

The Significance of Military-Political Relations with Turkiye for Azerbaijan (in the Background of the Karabakh War II)

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Abstract

The analysis of Azerbaijani-Turkish military-political relations in the background of the Karabakh War II actually describes the practical picture of the level of the development of relations between the two states in the diplomatic, economic, especially military-political relations, took place in the period from 1991 to 2020.

It is an indisputable fact that the rise of relations with Turkiye to the level of strategic partnership gave its first and greatest result precisely in the Karabakh War II. The rapid military operations of the Azerbaijani army in this war and the great victory over Armenia in a short period of 44 days, cannot be interpreted separately from the existing military-political relations between Turkiye and Azerbaijan. The importance of Turkiye's political and diplomatic support in this victory is an indisputable fact. During the period leading up to the Karabakh War II, which began in 27 September 2020, Turkiye's assistance to Azerbaijan within the framework of both NATO and bilateral military-political relations played an significant role in bringing the Azerbaijani army to the level of the strongest army in the South Caucasus. This article examines military-political relations between the two states and their importance for Azerbaijan on the basis of a specific example.

Methodology and methods used. In the process of research, a number of research methods were used, such as description, explanation, comparative analysis, induction. During the research, official documents, scientific research works, travel materials, statistical indicators, materials published on the internet portals of relevant institutions were widely used.

The scientific novelty of the study is that the stages of development of Azerbaijani-Turkish military-political relations, its various aspects and significance for the Republic of Azerbaijan were analyzed on the basis of a specific example – in the background of the Karabakh War II.

The most important result of the study is that Turkiye's military-political support of Azerbaijan was one of the factors that played a decisive role in the liberation of the lands, which had been kept in occupation for nearly 30 years, by the Azerbaijani army in the Karabakh War II in a short period of 44 days.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Turkiye, Karabakh War II, military-political relations, strategic partnership

Значення військово-політичних відносин з Туреччиною для Азербайджану (на тлі Другої Карабаської війни)

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Анотація

Аналіз азербайджано-турецьких військово-політичних відносин на тлі Другої Карабаської війни фактично описує практичну картину рівня розвитку відносин між двома державами в дипломатичних, економічних, особливо військово-політичних відносинах, які мали місце в період з 1991 по 2020 роки.

Незаперечним фактом є те, що вихід відносин з Туреччиною на рівень стратегічного партнерства дав свій перший і найбільший результат саме у Другій Карабаській війні. Стрімкі військові дії азербайджанської армії в цій війні і велика перемога над Вірменією за короткий проміжок часу в 44 дні не можна тлумачити окремо від існуючих військово-політичних відносин між Туреччиною і Азербайджаном. Важливість політичної та дипломатичної підтримки Туреччини в цій перемозі є незаперечним фактом. У період, що передував Другій карабаській війні, яка почалася 27 вересня 2020 року, допомога Туреччини Азербайджану в рамках як НАТО, так і в рамках двосторонніх військово-політичних відносин зіграла значну роль у виведенні азербайджанської армії на рівень найсильнішої армії на Південному Кавказі. У цій статті на конкретному прикладі розглядаються військово-політичні відносини між двома державами та їх значення для Азербайджану.

Методологія та використані методи. У процесі дослідження було використано ряд методів дослідження, таких як опис, пояснення, порівняльний аналіз, індукція. Під час дослідження широко використовувалися офіційні документи, науково-дослідницькі праці, подорожні матеріали, статистичні показники, матеріали, опубліковані на інтернет-порталах профільних установ.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає в тому, що на конкретному прикладі – на тлі Другої Карабаської війни – проаналізовано етапи розвитку азербайджано-турецьких військово-політичних відносин, їх різні аспекти та значення для Азербайджанської Республіки.

Найважливішим результатом дослідження є те, що військово-політична підтримка Азербайджану з боку Туреччини була одним із факторів, який відіграв вирішальну роль у звільненні азербайджанською армією земель, які протягом майже 30 років перебували під окупацією, у Другій карабаській війні за короткий період у 44 дні.

Ключові слова: Азербайджан, Туреччина, Карабаська війна, військово-політичні відносини, стратегічне партнерство

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Introduction (problem statement).

The South Caucasus region, where Azerbaijan is located, and the neighboring regions adjacent to this region (Black Sea, Caspian Sea, North Caucasus, Middle East, etc.) have been regions remembered for complex military and political processes in world politics since the earliest times of history. In other words, the region where Azerbaijan is geographically located has been in the center of attention due to the struggle for military-political, economic-commercial influence, either between the states existing here or between other states that have an interest in the region. In modern times, global and regional powers such as the United States, the European Union, Türkiye, Russia, France, England, India, Iran, and Israel are fighting for influence in the region in line with their national interests. This makes it inevitable for Azerbaijan not to limit its bilateral relations with powers interested in the region to the political-diplomatic, economic-commercial and cultural fields, but also to expand its military relations in order to protect its national interests.

