

## GUAM AS SEEN FROM AZERBAIJAN

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The 21st century is revealing its new face to the world community: it is unipolar yet strives for multipolarity, raising numerous global and regional issues as it goes. Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" brought up questions previously camouflaged by the political and historical processes, the answers to which should be sought not only in the reality created by the end of the Cold War, but also in the changed social, economic, and political lifestyle manifesting itself across the vast stretches of Eurasia.

The bulwark of socialism (alias the Soviet Union) disappeared, leaving the states of the socialist bloc (particularly the former Soviet republics) to fend for themselves and cope with numerous problems single-handedly. The post-Soviet republics turned to historical archives to restore the memories of their independence to be able to move toward new sovereignties. Few in the newly emerging market and capitalist environment could boast of relevant practical skills and past experience. By the time the Soviet Union disintegrated, the fifteen Soviet republics had been living under approximately equal economic conditions, but had different natural and

human resources; their location on the world's political and geographic map also differed, which explains the different degrees of interest the regional and world powers showed in them. Those newly independent states that attracted the attention of the leading geopolitical actors were guided by their ethnic, linguistic, religious, military-political, economic, and other preferences in their choice of new allies to fill the political and ideological void. At the same time, the centuries-long experience of living in a single political and economic expanse dominated first by czarism and later, in Soviet times, by the C.P.S.U. taught all the republican political elites to rely on the Kremlin when making all decisions. This bad habit did not allow them to carefully analyze the short- and long-term results of the steps they took as leaders of independent states. More than that, by the time the Soviet Union disintegrated, the republics were practically inseparable economically: the death of the common state disrupted the interconnected production cycle and cornered all players in the post-Soviet and some players in the post-socialist expanse.

## GUAM: Prerequisites

Under these conditions, all the former Soviet constituents, which found themselves at sea in the world of capitalism and market relations, obviously needed a quasi Union, a vertical structure able to assuage the pain of the sudden changes. The Russian political establishment which initiated a new structure—the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) vaguely resembling the British Commonwealth of Nations—expected much more from its brainchild. It expected the CIS to efficiently promote the former Soviet republics' military-political and economic cooperation, however, as former prime minister of Russia Viktor Chernomyrdin aptly remarked, “we wanted the best, but got the usual.” In the early and mid-1990s, the Russian Federation, which inherited the necessary institutions of state administration and relevant experience of the statehood, remained shattered by the economic collapse, the separatist trends in the Caucasus and elsewhere, the weakened army, and the disappearance of the ideological bonds of communism. The CIS clearly betrayed Moscow's old imperial ambitions, which could not but force the leaders of the former Soviet republics to look for an alternative: the new states could not yet survive separately, but they were unwilling to live under one roof as before. It seems that the leaders of what in 1997 became GUAM were guided by the above. From the very beginning the four states (the first letters of which formed the abbreviation) described their main aims as “development of quadripartite cooperation for the sake of European stability and security based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of state borders, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.”<sup>1</sup>

An analysis of the new structure's geographic composition (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) and the members' economic and political situation makes it possible to identify certain features responsible for the alliance's composition. Three out of four members have armed conflicts on their territories, the keys to which (according to many) are still found in Moscow. Ukraine, with greater industrial and human potential than the other three republics and the obvious intention to shake off Russia's influence, could not but be flattered by the prospect of becoming the driving force behind a structure that some time in future might claim a role similar to that of the CIS. (Though in the latter half of the 1990s, Kiev was not looking that far ahead.)

