



Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy
School of International Affairs

FRIDAY HEARINGS

Hosted by Amb. Hafiz Pashayev
Moderated by Amb. Araz Azimov

Baku, Azerbaijan
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About Friday Hearings

Friday Hearings is a regularly summoned gathering that aims to engage policy-makers, representatives of civil society and members of the academic community in a fruitful discussion addressing contemporary foreign policy issues. It is meant to provide a platform where innovative ideas on, and approaches to, tackling complex foreign policy issues could be generated through open, frank and vigorous dialogue and debate.

Friday Hearings is held under the Chatham House Rule of Confidentiality, meaning that “participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”.

The idea of *Friday Hearings* was first voiced by Amb. Araz Azimov, a long-serving Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan and special representative of the President of Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations. Amb. Araz Azimov has served as Moderator in all *Friday Hearings* sessions and, in that capacity, guided and streamlined the discussions.

Amb. Hafiz Pashayev, Azerbaijan’s first Ambassador to the United States and now a Deputy Foreign Minister and the Rector of Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, has hosted all *Friday Hearings* sessions.

Four sessions of *Friday Hearings* were held in 2009:

Session I: Regional Politics in Light of Recent Armenian-Turkish Developments (April 10, 2009)

Session II: Shall GUAM Only Remain an Island? (May 08, 2009)

Session III: Any Shift in Energy Politics? (November 20, 2009)

Session IV: Azerbaijan in Global Picture: An Assessment of 2009 (December 18, 2009)

Session I: Regional Politics in Light of Recent Armenian-Turkish Developments (April 10, 2009)

The first session of *Friday Hearings* convened to look into the recent developments in relations between Turkey and Armenia and provide an assessment of the impact the latter developments have had, and may still have, on the evolving security dynamics in the region of South Caucasus, as well as on Azerbaijani-Turkish relations.

Key Issues

The first session of *Friday Hearings* discussions identified the following issues of key relevance to Azerbaijan's foreign policy as far as the evolving dynamics of Turkey-Armenia relations are concerned:

Turkey and the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement

Some argued that Turkey's move to improve relations with Armenia is a result of intense pressure that both the United States and Russia have put on Ankara. The growing influence Moscow has gained over Turkey can be attributed to the rapidly growing trade between the two countries.

Others, however, maintained that Turkey's wish to join the European Union is the most important factor urging Ankara to open up its border with Armenia.

Yet others stated that, its Islamic heritage notwithstanding, Turkey's incumbent AK Party has lately pursued quite a pragmatic foreign policy, with Ankara's cooperation with NATO both in Kosovo and Afghanistan intensified, partnership with Israel boosted, as well as internal security activities increased. This group therefore argued that what factored in Turkey's decision to ease relations with Armenia are Ankara's hopes that the border opening and the resulting increase in trade between Armenia and Turkey will subdue determination of the Armenian Diaspora to campaign for the official declaration about the events of 1915 in Anatolia.

Another group suggested that Turkish domestic politics factored significantly in AKP's decision to launch negotiations with Armenia.

Finally, some argued that the issue of the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement ought to be viewed and analyzed through the prism of the changing security dynamics in the region following the August crisis of 2008. For this group, therefore, the motivation behind Turkey's move to launch negotiations with Armenia lies in Ankara's determination to develop incentives for peace and progress in the region.

Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and Azerbaijani-Turkish relations

The strategic developments in the region of South Caucasus since early 1990s have been contingent on, and hinged upon, the level and extent of partnership between Turkey and Azerbaijan, one that has also been supported by global players, primarily by the United States. Partnership between Turkey and Azerbaijan manifested itself in a number of dimensions. Euro-Atlantic integration is one, and Turkey has been in the forefront of promoting Euro-Atlantic integration processes in the region. The energy and transportation sectors are another dimension in which Baku and Ankara have enjoyed solid cooperative relations over the last twenty years.

The extent of Turkey's influence in the South Caucasus has been restricted by Armenia and its destructive behavior in the region, one which first and foremost manifests itself in Armenia's continued occupation of Azerbaijani territory. More, Yerevan failed to reciprocate Turkey's extension of recognition to Armenia in 1991 and, instead, came out with preconditions for normalization of relations.

