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School of International Affairs and Business

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**AZERBAIJANI CULTURE IN DIASPORA:
A CONVERSATION WITH SABINA RAKCHEYEVA**

Below is the third in the series of interviews Azerbaijan in the World has recently conducted with leading figures of the widespread Azerbaijani diaspora on the state of Azerbaijani culture abroad. This third discussion, which focuses on music, is with Sabina Rakcheyeva, a distinguished Azerbaijani violinist living in London. Dr. Rakcheyeva's official web page is at www.sabinarakcheyeva.com.

Azerbaijan in the World: How did it happen that you became an artist? Was it a rational choice of conscious mind or the spontaneous pursuit of what you felt was your calling in life?

Sabina Rakcheyeva: When I started taking violin lessons—I was seven at the time—I certainly did not know I was going to become a professional musician. Although my mother has always been very fond of classical music, none of my family members is a professional musician; so the decision to try myself out in music was one of my own and not a function of family influence of any sort. Having once seen someone play violin on TV, I asked my mother to buy one for myself. She proved receptive to my desire and followed up by enrolling me in a music school. While about half a year into my music classes I wanted to quit (the classes proved far more demanding and required far greater commitment than I had initially assumed); upon my mother's insistence I continued and following one more year, I started to get a taste for music and good violin sound. I also enjoyed performing on stage, so I decided to continue into a more advanced level. At the age of 13, I decided to become a professional. I then left a regular high school and enrolled in a Baku music college at the age of 14 and subsequently the Baku conservatory at the age of 18, from which I graduated—with both a bachelor's and master's degree—in 2000. I continued my musical education at the Juilliard School in New York, spending three years there and graduating with a master's degree in 2002.

AIW: When was it that you established your own ensemble?

Rakcheyeva: When I completed Juilliard, I decided to remain in New York for two more years performing as part of various orchestras, chamber music groups and ensembles. Only when I moved to London in 2007 did I set up my own first ensemble. I am still with that group, with which I recorded my first album *UnVeiled* in 2011. The latter, for the first time, features music of my own making.

AIW: How has the subject matter of your music evolved and what influences have affected you in this evolution?

Rakcheyeva: Like every other beginning violinist in my part of the world, I began as a classical musician, for a simple reason that there was no extra curriculum offered at the music school. When I moved to New York at the age of 21, I began to experiment somewhat with jazz and improvised music; but even then, my repertoire remained dominated by classical music. In part, it was again a function of the imperatives of professional training I had received (one is inevitably restricted by an academic curriculum one's school has to impose), but in part this derives from the desire of someone who left her small world at a rather young age—indeed, I left Baku as a teenager—to succeed as a professional musician in the international realm, which effectively translated into the desire to become part of the international classical community. Besides and like any artist, I wished to have an exposure to and receive a feedback from wider and more diverse audiences, something I could not get at home.

After I was out of school, I wanted to find my own niche. I would not suggest my interests shifted completely from classical music, however. Rather, they expanded to involve—apart from classical music—some elements of jazz and improvised music. Indeed, through my music, I now attempt to create fusion of Western, classical and traditional compositions. While the idea to fuse my music with, and ground it in the traditional elements was in a way intuitive, it was also my way of relieving myself from the tight constraints of the academic program I had to pursue in Baku and New York. And that I was able to experiment and improvise with other musicians in my ensemble encouraged me further to do something on my own.

AIW: You are Azerbaijani, yet now you are based in London and normally perform outside your homeland. Do you nonetheless feel you represent Azerbaijan with your music, or would you rather suggest that your music is more cosmopolitan in nature?

Rakcheyeva: My position on this is two-fold. On one hand, even though I am from Azerbaijan, my background is in classical music. So, when I perform classical music as part of, say, a 50-piece orchestra, I become part of the international classical music community, part of a whole, that is, and one far bigger than myself and, indeed, far wider than Azerbaijan. But on the other hand, in any other circumstances, I always represent and am always referred to as a violinist from Azerbaijan.

AIW: In what ways, then, do you think your music represents Azerbaijan and communicates Azerbaijani identity to outside listeners?

Rakcheyeva: Because my current work is fusion of the West and the East, my Azerbaijani origins are always reflected in my own compositions. For my first collection, for example, I used some mugham as a background tune, as well as some elements from traditional Azerbaijani songs. In fact, I grounded some of my compositions in Azerbaijani folk songs, such as *Sari Gelin and Lacin*, among others.

AIW: You noted that creating fusion between the Western music and Azerbaijani traditional elements has been your way to distinguish yourself from other performers on the international musical scene. In what ways do you think you are different from other Azerbaijani artists in this; those, that is, who attempted similar fusion with their music, like Alim Gasimov who has tried to create a cultural mix between Azerbaijani mugham and Western elements, or indeed Aziza Mustafa Zadeh who, like her father, tried to create fusion between jazz and traditional Azerbaijani music?

Rakcheyeva: I strongly believe that in the current globalised world in which we are living, it is extremely difficult—if at all possible—to claim you have created something no one had ever before done, for at least one simple reason that we can't know and can't be exposed to the work of everyone there is and has been. Rather, my goal is to express myself, indeed convey my message, through music by virtue of my own means and my own ideas. For me, those ideas are certainly new, for I personally don't know of any violinist from Azerbaijan who would do the same things as I do. And for me, a sense that I am doing something that to me is original is a sufficient incentive to work and create. But again, since I am also a classical musician, I am always happy to play something that has been performed hundreds and hundreds of times by others as well.

