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School of International Affairs

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REACHING OUT TO AZERBAIJANI DIASPORA

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State Committee on Affairs with Azerbaijanis Living in Foreign Countries (SCAALFC)

Azerbaijanis have always paid attention to their co-ethnics living beyond the borders of the republic. However, until President Heydar Aliyev established the State Committee on Affairs with Azerbaijanis Living in Foreign Countries (SCAALFC) in July 2002, this longstanding attention to the Diaspora and the ways its members could help their motherland in general, lacked focus. There were a number of non-governmental organizations involved before then, of course, but few had the funding or clout to make a difference, shortcomings that were highlighted at the I Azerbaijani Diaspora Congress in November 2001.

That meeting and the reaction it generated in the Government of Azerbaijan and the society truly represented a turning point. It led to a general recognition of the notion that Azerbaijan had a diaspora, people linked by culture, language and identity with their homeland, and that these groups could help advance Azerbaijani interests, especially in contests with diasporas of other states.

Since then, the Committee has enjoyed the active support first of Heydar Aliyev and then his successor Ilham Aliyev, as well as the backing of the parliament and the people of

Azerbaijan. Today, we are proud to note that the first stage in the formation of the diaspora has been successfully completed. We have institutions to help Azerbaijanis abroad, and they are now helping Azerbaijan to tell its story to the world and especially to counter the work of others who want to distort it.

Since the time it was established, SCAALFC has been increasingly active. In 2002, The Committee organized a conference on "The Azerbaijani Diaspora: Current Situation and Future Prospects." In 2003, it worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct the first Forum for Leaders of Azerbaijani Diaspora Organizations, in Mainz, Germany. More than 170 delegates from 29 countries came to discuss how to improve our work. In 2004, SCAALFC helped to organize in Berlin the Founding Congress of European Azerbaijanis, as well as the Founding Meeting of the Federation of Azerbaijani-Turkish Study Groups in Iskenderun, Turkey. The Committee also provided help to the Azerbaijani communities in the Benelux countries to set up their own organizations.

During that period, SCAALFC also worked with Azerbaijani communities in Canada, Japan and the United States to get organized and become more active. Indeed, when Tokyo registered the Azerbaijani-Japan Friendship Association in 2006, it was the first Azerbaijani organization registered in that country.

The Committee's activities during that period and since have not been limited to organizing groups. It has also reported to the Government of Azerbaijan on how Baku can help to protect the rights of Azerbaijanis living abroad. It has held Azerbaijani evenings and Azerbaijani culture events both together with diaspora groups and independently. It has supported the creation and operation of Sunday schools to ensure that younger Azerbaijanis will retain their language and culture regardless of where they live. It has supported Azerbaijani-profile schools abroad, such as Moscow Secondary School No.157. The Committee has also assisted in the promotion of teaching of Azerbaijani at Moscow State Institute of International Relations, the National University of Kyiv, and the French Institute for Eastern Cultures and Languages.

In March 2006, President Ilham Aliyev convened the II Congress of the World Azerbaijanis, to discuss the ways in which they could influence the policies of the governments of the countries they live in toward Azerbaijan and how the Azerbaijanis living abroad could maintain and develop closer ties to their homeland. Representatives of more than 80 groups from 30 countries took part in its deliberations.

Now Azerbaijanis living abroad are not only working to promote the interests of Baku beyond Azerbaijan, but in many countries they are also developing close ties with other diasporas, including in the first instance Turkish ones, as well as the Jewish communities. In most countries, Turkish diasporas are both larger than the Azerbaijani one and have more experience in working with the governments of those countries. Consequently, they are frequently able to provide real support for Azerbaijanis, just as Azerbaijanis are able to do in return.

Our cooperation with Turkey and the Turkish diasporas was highlighted during the November 2007 meeting of the Congress of the World Turkic Nations. Held in Baku – the first time this body has met outside of Turkey itself – the Congress agreed to create a new permanent secretariat to ensure that all the countries of the Turkic world and all their diasporas can work together in support of the many things they have in common.

Azerbaijanis in the United States have also been closely working with the Jewish community, and that cooperation has paid off: Not only have Azerbaijanis learned a great deal about lobbying from the vastly more experienced Jewish groups, but they have secured the support of the latter in key legislative battles.

