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AZERBAIJAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA SINCE 1991

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Azerbaijan has been committed to broaden its relations with neighboring countries, including the post-Soviet states in Central Asia. At present, relations between Baku and the governments in that region are developing rapidly. Not only do four of these five countries share a Turkic background, but all of them have closely related cultures and are important partners of Azerbaijan on energy issues and the Silk Road transportation corridor.

Uzbekistan. Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan established diplomatic relations on October 2, 1995, with Azerbaijan opening an embassy in Tashkent in 1996 and Uzbekistan opening an embassy in Baku in 1998. President Heydar Aliyev worked hard to develop relations between the two countries, and in May 1996, Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov paid an official visit to Baku during which the two leaders signed 17 agreements. Thirteen months later, President Aliyev visited Tashkent, during which they signed 20 additional documents, including one establishing an inter-governmental commission on bilateral cooperation.

The two countries cooperate closely not only bilaterally but in multilateral settings, with Tashkent consistently supporting Azerbaijan's position on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in votes at the United Nations General Assembly, including the March 2008 resolution on the Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan. Both countries also participate in the TRACECA corridor project. And the exchange of visits at all levels and on a wide variety of issues has been increasing.

Kazakhstan. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan established diplomatic relations on August 30, 1992, with Azerbaijan opening an embassy in Astana in 2004 and Kazakhstan opening an embassy in Baku in 1993. In September 1996, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited Baku, and nine months later, Azerbaijan President Heydar Aliyev visited Kazakhstan. These visits laid the foundation for a rapid growth in bilateral ties, a development marked by the signing in Baku on May 24, 2005, of an Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Alliance between the two countries. This bilateral cooperation has set the stage for cooperation in a variety of multilateral forums, with Kazakhstan consistently supporting Azerbaijan on the question of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

The two countries have worked closely to promote Trans-Caspian oil and gas transportation routes, and they share many common positions on issues like the delimitation of the Caspian Sea bed and the legal status generally of that body of water. Moreover, they have expanded contacts with each other through the growth of direct air connections between Baku and Astana and through the establishment of an Azerbaijani Consulate General in Aktau at the Kazakhstan end of the Baku-Aktau shipping corridor. And the interstate commission has successfully promoted the expansion of ties not only in the energy sector but in other areas as well.

Turkmenistan. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan established diplomatic relations on June 9, 1992. Azerbaijan opened an embassy in Ashgabat in 2002, and Turkmenistan opened an embassy in Baku in 1999 but because of financial problems had to close its mission in 2001. Ashgabat reopened its embassy in Baku in 2008.

In March 1996, Turkmenistan President Saparmurat Niyazov visited Baku where together with his Azerbaijani counterpart Heydar Aliyev, he signed the Baku Declaration and the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation which lay the foundation for the development of bilateral ties. Recent years have seen contacts between the two countries grow extremely quickly. In May 2008, Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov visited Baku, and in November 2008, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev visited Turkmenistan.

Tajikistan. Azerbaijan and Tajikistan established diplomatic relations on May 29, 1992. Azerbaijan opened its embassy in Dushanbe in 2007, and Tajikistan opened its embassy in Baku in 2008. Relations between Baku and Dushanbe have been growing rapidly in recent years. In March 2007, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev

visited Tajikistan, and five months later, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon visited Azerbaijan. The agreements they reached during these meetings included the establishment of an interstate commission to promote trade and economic cooperation.

Kyrgyzstan. Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan established diplomatic relations on January 19, 1993. Azerbaijan opened its embassy in Bishkek in 2007. Kyrgyzstan has been represented in Baku since 2001 by an honorary consul. Azerbaijan works closely with Kyrgyzstan in the TURKSOY group, which was established to promote cooperation among Turkic countries.

AZERBAIJAN AND CENTRAL ASIA: FROM BRIDGE ON THE SILK ROAD TO PARTNERSHIP IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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Baku's relations with the five post-Soviet states of Central Asia have evolved more radically over the last 20 years than have its ties with any other region of the world. That is true whether one thinks in terms of the expectations of analysts and governments outside the region, the goals of Azerbaijan and its interlocutors in the region, or the aspirations of all five countries involved. But these shifts have passed beneath the radar screen because many in the region and beyond continue to use a vocabulary which stresses continuity rather than change and which thus conceals rather than reveals what has been going on.

