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In this issue:

- Bahar Başer, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and the Minsk Group: Towards a More Productive Engagement?"
- Gulnara Inanc, "Baku, Tehran Seek New Balance In Relationship"
- Paul Goble, "Naval Competition on the Caspian Heating Up"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

**THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT AND THE MINSK GROUP:
TOWARDS A MORE PRODUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT?**

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Almost from the start of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, outside or third parties have sought to mediate the conflict, but the conflict remains unresolved. And that, in

turn, has sparked a debate, sometimes intense and sometimes less so, as to whether such media contributes to conflict resolution or in fact keeps the conflict alive.

From the outset, the conflict was perceived as important both by regional powers and international organizations. From 1992 to 1994, when the former Soviet republics joined the CSCE and a ceasefire was signed, the CSCE intervened as a third party mediator. In March 1992, the CSCE Council of Ministers held an emergency meeting in Helsinki where they designated the organization to be the main instrument in settling the conflict. A committee [1] was formed to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. However, its members could not even hold a conference to assess the issues arising from Minsk. From that time on, the OSCE negotiation group took the name "the Minsk group."

The Minsk group had several obvious shortcomings: "the CSCE's lack of experience with these type of conflicts and reduced solidarity among its members, combined with Russia's regional ambitions and Turkey's advocacy role serve to weaken the intervention..." (Mooradian & Druckman 1999, p. 710). The CSCE's role was relatively weak compared to Russia's and it, in fact, made it difficult for them even to create an agenda for a potential meeting. At that time, there was fairly high level Western interest in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and it was "this high level American intervention" that led to the creation of the Minsk group (Maresca 1996, p. 260). At the beginning of 1993, in an attempt to restart the stalled CSCE negotiations, Russia, Turkey and the United States held a series of private discussions resulting in what became known as the "3+1 initiative." [2]

According to their proposal, Armenian forces would withdraw from Kalbajar in two months; this term would be accepted as ceasefire and during this time new peace talks would start. Azerbaijan and Armenia accepted the plan. However, Armenia declared some of its concerns about the Karabakh Armenians' point of view. In May 1993, Karabakh officials rejected proposals due to their lack of "guarantees for the Karabakh Armenians and the proposal's exclusion of the elimination of the embargo put on Karabakh by Azerbaijan" (Lutem 2001, p. 14). Following and despite the latter, in October 1992, the US Congress passed the Freedom Supports Act 907a, which denied Azerbaijan all forms of governmental US aid, unless it respects international human rights standards, abandons its blockade of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and searches a peaceful solution to the conflict (Cornell 1997, p. 10). While Armenia was on the top of the list of the countries that received US aid in the region, Azerbaijan was left out of US aid distribution. US foreign policy towards the conflict favored Armenia until Caspian oil came on the scene.

In July 1993, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 853 regarding the Armenian-Azerbaijani fighting. The Resolution condemned seizure of Aghdam and called on all parties to cease supplying weapons to the belligerent sides, especially to the Armenians, because military assistance by third parties, especially by Armenia and Russia, intensified the fighting and resulted in the continued occupation of Azerbaijani territories. The resolution also called on Armenia to use its influence with the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities to force them into compliance with the UN Resolutions and Minsk Group initiatives. The resolution also called for the lifting of all economic and energy blockades in the region (Gurbuz 2003, p. 55). However, Karabakh authorities rejected the resolution.

From 1993 to December 1994, Russia was influential in brokering peace in the region. Russian diplomats and Russia's special envoy to the Minsk Group employed

shuttle diplomacy between the conflicting parties. However, in contrast to other contributing peace efforts in the region, Russia undermined the CSCE's role and caused confusion among the parties and other mediators.

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as a peacemaking structure entered the mediating process when Azerbaijan accepted the invitation to enter the CIS Tashkent Agreement on security in May 1992. Armenia was already a member and the CIS became a legitimate peace building force when Russia declared that OSCE could not even secure a cease-fire in the region (Barseghyan & Karaev 2004, p. 10). The CSCE also accepted the CIS participation in the peace process. Finally in 1994, the CIS, Russia and the CSCE managed to convince the parties to sign a cease-fire agreement and terminate violence, although most of the disputes between the parties stayed unsolved. After the cessation of hostilities, Armenia and Azerbaijan entered a state of frozen conflict, in which mass violence had ended, but the political dispute was unresolved (Waal 2003, p. 251).

