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Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

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AZERBAIJAN AND THE WORLD AT THE START OF 2010

Editorial Note: The Roman god Janus after whom the month of January is named is always shown with two faces, one looking forward and one looking backward. Thus, it is at the turn of each new year that people both consider what they have been through and where they are going. 2009 has been a year full of events full of meaning for Azerbaijan and its relationship with the world. Below are the reflections of some of Azerbaijan's leading analysts and practitioners about both what has occurred in 2009 and what may lie ahead in 2010.

Azerbaijan in the World: What were Azerbaijan's major foreign policy achievements in 2009?

Elin Suleymanov [Consul General of Azerbaijan to Los Angeles, California]: Azerbaijan's diplomatic service celebrated the 90th anniversary of its founding in 1919, thus offering a chance to talk about Azerbaijan's place in the world. Indeed, instead of cataloguing Baku's achievements, I'd like to focus on Azerbaijan's growing international profile and its assumption of a leadership role in the region. These developments reflect President Ilham Aliyev's pragmatic and resolute foreign policy, a policy whose implementation under the leadership of Foreign Minister Elmar

Mammadyarov was over the last year more pro-active and persistent than ever before. Particularly important in my view has been Azerbaijan's success in raising international awareness of the importance of the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict for the future of the entire region, as well as Baku's resoluteness in asserting itself as an independent and sovereign regional player basing its actions solely on its own national interests and perceptions.

Asim Mollazade [Milli Majlis deputy and chairman of the Democratic Reforms Party]: Among the achievements of the last year, I would point to Baku's success in attracting international attention to its conflict with Armenia and the intensified talks about the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Vafa Guluzade [former national security advisor and now an independent analyst]: 2009 was a difficult year for Azerbaijan in foreign affairs: we had a lot of difficulties, and as a result, Azerbaijan's relations with other countries deteriorated somewhat. Baku did gain ground in attracting attention to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but our relations with neighbors and other countries are more tense than a year ago. On a positive side, though, the latter fact has not turned Azerbaijan into some kind of rogue or pariah state although, as world history teaches us, that could happen.

Rasim Musabeyov [an independent political analyst]: It is difficult to speak about concrete results from and achievements of 2009 just now, but I would point to the growth of Baku's independence in taking foreign policy decisions, its confidence and insistence on the defense of its own national interests.

Azerbaijan in the World: What were the major shortcomings of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in 2009?

Elin Suleymanov: Azerbaijan's foreign policy has been overall on a positive track. This success has produced some problems, which might be described more properly as growing pains. The Azerbaijani diplomatic service is stretched thin. It continues to suffer from a shortage of qualified and adequately trained mid-career personnel. This, of course, is a natural situation for a rapidly expanding service. The ministry's introduction of an entrance examination and the establishment of the Diplomatic Academy have helped, but we have more to do.

Another challenge is that we have so far failed to develop a dynamic way of presenting Azerbaijan in varying contexts. This, too, is a result of insufficient training.

Asim Mollazade: Azerbaijan cannot be indifferent to the criticism it has received from the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United States with regards to the media situation here. Armenia and Russia have similar problems at home but have largely managed to escape such criticism.

Vafa Guluzade: Our main problem, Nagorno-Karabakh, is still unresolved, and no one is really supporting Azerbaijani policy. We live in a hostile environment: the country that is a victim of aggression – Azerbaijan – is not supported by the international community, while aggressor – Armenia – is beloved, by the United States and all allies in NATO. Support for Azerbaijani position is limited to declarations, which do not offer real support. We have also witnessed very negative television propaganda about Azerbaijan, like the film presented by *Euronews* which

never mentioned the fact that Armenia's military action forced one million people to flee their homes or that 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory remains under Armenian occupation.

Another problem of the last year was increasing tension between Baku and Washington, with Baku increasingly incensed by US support for Armenia and by its criticism of Azerbaijani domestic affairs. We need to work toward a better relationship with Washington and recognize that some of US criticism is objective. Moreover, we should be trying to increase our integration with NATO. But we are not doing it. But most important: Our policy must be completely open. We must stop trying to balance everything because the era of balancing has ended. It is completely obvious that we are not able to be with Russia, because Russia itself is going to be with the United States. That is why there is no sense in balancing. Toward that end, we must adopt a cautious and sophisticated approach.