When Azerbaijan regained its independence in 1991 and the five Soviet republics in Central Asia gained theirs, many governments and commentators did one of two things with regard to the relations these six countries were going to have. Either they lumped all of them together given their Soviet experience, their Islamic cultures, and their Turkic languages (except for Tajikistan), or they viewed them as an updated version of the Silk Road that would in the 21st century carry Western models of economics and politics eastward and Eastern oil and gas in the opposite direction.

Both of these perspectives, while they caught important aspects of reality, vastly oversimplified the situation in three ways. First, they ignored the enormous diversity of these countries in terms of their history, culture, political style and aspirations, natural resources and economic opportunities, and, last but far from least, their very different geographic locations. Second, they failed to treat these countries as subjects of their own histories, continuing the Orientalist tradition of assuming that their importance was a function of their being the objects of interest, attention and actions of others. And third, focusing on the East-West axis, they ignored the North-South one, not only the continuing role of Russia but also the growing role of Iran and the Muslim Middle East more generally.

Most governments, including those in the region and outside, have moved beyond these misconceptions. But in almost every case, they continue to employ language that downplays not only the complexity of the situation but also the role of Azerbaijan and the five countries of post-Soviet Central Asia relative to that of outside powers, including not only governments but also oil and gas companies as well.

If one looks at Azerbaijan's relationship with Central Asia over the past 18 years, three things stand out. First, Baku's understanding of its ties with the region as a whole has fundamentally changed. Second, its relations with each of the countries have evolved almost beyond recognition both because of that overall conception and because of its specific needs with each of them. And third, Azerbaijan's own sense of its place in the world and its commitment to a balanced foreign policy, one that requires it to navigate between and among various power blocs, mean that Baku's aspirations for its relationships with the five countries of Central Asia appear likely to continue to evolve.

Azerbaijan's Vision of Central Asia. Azerbaijan is not a Central Asian country, and while it is both Muslim and Turkic, it is both those things in very different ways from the countries of Central Asia. It is thus a bridge between two worlds, between Europe and the East, and that given Turkey's interest in promoting the development of a "Turkic world," the West's interest in hydrocarbons, and the exoticism of the unfamiliar which for many in the outside world both Azerbaijan and Central Asia were in the early 1990s and to some extent still are. Immediately after recovering its independence, Azerbaijan accepted these outside definitions, but its own leaders quickly recognized that their country's relationship with Central Asia as a whole was going to be more complicated.

On the one hand, Azerbaijanis who had looked at a map – and they were more numerous than those giving advice to them who had – could see that Azerbaijan was a bridge and a barrier along both east-west and north-south axes. It could be a bridge between the West and Central Asia or a barrier between the two, and it could be a bridge between Russia and the Middle East or a barrier. And many in Baku quickly recognized that those who wanted it to be a bridge along one path wanted it to be a barrier along the other, something that Azerbaijan's elites recognized was not sustainable however much some countries were pushing the idea.

And on the other hand, Azerbaijanis recognized early on that the countries of Central Asia were both so fundamentally different than theirs – far more traditional, far more Islamic, and far less open, to name but three of the most obvious ways – that Azerbaijan could deal with it only by seeing it as different from itself and insisting that others do the same, again however much many outsiders were unprepared to do so or at least unwilling to accept the complexities that such an understanding requires.

As a result, over the last 15 years, Azerbaijan has shifted from viewing itself as part of Central Asia to seeing itself as a sympathetic and interested outside power. For no other group of countries has the change in concept and hence of behavior for Azerbaijan been greater or with larger consequences.