There have been conflicting messages from the Turkish side, with some officials in Ankara claiming that the border opening is due to proceed, and others moving to assure that the border will not open unless and until there is progress in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

There is a political and an emotional dimension of repercussions the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement could have on Azerbaijani-Turkish relations. On the emotional side, it is very likely that the Azerbaijani public will regard the possible opening of the borders as nothing else but personal humiliation unless it is accompanied by progress in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On the political side, the move to open the Turkish-Armenian border without a parallel move in the Armenian-Azerbaijani direction is likely to ruin the balance of power in the region. Baku's official position is that the Turkish-Armenian border opening should be accompanied by adequate moves in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, if it is to improve the security dynamics in the region. President Ilham Aliyev made this position clear and, by choosing not to attend the Istanbul summit of the 'Alliance of Civilizations' in April 2009 (a move that was informed by Ankara's failure at the time to make clear its position as to the linkage between the border opening and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict), sent a strong message to Turkey that Azerbaijan is actively watching the process and is determined to defend its national interests.

Turkey-Armenia rapprochement and the blockade of Armenia

Talks about the blockade of Armenia are nothing else but a propaganda delusion. A single glance at a map would suffice to ascertain that Armenia is not subject to a blockade and that any argument to the contrary would be logically and geographically flawed. Moreover, the isolation from regional trade that Armenia currently suffers from has been derivative of, and caused by, its own destructive behavior.

Russia and the Turkey-Armenia rapprochement

All hopes that the Americans and others may cherish notwithstanding, it is a delusion to think that the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border may help Armenia neutralize Russia's undue influence in the country. Neither the presence of a Russian military base on Armenian soil, nor Russian ownership of 80 percent of Armenian industry, nor the exercise of border and airspace control by the Russian army in Armenia would be compromised by the Turkish-Armenian border opening. On the contrary, not only would Russia keep its influence in the country and the broader region, but, through the mechanism of resumed Turkish-Armenian interaction, Moscow would gain an opportunity to wield influence on NATO and other European institutions from within. Hence, the game—again—is being played to the Russian advantage, with Moscow destined to win no matter whether the Turkish-Armenian border is eventually opened or not.

Some noted, however, that, as complex a player as Russia is, its regional behavior has also undergone certain changes since the Georgian crisis in August 2008, a development reflected in Russia's changing position on the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Others, however, maintained, that Russia, being nothing else but an empire, cannot change overnight: now that Moscow has managed to introduce its peacekeeping forces in Moldova and Armenia, it seeks to do likewise in Azerbaijan.

Session II: Shall GUAM Only Remain an Island? (May 08, 2009)

The second session of *Friday Hearings* convened to look into recent developments within GUAM, both as an institution as well as among its four member states. Drawing and building on that analysis, the gathering sought to provide an assessment of the future the latter developments, and the broader geopolitical context those are embedded in, hold for GUAM at a critical juncture of its evolution.

Key Issues and Developments

The second session of *Friday Hearings* discussions identified the following issues of key relevance to Azerbaijan's foreign policy as far as the evolving dynamics within and around GUAM are concerned:

GUAM's Rationale at Its Inception

With its idea first brought to the surface in 1996, during the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Conference in Vienna, Austria, GUAM—a regional organization that brings together Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova—was formally founded at the Strasbourg Council of Europe summit in October 1997. Uzbekistan joined the organization during NATO's 1999 summit, only to leave it in 2005.

Two issues stood at the core of the rationale that drove the four states to work together within an institutionalized framework at that stage of their post-Soviet evolution: their interest in ensuring Russian compliance with conventional force limits envisaged in the CFE Treaty and the withdrawal of Russian troops from their soil on the one hand, and their quest to find solution to secessionist conflicts three of the four were grappling with on the other.

