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CALIFORNIA AND AZERBAIJAN: REAL SYNERGY

Jason Katz
Principal
Tool Shed Group

California is increasingly the epicenter of American politics, diversity, creativity and innovation. California is home to the largest United States Congressional delegation; indeed, it is home to some of the most powerful and notable elected officials serving on Capitol Hill today. California also has the largest population of any state in the U.S. and is the hub and foundation for groundbreaking legislation that shapes social, political and business trends in the entire US. With all of its flaws and idiosyncrasies, the manner with which California deals with competing ethnic, religious and cultural issues and situations stands as an example to the rest of the United States—and perhaps the rest of the world.

The coined phrase “as goes California, so goes the nation” is accurate and apt. California, by design, by accident or by fate, is home to an astounding amount of synergy on many fronts, a necessary component for all of this innovation to exist and happen in one place. However, this synergy does not happen in a vacuum and does not come to be without outside influences, partnerships and collaborations.

Genuine synergy is a wonderful thing and rarely can it be found in the world today. It is perhaps a result of history or culture or geography or even a twist of fate that the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of California should possess such a high degree of synergy. There are a plethora of issues and common interests and stemming from them, real opportunities for the people of California and Azerbaijan.

Civil rights, tolerance and pluralism are a good place to start. California, beginning with legislation authored by the venerable and powerful late Assemblyman Tom Bane, paved the way for significant strides in tolerance-related, civil rights and hate crimes legislation in California. His legislative courage and drive for a more tolerant society gave rise to similar legislation throughout the United States. To this day, California has some most significant and sweeping tolerance-based laws in the US.

In like terms, the Republic of Azerbaijan stands as an example to not just other majority-Muslim nations, but to the entire world as an exemplar of tolerance and a pluralistic society. Indeed, Azerbaijan established the first parliamentary democracy in the Muslim world. Unfortunately, it came to an abrupt end following its first 23 months of existence with the invasion of the Bolsheviks, but after independence in the 1990s, Azerbaijan picked up where it had left off.

Azerbaijan is home to a prosperous and diverse population, well adjusted in the ways of the modern world. This majority-Muslim nation is staunchly secular and has a deep seeded and proud tradition of tolerance and pluralism. Azerbaijan is home to Sunnis, Shias, Jews, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, among others. These religious and ethnic groups live today as they have for centuries—without strife, persecution or segregation. Azerbaijan’s laws, as in the case of California, protect this tradition by guaranteeing, among many other things, the right for all people to vote, regardless of race, religion, national origin or ethnicity.

As California is the focal point for American ethnic and religious politics, Azerbaijan is, too. It was Azerbaijan that the late Pope John Paul II, the patriarch of not just the Roman Catholic Church, but the patriarch for tolerance and freedom to all worldwide, chose to visit ahead of various Christian nations in 2002. It was from majority-Muslim Azerbaijan that the Pope pleaded, “I ask religious leaders to reject all violence as offensive to the name of God,” and pleaded for a “Spirit of Tolerance.” It is fitting that the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church chose majority-Muslim Azerbaijan as his pulpit to speak to the world about tolerance and pluralism.

Politics is also a realm where there is great synergy between Azerbaijan and the State of California. Nowhere can this been seen more clearly as in women’s rights and women in politics. Women serve at very high levels in both elected and appointed positions in Azerbaijan and in California and are policy and decision makers in both. It was merely a couple of years ago that a group of powerful women legislators in leadership positions from California visited Azerbaijan. The delegation was led by powerful Senator and noted woman’s rights advocate Sheila Kuehl. By their own accounts, women in Azerbaijan, from First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva to the numerous women members of parliament, play powerful and key roles

in Azerbaijani politics, domestically and internationally. It is interesting to note that Azerbaijan granted woman suffrage before the United States of America did.