AIW: You note your goal in music is to convey your message. What is the message?

Rakcheyeva: First and foremost, it is my feelings that I strive to convey. It is also, however, the cultural elements of where I come from that I try to communicate to my audience. I feel very strongly about the place of my origin and its culture and am proud that I am well positioned to communicate some elements of that culture to the Western audience in a language, which they understand and to which they are receptive. And my strong belief is that one should always approach people in their own language and by their own means. In this sense, my efforts at presenting the elements of Azerbaijani traditional music in a classical or jazz arrangement are partly meant to serve these goals as well. This sort of exposure could well serve as a first

step on the way towards the introduction of the Western audience to the richness of Azerbaijani music.

AIW: Then can one say that it was from these strategic considerations that you sought to fuse the several streams of music in the first place?

Rakcheyeva: Only in part, because the other part of the process was rather intuitive. When I started performing and even when I performed some traditional Azerbaijani music with violin, I would play it in a somewhat Western way because of the training I have received. I certainly could not simply pick up a violin and perform mugham in a way a traditional *kamancha* artist would do, for example. I would necessarily, if inadvertently, add some Western elements to the sound. When I first did this, however, I felt that effort might indeed become something I would try doing on a more continuous basis. The first time I felt this was in New York when, in the middle of a concert in which I was performing classical music, I was unexpectedly asked to play a piece of Azerbaijani traditional music. Following my performance, many people approached me saying they had never heard Azerbaijani music before, and adding that with my playing—indeed, it wasn't purely traditional music that I performed, but a tune in my own improvised arrangement—they understood and grasped it quite well.

AIW: Can we then say that what your music is today is a result of your Azerbaijani origins, on one hand, and Western training to which you were exposed, on the other?

Rakcheyeva: Certainly, but there is also a third element—my personality—in which my music is grounded. The personality factor is very important, for you may well find people similar to me in terms of their cultural origins and academic background, yet different in terms of the music style they perform. Regardless of what training an artist has gone through and wherever she comes from, when it comes to interpretation of whatever she has been exposed to over the lifetime, be that training or culture, it is always about realisation of the artist's inner feelings and perceptions and this is where her personal character kicks in.

AIW: Apart from these three factors, could you name any other individual musicians, in Azerbaijan or indeed beyond, who have also had an influence on your music?

Rakcheyeva: First and foremost, I am certainly grateful to my teachers who introduced me to the world of music and who instilled in me a belief that I have certain abilities and talents and that, provided I work hard, the music pathway could prove rewarding.

As far as the particular nature of my music is concerned, my big idol in the earlier years of my career—again to a large extent given the Soviet Union context in which I grew up and began my professional career—was Russian violinist David Oistrakh. To me, he was and still is one of the greatest violinists of the past. When it comes to composers, my favourite is certainly J. S. Bach. More recently, Alim Gasimov and Aziza Mustafa Zadeh proved big influences on me and my music. Indeed, their success at breaking through the realm of the Eastern world and gaining popularity in the West, in part through their efforts to mix and fuse the Western and Eastern elements in their music, is impressive. Alim's sheer personality has impressed me as well, humble but passionate and authoritative.

AIW: Where do you see your music going next?

Rakcheyeva: I certainly look forward to trying new experimental approaches to music, as well as continuing performing classical music. I will hopefully continue performing with my current ensembles and will also involve myself with new chamber groups. In terms of genres, I will continue incorporating some elements of Azerbaijani music into my compositions and improvisations. And finally, I will also advocate for music as an important tool of communication and cultural diplomacy.

AIW: Have there been instances of, or are there plans for, collaboration between yourself and other artists from Azerbaijan or indeed elsewhere?

Rakcheyeva: Given that I was deeply into the writing of my doctoral dissertation over the last few years and that I have been rather immersed into the cultural scene of the West, there has not been much opportunity for me to collaborate with Azerbaijani performers. Now that I completed this stage of my life—indeed I just had my graduation on July 20—I certainly plan to pursue more collaborative projects. In the past, I did experiment with Alim Gasimov, for example; it was wonderful and we might well do something together in future. I also like the style of our young and very talented pianist Isfar Sarabski; so he and I might well collaborate in future as well.

AIW: Which of your concerts do you consider a particular success?

Rakcheyeva: Over nearly twenty years of my performing career, I have had many fantastic and memorable experiences on stage. I consider the most successful performances those when the members of the audience really enjoyed the performance and came backstage to tell me that the music made an impact on them and their state of mind. To me, this is an ultimate reward for any artist.

AIW: You mentioned you spent the last few years of your life doing a PhD with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Could you say more about that stage in your life? How did you arrive at the decision to do a PhD?

