

# **XƏZƏR UNIVERSİTETİ**

**Fakültə: Təbiət elmləri, sənət və texnologiya yüksək təhsil**

**Departament: Siyasi elmlər və Fəlsəfə**

**İxtisas: Beynəlxalq münasibətlər və diplomatiya**

## **MAGİSTR TEZİSİ**

**Mövzu: İkinci Qarabağ Müharibəsi sonrası Azərbaycan Respublikasının xarici siyasəti:  
Azərbaycan-İran münasibətlərinin klassik realizm nəzəriyyəsi prespektivindən təhlili**

**Magistrant: Abdurahmanzadə Pünhan**

**Elmi rəhbər: Vasif Hüseynov**

**İyun - 2023**

**KHAZAR UNIVERSITY**

**Faculty: Graduate School of Science, Art, and Technology**

**Department: Political Science and Philosophy**

**Major: International Relations and Diplomacy**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Topic: Foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan after the Second Karabakh War:  
Analysis of Azerbaijan-Iran relations from classic realism perspective**

**Student: Abdurahmanzada Punhan**

**Supervisor: Huseynov Vasif**

**June - 2023**

## Abstract:

The Second Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia has had significant implications for Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices and its relations with neighboring states. This dissertation undertakes a comprehensive analysis of Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the Second Karabakh War, with a specific focus on its relations with Iran, through the lens of political realism. Drawing on the theoretical framework of political realism, which emphasizes power, national interests, and security concerns, this study aims to shed light on the motivations, considerations, and strategies that underpin Azerbaijan's foreign policy decisions.

The dissertation begins by exploring the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran, highlighting the importance of the Second Karabakh War in shaping these ties. It provides an overview of Azerbaijan's foreign policy goals and priorities, analyzing the changes in its foreign policy post-war, and identifying the factors that influence Azerbaijan's decision-making processes. By examining Azerbaijan's overall foreign policy context, this study lays the foundation for understanding the dynamics of its relationship with Iran.

The subsequent chapters focus specifically on Azerbaijan-Iran relations from a classical realism perspective. They investigate the impact of Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War on its foreign policy towards its opponents, with Iran being a significant regional actor. The historical background of Azerbaijan-Iran relations is explored, considering previous conflicts and instances of cooperation. The chapters delve into the influence of Azerbaijan's relations with Iran's opponents on Iran's stance during the war, Iran's balancing policy, and the pragmatism embedded in its post-war stance. Additionally, they analyze the shifts and developments in Azerbaijan-Iran relations after the war, identifying key areas of cooperation and disagreement, and examining the factors shaping the dynamics between the two countries. The chapters also consider how Azerbaijan's relations with its friends and allies influence its foreign policy towards Iran and how Iran's position during the war influences Azerbaijan's post-war attitude.

This dissertation contributes to the understanding of Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices after the Second Karabakh War, particularly in relation to Iran, by applying the theoretical framework of political realism. By analyzing power dynamics, national interests, regional balance of power considerations, and security concerns, this study provides valuable insights into the complexities of Azerbaijan's post-war foreign policy and its relations with Iran.

Through a comprehensive analysis of historical context, specific events during the war, post-war developments, and the implications of Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices, this study enhances

understanding of the intricate dynamics and motivations that shape Azerbaijan's relations with Iran in the post-Second Karabakh War era.

## Referat

Azərbaycan və Ermənistan arasında İkinci Qarabağ Müharibəsi Azərbaycanın xarici siyasət seçimlərinə və qonşu dövlətlərlə münasibətlərinə mühüm təsir göstərmişdir. Bu dissertasiya işində İkinci Qarabağ müharibəsindən sonra Azərbaycanın xarici siyasətinin hərtərəfli təhlili, onun İranla münasibətlərinə xüsusi diqqət yetirilməklə, siyasi realizm obyektivindən istifadə edilir. Gücü, milli maraqları və təhlükəsizlik qaygılarını önə çəkən siyasi realizmin nəzəri çərçivəsinə əsaslanaraq, bu araşdırma Azərbaycanın xarici siyasət qərarlarının əsasını təşkil edən motivasiyaları, mülahizələri və strategiyaları işıqlandırmaq məqsədi daşıyır.

Dissertasiya Azərbaycan və İran arasında ikitərəfli əlaqələrin tədqiqi ilə başlayır, bu əlaqələrin formalaşmasında İkinci Qarabağ müharibəsinin əhəmiyyətini vurğulayır. Azərbaycanın xarici siyasət məqsədləri və prioritetləri haqqında ümumi məlumat verir, müharibədən sonrakı xarici siyasətində baş verən dəyişiklikləri təhlil edir və Azərbaycanın qərar qəbul etmə proseslərinə təsir edən amilləri müəyyənləşdirir. Azərbaycanın ümumi xarici siyasət kontekstini tədqiq etməklə bu araşdırma onun İranla münasibətlərinin dinamikasını anlamaq üçün əsas yaradır.

Sonrakı fəsillərdə klassik realizm prizmasından Azərbaycan-İran münasibətlərinə xüsusi diqqət yetirilir. Azərbaycanın İkinci Qarabağ Müharibəsindəki qələbəsinin İranın mühüm regional aktor olması ilə onun rəqiblərinə qarşı xarici siyasətinə təsirini araşdırılır. Azərbaycan-İran münasibətlərinin tarixi fonu əvvəlki münaqişələr və əməkdaşlıq nümunələri nəzərə alınmaqla araşdırılır. Fəsillər Azərbaycanın İranın opponentləri ilə münasibətlərinin İranın müharibə zamanı mövqeyinə təsiri, İranın balanslaşdırma siyasəti və onun müharibədən sonrakı mövqeyində cəmlənmiş pragmatizmi araşdırır. Bundan əlavə, müharibədən sonra Azərbaycan-İran münasibətlərində baş verən dəyişiklikləri və inkişafı təhlil edilir, əməkdaşlıq və fikir ayrılığının əsas sahələrini müəyyənləşdirilir və iki ölkə arasında dinamikanı formalaşdıran amilləri araşdırılır. Həmçinin Azərbaycanın dostları və müttəfiqləri ilə münasibətlərinin onun İrana qarşı xarici siyasətinə necə təsir etdiyi və müharibə zamanı İranın mövqeyinin Azərbaycanın müharibədən sonrakı münasibətinə necə təsir etdiyi nəzərdən keçirilir.

Bu dissertasiya siyasi realizmin nəzəri çərçivəsini tətbiq etməklə Azərbaycanın İkinci Qarabağ müharibəsindən sonra, xüsusən də İrana münasibətdə xarici siyasət seçimlərinin başa düşülməsinə töhfə verir. Güc dinamikasını, milli maraqları, regional güc balansını mülahizələrini və təhlükəsizlik problemlərini təhlil edərək, bu tədqiqat Azərbaycanın müharibədən sonrakı xarici siyasətinin mürəkkəbliyi və İranla münasibətləri haqqında dəyərli fikirlər təqdim edir.

Tarixi kontekstin, müharibə zamanı konkret hadisələrin, müharibədən sonrakı hadisələrin və Azərbaycanın xarici siyasət seçimlərinin nəticələrinin hərtərəfli təhlili yolu ilə tədqiqat İkinci Qarabağ Müharibəsindən sonrakı dövrdə Azərbaycanın İranla münasibətlərini formalaşdıran mürəkkəb dinamika və motivlər haqqında anlayışımızı gücləndirir.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	8
Theoretical Framework: Classic Realism.....	10
Chapter I: Bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran: significance of the Second Karabakh war.....	15
Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy After the Second Karabakh War .....	15
Azerbaijan-Iran Relations: A Historical Overview.....	28
Azerbaijan-Iran relations during the Second Karabakh War .....	36
Azerbaijan-Iran Relations: Post-Second Karabakh War .....	43
Chapter II: Analysis of Azerbaijan-Iran relations from the classic realism perspective: How has the victory in the Second Karabakh War influenced Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards its opponents? .....	50
Impact of the Second Karabakh War on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Towards Its Opponents: the case of Iran .....	50
Classical Realism and Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Shifts.....	59
Azerbaijan-Iran Relations and the Second Karabakh War: A Realist Perspective .....	62
Conclusion.....	68
<i>References</i> .....	71

## **Introduction**

The Second Karabakh War, which unfolded between Azerbaijan and Armenia, has had far-reaching consequences for the geopolitical dynamics of the South Caucasus region. As Azerbaijan emerged triumphant, liberating its territories and reestablishing control over its borders, the aftermath of the conflict has profoundly influenced Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices and its relationships with neighboring states. This dissertation aims to comprehensively analyze Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the Second Karabakh War, with a specific focus on its relations with Iran, through the lens of political realism.

Political realism, a school of thought rooted in classical realist theories of international relations, provides a valuable framework for understanding and analyzing the behavior of states in their pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Realism emphasizes the primacy of power, national interests, and the quest for security in shaping states' actions in the international system. By applying this perspective to Azerbaijan's post-war foreign policy decisions, we can gain deep insights into the motivations, considerations, and strategies that underpin Azerbaijan's relations with Iran.

Azerbaijan-Iran relations after the victory of Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War is in its most strained period since Azerbaijan declared independence. The clash of interests between two parties, oppositional frontlines in ideological sphere and Iran's "creating balanced security environment in the region" policy are the main causes of this situation. But the fact is that these issues exist in Azerbaijan-Iran relations since Azerbaijan gained its independence in 1991. Therefore, the question is "Why now? Why does the situation exacerbate between Azerbaijan and Iran? What is the role of the victory in the Second Karabakh War in this process?" These questions bring urgency to analyze foreign policy of Azerbaijan after the Second Karabakh War and understanding because of what changes situation changed.

The objective of this dissertation work is to find answers to the abovementioned questions and investigate to the topic with this purpose.

The dissertation work consists of two chapters along with the introduction and conclusion sections.

Chapter I of this dissertation delves into the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran, underscoring the significance of the Second Karabakh War in shaping these ties. The chapter delves into the historical background of Azerbaijan-Iran relations, exploring the historical conflicts and



instances of cooperation between the two countries. By analyzing the influence of Azerbaijan's relations with Iran's opponents on Iran's stance during the war, the chapter uncovers the intricacies of Iran's balancing policy and the pragmatism embedded in its post-war stance. It offers an overview of Azerbaijan's foreign policy goals and priorities, providing a nuanced understanding of its aspirations in the post-war era. Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the changes that have occurred in Azerbaijan's foreign policy as a result of the war, examining the factors that influence Azerbaijan's decision-making processes. By unraveling the complexities of Azerbaijan's overall foreign policy context, we can better appreciate the dynamics of its relationship with Iran.

Chapter II focuses specifically on Azerbaijan-Iran relations from the classic realism perspective. This chapter investigates the impact of Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War on its foreign policy towards its opponents, with Iran occupying a significant position as a regional actor. Additionally, the chapter examines the shifts and developments in Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the war, identifying key objectives, priorities and changes, and evaluating the factors that shape the dynamics of foreign policy.

This dissertation makes a significant contribution to understanding of Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices after the Second Karabakh War, particularly in relation to Iran, by employing the theoretical framework of political realism. By carefully analyzing the power dynamics, national interests, considerations of regional balance of power, and security concerns, we can gain valuable insights into the intricate dynamics and motivations that shape Azerbaijan's relations with Iran in the post-Second Karabakh War era.

## **Theoretical Framework: Classic Realism**

Political realism is a prominent theoretical framework within the field of international relations that offers valuable insights into the behavior of states and the dynamics of power in the international system. Rooted in the works of scholars such as Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and E.H. Carr, political realism emphasizes the primacy of national interests, the struggle for power, and the importance of state sovereignty.

Central to political realism is the notion that states are rational actors driven by self-interest and the pursuit of power in an anarchic international system. According to realist thinkers, states prioritize the protection and promotion of their own security, survival, and well-being above all else. This self-centered focus stems from the belief that the international arena is characterized by a constant struggle for power and security, where states must navigate a competitive landscape to ensure their own survival.

Realism emphasizes the significance of power as a key determinant of international relations. States are seen as actors constantly seeking to maximize their power relative to other states, whether through military capabilities, economic resources, or diplomatic influence. Power dynamics and the balance of power play crucial roles in shaping the behavior of states, influencing their decisions regarding alliances, conflicts, and cooperation.

Political realism recognizes the importance of state sovereignty, suggesting that states have the ultimate authority and responsibility within their territories. Realists argue that states prioritize their own interests and act based on calculations of power and self-preservation, sometimes leading to a conflict of interests with other states. (Morgenthau, 1948)

By adopting a political realism perspective, this study aims to analyze Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its relations with Iran after the Second Karabakh War. Through the lens of political realism, the work will examine how Azerbaijan's pursuit of national interests, power considerations, and regional security dynamics have influenced its interactions and policies towards Iran. This theoretical framework provides a valuable lens for understanding the motivations and behaviors of states in the international system and serves as a foundation for our analysis in this study. Additionally, since there are 3 important forms of political realism like Classic, Neo and Neoclassic, Classic realism theory will be used for analyzing the topic.

Furthermore, realism is a set of ideas that take into account the importance of security and power factors. These ideas are based on the individual's belief that others are always trying to kill

him. Therefore, individual must be willing to kill others in order to protect himself. Realism is based on the struggle among nations. This struggle is not accidental. It has concrete rules. Thucydides is the founding father of the school of Political realism. He was Athenian historian and general. In his famous book called “History of the Peloponnesian War” he first time elaborated the main principles of war and peace. For explaining human behavior, he tried to develop an understanding of human nature. Another important member of the school of political realism is Thomas Hobbes. He was a British scholar and philosopher. In his famous book “Leviathan” (1651), he had tried to understand behavior of state or to find answer “Why are states waging war” question. He believed that egoist and aggressive policy of states take its root from human being. In other words, human being is aggressive and egoist that’s why states are aggressive and egoist. The main concepts of Realistic School are:

- Zero Sum Game – one actor’s gain is equivalent to another actor’s loss. There is only one winner.
- Balance of Power – the situation in which major contending powers do have approximately similar power. States balance against dominant power.
- Security Dilemma – the situation in which the actions taken by a state to increase its own security cause reactions from other states, which in turn lead to decrease rather than increase the security of entire states.
- Security environment – states usually use this practice in order to balance threats to their sovereignty or national interests from others by creating balance in neighbor environment, especially by balancing neighboring states. In this study the best example of it is Iran’s support to Armenia in order to equalize it to Azerbaijan to remove Azerbaijan’s threat to its own security. And also to create balance and status quo in its borders
- Balance of threat (Bandwagoning) – states are generally balancing by allying against a perceived threat, but very weak states are more likely to allying with the rising threat in order to decrease threat for provide their own security. (Because they cannot increase their power, therefore they try to decrease threat by allying with the threatening power)

There are two main proponents of Classic realism – Eduard Carr and Hans Morgenthau. According to Eduard Carr the main stimulus of the state action is National Interests and the main national interest is survive (security). That’s why states need to be powerful (military, economic etc.).

Another important proponent of Classic Realism is Hans Morgenthau. His “Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power” (1948) book is one of the important works of Classic Realism. According to Morgenthau, foreign policy has a rational nature and should be revealed by theories. His theory of international relations is based on six principles of political realism:

1. Politics is governed by objective laws.
2. The key to understanding international politics is the concept of interest, defined by power.
3. Although the forms and nature of state power change depending on time, place and context, the concept of interest will remain unchanged.
4. Universal ethical principles do not determine the functioning of the state.
5. There is no set of universally agreed moral principles.
6. The political sphere is intellectually independent of other spheres.

Morgenthau’s thoughts about National Interest: Since the government is a reflection of the national interest, the state must pursue its national interest. National interest is the only governing factor for foreign policy. Morgenthau notes that there are differences between the two elements of national interest: 1. Logically required and in this sense necessary (permanent interests as survive or national security); 2. Variable and defined by conditions. Foreign policy must pursue long-term goals (a changing element). The second element is governed by a specific situation and determined by subnational, national and supranational interests. Group interests can put pressure on foreign policy by equating themselves with national interests on the national stage. National interest can also be directly or indirectly invaded by foreign aggression. According to Morgenthau, the right balance must be created between these two elements of national interest.

Morgenthau's concept of national interest is not free of "moral dignity." But the national interest is more important to all peoples than freedom or economic prosperity.

According to Morgenthau, diplomacy performs two important functions: direct and indirect. With the help of a direct function, it reduces and softens conflicts. With the help of an indirect function, it creates conditions for the creation of a world community. For Morgenthau, diplomacy can perform its functions properly by following nine rules:

- Diplomacy must be free from the spirit of war
- Foreign policy goals should be defined as national interests and these goals should be defended by the government and force
- Diplomacy must look at the political scene from the perspective of other nations

- States must be prepared to make concessions on matters of non-vital importance
- States should strive for real advantages, not artificial ones
- States should not accept a position from which it is impossible to retreat without loss and to move forward without risk
- The state should not allow a weak ally to make decisions for him
- Military forces should be subordinate to the political leadership
- The government should be the leader of public opinion, not a servant

The generalization of the views of Carr and Morgenthau caused to the emergence of six core assumptions of Classic realism:

- States are main actors of International Relations
- International Relations does have anarchic nature
- States attempt to accumulate power in order to survive
- States always pursue their national interests and primary national interest is national security
- States can never be sure about the intentions of each other
- States are rational actors

To sum up, the application of Classic realism in analyzing foreign policy involves examining the international system through a lens that prioritizes power dynamics, national interests, and the pursuit of security. Scholars analyze the behavior of states, focusing on their interactions and strategies to maximize their relative power and ensure their survival.

In the context of foreign policy analysis, Classic realism helps understand the motivations behind state actions, such as alliances, conflicts, and diplomatic maneuvers. Classic realists emphasize the importance of factors like military capabilities, geographical positioning, and resource distribution in shaping state behavior. It acknowledges that states operate in a self-help system, assuming that they act in their own self-interest and seek to maintain or enhance their power. It emphasizes the competitive nature of international relations, where states engage in power struggles to secure their interests and protect their sovereignty. By employing Classic realism, analysts can assess the balance of power, identify potential threats and allies, evaluate the risks and benefits of different courses of action, and predict state behavior based on strategic calculations. It provides a framework to analyze foreign policy decisions by understanding states' security concerns, their responses to changing geopolitical dynamics, and the pursuit of their national

interests in the international arena. Ultimately, the application of Classic realism in analyzing foreign policy offers valuable insights into the rational calculations, power dynamics, and strategic considerations that shape state behavior and interactions in the complex realm of international relations, and Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards Iran, especially after the victory in the Second Karabakh War, is one of the most relevant cases for this analysis.

