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In this issue:

- Paul Goble, "Yerevan Again Ready to Play 'Talysh Card'"
- Parvin Ahanchi, "Witnesses and 'Memorizers' in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict"
- Shahla Sultanova, "Baku Media Coverage of Islamic Extremism Reinforces Azerbaijani Secularism"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

YEREVAN AGAIN READY TO PLAY 'TALYSH CARD'

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Recent statements by Armenian politicians about the possibility of using violence to "liberate" Armenian-populated districts in southern Georgia have attracted international attention, but Yerevan's willingness to again try to play "the Talysh card" against Azerbaijan may be even more significant not only because it could presage revived interest in Talysh autonomy or more ominously new terrorist acts in Azerbaijan, but also because, according to one prominent Baku journalist, this Armenian willingness may be part of a broader Russian effort to influence the choice of gas pipeline routes out of the Caspian basin.

In the November 16 issue of *Ekho*, Nurani reports that Yerevan hosted what it called "the Second International Conference on Talysh Studies." The meeting was organized by the Yerevan center *Modus Vivendi*, the Caucasian center of Iranian Studies, also in Yerevan, and ARMACAD, the Armenian Association of Academic Cooperation and Support. The sponsor was the Hyksos Foundation. [1]

While such an enterprise might seem of only academic interest, Nurani continues, the real purpose of this new Armenian interest in the Talysh minority in Azerbaijan is made clear by the statement of Ara Papyan, the president of the Modus Vivendi Center. He suggested that the Talysh "particularly in Azerbaijan are subject to oppression and discrimination. And while we speak out for the rights of the Armenian people, then naturally it is our moral duty to support such peoples in their efforts to preserve national identity and the development of their culture. If various peoples preserve their identity in Azerbaijan, then they will in this way help maintain the regional balance, something which is very profitable for us."

In short, the *Ekho* journalist writes, Yerevan is once again backing the Talysh not so much in order to support this minority group, but rather to support Armenians. And that goal in turn helps to explain why the Yerevan session, although billed as "international," was largely limited to Armenians and to those Talysh like Fahraddin Abbaszade, who believe that Armenian meetings can help them "restore Talysh statehood and resolve the problems of all the indigenous peoples of the South Caucasus."

Nurani said that it was unclear whether Alikram Humbatov, who in 1993 proclaimed the Talysh-Mugan Republic and who now lives in exile in the Netherlands, had come, but the leaders of the Talysh community in Azerbaijan, a group whose numbers are disputed—just under 80,000 people declared themselves Talysh in the 1999 Azerbaijani census, but many Talysh activists and scholars suggest the real number is larger—did not attend. Hilal Mammadov, the head of the Talysh Cultural Center in Azerbaijan, said he would not attend, because "there is no sense in going to a conference in the capital of a country, which occupies 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan."

Armenia, a state where the Talysh have never lived in significant numbers, is interested in "the Talysh question" now, Nurani says, "exclusively out of hatred to Azerbaijan," "against which they try to use all means, both permissible and not." As a result of this, there has now been "a conference on Talysh studies." That would be understandable perhaps, but as Nurani suggests, the real question is another: will the activity of Yerevan in 'the Talysh question' be limited exclusively to conferences or will it involve something far more dangerous?

Unfortunately, as Nurani points out, there is a precedent for thinking that the worst is possible. On March 19, 1994, and on July 3, 1994, terrorists set off explosions in the Baku metro, which caused 27 lives and left 91 people injured. It turned out, the journalist continues, that "both explosions were committed by militants of Sadval, the Lazgi separatist group, who had been recruited by the special services of Armenia and passed through training on its territory. The executor of the first explosion was Oqtay Gurbanov, who died in the course of the terrorist act; that of the second was Azar Aslanov, who then was tried and convicted in a Baku court.

According to Nurani, "if things have changed in Armenia since the mid-1990s, then they have done so only to the worse," because "those who [at that time] planned

and prepared terrorist acts against Azerbaijan 'in the field,' now occupy extremely high posts. And, as is well known, there are no former terrorists." There is yet another reason for concern, the journalist says: terrorist acts are often conducted by those who know, as Armenian leaders do now, that they lack the strength to win in any other way. Consequently, "there is not and cannot be any certainty" that Yerevan "will not try again to use terrorist methods against Azerbaijan" through the recruitment and use of marginal figures among the Talysh, a practice that could give Armenia much-needed deniability.