One of the reasons Azerbaijan devotes so much attention to expanding its contacts with its diaspora and with the diasporas of other Turkic nations is that all of us must deal with the activities of the Armenian diaspora, which for decades has put out its distorted

version of Azerbaijanis and other Turkic peoples without the latter being able to respond effectively. Now that situation is changing, and a major explanation for that is to be found in SCAALFC's activities.

During the last year alone, the Committee helped to organize the II European Forum of Azerbaijani Students in Brussels, helped to set up the headquarters of the Azerbaijani Council of America in California, and supported the establishment of the German Consultation Council of Azerbaijanis in Germany. I am proud to say that we took part in the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the Azerbaijani Society of America, even as we were creating new groups in Britain, Poland, and Denmark.

In addition, SCAALFC hosted a meeting of the Central Council of the Congress of Azerbaijanis in Russia, and helped to establish the Azerbaijan-Israel International Association in Tel Aviv (AZIS), and backed the creation of AZIS-Germany, an association dedicated to unite Azerbaijanis living there and promote closer ties between Azerbaijan and the countries where Azerbaijanis live, just as all our activities are designed to do.

Of particular importance last year was our work in the Russian Federation where more than two million Azerbaijanis now live. When the Russian Government issued a decree that put the continued presence of many of them at risk, SCAALFC worked with the Embassy of Azerbaijan to ensure that all of the members of that community were able to get the documents they needed to fully comply with Russian law. As a result, there has not been the mass outflow of Azerbaijanis that many had feared.

In the year ahead, we are planning to host the I Forum of Azerbaijani Scientists and the I Meeting of Azerbaijani Journalists living abroad, models of the kind of thing we hope to do for other professional groups in the future. Moreover, we are closely involved in the planning for meetings of the Benelux-Azerbaijani Congress, as well as meetings in Moscow, Paris and other cities, where we have Azerbaijani communities. In addition to helping to arrange visits by foreign officials and parliamentarians, we are also working to establish diaspora organizations in countries like Turkmenistan, where they have never existed before.

These are the achievements we have gained as of today. However, with more than some 300 different active diaspora communities and even more emerging almost every month, and with both Azerbaijan and its co-ethnics living abroad playing an ever larger role in the world, our biggest challenges at the Committee are very much ahead of us.

For more information about SCAALFC and the diaspora, please consult either the Azerbaijani Diaspora website at <http://www.diaspora.az/>, or one of the publications or the organizations listed below.

SCAALFC Publications:

Azərbaycan diasporuna dövlət qayğısı. Bakı, „Çaşıoğlu“, 2003 il, I Kitab. [*State Care of Azerbaijani Diaspora*, I Volume, Baku: Chashioglu, 2003].

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Əliyev Z. Diaspor – izahlı sözlük və məlumat. Bakı, "Yurd" PB, 2007. [Aliyev, Z. (2007). *Diaspora – Explanatory Glossary and Information*, Baku: Yurd].

AZERBAIJANI DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS: A SELECTED LIST

Australia -- Australian Azerbaijanis Society

Austria – Austria-Azerbaijan Academic Union <http://www.avstriya.com>

Belarus -- Congress of Azerbaijani Communities in Belarus

Benelux Countries -- Benelux Congress of Azerbaijanis
Belgium Azerbaijan House <http://www.diaspora-az.com>

Bulgaria -- Bulgaria Azerbaijan Friendship Society <http://www.azbul.8m.com>

Canada -- Association of Azerbaijani Women in Canada
Canada Azerbaijan Center of Commerce <http://www.roscaz.com>
Canada-Azerbaijan Cooperation Association <http://www.canadaazerbaican.org>
Canada Azerbaijan Alliance

Czech Republic -- "Azer-Czech" Society <http://www.diaspora.cz>

Denmark -- "Vatan" Society

Estonia -- "Aydan" Estonia-Azerbaijan Culture Center <http://www.azeri.ee>

France -- Association of Azerbaijani Students in France <http://www.azerbaijan.com.fr>
Azerbaijan House <http://www.azmaison.fr>

Germany – Federation of Azerbaijani Communities <http://www.friden-feoderation.de>

Georgia -- Azerbaijani Cultural Center
Azerbaijan Youth Association
Development Center for Azerbaijani Community
National Assembly of Azerbaijanis in Georgia

