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EASTERN PARTNERSHIP : AZERBAIJAN

The development of the EU-Azerbaijani relations

Overview

The aim of the study is to give an overview on the relations between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan. The first part of the study draws up the origin and purpose of the Eastern Partnership program of the EU then the significance of the South-Caucasian country. In the second part the study examines the rapid economic growth of Azerbaijan and its effect to the country's economic indicators. This research was supported by the European Union and the State of Hungary, co-financed by the European Social Fund in the framework of TÁMOP 4.2.4. A/2-11-1-2012-0001 'National Excellence Program'.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is an initiative of the European Union to strengthen the relations with the post-Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Happenings in the countries in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus affect the European Union. The project was initiated by Poland and a later proposal was prepared in co-operation with Sweden. The Eastern Partnership was presented by the Foreign Minister of Poland and Sweden at the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council in Brussels on 26 May 2008. EaP was inducted by the European Union in Prague on 7 May 2009¹.

The first meeting of foreign ministers in the framework of the Eastern Partnership took place in Brussels on 8 December 2009². Participants agreed on further deepening of bilateral and multilateral relations between the European Union and the five Eastern Partnership countries. Practically the Eastern Partnership completes the EU's foreign policy towards Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus countries. The Union has an interest in helping these partner countries and the European Commission put forward concrete ideas for enhancing the relationship with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine³.

The Eastern Partnership not only creates a valuable framework for enhanced cooperation with the EU but also aims to develop regional cooperation and multilateral dialogue that are so needed in the South Caucasus. Eastern Partnership of the European Union from the very beginning was compared with the EU summit for

¹ Ian Praynor (2009): *EU pact challenges Russian influence in the east*. Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/07/russia-eu-europe-partnership-deal> (02.04.2013)

² *Eastern Partnership implementation well on track - 1st Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting*. Source: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-09-1891_en.htm (02.04.2013)

³ Türke, Dr. András István (2011): *A Keleti Partnerség*. EuVI Elemzés. Europa Varietas Institute. 30. 11.2011.

the Mediterranean Union, which took place in 13 July 2008. It is noticeable that in Prague only Chancellor Merkel came in person while France, the UK, Italy and Spain were represented on a lower level.⁴

The purpose of the Eastern Partnership, which has been given financial resources for €600 million per year in order to support the reform-oriented countries of the east, is to introduce reforms, promote democracy and market economy. The Swedish and Polish proposals designed greater cooperation with the 'European Union's eastern neighbouring states that was based on and went beyond the familiar strategy of the European Neighbourhood Policy'⁵.

As the EU grows in size and scope, it launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP of the European Union sets ambitious objectives based on mutual obligations of the Union and its Member States and Azerbaijan to common values. It includes the respect and support for sovereignty; territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of each other. Furthermore compliance to international and European norms and principles. Any breach of these norms and principles by either party will result in immediate suspension of its implementation. Azerbaijan joined to the policy in 2004, and the action plan for Azerbaijan was adopted on November 14, 2006. Due to the mutual will and to the agreements the relations between the EU and Azerbaijan are developing almost in every fields.

History of the EU-Azerbaijani relations

Azerbaijan, the most populous country in the South Caucasus region, has recently been in the center of attention after its economy has stabilized for 1996 and since then increases dynamically of over 10% per year on average. The proceeds from oil and gas export resulted in tremendous changes in the economically underdeveloped post-Soviet republic's life. The European Union and Azerbaijan have cooperated since the fall of the Soviet Union. The EU was a great help in the early years of independence to Azerbaijan by supporting the country in a variety of social and economic problems.

Azerbaijan and EU relations have developed steadily, and with the €400 million financial aid the economy of the Caucasian Muslim country could grow faster. The economic potential of those Central Asian countries which have significant quantities of energy source has significantly risen. Not only Russia and the United States, but also the European Union, which is highly dependent on outer energy sources as well as China are struggling for influence in this region.

