



THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA TODAY: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

- Come to Move Mountains!
Diaspora and Development in a Transnational Age
By Tsypylma Darieva, Tsukuba, Japan 2
- Diaspora Returnees, Transfer of Knowledge and a
New Understanding of "Homeland"
By Anna Harutyunyan, Berlin 5

- CHRONICLE
From 7 June to 12 September 2011 8

- READING TIP
Free Online Newsletter: Euxeinos. Culture and Governance in the Black Sea Region 9

Come to Move Mountains! Diaspora and Development in a Transnational Age

By Tsypylma Darieva, Tsukuba, Japan

Abstract

Second and third generation Armenian-Americans are no longer attracted to Armenia simply in order to reestablish their ethnic roots. Rather they increasingly seek to interact with the country as part of a much broader cosmopolitan movement that both revitalizes their ties to their historic homeland, but links them to a transnational movement that promotes diversity, democracy, environmental sustainability and tolerance.

Evolving Relations between Diaspora and Homeland in Armenia

One of the key features identifying members of a 'diaspora' is their continuing attachment to the homeland, regardless of whether it is an imagined or a real country of exodus. Much has been written about the ideals and paradigms of the diasporic identity, but there have been fewer investigations of the ways diasporic people practice this kind of attachment to their homeland in a transnational age.

Attachment to the homeland can take many different forms and meanings. It can be expressed in the construction of an imagined community with a sacred place reserved for worshipping the land of exodus, in public activities of political associations with territorial claims, in repatriation movements, in artistic expressions of nostalgic longing for home or in simply hanging an image of the homeland in the living room.

In this article, I discuss a new form of diasporic interaction with the homeland by identifying the diasporic homecoming practice as a transnational activity with a significant social and political impact. Current trends suggest that the classical form of homecoming as return migration and repatriation is losing its ability to attract second and third generation Armenian diasporics. New ways of engaging with the homeland within global social movements are emerging and seem to play an increasing role in the reconfiguration of relationships between diaspora and the homeland.

I argue that along with a parochial nostalgic longing for a homeland and ethnic soil, members of the US Armenian diaspora reconfigure their attitude to their homeland by introducing a new set of ideas and practices embedded in cosmopolitan 'future projects'. Exploring transnational engagement with the postsocialist Armenia among second- and third-generation US Armenians, I inquire into the linkages between diasporic homecoming and cosmopolitanism, a perspective that has not received enough attention in the literature or in local and global politics. I use the term 'diasporic cosmopolitanism' to mean a kind of simultaneity of ethnic closure and openness to the world and global issues that

goes beyond identification with a national project and ethnic repatriation.

Diaspora Efforts to Develop Armenia

With the end of the Cold War, today there is a new interest¹ in the Republic of Armenia among members of the old Armenian diaspora. Since the 1990s, as Armenia gained its independence, members of Western diasporic communities have been arriving in Armenia as tourists, volunteers and NGO activists. The point is that newcomers arrive to Armenia not only to see the sacred Mount Ararat or to learn Armenian in a 'holy land', but rather with the aim to 'develop Armenia'. The temporal visits can be framed in terms of diasporic homecoming or a kind of 'ethnic reunion', but in a very specific way. As Armine Ishkanian rightly noted, the myth of return and patriotism in the 21st century appears to be weakening, as most diaspora Armenians prefer to interact with Armenia transnationally and not as a one-way process. Travelers and temporary migrants prefer to talk more about the transfer of ideas, cross-cultural exchange of materials, and know-how to a developing land, often making reference to their broader global aspirations. This notion seems to be stronger than the ideas of permanent resettlement and the dream of being buried in an imagined native soil. Moreover, Armenian American diasporic visitors have no local dimension or intimate knowledge of a particular genealogy, place, or village in Armenia. Directed to a territory that is not the ancestral homeland, the territory of Turkey from which their grandparents actually originated, many of the second and third generation diasporic Armenians combine 'homeland imaginaries' and 'ancestral tourism' with an

¹ After WWII many diasporic Armenians (100,000) were attracted by the repatriation policy in Soviet Armenia, known as *nerghakht*, Stalin's campaign to repopulate the regions of Kars and Ardahan which were to be acquired from Turkey. A formal claim to Kars and Ardahan was made by the Kremlin to the Turkish ambassador in Moscow, but was dropped in 1949 with no border change. The dramatic experience of the return program (deportation of newcomers to Siberia, precarious life conditions, unemployment) disillusioned diasporic Armenians and created a political rift between the diaspora and Soviet Armenia.

assertion that to reclaim Armenian soil is to contribute to the environment of the entire planet and its inhabitants. Currently, members of the Western diaspora are increasingly involved in diverse forms of international and global engagement. A search for roots and identity drives financial investments.