# **Chapter I: Bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran: significance of the Second Karabakh war**

## **Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy After the Second Karabakh War**

*Overview of Azerbaijan's foreign policy goals and priorities:* To start understanding Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its priorities and objectives it is needed to look at officially declared foreign policy priorities and goals of the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to the article published in the website of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan<sup>1</sup> the officially declared foreign policy priorities and objectives of Azerbaijan are as follows:

- Developing a Pluralistic Democracy based on the Market Economy and the Rule of Law:

Azerbaijan's commitment to developing a pluralistic democracy involves fostering political inclusivity, promoting transparency, and strengthening democratic institutions. The country aims to create an environment that encourages market competition, attracts foreign investment, and ensures the rule of law. This includes efforts to enhance the efficiency of the judicial system, combat corruption, and protect property rights.

- Conducting an Independent Foreign Policy and Restoring Territorial Integrity:

Azerbaijan's foreign policy prioritizes maintaining its independence and sovereignty. It seeks to restore its territorial integrity by peacefully resolving the conflict with Armenia, which includes liberating the occupied territories. Azerbaijan used to engage in diplomatic negotiations through the OSCE Minsk Group process to achieve a lasting solution that upholds international law and recognizes its territorial boundaries. But unfortunately, OSCE Minsk Group proved itself as a useless tool since it did not bring any changes to the conflict but rather tried to make it a frozen one and preserve status quo. Therefore, Azerbaijan started to use other tools such as mediation of superpowers alone not in the group form. And the developments in the issue proved that Azerbaijan's way is the correct one. In the alone mediation efforts mediators were not trying to do the same mistakes which OSCE Minsk Group did. Rather by bringing acceptable way they were trying to gain more respect from Azerbaijan so to that end Azerbaijan-the leading power of the region would consider their interests in the new reality.

---

<sup>1</sup> Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan, *THE PRIORITIES OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN*, available at: <https://supremecourt.gov.az/static/view/5>

- Eliminating Threats to Security, Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity:

Azerbaijan is determined to address threats to its security and territorial integrity. This includes countering terrorism, separatism, and extremist ideologies. Azerbaijan actively participates in regional and international security frameworks, cooperates with relevant organizations, and strengthens its defense capabilities to ensure the stability and independence of the country.

- Resolving the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict through Negotiations:

Azerbaijan's priority is to resolve the conflict based on the principles outlined in the OSCE Lisbon Summit. It seeks a negotiated settlement that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The country supports any mediation efforts, to facilitate negotiations and achieve a sustainable and peaceful resolution to the conflict.

- Eliminating Consequences of Armenia's Military Aggression:

Azerbaijan aims to address the consequences of Armenia's military aggression against its territory, including the humanitarian, social, and economic challenges faced by affected communities. This includes the repatriation and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, restoration of infrastructure, and providing support for economic recovery in the affected regions.

- Developing Good Neighborly Relations:

Azerbaijan places importance on building and maintaining good neighborly relations with its neighboring countries. It seeks to develop mutually beneficial partnerships that foster cooperation in various fields, including trade, energy, transportation, and cultural exchanges. By promoting regional integration and connectivity, Azerbaijan aims to contribute to stability, economic development, and enhanced diplomatic relations within the region.

- Strengthening Security and Stability in the Region:

Azerbaijan actively engages in efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region. This involves fostering cooperative relationships with regional organizations, participating in joint military exercises, and sharing intelligence information to combat common security threats. Azerbaijan supports confidence-building measures, promotes dialogue, and advocates for peaceful conflict resolution to maintain regional stability.

- Prevention of Illegal Weapons and Transportation:

Azerbaijan is committed to preventing the illegal transportation of weapons, drugs, and other illicit activities in the region. It cooperates with international organizations, such as the United



Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as neighboring countries, to enhance border security, combat transnational organized crime, and enforce control over arms trafficking.

- Adherence to Global Non-Proliferation Regimes:

Azerbaijan actively participates in global non-proliferation efforts, adhering to international agreements and conventions aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting disarmament. It supports existing global regimes, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and advocates for the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the South Caucasus to enhance regional security.

- Integration into European and Transatlantic Security and Cooperation Structures:

Azerbaijan seeks closer integration into European and Transatlantic security and cooperation structures to enhance its regional and international standing. It actively engages with organizations such as NATO, the European Union, the Western European Union, and the Council of Europe. Azerbaijan's cooperation includes participation in peacekeeping operations, contributing to regional security initiatives, and aligning its policies with the norms and standards of these organizations.

- Accelerating Economic Development and Utilizing Strategic Geographical Position:

Azerbaijan recognizes its strategic geographical position as a bridge between the East and the West, and it leverages this advantage to accelerate economic development. The country focuses on diversifying its economy, attracting foreign direct investment, and promoting trade and investment opportunities. It prioritizes the development of key sectors such as energy, transportation, tourism, agriculture, and technology, utilizing its geographical location to facilitate regional connectivity and become a hub for trade and commerce.

- Developing the Eurasian Transport Corridor:

Azerbaijan actively participates in the development of the Eurasian transport corridor, a critical infrastructure network connecting Europe and Asia. By expanding and improving transportation networks, including rail, road, and maritime routes, Azerbaijan aims to enhance regional connectivity, facilitate the efficient movement of goods and services, and promote trade and economic cooperation. This initiative contributes to regional integration, strengthens Azerbaijan's position as a key transit country, and fosters economic development across the region.

These foreign policy priorities reflect Azerbaijan's commitment to promoting its national interests, ensuring security and stability, resolving the conflict with Armenia, and fostering regional cooperation and integration. Through these strategic goals, Azerbaijan aims to position itself as a key player in the region, strengthen diplomatic ties, attract investments, and create favorable conditions for sustainable economic growth and development.

*Analysis of changes in foreign policy post-war:* The victory in the Second Karabakh War has significantly influenced Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents, resulting in strategic shifts and increased confidence in its regional standing. (Blank, 2021). This analysis examines the key factors and implications of this transformation.

After the war the foreign policy of Azerbaijan show greatly heightened assertiveness. This is one of the main factors increased its weight in Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the war. The successful outcome of the war has bolstered Azerbaijan's confidence and assertiveness in its foreign policy. The liberating of territories previously occupied by Armenia has strengthened Azerbaijan's position in the region, enabling it to pursue a more proactive approach towards its opponents. (Ismailzade, 2021)

This newfound assertiveness is reflected in several aspects of Azerbaijan's foreign policy such as asserting territorial integrity, asserting to improve military capabilities, more hegemonic policy in regional matters, diplomatic and economic assertiveness. After the victory Azerbaijan proved its will to overcome any challenge that threatens its safety or interests.

In that context it can be seen that since the victory in the war has allowed Azerbaijan to liberate territories that were previously under Armenian occupation Azerbaijan now emphasizes its unwavering commitment to its territorial integrity and sovereignty. It has become more assertive in defending its borders and asserting its claims to liberate its occupied territories. Azerbaijan even does not tolerate violation of the rules of the 10 November Declaration<sup>2</sup> among Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia by the Russian peacekeepers. It can be said that Azerbaijan with its assertiveness dictate its position over Russia in the region.

Changing power balance in the region is the biggest concern of Iran but after the victory in the war Azerbaijan without any hesitation started to strengthen its defense/military capabilities. (Natiqqizi, 2022). The Second Karabakh War showcased Azerbaijan's military capabilities and demonstrated its ability to successfully liberate occupied territories. This has led to a renewed focus

---

<sup>2</sup> President.az, *Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation*, 2020, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45924>

on strengthening its defense capabilities and investing in modernizing its armed forces. The aim is to deter potential threats and project power in the region, bolstering Azerbaijan's assertiveness.

The victory in the war has reshaped the regional dynamics in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan's assertive foreign policy approach has altered the balance of power in the region (Miholjic, 2020), diminishing the influence of its opponents. With more power in the region Azerbaijan dictates its rules and interests which are not accepted by external powers who have interests in the region. But again, newly shined factor – assertiveness, makes Azerbaijan more independent in its foreign policy towards the region but also brings irritation to external powers who have interest here. But the assertiveness has provided Azerbaijan with more leverage in regional affairs and has enhanced its ability to assert its interests.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach has also become more assertive diplomatically. It seeks to assert its positions and interests in international forums, advocating for the recognition of its territorial integrity and the rights of internally displaced persons. Azerbaijan actively engages in diplomatic initiatives to promote its narrative and secure international support.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan's assertiveness extends to its economic initiatives as well. The country has declared ambitious goals, such as the increasing gas export to Europe by two times which is decaled with the agreement between Azerbaijan and European Union strategic partnership memorandum<sup>3</sup> in the field of energy. Such kind of projects aims to enhance regional connectivity and solidify Azerbaijan's role as an important economic hub. These initiatives demonstrate Azerbaijan's assertive approach in pursuing its economic interests and regional integration.

Overall, heightened assertiveness is a significant aspect of Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach following the victory in the Second Karabakh War. Azerbaijan's assertiveness is reflected in its commitment to territorial integrity, strengthening defense capabilities, reshaping regional dynamics, diplomatic initiatives, and pursuing ambitious economic projects. It signals Azerbaijan's determination to protect its interests, assert its influence, and consolidate and improve its regional position.

As mentioned above Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the Second Karabakh War shows up different factors and aspects which are vastly different from pre-war period. After the victory Azerbaijan redefined regional dynamics. (Miholjic, 2020). The victory in the Second Karabakh War has altered the regional dynamics in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan's enhanced military

---

<sup>3</sup> European comission, *EU and Azerbaijan enhance bilateral relations, including energy cooperation*, 2022, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_4550](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_4550)

capabilities and territorial gains have reshaped the power dynamics, establishing Azerbaijan as a significant player in the region. As a result, Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents has evolved to reflect its newfound position of strength. With this strength Azerbaijan shows up shifts in its priorities and policy objectives in the region. With the liberation of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan can redirect its focus towards other regional issues and goals. This includes a greater emphasis on economic development, infrastructure projects, and strengthening bilateral relations with regional and global partners.(Santana, 2021). So, it can be seen that after the victory Azerbaijan behaves as a leader of the region, as a creator of the rules in the region but not as a state of which territories were under the occupation, of which is in the need of help from international community. And these changes are not accepted by actors who have interests in the region, and this is one of the cause of tension between Azerbaijan and Iran.

To further elaborate the redefinition of regional dynamics, it has influenced Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents in several ways. It firstly causes a shift in power balance of the region. (Miholjic, 2020). The military success and territorial gains achieved by Azerbaijan have reshaped the power balance in the region. Azerbaijan's strengthened position has not only altered its relations with Armenia but also impacted the dynamics with other neighboring countries. This shift in power balance has prompted Azerbaijan's opponents to reassess their own strategies and positions, creating a new geopolitical landscape in the South Caucasus. The victory in the Second Karabakh War has elevated Azerbaijan's regional influence and prominence. Azerbaijan's successful military campaign and territorial consolidation have positioned it as a key player in regional affairs. As a result, Azerbaijan has gained leverage and the ability to shape the agenda and outcomes of regional initiatives, influencing the behavior and responses of its opponents.

The redefined regional dynamics have led Azerbaijan's opponents to reevaluate their alliances and partnerships in the region. The changing power dynamics may compel these countries to seek new alliances or adjust their existing relationships to maintain their own strategic interests. Azerbaijan's opponents may seek closer ties with external actors to counterbalance Azerbaijan's growing influence, leading to potential shifts in regional alliances and partnerships. As an example of that factor Armenia improved its relations both with France and Iran. (Sadik, 2023). In fact these two countries, although they are representing two different blocks and ideology, support Armenia in the same way. It can be said that even these countries support Armenia's interests towards Azerbaijan more than Armenia support. The redefined regional dynamics also affect ongoing conflict resolution efforts. Azerbaijan's military success has altered the context and dynamics of

the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, potentially influencing the approaches and attitudes of international mediators and other stakeholders involved in the peace process. The changed regional dynamics may necessitate adjustments in the negotiation frameworks and strategies employed to reach a lasting resolution. While the redefined regional dynamics bring challenges, they also present opportunities for enhanced regional cooperation. (Cornell, 2023). Azerbaijan's strengthened position and influence can contribute to increased collaboration on economic, infrastructure, and security initiatives among countries in the South Caucasus. However, the willingness of Azerbaijan's opponents to engage in such cooperation and the broader geopolitical dynamics will shape the extent and nature of regional collaboration. To sum up analysis about redefined regional dynamics it can be noted that, the victory in the Second Karabakh War has significantly redefined the regional dynamics in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan's strengthened position and increased influence have influenced its foreign policy approach towards its opponents, prompting them to reassess their strategies and relationships. This redefinition of regional dynamics has implications for conflict resolution efforts, regional cooperation, and the overall stability and balance of power in the region. (Avdaliani, 2020).

Overall, the victory in the war has solidified Azerbaijan's position as a regional power in the South Caucasus. By liberating its territories, Azerbaijan has expanded its borders and increased its control over strategic areas. This has enhanced Azerbaijan's geopolitical influence and reshaped the dynamics among neighboring countries. The defeat in the war has significantly weakened Armenia's position and influence in the region. With the loss of territory, Armenia's ability to exert control and influence has been curtailed. This shift in power dynamics has impacted the regional balance and created opportunities for Azerbaijan to assert its interests more forcefully.

Also, the reshaping of regional dynamics has heightened security concerns for all actors involved. Azerbaijan's territorial liberation has led to changes in threat perceptions and prompted neighboring countries to reassess their own security strategies. (Ibrahimov & Muradov, 2021). This has resulted in an increased emphasis on security cooperation, including the strengthening of defense ties and the sharing of intelligence among regional actors.

The victory in the war has also prompted a reassessment of alliances and partnerships in the region. Azerbaijan's enhanced position and assertiveness have led to shifts in the alignment of countries, as well as the exploration of new partnerships. Neighboring countries and external actors have adjusted their strategies to accommodate the changing regional dynamics and seek opportunities for cooperation with Azerbaijan. (Jafarova, 2021). The reshaping of regional

dynamics has created opportunities for increased regional integration and connectivity. Azerbaijan's focus on infrastructure projects, such as energy pipelines and transportation network, has the potential to foster economic cooperation and promote connectivity in the region. This can lead to greater economic interdependence and influence the dynamics of regional cooperation.

Another factor in the foreign policy of Azerbaijan is Balancing and Engagement:

Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents involves a combination of balancing and engagement strategies. (Mammadov, 2021). Balancing refers to maintaining a delicate equilibrium between competing regional powers to safeguard its interests, while engagement focuses on fostering constructive relationships and pursuing mutual benefits. The balancing and engagement strategies adopted by Azerbaijan in its foreign policy approach towards its opponents play a crucial role in maintaining regional stability and safeguarding its interests.

Balancing refers to Azerbaijan's efforts to manage and maintain a delicate equilibrium between competing regional powers and actors. It involves avoiding overreliance on any single state or alliance while safeguarding its sovereignty and security. Azerbaijan seeks to balance its relationships with neighboring countries, global powers, and regional organizations to ensure a favorable environment for its foreign policy objectives. Azerbaijan firstly creates balance in its foreign policy by establishing strategic partnerships. Azerbaijan cultivates strategic partnerships with multiple countries to diversify its alliances and reduce dependency. This includes building relations with various regional and global actors, such as Turkey, Russia, the European Union, and the United States. (Jafarova, 2021). By fostering a network of partnerships, Azerbaijan aims to protect its interests, enhance its security, and access economic opportunities. Strategic partnerships form a significant component of Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents. These partnerships are aimed at fostering closer ties, enhancing regional cooperation, and advancing Azerbaijan's strategic interests. In the context of Strategic partnership different vectors can be seen. Azerbaijan's strategic partnership show up powerfully in relations with Turkey. The partnership between Azerbaijan and Turkey is characterized by strong historical, cultural, and ethnic ties. The two countries share a common linguistic and ethnic heritage, which forms the foundation of their close relationship. This partnership extends beyond cultural affinity to encompass various spheres, including politics, security, economy, and energy. In political sphere Azerbaijan and Turkey have a history of mutual support on regional and international issues. They frequently align their positions on matters of shared concern and coordinate diplomatic efforts. This partnership strengthens their collective influence and enables them to pursue common objectives. These two states always back

up each other in different places even though one of them was not represented there. But from the classic realism perspective this partnership and brotherhood take place just because of shared common interests. In that context Azerbaijan found itself powerful ally and safety shield which helps him to protect its neutrality and balancing policy between Russia-led and USA led block.

Cooperation in the security sphere meets mostly the interests of Azerbaijan. Because Turkey engages in robust security cooperation, including joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and defense collaboration with Azerbaijan. (Tait, 2011). This collaboration helps Azerbaijan to enhance its defense capabilities and fosters a sense of security in the region. Although Azerbaijan gained victory in the Second Karabakh War, there are separatist forces in Karabakh region of Azerbaijan which are backed by Armenia and mostly supported by Russian Peacekeepers. Considering these factors and adding Iran's threat to Azerbaijan brings great need for military power in Azerbaijan. In the face of Turkey Azerbaijan found the power which can help it to increase its military capabilities and gain military support when it is needed. In this context Shusha declaration of 2021 between Azerbaijan and Turkey<sup>4</sup> is the culmination point of security partnership between two states.

Economic field is another place where Azerbaijan-Turkey partnership continues. Azerbaijan and Turkey actively promote economic integration through various initiatives. They have established transportation corridors, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which facilitate the transport of energy resources and goods between the two countries. Economic cooperation agreements and joint investment projects further deepen their economic ties. In economic sphere mainly Turkey fulfils its interests like being hub for transportation to Europe from Asia and also having huge amount of Azerbaijan investment and additionally buying Azerbaijan natural resources in cheap prices for consuming and for using in industry. But on the other hand, Azerbaijan finds security shield in its natural resources, transit ways and pipelines which help Azerbaijan to sell its natural resources.

Russia-Azerbaijan Relations: Azerbaijan maintains a strategic partnership with Russia, which plays a significant role in shaping the regional dynamics of the South Caucasus. While Azerbaijan and Russia have had historical complexities and diverging interests, they also share areas of cooperation and common ground. Azerbaijan and Russia have established energy cooperation agreements, including the sale and transportation of Azerbaijani oil and gas to international markets

---

<sup>4</sup> President.az, *Azerbaijan, Turkey signed Shusha Declaration on allied relations*, 2021, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/52115>

through Russian territories. This energy cooperation helps ensure stable energy supplies and contributes to regional energy security. Azerbaijan and Russia engage in diplomatic dialogue on regional issues, including the resolution of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. They participated in peace talks and international initiatives, such as the Minsk Group, to seek a peaceful resolution and maintain stability in the region. Both parties have trade and economic relations in various sectors, such as agriculture, industry, and tourism. Both countries strive to expand their economic cooperation through bilateral agreements and joint projects. The culmination point of the relations is the 2022 declaration between Azerbaijan and Russia named as “Declaration on allied interaction between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation”<sup>5</sup>.