By 1997 the five Central Asian republics had not yet demonstrated their intention to move away from the former center; the Baltic countries were hastily re-establishing their contacts with the West cut short in the 1940s; Armenia, which completely depended on Russia because of the aggressive war it was waging against Azerbaijan, did not even think of any alternative alliance, while Belarus was still living in the Soviet “euphoria.” It was Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova that were actively looking for an alternative to the former Union not only in the West, but also much closer to home, among themselves. Significantly, the common Internet site of the embassies of the GUUAM members (Uzbekistan joined it in 1999) said: “GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) Group was formally founded as a political, economic and strategic alliance designed to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of these former Soviet Union republics.”<sup>2</sup> At that time, this was the consolidated and commonly accepted approach shared by the five countries. Their com-

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<sup>1</sup> *Istoria GUAM*, Official Internet site of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM, available at [<http://www.guam.org.ua/history.phtml>], 14 January, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> *The GUUAM Group: History and Principles*, Briefing Paper. Website of the GUUAM Embassies in the USA, available at [<http://guuam.org/general/browse.html>]. Created 20.10.2000], 25 January, 2008; “As per its concept, GUAM primarily stands for political and security interests of the member states and then for the economic ones only. It was not a transport or energy project but the security-political one from the very beginning, regardless of using the transport and economical component for backing up the political idea of GUAM project” (“GUAM: Test for Ability to Act,” *Ukrainian*

mon idea of the role of GUUAM fit the situation in which the alliance came into being. The first shoots appeared in “1995-1996 in the form of political consultations within the OCSE, the Council of Europe, and the talks on conventional armed forces in Europe.”<sup>3</sup> This was a time when these states, supported by the European structures and the United States, were very much concerned about their sovereignties. Their economic, communication, energy, and military (in the form of weapon and ammunition supplies) dependence on Russia coupled with the unresolved territorial conflicts created an understanding in GUAM’s corridors of power that dependence on Moscow should be slackened, if not completely liquidated, with the help of new systems of relations among the new sovereign states independent of Big Brother. These ideas, together with other factors, probably forced Uzbekistan (a GUUAM member at the time), Georgia, and Azerbaijan to leave in 1999 the Collective Security Treaty actively lobbied by Moscow. (In 2002, the structure that united most of the former Soviet republics was transformed into the Collective Security Treaty Organization.)<sup>4</sup>

We should not underestimate the fact that the West was resolved to prevent the Soviet Union’s resurrection in the form of the CIS, CSTO, or any other Moscow-sponsored initiative. There is the opinion that GUAM was Washington’s Project designed to undermine Russia’s influence in the former Soviet territory.<sup>5</sup> There is another opinion: “The new structure was set up to trace alternative transportation routes for big Caspian oil, revive the Great Silk Road, create a Eurasian transport corridor, and enter into multilateral cooperation within international organizations and forums, such as the Council of Europe, NATO, etc.”<sup>6</sup>

We have to agree with those who say that the political component and security issues prevailed in the national interests of the GUAM members at the early stage, and later, as they strengthened their sovereignty and acquired the experience of an independent existence, their interests shifted to the economy, transportation, and energy. These issues dominated the agenda of all meetings and discussions. Until 2001, when the structure developed into an international organization in its own right, the alliance showed no impressive practical results. At the same time, it coordinated the processes unfolding within its region. Dependence on Russia for energy supplies<sup>7</sup> pushed the energy issue to the center of the members’ concerns. This made Azerbaijan, the central link of the alternative energy transportation route from the Caspian to Europe, one of the central countries. The GUAM states were too weak economically, they had no money to pay for new transportation routes, while Russia, which wanted to concentrate all the transportation arteries in its territory, or at least control those that bypass it, continued to dominate in this sphere. For these reasons the energy projects were temporarily frozen, but they were never removed from the agenda altogether. In this context, the TRACECA and Silk Road projects advanced the cause of energy security for the GUAM countries and increased the role of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine as transit countries.

