



Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

School of International Affairs

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AZERBAIJAN AND GREECE

An Interview with H.E. Mr. Ioannis Metaxas
Ambassador of Greece to Azerbaijan

May 18, 2011
Baku, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan in the World: How have Azerbaijani-Greek relations evolved in the post-Soviet era and how would you describe their current status?

Ambassador Metaxas: Both states belong to the same geographical area, the broader Black Sea area. This proximity produces common interests and brings both countries and their peoples ever closer. Diplomatic relations were established in 1992, and thus next year, we will mark their 20th anniversary. The Embassy of

Greece in Baku began work in 1993, and the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Athens opened its doors in 2004.

Our bilateral relations are very good, with a high-level political dialogue developing in recent years. Presidential and ministerial visits in both countries have been instrumental in this. Last April, the state visit to Baku of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Dr. Karolos Papoulias, was very successful and further deepened our relations to the point of a real partnership. I am confident that this partnership will continue to develop benefiting both our people.

AIW: What is the state of energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and Greece? What is your assessment of the importance of, and prospects for, the Southern Corridor gas projects?

Amb. Metaxas: On 2007, both countries signed a memorandum of cooperation in the area of oil and gas. Greece also declared that we wanted to be the first EU member-state to directly import gas from Azerbaijan. This wish may become a reality during 2011, since it is in principle agreed that the Turkish Company BOTAS will transfer to SOCAR its obligations arising from its contract with the Greek Public Gas Company DEPA for the purchase of 0,75 bcm/year. In addition, Greece stands ready to cooperate with Azerbaijan, in order to build the ITGI and IGB pipeline projects, which can allow your country to directly export, through Greece, gas to Italy, Bulgaria, maybe also Romania and other countries of South East Europe.

The overall Southeastern European Market, which can be reached through my country, will have a supply gap of 8 bcm/year by 2020 and 12 bcm/year by 2025. The combination of the design capacity of 9 bcm/year for ITGI and 3 bcm/year for IGB pipelines, with a maximum capacity of 12 bcm/year and 5 bcm/year respectively, will provide a perfect solution for matching the future supply of Azerbaijani gas with the demand in the markets of Greece and its neighboring countries. Let me also stress that the energy sector in Greece offers a lot of investment opportunities and may be interesting for your country.

AIW: What are the main components of trade and areas of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Greece, apart from energy?

Amb. Metaxas: According to the Greek Statistical Authority, during 2010 Greece exported to Azerbaijan goods valued at 12,84 million USD, while we imported from your country goods valued at 13,21 million USD. These figures do not correspond to the potential of both countries. Our economies are complementary. Therefore, bilateral trade can further expand to mutual benefit. Moreover, a lot of opportunities exist for the development of our business relations. Azerbaijani investors can take advantage of current opportunities in Greece and make profitable investment. For instance, some Greek Hotels are on sale. The real estate area in general offers great opportunities. Prices are now low and will start to climb again, once the economic crisis is over, a year or two from now. A lot of opportunities for investment exist in other sectors as well. Our Authority *Invest in Greece* can provide useful information and administrative support to any interested Azerbaijani investor.

AIW: What is the state of bilateral cultural and social cooperation?

Amb. Metaxas: We have had a bilateral culture agreement with Azerbaijan since 1997. On the basis of that accord, the second bilateral program on cooperation in

the fields of science, education and culture for the years 2011-2013 has been agreed to and is now being implemented. Among its provisions are scholarships for Azerbaijani students wishing to study in Greece. We also support the operation of the *Center of Modern Greek Language and Culture*, set up in 2004 within the Baku Slavic University. In this Center, Azerbaijani students learn modern Greek, with very good results. We believe that this Center constitutes a true bridge between our two people.

AIW: What is the state of cooperation between the two countries within the Eastern Partnership framework? What future do you see for this initiative?

Amb. Metaxas: The Eastern Partnership, along with the Black Sea Synergy, are EU policies that aim to enhance our relations with our eastern neighbors, including of course Azerbaijan. Greece, being an EU member-state geographically very close to Azerbaijan, actively supported the establishment of these policies. And Greece wishes to also use this opportunity to enhance bilateral cooperation with your country. One EU twinning project on *Capacity Development for Enhancement of Copyright and Related Rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan* has already been awarded to a consortium with Greek participation. Moreover, as part of the Eastern Partnership initiative, negotiations for an EU-Azerbaijani Association agreement have begun. The next step will be an accord on visa facilitation and readmission. If Azerbaijan becomes a WTO member, it will be offered the chance to conclude with the EU an agreement for a deep and comprehensive free trade area. I therefore believe that the Eastern Partnership has a bright future and your country can effectively use this EU policy to get ever closer to the European Union.

