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In this issue:

- Lícínia Simão, "The Eastern Partnership and EU-Azerbaijan Relations"
- Paulo Botta, "Argentina and the Caucasus since 1991"
- Paul Goble, "Baku's Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus: A Bridge between the Secular State and Muslims Abroad"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND EU-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

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From the early days of preparations for the European Union 2004/07 "big bang" enlargement, relations between the EU and the states in its Eastern borders have been problematic. Not only did the expansion of EU borders and governance models to Central and Eastern Europe affect the long established relations of these countries with their immediate neighbors who were left out; but a new and broader security reality arising after September 11th also heightened concerns within the EU about possible security threats from outside the organization. The European Union's response was the establishment of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2003.

The main goal behind the initiative was to create an institutional framework for

deeper and closer relations with countries neighboring the enlarged Union. Trade and visa facilitation immediately became two central areas of interest to the countries in the periphery of the EU; some countries such as Ukraine and Georgia even ventured into accession hopes, whereas for the EU there was a clear security agenda, as expressed in the European Security Strategy of 2004. The EU's interest in engaging closely with its neighbors, however, was explicitly linked to concerns about the possible impact of protracted conflicts in Moldova and in the South Caucasus, as well as broader security threats like smuggling of nuclear materials, terrorism, and illegal immigration. All these issues demanded a closer partnership, through which the EU could nourish democratic reforms, mediate regional tensions, and gradually improve the economic and social conditions in its neighborhood and thus stabilize its periphery.

The EU's relations with its Eastern neighbors can therefore be approached from two complementary perspectives. The first relates to the organization's increased strategic interest in entering the Caspian energy game. This has become a major issue for the EU and for some of its member states' individual foreign policies toward the South Caucasus, Central Asia and the broader Black Sea area. The goal has been to diversify oil and gas supplies while also investing in new clean and renewable energy. Relations with Russia and Turkey have been central in this respect, but Azerbaijan stands out as a leading partner for many western companies involved with the extraction and transportation of oil and gas in the region. As one German publication noted, "[Azerbaijan] is the 6th major oil supplier to Germany today, and also the biggest recipient of German FDI that flows into the South Caucasus" (Meister 2010). Azerbaijan has also been a committed partner in the EU's policy of energy diversification, one meant to decrease the EU's dependence on Russian exports.

The second perspective through which one could assess the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbors concerns the EU's role as a transformative power (Popescu 2009). The Union acted to promote what some have called the "lite-version of enlargement" (Popescu & Wilson 2009), one in which limited integration and increased political dialogue were meant to promote political, economic and social reforms, with clear security outcomes. The EU invested a great deal of political and financial capital in promoting dialogue between Georgia and Abkhazia, for instance, hoping to set in motion long-term transformative dynamics (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2007), but as far as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is concerned, the EU has been conspicuously absent and has taken a backseat role to the OSCE's Minsk Group, while refraining from developing confidence building measures between the parties of the conflict.

The EU has also built on the ENP's potential for reforms, pushing for new legislation to be adopted, for the development of civil society and the rightful conduct of elections, in line with the commitments undertaken by its neighbors in different *fora*, such as the ENP, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The track record, so far, has been very poor, across all the EU's neighborhood. Overall, the balance of the EU's engagement has been fairly modest, at best, and counterproductive, at worst. Perceived competition for influence in the former Soviet space deteriorated relations with Russia and left countries in their shared neighborhood vulnerable to power displacements. The brief war in Georgia, in 2008, illustrates just that. The competition, however, has also provided these countries with leverage over external influence and pressure, enabling them to bandwagon among powerful external players to their short-term advantage. Azerbaijan managed to do just that, drawing

Russia closer, by committing increased energy sales to Russian pipelines, and simultaneously putting pressure on the EU to overcome its internal divisions and seriously commit to the Nabucco and other Southern Corridor projects.

Given this track record, what can Azerbaijan and its neighbors expect from the European Union's Eastern Partnership program (EaP)? That project, launched in 2009, was intended to clearly differentiate between the southern neighbors and the eastern ones and was meant as a response to the French initiative of creating the Union of the Mediterranean. It has focused on increased economic integration and visa facilitation to be negotiated in the framework of new Association Agreements set to replace the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreements. These new agreements will also promote an expansion of the institutional capacity of the neighbors, including through the Twinning and TAIEX instruments, and simultaneously facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of reforms. The initiative's multilateral dimension, on the other hand, is based on four platforms, ones dealing with democracy, economic development, energy security and people-to-people contacts. To a large extent, the EU maintains its structural approach to regional stability, in that it seeks to develop efforts aimed at consolidating long-term relations with the countries in the Eastern neighborhood, guided by commonly agreed goals and methods (Simão and Freire 2008).