But yet another question arises, Nurani says. Given the extent of Russian influence and even control over Armenia, one is required to ask "how independent is Armenia regarding such decisions?" The Russian Federation has intensified its "diplomatic activity along the Nabucco route" even though European demand for gas is so great that there is room for all. Thus, there is "no doubt" that "Moscow needs not only and not so much successful business as the opportunity to use the supply of oil and gas as a means of political pressure. And in such a situation, efforts to 'press' Azerbaijan, whose independent energy policy is radically changing the distribution of forces, cannot be excluded either."

Thus it may be, the Baku journalist concludes, that "not just Yerevan will try to play 'the Talysh card,'" but one thing is certain: "the interests of the Talysh will be the last thing their 'defenders' will consider."

Notes

[1] See <http://echo-az.com/index.php?aid=16942> (accessed 13 December 2011).

WITNESSES AND 'MEMORIZERS' IN THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

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The children of internally displaced persons who witnessed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict first-hand are more radical in their assessment of Armenians and the prospects for a settlement than their parents, according to both a set of oral histories gathered from both groups and survey research. That trend suggests that unless the conflict is resolved soon, the situation could become truly intractable.

The goal of my research is to study relationships between collective memory and individual, the complexities of what is called collective memory, as well as to examine the relationship between memory and history in the Karabakh case. I argue that the role of both individual and collective memory of the IDPs is to transmit information from the past to the present, to transmit notions of responsibility, as well as provide a perspective to discuss and imagine ways for peaceful reconciliation and transformation of the conflict, or alternatively, a potential

framework for imagining further armed violence.

This research is ongoing, but here I want to focus on the question of relationship between the witnesses and those who have learned from them, whom I call “the memorizers,” in forming the collective portrait of the Karabakh communal memory. Of course, looking at the Armenian-Azerbaijani ethnic conflict from the historical perspective, the categories of the “witness” and the “memorizer” are dynamic. Those who witnessed the Karabakh events at the end of the 1980s grew up in the 20th century as memorizers of the events that happened in early twentieth century. They know about the events of the ethnic conflicts of 1905 and 1918 through what their parents and grandparents told them as witnesses.

Moreover, this division continues. Though a cease-fire has been declared, people are still dying on the front lines. The young memorizers are “witnessing” the death of the civilians and especially the innocent children on the frontline. These violent events of the present “cease-fire” period form youth memorizers into actual witnesses of the consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and war that happened a couple decades ago. Now we have another case, where children are becoming witnesses of a “frozen,” yet still bloody, conflict.

The Memorizers’ memory about the conflict and war in Karabakh is molded by their impressions from conversations with the elderly, from internet sources, TV, radio, books and newspapers, and, of course, via the schools. So what they will memorize and how their memory will be formed depends on specific information they receive and communicate. There is, however, one thing in common for all the memorizers: they have never experienced living peacefully with the Armenians.

One of the most important things I sought to discover was whether the witnesses and the memorizers acknowledged differences among Armenians. I found that a few people believed that not all of the Armenians are guilty of fanning the flames of war. Those respondents were convinced that they would be able to live together again in the Karabakh as neighbors.

Occasionally, too, I came across respondents who did not consider all Armenians to be the same. But most as a result of twenty years of conflict, war, and separation have created strongly held confrontational dispositions. The key fact, however, is this: Those who had some positive feelings about the Armenians were found only among the elderly witnesses; the younger memorizers have only negative stories about them. That is not surprising: The memorizers are witnessing their parents’ problem in adaptation to the new environment where they are compelled to live as a consequence of the conflict. In their daily lives, they are experiencing not having citizenship in the place where they reside. All difficulties of the adaptation period are seen as the result of the conflict and war. So from the early period of their lives they are forming negative impressions of these events and this will shape their imagination and opinion. The predominant and consistent focus coming from our discussions is their desire and intention to return to their homeland.

Both interviews and surveys showed that the children of those who had direct experience with the conflict know precisely where their families came from and the exact date on which their parents became IDPs. They hold the precise information about parents fleeing the Karabakh cities, villages related to the beginning of the conflict in the Karabakh up to the war time period (1988—1993). They identified precisely the region, city and villages where the family left and became IDP. Eighty

percent of the respondents' parents left Shusha and the rest of them were fleeing from different places of the Karabakh.

One of the key questions to understanding the IDPs' adaptation and psychological condition relates to their interaction with the local population. In most cases, the local people were sympathetic toward the IDPs. This sentiment has been expressed by half of the children, while 28% of them avoided the question. Seven percent of the children recalled cases when local people did not understand that they had been forced to leave their homes and were thus rude to them. They also said some local people blamed them for leaving Karabakh and called them refugees and were indifferent to their fate. As a result, 67 percent of them consider Baku only a temporary residence, while 21% noted they feel they are ordinary Baku citizens and 12 % of the children said that they feel they are IDPs.

