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School of International Affairs

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AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY IN 2011: A BREAKTHROUGH YEAR

2011, the 20th year since the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence, was truly a breakthrough year, one in which Baku's achievements in diplomacy, culture, and economics increased the status of the country not only as a regional leader, but around the world, and thus opened the way to both new achievements in the future and greater scrutiny by the international community at the same time. Indeed, the combination of these achievements over the past year may set the stage for Baku to achieve its most important goal sometime in the year ahead, the end of Armenian occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory and the return to their homes of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons.

Azerbaijan's balanced diplomacy, a hallmark of the presidency of Ilham Aliyev, won its most important victory ever with the election of the country to a two-term on the United Nations Security Council. Despite opposition from some governments who appeared unwilling to stand up to Armenian lobbying, Azerbaijan secured overwhelming election, because Baku's diplomats have reached out to ever more parts of the world. Over the past year, Azerbaijani diplomats have been especially

busy in areas like Latin America and East Asia, and their actions, as well as Baku's support for the principles of the territorial integrity of states and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, won Azerbaijan the support it needed to win this seat.

Azerbaijan's election is a victory in its own right, but Baku now has the opportunity to press its case against the Armenian occupation and in support of other causes from a new position of prominence. Not surprisingly, other governments, first and foremost that of the Russian Federation, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, have already begun discussions with Baku about how it will proceed there. And Novruz Mammadov, the head of foreign relations of the Presidential Administration, has suggested that such contacts are likely to intensify to the point that the Azerbaijani foreign ministry should create a special group to deal with them and that Baku must expand its permanent mission to the United Nations in New York. [1]

Azerbaijan's election to the Security Council clearly has far-reaching consequences, but perhaps equally significant was the victory of Azerbaijani artists in the *Eurovision* competition. Not only did that victory throw a sharp spotlight on the country and on its achievements as a cultural center and crossroads east-west and north-south, but it sets the stage for Azerbaijan to be the host of the 2012 competition. That has sparked an even more intensive building boom in the Azerbaijani capital to house all those who will attend and ever more attention to Azerbaijan in the media of Europe and more generally.

In the months since the 2011 *Eurovision* competition, there have been hundreds of articles about Azerbaijan, many in outlets which had largely ignored the country in the past. That attention will only intensify over the coming months. Most of the coverage will be positive, not only because Azerbaijan has a good story to tell, but because its leaders, officials and diplomats are working more actively in this field of public diplomacy than ever before. President Ilham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, and their daughter Leyla Aliyeva have all received international recognition for their efforts in this regard.

But it is inevitable that some of this expanded coverage will be critical precisely, because of Azerbaijan's new prominence, because all countries have problems, and because there are those who do not wish Azerbaijan well. How Azerbaijanis at all levels react to this will go a long way in determining how well Baku will be able to build on this remarkable achievement, all the more so because from now on the world will be watching Azerbaijan far more than it ever has before. That is one of the prices of success, but it is a price worth paying for Azerbaijan's new prominence.

Finally, the third major achievement of the past year has been Azerbaijan's continuing economic rise. Its economy, powered not only by oil and gas exports, but by other industries as well, means that Azerbaijan accounts for more than 80 percent of the GDP of the South Caucasus. At a time when economics more than anything else determines political outcomes, that makes Azerbaijan the force to be reckoned with in that region and an increasingly important player in Eurasia, Europe, the Middle East and beyond. Indeed, Baku, having followed a balanced foreign policy, now is truly a partner and not just a junior one with the leading states of the world. That gives it an influence few would have imagined only a decade ago, something Azerbaijanis can celebrate and work to expand in 2012.

Notes

[1] See <http://news.day.az/politics/304186.html> (accessed 30 December 2011).

AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY IN 2012: TEN ISSUES TO WATCH

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Having just completed its most successful year in foreign affairs since the restoration of independence, Azerbaijan enters 2012 with many new opportunities and the challenges that come with them. No one can say exactly what the next twelve months will bring, especially in the area of foreign affairs, but below are ten issues that are certain to be at the center of attention in Baku in the coming months.

