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In this issue:

- Paul Goble, "Baku Offers 'Azerbaijan Model of Development' to Others"
- Frederick Starr, "Rethinking Central Asia"
- Leyla Sayfutdinova, "Transforming Public Spaces in Post-Socialist Cities"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

BAKU OFFERS 'AZERBAIJAN MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT' TO OTHERS

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Two events this month call attention to a new vector in Azerbaijani foreign policy: Baku's interest in presenting itself not just as a country that has successfully navigated the path from one social-economic system to another without the kind of instability that has plagued others in this situation but as a model for others. On the one hand, Baku has released a new book entitled *The Azerbaijani Model of Development* in which various officials, journalists and scholars talk about what has taken place in Azerbaijan over the last 17 years. And on the other, the Azerbaijani government has committed itself to opening cultural centers at its embassies abroad to share the Azerbaijani experience with others.

The first of these two developments represents the coming to fruition of an idea advanced earlier this year by Ramiz Mehtiyev, the head of the President's Office and a full member of the country's Academy of Sciences. He suggested that Azerbaijan's successful transit deserved to be described and offered to others and that Azerbaijanis themselves should reflect upon it as they seek to move beyond what they have accomplished already.

The new book, which already is available in Azerbaijani and Russian and will be translated into other languages in the near future, was edited by Ali Hasanov, a historian, and by Bakhtiyar Sayigov, a Milli Majlis deputy who also works as the editor-in-chief of the national newspaper *Azerbaijan*, which was responsible for its publication.

Tracing developments over the country's national history since 1994, the period of the rule of Heydar Aliyev and then his son Ilham Aliyev, the incumbent president, the book is both encyclopedic in its assemblage of data about economic trends and specific government policies as well as in its discussion of specific policies and trends.

Ramiz Mehtiyev writes in the preface that the book shows how economic and political arrangements were transformed over this period, a process that Azerbaijan managed without the turmoil that has plagued others. To achieve its current place in the world as one of the most rapidly developing post-Soviet countries, Azerbaijan had to undergo "the complete transformation of the system which had existed for many years and that was rooted in the consciousness and behavior of people. The success of this was made possible above all by the combination of a strong political will, a carefully thought out economic policy and serious reforms. Historical experience shows that the transition from one social-economic formation to another is accompanied by instability, conflicts and disorders." And Azerbaijan's ability to escape such things thus offers a model for other countries. [1]

The book describes the way in which the government strengthened the oil and gas sector and used the earnings from it to ensure "a balanced and stable development of the capital and the regions" even as it has sought to diversify the economy and lower the dependence of the country on its oil and gas exports through the development of other forms of infrastructure that will allow private enterprise to flourish and provide employment.

The "basic" goal in all of this, the authors of *The Azerbaijan Model of Development* argue, is the transformation of Azerbaijan into a modern and "more powerful country" based on "the improvement of the social well-being of the population." Although far more attention has been devoted to the oil and gas sectors by most commentators, Mehtiyev and the other authors suggest that increasing the well-being of the population, securing the growth of social infrastructure, and reducing poverty and unemployment have been and remain the focus of the country's leaders and thus are responsible for the success Azerbaijan has enjoyed and continues to enjoy.

Two Milli Majlis deputies underscored all these points. Ziyad Samadzade, who is heading the parliament's economic policy committee, noted that "Azerbaijan is one of the few countries which guaranteed itself economic freedom" at a time when it like the other former Soviet republics faced so many challenges. [2]

And he suggested that "the appearance of the book" just now is itself a testimony to "the stable development of Azerbaijan. Its translation into various languages," he continued, "will help provide a closer acquaintance by the world with the Azerbaijani model of development" over the last two decades.

Meanwhile, Shamsaddin Hajiyev, the chairman of the Milli Majlis committee on science and education, pointed out that while "each country has its own particular features of development," including resources and leadership, many countries can learn from the successes Azerbaijan has achieved.

He suggested that "there are no analogies to the economic development of Azerbaijan" over that period "anywhere in the world." In a very short time, Hajiyev said, the country "has traversed a path which other countries have not been able to cross in the course of a lengthy period. The macro-economic indicators of Azerbaijan now exceed by four to five times those of Armenia and Georgia taken together."

At least in part to share this experience with other countries as well as to further improve Azerbaijan's standing in the world, the country's council of ministers, on December 3, adopted a program calling for the organization of cultural centers in rapidly increasing number of the diplomatic representations of Azerbaijan abroad in fulfillment of a decree President Ilham Aliyev issued three months ago. [3]

Notes

[1] See <http://news.day.az/politics/241916.html> (accessed 13 December 2010).

[2] See <http://news.day.az/politics/242451.html> (accessed 13 December 2010).

[3] See <http://news.day.az/politics/241423.html> (accessed 13 December 2010).

