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BAKU AND CONTEMPORARY AZERBAIJANI IDENTITY: WHAT DO CHANGES IN THE CAPITAL MEAN FOR THE COUNTRY?

Leyla Sayfutdinova
PhD candidate
Middle East Technical University, Turkey

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the transformation of Baku has been the subject of discussions among past and present Baku residents. Although everyone agrees that Baku has changed dramatically and irreversibly, the reactions to this change vary greatly: some lament it while others welcome and celebrate it. This controversial issue was brought to public attention once more in late 2008, when the discussion transformed from conversations in the privacy of people's homes and low-key online forums into a highly charged debate involving prominent

intellectuals and politicians. Particularly heated was the question of Baku's cosmopolitan past and its role in the Azerbaijani nationhood. But why is this so? Why is the cosmopolitan urban identity of Baku so problematic for Azerbaijani nationhood and why does this question generate so much passion?

In Soviet times, Baku, like Odessa or Tashkent, was famous for its cosmopolitanism, or, in Soviet parlance, "internationalism." But the emergence of this cosmopolitan culture actually dates back to pre-Soviet times, when Baku, as a center of Russian Empire's oil industry, drew people from various parts of the empire. This large settled population was diverse not only ethnically, but also in terms of occupation and class: it included workers in the oil industry, but also merchants and intelligentsia. Yet it was only in the Soviet period that Baku's heterogeneity became celebrated—as a case of true "proletarian internationalism." Baku's multi-ethnic population fit perfectly into the official Soviet framework of "merging of nations" and of creating a "Soviet person." And as these ideological constructs suggest, what was celebrated in Baku's cosmopolitanism was not simply a mixture, but rather a hybridity. Soviet authorities did encourage a further "internationalization" of Baku, through careful control of migration flows that favored highly skilled labor from other urban centers outside Azerbaijan over unskilled rural migrants from Azerbaijan's countryside, as well as through education and cultural policy which made Baku into a predominantly Russian-speaking city. By the middle of 20th century, a hybrid Baku urban culture—a product of this complex policy-making and local traditions of intercommunal accommodation—emerged. This culture included its own code of behavior that distinguished "*bakintsi*," the Russian name for bakuvites, from outsiders: from rural migrants on the one hand, and from newcomers from other cities of the Soviet Union, on the other. From rural migrants *bakintsi* were distinguished by their urban manners, higher level of education, and fluent command of the Russian language; from other newcomers by their emotionality, warmth, respect for the elders, hospitality, appreciation for good food, traditional gender roles, and, above all, pride in Baku's multi-ethnicity. Sometime in 1960s this sense of urban identity that transcended ethnic boundaries was expressed with a popular catch phrase "a nation of Baku."

Bakintsi also developed their own distinctive intellectual and cultural elite. Needless to say, the cultural production of this elite was hybrid. Thus, musician Vagif Mustafa-zade became known for his merging of Azeri traditional *mugham* music with jazz; writers such as Rustam Ibrahimayov and his elder brother Maqsud romanticized Baku in their fiction—in Russian; Muslim Magomayev, the first Soviet singer with star-like popularity, and Garry Kasparov, world chess champion, are some of the most known representatives of this cultural elite.

However, this celebrated and romanticized hybridization was not nearly as harmonious a process as many *bakintsi* believed. It did not reflect the goodwill and tolerance of Baku residents alone, but also the state policies such as migration restrictions and Russian-led internationalism. And finally, in Baku, which was a capital of a national republic, these policies came into contradiction with the counteracting policy of nationalization and indigenization of elites. This clash was revealed in late 1980s with the beginning of the Karabakh conflict. Despite the celebrated internationalist traditions, the interethnic strife affected Baku as well as other parts of Azerbaijan. Soviet migration policies proved ineffective in the conditions of a military conflict, as people displaced by the armed conflict in Azerbaijan's regions migrated to Baku. Many of the old urban residents began to flee from the city: first were Baku Armenians, followed by many Jews and Russians,

and also by many mixed families and ethnic Azerbaijanis who constituted the core of *bakintsi*. This was not all about ethnic relations—the restructuring of the Soviet economy was another important cause of this large-scale migration, as deindustrialization left many skilled Baku residents under- or unemployed. But together these complex social, political and economic transformations had led to a dramatic change in the composition of urban population of Baku, something that in turn affected the culture of the city and of Azerbaijan more generally.