1. A New Format for Karabakh Negotiations?

Azerbaijan's overriding foreign policy goal now as it has been for 15 years is to end Armenian occupation of 20 percent of its territory. There have been many moments of hope and despair over that period, but at the start of 2012, the stage appears set for a major change either in the composition of the OSCE Minsk Group or even in its displacement by other forums as the center of talks on a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Like Turkey, Azerbaijanis are furious at France, one of the Minsk Group co-chair countries, whose parliament has just passed a law criminalizing the denial of the so-called "Armenian genocide" of 1915. Like their Turkish counterparts, Azerbaijani officials and politicians have suggested that at the very least this action means that Paris can no longer claim to be an even-handed player in the talks, and some in Baku and Ankara have suggested that at the very least Paris should be replaced as a co-chair.

At the very least, such calls will reinforce Azerbaijani feelings that the Minsk Group has not lived up to its promise. More likely still, it will lead to calls for a change in the group's membership or format. And even more probably, it will mean that other venues, such as the role now being played by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev will expand. At the very least, this latest controversy suggests that a settlement based on international law may be further away than it was only a year ago, even though Armenia's position domestically and internationally is weaker now than ever before.

2. UN Security Council Membership.

Official Baku and the Azerbaijani people celebrated Azerbaijan's election this past fall to a two-year term on the UN Security Council as a reflection of its rising status in

the world and its successful diplomatic outreach to regions such as Latin America to which other candidate countries devoted less attention.

Beyond any doubt, Azerbaijan's election will enhance both its international standing and its ability to promote its national interests, but these gains will pose challenges. On the one hand, as a member of the UN Security Council, Azerbaijan will have to take positions on many issues it has not had to in the past, something that will put it in the spotlight more often and make the continued prosecution of its highly successful balanced foreign policy somewhat more difficult. And on the other, Baku will find itself drawn into numerous and intense negotiations on many of these issues, an involvement that will place burdens on Azerbaijan's still-growing diplomatic apparatus.

At the very least, as officials in the Presidential Administration and Foreign Ministry have indicated, Baku will have to expand its permanent representation in New York and other United Nations centers and increase the size of its foreign policy institutions even more rapidly than it has done over the last five years under the direction of President Ilham Aliyev.

3. Escalating Tensions around Iran.

One issue that Azerbaijan will have to confront not only as a member of the UN Security Council, but also more generally is the rapidly escalating tensions between Tehran and the international community over Iran's nuclear program. While it has opposed nuclear proliferation, Baku has been very clear that it will never allow its territory to be used to attack Iran, and it continues to have close relations with the Iranian government while also maintaining good relations with the United States, the European Union and Israel, three of international actors who are currently involved in a standoff with Tehran over its nuclear program.

If tensions around Iran continue to escalate and particularly if they lead to military actions by any of the sides, Baku could be forced to choose, but more likely, it may become a central player in the drama, with each side viewing Azerbaijan as a bridge or mediator whose leaders and diplomats could prevent the crisis from deteriorating further. That, too, will place new burdens on Azerbaijan, but it may prove to be the opportunity to elevate Baku from being a major regional power into one with far more influence beyond its immediate neighborhood.

Other countries, including China and India, clearly see this, and they are likely to seek to work with Baku lest things get out of hand, a positive development beyond question, but one that will also pose new challenges to Azerbaijan's balanced foreign policy.

4. The End of the Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement.

No single action so far unsettled Azerbaijan more than the apparent opening of a rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey with the signing of the so-called Zurich Protocols in October 2009. Azerbaijan viewed Turkey as its closest ally in Baku's efforts to end the Armenian occupation of its territory, and Ankara's willingness to sign an agreement with Yerevan struck many in Baku as an act of betrayal—or at the very least as an action that would allow Armenia an opportunity to refuse to abide by international law and withdraw its forces from Azerbaijani territories.

Because of Armenian intransigence and Azerbaijani criticism, Turkey has backed away from these protocols with the Grand National Assembly refusing even to consider them for possible ratification. Now it is clear that the Protocols are a dead letter and that Turkey will not open its borders with Armenia until Yerevan ends the occupation, a reflection of Turkish attitudes toward Armenia and even more of Ankara's appreciation that it went too far by signing the accords without carefully considering the views of Azerbaijan.

On the one hand, this means that Armenia cannot hope to expand its economy by exporting its goods through Turkey unless and until it withdraws from Azerbaijan, a situation that—given the increasingly disastrous economic and political situation within Armenia—should force Yerevan to negotiate a settlement more quickly. But on the other, this development means that Armenia is more, not less, dependent on the Russian Federation and that the key to any solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict lies in Moscow.

5. Uncertainties in Moscow.

Given the growing importance of Moscow in this regard and the presence of more than a million Azerbaijanis in the Russian Federation, upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections there and the uncertainties they are already generating are going to be matters of first concern for Baku.