For Azerbaijan, the benefits of this program have not been immediately clear. Baku's deputy foreign minister, Araz Azimov, has suggested that the EaP is inadequate from Azerbaijan's perspective since it fails to provide a framework for the discussion of strategic issues like energy and transportation infrastructure. These issues remain within the prerogative of EU member states, thus leaving the EaP a soft-policy framework. Even more troubling from Baku's perspective, the new program's multilateral dimension has consistently remained underdeveloped and, therefore, energy security can only be discussed at the bilateral level, leaving the regional challenges unaddressed. While the issue of the Southern Corridor, for example, could certainly be facilitated through a swift and consistent dialogue among consumer, transit and producing states—within the EaP—neither Russia nor Turkey, two fundamental partners in EU energy security, are included in the EaP, a fact that renders the EaP framework inefficient in terms of addressing these issues. Furthermore, neither Baku nor its neighbors see any near-term prospect for establishing a comprehensive free trade area between the EU and its eastern neighbors, given the costs involved, regional conflicts, and the fact that a few of the neighbors—including Azerbaijan—are not members of the World Trade Organization (Boonstra & Shapovalova 2010).

These shortcomings notwithstanding, the EaP has come up with a number of parallel initiatives, such as the Civil Society Forum, one meant to bring together civil society organizations (CSOs) from the EU and the Eastern neighborhood to develop a network of partnerships, which could assist these countries in reforms and could contribute to capacity-building among CSOs in the East. The Forum has also assumed responsibility for monitoring reforms and providing feedback to the European Commission. Despite the dynamic role of the Forum, the situation in the region remains problematic, as regards democracy and human rights. All in all, the challenges for the EaP remain as high in the political and human dimensions as they are in the security and strategic ones.

One way or the other, EU-Azerbaijan relations rest on a common understanding of the relevance each has in the strategic interests of the other. Azerbaijan is

proceeding along a path of economic development and political activism that could have important regional implications, both for its neighbors in the Caucasus and for the broader Eastern dimension of the EU's regional relations. New business opportunities are emerging throughout the region, providing an opportunity for greater integration and dialogue. Nevertheless, the obstacles to such successful partnership are evident and go well beyond the institutional fragilities of the EaP. The current financial crisis is making the European economy less competitive and the political and institutional reforms that need to accompany economic growth have been missing in the South Caucasus.

A final area of contention, which the EaP fails to properly address, is represented by the protracted conflicts. The current period of transition of the EU's external relations toward the Lisbon Treaty institutional arrangements has already dealt the first blow to the EU's policy toward the conflicts in the South Caucasus. The likely extinction of the post of EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus will make the coherence of an EU action in this regard even harder to achieve, when the three EU Delegations in Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku are to coordinate their actions on the conflicts. Moreover, the visibility of the EU will be much reduced in this respect. The EaP does not provide for a forum in which to address the potential role of the EU as a conflict mediator, nor is there a conflict-aware approach to either bilateral or regional relations. Confidence-building mechanisms have remained complementary ideas to the broader development of closer relations, rather than the backbone of the EU's approach to the South Caucasus. All the expectations of development will certainly be frustrated if war erupts again in this region.

Azerbaijan's interest in the EaP has been tempered by the EU's lack of effective tools and political will to advance a clearer role for itself in conflict resolution, as well as in the commitment to the Southern Corridor. Naturally, Baku's leadership have an interest in deepening relations with the EU, but these limitations could prove important set-backs in the fast-developing partnership with the EU and some of its individual member-states. For the Azerbaijani civil society, on the other hand, the EaP represents, undoubtedly, an important qualitative change as compared with the previous EU engagement in democracy and human rights, representing a real opportunity for diversification of voices and views regarding Azerbaijan's future.

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ARGENTINA AND THE CAUCASUS SINCE 1991

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At first glance, it might appear that Latin America in general and Argentina in particular are so far removed from the post-Soviet Caucasus that any contacts between them will be limited to formalities. But in fact, in the case of Argentina and each of the three Caucasus countries, there are reasons that the relationships have gone beyond that. There is a sizeable Armenian community in Argentina which ensures that the country will focus on Yerevan. Azerbaijan's growing economy and its role as a bridge to Central Asia make it a very attractive partner for Argentina. And Georgia's problems may provide an opportunity for Argentina to play a larger role on the world stage.