There are two broad approaches that were developed in Baku in response to this dramatic change. On the one hand, there exists nostalgia and romanticizing of the past. In its extreme, the nostalgic approach sees Baku's cosmopolitanism/internationalism as a harmonious, conflict-free, symbiotic experience of cohabitation and hybridization, a kind of "Golden Age" from which the city had now fallen. Many of such nostalgically minded people reject nationalism in all forms; on the other hand there are those who uphold the view that in Baku national identities were harmoniously complemented by a trans-ethnic urban one. Stories are told about old Baku courtyards where people of different ethnic backgrounds lived together, celebrated each other's holidays and helped each other in difficult times, about friendships and love affairs across ethnic boundaries.

On the other hand, there is the rejection of the "myth" of the golden past, which sees the narratives of peace and harmony as, at best, ideological constructs imposed by the Soviet authorities, and, at worst, as outright lies. Stories are told about discrimination and intolerance that persisted despite the officially promoted ideology of internationalism, and especially of discrimination of ethnic Azerbaijanis by Russians and Armenians. The cosmopolitan Baku culture is seen in this discourse as a coercive attempt to assimilate and de-ethnicize Azerbaijanis and Azerbaijani culture. However, these two opposite approaches have two important things in common: first, they both share a homogenized and reified image of Baku's internationalist/cosmopolitan past, and second, they both see a conflict between Baku cosmopolitanism and Azerbaijani nationalism. But if in the first nostalgic discourse nationalism is seen as a negative force that destroyed the glorious "nation of Baku," in the second one it is justice that was achieved with independence.

Interestingly, the recent public outburst of the debate showed that yet another approach to the Baku cosmopolitanism is developing, one that attempts to de-homogenize this past and to uncover the power relations that lie behind it. This approach acknowledges that Baku's cosmopolitanism was characterized by both harmonious co-habitation and practices of domination and discrimination. This approach also connects the Baku cosmopolitanism with Azerbaijani nationalism; yet, here they are not necessarily viewed as conflicting opposites. The contradiction is resolved through a civic rather than ethnic understanding of nation.

Thus, the debate on Baku cosmopolitanism reveals that the issue at stake here is not so much the Baku identity as such, but rather the nature of Azerbaijani nationhood. Nearly twenty years into independence, the issue is still far from settled.

It is not clear what course Azerbaijani nationhood will take, and therefore it is hard to say what the role of Baku's cosmopolitan past in this nationhood will be. At present, however, its role may be the very power of generating such a debate.

A BALANCING ACT WITHIN A BALANCING ACT: PROMOTING AZERBAIJANI NATIONAL INTERESTS WITHIN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Paul Goble
Publications Advisor
Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

Speaking at an October 22 symposium on the South Caucasus, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov said that "it is difficult to speak about cooperation" among the three states of that region because they are involved in so many conflicts both with each other as is the case with Azerbaijan and Armenia and with outside powers like Georgia and the Russian Federation. [1] But if finding cooperation across the three is difficult, working on it where possible is critical not only for maintaining a balance among them but also for positioning them relative to the outside powers who have their own agendas in the region. And that makes Baku's growing relationship with Tbilisi, the only other capital in the region that Azerbaijan is not locked into a military conflict with, especially important.

In his remarks, Mammadyarov argued that Azerbaijan and Georgia have already achieved "remarkable relations" both in the political and economic sphere. They share many views about the world, a commonality strengthened by mutual visits of President Ilham Aliyev and his Georgian counterpart Mikhail Saakashvili and by their membership in GUAM and aspirations for closer ties with Europe. And as the Azerbaijani foreign minister pointed out, the Azerbaijani oil company SOCAR is now "the very largest tax payer in Georgia," yet another indication of the integration that has already taken place between the two.