With GUAM-based institutionalized interaction accelerating the pace, intra-regional economic cooperation, including, in particular, the idea of a Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor, has increasingly come to the focus of the four states' attention. The latter idea also suited the western strategy of promoting the east-west transport corridor in Eurasia and was—again—viewed by the four partners as another mechanism through which to promote regional security and efficiency.

GUAM's Achievements

During its Kyiv Summit in May 2006, the GUAM members took steps towards the institutionalization of the organization, with its name changed to the "Organization for Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM", its charter adopted and its Secretariat established in Kyiv.

All in all, GUAM has now developed several institutions, including a parliamentary assembly and eight working groups focusing on different issues of common interest and concern. GUAM has also developed effective partnerships with the US, Poland, Japan and Lithuania.

While the GUAM member-states failed—due to Russia’s veto power—to achieve much within the OSCE framework, coordination among them worked well in the UN General Assembly, where the four pushed for the resolution recognizing their territorial integrity.

GUAM’s Challenges

GUAM is experiencing a critical period of its existence, with challenges deriving both from the geopolitical environment in which the organization finds itself and from within its member-states.

While GUAM was from the outset very enthusiastic about the possibility to partner up with the west, including on the issues relating to the east-west transportation corridor, and was very assertively outspoken about its intentions in a variety of multilateral forums, these initiatives were met with harsh criticism from the eastern flank on the one hand and western skepticism and reluctance to render support on the other. Russia has always viewed the organization as an anti-Russian, western creation. Responsive to Russia’s concerns, the west, on the other hand, has not been very supportive of GUAM either. NATO turned down GUAM’s proposition to establish a NATO-GUAM consultative forum in a “16 plus 4” format, while the EU was equally unwilling to work with GUAM as an institutional partner and, hence, refused to consider GUAM as a party to projects such as TRACECA. Now, again, instead of working with a full-fledged institution as GUAM is today, the EU chose to launch a new initiative, the Eastern Partnership. Some have argued, therefore, that as an organizational partner, GUAM has never received the recognition it deserved.

Internal developments within the GUAM member-states also pose a challenge to the organization’s continued existence. Three of the four are enmeshed in political controversy and instability: Georgia is still trying to grapple with the repercussions its 2008 war with Russia has brought to bear upon the country’s internal political developments, Moldova is dealing with the aftermath of the recent changes the country has lived through, while Ukraine keeps searching for ways to mollify deep dissension in which the government and opposition have become entangled. The challenging political processes that the three countries are currently going through work to jeopardize their continued commitment to GUAM and the objectives the organization was meant to pursue.

Azerbaijan remains the only stable, consistent and reliable partner within GUAM. Even Baku’s commitment, however, was jeopardized for a while following what came to be

known as color revolutions and a new ideological posture that two of the GUAM member-states—Georgia and Ukraine—as well as some western countries, came to display afterwards, developments that bred a feeling of exclusion in the Azerbaijani capital.

The leadership in some member-states, like President Yushchenko of Ukraine, sought to use GUAM as a tool to ensure legitimacy at home (through asserting the country's leadership within GUAM); other leaders, like President Voronin of Moldova, attempted to use their membership in GUAM as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Russia. None of these were helpful in terms of ensuring GUAM's sustainability and long-term effectiveness.

Recommendations and Position Statements

GUAM should try hard to avoid “mission creep”. While the initial rationale for the creation of GUAM was cooperation on the CFE Treaty, as well as in the area of conflict resolution, the organization has quickly lost its focus and ended up dealing with a wide range of issues that were not part of its original mandate. Some of those issues that GUAM is trying to deal with, on the other hand, are part of what constitutes the mission of other existing organizations, like BSEC. GUAM should therefore focus on issues in which it is most effective and on which its member-states share a unanimous position. The organization should set modest and concrete objectives for itself. The experience shows that GUAM is more successful in addressing joint security issues, in the areas of conflict resolution and when acting collectively within broader international institutionalized settings.

GUAM can also serve as an institutional framework for an effective transportation corridor, which makes sense from both economic and security points of view.

Energy cooperation could also serve as an important mechanism through which GUAM could re-invigorate itself. However, GUAM's existence should not hang on energy alone. Energy cooperation cannot and should not replace GUAM.