Uzbekistan joined GUAM (to turn it into GUUAM) in 1999 and thus widened the organization’s energy and transit prospects. Its short-lived, and fairly token, membership (the republic left the structure in 2005 after the Andijan events that claimed many lives) did not add anything at the practical level, however, the other GUUAM members received a strong boost. It was thanks to Tashkent’s

*Monitor, Policy Paper #5*, Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine, June 2005, available at [<http://cpcfp.org.ua/en/projects/foreignpolicy/papers/052005/>], 14 January, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> “Novye perspektivy GUUAM. GUUAM: vsia nadezhda na Zapad.” Information Internet portal Moldova.ru, 22 April, 2005, available at [<http://www.moldova.ru/index.php?tabName=events&owner=27&id=69>], 14 January, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Roman Petrenko, an expert at the International center of Prospective Studies in Kiev, believes that Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan agreed on leaving the CST (see: “Novye perspektivy GUAM”).

<sup>5</sup> See: “Voskreshenie GUAM,” Informatsionny Internet portal Vovremia.info, 13 May, 2007, available at [<http://www.vovremia.info/?art=35331>], 15 January, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> D. Preiger, I. Maliarchuk, A. Novikova, E. Nizhnik, “GUUAM: Ups and Downs of the Great Silk Road,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (9), 2001, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Until 2007, even Azerbaijan, itself an exporter of hydrocarbons, bought some of the natural gas it needed for domestic use from Russia for purely economic reasons.

presence in the emerging alliance that the United States doubled its efforts to institutionalize the structure and fund its activities.<sup>8</sup>

Any discussion of GUAM should stress the U.S.'s special role in turning the organization into an efficient mechanism and an active actor on the international scene. It is no wonder that Uzbekistan announced its intention to join GUAM in 1999 in Washington at the NATO summit. It is thought that it was Washington that convinced Uzbekistan to join the structure. America was given the opportunity to draw the Central Asian republic into its political orbit. Under President George W. Bush (who by a whim of fate had to concentrate on his country's foreign policy), America doubled its interest in GUAM as a structure able to play an important role in the post-Soviet expanse.

Washington did not limit itself to moral and political support—it extended financial support as well. Under the Defense and Security Assistance Act of the U.S. Congress of 2000, GUAM and Armenia received considerable financial support “to promote independence and territorial sovereignty.” At a press conference held on 20 September, 2000, Spokesman for the U.S. State Department Richard Boucher said: “And generally, we see this as a positive development of regional cooperation, and certainly we will want to cooperate in any way we can.”<sup>9</sup> On 18 May, 2000, at a seminar in Washington, the ambassadors of the GUAM members described the United States as a “strategic partner in their countries’ efforts to build democratic governments and free market economies.” They announced “their nations’ intention to expand cooperation among themselves and with the United States.”<sup>10</sup> The joint statement of 4 July, 2003, which summarized the results of the GUAM-U.S. consultations at the top level, described the United States not only as an active sponsor, but also as the initiator of several projects, some of them had already been implemented and others were in the process of implementation: in 2003, GUAM was granted an observer status in the U.N. General Assembly; launched interparliamentary cooperation of the GUAM members; created a free trade area; and ensured practical cooperation among the members in the sphere of transportation, science, technology, and other fields.<sup>11</sup> Today, GUAM is closely cooperating with the United States to develop and strengthen its members. The framework GUAM-U.S. program, under which the sides are strengthening regional security and counter-terrorist struggle, is developing successfully.<sup>12</sup>

GUAM has created an equally efficient mechanism of cooperation with the OSCE, another European structure. The GUAM members have managed to achieve a high level of coordination, whereby the sides have shifted from consistent mutual support to daily statements on the issues discussed by their organizations.<sup>13</sup>

## GUAM: Institutionalization

On 6 November, 2000, during the 55th Session of the U.N. General Assembly, the heads of the five member-states met in New York to sign a memorandum that determined the organization's future

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<sup>8</sup> Experts believe that Russia, which sees GUAM as an infringement on its “special role” in the post-Soviet expanse, has done and is doing a lot to interfere with it becoming stronger and possibly enlarging. In this light, Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the organization in 2005, its rejoining the CSTO, removal of the American military base from its territory, and its membership in EurAsEC can be described as Moscow's great success.