Rasim Musabeyov: Our main shortcoming continues to be that we react rather than act, something that gives others the initiative. Obviously, the possibilities of Azerbaijan as a small country are limited in the international arena. However, it is necessary to search and use new possibilities and to formulate a discourse on problems that immediately touch our affairs.

Azerbaijan in the World: Some analysts have suggested that 2009 was dominated by an effort of all countries in the region to adjust to the new conditions created by the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. How well do you think Baku has done in this regard?

Elin Suleymanov: Indeed, the August events of 2008 have brought about a dramatic change in our region. In my view, the Azerbaijani leadership managed this complicated situation with great success. This, in turn, highlighted both Baku's ability to operate calmly in a regional crisis and the fact that Azerbaijan's long-standing pragmatic approach has been a correct policy to pursue. Azerbaijan, which has always perceived itself as a part of a greater region, has continued to deepen cooperation with all partners. Rather than seeking short-term benefits from the situation, Baku has worked towards strengthening regional stability for the long term.

Asim Mollazade: Azerbaijan provided humanitarian help to Georgia and at the same time continued normal relations with Russia, and it has maintained the energy corridor through Georgia despite the expectations of many of the converse.

Vafa Guluzade: In my view, the United States wanted Russia to act in August 2008 the way it did in order to demonstrate to all the countries of the region that Russia is an aggressive and revisionist state that threatens them. On the other hand, Georgia now, without Abkhazia and South Ossetia, is able to join NATO. In a way, the August war of 2008 and the ensuing occupation of Georgia's territories was about Georgian membership to NATO.

For Azerbaijan, the war meant that people in Baku again focused on the reality that fighting Armenia is about fighting Russia, something that could give Moscow a pretext for attacking Azerbaijan and occupying even more territories.

Rasim Musabeyov: In the wake of the war, Azerbaijan confirmed its strategic partnership with Georgia by inviting President Saakashvili to Baku in the beginning of 2009. Moreover, despite Moscow's dissatisfaction, Baku sent a group of officers to work with NATO in Georgia. But all of this even taken together did not create obstacles for the development of partnership relations between Azerbaijan and Russia, especially in economic and humanitarian fields. Political dialogue continued at all levels. In a word, Azerbaijan demonstrated stability and faithfulness to the obligations it had assumed with all its partners.

Azerbaijan in the World: What specific challenges do you see the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement presenting to Baku now and in the future?

Elin Suleymanov: Dialogue between Turkey and Armenia could have a positive impact on our region. The concern here is not the dialogue itself but an attempt to pursue symbolic gestures instead of addressing real issues. Azerbaijan has, from the very outset, stated that the real, most pressing problem for the region continues to be Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani lands. No sustainable normalization can be expected in the South Caucasus unless and until this challenge is dealt with. The problems involved in ratifying the protocols have proven Azerbaijan's point.

In fact, Turkish-Armenian discussions have reminded the world about the centrality of resolving the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict for the future of the region and that of Armenia itself. The main objective for Azerbaijan, therefore, is to work together with Turkey and other partners to continue efforts towards a fair settlement of the conflict instead of playing politics of symbolic gestures. Among the key factors for that is the need to engage in an intensive multifaceted and wide-ranging outreach to the Turkish society.

Asim Mollazade: When President Aliyev refused to attend the Istanbul conference, Baku showed once again that no serious progress can be made in the South Caucasus without Azerbaijan's full participation. Azerbaijan explained that it is not against the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement per se, but that the latter could only proceed once that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been resolved.

Vafa Guluzade: In my view, the latest effort at Turkish-Armenian rapprochement has failed, in large part because Ankara did not take Baku into consideration in the beginning of the process. It is now clear that the Turkish parliament is not going to ratify the Zurich protocols until there is some progress in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Indeed, one could say that blocking the ratification of the protocols represents a major victory for Azerbaijani foreign policy in 2009.