RETHINKING CENTRAL ASIA

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(A Precise of a presentation
Professor Starr is making to the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy
on December 17, 2010)

Amidst the endless rush of events in the heart of the Caucasus, and the ongoing dance of external powers there, it is easy to allow Central Asia to slip from view. By "Central Asia," I mean the historical region including Afghanistan that has existed as a cultural zone for 3,000 years and not only the five former Soviet republics.

The casual picture one forms from both the Russian and western press is a depressing one. With remarkable consistency, the press of Russia, Europe, and

America offer the image of a region that is dominated by primitively authoritarian governments, riddled by oligarch-led corruption, vitiated by a growing polarization of wealth, and increasingly permeated by radical Islamists who feed of the failure of governments.

Each of these points contains an element of truth. One-man rule (except in Kyrgyzstan), weak parliaments, corruption in high places, polarization of wealth (although this is declining in Kazakhstan), and Islamists currents are all causes for concern. But this is only part of the picture. The reasons for which the rest of the story is ignored are easy to identify. Most Russian journalists have yet to accept 1991 and are eager to prove that Central Asians are incapable of governing themselves without Russia. European and American papers have few, if any, reporters on the spot in the region and end up relying on tendentious and often carelessly researched reports by NGO organizations.

The part of the picture that we ignore is worthy of our attention. Kazakhstan's banks were greatly overextended and suffered during the economic crisis but are recovering well. The growth rate of GDP is again over 8% and the country consistently seeks to maintain a balance in its international political and economic relations.

Uzbekistan's banks were not overextended before the crisis and the government guaranteed all private savings as the crisis was about to hit. As a result its rate of GDP growth is a solid 8.2%. This has led a more confident Uzbek government to introduce limited reforms and extend loans to more small and middle sized private firms.

Tajikistan's growth rate is a relatively low 3.1%, from a very low base. This is far from what is needed but not bad in comparison to many western countries. Poverty is widespread but solid growth for four years before the crisis began to cut into this problem. Moreover, the National savings bank is making more and more micro-finance loans and loans to women whose husbands are working in Kazakhstan or Russia.

Kyrgyzstan, of course, has lived through two governmental crises in five years and may yet see another. But a new government there is trying a bold experiment with parliamentary democracy, and the society possesses a significant number of modern and well-educated men and women. Adroit moves prevented outside armed intervention and International financial institutions are committed to helping the country emerge from crisis.

Afghanistan is indeed a suffering land, with active fighting in several parts of the country and widespread deep poverty. But over the past decade every key health indicator has increased dramatically, hundreds of new schools have opened, and large numbers of girls are being educated for the first time. Hundreds of new firms are beginning to generate profits.

Finally, Turkmenistan has, in three years, undergone a "New Renaissance." Besides reconstructing the capital and secondary cities, the government has invested heavily in education and public health in what is bound to be a transformative development. A new pipeline to China broke Gazprom's hold on the country and will generate vast new wealth.

More important than these “objective” developments is the gradual emergence of a new psychology throughout the region. Instead of viewing themselves as cultural colony of Russia or, before that, of the Arab world, they are increasingly embracing the achievements of their own Turko-Persian civilization, in both the ancient times and the golden age 800-1100. Figures like Farabi, Ibn Sino, Khorezmi, Farghani, Hayyam, Yusuf of Balasugun, Mahmud of Kashgar and Biruni are increasingly seen as the common heritage of the entire region, rising above ethnicity and political geography. Such giants once made the region the intellectual center of the world.

It was also the most generative center for the main religions. Zoroastrianism was born there, Buddhism took shape there, animism, shamanism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity and Judaism all flourished there. The region helped define the very character of Islam through such figures as al-Bukhari, Ghazali, and Yasavi.

Nor was Central Asia backwards politically. Several of the world’s mightiest empires were based there, among them the Kushans, Parthians, Seleucids, Tuerkis, Samanids, Taurids, Ghaznavids, Ghorids, and Timurids, not to mention Babur, who was born there and began his exploits in the Ferghana Valley and Afghanistan.

Central Asians are gradually embracing this complex and rich heritage. They see themselves increasingly not as a periphery but a center, not as an object to be toyed with by others but as sovereign subjects with legitimate rights in the international community.

Where will this lead? Of course, we don’t know. Things could slip backwards. Yet there is reason to think this won’t happen. Across the region there have been serious investments in education. A new generation of young leaders has been trained abroad or had its horizons expanded by new or reformed institutions within the region. It is only a matter of time before such men and women begin to put their stamp on Central Asia as a whole, including Afghanistan. As this happens, one can reasonably expect new and more positive directions. As the last Soviet generation fades, it will be replaced by a new generation whose members are more closely in touch both with the larger world and with their own cultures and heritage. In looking to the future one must always be sober and avoid all naivety. But surely the developments I have briefly sketched here are grounds for cautious optimism.

