



AZERBAIJAN

FEEL THE DIVERSITY



Promoting A Lasting Partnership Between Azerbaijan And America

As the Chairman of the Azerbaijan America Alliance, I am distinctly proud to have the opportunity to share with you my thoughts about Azerbaijan, its people, and its importance to America and the world.

Azerbaijani culture is undoubtedly one of the most diverse in the world. Azerbaijan's population of nine million people represents aspects of European and Islamic heritages, as well as more recent Western influences. It is this diversity, as well as thousands of years of history, that contributes to the wide variety of endeavors in which Azerbaijan excels -- its breathtaking architecture, its traditional and modern music and dance, its much-celebrated local cuisine, and its unforgettable hospitality.

I have experienced Azerbaijani hospitality while visiting the country. When I was chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Europe and Eurasia subcommittee, and as a private American citizen, I have had the opportunity to visit Azerbaijan on several occasions and met with President Ilham Aliyev. The government of Azerbaijan has shown strong friendship to the U.S. and has been committed to democratic and positive developments.

Azerbaijan is located in a geopolitically crucial region, bordered by Iran to the south and Russia to the north, and stands as a stable, pro-Western nation in a turbulent region. Azerbaijan has consistently stood alongside the United States in the war on terror. Azerbaijan was among the first nations to provide military support to our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan and was one of the first countries to pledge support to the United States following the tragedy of 9/11. It is vital that the U.S. continues to strengthen its diplomatic bonds with Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijan America Alliance is dedicated to fostering mutual understanding and respect between the peoples of Azerbaijan and America. The Alliance is working to strengthen the relationship between the U.S. and Azerbaijan through academic discussion, cultural programming, and social and political discourse.

Azerbaijan is a true friend and ally of America. And America should be a true friend to the country and people of Azerbaijan.

Sincerely,

Dan Burton

Former U.S. Representative

Chairman, the Azerbaijan America Alliance

Azerbaijan's Partnership With The U.S. Fosters Democracy, Security In A Difficult Region



Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS)

At the end of this month, Azerbaijan will conclude its first-ever term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This elected

role as the representative for Eastern European nations underscores an important transformation over the past two decades. Today, Azerbaijan is an increasingly influential leader in the Caucasus region.

Azerbaijan's continued recognition on the world stage is especially advantageous for the United States, given our two countries' mutual interests. We share serious concerns about a nuclear Iran and a more assertive Russia. We also seek a safer and more prosperous world, where terrorists are on the run and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is on the decline.

America swiftly saw Azerbaijan's steadfast commitment to fight terrorism in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Azerbaijan extended an early pledge of support for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, granting overflight rights and later dispatching troops to serve alongside American soldiers. Now, stabilization efforts in Afghanistan are bolstered by Azerbaijan's strategic location for transporting supplies by land, sea, and air. More than a third of the equipment sent to U.S. troops in Afghanistan flies over or moves through the capital city of Baku. In keeping with its pledge to combat

terrorism, Azerbaijan has promised aid to support Afghanistan's security forces even after NATO troops are scheduled to withdraw next year.

The United States is fortunate to have a stable ally in the Caspian region with a consistent track record of cooperation. Although many agree that additional steps are needed for democratic reform in the post-Soviet nation, it is encouraging that Azerbaijan has emerged from decades of communist rule on a path toward economic prosperity and freedom.

Along the way, it has become a prominent energy provider that understands the need to diversify energy routes and resources to our European allies, who are often constrained by an over-reliance on energy from Russia. New gas pipelines through Baku reaffirm Azerbaijan's expanding leadership within the global energy market and enable our NATO allies to tap into energy resources not controlled by the Kremlin.

I join my colleagues from both political parties in hoping these successes continue and that bilateral cooperation deepens. As U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan Richard Morningstar said during his confirmation last June, the "wide

range of shared interests" between the United States and Azerbaijan "intersects with many of the United States' highest foreign policy priorities."

Given this productive partnership, it is disappointing that the Obama Administration largely panned the recent election of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev while extolling the election of President Hassan Rouhani in Iran. Unlike neighboring Azerbaijan, which has worked to build diplomatic ties with the West and respects democratic ideals, Iran has made no secret of its hostility toward the United States and ambition to become a nuclear power. One would expect America's allies to receive warmer treatment than our adversaries, despite legitimate concerns about the fairness of the recently held elections in both countries.

As a co-chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, which oversees America's commitments to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), I had the opportunity to visit the Caspian region earlier this year and meet with President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov. I am hopeful that Azerbaijan will continue to advance its relationship with the OSCE under their leadership as it prepares

to host the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly next year.

As a dynamic and modern state at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, Azerbaijan is a critical ally worthy of the United States' continued support and attention. Although its path toward democracy is not everything we had hoped for, the development of democratic principles promises to enhance U.S. security and that of other free countries throughout the world.

Roger Wicker represents the state of Mississippi in the U.S. Senate. He is a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.



Time To Recognize Our Azerbaijan Alliance



Representative Howard Coble (R-NC)

I was asked recently by an old friend why I would ever join the Azerbaijan Caucus here in Congress. He then pointed out to me that Baku and Burlington aren't exactly sister cities and that sometimes our leaders seem to be more worried about foreign countries

like Azerbaijan than the good old USA. I politely agreed that there is much distance, both culturally and mileage-wise between our two nations. I was, however, quick to point out that all you have to do is drive past a gas station on High Point Road to understand how important some of these foreign nations have become.

Azerbaijan is an emerging ally of the United States that is conveniently wedged between the Russian Federation to the north and Iran to the south. It is a nation that shares with North Carolina both a collection of noted lighthouses and an agricultural heritage. From the Caspian Sea on the east coast to the Caucasus in the west, Azerbaijan has many features similar to our own state. In recent years, it has also proven to be a notably strategic country for two reasons.

Fuel prices in our area are currently perched around \$3.20 per gallon and expectations are for them to continue to rise. This enormous increase in price over the last five years has put a large hole in the wallets of our citizens and has created a ripple effect throughout our economy. Yet, countries such as Azerbaijan have increasingly utilized new technologies and transportation methods to open fresh drilling fields, allowing increases in gas and oil exports.

In one example, Azerbaijan business leaders and government officials are currently completing plans for a natural gas line called the Southern Gas Corridor. The line would extend from the Caspian Sea, through Georgia and into Turkey, with the final destinations being Italy and the rest of Europe. Since Saudi Arabia and Russia have dominated fuel exports, adding competition to the export markets can only have a positive effect on international prices. It is no wonder why the Russian Federation might be dismayed over loss of control in the European markets, control which resulted in a devastating decision to turn off supplies in the winter of 2009, staggering the economy of Europe.