Not surprisingly, such increasing closeness and cooperation has sparked discussions on occasion about the possibility of some closer political relationship, including even the formation of a confederal state. But at least from Azerbaijan's perspective, as readers of the chronologies in recent issues of *Azerbaijan in the World* know, that is more a rhetorical device to stress just how close the two countries have become rather than a road map for negotiations anytime soon. Indeed, both Baku and Tbilisi have their own reasons not to take such a step lest the problems of the one become the problems of the other, something neither of these countries is interested in having happen.

The Azerbaijani foreign minister in the same speech stressed that "Azerbaijan would like it if Armenia were to join in such regional projects," but that is impossible until Yerevan changes course and agrees to the withdrawal of all Armenian forces from occupied Azerbaijani territories. Once that happens, Mammadyarov suggested, Baku would welcome Armenian participation because "the foreign policy of Azerbaijan is based on cooperation with all neighbors and states." Unfortunately, he said, "the only country in the region which rejects that approach is Armenia."

A major reason for making progress on establishing a just and lasting balance among the countries of the South Caucasus, of course, is that outside powers continue to play on divisions among the South Caucasus countries in order to promote their own interests. Indeed, much of the analysis both in the region and more generally over the last two decades has focused on the actions of these outside players, such as the

Russian Federation, the United States, Turkey, the European Union, and Iran rather than on the actions of the countries within the region themselves. But in recent times, the balance between these two balances may be shifting toward the inner wheel. And what that means for Baku is that Azerbaijan must try to promote or establish relations among the countries of the region even as it works to balance the various outside powers interested in playing a role or even assuming a dominant position in the region.

That is an even more difficult task than building relations with Georgia. Indeed, shortly after Foreign Minister Mammadyarov's speech, Armenian media outlets immediately saw his remarks as part of a "Baku-Tbilisi-Ankara" axis that was not only directed against Armenia itself but also against Armenia's efforts to maintain its close relationship with the Russian Federation and exploit its growing ties with Iran, a country which has become increasingly active in the region over the last six months. And those Armenian articles represent a kind of invitation to Armenia's supporters to become more active in order to prevent Baku-Tbilisi ties from becoming a greater problem for Yerevan.

This constellation of forces suggests at least three tentative conclusions. First, the balanced foreign policy that Azerbaijan has pursued under both President Ilham Aliyev and his father Heydar Aliyev is something far more complicated than most analyses have suggested because it requires two balancing acts, not one. Second, all the South Caucasus states have relationships with the major outside powers, and those powers can, even under conditions of diminished attention to the region, play on the internal balance even as changes in that balance force them to consider shifts in their own position. And third, because of this complexity, the possibility for radical, even tectonic shifts in position is probably greater rather than less even though systems of greater complexity are often more stable than simpler ones.

For Azerbaijan, that means that developing relationships with its immediate neighbors is linked to but not derivative of its ties with outside powers and that such relationships, despite the assumptions of many in the region and outside, could change dramatically in the short term lending a new unpredictability to what is already one of the more unpredictable regions of the world.

Note

[1] See <http://news.day.az/politics/234791.html> (accessed 25 October, 2010).

WHAT ROLE FOR THE EU IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS?

Hanna Shelest
Senior Researcher
National Institute for Strategic Studies, Odessa Branch, Ukraine

The European Union is increasingly active in seeking solutions to the conflicts in the South Caucasus, its leaders recognizing that without such solutions, there is a very

real risk that instability in that region will spread beyond the Black Sea region into what is now the European union. Moreover, there is a belief that in contrast to some of the other states involved in this process, the European Union is viewed positively by all parties as a more or less neutral actor.

This represents a major change because as recently as October 2008, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said that in the previous decade, the European Union had not paid enough attention to the South Caucasus and especially to the conflicts there (Корреспондент, 2008). But the expansion of the EU in 2007 to the shores of the Black Sea, the impact of the West's recognition of Kosovo, and the new geopolitics of the region after the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008 have changed all that.