European Union-Azerbaijan Partnership: Azerbaijan also maintains a partnership with the European Union (EU) aimed at promoting political dialogue, economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges. The EU is an important partner for Azerbaijan in terms of trade, investment, and technical assistance. Azerbaijan and the EU engage in regular political dialogue to discuss issues of mutual interest, human rights, democracy, and regional stability. This dialogue serves as a platform to address concerns, enhance understanding, and strengthen relations. The EU is Azerbaijan's largest trading partner, and both parties strive to deepen their economic cooperation. The EU provides technical assistance, supports investment projects, and promotes trade relations to enhance economic ties between Azerbaijan and EU member states. Azerbaijan and the EU promote cultural exchanges, educational programs, and cooperation in various fields to foster mutual understanding and cooperation between their respective societies. In July of 2022 Azerbaijan and European Union signed a new agreement which is about the increasing of gas export to Europe from Azerbaijan by two times, which is named as “Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy”<sup>6</sup>.

Azerbaijan-Israel Partnership: The partnership between Azerbaijan and Israel has witnessed significant growth in recent years, spanning various domains, including defense, energy, technology, and agriculture. This partnership is driven by shared interests and common objectives. (Avdaliani, 2020). Azerbaijan and Israel engage in defense cooperation, including the sale and purchase of military equipment, joint military exercises, and intelligence sharing. This collaboration strengthens Azerbaijan's defense capabilities and provides technological

---

<sup>5</sup> President.az, *Declaration on allied interaction between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation*, 2022, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/55498>

<sup>6</sup> European commission, *EU and Azerbaijan enhance bilateral relations, including energy cooperation*, 2022, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_4550](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_4550)



advancements. They have cooperated in the energy sector, particularly in the field of oil and gas. Azerbaijan exports energy resources to Israel, contributing to Israel's energy security. Additionally, the two countries explore opportunities for collaboration in renewable energy and alternative fuels. Israel promotes technological improvement and innovation in Azerbaijan. This includes cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, cybersecurity, water management, and high-tech industries, where both countries can benefit from sharing expertise and resources. In 2023 Azerbaijan opened embassy in Israel which is one of the significant events of the whole Israel – Azerbaijan relations since 1992. (Huseynov, 2022) But in fact this event was the cause of further exacerbation of the relations between Azerbaijan and Iran. Iran recognizes this event as a new threat to its interests and security.

**Azerbaijan-Pakistan Partnership:** Azerbaijan and Pakistan share historical, cultural, and religious affinities, forming the basis of their partnership. This relationship encompasses various aspects, including political cooperation, defense collaboration, and cultural exchanges. Azerbaijan and Pakistan maintain close diplomatic ties and coordinate their positions on regional and international issues of mutual concern. They support each other's initiatives and engage in regular political dialogue. The parties have engaged in defense collaboration, including training exchanges, military exercises, and defense equipment sales. This partnership enhances the defense capabilities of both countries and contributes to regional security.

These strategic partnerships contribute to Azerbaijan's balancing foreign policy by expanding its regional influence, diversifying its alliances, and securing economic and security interests. By cultivating strong relationships with key regional and global actors, Azerbaijan strengthens its position and enhances its ability to navigate complex geopolitical challenges. (Blank, 2021)

Another tool used by Azerbaijan is non-alignment. Azerbaijan maintains a non-aligned stance, steering clear of formal military alliances or exclusive partnerships that could antagonize its opponents. This approach allows Azerbaijan to retain flexibility and maneuverability in its foreign policy decisions, avoiding unnecessary entanglements and conflicts. Non-alignment is a key aspect of Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach, emphasizing its commitment to maintaining independence and avoiding formal military alliances or exclusive partnerships that could limit its flexibility and autonomy. Non-alignment allows Azerbaijan to preserve its strategic autonomy and decision-making freedom in international affairs. By refraining from joining military alliances, Azerbaijan can independently shape its foreign policy agenda, pursue its national interests, and navigate regional dynamics without being bound by the obligations and constraints of formal alliances. Non-

alignment does not mean isolation. Azerbaijan actively engages in multilateral forums and international organizations to participate in global affairs, voice its concerns, and contribute to cooperative initiatives. It seeks to maintain good relations with a wide range of countries and regional organizations, leveraging its neutrality to facilitate dialogue and bridge differences.

Non-alignment serves as a mechanism for Azerbaijan to avoid becoming entangled in regional conflicts or being drawn into disputes that are not directly related to its core interests. By adopting a neutral stance, Azerbaijan minimizes the risk of being pulled into confrontations and can focus on its own development and stability.

Non-alignment positions Azerbaijan as a potential mediator and facilitator in regional conflicts. Its impartiality and independence can contribute to its credibility and effectiveness in promoting peaceful dialogue, negotiation, and conflict resolution. Azerbaijan's non-alignment status enhances its capacity to serve as a neutral platform for promoting dialogue among conflicting parties. From this perspective it is not a shocking fact that Azerbaijan host different meetings between western powers and Russia in order to mediate relations.

Non-alignment enables Azerbaijan to explore economic opportunities and partnerships with a wide range of countries. By maintaining neutrality, Azerbaijan can attract investment, foster trade relations, and establish economic cooperation with multiple actors, maximizing its potential for economic growth and development. Non-alignment contributes to Azerbaijan's international reputation as a reliable and neutral actor. It enhances the country's image as a responsible and peace-loving nation committed to resolving conflicts through peaceful means, thereby strengthening its diplomatic standing and credibility in the global arena. By adopting a non-aligned stance, Azerbaijan seeks to safeguard its sovereignty, preserve its independence, and actively engage with a diverse range of actors without being bound by formal military alliances. This approach allows Azerbaijan to pursue its national interests, contribute to regional stability, and capitalize on opportunities for economic growth and cooperation. From that context, to prove that intentions and interests also to show this to the whole world Azerbaijan joined Non-Alignment Movement in 2011<sup>7</sup>. The participation of Azerbaijan in the movement increases its influence in the whole world and also helps Azerbaijan to fulfill its interests in diplomatic field, especially about engagement. In 2019 Azerbaijan become the leader of Non-Alignment Movement for three years term. Azerbaijan's leadership to the Movement is evaluated greatly because of Azerbaijan's

---

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Azerbaijan, *Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)*, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/category/international-organisations/non-aligned-movement-nam>

innovative initiatives to promote Non-Alignment Movement. Also with the diplomatic weight in Non-Alignment Movement Azerbaijan also gains diplomatic weight in UN General Assembly. With that Azerbaijan mainly gains diplomatic victory by gaining more than 50 percent of votes in UNGA.

On the other hand, engagement entails Azerbaijan's proactive efforts to foster constructive relationships and pursue mutually beneficial cooperation with its opponents. Despite geopolitical differences or historical conflicts, Azerbaijan seeks to engage diplomatically, economically, and culturally with its opponents to promote understanding, dialogue, and potential areas of collaboration. Azerbaijan engages in diplomatic dialogue with its opponents to address shared concerns, resolve conflicts, and seek peaceful resolutions. It participates in multilateral forums, international organizations, and bilateral talks to promote constructive discussions and bridge differences. In the context of engagement diplomatic dialogue plays a crucial role in Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach, facilitating communication, understanding, and conflict resolution with its opponents. Diplomatic dialogue allows Azerbaijan to establish channels of communication with its opponents, enabling the exchange of views, concerns, and interests. Through diplomatic channels, Azerbaijan can promote mutual understanding, clarify intentions, and address misperceptions or miscommunications, thus reducing tensions and creating a basis for constructive engagement. Diplomatic dialogue serves as a platform for Azerbaijan to engage in negotiations and seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts with its opponents. By engaging in diplomatic talks, Azerbaijan can express its grievances, present its positions, and explore potential compromises or mutually acceptable solutions. This can contribute to de-escalation, confidence-building measures, and ultimately, the peaceful settlement of disputes. Diplomatic dialogue helps build trust and confidence between Azerbaijan and its opponents. Through sustained and open communication, Azerbaijan can demonstrate its commitment to peaceful coexistence, respect for international norms, and willingness to engage in constructive dialogue. This can contribute to a more stable and predictable relationship, reducing the likelihood of conflicts and promoting cooperation.

Diplomatic dialogue provides a platform for Azerbaijan to negotiate and conclude bilateral agreements with its opponents. These agreements can cover various areas of cooperation, such as trade, investment, cultural exchange, and security. By engaging in diplomatic dialogue, Azerbaijan can seek to establish mutually beneficial frameworks that promote cooperation and address shared challenges. Azerbaijan's diplomatic dialogue extends beyond bilateral interactions and can include regional and international mediation efforts. By engaging in mediation processes, Azerbaijan can

utilize its diplomatic skills, regional knowledge, and impartiality to facilitate dialogue and bridge differences between conflicting parties. This can contribute to conflict resolution and stability in the broader region. Active engagement in diplomatic dialogue enhances Azerbaijan's diplomatic standing and reputation in the international community. By demonstrating a commitment to peaceful dialogue and diplomatic solutions, Azerbaijan can garner respect and credibility among its peers, strengthening its influence and capacity to shape regional and global affairs.

Through diplomatic dialogue, Azerbaijan seeks to foster understanding, resolve conflicts, build trust, and promote cooperation with its opponents. It serves as a crucial tool for peaceful engagement and conflict resolution, enabling Azerbaijan to pursue its national interests and contribute to regional stability. Azerbaijan recognizes the importance of economic cooperation as a means to build bridges and establish common interests with its opponents. By promoting trade, investment, and regional infrastructure projects, Azerbaijan seeks to create interdependencies that can foster stability and enhance economic prosperity.

By employing a balanced approach and actively engaging with its opponents, Azerbaijan aims to reduce tensions, build trust, and create an environment conducive to resolving conflicts peacefully. Balancing and engagement strategies enable Azerbaijan to protect its interests while contributing to regional stability and cooperation.

## **Azerbaijan-Iran Relations: A Historical Overview**

Azerbaijan is of great importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran. First, Azerbaijan is Iran's northern neighbor. Iran has a 765-kilometer-long border with Azerbaijan. At the same time, both countries are on the coast of the Caspian Sea. Transportation between Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan can only be provided through Iran. Both states have had common values and cultures from the past to the present. Moreover, most of the people in both states belong to the Shiite sect of Islam. The Safavid Dynasty, which took over the administration of the present Iranian lands in the sixteenth century, accepted Shi'ism as a state sect in 1501. After this date, the Islamic and Turkish worlds were divided in terms of sect. 80% of Azeri

Turks in the Republic of Azerbaijan are Shia. Azerbaijan is the country with the second-largest Shia population in the world after Iran. (Nassibli, 1999). Most of the Azerbaijani Turks are not only Shiites but also belong to the Jafari branch of Shiism, which is dominant in Iran. Despite all these differences, the most important difference between the two states is that Azerbaijan is a secular state and Iran is a theocratic state. Azerbaijan's secularism has largely been inherited from the USSR period, and the Azerbaijani administration strives to preserve this feature of the country.

The historical, cultural, and religious partnership between Iran and Azerbaijan produces two contradictory results. Common points soften relations on the one hand and cause tension on the other. For example, the fact that a large part of the Azerbaijani people are Shiites and even from the Jafari branch of Shiism increases the closeness with Iran on the one hand, and on the other hand, the secular state structure of Azerbaijan creates conflict with Tehran. The political leaders of the two states use the historical, cultural, and religious partnership as a tool to keep the strained relations at a certain level and emphasize this situation. (Abasov, 2011)

Iran's foreign policy towards the Caucasus is based on geopolitical concerns. Tehran often prioritizes its security and economic interests. The limitations imposed by the significant Azerbaijani Turkish population in Iran and the conflictual relations with the USA and Israel affect Iran's South Caucasus policy. (Shaffer, 2003:18). After the collapse of the USSR, many new states emerged in the vicinity of Iran. Among these states, Azerbaijan has been of great importance to Iran. Initially, Tehran saw Azerbaijan as a natural ally for historical, religious, and cultural reasons. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has assumed Iran as a natural ally and as a pro-Azerbaijani mediator in the solution of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, the declaration of the independence of Azerbaijan caused indecision in the Iranian political elite for a while. Some of the Iranian rulers argued that the Republic of Azerbaijan should be integrated into Iran on the grounds that it was a part of Iran in the past. Others strongly opposed it. Opponents both did not find this idea realistic and claimed that such an integration would increase the Turkish weight in the country and lead to the Turkification of Iran. (Nassibli, 1999). The Islamic Republic of Iran officially recognized the independence of Azerbaijan on March 12, 1992. During this period, trade between Baku and Tehran increased rapidly, and visa applications between the two states were abolished.

Iran's foreign policy towards Azerbaijan includes some basic principles. The first of these is to limit Baku's influence on southern Azerbaijan and to ensure Iran's territorial integrity and stability by keeping Azerbaijan busy with its own internal problems. (Nassibu, 1999:13-14). Due to the large Azerbaijani Turkish population, Iran is afraid that Azerbaijan will get stronger and follow an

irredentist policy. For this reason, it wants the continuation of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and wants Baku to direct its full attention to this problem. Although Tehran officially declares that it is neutral in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, it de facto supports Armenia. Another dimension of Iran's support for Armenia hinders Turkey's cooperation with Azerbaijan and the Central Asian Turkic Republics. Instead of increasing Turkish influence in the region, Iran wants to export the revolution and establish a pro-Tehran regime by eliminating the secular system of Azerbaijan on the axis of the "Shiite Crescent". Therefore, in the current situation, it does not want Azerbaijan to develop by increasing its national power elements, nor does it want Azerbaijan to be an effective regional or global power other than itself. The developed bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey in every field, the balanced foreign policy of Baku between the USA and the Russian Federation (RF), and the military-technological cooperation that Azerbaijan established with Israel in order to increase its military power due to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia increase Tehran's security concerns. Iran perceives the increase in the effectiveness of another regional and global power in Azerbaijan both as a challenge to its own regional supremacy and a threat to its security.

When Iran-Azerbaijan relations are examined over time, the relations between the two states have changed radically since the leader of the Azerbaijan National Front, Elchibey, came to power. Elchibey was a leader with a secular, nationalist, and anti-Iranian stance and emphasized the need to unite North and South Azerbaijan on every platform. According to him, North and South Azerbaijan will unite in five years. Although Elchibey's statements did not have much effect on the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, they changed Tehran's view of Azerbaijan. Iran mostly perceives Azerbaijan as a threat to itself. Claiming to be the leader of the Islamic world, Tehran started to support Christian Armenia instead of Muslim and Shiite Azerbaijan in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In addition, Iran used the non-Turkish and Persian-speaking Talysh minority in Azerbaijan to balance the South Azerbaijan problem.

Heydar Aliyev, who became the President of Azerbaijan after Elchibey was removed from power, tried to improve relations with Iran. Aliyev followed a balanced and pragmatic policy between the USA, Turkey, and Iran. He made several visits to Iran. However, Aliyev was not successful in shaping Iran's Azerbaijan policy. The agreement between Iran and Azerbaijan, allowing Iran to extract and transport 25% of Azeri oil, was signed on November 11, 1994. However, the agreement could not be implemented due to strong US opposition. In 1996, the US Congress approved the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, which imposes sanctions on

companies participating in projects involving Iran. Azerbaijan had to take into account the decision of the USA. Because the USA had a 40% share in the aforementioned project, Baku needed the political and economic support of Washington to implement the project. Iran reacted to his exclusion from the project and described Aliyev as a puppet of the "great devil". (Souleimanov & Ditych, 2007:104). Aliyev gave 10% to Tehran in the "Shahdeniz" field consortium to appease Iran. However, despite this, Iran has revised its Azerbaijan policy. First of all, it established close relations with Russia, increased its economic and political cooperation with Armenia, and followed a cautious policy towards Azerbaijan. However, with the support of the USA, Turkey and Azerbaijan formed a counteralliance.

In the period of Ilham Aliyev, a more moderate atmosphere was formed in bilateral relations, but tensions also occurred. In this period, although positive developments were achieved in relations with mutual visits and signed commercial and economic agreements, it was not possible to reach the desired level in general. (Çelikpala, 2013:290).

Looking at the political aspect of the relations, it is seen that the large Azerbaijani population living in Iran is a determinant in the relations between the two countries. Today, a significant part of the Iranian population consists of Azerbaijani Turks. There are different figures in various sources regarding the Azerbaijani Turkish population living in Iran. According to the 1996 census, there were 11.5 million Azerbaijani Turks living in Iran. This figure made up 25% of the country's population. Iran's ambassador to Azerbaijan stated in 2006 that the number of Azerbaijani Turks living in Iran exceeded 35 million. (Yunus, 2006:114). Azerbaijani Turks living in Iran constitute 75% of the total population of Azerbaijani Turks in the world. Most of the Azerbaijani Turks in question have been integrated into Iranian society and are working in the upper echelons of the state administration. One of the most important of these is Seyid Ali Khamenei, the current religious leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the successor of Ayatollah Khomeini. (Oğuz, 2012).

Today, there are two main factors affecting the South Azerbaijan movement in Iran. (Nassibli, 1999). The first is the rise of Azerbaijani Turkish national consciousness and its spread to higher social classes, and the second is the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The rising national consciousness did not create an incentive for the Azerbaijani Turks to leave Iran (Akdevelioğlu, 2004:150) but rather tended towards the acquisition and expansion of cultural rights. (Shaffer, 2000:460). For example, Azerbaijani Turks want to use their language as the official language of instruction in schools.

Among the Azerbaijani Turks living in Iran, there are three main currents regarding South Azerbaijan. Religious leaders, traders, and high-ranking people in the Iranian state administration, who are included in the first movement, support a united Iran. While some of them argue that all of Iran should be Turkified, others support the participation of Northern Azerbaijan in Iran. The second stream consists of intellectuals, merchants, and bureaucrats and fears the division of Iran. This movement wants autonomy and cultural rights to be given to southern Azerbaijan. "Democracy for Iran, autonomy for Azerbaijan" is a common slogan among this group. The third current demands the independence of South Azerbaijan and the union with the north. This trend claims that the problem cannot be solved in the long run, and they declare that they will resort to all means to achieve their goals, including military methods. (Nassibli, 1999). Tehran is suspicious of Baku's irredentist policy towards the Azerbaijani Turkic population in its country.