Besides fuel prices in the Sixth District, another positive aspect for supporting the Carolina-to-the-Caucasus alliance is the stability a nation like Azerbaijan can provide to a volatile region. All you have to do is check out the news to see how Iran, despite the recent treaty, has caused great concern to both the Saudis and the Israelis. A strong western ally in Baku can help keep a cap on Iranian plans to fully enrich nuclear weapons, while keeping a close watch on other weapons programs that may not be so prominently displayed for others to unveil. President

Lyndon Johnson once said, "We are not about to send American boys 9 or 10 thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves," and despite the failure of that administration to honor his promise, it would be safe to say the average American would still agree with his sentiment today. The United States is currently winding down 11 years of overseas wars, which have drained the economy and exhausted our military. By having an ally who can represent western goals, we can keep our military personnel at Fort Bragg and Camp LeJeune from heading back to a region of the world that is running amok with anti-western intentions. To the north, Russia has emerged as the local bully and President Putin's recent handling of the Syrian situation vaults him into the forefront of regional strongmen. Coupled with the Russian incursion into Georgia in 2008, it wouldn't be hyperbole to express concern over what may happen in the next 10 years after the U.S. disembarks from Afghanistan and its surrounding support bases. To the west of Azerbaijan, Armenia has expressed no clear resolution to exit the political orbit of her Russian neighbors and so the government in Baku is our remaining best hope of keeping the peace and stability. Their desire to

embrace a greater role on the geopolitical stage makes for comfortable bed fellows with the west. This is not to say any of this will be easy. Governments change, leaders fall out of favor and alliances change. As Neville Chamberlain and Napoleon so aptly demonstrated, nothing in international politics is ever simple. It does, however, make lots of sense to welcome our friends from Azerbaijan with open arms and invite them, at least metaphorically, to our tailgate parties and holiday parades. By joining together with other supporters in the Azerbaijan Caucus, we can work to build relationships and share ideas. Who knows, we might even make a few Tarheels out of them after all.



America's Alliance With Azerbaijan: An Invested Partnership



Representative Gene Green (D-TX)

America's relationship with Azerbaijan is critical to preserving the national interests of both countries. Built on the strong pillars of security and energy, it is a partnership that will help the country of Azerbaijan realize its potential as an international ally. Additionally, since Azerbaijan is planted between Russia, Iran and Turkey—at the crossroads of

civilizations—their alliance presents the United States and allies with a special opportunity to perpetuate a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East.

As a secular, Muslim-majority country, Azerbaijan is on the frontlines in the fight for freedom and democracy against radicalized Islam and terrorism. The spread of Islamic terrorism is a threat to nations in the Middle East and to the United States. Azerbaijan has proved to be a great partner in fighting terrorism, especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001. In the wake of the attacks, Azerbaijan supported the U.S. and allies by immediately granting flight clearance and logistical assistance to U.S. Armed Forces. Additionally, Azerbaijan became instrumental to U.S. military operations by allowing the free movement of troops and supplies into Afghanistan when the primary supply network through Pakistan became politically difficult to maintain.

Soon after gaining its independence, Azerbaijan's leadership decided to move the country toward an independent path unconstrained by neighboring influences. Since then, the country has had an uneasy relationship with Iran. Today, their steadfastness serves as an important symbol of what a secular, prosperous, Shia-majority society can look like for the Iranian people.

Azerbaijan has also developed deep

diplomatic, economic, and security ties with our closest ally in the Middle East, Israel. These nations maintain diplomatic support for the each other, including Azeri support of the international sanctions against Iran. In recent years, Israel has become one of Azerbaijan's top five trading partners and, last year, Azerbaijan signed a \$1.6 billion defense agreement with Israel, which includes air defense systems and drones.

While Azerbaijan continues to play a crucial role in U.S. national and international security, equally as important is the energy stability and diversification that Azerbaijan brings to the world market. Azerbaijan has become an international energy leader due to the large complexes of oil and natural gas found off its coast in the Caspian Sea.

The discovery of the immense Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) complex opened Azerbaijan's energy sector to foreign partnerships and investments. In 2010, the ACG oil field was producing approximately 850,000 barrels per day, which were destined for U.S. allies like Turkey and other countries in Europe. It is estimated that through partnerships and joint ventures over \$20 billion will be invested in the ACG complex.

In addition to its oil reserves, which are currently ranked the 3rd largest in the world, Azerbaijan has considerable natural gas reserves.

The Shah-Deniz field, also located in the Caspian Sea, contains approximately 40 trillion cubic feet of gas condensate. In the first and second stages of development approximately \$30 billion in production and transportation investment will flow into the country. Shah-Deniz is another step in a long journey to develop the vast resources within Azerbaijan.

Through an expanding network of pipelines and off-shore facilities, European and Turkish access to Azerbaijan's natural resources offer hope of energy independence from their current reliance on Russia. Diversification of energy resources, that was once thought impossible, is now allowing these U.S. partners the ability to pursue their goals and ideals through an open and competitive energy market rather than a single supplier.

The people of Azerbaijan realize that energy resources can bring significant foreign investment that can result in increased spending on domestic infrastructure, political stability, and the ability to meet future economic growth requirements.

As our two nations look toward the future together, we must recognize that while Azerbaijan is a powerful ally it is still a young democracy with progress to make to sustain a truly functioning democracy. As an ally, we must work with them and support their democratic development

