



# Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

*School of International Affairs*

## **AZERBAIJAN IN THE WORLD ADA Biweekly Newsletter**

Vol. 1, No. 7

May 1, 2008

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### **In this issue:**

- Israel and Azerbaijan: An Interview with Arthur Lenk, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Israel to Azerbaijan
- Alexander Murinson, "Think Tanks and the Future of Cooperation Among Turkey, Israel, and Azerbaijan"
- Paul Goble, "Baku's Detention of Russian Nuclear Equipment Destined for Iran: Why It Happened and What It Means"
- Vugar Seyidov, "The Five Key Vectors of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

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### **ISRAEL AND AZERBAIJAN**

#### **An Interview with Arthur Lenk Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Israel to Azerbaijan**

April 29, 2008  
Baku, Azerbaijan

*Azerbaijan in the World:* What do you see as the central core of relations between Israel and Azerbaijan? How would you rate their current level?

*Ambassador Lenk:* At the very core of the relationship between our countries is a human bridge, one between the Jews of Azerbaijan, my brothers and sisters who are living here as full and patriotic members of Azerbaijani society but are still linked to Israel, and the 50 thousand, or so, Azerbaijanis who now live as full and patriotic

members of the State of Israel but still remain very connected to Azerbaijan, the land of their birth. These two groups of people constitute two sides of the human bridge interested in our relationship growing. This human aspect that I don't think Azerbaijan has with that many countries makes our relationship very special. There are of course many other interests we share, and all of them are very important, but I think none is more important than person-to-person ties that bring Azerbaijan and Israel together.

*AIW:* How have Azerbaijani-Israeli relations evolved during your tenure as Ambassador in Baku?

*Lenk:* I am not sure that it has anything to do with who the ambassador is, but the relationship between Israel and Azerbaijan has been developing in a positive manner because both of our countries and our common interests are developing together. As an example, I can mention trade: Until 2005, there was almost no trade between our countries. But in 2006, Israeli exports to Azerbaijan amounted to 28 million US dollars and in 2007, they exceeded 80 million. And that doesn't include Israel's purchases of Azerbaijani oil. If we include them, then we have more than one billion US dollars in bilateral trade.

*AIW:* What led to this remarkable growth in bilateral trade?

*Lenk:* I think it was the product of the rapid development of Azerbaijan. If you walk down the streets of Baku or Quba or Ganja, you see just how rapid that development continues. Over the last two years, you have been a world leader in terms of economic growth. And I have heard from your president and other leaders of Azerbaijan that your country needs to learn from leaders, from those who are the best in each sector. We in Israel are not the best in the energy sector because Israel does not have any natural resources. But what Israel has been very successful at is in using its human capital and very limited natural resources to achieve a great success. The high technology sector and agro-business are two examples of this success.

*AIW:* What is the state of energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel?

*Lenk:* Israel is one of Azerbaijan's largest oil customers, and Azerbaijan is Israel's second largest supplier. We have been buying Azerbaijani oil for a number of years, although it has very much increased since the opening of BTC. And that increase makes perfect sense; that is why BTC was built – not for Israel, but to insure that Azerbaijani oil, instead of remaining in the Caspian, reaches the Mediterranean. And what is the closest economy to Ceyhan? Israel's. That is not because anybody planned it this way, but this is simple geography. And because it is so close, it serves the interests of Azerbaijan and the other countries involved for Israel to be an important customer. So, we are buying more and more oil from Azerbaijan, and that is an important aspect of our relationship. Moreover, Israel has a pipeline between Eilat and Ashkelon that may help Azerbaijan send more of its oil to Asia. This is something that Azerbaijani and Turkish leaders have discussed before. This issue will also feature in the discussions with Israel's national infrastructure minister (who is in charge of energy issues in Israel), Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, who visited Baku in 2006 and is going to come back this June for the Oil and Gas conference. The fact that the minister is coming to Azerbaijan for the second time in two years is an indicator of the growth in energy cooperation between Israel and Azerbaijan, and its potential to extend in a number of different directions.

*AIW:* There has been some discussion about possibly extending the BTC pipeline so that it would be directly linked to the Eilat-Ashkelon pipeline. How realistic is that idea?