Legislative delegations from Azerbaijan featuring women (and men) members of the Azerbaijani parliament, the Milli Majlis, regularly visit California. Despite the typical angst, disgust and negative rhetoric from the Armenian community, these members are welcomed with open arms and hold substantive discussions on democracy, good governance and the synergy between the two political systems. MPs Asim Mollazade, Ganira Pashayeva and Gular Ahmadova travel to California for these far reaching and important exchanges. The value of these exchanges and discussions are not only in the transfer of knowledge and understanding of Azerbaijani and American politics, history and culture, but also in that they bring the synergy of Azerbaijan and California into focus. Again, woman's issues play a key role in these discussions, as Azerbaijan, again, a majority-Muslim nation, sees women as equals in government and in society as a whole.

In the realm of business, Azerbaijan and California share a great deal, too. Innovation, the alpha and omega of contemporary business, is a synergy between California and Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan, with an economy heavily dependent on oil and natural gas production, is today actively and in a forthright manner striving to diversify. The sector of choice for diversification is technology—yet another synergy with California. Regular Ministerial level delegations in this sector from Azerbaijan visit California to develop relationships that will bring state of the art internet and information security, with American and Azerbaijani expertise, to Azerbaijan, while providing training, jobs and an exchange of knowledge to both nations. In addition, these delegations foster the exchange of scientific expertise in the realms of nanotechnology, information technology and communications.

Ali Abbasov, Azerbaijan's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, often travels to California to hold an annual technology oriented business conference in Los Angeles. These conferences are well attended by American business leaders who recognize the opportunities associated with working and doing business with and in Azerbaijan. A large technology conference is planned for May of this year. In addition, and related to this synergy are the memoranda of understanding signed with Californian universities, such as California State University San Jose, that enable the exchange of students.

In like terms, vast numbers of American business leaders and investors travel to Azerbaijan to avail themselves of Azerbaijan's technology innovation zones, which enable US business leaders to tap into not only Azerbaijan's vast reservoir of scientists and "techies," but to that of the entire region of Eurasia.

It is important to note that not because of oil wealth, but because of synergy and common interests, Azerbaijan is an attractive and stable platform for investment for American companies. Azerbaijan also sparks the interest of prominent businessmen who happen to be Jewish due, in part, to the multi-billion dollar per year trade between Azerbaijan and Israel and the fact that Azerbaijan is Israel's friend. It is important to recognize that these business leaders don't see Azerbaijan as Israel's good Muslim friend. That is beside the point. The two nations have a pragmatic and beneficial relationship with one another, a plus for business leaders who happen to also be Jewish and a relationship that Californian business leaders wish to replicate with Azerbaijan.

Engagement is an integral part of providing stewardship to synergy. Regular delegations of Azerbaijani political leaders and business leaders are a requisite. Likewise, regular visits by Americans to Azerbaijan are necessary. It is necessary to have these groups of people meet and exchange ideas and learn to work with one another to foster the synergy that exists and to build even a greater degree of synergy. I have traveled to Azerbaijan with many Americans. In every case, each visiting American travels back home impressed by the modernism and cosmopolitanism of Azerbaijan's cities and people and each immediately wants to go back to Azerbaijan.

The model of Azerbaijan and California can and should be used as a model for other states in America. Engagement—political, diplomatic, academic and in the realm of business—can only serve to benefit both nations.

Again, synergy, real synergy, is something very rare. Who would have thought that Azerbaijan, twelve hours ahead and seemingly a world away, would have such significant and direct synergy with the State of California? The reality is that they do.

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TURKEY-ARMENIA: BORDERS AND TRADE

Javid Valiyev
Research Fellow
Center for Strategic Studies (Baku, Azerbaijan)

On October 10, 2009, Turkey and Armenia signed two protocols in the capital of Switzerland, Zurich, to establish diplomatic ties and to open the borders. Four months later, however, neither the Turkish nor the Armenian parliament has ratified them, something required for them to enter into force. But in this period, it has become obvious that however politically important these accords were, for Armenia, it is a matter of vital economic importance that the border with Turkey be reopened.

The borders between Armenia and Turkey were closed by Ankara in 1993 to protest Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territories and in response to Yerevan's political demands on Turkey. These borders have not reopened, something that has forced Yerevan to explore expanding ties with Iran, but because of Iran's international isolation, the geopolitical and geo-economic competition between Iran and Russia, and Tehran's own financial constraints, Iran has not been able to do much to help Yerevan.