Hungary -- Hungary-Azerbaijan Friendship Society

Israel -- Israel-Azerbaijan International Association

Italy -- Italy-Azerbaijan Friendship Association

Japan -- Azerbaijan-Japan Friendship Association

Kazakhstan -- "Turan" Azerbaijan Culture Center
Azerbaijan Youth Organization

Kyrgyzstan -- "Azeri" Social Union
"Azerbaijan" Youth Organization

Latvia -- "Azeri Vahdat" Society
Latvia-Azerbaijan Culture Association

Lithuania -- Lithuania Azerbaijan Society

Moldova -- Moldova Azerbaijanis Congress

Norway -- Norway-Azerbaijan Culture Society
"Norway-Azerbaijan" Youth Society

Poland -- Azerbaijan Information Culture Center
Poland-Azerbaijan Culture Society
"Azer-Pol" Friendship Society

Romania -- "Azerbaijan Culture and Youth" Association

Russian Federation -- "AZERROS" Federal National-Cultural Autonomy of Azerbaijanis in Russia <http://www.azerros.ru>
All-Russian Azerbaijani Congress <http://www.vakmos.org>
Azeri Diaspora in Russia <http://www.azeri.ru>

Spain – Azerbaijani Friendship Society

Sweden -- Azerbaijani Study Group <http://www.azerbaycan.se>
Azerbaijan Academic Union
Azerbaijani Federation <http://www.azfi.org>

Switzerland-- "Switzerland-Azerbaijan" Study Group
Culture Center of Azerbaijanis in Switzerland

Turkey --"Araz" Student Union <http://www.araztoplulugu.8m.net>
Izmir Azerbaijan Culture House and Union Group
Manisa Azerbaijan Culture and Union Group
Koceli Azerbaijan House Study Group
Chanakkale Azerbaijan House Study Group
Balikesir Azerbaijan House Study Group
Ayдын Azerbaijan House Study Group
Mugla Azerbaijan House Study Group
Adana Azerbaijan Culture and Union Group

United Arab Emirates -- Azerbaijani Society

United Kingdom -- Vatan Society <http://www.vatan.org.uk>
Azerbaijan Youth Club
Caspian-Khazri School in London

United States -- Azerbaijan-America Society <http://usa.azeris.org>
US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce <http://www.usacc.org>
Society of Azerbaijanis in Houston <http://www.HoustonAzerbaijani.org>
US-Azerbaijan Council <http://www.usazerbajancouncil.org>
Azerbaijan-America Education and Culture Foundation <http://www.aacef.org>
Azerbaijan New-York Association
Houston-Baku Sister City Association <http://www.houstonbaku.com>
US-Azerbaijan Council <http://www.azeris.org>

Uzbekistan -- Association of Azerbaijani Culture Centers

Tajikistan -- "Friendship" Azerbaijan Culture Center

Ukraine -- Congress of Azerbaijanis in Ukraine <http://www.kongressaz.kiev>
Harkiw Azerbaijan-Ukraine Friendship Society <http://www.dostlug.org.ua>

AZERBAIJANIS OUTSIDE OF AZERBAIJAN: EMIGRES, DIASPORAS AND NATIONAL MINORITIES

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Like every other country, Azerbaijan has members of its ethnic community living abroad. But except for a very few, it has a far larger number of such people compared to its own population, and they vary more widely in their relationships to the countries in which they live and to Azerbaijan itself. The enormous number of Azerbaijanis living beyond the borders of Azerbaijan makes them increasingly important players in international affairs; their diversity makes Baku's dealings with them complicated and their various roles often misunderstood by others.

The total number of Azerbaijanis living outside of Azerbaijan is a matter of dispute, with most estimates converging on 35 to 40 million, some four to five times the number living in the Republic itself. There are three major reasons for the inability even of experts to agree on the figure. First, many of the countries in which Azerbaijanis live have not conducted reliable censuses or asked questions about ethnic self-identification.

Second, in some countries, ethnic Azerbaijanis have in fact re-identified as members of the dominant community, because they feel closely related to the locally dominant community such as some in Turkey, have lived there so long that they have lost much of the Azerbaijani identity as is the case with some in some Western countries, or have been forcibly re-identified by the governments under which they live such as in some Central Asian countries in the past.