Iran is afraid of the emergence of a strong and attractive Azerbaijan Republic and that this situation will increase awareness of ethnic identity among Azeri Turks. Iran officially expresses its neutrality in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict. (Shaffer, 2000:466-467). In reality, Iran, despite its historical, cultural, and religious partnership with Azerbaijan and the significant number of Azerbaijani Turks living on its territory, supports Christian Armenia in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, similar to the policy of the USA, which it defines as the "great devil". Until the ceasefire mediated by the RF in 1994, Iran did not take any action to prevent Armenia's invading policy towards Azerbaijani lands. (Sarıkaya, 2021:92). Azerbaijan suffered from this situation every time it played the role of mediator between the parties. Iran's mediation attempt in November 1991 was inconclusive due to Armenia's Khojaly massacre (February 25–26, 1992), and the mediation attempts in February and May 1992 were due to the occupation of Shusha and Lachin by Armenians. While the peace talks for conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia were continuing in Tehran, the Azerbaijani Turks blamed Iran for the fall of Shusha and other strategic cities to the Armenians. (Shaffer, 2002). The Islamic Republic of Iran supports Christian Armenia against its Muslim neighbor, Azerbaijan. An important reason for this is to prevent Azerbaijan from being a center of attraction for Azeris in Iran while dealing with the aforementioned conflict. (Sarıkaya, 2008:304). Iran has followed a policy in favor of the continuation of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia without a solution. The reason for this is that the deadlock makes both Armenia and Azerbaijan dependent on Iran. Since the borders of Turkey and Azerbaijan are closed due to the territories occupied in and around Karabakh, Armenia needs its southern neighbor Iran in every area. Azerbaijan has to use Iran to reach Nakhchivan. In addition, the continuation of the



occupation would cause Baku to direct all its energies to the occupied territories under the Armenian occupation, and therefore it would not be able to show interest in Southern Azerbaijan. In addition, a weak Azerbaijan that could not protect its territorial integrity would not have the potential to rival Iran ideologically, geopolitically, and politically. (Keskin, 2020).

On the other hand, Iran did not want the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia to escalate. In such a case, the possibility of intervention by foreign powers would arise, a refugee flow towards itself would occur, and instability would occur on the northern border. In addition, Tehran has resorted to anti-Armenian discourse when it is under political pressure from southern Azerbaijan due to its national interests. (Shaffer, 2003:19). In fact, when Armenians attacked Nakhchivan in September 1993, Iranian troops crossed the Aras River and warned Armenia, and Armenia guaranteed Iran that it would not attack Nakhchivan. (Sinkaya, 2012:240-241).

The second dimension of political relations was the problem of determining the status of the Caspian Sea. After the collapse of the USSR, three new riparian states emerged in the Caspian Sea. On the other hand, Iran wanted to act within the framework of the agreements signed with the USSR in 1921 and 1940 in the Caspian Sea. According to international law, the status of the Caspian Sea had to be determined by agreement among the riparian states. Some riparian states signed bilateral agreements among themselves, but for a long time, no agreement was reached on which all riparian states agreed. The intervention of Iranian warships and planes in the Caspian Sea, near the Iranian border, by Azerbaijani elements, which were searching for oil in July 2001, brought the two states to the brink of war. Iranian warplanes harassed the research vessel of BP/Amoco, which was exploring for oil in the Caspian Sea, on July 23, 2001. On the same date, an Iranian warship entered the territorial waters of Azerbaijan and threatened the search ship Geophysics-3 with fire if it did not leave the area. Turkey quickly took action on this situation. Ankara announced that the Chief of General Staff of the time, General Hüseyin Kvrkolu, would visit Azerbaijan on August 25, 2001, and that this visit would be accompanied by 10 F-16 warplanes and the "Turkish Stars" aerobatic team. During this visit, "Turkish Stars" made a 22-minute demonstration flight over Baku and the Caspian Sea (Olson, 2002:120). Turkey has shown Iran that it will stand by Baku when the Republic of Azerbaijan is under threat. (Koolae & Hafezian, 2010:400).

Azerbaijan and the USA conducted joint exercises in the Caspian Sea in August 2003 and February 2004. After the exercises in question, Iran accused Azerbaijan of arming the Caspian Sea. (Yunus, 2006:115). Iran has generally defended the thesis of dividing the bottom of the Caspian

Sea in such a way that each riparian country has a 20% share. With the agreement signed between Azerbaijan, the RF, and Kazakhstan in 2003, 18.7% of the Caspian Sea floor was left to the RF, 19.5% to Azerbaijan, and 29.6% to Kazakhstan within the framework of the midline principle. The share that would fall to Iran, which did not accept the agreement, was 13.8%. (Ghafouri, 2008:89). Iran has insisted on claiming a 20% share in order to acquire more energy resources by acquiring the oil-rich regions of Azerbaijan. Tehran has engaged in some provocative activities to increase its share. For example, Iranian scientists began to conduct research on the seafloor in the south of the Caspian Sea. Iran stated that it is the shortest and most cost-effective route for the transmission of Caspian energy resources to international markets because of its geographical location and transportation infrastructure. (Sadri, 2003:187). However, the biggest obstacle to the realization of this situation has been the strategy of the USA to surround and isolate Iran. (Miles, 1999:327). Tehran strongly opposed the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which was put into operation in 2006, aiming to transport the oil produced in the Caspian Basin, especially Azeri oil, to the world markets through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, but failed to prevent this project. The project in question was perceived as a geopolitical defeat for Iran.

Differences of opinion between Iran and Azerbaijan on the status of the Caspian Sea were resolved on 12 August 2018 with the participation of riparian Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, the RF, and Turkmenistan. The agreement was that each riparian state should be sovereign up to a distance of 15 nautical miles, be able to engage in fishing activities within 10 nautical miles of a distance after 15 nautical miles and accept the remaining sea area as a neutral zone open to the common use of the states.

The third dimension of political relations is the adoption of different ideologies by Iran and Azerbaijan. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as its name suggests, is a theological state. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has a secular state structure. Today, Azerbaijan is the target of Iran's Islamic export policy. (Souleimanov & Ditych, 2007:107). Azerbaijan sees the rising social and political opposition to the Aliyev administration as a threat and believes that the opposition with Islamic tendencies is provoked by Tehran. Baku accuses Iran of supporting Islamic groups and actions by opening religious schools, bookstores, and cultural centers in Azerbaijan. Iran supported the pro-Tehran Azerbaijani Islamic Party, which was banned by Azerbaijan politically and financially. Baku High Criminal Court sentenced Azerbaijan Islamic Party leader Movsum Samedov to prison for various crimes in which he was involved in terrorism. The wearing of hijab in schools was banned by the Baku Education Department in December 2011. Some religious leaders in Iran have publicly

accused the Baku administration, arguing that the ban in question is incompatible with the Islamic history of Azerbaijan.

The two states have different motivations and orientations in the field of security and the alliances they have established in this context. This situation causes tension between Tehran and Baku relations. Both states tend toward different and opposing power centers. Iran establishes close relations with Russia and China in order to meet US and Israeli threats against itself. On the other hand, Azerbaijan is developing its relations with Turkey and Israel in order to solve the Karabakh conflict, which is the biggest security problem, and follows a balanced policy between the West and especially the USA and Moscow. Baku's relations with the aforementioned states for political, military, economic, and technological cooperation are at an advanced level.

The closest danger Tehran perceives from Baku is the US and Israeli military deployments in its territory. Azerbaijan's close relations with the USA and Israel are a big problem for Iran. Azerbaijan and Iran signed an agreement in 2005 with the aim of eliminating Tehran's concerns and committing not to allow each other to use their lands against the attacks of third states. On the other hand, in the Tehran Declaration published by five Caspian riparian countries in 2007, the riparian states declared that they would not allow other riparian states to use their lands for the purpose of attack. While Azerbaijan is impartial towards Iran's nuclear program, it also asserts that it has the right to develop military and technological relations with Israel. Ilham Aliyev's administration signed an agreement to buy military equipment worth 1.6 billion dollars from Israel. This agreement was met with a reaction by Iran, and Tehran accused Baku of facilitating a possible attack on Iran by developing cooperation with the USA and Israel. (Çelikpala, 2013:291-292). The discovery of terrorist cells associated with the Iranian intelligence service in Azerbaijan and cyberattacks on the official websites of Azerbaijani state institutions have made relations between the two states even more tense. The websites of important state institutions such as the Presidency of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Constitutional Court were hacked on January 16, 2011. Notes accusing the Azerbaijani authorities of "serving the Jews" were placed on these sites. It has been claimed that the hackers in question carried out the cyberattacks from Iran. (Muradova, 2011).

Tensions in bilateral relations continued in the following period as well. Major General Hasan Firuzabadi, Chief of General Staff of Iran at the time, said about the Aliyev administration, "If they continue to pursue an anti-Iranian policy, Aliyev will face a terrible future. It will be impossible for Aliyev to suppress an uprising by the people of Aran (Azerbaijan). These statements of the Iranian

Chief of General Staff were perceived by Baku as Tehran's anger towards its relations with the USA and Israel. These statements caused the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan to issue a note to the Iranian Ambassador in Baku. (Tait, 2011). Iran stated that Azerbaijan has become the base of the US and Israeli intelligence services, which are trying to obtain intelligence against the Tehran administration.

Bilateral economic relations have been affected by the course of political relations between the two capitals and developments in the global economy. Energy has come to the fore in the economic relations between the two states. (Zadeh, 2008:39). Negotiations were held between political leaders, and economic agreements were made. In addition to the historical pipeline that traverses the Caspian Sea coast, a pipeline connecting Northern Iran to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan was completed in 2005, and the leaders of both countries expressed that they want to increase their cooperation in the field of energy. Road and railway construction also presented another development area for both countries. In this context, the railway line, which was established between the cities of Qazvin in Iran and Astara in Azerbaijan, then extending to Baku and later covering Russia, was put into service in 2018. An important part of the railway and highway projects between the two countries is realized within the framework of the "North-South" international transportation corridor. Through the "North-South" international transportation corridor, European countries, the RF, Central Asia, and the Caucasus regions is able to reach the Persian Gulf and India, and on the other hand, the trade of the countries that have a coast to the Caspian Sea with the Black Sea ports develops. (Aslanlı, 2017:15).

## **Azerbaijan-Iran relations during the Second Karabakh War**

### Pragmatism in Iran's stance

With a population of 79,926,270 according to the 2016 census, Iran is one of the countries with the highest population in the Middle East (Iran-Main Indicator, 2020). As of 2020, Iran has 25% of the Middle East's oil reserves and 12% of the world's oil reserves (Peterson & Dunn, 2021). Iran's geographical location between the Middle East, the Gulf region, the Caucasus, and Central Asia

has increased its role as an important regional and global actor throughout history. Iran was a country that was constantly targeted by the great powers of the period and perceived threats from its close circle and great powers. Iran fought Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was occupied by the British and Russians in the twentieth century. As a result of all these factors, security and eliminating foreign threats have come to the fore as dominant factors in Iran's foreign policy (Sharashenidze, 2011:2). Iran's foreign policy is influenced by the political structure of the state. After the Islamic revolution, the political structure is in a position between democracy and theocracy. The religious leader has decisive and definitive power. As in all other fields, the religious leader has the last word in the field of foreign policy. On the political power side, the authority is shared between councils, assemblies, and state institutions, which are elected by the people and formed by the religious section, which has veto powers and responsibilities over each other. The basic principles of Iran's foreign policy are in Article 152 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran: "Preventing the establishment of superiority over Iran; establishing mutual relations with peaceful states; maintaining Iran's independence and territorial integrity in all areas; defending the rights of all Muslims; being in a state of non-alignment towards hegemonic powers" (Constitution, n.d.). Maintaining the balance between ideology and pragmatism in foreign policy making, which has existed throughout Iran's history, is the most difficult, complex, and continuous phenomenon for Iranian foreign policy in the last period (Ramazani, 2004:549). There are some events that can be given as examples of the balance between pragmatism and ideology. For example: During the Iraq-Iran war, although Khomeini favored the end of the military struggle between the two states, he did not favor the ceasefire because he was worried about the security of the revolution. As another example, Iran did not mind the secular Baathist policies that were in power in order not to lose the Syrian state, which was its only supporter in the current isolation during the Iraq War, despite the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In the Iraq war, Iran used the Shiites in Kuwait as an element of pressure due to Kuwait's pro-Iraqi attitude.

In general, it is possible to show the main elements that have not changed in Iran's foreign policy since the Islamic revolution as follows (Marzieh, 2016: 106–107).

- the current international system is not accepted,
- rejection of any power's hegemony,
- the desire to remain independent in the international system,
- Rejection of "Zionism" and

- support of oppressed peoples

Until the end of the 1980s, Iranian foreign policy was mostly supportive of states such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, and the Philippines, where Islamic movements developed (Gresh, 2006:3). Although Iran's political Islam model is sympathetic to some parts of the Muslim world, it has been viewed with suspicion by secular states and their Western allies. Although Tehran's strategy of being self-sufficient and isolated from the world caused problems in many areas, it caused the greatest damage to the Iranian economy. In this environment, Iran tried to make friends in the international community and reduce external threats, especially by improving its relations with its neighbors, and the policy of "exporting the revolution", which has been maintained since the beginning of the revolution, has changed. The pragmatist wing insisted that the Islamic revolution should first be mature in Iran. After 1988, Iran started to move from an internally focused and isolated understanding to an externally focused and cooperative understanding (Yousefi, 2010:5). After the Iran-Iraq War ended in 1988 and especially after the death of Khomeini, Tehran's foreign policy was based on the principle of "mutual balancing". The regional leadership and the desire to eliminate Western influence in the region met with pragmatic tendencies that favored improving the economic situation of the country by exporting oil to countries including Western trading partners (Rasmussen, 2009:4). Iranian foreign policy has become more confrontational under the rule of Mahmud Ahmadinejad since 2005, and the perception that Iran is trying to become a regional hegemon has prevailed in the West. According to Ahmadinejad, the West did not respond to Tehran's peaceful and cooperative approach, and no reduction in the threat to Iran from the West was observed. For this reason, all the foreign policy approaches of Ahmadinejad—conflict nuclear policy, regional and east-oriented foreign policy, third worldism—were seen as a way of survival and deterrence (Yousefi, 2010:19). Rouhani, who came to power in 2013, started to ensure Iran's national security with new principles, from conflict to dialogue and constructive interaction in the international system within the framework of "softening" and "prudent moderation" in foreign policy. As a result, it has adopted a strategy aimed at increasing Iran's position and importance and ensuring its long-term comprehensive development (Zarif, 2014). In the presidential election held on June 18, 2021, in Iran, the conservative candidate Ibrahim Reisi won 62% of the votes. Ibrahim Reisi again chose a path similar to Mahmud Ahmadinejad's foreign policy and made more radical choices in relations. The observable result of these is that the relations between Azerbaijan and Iran have recently moved to a different tense dimension.

### Influence of Azerbaijan's relations with Iran's opponents on Iran's stance during the war

Azerbaijan's relations with Iran's opponents, particularly with Israel, had a significant impact on Iran's stance during the Second Karabakh War. Azerbaijan has close relations with Iran's regional rivals such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, which has complicated Iran's approach towards the conflict (Avdaliani, 2020). From a realist perspective, states seek to maximize their own interests and security, and Iran may have perceived Azerbaijan's alignment with its enemies as a threat to its own security. This could explain Iran's initial reluctance to take a strong stance on the conflict and its cautious approach towards supporting either side.

Moreover, Azerbaijan's close ties with Israel have been a major source of concern for Iran, given its tense relationship with the Jewish state (Avdaliani, 2020). Iran's support for Armenia during the conflict can be seen as a response to Azerbaijan's relations with its enemies, rather than an expression of solidarity with the Armenian people. However, it is important to note that these factors alone do not fully explain Iran's stance on the conflict, and a more comprehensive analysis is needed to fully understand the complex dynamics at play.

Azerbaijan's relations with Iran's enemies, particularly Israel and the United States, had a significant impact on Iran's stance during the Second Karabakh War. Azerbaijan has long-standing and close relations with Israel (Avdaliani, 2020), with both countries conducting significant arms trade and strategic cooperation. Similarly, Azerbaijan has developed deep economic and energy ties with the United States, including serving as a strategic partner in the transport of Caspian energy resources to Europe.

Iran views both Israel and the United States as major threats to its national security and regional interests. Therefore, Azerbaijan's close relations with these countries create concerns for Iran. During the Second Karabakh War, there were allegations that Israeli-made drones were being used by Azerbaijan, causing significant casualties on the Armenian side.

Overall, Azerbaijan's close relations with Iran's enemies, coupled with the potential spillover effects of the conflict, significantly impacted Iran's stance during the Second Karabakh War. Iran's concerns over the use of Israeli-made weapons and the potential for destabilization in its own borders played a crucial role in shaping its position on the conflict.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan's strong alliance with Turkey, which has also been at odds with Iran on various regional issues, further complicates Iran's stance on the conflict. Turkey's political support for Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War was evident and additionally although there

was not any proof, there was fake news that Turkish military advisers and fighters involved in the conflict. This fake news was seen by Iran as a new threat that Turkey tries build military power in the region to expand its influence in the region and counterbalance Iran's own influence. As a result, Iran have been more inclined to support Armenia, in part to counterbalance Turkey's influence in the region.

Overall, Iran's stance during the Second Karabakh War was shaped by a complex web of factors, including its economic and political ties to Armenia, its concerns about regional destabilization, and its relationship with Azerbaijan's regional adversaries. While Iran did not overtly support either side in the conflict, its cautious approach reflected its efforts to balance these various factors and maintain stability in the region and that's why Iran in some ways helped Armenia to balance situation.

To sum up, Iran's stance on the Second Karabakh War can be seen as reflecting its broader geopolitical concerns and interests in the region. While it sought to maintain its neutrality and avoid being drawn into the conflict, it also sought to protect its own security interests by closely monitoring the situation and expressing its concerns when necessary. However, the complex geopolitical dynamics at play in the region make it difficult for Iran to maintain a completely neutral stance, and its relationship with Azerbaijan will likely continue to be shaped by these factors in the years to come.

#### Iran's balancing policy

Iran's balancing policy towards the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict involves navigating a delicate regional situation while safeguarding its own interests and maintaining stability in the region. (Blank, 2021). Iran's geographic proximity to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as its historical and cultural ties with the Armenian population, presents a complex dynamic that shapes its approach to the conflict.

Iran's balancing policy is driven by several key considerations:

- **Security and Stability:** Iran seeks to prevent the escalation of the conflict and maintain stability along its borders. Given its shared borders with both Azerbaijan and Armenia, Iran is particularly concerned about the potential spillover of violence, the influx of refugees, and the impact on its own security. Therefore, it aims to prevent the conflict from destabilizing the region and potentially affecting its own internal stability.