Rakcheyeva: The years of 1995-1996, when I was around 18-19 years old and was still in Baku, were pivotal ones for Azerbaijan. There were a lot of new embassies opening up, many new concerts and orchestras staged, many private events organised, and so on. I was very lucky to become part of all this as I was constantly invited to perform at various concerts and private events. Indeed, I had a very tight schedule at the time, performing several times per week. Even when I left for New York, I continued my active involvements in different kinds of events, including and particularly those organized by our embassy in Washington, DC, for international audiences. And it was when I started performing outside Azerbaijan that I came to feel I represented Azerbaijan and I began to develop an interest in public diplomacy and took notice of the power of music to connect people of diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. Given this new interest, I later took part in several international conferences, seminars and workshops on diplomacy, particularly public diplomacy. One of those workshops, organised by the Prince of Lichtenstein in the summer 2007 at the time when relations between the United States and Iran were particularly tense, was on the situation around Iran. The organizers invited me as well as someone of Muslim origins yet based and trained and performing in the West. Having attended this meeting in which both representatives of Iran and Western countries including the United States were present, I saw just how tense relations

between the parties indeed were at the time and how difficult it was for them to find a common ground and engage in a constructive dialogue. I gave a performance immediately after the meeting, one which representatives of both sides attended. Having seen how all of them—regardless of the obvious and seemingly irresolvable tensions one could observe in relations during the actual meeting—came to relate to my music in a way that a sort of positive interaction between them unfolded after my performance as they started discussing different elements around it, I have begun thinking about the role an artist could play in negotiations and bridging seemingly unbridgeable positions between the parties. Shortly thereafter, I came across a doctoral program in the music department at SOAS, the framework of which promised to enable me to use an approach rooted in my music background and apply it to international relations. So I decided to apply and this is how I moved to London in 2007 and became a PhD student at SOAS, where I have spent the last five years of my life.

AIW: Do you now feel it was a useful experience and something you could indeed use in future as you progress further in your career as a performing artist?

Rakcheyeva: It certainly was! First of all, as a result of the research I did, I met many interesting people with whom I hope to remain in contact. But apart from this, because of this experience, I can now present myself not merely as a performing musician, but also as a cultural practitioner of a different sort. As a violin performer, one's contribution is limited to whatever concerns actual violin performances, but as someone with an academic degree, I have an opportunity to apply a theoretical approach to the role of music and musical improvisation in the negotiations process. Indeed, my dissertation primarily focused on particular ways in which one could use musical improvisation as a tool in cultural diplomacy. I should note that my first CD was part of this academic project and only later became a stand-alone commercial project. The first ensemble I established in London, the one I still remain with, was also initially meant as part of this project. The idea was to observe on a very practical basis the process by virtue of which an improvised piece of music emerge as a result of a complex negotiation process within a multinational group of musicians—each coming from different cultural backgrounds and espousing therefore different tastes in music—and then draw comparisons with a similar process of negotiation in the realm of international relations and diplomacy and draw useful lessons the former could offer for the latter. I hoped that practicing diplomats could look into the complex process by which an improvised piece of music comes to being and draw useful lessons as to the ways in which “negotiating” people could relate to each other, negotiate their differences and find a jointly worked out solution. Finally, I also looked into the ways in which music could be used in conflict resolution, as well as in efforts to represent one's country to broader audiences and in wider realms.

AIW: Did you also look, then, at the cultural policies of Azerbaijan and did you come up with any recommendations one could use to improve the latter, especially given the obvious efforts the Baku government has been making in this direction recently?

Rakcheyeva: Yes, indeed. I examined what has been done so far in terms of the country's public/cultural diplomacy and asked myself whether anything could be done more effectively, including and primarily internally within the country's musical scene. One recommendation I came up with, for example, was a call to focus on long-term collaborative projects effected as part of the country's cultural diplomacy abroad, projects that would pair Azerbaijani musicians and artists with their peers

abroad and promote their interaction beyond a one-time performance.

AIW: More generally, what is your assessment of the current state of the music scene in Azerbaijan and what should be done to prompt, and contribute to, its further evolution? That is, what forms do you think the government's support for music, and perhaps art in general, could assume?

Rakcheyeva: Indeed, a primary focus of my dissertation was on the ways in which one could work to benefit the local cultural agencies and agents. Although Azerbaijan has many talented artists, our local cultural agents and agencies have yet to develop to the point that they could satisfy the demands of the country's rapidly growing cultural scene and thus be positioned to contribute to its development. The key problem in this regard is that the Ministry of Culture, the country's key agent of the kind and one that receives the largest portion of the government fund, is responsible for all the cultural projects there are in the country, both internal and external. In such a situation, progress becomes simply impossible. For if you don't stimulate, including financially, local agents coming from different strands of music, including those different from mugham and jazz which are currently receiving the biggest chunk of government attention, the local cultural scene will inevitably grow increasingly impoverished. That said, we need to begin by encouraging smaller cultural initiatives, allocating smaller grants, on a competitive basis, to smaller cultural agencies and agents like galleries, music groups and independent artists. Currently, the artists who do get some funding support have not won a competition, but have been "selected" by one party or the other on the basis of the latter's own, inevitably limited, knowledge of the country's cultural scene.

In addition, for the domestic artists to flourish, Azerbaijan needs a solid cultural management system in place, something we clearly do not have at the moment. Given this latter deficiency, for example, the Ministry of Culture—whenever it needs to implement a cultural project—has to outsource its implementation to some external agency. Not only does this cost additional money, it also fails to stimulate local agents of the kind. Yet this is not because the Ministry does not want to outsource the event to local agents that they end up turning to external ones, but because we simply do not have local agents of the sort in the country. We must therefore start by training a certain number of local people as cultural managers. While establishing a relevant program internally might well take some time, we could begin by sending a certain number of people to study in the relevant programs abroad. Only then could we gradually observe the emergence of a range of different private agencies and individual agents.