After Azerbaijan gained its independence, the identification of the Republic of Türkiye as the most reliable partner in its foreign policy was an almost inevitable move to protect its independence in the background of increasingly complex military-political processes in the region. The Republic of Azerbaijan, which feels a serious and regular threat not only to its national interests, but also to its own existence, by the Russia-Armenia-Iran triad, was able to protect its existence on the basis of the strong military-political relations it established with Türkiye, put an end to the thirty-year-long occupation of Armenia. Consequently, Azerbaijan has become one of the states with the strongest military power not only in the Caucasus but also in the world. As discussed in more detail below, Türkiye's support played a leading role in the transformation of the Azerbaijani army into the most powerful army in the Caucasus.

Publications published on the subject.

A number of scientific research works, monographs and scientific articles, as well as conference and symposium reports, have been published in the past three years on the effects of Azerbaijan-Türkiye military-political cooperation on the Karabakh War II, both within the country and abroad. The main approach in the vast majority of the scientific works we reviewed is that the role of Türkiye's military and political support was very important in the victory of Azerbaijan during the Karabakh War II in a short period of 44 days. This support, while reducing external pressure on Azerbaijan, accelerated the course of the war in favor of Azerbaijan.

The legal basis of the military alliance between Türkiye and Azerbaijan was established with the "Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan" signed in 16 August 2010. (Presidential Communications Directorate, 2021, p. 59).

Although the history of military cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan begins after Azerbaijan gained its independence, the legal basis of recent military cooperation is the "Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan" signed in 2010. The most important feature of this comprehensive Agreement, which has many dimensions such as military-technical cooperation, financial cooperation and humanitarian issues, is that it envisages supporting the attacked party with all means in the face of attack by third parties.

After the signing of the agreement, the joint defense capacity has been continuously improved with the ongoing negotiations and technical studies. Continuing contacts with joint military exercises brought Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations to a very advanced stage. On the other hand, the aforementioned exercises cause discomfort in some focal points that do not want the balance established between Azerbaijan and Armenia to deteriorate and are not satisfied with the closeness between the two countries. Recently, very important military exercises have been carried out between the two countries, especially after the provocative Tovuz attack of Armenia. Türkiye provided military and diplomatic support to Azerbaijan during the war. Türkiye, which increased the mobility of the Azerbaijani army especially with the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) supplied from Türkiye and the joint military exercises held before the war, gave Azerbaijan a great military advantage (Meister 2020). In addition, keeping Turkish aircraft (F-16) at the Azerbaijan military airport has an important place among the support provided. (Asker, 2021, p. 104).

The Karabakh War II, which resulted in the decisive victory of Azerbaijan in 2020, became an important breaking point in the South Caucasus region. In the process leading up to this war, Azerbaijan has repeatedly warned Armenia for violating the ceasefire reached in 1994. It has become clear that the Armenian administration, which has also undermined the diplomatic solution efforts, aims to "expand the geography of the conflict, attract third parties to the problem and realize its expansionist goals". (Shefiyev, & Huseynov, 2021, p.181). During the war, which started on the morning of 27 September 2020 and lasted 44 days, Azerbaijani military units advanced rapidly on the field and gradually liberated its territories occupied by Armenia.

Türkiye from the very beginning condemned Armenia's aggressive attitude and declared that it would "continue to stand by Azerbaijan with all its means in the struggle to protect its territorial integrity" (T.R Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Ankara, by supporting Azerbaijan during the war, "has been an important factor in the victory of Azerbaijan in the war" (Hasanoglu, Mammadov, & Maharramov, 2020, p. 522). According to Turkish Minister of National Defense Hulusi Akar "The heroic Azerbaijani army has saved Karabakh from the Armenian occupation, which has been going on for 30

years, by carrying out the One Homeland Operation with great success, with the contribution of our domestic and national weapon systems.” (Ozer, 2020).

Armenian Parliament Spokesperson Alen Simonyan said, “We did not have a problem with the number of soldiers. Our problem was how to fight Bayraktar Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and we could not prevent them with our technical equipment” (Simonyan, 2021) and pointed out the importance of the equipment that Türkiye sells to Azerbaijan. As a matter of fact, President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev, who received the Supreme Order of the Turkic World on behalf of the Turkic Council for the Karabakh Victory, expressed Türkiye’s role in the victory as follows in his speech at this ceremony: “Our determination, will and courage in the Karabakh War II led us to the Great Victory. I must also say that, as everyone sees, what gives us additional strength is the help and moral support provided by my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from the first hours of the battle to the last minutes of the battle. Mr. President said that Azerbaijan is not alone in this war. This kept some of the powers that are the protectors of Armenia out of this war and allowed us to fulfill this glorious mission.” (Aliyev, 2021).