In Budapest in 1994, [3] the OSCE held a summit and appointed co-chairs to lead the Minsk Group. Until 1995, Russia and Sweden served as the co-chairs. The Nagorno-Karabakh intervention marked the first time in history that the OSCE committed itself to resolving a conflict as a mediator in a peace conference (Mooradian 1998, p. 6). The OSCE failed to bring parties to any preliminary statement of general principles, to guide the process of conflict settlement (Barseghyan & Karaev 2004, p. 10). At the Lisbon Summit in 1996, the main peacemaking proposal in NK was accepted by all the participating countries except Armenia. [4] Since the OSCE resolution supported territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the Armenian side found it unacceptable.

In 1995, Sweden vacated its co-chair position to Finland and when Finland ceased to be the co-chair with Russia in 1997, a French representative was appointed to succeed the Finnish position. This initiated opposition from the Azerbaijani side, which requested an American representative instead. The dispute was resolved by appointing an American as third co-chair and since then this *troika* has not changed.

Unfortunately, Russian-OSCE coherence problems did not end after the ceasefire. Until the time when Swedish co-chairs left their position to Finland, Jan Eliasson's efforts of shuttle diplomacy were challenged by Russian diplomacy. Since that time, the Minsk group has come up with several proposals. Those proposals have been rejected once by Azerbaijan and twice by Armenia, a development that led OSCE to change its negotiation strategy in 1999 and to give greater priority to face-to-face meetings between Azerbaijani and Armenian officials. [5]

In March 2002, the Minsk group co-chairs offered another peace plan to the representatives of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The talks were held in privacy and the plan was not disclosed to the public. Following a decade of fruitless talks, a new format of the meetings, the Prague Process, involving direct bilateral contact between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan was initiated in 2004. Two years later, the Minsk Group declared that 2006 could be the "ripe moment" for a settlement. The mediators tried to convince Azerbaijan to accept a referendum just within NK, but Baku rejected that. It called for a nationwide Azerbaijani referendum on the final status of NK, but Yerevan in turn rejected that.

Because of this experience, many analysts agree that mediation efforts in NK have turned out to be a complete fiasco and that these efforts themselves have prolonged

the conflict (e.g. Betts 1999; Mooradian 1998). Moreover, from the beginning, the OSCE has been criticized by both Baku and Yerevan on many grounds. The co-chairs, in response, have laid the blame on the parties, but there clearly are several aspects of their activity and structure that hindered the peace process. This concerns, in particular, the specific views of the co-chair countries and their biases, real and perceived, for one or another side; something that has limited their ability to influence both parties.

It can be said that the mediators were successful, when they acted as communicators, still they could not change the perceptions of the parties from zero sum game to win-win solutions. The mediators, however, lacked the capacity of maneuvering and formulation. At the same time, the mediators also could not afford to withdraw or terminate the mediation efforts, since their national interests were at stake and they did not want another mediator to undertake initiation. One way or another, no peace plan was fully acceptable to both of the warring parties, and the lack of leverage gave them room to avoid pressure. The OSCE Minsk Group's impartiality, in turn, has been a matter of dispute for a long time.

Several conclusions follow from the above. Above all, there needs to be a change in mentality; that change is more than necessary both among the parties and the mediators. The parties need to understand compromise is inevitable for a peaceful settlement, and the mediators need to change their strategies, which seem to have failed up until now. They must pay more attention to the roots of the conflict and try to better understand why the parties are not willing to surrender certain principles. Now, more than 20 years on, Armenia's and Azerbaijan's demands are mutually exclusive and the international community's approach is usually divided. As a result, peace remains a long way off.

If the two parties are not ready, there will not be a settlement. The third party mediators may come up with more effective peace proposals and more innovative resolution packages, but they cannot dictate a settlement to the parties. Expecting a miracle from the third parties is not rational, but without their involvement the immediate parties are unlikely to be able to find a resolution on their own.

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Notes

[1] The committee consisted of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Hungary, Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation, Sweden, Turkey and the USA.