Armenia's difficulties increased after the August 2009 Russian-Georgian war, which effectively blocked the only route Armenia had had up to then for imports and exports. As a result, Armenia stepped up its effort to reopen the border with Turkey, and if the protocols are ratified, Armenia will be able to escape from its current isolation. Consequently, despite criticism from the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian opposition, the Yerevan government has felt compelled to pursue its new course with Turkey. (The opposition and diaspora support opening the borders, but they oppose dropping Armenia's political demands against Turkey, something Turkey requires for this accord to go forward).

Armenia's economic situation is far from enviable. A landlocked state without good relations with any of its neighbors and one that has no natural energy resources, it has to find a way to acquire energy from abroad and to export its products. But if Armenia viewed its situation differently, it could have certain advantages: a regional market of 170 million consumers and access to oil and gas from the Caspian basin. Unfortunately for Armenia, its government until recently has not been able to gain access to these advantages because of its demands that Turkey represent the events of 1915 as "a genocide" and because of its occupation of Azerbaijani territory. Before August 2009, it could use Georgia as a lifeline to Russia, but the war there ended that.

Russian forces not only damaged the Poti and Batumi ports but also closed the Russian-Georgian border thus closing Armenia's only route out and severely limiting Moscow's ability to help its economy. CIS figures suggest that Armenia's economy fell 19 percent in 2009, and its external trade more than twice that amount. Similar declines, at least in the export sector, can be expected if the protocols are not ratified and the Turkish-Armenian border remains closed.

Prior to signing the protocols, Yerevan had insisted that Turkey was in violation of international law for its closure of the borders given that various international accords require that landlocked states be provided access to the seas. That argument does not stand up, however, because until August 2009, Armenia was able to carry out trade across Georgia and with Iran. Moreover, there has been significant trade between Armenia and Turkey (through Georgia and Iran) even when the borders have been officially closed: trade turnover between the two rose from USD 4.5 million in 1993 to USD 30 mln. in 1997 to USD 200 million in 2008. There are some 20 shareholder companies involved, and the Turkish-Armenian Business Council has been functioning since 1997.

Since 2003, there have been flights between Yerevan and Istanbul, Antalya, and Trabzon and bus tours from Yerevan to Antalya and Istanbul. Some 40 to 75,000 Armenians now work illegally in Turkey. Besides, there is a roaming accord between Turkish and Armenian GSM operators. And there is also a five-plus-five year contract signed between Turkish Unit Group on the one hand and Armenia's Ministry of Industry and Energy and Armenian Electric company on the other. The latter will enable Turkey to start purchasing electricity from Armenia once the borders are open. For all these reasons, one cannot say there is an economic blockade or even that the border is totally closed. Instead, what has happened is that the "closure" has increased transport costs between the two countries by 10 percent and delayed deliveries by two days.

Having said this, it is important to recognize that the issues of recognition and of opening borders are connected in an important way. Lacking diplomatic ties, the investment risk point for each side has increased. If Armenia restores its relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, its investment risk point would fall by 25 percent and Armenia's GDP would increase by as much as 30 percent.

Opening the borders would have the greatest impact on labor migration. According to a UNDP report, more than a million Armenians have left their country for economic reasons in the past 20 years. If the economy improved as a result of the opening of the border, some of them might return.

But whatever some Armenians claim, opening the borders will have only a marginal impact on Turkey as a whole, a country whose economy and trade are several orders of magnitude larger than Armenia's. Nonetheless, in several regions, the opening of the borders would help Turkey, something that explains local Turkish support for restoring trade across that frontier.

Clearly, the Russia-Georgia war along with the global financial crisis has increased Armenia's need for reopening the borders. For this reason, the issue of opening borders has become a trump card for Turkey, a country that has more than economic issues at stake in whatever happens along that border.