The Russian-Georgian war was especially significant in changing the role of the EU. If the United Nations and the OSCE must be listed among the losers in that conflict, the European Union was able to put itself forward as a peacemaker and thus gained new stature. The French president played a key role in brokering an end to the conflict, and since August 2008, most EU institutional actors in the region have been based in Georgia (Merlingen & Ostrauskaite 2009, p.10) where they have promoted dialogue and, through the use of soft power, sought to change attitudes about negotiations (Merlingen & Ostrauskaite 2009, p.13).

But at the same time, the war itself highlighted certain weaknesses in the European Union's ability to prevent conflict. Despite the funds it had expended over the previous decade, the EU had not managed to develop a political and security strategy that worked. And the war called into question the notion that the kind of assistance the EU had offered was in any way adequate in the region (Popescu 2009). That forced some in the European Union to rethink its policy toward other frozen conflicts there.

One step it did take was to organize a report on the outbreak of the conflict, a report that was the largest and most comprehensive of any offered by the international community. Presented on September 30, 2009, after nine months of work under the chairmanship of Heidi Tagliavini, it had the virtue of drawing support from both sides. On the one hand, the Russian side was pleased that the report identified Georgia as the immediate aggressor against South Ossetia. But on the other, the report demonstrated that the actions of the Russian Federation had prompted Tbilisi to act as it did, something that pleased Georgians and their supporters (Cornell 2009), as did the report's dismissal of Russian allegations against Georgia of genocide (European Union Council 2009). This report, in fact, may become a model of EU activity in such cases, although, in the future it should be more clearly stated, so as not to provoke future disputes around, and manipulation of, its statements and conclusions.

Despite the positive experience in resolving the Russian-Georgian crisis of August 2008, the EU faces continuous challenges to its activities as a mediator and peacekeeper. National politics of the member states have been more influential on decision-making processes than general view of the necessity to resolve conflicts, and until 2008 the European Union was not able to speak with one voice. Some countries, such as France, Germany and Italy, do not want any confrontation with Russia, while others, such as Poland, the United Kingdom and the Baltic states, advocate a harder line. Moreover, these divisions limited the EU's ability to take steps that would force either or both of the sides to take it entirely seriously.

For all these reasons and because each of the states in the EU has bilateral interests with each of the countries in the South Caucasus and with the Russian Federation, the European Union faces serious obstacles to becoming a major mediator in the region. However, the situation has changed, and the change came not only from the external conditions which the EU found itself facing after the latest round of enlargement and consequences of the Russia–Georgia war, but also from an internal understanding of the changing role of the EU, necessity to take bigger responsibility in the world affairs and certain accommodation of the different national policies toward the crisis regions. Rather general view existed that the practice of mediation is of added value to the EU in its role as a regional actor in conflict resolution. Now it will depend on the internal will of the organization and its member-states, and on whether they will be able to change perceptions and attitudes toward them as mediators in other regional conflicts.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev tells his Ukrainian counterpart Viktor Yanukovich during a visit to Kyiv that "from the moment of the acquisition of independence, special friendly

relations have always existed between Azerbaijan and Ukraine"
(<http://news.day.az/politics/235693.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that "Russia is a strategic partner of contemporary Azerbaijan but one of the questions which blocks the development of the partnership is the fact that Moscow up to now has not supported in a clear way the interests of Baku in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235769.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev says during a visit to Beijing that "if peace talks do not yield results, Azerbaijan will use all means, including the power of the army, for the restoration of the territorial integrity of the country. For this in the ranks of our Armed Forces, serious preparatory work is being carried out"
(<http://news.day.az/politics/236141.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that the recent changes in visa procedures are intended to bring Azerbaijan into correspondence with European standards (<http://news.day.az/politics/234797.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

The US Department of State values the efforts of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev toward the resolution of the Karabakh conflict
(<http://news.day.az/politics/235894.html>).