[2] Private US-Russian-Turkish talks grew to "3+1 initiative" when the Italian Minsk group chair joined the discussions. Armenia and Azerbaijan were then invited to join, preceding the reopening of talks in the Minsk Group. These talks led to a proposal commonly known as the "3+1 initiative" (Betts 1999). Later still, Armenia and Azerbaijan joined (5+1), then finally the Minsk group met together (Laitin & Suny 1999).

[3] Since 1994, the Minsk Process also includes the Vienna-based High Level Planning Group (the HLPG) for the peace-keeping operation, as well as a field mission in the region in the form of a personal representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office since May 1995 (Hakala 1998, p. 6).

[4] The proposal was envisaging a clause on territorial integrity of members, which was unacceptable to Armenia since it involved recognition of Azerbaijani territorial integrity as well.

[5] There had been dozens of meetings and among them the French facilitated meeting is outstanding. In March 2002, they agreed to assign "Personal Representatives at the level of deputy foreign ministers." There had been another meeting in Key West, Florida, which outlined another peace deal between the two parties. Although the Minsk group representatives and co-chairs were present at those meetings, they failed to yield a desirable outcome.

BAKU, TEHRAN SEEK NEW BALANCE IN RELATIONSHIP

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Two recent visits by Baku officials to Tehran, Ramiz Mehdiyev, the head of the Presidential Administration, and Allahshukur Pashazade, sheikh-ul-Islam and head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, have attracted attention not only because they follow on the heels of Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov's visit to Israel, but because they represent an effort to rebalance the relationship between Azerbaijan and Iran in both the political and religious spheres.

None of these visits was the result of a last minute decision: all are likely to have been planned for months; and consequently, it would be a mistake to call them a coincidence. Indeed, four years ago, a similar "coincidence" occurred when then-Iranian President Ahmadinejad and then Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman visited Baku almost simultaneously. This time around, Tehran assessed the visits of Mehdiyev and Pashazade as something extraordinary, given that they took place just before the Iranian presidential elections and thus helped to define the environment in which the new reformist Iranian leadership would be forced to operate.

Iran now must deal with the reality that Azerbaijan has become a politically and economically strong country not only in the region, but in the world, and thus it is not entirely surprising that official Baku and Tehran have been seeking rapprochement and the achievement of balanced relations, not simply at the level of diplomatic words but truly friendly and trusting ties. That is certainly suggested by the comment of the Iranian ambassador in Baku about the need to demonstrate the high level of trust between the two governments.

Regarding the issue of mutual support, the Iranian foreign ministry noted that during Mehdiyev's visit, the two sides discussed the Syrian crisis, something of enormous importance to Tehran and something on which, the ministry said, the two sides had succeeded in bringing their respective positions closer into line. [1] A second issue the two sides discussed was the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Azerbaijan favors that and also supports the division of Jerusalem between Palestine and Israel.

The third issue the two sides discussed was the equation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Palestinian problem, again something on which the two sides agreed. The fourth issue involved Iran's commitment not to support the Talysh movement or any other separatist group in Azerbaijan, a commitment former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami had made to the late Azerbaijan President Heydar Aliyev. And the fifth concerned the conflict between Iran and Israel, a conflict that the Israelis would like Baku to help resolve and something, which explains the proximity of the visit by Azerbaijani officials to Tehran and Israeli officials to Baku. [2] Because of that possibility, of course, both Israel and the US support good relations between

Tehran and Baku, and just as was the case four years ago, Azerbaijan is in a better position to serve as an intermediary than anyone else.

It is no accident that as these visits were taking place, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov spoke to the American Jewish Committee Global forum in Washington. Jewish organizations made clear that they were interested in all possible contacts through intermediaries with Tehran, including those that Azerbaijan could offer, including the follow on visit by Pashazade to Tehran, a visit that the Iran side characterized as one that reaffirmed the shared Islamic heritage of the two neighboring states.

“In our veins,” Seid Ali Khamenei, the spiritual leader of Iran said, “flows one and the same blood,” words that reflect another slogan which has been used in Tehran about relations with Azerbaijan, “two states—one nation.” Obviously, the Iranian religious leadership along with political ties wants to ensure close religious links as well.

As a religious state, all of Iran’s foreign policy is built on the basis of Islam and on the support of Islamist groups in various countries. Pashazade in this context had as his task dissuading the Iranian clerics from providing moral and material support to Azerbaijani Islamists. The two sides were able to agree on the need to block any mass penetration of radical Islam into either country.