The legal framework of cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan was the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which entered into force on 22 June 1999. Azerbaijan became part of this policy in 2004⁶. The fundamental principles on which the co-operation is based on the followings: respect for democracy, principles of international law, human rights and market economy. Beyond the PCA, which eliminates trade quotas, provides intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights, the parties agreed on Most Favoured Nations Treatment (MFN) as well. Thanks to the MFN Azerbaijan receives tariff preferences granted by the EU, and involved into the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)⁷.

⁴ Cornelius Ochmann (2011): *The future of the Eastern Partnership Seen from German perspective*. East European Studies. Budapest.

⁵ Kai Olaf Lang: *Eine Partnerschaft für den Osten*. Source: http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/aktuell/2008A66_lng_ks.pdf (07.08.2013)

⁶ European Union External Action: *Azerbaijan*. Source: <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/azerbaijan/> (21.12.2013)

⁷ *Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)*. Europe.eu. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/development/generalised-scheme-of-preferences/index_en.htm (13.12.2013)

On 1 May 2004 the European Union added 10 new members, which changed the political geography of the EU, thus providing new opportunities to deepen existing relationships towards eastern and southern neighbours. With the enlargement of the Union its borders changed and new countries became direct neighbours. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was the EU's response to the new situation. With this policy the EU is able to help to those countries that are not involved in the enlargement process. The EU strongly takes sides in addition to further development of partnership relations for mutual benefit, promoting security, stability and prosperity.

Today the EU-Azerbaijani relations are about the partnership. Ilham Aliyev Azerbaijani prime minister visited Brussels in 2006⁸ and as a result a strategic partnership agreement was signed: Memorandum of Understanding in the field of energy. Despite the fact the agreement is about energy, the document also reflects the possibility of a future agreement on education, agriculture and transport. The dynamic development between Azerbaijan and the European Union is mutually beneficial for both partners.

The European Union officially launched the Eastern Partnership program on 7 May 2009, which aims to deepen economic and political ties with the former Soviet republics, including Azerbaijan as well. As mentioned above, the EU spent €600 million every year to support democratic situations and economic reforms in these countries.

The significance of Azerbaijan

The EU considers it very important to develop bilateral partnerships with South Caucasian countries. Azerbaijan is a special priority to the European Union due to its strategic geopolitical location and its wealth in raw materials, especially in oil and gas.

The increasing importance of the South-Caucasian Muslim country as an energy, transport and communication corridor that connects the Caspian region and Central Asia with Europe incorporating its role as a provider to the EU's incremental needs in the field of energy security requires closer and more active cooperation in regional energy projects, particularly the Nabucco pipeline project. The EU is performing all the possible projects to lessen Russian gas dominance in the European market. One of those projects is the 'Southern Corridor' project, which includes Nabucco pipeline as a priority as well as ITGI, TAP and White Stream. All of these projects heavily depend on Azerbaijani gas.

Azerbaijan launched a new LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) project, namely the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector (AGRI)⁹, which planned to transport Azerbaijani gas to Georgia by pipeline, liquefying there and then transport it to the Romanian Black sea port of Constanta. Through Romania's pipeline the gas designed to pump further to the neighbouring states, connecting Caspian-region gas supplies to the European market. Azerbaijan also desires to cooperate with the EU more and more closely on all possible levels¹⁰.

⁸ *Historical Background*. Heydar Alyev Heritage. Source: <http://lib.aliyev-heritage.org/en/9396424.html> (21.12.2013)

⁹ *AGRI. Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnection*. Natural Gas Europe. Source: <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/category/pipelines/azerbaijan-georgia-romania-interconnection> (21.12.2013)

¹⁰ We can compare two EU policies regarding the Black Sea region, the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). BBS It includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the west, Ukraine and Russia in the north, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the south. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/blacksea/index_en.htm (18.08.2013)

Azerbaijan's economic development

Over the past twenty-five years one of the most momentous historical events was the fall of the Soviet Union. The bipolar world order has collapsed, which has left still far-reaching political, social, and economic legacies in the life of Central Asian countries.