AIW: What in your view ought to be the next steps in relations between Azerbaijan and Greece?

Amb. Metaxas: After such a successful visit of the President of the Hellenic Republic in Baku, last April, it is very difficult to plan equally important steps. However, relations between two countries belonging to the same geographical area never stop. In this context, I can anticipate the visit of the Azerbaijani friendship group of the Milli Majlis to Athens and the organization of bilateral political consultations there as well. I also wish that bilateral trade continues to increase. Last but not least, I hope that, among the decisions for the export of the Shah-Deniz-2 Azerbaijani natural gas, one part will be exported through the ITGI project, giving, as I said, to Azerbaijan the possibility to have access to new customers in Southeast Europe.

AIW: Given your experience, what advice would you give young Azerbaijanis beginning their careers in diplomacy?

Amb. Metaxas: The wish to serve his or her country is the basis for the decision of each person to become a diplomat. This career is a sort of adventure, having little in common with other careers in the public sector. A prerequisite for the success of a diplomat is to respect the law of his country, the law of the country where he is appointed and the international law. Of course, a diplomatic career can complicate family, something a young Azerbaijani needs to take into account as well.

AZERBAIJAN JOINS THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

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At the 16th ministerial of the Non-Aligned Movement in Bali, Azerbaijan formally joined that group, a step that many commentators have viewed as the latest manifestation of the balanced foreign policy that President Ilham Aliyev has pursued since coming to office but one that others see as reflecting a new direction in Baku's foreign policy, one driven both by criticism from the West over the Azerbaijan government's treatment of its opponents and a desire by Baku to wean Moscow away from Armenia and thereby open the way to a settlement of the longstanding Karabakh conflict.

In his speech to the Bali meeting, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov made two remarks that help to explain why this latest move by Azerbaijan is consistent with its overarching goals. On the one hand, the minister said that "Azerbaijan feels responsible for promoting mutual respect and mutual understanding through dialogue between religions and cultures" and thus "we must find new paths and means for the realization of a more effective Movement which will be in a position to react to the rapidly changing international climate." And on the other, the foreign minister said, Azerbaijan's membership in Non-Aligned Movement will give Azerbaijan "an additional platform" for promoting the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. [1]

The Azerbaijani government has been angered by Western criticism of its response to demonstrations, not only because the West has been pressuring Baku for greater access to its oil and gas supplies and for active support against Iran but also because it appears to many in the Azerbaijani capital that the West's criticism of Baku's actions is an extension of its condemnation of Middle Eastern governments and because the West has been unable to deliver a settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Given the centrality of the latter in Azerbaijan's foreign policy thinking, a centrality highlighted by Foreign Minister Mammadyarov's statement in Bali, Baku has clearly decided to send a message to the West that it is not nearly as much in that region's corner as Azerbaijan had suggested earlier and as many in the West had continued to assume.

Given that, some might have expected Azerbaijan to shift its orientation more toward Moscow. Such observers might in fact cite a variety of recent statements by senior Azerbaijani officials that Moscow and President Dmitry Medvedev are now playing the predominant role in Karabakh peacemaking. Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Moscow, for example, said recently that "a special role in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict belongs to Russia and to [its] President Dmitry Medvedev." [2] But Moscow's continued if not unqualified support for Armenia likely rules out such a shift for Baku as does the calculation that a move in that direction might truly prove irreversible.

Consequently, Baku has chosen to join the non-aligned movement now, a step that does three things for Azerbaijan. First, it allows Azerbaijan to retain its freedom of

action and even gives it a new place to press its position on Karabakh. Second, it offers a new model for the foreign policies of South Caucasus countries, perhaps signaling that they can maintain themselves in between Russia and the West rather than choosing one or the other, and thus promotes the notion of Azerbaijan as a bellwether of the region. And third, it puts pressure on Moscow to shift away from Armenia and on the West to push for a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

To the extent this analysis is correct, it has already won Azerbaijan its first victory: the joint declaration of the presidents of the three co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group at Deauville, a declaration that as Ambassador Bulbuloglu noted is extremely important because “for the first time is established a definite time for results in the talks about the Nagorno-Karabakh problem,” an apparent reflection of conclusions in both Moscow and the West that the Karabakh conflict must be solved and solved now—even if that means Moscow must shift away from its traditional partner Armenia and even if it also means that the West must give up its notion that the South Caucasus or at least the most important country there has no choice but to move into the orbit of the West.