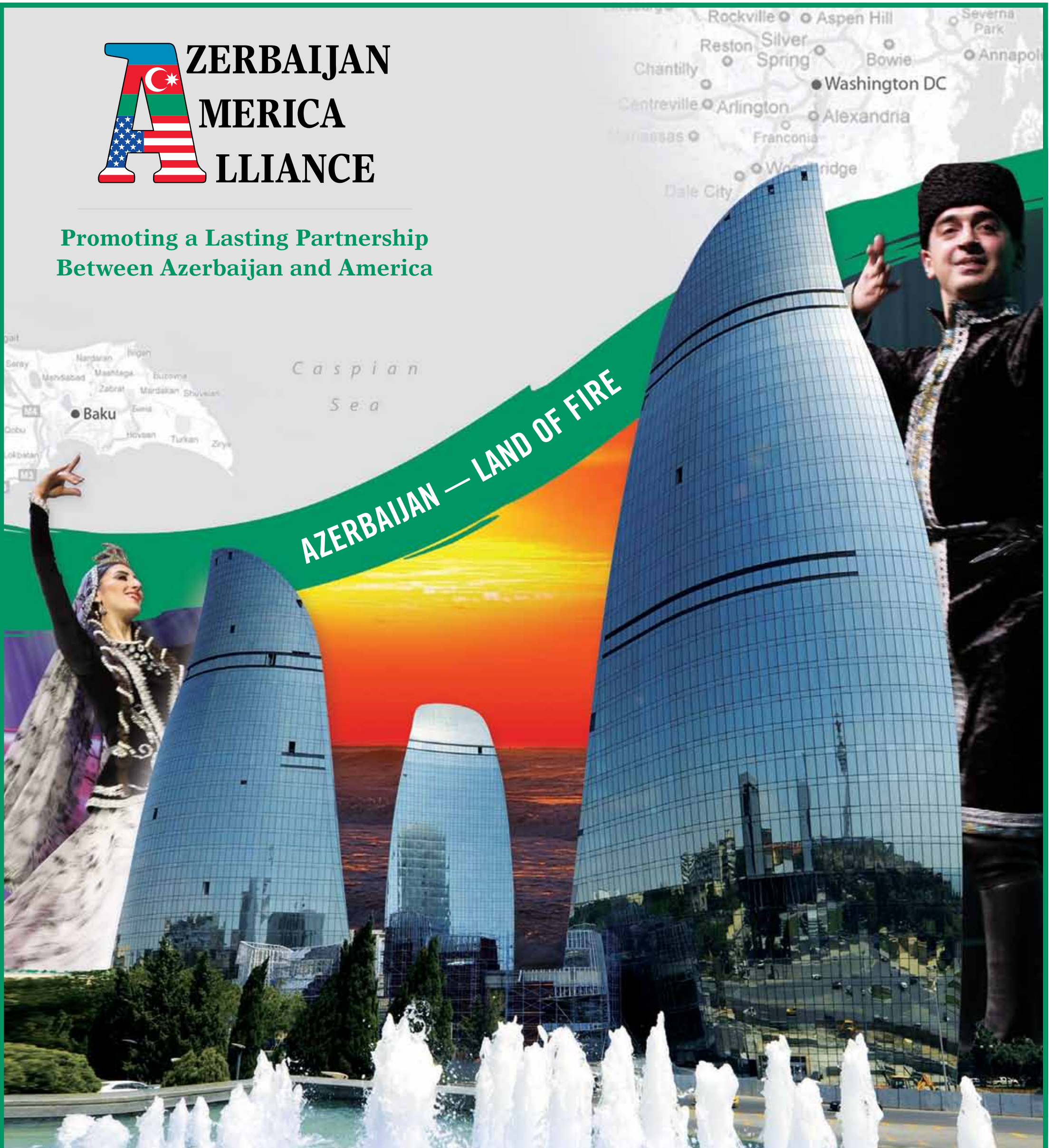
by providing Azerbaijan with assistance. It is my hope that the Obama Administration and my colleagues in Congress will join me in working for a permanent change in policy, so that the U.S. can support Azerbaijan like we support so many allies around the world.

Providing support for Azerbaijan will not only help move the country to its full potential, it will also serve our national interests of fostering democracy and investing in our national security. As a member of the Azerbaijan-American Alliance, I am committed to assisting the people of Azerbaijan realize their potential as an international ally, especially as it relates to security, energy, and democracy.



AZERBAIJAN MERICA LLIANCE

Promoting a Lasting Partnership
Between Azerbaijan and America



The Azerbaijan America Alliance is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to strengthen and foster the relations between the people of Azerbaijan and America.

www.AzerbaijanAmericaAlliance.org

Caspian Energy = American Security



Representative Jim Bridenstine (R-OK)

In a landmark achievement, the United States recently surpassed Russia as the world's largest combined producer of oil and gas according to an October 2013 Wall Street Journal analysis of International Energy Agency statistics. This milestone was reached because private capital and innovative entrepreneurs took calculated risks striving for access to new energy resources and the tools to produce and distribute them more

efficiently. The "Fracking Revolution," which could secure America's energy future for generations, is testament to the technological advancement brought by free enterprise and open markets.

Unfortunately, nations in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus do not share a similar energy security. Russia continues to subvert the independence of its former Soviet satellite states by controlling their energy resources. Just a few weeks ago Ukraine, a critical East-West energy conduit, appeased Russia - Kiev's main energy supplier - by scuttling a long-awaited association agreement with the European Union. The EU agreement would have committed Ukraine to important political, economic, and trade liberalization reforms. Now, Ukraine is unlikely to develop more democratic institutions or free markets because Moscow effectively controls Kiev's foreign policy.

Unlike some other former Soviet satellite states, Azerbaijan has taken great risks to achieve political independence from Russia and a secure energy future. It is utilizing western companies, free markets, and private capital to conduct Caspian Sea-based energy exploration and distribution. Azerbaijan's wise decision is now providing energy security for our European allies and friends. To avoid another Ukraine debacle, U.S. foreign policy must support Azerbaijan's energy development through both diplomatic assistance to protect Azerbaijan from Russian interference and increased security

cooperation with Baku to safeguard its facilities and pipelines. Congress should take the first step by repealing Section 907 of the antiquated U.S. Freedom Support Act, a provision which unnecessarily inhibits U.S. cooperation with Azerbaijan. Protecting Azerbaijan's energy renaissance supports foundational U.S. foreign policy objectives of ensuring our allies' political independence and free markets.

Squeezed between Russia and Iran, Azerbaijan is an unlikely energy powerhouse. Yet, Azerbaijan ranks 21st in proven oil reserves and 26th in gas according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).² Azerbaijan's government reports that oil production more than tripled to almost one million barrels per day since 2000. Gas production in the Caspian's Shah Deniz field skyrocketed to over 580 billion cubic feet last year even prior its full development. With an EIA-estimated 30 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves, Azerbaijan is well-stocked to provide energy security for our European friends into the future.

We should also carefully note who produces and to whom Baku distributes its energy riches. Rather than opt for a state-controlled top-down system, Azerbaijan became the first country to open the Caspian to U.S. energy companies. American and Western energy firms are major partners in resource exploration and production and also development of an expanding pipeline network. EIA notes that Azerbaijan's state oil company only accounts for 20 percent of total

petroleum output. U.S. companies such as Chevron, ConocoPhillips, and Exxon-Mobil, among others are big shareholders in the Shah Deniz field consortium and pipeline network.

Rather than capitulate to Moscow's bullying, Baku builds oil and gas pipelines that specifically avoid the trap of crossing into Russian territory. Azerbaijan's oil and gas exports directly increase the energy security of our European and Israeli allies by helping diversify supply. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline helps deliver 40 percent of Israel's oil consumption according to the Washington Institute for Near East Peace. The South Caucasus pipeline helps fuel Turkey's economic boom. The emerging Southern Gas Corridor will connect Caspian gas to Europe and decrease European reliance on Russia even further. In another impressive commitment, Azerbaijan recently decided to send over 350 billion cubic feet of gas to southern Europe through the Trans Adriatic Pipeline.