Now, as the world approaches the 20th anniversary of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, is an especially appropriate time to survey the evolving relationships between Argentina, on the one hand, and each of the three countries of the Caucasus, on the other.

Armenia

Argentina and Armenia established diplomatic relations in January 1992, just two weeks after the formal dissolution of the USSR; and five months later Armenian President Levon Ter Petrosian visited Argentina, actions that reflect the influence of the 130,000-strong Armenian diaspora in that country. In 1993, Yerevan opened an embassy in Buenos Aires, although Argentina did not do so in Armenia until May 2010. Despite that delay, however, President Carlos Menem visited Armenia in 1998, and other senior Argentine leaders visited over the following decade.

Subsequently, the Armenian foreign minister visited Argentina during the first week of January 2011, just three weeks before the official trip of the Argentinean President Cristina Fernández to Turkey. In sum, the bilateral relations between Argentina and Armenia are centered on maintaining close ties based on the interests of the Armenian government and the Armenian community living in Argentina.

With regard to economic relations, the situation remains unbalanced, with Argentine exports amounting for 90 percent of all trade (see Table 1).

Table 1. Armenian-Argentine trade flow 2000-2010 (ths. USD) [1]

Year	Exportations from Argentina	Importations from Argentina	Trade balance
1998	-	0	0
1999	21	1	20
2000	33	0	33
2001	51	1	50
2002	694	-	694
2003	400	2	398
2004	2,319	0	2,319
2005	1,687	1	1,686
2006	2,595	-	2,595
2007	5,217	0	5,217
2008	2,288	3	2,285
2009	2,849	122	2,727
2010	211	21	190

Azerbaijan

Argentina and Azerbaijan established relations in November 1993, but contacts between the two countries in the 1990s and early 2000s remained sporadic. However, recently relations have begun to expand rapidly. In August 2010, Azerbaijan opened its embassy in Argentina, Baku's first diplomatic mission in South America, with Mammad Ahmadzade as resident ambassador. Another milestone was the visit that Deputy Foreign Minister of Argentina, Alberto D'Alotto, made to Azerbaijan in November 2010. During his visit, a variety of bilateral cooperation agreements were signed, including one calling for continuing political consultations.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov emphasized that one of the main priorities of Baku's policy toward Argentina was to end what many viewed as an aggressive policy by Armenia there and to expand economic ties. Argentina was pleased with this gesture by Baku because many had thought Azerbaijan would open its first Latin America mission in Brazil. Although Argentina does not have a resident ambassador in Baku, Buenos Aires plans to open an embassy there later this year.

Commercial statistics show a growing but still modest presence of Azerbaijan in Argentinean foreign trade from 2006 onwards (see Table 2). While the imbalance remains (as in the Armenian case), the opening of the embassy in Buenos Aires should serve to broaden contacts between businessmen from the two countries. Azerbaijani officials say there is a concrete interest in Argentine agricultural technologies in addition to traditional exports of pharmaceutical products and soybean oil.

Table 2. Azerbaijani-Argentine trade flow 2000-2010 (ths. USD) [2]

Year	Exportations	Importations	Trade balance
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	from Argentina	from Argentina	
1998	102	0	102
1999	-	1	1
2001	543	-	543
2002	287	-	287
2003	118	-	118
2004	373	1	372
2005	782	64	718
2006	981	121	860
2007	3,306	99	3,207
2008	3,424	70	3,354
2009	3,385	115	3,270
2010	2,121	46	2,075

Given the influence of the Armenian community in Argentina, and as it is recognized by Azerbaijani decision makers, one of the best investments Azerbaijan can make will be an expansion of its public diplomacy effort in Buenos Aires.

Georgia

Argentina established diplomatic relations with Georgia in November 1992, but neither country has a resident ambassador in the other. Georgia's ambassador to Argentina is based in Brazil, and Argentina's ambassador to Georgia is based in Turkey. Despite a series of agreements, the most recent in November 2009, ties between the two have not moved much beyond the formal. Since August 2008, when Venezuela and Nicaragua recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia has adopted a much cooler approach to Latin America, although Argentina, which has not recognized these republics, is viewed as a positive exception to that pattern in Tbilisi.