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomes the joint declaration in Astrakhan issued by the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia
(<http://news.day.az/politics/235893.html>).

The Turkish Foreign Ministry welcomes the joint declaration of the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia in Astrakhan and hopes that it will advance the cause of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
(<http://news.day.az/politics/236197.html>).

Peter Semneby, special representative of the European Union for the South Caucasus, says that "it would be very tragic if the Karabakh conflict were not resolved within the course of another 40 years"
(<http://news.day.az/politics/233985.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 October

The Turkish Foreign Ministry welcomes the joint declaration of the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia in Astrakhan and hopes that it will advance the cause of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
(<http://news.day.az/politics/236197.html>).

29 October

President Ilham Aliyev tells his Ukrainian counterpart Viktor Yanukovich during a visit to Kyiv that "from the moment of the acquisition of independence, special friendly relations have always existed between Azerbaijan and Ukraine" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235693.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Vagif Sadykhov Azerbaijani ambassador to Italy (<http://news.day.az/politics/236057.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev telephones his Turkish counterpart Abdulla Gul on the occasion of the latter's birthday celebration (<http://news.day.az/politics/236008.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev meets in Beijing with Chinese National Defense Minister Liang Guanglie (<http://news.day.az/politics/236060.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the President's Office, says that "the active mediation" of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in the Karabakh conflict is "creating a situation in which Armenia must, having reviewed its position, adopt definite steps and adopt a constructive position" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235996.html>).

Deputy Internal Affairs Minister Orudzh Zalov takes part in the third international congress in St. Petersburg on "Security on the Highways in the Name of Security of Life" (<http://news.day.az/society/236140.html>).

The Ecology and Natural Resources Ministry says that Armenians have "completely destroyed" the eco-system" in the Zangilan district of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/235925.html>).

Hidayat Orujov, chairman of the State Committee for Work with Religious Structures, meets with Kuwait Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (<http://news.day.az/politics/236185.html>).

Shahin Abdullayev, Azerbaijan's ambassador in Cairo, says that relations between Azerbaijan and Egypt are progressing rapidly (<http://news.day.az/politics/235897.html>).

Ismatulla Irgashev, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Baku, says that Tashkent consider Azerbaijan to be "a factor of stability and security in the South Caucasus region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235939.html>).

Hulusi Kilic, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says that he hopes that there will be definite progress on the Karabakh conflict at the upcoming OSCE summit in Astana (<http://news.day.az/politics/235932.html>).

Hulusi Kilic, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, visits the memorial to Turkish soldiers in Baku on the occasion of the 87th anniversary of the formation of the Republic of Turkey (<http://news.day.az/society/236045.html>).

Sergey Markov, a Russian Duma deputy, says that the Astrakhan summit hardly represented a step forward but "the main thing is that it prevented steps backward" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235898.html>).

Abdulla Çalyskan, a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, calls on the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries to redouble their efforts to reach an agreement on Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/235823.html>).

Ural Mukhamedzhanov, the chairman of the Kazakhstan parliament, says that Kazakhstan in its capacity as OSCE president-in-office, is actively seeking to advance discussions on the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/235891.html>).

The First Congress of the Association of Azerbaijanis of Kazakhstan opens in Almaty (<http://news.day.az/society/236062.html>).

Russian law enforcement agencies say that Yerevan is continuing to arm terrorists of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) (<http://news.day.az/politics/235938.html>).

28 October

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that if Yerevan adopts a law recognizing the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh or about its unification with Armenia, this once again shows that Yerevan is not prepared to play a constructive role in the resolution of the conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/235746.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that the Astrakhan declaration of the presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia recommitting all of the parties to the Karabakh conflict to earlier agreements was "a positive result" of their meeting (<http://news.day.az/politics/235720.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the President's Office, says that "the development of Azerbaijani-Russian relations involve all spheres including inter-parliamentary cooperation" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235733.html>).