Baku and the Five Capitals. These shifts have been most obvious as Azerbaijan has focused on its relations with the individual countries. Relations with three of them – Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – have been driven largely by two issues:

the unresolved question of the delimitation of the Caspian seabed and the production and especially the route for the export of hydrocarbons. In each of these cases, not only have the interests of Azerbaijan and its interlocutor shifted – with Azerbaijan and the other countries involved in their thinking on the Caspian and as to their relative status as suppliers of hydrocarbons or as transit routes to world markets. Relations with the two others – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – have been less intense precisely because neither of these issues is in play.

Moreover, there has been a shift in generations in Baku, from a leader who dealt with most Central Asian presidents on the basis of their common experience as former heads of Soviet republics to one who has emerged as a national leader independent of that Soviet past. On the one hand, that shift has led both sides to reconsider the nature of the relationship. But on the other, this has meant that Azerbaijan has been able to view the countries of Central Asia as countries like any others instead of as “former Soviet republics.”

And perhaps most important, Azerbaijan by virtue of the skill of its leadership, the location of the country, and its commitment to a balanced foreign policy has outpaced all of the Central Asian states. It is no longer in its own thinking or in their just one of the post-Soviet Muslim republics but a regional power, ready, willing and able to play international politics at a level and on a board far beyond the reach of most of the Central Asian states. And that has had the paradoxical consequence that just at a time when many have downplayed the status of Azerbaijan as a bridge from east to west, it is now playing that role to the hilt, precisely because it has also maintained a balance north and south, something that no other country in the region and especially in Central Asia narrowly defined has been able to do.

Azerbaijan, Central Asia and the Broader World. Looking forward, Azerbaijan is in a position, as its own leaders and people recognize, to play a role in Central Asia far larger than anyone had thought, not simply as a transit route and not because of competition over oil and gas resources but because of its ability to attract the attention of powers further afield. That is something both Azerbaijan and the countries of Central Asia understand, as shown by the increasingly frequent back and forth visits among them and by the deference to Azerbaijan that even the most senior leaders in Central Asia have shown.

Maintaining this position will not be easy. The challenges Azerbaijan faces in the ever more interconnected and globalized world are enormous as are those within its own borders, but those who expected Baku to be only a bridge for others must now contend with the reality that it is in a position to be far more than that, a situation that others will challenge and that in the future, Baku will have to parry. In short, the game of international relations goes on: Not the Great Game in which the peoples and governments of Eurasia are pawns for outsiders but one in which they are players too, something Azerbaijan’s government understood earlier than most and has definitively taken advantage of.

ASHGABAT’S AZERBAIJAN DILEMMA

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Ashgabat has officially expressed its intention to strengthen its military position in the Caspian. At an expanded session of the Turkmenistan Security Council, which took place on the occasion of the opening of the new building of the Police Academy in Ashgabat, President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov said that by 2015, Turkmenistan will build a naval base on the Caspian to defend the sea border of the country. That border, he noted, always must be ready to combat smugglers and terrorists, the goal of whom is the destabilization of the situation inside the country. In reporting this, Turkmenistan's state television said that "Turkmenistan does not have any territorial claims on any territory and does not consider any state as its enemy. Instead, it considers its borders frontiers of peace, friendship and good neighborly relations."

It is, however, necessary to recall that literally on the eve of the president's announcement, the Turkmenistan government accused Azerbaijan of exploiting oil fields which supposedly belong to Turkmenistan. In this connection, Ashgabat even declared that it was ready to turn to the International Arbitrage Court for a resolution of this dispute. The most interesting thing here is that the disputed issues and more precisely the pretensions of Turkmenistan to ownership of several oil and gas fields in the Caspian have existed between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan already for quite some time.

But Turkmenistan's striving to defend with its own forces its sea borders is something Ashgabat has begun talking about only now.

By the way, Turkmenistan has a sea border not only with Azerbaijan but also with Russia, Kazakhstan and Iran, each of which has its own naval flotillas. Ashgabat up to now had limited itself to the purchase of naval patrol vessels. The Turkmen leader explained the need to rearm the national army and the strengthening of the military strategic position on the sea by pointing to the increasing activity of international extremist and terrorist groups that are interested in drug trafficking. On this basis, the Turkmenistan president said, the naval forces will be dislocated on a permanent basis, although he did not specify precisely where this naval facility would be located. Berdymukhammedov also declared that the border service of Turkmenistan would buy new patrol boats and that for the Turkmenistan fleet it would buy two contemporary ships armed with rockets. In addition, and in order to increase the effectiveness of the protection of its borders, he indicated that Turkmenistan plans to conduct regular large-scale naval exercises.

