

# BAKU DIALOGUES

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# PfP Enters its Fourth Decade

## A Journey Undertaken with Azerbaijan

*Rick Fawn*

Azerbaijan was one of the first countries to join NATO's major outreach program, Partnership for Peace (PfP), upon its establishment at the Alliance's summit in Brussels on 10-11 January 1994—a year that also marked the fifty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Alliance itself. This happened on 4 May 1994, when President Heydar Aliyev came to Brussels to sign the Partnership for Peace Framework Document, an event that took place about a year after he returned to Baku to begin pulling the country back from the edge of total collapse.

Surely there was an element of deliberate sequencing involved, for the very next day after signing this document, on 5 May 1994, a final

agreement was reached on a Russian-brokered ceasefire to end the First Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan. And only four months later, in September 1994, the negotiations on the Contract of the Century were successfully concluded that would facilitate the export westwards of Azerbaijan's hydrocarbons rather than through Russia. This last development had been predicated—and again unlikely to be coincidental timing—by the Clinton Administration's abandonment of its “Russia First” policy, which had elevated Moscow's interests above those of other post-Soviet successor states.

Seen from Baku, this period of a few months in 1994 represents the moment of the inauguration of Azerbaijan's grand

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strategy, an integral component of which was strategic geopolitical and geoeconomic outreach to the West and its anchoring military alliance. Azerbaijan's military cooperation with NATO member state Türkiye ought to be better appreciated as being an integral part of this narrative. Much of their cooperation occurred within the PfP framework and was instrumental in advancing Azerbaijan's military preparedness, which in turn helped to enable it to restore fully its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

### NATO Responds

Since it came into existence, PfP has been a highly innovative engagement mechanism. It nevertheless was a belated response to the seismic geopolitical changes in Europe and Eurasia following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in late 1989 and of the Soviet Union itself in late 1991.

This article contends that PfP was an adaptable form of new relations for the Atlantic Alliance, seeing that it was dealing through the

Partnership's launch with over two dozen countries that stretched from Estonia in the northeast, across the Balkans, out to the South Caucasus (including Azerbaijan), and all the way to some Central Asian states—right up to the borders of Afghanistan and China. Included also—and receiving some specific attention later in this article—were Ukraine and

the Russian Federation. PfP has been adaptable and adapted, but it nevertheless raised expectations—especially of political status—that were, in some important cases, unfulfillable.

PfP's launch in 1994 coincided with other major policy developments, foremost the U.S.-led decision to allow and then actively to encourage NATO enlargement, which further undid the “Russia First” policy. Despite ambiguities regarding PfP, especially in the formative period of post-Cold War relations in the 1990s, the article argues that PfP's later evolution into more tailored, bilateral arrangements with partner countries has given both of them perhaps less public but certainly

*Heydar Aliyev came to Brussels to sign the NATO Partnership for Peace Framework Document about a year after he returned to Baku to begin pulling the country back from the edge of total collapse.*

more directly useful engagement, not least when the foreign policy agendas of countries that have not joined the Alliance have themselves evolved also.

When transformative political change came with the East-Central European revolutions of 1989, NATO had to find responses. This was both an unexpected and gigantic “ask.” We should not take that for granted as we reflect over 30 years of the life and adaptations of PfP and, I add, on the 35 years since the breaching of the Berlin Wall—that seemingly permanent symbol of the division of Europe.

Indeed, when PfP was launched in January 1994, British Prime Minister John Major said that NATO was “seeking to build a stable framework for the most profound changes in modern history.” That was not undue political hyperbole—building a “stable framework” for European security needed to deal with multiple conflicts when Major spoke, including in the former Yugoslavia and many parts of the former Soviet Union, such as in

Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan, and the continued Armenian occupation of internationally-recognized Azerbaijani territory).

Fundamentally—and, especially with historical hindsight, the greatest challenge—was the need to find a compromise between post-communist states that wanted full NATO membership and a Russia that wanted to continue to be recognized as a great power, including having a veto on the foreign and security policy choices of its former vassal states. On such and similar questions, NATO took time to decide even tentatively what to do, and, in fact, initially kept those countries at arms’ length. PfP would be the cornerstone compromise.