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CASPIAN COOPERATION WITHOUT A CASPIAN ACCORD

Paul Goble
Publications Advisor
Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

The five Caspian littoral states are still far apart regarding the legal status of the sea and especially its hydrocarbon-rich seabed, but in late March, their representatives reached tentative agreement on a draft security cooperation accord and on the formation of a Council of Science and Innovation in the Caucasus. Whether these prove to be confidence-building measures that will promote the long-sought accord on the delimitation of the sea remains to be seen, but they represent an intriguing example of the way in which states which disagree over the very largest issues may nonetheless be able to cooperate on others.

Following a mid-March meeting in Baku attended by experts from the five littoral states, Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov noted that there had been no progress toward a final settlement, but in remarks that attracted relatively little attention at the time, he said that representatives of the five countries—Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran—were close to an agreement on security cooperation and that they had agreed to the formation of a Council of Science and Innovation in the Caucasus. [1]

The security accord, while not yet in final form, provides for cooperation in various areas, including in the critical areas of resolving disputes about the use of the sea's waters, and for excluding military competition in the sea. While such declarations often have little content, this one appears directed in the first instance against any outside force that might become active on the Caspian. That represents a victory for Russia and Iran, both of which had actively opposed any development of a NATO presence there, and possibly for other states, like Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, which have announced plans for and even begun work toward their own coastal naval capacities.

The other outcome of the meeting in Baku was the creation of a joint public-private Council on Science and Innovation of the Caspian. To be headed by LUKOIL's Grayfer, the council initially will include scholars, businessmen and officials from the Russian Federation and from Azerbaijan, but the other littoral states have shown an

interest and appear likely to join once their governments have considered the matter. The new body, its organizers suggest, will oversee the creation of a common data base for the sea, something that could help future negotiations by providing information on which all five could agree.

Initially, the council will engage in monitoring of the resources and environment of the region as a whole, itself a confidence building measure because it will be the first time that the littoral states will have common data on the sea rather than only information about the portions of it each claims.

The councils' executive director, Nina Levshin, told journalists that with this new body, "we have the chance to resolve by peaceful means disputed resource questions, [and] we hope that this will accelerate the resolution of the legal status of the Caspian." [2] But even if that does not happen, the new council should allow the five states to work together with fewer problems than they have had up to now.

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caspian was divided between the USSR and Iran, but now it must be delimited either as a sea or a lake—agreement on that determines how that body of water will be divided—among five countries. They have been engaged in on-again-off-again talks since 2001, but the divisions among them remain deep, in large measure because so much is at stake.

The Caspian is one of the most petroleum-rich sites in the world, with an estimated 10 billion tons of oil and 18-20 billion tons of gas. Consequently, even small shifts in the lines of control will have enormous consequences for the states on its shores. Moreover, all of them have an interest in some kind of division so that international investors will have confidence that their money will not disappear as a result of a shift in the political winds.

At the conclusion of the March meeting, Mehdi Safari, the special representative of the Iranian president for the talks, underlined just how many disagreements among the five are yet to be resolved: "At present," he said, "the following questions are being discussed: should the water space be divided into several sectors or into territorial waters, economic zones, and common waters or should the economic zone and the territorial waters form a single whole, and the rest remain common, and also how many miles from the shore should these zones extend." [3]

That enumeration shows that it is likely to be a long time before any general agreement is reached, but the near accord on security and the agreement to form an experts council to monitor the situation shows that underneath the disagreement on the larger questions, there is real movement toward cooperation on smaller ones, an indication that this particular "frozen" conflict may in fact begin to thaw, albeit without the grand bargain that some have seen as being required.

Notes

[1] See <http://www.ia-centr.ru/expert/7462/> (accessed 18 March 2010).

[2] See <http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/news/politika/caspian%20sea/17167.html> (accessed 28 March 2010).

[3] See <http://www.ia-centr.ru/expert/7462/> (accessed 18 March 2010).

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that "it is possible to say that in principle, the basic part of the negotiations on the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have been completed" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200494.html>).