Table 3. Georgian-Argentine trade flow 2000-2010 (ths. USD) [3]

Year	Exportations from Argentina	Importations from Argentina	Trade balance
1996	6,844	8	6,836
1997	1,540	5	1,535
1998	6,201	12	6,189
1999	2,546	203	2,343
2000	1,643	4,457	-2,814
2001	28	3,728	-3,700
2002	102	288	-186
2003	516	11,740	-11,224
2004	642	7	635
2005	1,423	10,635	-9,212
2006	3,972	21,233	-17,261
2007	3,116	-	3,116

2008	6,869	153	6,716
2009	6,209	37	6,172
2010	4,085	20	4,065

As a consequence, Tbilisi focused on Brazil and then on Argentina. Brazil was chosen due to its growing international status as a new regional power. Argentina became the Georgian second best option in Latin America. Buenos Aires, on the other hand, sees the relationship in terms of economy: Georgia is the first partner in the Caucasus regarding Argentinean exportations to that region (see Table 3).

Notes

[1] The table is derived from the website of *Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración* (ALADI, Latin American Integration Association), <http://www.aladi.org>.

[2] The table is derived from the website of *Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración* (ALADI, Latin American Integration Association), <http://www.aladi.org>.

[3] The table is derived from the website of *Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración* (ALADI, Latin American Integration Association), <http://www.aladi.org>.

BAKU'S ADMINISTRATION OF MUSLIMS OF THE CAUCASUS: A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE SECULAR STATE AND MUSLIMS ABROAD

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As Azerbaijan has expanded its diplomatic role in the Muslim world as part of President Ilham Aliyev's balanced foreign policy, Allahshukur Pashazade, the longtime head of the Baku-based Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, has come to play an ever larger role in that policy, not only defending Azerbaijan's tradition of inter-religious tolerance and boosting its status as a center of the Islamic world but extending Azerbaijan's influence among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and in the Muslim world more generally.

A major reason behind the sheikh ul-Islam's growing role is the unusual nature of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, but an even larger one is Pashazade's own personality and the confidence President Aliyev has placed in him as an increasingly important bridge between the secular state and its own Muslims at home and between Baku and Muslims abroad.

The Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus has a unique but very complicated history. Formed in 1943 as the Muslim Spiritual Administration of the Trans-Caucasus, it was unusual from the beginning. Its head, the sheikh-ul-Islam, has

always been a Shia Muslim, and its deputy, a Sunni Muslim. In Soviet times, the sheikh-ul-Islam, had administrative responsibility for all the Shia living in the USSR, while his deputy had oversight for the Sunni Muslims of the trans-Caucasus republics.

With the end of the Soviet Union, the body changed its name to the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, and its responsibilities changed as well. On the one hand, it has overseen the dramatic growth in the number of Muslim communities in Azerbaijan and elsewhere in the region, a growth that reflected both the desires of people there and the efforts of Muslims in other countries, including both Turkey and Iran. But on the other, in the absence of a Shia leadership elsewhere in the post-Soviet states, the head of the Baku-based institution exercised spiritual leadership, if not always administrative control, over the smaller number of Shia communities beyond the borders of Azerbaijan. (That may be beginning to change: Last month, Ravil Gainutdin, the head of the Union of Muftis of Russia, declared that he is the leader of the Shia as well as the Sunni parishes in the Russian Federation.)

But perhaps more than most institutions, the Administration of the Muslims of the Caucasus is in many respects the projection of the personality of its leader, and for 30 years, that leader has been Haji Allahshukur Gummet ogly Pashazade. An ethnic Talysh who was born in 1949 near the city of Lankaran in the south of Azerbaijan, Pashazade was trained within the Soviet Union at the Mira Arab madrassah in Bukhara and the Tashkent Islamic Institute. In 1975, he became secretary and deputy chairman of the Administration while serving as *akhund* of the Tezepir Mosque in Baku.

In 1980, he was elected head of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of the Trans-Caucasus, a position he has now held for more than three decades, longer than any of his predecessors and a tenure that by itself has earned him deference from other Muslims. As religious conditions in the USSR eased in the 1980s, Pashazade became more active in international Muslim organizations including the World Islamic Congress.