It is not surprising that unlike so many migratory transnational networks that are built on a foundation of individual informal ties of kinship and remittances to family members, members of the 'external diaspora' build homeland ties primarily through formal NGOs and international organizations. For example, many Armenian Americans invest more of their private donations and individual energy in the development of roads and hospitals and the revitalization of museums and churches in Armenia than in supporting local households. The idea of traveling to Armenia not as a tourist, but rather as a volunteer to support impoverished society is increasingly popular among young creative Armenian-Americans.

'Come move mountains': Newcomers in Yerevan

Along with dozens of visible, larger non-profit organizations working in the education and health sectors in Armenia, there are two homecoming target-oriented diasporic organizations: Armenian Volunteer Corps (AVC) and Birthright Armenia. Founded in 2001, both organizations are engaged in a kind of 'homecoming project' for young diasporics in a particular way. Both volunteer organizations share the mission of affording the diasporic youth an opportunity to contribute to local development through professional work. Their specific goal is to support volunteer activities in Armenia by those who grew up in Western countries and who have at least one Armenian grandparent. Between 2007 and 2009, more than 200 male and female volunteers from the US, Canada, France, and Australia between the ages of 21 and 34 went to Armenia for periods varying from three months to two years. The number is growing.

Some scholars compare Armenian diasporic inspirations and experiences with the Jewish case, but the Armenian engagement with the homeland should not be equated with the Jewish Zionist movement. In contrast to the Jewish Zionist project and its relationship to Israel, the Armenian diaspora does not have an ideological foundation for supporting Armenia as there is with Zionism. The ties between the homeland and the diaspora are relatively weak and the diaspora's support for Armenia is less institutionalized and less 'strategic', but more individualistic and project-specific. On one hand, the Armenian volunteer work may speak of a desire to 'serve to the nation'; but their efforts are not

solely encompassed by this nationalist type of motivation. Without nationalistic slogans, its goal is empowerment and a desire to join with those around the world who work to save the planet. This form of cosmopolitan 'bifocality' links the fate of the nation to that of all humanity. Many of the young people involved in development projects in Armenia are informed by global ideas such as commitment to the protection of human rights and tolerance towards others. Politically, AVC statements differ significantly from the goals of nationalist diasporic Armenians who identify themselves as 'Dashnaks'. In contrast to traditional Dashnak's claims to annex lands in Eastern Anatolia inside Turkey and to establish an Armenian state, the AVC recruits young volunteers through a humanitarian rhetoric and focuses on the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Explaining his drive to settle in Armenia within the official AVC slogan 'Come Move Mountains', one 30-year-old male volunteer from Boston emphasized: 'There are many things to change here. You know, there is a problem of poverty, infrastructure. There is a problem of corruption'. (Yerevan, on May 7, 2005).

Although the imaginaries of home and practices of a diasporic 'trip to the homeland' are framed in terms of remembering ancestral origins, these trips take on new dimensions. The contemporary Armenian programs challenge the ethnic idea of homecoming through cosmopolitan practices framed as 'progress', 'democracy' and 'global civic society'. That is to say, the current Armenian homecomings today not only comprise anti-modern, de-globalized repatriation policy, but also modern long- and short-term visits, work contracts, development-aid programs, and social projects across borders.

Globalizing Ethnic Nature?