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SPACES IN POST-SOCIALIST CITIES

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Urban public spaces are important local intersections where economic, political and social relations are revealed and played out. For this reason, the transformation of public space in post-socialist cities is especially important for understanding state-society relations and their change in post-socialist contexts. In Western literature, the origins of urban public space are often traced back to the *agora* of the Greek city-states (Neal 2009, p. 5; Mitchell, 1995/2009, p. 88). The *agora*, translated as a

gathering place, was an open area in the center of the city where all citizens could gather and participate in a variety of political, religious, and social activities. These two features—accessibility and openness on the one hand, and the plurality of activities on the other—are the most important characteristics of the urban public space in modern age as well. In capitalist cities, the most contested issue is the privatization of public space, and therefore lack of openness, accessibility and deterioration of truly public character of those spaces. In contrast, in socialist cities the public spaces were indeed more open and accessible, however the variety of activities in such spaces was rather limited and focused mostly on recreation and official demonstration, as opposed to informal politics and commerce. The post-socialist transformations have changed this situation profoundly.

Despite some variations, these changes have included in all cases the privatization of land and housing with the introduction of a real estate market, the decentralization of political power at least initially, and the emergence of new power centers in the cities as a result of the weakening of state authority (Sailer-Fliege 1999, p. 11). Another significant change involved the shift from industry-dominated urban economies towards the service oriented ones, a profoundly important change because it created two classes of cities, “winners” and “losers” in the transition (Kovacs 1999, p. 5; Sailer-Fliege 1999, p. 11). And finally, while the transition opened the way to international investment as part of globalization, not all cities benefited equally (Stanilov 2007a, p. 75).

All these changes have had a major impact on the urban public spaces. In most of the post-socialist cities, there has been a reduction in the total area of public space, largely as a result of privatization or the return of buildings to their pre-socialist owners (Stanilov 2007b, p. 269). This was especially destructive for smaller public spaces such as playgrounds, small gardens and pieces of greenery in residential areas, as new owners exercised their newly acquired property rights. Although this has created tensions between old residents/tenants who did not want to lose the public space and new owners, those tensions were overwhelmingly resolved in favor of the new owners, as authorities sided with them. And in a related development, there has been the rise of shopping centers and office buildings in the urban periphery, which earlier served as “the green belt” of the cities (Stanilov 2007a, p. 82). In some places, these forces reduced the amount of green space by half in only a few years (Granitska 2005, cited in Stanilov 2007b, p. 272).

Overall, commercialization of public space has been a defining feature of its transformation. After the economic reform, a ‘retail explosion’ took place (Stanilov 2007a, p. 87). Immediately after liberalization of economy, street trade and small shops proliferated, and as a result, not only streets but also other public spaces such as parks and squares were turned into improvised retail markets. The public spaces for once began to resemble the archetypical *agoras*. The street trade period subsided by the end of 1990s, and in the 2000s the next phase of retail commercialization began, with the construction of large shopping centers and supermarkets (Stanilov 2007a, p. 88), and thus the commercial activity shifted from public spaces to pseudo-public. Gated communities also proliferated rapidly, thus taking up formerly public land for private purposes.

The remaining parks and plazas have also undergone changes. Many of them were renamed and assigned either old pre-socialist or completely new names. The extensive monument complexes of the socialist period are sometimes preserved, but more often they were either destroyed, reconstructed, or left to decline.

Commercialization of the remaining public spaces has involved both street trade, although at a lesser scale than in early 1990s, and more upscale developments such as open-air cafes.

In order to understand these processes more fully, it is useful to examine one of the "winner" cities, Budapest in Hungary, and one of the "loser" cities in Siberia. In Hungary, as elsewhere, the post-socialist transformation began with large-scale privatization of both land and housing. Housing was mostly privatized by the current tenants—unlike Czech Republic and Baltic states, Hungary did not implement restitution of property to the old owners. Instead, the old owners were offered compensation in the form of vouchers (Dingsdale 1999, p. 57). The newly organized local government adopted an entrepreneurial approach and was eager to sell off its land assets. Thus, an intensive real estate development began in Budapest. Hungary in general and Budapest in particular have been very successful in attracting foreign investment, and real estate has been an important part of this process. The vacant plots in city center were the first ones to be developed, mostly by Austrian companies, mainly for office space (Tosics 2006, p. 136). Another major development was the construction of shopping centers and supermarkets. These were usually built in the "inner periphery" areas of the city. The positive effect of this process was that it revitalized some of the old industrial sites, which have been largely left to decay in the post-socialist period (Tosics 2006, p. 138). But at the same time, green areas in the inner center have been affected by the residential construction, triggering conflicts between old and new residents (Tosics 2006, p. 143).