*Lenk:* I am not sure I'd call it an extension of the BTC, but Israel and Turkey have been considering the feasibility of building a pipeline between Ceyhan and Ashkelon that would make it easier for Israel to purchase Azerbaijani oil. And if such a pipeline existed, Baku could easily export its oil all the way to India and Thailand, countries which have already expressed an interest in buying Azerbaijani oil. Consequently, the talks are pretty serious, and the issue now is about economic feasibility. I'm not an expert on that but I do know that the two countries are conducting such studies. And, as I already mentioned, this will be one of the issues Israeli national infrastructure minister will be discussing with his Azerbaijani colleagues in the coming June.

*AIW:* Many commentators have suggested that if a water pipeline between Turkey and the Middle East were constructed, it contribute to the achievement of peace in that region. Might the BTC pipeline contribute in the same way?

*Lenk:* It's interesting you mention it. Azerbaijan's relations with Jordan who is very important strategic partner for us are growing. The king of Jordan will be in Azerbaijan next week. Wouldn't it be great if oil from Azerbaijan could go to Jordan via the Eilat-Ashkelon pipeline, which would be a natural choice as Eilat is next to Aqaba where the Jordanians will get oil. Jordan would have more energy and be more connected to Azerbaijan, and that would certainly help build more trust and peace between us. This is something that has been discussed between Azerbaijani and Jordanian officials. I can also imagine a time in which there will be peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and the Palestinians too will be interested in buying oil from Azerbaijan. So I completely agree with your idea that developing our bilateral ties could help promote peace in your region and in mine, and we should definitely seek for ways to ensure this happens.

*AIW:* What are the main components of trade between Azerbaijan and Israel, apart from energy?

*Lenk:* Many other areas are very important, too. First of all, there is agriculture. Israeli technologies in this sphere can help build the non-oil sector in Azerbaijan. In fact, Israeli minister of agriculture will be visiting Baku this May. Another important area is high technology. Israel is a high-tech country. Indeed, although we are a tiny country in some ways, we are a giant in that sphere. Another area where we can cooperate is construction, given the building boom here in Azerbaijan, and we are going to bring a delegation to have a forum together with AzPromo in the summer. Also, I have just got back from Ganja and Goranboy, and one of the things I learned about Goranboy was that there is a real water-use problem there: the region used to receive its water from Nagorno-Karabakh which is now impossible because of the conflict with Armenia. Hence, Goranboy's farmers and its leaders are interested in learning about Israel's water management technologies. So, this is yet another area for cooperation between our countries.

*AIW:* As you know, Azerbaijan's involvement in GUAM is an important dimension of our country's foreign policy. That organization has been developing relations with countries beyond the region like Japan and the United States in what is called the

GUAM Plus. Is there any interest in Israel in getting involved in the GUAM framework.

*Lenk:* We are certainly looking for ways to expand our ties and connect our region to yours, but we have a couple of countries between us that make such arrangements more complicated. I think the BTC is an example of the way to connect Israel and Azerbaijan. The Internet and hi-tech are also possible pathways to have our countries connected. I would love to see a time when someone could drive directly from Israel to Azerbaijan. Wouldn't that be great? That would require more stability and peace in your region and ours, but I don't think that is so far-fetched. Israel even now has very friendly relations with all four GUAM countries, we are interested in developing ties with each of them, and we would like to explore a framework for us to support GUAM.

*AIW:* Israel has always expressed its full support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Why then did it abstain in the vote on UN General Assembly Resolution 10693, which was passed in March?

*Lenk:* Around a hundred countries abstained in New York. Israel was one of them. At the same time, Israel very much supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. In fact, there is an interesting parallel between Israel and Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan very much hopes that the peace process in the Middle East will succeed, and Israel thinks the same way about your region. That is not always the case with all our neighbors, is it? But it is true about Israel and Azerbaijan. At the same time, given concerns and hope for the peace negotiations with the Minsk process, Israel decided to abstain along with many other countries. On a separate but not entirely disconnected issue, it is important to know that Azerbaijan takes part in UN votes about 20 to 25 times a year on issues of relevance to Israel and our peace process, and on every single occasion, Azerbaijan votes against Israel. That is not why we did what we did, but the fact remains that despite a somewhat troubling voting record on Azerbaijan's part, we still view Azerbaijan as a strategic partner and emphasize the things we agree on. I should emphasize here that Israel does not disagree with Azerbaijan on the issues of its territorial integrity. Again, we didn't vote against Azerbaijan; we abstained.