NATO’s first response to the post-Cold War changes came with the Alliance’s London Summit, held on 5-6 July 1990. NATO recognized the geopolitical impact of the 1989 revolutions. That was already colossal, and no one then expected that the Soviet Union had but 18 more months to live. So unanticipated was that that all parties were perfectly

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content to end the Cold War in November 1990 at the Paris Summit of the CSCE. Margaret Thatcher even called its closing document the “Magna Carta” of Europe, ushering in a new European history – with the Soviet Union integral to it.

NATO’s approach at that time to Moscow’s former socialist allies was not in any way to suggest the possibility of Alliance membership. Instead, if it had one perspective, NATO’s view was of alarm. Far from opening its doors, NATO was deeply concerned about security risks from this region—and again, at a time that still *preceded* the ferocious disassembly of Yugoslavia.

In May 1990 NATO Secretary General, Germany’s Manfred Wörner, warned that “there are old national and ethnic rivalries that we thought had been overcome; border and minority questions are again rearing their heads.” In that context—and, again, let us keep in mind how far we have come—well before PfP, NATO wanted a level of engagement that was literally about finding only some means of talking with these countries. The London NATO Summit in July 1990 issued its “Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance.” What did NATO offer to these newly freed countries—countries that thought of

themselves as European that had been forcibly taken away from the West and, through their hard and peaceful work managed to return themselves to the European fold?

The Atlantic Alliance told the governments on the other side of the European continent that they could “come to NATO, *not just to visit*, but to establish regular diplomatic liaison with NATO.” In retrospect, this stance appears less surprising. A little more than a year later, on 1 August 1991, U.S. President George H.W. Bush gave what is now known as his “Chicken Kiev” speech in the Ukrainian capital. There, he emphatically cautioned against the unbridled pursuit of national self-determination: “Americans will not support those who seek independence in order to replace a far-off tyranny with a local despotism. They will not aid those who promote a suicidal nationalism based upon ethnic hatred.” Be that as it may, the point is that the conduct of regular diplomatic relations is, of course, the thinnest form of formal international engagement. It then took NATO another 18 months to establish the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). This mechanism further solidified the means for discussion, but not actual, let alone meaningful interactions.

This was extraordinary timing, as the founding of NACC was pronounced on 20 December 1991—that is to say, at the very moment of the implosion of the Soviet Union. During that meeting, and as the final communiqué was being prepared, the Soviet Ambassador exited the session and returned 30 minutes later. NATO’s website even includes a participant’s recollection of him re-entering “white-faced,” to announce that he was no longer the Ambassador of the USSR, but that of the Russian Federation. He asked that references to the USSR be removed from the communiqué, but it had already been released.

Historic metamorphoses continued the next day when leaders of Soviet republics met in Kazakhstan’s then-capital to sign the Alma-Ata Protocols. These gave substance to the more informal agreement made three weeks prior by the three leaders of the predominantly Slavic Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, marking the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The offer of participation in NACC was immediately extended to these now “post-Soviet,” states (excluding the Baltic republics, whose annexation into the USSR was not recognized by Western governments and who were not parties to the Alma-Ata document.)

Nevertheless, at this point NACC was still, in NATO’s words, a “manifestation of *extending the hand of friendship*” (emphasis added) that was offered the year before. Charming as these expressions may have been, they were insufficient for the Visegrad countries who, already by February 1991 at their “Visegrad Summit,” had made it adamantly clear that they sought full NATO membership. NACC was still tentative cooperation, and largely political, but with signs of that flexibility that later became so important for the PfP mechanism.

That capacity for flexibility—for different or updated diplomatic signaling—was shown early within the context of PfP. As an example, we might be reminded that Romania—very much now an Atlanticist country—was excluded from NACC in 1991 for its lack of democratic transition. But Romania’s experience showed how PfP could gesture NATO’s own changes in approach. An initially-excluded Romania became the second country to sign PfP in 1994 (even if Romania’s post-1989 political transition was generally not considered consolidated until new elections in 1996). PfP served to change and could accelerate some relations in the post-communist space.

More importantly, PfP was launching what we can call “sovereign egalitarianism”—a principle of fundamental importance to the NATO variable in Europe’s post-Cold War order. That is, irrespective of demographic, geographic, economic, or military size, every country is to be considered equal. Probably a few countries, or one in particular, namely Russia, have been unhappy and have even deeply contested this idea of the political and diplomatic equality of states. PfP, however, was clearly demonstrating that it was building mutual relations with each and every country, regardless of their strategic heft.