Ogtay Asadov, Milli Majlis speaker, receives a delegation of members of the Russian Duma and Federation Council during a Baku roundtable on "The Role of Parliament in the Development of Civil Society" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235876.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that reports that a Russian university has concluded a cooperation agreement with an institution in the occupied territories are not true (<http://news.day.az/politics/235761.html>).

Mazahir Panahov, the head of the Central Elections Committee, says that 859 international observers from 69 countries are registered to observe Azerbaijan's upcoming parliamentary elections (<http://news.day.az/politics/235834.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia will be forced to peace" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235682.html>).

Movlud Chavushoglu, chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that the Congress of Local and Regional Governments of the Council

of Europe has an important role to play in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/235855.html>).

Sergey Vinokurov, the chief of the Administration for Inter-Regional and Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries of the President's Office of the Russian Federation, says in Baku that "the strategic partnership between Russia and Azerbaijan is a guarantee of stability" in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/235782.html>).

Sergey Markov, a Russian Duma deputy, says that "for the restoration of peace and stability in the South Caucasus region, the dominating influence of one of the super-powers or a union of states" such as between Russia and Turkey "is necessary" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235756.html>).

Leonid Slutsky, the deputy head of the Russian Duma's international relations committee, says that the Russian parliament welcomes the agreement on the Karabakh conflict achieved at the Astrakhan summit of the presidents of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/235735.html>).

Mustafa Isen, the secretary general of the President's Office of Turkey, says that cooperation between Ankara and Baku is continuing to develop ever more rapidly (<http://news.day.az/politics/235695.html>).

Zeynep Daghy, a member of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, calls on Yerevan to stop making "populist" declarations which only harm its relations with its neighbors (<http://news.day.az/politics/235606.html>).

The Ukrainian government has named a square in Kyiv for Heydar Aliyev, the former president of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/235809.html>).

27 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives the three OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs and the special representative of the OSCE president (<http://news.day.az/politics/235690.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev says in Astrakhan during a ceremony erecting a statue of his father Heydar Aliyev that "centuries' long friendship, cooperation and common past connect us with Russia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235542.html>).

The presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia after their summit in Astrakhan release a joint declaration recommitting the sides to the principles contained in the November 2008 declaration they issued in Moscow (<http://news.day.az/politics/235627.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov sign in Astrakhan appendices to the Azerbaijani-Russian border agreement (<http://news.day.az/politics/235686.html>).

Makhmud Mammadguliyev, deputy foreign minister, says that Azerbaijani entrepreneurs should more actively participate in the process of the accession of Azerbaijan to the World Trade Organization (<http://news.day.az/economy/235545.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev meets Chen Binde, the chief of staff of China's Peoples Liberation Army to discuss bilateral cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/235517.html>).

The Defense Ministry rejects Armenian charges that Azerbaijani forces fired first in a clash along the ceasefire line on October 26 (<http://news.day.az/politics/235577.html>).

Yevgeny Sloboda, the head of the CIS elections observer mission to Azerbaijan, says that preparations for the elections there are going successfully (<http://news.day.az/politics/235575.html>).

Majid Namju, Iranian energy minister, says that a priority task of his ministry is "the synchronization of the electric energy grids of Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia" (<http://news.day.az/economy/235587.html>).

Mehdi Gazanfari, Iranian trade minister, says that trade between Iran and Azerbaijan could double in the near future (<http://news.day.az/economy/235518.html>).

26 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from the incoming Japanese ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/235511.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from the incoming Polish ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/235505.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from the incoming Palestinian ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/235503.html>).

Mammad Ahmadzade, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Buenos Aires, meet with Argentina's Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Culture Héctor Marcos TIMERMANN to discuss bilateral cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/235369.html>).

Zakir Hashimov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Astana, says that cooperation between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in trade can increase significantly (<http://news.day.az/politics/235353.html>).

Tural Rzayev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Kuwait, meets with Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber as-Sabah to discuss the development of bilateral ties (<http://news.day.az/politics/235333.html>).

Manouchehr Mottaki, Iranian foreign minister, confirms the readiness of Tehran to serve as a mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/235513.html>).