The close cooperation with the Russian economy meant the major mainstay to weak economies of the member countries of the Soviet Union, which resulted in a strong dependence on Russia. In order to preserve their sovereignty and to reduce their economic dependence on Russia the former member states started to search western and eastern relations. However, this meant a risk to Russia's position of power and security in the region, therefore, Moscow punished these countries with retaliations¹¹.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union three old-new countries were born in the South Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was established in 1918, the first democratic and secular republic in the Muslim world, but in 1920 it merged into the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan regained independence in 1991.

In the 1940s, Azerbaijan supplied the Soviet Union with oil, in addition, approximately 600 000 Azerbaijani soldiers fought in the frontline against Nazi Germany. Hitler himself also made an attempt to occupy the famous Baku oil field under the Operation Edelweiss without success. Azerbaijan has complex relations with its neighbours. It is clearly competes with Russia in a struggle for European markets, because obviously Russia has no interest in the significant increase of Azerbaijani oil and gas export.

Azerbaijani oil

In Azerbaijani territories oil has been known and used since ancient times. Azerbaijan has long been called "*The Land of Fire*" due to its "*burning hillsides*" caused by gas seeping¹². The first oil well was put into operation in 1844 and since the 1870s oil has been industrially mined as a raw material. Interestingly, the Nobel brothers' company was the first among the oil producers¹³. Around 1900 Baku provided half of the total oil in the world with it's about 100 million tons of annual production. In the same period, the U.S. produced only 9 million tons.

During the existence of the Soviet Union it remained a major oil producer and in World War II Azerbaijan gave 75 percent from the whole oil production of the Union. In Soviet times decisions about the extraction of oil were not sovereign instead, they were based on imperial-federal interests. In 1991 after the proclamation of independence, Azerbaijan had to determine the strategy by itself according to its own interests¹⁴.

This was, however, not easy for political and economic reasons because the industry and agriculture were built to supply the Soviet market. Huge oil and chemical industries, metallurgical enterprises and large-scale industrial agriculture (cotton, grain, fruit, tea, and tobacco) were typical. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union Azerbaijan lost its traditional industrial and agricultural outlets and the country's real GDP¹⁵ contracted by 55% in the period 1991-1997. This downward trend finally halted by 1997.

¹¹ For example, to Georgia it has imposed a penalty that prohibits the export of Georgian wine to Russia.

¹² Azerbaijan. The European Azerbaijan Society. Source: <http://teas.eu/welcome-to-azerbaijan> (21.11.2013)

¹³ Natig Aliyev (1994): The history of oil. Source: http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/22_foilder/22_articles/22_historyofoil.html. (12.12.2013)

¹⁴ *Baku, Azerbaijan*. The Encyclopedia of Earth. Source: <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/150387/>. (11.12.2013)

¹⁵ adjusted for inflation

GDP growth of Azerbaijan:									
Year	1990	1993	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
GDP growth %	-11,7	-23,1	-11,8	11,1	26,4	34,4	25	10,8	9,3

Source: World Bank. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/countries/AZ?display=graph> (18.10.2013)

In the '90s of the previous century, Azerbaijan suffered a deep crisis in political, economic, and military spheres connected with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Heydar Aliyev¹⁶ designed the energy strategy as a leading force in the economic development of the country: *"oil is the greatest wealth of Azerbaijan and it belongs not only to the present of Azerbaijan, but also to the future generations"*¹⁷. It seemed that the possible breakthrough was provided by oil.

"The Contract of the Century"¹⁸ was signed with the oil companies of the West in Gulistan Palace of Baku on September 20, 1994. This oil contract opened a new page in the history of the country. At present, every 20 September is celebrated as the "Day of oilmen". Thanks to the stabilization policy, GDP growth has been in orbit since 1998 and the previous years' hyperinflation of over one thousand percent has been steadily reduced below 3 percent.