Another process was also developing alongside PfP. The game-changing nature of that other process in some ways undermined PfP whilst in others made PfP even more important. At the same time as the launch of PfP, four Central European countries had been advocating for three years for full NATO (and EU) membership. Those four countries were the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, and they were endowed with the new successful collective name brand of “Visegrad” and the resources of two charismatic, distinguished, and moral heavyweights.

These two personalities had unbeatable stature to begin with, reinforced by having each been unjustly jailed by their communist-era regimes, and thereafter ascending to their countries’ presidencies: the former dissident Václav Havel as President of Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic; and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lech Wałęsa, as President of Poland. They also managed to use their moral suasion on an interpersonal level to make a very hesitant Clinton Administration change its thinking. After all, that presidency won against incumbent George H.W. Bush, who had overseen the end of communism in Eastern Europe and thus had had a fantastically successful foreign policy. Clinton’s campaign eschewed foreign policy and focused on domestic matters, to the point that its electoral catchphrase became “It’s the economy, stupid.”

Be that as it may, the Visegrad Group and its two leading personalities made a diffident NATO (and the EU) change initial thinking of standoffishness in the post-Cold War world. To my mind, those four countries collectively as the Visegrad Group succeeded in projecting not only a positive image of their region (and to define it as one distinct from its neighbors both to the east and south) to their

new-found Western partners, but also managed to remind and to convince those interlocuters that they had been historically contributors to the values that made the “West” and “Europe” what they were. (For my part, I have traced Visegrad’s choreography of that historical argument and its impact on Western governments and institutions in *Castle on a Hill: The Visegrad Group, Regionalism and the Remaking of Europe*, published in December 2004 by Georgetown University Press).

Such a reframing and projection of a new history was fundamental. Prominent Westerners such as former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski warned of “post-communist nationalism,” and scholar John Mearsheimer thought Eastern Europe would revert back to the 1930s and drag major powers into what apparently would be their myriads of conflicts with each other.

The launch of PfP needs to be seen in the complex light of uncertainty and multiple competing political interests. Think also of timeframes. The pivotal year

of 1994 now seems long gone, or to younger readers, merely ancient history. It is important to recall the

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sense of waiting that post-communist countries and societies had. Take the year of the 1989 revolutions as the year 2024. Central Europeans wanted “in” to NATO and the then-European Community (EC) immediately—that is, in 2025 in this thought experiment. They only got a signal from the EC in the equivalent of 2028 (and already having achieved under their own steam what the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria were asking of them), then notice of accession in 2032 (with Agenda 2000 that established terms of accession negotiations), and then actual entry a total of 15 years later, in 2039. Who of us knows what we might be doing 15 years from now?

That being said, NATO became a little faster in signaling to some post-communist countries about the prospects of membership—and that ultimately was what was intended when Western governments moved to the idea of some accession—that is, one-half of the two cornerstone Western organizations—in order both to stabilize Europe and to reward the major

reformist post-communist governments. The initial thinking was that EU accession could come first, but then could not and, in the end, did not.

NATO outreach therefore also helped the EU by giving some of these countries tangible benefits in their longer waiting period. Again, this is largely because the Visegrad countries pressed very hard and loudly while also showing that they could and did work with NATO at every opportunity—including in emerging NATO operations in the former Yugoslavia. Even so, when U.S. President Bill Clinton gave only an open-ended statement that NATO membership was “no longer a question of whether but when,” that was in 1994. We should ask our own minds—as if we were the ones seeking NATO membership now—how we would react to receiving a message five years from today that, at some unspecified, future time we would secure membership. Central European university-aged demonstrators in 1989 would be middle-aged by the time that their aspirations would be fulfilled.

There are at least two matters regarding the exact timing of when PfP was launched in 1994 that need attention. The first was that PfP was said—and this I believe was genuinely meant and still

today—to be based on mutual respect and benefit, and it was envisioned to enhance stability between the Alliance and its partners.