Another example standing for the historical evolution of the Armenian diaspora and a cosmopolitanization of the attitude towards the homeland in Armenia is related to the activities of the non-profit organization, the Armenian Tree Project. Founded in 1994 in Watertown (Boston, USA) the ATP sends a large amount of capital to the greater Yerevan area, establishing nurseries, planting trees, and starting up village projects. The local office's activities in Yerevan are divided into three main tree-planting sites: community sites in the city, developing nurseries, and supporting impoverished villages with a high percentage of refugees from Azerbaijan. Founded in Yerevan by Carolin Mugar, a second-generation Armenian-American from the village of Kharpet in Anatolia, the tree planting activities are financed by generous donations from a significant number of second-generation Armenian-Americans. At the same time, ATP has received support not only from a clus-

ter of US Armenian family foundations, but also from international organizations such as Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund. Armenian-American life cycle events, such as birthdays, anniversaries and deaths, take on a new transnational dimension as they are redefined as opportunities to contribute to the organization. Increasingly, for example, diasporics are donating to ATP in order to commemorate the death of a family member. Another transnational technique was introduced as the 'Green Certificate,' which was presented to donors confirming their sponsorship of tree plantings in Armenia. These activities among donors include the emerging practice of pilgrimage to the sites of sponsored trees and nurseries in Armenia.

The tree-planting culture is helping to diversify the typical Armenian image of the homeland, which has been focused on the holy Mount Ararat. The ATP's official logo design is three triangular green trees, which is similar to the design incorporated into ornamental Oriental rugs. Flyers, websites, newsletters, and donation certificates are identified by an image of three evergreen trees without any specific mountain images. Both the mountain and the trees are symbols of nature. But unlike the mountain, which is associated with a particular longing for a past, a tree represents social qualities, such as vitality, cultural universality, and a powerful orientation towards the future.

The rhetoric of the Armenian Tree Project tries to create a new dimension for envisioning a mutually acceptable future that diminishes the tensions between 'us—*spjurk*' and 'them—*Hayastantsy*' via global issues. In 1998, the Armenia Tree Project jointly initiated a ceremonial event to mark Earth Day in Armenian villages. The date, 22 April, is very close to the traditional day for volunteer civic work initiated by the Soviet authorities in order to celebrate Lenin's birthday. This day, which was observed among all Soviet institutions, schools, and

enterprises by cleaning the territory around the organization's location and then planting a tree, has been transformed into the new context of a global Earth Day in Armenia.

The ATP newsletter from the spring of 2007 states: 'We will use trees to improve the standard of living of Armenians and to protect the global environment'. This quotation indicates that planting global trees simultaneously brings to mind an ethnicized connotation based on the typical diasporic search for roots and is also reconceptualized within broader global frameworks. By positioning actions within a movement to sustain and protect the planet, the act of tree planting in a specific place is transformed into a form of creative cosmopolitan discourse. Again, in contrast to the Zionist project which is characterized by a monocultural use and physical occupation of the land through planting pine trees promoting an ethnically driven security agenda (Braverman 2009), the Armenian Tree Project in both donation techniques and in the acts of greening the landscape is not fixed on the ecological symbolism of a particular tree, but rather emphasizes Armenia's biodiversity in its global context and sees Armenia as part of a larger region—the Caucasus. As a part of international projects, the ATP tree planting is linked to a commitment to biodiversity, which is made explicit in the curriculum for environmental education published in English and Armenian.

Thus, the idea and practice of engaging with the homeland among second- and third-generation Western diasporic Armenians in the Republic of Armenia is based less on regaining a lost intimacy and a place of origin, but rather on the desire to connect a specific territory to the rest of the world by 'developing the country' in democratic ways. These diasporic networks contribute to social and political changes, in particular in the lands classified as the 'Third World', by planting ideas about environmental sustainability and civil society.

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Diaspora Returnees, Transfer of Knowledge and a New Understanding of “Homeland”

By Anna Harutyunyan, Berlin

Abstract

Armenians living in the diaspora often had a picture of Armenia that did not correspond to the reality on the ground. Returning to the real Armenia shatters these images. Now these returnees are transferring their educational and cultural capital to Armenia, seeking to bring real change to a country with a (post-) Soviet heritage and little experience of statehood.

Introduction: “Returning” to the Homeland

In July 2010 I started my field research trip to Armenia. That was the first time I flew to my own country for work and not for summer vacation, as I had in previous years. Going to Armenia for work as a German University research fellow incited strange feelings of being in-between different worlds: being connected with Armenia and being away from Armenia; knowing Armenia, but going to re-discover Armenia.