Another way in which the government could stimulate the internal cultural scene, make it more competitive and build a more healthy and better functioning funds allocation system is to establish a National Arts Council similar to the one that exists in the United Kingdom. The latter—if allocated an important portion of government funds and given a certain extent of independence in its functioning—could provide funds, on a competitive basis, to smaller cultural agents. It could also work to design and implement larger projects of programmatic nature, something currently done by the Ministry of Culture. In that event, the government would no longer—via its Ministry of Culture—emerge as a direct and unique funder of all the cultural activities in the country, but as a stimulus of greater diversity.

AIW: You have talked about music management. What about music education per se? What is the state of affairs in that realm in the country and does it need an improvement of any sort?

Rakcheyeva: In part, we should be grateful to the Soviet education system, which made sure that music education in Azerbaijan remains rather good. What needs to be done, however, is to give the young Azerbaijanis more opportunities to engage with the international music scene as well, something that does certainly exist at the moment, but we need more of this. Moreover, we need to work to upgrade the curriculum currently used at musical schools in Azerbaijan. Introducing some unconventional courses in the curriculum, like improvisation, fusion music, jazz—something where people could be more creative—would certainly be an improvement.

AIW: The government has by now come up with a number of mechanisms, including the international festival in Gabala and international mugham festival, through which it exercises its cultural diplomacy. What do you think about these efforts?

Rakcheyeva: These efforts have indeed been very positive and do help promote our culture abroad. What we need to make these efforts ever more effective is, again, to have a better cultural management system in place. We have wonderful artists to represent our culture and we have sufficient funds to be able to invite distinguished artists from abroad; the absence of a solid cultural management system is the only missing link. At the same time, we need to be concerned about promoting the broader cultural education of Azerbaijanis, something the newly established national cultural program, if paid attention and further improved—could certainly help with.

AIW: Azerbaijan recently hosted Eurovision song contest. What role do you think it played in the country's cultural diplomacy?

Rakcheyeva: While many serious artists, including in the West, regard the Eurovision contest as a major pop event only, several artists have told me that the performances of Azerbaijani traditional music included in the overall program did indeed provide an impressive introduction to the country in general and its rich culture in particular.

AIW: Finally, do you believe that art could have a wider influence within Azerbaijan beyond the cultural realm to which it directly relates?

Rakcheyeva: Absolutely! Art can affect anything and everything. For art is all about human relations, it is something that a human being produces, whether by means of a musical instrument, a brush, or a pen. Everything that lies beyond is, in fact, nothing but a continuation of a human spirit and human emotions. No wonder that the biggest figures in history, including in politics, have been involved with arts at any stage in life in one way or the other. For any dimension in our life, be it diplomacy or economic realm, is all about human relations, and as long as this is the case, art can and does have a large role to play. Consequently, the more we invest in art, the better, the more intelligent, and the more virtuous nation we shall become.

AZERBAIJAN EXPANDS TIES WITH LATIN AMERICA

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The visit of Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov to Columbia, Argentina, Uruguay, and Peru during the last eight days of July highlights something that many have overlooked: More than any other post-Soviet state, Azerbaijan over the last decade has sought to expand its political, economic and cultural ties with the countries of South America. [1]

At each stop, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov met with the presidents, foreign ministers, economic officials, and members of the Azerbaijani diaspora. He extended invitations from President Ilham Aliyev to the presidents to visit Baku, a step each said that he was interested in doing. He reached agreement on new economic relations with each of these countries, not only in the petroleum areas, but in other sectors of the economy as well. And he stressed the ways in which Azerbaijan sees the countries of Latin America as its natural allies.

Many news reports about the visit were inclined to portray it, and indeed the Azerbaijani policy behind it, as reflecting either Baku's desire to collect as many leadership visits as possible or to demonstrate the relevance of President Aliyev's commitment to a balanced foreign policy. But there are three far more important considerations that explain why the expansion of ties between Azerbaijan and the countries of Latin America are so important for both Baku and these states.

First, Azerbaijan has been a major beneficiary of these ties. Its election to a two-year term on the United Nations Security Council is at least in part a reflection of such broad ties. Moreover, these ties give Baku added weight not only at the United Nations, but in other international forums as well. Moreover, and this is especially important in Baku, Latin American countries, and Colombia in particular, have taken a forthright pro-Azerbaijani position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As bilateral ties increase, Azerbaijan will not only gain more influence, but will be in a position to promote Latin American interests as well. Consequently, while most of its neighbors are pursuing regionally defined diplomatic offensives, Azerbaijan is positioning itself as a country with worldwide interests and contacts.

Second, Azerbaijan will clearly benefit from economic ties with Latin American countries. Many of them are interested in developing multiple sources for hydrocarbons and consequently they will welcome expanded trade. But as Foreign Minister Mammadyarov's visit underlined, such trade will not be a one-way street or involve only hydrocarbons. Instead, it will promote a diverse range of sectors of the Azerbaijani economy and also lead to a further improvement of the standard of living of the Azerbaijani people.

And third—and geopolitically, this may be the most important consequence of all—Azerbaijan's cultivation of ties with the countries of Latin America mean that increasingly the governments of those countries will look to Baku as a gateway to

the Caucasus and Central Asia, a perspective that will only increase as they and Azerbaijan increase the number of embassies and missions in the other. At present, Azerbaijan has two embassies in the region, in Mexico and Argentina, but Foreign Minister Mammadyarov indicated that it plans to open more as part of President Aliyev's commitment to doubling the number of Azerbaijani diplomatic missions abroad in the last few years.