This is, one has to admit, rather atypical behavior for a collective defense military alliance. And yet, those aspirations then satisfied few and likely even alarmed others. It was certainly insufficient for the Central Europeans who wanted nothing short of full membership of NATO, and who defined that membership both in terms of their historico-cultural right to join and also to fulfill a security need. That security need may not have been (and to a significant degree was not) about Russia. The break-up of the USSR meant that the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary no longer bordered Russia, although Poland adjoined Russia’s Kaliningrad Oblast. In other words, the post-1991 geography was very different from the 1989 geography. And for Poland and Czechoslovakia (and, later, its two successor states), NATO membership was often cast in terms not of the present but of the past: avoiding forever their cataclysmic vulnerabilities of 1938 and 1939.

Additionally, 1994 marked the final withdrawal of all Soviet-cum-Russian military forces from the region: those that were still



stationed in eastern Germany and which Moscow could not even afford to rehouse. And knowing that, the Czechoslovaks pointedly offered in 1990-1991 to go to the USSR and build accommodation to rehouse these troops. And that both Czechoslovakia and Hungary had seen the Soviet forces stationed in their countries fully withdraw already in 1991.

Even so, the Central European states wanted full NATO membership. For them, PfP was wholly insufficient, even perhaps insulting. Those countries often re-labeled “Partnership for Peace,” with, again, the abbreviation PfP, as denoting instead “Policy for Postponement.”

So, it is not surprising in itself—but astonishing for the overall geopolitics of post-Cold War Europe—that at the very time that the “respectful” nature of PfP was being rolled out, including to Russia, the Clinton Administration had changed course. It was in January 1994, in Prague, when meeting with the leaders of the four Visegrad countries that Clinton said, as noted above, that Alliance membership was no longer a question of happening but only of its timing. And this he did just after having attended the NATO Heads of State summit in Brussels that

launched PfP. The NATO Brussels Summit, for its part, only had a brief mention of something called a NATO Enlargement Study—a thin, and arguably even still theoretical start to the vague idea of eventually opening Alliance doors to others.

The second irony was that consideration of inclusion in a highly innovative security mechanism (i.e., PfP) was extended in 1994 to almost every post-communist country—including also post-Soviet states. Only countries embroiled in outright war at that time, like Tajikistan, Bosnia, and Croatia (plus Serbia and Montenegro, states that at the time belonged to a rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that was under UN and Western sanctions), were not initially included (the former joined NACC in 1992, but PfP only in 2002, having endured a five-year civil war; Croatia joined in 2000, after the death of its controversial president; and the remaining three in 2006).

PfP effectively made countries equal participants, including Russia and other states from the Soviet Union (like Armenia, which had entered into both bilateral and multilateral security commitments with Russia by 1994), as well as all of those from across Eastern Europe: Estonia in the north down to Bulgaria in the south. Importantly,

PfP made countries equal because they each had the same relations with NATO, being treated to the same approach by and with the same access to the Alliance.

### *Demanding and Expanding Roles*

In principle, therefore, in 1994 and onwards PfP should be seen as even more important because it rendered public and tangible a fundamental international political value. It was enacting some of the virtues of the post-Cold War order by treating all states as equals—irrespective of physical size and any previous or current perceived status. On a practical level, there were some natural limits to this generalized outreach: tailoring within PfP to distinctly individual country needs came later, and rather successfully. But in 1994, PfP seemed to intend to work with and even bridge differences among a disparate group of countries with divergent foreign and security policy aims: some that were deeply interested in NATO but would not be offered membership whilst the prospect for the foregoing

did not even exist and decades later would still not. At the same time, through PfP, NATO could now accelerate and intensify relations with certain countries, allowing them to fulfill their sovereign right to make foreign policy and security choices of their own. NATO’s public documentation notes that the seven countries that joined the PfP program in 1999 and 2004 all did so “soon after its creation in 1994 and have subsequently forged ever closer and deeper relations with the Alliance with a view to becoming NATO member states.” Not all countries wanted, or could get, that.

Nor would one country in particular remain content to be bracketed with all of these others.

NATO knew these issues as it prepared to announce another enlargement at its 2002 Prague Summit, with accession to occur in 2004 for Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. That again was the fulfillment of the clear desires of countries that wanted membership and met NATO’s criteria. But it was also at the Prague Summit

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that a new mechanism and another enhancement of outreach was introduced: the Individual Partnership Action Plan. Azerbaijan, located afar on the Caspian Sea, attended that summit as a PfP partner, and was an early country to express its interest in this new mechanism.