While Azerbaijan and America see energy as the means to generate prosperity and security, other countries take a darker view. With few other sources of power, Russia uses energy as a weapon to intimidate and coerce. Many of our NATO allies rely heavily on Russian oil and gas. This dependency provides Moscow with license to meddle in the internal affairs and foreign policies of many countries, particularly our newest NATO allies in Eastern Europe. In January 2009, for example, Russia halted gas

exports to Ukraine in the dead of winter and people suffered. By extension, this round of Russian pipeline politics once again threatened our closest allies because their gas comes from Ukraine.

Diversifying supply is always sensible, but it becomes strategically imperative when countries such as Russia exploit dependency to threaten other nations' political independence. Fortunately, Azerbaijan's energy boom - a genuine partnership with private enterprise - provides an additional way to ensure energy security. The United States should fully support Azerbaijan's energy development so that Baku is not forced to choose between integrating with the West or being coerced into Vladimir Putin's dreams of a new Russian imperium.

Rep. Jim Bridenstine represents the First District of Oklahoma.



REPRINTS FROM OTHER VOICES

Azerbaijan's Example Of How To Breed Success

U.S. must signal Russia and Iran to keep hands' off

By S. Rob Sobhani

As the world focuses on the passing of Hugo Chavez and the impact of his socialist policies on oil-rich Venezuela, halfway around the globe a different kind of leader has been quietly transforming his country into a prosperous and reliable partner of the West. Since assuming the presidency in 2003, Ilham Aliyev, the 52-year old Azerbaijani head of state, has used his country's vast energy resources to make the transition from a centrally planned economy to a free and prosperous one. While socialism has ruined Venezuela's enormous potential, Mr. Aliyev's adoption of market capitalism has transformed his country into the Kuwait of the former Soviet Union with an average annual gross domestic product growth rate of 24 percent over the past 10 years.

Chavez's governing style was to put demagoguery before country. In Mr. Aliyev, Azerbaijanis have a leader who has put his country before ideology. For example, unlike Chavez, who drove away American energy companies, Mr. Aliyev has welcomed cooperation with the likes of Exxon and Chevron. The results are phenomenal: Azerbaijan's 1 million barrels per day of oil is exported via pipeline to consumers around the world without any glitch, and its oil fund now stands at more than \$35 billion. Unlike Chavez, Russia's Vladimir Putin and Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mr. Aliyev does not use his country's oil as a weapon. Instead, he shares Washington's vision of an uninterrupted flow of oil and gas from the landlocked Caspian Sea to international markets.

Unlike Chavez, who spent his time with thugs

and anti-Semites such as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mr. Aliyev has steered this Shia Muslim nation of 8 million clear of religious fundamentalism. When one meets with this forward-looking leader, the first topic of conversation is the importance of religious tolerance. Mr. Aliyev and a majority of Azerbaijanis pride themselves on having created a society whose foundation rests on cultural and religious coexistence. While operatives of the Iranian regime kill Israeli tourists around the world, Mr. Aliyev takes pride in inaugurating synagogues and churches in downtown Baku.

On foreign policy, while Chavez became the ringleader of the anti-American club, Mr. Aliyev has promoted friendly ties with the United States. Immediately after the attacks on our country on Sept. 11, 2001, Azerbaijan extended its hand of cooperation in the war against terrorism. Today, troops from Azerbaijan serve in Afghanistan carrying out dangerous missions alongside American soldiers. In fact, according to Sen. John McCain, Azerbaijan's special forces have performed critical operations with courage and skill.

Mr. Aliyev also understands that we live in the 21st century and is investing his country's wealth

in the future. The recent launch of Azerspace 1 is a clear example of his forward-thinking approach. The satellite was manufactured by Virginia-based

Orbital Sciences Corp., supporting 1,500

American jobs. He understands that growing the nascent satellite industry will boost his country's intellectual capacity and knowledge stream through constant research and education. It is not surprising that 2013 was declared the year of information and communications technologies by the president. The launch of Azerspace marks another milestone in the partnership between Washington and Baku.

Although Azerbaijan is making steady progress in its transition to a free-market economy and an elevated standard of living for its citizens, challenges remain.

The legacy of human rights violations and corruption inherited from Soviet times has presented some bumps on the road to smoother bilateral relations between the

United States and Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, under the leadership of Mr. Aliyev, Azerbaijan is making the arduous transition to a democracy. Washington must work with Baku in order to address these issues, but also remember that America's

transition to a free and fair country took many years.

In recognition of Azerbaijan's role as a reliable and responsible ally in the broader Middle East and its strategic location (situated between a belligerent Russia and theocratic Iran), Washington should take two immediate steps to further broaden and strengthen this relationship: First, the United States must make a more robust effort at the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. President Obama's second term affords no domestic political land mines. Since the new secretary of state, John F. Kerry, is known to be a friend of Armenia and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel is a good friend of Azerbaijan, it is in U.S. national security interest to end this "frozen" conflict. Second, Mr. Obama should invite Mr. Aliyev to the White House to show America's appreciation to a friend and ally. Beyond showing our appreciation, we must send a signal to Moscow and Tehran that we will not tolerate any adventurism or pushing around of smaller countries in the region.

As the world contemplates the effects of Chavez's rule of Venezuela, it is a useful moment to consider how a very different kind of leadership in a strategically important, energy-rich country has led not to confrontation, but to partnership. Azerbaijan still has some work to do in building its democratic institutions, but in the meantime, it has been laying the foundations of economic prosperity for its people. For an example of how Venezuela could have turned out better, one need only look at Azerbaijan.

S. Rob Sobhani is CEO of Caspian Group Holdings.



ILLUSTRATION BY GREG GROESCH

Azerbaijan Piles Up The Building Blocks Of Democracy

Aliyev's re-election ensures a continued partnership with America

By Ambassador Elin Suleymanov

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev seen during the voting at a polling station in Baku, Azerbaijan, Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013. Oil-rich Azerbaijan is booming and the wealth is trickling down to its poorest people. It all means that its president doesn't even need to clamp down too hard to ensure he extends a decades-long dynastic rule in elections on Wednesday.

Azerbaijan and the United States are partners in addressing the world's most difficult challenges from fighting terrorism internationally to serving shoulder-to-shoulder in Afghanistan and working together to ensure peaceful future for the Afghan people. In fact, one of only a few nations that have made an early commitment to post-2014 Afghanistan, Azerbaijan accounts for some 40 percent of transit via the vital Northern Distribution Network supporting the International Security Assistance Force.