The international media in Europe and the United States gave relatively little attention to the Azerbaijani foreign minister's visit, but the steps Mammadyarov took mean that in the future, they will be more attentive because these are the kind of ties that increasingly matter, even or perhaps especially if they do not fit into the neat geopolitical schemas so many writers still have.

Notes

[1] For background on this, see the comments of Mammad Ahmadzada, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Argentina, at <http://ada.edu.az/biweekly/issues/vol3no23/20110129033600828.html> (accessed 28 July 2012).

YEREVAN AGAIN INTENTIONALLY MISUNDERSTANDS MINSK GROUP DECLARATION ON FLIGHTS

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As they have in the past, Armenians are intentionally misunderstanding a declaration by the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, thus setting the stage for a tragedy for which Yerevan will have only itself to blame. Two commentators in particular, Anush Levonyan [1] and Erik Eritsyanyan, [2] have been particularly egregious in this regard, extrapolating from a promise Azerbaijanis have made to respect international law into an undertaking not to interfere with civil aircraft in general.

These Armenian analysts in discussing the first part of the declaration of the Minsk Group co-chairs concerning efforts to make the Khojaly airport operational fail to take into account that declaration's insistence that both sides operate exclusively within the framework of international law and existing practice concerning flights over their territories. If the Armenians had done so, they would have immediately recognized that there is no basis for their sweeping conclusion that Armenia can open an airport on the occupied territories and begin flights immediately. [3]

If the Armenian conclusions about the declaration of the Minsk Group co-chairs were correct, the entire airspace over Azerbaijan, including that over Nagorno-Karabakh, would be a place of free passage for all regardless of the intentions behind those flights and regardless of the views of the Azerbaijani authorities. No country would ever agree to such an interpretation about its sovereignty—and that includes Azerbaijan.

A border is a border regardless of whether it is on land or in the air. If someone violates the land border and does not react to the warnings of border guards to stop, then international law allows the border guards to open fire. The situation in the air is the same. If someone violates a country's airspace, that is, if a country or firm sends a plane into the airspace of another country without permission, then, the country whose sovereign airspace is violated has the right to use force to enforce its sovereignty.

It is thus difficult to imagine, given what international law allows, that Azerbaijani forces would refrain from destroying an Armenian plane, even dressed as a civilian one that was flying over military and strategic positions without permission. Indeed, such flights regardless of their professed non-military nature would not enjoy immunity under the provisions of the International Civil Aviation Organization and other international legal authorities.

Consequently, no one has the right to expect from Azerbaijan what he or she would not require from other countries, a unilateral withdrawal from a zero tolerance position concerning violators of a state border.

Of course, it bears repeating that Azerbaijan never has and never would shoot down civil aircraft flying over its territory with the permission of the authorities of the country. Thus, the assurances offered by Baku and included in the declaration of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs do not concern plans, which ignore international rules and practice. This is all the more necessary to restate in order that there not be any doubt the violators will be shot down if they ignore direct orders to leave Azerbaijani airspace especially in areas like Nagorno-Karabakh, which remain a zone of military action.

Notes

[1] See <http://regnum.ru/news/fd-abroad/azeri/1553375.html> (accessed 30 July 2012).

[2] See <http://times.am/?l=en&p=9994> (accessed 30 July 2012).

[3] See http://aze.az/news_k_svedeniyu_armyanskoy_79851.html (accessed 30 July 2012).

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

The Foreign Ministry says that the international community's refusal to recognize as legitimate the elections in Nagorno-Karabakh shows that the status quo is unacceptable (<http://news.day.az/politics/345076.html>).

Musa Gasimly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that, "the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group, created for the resolution of [the Nagorno-Karabakh] conflict, have not brought results. This means that the existing situation, that is, the status quo, must be changed. In other words, the armed forces of Armenia must be withdrawn from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/346196.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

The US Department of State in its annual report on religious freedom says that Azerbaijan represents a remarkable example of religious tolerance and inter-confessional cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/346998.html>).

Catherine Ashton, the supreme representative of the European Union for foreign affairs, says that the EU "wants to help build trust" between Azerbaijan and Armenia and thus would like to send a limited number of its officials to visit the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/345991.html>).

Sherzod Fayziyev, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Baku, says that, "Azerbaijan is the key partner of Uzbekistan" in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/345844.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 July

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Pascal Menen, French ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/346956.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov says that Azerbaijan's defense capacity has increased significantly over the last year (<http://news.day.az/economy/346994.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that talks with Moscow on the future of the Gabala radar station are continuing (<http://news.day.az/politics/347039.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Mammadgulyev says that the next round of talks between the EU and Azerbaijan concerning the simplification of the visa regime between them will take place in the fall (<http://news.day.az/politics/346927.html>).

The Foreign Ministry reminds anyone thinking of taking part in a Yerevan-organized sculpture symposium in Shusha that visiting the occupied territories without the advance permission of Azerbaijan is illegal (<http://news.day.az/politics/347020.html>).

Fattah Heydarov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva is the moving spirit behind the international music festival in Gabala and that her contribution to the development and propaganda of Azerbaijani culture internationally is beyond price (<http://news.day.az/politics/346864.html>).

Hady Radzhabli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that even if ethnic Armenians in Syria and

elsewhere are given Armenian citizenship, that by itself will not solve Yerevan's demographic crisis (<http://news.day.az/politics/347021.html>).

Chingiz Ganizade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that many Armenians are leaving Armenia because they do not want to fight in Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/346821.html>).

The State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages, and Missing in Action continues to seek the release of an Azerbaijani soldier held by Armenian forces (<http://news.day.az/politics/346984.html>).