Since then and through various PfP programs, NATO has been able to determine specific areas of cooperation with specific partners. To reinforce the argument for PfP's ability to adapt, let us consider the diversity, after the 2004 enlargement, of countries with which NATO was "partnering."

Jeffrey Simon, a dedicated chronicler of NATO's post-Cold War adaptations and its enlargement processes, identified eight categories in 2004. With slight modifications, they are:

- Five "advanced" partners (Simon's term), of European neutrals and which he said had no interest then to join the Alliance (of course Finland and Sweden reversed their policies of neutrality in the face of Russia's full-scale Ukrainian invasion. NATO's website today notes that Finland and Sweden joined PfP in 1994 and each became "one of NATO's most active partners" before joining in 2022 and 2024);
- Three Membership Action Plan partners of Albania, Croatia, and

Macedonia (all of which would gain membership);

- Three South Caucasus partners (without designating whether any sought NATO membership, although Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze had said such as early as 1999);
- Five Central Asian partners (again not indicating membership intention, but highly unlikely then or since);
- Two relatively inactive partners—Belarus and Moldova (the former being Russia's close military ally, even before allowing its territory to launch attacks on Ukraine in 2022; Moldova remaining "neutral" militarily);
- Ukraine, which at that time claimed to be aspiring to having an "Action Plan;"
- The Russian Federation; and
- Two of what he called "Balkan PfP Aspirants"—Bosnia and Serbia, both of which joined PfP in December 2006 (Montenegro gained independence from the latter in June 2006 and joined PfP in December of that year, obtaining NATO membership in 2017).

That is an extraordinary list, most of whom have continued engagement under PfP, or as the list indicates, went on to join the Alliance. In that way, the Individual Partnership Action Plan (launched in 2002, as noted above) was very

foresighted to acknowledge both the entry (and termination) of PfP for many European countries in 2004, and then the diversity of needs and desires of those remaining. Within that—and recalling that the 2002 NATO Summit took place merely months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks—PfP provided means for developing cooperation on combating international terrorism and supporting the very multinational collaboration that NATO came to lead on the ground in Afghanistan.

But all of this could not be a sufficient measure for the Russian Federation, a country whose dissatisfaction with the U.S.-led post-Cold War order (and whose imperial ambitions) became clearer since. From Moscow's early perspective, perhaps, it saw itself as willing to work, even integrate with the West. Russian President Boris Yeltsin spoke of the end of the Cold War as a victory for all. To that end, that Russia was the first country to sign up for PfP in 1994 is historically symbolic. Thereafter, however, the thought at that time that its major engagement with NATO was through a mechanism shared by the littlest of states surely could not satisfy what has become—regardless of any debate regarding the legitimacy of such perspectives—a demand to be treated as a great and global power.

Despite and probably because of the "not whether but when" Clintonesque message on NATO enlargement in 1994, U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry maintained on 30 May 1995 that focus on NATO membership "missed the point," and that the real platform remained PfP. Still, at that point NATO had extended no other, let alone distinctive outreach to Moscow. Moscow had also expressly said that it wanted "special status" in some form of cooperative mechanism with NATO, in addition to PfP, which simply was unforthcoming. And broadening the security perspective for the official Russian mind away from NATO, the year 1994 had the optimism of the transformation of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe into a formal institution, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Although lacking a legal foundation, the OSCE's consensus nature meant that any country, foremost Russia, retained a de facto decisionmaking veto. Russia was, at that time, highly supportive of the OSCE. The Organization extolled and embodied "comprehensive security," which combined attention holistically to all security needs—in the OSCE's parlance, this is called the military-political dimension, the economic and environmental

dimension, and the human dimension. And the OSCE saw security as an indivisible and common undertaking.

But how could collective security work alongside what was also clearly—and a heavily armed one, to boot—a collective *defense* body in the form of NATO that was at that same time expanding (not forgetting its effective first post-Cold War enlargement with eastern Germany in October 1990)? Russian requests for a veto on NATO policy—including and especially enlargement—were naturally dismissed. At least on 7 May 1997 (i.e., six years from now if you were a Soviet strategic planner having witnessed the end of your USSR), NATO granted Russia seemingly unique status with it.

The NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed at the 1997 Paris NATO Summit, which established the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (NRPJC). Two issues arose with that seeming individual, respectful treatment of Russia. First, a similar agreement was signed at the same time with Ukraine. If we did not know then, we certainly do know now how official Moscow deems the rights, the status, and arguably even the very ability to exist of Ukrainians and Ukraine in its present borders.