Our nations also work together to promote Europe's energy security by bringing Caspian natural gas to the European markets through the strategic Southern Gas Corridor, including the recently announced Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, a choice enthusiastically endorsed by the United States. Importantly, Azerbaijan, a nation proud of its Muslim heritage, stands as a strong supporter of intercultural dialogue and is a good friend of Israel. The U.S.-Azerbaijan partnership has been a key factor in transforming our region and remains an integral part of the international effort to bring about a lasting and international law-based settlement to the protracted Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, which resulted in displacement of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani civilians.

This partnership is part and parcel of the vision that the citizens of Azerbaijan voted for in the

recent presidential election. The election produced no political surprises, as the incumbent, President Ilham Aliyev, won a landslide victory on Oct. 9. Mr. Aliyev's victory was universally predicted by an overwhelming majority of pundits as well as by numerous pre-election surveys and polls. The incumbent's undisputed advantage over the opposition comes, among other things, as a result of Azerbaijan's rapid social and economic growth—the

exposure, further diminished the chances of Mr. Aliyev's opponents. Therefore, unable to mount a credible political challenge, the Azerbaijani opposition predictably lost by a significant margin.

However, this simple and clear reality of Azerbaijan's political discourse seems to be frequently overlooked in the media coverage of the election. Any nationwide election with 5.1 million registered voters is never a perfect process. There were likely

allowed real-time monitoring of the process. The candidates campaigned and addressed rallies freely around the country, and each was allocated the equal time free of charge during televised debates, which were aired live on national TV every other day during the campaign. These debates provided political entertainment for viewers, easy quotes for Azerbaijan's critics and illustrated the noisy pluralism of Azerbaijan's system.

Following the election, most international observers, including the European Union, Council of Europe delegations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe observation mission head, described the election as a step forward. They noted the well-organized electoral process and called for addressing existing problems they monitored. In a stark contrast, the OSCE mission from the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights issued a highly negative report, unfortunately echoed by the U.S. State Department. Interestingly, this controversial assessment of the election is not shared by the Azerbaijani citizens, who spoke loud and clear by voting for Mr. Aliyev.

Democracies consist of fundamental building blocks, which include pluralism, diversity, tolerance, gender equality and economic opportunities. Having established the first-ever democratic republic with a predominantly Muslim population in the world in 1918 and granted equal voting rights for women ahead of the United States, the Azerbaijani people have established these fundamentals. In so doing, they also shattered long-entrenched misperceptions. Likewise, today, we should strengthen the strategic U.S.-Azerbaijan partnership and continue making news by breaking existing convenient stereotypes, not by imposing new ones.

Elin Suleymanov is Azerbaijan's ambassador in Washington.



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nation's gross domestic product grew threefold over the past decade — and Mr. Aliyev's steady leadership chartering a pragmatic, independent course in a complicated region of the world. In addition, the confusion among the opposition, which resulted in nominating a self-described "backup candidate," Jamil Hasanli, a historian with rather limited political

irregularities and problems, which need to be addressed in accordance with the law.

Still, the latest election was observed by more than 50,000 observers, including some 1,400 international observers representing 100 countries and 50 international and nongovernmental organizations. Some 1,000 webcams in various precincts

Baku 2015 Heralds New Era In European Sports Movement

The Baku 2015 European Games will play an important role in the history of European sport, the First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, member of the Executive Committee of the National Olympic Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and the Chair of the Baku 2015 First European Games Organizing Committee said in welcoming the European Olympic Committee's Coordination Commission to Baku to inspect progress in preparations for the Games in Baku in 2015.

The First Lady said the people and Government of Azerbaijan were fully committed to supporting the European Games, which will involve the 49 Olympic nations of Europe in the first pancontinental multi-sport event in 2015.

"The European Games will be held in Azerbaijan for the first time. It marks a new era in the European sports movement," said the First Lady, who is also chair of the Baku European Games Organizing Committee.

"I would like to again underline that the Games are supported by the people of Azerbaijan who are excited and proud that our country will play a very important role in the history of European sport," she told Coordination Commission members, who will receive detailed presentations over the next two days from organizers about developments in key Games areas, including sport and venues, technology, transport, accommodation, and communications.

Baku 2015 Games organizers meanwhile, have also lifted the curtains for the first time on some of the iconic venues and spaces that will be used to stage the first European Games.

Local and international media were given a sneak preview of a number of venues that will host international



The Azerbaijan Government is investing in extensive preparations across Baku to launch the European Games as a major event in the international sporting calendar, including a new airport terminal, transport projects, including upgrades to the underground and bus systems, and many other infrastructure and city enhancement projects.

athletes and sports here in Baku, including Crystal Hall, which staged the highly acclaimed Eurovision 2012 and will stage Volleyball at the European Games in 2015.

The media tour also included the Athletes Village, consisting of spacious, well-fitted apartments, which will provide a new standard of living and preparation for international athletes.

"The Baku 2015 organizers have placed the athletes at the forefront of preparations for these Games, and the well designed and serviced apartments

and living areas in the Village are a testament to the thinking that has gone into providing the best conditions possible for the athletes at the first European Games in Baku in 2015," said Patrick Hickey, IOC Executive Board member and president of the European Olympic Committees, which own and regulate the event.

The media tour provided a glimpse into the unique Games experience being planned in Baku for the continent's first major pan-European multi-sport event, which is expected

to involve more than 5,400 competitors from the 49 Olympic nations of Europe across 18 sports and will be staged every four years.

The tour, which also included viewings of the Baku Sports Hall, Freedom Square, the Gymnastics Arena, and Olympic Stadium, highlighted the highly advanced state of preparation and construction of sports venues for the Games.

"We have an excellent mix of new, existing and temporary venues and structures for the Games, and

preparations for many of the 21 stadia and facilities are well advanced. This will enable us to focus on testing and fine tuning the stadiums and sports centres in the months ahead to ensure we have high performing venues for the athletes at Games time," said Azerbaijan Youth and Sports Minister, Azad Rahimov, who is leading the planning for the sporting spectacle.

The venue locations also revealed how organizers are planning to integrate the city's dramatic, award-winning architectural landmarks and public spaces including the soaring Flame Towers, and waterfront settings to create a unique atmosphere inside and outside the venues and across Baku.

The Azerbaijan Government is investing in extensive preparations across Baku to launch the European Games as a major event in the international sporting calendar, including a new airport terminal, transport projects, including upgrades to the underground and bus systems, and many other infrastructure and city enhancement projects.

"We recently celebrated our 600 days to the Games milestone, and we hope visitors to Baku can start to feel the excitement and energy that is building as the city and continent continue the countdown to the first European Games," Jim Scherr, Chief Operating Officer of the Baku 2015 European Games Organizing Committee, said.