Turkey and Kazakhstan should engage in close cooperation with GUAM, one which should be predicated upon the parties' economic interests.

One participant suggested that the practical way of assessing whether GUAM is a viable entity is to test it with real projects. That is, each member should come up with three project ideas on an annual basis, ones for which they would need support from the other GUAM member-states. If they end up capable of collectively solving each other's problems in this fashion, the organization will have a future; otherwise, keeping GUAM floating may not be possible or even useful.

Some maintained that the political repercussions of GUAM's dissolution will be significant, a development that is likely to reflect negatively both on the internal political developments and reform processes within the member-states and on the overall security dynamics in the region, which would suffer from the emergence of a geopolitical vacuum. Others, however, argued that most organizations have a limited lifetime and one should not regret when they complete their mission and cease to exist. What is important, instead, is to learn from a valuable experience in the process: Even when organizations fail, we still have the benefit of learning from their case.

Session III: Any Shift in Energy Politics? (November 20, 2009)

The third session of *Friday Hearings* convened to look into, and discuss, the most recent developments in the Caspian Basin region. It also sought to provide an assessment of the global processes that have had a bearing on the regional dynamics and energy security of the Caspian Basin.

Key Issues and Developments

The third session of *Friday Hearings* discussions identified the following issues of key relevance to Azerbaijan's foreign policy as far as the evolving dynamics of energy politics in the region and across the globe are concerned:

Nabucco Stalemate

The geopolitical breakthrough that came with the launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipeline projects, when for the first time, the long existing north-south dimension in the transportation of Caspian oil and gas was supplemented with a new, east-west dimension, has now been followed by a stalemate with and around Nabucco. There are two major reasons for the latter impasse: a lack of the EU states' unanimous position on the issue and a lack of progress in negotiations with Turkey over gas transit fees.

Although Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan personally promised during his summer visit to Azerbaijan that Turkey would make certain that the situation with gas transit fees would improve and negotiations with Azerbaijan would be finalized, there has as yet been no progress on the issue.

The deadlock in gas negotiations with Turkey has had a negative impact on Azerbaijan's economic development in that it caused a delay in the implementation of the second phase of the *Shah Deniz* project, and subsequently delayed the concomitant flow of revenue into the country's economy.

Some stated that Turkey's intransigence about the gas contract with Azerbaijan suggests that Ankara is trying to capitalize on its status of being a monopolist transit state, a policy similar to what Russia's *Gazprom* has been practicing vis-à-vis Turkmenistan for some 20 years now.

Some suggested that the fact that this deadlock in a gas deal with Turkey came to coincide with the process of the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement added a political dimension to what otherwise would be a purely commercial matter. Others, however, rejected the possibility of any official linkage between the two processes.

Azerbaijan's Energy Export Diversification Policy

Turkey's uncompromising stance in gas negotiations with Azerbaijan prompted the latter to step up its efforts toward diversification of its energy exports and thus look for alternative gas export routes. To that effect, Azerbaijan has recently entered into agreements with Russia, Bulgaria and Iran.

One of the options Azerbaijan is currently considering for its gas—in addition to the traditional route via Turkey—is what came to be known as the *White Stream*, a pipeline that is set to connect Baku and Georgia to Bulgaria and Romania via the Black Sea. If materialised, the *White Stream* will therefore bypass Turkey. Another, no less plausible, albeit less profitable, option is to export Azerbaijani gas in the eastern direction to China and further on to Asian markets via Turkmenistan. Yet another option Baku is currently contemplating is to export its gas to the European market through the Russian territory. Finally, within the north-south geopolitical dimension, Azerbaijan is also considering Iran as a transit state for its gas exports.

Both Iran and Russia, in turn, are very interested in securing access to Caspian—including, and especially, Azerbaijan's—gas resources, an interest that derives from the fact that the national gas industries of both Moscow and Tehran are in need of heavy investment and modernisation.

Recommendations and Position Statements

Many agreed that energy has never been an issue of an exclusively commercial nature; rather, it treads along with politics.