Another interesting development in Budapest has been the growth of gated communities. In fact, as Bodnar and Molnar (2009) argue, the term is rather misleading since they are rarely physically gated. They suggest calling these new forms "residential parks" as real estate firms there and in Germany do (Bodnar and Molnar 2009, p. 7). The construction of these complexes has led to a (re)negotiation of private and public space in Budapest. The developers often favor the districts with large green areas and open access to river. These, however, are usually protected areas, and the access to river in particular is problematic, since the legislation establishes a 30-meter special regulation zone along the Danube embankment. The local government which does not have resources of its own has used existing legislation to pressure the private developers into investing in public projects, such as Marina Park. This is an upscale complex on the Pest side of Danube, offering river view, luxury services, and marina to its residents. In exchange, they were required by the government to build a large public park with a bicycle lane along the embankment. There are, however, continued concerns as to how public and open this space will be in practice, since the entrance to the park is controlled despite the regulations (Bodnar and Molnar 2009, pp. 11-13).

While restructuring of the public space in Budapest is rather well described, the use of it remains less known. An example of a post-socialist transformation of use of public space can be found in Bodnar (1998). Moscow square, renamed in 1990s to the original "Elizabeth" is still commonly referred to with its socialist name. Originally a clay pit in 17th century, it had since been a site for brick factory transformed into a skating ring at the turn of 20th century; during the World War II, it became a busy traffic center with tram terminal and bus stops. In 1972, its transportation function was enhanced even further with the opening of underground station. Its location within the city is important, as it connects the inner city with the hilly suburbs of Buda. Throughout the day, the square is used by different groups of

people, some of which pass through it on the way while others come to stay. Early in the morning the square is used as an unofficial labor market; the supply of unskilled and low skilled labor is provided by ethnic Magyar men from Romania. Later in the morning appear elderly ladies selling flowers and other small items, representing the continuation of a tolerated socialist practice. They are followed by ethnic Magyar rural women from Romania, selling their hand-made needlework. At the opposite side of the square Hungarian Roma women sell cheap low quality products, from watches to underwear. There are also street singers (Ukrainian), charity workers distributing food, and beggars. The activities, in addition to transport, commerce, begging and charity, also include politics, as political parties often come here to gather support (Bodnar 1998, pp. 492-496). In addition to these largely informal activities, there are a number of established commercial enterprises, from fast-food stalls right on the square to nightclubs and real estate agencies in the surrounding buildings. Finally, there is the police surveillance, not very visible but always present; resolving arising conflicts between different groups of vendors, sometimes pocketing their profits, but ignoring, for example, the labor market in which employers pay neither taxes nor social security benefits.

The Moscow square is a great example of the public space transformation in a post-socialist city. All the activities that were forbidden in socialist times, the commerce and the politics, are present there. So is the visibility of poverty, thanks to beggars and homeless coming to get their free soup. Other changes include two kindergartens that were closed down, thus illustrating the shrinkage of public services in the city. Another issue is the change (or lack) of public order: in socialist times, the Moscow square was apparently a much more ordered space. And overall, the square became a polarized and conflict ridden space, similar to many such spaces in the west.

The mono-functional cities in Russia present a rather different picture. They have been hit the hardest by the post-socialist transformation and the de-industrialization this has entailed because their economies were based on a single industry (Molodikova and Makhrova 2007, p. 64). By the time of transition in 1989, about half of cities in Russia had been in the mono-functional category. Most are relatively new, a majority are in Siberia and the Far East and all are linked to a hierarchical urban network connecting them to larger, more mixed economy urban centers in the South (Engel 2007, pp. 285-286).

Barbara Engel bases her analysis on three mono-functional cities in Northern Siberia—Angarsk, Sajansk and Ust-Ilimsk. In terms of urban design, these cities were new and socialist and did not have any pre-socialist characteristics. In practice, this meant construction of monotonous blocks and geometrical grids of streets. The open public space was abundant, and included urban squares, parks and boulevards. In addition, there were also vast expanses of “poorly differentiated open space” between buildings (Engel 2007, p. 296). The primary function of the squares was the demonstration of political power and they were used mostly for parades and other public celebrations on major Soviet holidays. There were also a number of smaller public spaces and various facilities for sports and recreation. Like the cities of which they were a part, such places were also mono-functional.

In general, according to Engel, in the socialist period the public spaces in these cities were under-utilized, because of their abundance and limited number of approved uses (Engel 2007, p. 291). The privatization and more generally the post-socialist transformation have changed this situation dramatically. The mono-functional cities

faced serious out-migration, but because of economic decline, they still had massive unemployment (Engel 2007, p. 296). As in Central and Eastern Europe, the state largely withdrew from maintenance of urban space. The privatization appears to have taken place without any regulation by state. Small public spaces, such as children playgrounds, neighborhood parks and so on, disappeared. Streets and larger open spaces became the arena of unregulated street trade. And automobile congestion exploded.

Engel's analysis focuses on the appropriation of public space, not on its actual use. Thus, her account does not say much about the use of public spaces, the conflicts around them in the post-socialist period. Lack of other studies on these cities makes it difficult to generalize, but from her account, it does appear that the public space in mono-functional cities is in decline, both in terms of reduction of its area and appropriation by private owners. Her main conclusion is that the development of urban space in these cities in the post-socialist period is chaotic and not regulated because of the weakness and lack of resources of the local government. The solution, in her view, would be to decentralize the government structure and allow local governments more powers to regulate the private sector activities in the public space (Engel 2007, p. 298).