There are two small groups whose daily social life is different from the majority of children. One, (9%) prefer to socialize only with other children from Karabakh. The second group (12 percent) consists of children who were compelled to socialize only with children from the local communities having been separated from the Karabakh children living in the area. More than three out of four of the sample said they played with both IDP children and local people.

The IDP children diverge concerning Armenians. About half had a positive view of children of the other nationality, but not all Azerbaijani IDPs are ready to live in peace with Armenian children given the depth of the conflict over twenty years, especially since they have no current ties or even contacts with Armenian children. What is striking is that the overwhelming majority (86%) of the children blame the Russian Army and ultra-nationalistic Armenian groups for the flare-up of the events in Karabakh. That the children blamed "ultra-nationalists" among the Armenians suggests that they believe there are other Armenians and that opens the possibility to a peaceful settlement with the latter.

Eighty-six percent of the children said that they regularly discuss the peace process, most with their parents, teachers and friends directly, but in five percent of the cases via Facebook. In these discussions, 51 percent consider the military option, while 49 percent favor negotiations.

Some respondents also noted that, in their experience, their Armenian neighbors were very sorry that the war had come and that the Azerbaijanis felt compelled to flee. But these same people noted that other Armenians had been actively involved in preparing for the violence, working with special organizations from abroad for "the sake of greater Armenia." Such people, respondents said, showed themselves very early in the conflict by providing Armenian forces with information about the strategic points in Azerbaijani cities. As far as a future in which Armenians and Azerbaijanis would live together again is concerned, most were prepared to live with their former neighbors, but not with other Armenians who have moved in since the war began.

The memorizers' opinion largely excludes the possibility of living together with the Armenians in Karabakh again. My interviews and survey show that the elderly are more tolerant about living together with their former neighbors in the Karabakh. As I have noted, the memorizers never had the experience of living peacefully with the Armenians. Undoubtedly, the children's perspectives have been formed by information about the killing of innocent children, women and the elderly by the

Armenian ultra nationalists. Children were "witnessing" the information on TV, press and the Internet about the killing of children on the frontline villages.

As a result, few of the children are ready to interact with their Armenian counterparts, a situation their elders need to counter lest the conflict become truly intractable. Moreover, the witnesses also need to support the peaceful resolution the Karabakh conflict in their discussions with their children, an attitude that will make reconciliation possible. For these reasons, older people can and must play a significant role in bringing peace to the region and in helping the children of Karabakh to build a joint future.

BAKU MEDIA COVERAGE OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM REINFORCES AZERBAIJANI SECULARISM

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Although part of the Islamic world for more than a millennium, Azerbaijanis, two-thirds of whom are traditionally Shia and one-third Sunni, are first and foremost secular and tolerant of representatives of other religious trends. Those values rooted in their own history have inoculated them against extremist groups who have sought to penetrate Azerbaijan over the last two decades, and such feelings and commitments have only been strengthened by the coverage of Wahhabism in the Baku media. But so sweeping has been the denunciation of Wahhabist groups in the Baku media and so unrestricted has criticism of them been in these outlets that there may be a danger that this criticism of Islamist extremists verges on criticism of Islam itself, something that could generate a backlash.

A content analysis of articles referring to Wahhabism in the online media of Azerbaijan suggests that these media have been so sweeping in their condemnation of Wahhabism as a criminal trend and in their lack of a clear definition of what Wahhabism is and what it is not that such a backlash may already be happening. To the extent that is the case, Azerbaijani Muslims who themselves oppose Wahhabist ideas and Islamist extremism may find themselves victimized by these media portrayals of what is after all a very limited trend within the Islamic community.

In recent years, the Azerbaijani media have viewed Islam with suspicion, largely because these outlets have discussed Islam only in terms of the explosion at the Abu-Bakr mosque, attacks on the US embassy in Baku, and militant activism in the North. In the absence of other coverage, such treatment tends to present all Muslims in an unfavorable light. That is all the more so because most Azerbaijanis are committed secularists and know relatively little about Islam. During Soviet times, Islamic practice was actively discouraged, but after 1991, Muslim missionaries and activists entered Azerbaijan from Turkey, Iran and the Arab countries.

The Shia missionaries presented ideas that were at least familiar to many Azerbaijanis, but those from Sunni traditions were a surprise to most. Perhaps the most unusual among these new entrants was Salafism, whose most extreme form is

Wahhabism. Called “the bearded ones” by many Azerbaijanis, adherents of this trend quickly acquired an extremely negative reputation in the country, a reputation exacerbated by the conflict around the Abu-Bakr mosque and especially by the appearance of Chechen refugees in its congregation. Not surprisingly, there has been widespread support for the government’s restrictions on the activities of this particular community. Scholars like Sofie Bedford (2004) and Svante Cornell (2006) have documented such attitudes, as well as official actions against Wahhabist groups there and elsewhere in the country.