Beyond any doubt, the newly declared position of Turkmenistan concerning its plans to construct a naval base says that Turkmenistan is dissatisfied with the development of events on the Caspian and above all that despite its significant hydrocarbon reserves, Ashgabat has not been involved as actively as Azerbaijan in regional projects. Moreover, the Turkmenistan president's declaration suggests that he is dissatisfied with the way in which negotiations on the final status of the Caspian Sea have been proceeding.

With regard to the question of the division of the Caspian seabed, Azerbaijan, Russia and Kazakhstan do not have any pretensions toward one another. On this question, among our countries there exist both bilateral and trilateral accords. The sides have also come to a unified position on the definition of the coordinates of the dividing

lines. The two other littoral states, Turkmenistan and Iran have not agreed to this, and as a result, despite many years of discussions, the status of the Caspian has not yet been defined.

It is of course difficult to imagine that because of the Caspian a serious military conflict between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan could begin. And although there were certain tensions between Baku and Ashgabat at the end of the 1990s, the most recent declaration of President Berdymukhammedov hardly can be considered a call to military action.

In Ashgabat, the government understands perfectly well what it is doing. Today is not the beginning and even not the end of the 1990s. Azerbaijan today is an important regional player with growing economic and military capacity, it is actively involved in large-scale oil and gas projects, and Baku cannot be frightened easily by the strengthening of naval forces in the region. That is all the more so in this case because according to Ashgabat's official declaration, it is building up these forces to oppose terrorist and extremist organizations, a task that is entirely a good thing. The only question that arises is why it is necessary to wait until 2015?

As far as the declaration of the Turkmenistan side concerning an appeal to the International Arbitrage Court, then this is more likely than anything else an attempt to demonstrate to the regional community Turkmenistan's interests and readiness to defend them by all available means. But Azerbaijan has not violated the interests of anyone else and does not intend to be hostile to Turkmenistan. More than that, in the period when problems with Turkmenistan concerning the sea border did arise, Azerbaijan showed admirable restraint and declared that it was stopping all work in the area until the final resolution of the status of the Caspian Sea. What more could it have done?

It is more likely that the Turkmen declarations will stop at this. The tone of official Ashgabat since the president's statement has become distinctly softer. What's more, on the horizon is the development of the Nabucco program to which Turkmenistan is beginning to show direct interest. President Berdymukhammedov, *Interfax* reports, has said that "Turkmenistan, which supports the principles of the diversification of the export of its energy production to world markets intends to use existing possibilities for participation in major international projects like, for example, Nabucco."

The Turkmenistan leader is a sufficiently pragmatic politician who well understands what is going on and is more than capable of evaluating the situation. And that, in the current circumstances, is far more important.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says at the informal summit of four of the five Caspian littoral states, in Aktau (Kazakhstan), that he is "certain" that "the decisions of the Tehran summit are very important" and that all issues of the Caspian Sea basin "will be

successfully resolved in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172108.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the international relations department of the Presidential Administration, says in reaction to the announcement that Turkey and Armenia have signed two protocols moving those countries closer to diplomatic relations and the opening of the border that “the main thing is that Turkey remain true to its promises” to Azerbaijan not to do anything that would undercut Baku’s position (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170841.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that the signing of the Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and the Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations with Armenia does not mean that Ankara plans “the opening of the borders with Yerevan.” That will be an outcome of a process, he says, that will require other steps, including progress toward the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170524.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that the existing situation in the Caucasus “is not profitable for Turkey, for Armenia or for Azerbaijan.” Many people think, he continues, that “Armenia has won from the occupation of the lands of Azerbaijan, but this is not so. Armenia is becoming poorer with each day and the people of Armenia are leaving the country.” If Yerevan continues the occupation, Armenia “will continue to grow poorer” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170578.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says in Georgia that there is “still a long way to go” before the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border. On another matter, he says that he intends to visit Abkhazia in order to “try to regulate its relations with Georgia” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171473.html>).