*AIW:* Azerbaijan is actively working to strengthen its ties with its diaspora. Along with the Turkish, the Israeli diaspora is one of the friendliest toward Azerbaijanis living abroad. How do you see cooperation between these two diasporas developing in the future?

*Lenk:* One thing that Jews and Azerbaijanis have in common is that each of us has more of our community living outside our country than inside. I don't know many countries of which this is true. You have a large and active diaspora in Israel, where it serves as Azerbaijan's lobby, the fact that I don't think many are aware of. Moreover, there is the traditional relationship between Azerbaijan and Jewish organizations and communities in many countries in Europe and the United States who have supported Azerbaijan and its relations with Israel since Azerbaijan regained its independence in the early 1990s. Representatives of the American Jewish community were very vocal in supporting the construction of the BTC in the 1990s. A number of major Jewish organizations from the United States, among them representatives of AIPAC (The American Israel Public Affairs Committee), have visited Azerbaijan in recent years. Though those organizations are not Israeli, but American, they, along with most Azerbaijanis and Israelis, want to see the relations

between our countries develop, and, because for both of us the United States is a very important partner, we welcome their growing relations with Azerbaijan. Turkey is another very important strategic partner for Israel and because of Turkey's relationship with Azerbaijan, I think this is a classic example of how we can have a relationship among countries and their diasporas to help one another building on each other's strengths. Not only is this cooperation among our three countries important in economic terms, but, at a time when people tend to talk about differences and clashes of civilizations, it sends a very important message that Islam, Christianity and Judaism do not need to separate people but in fact can promote cooperation.

*AIW:* Some view the strategic partnership among Israel, Azerbaijan, and Turkey as directed against other countries. How do you see the nature of this trilateral cooperation?

*Lenk:* I don't see it as an alliance against anyone. I believe the opposite is true. I see it as an alliance of shared interest for collaboration for peace, for business, for friendship. Israel has a very positive, important and growing relationship with Russia – if we have a large Azerbaijani diaspora, we have even larger Russian one, which is almost a million. Russia is an important partner in dealing with Azerbaijan's southern neighbor – Iran, which is a concern of all of the international community, not just Azerbaijan and Israel. Moreover, Israel has very good diplomatic relations with Greece and with Cyprus, and we have diplomatic relations with Armenia as well.

*AIW:* For a long time people have been talking about the opening of an Azerbaijani embassy in Israel. That hasn't happened. Why do you think there has been this delay?

*Lenk:* From the Israeli perspective, we can only say: "Xoş gəlmisiniz!" – "You are welcome!" We would love to be able to offer the kind of hospitality to Azerbaijan that Azerbaijan has offered to us over these years. That is what friendly countries do. Moreover, as more Azerbaijanis visit Israel each year and more Israelis come here, there is a need for consular services. And there are lots of other people in Israel, among them businessmen, who would love to learn more about your country. So, I hope that an Azerbaijani embassy will open in my country soon. It is an issue that Azerbaijan has to take for itself. It seems to me that in these days, as cooperation between our countries grows and as Azerbaijan is seeking for more ways to promote its public diplomacy, Azerbaijan has its own interest in being in Israel and having people in Israel hear Azerbaijan's position, its goals and agenda. But this is a decision for Azerbaijan to make.

*AIW:* Do you see any hurdles that Israel and Azerbaijan will have to overcome in order to improve their relationship?

*Lenk:* I don't think there are hurdles! Senior decision makers in both countries have made it clear that we are both benefiting from the development of this relationship. One measure of that is the increasing number of official visits in both directions, especially since 2004-05. Up until 2004-05 there have only been two visits by ministers from Israel to Azerbaijan: Israeli health minister visited Azerbaijan in mid-1990s and prime-minister of Israel came over night in 1997. The frequency of visits has greatly increased since after 2005. As I have mentioned, Israel's minister of national infrastructure came in 2006, and is returning again this June; Israel's deputy prime-minister came in 2007; Israel's minister of agriculture is coming this May. In

the opposite direction, in 2007 and 2008 Azerbaijani minister of economic development visited Israel and signed the agreement on investment protection; your minister of emergency situations came to Israel to take part in the emergency preparation exercise; the minister of ecology visited Israel last year and took part in a big exhibition; the minister of transportation also visited Israel last year; your minister of communications, information, and technology visited Israel in 2005 and he is coming back in 2008. This is a lot. And it is now up to the ministries of foreign affairs, both ours and yours, to work on a framework for our relations to grow even more.