Baku is the largest city on the Caspian Sea with a population of over 2.5 million. Once an important staging post on the Silk Road, it sits at the crossroads between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Today, Baku combines modern, award winning architecture with an Old City that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Azerbaijan is a multicultural society with a tradition of tolerance and warm hospitality.

ICT Trade Mission To Azerbaijan Successfully Completed

Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce (USACC), Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of Azerbaijan, and Embassy of Azerbaijan to the United States have successfully completed a three-day Information and Communications Tech-

in both private and public sectors of Azerbaijan.

The first day of mission program included participation at Bakutel2013, the 19th International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition, where Trade Mission participants exhibited their services under U.S. Pavilion. Bakutel2013 is highly recognized for its increase in the number of participants and gathered 27 countries, including U.S., which made first time debut appearance in Azerbaijan.

USACC booth was visited by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and representatives of international industry institutions including the United Nations (UN), International Communications Union (ITU), Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications and the association of trade show organizers - the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI).

On second day of mission, Azerbaijan - U.S. ICT Business Forum took place at Baku Business Center with the participation of 30 presenters, including keynote speakers Prof. Dr. Ali M. Abbasov, Minister of Communications and Information Technologies of Azerbaijan, Mr. Reza Vaziri, USACC Co-Chairman, and Mr. Richard Morningstar, Ambassador of the United States to Azerbaijan.

Forum participants had the opportunity to listen to market briefings from Azerbaijan's government officials and industry regulators. They were also able to present their companies to an audience of local tech-based companies and institutions. Among the panels discussed were Azerbaijan's telecommunications satellite prospects, the upcoming launch of two more satellites, trade and investment opportunities in ICT field, and other opportunities in Azerbaijan-U.S. ICT partnership.

The Forum was followed by an MCIT-sponsored VIP Gala Dinner with the participation of 90 guests.

The third and last day of mission program incorporated numerous matchmaking meetings with government and industry officials as well as on-site visits to AzerCosmos Main Satellite Ground Control Station and Heydar Aliyev Cultural Center, which is renowned for its distinctive architectural style.

The Mission came to an end with a private reception at the Residence of United States Ambassador to Azerbaijan Richard Morningstar. Ambassador welcomed the trade mission delegation. Mr. Elmira Valizade, Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technologies of Azerbaijan, and Mr. Reza Vaziri, USACC Co-Chairman then briefed the government and business leaders about the importance and positive outcomes of ICT trade mission.

USACC would like to express its deep gratitude to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Embassy of Azerbaijan to the United States for its strong commitment in this paramount initiative to strengthen U.S.-Azerbaijan trade relations.



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Downtown Baku is a vibrant and active business environment.

nologies (ICT) Trade Mission from United States to Azerbaijan recently with major sponsorship of NarMobile. Trade Mission started on December 2, 2013 with the official opening of Bakutel2013 and completed on December 4, 2013 with a formal reception at the Residence of U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan. A total of 13 leading American companies participated in the mission.

The trade mission measured another exceptional success for boosting U.S.-Azerbaijan trade relations in the ICT field. Major focus area was Azerbaijan's rapidly growing ICT industry - one of the main directions for the development of the economy in the country. Mission also explored high potential partnership opportunities in the market. American tech-service and technology providers exploring the opportunities included large and medium scale companies such as Lockheed Martin, Hughes, Oracle, Globecomm, Exelis, Futron Corporation, Hughes, Space Systems Loral, iControl, Wisethink Information Solutions, Tmob, SW Creatives and Elizarov Consulting Group.

The trade mission provided a comprehensive program, which offered the U.S. participants a high market exposure and access to key decision makers



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EOC Impressed With Baku 2015 Preparations For First European Games

The European Olympic Committees (EOC) inspection team praised progress made by the local operating committee of the Baku 2015 European Games following its three day visit to the city hosting the 2015 European Games.

The preparation to the Baku 2015 Games was discussed at the meeting of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev with the President of the European Olympic Committee Patrick Hickey and a member of the executive committee of the European Olympic Committee, Spyros Capralos where the importance of the work carried out in Azerbaijan for the development of different areas of sports, and progress on preparation for the inaugural European Games in Baku in 2015 were stressed.

Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, member of the Executive Committee of the National Olympic Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and the Chair of the Baku 2015 European Games Organizing Committee welcomed the EOC members to the two days of presentations held in Baku on 28-29 October 2013.

Speaking at a press conference in Baku today, the EOC Coordination Commission chairman Spyros Capralos said he was "impressed" with overall planning and preparations by the Baku 2015 Organizing Committee for the historic first European Games.

Spyros Capralos said: "The Baku 2015

Games will leave a great legacy of new venues, infrastructure and inspiration for the communities and youth of Azerbaijan and Europe as a whole."

"In the six months since our first Coordination Commission visit, Jim Scherr has come on board as Chief Operating Officer and has quickly put in place a first

"I am grateful for the involvement of President Aliyev and the First Lady in our visit. Their commitment to hosting the first European Games has been unwavering and their involvement in the plans and progress is welcomed," Patrick Hickey said.

"BECOG has reached a new level of

year's universally acclaimed London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and other major international events and projects.

The BEGOC Chief Operating Officer Jim Scherr, said: "With a little under 600 days until the Opening Ceremony of the Baku Games, everyone at BECOG is pas-

sport and the values of sport, describing the Baku Games as visionary and innovative.

President Hickey also praised the leadership of the Baku Games project by Azerbaijan Sport and Youth Minister Azad Rahimov, and thanked the support for the Games shown by the people and Government of Azerbaijan.

The EOC Commission members received presentations and reports from Games Organizers on progress in several key functional areas, such as sport, venue locations and construction, transport, finance, communications, accommodation, and technology.

They also toured some of the key Games sites, including Crystal Hall, which will host five sports - Boxing, indoor volleyball, taekwondo, fencing and karate.

Minister Rahimov said the people of Azerbaijan are planning a national welcome and Games experience that will live long in the memories of the athletes and countries of Europe, and which would inspire future generations of young people in Azerbaijan and the continent, and thanked EOC Coordination Commission members for their advice and support during the visit.

"Our plans for the Baku 2015 Games have been significantly enhanced and strengthened from the highly productive meetings with the EOC Games experts, and we look forward to further visits from the Coordination Commission as we move forward towards the inaugural Baku 2015 Games."

"BECOG has reached a new level of detail in its planning for these historic first European Games relating to the sports competition schedule and venues. This will pave the way for planning to proceed to more advanced stages of venue and sports operations as well as accommodation, transport and other core Games sectors and services for athletes, spectators, visitors and other groups in readiness for the Games," Hickey said.

rate internationally experienced senior team who have hit the ground running."