Thanks to the efforts of the Iranian religious establishment, the spread of the radical wing of Salafism into the region has been limited. The prolongation of the conflict in Syria, however, creates a favorable basis for the spread of terrorism in much the same way that the Russian-Chechen war did in the 1990s. Consequently, Baku and Tehran have many reasons for cooperation.

With its new president, Iran will be moving toward a new political level both internally and externally. It will certainly want to advance Iranian-Azerbaijani relations in ways that are consistent with the needs of both sides. And as Alex Vatanka, an expert at the Middle East Institute in Washington, has pointed out on the pages of *Azerbaijan in the World*, Azerbaijan is precisely the country with which Tehran will be reviewing its entire range of policies in order to boost cooperation rather than incite a new round of competition.

Notes

[1] See <http://m.amerikaninsesi.org/a/1660588.html> (accessed 13 July 2013).

[2] See <http://www.turkishnews.com/ru/content/2012/06/11/Азербайджан-может-стать-посредником/> (accessed 13 July 2013).

NAVAL COMPETITION ON THE CASPIAN HEATING UP

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The first-ever joint Russian-Iranian naval exercises on the Caspian Sea, exercises that are taking place even though there has been no agreement on the delimitation of the seabed, suggest that there may be a serious naval competition on the Caspian for the first time in nearly a century between Russia and Iran, on the one hand, and other countries in the region, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which have developed closer ties with NATO and the West, on the other. Indeed, one Moscow newspaper earlier this month characterized the Russian-Iranian naval maneuvers as heralding a new "anti-NATO Caspian alliance" and warned that other littoral countries will have to respond to this new reality. [1]

Over the last two years, both the Russian Federation and Iran have increased the size of their naval presence on the Caspian, exchanged fleet visits, and now have conducted joint exercises, a trend that has prompted regional observers to ask whether "the neighbors of Russia and Iran in the Caspian basin should be concerned about this? Or whether on the contrary the strengthening of the military-political influence of the two powers will strengthen stability in the Caspian region and block the penetration of that region by outside players?" [2]

Both Russian and Iranian officials have made clear that they are concerned about the growing activity of NATO and the United States in the region and especially the transit of military supplies via Aktau in Kazakhstan and military cooperation talks between Azerbaijan and the Western alliance. Russian commentators in particular have spoken about "the problem of the militarization of the Caspian" and the need to prevent this by an agreement among the five littoral states, something the latter have not succeeded in reaching even on the delimitation of the seabed despite talks that have been going on for more than a decade.

Both have also insisted that the strengthening of the Russian and Iranian presence on the Caspian is "not directed against Azerbaijan," but that rather, in the words of Russian military analyst Vladimir Popov, this trend reflects "the common geopolitical interests" of the two powers, interests which he says "are much closer than the interests of Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan" which are more interested in involving NATO and the United States rather than keeping outside powers out of the region. [3]

Not surprisingly, Azerbaijan and other littoral states feel they have no choice, but to develop their own naval capacities lest Russia and Iran use their power to "resolve disputes on the Caspian by military means." That is the typical logic of naval competitions throughout history, and it is one that no country concerned with the defense of its national interests can afford to ignore. Azerbaijan is no exception: it is developing a navy with ever-greater capacity to defend its coastline and protect the passage of its own and other countries' shipping on the Caspian.

Unfortunately, each country is eyeing what the other is doing, a pattern that presages a naval competition on a sea that has not seen one since 1920 when Russia's White Army Caspian flotilla withdrew in the face of the Bolshevik advance. But as Moscow analyst Sergey Mikheyev points out, "this is an extremely dangerous logic which can lead to unpredictable consequences and which threatens a potential catastrophe."

According to Mikheyev, "Russia is calling for the creation of a regional organization, which will be a space for the resolution of contradictions and the coordination of efforts on both political and military relations;" something that Kazakhstan has

indicated some interest in, but that Azerbaijan like Turkmenistan does not, at least at present. But this Russian proposal and both the costs and the dangers of a naval competition are likely to open the way to more talks among the littoral states, something each of them will be watching closely as will the outside powers that Moscow and Tehran want to keep outside of the region.