The conclusions presented below about the media’s role in intensifying such attitudes are based on an examination of articles in four outlets of the online media in Azerbaijan—including the *Bizim Yol* and *525-ci qazet* newspapers, as well as the APA (Azerbaijan Press Agency) and *Trend* news agencies, over the period of 2007 to 2010. Having identified articles about Wahhabism, the author asked how has Azerbaijani media portrayed certain religious people and how was the image of Wahhabis created, and what made the religious portrayal of Wahhabis criminal?

What this examination found was that the overwhelming majority of articles were more negative than positive with terms like “terror” and “radical” used frequently in connection with Wahhabism, even though few of the stories gave any definition of Wahhabism or how it is related to and viewed by other trends in the Muslim umma. Specifically, 82 percent of the articles mentioning Wahhabis were news stories, while 18 percent were identified as analyses, with the stories ranging in length from 80 to 700 words. In 80 percent of the stories, the word “Wahhabi” was used only once, but in 88 percent of these, this trend was criticized or presented in a negative light.

Significantly, none of these stories includes any interview with or statement by a Wahhabi, and only a single article provides even a limited definition of this trend. But more than 80 percent of the stories suggested that Wahhabis were criminals and threats to the security of the government and people of Azerbaijan. Indeed, slightly more than one in five of the articles simply equated Wahhabism with radical Islam, a trend that in Azerbaijan is equated with terrorism and crime. And two out of every five articles cited officials as the source of this judgment.

The representation of Wahhabism by the Azerbaijani media is similar to the way in which that trend is presented in the Russian Federation and other former Soviet republics, but the intensity of the criticism of Wahhabism in the Azerbaijani media is striking and thus could prove counterproductive, either by causing some people to want to examine the trend more closely or by leading others to view all Muslims as potential threats.

References

Bedford, Sofie (2004) *Islamic Activism in Azerbaijan: Repression and Mobilization in a Post-Soviet Context*, Stockholm Studies in Politics 129, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev telephones Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to congratulate him on the victory of *United Russia* in the Russian parliamentary elections (<http://news.day.az/politics/302734.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Azerbaijan is ready and able to supply the European market with large amounts of natural gas and is conducting talks with the European Union on pipeline routes (<http://news.day.az/economy/303273.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku hopes for a peaceful resolution of all problems connected with the nuclear program of Iran and that "the territory of Azerbaijan will never be used as a place *des armes*" against Tehran (<http://news.day.az/politics/303756.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and French Minister for European Affairs Jean Léonetti, together with Elmar Mammadyarov and Edvard Nalbandyan, the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia, issue a joint statement in Vilnius on the importance of achieving a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/302877.html>).

Grigol Vashadze, Georgia's foreign minister, says that all the member states of GUAM confirm that "rumors about its premature end are baseless" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303963.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that "the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by military means is impossible, but at the same time the current status quo is unacceptable" (<http://news.day.az/politics/304391.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

15 December

President Ilham Aliyev is awarded an honorary diploma by the Romania-based International Foundation for Cooperation and Partnership in the Caspian-Black Sea Region (<http://news.day.az/politics/304643.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Rafael Barak, state secretary of the Israeli foreign ministry, and tells him that Baku intends to continue its political dialogue with Israel (<http://news.day.az/politics/304550.html>).

National Security Minister Eldar Makhmoudov receives Gela Bezhuashvili, head of the Georgian Intelligence Service, and the two agree to broaden cooperation between their respective institutions (<http://news.day.az/politics/304579.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov says that weapons produced in Azerbaijan may soon be sold to Arab countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/304572.html>).

Transportation Minister Ziya Mammadov and Finance Minister Samir Sharifov sign an agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development that will extend 750 million US dollars to Baku for the construction of a major transportation project (<http://news.day.az/economy/304566.html>).

Ramiz Mehdiyev, head of the Presidential Administration, has his book *Azerbaijan: Demands of the Period of Globalization, Lessons of the Past, Realities of Today and Prospects for the Future* published in Farsi in Iran (<http://news.day.az/politics/304600.html>).

Ombudsman Elmira Suleymanova receives Peter Bateman, Britain's ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/society/304622.html>).

Aflatun Amashev, head of the Council for the Press of Azerbaijan, receives his German counterpart DAPD director Alexander Todosiychuk to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/society/304583.html>).

The State Border Service announces that it has blocked two attempts to smuggle drugs from Iran into Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/society/304587.html>).