Some advised that the Caspian region seems to be lacking a deterrence mechanism, one which would be crucial, even existential, in the case of a politically motivated act of inter-state violence.

Pointing to the fact that Turkey purchases Russian gas for around USD 400, while paying only USD 120 for Azerbaijani gas, some suggested that romanticism in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations should be over: for Azerbaijan, commercial considerations should prevail over the notion of fraternity when negotiating a new gas transit deal with Turkey.

Some suggested that the EU should make sure to secure the agreement of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to supply significant volumes of gas for the second phase of the *Nabucco* project. For that, however, the EU must guarantee to purchase ten bcm of gas from those two states.

Session IV: Azerbaijan in Global Picture: An Assessment of 2009 (December 18, 2009)

The fourth session of *Friday Hearings* convened to provide an immediate assessment of the results and outcomes of the year 2009. It aimed to look into the evolutionary dynamics of 2009 and evaluate major accomplishments and challenges of the year as far as Azerbaijan's foreign policy is concerned. Drawing on and building upon that analysis, it sought to evaluate the prospects for Azerbaijan's foreign policy in 2010.

Key Issues and Developments

The fourth session of *Friday Hearings* discussions identified the following issues of key relevance to Azerbaijan's foreign policy as far as the evolving dynamics and the results of 2009 are concerned:

The key developments of 2009 were shaped and conditioned by the structural influences that the events of 2008 had brought to bear upon the dynamics of the consecutive year, the most important of those events being the Georgian crisis of August 2008. In turn, the developments that evolved in 2009 are likely to continue into 2010.

The human factor proved crucial in transforming the negative pattern of regional dynamics of 2008 into a more positive trend of security relations in the following year. In 2009, some regional leaders, as well as those in some major outside powers, in their quest to break with the negativity of the past, demonstrated a constructive approach in dealing with outstanding security problems the region was faced with. Among those who displayed an utmost extent of constructiveness was President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, who demonstrated new powers of a politician breaking down the mold and enlisting others in his visionary approach for the settlement. The Munich meeting of November 2009 was especially salient in that respect.

At a macro-level, 2009 produced two major results for the region of the South Caucasus:

First, as a result of what happened in 2008 and the ensuing developments of 2009, the South Caucasus region was brought back to the focus of the international agenda.

Second, the region has become "more regional in taste": the interests of the region as a whole, as well as those of its constituent parts (states), have been the focus of the policies of both regional and outside players.

Turkish-Armenian rapprochement

The process of the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement, and the signing of the two Geneva protocols that so far came out of it, have been the most important in 2009 in terms of repercussions those had on the overall security dynamics of the region in that year and beyond.

The process of the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement is informed by Ankara's desire to revitalize its regional position in the South Caucasus and beyond. Having been the most important player and a locomotive of Euro-Atlantic and European integration processes in the region since 1991, Turkey had vanished from sight by the end of the 1990s, and is now trying to make its way back to the South Caucasus. Making a breakthrough on an Armenian dimension is viewed in Ankara as one possible way of achieving the latter.

As surprising as it may appear, Russia also seems supportive of the opening of borders between Armenia and Turkey, a support that could be derivative of Moscow's desire to play a more constructive role in the region after the August crisis of 2008, or informed by the shift in Moscow's understanding of its foreign policy interests in the region, if not by President Medvedev's personal urge to contribute to the improvement of the regional security dynamics.

The process of the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement has effected qualitative changes to the regional security dynamics and has brought to salience the importance of Turkish-Azerbaijani partnership as a factor conditioning the direction and pace of the latter.

The process of the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement has also made clear that there are now three major players in the region: Russia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan – all three being important in terms of shaping the evolving security dynamics of the region.

Some participants, however, were skeptical as to the eventual success of the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement. While the rapprochement process does have a significant positive charge, it may end up exacerbating overall security dynamics in the region, especially if Armenia opts to push for a genocide resolution in the US Congress in April 2010.