<sup>9</sup> *The GUAM Group: History and Principles*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*. The list of agreements signed by the GUAM members can be found on its official website [<http://www.guam.org.ua/agreement.phtml>].

<sup>12</sup> See: *Istoria GUAM ...*

<sup>13</sup> See: GUAM: “Test for Ability to Act.”

and the mechanism for its functioning. Since 2001, GUAM has been developing from a consultative club into an alliance with a well-organized structure and a program of action. On 7 June, 2001, the GUAM members adopted the Yalta Charter which “became the first step toward GUUAM’s institutionalization and laid the foundation for its transformation into a fully-fledged international organization.”<sup>14</sup>

In 2004, the organization set up its Parliamentary Assembly, thus removing all doubts about the organization’s future. The assembly became a mechanism for unifying the laws of the member countries and harmonizing them with international legal norms. The Color Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine somewhat slowed down the process, but later they supplied it with even more energy.

On 22 May, 2006, Kiev hosted a regular GUAM summit that passed another important decision. The organization was transformed into an international structure with the new name of Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM and its headquarters in Kiev. The summit also adopted the Charter and a joint declaration. The Charter does not contain a provision about the need to strengthen the members’ sovereignty, one of the central issues in the Joint Communiqué of the GUAM heads of state of 10 October, 1997.<sup>15</sup>

The GUAM Baku summit held on 18-19 June, 2007 marked another important step forward. Ukraine transferred its chairmanship to Azerbaijan; the heads of state discussed all the urgent regional issues and adopted a program for Azerbaijan’s chairmanship in 2007-2008.<sup>16</sup> The concluding Communiqué said that the Council of Heads of State met in an extended format: the presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine and the prime minister of Moldova greeted the heads of Lithuania, Poland, and Rumania, the vice-president of Bulgaria, vice-speaker of the Estonian parliament, minister of economics of Latvia, high officials of the United States, Japan, OSCE, the BSECO, and UNESCO, and the heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Azerbaijan as special guests. GUAM-U.S., GUAM-Japan, and GUAM-Poland meetings were held within the event’s framework.<sup>17</sup> The high level of representation bears witness to the organization’s prominent role on the international scene and its great political weight, which allows GUAM to address many problems of world politics.

The interest Japan, an economic giant by all standards (represented by deputy foreign minister), displayed in GUAM cannot be underestimated: at the first meeting within the framework of the summit, the sides discussed issues of global importance—democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and cooperation priorities in energy and transport (the use of the Europe-Asia corridor with the help of GUAM).<sup>18</sup>

Today GUAM is not striving to replace the CIS in the post-Soviet expanse; just like the CIS and CSTO, it has developed into a regional structure.<sup>19</sup> Political observers believe that the fact none of the members dominates within GUAM makes it doubly attractive and allows it to move ahead.

It should be said that in the ten years of its existence, the structure has somewhat shifted its accent and revised its tasks. After celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2007, the members pointed out:

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<sup>14</sup> *Istoria GUAM...*

<sup>15</sup> See: *The Charter of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM*. Website of GUAM information office [http://www.guam.org.ua/255.612.0.0.1.0.phtml], 26 January, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> See: “Program of the Republic of Azerbaijan’s Chairmanship for 2007-2008,” *Diplomatiya Aləmi*, No. 17, 2007, pp. 52-55.

<sup>17</sup> See: *Ibidem*. “Communiqué of the Second GUAM Summit,” pp. 62-64.

<sup>18</sup> See: *Joint Statement by the GUAM-Japan Meeting*, *Diplomatiya Aləmi*, No. 17, 2007, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> In this context, President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko said: “When we talk about the CIS, the club of former Soviet republics, we are fully aware of the fact that there is a system of interests that needs coordination... When we talk about the region, we mean somewhat different things and more local and more concrete aims. This international organization is not pursuing vast goals similar to those of the CIS,” 22 May, 2006 (“Ostrov GUAM,” Information Internet portal Lenta.ru [http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/05/22/guam/], 25 January, 2008).