6. A New Wave of Instability in the North Caucasus.

Azerbaijan lives in what remains a very unstable neighborhood. No part of that is more unstable than the North Caucasus, and that region is likely to become more troubled in the year ahead. The amount of Russian aid and outside investment are uncertain, and various groups in the region are prepared to challenge Moscow's appointed representatives there, especially in the run-up to the Sochi Olympics planned for 2014.

Trouble in the North Caucasus affects Azerbaijan in two ways. On the one hand, trouble there has a tendency to cross borders either as the result of refugee flows or the perception of regional difficulties that problems in the North involve. And on the other, Russia has never been able to stabilize the North Caucasus without establishing a dominant position in the south. Consequently, if there are problems in the North Caucasus in 2012, Azerbaijan and its neighbors will have to cope with expanded Russian interest in using the South Caucasus to defend Moscow's position in the North.

7. Echoes of the Arab Spring.

Perhaps the greatest of unknowns for 2012 is the possible echoes of the Arab Spring of 2011. The revolutions in Egypt and elsewhere have inspired popular revolts in many countries, both politically and technically, and they have also forced governments to take new measures, with some seeking to find common ground with the population and others invoking the need for stability to crack down on their populations.

Azerbaijan has been far less affected by the Arab Spring than many countries in the region; not only because its government enjoys more support and has greater legitimacy than others, but also because Baku under President Ilham Aliyev—as was

the case under his father Heydar Aliyev—has invested in promoting the welfare of the population. Given the inevitability of a revolution of rising expectations and a growing population, Baku will find itself under even more pressure to make such investments in the future.

8. Eurovision and More Intense International Attention to Azerbaijan.

All Azerbaijanis welcomed their country's victory in the *Eurovision* competition and look forward to Baku's hosting of that competition in 2012. The victory attracted expanded international attention to the country, and the upcoming competition promises to attract even more.

Because Azerbaijan has a good story to tell, most of this attention has been and will be positive, but no country is without problems—and problems more than achievements make for better media stories. Since the victory at *Eurovision* 2011, Azerbaijan has been the subject of many critical stories, some of which offer a distorted picture of life in the country. And in the coming months, Azerbaijan is likely to be the subject of many more.

What many people around the world will be watching is how Azerbaijanis react. Some Azerbaijanis will undoubtedly see such stories as the work of "the Armenian lobby," but most will recognize that such stories are a reflection of the way the world media works and understand that the more important their country becomes, the more likely at least some journalists will try to play up the negative. At the same time, however, Azerbaijani representatives, including diaspora organizations, will have an expanded role to play in correcting false reporting about the country.

9. Expansion of Azerbaijan's Diplomatic Presence Abroad.

More than any other leader in the post-Soviet region, President Ilham Aliyev has committed his country to the expansion of its diplomatic presence abroad, particularly in regions like Asia and Latin America that many other countries have fewer contacts with. That policy which lay behind Azerbaijan's election to the UN Security Council has led to a doubling in the number of Azerbaijani missions abroad over the last five years and—what is equally important—a dramatic growth in the number of resident embassies and missions in Baku is set to continue.

Few international observers thought it would be possible for Azerbaijan to expand so quickly, but Baku's program for training new diplomats at institutions like the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy has managed to keep up. As its network of missions increase and as demands on those which already exist grows, Azerbaijan will have to do even more in this regard, perhaps doubling the size of its foreign service over the next two years. That, too, will be a major challenge.

10. Growing Economic and Military Power.

At the foundation of Azerbaijan's expanding influence in the world is its economy. Its oil and gas resources and its role as an exporter and transporter of hydrocarbons already have made Baku a serious player in Europe. That role will only expand as various pipeline projects come on line and the true extent of new gas field finds is defined. That could set Baku on a collision course with other exporters; at the very least, Azerbaijan's officials and diplomats will have to work hard to defend Azerbaijan's interests in this most important sector.

In 2011, Azerbaijan's GDP formed 80 percent of the total GDP of the three South Caucasus countries. That share will likely rise still further in 2012 given the economic disaster in Armenia and troubles in Georgia. And that economic power will add weight to its influence not only over its neighbors in the South Caucasus, but in Central Asia and the Greater Middle East more generally.

One area that is likely to become increasingly important over the next year will be Azerbaijan's export of weapons and military hardware. Thanks to joint production agreements with Turkey and its own military industry, Azerbaijan is now posed to take its place as a major arms exporter, a status that will only give additional weight to its diplomacy.