In other words, NRPJC could provide insufficient recognition (if indeed anything could) of Russian great power status. Second, once NATO commenced the bombing of Serbia in 1999, Moscow ceased its involvement in NRPJC. It would take a still pro-Western Russian president and three years to enact a replacement. Russia's Vladimir Putin came to NATO's Rome Summit in May 2002 to sign the agreement for the new NATO-Russia Council.

A few months later, at the NATO Summit in Prague (which also launched the Individual Partnership Action Plans for countries not gaining Alliance membership), NATO enlargement across Eastern Europe was declared. At that summit, U.S. President George W. Bush announced that—literally—he would in a few days explain to his “friend” that:

A larger NATO is good for Russia, as well. [...] I will tell my friend, Vladimir Putin, and the Russian people that they, too, will gain from the security and stability of nations to Russia's west. Russia does not require a buffer zone of protection; it needs peaceful and prosperous neighbors who are also friends.

In these circumstances, PfP could not feel satisfactory to Russia—nor could it have been intended to do.

What, however, then and since remains important is how PfP could still work and reach so many other countries. A brief final consideration of PfP's achievements, with some examples, might help to illustrate that.

### “One Partner, One Plan”

Going now into its fourth decade, Partnership for Peace has contributed to the historical restructuring of pan-European institutional architecture. NATO's own documentation states that PfP was fundamental to preparing countries for its two biggest enlargements. Knowing in 2002 that NATO in 2004 would broaden to states on the Baltic and the Black Seas, while still having relations with so many other post-communist and post-Soviet states, the Atlantic Alliance refashioned PfP to work individually with each of those.

It was already mentioned that Bosnia, having endured over three years of civil war, came to join PfP. And at the other of the Eurasian landmass, Tajikistan which had joined NACC in 1992 just as it was descending into five years of civil war, could enlist in PfP in 2002 as the twenty-seventh partner, and as the final post-Soviet to do so. Turkmenistan, whose status of

“permanent neutrality” was unanimously recognized by UN member states in December 1995 and which is referred to by media outlets like CNN as “the hermit nation,” nevertheless joined NACC in 1992 and PfP in 1994. The Alliance formally states that “Turkmenistan's cooperation with NATO is mutually beneficial” and points to various engagements and its response to a NATO request for assistance to Bosnia for natural disaster relief in 2014.

To a county such as Azerbaijan—an early signatory of PfP—the prospects for continued and indeed expanded assistance with de-mining in Karabakh seems a particularly urgent and auspicious area of cooperation in the time ahead.

Aside from other forms of cooperation under PfP, the country has also received some assistance in dealing with a horrendous human and security legacy. This would be both a project and a means for both parties every tangibly to expand cooperation, including between Azerbaijan's National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) and the NATO Trust Fund.

PfP remains a great means to develop meaningful interactions with NATO. It remains extremely important especially for



countries without membership aspirations or prospects, and we are in an age when countries most certainly can and must choose their foreign policy orientations that may have their own priorities and outlooks. Many countries have different approaches to their security. The regularized engagement, on always a jointly devised basis, of PfP county officials and NATO personnel may be too low-key for media but provides irreplaceable mutual familiarity and bonds, let alone (in many cases) very tangible cooperation. No better a term is what NATO has come to use for this bespoke set of cooperation: “One Partner, One Plan.” The PfP has been over decades the means to integrate PfP personnel in NATO peacekeeping operations and the means to secure assistance in civilian disaster relief.