A year after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was chosen as president of the Supreme Religious Council of the Caucasus Peoples by the religious leaders of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Karachayevo-Cherkessia, and Adygeya, a remarkable bridging of political boundaries and one that prefigured his later selection as co-chairman and then chairman of the Inter-Religious Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Over the last five years, Pashazade has been ever more active not only hosting international religious conferences in Baku but also in meeting with the leaders of Muslim states who have visited Baku, including the president of Iran, and travelling throughout the Islamic world. He has been increasingly active in speaking out on behalf of the Muslims of Azerbaijan as well. In the last few weeks alone, for example, the sheikh-ul-Islam has denounced attempts to "blacken" the reputation of the religious situation in his country [1] and called on religious leaders throughout the world to pay more attention to the Hojaly genocide. [2]

As the Muslim world becomes more active, Pashazade is set to play an even more active role not only in reaching out to leaders of that world on behalf of Azerbaijan but also in explaining that world to Azerbaijanis and those interested in that country.

Notes

[1] See <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/islam/?act=news&div=39619> (accessed 25 February 2011).

[2] See <http://news.day.az/society/254700.html> (accessed 25 February 2011).

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that "Azerbaijan is already considered as a factor of political stabilization of the region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/253652.html>).

Rafael Ibrahimov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Stockholm, says that "Azerbaijan is ready to grant a high level of autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh; however this is possible exclusively in the framework of the territorial integrity of the country" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254591.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijan's consul general in Los Angeles, says that "the integration of Armenia into the region could take place with the participation of Azerbaijan and Turkey" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254151.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Peter Semneby, the outgoing EU special representative for the South Caucasus, says that he does not share the view that there has not been progress in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. "There is progress," he says, "but not as serious as many had hoped" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254931.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that the "chief goal" of his embassy is to achieve a situation in which "each citizen of Azerbaijan can make use as much as possible of the dynamic and continuing development of the country" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254838.html>).

Teymuraz Sharashenidze, Georgia's ambassador to Baku, says that Azerbaijan has helped strengthen Georgia's energy security and reduced its dependence on Russia "to zero" (<http://news.day.az/politics/255406.html>). In other comments, he says that "Georgia and Azerbaijan are strategic partners" (<http://news.day.az/politics/255415.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

28 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives Branko Hrvatin, the president of the Supreme Court of Croatia (<http://news.day.az/politics/255597.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Nikolae Dumitru, the president of Romania's NIRO Investment Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/255609.html>).

Arzu Rahimov, the head of the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan, discusses migration issues with Turkish officials in Ankara (<http://news.day.az/politics/255466.html>).

Eldar Ibrahimov, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, says that body has given a positive assessment to the November 2010 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/255491.html>).

Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammadov says that Ashgabat supports "peaceful and legal means" of demarcating the Caspian seabed (<http://news.day.az/politics/255525.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that "relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are being built on deep historic roots and a strategic alliance" (<http://news.day.az/politics/255468.html>).

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis, OSCE chairman-in-office, says that "Lithuania will try to push forward a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/255583.html>).

Zafer Caglayan, Turkey's state minister for foreign trade, says that bilateral trade between Turkey and Azerbaijan now amounts to 2.5 billion US dollars a year but has the potential to increase four or five times (<http://news.day.az/economy/255487.html>).

Devlet Bahceli, the head of the Turkish National Movement Party, says that "the Turkish people will never forgive those guilty of carrying out the Hojaly tragedy" (<http://news.day.az/politics/255495.html>).

27 February

Eldar Ibrahimov, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, says that that body at its upcoming meeting in Belgrad will among other things discuss Azerbaijan's role in the struggle against human trafficking (<http://news.day.az/politics/255351.html>).

26 February

President Ilham Aliyev leads the commemoration of the 19th anniversary of the Hojaly tragedy by laying flowers at the Baku monument to the victims of that event. Azerbaijanis and many governments and organizations around the world also mark this event (<http://news.day.az/politics/255212.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that there is "always the possibility of reaching a peaceful agreement on Karabakh"
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255224.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that there is "a great future" for the transit of Azerbaijani gas through Greece
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255197.html>).

Emergency Situation Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov reaches an agreement with Georgia's interior minister Vano Merabishvili to cooperate in responding to disasters (<http://news.day.az/politics/255247.html>).

Zahid Oruj, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the violence in Hojaly was part of Armenia's drive to occupy Nagorno-Karabakh and other parts of Azerbaijan
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255204.html>).

Fazail Agamaly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the Hague tribunal should render a decision on the role of Armenian leaders Sargsyan and Kocharyan in the Hojaly genocide (<http://news.day.az/politics/255067.html>).

Leyla Aliyeva, the vice president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, says that "the act of genocide against the peaceful residents of Hojaly is the most terrible and bloody tragedy in the history of the Karabakh conflict"
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255193.html>).