*AIW:* How does Iran fit into all of this?

*Lenk:* I look forward to a future when Iran's citizens can visit Israel and Israelis can visit Iran. I look forward to a time when Azerbaijanis and all the other citizens of Iran are free and able to live their lives peacefully and when Iran is a good neighbor. Iran is a very important country, but right now, those who rule Iran have adopted policies that the entire international community views as dangerous. The entire international community, through a number of UN Security Council resolutions, has been quite clear. Iran must change its policy regarding weapons of mass destruction.

*AIW:* Given your own experience, what advice would you give young Azerbaijanis beginning their careers in diplomacy?

*Lenk:* First, learn languages – and this comes from a person whose spoken Azerbaijani is awful. I wish I had better Azerbaijani. Languages are important: the more you can interact with people, the better. I very much admire Elin Suleymanov, your consul general in Los Angeles. He is always out visiting people of all kinds. He is a model of how to represent your country abroad. Your ambassador in Geneva is yet another example of how a diplomat should behave: he is not sitting in his office and always seems to be somewhere. I very much hope that young Azerbaijani diplomats will soon be serving in Israel.

*AIW:* Thank you, Ambassador Lenk for this most interesting interview.

*Lenk:* Thank you. And let me reiterate that our relationship benefits both of us. Both of our countries have neighbors who don't want our countries to succeed. But each of our countries wants to see the other succeed. That doesn't happen in every case around the world. And as an Israeli, I value that and value the fact that Azerbaijan as an open, tolerant and friendly Muslim country is becoming a model for many others.

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**THINK TANKS AND THE FUTURE OF COOPERATION  
AMONG  
TURKEY, ISRAEL, AND AZERBAIJAN**

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Think tanks played a key role in the development of cooperation between Western Europe and the United States after World War II, not only surviving as incubators of new ideas but places in which people from the various countries involved could meet and discuss the nature of their relationships. Now, many people believe that think tanks in Turkey, Israel, and Azerbaijan, despite all the differences in the epistemic communities in these three countries could play a similar role in promoting a strategic partnership among them.

On the one hand, none of these countries has the depth or breadth of experience with think tanks that the United States and the Europeans had, a situation that casts doubt on such an expectation. But on the other, each of them has at least some researchers and politicians who recognize the role that think tanks can play and who are committed to making use of them now and in the future.

Until Turgut Ozal liberalized Turkey in the 1980s, that country did not have a significant non-governmental sector. Indeed, a senior member of one of the leading think tanks in Turkey has written that "the think tank sector is a rather new phenomenon in Turkey." [1] As recently as 2000, there was only one influential research center, the Foreign Policy Institute in Ankara, which was closely tied to the foreign ministry. In that year, Umit Ozdat created the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies, or ASAM by its initials in Turkish. And since then, other smaller think tanks have proliferated. But even as a group, they have not had a significant impact on the government's policies.

ASAM, however, did make some important contributions to the policy process. Not only did it conduct ground-breaking research on the South Caucasus and Central Asia, but it spearheaded links with Israel. Because of that effort, many in Turkey and some elsewhere believe that in the future, ASAM, and possibly some of the other think tanks in Turkey, could play a similar role in developing ties with Azerbaijan as well.

Israel has a longer history with think tanks, but as in Turkey, they play a far less significant role than they have historically done in Europe let alone the United States, although they are often the source of innovative ideas that are then developed by members of the media or government officials. The most influential Israeli think tank is the Inter-Disciplinary Center (IDC), which not only serves as the base of operation for the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) program but also attracts some of the most senior Israeli government officials to its meetings.

Now rivaling IDC is the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA), which is led by one of the most vocal proponents of cooperation between Israel and Turkey, Efraim Inbar, a member of Israel's National Security Council. Inbar was directly involved in negotiations between Jerusalem and Ankara concerning military

technology transfer agreements and arms sales. And he has visited Azerbaijan on several occasions as well.

Compared to Turkey and Israel, Azerbaijan's think tank community started later and is smaller. But there are some indications that this may soon change. Not only did Baku open a Diplomatic Academy in March 2006 to train young members of its foreign service and generate new knowledge on Azerbaijan's foreign policy and the broader region, but there are now several genuine think tanks, the most notable of which is probably the Peace and Conflict Resolution Center founded by Elhan Mehtiyev, which has held a number of conferences and issued various publications.

