

Azerbaijan-Israel, Turkey-Israel Relations Based on Analysis of Experts (2016-2018)

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15421/172337>**Mammadova Samira Isgandar**Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0675-9248>, studyinabroad80@gmail.com*Sumgait State University (Sumgait, Azerbaijan)*

Abstract

The main aim of the article is to expole political and economical relations between Azerbaijan-Israil, Turkey-Israil on the base of expert analysis. One of the main objectives is to identify Israel's policy of the Southern Caucasus region and current condition of the region. Today, strong and independent Azerbaijan successfully implements a multi-vector foreign policy.

However, multicultural societies have existed in Azerbaijan for centuries. Friendship and solidarity between peoples is a clear example of this. Even today, we are trying to show our positive influence on the processes going on in the region and the world with our own initiative. It is no coincidence that several initiatives put forward by Azerbaijan have already found their place in life, and new opportunities are emerging around these initiatives. Currently, Azerbaijan is an economically and politically independent country, with an independent foreign policy. This policy is supported by most countries of the world. Every country should treat other countries with respect. Each country should respect the choice of other countries - both at the international level, and in the field of interreligious dialogue and humanitarianism. All these are related to each other.

Conclusion. So, we came to a conclusion that every country has own state interests in cooperation. Turkey, Israel is also among of these countries, and they have economics, political and social interests in the Southern Caucasus region. So, Azerbaijan cooperates with these countries in mutual relations. Azerbaijan is an important supplier of strategic energy resources to Israel. This country freed us from energy dependence of other countries. Anti-Semitism has never existed in this country during the entire period when Jews lived in the territory of Azerbaijan. Israel is an important strategic partner that supplies Azerbaijan with the most advanced technologies in the fields of oil and gas, telecommunications and agriculture. Application importance: this material can be used in lectures and seminars at HEIs. In additionally, politicians, historians can benefit from this material.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Israil, Turkey, foreign policy, relationship, the Caucasus

Азербайджансько-ізраїльські, турецько-ізраїльські відносини на основі аналізу експертів (2016-2018)

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Анотація

Основною метою статті є дослідження політичних та економічних відносин між Азербайджаном та Ізраїлем, Туреччиною та Ізраїлем на основі експертного аналізу. Однією з головних цілей є визначення політики Ізраїлю щодо регіону Південного Кавказу та поточного стану регіону. Сьогодні сильний і незалежний Азербайджан успішно реалізує багатовекторну зовнішню політику.

Проте мультикультурні суспільства існували в Азербайджані протягом століть. Дружба і солідарність між народами – яскравий тому приклад. Вже сьогодні ми власною ініціативою намагаємося продемонструвати свій позитивний вплив на процеси, що відбуваються в регіоні та світі. Не випадково кілька ініціатив, висунутих Азербайджаном, вже знайшли своє місце в житті, і навколо цих ініціатив виникають нові можливості. В даний час Азербайджан є економічно і політично незалежною державою, яка проводить незалежну зовнішню політику. Цю політику підтримує більшість країн світу. Кожна країна повинна з повагою ставитися до інших країн. Кожна країна повинна поважати вибір інших країн – як на міжнародному рівні, так і в сфері міжрелігійного діалогу та гуманітаризму. Усе це пов'язано одне з одним.

Висновок. Отже, ми дійшли висновку, що кожна країна має свої державні інтереси у співпраці. Туреччина, Ізраїль також є серед цих країн, і вони мають економічні, політичні та соціальні інтереси в регіоні Південного Кавказу. Отже, Азербайджан співпрацює з цими країнами у взаємних відносинах. Азербайджан є важливим постачальником стратегічних енергоресурсів для Ізраїлю. Ця країна позбавила нас від енергетичної залежності інших країн. За весь період проживання євреїв на території Азербайджану в цій країні ніколи не було антисемітизму. Ізраїль є важливим стратегічним партнером, який постачає в Азербайджан найперевіреніші технології в галузі нафти і газу, телекомунікацій і сільського господарства. Прикладне значення: матеріал може бути використаний на лекціях та семінарах у ВНЗ. Крім того, цей матеріал може стати в нагоді політикам, історикам.