Roland Kobia, the head of the EU delegation in Azerbaijan, says that "the elimination of the position of EU special representative to the South Caucasus does not reduce the involvement of the organization in the region"
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255290.html>).

Peter Semneby, at the conclusion of his service as EU special representative to the South Caucasus, says that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict generates concerns because it "does not exist in a vacuum" and any arms race in the region threatens to spark new tensions (<http://news.day.az/politics/255281.html>).

25 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives Georgian Interior Ministry Bano Merabishvili
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255132.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Peter Semneby, the EU special representative for the South Caucasus, on the completion of the latter's service in that position
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255165.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou to discuss bilateral energy cooperation
(<http://news.day.az/politics/255156.html>).

Finance Minister Samir Sharifov says that "Azerbaijan must speak with the international community in a common language as far as accounting is concerned"
(<http://news.day.az/economy/255036.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov receives Hungarian State Secretary Zsolt Németh (<http://news.day.az/politics/255185.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov says that the Caspian littoral states are working to agree on a new schedule of talks for the working group on the determination of the status of the sea (<http://news.day.az/politics/254983.html>).

Aydin Aliyev, the chairman of the State Tariff Committee of Azerbaijan, signs an agreement on cooperation with his Argentinian opposite number Riccardo Ecegaralla (<http://news.day.az/politics/255039.html>).

Namik Aliyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Tbilisi, visits Georgia's Marneul district which has a large Azerbaijani population (<http://news.day.az/politics/255113.html>).

Sultan Gasymov, Azerbaijan's consul general in Yekaterinburg, says that his office is working to strengthen bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and both the Russian Federation as a whole and Sverdlovsk oblast in particular (<http://news.day.az/politics/255042.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the latest declarations of the Minsk Group are openly false because for a long time already there has not been observed any movement forward, not even a centimeter" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254810.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, Milli Majlis, says that the current Armenian president "was a participant and inspirer of the Hojaly genocide" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254935.html>).

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich names Aleksandr Mishchenko, who has been Kyiv's representative in Ankara, to be Ukrainian ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/254997.html>).

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich says that "the first million tons of Azerbaïjani oil passing through the Odessa-Brody route is the beginning of a great project" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254979.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev meets his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan (<http://news.day.az/politics/255123.html>).

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis, OSCE chairman-in-office, says he is concerned about the possible deterioration in Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/254991.html>).

Hungarian State Secretary Zsolt Németh says in Baku that Budapest will devote "all necessary efforts" toward the integration of Azerbaijan into Europe (<http://news.day.az/politics/254980.html>).

Péter Olajos, deputy state secretary of Hungary's national development ministry, says that Budapest intends to develop relations with Azerbaijan not only in the energy sector but in other fields as well (<http://news.day.az/economy/255065.html>).

Hungary opens a new embassy building in Baku
(<http://news.day.az/politics/254977.html>).

24 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives James Steinberg, US deputy secretary of state
(<http://news.day.az/politics/254965.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Ukrainian Prime Minister Nikolay Azarov in Kyiv (<http://news.day.az/politics/254861.html>).

Namik Aliyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador in Tbilisi, says that "Azerbaijan and Georgia must be united in blocking Armenian policy" which includes the promotion of Abkhazia as an independent country (<http://news.day.az/politics/254806.html>).

Agaselim Shukurov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Libya, says that his embassy has arranged for the departure from that country of five additional Azerbaijani citizens who had been working there (<http://news.day.az/society/254808.html>).

Elmira Suleymanova, Azerbaijan's ombudsman for human rights, calls on international bodies to apply sanctions against Armenia for its role in Hojaly (<http://news.day.az/politics/254915.html>).

James Steinberg, US deputy secretary of state, says on his arrival in Baku that "Washington is interested in the most rapid resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254898.html>).

Jordi Xuclà i Costa, the head of the sub-committee on Nagorno-Karabakh of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that his group is prepared to help advance negotiations on that conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/254948.html>).

Tokyo hosts the eighth session of the Japanese-GUAM working group on tourism (<http://news.day.az/politics/254895.html>).

Azerbaijan and the European Union agree on a twinning program in the area of copyright law (<http://news.day.az/economy/254894.html>).

23 February

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the process of modernization in Azerbaijan is taking place in all spheres" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254660.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Colonel Hamad Kalkaba Malboum, the president of the International Military Sports Council (<http://news.day.az/politics/254748.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his Ukrainian counterpart, Konstantin Grishchenko. The two say that their countries do not intend to break diplomatic relations with Libya (<http://news.day.az/politics/254761.html>).

