

TÜRKİYE-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS AND KARABAKH WAR

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ABSTRACT

TÜRKİYE-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS AND KARABAKH WAR

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This thesis aims to explain how the Second Karabakh War and the discourses of official decision-makers in Türkiye and Azerbaijan during the war altered the perceptions of mutual and shared security in post-war relations. The thesis problematizes both the First Karabakh War, which broke out in the 1990s, and particularly the Second Karabakh War, which lasted 44 days in 2020. While this research does not propose a fully-fledged theoretical model, it analyses the discourses of "solidarity, brotherhood, and unity" and "one nation, two states" that persisted between Türkiye and Azerbaijan during the 44-Day War, drawing on concepts that can be linked to constructivist theory and regional security themes. It concludes by finding that these discourses resulted in unification, integration, and institutionalisation in areas such as security and defence in the post-war period. This spirit of solidarity, displayed on national and international platforms during and after the war, created a qualitative leap in bilateral relations, elevating them from strategic partnership to alliance. This conclusion was reached by comparing the regional and international security perceptions of both countries in the 1991-2020 and post-2020 periods. Since current literature on Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations after the Second Karabakh War has

focused primarily on areas such as military cooperation, joint exercises, and energy, this thesis emphasises the importance of the wartime rhetoric on solidarity between the two friendly states and the deepening institutional security-based relations that followed. A limitation of this thesis is the use of almost exclusively Turkish and English sources and the lack of elite interviews involving decision-makers and politicians.

Keywords: Karabakh War, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, security, alliance



ÖZ

TÜRKİYE-AZERBAYCAN İLİŞKİLERİ VE KARABAĞ SAVAŞI

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Bu tez, İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nın ve bu savaş sırasında Türkiye ve Azerbaycan'ın resmi karar alıcılarının söylemlerinin, savaş sonrası ilişkilerde karşılıklı ve ortak güvenlik algılarında nasıl değişiklikler yarattığını açıklamayı amaçlamıştır. Tez hem 90'larda patlak veren Birinci Karabağ Savaşını hem de ve özellikle 2020'de 44 gün süren İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nı problematize eder. Bu araştırma, tam teşekküllü bir teorik model önermese de inşacı teori ve bölgesel güvenlik temalarıyla ilişkilendirilebilecek kavramların ışığında, Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasında 44 Gün Savaşı boyunca süreklilik teşkil eden “dayanışma, kardeşlik, ve birlik” ve “tek millet, iki devlet” gibi söylemleri analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak bunların savaş sonrası dönemde güvenlik ve savunma gibi alanlarda birleşme, entegrasyon ve kurumsallaşma ile sonuçlandığını tespit etmiştir. Savaş sırasında ve sonrasında ulusal ve uluslararası platformlarda sergilenen bu dayanışma ruhu, ikili ilişkilerde niteliksel bir sıçrama yaratarak ilişkilerin stratejik partnerlikten müttefiklik seviyesine yükselmesine yol açmıştır. Bu sonuca, 1991-2020 ve 2020 sonrası dönemler, her iki ülkenin bölgesel ve uluslararası güvenlik algıları karşılaştırılarak varılmıştır. İkinci Karabağ Savaşı sonrası Türkiye-Azerbaycan ilişkileri, güncel literatürde daha çok askeri işbirlikleri,

tatbikatlar ve enerji gibi alanlara odaklanılarak ele alındığından bu tez, iki dost ülke arasında savaş boyunca sürmüş olan diyalogun ve dayanışmanın önemine ve daha sonra derinleşen kurumsal güvenlik bazlı ilişkilerin önemine vurgu yapmaktadır. Neredeyse yalnızca Türkçe ve İngilizce kaynakların kullanılmış olması ve karar alıcılar ve siyasetçiler gibi öznelerin yer aldığı bir elit mülakatı yapılamamış olması bu tezin bir kısıtıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karabağ Savaşı, Türkiye, Azerbaycan, güvenlik, müttefiklik



To My Grandparents



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I want to emphasise that I consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity to receive a quality education from highly esteemed scholars in a field I desired, chose, and was interested in. I have never taken it for granted. I have had the opportunity to stand on

the shoulders of many valued individuals who have struggled to help every woman, especially Turkish women, reach their current status. My sole purpose is to progress along the path they paved and the goals they set.