The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) announces that Russia's Gazprom intends to increase its purchases of Azerbaijani gas by 50 percent in 2012 (<http://news.day.az/economy/304636.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, sheikh-ul-Islam and head of the Board of Muslims of the Caucasus, says that "Nagorno-Karabakh is the center of terror in the region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/304614.html>).

14 December

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Chzhan Yannyan, outgoing Chinese ambassador to Baku, on the occasion of the latter's completion of his assignment in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/304368.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Paulo Antonio Pereira, Brazil's ambassador to Baku, who declares Brazil supports the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of international norms and principles and the resolutions and decisions taken by international organizations (<http://news.day.az/politics/304335.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Anatoly Antonov, Russia's deputy defense minister, to discuss Russia's future renting of the Gabala radar station (<http://news.day.az/politics/304377.html>).

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Moscow, says that "it is important that the young people of the CIS learn to understand one another"

(<http://news.day.az/politics/304405.html>).

Elkhan Gahramanov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, invites Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan, UAE deputy prime minister, to visit Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/304332.html>).

Rovshan Rzayev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Yerevan "blocks the dialogue of the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of Karabakh" (<http://news.day.az/politics/304323.html>).

Farhad Badalbayli, a member of the Azerbaijan Community of Nagorno-Karabakh Region of the Azerbaijan Republic, says that his group will continue to call for meetings with the Armenian community there either in Moscow or in another location (<http://news.day.az/politics/304357.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that "Azerbaijan respects the positions of the international community relative to Iran" (<http://news.day.az/politics/304313.html>).

Sergey Lebedev, executive secretary of the CIS, says that "the Karabakh conflict is our common misfortune" (<http://www.news.day.az/politics/304304.html>).

Tehran proposes that the Caspian countries create special joint detachments to prevent illegal fishing there (<http://news.day.az/society/304393.html>).

13 December

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that Armenia is guilty of hypocrisy in its statements about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/304186.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "a love for Heydar Aliyev lives in the hearts of the peoples of the Turkic world" (<http://news.day.az/politics/304108.html>).

Elkhan Gahramanov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, says that talks between the UAE and Azerbaijan on the creation of a business council are near completion (<http://news.day.az/economy/304177.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia has practically lost its independence" and that "sooner or later" it "will have to change its position and look not to the past, but to the future" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303990.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is guilty of a lack of objectivity in her comments about Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/304139.html>).

The Russian defense ministry says that talks between Russia and Azerbaijan on the final resolution of questions connected with the extension of Moscow's rent of the Gabala radar station are beginning (<http://news.day.az/politics/304062.html>).

Carlos Jimenez Macias, a Mexican senator, says that Azerbaijan and Mexico intend to broaden their cooperation in the oil and trade sectors

(<http://news.day.az/economy/304070.html>).

The Baku office of the OSCE releases an Azerbaijani-language version of the book *A Guide to Human Rights and the Basic Freedoms of Military Personnel* (<http://news.day.az/society/304090.html>).

12 December

President Ilham Aliyev leads the Azerbaijani nation and the international community in marking the eighth anniversary of the death of his father, former President Heydar Aliyev (<http://news.day.az/politics/303824.html> and <http://news.day.az/politics/303875.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives William Fraser III, head of the United States Transportation Command (<http://news.day.az/politics/303983.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Mehmet Emin Alpman, chief of the Main Planning Administration of the Turkish General Staff (<http://news.day.az/politics/303968.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov receives Vladimir Kuvshinov, deputy secretary general of the International Organization of Civil Defense (<http://news.day.az/society/303928.html>).

Ogtay Asadov, speaker of the Milli Majlis, and Magomedsultan Magomedov, head of the National Council of Daghestan, finalize discussion on a cooperation agreement during a meeting in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/303872.html>).

Musa Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "all-national leader Heydar Aliyev marked out the path of development of Azerbaijan, and President Ilham Aliyev is continuing his plan with honor" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303881.html>).

Bayram Safarov, head of the Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh, says that his group "intends to continue meetings with the Armenian community" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303857.html>).

The State Maritime Administration thanks the maritime rescue center in Astrakhan for participating in the rescue of Azerbaijani fishermen (<http://news.day.az/society/303884.html>).

Leyla Aliyeva, the vice president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, tells a Moscow meeting on the eighth anniversary of the death of Heydar Aliyev that the former Azerbaijani leader was "a great politician who was known and reckoned with by the entire world" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303997.html>).

Grigol Vashadze, Georgia's foreign minister, says that all the member states of GUAM confirm that "rumors about its premature end are baseless" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303963.html>).