Zhang Yangnan, China’s ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Beijing “considers Azerbaijan the main country in the Caucasus and devotes great importance to the development of relations with this country” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171039.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy

15 September

President Ilham says that “the Contract of the Century [signed 15 years ago today] was an extraordinarily significant and decisive event in the life of independent Azerbaijan” (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/172632.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172593.html>).

Carl Bildt, the chairman in office of the European Commission, announces that the European Union intends to broaden its cooperation with Azerbaijan and to begin

negotiations about association accords with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172588.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, rejects as without any foundation a report by Russia's *Regnum* news agency that Azerbaijan and Armenia have had "secret contacts" and that they have agreed on the procedure for the return of five of the occupied regions of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172559.html>).

US Senator Carl Levin, Democrat of Michigan, says that the Gabala radar station is "a potential priority in American-Russian cooperation in the sphere of anti-missile defense" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172502.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkey's ambassador to Azerbaijan, reaffirms that Ankara "will never take any steps which contradict the interests of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172534.html>).

Mammadbagir Bahrami, Iran's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "the problem of the status of the Caspian cannot be resolved without the participation of one or another littoral state" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172524.html>).

The Foreign Ministry announces that Azerbaijan has established diplomatic relations with Tuvaloo (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172515.html>).

14 September

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, who serves as president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, as a deputy in the Milli Majlis, and as a good will ambassador for both UNESCO and ISESCO, was decorated with the Cross of the Grand Commander of the Service Order of the Republic of Poland. The cross was presented by Krzysztof Krajewski, Poland's ambassador to Azerbaijan, on behalf of President Lech Kaczynski (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172438.html>).

Srgjan Kerim, president of the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly, says that "the fact that Azerbaijan has raised the question about Nagorno-Karabakh at the level of the General Assembly of the UN is a sign of the strengthening of international interests in events in this region." He adds that the success of Azerbaijan in pushing another resolution "depends on Azerbaijan itself, but lobbying in the UN plays a big role in such questions" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172317.html>).

Vahid Ahmadov, a member of the Milli Majlis economic policy committee, says that Turkmenistan "wants to more widely use those levers which it has" but "does not want to argue with Russia, with European countries or with the United States." He is commenting on Ashgabat's statement that it has enough gas to supply the Nabucco pipeline (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172323.html>).

Turkey announces the appointment of Aykhan Enginar as its new consul general in Nakhchivan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172425.html>).

12 September

President Ilham Aliyev says at the informal summit of four of the five Caspian littoral states that he is "certain" that "the President decisions of the Tehran

summit are very important" and that all issues of the Caspian Sea basin "will be successfully resolved in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172108.html>).

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki lodges a formal protest with Azerbaijan and the three other Caspian littoral states for organizing the informal summit in Aktau at which regional affairs were discussed (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172195.html>).

11 September

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu proposes having the Turkish parliament discuss the protocols Turkey and Armenia have signed on movement toward the restoration of diplomatic relations and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172069.html>).

Ian Micallef, the president of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, says after meeting with Azerbaijan Deputy Justice Minister Vilayat Zakirov that his group is impressed by the work done in Azerbaijan for the development of municipal governance (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172130.html>).

10 September

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov speaks via telephone with his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu concerning the incident between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces on the line of the front (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172086.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, the deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis security and defense committee, says that "the incident on the line of the front was not an exchange of fire but a small battle," adding that as a result, "today the Armenian side has yet again been shown that the Azerbaijani army is prepared" to respond to any challenge (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171913.html>).

Turkish Ambassador to Azerbaijan Hulusi Kılıç says that "Turkey does not want to see closed borders" in the Caucasus region. At the same time, he says, that "no one will be able to say that [Ankara's] negotiating process with Armenia can bring harm to Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171810.html>).