In short, 2012 is likely to be an exciting and challenging one for Azerbaijan and its relations with the world. But as President Ilham Aliyev recently said, the strength of the Azerbaijani government combined with the strength of the Azerbaijani people means that there is no task, foreign or domestic, that the country cannot hope to achieve.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan will be restored" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306245.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev tells an informal summit of the CIS that "Azerbaijan is inclined toward constructive and active participation in all the processes within the framework of the CIS" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305308.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Azerbaijani embassies abroad must give priority to the struggle with issues involving official recognition of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/307331.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

The Russian Foreign Ministry says that mutual understanding was reached during 2011 on a number of "knotty questions" concerning the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/306847.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says France should withdraw as co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group following its decision on "the Armenian genocide" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306025.html>).

Iulian Chifu, advisor to the Romanian president for strategic questions, security and foreign policy, says that "the European Union could be an honest mediator for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/307129.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 December

Azerbaijanis around the world mark the Day of National Solidarity of the Azerbaijanis of the World (<http://news.day.az/politics/307324.html>).

The City of Calgary in Canada declares December 31st to be the Day of Solidarity of Azerbaijanis of the World (<http://news.day.az/politics/307368.html>).

30 December

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Matthew Bryza, outgoing US ambassador to Baku on the occasion of the completion of his appointment in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/307288.html>).

Nazim Ibrahimov, chairman of the State Committee on Work with the Diaspora, says that the role of Azerbaijani youth in the activity of the diaspora is growing (<http://news.day.az/politics/307255.html>).

The Foreign Ministry announces that NATO has agreed to the third stage of the individual partnership program with Azerbaijan for 2012-2013 (<http://news.day.az/politics/307348.html>).

The Milli Majlis adopts an appeal to the French Senate calling on it not to adopt a draft law on the criminalization of the denial of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/307277.html>).

The Milli Majlis adopts an appeal in honor of the *Day of Solidarity* of Azerbaijanis of the World (<http://news.day.az/politics/307346.html>).

The Azerbaijan Society of Moscow holds a conference on "The Political Stability and Economic Successes of Azerbaijan over the Last Decades" on the occasion of the *Day of Solidarity* of Azerbaijanis of the World (<http://news.day.az/society/307358.html>).

29 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ralph Gonsalves, prime minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (<http://news.day.az/politics/307140.html>).

Fuad Alaskarov, head of the law enforcement department of the Presidential Administration, says that "the national action program in the sphere of human rights corresponds to the goals of the strategy of the development of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/307085.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that the question of France's continuation as a co-chair country of the OSCE Minsk Group "can be discussed"

(<http://news.day.az/politics/307182.html>).

Eldar Hasanov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Sofia, hosts a meeting of Azerbaijanis there on the *Day of Solidarity* of Azerbaijanis of the World. The same day, similar meetings are held in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro (<http://news.day.az/society/307141.html>).

The Azerbaijani embassy in Brussels hosts a meeting on the *Day of Solidarity* of Azerbaijanis of the World (<http://news.day.az/society/307105.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the US will encounter problems in defending its interests in Azerbaijan if it does not have an ambassador in Baku for an extended period (<http://news.day.az/politics/307130.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that "Azerbaijan is a very important country for the United States in the sphere of security, energy, and domestic reforms" (<http://news.day.az/politics/307172.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that "there cannot be a military solution to the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" and that "the only way" to resolve it consists of "peaceful negotiations between the sides" (<http://news.day.az/politics/307150.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that the Southern Gas Corridor can play an important role not only for the South Caucasus, but also for all of Europe (<http://news.day.az/economy/307160.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russia's ambassador to Baku, presents awards to several Azerbaijani media figures (<http://news.day.az/society/307125.html>).

The Moldovan embassy in Baku says that media reports that Chisinau has sold military arms to Armenia are not true (<http://news.day.az/politics/307112.html>).

28 December

President Ilham Aliyev signs a directive awarding honors to representatives of the Azerbaijani diaspora in the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/politics/306954.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that it is seeking clarification on reports that members of the Australian regional parliament of New South Wales have visited the occupied territories without clearance from Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/306892.html>).

The Administration for Civil Aviation announces that it has signed a cooperation memorandum with its counterpart in Qatar (<http://news.day.az/economy/306894.html>).

The Ecology and Natural Resources Ministry says that Turkey is taking steps to ensure that there is going to be no future contamination of the waters of the trans-border Kura River (<http://news.day.az/society/306896.html>).