While boarding the Berlin–Yerevan flight of Armenian Airlines, I kept remembering the Facebook status of one of my diaspora friends who now lived in Yerevan: “If you want to know what’s going on in Armenia, you need TO LIVE in Armenia for a minimum of 5 years. Not everything is pink like my balcony.” I had not been in Armenia for five years and now was on the way to Yerevan for a 2.5-month field trip to study the new “pink balconies” of my city.

Unlike many Armenia Armenians (among them my own family) who emigrated from the country in the beginning of 1990s for a better life, a number of diaspora Armenians started visiting Armenia to discover their homeland and some of them also made the choice to settle there. True, for many of them Armenia was nevertheless not the homeland they had imagined when they lived in the diaspora. The post-Soviet Armenia was not a place where they would connect with their family memories and identity aspirations.

However, diaspora Armenians’ detachment from the idea of the Republic of Armenia as their “ancestral homeland” had more fertile soil than simply the Cold War between the Soviet Union (of which Armenia was a part) and the rest of the world. In many interviews I conducted in the diaspora communities, different Armenians described various images of the homeland and the place of Armenia within their particular imaginative map. For many the post-socialist Republic of Armenia has come to represent a formal, non-intimate, and non-emotional homeland, which has little in common with their sense of “home”. Meanwhile, for many, a real emotional attachment still persists with the respective countries of their life before migration (Turkey, Leba-

non, Iran, Syria, etc.). This is where they were born and raised and whose cultural identity they inherited and passed to the next generations.

On the other hand, for many others, the connotation of “ancestral homeland” was long connected with the lands which their forefathers had left during the traumatic exodus. For many diaspora generations the image of the homeland was the symbolic “Armenia, lands of paradise,” which constituted the Anatolian part of today’s Turkey. Sure, behind that image there always has been an everlasting longing for the homeland and a continuous desire to return to the lost lands and once again be a part of them. Diasporan identity and the collective (hi)story of their ethnic group have been constructed on the memory and commemoration of violence and trauma. The central and most important constitutive element of that identity had come to be the genocide remembrance in the families, commemoration practices within diaspora communities, and the political agenda of its recognition.

However, the growing visibility of the post-Soviet, independent Armenian Republic has played a decentralizing role in the mental map of the “homeland”, remaking it from one that is symbolic, imaginative and idealized into one that is more tangible and realistic.

In her film “Stone, Touch, Time” Garine Torosian tears down the wall constructed between the unreal imagined homeland and real existing “Hayastan” (Armenia) by introducing narratives of three Armenian diasporan women’s identity. The film-maker aims at showing the real image of Armenia: she enters its reality, discovers it, understands it, but then leaves it behind. The film echoes with the stories of my diaspora interviewees back in Berlin and other communities on the perception of post-Soviet Armenia as the homeland: “dreaming about your homeland as a diasporan is like being in love with someone you still don’t know. You play with your imagination, you cherish it, you can control it. When we saw Armenia, we got to know it. There was no space left for imagination and that was the hardest part... to face the reality. We are happy it exists,

but it is not our reality” [BG, Turkish Armenian, Berlin, September 2008].

This article is about those who have torn up their imaginative pictures of Armenia as the homeland, those who not only entered Armenia’s reality, but also have become a part of that reality, started changing its cultural content, as well as changing the main diasporan discourse on what the homeland ultimately should mean. The focus group for this analysis are middle-aged professionals who moved to Armenia from a wide geography of Diaspora communities (USA, Canada, Western Europe and Middle Eastern countries) to settle permanently and initiated a broad range of activities, from business investments to voluntary public work.

“Not Everything is Pink like my Balcony”

Clashes and strategies of adaptation

I went to see Raffi, one of my interviewees who moved with his family from Canada to Armenia almost nine years ago, in his office in downtown Yerevan. We started our conversation talking about the Armenian government’s new initiative encouraging mass labor immigration to Russia. “They (Russians) are openly saying ‘Come!’”. But, should OUR government support this idea? I keep thinking of what is going to happen in the end and it makes me deeply sad.” Indeed the government’s support for labor migration from Armenia to Russia has been confusing for returning diasporans.