- **Ethnic and Cultural Factors:** Iran has a significant ethnic Azerbaijani population, which creates sensitivities and domestic considerations. The Iranian government aims to manage and address the concerns of this population to avoid internal tensions and maintain social cohesion. At the same time, Iran maintains cultural and historical ties with Armenia, which influence its approach to the conflict.

- **Economic Interests:** Iran has economic interests in the region, including trade relations and energy partnerships with both Azerbaijan and Armenia. Balancing these economic ties while avoiding taking sides in the conflict is a crucial aspect of Iran's policy. Iran aims to preserve its economic interests by maintaining constructive relations with both countries and facilitating trade and energy flows in the region.

- **Regional Power Dynamics:** Iran carefully assesses the broader regional power dynamics in the South Caucasus. It takes into account the involvement of external actors, such as Russia and Turkey, and their influence on the conflict. Iran seeks to navigate these dynamics while preserving its own regional standing and avoiding unnecessary confrontation with external powers.

Iran's balancing policy in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict involves diplomatic efforts, mediation initiatives, and calls for a peaceful resolution. Iran has consistently advocated for dialogue and a negotiated settlement to the conflict, emphasizing the importance of respecting international borders and territorial integrity. It has engaged in diplomatic exchanges with both Azerbaijan and Armenia to promote dialogue and ease tensions.

However, it is essential to note that Iran's balancing policy is not without challenges. The complex dynamics of the conflict, the involvement of external actors, and the divergent interests of regional powers pose constraints on Iran's ability to shape the outcome. Nevertheless, Iran's balancing policy reflects its efforts to navigate the conflict while prioritizing stability, security, and its own interests in the region.

Iran's balancing policy towards the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict also involves careful diplomatic maneuvering to maintain its regional influence and prevent the conflict from negatively impacting its broader strategic objectives. (Blank, 2021). Iran aims to avoid taking a clear stance that could alienate either side or lead to a deterioration of its relations with Azerbaijan or Armenia.

Iran has engaged in diplomatic initiatives, including hosting trilateral meetings and participating in international peace talks, to facilitate dialogue and peaceful negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. It has emphasized the importance of respecting the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of both countries while also advocating for the rights of ethnic Armenians in the region.

One of the key aspects of Iran's balancing policy is its close engagement with Russia. Iran shares common interests with Russia in maintaining stability in the South Caucasus and preventing the expansion of influence by external powers. Through coordination and cooperation with Russia, Iran seeks to leverage its relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia to promote stability and advance its own interests.

However, Iran's balancing act is not without challenges and constraints. The complex nature of the conflict, the deep-rooted historical tensions, and the presence of external actors with competing interests create a challenging environment for Iran's balancing efforts. Additionally, Iran must carefully manage its relations with other regional powers, such as Turkey, which has a distinct position in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict.

Furthermore, Iran's balancing policy may face internal pressures and criticism, particularly from domestic factions with closer ties to one side of the conflict. Managing these domestic dynamics while pursuing a balanced approach requires careful political calculations and strategic decision-making by Iranian policymakers.

Overall, Iran's balancing policy towards the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict reflects its efforts to safeguard its own interests and navigate the complex geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus. By engaging in diplomatic initiatives, leveraging its relations with regional and international actors, and emphasizing peaceful dialogue, Iran seeks to contribute to a resolution that ensures stability and balance within its borders. However, it must be mentioned that Iran's balancing policy was not just about equal policy towards each side; it was also like Iran, by helping Armenia via supporting its interests in the diplomatic field and letting military transportation from its borders to Armenia, wanted to balance the powerful side, Azerbaijan, to overcome and become the most powerful state of the region. (Blank, 2021) As a result of this, there is a possibility that Iran will lose its interference tool in the region. That's why Iran is interested in maintaining conflict in the region without escalation. And this attitude is in conflict with Azerbaijan's interest in maintaining its territorial integrity and sovereignty. In fact, this clash of interests was the origin of strained relations between Azerbaijan and Iran. But because of the abovementioned factors, especially ethnic and cultural factors, Iran was unable to successfully maintain its interest in the region. (Jafarli, 2022). If Iran stood on the Armenian side in order to maintain its interests and stop Azerbaijan from liberating its territories, it would face unrest from ethnic Azerbaijanis who live in South Azerbaijan. Because of

that fear, when Iran saw that Azerbaijan overcame Armenia, instead of helping Armenia, it took a pro-Azerbaijan stance and stated that Azerbaijan has a right to maintain its territorial integrity and sovereignty over internationally recognized borders. Iran did this in order to at least keep some positive attitudes in Azerbaijan towards Iran. If Iran did not do this, the most powerful state in the region would be on the complete opposite side of Iran. It must be mentioned that after stating that Azerbaijan has a right to maintain territorial integrity, Iran somehow damaged its relations with Armenia. To cure this damage after the war in the Zangazur corridor issue, Iran took a stance on the Armenian side and stated that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Armenia are Iran's red lines. (Jafarli, 2022). With this, Iran again somehow balanced conflicting sides and maintained its interests in the region, at least some of them.

### **Azerbaijan-Iran Relations: Post-Second Karabakh War**

The difficulty of interstate ties between Azerbaijan and Iran has been exacerbated in the years following the 2020 Second Karabakh War, which culminated in Azerbaijan's military triumph against Armenia. Despite the misconceptions that have formed in bilateral relations since the Republic of Azerbaijan achieved independence, the war's outcomes have broken the parties' agreed-upon norms of the game. It should be emphasized that Azerbaijan's ties with Iran have never been easy and trouble-free in the thirty years since its independence. (Jafarli, 2022). Recent events show a growing mistrust and enmity between the two neighbors that share historical, cultural, and religious ties, with long-term implications for bilateral relations.

This judgment was supported by the emergence of a more severe issue between the two nations, which was marked by reciprocal diplomatic retreats, harsh criticism, and defamatory charges in the official media. This part examines contemporary Azerbaijan-Iran tensions, their potential effects on bilateral and regional cooperation, and the new foreign policy stance that the discourse and political line of the Azerbaijani administration imply.

It is necessary to look for the root causes of the current hostility between Azerbaijan and Iran in the regional developments throughout September and October 2022. On September 13, a number

of fights broke out along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, resulting in several casualties and injuries on both sides of the conflict. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated, "Since the start of military operations on September 13, Azerbaijan has occupied another 10 square kilometers of Armenian territory." He said that 40 square kilometers of Armenian land had been captured by Azerbaijan in May 2021. (Jafarli, 2022). Iran saw this episode as an effort by Azerbaijan to forcefully establish the Zangezur Corridor, which is one of Iran's primary concerns.

After the victory of Azerbaijan in 44 days in the Second Karabakh War, Iran has declared new red lines in its foreign policy towards the south Caucasus region: the sovereignty of borders and the unacceptance of geopolitical changes in the region that are not in common with Iran's interests. But the growing strength of the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliance and the Azerbaijan-Israel strategic partnership, as demonstrated by Baku's decision to open an embassy in Tel Aviv, points to a regional geopolitical shift against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Tehran considers the deportation status of the transport-communication corridor, which will pass from Zangezur to the south of Armenia's Sunik province, a border change because, in this case, the land connection between Armenia and Iran will be cut off. And as a result, Iran's access to Georgia's sea ports, bypassing Azerbaijan and Turkey, and from there to Europe, namely the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor, will also be blocked. The news that Azerbaijani forces advanced into Armenia during the 13–14 September operations received a harsh reaction from the Iranian government. Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, warned that the Islamic Republic will not tolerate changes in regional borders. The same opinion was expressed by Vahid Jalalzadeh, the official representative of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament. After the clashes throughout the border, on October 3, the Minister of Defense of Israel, Benjamin Gantz, paid an official visit to Azerbaijan, which undoubtedly caused Iran's significant political irritation.

We may conclude that Tehran treated this trip from the perspective of geopolitical and border developments in the area, judging it as a danger to Iran's interests, based on the essay written by the former ambassador to Azerbaijan, Mohsen Pakaein, and published on the website of the IRNA news agency. (Jafarli, 2022). Because a telephone discussion between the Azerbaijani Minister of Defense, Zakir Hasanov, and the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Mohammad Bagheri, took place on the day the Israeli team arrived in Baku, we may conclude that Iran was provoked.

The opening of Zangilan airport on the twentieth of October, which was visited by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoan, was the next event that alarmed Iran. Having been freed from

occupation, Zangilan is bordered to the south by Iran and to the west by Armenia (Syunik region). Even after the conflict, public declarations and reports that an Israeli dairy farm would be constructed caused Iran grave anxiety. Iranian leaders have made it clear that they would never accept Israeli presence or activity close to their borders. It is obvious that Iran believes Israel is conducting military or intelligence operations in Zangilan, which means that the airport is a crucial piece of infrastructure that might be used for these operations.

An extensive military exercise conducted by the Iranian military in northwest Iran in the fall of 2021 and a subsequent large-scale exercise conducted in the same region a year later can be seen in this regard as warnings to Azerbaijan, Israel, and other interested parties. (Jafarli, 2022). This three-day exercise, which started on October 17, 2022, and included activities like controlling roads and elevations, imitating an offensive operation, and passing through the Aras River using pontoon bridges, caused serious unhappiness at the governmental and public level in Azerbaijan and was seen as hostile toward Azerbaijan. The new Iranian consulate general in Kafan, Armenia, was opened one day after the Zangilan airport's opening ceremony. It is no surprise that a general consulate was inaugurated in Kafan, as it serves as the administrative hub of Sunik province, or Zangezur. The aim was to keep an eye on local developments and defend Iranian state interests. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian reaffirmed that Iran would not allow changes to the historical borders in the area, that this constitutes their red line, as well as that Iran will take all measures to fight such attempts while in Armenia to attend the inauguration. The Iranians accelerated the opening date in reaction to what they saw as Azerbaijani incursions, although the look of the Iranian consulate building in Sunik implies that it is still unfinished. The actions and remarks made at the governmental level in Tehran and Baku caused escalating tensions in the days that followed.

On November 1, 2022, the State Security Service of Azerbaijan (SSS) issued a statement on the discovery of an illegal armed force that had been formed under the direction of the Iranian special services. (Jafarli, 2021). A day later, military drills involving the Azerbaijani Special Forces started in areas close to the country's southern borders. The Speaker of the Iranian Parliament's anticipated trip to Azerbaijan was postponed due to the adverse situation. On November 7, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence reported that it had located and detained a gang of 26 ISIS-affiliated terrorists in connection with the Shiraz attack, which was directed by an Azerbaijani. The Iranian ambassador in Azerbaijan was called to appear before the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry on November 11, while the Azerbaijani envoy in Tehran was called before the Iranian Foreign

Ministry on November 10. The Azerbaijani side, on the other hand, declared concern with respect to what Iran had communicated to the Azerbaijani ambassador, expressing Iran's strong dissatisfaction with "unfriendly" statements made by high-ranking Azerbaijani officials and erroneous reports about Iran in the country's media. A complaint note was presented to the Azerbaijani ambassador to the Iranian MFA on November 14 "in connection with the unlawful acts perpetrated in the country by several Azerbaijani citizens." The Iranian espionage network was effectively discovered on the same day by the SSS of Azerbaijan. In his words made during a celebration of Victory Day in Shusha, the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, referred to Iran's recent actions in the context of his plea to Armenia and the Armenian people: "They [Iran] need to realize this to prevent falling prey to foreign-based groups that wish to use this area as a playground once more. Here, we have the last say. Here, the real power is with us. Our army has demonstrated valor, competence, and commitment. Everyone is aware that we will accomplish our goals, and individuals who conduct military drills in favor of Armenia near our border need to be aware of this as well. If required, we will demonstrate our resolve once more. No one can frighten us". (Jafarli, 2022).

Since the Republic of Azerbaijan's independence declaration, such issues have occasionally emerged in ties between Iran and Azerbaijan. In a previous piece, we discussed it. However, it is now clear that irredentist rhetoric and propaganda, coupled with severe condemnations and threats against Iran, are being repeated in official declarations and broadcasts by Azerbaijani state media. State television in Azerbaijan is currently airing charges against the Iranian government and the subject of South Azerbaijan and its previous historical territories in an unheard-of volume and manner. Mahmudali Chehreganli, a well-known Iranian refugee who is living in exile in the United States and has been denied entry into Azerbaijan for many years, is interviewed by AzTV. Nearly everyone in the nation is aware that the presidential administration sets the broadcast policy for the state-run AzTV channel, particularly in regard to significant political matters. Public Television (ITV), another state-run television network, is competing with AzTV in this area. It may even be stated that ITV airs more of the subject matter than state television. (Jafarli, 2022).

It might be said that Aliyev's address on November 11, 2022, at the 9th Summit of the Organization of Turkic States in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, marked a dramatic change in Azerbaijani foreign policy toward Iran. Despite not mentioning Iran by name, Aliyev brought up in his speech the issue of millions of Azerbaijanis living in Iran being denied their constitutional right to an education. He said, "The younger generations of the Turkic world ought to be given the opportunity

to pursue education in their native language in the countries of their residence. Sadly, the vast majority of the 40 million Azerbaijanis who reside outside of their home country are denied access to these chances. The organization should constantly prioritize providing native-language instruction to our countrymen who live outside of Turkic republics. Steps should be taken in this regard that are necessary.

Naturally, this speech received attention in Tehran. According to Iranian officials, Aliyev's "unrealistic statements" were criticized by Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the foreign minister of Azerbaijan, during a phone conversation with Jeyhun Bayramov. The Republic of Azerbaijan itself was taken away from Iran in the Gulistan Treaty, as a number of Iranian parliamentarians who vehemently objected to Aliyev's words reminded the audience. (Blank, 2021).

Aliyev has stated on multiple occasions that he is the president of all Azerbaijanis worldwide during his time in office, but this is the first time he has addressed the issue of Azerbaijanis (Turks) in Iran in public at a gathering of a Turkic regional organization, identifying it as a problem for all of the Turkic world and urging the Turkic states to take the necessary action in this regard. On November 25, 2022, at an international conference hosted at ADA University in Baku, Aliyev brought up the subject once more and declared, "We will do everything we can to safeguard the millions of Azerbaijanis living in Iran."

The foreign policy of Azerbaijan has taken a new direction as a result of the position taken by Aliyev; however, it is not yet obvious how sincerely the government will pursue it. As the intellectual legacy of the 1988–1991 popular movement and its charismatic leader Abulfaz Elchibey, the concept of "whole Azerbaijan"—the issue of the South—had previously only been on the nationalist opposition's agenda in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan's contemporary history, Elchibey was primarily responsible for making this concept political and popularizing it as a job for the entire country. Up until recently, one of the primary charges leveled by Aliyev's rule and its supporters against the Elchibey administration (1992–1993) was that it was ineffective in both internal and international affairs and had made Azerbaijan the enemy of important neighbors, including Iran and Russia. (Blank, 2021). Aliyev, however, first robbed the opposition of the Karabakh issue as the most significant subject used in the internal political struggle, and later, by embracing the South issue, he has now gathered around him some of his nationalist rivals as a consequence of the return of the majority of the areas that were occupied in the 44-day war (even though there are still questions about the areas that are under the control of Russian peacekeepers). There is now an ideological void for those who do not wish to join this union. By serving as the

defender and head of all Azerbaijanis worldwide, Aliyev is already attempting to elevate himself beyond the internal political conflict and rivalry. He extols his leadership in the country. Ilham Aliyev is not shown in this fashion in official propaganda, most likely because his father received that address and did not wish to hide him.

Despite all the issues, Iran and Azerbaijan's bilateral ties have improved over the course of the last 30 years because of a strong treaty-legal foundation. Tehran and Baku have consistently demonstrated pragmatism by avoiding contentious issues that can escalate into a fight and harm their respective economies and trade relations. Therefore, it is important to note that following the tension in 2021, in March 2022, in Baku, two parties signed a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on creating new communication links between the East Zangezur economic region of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through the territory of Iran." This agreement is quite significant. A new railway, road link, communication, and energy lines connecting Azerbaijan's East Zangezur economic zone, and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through Iran are intended to be established as a result of the pact. To that end, it is proposed to build infrastructure for communication and energy delivery over the Araz River, including 4 bridges, 2 motorways, and 2 railroads. This indicates that Azerbaijan has alternative options regardless of whether it is feasible to build the Zangezur transit route across the territory of Armenia.

As part of the North-South International Transport Corridor, Azerbaijan and Iran are also working together to speed up the transportation of freight from India to Russia and Northern and Western Europe. This demonstrates the strategic importance of cooperation since there are plans to link the railway networks of Azerbaijan and Iran. The initial stage of the project aimed at linking the Astara (Azerbaijan) to Astara (Iran) railway was commissioned in March 2018.

The "3 + 3" model of cooperation—which brings together all three South Caucasus nations of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan with Russia, Turkey, and Iran—was also adopted with the involvement of the two nations and formally entered the political agenda following the Second Karabakh War. The first conference in this style was held in Moscow in December 2021, but Georgia chose not to attend. In a telephone call in which he also expressed Iran's discontent with Aliyev's "unrealistic comments" in Samarkand, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov was invited to the second meeting, which was scheduled to take place in Tehran.

The parties' aim to deescalate hostilities between the two distinct countries might be inferred from this fact. The article by Ali Akbar Vilayati, a former foreign minister and advisor to Iran's



Supreme Spiritual Leader, and the statement by Hikmat Hajiyev, the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan's assistant and head of the presidential administration's department of foreign policy affairs, both call for a de-escalation of the situation.

It must also be kept in mind that the conflicts between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan are fundamental in character rather than a passing circumstance brought on by a single incident. The fact that both sides claim the identical territory—Iran regards Azerbaijan as its historical land, while the irredentist sentiments of the Azerbaijani public have now entered official discourse—means that the disagreements are protracted and the interests are incompatible, which emphasizes the difficulty of creating a relationship based on mutual trust.

## **Chapter II: Analysis of Azerbaijan-Iran relations from the classic realism perspective: How has the victory in the Second Karabakh War influenced Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards its opponents?**

### **Impact of the Second Karabakh War on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Towards Its Opponents: the case of Iran**

#### Evaluation of Azerbaijan's strategic position and increased regional influence after the war

The Second Karabakh War marked a turning point in Azerbaijan's strategic position and regional influence. By liberating occupied territories, Azerbaijan has solidified its borders and strengthened its territorial integrity. This has provided the country with a more secure foundation from which to pursue its foreign policy objectives.