Egemen Bagis, Turkey's minister for relations with the European Union, says that Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's call for Ankara to revise its position on "the Armenian genocide" shows his failure to understand the situation (<http://news.day.az/turkey/303936.html>).

11 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives Carlos Jimenez Macias, a Mexican senator (<http://news.day.az/politics/303774.html>).

The Kyrgyz Foundation for the Support of the Policy of Turkic Language Countries and the Azerbaijani company *Femina* publish in Bishkek in Russian the third volume of the book *President Ilham Aliyev* (<http://news.day.az/politics/303783.html>).

Anastasia Aleksandrova, supervisor of the World Bank program for the development of social protections in Azerbaijan, visits Baku (<http://news.day.az/economy/303730.html>).

10 December

The Foreign Ministry says that Lebanon has always supported the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the resolutions adopted by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which condemn Armenian aggression and support the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/303658.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that statements by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan that there is no religious basis for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are designed to confuse the international community and to imply that Azerbaijan has made religion a factor, something Baku has not done (<http://news.day.az/politics/303649.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that the refusal of the representatives of the Armenian community to meet with the Azerbaijani community there is "directed at breaking up talks on the resolution of the conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303639.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's recent criticism of Azerbaijan reflects "double standards in the foreign policy of the United States" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303709.html>).

Murad Najafbayli, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Bern, says that "Azerbaijan has become the leading power of the region" over the last 20 years (<http://news.day.az/politics/303660.html>).

9 December

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that "Armenia always seeks the occasion for dragging out the negotiation process" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303571.html>).

Vilayat Guliyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Budapest, hosts a conference on the eighth anniversary of the death of former President Heydar Aliyev (<http://news.day.az/politics/303485.html>).

The State Migration Service says that during the first 11 months of 2011, 48,250 foreigners applied for residence permits in Azerbaijan, of whom approximately 38

percent were from Turkey, 11 percent from Russia, and 10 percent from Georgia (<http://news.day.az/society/303347.html>).

Eldar Makhmoudov, head of the State Commission on the Affairs of Prisoners of War, Hostages and Those Missing in Action, says that the lack of resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict means that the problems of prisoners and hostages continue to generate concern (<http://news.day.az/politics/303574.html>).

The Center for Strategic Research of the Presidential Administration launches a new international academic journal *Caucasus International* (<http://news.day.az/politics/303578.html>).

The Joint Working Group for Strengthening International Standards in the Sphere of Human Rights says that "regrettably" the latest report of Amnesty International about Azerbaijan reflects the desire of that group's authors that "the processes which took place in the Arab countries since the beginning of 2011 will be repeated in Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303543.html>).

Zmaga Jelencic Plementi, a member of the Slovenian parliament, says that *Amnesty International's* report on Azerbaijan "reflects the distorted and unjust position" of that group (<http://news.day.az/politics/303500.html>).

8 December

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Azerbaijan is ready and able to supply the European market with large amounts of natural gas and is conducting talks with the European Union on pipeline routes (<http://news.day.az/economy/303273.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov calls on ISAF to increase its efforts to avoid losses among the civilian population in Afghanistan (<http://news.day.az/politics/303357.html>).

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev and his Swiss counterpart Erich Martin sign a cooperation accord at the conclusion of the fifth session of the joint inter-governmental commission on trade and economic cooperation (<http://news.day.az/economy/303268.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Makhmoud Mammadguliyev says that Azerbaijan hopes to sign an agreement with the European Union on the simplification of visa rules (<http://news.day.az/politics/303361.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov says that Azerbaijan and Russia will hold talks on extending the existing contract on Russia's operation of the Gabala radar station (<http://news.day.az/politics/303257.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that members of the OSCE Minsk Group must stop applying double standards on the question of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/303366.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Baku considers the proposals of the three co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group to be those of that group and not those of only

one of those states (<http://news.day.az/politics/303304.html>).

Vilayat Guliyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Budapest, supported by the State Committee for Work with the Diaspora, opens a five-day conference on "Azerbaijan-Hungary: A Dialogue of Cultures" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303274.html>).

The Culture and Tourism Ministry announces plans to create a unified information base and website on Caucasian Albania (<http://news.day.az/society/303363.html>).

Maleyka Abbaszade, chairman of the State Commission on Student Admissions, says that neighboring countries, including Russia and Ukraine, "are accepting Azerbaijani students without corresponding examinations ... as a result of demographic problems" that have left many vacant places in their academic institutions (<http://news.day.az/society/303297.html>).