Fuad Ismayilov, Azerbaijan's ambassador in Vienna, passes away. He was jointly accredited to Slovenia and Slovakia (<http://news.day.az/politics/254744.html>).

Eynulla Madatli, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Kyiv, says that Baku must seriously think about the prospects of further participation in the Prague Process intended to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/254759.html>).

Agasalim Shukurov, Azerbaijan's ambassador in Libya, says that 12 Azerbaijani citizens have been evacuated from that country (<http://news.day.az/politics/254663.html>).

Rafael Ibrahimov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Stockholm, says that "Azerbaijan is ready to grant a high level of autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh; however, this is possible exclusively in the framework of the territorial integrity of the country" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254591.html>).

Bakhtiyar Sadykhov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the powers of Armenia are not the real masters of their country," but he adds that he does not consider it "correct to draw parallels between this country and Egypt" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254442.html>).

Firudin Sadygov, the head of the working group of the State Commission on the Affairs of Military Prisoners, Hostages, and Missing Persons, says that "more than 800 of the 4049 prisoners and hostages" who are Azerbaijani citizens are on the Armenian side of the cease-fire line (<http://news.day.az/politics/254681.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, the executive secretary of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that international organizations "continue to apply double standards" in relation to Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/254688.html>).

Turkey's Grand National Assembly has ratified two inter-governmental agreements with Azerbaijan concerning copyright law and other matters (<http://news.day.az/politics/254632.html>).

EU representatives meet with TRACECA officials to discuss continuing cooperation (<http://news.day.az/economy/254692.html>).

22 February

The Foreign Ministry warns Azerbaijanis against visiting Yemen because of the instability there (<http://news.day.az/politics/254454.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov meets with UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan (<http://news.day.az/economy/254510.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, deputy secretary of the Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that "events in the Arab countries will not influence the situation in Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254457.html>).

Arzu Rahimov, head of the State Migration Service, meets with Turkish Interior Minister Beshir Atalay to discuss the complete elimination of the visa regime between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/254561.html>).

Aydin Aliyev, head of the State Tariff Committee, meets with his Argentinian counterpart Riccardo Ejikaralli in Buenos Aires (<http://news.day.az/economy/254416.html>).

Vagif Sadygov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Rome who is also jointly accredited to San Marino, presents his credentials to the captains-regent of the latter country, Giovanni Francesco Ugolini and Andrea Zafferan (<http://news.day.az/politics/254458.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, the head of the Board of Muslims of the Caucasus, says there is no possibility that the wave of protests in Arab countries will lead to the destabilization of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/254404.html>).

EU ambassadors to Azerbaijan complete a two-day visit to the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan (<http://news.day.az/politics/254666.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says "the time has come to provide the world with the truth about the Hojaly tragedy" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254492.html>).

Vasil Kalinov, Bulgarian ambassador to Baku, says that "Azerbaijan is a great friend of the European Community" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254488.html>).

Giedrius Cekuolis, OSCE Chairmanship special representative for protracted conflicts, says that "the absence of progress at the OSCE summit in Astana ... on the question of conflicts on the space of the organization is an additional stimulus for active work by the Lithuanian presidency" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254485.html>).

Senator Kent Conrad and other members of the US Congress say that "the victims of the Hojaly tragedy must not be forgotten" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254452.html> and <http://news.day.az/politics/254439.html>).

Vasil Kalinov, Bulgaria's ambassador to Baku, says that an agreement on the supply of Azerbaijani gas via the Black Sea to Bulgaria will be signed this year (<http://news.day.az/economy/254472.html>).

21 February

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov signs an accord with Turkey's defense minister Vejdi Kenul on the joint construction of jet-powered rockets (<http://news.day.az/economy/254273.html>).

Azay Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that there are many signs for the emergence of "a revolutionary situation in Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/253669.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "force and terror are the most important instruments of the Armenian diaspora" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254044.html>).

Elshad Iskandarov, the head of the youth forum of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, says that his group plans to send an appeal to the Hague tribunal to make an assessment of the Hojaly tragedy (<http://news.day.az/politics/254303.html>).

Giedrius Cekuolis, OSCE Chairmanship special representative for protracted conflicts, is visiting the South Caucasus to stress "the importance of confidence building measures" such as removing snipers from along the ceasefire line (<http://news.day.az/politics/254224.html>).