Notes

[1] See <http://news.day.az/politics/269888.html> (accessed 30 May 2011).

[2] See <http://news.day.az/politics/270233.html> (accessed 30 May 2011).

THE AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: AN UNTOLD HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO PRESERVE AZERBAIJAN’S ISLAMIC LEGACY

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The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, established 93 years ago this past week as the first republic in the Muslim world, played an enormous role not only in the history of the Azerbaijani people but in that of the entire Muslim world. Materials in the Azerbaijan National Archive, however, make clear that the impact of the ADR on the Muslim world was so great that it deserves to be far better known—there and in Azerbaijan itself.

An important component of this influence involves the transfer of the Islamic Archives from Tiflis to Baku during the period of the ADR. Those archives were maintained in what became the Georgian capital after 1917 by the Islamic Boards for Shia and Sunni Muslims in the Caucasus. Those two bodies were established by the Russian Imperial government in 1872 to supervise Muslim parishes and educational institutions in the Caucasus.

The tsarist authorities viewed the South Caucasus as a strategically important region and hence were concerned with social, economic and political processes of all kinds

there. The two Islamic boards set up in Tiflis were viewed as the main keys as it were to controlling the Muslim population of the South Caucasus. Not surprisingly, some Muslims and radical parties like the Social Democrats viewed these boards as part and parcel of the tsarist state and worked against them. But the real situation was more complicated.

While both these boards took direction from the tsarist authorities, they also resisted tsarist power. For example, the Russian government received two reprimands against its plans for a Tiflis railway because the authorities planned to build it through the main Muslim cemetery in Tiflis. After a long discussion over this, the Shia Board officially rejected the plan in a letter to St. Petersburg, an indication that the board saw itself as quasi-independent, at least when specifically religious concerns were involved.

In 1905, at the time of clashes between Armenians and Tatars, the tsarist authorities sought to use religious leaders, Muslim as well as Christian, to calm the situation. Both Shia Akhunds and Armenian parish priests were dispatched to conflict areas in order to promote law and order. These religious leaders then took their peace mission to Tiflis in order, the archives say, "not to allow clashes there to expand." Unfortunately, both in the former and in the latter case, they were largely unsuccessful.

In addition to such activities, the boards collected statistical data on a wide variety of activities among the Muslims of the Caucasus, including the number of mosques, the size of vaqfs, marriages, divorces, shariat rulings, and causes of illness and death. And the archives of the boards also contain information on numerous circular letters dispatched by St. Petersburg concerning the organization of prayers for the coronation of the tsar or a key life event in the court.

Because the ADR took possession of the boards' archives, the Azerbaijan National Archive now has files for the Transcaucasia Shia Ecclesiastical Board (1872-1919), the Office on Transcaucasia Sheikh-ul-Islam (1827-1890), the Transcaucasia Sunni Ecclesiastical Board (1872-1920) and Office of the Transcaucasus Mufti on Omar's Doctrine (1850-1877). All these materials are described in a guide to the archives compiled during Soviet times (Naidel 1958). It is not only incomplete but fails to discuss the contents of the thousands of documents destroyed in Soviet times. On September 1, 1942, for example, some 12,988 documents from these files were simply burned.

Nonetheless, these archives contain a wealth of important information, including correspondence with Russian Imperial officials concerning Russian conquest of Persian and Turkish fortresses, as well as detailed reports on the life of Muslims and Muslim leaders throughout the Caucasus. Most of the documents are in Azerbaijani, Persian and Russian, but many are in more than one language, and a few are in Arabic.

That these archives should now be in Baku is related to Georgia's declaration of independence from the Transcaucasia Federation on May 26, 1918. Four days later, adherents of the two otherwise separate Muslim traditions formed a special committee and sent a letter to the new ADR government arguing that the boards, their documents and property should be transferred to "a more or less central place in Eastern Transcaucasia. [1] The letter specifies that "Tiflis, which has been established by the Russian Empire as the residence of the Ecclesiastical Boards,

recently has been included within the territory of the Georgian Government... This is an urgent demand of the Muslim leaders ... [And] we request ten wagons and 5,000 rubles to move employees, property and archives."