“During these 10 years, our Group has transformed into a full-fledged international organization with a distinct identity devoted to democracy and economic development.” We are convinced, stated the members, that we should promote our transit role, ensure our economic and energy security, expand regional cooperation with the aim of integrating to a great extent into the European structures and drawing closer to NATO, confirm democratic values in the sphere of human rights, the antiterrorist struggle, and the struggle against aggressive separatists, etc.<sup>20</sup> To achieve the stated aims, each of the countries should use all the potential at its disposal.<sup>21</sup>

## GUAM: The Role of Azerbaijan

I have already written that for several objective reasons, four out of the fifteen post-Soviet republics (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) initiated a new regional structure. At that time, each of the members was torn apart by domestic and foreign policy contradictions which dampened the prospects of the newly born organization. It was thought that the member countries differed in their approaches to many issues, which made the structure’s further functioning doubtful.<sup>22</sup> At that time, Azerbaijan was exerting efforts to break the information blockade around Armenia’s occupation of part of its territory and looking for alternative routes to bring its energy resources to the world market. Georgia and Moldova were convinced that they should reestablish their territorial integrity disrupted by the separatist movements in Abkhazia, South Ossetia (Samchablo), and Transnistria supported (as many believed) by Moscow. Ukraine, in turn, was working hard to reduce its political, economic, and energy dependence on Russia. These countries needed allies to cope with their most urgent problems. At the same time, the four republics were seeking stronger sovereignty and integration into the European family of nations for the sake of faster democratic development.

The decision by President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliiev to make his state one of the founders of a new, second after the CIS, alliance in the post-Soviet expanse was very bold for its time. The events unfolded against the background of intensive talks about the main oil pipeline to move Azeri oil from the Caspian shores to the world markets. The Contract of the Century signed in Baku on 20 September, 1994 was intended to further develop the republic’s oil fields, but it did not specify the routes by which the extracted oil would reach the western markets. The country should tread cautiously toward a new alliance that its “northern neighbor” did not hail. More than that—the republic still carried the weight of many unresolved issues: Armenia’s aggression against Azerbaijan and adequate international assessment of Armenia’s occupation of part of Azerbaijan’s territory; continued Russian military-political support of Armenia and Azerbaijan’s economic dependence on Moscow demanded a careful investigation of the positive and negative (long- and short-term) results of Azerbaijan’s involvement in the new organization. President Aliiev discerned great potential in the new structure. It promised to develop into an influential alliance to allow Azerbaijan, together with other post-Soviet republics, to deal with its foreign policy issues as an equal partner of international relations.

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<sup>20</sup> See: *Statement of the GUAM Vilnius Summit*, 10 October, 2007. Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijan Republic [[http://www.mfa.gov.az/eng/international/organizations/guam/vilnius\\_statement.shtml](http://www.mfa.gov.az/eng/international/organizations/guam/vilnius_statement.shtml)], 21 January, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> One of the analysts has pointed out: “GUAM has got all it needs to become a key mechanism for vanishing new division lines in Europe, a tool of assisting the post-Soviet countries in the European and Euro-Atlantic integration” (“GUAM: Test for Ability to Act”).

<sup>22</sup> See: “Voskreshenie GUAM;” “GUAM: Test for Ability to Act.”