In fact, moving to and living in Armenia causes numerous instances of confusion for returnees. The first thing the diaspora Armenians face is the question of legitimacy. “We come to Armenia with the knowledge we gained in our countries. We try to use our knowledge, but often it does not correspond to the local laws and we get stuck in-between what we know and what we can do”. This question of legitimacy poses a dilemma for the returnees in how to deal with the situation. Many of the interviewees mentioned that life in Armenia requires ingenuity. “You have to be creative and to know how to maneuver”, while also trying to remain within the confines of the law and working professionally without relying on local “brotherhood” connections to get ahead.

Diasporan (trans-)cultural capital vs. a homogeneous homeland

For returning diasporans using knowledge and professional skills acquired abroad often results in clashes with local actors in a variety of fields. As some of them told me, this is a clash between knowledge and so called “non-knowledge”, between cosmopolitan and global thinking, which is based on a universal understanding of democracy and human rights, and local actors’ complete lack of comprehension of those concepts. In Raffi’s opinion

this divergence ultimately derives from the experiences of statehood of those countries where the returnees come from (mostly the USA, Canada and Western Europe) and Armenia’s lack of a similar experience. “Armenia has only 20 years of life experience and you can never compare that with the way that Canada as a state developed over the last century”.

On the other hand, since they were raised in multicultural societies and surrounded by a multiplicity of backgrounds, identities and practices, the repatriated Armenians think the cause of divergence and conflict between global and local knowledge lies in Armenia’s homogeneity. “The more we (those living in Armenia) socialize, communicate and mix with foreigners, the better it would be for Armenia’s modernization”, according to a diasporan owner of a disco bar in Yerevan that is popular with both diaspora and local youth.

The (trans)cultural capital of the diaspora Armenians is pivotal for Armenia’s modernization. The transfer of knowledge and the localization of their social, educational, intellectual and professional expertise is much more significant than any financial asset invested into the modernization of the new homeland.

The flow of diasporic individual and institutional investors started after the independence of the republic in the 1990s. Numerous studies have been conducted on Armenia analyzing the diaspora relationship from the perspective of diaspora institutional and individual financial investment for economic and social improvement. However, little attention has been paid to the role of non-financial assets in the form of knowledge, life experiences and professional skills contributed by the diasporan repatriates.

Emergence of A New Discourse

A new understanding of each other’s role and Armenia’s modernization

The fields of activity where diaspora repatriates are represented cover a wide range, starting from social/ volunteer work (e.g. in the field of disabled or orphan children, women’s issues, gender equality, etc.) to the business or legal sphere (e.g. entertainment management, the nightclub business, legal consulting, etc.). What unites all those different actors and makes them important for this short article is the necessity of a new discourse to be initiated both by the diaspora and homeland Armenians and which should become a joint strategy for Armenia’s modernization. According to the repatriates, the new discourse should be based on more than just the past and the memory of trauma and violence, which used to be a main constitutive bridging element between the homeland and diaspora for decades. A new discourse should be based instead on the re-conceptualization of

the meaning of diaspora for Armenia and vice versa, the role of Armenia for the diasporic communities. The new mutual re-conceptualization should include an understanding of local needs for democratization and modernization, on one hand, and the transfer of knowledge by the diaspora professionals to the locals, on the other.

From the politics of memory to the politics of active citizens

A considerable amount of the research on the Armenian diaspora has dealt with diaspora memory politics in Armenia, focusing on the ritualized and materialized representations of memory both in the diaspora and the homeland. In the meantime, besides the topic of genocide memory politics, the repatriates I have interviewed increasingly discuss how the diaspora could contribute to the politics of active citizenship and professional development.

Back in Raffi's office, I asked him to list the priority issues. "So, let's include genocide recognition, Armenia's economy, civil society, human rights, governance, the Karabakh issue, Armenia–diaspora relations... and let us prioritize. Now, as someone living in Armenia, I would place Armenia's statehood, as the primary priority issue. If there is no good governance, no civil society, if there is no Armenian state, what are we talking about? ... During my childhood we were taught patriotic songs about independent Armenia as a dream country. The independence came too fast. We all did not expect it to happen so quickly. After singing all those songs, when the time came for action, what have we done after all? What we (both in the diaspora and in Armenia) did, led us to today's situation..." In Raffi's words, the core of the new discourse should be to stimulate the emer-

gence of active citizens. They should become the leadership of the new Armenian state.