Hasan Sultanoglu, Azerbaijani consul in the Turkish city of Kars, says that he "does not believe that Turkey will make a step which will disappoint Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171961.html>).

Agnes Vadai, senior state secretary of the Hungarian defense ministry, tells Ziyafat Askarov, the vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, that Budapest wants to expand its cooperation with Baku in the area of military training (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171941.html>).

Miklos Harashti, the OSCE special representative on press freedom, visits Azerbaijan to present the Azerbaijani translation of the book, "The Self-Regulation of the Media." In commenting on the results of his week-long visit, Harashti says that he "hopes" that the Azerbaijani government's policy of amnestying journalists

who have been convicted of crimes “will continue” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171871.html>).

The Netherlands announces the appointment of its first ambassador to Azerbaijan. He will be Jan-Lucas van Horn, and he will open a Dutch embassy in Azerbaijan in the middle of October. Azerbaijan established an embassy in the Hague in 2007 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171880.html>).

9 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives Italian Ambassador Gian Luigi Mascia on the completion of his assignment to Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171780.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Baku is “ready to open the borders with Armenia as soon as Yerevan liberates the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.” The statement by the ministry’s press spokesman Elkhan Polukhov comes in response to reports that Turkey and Europe are working on a project that would connect Azerbaijan with Europe via a highway passing across Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171670.html>).

Azerbaijan, Turkey and Israel are conducting talks about the joint production of armoured vehicles and expect to sign an accord in the near future (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/171679.html>).

8 September

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says that “Turkey will not take steps which could disappoint Azerbaijan” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171577.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says in Georgia that there is “still a long way to go” before the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border. On another matter, he says that he intends to visit Abkhazia in order to “try to regulate its relations with Georgia” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171473.html>).

Mehmet Ali Shahin, the newly elected chairman of the Turkish parliament, tells Azerbaijan’s ambassador to Turkey, Zakir Hashimov, that he hopes for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict “in the nearest future” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171590.html>).

Samad Seidov, PACE vice president and head of the Azerbaijani delegation to PACE, says that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will not discuss Azerbaijan as a separate issue at the upcoming fall meeting of the organization (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171519.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that it is ready to work with the newly appointed American co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Ambassador Robert Bradtke. Bradtke succeeds Matthew Bryza in that post (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171489.html>).

Latif Gandilov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Kazakhstan, says that “questions of sub-regional cooperation will be discussed at the summit in Aktau” on September 11-13 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171479.html>).

Azerbaijan opens a representation office in Tbilisi of its Foundation for Exports and Investment (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/171455.html>).

7 September

Vahid Ahmadov, a member of the Milli Majlis economic policy committee, says that Azerbaijan will never agree to the inclusion of Armenia as part of the Nabucco project until "the Karabakh question and the issue of the return of Azerbaijani territories occupied by Armenians are resolved" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171380.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that an upcoming visit by OSCE experts to the Lachin corridor "is a constituent part of the negotiations" within the framework of the Minsk Group (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171375.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu reportedly tells a Turkish journalist that Ankara has proposed building a road that would connect the Caucasus with Europe. The first stage of this highway would pass from Azerbaijan through Armenia to Turkey (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171329.html>).

US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns and Assistant Secretary of State Tina Kaidanov visit Ankara to discuss the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171319.html>).

6 September

Zakir Hashimov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Turkey, says that "the Turkish-Armenian borders will open only after the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."

5 September

Ziyafat Askarov, first vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that the Azerbaijani parliament will take up legislation on peacekeeping forces at its fall session (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171204.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, the deputy chairman of the Yeni Azerbaijan, says that his party is convinced that "Turkey will not take any steps which undermine the interests of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171184.html>).

Samad Seidov, head of the Azerbaijan delegation to PACE, says "the obligations of Azerbaijan before the Council of Europe will be considered in the Monitoring Committee" of the Council.

Ziyafat Askarov, first vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that "the Armenian project about the genocide of Armenians in Azerbaijan is without foundation."

4 September

President Ilham Aliyev says that despite the international financial crisis, "the economy of Azerbaijan continues to move forward" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170864.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that Azerbaijan's military "is the strongest in the Caucasus by all measures" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171052.html>).