At that time, a new alliance designed to strengthen the sovereignty of the new states and ensure their energy security was a step into the future. Of the four members only Azerbaijan is rich in energy resources, while the other three members have rich potential as transit countries. Under these conditions, a structure that brought together these states would allow Azerbaijan to address certain foreign policy issues. It was an alliance of states with common problems related to their territorial integrity and a desire to achieve sovereign, good-neighborly, and equal relations with close neighbors and the “far abroad.” The members of the new structure were moving toward a market economy and democracy and were ready to fight aggressive separatism and the global security threats. As distinct from the governments of its three partners, Azerbaijan refrained from using aggressive anti-Moscow rhetoric, even though at that time Russia looked to be the main source of the republics’ problems. While maintaining balanced relations with the leading world powers showing an interest in the region, Azerbaijan pursued an adequately balanced policy in relation to all the regional power poles without unnecessary biases. This helped the country preserve freedom of action outside the Caucasus, which was manifested by Azerbaijan’s membership in GUAM. As a member of most international regional and continental organizations, Azerbaijan never limited its diplomatic horizons and used these structures to make public its position on every vitally important issue.

I have already written that the structure has been developing at the beginning of the 21st century, which produced new threats and challenges: world terrorism and globalization. The GUAM members shifted their position according to the domestic political and economic processes. As distinct from Georgia and Ukraine, where the Color Revolutions stirred up their interest in GUAM and its institutional and structural development, Azerbaijan (an active member of other structures—OIC, CIS, BSECO, and others) never let GUAM out of sight. The republic’s leaders believe that the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and restored territorial integrity are their central foreign policy issues. It was Azerbaijan that put the Karabakh problem within the framework of the “frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet expanse” issue, via GUAM, on the U.N. agenda. Despite Armenia’s and the Armenian lobby’s stiff resistance and thanks to Azerbaijan’s diplomatic efforts and the concerted efforts of the GUAM members, the 61st U.N. General Assembly adopted the draft resolution “Protracted Conflicts in the GUAM Area and Their Implications for International Peace, Security and Development;” Azerbaijan also enlisted the support of several countries.<sup>23</sup> Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev made public the position of Azerbaijan and the other GUAM members on this issue: “It is not merely historical contacts, political ideas, and common interests that tie the GUAM members together... The three countries have experienced separatism, ethnic purges, occupation of their territories, and millions of refugees and migrants. For obvious reasons we are convinced that these issues should be resolved within international law. Restored territorial integrity is our main demand.”<sup>24</sup>

As one of the central links in the Europe-Asia transit chain, Azerbaijan is building up its potential by offering its transit infrastructures and using its own products. Today, practically all the GUAM members are pinning their energy security hopes on Azerbaijan. Even though it has several diversified fuel transportation routes, Azerbaijan does not exclude new routes. This was what Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko said in one of his interviews: “Ukraine and Azerbaijan will concentrate on a new transportation route for Caspian oil along the Baku-Supsa-Odessa-Brody-Plock line.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See: “Communiqué of the GUAM Summit,” *Diplomatiya Aləmi*, No. 17, 2007, p. 63.

<sup>24</sup> “Speech of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev,” *Diplomatiya Aləmi*, No. 17, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> “Ukraine Supports the Initiatives of the Azeri Side on the Nagorno-Karabakh Issue—Viktor Yushchenko’s Interview,” Official Internet representation of the President of Ukraine, 7 September, 2007, available at [[http://www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/data/17\\_10161.html](http://www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/data/17_10161.html)], 21 January, 2008.

The expert community has pointed time and again that GUAM is pursuing energy aims. According to Nikolai Gnatiuk, head of the foreign policy programs at the Department of Political Sciences of the Kiev-Mogiliansky Academy: "GUAM is an organization geared to the energy component. All the other spheres are superimposed on the energy issue."<sup>26</sup> Speaking at the Baku summit, the president of Azerbaijan approved of the idea of a new pipeline and pointed out that the GUAM members were extending their political support to the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk project.<sup>27</sup> At his meeting with the Ukrainian minister of fuel and energy, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Ukraine Tاليat Aliiev confirmed that these plans would be carried out: he said that his country could operate the Odessa-Brody pipeline in the forward direction and send up to 5 million tons of oil a year to two of the largest oil refineries in Ukraine.<sup>28</sup>