And third – and this may be the most important reason of all – a few Azerbaijanis living abroad are political émigrés in the usual sense of that term; significantly more, especially in recent years, constitute a diaspora of people who have moved from Azerbaijan to another country to live and work but maintain close ties with their homeland; and finally the largest group of all include Azerbaijanis who form ethnic minorities in their countries in which they live because their ancestors have lived there for centuries. Moreover, in some places and for some individuals, the lines between these categories break down.

Because these groups are so different, their relationships to Baku and Azerbaijan are different, and the challenges the Azerbaijani government and people face in dealing with them are enormous, especially because some of the participants and many more outside actors do not understand this diversity or the ways in which expectations about such ties that are entirely justified in some circumstances are completely inappropriate in others, however much some for their own reasons may want them to be otherwise.

Given this daunting demographic and political complexity, no single article can hope to comprehend this subject. What follows is first, an overview of the number of ethnic Azerbaijanis living in different countries around the world, second, an assessment of their specific situation today, and third, a brief enumeration of the challenges this diversity poses for Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis at home and abroad.

An Enormous Category

More than half of the 35 to 40 million Azerbaijanis living outside Azerbaijan live in Iran where most of them are part of a community that has existed for almost a millennium. In Turkey, estimates of the number of Azerbaijanis range from 500,000 to a million, most of whom the descendents of one or another wave of emigration from Azerbaijan over the last

century. In Azerbaijan's immediate neighborhood, there are some 400,000 Azerbaijanis in Georgia, 100,000 in Daghestan, and, after the exodus of almost all of the Azerbaijanis who had been living in Armenia as a result of the Karabakh war, fewer than a hundred in that neighboring country. All three of these communities are the descendents of Azerbaijanis who have been living there for centuries.

In the Russian Federation, there are now at least 2.5 million and perhaps as many as three million Azerbaijanis, almost all of whom, except for the group in Daghestan, have arrived at the end of the Soviet period or after when they left their homeland to find work in Russian cities. In Western Europe, there are growing diasporas of the classical kind: 60 to 80,000 in Germany, 30-40,000 in France, and another 50-70,000 elsewhere in Europe. And in North America, there are now more than 275,000 ethnic Azerbaijanis in Canada and more than 300,000 in the United States, again of the classical diaspora type. There are small Azerbaijani communities in Asia and elsewhere, but they are only beginning to emerge.

Five Different Situations

Iran. No group of Azerbaijanis living abroad is larger and more important but at the same time more misunderstood. On the one hand, they still constitute a distinct ethnic community with its own past, problems and aspirations. But on the other, many of its members are integrated into Iranian society so completely that ethnic Azerbaijanis are found at the very top of the Iranian political and social system. Consequently, both observers and participants often shift between two polar positions – Azerbaijanis are oppressed and thus candidates for secession or Azerbaijanis are so integrated that any problems some have are irrelevant – when reality comprehends both of these and everything in between.

Prior to the Iranian revolution in 1979, the shah and those around him viewed the Azerbaijanis as outsiders and a potential threat to the Iranian nationalism Tehran then espoused. Not surprisingly, many ethnic Azerbaijanis resented this and were radicalized, and it was precisely in Tabriz, the most important city of Iranian Azerbaijan, that the revolution against the shah began. Under Khomeini, the basis of political loyalty shifted from ethno-nationalism to Islam, something that made the integration of the Azerbaijanis in principle easier.

But if that was true for many of them – and one example of this integration is the fact that today the head of the Guardians Council is himself an Azerbaijani – it was not for others. Many Iranian officials continued to treat the community in much the same way that they had under the shah, and some in the community felt a new sense of pride with the emergence of an independent Azerbaijan in 1991. That was and is all the more so because of the activities of some Azerbaijanis in Baku who would like to see "southern Azerbaijan" as Iran's Azerbaijani area is called to be more autonomous, independent or even linked to the Republic.

Turkey. The situation of Azerbaijanis in Turkey today is unique. Unlike the political émigrés who arrived after the Soviet occupation of Baku, the ethnic Azerbaijanis in Turkey fit into Turkish life so well – they speak a closely related and fully mutually intelligible language and share a common commitment to Turkishness – that they sometimes find it difficult if not impossible to maintain their community as a separate and distinct entity. At the same time, however, and given the influx of new arrivals from Azerbaijan and the Caucasus in the 1990s, most of them retain close ties to and interest in Azerbaijan, an attachment and a focus that makes them in some ways more a political community than an ethnic one.