In this regard, the highest gratitude is extended to the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, *Başöğretmen and Ulu Önder* Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whose visionary ideas guided the Turkish nation towards progress and scientific advancement. Thus, I earnestly strive to uphold his legacy and honour his memory with heartfelt appreciation.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACG	Azeri–Chirag–Gunashli oil field
ADR	Azerbaijan Democratic Republic
AIOC	Azerbaijan International Operating Company
AKP/JDP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party
APF	Azerbaijan People’s Front
AzCP	Azerbaijan Communist Party
BOTAŞ	Boru Hatları ile Petrol Taşıma A.Ş.
BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation
BTC	Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan
BTE	Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum
BTK	Baku–Tbilisi–Kars
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
HLSCC	High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IPAP	Individual Partnership Action Plan
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KGB	Committee for State Security
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKAO	Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast
MHP/NMP	Nationalist Movement Party / Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi
OMON	Special Purpose Mobile Unit
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OTS	Organization of Turkic States
PETKİM	Petkim Petrokimya Holding A.Ş.

PfP	Partnership for Peace
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
CHP/RPP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party
SCP	South Caucasus Pipeline
SGC	Southern Gas Corridor
SOCAR	State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic
TANAP	Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline
TAP	Trans-Adriatic Pipeline
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi)
TİKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TOKİ	Mass Housing Development Administration
TPAO	Turkish Petroleum Corporation
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
TÜRKBİR	Türk Devletler Birliği
TÜRKSOY	International Organization of Turkic Culture
TYS	Turkish Proficiency Exam
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UCAV	Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YEE	Yunus Emre Institute
YTB	Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In international relations, some interstate connections are shaped and transformed beyond geographical borders and sometimes deepen and evolve by drawing on shared history and nurturing similar visions of the future. In this sense, as international and regional systems and dynamics were reshaped in the post-Soviet era, Türkiye and Azerbaijan found an opportunity to enter a multidimensional phase of fraternisation. This emphasis on brotherhood, symbolised by Azerbaijan's national leader Heydar Aliyev's statement, "one nation, two states," also reflects a shared sentiment carried from the past to the present, as do the words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic of Türkiye, "Azerbaijan's joy is our joy, its sorrow is our sorrow." Azerbaijan regained its independence in 1991, and Türkiye immediately recognised this new Turkic state, becoming the first state to do so. This signalled the close post-Soviet ties 33 years ago. Since the 1990s, both countries have never underestimated this special, close, and unique relationship, fuelled by their multilayered linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and historical ties, and have strived to preserve and elevate these ties in both discourse and action. The people of both states share a sincere and exceptional closeness that extends beyond rhetoric or diplomatic relations, but also in practice.

Economic relations, of which its foundations were laid in the 1990s, progressed in the 2000s within the framework of large-scale projects such as oil and gas pipeline constructions, investments and similar collaborations, particularly aimed at transporting Azerbaijan's energy to Europe, and gained significant momentum in these areas over the next 25 years. Diplomatic and political dialogue between the two states

has continued uninterruptedly despite minor disagreements, and both states have strived to pursue national and international policies in line with each other's interests. The social foundation of fraternal relations has also been preserved and deepened through international education opportunities, joint artistic and linguistic activities, community outreach, and similar social and cultural activities and projects.

The Karabakh War, the first of which occurred in the 1990s and the second in 2020, holds a special place in bilateral relations. For nearly three decades, Türkiye has kept its borders with Armenia closed as a symbol of its commitment to Azerbaijan's just cause, while the Turkish people have supported Azerbaijan's struggle in every way, sharing in both its suffering and its victories, as Atatürk put it. Azerbaijan has praised the importance of this support everywhere and in every way. Turkish diplomats and politicians prioritize bilateral relations, defending Azerbaijan's position on numerous national and international platforms and demonstrating this resolve at the negotiating table. The messages of solidarity frequently present in the discourse are also valid for Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan has supported Türkiye's messages of a peaceful solution to its own territorial disputes and has sought to include it in all possible resolution mechanisms and platforms.

Today, the two countries possess not only shared values but also shared security and similar *enemy* perceptions. Türkiye has always considered the Azerbaijani factor in its normalization process with Armenia, and in 2020 and beyond, it has entered a new normalization phase with Armenia by gaining Azerbaijan's approval. While the partnership on the security agenda was enhanced with the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2010, the Shusha Declaration signed in 2021, influenced by the commitment to ensuring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and Türkiye's rise as a regional power in the South Caucasus, elevated bilateral relations to the level of an alliance.