Azerbaijan is rendering practical support to the idea of GUAM's energy and transport components. By late 2007, the republic was supplying Georgia with 70 to 75 percent of its natural gas requirements from its own resources.<sup>29</sup> At the second summit of the Caspian states held in Tehran on 16 September, 2007, the president of Azerbaijan raised the question of free transit for the littoral states with no outlets to the World Ocean.<sup>30</sup> This means that Baku is lobbying a new transit corridor that starts at the borders of Ukraine and Moldova and crosses Georgia and Azerbaijan to reach the Persian Gulf. This project is part of the Program of Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2007-2008 adopted by the second GUAM summit in Baku in June 2007.<sup>31</sup>

Azerbaijan actively supports the idea of a free trade area for the GUAM members; it was the first to ratify the corresponding agreement in June 2003. So far, trade among the members has not yet become the larger part of their overall trade turnover, but it is fairly prominent. Moldova and Georgia managed to sell some their wine and liquor in Azerbaijan and Ukraine after Russia's Chief Medical Officer Gennadi Onishchenko banned their export to Russia because of their "low quality." In one of his interviews, the Ukrainian president spoke about the wide prospects for cooperation between Kiev and Baku in "aircraft construction, transportation, construction, agriculture, and small and medium business," as well as in all other spheres.<sup>32</sup>

The Baku GUAM summit produced another initiative: Georgia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan decided to set up their peacekeeping forces. According to the Ukraina-AMI, Head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Sergey Kirichenko stated that the general staffs of the armed forces of the GUAM members had already created a conception for an international armed unit within the organization.<sup>33</sup> This is undoubtedly a new, higher level of cooperation. Today Azerbaijan has not yet announced how and where it might use the international peacekeepers to restore its territorial integrity, but we cannot exclude the possibility that peacekeeping forces trusted by the country's leaders and people might be used in the future. It is thought that the GUAM peacekeeping forces will bring the members even closer together, increase the organization's efficiency, and add to its regional political weight.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> "Voskreshenie GUAM."

<sup>27</sup> See: "Speech of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliiev," p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Information Agency Kavkaz-Press (Georgia), *News Bulletin*, No. 13, 25 January, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> See: "Speech of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliiev."

<sup>30</sup> See: "Tehran-2007: Baku has Taken the Torch," *Region plus*, No. 21 (41), 1 November, 2007, p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> See: "Program of Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2007-2008," p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> "Ukraine Supports the Initiatives of the Azeri Side on the Nagorno-Karabakh Issue—Viktor Yushchenko's Interview."

<sup>33</sup> See: "The Conception of the GUAM Peacekeeping Contingent has been Created," Agency of International News Ukraina-AMI, 25 October, 2007, available at [<http://newsukraine.com.ua/news/82564>], 21 January, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> See: "Dalekie-dalekie perspektivy GUAM," Internet newspaper GazetaSNG.ru, 21 June, 2007, available at [<http://www.gazetasng.ru/v-nomere/freeze-frame/?id=6208>], 21 January, 2008.



## *C o n c l u s i o n*

GUAM has already demonstrated its potential as an organization with great ambitions and plans, to say nothing of all the necessary prerequisites and possibilities. Today, Azerbaijan and Ukraine are acting as the two driving forces behind the organization; they are using their potential to strengthen and extend the authority of the organization, which is functioning on the principles of unity and mutual respect and takes the interests of all the sides into account. The fact that relations inside it are equal and that none of the sides is trying to dominate allows GUAM to preserve its efficiency and look to the future. Speaking at the Baku summit, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliiev stated: "We have reached a new stage in GUAM's life." The organization still has much to accomplish, but the past decade has placed it on the right path despite the numerous difficulties. The members have passed the test and emerged from it stronger and more determined than before. Today we can say that in the next five years GUAM will accomplish much more than it has in the previous ten years: it has all the necessary prerequisites for this at its disposal.