The Turkish Organization for Machine Building and the Chemical Industry says that Azerbaijan and Turkey are planning to establish a joint enterprise to export arms

production (<http://news.day.az/politics/306893.html>).

Dunja Mijatović, OSCE's representative for freedom of the media, welcomes President Ilham Aliyev's pardoning of Jabbar Savalanly (<http://news.day.az/politics/306930.html>).

27 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, on the completion of the latter's assignment in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/306631.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that the French National Assembly's adoption of a law about "the invented 'Armenian genocide'" is having a serious negative impact on the image of France (<http://news.day.az/politics/306603.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Mammadgulyev says that Azerbaijan and the World Trade Organization have agreed to additional talks in Geneva in February 2012 (<http://news.day.az/economy/306713.html>).

The Communications and Information Technology Ministry protests the World Atlas on the Apple I-Phone atlas showing occupied Azerbaijani territories as part of Armenia (<http://news.day.az/society/306687.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that following the Arab Spring, the Arab countries will prefer the Turkish model of state administration (<http://news.day.az/politics/306719.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, sheikh-ul-Islam and head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, says that the decision of the French National Assembly concerning the criminalization of denial of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" is a provocation against the Turkic world, including Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/306674.html>).

Azerbaijanis in Voronezh organize a celebration of the *Day of Solidarity of Azerbaijanis of the World* (<http://news.day.az/society/307064.html>).

Hulusi Kilic, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says that "politicians should not involve themselves with the work of historians" by adopting laws criminalizing the denial of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306673.html>).

26 December

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the might of the Azerbaijani state and the creative potential of our people inspire confidence that we will achieve the new goals we have set" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306524.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Hasan Mammadzade as Azerbaijan's ambassador to Vilnius (<http://news.day.az/politics/306518.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov is awarded a medal in honor of the 20th anniversary of the independence of Kazakhstan by Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev (<http://news.day.az/politics/306431.html>).

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev meets with Israeli officials to discuss expanding economic cooperation between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/economy/306472.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department of the Presidential Administration, says that "Azerbaijan has been transformed from a country which imports capital into one that exports it" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306517.html>).

Arif Mammadov, director of the State Administration for Civil Aviation, discusses the illegal construction by Armenians of an airport in Hojaly with Catalin Radu, president of the European Civil Aviation Conference (<http://news.day.az/politics/306417.html>).

Yana Salman, a member of the Azerbaijan-Israel Association, says that Israel must not recognize "the Armenian genocide," because the Armenians are using these events of a century ago for political reasons and because "many Armenians were *de facto* 'a fifth column'" in 1915 (<http://news.day.az/politics/306410.html>).

Jevda Abramov, leader of the working group for inter-parliamentary ties between Azerbaijan and Israel, says that discussion of "the Armenian genocide" will be limited to a parliamentary committee and that Israel will not recognize the events of 1915 as a genocide because of its relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/306422.html>).

The European Congress of Azerbaijanis calls on French President Nicholas Sarkozy not to sign the French parliament's action imposing penalties for anyone who denies "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306421.html>).

Nino Enukidze, Georgia's deputy minister for energy and national resources, presides over the opening of SOCAR Energy Georgia's completion of a gas pipeline (<http://news.day.az/economy/306489.html>).

The Eurasian Development Bank says that Azerbaijan leads the CIS in the growth of hard currency reserves (<http://news.day.az/economy/306484.html>).

25 December

The Foreign Ministry expresses regret that representatives of the Armenian community of Nagorno-Karabakh refused to meet with the Azerbaijani community of that region of Azerbaijan (<http://video.day.az/view=ec764mgq>).

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari expresses gratitude to Azerbaijan for its cooperation in handling pilgrims to holy places in Iraq (<http://news.day.az/politics/306267.html>).

24 December

President Ilham Aliyev marks his birthday at the ceasefire line near Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/306185.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives greetings on his birthday from world leaders, including Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, US President Barak Obama, German

Chancellor Angela Merkel, Jordanian King Abdullah II, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, and others (<http://news.day.az/politics/305905.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev is awarded the order of friendship of the peoples by Belorussian President Aleksandr Lukashenko (<http://news.day.az/politics/306161.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says that "the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the only one on the post-Soviet space, which can be resolved now. There is only one path to this and that is to reach an agreement, because the alternatives to agreement do not exist. The alternative is only a bad one, war" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306251.html>).