Over the last five years, scholars and former officials from each of these countries have attended meetings hosted by think tanks in the other states. As that develops, just as such exchanges developed between the US and Europe a half century ago, there is the very real possibility that think tanks in Turkey, Israel and Azerbaijan will contribute to the growth of the strategic partnership of the two. At the very least, a regular examination of who is visiting and citing whom in the three countries is something those concerned about the future of this relationship cannot afford to ignore.

#### Notes

[1] Kiniklioglu, Suat (2005). "Turkey's Think Tank Scene," *Turkish Daily News*, December 27.

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### **Baku's Detention of Russian Nuclear Equipment Destined for Iran: Why It Happened and What It Means**

Paul Goble  
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After Moscow on April 28 provided the documentation Baku said was required to permit the transit of Russian equipment needed for construction of a nuclear power station in Iran, the Azerbaijani authorities two days later, after reviewing this paperwork, allowed the train carrying it to pass into Iran, thus ending what had been an increasingly heated month-long standoff among the three countries.

But even though each of them said the incident was closed, their declarations did little to end speculation that more was involved in the Azerbaijan action than met the eye, a measure of the complexity of all issues involving Russia, Iran and nuclear materials and also of the challenges governments have in ensuring that both their own populations and the international community understand why they act as they do in any particular case.

This "incident" began on March 29 when Baku ordered its border guards to prevent a Russian shipment of 14 tons of equipment to Iran where a Russian

construction company is building an atomic energy station. But that event has a pre-history in a triple sense, one that helps to explain what happened next.

First, Azerbaijan has exercised its right as a sovereign state to require documentation of particular kinds of potentially dangerous material several times in the past, so that this decision initially did not strike anyone as especially significant. It was assumed by both Russian and Azerbaijani commentators that it truly was "a technical question."

Second, the international community, both through the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has focused on Iran's nuclear problem and prohibited the export to that country of any items or materials that might allow Tehran to move from the peaceful use of nuclear materials to a military program.

But third, Baku did not stop the shipment when it crossed from the Russian Federation into Azerbaijan but only when it was about to go from Azerbaijan into Iran. Several Azerbaijani experts have told the media that was a mistake; at the very least, it contributed to the notion that what the Azerbaijani government had done was political rather than technical.

For almost three weeks, none of the sides – not the Russian government nor the Russian company involved, not Azerbaijan and not Iran – did very much, besides saying when the question came up in the media that it was a "technical" one that they expected would be solved sooner rather than later. Iran, for example, was saying that as late as April 23.

On the one hand, it seems likely that all of them believed that; and on the other, it is obvious that none of the participants wanted this to blow up lest it create the kind of ill will that would make it more difficult for Russia to build the atomic energy station in Iran and for both Russia and Iran to make use of Azerbaijan as a reliable transit bridge.

But then as sometimes happens, the incident burst into the media, and officials in all three countries changed their tone, laying out clearly defined positions that showed just how far apart they in fact were on this issue but also creating the conditions for conversations behind the scenes that ultimately led to the resolution of the incident.

On April 24, Araz Azimov, Azerbaijan's deputy foreign minister, told the press that Baku's action with regard to the shipment "does not bear a political character." Both as an independent country and a member of the international community, he said, Azerbaijan has responsibilities to ensure that no country ships certain kinds of items to another without adequate documentation. And he concluded by pointedly asking rhetorically, "If all this documentation exists, then why doesn't Russia simply provide it" and resolve the problem.

Both the Russian foreign minister and Atomstroyeksport, the firm directly involved, continued to insist that Russia had done all it needed to do and that Baku's demand for more documentation not only violated the principles of international trade but also raised the question of whether Azerbaijan was acting for other and deeply political reasons.

And Iran, having taken a low profile for the first weeks of this crisis, at the end of April summoned the Azerbaijani ambassador in Iran to hear its complaint and directed Iran's ambassador in Baku to demand that Azerbaijan allow the shipment to leave for Iran, statements that Azerbaijani officials and commentators reacted strongly to, saying that no foreign government should assume that it can instruct Baku on how to behave.

Media in all three countries suggested that talks at various levels – a meeting between Russian and Iranian officials in Tehran about nuclear issues, a telephone conversation between the Russian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers which presumably covered this issue, and consultations at lower levels as well, some in the media speculated – all pointed toward a resolution.