Georgia

Georgia, in 2009, witnessed a continuously declining interest on the part of the international community in the problems the country has been engulfed by since the August crisis of 2008. With NATO membership turned down for some years now; EU membership not being considered as an option as far as the South Caucasus is concerned given that the Eastern Partnership framework is currently being developed as a new concept for relationship; a lack of progress, and apparently no chances for progress in the foreseeable future, in the settlement of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia issues, the Georgian leadership is taking a very severe challenge of being tested on the issue of effectiveness.

GUAM

While GUAM has not been politically very visible since the August crisis of 2008, practical cooperation within its framework has been continuing at full swing. There are, for example, eight regional GUAM-based working groups. There is a fully functioning secretariat and practical cooperation with Japan, Poland, Hungary, and the United States. The EU's Eastern Partnership allows for GUAM to cooperate within that framework as well.

The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The process of the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict gathered momentum in 2009. The year 2010 will be crucial in terms of moving the process further forward. A lack of progress in settlement will be devastating for all the parties involved.

Having overused a troublemaking position as a major factor of influence in its foreign policy, Armenia has come out of 2009 with that foreign policy resource – an instability resource – being largely exhausted. To an increasing extent, countries outside and around the region have shown interest in a constructive approach.

Having kept a low profile in the Minsk process for some time, the United States has now appointed a new representative in the Minsk Group who is trying to catch up with Russia and France. Unlike Russia and France, however, both of which are involved in the negotiations process at the level of presidents, the United States is still far less visible and less present.

The United States also failed to appoint its new ambassador to Azerbaijan in 2009, a development diverging from standard diplomatic practices.

Some suggested that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is unlikely to be settled in 2010 or any time soon, given that the great powers – Russia and the United States alike – are trying, and will continue to try, to use the problem to promote their own interests in the region.

South Energy corridor

2010 is also likely to become a year when the issue of developing the South energy corridor will progress further.

Global developments with regional extension

2009 witnessed a number of important global developments with direct regional extension into the South Caucasus: among those, US President Obama's

reconceptualisation of the missile defense system; NATO's reconceptualisation of its Strategic Concept; the Iranian crisis; NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan are four that in one way or the other bear influence on Azerbaijan and the region.

President Obama of the United States has come out of 2009 with a new philosophy on missile defense, turning away from a ground-based missile-defense system and opting for a mobile air- and sea-based system. This change in, and evolution of, technology has direct political implications for the region of the South Caucasus, among others. As far as Azerbaijan is concerned, this poses additional questions as to the future status of the Gabala radar station located on the Azerbaijani soil, an issue due for clarification in 2010.

In July 2009, NATO launched a process that is to lead to the new Strategic Concept of NATO. The process will engage all Allies in a discussion of, and debate on, all aspects of NATO in preparation for the next summit. This process of reconceptualisation of a key policy document of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance has direct regional extension into the South Caucasus: With NATO expansion being less likely now and, consequently, the role of a partnership institution growing in importance, there is an absolute necessity to reconsider the relations between NATO and partner nations. Given that the partnership institution now moves beyond the initial idea of preparing a country for membership to NATO, there is a pressing need for new institutional building. Azerbaijan, along with some other partner nations, invites NATO to look at these issues from a partner nation's perspective and consider developing a new model of relations between Allies and partner nations, a model to be reflected in the new Strategic Concept.

As it became clear from the events of 2008 and beyond, the unprepared political campaign for NATO membership came at a heavy price for Georgia, as well as for overall regional security. Hence, one should not give way to speculations on the issue of membership, and should rather seek for a new cooperation model for the South Caucasus, one similar to a new vision currently being developed with regard to Russia-US and Russia-NATO relations.

While the international community, and the International Atomic Agency in particular, have proven their inadequacy in dealing with situations like the one we are facing in Iran, whatever happens in Iran will have direct repercussions on the security dynamics in the Caspian region, including on issues of relevance to energy and energy security. For Azerbaijan, Iran is one of the most important neighbors, and hence, Baku sees no military solution for the Iranian crisis.