Seymur Orujov, head of the youth section of the *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, says that his party "has been transformed into a major political force not only in Azerbaijan, but in the region as well" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303312.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, tells 44 new Peace Corps volunteers coming to Baku to bring American values to Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/303335.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that "Azerbaijan is a very important partner and ally of the US and NATO for the delivery of supplies to Afghanistan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303275.html>).

7 December

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev says that Baku has spent 4.6 billion US dollars for the resolution of the social problems of refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/economy/303143.html>).

Bahar Muradova, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that "the latest declaration of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs made in Vilnius shows the direction in which work will be conducted in 2012," but that the statement "by itself is not a turning point in the resolution of the conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303060.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Azerbaijani diplomacy has completely driven Armenia into a blind alley" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303110.html>).

Leyla Aliyeva, vice president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and president of the Azerbaijan Youth Organization of Russia, says that the AYOR "has achieved good results and success" across the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/politics/303151.html>).

The Center for Strategic Research of the Presidential Administration and the UN Development Program hold an international conference on "20 Years of Independence: Achievements and Difficulties on the Path of Constructing a Progressive, Just and Dynamic State" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303052.html>).

6 December

President Ilham Aliyev telephones Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to congratulate him on the victory of the United Russia Party in the Russian parliamentary elections (<http://news.day.az/politics/302734.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov signs an agreement with his Lithuanian counterpart Audronius Azubalis eliminating visa requirements for persons from the two countries who have diplomatic, official or special passports (<http://news.day.az/politics/302934.html>).

Industry and Energy Minister Natig Aliyev tells visiting Himayatullah Khan, the first deputy minister of economic questions and statistics of Pakistan, that Baku has offered its services for the development of the oil and gas reserves of that country (<http://news.day.az/economy/302903.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "at the government level, there is no anti-Iranian propaganda in Azerbaijan, nor is there any anti-Azerbaijani propaganda in Iran," but that unfortunately, there are forces trying to set the two countries and peoples at odds (<http://news.day.az/politics/302905.html>).

Isfandiyar Vahabzade, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Minsk, is elected a member of that country's Union of Writers and also a member of the editorial board of *Belaya Vezha* (<http://news.day.az/politics/302904.html>).

Leyla Aliyeva, President of the Azerbaijani Youth Organization of Russia, Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Moscow, and Mikhail Meyer, director of the Institute of the Countries of Africa and Asia of Moscow State University, speak to an evening on the 20th anniversary of the restoration of the independence of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/302739.html>).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and French Minister for European Affairs Jean Leonetti, together with Elmar Mammadyarov and Edvard Nalbandyan, the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia, issue a joint statement in Vilnius on the importance of achieving a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/302877.html>).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says that Russia as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group "calls on the sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to make use of the proposals, which were developed recently as a result of the contacts of the sides of the conflict with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302819.html>).

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says that "only by the path of negotiations will it be possible to come to a resolution [of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict] that will help establish an atmosphere of trust and stability in the region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302803.html>).

Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey's foreign minister, says that "a number of conflicts in the OSCE region unfortunately remain unresolved, which negatively affects the work of the organization and undermines trust in it"

(<http://news.day.az/politics/302868.html>).

Erzhan Kazykhanov, Kazakhstan's foreign minister, says that Astana "supports the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia in their attempts to find a peaceful resolution on Nagorno-Karabakh" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302834.html>).

Lucinda Creighton, Ireland's state minister for European affairs, says that Dublin supports the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and, as the next OSCE chair, is going to propose "our own experience in conflict resolution" as the basis for future talks on Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/302826.html>).

US Senator John McCain tells a meeting of the new NGO, the Azerbaijan-American Union, that "allied relations must be built with such reliable partners as Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/303118.html>).

Siyamek Herawi, press secretary for the president of Afghanistan, says that Kabul welcomes the initiative of Azerbaijan concerning investments in his country (<http://news.day.az/economy/302848.html>).

5 December

President Ilham Aliyev telephones Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to congratulate him on the victory of *United Russia* in the Russian parliamentary elections (<http://news.day.az/politics/302734.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Azerbaijan is ready to increase its investments in Afghanistan (<http://news.day.az/politics/302709.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his counterparts from Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Portugal, as well as with the trade and development minister from Ireland during his stay in Bonn (<http://news.day.az/politics/302738.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev meets with his Kazakhstan counterpart, Adilbek Dzhaksibekov, in Astana (<http://news.day.az/economy/302708.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov visits the United Arab Emirates (<http://news.day.az/politics/302696.html>).

Latif Gandilov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Beijing, presents his letters of credence of Chinese President Hu Jintao (<http://news.day.az/politics/302688.html>).

Natig Mammadov, deputy labor and social welfare minister, take part in the 100th session of the International Migration Organization (<http://news.day.az/politics/302900.html>).