Conclusion: Modernization through Transfer of Knowledge

Last year I often conducted my field research by hanging out in a disco bar called "That Place." Surprisingly, in spite of the typically loud music and dancing crowd, I could always manage to find a good companion for conversation. The bar in downtown Yerevan, which attracts locals, diasporans and tourists, is owned by active Diasporans who moved from Dubai to Armenia several years ago. The owners sought to help the country modernize by bringing their own expertise and cultural influence into the entertainment business. "Soviet thinking is still in the heads of people, but look at this dancing crowd. These people represent the new generation, which is open-minded, different, flexible and more receptive to the new ["western"] methods of communication and life styles." one of the frequent diasporan visitors to the bar told me.

Be it through entertainment management or legal consulting, whether in English language classrooms, the Women's Center or on Facebook walls, diaspora repatriates are creating spaces for transferring their global knowledge or, in Bourdieu's words, their cultural capital to the local compatriots and believe that that is the way to develop a new pool of creative citizens. By transferring their cultural capital to locals, they not only change their own view of what the new homeland should mean now, but also change the perception of the local Armenians towards the role of the diaspora from passive outside observer to active local participant.

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CHRONICLE

From 7 June to 12 September 2011

7 June 2011	Authorities in Azerbaijan remove the statue of ousted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak from the "Azerbaijan-Egyptian friendship park" near the capital Baku
9 June 2011	A US warship arrives in Georgia's port of Batumi
9 June 2011	The Chinese airline company China Southern Airlines launches direct flights between China and Georgia
10 June 2011	The leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church Catholicos Karekin II visits Georgia and meets with the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church Ilia II
10 June 2011	The Georgian Energy Ministry signs a contract with the Oslo-based firm Clean Energy Invest AS to develop a hydro power plant project in Adjara
13 June 2011	Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov visits Georgia and says that the relations between the two countries are more cooperative in all spheres
15 June 2011	Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt visits Georgia as part of a trip to the three South Caucasus states focusing on the three states' relations with the European Union and democratic reforms
17 June 2011	The Georgian Parliament passes a package of legislative amendments envisaging the issuance of neutral travel documents for residents of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia
21 June 2011	The Georgian Parliament passes a constitutional amendment on its relocation to Georgia's second largest city of Kutaisi
21 June 2011	A Georgian soldier is killed in Afghanistan bringing the total number of Georgian servicemen killed in the NATO-led operation since 2009 to nine
21 June 2011	The airline company Georgian Airways launches direct flights between Moscow and Georgia's Black Sea resort of Batumi
24 June 2011	Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev fail to reach a breakthrough in negotiations on the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh during a two-day summit hosted by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Kazan
30 June 2011	Armenian opposition supporters hold a rally in Yerevan to demand early elections
2 July 2011	Georgia removes a restriction to allow Russian citizens obtain an entry visa at the Zemo Larsi-Kazbegi border crossing point
5 July 2011	The Georgian Parliament passes in its final reading amendments to the civil code allowing religious minority groups in Georgia to be registered as legal entities under public law
7 July 2011	Four photojournalists are arrested over espionage-related charges in Georgia
9 July 2011	Thousands of protesters led by priests from the Georgian Orthodox Church march in Tbilisi against amendments to the law on the status of religious minorities in Georgia
12 July 2011	Azerbaijan receives copies of 60 rare medieval manuscripts including works by scientists and poets from the Vatican's secret archives
13 July 2011	The European Commission adopts the Annual Action Programme 2011 for Georgia which provides 50.73 million Euros to support the country's criminal justice system, conflict resolution efforts and internally displaced persons
14 July 2011	Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov visits the breakaway region of Abkhazia
14 July 2011	Three Azerbaijani army officers post a video online addressed to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to complain of financial extortion by their commanding officer
19 July 2011	The Azerbaijani police breaks up an unsanctioned anti-corruption rally in Baku to support the anti-corruption campaign launched by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in early 2011
26 July 2011	Russian officials discuss in Baku the renewal of Russia's lease of the Qabala radar station in Azerbaijan that can monitor missile launches in the Middle East and Southeast Asia
29 July 2011	The US Senate passes a resolution supporting Georgia's territorial integrity and recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as regions "occupied by the Russian Federation"
1 August 2011	The Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian is optimistic about the potential for economic growth in the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh
4 August 2011	Islamic Party of Azerbaijan leader Movsum Samedov and six party activists go on trial in Baku's Court for Serious Crimes on charges of illegal weapon possession and attempting to seize power illegally