30 July

President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban attend the first three days of the London Olympics and congratulate Azerbaijan's Valentin Khristov for his bronze medal in weight lifting (<http://news.day.az/politics/346766.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his French counterpart Laurent Fabius (<http://news.day.az/politics/346859.html>).

Faig Baghirov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Ankara, hosts an Azerbaijani evening on the occasion of the start of Ramadan (<http://news.day.az/society/347013.html>).

The Justice Ministry says that the majority of Iranians now incarcerated in Azerbaijan were involved with drugs and smuggling (<http://news.day.az/politics/346736.html>).

The UN Human Rights Committee says in a report that Azerbaijani refugees now in Armenia as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh war are in a difficult situation (<http://news.day.az/politics/346808.html>).

Peter Bateman, British ambassador to Baku, says that London supports the work of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/346852.html>).

Hasan Hami, Morocco's ambassador to Baku, hosts a reception in honor of his country's Day of the Throne (<http://news.day.az/politics/346918.html>).

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves names Miko Haljas to be Estonia's ambassador to Baku, resident in Ankara (<http://news.day.az/politics/346841.html>).

28 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets Uruguayan President José Mujica and Uruguayan parliamentarians (<http://news.day.az/politics/346552.html> and <http://news.day.az/politics/346562.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, a Milli Majlis deputy, receives members of the senate of the US state of Mississippi at the headquarters of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party (<http://news.day.az/politics/346561.html>).

The Party of National Independence of Southern Azerbaijan organizes a demonstration in Toronto, Canada, to protest the visit of a Canadian parliamentarian to occupied Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/346468.html>).

Andrey Kondakov, president of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, says that Azerbaijan's term in the presidency of that institution will attract the attention of international investors (<http://news.day.az/economy/346479.html>).

27 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets Argentinian President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (<http://news.day.az/politics/346311.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Hector Timmerman, his Argentine counterpart (<http://news.day.az/politics/346388.html>).

Ali Hasanov, deputy prime minister and chairman of the State Committee for Work with Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, says that Armenia uses the occupied territories to facilitate the trade in illegal drugs (<http://news.day.az/politics/346331.html>).

The Foreign Ministry sends a note to Tanzania protesting the display on Tanzania's foreign ministry website of Karabakh as a separate country (<http://news.day.az/politics/346267.html>).

Khanhuseyn Kazymly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that there needs to be an international determination of all the harm that Armenian occupation has done to Azerbaijanis (<http://news.day.az/politics/346349.html>).

Ekhan Polukhov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Pretoria, meets with officials in South Africa's Free State province (<http://news.day.az/politics/346422.html>).

A group of young Azerbaijanis take part in Days of CIS Youth in the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/society/346416.html>).

The Turkish economics ministry says that a new law allows citizens of Azerbaijan as well as of a number of other countries to purchase property in Turkey without preconditions (<http://news.day.az/society/346237.html>).

The Swiss foreign ministry confirms that it does not recognize the illegal presidential elections in Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/346379.html>).

The Turkish Machine Tool and Chemical Industry Organization says that Azerbaijan and Turkey intend to produce jointly modernized military rifles and have signed an accord to do so (<http://news.day.az/politics/346317.html>).

26 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Mauricio Cardenas, Colombia's mines and energy minister, who says that Columbia intends to cooperate with Azerbaijan in the energy sector (<http://news.day.az/politics/346207.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Edgar Espíndola Nino, deputy chairman of the Colombian Senate (<http://www.news.day.az/politics/346094.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Yerevan has distorted the content of a UN report and that the information contained in the Armenian document "does not have any

relation to the position of the UN" (<http://news.day.az/politics/346085.html>).

Musa Gasymly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that, "the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group, created for the resolution of [the Nagorno-Karabakh] conflict have not brought results. This means that the existing situation, that is, the status quo, must be changed. In other words, the armed forces of Armenia must be withdrawn from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/346196.html>).

Azerbaijan's border forces say they have detained a Turkmen fishing vessel, which had illegally come into Azerbaijan's territorial waters (<http://news.day.az/politics/346118.html>).

A new monthly English-language newspaper about Azerbaijan, *Azerbaijan Star*, is launched in Toronto (<http://news.day.az/society/346199.html>).

Toyli Komekov, Turkmenistan's ambassador to Baku, hosts the launch of a two-volume collection in Azerbaijani of the speeches of Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammadov (<http://news.day.az/society/346203.html>).

The visit of Iranian deputy foreign minister Seid Abbas Aragci has been postponed (<http://news.day.az/politics/346170.html>).

25 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, his Colombian counterpart (<http://news.day.az/politics/345889.html>).

Industry and Energy Minister Natig Aliyev says that Nabucco is the best variant "from all points of view" for the transport of Azerbaijani gas to Europe (<http://news.day.az/economy/345813.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department of the Presidential Administration, says that, "the separatist regime in Nagorno-Karabakh is directed from Yerevan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/345843.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov and Ambassador Elin Suleymanov take part in Washington talks on US-Azerbaijani bilateral security issues (<http://news.day.az/politics/345762.html>).

Sherzod Fayziyev, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Baku, says that, "Azerbaijan is the key partner of Uzbekistan" in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/345844.html>).

Philip Missfelder and Karl-Georg Wellman, two German parliamentarians, issue a statement denouncing as illegitimate the so-called presidential elections in Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/345921.html>).