The Foreign Ministry responds to the statement of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan to a Syrian paper by reiterating that "the negotiation process on the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at present presupposes the search and identification of mutually acceptable compromises" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200860.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Vagif Sadykhov says that Baku plans in 2010 to open embassies in Serbia, Oman, Argentina, Thailand, Croatia, Libya, Lebanon, and Estonia and a consulate general in Batumi. That will increase the total number of Azerbaijani diplomatic missions abroad from the current 65 to 74 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199682.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that "the resolution of the Karabakh question is the key to the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200995.html>). And Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that there have been significant advances in the process of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200943.html>).

The OSCE reports that 19 people died along the ceasefire line between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces in 2009 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201169.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, the apostolic nuncio to Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201853.html>).

Gafar Aliyev, an official of the social political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "the main work of the diaspora is to bring to the attention of the world information about the cruel actions of the Armenians in 1918" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201813.html>).

Lord Ken Maginnis, a member of the British House of Lords calls for an international investigation into crimes committed by the Armenian forces in Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201840.html>).

30 March

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Vilayat Guliyev as Azerbaijani ambassador to Hungary and Hasan Hasanov as ambassador to Poland (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201692.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives his deputy foreign minister of Belorussia Igor Petrishenko who is in Baku with a delegation for three days of diplomatic consultations (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201659.html> and <http://www.day.az/news/politics/201672.html>).

The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs present a report on their consultations with Azerbaijani and Armenian officials and their visit to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201564.html>).

Donald Lu, charge d'affaires at the US Embassy in Baku, says that "the United States does not see any alternatives to the negotiation process in resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201643.html>). In other comments, he says that the absence of a US ambassador in Baku "does not reflect the current level of bilateral relations" between the two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201642.html>).

A group of US Congressmen send a letter to President Barak Obama stressing that Azerbaijan is "an important strategic partner" of the United States, that Paragraph 907 should be repealed, and that Washington should become more active as an OSCE Minsk Group co-chair in promoting a resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201614.html>).

Students of Azerbaijan and the United States take part in an online dialogue (<http://www.day.az/news/society/201662.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, the sheikh ul-Islam and head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, appeals to world public opinion on the occasion of the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis (<http://www.day.az/news/society/201647.html>).

Representatives of the Azerbaijan culture and tourism ministry take part in a conference in North Cyprus on the preservation of underwater cultural and historical monuments (<http://www.day.az/news/society/201603.html>).

29 March

Ambassador Agshin Mehtiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, sends a letter to the UN Secretary General denouncing his Armenian colleague as lying about Armenian actions in Khojaly (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201481.html>).

Sabir Rustamkhanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Azerbaijan has the right to take measures to suppress separatism" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201204.html>).

Milli Majlis deputies say that they intend to seek international recognition of the mass murders of Azerbaijanis by Armenians as an act of genocide (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201464.html>).

Altay Efendiyev, Azerbaijan's incoming ambassador in Spain, presents his credentials to King Juan Carlos I (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201498.html>).

James Steinberg, US Deputy Secretary of State, says that "Azerbaijan is a very important partner of the United States and a powerful force for the support of peace and stability in the Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201531.html>).

Catherine Baker, disarmament program manager at the US Department of State, visits Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201437.html>).

Erselan Fatkhipur, an Iranian parliamentarian, proposes constructing a highway connecting Tabriz and Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/201474.html>).

Miroslav Blashuk, head of the economics section of the Ukrainian embassy in Baku, says that Kyiv is "satisfied" with the level of its economic cooperation with Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/201442.html>).

28 March

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201517.html>).

27 March

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov, who also serves as the personal representative of the president for the resolution of the Karabakh problem, says that Armenia's leaders should be more careful in their declarations about Karabakh lest they create problems for themselves (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201171.html>).

26 March

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov attends the meeting in Moscow of the CIS Council of Foreign Ministers (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201138.html>). Among bilateral talks he conducts are ones with his Ukrainian counterpart Konstantin Grishchenko (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201118.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that "talking about hypothetical new proposals on Karabakh does not have any sense" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201107.html>).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov tells his Azerbaijani and Armenian counterparts, Elmar Mammadyarov and Edvard Nalbandyan, that the Russian leadership is committed to an active role in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201135.html>).