Ключові слова: Азербайджан, Ізраїль, Туреччина, зовнішня політика, відносини, Кавказ

Introduction.

On December 25, 1991, Israel was officially recognized Independence of Azerbaijan, diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan were established on April 7, 1992. In August 1993, the embassy of Israel was opened in Azerbaijan. Israel opened its embassy in Baku (Mamedova, 2020, p. 87)

In modern times, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Israel cooperates bilateral political, economic, cultural, humanitarian and other relations. Political, economic, geopolitical, geostrategic factors and regional security issues have raised relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Israel to the level of strategic partnership (Mammadova, 2022a, p.12).

Associate professor Elnur Kelbizadeh says, "At the current stage, Israel's interests in Southern Caucasus are related to 3 issues:

1. Relations with the Iran Islamic Republic. We should mention that despite of non-diplomatic relations between these 2 countries, they had cooperated till the end of the 70th of XX century. Iran were conducting the military and trade relations with Israel during the war between Iran and Iraq.

2. Southern Caucasus is an energy supplier for Israel.

3. Arm trade and export to Southern Caucasus. Due to the statistical data in 1918, Israel is on the 9th place among 109 countries who export arms" (Gasimli, Kalbizade, & Bakhshiyeva, 2002, p. 28-30).

Arye Gut, Israeli expert mentioned in his interview, "As a result of successful geopolitical and geo-economics initiatives, Azerbaijan has become a strong geopolitical center and leader of the region. Without his participation and consent, no political, economic and transport projects can be realized in the South Caucasus, which is a strategic region of the world. Azerbaijan is the strongest force and locomotive in the South Caucasus region. Let's not forget that today the Republic of Azerbaijan is in a very complex geopolitical environment and conducts a multi-vector foreign policy. Today's reality is that there is no country in Eurasia and the entire Muslim world that has closer ties with Israel than Azerbaijan. During the 26-year history of diplomatic relations between the two states, the necessity and viability of strategic relations between the Jewish state and the majority Muslim state has been proven. Our friendly countries really interact with each other as sincere and reliable strategic partners. In fact, Azerbaijanis and Jews can not only live side by side, but can also become true friends, develop and strengthen their relations" (Arye Gut, 2018).

According to Arye Gut (2018), Azerbaijan has a unique place in the complex geopolitical labyrinth. He said, "There is a political dialogue between Israel and Azerbaijan at the highest level and based on trust. There is a serious economic background - the trade turnover is about 5.7 billion dollars. However, the most important thing in Israel-Azerbaijan relations is the very important

human factor, I would say that this factor is one of the main pillars of bilateral relations.

Formulation of the problem.

Relations with Israel play an important role in the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. After researching the relationship between the two countries in the years of 1991-2008, it can be concluded that the development of political relations between the two states can be divided into two stages. The first stage covers the period of 1991-1998. In these years relations were weak. The second stage covers the period of 1998-2008. This period was marked by the greatest development in the relations of the two countries (Mammadova, 2015, p. 122).

There are historical relations between Israel and Azerbaijan. These relations are not only related to history, but also to the strategic and economic importance of Azerbaijan. As Azerbaijan is an oil exporting a large gas producer country, trade and economic cooperation has taken the main place in the relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with Israel. Israeli companies are closely involved in the development of Azerbaijan's energy sector (Mammadova, 2018, p. 398).

On April 12, 2000, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, received the delegation of this country headed by Viktor Harel, Deputy Director General for Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, at the Presidential Palace. This is considered to be the first economic mission from Israel to Azerbaijan (Mammadova, 2014, p. 161).