Notes

[1] See http://ng.ru/armies/2013-07-03/2_alliance.html (accessed 14 July 2013).

[2] See <http://kavpolit.com/kogo-stoit-opasatsya-azerbajdzhanu/> (accessed 14 July 2013).

[3] See http://ng.ru/armies/2013-07-03/2_alliance.html (accessed 14 July 2013).

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that, "the unique and important role of Azerbaijan in the world is based on five pillars: our traditions of tolerance, our strategic location, economic indications, as well as an understanding of the principles of regional security and a striving for peace in our region and in the entire world" (<http://news.day.az/politics/412602.html>).

Industry and Energy Minister Natik Abbasov says that Azerbaijan is "changing the energy map of Europe" (<http://news.day.az/economy/415004.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Azerbaijan opened new embassies in Brazil, Australia and Vietnam in 2012-2013 and is also planning to open ones in Chili and Uruguay shortly. Azerbaijan currently has more than 70 diplomatic missions around the world (<http://news.day.az/politics/414435.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

The European Parliament says that Azerbaijan no longer is among those countries where election observers are required (<http://news.day.az/politics/415143.html>).

Richard Morningstar, US ambassador to Baku, says that, "Azerbaijan has achieved significant improvements since becoming independent" (<http://news.day.az/politics/413144.html>).

Javanshir Akhundov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Tehran, tells Ahmad Alira Beigi, head of Iran's Eastern Azerbaijan Province, that the construction of a rail line between Azerbaijan and Iran would benefit both countries (<http://news.day.az/economy/413989.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

15 July

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev says Baku is interested not only in credits, but also in gaining international expertise (<http://news.day.az/economy/415942.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the international community should work to promote dialogue between the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/415948.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Yerevan constantly distorts the negotiating record in its public comments (<http://news.day.az/politics/415889.html>).

The Foreign Ministry notes that Leonid Kozhara, Ukrainian foreign minister and chairman-in-office of the OSCE, met with the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh while he was in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/415934.html>).

Aflatun Amashev, chairman of the Azerbaijan Press Council, and Hamit Kardeniz, the press officer of the Turkish embassy in Baku, agree to expand cooperation (<http://news.day.az/society/415894.html>).

Librarians in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan reach an agreement to cooperate more closely (<http://news.day.az/society/415919.html>).

Leonid Kozhara, Ukrainian foreign minister and chairman-in-office of the OSCE, calls for the Minsk Group to become more active (<http://news.day.az/politics/415818.html>).

Pascual Meunier, French ambassador to Baku, notes that France was the second country to recognize Azerbaijan and that it is committed to a strong and independent country and to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/415729.html> and <http://news.day.az/politics/415946.html>).

Andrzej Kasprzyk, personal representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office on the conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, says that he is concerned by the latest increases in violations of the Armenian-Azerbaijani ceasefire regime (<http://news.day.az/politics/415897.html>).

13 July

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group issue a joint statement calling for a meeting between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia later this year (<http://news.day.az/politics/415569.html>).

Azerbaijani and Iranian border officials agree to work together to reduce the time those crossing the border have to wait in line (<http://news.day.az/politics/415539.html>).

12 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and also with his Armenian counterpart Edvard Nalbandyan (<http://news.day.az/politics/415547.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev says that Azerbaijan does not have any other choice but to use force to liberate the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/415333.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Ahmed bin Nari al-Nabnani, chief of Oman's general staff (<http://news.day.az/politics/415343.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov receives a delegation from the Turkish defense ministry (<http://news.day.az/politics/415383.html>).

Azerbaijani and Turkish diaspora organizations in the United States launch a campaign to secure American recognition of the events in Khojaly and Srebrenica as genocides (<http://news.day.az/politics/415267.html>).

Richard Morningstar, US ambassador to Baku, says the United States will increase its activity in the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/415423.html>).

Igor Rogov, chairman of Kazakhstan's Constitutional Court, says that Astana is studying Azerbaijan's legal system (<http://news.day.az/politics/415422.html>).

11 July

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives the Secretariat of the Defense Industry of Turkey (<http://news.day.az/politics/414980.html>).

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev receives Carlos Dante Riva, Argentina's ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/economy/415140.html>).

Industry and Energy Minister Natic Abbasov says that Azerbaijan is "changing the energy map of Europe" (<http://news.day.az/economy/415004.html>).