The historical foundations of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations are critical to understanding the multifaceted partnership that has developed between the two countries over time. However, the new direction these relations took after the 2020 Second Karabakh War has been interpreted from many perspectives over the past five years. For instance, Neset and Aydın focus not only on the war's impact on bilateral

relations, but also on its individual-level outcomes. To them, while Türkiye is "witnessing a comeback," "increased military presence in Azerbaijan for the first time since the First World War," and is experiencing "emergence of a Russian-Turkish partnership and competition," Azerbaijan is described as "dominating the political and military scene," "increased its power in the region," and most importantly, "overcoming the psychological distress of losing the First Karabakh War." They also state that a Turkish military presence in the area, expected to be further strengthened by the Shusha Declaration, and a border connection with Azerbaijan via Nakhchivan, will further increase Turkish influence in the region. In this sense, relations seem to focus on military and geopolitical dimensions, with a win-win perspective¹.

Hajizade similarly highlights the dimensions of the "one nation, two states" rhetoric in post-war relations, both in the energy and military-defence fields. He states that the agreements signed by the two countries so far have led to deep technical-military cooperation and will increase Türkiye's role in Central Asia, in addition to the South Caucasus. He also emphasizes increased military exercises and how Azerbaijan has become a partner, rather than merely a customer, in the Turkish defence industry. Furthermore, Hajizade highlights the importance of the energy sector in economic relations in the post-war period. He, meanwhile, draws attention to the significance of the energy sector in post-war economic relations, noting that as of 2021, Türkiye had become Azerbaijan's number one trading partner. Azerbaijan's then-plans to increase its natural gas exports to Türkiye by 19% by 2023 are also significant in this regard. He argues that military and energy cooperation are the two most important areas of bilateral relations, while also stressing the mutual humanitarian aid as a significant element in relations².

¹ Siri Neset and Mustafa Aydın, "Changed Dynamics after the Second Karabakh War," in *Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War: Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, ed. Siri Neset et al. (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2023), 11–13, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/8911-changing-geopolitics-of-the-south-caucasus-after-the-second-karabakh-war>.

² Ali Hajizade, "Türkiye-Azerbaijan Relations: The Building of an Alliance," *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, March 22, 2024, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/feature-articles/item/13794-t%C3%BCrkiye-azerbaijan-relations-the-building-of-an-alliance.html>.

Hovsepyan and Tonoyan highlight the military dimension of post-war relations, particularly the dominance of the "Turkish school" in Azerbaijan³. According to them, "Türkiye not only managed to establish its serious role in the Azerbaijani defence and security system, but also to establish its 'military school' in the Azerbaijani defence system⁴." In this sense, they claim that Türkiye played a military advisory role in the post-war period. Furthermore, for Turkish-made UAVs and UCAVs, this war served as a field test of this strategy and training. The close relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan represent a model relationship developed for shared goals, both technologically and militarily. Hovsepyan and Tonoyan also note that a pro-Turkish environment, already present in Azerbaijan after the war but now flourishing, emerged, and that the social consequences of Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan during the war resulted in the rise of Turkism. According to them, the post-war rhetoric of the victory as the "shared victory of the Turkic world" is another example of this⁵.

Chiragov emphasises that the competition in the South Caucasus is "inherent, inevitable, deeply rooted in history, and persistent." This competition flared up again after the war, and Türkiye and Azerbaijan, in the new post-war era, aim to establish functions to promote cooperation and peace to balance this⁶. In this sense, both states have proposed the 3+3 platform, with Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia representing the Caucasus forming one trio, and Türkiye, Russia, and Iran forming the other trio, based on regional proximity⁷.

According to Chiragov, Ilham Aliyev's portrayal of Türkiye as a stabilizing force underlies not only its role as a supporter but also its role as a regional architect. He

³ Levon Hovsepyan and Artyom A. Tonoyan, "From Alliance to 'Soft Conquest': The Anatomy of the Turkish-Azerbaijani Military Alliance Before and After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 35, no. 4 (2024): 622–655, doi: 10.1080/09592318.2024.2312957.

⁴ Ibid, 636.

⁵ Ibid, 639-640.