Rasim Musabeyov: Azerbaijan has been able to insist on its point of view without provoking a rupture with Ankara. The Turkish government not only has confirmed the impossibility of moving forward without progress on Nagorno-Karabakh but has provided Azerbaijan with a new supply of arms. It is important for Azerbaijan to consolidate its latest gains and arrive at a situation when Russia's regional policies would grow increasingly friendlier to Azerbaijan and its concerns without a similar positive turn in the Armenian-Turkish relations. That will secure Azerbaijan's leadership position in the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijan in the World: What do you see as the prospects for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2010?

Elin Suleymanov: One can only hope that the progress registered during talks in 2009 will lead to a settlement. In recent statements, President Aliyev has stressed the urgency of resolving the problem and demonstrated a constructive approach at the talks. Other factors point in the same direction including a growing international realization after August 2008 of the dangers presented by unresolved conflicts, Turkey's commitment to seek progress on Nagorno-Karabakh as the price of ratification of the protocols, and Russia's involvement at the presidential level in talks about the conflict.

Asim Mollazade: There appear to be good chances for the completion of at least a framework agreement early in 2010. That should lead to an acceleration of the talks.

Vafa Guluzade: I do not think that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be settled in 2010. The great powers are not interested in resolving it. Russia benefits from a policy of no war-no peace, and the US supports Christian Armenia rather than Muslim Azerbaijan. I fear we may soon face a problem like the one the Palestinians have: ever more international declarations and ever less progress toward a genuine settlement.

Rasim Musabeyov: The OSCE Minsk Group talks on the basis of the so-called Madrid Principles are headed toward a time at which participants will not be able to avoid saying yes or no. Because the cost of failure would be so high for so many, I believe that the participants will find a way to reach an agreement. The chances for that are not so small, and it is important not to miss this chance.

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'NO ORDINARY YEAR' FOR AZERBAIJAN

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There is a long-standing tradition in journalism that articles written at the end of a year list the achievements and the shortcomings of their subject and then talk about how the individual or country involved will build on the former and overcome the latter in the year ahead. But as President Ilham Aliyev wisely pointed out this month, "2009 was not an ordinary year." And it deserves a special approach, one that focuses not on the mix of successes and failures in the usual sense but on new challenges that have emerged and the ways in which Azerbaijan has been working to meet them.

Of the many such challenges that have emerged over the last months, three are especially important because in each case they pose both new opportunities and new difficulties for Baku. They are the continuing fallout – good and bad – from the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, the increasing independence of Turkey as it seeks to become a major regional power, and Azerbaijan's own drive to

gain a higher profile in international affairs, changing from a country on the margins to a major player in its own right and doing so during a worldwide financial crisis. Each of these developments not only presented new challenges; they all both singly and collectively redefined many of the issues that have long been on Baku's agenda.

The full implications of the 2008 war became apparent only in the course of 2009. Not surprisingly, they were contradictory and continue to be subject to much debate. But several consequences appear beyond dispute. On the one hand, Russia's actions by violating one of the rules of the game that the countries of the region thought they could count on has forced the countries there to focus on security questions in a new way, asking what their own capacity to defend themselves is and what new relations with other powers they should pursue – or, alternatively, whether they can make use of Russia's actions either directly or as a model for their own national security strategies.

And on the other, Russia's actions in Georgia had profound consequences for Russian policy in the region. By cutting off its supply line to Armenia (which had passed through Georgia), Russia not only called into question the historically close ties between Moscow and Yerevan but virtually invited Armenia to seek a way out of that impasse, even to the point of exploring the re-opening of ties with its historical enemy Turkey, but also put Moscow in a position where, in order to recover some of the influence it lost as a result of the war, the Russian government wanted to appear as a peacemaker. Where better to show that new face than in the "frozen" Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a dispute Russia has long gained from having a condition of "no war –no peace" but where that status is no longer working to its benefit.

Thus, one of the most important consequences of the August 2008 war has been new movement toward the resolution of the long-running Karabakh conflict, movement made possible by changes in the calculations of both Armenia and the Russian Federation and, it should be added, by the skillful way in which Baku has suggested that its patience with the current situation is running out and that it is willing to use force to restore Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, a move no one wants.