Asef Hajiyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenia's continuing occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory is restricting the development of tourism in the region (<http://news.day.az/politics/415093.html>).

The European Parliament says that Azerbaijan no longer is among those countries where election observers are required (<http://news.day.az/politics/415143.html>).

Mohsun Pakayin, Iran's ambassador to Baku, says that the Minsk Group has failed to make the necessary progress (<http://news.day.az/politics/415068.html>).

Mohsun Pakayin, Iran's ambassador to Baku, says that Iran, if invited, would consider participating in the TAP program (<http://news.day.az/economy/415088.html>).

Lyudmila Shevtsova, deputy chairman of the Russian Duma, says that Russian-Azerbaijani relations have "deep roots" (<http://news.day.az/politics/415075.html>).

10 July

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev receives Saudi Arabian ambassador to Baku, Musaid bin Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Salimi (<http://news.day.az/economy/414860.html>).

Youth and Sports Minister Azad Rahimov signs a cooperation agreement with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Abbasi (<http://news.day.az/society/414586.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that President Ilham Aliyev's policies are based on the national interests of the country (<http://news.day.az/politics/414753.html>).

Ilgar Mukhtarov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Mexico City, says that Mexico's decision to recognize Khojaly as genocide was a shock for Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/414671.html>).

Hidzhran Huseynova, chairman of the State Committee on the Family, Women and Children, speaks on gender issues to a meeting of the OSCE Commission on the Human Dimension (<http://news.day.az/politics/414675.html>).

Afghanistani Foreign Minister Gulam Mustafa Patang says that Kabul supports Azerbaijan on the issue of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/414821.html>).

Maret Hajiyev, culture minister of the Republic of Ingushetia, says that Azerbaijan has impressed her by its amazing rate of development (<http://news.day.az/politics/414759.html>).

9 July

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that the European Parliament is interested in expanding cooperation with Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/414560.html>).

Fuad Alaskarov, head of the law enforcement department of the Presidential Administration, says that the latest report of Transparency International confirms "the successes of Azerbaijan in the struggle with corruption" (<http://news.day.az/politics/414441.html>).

Deputy Economic Development Minister Niyai Safarov visits China's Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region (<http://news.day.az/economy/414430.html>).

The Ukrainian foreign ministry says that Kyiv is pressing for the OSCE Minsk Group to become more active (<http://news.day.az/politics/414528.html>).

The Iranian foreign ministry says that Tehran is prepared to serve as an intermediary in talks to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/414402.html>).

The British Foreign Office announces that Ephran Siddig is to be the new British ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/414517.html>).

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will send election observers to Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/414540.html>).

8 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Columbian Foreign Minister Maria Angela Holguin (<http://news.day.az/politics/414204.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ukrainian Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara who is also chairman-in-office of the OSCE (<http://news.day.az/politics/414204.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev is named statesman of the year in a poll of representatives of students in the member states of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/414272.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Azerbaijan welcomes international observers of its elections (<http://news.day.az/politics/414164.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov calls on the OSCE to push the Minsk Group to become more active (<http://news.day.az/politics/414155.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Hamad Kalkab Malboum, president of the International Military Sports Association (<http://news.day.az/politics/414297.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, deputy chairman and executive secretary of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says the statement by Moldovan ombudsman Aureliu Grigoriu in Yerevan shows that Europe is now on the side of Azerbaijan regarding the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/414227.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department of the Presidential Administration, says that European leaders must put pressure on Yerevan to change its ways given Armenian treatment of Moldovan ombudsman Aureliu Grigoriu and notes that it is Armenia and not Azerbaijan that is blocking the path to peace (<http://news.day.az/politics/414104.html>).

Elmira Suleymanova, Azerbaijan's ombudsman, supports her Moldovan counterpart Aureliu Grigoria and says that the latter's remarks in Yerevan show that Europeans and other members of the international system do not consider Armenia a legal and democratic state (<http://news.day.az/politics/414074.html>).

Aydyn Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, publishes an open letter to Moldovan ombudsman Aureliu Grigoriu praising her for her stand on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/414260.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, a Milli Majlis deputy says that Yerevan is likely to engage in provocations during the Azerbaijani presidential campaign, but that Baku is ready to rebuff them (<http://news.day.az/politics/414145.html>).