The comparison of "winner" and "loser" cities shows important similarities in the post-socialist transformation of public space. In both cases, the post-socialist transformation of urban public space meant, first, the reduction of total area of such space, and second, the increasing diversity in its use. The privatization and the withdrawal of the state from many of its public duties, such as maintenance and provision of public services, are also common. However, the state is neither absent nor neutral: it performs surveillance and control, and is actively in the structuring of the remaining public spaces through engagement with private interests.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says in Astana that "Armenia is seeking to preserve the status quo and to make the negotiation process infinite" (<http://news.day.az/politics/240795.html>).

Azay Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Azerbaijan had had "certain hopes" for a breakthrough on Karabakh in 2010 (<http://news.day.az/politics/243267.html>).

Gular Ahmadova, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Azerbaijan is inclined toward a military solution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242190.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russian ambassador to Baku, says that his country, "on the basis of the declaration signed in Astana will increase the activity of its mediating efforts for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242912.html>).

The final text of the Astana Declaration adopted by the OSCE summit is released (<http://news.day.az/politics/241506.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

15 December

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his South Korean counterpart Kim Sung-Hwan in Seoul (<http://news.day.az/politics/243271.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Armenian media are distorting information about Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/243392.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives the Austrian and Dutch ambassadors to Azerbaijan, Sylvia Meier-Kajbic and Arjen Uijterlinde (<http://news.day.az/politics/243435.html>).

Azerbaijan opens an honorary consulate in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the United States (<http://news.day.az/politics/243434.html>).

Bahar Muradova, a Milli Majlis deputy, says the OSCE mission report about the occupied territories should be comprehensive and based on facts (<http://news.day.az/politics/243454.html>).

Serik Primbetov, Kazakhstan's ambassador to Baku, says that the OSCE Summit declaration on Karabakh represents a step forward in the process of resolving that conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/243440.html>).

Kazakhstan awards Azerbaijani artist Polad Bulbuloglu the Prize of Peace and Progress (<http://news.day.az/politics/243384.html>).

14 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming Hungarian Ambassador Jolta Chutora (<http://news.day.az/politics/243275.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva takes part in a UNESCO meeting in Paris in her capacity as a good will ambassador of that organization (<http://news.day.az/politics/243201.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, meets with Egyptian First Lady Suzanne Mubarak during sessions of an international forum against human trafficking in Luxor (<http://news.day.az/politics/243258.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says there is no other path for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict than the withdrawal of Armenian forces (<http://news.day.az/politics/243141.html>).

Musa Gasymlly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the Armenian parliament's discussion about the possibility of recognizing Karabakh as an independent state reflects the crisis of power in Yerevan (<http://news.day.az/politics/242999.html>).

Zahid Oruj, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan is seeking to intimidate Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/242861.html>).

Emanuelis Zingeris, the chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament's foreign relations committee, says that Vilnius considers Azerbaijan the most developed state in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/243358.html>).

The OSCE expresses the hope that the issue of the withdrawal of snipers from the Azerbaijani-Armenian ceasefire line can be resolved soon (<http://news.day.az/politics/243354.html>).

The European Committee on Social Rights of the Council of Europe publishes its report on the state of social rights in Azerbaijan and other countries which have signed the European Social Charter (<http://news.day.az/politics/243309.html>).

13 December

Bakhtiyar Sadykhov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the Armenian parliament's short-circuited discussion of recognizing Karabakh was "only a bluff" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242525.html>).

Hamza Hamit Homrishi, a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and of the Turkish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, says that "a war for Karabakh may restart" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242714.html>).

12 December

President Ilham Aliyev leads the Azerbaijani nation in commemoration of the memory of Heydar Aliyev on the seventh anniversary of the latter's death (<http://news.day.az/politics/242904.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, meets in Egypt with Anne-Marie Lizin, the honorary president of the Belgian Senate (<http://news.day.az/politics/242903.html>).

11 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives Alain Guidetti, Austrian ambassador to Baku, on the latter's completion of his diplomatic mission to Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/242863.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Wolfgang Ruttensdorfer, the president of Austria's OMV Company (<http://news.day.az/politics/242882.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammadov as well as with the foreign ministers of Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in Ashkhabad (<http://news.day.az/politics/242829.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Azerbaijan was among the countries which "supported the neutrality of Turkmenistan at the United Nations" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242884.html>).

Youth and Sports Minister Azad Rahimov says that the Council of Europe has expressed satisfaction with the policies Azerbaijan has carried out in the areas of his responsibility (<http://news.day.az/society/242838.html>).

Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammadov says that Ashkhabad continues to support the view that the Caspian Sea should be subdivided into

internal waters, territorial sea, and a common water space (<http://news.day.az/politics/242886.html>).

10 December

President Ilham Aliyev takes part in the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Moscow (<http://news.day.az/politics/242540.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadgulyev says that the European Union in the next few months may adopt a decision about beginning negotiations on the simplification of a visa regime with Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/242647.html>).

Fuad Alaskarov, the head of the law enforcement department of the President's Office, says that the European Court's precedent law is part of Azerbaijan's legal system (<http://news.day.az/politics/242599.html>).

Chingiz Askarov, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the European Human Rights Court, says that the ministerial committee of the Council of Europe is satisfied with the execution of the decision of the European Court regarding Eynulla Fatullayev, the editor of *Реальный Азербайджан* and *Gündəlik Azərbaycan* (<http://news.day.az/society/242779.html>).

Azerbaijan's permanent representation to the European Union sends a letter of protest to Jerzy Buzek, the president of the European Parliament, concerning falsehoods in a film shown at that institution by Armenian representatives (<http://news.day.az/politics/242744.html>).

Sabir Rustamkhanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that he does "not believe in the success of peace talks with Yerevan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242386.html>).

Shusuko Watanabe, Japan's ambassador to Baku, says that Tokyo supports the broadening of economic ties between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/242692.html>).

Roland Kobia, the head of the representative office of the European Union in Baku, meets with Azerbaijani human rights activists on the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights (<http://news.day.az/politics/242760.html>).

Janan Kalsyn, a deputy in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, says that "Ankara expects that Armenia will withdraw its forces from the territory of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242334.html>).

9 December

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his Russian and Armenian counterparts, Sergey Lavrov and Edvard Nalbandyan, in Moscow (<http://news.day.az/politics/242531.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his Ukrainian counterpart Konstantin Grishchenko on the sidelines of the CIS summit in Moscow (<http://news.day.az/politics/242443.html>).

The Protocol Service of First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva issues a statement expressing its outrage at slanderous inventions about her published in the Italian journal "Il Foglio" on the basis of reports supposedly from a German diplomat (<http://news.day.az/politics/242550.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that Armenia continues to show its lack of respect for international law (<http://news.day.az/politics/242403.html>).

Javanshir Akhundov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Tehran, meets with Ayatollah Lutfullah Safi Gulpaigani in Qum (<http://news.day.az/politics/242503.html>).

Rabiyat Aslanova, chairman of the Milli Majlis human rights committee, says that "2011 will become a turning point in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242365.html>).

Hardijs Baumanis, Latvia's ambassador to Baku, says that relations between Latvia and Azerbaijan are characterized by a high level of stability, developed political dialogue and cooperation between both the legislative and executive branches of government (<http://news.day.az/politics/242339.html>).

Richard Morningstar, special representative of the US Secretary of State for energy issues in Eurasia, says that "the fate of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline must be resolved by Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan" (<http://news.day.az/economy/242481.html>).

Adam Sterling, charge d'affairs at the US embassy in Baku, says that Washington intends to redouble its efforts as a co-chair in the OSCE Minsk Group over the next year (<http://news.day.az/politics/242500.html>).

Adam Sterling, charge d'affairs at the US embassy in Baku, says that "we are trying to overcome the difficulties created by WikiLeaks" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242498.html>).

8 December

The Foreign Ministry denounces Yerevan's policy of resettling Armenians from Syria and Armenia in the occupied territories as a violation of international law (<http://news.day.az/politics/242308.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Baku does not accept Georgia's proposal to exchange sections of territory along their common border (<http://news.day.az/politics/242271.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, begins a nine-day visit to Egypt to take part in an international forum on combating human trafficking (<http://news.day.az/politics/242273.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadgulyev meets with European Union officials to discuss accelerating cooperation between Azerbaijan and the EU (<http://news.day.az/politics/242129.html>).

The Azerbaijan State Committee on Standardization, Metrics and Patents signs a memorandum of cooperation with the Metrics Institute of Germany (<http://news.day.az/economy/242305.html>).

Azerbaijan and Turkey are preparing to begin joint production of weapons systems (<http://news.day.az/economy/242222.html>).

Tahir Rzayev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "international organizations are conducting a two-faced policy" regarding the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/242087.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says that the Astana Summit of the OSCE demonstrated "all the defects" of that organization (<http://news.day.az/politics/242130.html>).

Philip Gordon, US assistant secretary of state, says that the United States welcomes the actions of Russia concerning the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/242133.html>).

Egemen Bagysh, Turkish state minister and head of Turkey's delegation for negotiations with the European Union, says that his country's parliament will not ratify the Armenian-Turkish protocols until the Karabakh conflict is resolved (<http://news.day.az/politics/242233.html>).

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon presents a certificate of gratitude to Azerbaijani fire fighters who participated in the extinguishing of the recent fires in Israel (<http://news.day.az/society/242231.html>).