The successful military campaign and liberation of Karabakh region have significantly enhanced Azerbaijan's regional standing. The victory has demonstrated Azerbaijan's military capabilities and establishing it as a formidable actor in the South Caucasus region. This increased influence has allowed Azerbaijan to assert its interests and play a more assertive role in regional affairs. Azerbaijan's territorial gains have expanded its sphere of influence and created new opportunities for regional cooperation and economic development. The recovered territories, rich in natural resources and economic potential, have bolstered Azerbaijan's economic strength and attracted foreign investments. This has positioned Azerbaijan as a vital energy producer and transit hub, enhancing its role in regional energy security and cooperation initiatives. Azerbaijan's strengthened strategic position and increased regional influence have also had implications for its relationships with neighboring countries, including Iran. The victory in the Second Karabakh War has signaled Azerbaijan's growing assertiveness and ability to protect its interests. (Huseynov, 2021). This has prompted Iran, as a regional power, to take note of Azerbaijan's enhanced position and adjust its approach accordingly. Azerbaijan's expanded regional influence has allowed it to pursue its foreign policy objectives with greater confidence. It seeks to leverage its position to promote stability, security, and economic cooperation in the region. Azerbaijan's foreign policy goals align with its national interests, including the restoration of territorial integrity, resolution of the conflict with Armenia through peaceful means, and fostering regional cooperation for economic development.

After the victory the main change in Azerbaijan's foreign policy was about making foreign policy decisions in more confident and independent way. From that point, in the March of 2023 Azerbaijan opened an embassy in Israel. (Huseynov,2022). This event holds significance in the context of Azerbaijan's foreign policy objectives and regional dynamics following the Second Karabakh War. This move reflects Azerbaijan's strategic considerations, national interests, and evolving diplomatic priorities. Opening an embassy in Israel signifies Azerbaijan's intent to deepen its strategic partnership with the country. Israel is known for its advanced technological capabilities, military expertise, and innovative industries. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, seeks to diversify its partnerships and benefit from Israel's advancements in sectors such as defense, technology, agriculture, and energy. Establishing an embassy facilitates closer cooperation, exchanges, and joint ventures between the two nations. Azerbaijan's decision expands its regional engagement beyond its immediate neighborhood. By establishing a diplomatic presence in Israel, Azerbaijan aims to enhance its influence and connections in the Middle East. It demonstrates Azerbaijan's willingness to engage with a wider range of regional actors and contribute to regional stability, security, and economic cooperation.

The decision can also be seen as a part of Azerbaijan's efforts to balance its regional relationships. Azerbaijan shares a complex geopolitical landscape, with diverse regional dynamics and overlapping interests. By establishing diplomatic ties with Israel, Azerbaijan demonstrates its independence in foreign policy decision-making and seeks to diversify its relationships. This move allows Azerbaijan to maintain a balanced approach and mitigate potential tensions with other regional actors, including Iran. Improved relations with Israel provide Azerbaijan with an opportunity to tap into Israel's advanced technological and innovation sectors. Israel is renowned for its thriving startup ecosystem and expertise in areas such as cybersecurity, agriculture, water management, and renewable energy. Azerbaijan, with its growing economy, can benefit from technological collaborations and knowledge transfer. This move aligns with Azerbaijan's aim to accelerate the development of various sectors and leverage Israel's expertise for its economic diversification. (Huseynov, 2022).

The decision to establish an embassy in Israel also has implications for regional security. Azerbaijan has been a proponent of regional stability and security, particularly in the context of combating terrorism, transnational threats, and radical ideologies. By strengthening ties with Israel, which faces similar security challenges, Azerbaijan aims to foster collaboration in areas such as

intelligence-sharing, counterterrorism efforts, and defense cooperation. This joint approach contributes to enhancing regional security and addressing common threats.

Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel reflects its strategic considerations, pursuit of diversified partnerships, and regional engagement. It signifies Azerbaijan's intent to strengthen its ties with Israel in areas of mutual interest, including technology, economy, security, and regional stability. This move aligns with Azerbaijan's broader foreign policy goals and demonstrates its proactive approach to expanding diplomatic horizons and maximizing the potential benefits of strategic partnerships. In reality abovementioned facts are not the things which make this event important for analyzing. The things bring importance to the event is Iran's opposition. Despite the fact that Israel has an embassy in Azerbaijan since 1993, Azerbaijan did not an embassy in Israel until 2023. One of the key reasons for that decision was Iran's stance on this issue. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan did not consider the irritations of Iran in that regard and opened embassy in Israel. Iran's reaction to Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel was the full of irritations and concerns. Several factors contribute to Iran's stance on this matter, including geopolitical considerations, historical tensions, religious and ideological differences, and the impact on Iran's regional influence. Iran perceives the establishment of closer ties between Azerbaijan and Israel as a potential threat to its regional influence. Historically, Iran has sought to maintain a certain degree of dominance in the South Caucasus region. (Blank, 2021). Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel, a country with which Iran has strained relations, is seen as a deviation from Iran's preferred regional order. It challenges Iran's vision of maintaining a sphere of influence and limits its ability to exert control over neighboring countries. Iran and Israel have a long history of strained relations, driven primarily by political disagreements and ideological differences. Iran's government has been critical of Israel's policies towards Palestine, and the two countries have been at odds on various international issues. Azerbaijan's decision to establish closer ties with Israel, therefore, aggravates Iran's existing grievances and contributes to the irritations between the two countries. Religious and ideological differences also play a role in Iran's concerns about Azerbaijan's engagement with Israel. Iran is an Islamic republic, and its government presents itself as a leader of the Islamic world. In contrast, Israel is seen as a predominantly Jewish state. The religious and ideological disparities between Iran and Israel create tensions, and Iran perceives Azerbaijan's alignment with Israel as a departure from Islamic solidarity.

Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel challenges Iran's influence in the South Caucasus region. Iran has historically maintained cultural, religious, and economic ties with

Azerbaijan, and it has sought to position itself as a major player in the region. Azerbaijan's closer relations with Israel viewed as a dilution of Iran's influence and a potential shift in the regional power dynamics. This causes concern for Iran, as it fears losing leverage and control over its neighboring countries.

Despite Iran's irritation, Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, Azerbaijan considers its national interests, including economic and technological cooperation, and sees Israel as a valuable partner in these areas. Secondly, Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices are influenced by its pursuit of diversifying relationships and balancing regional dynamics. Finally, Azerbaijan's decision-making process takes into account the evolving geopolitical landscape and its own increasing regional influence, as demonstrated by its victory in the Second Karabakh War.

Azerbaijan's consideration of Iran's stance on the matter, particularly before the war, indicates a sensitivity to Iran's concerns. However, the outcome of the war, which solidified Azerbaijan's strategic position and increased its regional influence, have influenced Azerbaijan's decision-making process. The victory in the Second Karabakh War enhanced Azerbaijan's confidence and autonomy in shaping its foreign policy decisions, including the establishment of closer ties with Israel.

Additionally, the consequences of Iran's irritation regarding Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel can be further explored:

*Diplomatic Strain:* Iran's irritation with Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel lead to diplomatic strain between the two countries. Iran expressed its dissatisfaction through diplomatic channels, military trainings throughout the border of Azerbaijan and some populist videos which were made by government supported social media accounts.

*Reduced Cooperation:* The tension resulting from Azerbaijan's closer ties with Israel impact the level of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Iran in various areas, including trade, energy, and transportation.

*Regional Polarization:* The growing divide between Azerbaijan and Iran over their respective relationships with Israel contribute to regional polarization.

*Potential for Escalation:* If tensions between Iran and Azerbaijan escalate, it could have wider implications for regional stability. It may fuel proxy conflicts, increase geopolitical rivalries, and heighten the risk of regional instability.

Iran's irritation about Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel stems from geostrategic competition, proxy conflicts, and religious factors. The consequences of this irritation can range from diplomatic strain and reduced cooperation to potential escalation and regional polarization. The evolving dynamics between Azerbaijan, Iran, and Israel will continue to shape the regional landscape, with implications for regional stability and cooperation. Azerbaijan's decision not to fully consider Iran's worries regarding its closer ties with Israel can be attributed to several factors:

*Iran's Support for Armenia:* During the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, Iran's support for Armenia became apparent. This support included various forms of assistance, such as allowing military transportation through its territory and conducting military exercises near the Azerbaijani border. Azerbaijan, as the aggrieved party in the conflict, perceived Iran's actions as siding with Armenia, which led to a strain in their bilateral relations. As a result, Azerbaijan have been less inclined to consider Iran's concerns and interests in its decision-making process.

*Increased Independence in Foreign Policy:* The victory in the Second Karabakh War brought about a significant shift in Azerbaijan's foreign policy dynamics. It bolstered Azerbaijan's confidence and regional standing, allowing it to pursue a more independent foreign policy agenda. This newfound independence granted Azerbaijan greater latitude in making decisions without being overly constrained by the sensitivities of its regional neighbors. Consequently, Azerbaijan have felt more empowered to pursue its own interests, even if they did not align with Iran's preferences.

*Diversification of Partnerships:* Azerbaijan's decision to open an embassy in Israel should be seen in the context of its broader efforts to diversify its international partnerships. By establishing closer ties with Israel, Azerbaijan aims to broaden its diplomatic and economic relations beyond its immediate region. This diversification strategy aligns with Azerbaijan's goal of expanding its global reach and increasing its influence on the international stage. From that point of view, opening a consulate in Palestine can be seen as a step to maintain balance and avoid alienating Muslim states while pursuing its broader foreign policy objectives.

*Pragmatic Considerations:* Azerbaijan's decision-making process takes into account pragmatic considerations, including economic, security, and geopolitical factors. Azerbaijan perceives Israel as a valuable partner in areas such as technology, energy, and security cooperation. (Avdaliani, 2020) These pragmatic considerations prioritize Azerbaijan's national interests and the pursuit of economic growth and development. While Azerbaijan values its relations with Muslim states, it

also recognizes the potential benefits of engaging with other nations, including those with whom some Muslim states have strained relations.

### Analysis of how the victory in the Second Karabakh War shapes Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents

The characteristic feature of Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards its opponents after the victory in the Second Karabakh War can be simplified with one sentence: Azerbaijan has series of diplomatic victories over its opponents, especially Armenia and France.

Everything starts with 10 November capitulation act of Armenia which were signed by Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation and Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. The 10 November capitulation act marked a significant milestone in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia<sup>8</sup>.(President.az, 2020) Signed on 10 November 2020, this declaration was a comprehensive peace agreement that established the terms for a ceasefire and outlined the path towards a long-term resolution of the conflict. It played a crucial role in Azerbaijan's political victory and had far-reaching implications for the region. Key elements of the 10 November declaration include:

- **Ceasefire Agreement:** The declaration established an immediate and complete ceasefire, putting an end to the hostilities in the region. It called for the cessation of all military activities, including the deployment of armed forces and the use of force to resolve disputes.
- **Territories Handover:** The declaration outlined the return of territories that were under Armenian occupation back to its historical and internationally recognized owner - Azerbaijan.
- **Deployment of Peacekeeping Forces:** The agreement stipulated the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces to monitor the ceasefire and ensure the security of the conflict-affected areas. The peacekeepers were responsible for overseeing the return of displaced persons, the exchange of prisoners of war, and the preservation of stability in the region.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** The declaration emphasized the importance of providing humanitarian assistance to the affected populations, including facilitating the return of

---

<sup>8</sup> President.az, *Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation*, 2020, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45924>

displaced persons and addressing the urgent needs of the communities affected by the conflict.

- Resumption of Transport and Economic Links: The agreement called for the restoration of transport and economic links in the region, aiming to foster regional cooperation and facilitate the movement of people, goods, and services.

The 10 November declaration marked a significant turning point in the conflict, bringing an end to the active phase of the war and initiating a process of peaceful negotiations. It allowed Azerbaijan to reclaim its territorial integrity and reaffirmed the principle of respect for international borders. The declaration created a foundation for future discussions and efforts towards a lasting and comprehensive resolution of the conflict, opening up possibilities for stability, security, and cooperation in the region. The repeated diplomatic victories of Azerbaijan start from here.

After 10 November act on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2021<sup>9</sup>, in Moscow a new declaration signed between Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation and Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. The 11 January declaration primarily focused on reaffirming the commitment to the 10 November declaration, which played a pivotal role in Azerbaijan's political victory in the Second Karabakh War. The 11 January declaration aimed to reinforce the implementation of the provisions outlined in the 10 November declaration, ensuring the loyalty and adherence of all parties involved. (President.az, 2021). By reaffirming their commitment to the 10 November declaration, the 11 January declaration aimed to solidify the victory achieved by Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War. It highlighted the importance of upholding the principles and provisions of the peace agreement to ensure stability, security, and the long-term resolution of the conflict. The main aim of the 11 January declaration was the emphasizing the ninth article of the 10 November declaration which is about restoration of transport and economic link. In the ninth article Armenia took responsibility to give Azerbaijan extraterritorial corridor to link its main part to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The corridor must be under the control of Russian Border Forces and Armenia have to give security assurance to the corridor. But after the 10 november declaration Armenia deviate from this provision and because of that Azerbaijan forced Armenia to sign 11

---

<sup>9</sup> President.az, *Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation*, 2021, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/50070>



January declaration to remind Armenia the commitment that must be fulfilled. This was another victory of the Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the Second Karabakh War.

After the 11 January declaration Azerbaijan continues to gain diplomatic victories over its opponents. The next victory happened in Sochi, Russia. On 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 the next trilateral statement signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia<sup>10</sup>. The declaration, issued by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and the President of the Russian Federation, marked as another significant victory of the Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards its opponents. The main principles of the declaration are as follows: Commitment to ceasefire and stability; Implementation of previous statements - The leaders emphasized the necessity of implementing and upholding the provisions of the previous statements dated November 10, 2020, and January 11, 2021. These statements serve as guiding frameworks for achieving stability, security, and economic progress in the South Caucasus; Border delimitation - To enhance stability and security on the Azerbaijan-Armenia border, the parties agreed to take steps toward establishing a bilateral commission for delimitation of the state border. This demonstrates a commitment to resolving border-related issues through peaceful means and with the advisory assistance of the Russian Federation; Economic and transport relations - The leaders highlighted the importance of the Trilateral Working Group, established according to the Statement of January 11, 2021. This group focuses on the restoration of economic and transport links in the region. The declaration emphasizes the need for the timely implementation of specific projects to unleash the economic potential of the region. (President.az, 2021).

The declaration is another diplomatic achievement of Azerbaijan since Azerbaijan again forced Armenia to sign a document which is not in synergy with its interests. These victories show how the victory in the war strengthened Azerbaijan in the diplomatic field and brought Azerbaijan huge influential power to make its opponents obey the rules dictated by Azerbaijan's national interests.

After that declaration, the new victory happened in Prague, Czech Republic. On 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2022 (Huseynov, 2022), in Prague the meeting had been held between Azerbaijan, Armenia, European Union and France by the initiative of European Union. It is a known fact that France supports Armenia in every field and the aim of the Armenia-France duo in the meeting was to dictate their interests to Azerbaijan. But with the strength brought by the victory in the war Azerbaijan

---

<sup>10</sup> President.az, *Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation, 2021*, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/54426>

again disappointed the duo. At the end of meeting Armenia declared that the territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has to be solved by the principles of International law and Alma-Ata declaration. According to the Alma-Ata declaration Armenia recognized Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty over Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. This victory of Azerbaijan over France-Armenia duo is formalized by the 31 October declaration of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia.

The declaration signed by the President of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Armenia, along with the President of Russia, on October 31, 2022, marks a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to normalize relations between the two countries<sup>11</sup>. (President.az, 2022). It demonstrates a diplomatic triumph for Azerbaijan, as it reaffirms its commitment to the comprehensive normalization of Azerbaijan-Armenia relations, peace, stability, security, and sustainable economic development in the South Caucasus and, additionally and most significantly since both parties declared loyalty to UN principles and 1991 Alma-Ata declaration. These two matters show that Armenia recognized Karabakh as Azerbaijan's territory which makes further steps easier. The declaration highlights the willingness of both Azerbaijan and Armenia to resolve remaining issues, including the humanitarian block, without delay. This demonstrates a diplomatic breakthrough and a recognition of the importance of addressing the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. The declaration also acknowledges the crucial role played by the Russian peacekeeping contingent in ensuring security in the region. This underscores the diplomatic achievement of involving a neutral third party-Russia, to maintain peace and stability. The commitment to refraining from the use or threat of force and resolving all problematic issues based on mutual recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and border inviolability is a significant diplomatic accomplishment. It reinforces the principles of international law and demonstrates a willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue.

The declaration can be analyzed from a classical realism perspective, which focuses on power dynamics, national interests, and security concerns. Azerbaijan's diplomatic triumph lies in its ability to assert its national interests and secure its territorial integrity. By signing the declaration, Azerbaijan ensures the recognition of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and border inviolability. This aligns with the principles of classical realism, where states seek to maximize their power and

---

<sup>11</sup> President.az, *Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation, 2022*, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/57744>

protect their national interests. The commitment to refrain from the use or threat of force reflects the realist perspective of maintaining stability and avoiding escalation. By emphasizing the importance of resolving issues based on mutual recognition, Azerbaijan seeks to secure its interests and maintain a balance of power in the region.

### **Classical Realism and Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Shifts**

Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices after the Second Karabakh War can be analyzed through the lens of classical realism, which emphasizes power, national interests, and security as key determinants of state behavior in the international system.

Power has played a significant role in shaping Azerbaijan's post-war foreign policy. The victory in the war has enhanced Azerbaijan's relative power and influence in the region, as it successfully liberated territories previously occupied by Armenian forces. This power shift has provided Azerbaijan with a stronger bargaining position, allowing it to pursue its national interests with greater confidence. Azerbaijan has capitalized on its increased power to assert its sovereignty, consolidate its territorial integrity, and secure its borders. Azerbaijan's national interests have also guided its foreign policy decisions. The core national interests of Azerbaijan include restoring and preserving its territorial integrity, ensuring the security and stability of the country, and promoting its regional influence. The victory in the war has given Azerbaijan an opportunity to advance these interests more effectively. By liberating the occupied territories, Azerbaijan seeks to establish its authority over its entire sovereign territory and eliminate any threats to its national security. Additionally, Azerbaijan aims to enhance its regional standing and influence by projecting its power and actively shaping the regional dynamics.

Security considerations have been paramount in Azerbaijan's post-war foreign policy. The war highlighted the vulnerabilities and risks faced by Azerbaijan, particularly in terms of border security and potential threats from its opponents. In response, Azerbaijan has adopted a proactive approach to enhance its security. It has focused on strengthening its military capabilities, improving border control measures, and actively engaging in regional security initiatives. By prioritizing security, Azerbaijan aims to safeguard its borders, protect its population, and deter any potential aggression or destabilizing actions from its opponents.