SOCAR begins talks with Transneft about sending oil to foreign markets via the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/economy/414256.html>).

Columbian Foreign Minister Maria Angela Holguin says that Quito supports Baku on

the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/414121.html>).

A delegation from the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly visits Azerbaijan to investigate conditions of refugees there (<http://news.day.az/politics/414132.html>).

Musa Chilyev, head of Ingushetia, says people in his republic are interested in making tourist trips to Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/414128.html>).

7 July

Ogtay Asadov, speaker of the Milli Majlis, takes part in a ceremony on Croatia's national day (<http://news.day.az/politics/413792.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, first vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that "certain forces" are trying to complicate relations between Baku and Moscow by spreading rumors about Russian pressure on Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/413896.html>).

Bahar Muradova, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenia is against convening a conference of the OSCE Minsk Group, because it does not want a settlement of the conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/413882.html>).

Members of the Milli Majlis condemn Armenian threats to Moldovan ombudsman Aurelia Grigoriu (<http://news.day.az/politics/413943.html> and <http://news.day.az/politics/413928.html>).

Iranian President Hasan Rowhani says in a letter to President Ilham Aliyev that relations between their two countries are built "on friendship and mutual trust" (<http://news.day.az/politics/413907.html>).

Vinod Kumar, India's ambassador to Baku, says that Azerbaijan is an attractive place for investment (<http://news.day.az/economy/413875.html>).

Matthew Bryza, former US ambassador to Baku, says he is concerned by the absence of a permanent US co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/414046.html>).

6 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Gulam Mujtab Patang, Afghanistan's interior minister (<http://news.day.az/politics/413998.html>).

Javanshir Akhundov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Tehran, tells Ahmed Alira Beigi, head of Iran's Eastern Azerbaijan Province, that the construction of a rail line between Azerbaijan and Iran would benefit both countries (<http://news.day.az/economy/413989.html>).

5 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Josip Leko, speaker of the Croatian Parliament (<http://news.day.az/politics/413601.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Igor Sechin, president of Rosneft

(<http://news.day.az/politics/413601.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov meets in Riga with Latvian President Andris Bērziņš (<http://news.day.az/society/413659.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov meets in Minsk with his Belorussian counterpart Vladimir Vashchenko (<http://news.day.az/society/413659.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the statement of Moldovan ombudsman Aureliu Grigoriu to the Armenian parliament in which she talked about Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani lands shows that the international community will not put up with Armenia's continued occupation (<http://news.day.az/politics/413655.html>).

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkavichius who is now chairman-in-office of the Council of the European Union says that frozen conflicts such as Nagorno-Karabakh interfere with development (<http://news.day.az/politics/413459.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russia's ambassador to Baku, says that Russia does not interfere in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan and is not supporting any candidate in the presidential elections there (<http://news.day.az/politics/413753.html>).

Josip Leko, speaker of the Croatian Parliament, says that his country supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/413552.html>).

The Taxation Minister is elected to the executive council of the International Organization of Tax Administrations (<http://news.day.az/economy/413698.html>).

4 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives a US Congressional delegation headed by Senator Roger Wicker (<http://news.day.az/politics/413344.html>).

Shahin Abdullayev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Cairo, says that Baku will work with whatever government is in power there (<http://news.day.az/politics/413425.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that a continuation of the current approach to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is "exhausting hopes for a peaceful solution" (<http://news.day.az/politics/413305.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that Azerbaijan's efforts to promote civil society and democratic development are a model for Europe (<http://news.day.az/politics/413348.html>).

Farhad Mammadov, director of the Presidential Center for Strategic Research, says that the occupied territories are being used for the training of terrorists (<http://news.day.az/politics/413421.html>).

Pascual Meunier, France's ambassador to Baku, says that both France and Germany are observing the OSCE embargo against arms sales to Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/413214.html>).

French Senator Jean Besson says that "France as a co-chair country of the OSCE Minsk Group is seeking to resolve the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia" and that Paris "hopes that Azerbaijan will find a path to the resolution of the conflict close to its own position" (<http://news.day.az/politics/413250.html>).

3 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mario Baldini, the outgoing Italian ambassador to Baku on the occasion of the completion of his posting to Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/413080.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev presents medals to Turkish General Hairi Kivrikoglu for his contributions to bilateral military cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/413121.html>).