Mikhail Ratushny, president of the Ukrainian World Coordinating Rada, says that, "today, relations between Azerbaijan and Ukraine are defined as those of strategic partnership" (<http://news.day.az/politics/345876.html>).

24 July

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Mammadgulyev takes part in the third Brussels ministerial of the Eastern Partnership.

The State Civil Aviation Administration says that no foreign plane may fly over the territory of Azerbaijan without the permission of Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/345559.html>).

The State Committee for Work with the Diaspora meets with officials of the Ukrainian World Coordinating Council to share experience (<http://news.day.az/politics/345629.html>).

The State Migration Service receives European Union officials to discuss the visa regime between Azerbaijan and the EU (<http://news.day.az/politics/345607.html>).

Aflatun Amashev, head of the Azerbaijan Press Council, receives Zeki Gazioglu, the head of the representation in Baku of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (<http://news.day.az/society/345707.html>).

The Iranian foreign ministry says that relations between Iran and Azerbaijan are "at a high level," something that disturbs "certain forces" (<http://news.day.az/politics/345593.html>).

The Iranian foreign ministry says that the "so-called 'elections'" in Nagorno-Karabakh have a negative impact on the peace process (<http://news.day.az/politics/345572.html>).

23 July

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev receives Peter Siarto, co-chair of the joint Azerbaijani-Hungarian inter-governmental commission (<http://news.day.az/economy/345410.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the Azerbaijani embassy in Tehran has reached an agreement with the Iranian government that will allow Azerbaijani diplomats to meet with the two Azerbaijani poets under arrest in Iran (<http://news.day.az/politics/345389.html>).

The Environment and Natural Resources Ministry releases a report documenting the destruction of the environment in Agdam district by the Armenian occupiers (<http://news.day.az/politics/345447.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenia has no interest in real negotiations and therefore is simply drawing out the talks on the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/345408.html>).

Halil Akinci, secretary general of the Turkish Business Council, says that his group does not recognize the recent "elections" in Nagorno-Karabakh as legitimate (<http://news.day.az/politics/345484.html>).

Azerbaijani judges and members of the Milli Majlis visit Mannheim to familiarize themselves with German legal procedures (<http://news.day.az/society/345515.html>).

The Presidential Center for Strategic Research signs agreements with its counterparts in the US, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Finland, France, Ukraine and Georgia (<http://news.day.az/society/345376.html>).

22 July

The Serbian Foreign Ministry says that Belgrade does not recognize the so-called "presidential elections" in Nagorno-Karabakh as legitimate (<http://news.day.az/politics/345251.html>).

Richard Morningstar takes the oath of office as US ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/345252.html>).

21 July

The Hungarian foreign ministry says that Budapest completely shares the views about the South Caucasus expressed by Catherine Ashton, the supreme representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy (<http://news.day.az/politics/345166.html>).

Robert Peacock of the US Department of Justice says that Washington intends to provide assistance to Azerbaijan to develop transit corridors (<http://news.day.az/economy/345210.html>).

20 July

The Foreign Ministry says that the international community's refusal to recognize as legitimate the elections in Nagorno-Karabakh shows that the status quo is unacceptable (<http://news.day.az/politics/345076.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Baku is seriously concerned by the situation in Syria, supports the Annan plan, and will recall its diplomats if that should be necessary in the future (<http://news.day.az/politics/345071.html>).

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group say that none of the co-chair countries nor any other country in the world recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent and sovereign state (<http://day.az/politics/344997.html>).

The Swiss foreign ministry says that Bern does not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent state or consider recent voting there as legitimate (<http://day.az/politics/345119.html>).

The German foreign ministry says that Berlin completely shares the views about the South Caucasus expressed by Catherine Ashton, the supreme representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy (<http://news.day.az/politics/345105.html>).

The Moldovan foreign ministry says that Chisinau does not recognize the recent voting in Nagorno-Karabakh as legitimate (<http://news.day.az/politics/345059.html>).

The Georgian foreign ministry says that Tbilisi does not consider the recent voting in Nagorno-Karabakh as legitimate (<http://news.day.az/politics/344943.html>).

Liam Fox, former British defense secretary, addresses a Baku conference on "Changing Threats to Global Security" (<http://news.day.az/politics/345038.html>).

A demonstration takes place in the Turkish city of Eskishehir to protest "the so-called 'presidential elections'" in Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/society/345126.html>).

19 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Jorge Marin, speaker of Mexico's Chamber of Deputies (<http://news.day.az/politics/344896.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Lt.Gen. Mark Hertling, commander of US land forces in Europe (<http://news.day.az/politics/344878.html>).

Oktay Asadov, speaker of the Milli Majlis, receives Christopher Pincher, chairman of the Azerbaijan-Great Britain inter-parliamentary working group (<http://news.day.az/politics/344836.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the illegal flights over the occupied territories are increasing tensions in the region (<http://news.day.az/politics/344837.html>).

Samad Seyidov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the Azerbaijani foreign ministry is considering how to react to the 15 countries, which sent observers to "the so-called 'presidential' elections in Nagorno-Karabakh" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344832.html>).

The State Committee for Standards, Metrology and Patents announces that it is conducting negotiations on cooperation agreements with Turkey, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Georgia, and Lithuania (<http://news.day.az/politics/344753.html>).

The Organization for Islamic Cooperation says that it does not recognize the recent voting in Nagorno-Karabakh as legitimate (<http://news.day.az/politics/344868.html>).