Manouchehr Mottaki, Iranian foreign minister, says that the summit of Caspian basin states which will take place in Baku "has great importance from the point of view of cooperation" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235512.html>).

Turkish Foreign Trade Minister Zafar Caglayan leads a delegation of 125 Turkish businessmen to Nakhchivan (<http://news.day.az/politics/235504.html>).

25 October

President Ilham Aliyev names Emmit Richard "Art" McHaffie Azerbaijan's honorary consul in Santa Fe, New Mexico (<http://news.day.az/politics/235316.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev gives an interview to the Ukrainian national television company in advance of his visit to Kyiv (<http://news.day.az/politics/235278.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov meets with his Russian counterpart Sergey Ryabkov to discuss security in the Caspian Sea basin (<http://news.day.az/politics/235308.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Google Earth photography proves that Armenians in the occupied territories are mining gold that belongs to the Azerbaijani people (<http://news.day.az/politics/228444.html>).

The Azerbaijan embassy in Bucharest, together with the State Committee of Azerbaijan for work with the Diaspora, hold an international conference on Baku's role in the energy security of Europe (<http://news.day.az/economy/235609.html>).

Mammadbaqir Bahrami, Iran's ambassador to Baku, says that "Iran condemns any policy of occupation" and thus supports Azerbaijani territorial integrity as the basis of a resolution of the Karabakh conflict. He also says that it is "very unfortunate" that the OSCE Minsk Group has not made progress in that direction (<http://news.day.az/politics/235320.html>).

24 October

The election observer mission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe says that preparations for the vote are proceeding in a peaceful environment (<http://news.day.az/politics/235068.html>).

23 October

Elnur Aslanov, the head of the political analysis and information department of the President's Office, says that "the pragmatic policy conducted by Azerbaijan serves the development of the entire region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/234936.html>).

Ogtay Asadov, the Milli Majlis speaker, says that Baku is "interested in conducting democratic, transparent and free parliamentary elections" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235021.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, speaks to the Turkish-Asian Center for Strategic Research (TASAM) on "The Turkish Council, the Turkish Diaspora and Social-Economic Cooperation" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235031.html>).

John Laird, a member of the British House of Lords, says that "the world community must undertake more serious measures for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/235050.html>).

The annual Baku Symposium on the *South Caucasus in a Changing World* completes its work and adopts a resolution calling for the development of regional ties and cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/235007.html>).

22 October

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that it is "difficult" to speak about cooperation involving all three countries of the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/234791.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that the recent changes in visa procedures are intended to bring Azerbaijan into correspondence with European standards (<http://news.day.az/politics/234797.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that the question of Iran's nuclear program must be resolved by diplomatic negotiations (<http://news.day.az/politics/234785.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, the deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis, calls on Russia to define its position on the question of the end of Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territory (<http://news.day.az/politics/234865.html>).

The Milli Majlis adopts a law on the creation of Azerbaijani embassies in the South African Republic, Brazil, Iraq and Vietnam (<http://news.day.az/politics/234807.html>).

Peter Schieder, former president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that the South Caucasus is important for the security of the entire world (<http://news.day.az/politics/234773.html>).

21 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives the election monitors of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (<http://news.day.az/politics/234625.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the results of 2010 will be successful for Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/234430.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Viktor Maslov, deputy chairman of the Russian Federation Council defense and security committee (<http://news.day.az/politics/234626.html>).

Communications and Information Technology Minister Ali Abbasov signs a cooperation agreement with Austria's Deputy Federal Minister of Economy, Family, and Youth Josef Mayer (<http://news.day.az/economy/234684.html>).

Eldar Ismayilov, president of the Association of Banks of Azerbaijan, says that Azerbaijanis are increasingly interested in joining the Central Eurasian Banking Federation (<http://news.day.az/economy/234681.html>).

Akif Mustafayev, the national secretary of TRACECA from Azerbaijan, says that the TRACECA corridor regulations include environmental protection measures (<http://news.day.az/economy/234655.html>).