Inviting only Türkiye to the ceremony held on in 10 December 2020 at Freedom Square in Baku, where Azerbaijan declared its victory in the war to the whole world, and the ceremony started by playing both the Azerbaijani National Anthem and the Turkish National Anthem, together with İlham Aliyev, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech is considered as a declaration of the joint victory of the two countries of the parade. In addition, elements such as the Azerbaijani Armed Forces personnel, as well as the soldiers of Türkiye’s II Commando Brigade taking part in the parade, and the playing of the mehter anthem during the parade, point to the dimensions of the military alliance in a symbolic sense.

Analysis of Azerbaijan-Türkiye military-political relations in the background of the Karabakh War II.

Türkiye’s open support to Azerbaijan in this war prevented the forces that wanted the war to end against Azerbaijan to join the war on the side of Armenia and to take the front against Azerbaijan. (Hasanoglu, Mammadov, & Maharramov, 2020, p. 526-527). In addition, Ankara has always supported Azerbaijan by underlining the relevant provisions of the UN Security Council and the rules of international law, and has stated many times that it will not hold any meetings with the Armenian administration until the occupation ends.

Türkiye especially emphasized that it stands by Azerbaijan both in high-level bilateral meetings and in international platforms. Türkiye’s clear stance stems not only from its fraternal ties and strategic partnership with Azerbaijan, but also from the justice in Azerbaijan’s case. That’s why all senior officials, especially President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, made statements of support to Azerbaijan throughout the war. (Ankara: Publications, p. 53).

Türkiye has told the world the rightful thesis of Azerbaijan in the presence of international organizations, through its foreign representatives and together with diplomats. In addition to these, Türkiye’s own representations have been activated in states that do not have a representative office of Azerbaijan. Apart from diplomacy and politics, the Turkish press made great efforts to announce the events and latest developments in Karabakh to the world during the war. In addition, the great support of the Turkish people and the humanitarian aid trucks sent by the Red Crescent to Azerbaijan were appreciated by the people of Azerbaijan.

The drones that Türkiye actively uses to protect its borders have proven their success many times over. With domestic production and development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (AUAV), Türkiye is taking firm steps towards becoming a rising power in the world.

The ability of countries to produce and develop their own weapons is among the important elements of a considerable position in the world. At the same time, countries that produce their own military equipment and technologies are in a position of potential power. In this respect, Türkiye has made a name for itself with its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). In addition, it has advanced in the military field with many domestic and national technology moves. Although Türkiye started its national technology move later than Israel and Iran, it has made significant progress in recent years. (İnat, 2014, p. 13).

Unmanned aerial vehicles have become the main element of the “Spring Shield” operations launched by Türkiye against terrorist elements in 2020. After this success, “BAYKAR” company General Manager Haluk Bayraktar posted a message on his social media account, “Operation Spring Shield under the coordination of the UAV Command and Control Management System Center, the herd SIHA operation was carried out for the first time in the world. With deepest gratitude to our heroic security forces who wrote epics with national technologies...”.

According to the data released by the Azerbaijan State Economic University (UNEC), the total cost of the destroyed military equipment of Armenia in the Karabakh war is around 4.8 billion dollars. The success of Turkish UAVs has also found wide coverage in the world press. Almost all war experts in the world are looking for answers to the question marks about how Turkey could develop so much. Türkiye, which is one of the countries noted in the defense industry by doing a lot of work in a short time, shows that it will progress step by step towards its goals with companies such as “BAYKAR” and “TUSAŞ” that directly affect the defense industry.

The Karabakh War is called the first war won by unmanned aerial vehicles. For this reason, it has gained an important place in the strategic war actions of the world. 77 soldiers of the Azerbaijan Air Force were trained by Baykar for the Bayraktar TB2 SİHA Operator for 4 months (Shimshek, 2021). No matter how important

the fighting elements are, the truth is trained and determined operators. The real heroes of war are the users of these enormous tools. UAVs played an active role in the eyes of the whole world in helping the Azerbaijani army win the war with the least loss. It seems that it has achieved effective success even in air defense systems, which are called the latest technology product, and has achieved results in a short time. Azerbaijan has given the name "Dog chaser--Iti qovan" to the UAVs, that have contributed significantly to the war since the first day. The high level of reconnaissance and point destruction skills doom the enemy to destruction despite all their camouflage. The images of the destruction of Armenian targets during the war also prove this.