Wolfgang Ruttenstorfer, the head of the Austrian energy company OMV, says that negotiations with Azerbaijan are "a priority" for the Nabucco project (<http://news.day.az/economy/242302.html>).

Teymuraz Sharashenidze, a candidate to become Georgia's ambassador to Baku, says that ensuring "the dynamic development" of bilateral ties would be his chief task (<http://news.day.az/politics/242196.html>).

7 December

The Foreign Ministry says that there must not be any discussion about providing any form of representation internationally for an "unrecognized entity" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242113.html>).

Ilgar Mukhtarov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Mexico, pays a working visit Uruguay (<http://news.day.az/politics/241949.html>).

Huseyn Najafov, Azerbaijani consul general in Georgia's Adjara Autonomous Republic, meets with the head of that republic, Levan Varshalomidze (<http://news.day.az/politics/242107.html>).

The Milli Majlis international relations committee discusses the ratification of the agreement on strategic partnership and mutual assistance between Azerbaijan and Turkey (<http://news.day.az/politics/242076.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the Turkish world has the necessary potential to occupy an influential position in world politics" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242103.html>).

Bakhtiyar Aliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the future of the Armenian people is questionable" given Yerevan's refusal to move forward on resolving the Karabakh issue (<http://news.day.az/politics/241858.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says that he discussed the Karabakh conflict at the Russian-EU summit in Brussels (<http://news.day.az/politics/242117.html>).

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis tells the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs that during Lithuania's chairmanship of the OSCE, the resolution of outstanding conflicts will be a major focus (<http://news.day.az/politics/242060.html>).

The US embassy in Baku says that "for Washington, Azerbaijan is a very important partner" (<http://news.day.az/politics/242056.html>).

Michal Labenda, Poland's ambassador to Baku, says that NATO's new strategic concept defines further steps for warding off new threats (<http://news.day.az/politics/242006.html>).

Azerbaijan and Italy sign an agreement eliminating visa requirements for bearers of diplomatic and official passports (<http://news.day.az/politics/242084.html>).

A delegation from the Russian Federation's Krasnodar kray visits Baku to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/economy/242022.html>).

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development approves a new strategy for Azerbaijan for 2011-2013 (<http://news.day.az/economy/242452.html>).

6 December

Baku releases a new book, *The Azerbaijani Model of Development*, the idea for which came from the head of the President's Office Ramiz Mehtiyev and the chief editor of which is Ali Hasanov (<http://news.day.az/politics/241916.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Azerbaijani and NATO experts are consulting within and on the Individual Partnership Action Plan between Baku and the alliance (<http://news.day.az/politics/241911.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, the executive secretary of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that "Azerbaijani diplomacy in all cases connected with the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict undertakes immediate steps and will be able to use effectively all means within the framework of the OSCE and the United Nations" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241859.html>).

Nizami Jafarov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Baku's pressure on Yerevan "will be increased" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241744.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the Astana summit showed that the position of Azerbaijan on Karabakh is just and recognized internationally and that

those countries which up to now have supported Armenia are now beginning to understand the essence of this problem." As a result, he says, "Armenia is in panic" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241504.html>).

Azerbaijani officials take part in a meeting of the Security Committee of the International Maritime Organization (<http://news.day.az/economy/241780.html>).

Syrian Deputy Oil Minister Hasan Zainab says that his country will begin importing natural gas from Azerbaijan in 2011 (<http://news.day.az/economy/241856.html>).

The participants in the symposium, the Turkish World in the 21st Century, adopt a resolution which among other things denounces the occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory by Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/241915.html>).

Rauf Denktash, the leader of the Turks of Northern Cyprus, says that "Heydar Aliyev was a personality who made a major contribution to the development of the Turkish world and Azerbaijani-Turkish relations" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241893.html>).

Ethan Goldrich, the director of the office of Caucasus Affairs and Regional Conflicts of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, visits Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/241866.html>).

5 December

Shahin Abdullayev, Azerbaijan's incoming ambassador to Egypt, presents his credentials to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, along with a letter of greetings from President Ilham Aliyev (<http://news.day.az/politics/241710.html>).

Leyla Aliyeva, head of the representation of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in Russia, takes part in the opening of a memorial plaque in honor of Azerbaijanis who died in the defense of Leningrad (<http://news.day.az/politics/241703.html>).

Rasim Musabayov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the actions of Armenia throw open challenges" to Azerbaijan and the world (<http://news.day.az/politics/241684.html>).

4 December

The Defense Ministry says that Azerbaijan has not violated the ceasefire regime as Yerevan has claimed (<http://news.day.az/politics/241619.html>).

Eliyor Ganiyev, the deputy prime minister and minister of foreign economic relations of Uzbekistan, visits Baku to take part in the national economic exhibit Tashkent has opened there (<http://news.day.az/economy/241646.html>).