Audronius Azubalis, Lithuanian foreign minister and chairman-in-office of the OSCE, says that it is necessary "to focus attention on the resolution of drawn-out conflicts" like the one over Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/302721.html>).

The Federation of Turkish-Azerbaijani Societies organizes an international conference

on "Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations in a Developing and Changing World"
(<http://news.day.az/politics/302645.html>)

4 December

Ali Hasanov, head of the social political department of the Presidential Administration, during a visit to Tehran, tells Mohammadcafar Mohammadzade, Iran's deputy minister of culture and Islamic heritage, that "the media of Iran must stop anti-Azerbaijani propaganda" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302446.html>).

Azay Guliyev and Eldar Ibrahimov, two Milli Majlis deputies serving as observers in the Russian Duma elections, say that voting there "took place in correspondence with the law" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302494.html>).

3 December

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the reports of *Transparency International* [concerning Azerbaijan and other countries] are far from objective" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302418.html>).

The State Customs Committee says that it plans to sign bilateral customs agreements with Macedonia, Kuwait, Jordan, Hungary and other countries in 2012 (<http://news.day.az/politics/302396.html>).

Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammadov confirms the Turkmen delegation to the inter-governmental Turkmen-Azerbaijani commission on economic cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/302332.html>).

Zoran Vayovic, Serbia's ambassador to Baku, says that he hopes "relations between Azerbaijan and Serbia will soon rise to the level of strategic partnership" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302338.html>).

The European Union launches a series of special seminars and training programs in Azerbaijan on auditing and financial administration (<http://news.day.az/economy/302415.html>).

Haluk Ipek, deputy head of Turkey's ruling *Justice and Developing Party*, says that "the Nagorno-Karabakh problem is close to resolution, because all the countries of the region, in particular Armenia and Russia, understand the necessity of resolving this problem, the continuation of which is harming these countries" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302424.html>).

2 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming Swedish Ambassador to Baku, Michael Ericsson (<http://news.day.az/politics/302210.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming Croatian Ambassador to Baku, Drazen Hrastic (<http://news.day.az/politics/302210.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva says that "tolerance and openness are today the most beautiful qualities of the Azerbaijani people" (<http://news.day.az/politics/301421.html>).

Culture and Tourism Minister Abulfaz Garayev tells Radek Matula, the Czech Republic's ambassador to Baku, that the two countries will sign a tourism cooperation accord (<http://news.day.az/economy/302296.html>).

Agiya Nakhchyvanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the idea of Azerbaijanism is a new paradigm of development of the public consciousness of the Azerbaijani people" (<http://news.day.az/politics/302225.html>).

The National Council of Youth Organizations hosts an international conference on the development of contacts between young people in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/society/302311.html>).

The Russian embassy in Baku says that there are 6,339 Russian citizens in Azerbaijan registered to take part in the upcoming Duma elections (<http://news.day.az/politics/302241.html>).

1 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives letters of credence from the incoming Ambassador to Baku of Denmark Ruben Madsen (<http://news.day.az/politics/302070.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives letters of credence from the incoming Ambassador to Baku of Bangladesh Zulfigur Rahman (<http://news.day.az/politics/302070.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives letters of credence from the incoming Ambassador to Baku of Vietnam Fam Suan Sean (<http://news.day.az/politics/302070.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives letters of credence from the incoming Ambassador to Baku of Portugal Luiza Bastos de Almeida (<http://news.day.az/politics/302070.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives letters of credence from the incoming Ambassador to Baku of Algeria Mouloud Hamai (<http://news.day.az/politics/302070.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives letters of credence from the incoming Ambassador to Baku of Ghana Seth Koranteng (<http://news.day.az/politics/302070.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Andrey Kostin, president of the VTB Bank of the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/politics/302070.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "Azerbaijan has always sought and now attempts to preserve fraternal and goodneighborly relations with Iran" (<http://news.day.az/politics/301924.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that the failure of the Armenian community in Karabakh to talk with the Azerbaijani community there means that the Armenians "do not want to end their policy of aggression and use talks for the goal of dragging out the problem" (<http://news.day.az/politics/301924.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku is committed to restoring and maintaining

monuments of ancient Albanian culture situated on the border between Azerbaijan and Georgia (<http://news.day.az/politics/301924.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Armenians routinely "falsify ancient and contemporary history," including the role of Caucasian Albania (<http://news.day.az/politics/301924.html>).

Georgy Poltavchenko, governor of St. Petersburg, speaks to a meeting of the National-Cultural Autonomy of the Azerbaijanis of St. Petersburg (<http://news.day.az/society/301948.html>).

Note to Readers

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