Nathalie Goulet, a French senator, says that the French legislature must reverse course on "the so-called Armenian genocide" lest Turkey remind the world about Algeria and other conflicts that France has been involved in (<http://news.day.az/politics/306173.html>).

Gallup International research says that Azerbaijan ranks eighth out of 51 countries in terms of popular hopes for and confidence in the future (<http://news.day.az/politics/306199.html>).

23 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari (<http://news.day.az/politics/306076.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "if France occupied a just position, it would not be involving itself in history of a century ago and thereby sharpening the situation in the region. Such a position by France as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group calls forth regret" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305988.html>).

Fuad Akhundov, head of the political research and analysis of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, said that the Gandzasar church, which the Armenians claim as their "Notre Dame," in fact was built by the ancient Albanians (<http://news.day.az/politics/306026.html>).

Bahar Muradova, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that the Azerbaijani parliament must hold the French parliament responsible for its vote on "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306029.html>).

Kamran Imanov, head of the Agency for Copyright, says that the Baku Center for Protecting Intellectual Property has developed a plan for fighting piracy and Armenian plagiarism (<http://news.day.az/society/306098.html>).

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, says that the OIC condemns the action of the French parliament concerning "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306032.html>).

Mustafa Kabakci, a deputy of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that Ankara does not need the advice of the French foreign minister (<http://news.day.az/politics/306113.html>).

The Georgian national security concept says that Azerbaijan is a strategic partner of Georgia (<http://news.day.az/politics/306105.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russia's ambassador to Baku, says that "the unique status of the Russian language in Azerbaijan deserves praise" (<http://news.day.az/politics/306065.html>).

Nathalie Goulet, a member of the French Senate, says that French lawmakers should leave the question of "the Armenian genocide" to historians (<http://news.day.az/politics/306000.html>).

Stand & Poor's says that Baku's projected foreign debt is not going to be excessive (<http://news.day.az/economy/306086.html>).

22 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives greetings from world leaders on the occasion of his 50th birthday (<http://news.day.az/politics/305905.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives outgoing Chinese Ambassador to Baku Chzhan Yanyan on the occasion of the latter's completion of his assignment in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/305878.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev inspects new military helicopters from Russia (<http://news.day.az/politics/305919.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva participate in the ceremonies on the reopening of the Ajdarbek mosque in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/305876.html>).

Labor and Social Security Minister Fizuli Alakparov receives his Serbian counterpart Rasim Ljajić who says that Serbia is interested in expanding ties with Azerbaijan in those sectors (<http://news.day.az/economy/305917.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that "certain European deputies have been converted into the hands of definite circles" by taking up "the so-called 'Armenian genocide.'" It adds that "if France has such a principled approach to definite issues, then it as a co-chair country of the OSCE Minsk Group should also consider the question of the Hojaly genocide" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305858.html>).

Ramiz Mehdiyev, head of the Presidential Administration, takes part in the presentation of Graham Wilson's new book *The President of Azerbaijan: His Struggle for Peace and Vision for the Future* (<http://news.day.az/politics/305920.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says the adoption by the French parliament of a law on "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" is "unjust" and casts a negative shadow on France "as a democratic state and society" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305908.html>).

Rufat Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says Yerevan's economic policies are making Armenia "unfit for human habitation" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305806.html>).

Ilyas Ismayilov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that after the French Senate adopted a

law on the criminalization of the denial of "the Armenian genocide," that country cannot be considered "an objective mediator for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305907.html>).

A new book *Ilham Aliyev—Eight Years in Power* is presented in Sumgayit (<http://news.day.az/politics/305916.html>).

The International Center of the Diaspora and the Azerbaijani Society of War Veterans stage a demonstration in front of the French embassy in Baku to protest the French Senate's discussion of a measure criminalizing denial "of the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305791.html>).

The Azerbaijani diaspora of the United Arab Emirates calls on the French parliament to end discussions of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305825.html>).

The Azerbaijani and Turkish diasporas of Finland call on France not to adopt legislation on "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305807.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that he hopes the Senate will confirm his appointment to that position (<http://news.day.az/politics/305874.html>).

Heybulla Ramazan, an advisor to the Turkish prime minister, says that Ankara will respond to the decision of the French Senate to criminalize the denial of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305868.html>).

Mikhail Machavariani, vice speaker of the Georgian parliament, says that the resolution of conflicts in the South Caucasus on the basis of the principle of territorial integrity will benefit "all the countries of the region, including Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305817.html>).

The World Bank conducts a preliminary assessment of tenders for modernizing the capital markets of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/economy/305856.html>).