The Caucasus. Like the Azerbaijanis in Iran, the Azerbaijanis of the Caucasus are part of the same Turkic community that settled in this region a millennium ago. The situation they find themselves in, today, however, varies widely. In Armenia, from which all but a handful have been expelled, Azerbaijanis are forced to hide their identity, often changing their names and never flaunting their ethnicity in public. In Georgia, the

community has had a very complicated relationship with Tbilisi. In the early 1990s, when the Gamsakhurdia government pursued a policy of "Georgia for the Georgians," Azerbaijanis felt isolated and some left. Later, under Shevardnadze, they were treated as full-fledged citizens of Georgia and had fewer problems.

Most recently, their rapidly growing size combined with the economic and political problems of Georgia has put them in a more difficult position once again, especially with regard to access to Azerbaijani-language higher education and jobs. As a result, even though the community continues to increase – it is the largest ethnic minority in Georgia – many of its members are choosing to leave either temporarily for schooling and work or even permanently.

The slightly more than 100,000 Azerbaijanis in Daghestan, a republic within the Russian Federation, have their own schools, cultural institutions, and media. Most of them live in Derbent, just north of the border of the Republic of Azerbaijan, although some have moved to other cities. Despite being the seventh largest ethnic community in that republic, the Azerbaijanis there appear generally satisfied with their situation at present.

The Russian Federation. Most of the members of this community are recent arrivals to Russia's major cities. Indeed, according to some estimates, the Azerbaijanis number more than a million in Moscow alone and thus constitute the largest ethnic minority there. They have that status in many other Russian cities as well.

Because many Russians were offended by the arrival of what tradesmen and workers came to call "persons of Caucasus nationality" – a category in which the Azerbaijanis are the largest component – in the 1990s, some Azerbaijanis have been mistreated, beaten or even killed. And most recently, some Azerbaijanis in Moscow have been involved in clashes with ethnic Armenians there, a development that Russian media outlets suggested meant that there is now "a Moscow Karabakh."

Despite that, the Azerbaijani community is extremely active, has created a variety of independent social and political groups, secured the creation of some Azerbaijani-language, and, more than any other group, worked to make the system of non-territorial national-cultural autonomies Moscow has allowed work to their advantage. Indeed, at a recent meeting of the Azerbaijani federation of such autonomies, the leaders of other groups said they are copying what the Azerbaijanis have been doing.

The West. The Azerbaijani communities in Western Europe, the United States and Canada are relatively new, rapidly growing, and consist of students and business people. In most cases, they view themselves and are viewed by others as having a foot in both worlds, their homeland and their place of residence. And given the openness of the societies in which they live, they are the most active in seeking to promote the interests of their own country which in almost every case they view as their own. In some of these countries, they are subject to relatively strong pressures to assimilate but in none are they victims of active government discrimination.

Three Distinct Challenges

In working with Azerbaijanis living outside of Azerbaijan, Baku faces three distinct challenges. First, it must deal with the daunting diversity of this community, a diversity that many do not understand or for their own reasons are not prepared to recognize. What works or even is appropriate in one place will not work or be appropriate in another. And any effort to pursue a single policy toward all of the groups that make up this community will backfire, alienating the very people with whom Azerbaijan wants to maintain and develop relations.

Second, because Azerbaijan is entering the "diaspora" game relatively late compared to some other countries, it faces the obvious temptation to use the state alone as the means for organizing such communities abroad. Not only does that ignore the important

reality that these groups are distinctive and independent, but it opens the door to charges by other diasporas and states that Azerbaijanis abroad are nothing more than agents of Baku, charges that however untrue limit the value of what Azerbaijanis abroad can do for Azerbaijan.

And third, by its involvement with Azerbaijanis abroad, Baku risks finding itself "captured" by the diaspora. That is, the issues that agitate Azerbaijanis outside of Azerbaijan are not always the same as those which concern Azerbaijanis at home. As a result, the actions and statements of the former can sometimes undercut the goals of Azerbaijani citizens and the policies of the Azerbaijani government, leading to misunderstandings and anger on both sides.

So far, Baku has successfully navigated through this minefield, but as ethnic communities abroad in general and Azerbaijanis living outside of Azerbaijan in particular become more important, both the people and government of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijanis abroad will have to work hard so that all involved will benefit and none will suffer.

BAKU AND THE AZERBAIJANI DIASPORA: HOW MUCH INTERACTION AND INFLUENCE?