8 August 2011	Kiosk owners in Armenia's capital Yerevan protest against Mayor Karen Karapetian's decision to close their businesses
11 August 2011	The deputy chairman of the banned Azerbaijani Islamic Party Arif Ganiev and the editor of the Islamic news website islam-azeri.az Ramin Bayramov are arrested in Azerbaijan
11 August 2011	The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry formally protest anti-Azerbaijani statements allegedly made by an Iranian official
16 August 2011	German parliament deputy Christoph Straesser, a special rapporteur on political prisoners in Azerbaijan for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) is denied a visa to visit Azerbaijan
23 August 2011	Azerbaijan lodges a formal protest with the French Foreign Ministry over the visit of French parliamentary deputies to the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh
24 August 2011	30 ethnic Azeris are detained by Iran's Intelligence Ministry over environmental protests
25 August 2011	Russian President Dmitry Medvedev meets with incumbent South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi
26 August 2011	Former French ambassador to Georgia Philippe Lefort is appointed as the EU's special representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia
27 August 2011	The Central Election Commission of the breakaway region of Abkhazia declares Alexander Ankvab as the winner of the elections held on 26 August
29 August 2011	An airport technician from the Naxcivan Autonomous Republic is found dead at the Ministry for National Security after being accused of "working for Iran"
1 September 2011	The Eurovision Song Contest management asks the Azerbaijani authorities to simplify visa regulations in the run-up to the 2012 contest in Baku
8 September 2011	Georgia reports 1.79 million visits by foreign citizens in the first eight months of 2011
9 September 2011	The French energy company Total discovers a major natural gas field in Azerbaijan's sector of the Caspian Sea
12 September 2011	12 EU Member States agree to task the European Commission with leading negotiations with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on the construction of a trans-Caspian natural gas pipeline

READING TIP

Free Online Newsletter: Euxeinos. Culture and Governance in the Black Sea Region



The internet publication "Euxeinos" explores contemporary cultural, political and economic problems in the Black Sea Region. Its title is derived from the Greek word for "The Black Sea" "Pontos Euxeinos" ("Hospitable sea"). This euphemism hints both at the hidden opportunities of this emerging region and the cleavages between the single nations, societies and territories. Each issue focuses on a special topic, e.g. the Holocaust in Romania, the public sphere in Bulgaria, the Black Sea as an economic space, Russia as a political player in the region.

Its authors are experts from the Black Sea Region and from Western countries. Euxeinos is produced by the Center for Governance and Culture (University of St. Gallen, Switzerland).

"Euxeinos" is published roughly every second month and can be downloaded for free from the website of the Center for Governance and Culture. A tool for a free subscription is available as well. Please visit <http://www.gce.unisg.ch/Projekte/Euxeinos.aspx>

Editors: Ulrich Schmid, Maria Tagangaeva

ABOUT THE CAUCASUS ANALYTICAL DIGEST

Editors: Iris Kempe, Matthias Neumann, Robert Orttung, Jeronim Perović, Lili Di Puppò

The Caucasus Analytical Digest (CAD) is a monthly internet publication jointly produced by the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Tbilisi (www.boell.ge), the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen (www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de), the Resource Security Institute in Washington, DC (resourcesecurityinstitute.org/) and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich (www.css.ethz.ch) with support from the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Caucasus Analytical Digest analyzes the political, economic, and social situation in the three South Caucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia within the context of international and security dimensions of this region's development. CAD is supported by a grant from the Heinrich Boell Foundation.

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Editors: Lili Di Puppò, Iris Kempe, Matthias Neumann, Robert Orttung, Jeronim Perović

Layout: Cengiz Kibaroglu, Matthias Neumann, and Michael Clemens

ISSN 1867 9323 © 2011 by Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, Bremen and Center for Security Studies, Zürich

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