The second major shift in the geopolitics of the South Caucasus has been the increasing independence of Turkey. Disappointed with both its inability to gain membership in the European Union and the ways in which NATO commanders have from its point of view taken Turkey for granted, Ankara has sought to play a more independent role. The August 2008 war offered Turkey a triple opportunity: First, it could present itself as a peacemaker with its offer of a security and cooperation pact for the entire region. Second, it could explore relations with others, including Iran, that countries in NATO or aspiring to EU membership generally have to avoid. And third, taking advantage of Armenia's isolation in the wake of the Georgian conflict, Ankara could reach out to Armenia, a step that not only underscored its willingness to think what had been unthinkable only a few months earlier but also won points in Western capitals where Turkey is still campaigning against any official declaration about the events of 1915 in Anatolia.

Each of these Turkish actions had profound consequences in Baku. First of all, Turkey's effort to be a new regional hegemon cast doubt on the assumption that the contest in the Caucasus was between Russia on the one hand and the West on the other, with Turkey playing a supporting role. In fact, the geopolitical competition in the Caucasus has become much more complicated. Not only is Turkey now playing an independent role but so too is Iran and China, and their entrance means that the

old two-sided game has been replaced by a much more complicated multi-sided one. That in turn has forced Azerbaijan to pay greater attention to players it had largely ignored and allowed Baku greater freedom of maneuver to pursue its "balanced" foreign policy.

Second, Turkey's willingness and ability to get involved with Iran has opened the way for Baku to do the same, not only by expanding gas sales to the south but also by allowing for a dramatic warming in ties between the two Shia states. That has the effect of changing the image of Baku as inherently anti-Iranian given the problems of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran – the so-called "Southern Azerbaijan" issue – and gives Azerbaijan yet another way of exporting its oil and gas and thus reduces the pressures on it to choose between pipeline system that flow through Russia and those that avoid it. Curiously but hardly surprisingly in the current circumstances, those in the West who most want to see pipelines bypass Russia are nonetheless horrified that Azerbaijan may arrange exactly that by going through Iran.

But if these two consequences have attracted some attention in Baku, the third aspect of Turkey's new approach has been at the center of debate in the Azerbaijani capital. Operating on the assumption that Azerbaijan and Turkey are "one nation, two countries," Azerbaijanis had assumed that Turkey would never do anything with regard to Armenia that Azerbaijan did not approve of in advance. The signing of the Ankara-Yerevan protocols that point toward the restoration of diplomatic ties and the opening of the Armenian-Turkish frontier calls that into question.

Baku has always insisted, and Turkey has generally agreed, that there can be no progress in Turkish-Armenian relations unless and until Armenia withdraws from the 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan it occupies. Turkey broke relations and closed its border with Armenia more than 15 years ago to protest Armenian actions in Azerbaijan, and no one in Baku saw any reason for Turkey to change position now.

But that was to misread both Turkey and its specific, even unique national interests. That Turkey sees Azerbaijan as its closest ally has not changed, but Turkey has other interests, including both preventing any country and especially major Western powers from making any official declaration about the events of 1915 in Anatolia and demonstrating that it can act as an important regional power in its own right. Those interests are now at the center of Ankara's policies, something that has infuriated many Azerbaijanis who feel betrayed, even though in the event Turkey has not moved as far or as fast on Armenia as many had feared or expected.

(As some of the wiser heads in Azerbaijan have noted, Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia could end by working to Azerbaijan's advantage. On the one hand, such ties will have the effect of seriously reducing the influence of the Armenian diaspora both internationally and in Armenia, a group that has been more hostile to Baku than have the Armenians of Armenia. And on the other, an Armenia with an opening to the world through Turkey will be both less dependent on Russia as it was in the past and also less committed to a Masada-type defense of Karabakh).

The third challenge to Azerbaijan as a foreign policy actor is the unintended and largely unexpected result of its own efforts to assume a higher profile in international affairs at a time when, thanks to the international financial crisis, most countries are cutting back on their missions and other activities abroad. Thanks to its careful stewardship of past earnings from the sale of oil and gas, Azerbaijan has not been hit as hard by the world financial crisis as most other countries. And consequently, it

has been able to pursue President Aliyev's call for expanding its diplomatic presence and muscle around the world.