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The Azerbaijani government is becoming ever more involved with Azerbaijanis living abroad, hoping to use them to influence other states. Baku's efforts in this direction are making the various members of this community more self-conscious of their identity if not yet a single united group. And this new self-consciousness among Azerbaijanis abroad appears likely over time to have an influence on Azerbaijan itself, regardless of how much influence they may have on the countries in which they live.

Given the importance of diasporas in general, it is not surprising that many scholars have considered their role in the formation of national identity. Shain and Barth (2003, p. 459), for example, note that diasporas, because they are "outside the state but inside the people ... often attach more importance to national identity than those inside the state." Consequently, at a minimum, they serve as a source of ideas for those living inside the state as well. That is clearly true for Azerbaijan.

Obviously, as various scholars have shown, tracing this influence is far from easy. There are simply too many causal chains involved in any particular shift of views either among diaspora communities or among officials and citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan. But it is clear that this influence exists to a greater or lesser extent, and this essay focuses on four areas where there are some indications that it already is having an impact.

First, an obvious example of this concerns attitudes toward the war with Armenia. Although few in the diaspora actually participated in that conflict, it became for them both a defining feature of their identities as Azerbaijanis and a primary focus for their activities in the countries where they are living. And as Baku is increasing its interaction with them, some of the attitudes of the diaspora may reinforce or even modify the views of some officials and groups at home.

Indeed, these developments may be witnessed already today in, among other things, both the increasingly determined statements of President Ilham Aliyev about his willingness to use military means to recover the occupied territories and his recent remarks about the

decision of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic to give up Yerevan and public debates those remarks have prompted.

The second way in which the diaspora may be having an impact on the homeland Azerbaijan concerns the content of Azerbaijani national identity. While for most of the last decade, the Azerbaijani government has stressed an inclusive, civic definition of Azerbaijanis' national identity – the one they have labeled as Azerbaijanism – it now gets increasingly inclined to use the language of ethnic kinship to get Azerbaijani and Turkic diasporas to work together. While deeper cooperation with Turkic diasporas may only be welcomed, there is a risk that this stress of a pan-Turkic unity may lead to an increasing gap between the definition of Azerbaijani identity for those inside the state (which combines the notion of nationality and citizenship) and that for those outside (based on ethnic kinship and thus excluding representatives of other ethnic groups who might otherwise identify as Azerbaijani).

On the one hand, that division, especially if it grows, could cost Baku an important tool for promoting the country's interests abroad, for it may deprive the state of the support of a considerable number of people in diaspora who might otherwise be willing to serve the interests of what they would consider their motherland. On the other hand, the diaspora's view is already having an impact on the thinking of many Azerbaijanis within Azerbaijan, potentially leading to a change in their national identity that could create a self-perception of marginalization among many of the ethnic minorities living there and call into question the country's well-deserved reputation for tolerance. Moreover, it is not improbable that this may eventually cause the "political conflict over the determination of national identity" (Shain and Barth 2003, p. 459; for pertinent theoretical discussions, see also Bloom 1990, pp. 79-81).

To avoid either of these developments, none of which is in Azerbaijan's national interests, those institutions in Azerbaijani government and society which shape the discourse about national identity need to develop a uniform conceptualized approach to nation-building and work together towards the creation of a single national identity shared by Azerbaijanis both inside and outside the political borders of the state. Besides, state bodies concerned should work more actively to reach out to diasporas of states with whom Azerbaijan has strategic and/or friendly relations based on its national interests rather than ethnic kinship.

The effect of this interest-based diasporic cooperation will be the formation of changed perception among the Azerbaijani diaspora that the unity of action with Turkic and other diasporas is generated by the convergence of national interests of their respective states, rather than sheer kinship considerations; with the important side-effect being the increase of their allegiance to the state, rather than to a single ethnic group. Working towards further solidifying the links and relations with the Jewish diaspora may be a good starting point and an exemplary model for establishing similar relations with other 'friendly' diasporas in future. Also important in this regard would be organization of regular multi-lateral forums with the participation of Azerbaijani, Turkic and other states' diasporas, which will contribute to the formation of the sense of unity among diasporas based on common interests rather than ethnicity or religion.