20 February

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev and Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov take part in the international defense exhibition IDEX-2011 in the UAE (<http://news.day.az/politics/254201.html>). Azerbaijani firms also take part in the exhibition (<http://news.day.az/economy/254173.html>).

19 February

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijan's consul general in Los Angeles, says that "the integration of Armenia into the region could take place with the participation of Azerbaijan and Turkey" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254151.html>).

Michal Labenda, Poland's ambassador to Baku, says that "war is not a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254129.html>).

Canada's ministry of foreign affairs and international trade says that it does not recommend that Canadians visit Nagorno-Karabakh or adjacent occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/254037.html>).

18 February

Zahid Oruj, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the arrest of "criminal elements of Armenian origin" in the US shows that the world still must deal with the threat of "Armenianism" (<http://news.day.az/politics/253947.html>).

Turkish Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Caglayan says that "Armenia must free the occupied lands of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/253985.html>).

The Slovak foreign ministry says that reports that a delegation of Slovak, Czech and Austrian entrepreneurs had visited Nagorno-Karabakh are not true (<http://news.day.az/politics/253976.html>).

The Hungarian foreign ministry recommends that Hungarians refrain from travelling to the Armenian-occupied territories of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/253938.html>).

Mustafa Kabakci, the head of the Azerbaijan-Turkey inter-parliamentary group, says that the strategic partnership treaty with Azerbaijan will be ratified very soon (<http://news.day.az/politics/253949.html>).

17 February

President Ilham Aliyev says that "Azerbaijan is already considered as a factor of political stabilization of the region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/253652.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla (<http://news.day.az/politics/253790.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Reza Tagipur Anwari, Iranian minister of information technology and communications (<http://news.day.az/politics/253828.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence of incoming US Ambassador Matthew Bryza (<http://news.day.az/politics/253786.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence of incoming Georgian Ambassador Teymuraz Sharashenidze (<http://news.day.az/politics/253798.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, who is also president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, a good will ambassador for UNESCO and ISESCO, and a Milli Majlis deputy, meets in Paris with French Culture Minister Frederic Mitterrand (<http://news.day.az/politics/253953.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva says that "Azerbaijan has been transformed into the most rapidly developing country of the region" (<http://news.day.az/politics/254024.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social political department of the President's Office, says that there is no threat to embassy officers or other foreigners living in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/253691.html>).

Vagif Sadykhov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Rome who is also jointly accredited to Malta, presents his credentials to Maltese President George Abela and extends an invitation from President Ilham Aliyev to visit Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/253843.html>).

Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, sends a letter to the UN secretary general and the Security Council about Armenian falsifications and violations of the ceasefire regime (<http://news.day.az/politics/253731.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that it is "necessary to define the legal framework for the occupied territories" (<http://news.day.az/politics/253751.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says the United States supports the anti-corruption initiative of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/253793.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that his recess appointment by President Barak Obama is a reflection of "how great importance the US gives to cooperation with Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/253791.html>).

Mustafa Kabakci, the head of the Turkish-Azerbaijani inter-parliamentary friendship group, says that those who “do not want the renewal of military action must end the occupation and return everything to its normal state” (<http://news.day.az/politics/253602.html>).

The French foreign ministry warns its citizens against travelling to Karabakh and other Armenian-occupied territories of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/253675.html>).

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis, OSCE chairman-in-office, discusses the Karabakh conflict with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (<http://news.day.az/politics/253664.html>).

Richard Morningstar, Special Representative of the US Department of State on Energy Issues in Eurasia, says that Washington supports combining the Nabucco project with the ITGI project (<http://news.day.az/economy/253792.html>).

The GUAM secretariat hosts the fifth session of its working group on emergency situations with representatives from Azerbaijan and the other member countries as well as Japan (<http://news.day.az/politics/253837.html>).

16 February

President Ilham Aliyev confirms a series of inter-governmental agreements reached over the last year (<http://news.day.az/politics/253463.html>).

Hasan Hasanov, Azerbaijan’s ambassador to Poland, says that the continuing Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is “a threat to the security of Europe” (<http://news.day.az/politics/253628.html>).

Faik Bagirov, Azerbaijan’s ambassador to Ankara, meets with Mehmet Ali Shahin, the speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (<http://news.day.az/politics/253467.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, draws parallels between the situation in Egypt and Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/253480.html>).

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis, OSCE chairman-in-office, says that “growing tension around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” is generating concern (<http://news.day.az/politics/253462.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.