3 December

Prime Minister Arthur Rasizade says at the opening of the Uzbekistan national exhibition in Baku that "we must devote efforts to make use of the potential of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan" in all areas (<http://news.day.az/economy/241525.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the international relations department of the President's Office, says that meetings with Armenia should occur only when a result can be expected (<http://news.day.az/politics/241462.html>).

The Azerbaijani council of ministers has approved the establishment of cultural centers at Azerbaijani embassies abroad (<http://news.day.az/politics/241423.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that the OSCE summit in Astana showed that "bipolarity" had returned to the OSCE region (<http://news.day.az/politics/241442.html>).

Ilgar Mukhtarov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Mexico, pays a working visit to Chili (<http://news.day.az/politics/241342.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, tells the international symposium in Cyprus on the Turkish World in the 21st Century that the Karabakh issue "must be a problem not only of the Azerbaijani people but of the entire Turkish world" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241477.html>).

Garib Mammadov, the head of the Azerbaijani State Committee on Land and Cartography, says that Baku is conducting preparatory steps for demarcating the border with the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/politics/241465.html>).

Officials of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party discuss cooperation with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (<http://news.day.az/politics/241527.html>).

The chiefs of the general staffs of the CIS countries agree to expanding military cooperation within the group (<http://news.day.az/politics/241480.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says that he highly values his meetings with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev because "we are one nation but two different states. Trust between us is unlimited" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241341.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul calls on the countries of the OSCE to increase their efforts toward the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/241340.html>).

Slovenian President Danilo Türk says that "mutual trust has to be strengthened for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241343.html>).

The final text of the Astana Declaration adopted by the OSCE summit is released (<http://news.day.az/politics/241506.html>).

Adam Sterling, the charge d'affairs of the US embassy in Baku, condemns the release of documents by WikiLeaks (<http://news.day.az/politics/241379.html>).

2 December

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the foreign relations department of the President's Office, says that the Astana declaration presupposes the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/241287.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that "at Astana, Azerbaijan encountered the unconstructive position of Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241184.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that "Azerbaijan cannot become a field of struggle for the realization of someone else's interests" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241215.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that the WikiLeaks documents are intended to weaken relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey (<http://news.day.az/politics/241197.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, the head of the political analysis and information department of the President's Office, says that "Azerbaijan is being transformed into a center of intellectual dialogue" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241204.html>). In other comments, he says that the European Union must take a more definite position on the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/241199.html>).

Elkhan Nuriyev, the head of the Center for Strategic Studies attached to the President of Azerbaijan, says that "Azerbaijan attracts Europe as a country with a young democracy" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241230.html>).

Farid Shafiyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Ottawa, meets with Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay (<http://news.day.az/politics/241155.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia will attempt to begin an escalation of its aggressive actions" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241113.html>).

Elman Mammadov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that there are "forces in the world for whom the publications of WikiLeaks are useful" (<http://news.day.az/politics/240988.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says that the close relations between Ankara and Moscow have led to progress in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/241251.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says that "Turkey is ready to support the peaceful resolution of conflicts" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241154.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says "Turkey and Azerbaijan are indivisible" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241265.html>).

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis, the incoming chairman-in-office of the OSCE, says that the co-chairs of the Minsk Group must "step up the tempo" of talks on the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/241187.html>).

Georgian Energy Minister Aleksandr Khetaguri says that Azerbaijan is Georgia's "strategic partner" (<http://news.day.az/economy/241323.html>).

Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz says that "Turkey is carrying out together with Azerbaijan new energy projects" (<http://news.day.az/economy/241240.html>).

1 December

President Ilham Aliyev meets with other leaders attending the OSCE Summit in Astana (<http://news.day.az/politics/240968.html>).

Prime Minister Arthur Rasizade receives Edouard Dayan, the general director of the Universal Postal Union (<http://news.day.az/economy/241149.html>).

The OSCE Summit in Astana adopts a declaration on the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/241032.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says that "no one will be able to harm the fraternal relations of Turkey and Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241069.html>).

Romanian President Trajan Basescu says that the use of force to resolve conflicts on the territory of OSCE member states is "unacceptable" (<http://news.day.az/politics/241084.html>).

Austrian President Heinz Fischer says that the OSCE's main task is to resolve the conflicts on the territories of its member states (<http://news.day.az/politics/241063.html>).

US Secretary of State says that the US seeks "the renewal of efforts" toward a solution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/240959.html>).

Hardijs Baumanis, Latvia's ambassador to Baku, says that his country is interested in broadening its legal base of cooperation with Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/241103.html>).

Dunja Mijatovic, OSCE representative on freedom of the media, expresses confidence that Azerbaijan in the near future will adopt a law on defamation (<http://news.day.az/politics/241018.html>).

Note to Readers

The editors of "Azerbaijan in the World" hope that you find it useful and encourage you to submit your comments and articles via email (adabiweekly@ada.edu.az). The materials it contains reflect the personal views of their authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.