Günther Oettinger, European Union commissioner for energy, says that Brussels "support the choice of the Shah Deniz consortium" (<http://news.day.az/economy/305849.html>).

Carolina Bright, head of the International Finance Corporation project in Baku, says that "Azerbaijan can occupy leading positions in the region on the development of corporate administration if it continues active development of this sphere" (<http://news.day.az/economy/305843.html>).

21 December

President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva receive Rashida Dati, a deputy of the European Parliament (<http://news.day.az/politics/305707.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Wilfried Martens, president of the European People's Party (<http://news.day.az/politics/305703.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Milo Đukanović, former president of Montenegro

(<http://news.day.az/politics/305703.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Valdis Zatlers, former president of Latvia
(<http://news.day.az/politics/305703.html>).

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev announces that the Azerbaijani government has defined five basic directions for the modernization of the country's economy (<http://news.day.az/economy/305593.html>).

Bahar Muradova, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that France's consideration of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" will lead other countries to evaluate aspects of French history (<http://news.day.az/politics/305591.html>).

Rabiyat Aslanova, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "today Europe is experiencing not only an economic crisis, but a crisis of thought" as evidenced by the French Parliament's decision to discuss "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305614.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, sheikh-ul-Islam and head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, receives Wilfried Martens, former Belgian prime minister, who says that "religious tolerance in Azerbaijan has great importance" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305560.html>).

The National Academy of Sciences, the International Agency for Atomic energy, and the Isotope Institute of Hungary sign a trilateral cooperation accord (<http://news.day.az/economy/305660.html>).

Ali Fatollahi, Iran's deputy foreign minister, says that "Azerbaijan has firm positions in the world" thanks to "the successful continuation" by President Ilham Aliyev of the course defined by his father President Heydar Aliyev (<http://news.day.az/politics/305690.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russia's ambassador to Baku, hosts a roundtable on the 20th anniversary of the formation of the CIS (<http://news.day.az/politics/305678.html>).

Rashida Dati, a deputy of the European Parliament, says that she "supports the position of Azerbaijan on "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305679.html>).

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono administers the oath of office to Prayono Atiyanto, the new Indonesian ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/305663.html>).

Mikhail Machavariani, first vice speaker of the Georgian Parliament, says that if the territorial conflicts involving Azerbaijan and Georgia were resolved, "the South Caucasus would be one of the most flourishing regions of the world not only economically, but politically as well" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305606.html>).

Turkey's Grand National Assembly says it will take up next year the question of the Hojaly genocide (<http://news.day.az/politics/305600.html>).

Ukraine's *Verkhovnaya Rada* adopts legislation concerning cooperation with Azerbaijan on the transportation of oil across Ukraine

(<http://news.day.az/economy/305670.html>).

The US Agency for International Development announces that it will help Baku develop taxpayer services (<http://news.day.az/economy/305594.html>).

20 December

President Ilham Aliyev tells an informal summit of the CIS that "Azerbaijan is inclined toward constructive and active participation in all the processes within the framework of the CIS" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305308.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev meets with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev and other CIS country leaders in Moscow (<http://news.day.az/politics/305308.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev says in Sumgayit that "Azerbaijan is successfully developing and successfully moving ahead" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305177.html>).

Prime Minister Arthur Rasizade says that "the level of cooperation of Azerbaijan with Georgia can serve as an example to others" (<http://news.day.az/economy/305280.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku accepts some and rejects others of the Venetian Commission's evaluation of its draft legislation on political parties (<http://news.day.az/politics/305460.html>).

Aleksandr Mishchenko, Ukraine's ambassador to Baku, announces the expansion of tourism cooperation between Baku and the Autonomous republic of Crimea (<http://news.day.az/economy/305387.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the French parliament's discussion of legislation that would make the denial of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" a crime shames French democracy (<http://news.day.az/politics/305366.html>).

Safa Mirzoyev, head of the apparatus of the Milli Majlis, says that the EU's twinning project in support of the Milli Majlis has brought Azerbaijani law and practice into closer compliance with European norms (<http://news.day.az/politics/305359.html>).

Kenul Nurullayeva, executive director of Baku-2020, says that Baku has a good chance to host the Olympics in 2020 (<http://sport.day.az/olimpizm/20111220023603812.html>).

The Mexican Senate declares that the events in Hojaly were a genocide (<http://news.day.az/politics/305407.html>).