Azerbaijan's post-war foreign policy choices also exhibit a pragmatic approach, as classical realism suggests. Azerbaijan recognizes the complexities of the regional dynamics and the need to engage with various actors, including its opponents, based on its national interests. While pursuing its own objectives, Azerbaijan has shown a willingness to engage in diplomatic negotiations and dialogue to address the remaining issues and seek a long-term resolution to the conflict. At the same time, Azerbaijan has utilized its newfound power and influence to protect its interests and shape the regional balance of power. This pragmatic approach allows Azerbaijan to navigate the intricate web of regional relationships and pursue a foreign policy that maximizes its advantages and minimizes potential risks. (Huseynov, 2022)

The application of classical realist principles provides a comprehensive framework to understand Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices after the Second Karabakh War. The concepts of power, national interests, security, and pragmatism help illuminate the motivations behind Azerbaijan's actions. By leveraging its increased power, pursuing its national interests, prioritizing security, and adopting a pragmatic approach, Azerbaijan aims to consolidate its gains, secure its borders, and assert its influence in the region.

Classical realism offers a comprehensive framework to analyze the shifts in Azerbaijan's foreign policy following the victory in the Second Karabakh War. By examining Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices through the lens of classical realism, we can gain deeper insights into the underlying motivations and strategies employed by Azerbaijan towards its opponents. Power dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping Azerbaijan's foreign policy shifts. The outcome of the Second Karabakh War has significantly enhanced Azerbaijan's regional standing and power. The successful military campaign and the subsequent victory have boosted Azerbaijan's confidence and solidified its position as a regional player. This increased power allows Azerbaijan to assert its interests and influence regional dynamics. It also serves as a deterrent to potential adversaries, sending a clear message that any aggression or threats to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity will be met with a robust response. Consequently, Azerbaijan has been focused on consolidating its power and ensuring its military superiority through modernization efforts, procurement of advanced weaponry, and investment in defense capabilities.

National interests are another crucial factor driving Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices. The resolution of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity are of paramount importance to Azerbaijan. This aligns with the realist notion of self-interest, as states prioritize the protection of their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

(Morgenthau, 1948). Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents is driven by its determination to eliminate any threats to its security, political independence, and territorial integrity. As such, Azerbaijan seeks to counter any attempts to undermine its national interests and actively promotes full restoration of sovereignty and control over territories which are controlled by separatists who are supported by Armenia. Security considerations play a pivotal role in Azerbaijan's foreign policy calculations. The Second Karabakh War highlighted the vulnerabilities and challenges posed by regional conflicts and instability. Azerbaijan recognizes the importance of a secure and stable environment for its national interests and the pursuit of economic development. To safeguard its security, Azerbaijan seeks to prevent the spread of illegal weapons, counter terrorism<sup>12</sup>, counter extremist ideologies, and promote stability in the region. By actively engaging in regional security initiatives and cooperation mechanisms, Azerbaijan aims to ensure a secure environment both domestically and in its immediate neighborhood.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy shifts, viewed through a classical realist perspective, reflect its response to the changing power dynamics in the region, the pursuit of its national interests, and the imperative to maintain security and stability. By leveraging its increased power and influence, Azerbaijan aims to protect its territorial integrity, consolidate its gains, and assert its role as a key regional player. Understanding these motivations and strategies is crucial to comprehending the dynamics of Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards its opponents in the aftermath of the Second Karabakh War.

Moreover, classical realism sheds light on Azerbaijan's strategic calculations and its approach to regional balance of power. Following the victory in the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan has emerged as a more assertive player in the South Caucasus region. It seeks to leverage its newfound power and influence to shape the regional balance in its favor. This realist perspective highlights the importance of power dynamics and competition among states in international relations. Azerbaijan's foreign policy shifts also reflect its desire to protect and advance its national interests in the post-war era. Azerbaijan's foreign policy priorities include promoting economic development and regional integration. Azerbaijan recognizes the importance of its strategic geographic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Leveraging this position, it seeks to enhance its economic ties, attract investments, and diversify its economy. Through regional integration initiatives, such as the development of transport corridors and energy cooperation, Azerbaijan aims to solidify its

---

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Azerbaijan, *Fight Against Terrorism*, available at: <https://mfa.gov.az/en/category/security/fight-against-terrorism>

role as an important transit hub and strengthen its economic position. This realist perspective emphasizes the pursuit of economic interests as a key driver of foreign policy decisions.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices are influenced by its pursuit of stability in the region as well. Classical realism recognizes the role of stability in maintaining the balance of power and preserving national security. Azerbaijan seeks to prevent the escalation of conflicts and the spread of instability in its neighborhood. By engaging in diplomatic efforts, participating in regional security frameworks, and advocating for peaceful resolutions to conflicts, Azerbaijan aims to promote stability and mitigate potential threats to its security and interests. A classical realist perspective provides valuable insights into Azerbaijan's foreign policy shifts after the Second Karabakh War. The pursuit of power, protection of national interests, regional balance of power considerations, and the promotion of stability shape Azerbaijan's approach towards its opponents. By analyzing Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices through this lens, we gain a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations and strategies employed by Azerbaijan in the post-war period.

## **Azerbaijan-Iran Relations and the Second Karabakh War: A Realist Perspective**

### Realist analysis of Azerbaijan-Iran relations post-war

From a realist perspective, the post-war period has significantly impacted Azerbaijan-Iran relations, as power dynamics and national interests come to the forefront. Realism emphasizes the importance of power and self-interest in international relations, and these factors play a critical role in shaping the dynamics between Azerbaijan and Iran. Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War has substantially enhanced its regional standing and power. It has liberated its territories, solidified its sovereignty, and consolidated its position as a key player in the South Caucasus region. This newfound power has increased Azerbaijan's leverage and influence, allowing it to pursue its interests more assertively. Iran, as a neighboring state, closely observes Azerbaijan's growing power. Realism suggests that Iran is likely to approach this shift with caution and evaluate

it through the lens of its own national interests and security concerns. (Jafarli, 2022). While Azerbaijan's enhanced position may offer potential opportunities for collaboration, Iran may also perceive it as a potential threat to its regional influence or security. As such, Iran's response is influenced by a realist assessment of power dynamics and the potential impact on its own strategic objectives.

Balancing behavior is another aspect of realist analysis in Azerbaijan-Iran relations post-war. Both countries are likely to engage in strategic maneuvers and alliances to protect their respective interests and maintain a certain level of influence in the region. Iran, in particular, seek to balance Azerbaijan's growing power by strengthening ties with other regional actors or engaging in diplomatic initiatives. Similarly, Azerbaijan take steps to safeguard its gains and counterbalance any potential threats to its security or influence.

Cooperation and competition are two interconnected aspects that realism acknowledges. While competition may arise due to conflicting interests or perceptions of threats, there is also room for pragmatic cooperation based on shared interests. Azerbaijan and Iran may identify areas of mutual benefit, such as economic partnerships, trade agreements, or joint infrastructure projects. Realism recognizes that states act in their own self-interest, and if cooperation aligns with their respective national interests, it can serve as a basis for collaboration.

However, realism also acknowledges that competition and rivalry are inherent in international relations. Azerbaijan's increasing power and influence may challenge Iran's regional aspirations, and the potential for competition in areas such as energy resources, regional alliances, or geopolitical influence cannot be ignored. (Blank, 2021). Realist analysis considers how these factors shape the overall relationship between Azerbaijan and Iran, with both states seeking to secure their interests and maintain their positions in the regional balance of power.

A realist analysis of Azerbaijan-Iran relations post-war highlights the central role of power, national interests, and security considerations. It recognizes the impact of Azerbaijan's victory on the regional power dynamics and Iran's response based on its own strategic calculations. Balancing behavior, cooperation, and competition further shape the relationship, as both states navigate their interests in a changing regional landscape. Understanding these dynamics through a realist lens provides a deeper insight into the complexities and potential tensions in Azerbaijan-Iran relations after the Second Karabakh War. Realism also underscores the importance of security considerations in shaping Azerbaijan-Iran relations. The Second Karabakh War has not only impacted the balance of power but has also had implications for regional security dynamics. Azerbaijan's territorial gains

and enhanced military capabilities following the war have heightened its sense of security and reduced its vulnerability to external threats. This, in turn, influences Azerbaijan's foreign policy approach towards its opponents, including Iran. For Azerbaijan, ensuring the elimination of threats to its security, political independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity is a crucial priority. Realism recognizes that states prioritize self-preservation and take measures to protect their security interests. In the context of Azerbaijan-Iran relations, Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War has bolstered its security posture and potentially altered its perception of threats in the region.(Blank, 2021).

Iran, on the other hand, may perceive Azerbaijan's increased power and influence as a potential challenge to its own security interests. The theory suggests that Iran would seek to maintain a balance of power and protect its security by closely monitoring Azerbaijan's actions and aligning its foreign policy accordingly. This could manifest through various means, such as strengthening alliances with other regional actors or enhancing its military capabilities. Moreover, realism acknowledges the role of historical interactions and geopolitical rivalries in shaping Azerbaijan-Iran relations. The historical background of their relationship, including previous conflicts and cooperation, contributes to the current dynamics between the two states. Realist analysis takes into account the historical context and how it influences their perceptions, trust, and potential areas of contention.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy goals and priorities, as outlined earlier, align with its national interests in developing a pluralistic democracy, ensuring territorial integrity, and pursuing economic development.<sup>13</sup> Realism suggests that Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices are driven by its perception of how these goals can be best achieved in the regional context, considering its power, security, and national interests. A realist analysis of Azerbaijan-Iran relations post-war highlights the interplay between power, security considerations, historical factors, and national interests. The Second Karabakh War has influenced the balance of power in the region, impacting the dynamics between Azerbaijan and Iran. Understanding these dynamics through a realist lens provides valuable insights into the motivations, behavior, and potential areas of cooperation or contention in Azerbaijan-Iran relations following the war.

---

<sup>13</sup> Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan, *THE PRIORITIES OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN*, available at: <https://supremecourt.gov.az/static/view/5>



### Evaluation of Iran's stance and response to Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War

The victory of Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War has significant implications for Azerbaijan-Iran relations. From a realist perspective, it is crucial to delve deeper into Iran's stance and response to understand the intricate dynamics between the two countries. Iran, as a neighboring country, has a complex set of regional interests and concerns that shape its approach towards Azerbaijan's victory. Historically, Iran has maintained close ties with Armenia due to cultural and economic affinities. This historical connection may influence Iran's perception of the conflict and its reaction to Azerbaijan's increased power and influence in the region. Iran views Azerbaijan's victory as a potential challenge to its own standing and influence in the South Caucasus. From that point as Realist principles suggest that states engage in balancing behavior to maintain a favorable balance of power in the region, in Azerbaijan-Iran relations, Iran employ various strategies to safeguard its interests and counterbalance Azerbaijan's growing influence. This could include diplomatic maneuvers, such as engaging in dialogue and mediation efforts, to ensure that its voice is heard and its interests are protected in the post-war scenario. Iran also leverage its geographic position as a transit route between Azerbaijan and Armenia, using it as a bargaining chip to assert its regional importance.

While competition and potential tensions exist, there are also opportunities for cooperation between Azerbaijan and Iran. Both countries share common interests in areas such as energy, transportation, and regional stability. Cooperation in these sectors could serve as a platform for building trust and enhancing bilateral relations. However, competition may arise in terms of regional influence, resource management, and divergent geopolitical alignments. It is essential to analyze how these dynamics influence Azerbaijan-Iran relations and the extent to which realist principles guide their interactions.

By delving deeper into Iran's stance and response to Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War through a realist lens, we gain a more nuanced understanding of the intricate power dynamics that shape the bilateral relationship. This analysis helps elucidate the broader implications of the war on Azerbaijan's foreign policy and sheds light on the regional dynamics in the South Caucasus. From that context, Iran's response to Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War is likely influenced by its security considerations in the region. As Azerbaijan consolidates its territorial gains and strengthens its position, Iran perceive Azerbaijan's victory as potential security implications. The increased presence of Azerbaijani forces near the Iranian border, combined with the potential for increased military cooperation with Azerbaijan's allies,

raise concerns for Iran's security interests. This could prompt Iran to adopt a cautious approach and closely monitor developments in Azerbaijan's foreign policy and military capabilities. Iran has long sought to assert its influence and maintain a dominant role in the region. Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War potentially disrupts the regional balance of power and challenges Iran's aspirations. As Azerbaijan gains momentum and regional prominence, Iran employs various tactics to protect its interests and preserve its regional influence. These tactics involve supporting and aligning with actors or groups that can counterbalance Azerbaijan's growing influence, including utilizing diplomatic channels and engaging in regional alliances.

A realist perspective allows for a comprehensive analysis of Iran's stance and response to Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War. By considering Iran's regional interests, balancing behavior, security considerations, historical ties, and regional ambitions, valuable insights into the complexities of Azerbaijan-Iran relations can be gained. Understanding these dynamics is essential to comprehensively analyze the post-war foreign policy shifts of Azerbaijan and the broader regional implications in the South Caucasus.

Additionally, Iran's stance towards Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War was also influenced by its fear of potential territorial claims and national unification aspirations. South Azerbaijan, located in Iran's northwestern region, is home to a significant Azerbaijani Turk population. The victory and increased regional influence of Azerbaijan may potentially embolden the national unification ideas among South Azerbaijan Azeris, who share ethnic and linguistic ties with their counterparts in Azerbaijan. Iran, as a diverse country with various ethnic groups, is cautious about any potential secessionist movements or calls for national unification within its borders. Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War, which involved the liberation of Azerbaijani territories, could rekindle aspirations among the South Azerbaijan Azeris for greater autonomy or even unification with Azerbaijan. Iran's historical experiences with separatist movements, such as the Kurdish and Balochi groups, contribute to its concerns regarding the stability and integrity of its own territorial boundaries. And Iran's attitude towards that matter is like that: defeated and weak Azerbaijan will not be attractive for the Azerbaijan turks living in contemporary Iran territories and also in this situation Azerbaijan cannot be inspiration or supporter of ideologies of Azerbaijan turks living in contemporary Iran territories about autonomy, rights and privileges or national unification. From that point of view to safeguard its territorial integrity and internal stability, Iran adopts a cautious approach towards Azerbaijan, particularly in relation to any perceived support or encouragement of national unification ideas among South Azerbaijan

Azeris. Iran closely monitors developments in Azerbaijan's foreign policy and take measures to prevent any potential spillover effects that could fuel secessionist sentiments or destabilize its northwestern region. From a realist perspective, these concerns and fears of Iran highlight the intricacies of Azerbaijan-Iran relations. While Iran may desire to maintain good neighborly relations and cooperate with Azerbaijan in various areas, it must carefully balance its interests with the need to ensure internal stability and territorial integrity. Analyzing Iran's response through a realist lens helps shed light on the underlying power dynamics and considerations that shape its stance towards Azerbaijan's post-war foreign policy.

By considering Iran's fear of potential territorial claims and national unification ideas among South Azerbaijan Azeris, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities in Azerbaijan-Iran relations. This analysis helps elucidate Iran's response to Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War and its implications for regional dynamics and stability in the South Caucasus.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation has provided a comprehensive analysis of Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the Second Karabakh War, focusing on its relations with Iran from a classic realism perspective. Through an examination of Azerbaijan's foreign policy goals, historical context, and post-war dynamics, several significant findings have emerged, shedding light on the complexities and implications for regional relations.

First and foremost, the victory in the Second Karabakh War has had a transformative impact on Azerbaijan's foreign policy objectives and priorities. The liberation of Azerbaijani territories and the restoration of its territorial integrity have become crucial goals for the country. Azerbaijan's foreign policy has shifted towards asserting its national interests and safeguarding its sovereignty, emphasizing the importance of power and security considerations in its decision-making.

Applying classical realist principles to Azerbaijan's foreign policy choices reveals the underlying motivations and considerations. The pursuit of power and security has been central to Azerbaijan's approach towards its opponents, including Iran. The country's enhanced strategic position and increased regional influence have enabled it to assert its interests more assertively, seeking to eliminate threats to its security and stability.

Analyzing Azerbaijan-Iran relations from a realist perspective provides valuable insights into the dynamics between the two countries. Iran's response to Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War is influenced by multiple factors, including security concerns, historical ties, and regional ambitions. Furthermore, Iran's fear of potential territorial claims and national unification ideas among South Azerbaijan Azeris (Turks) adds another layer of complexity to the relationship. Iran seeks to maintain stability within its own borders and prevent any spillover effects that could fuel secessionist sentiments or disrupt its territorial integrity. The implications for Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its relations with Iran are substantial. Azerbaijan's increased regional influence and strategic position enable it to pursue its national interests more assertively, while managing its relations with neighboring countries, including Iran. Understanding the realist dynamics helps policymakers navigate the complexities of the regional environment, make informed decisions, and strike a delicate balance between asserting national interests and maintaining stable regional relations.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan's foreign policy change after the Second Karabakh War in comparison prewar situation, can be explained through one sentence by considering all above facts. The

sentence will be like that: After the victory Azerbaijan started to use balance of power principle of realism rather balance of threat principle which Azerbaijan used to use before the war. Before the victory in the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan's foreign policy was characterized by a strategic adherence to the balance of threat principle of realism. Recognizing the presence of multiple threats and challenges in its regional environment, Azerbaijan sought to mitigate risks by strategically aligning itself with various regional and international actors. The primary focus was to counterbalance perceived threats and maintain a delicate equilibrium through diplomatic engagements, multilateral cooperation, and pragmatic decision-making. However, following its victory in the war, Azerbaijan underwent a significant shift in its foreign policy orientation. The principle of balance of power became more prominent in Azerbaijan's strategic calculations. With newfound confidence and an altered regional landscape, Azerbaijan pursued a more assertive and self-reliant approach to safeguarding its national interests. This shift entailed a greater emphasis on building and consolidating its own military capabilities, forging stronger alliances with like-minded states, and taking a more proactive role in regional affairs. The transition from the balance of threat to the balance of power principle reflected a fundamental reevaluation of Azerbaijan's position and aspirations in the region. The victory not only bolstered Azerbaijan's confidence but also reinforced its determination to assert its sovereignty and protect its territorial integrity. Recognizing the importance of power dynamics and the need to secure its own interests, Azerbaijan strategically engaged in actions aimed at maximizing its influence and solidifying its position as a key regional player. By adopting the balance of power principle, Azerbaijan sought to enhance its bargaining power, deter potential threats, and secure its gains from the war. This involved forging closer ties with regional powers, diversifying its strategic partnerships, and actively pursuing policies that reinforced its position of strength. The focus shifted from solely responding to threats to actively shaping the regional balance of power in a manner favorable to Azerbaijan's interests.