Husameddin Jindoruk, the leader of the Democratic Party of Turkey, says that Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan should not come to the football match in Turkey because such an action would offend Azerbaijan, 20 percent of whose territory Armenia occupies (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171027.html>).

Zhang Yangnan, China's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Beijing "considers Azerbaijan the main country in the Caucasus and devotes great importance to the development of relations with this country"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171039.html>).

Rafael Huseynov, a member of the Azerbaijan delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that PACE has accepted Baku's report on protecting the environment from noise and light problems
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171124.html>).

National Security Minister Eldar Mahmudov attends a meeting of the CIS special services in Moscow at which Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says that "the special services of the CIS must cooperate to ensure security"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171129.html>).

Ismatulla Irgashev, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Tashkent supports "the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem" on the basis of the model "the Azerbaijan side has proposed"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171030.html>). In other comments, he says that relations between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan are developing "intensively" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/171032.html>).

3 September

President Ilham Aliyev speaks by telephone with Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170985.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkey's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Ankara "expects that Azerbaijan will believe Turkey" when it says that the protocols Turkey had signed with Armenia will be considered and confirmed by the Turkish parliament
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170904.html>).

Deniz Baikal, the head of Turkey's Republic Peoples Party, says his group will not support the protocols Ankara has signed with Yerevan
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170856.html>).

Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the National Movement Party of Turkey, says that his group "will use all its resources to oppose the protocols" Ankara has signed with Yerevan and will vote to reject them if they are presented to the parliament
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170951.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadguliyev says that the ministerial meeting of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation set to take place September 16 has been rescheduled for November

(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170920.html>). He also says that the next session of the Committee for Cooperation with the European Union will take place in October (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170938.html>).

Nikolay Bordyuzha, the secretary general of the Organization of the Treaty of Collective Security, says that there are no negotiations taking place at present concerning the possible inclusion of Azerbaijan in that organization (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170906.html>).

Mubariz Ahmadoglu, the director of the Center of Political Technologies, says that "the list of countries which will send their peacekeepers to Karabakh is almost set." The list will not include any from Iran, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, the US or France but rather will consist of forces from Hungary, Romania, Azerbaijan and Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170909.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that plans by Armenian diplomats to visit the occupied territories are "not a constructive step" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170880.html>).

The visit to Baku by Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced for September 30 - October 1 will be delayed because of scheduling problems (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170860.html>).

2 September

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov speaks by telephone with his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu about the two protocols Ankara has signed with Yerevan through the mediation of Switzerland (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170829.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, the head of the political analysis and information department of the Presidential Administration, says that a report by Russia's *Regnum* news agency that President Ilham Aliyev had convened a special council in response to the signing of protocols by Turkey and Armenia is "disinformation" and "a provocation." No such meeting occurred, Aslanov says (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170798.html>).

Latif Gandilov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Kazakhstan, says that "the establishment of a naval base must not be considered to be the result of disagreements between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170746.html>).

NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen says that he welcomes "the improvement in relations between Turkey and Armenia" and hopes that this will contribute to "stability and security in this part of Europe" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170810.html>).

Husameddin Jindoruk, the former speaker of the Turkish parliament, says that "the protocols agreed to with Armenia cannot be presented for discussion by parliament." He says that Turkey clearly took this step on the instructions of the United States (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170775.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says it is seeking an explanation from the United States as to why Azerbaijan's ambassador in Washington Yashar Aliyev was not invited to the White House for the *Iftar* dinner, especially since the ambassador was invited to the State Department commemoration of this holiday (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170819.html>).

1 September

The Foreign Ministry says that "the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border without the resolution of the Karabakh conflict contradicts the national interests of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170551.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, the deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis security and defense committee, says that "the liberation of the territory of Azerbaijan and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey must go in parallel" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170546.html>).

The US Department of State welcomes the rapprochement of Turkey and Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170510.html>).

The Foreign Ministry calls for the demilitarization of the Caspian Sea region (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170563.html>).

Note to Readers

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