Third, the increasing activities of Azerbaijani communities in countries like Iran, the Russian Federation and the United States and their multicultural influence on Azerbaijan almost certainly will contribute to a further strengthening of Azerbaijanism as a state-promoted national identity and thus to what Baku calls its balanced foreign policy. But for that to be sustained in the future, the Azerbaijani government will need to find new and strengthen existing mechanisms to increase its own contacts with various parts of the Azerbaijani diasporas around the world, and their contacts with each other. Not only will such mechanisms provide for intercultural exchange among Azerbaijanis coming from different cultural contexts and thereby keep up the multicultural content of their national identity, but they will also serve as a constant reminder of a single idea that binds them all together, that of allegiance to and affection for the state of Azerbaijan.

Toward that end, Azerbaijan might find it useful to introduce the concept of "dual nationality" (as opposed to "dual citizenship"), thus promoting the notion that Azerbaijanis are part of Azerbaijan regardless of where they live and what citizenship they have. That will increase the linkages between the diaspora and the homeland and slow any assimilation of the diasporas into their host societies. This institution may be especially attractive, for it will promote travel and contacts without allowing the diaspora to play a direct political role in the homeland through voting (see King and Melvin 1999-2000, p. 114).

Fourth, the Azerbaijani diaspora may have an important influence on Azerbaijan's domestic polity by turning into a valuable force behind democratization of their homeland. Because of their natural concerns about their own image in the hostland, which is derivative from the way in which Azerbaijan is viewed by the peoples and governments of the countries in which they live, members of the diaspora are likely to push the democratic governments and relevant international organizations (e.g., Council of Europe, OSCE, EU) in the countries of residence to adopt a more critical approach to the issue of Azerbaijan's democratization. Also, not only are they likely to insist that Azerbaijan act in ways that will attract positive notice but also regularly to report to Azerbaijanis through various channels of the way in which other countries view what the Azerbaijani government is doing at home. Besides, those members of the diaspora who hope to return to the country in the future have the greatest interest in the homeland's welfare and democratic development and thus in pushing it in a positive direction.

Obviously, the impact of Azerbaijanis living abroad is far broader than on identity issues alone. Indeed, while Azerbaijani community in Iran does not fall under the classic definition of diaspora and is not treated as such by the Azerbaijani government, it may in the longer term become a factor to be considered by both Azerbaijani and Iranian governments in their efforts to strengthen the bilateral relations.

If the relationship of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis living abroad continues to expand, if the latter not only links itself increasingly to the homeland but also becomes more united, then it will be easier to trace these lines of influence. But as was noted above, there are already indications of just how important this influence could be if the Azerbaijanis living outside Azerbaijan find a common voice and raise it in their dealings with Baku.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

1. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

Speaking on the occasion of his selection as Azerbaijan's "Man of the Year," President Ilham Aliyev stressed that he is responsible for both the good and the bad in Azerbaijan, that he regrets negotiations with Armenia have not yielded a solution to the Karabkh issue, and reminded that Baku's patience on this was not unlimited (<http://www.br.az/site/main.htm>, February 6).

In remarks to a veterans congress, President Ilham Aliyev said that Baku has always been a multi-national city where people of different ethnic backgrounds and faiths have lived in harmony (http://www.news.bakililar.az/news_baku_vseqda_byl_12446.html).

In an interview carried in Moscow's "Rossiiskaya gazeta" on February 5, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mamadyarov said that Baku and Moscow were now cooperating on a wide range of issues and that there was no need for anyone to try to play the CIS and GUAM off against one another.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation issued a new book entitled *War Against Azerbaijan: Targeting Cultural Heritage* (280 pp. with illustrations, maps and two DVDs) detailing the destruction of cultural monuments in areas of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia. The book was presented in London on February 12th and in Paris on February 13th.

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopts a resolution calling on Armenia to withdraw from all Azerbaijani territories (<http://www.anspress.com/nid57738.htm>).

NATO officials welcome the pace and extent of Azerbaijan's military reforms (http://www.1news.az/articles.php?sec_id=2&item_id=20080204012239460).

Amnesty International calls on all the governments of the world to send letters to the Iranian government protesting its continued mistreatment of ethnic Azerbaijanis and other minorities (<http://www.echo-az.com/politica02.shtml>).

Vafa Guluzade, former Azerbaijani national security advisor, said that as Azerbaijan's role in the world becomes more important, Russian and other intelligence services are trying to find out what is going on there and influence it (www.interfax.az/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16018&Itemid=9).