Capralos and the EOC President and IOC Executive Board member Patrick Hickey were welcomed to Baku by Mr. Azad Rahimov, Azerbaijan Minister for Sport and Youth and the Chief Executive Officer of the Baku European Games Operations Committee (BEGOC), who personally led a tour of the venues accompanied by Jim Scherr, BEGOC Chief Operating Officer.

"We are delighted to welcome the Coordination Commission to Baku for the second time and have enjoyed taking them through our plans and progress," said Minister Rahimov.

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The EOC also praised the increased capacity of the Organizing Committee in recent months, which has been boosted by the recruitment of several highly regarded Games operations experts and planners, many of whom worked on last

sonate and totally focused on putting on Games that Baku, the whole country of Azerbaijan and the continent of Europe can be proud of."

"We have an experienced senior team in place and our planning is advanced. A huge amount of work has been undertaken over the last six months and an immediate priority is to begin sharing the details of our Games with the National Olympic Committees, Sport Federations and other key stakeholders," added Scherr.

Hickey said the EOC was pleased that Baku Organizers were using the Games as a catalyst to develop local communities and to help educate society through

Azerbaijan's Resolve As International Partner Through Peace And Security

By Ambassador FAKHRADDIN GURBANOV

Azerbaijan's Ambassador Fakhraddin Gurbanov writes about this country's successful journey as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council

This month Azerbaijan completes its two-year non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. Elected with the overwhelming support of the UN member states back in October 2011, Azerbaijan has contributed to upholding the United Nations' fundamental values and principles in this role over the past two years.

During its two Presidencies at the UN Security Council in May 2012 and October 2013, Azerbaijan has focused on key challenges facing the international community. In May 2012, my country convened a special session to discuss the issue of strengthening international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. While addressing the session, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev drew attention to the need to reinforce cooperation between UN member states and enhance the capacities of the relevant structures dealing with this challenge. The President

also emphasized that Azerbaijan will stand for respect of the norms of international law during its role at the UN Security Council. The session was vital in highlighting the importance of strengthening cooperation between the UN and regional organizations, as well as UN member states, which is a pre-requisite to achieving a terror-free world.

However, gone are the days when peace and security - a key UN objective - were understood purely in military terms. These days, sustained and lasting peace and stability can only be achieved by properly understanding their intrinsic link to political, humanitarian, development and inter-cultural ties. With that in mind, in October 2013 Azerbaijan initiated a special session on the issue of strengthening cooperation between the UN Security Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the very first session dedicated to UN-OIC cooperation. As most of the issues on the agenda of the UN Security Council relate to the OIC, the second biggest intergovernmental organization representing all Muslim nations after the UN, it is important that these two organizations strengthen cooperation and partnership in tackling

common issues. The session provided an opportunity to discuss the current state of this partnership and ways to

Inter-cultural dialogue is an area where Azerbaijan is well placed to take the lead, as the country is located at the meeting point of Europe and Asia, East and West. Recently, Azerbaijan has turned into a meeting place for representatives of different cultures and faiths for exchange of views

reinforce this in the years ahead.

Strengthening this partnership is also vital to reinforcing respect and understanding of different values, faiths and religions. Inter-cultural dialogue

is an area where Azerbaijan is well placed to take the lead, as the country is located at the meeting point of Europe and Asia, East and West. Recently, Azerbaijan has turned into a meeting place for representatives of different cultures and faiths for exchange of views. It is no coincidence that during the UN-OIC discussions in New York City, Baku was hosting the third International Humanitarian Forum, bringing together decision-makers, civil society members, religious leaders and academics for comprehensive discussions, and to exchange views on various aspects of future challenges.

Another area Azerbaijan focused on was the challenges facing Africa. During its second Presidency, UN Security Council members visited Africa, a trip initiated by Azerbaijan to see the challenges on the ground for themselves. While in Africa, the UN Security Council held a joint meeting with the African Union's Peace and Security Council to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes region, including Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Central African Republic etc. Moreover, Azerbaijan also took an active part in the discussions within the UN Security Council on the situation in various regions of Africa.

Another area where Azerbaijan has strengthened its role is in its assistance for worldwide international aid and prompt responses to humanitarian disasters. The Azerbaijan International Development Agency (AIDA), a recently established state entity to coordinate and implement the country's aid and development strategy, expanded its operations across Africa. AIDA has now accomplished over 20 programmes, mostly in Africa, both individually and in partnership with international stakeholders, covering areas such as healthcare, agriculture and capacity building. As the Millennium Development Goals come to a conclusion and focus shifts to the post-2015 period, this initiative was crucial in calling the international community's attention to the challenges facing Africa.

The successful two-year UN Security Council non-permanent membership demonstrated how Azerbaijan's young diplomacy can punch above its weight. Looking ahead, having accomplished its UN Security Council role successfully, Azerbaijan is resolved to strengthen its role in international relations through contributions to international peace and security.

It's Unfair To Hold Azerbaijan To A Higher Standard Than Russia

By Michael E. McMahon

The signing into law last year of permanent normal trade relations with Russia is one of the successful diplomatic accomplishments of President Barack Obama's first term.

A normal trade relationship between the United States and Russia will bring business opportunities for American companies and transparency to Russian partners. It is a win-win for both nations.

However, one former Soviet bloc country is singled out by a doctrine of U.S. foreign policy that is almost 21 years

During my service as a member of Congress on the House Foreign Relations Committee and a member of the Azerbaijan Caucus, I consistently advocated for the repeal of Section 907 to allow greater flexibility to engage in a deeper level of diplomatic relations with the Azeri people.

out of date and does not reflect the deep bilateral partnership between the United States and Azerbaijan.

During the breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1992, Congress, reacting to domestic political constituencies, passed Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act limiting direct U.S. aid to Azerbaijan. Responding to 9/11 and Azerbaijan's willing partnership in intelligence sharing, the granting of rights to overflights and providing logistical and strategic support, Congress in 2001 gave the president the ability to waive Section 907. Presidents George W. Bush

and Obama have wisely used this to build an even stronger alliance between our two countries by invoking it on an annual basis.

While some may argue that the waiver authority negates the need to repeal Section 907, the recent passage of PNTR for Russia raises the point of incompatibility. How is it that we have normal trade relations with Russia, while Azerbaijan is subject to restrictions that have to be reviewed annually?

Since 1992 Azerbaijan has proved itself a partner to the U.S. and a stalwart in the region. In a tough neighborhood where the Iranian regime openly violates U.N. sanctions, Azerbaijan has assisted the United States in the International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan and remains a key strategic and logistical hub supporting U.S. missions in the region. As a moderate Islamic nation, Azerbaijan has been a leading force in stability and economic security in the Caucasus region while facing an economic blockade by its western neighbor.