The European Union issues a mandate for the launch of talks on the simplification of its visa regime with Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/305391.html>).

Michael Wickers, US deputy secretary of defense, visits Baku to discuss defense cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/305356.html>).

The GUAM countries agree that Azerbaijan will serve as coordinator of its energy working group in 2012 (<http://news.day.az/economy/305475.html>).

Nikolay Patskevich, Belarus' ambassador to Baku, says that trade between Azerbaijan and his country will grow significantly in 2012 (<http://news.day.az/economy/305352.html>).

Andrey Valentinov, political advisor of the EU representation in Baku, says that the twinning projects are giving support to the development of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/economy/305378.html>).

19 December

President Ilham Aliyev receives Bernard Fassier, former French co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/305222.html>).

Rufat Aslani, head of the State Committee on Securities, presents a second report on money laundering and the financing of terrorism to a meeting of MONEYVAL in Strasbourg (<http://news.day.az/economy/305240.html>).

Samad Seyidov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that those "protecting" Armenians did not allow them to meet with Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/305183.html>).

Samir Imanov, head of the Azerbaijani Society in the United Arab Emirates, sends letter to French officials protesting Paris' discussion of "the so-called 'Armenian genocide'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/305172.html>).

Bernard Fassier, former French co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says that President Ilham Aliyev and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan may meet to discuss the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict early in 2012 (<http://news.day.az/politics/305220.html>).

Nina Kalandadze, Georgia's deputy foreign minister, says that Azerbaijan is "the number one trading partner" of her country (<http://news.day.az/economy/305142.html>).

18 December

President Ilham Aliyev is presented with the award "Worthy Friend of the Balkans" by Vlade Divac, president of the Serbian Olympic committee (<http://news.day.az/politics/305039.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov visits Warsaw for political consultations with the Polish government (<http://news.day.az/politics/305005.html>).

17 December

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov says that Baku will host an international arms bazaar in 2014 (<http://news.day.az/politics/304913.html>). He also announces the successful test of several new Azerbaijani weapons (<http://news.day.az/economy/304938.html>) and the development of production capacity in explosives and other arms (<http://news.day.az/economy/304908.html> and <http://news.day.az/economy/304902.html>).

The Azerbaijani consulate general in Aktau has dispatched several officials to striking regions of Kazakhstan in order to be prepared to evacuate Azerbaijanis from there if necessary (<http://news.day.az/politics/304960.html>).

Yaqub Makhmudov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the National Academy of Sciences has prepared a dossier for presentation to the Hague tribunal concerning acts of genocide against the Azerbaijani people committed by Armenians (<http://news.day.az/politics/304915.html>).

Eldar Ibrahimov, a Milli Majlis deputy, meets with his Ukrainian counterparts in Kyiv to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/304966.html>).

Azerbaijan's *Eurovision-2012* working group launches a site, <http://www.eurovision.az>, about its work (<http://news.day.az/showbiz/304965.html>).

Oleg Korokhin, Russia's deputy chief of mission in Baku, says that in Azerbaijan, "the Russian language is not simply remaining as a connecting link in inter-ethnic and inter-cultural dialogue, but from year to year is strengthening its positions in this area" (<http://news.day.az/society/304942.html>).

16 December

Elman Arasly, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Baghdad, says the visit to Baku by Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari will open "new pages of cooperation in various spheres" (<http://news.day.az/politics/304742.html>).

Arzu Rahimov, head of the State Migration Service, says that most illegal immigrants in Azerbaijan come from Turkey (<http://news.day.az/society/304752.html>).

Aydin Aliyev, head of the State Customs Committee, signs a cooperation accord with Israeli Ambassador to Baku Mikhael Lavon Lotem (<http://news.day.az/economy/305157.html>).

Azerbaijan is ready to take delivery from Russia of the first two of 24 attack helicopters, according to *Jane's Defense Weekly* (<http://news.day.az/economy/304769.html>).

Hulusi Kilic, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says that Ankara will always support Azerbaijan's position on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/304806.html>).

The US Department of State reiterates its support for Matthew Bryza's confirmation as ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/304901.html>).

Aflatun Amashev, head of the Media Organization of Turkic Language Countries and Societies, says that Turkey is discussing the possibility of creating a single Internet portal for all of them (<http://news.day.az/society/304805.html>).

The Russian Emergency Situations Ministry presents medals and other awards to Azerbaijani officials for their participation in the Caspian 2011 exercises and other cooperation forums (<http://news.day.az/politics/305615.html>).

Note to Readers

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