Over the last couple of years, the number of Azerbaijani missions has increased by 50 percent, and the number of Azerbaijani initiatives in bilateral and multilateral forums has gone up by at least that much. All those steps have as intended increased Azerbaijan's profile as a rising regional power, but they have had another consequence that should have been anticipated but that is in any case much less welcome: Azerbaijan is now subject to much greater scrutiny and criticism than it was in the past.

Government actions toward journalists and others have attracted a great deal of criticism from foreign governments and monitoring organizations. Some of this criticism is inappropriate, some is informed by "double standards" of one kind or another, but some of it is quite valid and reflects the kind of examination that a rising power has to expect the international community will subject it to. That does not make it easy to take, and Azerbaijanis have generally lashed out at anyone who criticizes what they do, failing in almost every case to see that this criticism is itself a mark of Azerbaijan's rise in the world even if it is also an indication of some of the chances Azerbaijan is likely to have to make if it is to rise higher still at least among the Euro-Atlantic powers.

Indeed, one of the key issues of the coming months is whether the criticism Baku has received in this area will be the cause of a rebalancing of Azerbaijan's foreign policy away from the West. That would compromise both the country's national interests and its proclaimed balanced foreign policy, but the level of anger about such criticism is so great that there is a danger of a new and different tilt, a possibility that those leveling criticism of Azerbaijan cannot fail to take into consideration.

All of these factors are going to continue to play a role in 2010, a year which may see a partial settlement of Karabakh because of Russian efforts, a partial opening of relations between Armenia and Turkey, and a greater willingness of Azerbaijan to forge ties with Iran and China. But because of the new complexity in the international game that 2009 brought, it is entirely possible than 12 months from now President Aliyev's suggestion that this has been "no ordinary year" will be equally applicable at the start of 2011.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the theme of Karabakh resolution has become one of the central ones on the international agenda," adding that the course of talks between Baku and Yerevan has been "positive but less positive than it could be" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187079.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that 2009 was "a very fruitful one" for Azerbaijan, with numerous foreign visits abroad by President Ilham Aliyev and other

Azerbaijani officials as well as visits to Baku by foreign officials, an intensification of discussions on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, and a growth in Azerbaijan's international standing. As evidence of the latter, he points to Baku's status having been capital of the Islamic world and to the Nakhchivan summit of the Turkic language states. At the same time, Mammadyarov says that some international organizations and countries have applied "double standards" in their judgments about Azerbaijan's internal affairs (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187518.html>).

Agshin Mehdiyev, the permanent representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, says that Azerbaijan is a co-author of a UN resolution on the right of nations to self-determination because "Azerbaijan has not opposed the right of peoples to self-determination. We have always said that this right does not have any relationship to the Karabakh Armenians. Because [the status of] the Armenians is already determined" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186673.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says that "Iran and Azerbaijan can become a bridge of friendship between the countries of the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186608.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russia's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "the security of pipelines which will provide for the transport of Azerbaijani gas to Russia will be guaranteed just as it is on other pipeline routes."

The European Court of Human Rights will consider a suit by Azerbaijanis who were forced to resettle as a result of Armenian occupation of the Lachin district (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186020.html>).

Marcelo Torres, Cuba's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that his country "knows well about the successes which Azerbaijan has achieved" and remembers in a positive way the fact that in 1993, Azerbaijan was the only country from the CIS which supported Cuba on the question of the blockade (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187395.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 December

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that his country "will do everything possible to reestablish the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187958.html>). His ministry expands on his point by saying that "without the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the establishment of stability in the Caucasus is impossible" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187940.html>).

Zakir Hashimov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Turkey, is chosen "ambassador of the year" by the Union of Workers and Leaders of Anatolia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187942.html>).

Azerbaijani diaspora communities in China, Pakistan and other countries mark the Day of Solidarity of Azerbaijanis of the World (<http://www.day.az/news/society/187965.html>, <http://www.day.az/news/society/187956.html>).

30 December

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva says that "2009 will remain in the history of our country as one of many important events and achievements" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187924.html>).