Transportation Minister Ziya Mammadov signs a cooperation agreement with his Turkish and Kazakhstan counterparts, Binali Yildirim and Askar Zhumagaliyev (<http://news.day.az/economy/413013.html>).

Azerbaijani deputies circulate a paper to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe labeling Armenia "an aggressor state" (<http://news.day.az/politics/413100.html>).

Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius receives Azerbaijan's Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov (<http://news.day.az/politics/413022.html>).

Richard Morningstar, US ambassador to Baku, says that, "Azerbaijan has achieved significant improvements since becoming independent" (<http://news.day.az/politics/413144.html>).

Huang Jin Ha, a member of the Korean National Assembly, says that Azerbaijan under President Ilham Aliyev has achieved economic and political stability and thus is an attractive place for investment (<http://news.day.az/politics/413093.html>).

Ioan Enjiu, a Romanian parliamentarian, says his country supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan on the basis of the four UN Security Council resolutions on that subject (<http://news.day.az/politics/413052.html>).

2 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ionnis Metaxas, outgoing Greek ambassador to Baku on the occasion of the completion of his assignment in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/412784.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Luka Truens, outgoing Belgian ambassador to Baku on the occasion of the completion of his assignment in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/412784.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev says that the existence of Article 907 in US law is having a continuing negative impact on military and other forms of cooperation between Baku and Washington (<http://news.day.az/politics/412715.html>).

Elkhan Suleymanov, an Azerbaijani deputy to the Euronest Parliament, calls on the

European Parliament to demand that Armenia repair dams and other facilities in the occupied territories that Yerevan has allowed to deteriorate (<http://news.day.az/politics/412762.html>).

Hartwig Fischer, a deputy in the German Bundestag, says that Berlin supports the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the four UN Security Council resolutions on that subject (<http://news.day.az/politics/412746.html>).

Azay Guliyev, an Azerbaijani deputy to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, announces that Azerbaijan for the first time has secured representation in the leading bodies of the assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/412802.html>).

Azerbaijan is elected to the working group on physical property of the European Economic Commission of the United Nations (<http://news.day.az/politics/412645.html>).

Azerbaijan is elected to the position of deputy chairman of the World Tariff Organization for the European Region (<http://news.day.az/economy/412775.html>).

Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmon receives Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov (<http://news.day.az/economy/412608.html>).

Kyrgyzstan Prime Minister Zhantoro Satibaldiyev receives Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov (<http://news.day.az/society/412808.html>).

Hartwig Fischer, a deputy in the German Bundestag, says that Berlin supports the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the four UN Security Council resolutions on that subject (<http://news.day.az/politics/412746.html>).

Mark Hereward, head of the UNICEF office in Baku, says that Azerbaijan has made significant progress in protecting the rights of children (<http://news.day.az/society/412624.html>).

1 July

President Ilham Aliyev receives Filippo Lombardi, chairman of the upper house of the Swiss parliament (<http://news.day.az/politics/412469.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Evelyn Farkas, advisor to the US secretary of defense (<http://news.day.az/politics/412469.html>).

Justice Minister Fikrat Mammadov meets in New York with Patricia O'Brian, deputy UN secretary general for legal affairs (<http://news.day.az/politics/412510.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that any visits to the occupied territories not authorized by Baku are illegal (<http://news.day.az/politics/412500.html>).

Bahar Muradova, a Milli Majlis deputy, calls for the convention of the full OSCE Minsk Group because of the lack of progress of the co-chairs (<http://news.day.az/politics/412225.html>).

Azerbaijani military officials meet with their American counterparts in Baku in the framework of the cooperation programs between the two countries

(<http://news.day.az/politics/412264.html>).

Philippo Lombardi, speaker of the upper house of the Swiss parliament, says the failure to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict despite more than 20 years of talks does not inspire confidence and that greater efforts should be made in the future (<http://news.day.az/politics/412331.html>).

Daniel Christian Ciobanu, Romanian ambassador to Baku and resident coordinator for NATO relations with Azerbaijan, says that the Western alliance highly values Azerbaijan's contribution in Afghanistan (<http://news.day.az/politics/412295.html>).

Note to Readers

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