The economic recovery experienced in 1996 mainly due to the 1994 economic opening after the inflow of foreign capital and modern technology the previously neglected oil fields have been exploited. Fuelled by foreign investment in oil and gas, the real GDP rose by 9.9 percent in 2001, and such rate growth has been maintained. In the years before the global economic crisis Azerbaijan produced the largest GDP growth of the world.

Azerbaijan's oil production increased dramatically in 1997, when it signed the first major Production Sharing Arrangement (PSA) with a consortium of 11 foreign companies from 6 nations¹⁹. Oil extraction and refining are key industries of the Azerbaijani economy and the non-oil sector also increased by around 10 percent on average over the past 5 years, mainly in the construction and service sectors. Concessions for research are given to companies for 3-5 years, which can be extended to 25 years if commercially exploitable oil is found.

The most significant concession is the Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC), which has many foreign shareholders²⁰. Azerbaijan's oil production since 2004 has been growing steadily: from 2005 to 2007 the production almost doubled. A large part of production is exported, which increases the revenue from the oil sector. While in 2005 9.8 % of the full GDP was from the oil sector, in 2007 this figure reached 19.7 %. Azerbaijan's high economic growth during 2006-08 could be attributed to large and growing oil exports, but at the same time some non-export sectors also featured double-digit rise, spurred by growth in the construction, banking, and real estate sectors.

¹⁶ Heydar Aliyev was the third President of Azerbaijan for the New Azerbaijan Party from 1993 to October 2003, when his son Ilham Aliyev succeeded him.

¹⁷ *Oil strategy of Azerbaijan*. Source: <http://aliyev-heritage.org/print.php?lang=en&page=oilstrategy> (12.10.2013)

¹⁸ *Azerbaijan's 'contract of the century'*. Source: http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/24_folder/24_articles/24_aioc.html (20.10.2013)

¹⁹ *AIOC Celebrates 5 Year Anniversary*. Source: http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/73_folder/73_articles/73_aioc.html (20.10.2013)

²⁰ Shareholders: British Petrol, Azerbaijani SOCAR, American Chevron, Norwegian Statoil, Turkish TPAO, Italian Eni, French Total, and further Japanese, and American companies.

Year	1996	2000	2005	2007	2008	2009
Total Oil Production	180.318	288.587	440.006	849.069	876.154	1,012.249

Source: *US Energy Information Administration. Azerbaijan*. Source: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=AJ#undefined> (20.10.2013)

The extracted oil supply earlier caused a problem in transportation because Azerbaijani shipments were made through Russia, while the dominant oil companies did not want to build a pipeline through Russia and Iran. A solution to this problem in the form of the 1,768 kilometers long Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil pipeline was provided, which transports oil from the Caspian Sea to the Turkish Mediterranean port. The oil price shocks in recent years have come just in time for Azerbaijan: the BTC oil pipeline was completed in 2005.

The capacity of the pipeline was 906 thousand barrels per day in 2007 out of which 650 thousand were used. Thereby by passing Russia these countries were in contact with the world market, which is a major step forward. The United States had a significant role in the creation of the pipeline because with it has managed to achieve two objectives. On the one hand, it overshadowed Russian interests and, on the other hand, it bypassed the Iranian area, which decreased dependence on oil from the Persian Gulf.

The country's financial situation improved rapidly: in 2004 the around 30 percent current account deficit changed to 30 percent plus in 2007. This is partly due to the surge in oil export (and high market price) as well as due to the fact that with the pipeline ready, the oil exploration and pipeline construction-related investments did not demand further imports. The global crisis has not hit Azerbaijan as severely as other countries in Europe or Central Asia. The impact of the crisis was felt mostly through lower oil revenues in 2008. Medium term challenge for the country is diversifying its economy. Despite its rapid growth (or even because of it) Azerbaijan must contend with many challenges.