A United Nations report describes and praises Baku's efforts to integrate Azerbaijanis displaced by the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.azerizv.az/article.php?id=12534>).

Kim Murphy describes the threat from Iran and the joint efforts of Azerbaijan and the U.S. to meet it in the *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 2008 (<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-zerbaijan10feb10,0,7338041.story>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

15 February

The Azerbaijan government launches a new website for those interested in visiting the country (<http://www.tourism.az/>).

Azerbaijan's Jewish community announces the launch of a new website about Azerbaijan's tolerance for religious and ethnic minorities (<http://in-brief.aen.ru/story-id=47843/>).

14 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives Bruno Puezza, the head of the United Nations office in Baku.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister meets with his French counterpart in Paris to discuss the resolution of the Karabakh conflict.

Azerbaijani officials meet with Frank Urbanchik, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for counter-terrorism to discuss cooperation.

13 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives a Tajikistan trade delegation.

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Makhir Aliyev ambassador to Syria.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation marks the reopening of a girls school in Pakistan it supported. The school had been destroyed by terrorists.

Azerbaijan's ombudsman takes part in the world conference of ombudsmen in Seoul.

12 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives the outgoing Turkish ambassador.

10 February

Azerbaijan Working Group in U.S. Congress Expands to 34 Members.

9 February

Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister meets with his GUAM counterparts in an informal session during the 44th Munich Conference on International Security.

8 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives the departing Saudi Arabian ambassador.

President Ilham Aliyev receives Lord Russell Johnston of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Karabakh monitoring group.

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Azerbaijan scholar Elkhan Nuriyev as head of the Baku Institute of Strategic Studies.

The British Council said that the map on its website showing Karabakh as part of Armenia has been put there by hackers. It apologized and has taken the map off its site.

Azerbaijan's ambassador to Jakarta, Ibragim Gadzhiyev, says that Baku considers Indonesia its bridge to the Far East (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/107236.html>).

The Azerbaijani government announces that it has completed a national registry of historical and cultural monuments in order to be able to specify the ones Armenian forces have damaged or destroyed.

7 February

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the Azerbaijani membership of a new Azerbaijani-Jordanian trade commission.

The speaker of the Azerbaijani parliament tells representatives of the Council of Europe that Baku is not yet ready to adopt a law on the protection of national minorities, noting that currently 20 of the 44 members in that body have not yet done so.

Azerbaijan's Defense Minister travels to Vilnius for a meeting of NATO and the alliance's partners.

6 February

President Ilham Aliyev receives the president of the International Olympic Committee.

President Ilham Aliyev receives Thomas Farrell, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State responsible for educational exchanges.

Azerbaijan holds consultations in Baku with Turkmenistan on the future status of the Caspian Sea.

Azerbaijani police announce that they have broken up a group involved in the trafficking of human persons from Azerbaijan to Turkey.

5 February

The Israeli parliament announces plans to hold a session on the Hojali massacres later this month. This is the first time the Israelis have taken this step.

AZ-IZ, the Azerbaijani-Israeli organization, says it will open an Azerbaijani cultural center in Israel in March. Azerbaijan does not yet have an embassy in Israel.

Azerbaijani students in France and other European countries open a four-day meeting in Paris to talk about their relationships with Baku and their host countries.

4 February

The Co-chairs of the Azerbaijan Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe arrive in Baku for a four day visit.

President Ilham Aliyev receives the European 'troika' – OSCE President Dmitri Rupel, the European Union commissar on security questions Benito Ferrero-Waldner, and the EU's Special Representative for the countries of the Southern Caucasus Peter Semnebi – at the start of their Baku visit.

A monument to the victims of the Hojali massacre was erected in the Hague's central military cemetery near the offices of the International Court.

An Azerbaijani delegation leaves for Cairo to take part in the opening of a friendship park and the dedication of a statue to former President Heydar Aliyev.

3 February

The head of the Nakhichevan regional government meets with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran to discuss cross-border issues.

2 February

The Federation of National Cultural Autonomies of Azerbaijanis holds its annual meeting in Moscow.

1 February

The Azerbaijan Press Agency begins distributing its news file in Arabic, and the Baku-based Trend news agency begins distributing its file in Persian.

The Germany-based "Caucasus Review of International Relations" launched in Germany (<http://www.cria-online.org/>).

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 the Republic of Azerbaijan.