The head of the Omar board sent a letter to the Georgian interior ministry on June 18, 1918 stating that "as supporters of the Independence of Georgia, the ecclesiastical board asks for a ruling on its fate [and] about how it is to function either in Tiflis as in previous years or whether it must leave the city." [2]

Meanwhile, the ADR government moved quickly to provide assistance to allow the ecclesiastical boards to move to Baku. Some of the wagons and their contents were lost, but the ADR's newly organized ministry for confessions, the Mashikhat, was able to reclaim many of them. And it retained the archives until they were handed over to Soviet officials. Between 1920 and 1923, Subkhan Verdikhanov, the first head of the Azerbaijan Archive, arranged to transfer the ecclesiastical board archives into the Azerbaijan Central State Archive.

Today, historians have the opportunity to study this important source for investigations on colonial rule and the way in which the Muslims of the region responded to modernization. The Islamic Board Archives allow us to see how these institutions functioned, and consequently, the role of the ADR in preserving them is critical. There is no immediate threat to these archives, but because of their importance, it would be wonderful if the Azerbaijani government, the successor to the ADR, could provide additional resources to make further study of these archives possible.

Reference

Naidel, M.I., ed. (1958) *Tsentralny Gosudarstvenny Istorichesky Arkhiv Azerbajanskoy SSR*, putevoditel, Baku.

Notes

[1] ARHA, f. 291, l. 1, record 5188, p. 3.

[2] ARHA, f. 291, l. 1, record 5188, p. 9.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev tells visiting Czech President Václav Klaus that "Azerbaijan leads on the post-Soviet space in terms of per capita investment" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267816.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says in Bali that the Non-Aligned Movement which Azerbaijan has now joined will give "an additional platform" for advancing

Baku's position on the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict internationally (<http://news.day.az/politics/269888.html>).

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijani ambassador to Moscow, says that the joint declaration of the presidents of the Russian Federation, the United States and France is "very important," because "for the first time is established a definite time for results in the talks about the Nagorno-Karabakh problem." In other comments, Bulbuloglu says that "a special role in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict belongs to Russia and to [its] President Dmitry Medvedev" (<http://news.day.az/politics/270233.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

President Ilham Aliyev's amnesty of May 26 is praised by international organizations and "evaluated as an important step toward the protection of freedom of speech and information in correspondence with the course of the democratic development of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/270087.html>).

The presidents of the Russian Federation, the United States and France, the co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group call on the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia to "demonstrate political will and complete work on the Basic Principles (on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) in the course of the upcoming Armenian-Azerbaijani summit in June" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269656.html>).

Jerzy Buzek, the president of the European Parliament, says that that body "supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268540.html>). He adds that "the European Parliament conducts dialogue with Azerbaijan as an equal partner" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268634.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

May 31

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku "devotes great importance" to the meeting organized at the initiative of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and scheduled to take place in the last third of June between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/270344.html>).

May 29

President Ilham Aliyev receives General Saldyray Berk, the general in charge of instruction and doctrine for Turkish ground forces (<http://news.day.az/politics/270183.html>).

May 28

President Ilham Aliyev's amnesty of May 26 is praised by international organizations and "evaluated as an important step toward the protection of freedom of speech and information in correspondence with the course of the democratic development of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/270087.html>).

Azerbaijanis and other supporters of Azerbaijan both within the country and around the world mark the Day of the Republic, the anniversary of the formation of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic in 1918 (<http://news.day.az/politics/270014.html>).

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton greets the Azerbaijani people on the occasion of the Day of the Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/269975.html>).

May 27

President Ilham Aliyev says that Azerbaijan in the future "will keep on its efforts to isolate Armenia from all regional projects" until Armenia withdraws from Azerbaijani territory (<http://news.day.az/politics/269969.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Aleksandr Zhukov, the deputy prime minister of the Russian Federation and president of that country's Olympic Committee (<http://news.day.az/politics/269877.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev visits the monument to the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic on the eve of the Day of the Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/269785.html>).

Ecology and Natural Resources Minister Huseyngulu Bagirov says that agreement has already been reached between Azerbaijan and international organizations about the threat posed by Armenia's *Metsamor* atomic energy station (<http://news.day.az/politics/269831.html>).

Ecology and Natural Resources Minister Huseyngulu Bagirov says that there must be a moratorium for a minimum of 10 to 12 years on fishing for sturgeon in the Caspian (<http://news.day.az/society/269804.html>).

Culture Minister Abulfaz Garayev receives a British parliamentary delegation and discusses ways in which London can help Azerbaijan in the simplification of the visa regime between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/269957.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku "welcomes the declaration of the presidents of Russia, the US and France that was made in Deauville during the G-8 summit" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269870.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that "following the logic of the Deauville declaration of the presidents of the Minsk Group co-chair countries, Armenia must begin the withdrawal of its armed forces from the territory of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269825.html>).