The country established the State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOFAZ) in 1999, which manages the increasingly significant excess revenues from oil and natural gas. Income from the Fund began to rapidly grow over the past few years: in 2007 the Fund managed \$3bn, in December 2008 it reached 11 billion dollar and funds from oil and gas projects can reach \$400bn in 2024 due to hydrocarbon reserves and global oil price hikes²¹.

The decline in world oil prices has led to lower projected revenue but 40\$ per barrel average oil price also means \$200bn revenue for the Fund for the next 15 years²². One objective of the Fund is to disconnect the income from the production from hydrocarbons of the economy so as to avoid the risks of Dutch disease and inflation (the oil and gas revenues should not go into the budget, but neither should the Found take over the tasks of the budget).

²¹ Said Natiq Aliyev in 2008, Minister of Industry and Energy of Azerbaijan. Source: <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/41895.html> (20.10.2013)

²² Dominic O'Neill (2009). Source: <http://www.oilfund.az/en/news/73> (20.10.2013)

The SOFAZ seeks to create confidence in allocation of oil revenues with many measures²³. It uses only a portion of the proceeds. One of the main goals is to ensure housing to those half a million people who escaped as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Year	Trade with the world /millions of euro/		Trade with the EU / millions of euro/		What percentage of the total trade takes with the EU:	
	import	export	import	export	IMPORT	EXPORT
2005	3.390	3.389	1.012	1.837	29,85	54,20
2006	4.180	5.058	1.290	2.878	30,86	56,89
2007	4.146	4.281	1.217	1.223	29,35	28,56
2008	4.890	30.996	1.382	17.875	28,26	57,67
2009	4.380	9.985	1.172	4.542	26,76	45,49
2010	3.170	7.754	1.056	3.953	33,31	50,98

Source: Europe.eu: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/dsca/dv/dsca_20130321_10/dsca_20130321_10en.pdf (11.12.2013)

The top five import partners of Azerbaijan were the EU, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and China in 2009. EU has become the main trade partner for Baku since 2004. 44,8 % of the total import from the EU to Azerbaijan are machinery and transport equipment, 20,5 % are miscellaneous manufactured articles. 98,8% of the total export of Azerbaijan to the EU are mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials.

This data also shows that the Azerbaijani economy relies too much on energy and is highly exposed to oil price changes, but “the country which provided so many world firsts in the oil and gas industry has the right to rely more than other countries on that industry”²⁴.

The direction of oil prices in any drastic manner can exert immense influence on the Azerbaijani economy²⁵. The structure of the Azerbaijani economy is continuously transforming. A third of the employees are working in agriculture, which provides only 6 percent of GDP while the relatively small number of workers employed in the energy sector that produces a quarter of GDP and more than half of the revenue budget.

Agriculture, therefore, where nearly 40 percent of the population is working despite its declining economic importance, is still central to the life of the country. Hungary's foreign trade turnover is developing the most dynamically with Azerbaijan among South Caucasus states. The Azerbaijani-Hungarian trade turnover was 5,74 million euro in 2003, in 2009 it has reached 61,37 million, which means a tenfold increase in 6 years. The economic partnership is based on typically Hungarian exports where machinery, transport equipment, medicines, and foods dominate. The value of the Azerbaijani import is minimal. These data can change if the Nabucco project will come to fruition with Azerbaijani contribution.

²³ Following a conservative policy, it invests managed funds in foreign governmental and institutional bonds. SOCAR became member of Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) among the first. EITI aims the transparency and traceability of income from raw material. Member states publish annual report of revenues from extracted raw material and this data will be compared to the company.

²⁴ Elshad Nassirov, vice-president of SOCAR, 2011. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12540269> (20.11.2013)

²⁵ The global economic crisis has drastically reduced the price of crude oil, which has resulted in the decline of the 47,8 billion euro export in 2008 to 13,2 billion euro in 2009, which meant a 73,4 percent setback.