Ziyafat Askerov, the first vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that during 2009 Baku not only developed at home but expanded ties with other countries across the world (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187853.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that media reports about the participation of Azerbaijani firms in a joint regional project with Armenia are "disinformation" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187835.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that it is considering requests by several neighboring countries to open consulates in Ganja (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187793.html>).

29 December

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the Russian Federation, says that he does not foresee any travel by representatives of the Azerbaijani community to Nagorno-Karabakh because the Armenian side has concluded that such visits do not work to its benefit (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187614.html>).

Emin Eyubov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Belgium, says that "the resolution of the Karabakh conflict corresponds to the interests of the European Union" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187222.html>).

Sultan Gasymov, consul general of Azerbaijan in Yekaterinburg, says that "relations between Azerbaijan and Sverdlovsk oblast have good prospects" (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/187761.html>).

Donald Lyu, charge d'affaires at the US Embassy in Baku, says that Washington will answer the diplomatic note presented by Azerbaijan concerning American assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187736.html>).

28 December

Justice Minister Fikrat Mammadov sends a letter to his Qatar counterpart Hasan ibn Abdullah on developing legal cooperation between the two states (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187466.html>).

Interior Minister Col. Gen. Ramil Usubov receives his Georgian counterpart Vano Merabishvili to discuss the joint struggle against organized crime (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187460.html>).

Gudrat Hasanguliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "in Armenia there exists a minority which understands the way in which their future depends on Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187250.html>).

The Azerbaijani community of Crimea lodges a protest with the Izyum city council of Kharkiv oblast over the decision of the latter to adopt a resolution speaking of "the Armenian genocide" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187557.html>).

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Balas says that Budapest "considers Azerbaijan a strategic partner in the South Caucasus region" and supports the resolution of the Karabakh conflict on the basis of the Madrid Principles (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186723.html>)

27 December

Hady Rajabli, a member of the Milli Majlis election monitoring team, says the Uzbek voting he and his group observed took place in "a highly organized manner" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187367.html>).

26 December

President Ilham Aliyev says that "2009 was a very important year in terms of increasing the sports glory of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187273.html>).

25 December

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov completes a two-day official visit to Turkey during which he meets that country's president, Abdulla Gul, prime minister Redjep Tayyip Erdogan, foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu, and other senior officials (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187116.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that as a result of "bureaucratic problems," the protocol establishing visa free relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey was not signed on December 25 as had been announced (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187459.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "in 2009, the priorities in both domestic and foreign affairs were realized" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187248.html>).

Defense Minister Col. Gen. Safar Abiyev receives Iranian Ambassador Mammadbaqir Bahrami to discuss bilateral military cooperation (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187158.html>).

Masamitsu Oki, Japan's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "renewable sources of energy are in prospect in [Tokyo's] future relationship with Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/187200.html>).

The Milli Majlis adopts an appeal to the European Parliament stressing that Azerbaijan continues to be a democratic state which respects human rights. The Azerbaijani parliament adopts that appeal after the European Parliament issues a

report sharply criticizing Baku for shortcomings in those areas (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187178.html>).

The Milli Majlis adopts on second reading a bill defining Azerbaijan's role in international peacekeeping operations. At present, 90 Azerbaijani officers and men are serving as peacekeepers in Afghanistan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187185.html>).

Milli Majlis deputy Jamil Hasanly proposes that the Azerbaijani parliament declare the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) to be a terrorist organization, but the Milli Majlis speaker, Ogtay Asadov says that the Turkish parliament should do so first (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187180.html>).

Representatives of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party take part in the 10th congress of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187198.html>).

Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Oganyan says that "it is time for Armenia to understand that the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty is not a panacea for all its problems with its neighbors" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187160.html>).

24 December

President Ilham Aliyev says on Russian television that Azerbaijan's success reflects its ongoing efforts "to diversify the economy and realize serious economic reforms" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187087.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev takes a call from his Turkish counterpart Abdulla Gul on the occasion of the Azerbaijani leader's 48th birthday (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187095.html>). Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is among the many foreign leaders who send birthday greetings to President Aliyev (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187091.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev reaffirms that "the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be restored" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187113.html>).