Living together as part of a single empire (Akhamenids, Sassanids, Caliphate), and additionally the resettlement of Jews in Azerbaijan periodically, linking their fate with this land, led to the emergence of relations between our peoples. The substantiation of thousands of Jews in the territory of Azerbaijan during the period of the Achaemenids, Sassanids, Caliphate is a well-known historical fact for all. It should also be noted that from the moment of resettlement to this day, there has not been a single fact of confrontation or conflict between the titular nation of the country - Azerbaijanis and Jews (Mamedova, 2014, p. 88).

Together with observers from Israel, A.Gut visited the Red Settlement where Jews live in Azerbaijan. Among the observers, Uzi Dayan expressed his admiration for the caring and sincere attitude towards Jews in Azerbaijan, which is unmatched anywhere else in the world. The Red Settlement is the only unique place in the world, after Israel, where mountain Jews live compactly, and Azerbaijan is proud of it. Jews and Azerbaijanis have lived here for centuries as native brothers, they are united by a common history and destiny. Azerbaijan has been a true example of inter-civilizational and inter-confessional dialogue, and it is still the case today. "Azerbaijan is really an island of stability, multiculturalism and tolerance" (Arye Gut, 2018).

The expert notes that President Ilham Aliyev's policy based on national interests is the cornerstone of

Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Official Baku has proved that no one can speak with Azerbaijan in the language of ultimatum. Cooperation and partnership with foreign partners is exclusively based on mutual interests.

Main part: Azerbaijan-Israel relations.

The Israeli expert touched upon the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan. He said that regarding the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan, this person left very terrible bloody traces in history. I reminded that Sargsyan was not only an ideologue, but also an organizer of the act of genocide in the city of Khojaly, Azerbaijan. 613 Azerbaijani civilians, including children, elderly and women, were killed there in one night. The people of Azerbaijan will never forgive Sargsyan for this crime.

What did Sargsyan leave for his people? During his ten-year rule, Armenia, which isolated itself in the South Caucasus region, was completely excluded from geopolitical, geoeconomic, transport and logistics projects, as well as projects related to the oil and gas resources of the Caspian Sea, due to its groundless territorial claims, especially its occupation of Azerbaijani lands and its ongoing military aggression. It is an undeniable fact that Armenia is the most dependent country in the Southern Caucasus. Today, Armenia is completely connected to Russia's foreign political and economic ambitions and depends on it" (Arye Gut, 2018).

According to Arye Gut's opinion, Armenia's economy is in a deplorable state, which means that it is gradually becoming and will become a satellite of Russia. "If Armenia had 3 million people 10 years ago, now there are about 1.5 million people left there. People are leaving Armenia because they don't see a future there. The reason for the mood of mass migration is the economic situation of Armenia. The population of Armenia negatively assesses the economic policy implemented in the country and sees the way out in leaving this place.

The atmosphere of impunity promoted by the authorities has led to the situation where the fate of the country is left to the hands of shallow, simple-minded people and dilettantes. In other words, they are the people whom Serzh Sargsyan awarded for "combat valor". Although Sargsyan led the country for 10 years, he remained the same locksmith as when he started his first job. In such a situation, the people rose up and demanded his resignation, and Sargsyan was forced to leave. Azerbaijan hopes that a person with common sense, who cares about his people and country in a difficult situation, will come to power in Armenia," Arye Gut summed up his opinion in the information-analytical program of Israel's 9th television channel "Den".

One of the states which Azerbaijan has close relations is Israel. Israel recognized Azerbaijan's independence on 25 December 1991, and diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on 6 April 1992. Israel's embassy in Azerbaijan has been operating since August 1993. Even Azerbaijan began to become the center of

attention of the world Jewish elite since 1810. In that period, the first Ashkenazis began to settle in Baku. In 1832, the first houses of worship of Jews were built in Baku.

Turkey-Israel relations.

A few years ago, the Turkish-Israeli relations began to strain, which seriously worried Azerbaijan. However, the relations between Turkey and Israel, which have become very tense in recent years, and in some cases have been completely severed, are on the way to recovery. The deterioration of Turkey-Russia relations also played an important role in the activation of this process.