In Afghanistan, the international community is likely to witness an increasing mess in 2010. That deepening quagmire, in turn, will bear negatively on the way NATO's presence in Afghanistan, and ISAF in particular, are perceived by the Afghan society, with the latter fact having certain repercussions across the entire Islamic community. That, surely, concerns, and has a bearing on, Azerbaijan as well.

Another global development emphasized, one that is not confined to 2009 alone but that is to have most serious repercussions on the region of the South Caucasus in the long run, is the shifting balance of power between Russia and the United States, globally and regionally. Russia is living through a period of radical transformation, a process that will result in some 20 years in the emergence of a different Russia, one that espouses liberal democratic values and is a NATO member. This transformation, on the one hand, will put an end to Moscow's assertive policies in its neighborhood, but, on the other, will give rise to the US growing presence in the region; something the regional states should take account of in their long-term foreign policy planning.

Recommendations and Position Statements

Some suggested that the United States should be more visible and more present in the process of the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. Time has come, they stressed, for a visit of President Aliyev to Washington, DC. The United States should finally appoint a new ambassador to Azerbaijan and should also develop a more visible strategy towards the South Caucasus. The Turkish-Armenian rapprochement was the first, if painful, step, one that has brought some changes in the situation. Now, the issue is how one is going to make use of it and if one is able to translate the resulting implications into a positive, rather than negative, trend.

Others placed the burden of responsibility for improving relations between the United States and Azerbaijan on Baku, pointing to, and emphasizing, the superpower status of the former and limited size and resources of the latter. To be able to define its further actions, Azerbaijan, they suggested, must understand America's goals in the South Caucasus. Whether Baku likes or dislikes the United States makes no difference. With no other options available, Baku must cooperate with the US, but it must do so skillfully.

Surprised at how little attention Azerbaijan and its problems receive in the international media, some suggested that Azerbaijan's foreign policy establishment ought to pay greater attention to public diplomacy in its efforts to further its interests abroad, particularly as it relates to the settlement of its conflict with Armenia.

Azerbaijan might think to consider a potential role for itself as a mediator between the United States and Iran, while taking account of the fact that Turkey seems to have considered a similar possibility.

Azerbaijan's identity is informed by dualism of belonging. On the one hand, it belongs to the Oriental and Islamic culture and civilization, but on the other, the country and its people have shared European history and have absorbed European values; a fact that, at times, leads Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis to think differently. Being at the crossroads, therefore, Baku should not seek to get closer to any one party at the expense of the

other. Rather, playing a role of a bridge, Azerbaijan should be a centre of inter-civilizational interaction and cooperation.

Some suggested, however, that Azerbaijan, being the first secular state in the Islamic world, has made its choice and defined the strategic vector of its development in terms of Euro-Atlantic integration. Azerbaijan, therefore, is not a bridge and not crossroads. Azerbaijan is a country with specific values, and the majority of Azerbaijanis look at the future of their country as a part of greater Europe.

About Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

Since its birth in March 2006, the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy has rapidly evolved into an institution with four major components: an executive training program for civil servants, a School of International Affairs, ADA Majlis, and a Research Council.

ADA's Advanced Foreign Service Program (AFSP) is a highly flexible executive program offering professional training to Azerbaijani civil servants working in the area of international affairs. ADA's Graduate Degree Programs offer rigorous higher-education for Master's candidates. The Academy currently offers a Master of Arts in Diplomacy and International Affairs (MADIA). ADA Majlis, a televised forum of analytical discourse, is a joint venture between ADA and ITV, Azerbaijan's Public Television Network. A series of regularly scheduled programs featuring debates with a focus on issues of foreign policy importance are broadcast on ITV.

Finally, ADA offers a perfect setting to conduct academic and policy research on regional and international topics. The Academy's Research Council plays a significant role in developing a productive research climate and in stimulating a forum for innovative ideas in Azerbaijan and a broader region. The Research Council also serves as a valuable resource for policymakers of all kinds. ADA's biweekly online publication *Azerbaijan in the World* seeks to promote the broadest possible discussion of issues concerning Azerbaijani foreign policy and international relations by both Azerbaijani scholars and practitioners and those from other countries.