Turkish television shows a film devoted to President Ilham Aliyev (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187344.html>), and Russian television carries a special program on the traditions and national values of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187337.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that ATV International will assist "the propaganda of Azerbaijan" to the world (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187047.html>).

Richard Morningstar, US special representative for energy policy in Eurasia, says that "Azerbaijan remains the basic ally of the United States in its energy policy in the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/186977.html>).

Yury Merzlyakov, the Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says he will be leaving that position in the near future (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187022.html>).

Pinkhas Avivi, head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Department for Central Europe and Eurasia, says during a visit to Baku that Israel "hopes that the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement will positively influence the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186988.html>).

Ziyafat Askerov, the first vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that Azerbaijan may increase the size of its military contingent in Afghanistan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187000.html>).

Boris Klimchuk, Ukraine's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "the position of the *Inter* television channel [on the Karabakh conflict] is not the position of Ukraine" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186981.html>).

Jamil Hasanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Azerbaijan must reconsider the level of its strategic partnership with the United States" following the decision of the Congress to supply aid to Karabakh other than through Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186426.html>).

23 December

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the state agreements signed with Kazakhstan in October (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186914.html>) and with Turkey in November (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186909.html>).

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili says "the Karabakh conflict must be resolved on the basis of respect for the state sovereignty of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186879.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says at a press-conference in Brussels that the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations is connected with the resolution of the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh and that Ankara's goal is "peace and stability" for the entire Caucasus (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186883.html>).

22 December

President Ilham Aliyev sends a message of greetings to Azerbaijanis abroad in advance of the Day of Solidarity of Azerbaijanis of the World on December 31 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186784.html>).

Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini says that "the contribution of Azerbaijan has decisive importance" on energy and regional security issues (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186554.html>).

Svetlana Orlova, Vice Speaker of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, says in Baku that the two countries will establish a joint commission on migration issues (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186702.html>). In other comments, she says that "Azerbaijan is the most important strategic partner of Russia in the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186645.html>) and that she hopes for progress on Karabakh in the near future (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186630.html>).

Azerbaijani police break up an effort by opposition parties to picket the US Embassy in Baku to protest the decision of the Congress to provide funds to Karabakh without going through the Azerbaijani government (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186736.html>).

The Azerbaijani Embassy in Washington explains that the US Department of State has been delayed in responding to the Azerbaijani protest note concerning funding for Karabakh because of snow and the upcoming holidays (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186675.html>).

Latif Gandilov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Kazakhstan, calls for the opening of a Diplomatic Club in Astana (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186649.html>).

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the Russian Federation, says that "it is still unknown when will take place the next meeting of deputies of Azerbaijan and Armenia." The only meeting so far occurred on October 22 in Moscow (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186641.html>).

21 December

President Ilham Aliyev telephones his Georgian counterpart Mikheil Saakashvili to offer him birthday greetings (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186552.html>).

Bahar Muradova, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that "Azerbaijan is living up to its obligations before the Council of Europe" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186493.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the European Union resolution on Azerbaijan reflects "double standards" in its criticism of the Azerbaijani political system (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186490.html>).

Representatives of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe arrive in Azerbaijan for meetings with officials, including in the Presidential Administration (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186470.html>).

Murat Ozkan, a member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, says that "Ankara will not agree to the opening of borders with Armenia" until there has been a resolution of the Karabakh dispute (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186356.html>).

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev takes part in the second meeting of the Azerbaijan-UAE intergovernmental commission on economic, trade, and technical cooperation in Abu Dhabi (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/186381.html>).

Bahram Khalilov, chairman of the Commission on Questions of State Service, and Mehmet Takinarlan, the head of the Turkish Administration of Government Cadres, sign a cooperation accord (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186500.html>).

Mikhail Margelov, head of the international affairs committee of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, says that the OSCE Minsk Group needs to do more to resolve the Karabakh conflict and that Moscow is ready to provide

additional assistance toward that end
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186526.html>).

Joseph Shagal, president of the International Israel-Azerbaijan Association, says that "it is hardly likely that the Armenian-Turkish border will be opened"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186016.html>).

The European Congress of Azerbaijanis adopt an appeal to US President Barak Obama calling on him to oppose the Congressional measure which calls for providing direct assistance to Karabakh bypassing Baku
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186504.html>).