During my service as a member of Congress on the House Foreign Relations Committee and a member of the Azerbaijan Caucus, I consistently advocated for the repeal of Section 907 to allow greater flexibility to engage in a deeper level of diplomatic relations with the Azeri people. From advancing energy projects to promoting democracy in the Muslim world, from advocating equal rights of women to preventing Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon, there are many cultural, economic, political and strategic ways that the United States and Azerbaijan can build a deeper partnership. Repealing Section 907 will allow those synergies to thrive.

Basing U.S. foreign policy on events in 1992 is as crazy as waiting for "Cheers," "Murphy Brown" or "Murder She Wrote" — all big television shows in 1992 — to return to prime time. It is time to change our U.S. policy and give the president the flexibility he needs to promote a stronger U.S. bilateral relationship with Azerbaijan. It's time to repeal Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act and send a message of respect and friendship to the people of Azerbaijan.

Former Rep. Michael E. McMahon, D-N.Y., is currently a partner in the government relations practice of the New York law firm Herrick Feinstein LLP.

Azerbaijan's Successful Journey As A Non-Permanent Member Of The UN Security Council

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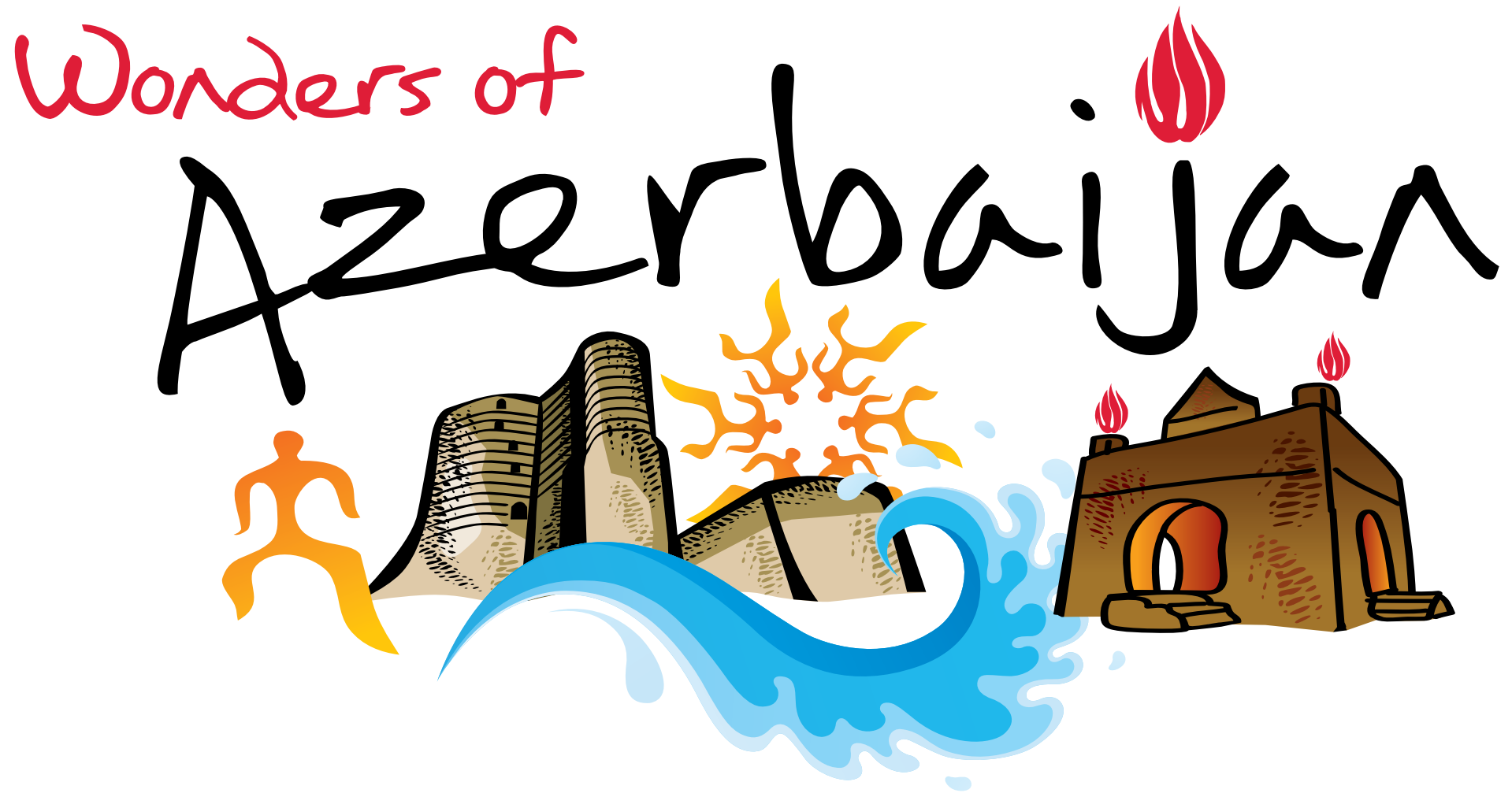


Ilham Heydar oğlu Aliyev was born in December 24, 1961, in Baku obtained both his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the Moscow State University of International Relations (MSUIR). In 1985, he finalized his research works and received a PhD degree in history.



Location:	Southeastern Europe, bordering the Caspian Sea, between Iran and Russia, with a small European portion north of the Caucasus range
Map References:	Eastern Europe
Area:	Total: 86,600 sq km
Comparative Area:	Slightly smaller than Maine
Land Boundaries:	Total: 2,013 km
Border Countries:	Armenia (with Azerbaijan-proper) 566 km, Armenia (with Azerbaijan-Naxcivan exclave) 221 km, Georgia 322 km, Iran (with Azerbaijan-proper) 432 km, Iran (with Azerbaijan-Naxcivan exclave) 179 km, Russia 284 km, Turkey 9 km
Coastline:	0 km (landlocked); note - Azerbaijan borders the Caspian Sea (713 km)
Maritime Claims:	None (landlocked)
Terrain:	Large, flat Kur-Araz Ovaligi (Kura-Araks Lowland, much of it below sea level) with Great Caucasus Mountains to the north, Qarabag Yaylasi (Karabakh Upland) in west; Baku lies on Abseron Yasaqligi (Apsheron Peninsula) that juts into Caspian Sea.
Elevation Extremes:	Lowest point: Caspian Sea -28 m
Highest Point:	Bazarduzu Dagi 4,485 m
Natural Resources:	Petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, nonferrous metals, bauxite
Land Use:	Arable land: 21.78%
Irrigated Land:	14,250 sq km (2010)
Per Capita:	1,384 cu m/yr (2010)
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