The French National Assembly formally says that it has no knowledge of a reported visit by French parliamentarians to the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/234709.html>).

Radek Matula, the Czech ambassador to Baku, says that "the Czech Republic supports Azerbaijan in its efforts to deepen relations with the European Union" (<http://news.day.az/politics/234630.html>).

Marcello Caballero Tores, Cuban ambassador to Baku, says that Havana considers that Azerbaijan supports the UN resolution on the need to end the economic, trade and financial blockade of Cuba imposed by the United States (<http://news.day.az/politics/234599.html>).

Mohammed Jahromi, the head of the Iranian Bank of Export Development, says that Baku and Tehran can develop closer ties because Azerbaijan is "an independent country" (<http://news.day.az/politics/234613.html>).

20 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives David Liddington, UK's Conservative Party Europe Minister (<http://news.day.az/politics/234482.html>).

Fuad Alaskarov, the head of the law enforcement department of the President's Office, says that the new visa rules are fully in correspondence with international law (<http://news.day.az/politics/234338.html>).

Deputy Taxation Minister Sahib Alakparov meets in Paris with his French counterparts to discuss bilateral cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/234360.html>).

Gudsi Osmanov, Azerbaijan's consul general in St. Petersburg, meets with Pskov oblast deputy governor Gennady Bezlobenko to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/economy/234500.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev signs a bilateral defense cooperation plan with his Ukrainian counterpart Mikhail Ezhel (<http://news.day.az/politics/234509.html>).

David Liddington, UK's Conservative Party Europe Minister, says that there are "a multitude of possibilities" for bilateral business development between Azerbaijan and the United Kingdom (<http://news.day.az/politics/234313.html>).

David Liddington, UK's Conservative Party Europe Minister, says that Azerbaijan's "wealth of energy resources" give it the potential to play a leading role in European energy security (<http://news.day.az/economy/234487.html>).

David Liddington, UK's Conservative Party Europe Minister, says that Europe must become more active in seeking a resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/234432.html>).

Michael Lavon-Lotem, Israeli ambassador to Baku, visits Nakhchivan and meets with Vasif Talybov, the head of the Autonomous Republic's Supreme Majlis (<http://news.day.az/politics/234440.html>).

19 October

President Ilham Aliyev issues a decree changing the visa procedures for visitors to Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/234291.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Stewart Levi, US Deputy Treasury Secretary (<http://news.day.az/politics/234193.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the new visa regulations do not affect visitors from Turkey (<http://news.day.az/politics/234295.html>).

Marie L. Yovanovitch, US ambassador to Yerevan, says that Matthew Bryza, whom President Barak Obama has nominated to be US ambassador to Baku, "has the absolute trust of the president and secretary of state of the United States" (<http://news.day.az/politics/234264.html>).

US and Turkish officials meeting in Washington discuss the Karabakh conflict, Turkish defense minister Vejdi Konul says (<http://news.day.az/politics/234179.html>).

18 October

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Moscow, says that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a clear example of how war blocks inter-cultural dialogue" (<http://news.day.az/politics/233990.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijani consul general in Los Angeles, receives an honorary certificate from the Beverly Hills city council in honor of Azerbaijan's independence day (<http://news.day.az/politics/234365.html>).

The Dutch government bans the sale of food products which list as their point of origin locations in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/234075.html>).

17 October

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies announces that it is conducting talks with Iran about possible joint projects in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (<http://news.day.az/economy/233866.html>).

16 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives Vitaly Smirnov, the honorary president of the Russian Olympic Committee (<http://news.day.az/politics/233827.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Wolfgang Grossruck, vice president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/233799.html>).

Elmira Suleymanova, the human rights ombudsman, discusses cooperation with Audrey Glover, the head of the OSCE elections monitoring group (<http://news.day.az/politics/233812.html>).

Mammadbaqir Bahrami, Iranian ambassador to Baku, opens the fifth international exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran there, including products from more than 20 Iranian companies in the regions of Iran (<http://news.day.az/economy/233815.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.