20 December

The Azerbaijan Society in the UAE sends a protest letter to *Euronews* protesting the channel's reporting on Karabakh
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186416.html>).

19 December

Etibar Mammadov, the head of the National Independence Party of Azerbaijan, says that the US Congress decision to provide funds directly to Karabakh bypassing Baku reflects the application by Washington of a policy of "double standards" to Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186353.html>).

Etibar Mammadov, the head of the National Independence Party of Azerbaijan, says that the Armenian-Turkish protocols "do not correspond to the interests of Azerbaijan" and that Baku "must play one of the key roles in the new world political system" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186339.html>).

Gultakin Hajibaylli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Turkish politicians will remain true to the promises they have given Azerbaijan"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186324.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the protest note the Foreign Ministry handed over to the US Department of State regarding the Congressional funding for Karabakh bypassing Baku, is "a correct step"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186172.html>).

Akif Aliyev, charge d'affaires at the Azerbaijani embassy in Tashkent, describes the history of relations between Baku and Tashkent at a conference on "Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan: Possibilities of Bilateral Cooperation" in the Uzbek capital
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186274.html>).

18 December

The Foreign Ministry says that the protest note the Azerbaijani embassy in Washington handed over to the US Department of State concerning the Congressional action providing for assistance to Karabakh bypassing Baku raises questions about US neutrality in negotiations on Karabakh
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186215.html>).

Bahar Muradova, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that people in Azerbaijan are "losing faith in the OSCE Minsk Group" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186190.html>). In other comments, she says that US President Barack Obama will show whether he was "worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize" by how he responds to the Congressional action providing assistance to Karabakh bypassing Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186185.html>).

Nasib Nasibli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the note to Washington influences public opinion in Azerbaijan but will not have an impact at the political level" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186142.html>).

Mammadbaqir Bahrami, Iran's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "the construction of a new gas pipeline between Iran and Azerbaijan is necessary" to carry the additional gas Baku has agreed to export to Iran (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/186243.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russia's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "concrete results are possible in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186143.html>).

Halil Akynji, Turkey's ambassador in Moscow, says that "Ankara does not consider Moscow a competitor in the Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186249.html>).

17 December

Yevda Abramov, a Milli Majlis deputy, calls on the Jewish community of Azerbaijan to protest the decision of the US Congress to provide assistance to Karabakh bypassing Baku and to appeal to Jewish organizations in the US to do the same (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/186049.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the international relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that the modifications of the Madrid Principles now being prepared may advance the solution of the Karabakh conflict. In response to questions, he says that there is no basis for transforming Azerbaijan into a federal state: it will remain a unitary one (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185993.html>).

16 December

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the international relations department of the Presidential Administration, says the US should consider very seriously a Congressional plan to provide assistance to Karabakh bypassing Baku and recognize that such actions will have an impact on relations between the two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185899.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Azerbaijan is "not conducting anti-American propaganda" when it criticizes the Congressional decision to provide assistance to Karabakh bypassing Baku. "We are not against providing help to the suffering," but among those suffering in Karabakh are "representatives of the Azerbaijani community" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185802.html>).

Rabiyat Aslanova, head of the Milli Majlis human rights committee, says that "it is obvious that 'Freedom House' is approaching [its] end," given the distorted account that organization has given of conditions in Azerbaijan and the divergence between its findings and those of other international monitoring groups (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185885.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that it has not yet received a response from Ukraine to its note protesting a story on the Ukrainian *Inter* television channel about Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185907.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkey's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Azerbaijan and Turkey will eliminate the visa requirement for visitors during the upcoming meetings in Ankara between Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and Turkish officials (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185792.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkish ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that if Armenia does not withdraw from the occupied territories, "the ratification of the protocols [between Ankara and Yerevan] will not be accelerated. This question is important for the entire Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185832.html>).

US Deputy Secretary of State Philip Gordon says that Washington hopes that there will be greater movement in the near future toward the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/185803.html>).

Konstantin Markelov, vice governor of Russia's Astrakhan oblast, invites Azerbaijani businessmen to cooperate in economic development there (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/185911.html>).

Note to Readers

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