Eldar Ismayilov, head of the Association of Banks of Azerbaijan, is elected president of the Central Eurasian Banking Federation (<http://news.day.az/economy/269796.html>).

Viktor Mereshkin, ataman of the Cossacks of Azerbaijan, says that despite Armenian claims, regular Cossack forces "never fought in Nagorno-Karabakh" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269790.html>).

US President Barak Obama greets President Ilham Aliyev on the occasion of the Day of the Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/269914.html>).

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov says that Moscow is convinced that "the chances for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have never been greater" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269876.html>).

May 26

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mark Field, president of the British-Azerbaijani Parliamentary Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/269685.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming Serbian ambassador, Zoran Vayovich (<http://news.day.az/politics/269684.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev recalls Maharram Aliyev as Azerbaijani ambassador to Dushanbe (<http://news.day.az/politics/269719.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Galib Israfilov as permanent representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations bodies in Vienna and to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (<http://news.day.az/politics/269718.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov receives General Khalif Mohammad Sani ar-Rumeisi, the chief of supply for the general staff of the armed forces of the United Arab Emirates (<http://news.day.az/politics/269601.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov meets in Rome with Franco Gabrielli, the head of the Italian Civil Defense Department, to discuss cooperation in responding to disasters (<http://news.day.az/society/269973.html>).

Communications and Information Technology Minister Ali Abbasov speaks to the International Trade Council in San Francisco (<http://news.day.az/politics/269524.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Makhmoud Mammadgulyev receives Ukrainian Ambassador Aleksandr Mishchenko who says that Kyiv wants to broaden cooperation with Azerbaijan in a variety of spheres (<http://news.day.az/economy/269547.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov takes part in Turkmen-Azerbaijani consultations in Ashgabat (<http://news.day.az/politics/269642.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that "responsibility for illegal settlement of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan lies with the official structures of Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269578.html>).

An explosion occurs near the building of the Azerbaijani consulate general in Istanbul, but there are no Azerbaijanis among the victims (<http://news.day.az/world/269544.html>).

Otto Hauser, honorary consul of Azerbaijan in Germany, says that "Azerbaijan will conduct Eurovision 2012 at a high level" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269556.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that reaction to events in Georgia show the double standards of "certain international organizations" in evaluating events in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/269729.html>).

Nizami Jafarov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "contemporary Azerbaijan has introduced into life the ideas of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269527.html>).

Sabir Rustamkhanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenians' attitude to Georgians is no better than their attitude to Azerbaijanis" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269390.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev greets President Ilham Aliyev on the Day of the Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/269658.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that the Deauville declaration of the three Minsk Group co-chair country presidents "underscores the importance of the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269725.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkish ambassador to Baku, greets the Azerbaijani people on the occasion of the Day of the Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/269722.html>).

Roland Kobia, EU representative in Baku, says that the European Union "completely" supports the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/269587.html>).

Roland Kobia, EU representative in Baku, says that according to the new European neighborhood policy, partner countries such as Azerbaijan have the chance to receive greater political and financial support from the EU if they reform (<http://news.day.az/politics/269586.html>).

Roland Kobia, EU representative in Baku, says that "the clear progress Azerbaijan has demonstrated in macro-economic policy and in the struggle with poverty" has been noted by the EU as have been "the achievements of Azerbaijan in the development of the energy sector, in the struggle with terrorism and criminal structures, and also on the question of gender equality" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269584.html>).

Afghanistan government officials complete their program of training at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (<http://news.day.az/politics/269661.html>).

The Azerbaijani and Turkish diasporas of the United States have called on the US Congress to end assistance to the Nagorno-Karabakh region occupied by Armenia and to reduce assistance to Armenia as well (<http://news.day.az/politics/269575.html>).

May 25

President Ilham Aliyev receives Asad Alam, the World Bank regional director for the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/269387.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov thanks the Non-Aligned Movement for agreeing to admit Azerbaijan to its ranks and says that Azerbaijan is "a reliable partner and a country which is playing a decisive role in the Caspian-Caucasus region as a strong and stable state" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269412.html>).

Industry and Energy Minister Natik Aliyev says that the AGRI pipeline project is making good progress (<http://news.day.az/economy/269407.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijan's consul general in Los Angeles, meets with the American Jewish Committee in San Francisco (<http://news.day.az/politics/269411.html>).