Kanat Saudabayev, Kazakhstan foreign minister and chairman-in-office of the OSCE, proposes a summit meeting between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Astana (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201098.html>).

Azay Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Syria's proposal to serve as a mediator in the Armenian-Turkish talks is deserving of attention (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201066.html>).

The European Union is providing assistance to the governments of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia to improve their management of their borders (<http://www.day.az/news/society/201125.html>).

25 March

Fuad Ismayilov, Azerbaijan's ambassador in Vienna, says that Austria will open an embassy in Baku this year (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201018.html>).

Talyat Aliyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador in Kyiv, is rated as one of the top ten most effective ambassadors in the Ukrainian capital by the Kyiv Institute of World Politics (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201021.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that there have been significant advances in the process of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200943.html>).

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Glushko meets with Council of Europe and European Commission officials to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201132.html>).

The Russian foreign ministry says that Azerbaijan is actively supporting Russian language instruction in its schools (<http://www.day.az/news/society/201002.html>).

Abraham Foxman, head of the US Anti-Defamation League, says that "Azerbaijan is a reliable friend and partner of the US and Israel" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200961.html>).

23 March

The co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe welcome President Ilham Aliyev's decision to pardon 77 inmates (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200699.html>).

22 March

Dunyamin Khalilov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "on the whole, the renewed Madrid Principles correspond to the interests of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200290.html>).

20 March

Garbi Mammadov, the head of the State Committee on Land and Cartography, says that Azerbaijan is discussing the limitation of its borders with Russia and Georgia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200455.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's proposal for the signing of a non-use of force agreement is welcome but "only after the removal of the causes which create that kind of threat, namely, the end of the occupation of the territories of the Azerbaijani Republic by Armenian forces" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200449.html>).

Bahar Muradova, the vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that another meeting between parliamentarians of Azerbaijan and Armenia is possible (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200447.html>).

Lt. Gen. Vahid Aliyev, military aide to the Azerbaijani president, says that "the Azerbaijani army is capable of fulfilling all the tasks it faces" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200438.html>).

Elmira Suleymanova, ombudsman of Azerbaijan, receives Vladled Stefanov, the commissar for the South Caucasus of the UN Supreme Commissariat of Human Rights (<http://www.day.az/news/society/200410.html>).

19 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200335.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mustafa Isen, the secretary general of the Presidential Administration of the Turkish Republic (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200382.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "Azerbaijan would like the most rapid assignment of a permanent ambassador of the US" to Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200307.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov positively assesses the fact that Yerevan has accepted the renewed variant of the Madrid Principles as that opens the way for further talks (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200304.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov speaks by telephone with his Georgian counterpart Grigol Vashadze (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200366.html>).

National Security Minister Lt. Gen. Eldar Mahmudov says that "Armenia remains a serious source of threat to peace and security in the South Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200322.html>).

The Azerbaijani embassy in Canada organizes a roundtable at the University of Toronto on the internal and foreign policy of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200479.html>).

Azerbaijan and Figi establish diplomatic relations through their respective missions to the United Nations in New York (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200229.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that "if Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia can restore relations after a major war, then this means that there is a chance for establishing peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200245.html>).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton discuss Karabakh peacemaking (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200344.html>).

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sends a message of greetings to the Azerbaijani people on the Novruz holiday (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200220.html>).

Ephraim Sneh, former Israeli deputy defense minister, sends a letter to the Washington Post complaining that that paper and others have adopted a policy of double standards in their reporting about Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200271.html>).

18 March

President Ilham Aliyev says that "Azerbaijan today is a country which in all directions is developing in the most rapid tempos and with enormous success" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200226.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi, who tells him that Bucharest backs stability and security in the Black Sea and Caspian basins (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200169.html> and <http://www.day.az/news/politics/200108.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva take part in the presentation of a new book on Azerbaijan that has been prepared under the auspices of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (<http://www.day.az/news/society/200173.html>).