Official Baku expressed concern when Ankara-Tel Aviv relations reached a breaking point. Because we have high-level relations with Israel, apart from our ties with our brother Turkey. In this sense, Azerbaijan chose not to take sides, but to reconcile the two sides, at least to maintain its relative neutrality. And this line has already begun to bear fruit. In other words, the restoration of Turkish-Israeli relations justified Azerbaijan's foreign policy course.

Let's review an interview of the director of International Relations and Strategic Research Center of the Caucasus Araz Aslanlı (2016).

Araz bey, Turkey, whose relations with Russia are strained, began to positively evaluate the offers of cooperation from Israel. Can the Russian factor bring these two important countries back to their old friendship?

A. Aslanli said, "In general, both common interests and external factors have always played an important role in Turkey-Israel relations. It was also possible to see it in the 1990s. There was rapprochement when Israel's search for a Muslim-friendly country coincided with some military-security interests of Turkey. Of course, there were also economic factors. But when there was a different ideological rhetoric of the ruling forces in Turkey, relations deteriorated. Clearly, the reason here was more than just rhetoric. Also, there were doubts in Turkey that Israel does not want military-security cooperation, but Turkey's dependence on Israel in this direction. Doubts about Israel's policy regarding PKK terror and Turkey's territorial integrity have increased. Different interests of Turkey related to the Arab and Islamic world in general also emerged. Thus, changing interests, serious doubts, and ideological rhetoric worsened Turkish-Israeli relations. This was a period when Turkey was trying to implement a "zero problem with neighbors" policy. Relations with Russia were also good (Aslanli, 2016).

Now the conditions have changed. Turkey seems to be returning to the situation of the early 1990s. The situation in relations with Syria, Russia and Iran is even worse than in the early 1990s. Israel is also the target of criticism from the United States due to certain issues. In other words, both countries need less problems and better relations between themselves. Israel makes proposals to Turkey to improve relations using the new conditions. Turkey responds positively to this by taking

steps towards the development of cooperation with Israel without completely abandoning its previous policy (Aslanli, 2016).

Azerbaijan expressed concern when Turkey-Israel relations were cut off. That is, on one side, brother Turkey, on the other side Israel, where there are close ties and partnerships. How important is the restoration of Ankara-Tel Aviv relations for Azerbaijan?

For a long time, the two main bridges of Azerbaijan-Israel relations were the Jews of the former USSR living in Israel (as well as those who left Azerbaijan) and Israel-Turkey relations. Currently, there are direct and normal relations between Azerbaijan and Israel. This is also important for Azerbaijan in terms of ensuring its territorial integrity and security. The deterioration in Turkish-Israeli relations worries Azerbaijan, but the temporary deterioration does not pose a vital risk for Azerbaijan. Simply, when Turkish-Israeli relations approach the limit of conflict (for example, during the attack on the "Mavi Marmara" ship), concern for Azerbaijan increases. In the remaining cases, Azerbaijan is able to "launch" processes within the framework of a balanced course in its foreign policy (Aslanli, 2016).

If Azerbaijan starts to see its relations with Israel (as Turkey does) not as cooperation, but as an initiative to create dependence, there may be a problem. In other cases, the relations of other countries with Israel may be important for Azerbaijan, but they will not be decisive. This also applies to our brotherly country and strategic ally, Turkey. Of course, Azerbaijan has a special approach to issues related to Turkey. But most likely, Azerbaijan evaluated the tension between Turkey and Israel as a temporary process and protected its bridges. This also benefited both Azerbaijan, Israel, and Turkey.

It is no secret that official Baku has warm relations with the world Jewish lobby. Do you think that Azerbaijan can play a role in the reunification of Turkey and Israel?

Of course, Azerbaijan's cooperation with Israel has a special character. But the bridges between Turkey and Israel are not few. At the official level, Azerbaijan tried to prevent the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations and made contributions in this direction. For example, the role of Azerbaijan in the voting process related to the fabricated Armenian claims in the Israeli Parliament was significant, and the decision that Armenia wished for was not adopted (Aslanli, 2016).