Azay Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenia's political life "interests" Azerbaijan "only to the extent" that it affects Yerevan's position on the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/269147.html>).

The European Union releases its "Renewed European Neighborhood Policy" which specifies that the EU is prepared to increase its involvement in the resolution of longstanding conflicts (<http://www.easternpartnership.org/community/debate/revised-european-neighbourhood-policy>; <http://news.day.az/politics/269545.html>).

The trade and transport committee of GUAM meets in Baku (<http://news.day.az/economy/269477.html>).

Hardijs Baumanis, Latvian ambassador to Baku, says that Riga intends to broaden its cooperation with the regions of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/269422.html>).

Teymuraz Sharashenidze, Georgian ambassador to Baku, says that the creation of a spiritual administration for Muslims in Georgia should not disturb Azerbaijan because it is "an NGO" and "this does not have any relation to religion. The structure concerned will be involved only in the improvement of the status of Muslims in Georgia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269410.html>).

May 24

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijani ambassador to Moscow, says that Baku is well advanced in its planning for the Eurovision 2012 competition to be held in the Azerbaijani capital (<http://news.day.az/culture/269160.html>).

Ambassador Khazar Ibrahim, permanent representative of Azerbaijan to NATO, says that cooperation between Baku and the alliance has "strengthened and become deeper in the years since 1994" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269238.html>).

Bakhtiyar Sadygov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "under Heydar Aliyev the work begun during the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was continued" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269254.html>).

Faradzh Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "achieving independence was for Azerbaijan a matter of honor" (<http://news.day.az/politics/269059.html>).

The Council of Heads of Governments of the Commonwealth of Independent States adopts Azerbaijani-prepared resolutions on cultural cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/269258.html>).

Audronius Azubalis, Lithuanian foreign minister and OSCE chairman-in-office, calls for the consistent development of relations between the European Union and the countries of the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/269180.html>).

Belorussian President Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulates President Ilham Aliyev on the Azerbaijani victory in Eurovision 2011 (<http://news.day.az/politics/269171.html>).

Catherine Ashton, the head of the EU diplomatic service, says that the European Union is concerned by the deadly incidents which have taken place in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh in recent days (<http://news.day.az/politics/269097.html>).

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Reza Rauf Sheibani says that Azerbaijan and Iran are creating a committee for political consultations (<http://news.day.az/politics/269214.html>).

May 23

President Ilham Aliyev receives Olzhas Suleymenov, Kazakhstan's permanent representative to UNESCO, and invests him with the Order of Friendship (<http://news.day.az/politics/269051.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Reza Rauf Sheibani (<http://news.day.az/politics/269004.html>).

The Azerbaijani embassy in Moscow protests the illegal visit by *Ekho Moskvy* journalists to the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/268909.html>).

Fazail Agamaly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia even at the level of the president is very concerned in recent years by the obvious achievements of Azerbaijan in the military sphere" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268845.html>).

Heydar al-Barrak, Iraq's ambassador to Baku, says that "after a certain period of stagnation," relations between Iraq and Azerbaijan "are successfully developing" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268898.html>).

Belorussian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Guryanov says that he anticipates active cooperation on investments between his country and Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/economy/269114.html>).

The Turkmenistan parliament adopts a law on the ratification of the cooperation accord on security on the Caspian Sea signed 18 November 2010 (<http://news.day.az/politics/268908.html>).

The *Our Home is Israel* fraction in the Knesseet says that it will deploy all possible resources to prevent the Israeli parliament from passing a resolution on 'the Armenian genocide' (<http://news.day.az/politics/268918.html>).

Aram Karapetan, the leader of Armenia's *New Times Party*, "does not exclude" the possibility of the renewal of war in Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/268942.html>).

May 22

Ambassador Akshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, says that Baku is offering its own candidacy in the upcoming elections to the Security Council (<http://news.day.az/politics/268781.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, the sheikh-ul-Islam and head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, meets with Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov in Grozny (<http://news.day.az/society/268778.html>).

Turkish Ambassador Hulusi Kılıç says that "Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood is eternal" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268780.html>).

May 21

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the membership of the joint Azerbaijani-Iraqi commission on trade and cooperation in a variety of sectors (<http://news.day.az/politics/268645.html>).

The European Commission says it plans to carry out a project for the transformation of the justice system in Azerbaijan over the next three years (<http://news.day.az/politics/268741.html>).

May 20

President Ilham Aliyev receives Jerzy Buzek, the president of the European Parliament (<http://news.day.az/politics/268620.html>).