The agriculture ministry and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) sign agreements on expanding cooperation and carrying out two joint projects in Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/200160.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that the chief obstacles in the talks on Nagorno-Karabakh are Armenia's refusal to remove its forces from the occupied territories and its opening the way for the return of those who were forced to resettle (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200101.html>).

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin and US Deputy Secretary of State Philip Gordon discuss the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200135.html>).

Paulo Antonio Pereira Pinto, Brazil's ambassador to Baku, says that his mission is to expand inter-cultural dialogue between the two countries because "Brazil and Azerbaijan are countries which see a world in which the defining force will become cultural multiplicity" (<http://www.day.az/news/society/200106.html>).

Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church says that his denomination “will continue its efforts on the resolution of the problems of Nagorno-Karabakh” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200146.html>).

Azay Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that if Yerevan does not agree to the revised Madrid Principles then “all responsibility for the breakdown in talks will lie on Armenia” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199952.html>).

Gultakin Hajibayli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that “sometimes the declarations of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group repeat the positions of Yerevan” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/200039.html>).

17 March

The Foreign Ministry says that Armenia has “created such a situation that Azerbaijan does not and will not participate in those regional projects in which that country takes part” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199997.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the OSCE Minsk Group provided Baku and Yerevan with the same text of the updated Madrid Principles rather than giving each side a different document as Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan has said (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199988.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the President’s Office, says that Ankara’s statements that it may have to expel 100,000 Armenians are “in correspondence with the interests of that country” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199979.html>).

Fuad Ismayilov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Vienna, says that “Austria understands that Azerbaijan today is the leader in the region” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199825.html>).

Sergey Lebedev, executive secretary of the CIS, says that “all members of the Commonwealth [of Independent States] are interested in the most rapid resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199830.html>).

Nathalie Goulet, a member of the French Senate, says that “cooperation with Europe can be useful for Azerbaijan” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199870.html>).

Steph Goris, honorary president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the West European Union, says that “The European Union always has been too soft and diplomatic when it comes to the Karabakh problem” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199589.html>).

Stratfor, an influential private US analytic center, says that “the United States is ready to sacrifice even its relations with Armenia” in order to convince Azerbaijan to provide “all around support to Turkey” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199942.html>).

Suat Kynkylyoglu, deputy head for foreign relations of the ruling Turkish Party of Justice and Development, says that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be resolved

before the Armenian-Turkish protocols on normalization of relations can be ratified (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199926.html>).

Georgy Vanyan, the president of the Caucasus Center for Peacekeeping Initiatives, says that "with a feeling of shame and hopelessness, I bow my head before the victims of Khojaly" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198289.html>).

16 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Thomas Mirow, president of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/199717.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the November 2009 agreement with the World Trade Organization calling for the establishment of a WTO regional office in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/199609.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms a December 2009 accord between the Azerbaijani and Chinese defense ministries concerning the provision of assistance by the latter to Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199611.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the October 2009 agreement on economic, scientific and cultural cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Czech Republic (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199610.html>).

Samad Seyidov, the head of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that discussion of the PACE monitoring committee report on Azerbaijan has been postponed until April (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199741.html>).

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Konstantin Grishchenko receives Azerbaijan's ambassador to Kyiv, Talat Aliyev (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199636.html>).

The French Embassy in Baku says that media reports about the statements in Yerevan of Bernard Fassier, the co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, contain distortions and do not reflect his views or the position of the French government (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199748.html>).

The US Embassy in Baku says that Washington "intends to continue to intensify work on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199725.html>).

The US Embassy in Baku says that the absence of an American ambassador is not "the result of problems in relations between the two governments" as "many in Azerbaijan think" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199737.html>).

Mehmet Ceylan, the deputy chairman of the foreign affairs commission of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that "Ankara will refuse to establish relations with Armenia" unless and until there is a resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199388.html>).

Heddie Frey, a member of the Canadian House of Commons, calls on Canadians and citizens of all countries of the world to mark the anniversary of the Khojaly tragedy (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199663.html>).

The Union of Azerbaijanis of the World begins a campaign against calls for governments to accept the Armenian position on "the so-called genocide of Armenians" in 1915 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199769.html>).

Note to Readers

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