In the end, the Russian embassy handed over the documentation that Azerbaijan said it needed, and Azerbaijan, after checking with its own experts at the Institute of Radiation Problems, allowed the shipment to proceed – an outcome that from a distance, many would view as a victory for Baku and its principled position.

But that is not how it appeared or appears to many because of the intense media speculation about why Azerbaijan had acted in the way it did and when, speculation that has generated at least three theories:

Azerbaijan wanted to show its loyalty to the United States, which is very much opposed to Iran's nuclear program.

Azerbaijan wanted to respond to Moscow's decision to upgrade relations with the so-called "unrecognized states" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, something Baku opposes both because Georgia is its GUAM ally and because moves on these two countries could presage a Russian shift on Karabakh.

Russia itself wanted to slow down its construction of the atomic energy station in Iran without having to take responsibility for doing so. Consequently, it created a situation in which Iran is more likely to blame Baku than Moscow.

Others suggested that Azerbaijan had just made a mistake, either because it did not appreciate what the shipment represented when it crossed from the Russian Federation into Azerbaijan or was simply overwhelmed because of the radical increase in the transit of goods across its territory over the last year, a trend that overwhelmed the capacity of its customs service to do its job.

But both Occam's razor – the proposition that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the simplest explanation is almost always the best – and the fact that no one has offered any additional proof to support theories that simply reflect and advance his views, suggest there is no reason in this case to go beyond the facts.

And that has an important lesson for Azerbaijan and for all other countries which act on the basis of a legal principle in a highly politicized atmosphere that may bring them into conflict with a more powerful country: It is critically important to ensure that the government recognizes that it may be even more important to ensure that its message about what it is doing reaches key audiences at home and abroad than even seeing the conflict resolve itself in the ways that it wants.

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## **THE FIVE KEY VECTORS OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY**

Vugar Seyidov  
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After it recovered its independence in 1991, Azerbaijan faced the challenge of defining almost from scratch policies on an enormous range of foreign policy issues. Indeed, the range of these issues is so broad that sometimes makes it difficult to see the basic contours of Baku's approach to the world. But now, nearly 17 years after this process began, it is possible to identify the five key vectors of Azerbaijan's foreign policy.

The overriding foreign and domestic policy challenge facing Azerbaijan is the restoration of its territorial integrity and the establishment of control over Nagorno-Karabakh and other regions of the country occupied by Armenian forces. No other Azerbaijani foreign policy concern can or will ever be allowed to take precedence over this one, a reality that many outsiders do not understand but that explains why Baku is using its oil revenues to transform its military in order to be in a force of a resolution of this problem. That is the first vector of Azerbaijan's foreign policy.

The second involves the definition of the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Because Azerbaijan extracts much of the oil that makes it a power from this territory, reaching an agreement about the division of the Caspian that satisfies the country's national interests is a continuing priority, one second only to the Karabakh dispute. As a result, Baku continues to put much of its diplomatic muscle behind negotiations with the four other littoral states. Not only must the legal status of the Caspian Sea and the marine borders be defined, but it is also crucial to keep the biggest lake off the arm race and turn it into a demilitarized zone, which will serve the interests of all five littoral states.

Azerbaijan's third key foreign policy vector is one that most analysts pass over but that in fact is central to the country's future. It concerns relations with the growing number of Azerbaijanis living abroad. The Azerbaijani government seeks to expand ties with them in order to promote Baku's interests bilaterally and multilaterally. For Azerbaijan, it is critically important that Azerbaijanis abroad, be they migrants, émigrés, or longtime ethnic communities, feel themselves part of the Azerbaijani nation broadly conceived. It is essential that the Azerbaijani communities in these countries feel the attention and care from the state of Azerbaijan and overcome the feeling of being abandoned. Towards that end, the Azerbaijani diplomacy can and must be more active in addressing cultural and social needs of Azerbaijani communities in the countries of their residence, especially in Iran, Russia, Iraq (the Turcomans), and Georgia.

Baku has identified as its fourth key vector in foreign policy active involvement in international and regional organizations. That has allowed Azerbaijan to expand its reach to countries in which it does not yet have diplomatic representation and to enlist the aid of these organizations, including the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, among others to put

pressure on Armenia and its backers to end the illegal occupation of the Azerbaijani territory.

And fifth, given both its geographical location and its national traditions, Azerbaijan has defined as a vector of its foreign policy both the closest possible integration into European and Trans-Atlantic institutions and strategic partnership with the United States on the one hand, and the best possible relations with the Russian Federation on the other, an approach that President Heydar Aliyev and his successor, President Ilham Aliyev, have defined as Azerbaijan's "balanced" foreign policy and one that requires the most clever and flexible of approaches.