Diversification of economy

Azerbaijan has the opportunity to produce a wide variety of agricultural products due to its varied climate. Mainly cotton, tobacco, and grain were produced in the Soviet era and are still produced²⁶. The country exports a large part of its agricultural products; domestic needs are met from import despite the fact that the country would be capable of self-sufficiency. In the wake of land privatization in recent years small farms have been established, which abandoned automation and have worked in smaller areas producing fruit and vegetables.

In recent years Turkish, Russian, and Iranian products flooded the Azerbaijani markets in which domestic producers can compete only with difficulty because of the lack of adequate technology and capital. In Azerbaijan the industry means not only the oil but also the chemical, metallurgical, and textile industries. Only a very small part of the oil is processed at home, the greater part is exported unprocessed. Chemical industry would need modernization to be able to produce internationally competitive products while the textile industry, which flourished in the Soviet era, needs huge investments for recovery²⁷.

Development plans envision textile industry as one of the driving forces of the economy in the future, thus its development receives a lot of attention. The largest iron ore prospect in the Caucasus can also be found in Azerbaijan but the metallurgy, which likewise flourished in Soviet era has also eroded. The machine industry developed from oil production; negotiations are ongoing inter alia with Renault about the manufacturing of light trucks.

For a long time the main problem was the monopoly of state-owned banks in the banking sector and the lack of competition but now the situation has improved a lot. The International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA) is the largest bank in the country, which transacts all oil and gas operations. Infrastructure, transport, telecommunications, plumbing, grid, drainage, and waste management are still under development. The biggest urban development project of the region is the Baku White City carried out under the Decree of the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, which implementation is still ongoing.

Summary

The European Union and Azerbaijan have cooperated since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both Azerbaijan and the EU hope to broaden and deepen the level of cooperation in order to mutual benefit.

Oil and gas revenues have resulted in enormous changes in the economy of Azerbaijan. *“Everything that was conducted for the first time in the oil and gas industry was conducted here – the first industrial production of oil, the first oil tanker, the first pipeline, the first offshore oil production”*²⁸. In the latest World Energy Outlook report The Caspian region identified as key to ensuring future global fossil fuel. The International Energy Agency expects some 35 billion cubic meters a year to be flowing out of Azerbaijan by 2030. *“Oil makes this nation rich and gas will make it even richer...”*²⁹

²⁶ Nurana Mammadova (2012): *How can Azerbaijan diversify its economy away from petroleum dependence to more sustainable economic development?* Source: http://www.crrcenters.org/store/download/news/Nurana%20Mammadova_How%20Can%20Azerbaijan%20Diversify%20Its%20Economy%20Away%20From%20Petroleum%20Dependence.pdf (10.11.2013)

²⁷ Kenan Sadigly: *Diversification problem in Azerbaijan economy*. Source: http://www.iset.ge/files/submission_kenan_sadigli_farid_nezerov_shahiyar_hasanverdiyev.pdf (10.11.2013)

²⁸ Elshad Nassirov, vice-president of SOCAR, 2011. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12540269> (11.12.2013)

²⁹ *The future of IMF*. Source: <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/countingthecost/2011/05/2011520111536734209.html> (11.12.2013)

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p. 1. Pumping units for the mechanical extraction of oil on the outskirts of Baku,

http://files.newsnetz.ch/bildlegende/89692/1116140_pic_970x641.jpg

p. 10. Baku flame tower,

<http://hqdesktop.net/futuristic-architecture-design-buildings-azerbaijan-baku-flame-towers-wallpaper-75000/>

p. 10. Azerbaijani Special Forces during military parade,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Special_forces_azerbaijan.png

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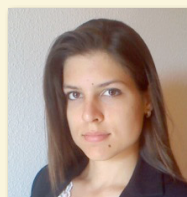
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