Hafiz Pashayev, deputy foreign minister and rector of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, says that "the development of ADA is a symbolic indicator of the general development of the country and the transformation of Azerbaijan into a regional leader" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268635.html>).

Milli Majlis Speaker Oktay Asadov tells Europarliament president Jerzy Buzek that he is concerned about that body's adoption of a resolution about Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/268523.html>).

Maharram Aliyev, Azerbaijani ambassador to Dushanbe, presents Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmon with the Order of the Crescent and the Star of the International committee for the Struggle Against Terrorism, Drug Trafficking and Ecological Crimes (<http://news.day.az/politics/268532.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that "the brotherhood between Turkey and Azerbaijan is eternal" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268598.html>).

Adel Mohammad Adaileh, Jordan's ambassador to Baku, says that Amman plans to purchase oil and gas from Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/economy/268552.html>).

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton tells her Armenian counterpart Edvard Nalbandyan that Washington, as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, will continue its support for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/268488.html>).

Jerzy Buzek, the president of the European Parliament, says that that body "supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268540.html>). He adds that "the European Parliament conducts dialogue with Azerbaijan as an equal partner" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268634.html>).

Amirkul Azimov, the secretary of the Tajikistan Security Council, says that the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty and other structures on the former Soviet space must not allow a deterioration of the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/268626.html>).

Daghestani President Magomedislam Magomedov tells Russian Orthodox Bishop Aleksandr of Baku and Azerbaijan that "Azerbaijan is an important neighbor for Daghestan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268612.html>).

May 19

President Ilham Aliyev receives Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (<http://news.day.az/politics/268399.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov says that his ministry is ready to "completely take on itself projects for the modernization of the armed forces" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268320.html>).

Dashgyn Shikarov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Pakistan, says that Baku intends to expand its economic relations with Pakistan as well as its political ones (<http://news.day.az/politics/268305.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "the links of Azerbaijan and Russia is multi-sided and multi-levelled" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268367.html>).

Bakhtiyar Sadykhov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says is that "Armenia cannot resolve its internal and external problems" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268199.html>).

Belorussian President Aleksandr Lukashenko tells visiting Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Yagub Eyubov that "the basis of our relations is among other things in our good feelings toward one another" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268371.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul congratulates President Ilham Aliyev on the victory of Azerbaijan in the Eurovision 2011 contest (<http://news.day.az/politics/268400.html>).

Nikolay Bordyuzha, the secretary general of the Council of Collective Security of the Member States of the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty, says that

the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be achieved "exclusively by peaceful means" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268284.html>).

Jerzy Buzek, the president of the European Parliament, says the extent of involvement of the partner countries in the European Eastern Partnership is "insufficient" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268398.html>).

Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, says that his organization does not operate "in Nagorno-Karabakh or the adjoining regions" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268381.html>).

Georgia's Regional Development & Infrastructure Minister Ramaz Nikolaishvili says that Azerbaijan will provide Georgia with an additional 575 million US dollars for the construction of the Georgian section of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad (<http://news.day.az/economy/268440.html>).

Kyrgyzstan Deputy Foreign Minister Nurlan Aytmurzayev says that Bishkek is discussing the opening of an embassy in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/268339.html>).

US Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon says that "the time has come" to complete work and confirm the basic principles for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict and to begin work on a peace accord (<http://news.day.az/politics/268259.html>).

Sergey Vinokurov, head of the administration for inter-religion and cultural ties with foreign countries in the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, says that "on Russia and Azerbaijan depends to a large degree the development of integration processes in the Caspian region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268334.html>).

A bilateral forum on "Russia and Azerbaijan: Toward New Horizons of Inter-Regional Cooperation" takes place in Astrakhan (<http://news.day.az/politics/268302.html>).

Dag Sigurdson has been named the new representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/268314.html>).

May 18

President Ilham Aliyev receives Gerhard Roiss, CEO of the Austrian company OMV (<http://news.day.az/politics/268160.html>).

Ramiz Rzayev, the chairman of the Azerbaijani Supreme Court, receives Eric Metrpierre, chief of service for European and International affairs at the French ministry of justice and liberties, to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/268147.html>).

Transportation Minister Ziya Mammadov receives his Georgian counterpart Ramaz Nikolashvili to discuss expanding cooperation (<http://news.day.az/economy/268169.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "the foundations for contemporary relations of Azerbaijan and Russia have been laid down by Presidents Ilham Aliyev and Dmitry Medvedev" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268217.html>).