Catherine Ashton, the supreme representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy, says that the EU does not recognize "the constitutional and legal frameworks within which [the so-called presidential] elections were held in Nagorno-Karabakh" and thus does not view them as legitimate (<http://news.day.az/politics/344726.html>).

James Appathurai, special representative of the NATO secretary general for the Caucasus and Central Asia, says that, "NATO like other international organizations does not recognize the so-called 'elections' in Nagorno-Karabakh" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344765.html>).

The Kuwaiti foreign ministry says that Kuwait City unqualifiedly supports Azerbaijan's position on the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/344826.html>).

The British embassy in Baku says that London completely shares the views about the South Caucasus expressed by Catherine Ashton, the supreme representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy

(<http://news.day.az/politics/344929.html>).

The Romanian embassy in Baku says that Bucharest does not recognize the recent voting in Nagorno-Karabakh as legitimate (<http://news.day.az/politics/344873.html>).

The Israeli embassy in Baku says that Israel completely shares the views about the South Caucasus expressed by Catherine Ashton, the supreme representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy (<http://news.day.az/politics/344936.html>).

Johannes Kahrs, a deputy in the German Bundestag, says that, "the so-called 'elections' in Nagorno-Karabakh only intensify the confrontation" in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/344940.html>).

18 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski (<http://news.day.az/politics/344673.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Binali Idrim, Turkey's minister of transportation (<http://news.day.az/politics/344673.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Jorge Martin, speaker of Mexico's Chamber of Deputies (<http://news.day.az/politics/344673.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Gen. Biagio Abrate, chief of the Italian general staff (<http://news.day.az/politics/344673.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Liam Fox, a member of the British House of Commons and a former British defense minister (<http://news.day.az/politics/344673.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives David Harris, chairman of the American Jewish Committee (<http://news.day.az/politics/344673.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that, "the so-called 'elections' in Nagorno-Karabakh have as their goal the annexation of the occupied territories by Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344534.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that as the result of the efforts of the Azerbaijani consul general in Tabriz, the Iranian authorities have allowed family members to meet with two Azerbaijani poets in detention in Iran (<http://news.day.az/politics/344532.html>).

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev receives Yahya Maroofi, secretary general of the Economic Cooperation Organization (<http://news.day.az/economy.344678.html>).

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Moscow, speaks to 120 young leaders from the CIS countries (<http://news.day.az/society/344667.html>).

The Azerbaijani Community of the Nagorno-Karabakh Region of Azerbaijan releases a film entitled "A Future Lost—Aygün" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344681.html>).

Mazahir Efendiyev, head of the Office of National Propaganda Against Narcotics, says that a UN meeting in Baku plans to adopt a Baku Convention on combatting illegal drugs (<http://news.day.az/society/344605.html>).

Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski says that Poland "supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344598.html>).

The Turkish foreign ministry "sharply condemns the so-called 'presidential elections'" in Nagorno-Karabakh as illegitimate and provocative (<http://news.day.az/politics/344589.html>).

Herbert Quelle, Germany's ambassador to Baku, says Berlin is interested in developing cooperation with Azerbaijan in all sectors (<http://news.day.az/politics/344530.html>).

17 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives outgoing Cuban Ambassador Marcello Caballero Torres in connection with the latter's completion of his assignment in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/344474.html>).

The National Security Ministry says it has detained a group of people involved in the smuggling of drugs and gems from Iran into Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/society/344409.html>).

Bahar Muradova, deputy speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that Baku is interested in broadening its cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of Europe (<http://news.day.az/politics/344404.html>).

Azerbaijan launches a new Japanese language journal, "Irs-Isan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344447.html>).

The St. Petersburg Branch of the All-Russian Azerbaijani Congress sends an appeal to all diplomatic representations in Russia's northern capital denouncing Iran's detention of two Azerbaijani poets and calling on these representations to seek their release (<http://news.day.az/society/344619.html>).

Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski says that, "Azerbaijan is a reliable and important player in the world energy arena" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344310.html>).

16 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Montenegrin Prime Minister Igor Lukšić (<http://news.day.az/politics/344280.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Georgian Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili (<http://news.day.az/politics/344280.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Yahya Maroofi, secretary general of the Economic Cooperation Organization, on the completion of the latter's term of office (<http://news.day.az/politics/344274.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that, "the main and priority issue" for Azerbaijani diplomacy is the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/344181.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Hong Jiuyin and Sherzod Fayziyev, the Chinese and Uzbekistan ambassadors to Baku respectively (<http://news.day.az/politics/344197.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that any unauthorized travel to the occupied territories shows "a lack of respect to the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/344225.html>).

Bahar Muradova, deputy speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that the OSCE is more concerned about preventing a resumption of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh than in finding a solution to the conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/344230.html>).

Faradzh Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the OSCE Minsk Group is directed at maintaining the status quo rather than at resolving the conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/344202.html>).

Mikhael Lavon Lotem, Israel's ambassador to Baku, says that any Israeli citizen traveling to the Armenia-occupied territories is not reflecting the position of the Israeli government (<http://news.day.az/politics/344145.html>).

Iranian Education Minister Hamidza Hajibabai says that his visit to Baku was "positive" (<http://news.day.az/politics/344136.html>).

Zhalya Aliyeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenia is not in a position to receive Syria Armenians who want to leave their homeland because of the civil war (<http://news.day.az/politics/344009.html>).

Note to Readers

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