Thinking about Baku's approach to the world in terms of these five vectors not only helps to explain many of the specific actions of Azerbaijani foreign policy actors but also provides a way of thinking about what Azerbaijan is likely to do in the future, especially if there are significant changes on one or another of these vectors.

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## **A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY**

### **I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy**

President Ilham Aliyev speaking in Fizuli says that the next few months must bring "clarity" to the Karabakh conflict, adding that Baku will not tolerate any double standards on this issue. In other comments, he criticizes those countries that try to impose democracy by force and says that Azerbaijan is the most democratic country in its region (<http://www.newsazerbaijan.ru/politic/20080418/42253390.html>).

### **II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan**

GUAM's executive secretary says the grouping is a stepping stone toward NATO and the European Union (<http://www.newsazerbaijan.ru/exclusive/20080416/42249492.html>).

The Organization of the Islamic Conference condemns Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/111816.html>).

U.S. President George Bush says Washington is and will remain an honest broker in the negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Karabakh ([http://www.echo-az.info/archive/2008\\_04/1796/politica04.shtml](http://www.echo-az.info/archive/2008_04/1796/politica04.shtml)).

Moldovan officials say they have no idea why anyone is spreading the idea that Chisinau is planning to leave GUAM (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/114807.html>).

### **III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy**

30 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives the credentials of incoming ambassadors from Portugal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Denmark, Australia, and Indonesia.

Azerbaijan releases Russian equipment for transit to Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant, ending diplomatic standoff.

President Ilham Aliyev signs the papers to establish an Azerbaijani consulate in Aktau, Kazakhstan.

#### 29 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Norwegian foreign minister Jonas Storr.

Azerbaijan and Montenegro establish diplomatic relations.

President's Office says that Baku has no plans to ban Wahhabism.

#### 28 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Slovak foreign minister Jan Kubish in the latter's capacity as President of the Council of Europe.

Azerbaijan announces a 32 percent increase in defense spending.

Azerbaijani experts take part in an IAEA conference in Vienna on non-proliferation.

Russian embassy in Baku hands over documentation on shipment of materials for Bushehr reactor detained at the Azerbaijani border with Iran since March 29.

#### 27 April

Iranian foreign ministry demands Azerbaijan release Russian equipment for Bushehr nuclear power plant.

#### 25 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Nobel Foundation head and Russian scientist Ronald Sagdeyev.

Foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov visits Estonia, announces Baku ready to allow visa-free travel by Estonians to Azerbaijan.

The Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan intergovernmental commission meets in Astana.

#### 24 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives visiting Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin.

President Aliyev receives Turkey's social security minister Faruq Celik.

Azerbaijani officials and experts participate in TRACECA meeting in Odessa.

Foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov visits Latvia.

23 April

Azerbaijan's national security minister visits Poland.

Baku hosts a NATO-Azerbaijan seminar on peacekeeping operations.

22 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Issues Ruben Jeffrey.

Foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov discusses on the telephone Caspian security issues with Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov.

21 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Lithuanian Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas.

President Ilham Aliyev receives Kalmyk President and FIDE head Kirsan Ilyumzhinov.

Azerbaijan's Trend News Agency begins distributing news in Arabic.

19 April

Foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Minsk co-chairs in Paris.

Foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov proposes during his visit to Sofia that Bulgaria become a member of the Friends of GUAM within the European Union.

18 April

President Ilham Aliyev says the next few months must bring clarity to the Karabakh conflict, adding that Azerbaijan will not tolerate double standards on this issue.

Azerbaijan and Armenian delegations at PACE discuss Karabakh.

17 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Sergei Lebedev, the executive secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

President Ilham Aliyev receives Jeffrey Gedmin, president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade returns from five day visit in Saudi Arabia, calls for international meeting of world's religious leaders in Baku in 2009.

Dutch diplomats complete four days of consultations with Azerbaijan foreign ministry officials.

16 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Daniel Feith, an advisor to the U.S. secretary of defense.

Azerbaijani jurist Hanlar Gajiev is elected a judge of the European Court of Human Rights.

Two-day experts conference on GUAM hosted by the Azerbaijan foreign ministry ends.

### **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](mailto: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.