After the war, Armenia realized that one of the main reasons for its heavy defeat was the drones. In 2022, they introduced their own production of unmanned aerial vehicle DAVARO. Laser-guided Armenian UAVs, which are planned to be developed in the field of reconnaissance and attack, were exhibited at the fair with many foreign participants.

Azerbaijan's active UAV force has managed to weaken the defense line of the Armenians from the first day. TB2 SİHAs, with their airtime and superior observation ability, also contributed to the change in the course of the war. With the elimination of air defense systems, the Armenian army lagged behind in tactical warfare. Based on the first 30 days of the war (the balance sheet will become much heavier when the exact figures come), Armenia's losses are as follows: The Azerbaijani army also shot down 5 SU-25 warplanes belonging to the Armenian army, destroyed 259 military transport vehicles, captured 180 military transport vehicles (The result of the Karabakh, 2020). The fact that the entire destruction process was shared with the world during the war also shows that Armenia could not use its weapons and that its military power was on the verge of extinction.

It is stated that military casualties are much higher than the shared official number of Armenia. It is also confirmed from Armenian sources that 80% of the army was destroyed. Armenia, which regularly opened fires of harassment on Azerbaijan's borders and caused civilian casualties, showed that it was not ready for such a big war. It is seen that the ammunition and heavy weapons in its hand are from Soviet Russia. It is not surprising that such a technologically undeveloped army was defeated on the battlefield.

It seems that Türkiye's investments in the defense industry have paid off and will take an active role in the world defense industry. Along with successful operations in Azerbaijan, Libya, Qatar, Ukraine, Poland, Serbia and Tunisia are also planning to purchase Turkish-made S/UAVs.

TB2s, which caused great losses with the MAM-L type laser guided bombs produced by ROKETSAN, which Türkiye actively used in the operations in Syria and Libya and they carried especially to the mechanized troops with air defense systems, enabled the progress of

Azerbaijani troops in the most serious moments of the war (Mevlutoglu, 2020). In addition, the AUAVs, which are on the front line on all fronts, have served for 3,000 hours uninterruptedly under the harshest war conditions, and have pinpointed nearly 900 targets. The total cost of Armenian vehicles, which were excluded from the war through SİHAs, reached 1 billion dollars (Turkish AUAVs, 2021). The use of UAVs / AUAVs, which are the products of the Turkish defense industry, provided both military and psychological superiority to Azerbaijan, while lowering Armenia's morale and motivation. Turkish AUAVs, which have been used so successfully, have also been the focus of attention in the international press. German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer underlined in a statement that the first AUAV war in history took place in Karabakh, and said that the attacks with AUAVs changed the course of the war and the result was heavy for the losing side. (German 2022).

Results.

The most important result of the research is that in the Second Karabakh War, Turkey's military-political support to Azerbaijan was one of the factors that played a decisive role in the liberation of the lands occupied by the Azerbaijani army for thirty years in a short period of forty-four days.

The most important component of this support is the improvement of both offensive and defensive capabilities of the Azerbaijani army with modern military technical means, mainly unmanned aerial vehicles, and air defense devices. At the same time, with military trainings, military advice of high-ranking officers formed examples of military cooperation that played an important role in the course of the war. It is worth noting that a Turkish statement had an impact on the course of the war, and perhaps its outcome. The official circles of Turkey clearly stated in this statement that if third countries enter the ongoing war between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the side of Armenia, Turkey will stand by Azerbaijan with its military power and join the war. This statement was repeated several times in the following days of the war and was sent as a clear message to countries such as Iran, Russia, and France.

As mentioned, the Turkish factor, as one of the main factors affecting the course and outcome of the forty-four day war of Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation, was also the greatest success of the cooperation between the two states, and it was one of the driving forces for the practical implementation and development of the cooperation. The collapse of the Armenian-Russian military cooperation, the shaking of the foundations of Russia's two-hundred-year hegemony in the South Caucasus, and the undermining of Armenia's thinking that they are an inviolable power in the region as long as Russia is behind them, have resulted in Turkey's planned and thought-out support to Azerbaijan. At the next stage, Turkey openly declared its support in the anti-terrorist operations conducted in order to clean the territories

from terrorists, which are actually not under the control of Azerbaijan and controlled by Russian peacekeepers, and did not allow Azerbaijan to be left alone. Against the background of all this, it can be noted that Azerbaijan-

Turkey military-political cooperation did not end only with the liberation of Azerbaijan's occupied lands, but influenced the reshaping of the future landscape of the region.

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