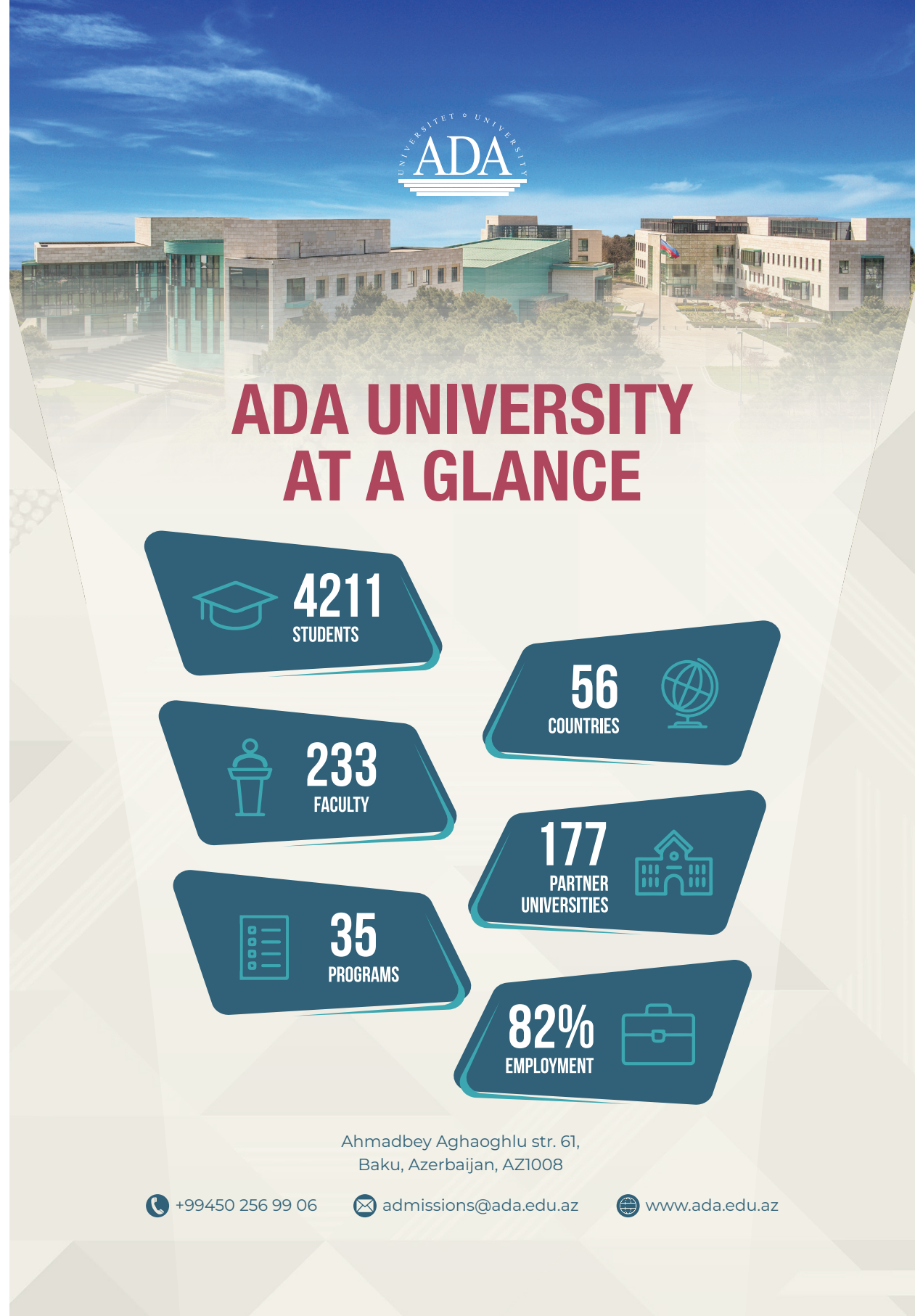
**A**mong the achievements of PfP over its now-thirty-year lifespan must be the fact (and character) of adaptability. That intrinsic flexibility means that countries can find their own niche and have tailor-made ways of maintaining—and, especially, of enhancing—their relations with the Alliance.

NATO’s programs generally, and PfP with them, “build on different but invaluable perspectives and find common solutions to common challenges.”

In an ever-more complicated and challenging world, that approach is needed even more. It is worthwhile to contemplate if and how PfP might have operated differently in the 1990s and also how it might have worked along-

*Countries can find their own niche and have tailor-made ways of maintaining—and, especially, of enhancing—their relations with the Alliance.*

side other developing policies. PfP was operating in very challenging circumstances. I certainly think that we would all have been worse off in the 1990s without PfP; it helped smooth some difficult geopolitical folds, and we benefit from it today. That it might not—and could not have—ultimately satisfied the growing demands of Russia was beyond its described intentions. But it did serve as another form of outreach to Moscow, while also signaling that Europe and Eurasia were in a historical age where countries of all sizes were entitled to, and should share, equal international rights and obligations. That remains a message and a practice of the highest value for today. **BD**



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