Hidayat Orujov, the head of the State Committee for Work with Religious Structures, tells the special representative of the Georgian Patriarch, Bishop Arkady Khachidze, that "unlike Georgians living in Azerbaijan, [Azerbaijanis] living in Georgia are encountering serious problems in the religious sphere" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268172.html>).

Zhalya Aliyeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that information about the mistreatment of up to 80 percent of Armenian children is unfortunately "the pure truth" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267962.html>).

Azerbaijan has prepared proposals for the extension of Russia's lease on the Gabala radar site beyond January 2012 (<http://news.day.az/politics/268070.html>).

The Azerbaijani army conducts exercises near the cease-fire line (<http://news.day.az/politics/268115.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev sends a message of greeting at the Astrakhan forum on cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/268036.html>).

Herbert Quelle, German ambassador to Baku, sends congratulations to the Azerbaijanis who won the Eurovision 2011 competition (<http://news.day.az/politics/267982.html>).

Serbian President Boris Tadic names Zoran Vayovich Serbia's ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/268098.html>).

Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, says that "Azerbaijan has devoted a great deal of effort to provide a worthy life for forced resettlers" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268219.html>).

Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, says that "Azerbaijan must say its weighty word" regarding the defense of refugees and internally displaced persons around the world (<http://news.day.az/politics/268025.html>).

Roland Kobia, EU chief representative in Baku, announces that the European Union is increasing its financial assistance to Azerbaijan as of 2012 (<http://news.day.az/economy/268010.html>).

Roland Kobia, the EU chief representative in Baku, says that talks about easing the visa regime between Azerbaijan and the European Union will begin in the near future (<http://news.day.az/politics/268030.html>).

Ali Bilge Cankorel completes his assignment as head of the OSCE office in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/268094.html>).

May 17

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva says that "today the visiting card of Azerbaijan is [its] rich cultural heritage" (<http://news.day.az/politics/268044.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov visits the Dutch infrastructure and the environment minister Schultz van Haegen-Maas Geesteranus to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/society/268806.html>).

The Foreign Ministry warns Azerbaijanis against travel to Syria (<http://news.day.az/politics/267883.html>).

The Milli Majlis adopts changes in the law governing international visitors in order to make the rules governing visas simpler (<http://news.day.az/politics/267844.html>).

Jerzy Buzek, the president of the European Parliament, says that "we do not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent unit" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267930.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russian ambassador to Baku, says that Azerbaijan has a major role to play in space exploration (<http://news.day.az/politics/267823.html>).

May 16

President Ilham Aliyev receives Georgian Defense Minister Bachana Akhalaya (<http://news.day.az/politics/267738.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Georgian Regional Development and Infrastructure Minister Ramaz Nikolashvili (<http://news.day.az/politics/267735.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the participants in the Baku conference of the leaders of the Higher Religious Council of the Peoples of the Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/267757.html>).

Vice Prime Minister Elchin Efendiyev says that the victory at the Eurovision competition is "propaganda for Azerbaijani culture and an indicator of the progress of our country" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267585.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, warns Armenia that it faces "bad consequences" if it continues to behave unconstructively and to drag out talks about Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/267718.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Armenian officials who claim that Nagorno-Karabakh was once part of Armenia are betraying their historical ignorance. "Neither Nagorno-Karabakh nor Nakhchivan ever were part of Armenia since Armenia as such did not exist" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267732.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov calls on Yerevan to stop dragging out the negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/267687.html>).

Deputy Communications and Information Technology Minister Iltimaz Mammadov discusses cooperation on space research with his Israeli counterpart Eden Bar-Dal (<http://news.day.az/economy/267631.html>).

Belorussian President Aleksandr Lukashenko confirms a series of accords with Azerbaijan concerning negotiations for an agreement on cooperation against the theft of cultural monuments (<http://news.day.az/politics/267868.html>).

Michael Lavon Lotem, Israeli ambassador to Baku, congratulates the Azerbaijani people on their victory at Eurovision 2011 (<http://news.day.az/politics/267739.html>).

Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Nino Kalandadze says that Tbilisi has full confidence in Georgia's ambassador to Baku, Teymuraz Sharashenidze, despite complaints against him from some ethnic Georgians living in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/267636.html>).

Roland Kobia, EU chief representative to Baku, congratulates Azerbaijan on the victory of Eldar and Nigar in the Eurovision 2011 competition (<http://news.day.az/politics/267637.html>).

The Iranian foreign ministry says that there has been no change in Tehran's position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/267523.html>).

Note to Readers

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