Overall, the shift in Azerbaijan's foreign policy from the balance of threat principle to the balance of power principle after the victory in the Second Karabakh War signifies a strategic transformation driven by a heightened sense of confidence and the pursuit of national interests. The change reflects Azerbaijan's proactive approach to safeguarding its sovereignty, consolidating its gains, and positioning itself as a significant player in the evolving regional dynamics. The main findings of the research can be simplified as below:

- The victory in the Second Karabakh War proved that Azerbaijan is the leading power of the South Caucasus

- Azerbaijan behaves as a lawmaker of the region and makes all interested parties to settle up with Azerbaijan's interest
- Military victory provides power to dictate rules in diplomatic table
- Azerbaijan changed its foreign policy from balance of threat principle to balance of power principle
- Iran was right in its fears about Azerbaijan's victory in the war

By considering this facts the dissertation proves that: "Proving the ability to overcome oppositional force via hard power ends with a more fluctuating and assertive foreign policy."

The findings of this dissertation contribute significantly to the field of international relations by offering a nuanced understanding of how political realism can be applied to analyze foreign policy decisions and interstate relations. It highlights the relevance of power, security, and national interests in shaping state behavior, particularly in the context of post-war dynamics and regional power shifts. On the other hand, this dissertation provides valuable insights into the analysis of Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the Second Karabakh War, with a specific focus on Azerbaijan-Iran relations from a political realism perspective. The findings contribute to the existing knowledge in international relations, offering important considerations for policymakers and scholars in understanding the complexities of regional dynamics and strategic decision-making.

For future research, further exploration could be conducted on the economic dimensions of Azerbaijan-Iran relations post-war, including trade partnerships, energy cooperation, and infrastructure projects. Additionally, comparative analyses of other conflicts and their impact on foreign policy decisions in the region would provide a broader understanding of the dynamics of power and security considerations.

Overall, this dissertation enriches our understanding of the complexities of Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its relations with Iran, while offering valuable insights into the application of political realism in analyzing post-war foreign policy dynamics.

## References

1. Abbasov, A. (2011). "Azerbaijan and Iran: Contradiction and Perspectives of Development of Their Relations", The Analyticon, No.7, <http://theanalyticon.com/?p=446&lang=en> (07.2011).
2. Akdeveliođlu A. (2004). "İran'ın Orta Asya ve Azerbaycan Politikaları". International Relations, Vol.1, No.2, s.129-160
3. Alibayli, V. Historical and Legal Aspects of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict. Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, Ancient and Medieval Eastern Studies. (2021)
4. Aliyarli.J. "How does the stagnation of potential Armenia-Azerbaijan peace deal influence Russia's South Caucasus policy?" Caucasus Strategic Perspectives Journal. p 79-104  
[https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP\\_vol2%20issue2\\_Winter%202021%20inside%20\(online\).pdf](https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP_vol2%20issue2_Winter%202021%20inside%20(online).pdf) (2021)
5. Asgarov, A. & Ismayilov, A. "Iran's Policy Towards Azerbaijan in the Period of Power Transfer. Dumlupinar University Journal of Social Sciences. ( 2021)
6. Aslanlı, K. (2017). "İran – Azerbaycan Ekonomik İlişkileri", Iran Researches Centre, [https://iramcenter.org/d\\_hbanaliz/analiz\\_iran-Azerbaycan\\_Ekonomik\\_iliskileri.pdf](https://iramcenter.org/d_hbanaliz/analiz_iran-Azerbaycan_Ekonomik_iliskileri.pdf), (26.09.2021).
7. Avdaliani, E. (2020). Defying Geography: The Israel-Azerbaijan Partnership, BESA Center Perspectives Paper No: 1.
8. Azernews. "Turkey seeks thaw in Iran-Azeri ties", <https://www.azernews.az/nation/31673.html>, (30.10.2021).
9. Başar, U. (2020). "İran Karabağ savaşının kaybedeni mi?", Anadolul Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/iran-karabag-savasinin-kaybedeni-mi/2052813>, (26.10.2021)
10. Blank, S. The Geopolitical Significance of the Azerbaijan-Armenia Conflict. Caucasus Social Science Journal. (2021)
11. Blank, S. "Iran's Challenged Position in the Post-War South Caucasus" Caucasus Strategic Perspectives Journal. p 41-61  
[https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP\\_vol2%20issue2\\_Winter%202021%20inside%20\(online\).pdf](https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP_vol2%20issue2_Winter%202021%20inside%20(online).pdf) (2021)
12. Constitution (t.y.). <https://en.mfa.ir/portal/viewpage/3997> (21.09. 2021).
13. Cornell, S. Promise and Peril in the Caucasus. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center. (2023)
14. Çelikpala, M. (2013). "İlham Aliyev Dönemi Dış Politikası: Sorunlar, Öncelikler ve İlişkiler", Atatürk Research Centre: 291-292.
15. Deutsche Welle. (2020). "İran ile Türkiye arasında şiiir krizi", <https://www.dw.com/tr/iran-ile-t%C3%BCrkiye-aras%C4%B1nda-%C5%9Fiiir-krizi/a-55911204>, (12.10.2021).
16. Erim, O.B. (2020). "Gelişen Azerbaycan-Türkiye İlişkileri Karşısında İran'ın Düşmanlığı", Crimean News Agency. <https://qha.com.tr/ozel-haber-roportaj/gelisen-azerbaycan-turkiye-iliskileri-karsisinda-iran-in-dusmanligi/288059/>, (13.10.2021).
17. Eurasia.net. (2011). "Tensions Growing Between Azerbaijan and Iran?", <https://eurasianet.org/tensions-growing-between-azerbaijan-and-iran>, (19.09.2021).

18. European commission .(2022). “EU and Azerbaijan enhance bilateral relations, including energy cooperation”. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_4550](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_4550)
19. Ghafouri, M. (2008). “The Caspian Sea: Rivalry And Cooperation”, Journal Compilation Middle East Policy Council, Vol.15, No.2, pp.81-96.
20. Gresh, G. (2006). “Coddling the Caucasus: Iran’s Strategic Relationship with Azerbaijan and Armenia”, Caucasian Review of International Affairs, Vol.1, No.1, pp.1-13, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/104431/Full.pdf>, (25.10.2021).
21. Huseynov, V. In Unprecedented Move, Baku Opens Embassy in Tel Aviv. Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/program/in-unprecedented-move-baku-opens-embassy-in-tel-aviv/> (2022)
22. Huseynov, V. Regional Tensions Loom Over Multilateral Initiatives in South Caucasus. Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/program/regional-tensions-loom-over-multilateral-initiatives-in-south-caucasus/> (2023)
23. Huseynov, V. Azerbaijan Warns Against Threats that Might Undermine Peace Process with Armenia. Jamestown Foundation. [https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-warns-against-threats-that-might-undermine-peace-process-with-armenia/?fbclid=IwAR3CIIgGEDNNd0aKiiMt7A5FZr-3Zz\\_QIXPOS9B7klve7Sc7oviEbZ4GmOQ](https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-warns-against-threats-that-might-undermine-peace-process-with-armenia/?fbclid=IwAR3CIIgGEDNNd0aKiiMt7A5FZr-3Zz_QIXPOS9B7klve7Sc7oviEbZ4GmOQ) (2021)
24. Huseynov, V. “Azerbaijan and Russia Sign Declaration on Allied Cooperation”. Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-and-russia-sign-declaration-on-allied-cooperation/> (2022).
25. Huseynov, V. “In Prague, Armenia and Azerbaijan Make a Critical Move Toward Peace”. Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/program/in-prague-armenia-and-azerbaijan-make-a-critical-move-toward-peace/> (2022).
26. Huseynov, V. “Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the 44Day War: A Failure or an Opportunity for the EU?” Caucasus Strategic Perspectives Journal. p 27-41 [https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP\\_vol2%20issue2\\_Winter%202021%20inside%20\(online\).pdf](https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP_vol2%20issue2_Winter%202021%20inside%20(online).pdf) (2021)
27. Ibrahimov, R. & Muradov, M. Historical and Legal Aspects of the Karabakh Conflict An Azerbaijani Perspective on A Shared Post-Conflict Future. Baku: ADA University Press. (2021)
28. Ismailzade, F. The Armernia-Azerbaijan War: The South Caucasus Implications. Global Review of Media and Communication. (2021)
29. Iran Islam Republic News Agency. (2021). “Hayber Fatihleri Tatbikatı başladı”, <https://tr.irna.ir/news/84489825/Hayber-Fatihleri-Tatbikat%C4%B1ba%C5%9Fad%C4%B1>, (26.10.2021).
30. Iran-Main Indicator. (2020). <https://www.amar.org.ir/english/Main-Indicators>, (15.10.2021).
31. Jafarli.S. “A New Direction in Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy: Irredentism?@. Baku Research Institute. <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/a-new-direction-in-azerbaijans-foreign-policy-irredentism/> (12.11.2022)
32. Jafarova. E. “The success of Azerbaijan’s multi-vectored foreign policy”. AIR Centre. <https://aircenter.az/en/single/the-success-of-azerbaijans-multi-vectored-foreign-policy-727>. (2021)



33. Keskin, A. (2020). "İran'ın Karabağ Siyasetinin 5 Yüzü", Fikir Turu, <https://fikirturu.com/jeo-strateji/iranin-karabag-siyasetininyuzu/> (29.10.2021).
34. Koolae, E. & Hafezian, M.H. (2010). "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the South Caucasus Republics", Iranian Studies, Vol.43, No.3, pp.391-409.
35. Kurşun, M. (2020). "İran Ermenistan'a Silah Taşdığı İddialarını Reddetti", Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/iran-ermenistana-silah-tasidigi-iddialarini-reddetti/1989277>, (12.10.2021).
36. Natiqqizi. U. (2022). "After war victory, Azerbaijan keeps increasing military spending". Eurasia.net. <https://eurasianet.org/after-war-victory-azerbaijan-keeps-increasing-military-spending>
37. Mammadov. M. "Azerbaijan's Soft Balancing vis-à-vis Russia". Caucasus Strategic Perspectives Journal. p 61-79  
[https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP\\_vol2%20issue2\\_Winter%202021%20inside%20\(online\).pdf](https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/CSP_vol2%20issue2_Winter%202021%20inside%20(online).pdf) (2021)
38. Mammadyarov. E. "Walking a tightrope: Azerbaijan's foreign policy strategy in a changing environment" Azerbaijan Focus Journal. (2009)
39. Marzieh, K.E. (2016). "Iran's Regional Policy in the South Caucasus: Case Studies of Relations with the Republics of Azerbaijan & Armenia", Durham University, [http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/11870/1/Iran's\\_South\\_Caucasus\\_Policy-2016.pdf?DDD35+](http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/11870/1/Iran's_South_Caucasus_Policy-2016.pdf?DDD35+), (19.10.2021).
40. Mearsheimer, J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. Washington: s.n. (2001)
41. Miholjic. N. (2020) "International Response to the Second Karabakh War" Caucasus Strategic Perspective. p12  
[https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/Vol\\_1\\_Is\\_2\\_Winter2020/\(12\)%20Nina%20Miholjic.pdf](https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/Vol_1_Is_2_Winter2020/(12)%20Nina%20Miholjic.pdf)
42. Miles, C. (1999). "The Caspian Pipeline Debate Continues: Why Not Iran?", Journal of International Affairs, Cilt.53, No.1, pp.325-346.
43. Mirzayev, M. Azerbaijan-Iran Relations in the Context of Regional Developments. Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia. (2022)
44. Morgenthau, H. Realism and Politics Among Nations. Washington: s.n. (1948)
45. Muradova, M. (2011). "Iran and Azerbaijan Clash over Cyber-Attacks and Arrested Terrorists", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute.
46. Nassibli, N.L. (1999). "Azerbaijan – Iran Relations: Challenges and Prospects", Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/azerbaijan-iran-relations-challenges-and-prospects>, (28.10.2021).
47. Nuriyev, E. & Valiyev, A. Crisis in Azerbaijani-Iranian Relations. Baku Research Institute. (2021)
48. Rouhi, M. Conflict in the South Caucasus and Its Effects on Iran. Trends Research & Advisory. (2020)
49. Oğuz. C. (2012). "Relations Between Iran and Azerbaijan: What next?". News.Az, <http://wwwnews.az/articles/53614>, (19.11.2021).

50. Olson, R. (2002). "Turkey-Iran Relations, 2000-2001: The Caspian, Azerbaijan and The Kurds", Middle East Policy, Cilt.9, No.2, pp.111-129.
51. Peterson, K., & Dunn, Candace. (2021). "Iran's crude oil production fell to an almost 40-year low in 2020", U.S. Energy Information Administration, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=49116>, (25.11.2021).
52. President.az. "Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation". <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45924> (2020)
53. President.az. "Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation". <https://president.az/en/articles/view/57744> (2022)
54. President.az. "Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation". <https://president.az/en/articles/view/54426> (2022)
55. President.az. "Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation". <https://president.az/en/articles/view/50070> (2021)
56. President.az. "Declaration on allied interaction between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation". <https://president.az/en/articles/view/55498> (2022)
57. President.az. "Azerbaijan, Turkey signed Shusha Declaration on allied relations". <https://president.az/en/articles/view/52115> (2021)
58. Ramazani, R.K. (2004). "Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy", Middle East Journal, Vol.58, No.4, pp.549-559.
59. Rasmussen, K.B. (2009). "The Foreign Policy of Iran: Ideology and pragmatism in the Islamic Republic", Danish Institute for International Studies, [https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/pbei/diis/0015954/f\\_0015954\\_13833.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/pbei/diis/0015954/f_0015954_13833.pdf), (16.10.2021).
60. Rehimov, R. (2021). "Azerbaycan Sınır Hizmetlerinden İranlı yetkililere "sorumlu olun çağrısı", Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-sinir-hizmetlerinden-iranli-yetkililere-sorumlu-olun-cagrisi/2388703>, (15.11.2021).
61. Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)" <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/category/international-organisations/non-aligned-movement-nam>
62. Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Fight Against Terrorism". <https://mfa.gov.az/en/category/security/fight-against-terrorism>
63. Rouhi, M. Conflict in the South Caucasus and Its Effects on Iran. Trends Research & Advisory. (2020)
64. Sadri, H. (2003). "Elements of Azerbaijan Foreign Policy", Journal of Third World Studies, Vol.20, No.1, pp.179-192.
65. Sadik. R. (2023) "İran-Azerbaycan gerginliği nereye varacak?" FikirTuru, <https://fikirturu.com/jeo-politik/iran-azerbaycan-gerginligi-nereye-varacak/>

66. Santana.S.V. “Azerbaijan as a Potential Regional Leader in the South Caucasus”.  
[https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/Vol\\_2\\_Is\\_1\\_Summer2021/Vin%C3%ADcius%20Silva%20Santana.pdf](https://cspjournal.az/uploads/files/Vol_2_Is_1_Summer2021/Vin%C3%ADcius%20Silva%20Santana.pdf)  
(2021)
67. Sarıkaya, Y. (2008). Tarihi ve Jeopolitik Boyutlarıyla İran’da Milliyetçilik, İstanbul: Ötüken. p 448
68. Sarıkaya, Y. (2021). “İran’ın İkinci Karabağ Savaşı Tutumu: Takke Düştü Kel Göründü”, Giresun Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi, Cilt.7, No.1, s.84-103.
69. Shaffer, B. (2000). “The formation of Azerbaijan Collective Identity in Iran”. Nationalities Papers, Vol.28, No.3, pp.449-477,  
<https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/The%20formation%20of%20Azerbaijani%20collective%20identity%20in%20Iran.pdf>, (30.10.2021).
70. Shaffer, B. (2002). “Is There a Muslim Foreign Policy? The Case of the Caspian”, Current History, Vol.101, No.568, pp.382-387.
71. Shaffer, B. (2003). “Iran’s Role in the South Caucasus and Caspian Region: Diverging Views of the U.S. and Europe”, Iran and Its Neighbors: Diverging Views on a Strategic Region, pp.17-22,  
<https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/shaffer.pdf>, (19.10.2021).
72. Shaffer, B. The Armenia-Azerbaijan War: Downgrading Iran's Regional Role. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center. (2020)
73. Shahmammadov, N. Azerbaijan-Iran Relations: The Historical and Political Context. Caucasus Social Science Journal. (2021)
74. Sharashenidze, T. (2011). “The Role of Iran in the South Caucasus”, Caucasus Analytical Digest, No.30, pp.2-4, <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CAD30-2-4.pdf>, (19.11.2021).
75. Sinkaya, B. (2012). “İran’ın Kafkasya Politikası”, Aydın M. (Ed.), Kafkaslarda Değişim Dönüşüm (Avrasya Üçlemesi), Ankara: Nobel: 229-256.
76. Souleimanov, E. Dityrych, O. (2007). “Iran and Azerbaijan: A Contested Neighborhood”, Middle East Policy, Vol.14, No.2, pp.101-116.
77. Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan. “Foreign Policy Priorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan” <https://supremecourt.gov.az/static/view/5> (2023)
78. Tait, R. (2011). “Iran, Azerbaijan, And Turkey: Zero Problems? Zero Chance”, Radio Free Liberty, [https://www.rferl.org/a/iran\\_azerbaijan\\_turkey\\_war\\_of\\_words/24301086.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/iran_azerbaijan_turkey_war_of_words/24301086.html), (15.11.2021).
79. Tehran Times. (2020). “Amir Abdollahian says Tehran and Baku should not give enemies opportunity to undermine ties”, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/466004/Amir-Abdollahian-says-Tehran-and-Baku-should-not-give-enemies>, (19.11.2021).
80. Yousefi, A.M.H. (2010). “Iran’s Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: From Confrontation to Accommodation”, Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations, Vol.9, No.2, pp.1-23.
81. Yunus, A. (2006). “Azerbaijan-Between America and Iran”, Russia in Global Affairs, Vol.4, No.3, pp.112-126, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/25376/Full\\_Text.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/25376/Full_Text.pdf), (23.11.2021).

82. Zadeh, K.S. (2008). "Iran's Strategy in the South Caucasus", *Caucasian Review of International Relations*, Vol.2, No.1, 35-41, <https://d-nb.info/993905447/34>, (19.10.2021).

83. Zarif. M.J. (2014). "What Iran Really Wants: Iranian Foreign Policy in the Rouhani Era", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.93, No.3, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2014-04-17/what-iran-really-wants>, (15.11.2021).