Turkish-Israeli relations do not continue only thanks to Azerbaijan. There is also direct cooperation between the two countries. So are the overseas lobbies you mentioned. There are serious relations between the Israeli and Turkish lobbies in foreign countries, especially in the United States. There is cooperation between military and security agencies, etc.

There was no clear official reaction to this proposal. But it is possible that if there are some small steps in the direction of eliminating the tension between Turkey and Russia, Azerbaijan will have a role here. It could

be guessed that Russia will not give an official answer to this. Because in most cases, Russia behaves like "the owner of unlimited power" and Azerbaijan, at least the owners of the current foreign policy course in Russia, would not want Azerbaijan to be involved in solving the problem of such a state. On the other hand, Russia wants the tension to continue to a certain extent and Turkey to take a step back. "Premature" relaxation of tension was not desirable for them in this sense.

In general, how do the sensitive and even dangerous processes taking place in the region today lead Azerbaijan to behave?

Azerbaijan is still able to do the difficult. That is, contrary to the expectations of many, he can continue a balanced foreign policy course. It was really difficult to continue this line in the background of the recent Turkish-Russian tension and what happened on the front line in early April. But Azerbaijan managed to do it. Consistency is important in foreign policy, and it is mostly possible to observe it in Azerbaijan's foreign policy.

You talked about the benefits of a balanced policy and the correct course of foreign policy. Although Azerbaijan's balanced policy and principle of not joining any bloc were criticized before, it is now appreciated even by Western and Russian analysts. An example of this is the fact that Georgia and Ukraine chose the West and lost their territory, or what is happening to Syria today, which is clearly leaning towards Russia. What do you think about the balanced political course of Azerbaijan? What is the benefit for Azerbaijan?

In the first period of Azerbaijan's independence, it experienced a period of searching for foreign policy. It was quite natural. Because it was not just about determining the course of foreign policy. On the one hand, Azerbaijan was trying to strengthen its independence, and on the other hand, it was trying to prevent aggression against its territorial integrity. There was also a lack of political experience in terms of statecraft. At such a time, uncertainties about the course of foreign policy or radical statements were natural, if not desirable.

But after a stage (from the end of 1993), a balanced foreign policy course was determined by Heydar Aliyev and is being successfully continued now. For the successful conduct of this course, it was very important that Azerbaijan did not have military bases common to other countries. In this regard, the process of the complete withdrawal of the Russian army and its military presence from Azerbaijan, which was completed during the presidency of Ilham Aliyev.

Approbation of research results.

Some points of the relations were discussed in the author's dissertation on "Azerbaijan-Israeli relations (1991-2008)" and monography titled Relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the State of Israel.

Conclusions.

Someone think that it would be more correct to form a policy close to one of the power centers in the

world. This may be possible in another region. But in our region, although such policies bring success for some political leaders, it has been seen several times that they cause disasters for countries. Trying to maintain a balance between the great powers, as well as between your own national interests and the interests of the great powers, is a difficult process. But the good thing is that Azerbaijan is still able to successfully carry out this difficult mission.

The Israeli community highly appreciated their state support Azerbaijan during the 44-day Patriotic War in 2021 (Mammadova, 2022b, p. 152).

We came to a conclusion that every country has own state interests in cooperation. Turkey, Israel is also among of these countries, and they have economics, political

and social interests in the Southern Caucasus region. So, Azerbaijan cooperates with these countries in mutual relations. Azerbaijan is an important supplier of strategic energy resources to Israel. This country freed us from energy dependence of other countries. The leadership of Azerbaijan has a caring and friendly attitude towards the traditions and life of the country's Jewish community, which has no precedent in the world. Anti-Semitism has never existed in this country during the entire period when Jews lived in the territory of Azerbaijan. Israel is an important strategic partner that supplies Azerbaijan with the most advanced technologies in the fields of oil and gas, telecommunications and agriculture. Israel cooperates with Azerbaijan in the creation and development of the military industry.

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