⁶ Fuad Chiragov, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy: Navigating Regional Security in a Fragmented World," *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 25 (Winter 2024): 149-150, published by Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development, <https://www.cirsd.org/files/000/000/011/12/a8572f58063687a5185224023eeb261fa4fd18b7.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid.

also argues that cultural affinity was not the sole reason Azerbaijan chose Türkiye as its primary base during the war. For Azerbaijan, Türkiye is a state that champions a free market economy, places great value on transportation and communications infrastructure, seeks open markets, relies on its competitiveness, and is fully confident of its success in any potential soft power competition in the region. Furthermore, because Türkiye prioritizes ensuring regional security, establishing lasting peace, and developing cooperation, it has already proposed the 3+3 platform with Azerbaijan, demonstrating both states' shared vision in this way⁸.

For instance, Veliyev focuses on various aspects of post-war relations. According to him, Azerbaijan had accumulated considerable military experience over the past 30 years and emerged victorious from the 44-day war, but this war also highlighted the shortcomings of its army and military. Although the war ended, security threats in the region, such as Armenia's constant violations of the border ceasefire and Iran's verbal threats against Azerbaijan, which it conducted on its border, remained unresolved, and post-war military strengthening gained renewed importance. For example, 20 military exercises were held in 2022 alone, and the number of Turkish generals in Azerbaijan was increased to four same years. Most importantly, Bahtiyar Ersay, who played a significant role in the Azerbaijani army's transition to a Turkish model, began wearing the Azerbaijani general uniform that same year as an advisor to the Azerbaijani Minister of Defence. He described this military closeness, which deepened after the war, as "one nation, one army⁹."

Veliyev also commented on the energy dimension of post-war relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. According to him, while discussions on relations generally revolve around military and political matters, significant progress has also been made in the areas of economics, energy, and transportation towards the realization of

⁸ Ibid, 153-154.

⁹ Veliyev, Cavid, "Azerbaijan-Türkiye Military Cooperation: One Nation, One Army," *Daily Sabah* (with Anadolu Agency), December 23, 2022, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/azerbaijan-turkiye-military-cooperation-one-nation-one-army>.

mutually integrated goals¹⁰. After the war more than 20 Turkish companies have implemented \$4 billion worth of projects to rebuild liberated territories. By 2024, Türkiye's investment in Azerbaijan had reached \$13 billion, while Azerbaijan's investment in Türkiye had reached \$21 billion. Also, that year, the capacity of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway was increased from 1 million tons to 5 million tons. For example, the 11th Joint Economic Commission meeting was held in June 2024, and the protocol signed at this meeting fostered new agreements in areas such as special cooperation, transportation, free trade, youth, and interuniversity projects¹¹.

According to Veliyev, "green energy" represents a new dimension in bilateral relations in the post-war period. Azerbaijan and Türkiye have made significant strides in ensuring Europe's energy security through projects like the BTC (Branch for the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye), TANAP (Trans-Anatolian Energy Project), and similar projects. The outcome of the Russia-Ukraine war was Europe's need to meet its energy needs from alternative sources, rather than relying on Russian energy. This, coupled with the impact of climate change, has led European countries to turn to green, renewable energy. In this sense, energy relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan are not limited to natural gas and oil; they have also shifted towards sustainable energy. Particularly after the war, the foundations for new cooperation through electricity production and transmission lines, such as the Zangezur corridor, were laid, creating the possibility of a green energy corridor between Central Asia and Europe. Nakhchivan has been declared a green energy region. Azerbaijan signed a strategic energy agreement with the EU, and international platforms such as the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP29, have demonstrated the greening of energy diplomacy. According to Veliyev, Türkiye, as a transition country, is geopolitically important in this transformation and for this reason,

¹⁰ Veliyev, Cavid, "Azerbaijan-Türkiye Ties: New Goals in Economy, Energy, Transportation," *Daily Sabah*, June 11, 2024, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/azerbaijan-turkiye-ties-new-goals-in-economy-energy-transportation>.

¹¹ Ibid.

Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations have moved to a new dimension in terms of energy after the war¹².

Current literature focuses primarily on the military and energy dimensions of post-war relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Hence, this thesis, by problematizing the Karabakh War in these relations, attempts to compare them with similar indicators (threat and security perception, cooperation, and capacity) for the period 1991-2020 and beyond, and to explain the transformation of the security dimension and the integration achieved in Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations after the Second Karabakh War. This thesis argues that repeated statements in the official discourses of both states influenced the post-war process, deepening and emerging institutionally in relations and integrating them. This study interprets the constructive nature of the discourse through the parties' intention to develop close relations and converge towards unity in foreign policy and perceptions of friends and enemies.

Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War produced results on the ground, clarifying the perceptions of friend and foe between the parties. The impact of Türkiye's political and diplomatic support and the coordinated use of defence and security instruments between the two states have also become visible. This coordination has evolved into a security partnership, resulting in the institutionalization of regional deterrence and joint action. In this respect, this thesis seeks to explain how the uninterrupted political and diplomatic dialogue between the two states during the Second Karabakh War, speeches to international organizations, interviews with media channels, and public addresses by state leaders transformed relations from strategic partnership to "equal brotherhood and unity." It will also examine how the shared security agenda, claims of regional agency, and institutionalization deepened relations, how the "one nation, two states" motto emerged as a shared defence consciousness, and how this closeness was represented internationally.

¹² Veliyev, Cavid, "Green Energy: A New Dimension in Azerbaijan-Türkiye Relations," *Daily Sabah*, December 13, 2024, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/green-energy-a-new-dimension-in-azerbaijan-turkiye-relations>.

The frequent dialogue between two friendly states, which escalates even more during a regional war, strengthening mutual trust, and demonstrating a common international stance are crucial for paving the way for institutional steps to strengthen these relations in the future. Therefore, despite the wealth of literature, this thesis aims to address the lack of official discourse-based interpretations of relations in 2020 and beyond. In this context, it intends to answer mainly these two questions: i) What is the place of the First and Second Karabakh Wars in the close relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and what changes have occurred in regional and shared security perceptions in post-war relations?; ii) What are the impacts of the mutual official discourses between Türkiye and Azerbaijan on their mutual political and security relations?

This thesis presents a qualitative case study that problematizes the security dimension of the Second Karabakh War in bilateral relations using secondary sources. It analyses past research articles, collective research books, reports, and discourses, interviews, speeches, and joint press releases and reports from Turkish and Azerbaijani decision-makers obtained from official websites and media outlets. This is interpreted within a historical context, and the analysis is conducted through comparisons with the past. Furthermore, a literature review is conducted to provide the reader with an overview of the general course of relations and the history of the Karabakh conflict.

While the findings in this thesis are not based on a single, specific theoretical framework, the analysis can be linked to regional security themes and the fundamental concepts of constructivism. The constructivist perspective's notion that discourse, its repetitions, and perceptions of identity create interests and institutional frameworks is crucial in this regard. In other words, the Karabakh War is central to the causal context in the process leading to the institutionalization of discourse and identity. Simultaneously, the rhetoric frequently repeated by official decision-makers during this process establishes the framework for interests, threats, and security perceptions, both interstate and societal. Concepts such as amity-enmity, threat perception, interoperability, cooperation, deterrence, connectivity, etc. primarily represent regional security themes. These are used to highlight the role of the Karabakh War element in bilateral relations.

Although the thesis largely uses the 1990-2020 timeframe to explain the historical background of bilateral relations, the period after 2020 is examined more extensively. This thesis is limited by the author's inability to utilize primary methods such as one-on-one interviews and field research, instead relying largely on research books, academic writings, commentaries, and official discourse.

The thesis consists of four main chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. The section following the introduction begins with the second chapter. The second chapter will attempt to explain the general framework of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations that have developed since the 1990s. The economic relations portion particularly addresses cooperation on natural gas and oil, regional energy projects, mutual investments and the construction of energy transportation channels. Cultural and social relations include activities such as inter-people communication, mutual cultural diplomacy policies, and educational collaborations. In military relations, it examines agreements in security, defence, and military fields since the First Karabakh War, training and exercises that have continued for over 30 years, and also commercial relations in the defence field.

The third chapter studies Türkiye and Azerbaijan's pursuit of regional security, particularly between 1991 and 2020, in the post-Soviet era, and attempts to explain the interaction between both individual perceptions and mutual security perspectives. To this end, it first looks into Türkiye's foreign policy approaches, threat perceptions, and the obstacles imposed by the international conjuncture within the context of regional dynamics. It then examines Azerbaijan's foreign policy objectives since independence, the significance of the Karabakh conflict, and regional security concerns. Finally, it explores the institutionalization of the security dimension of bilateral relations between the two countries prior to the Second Karabakh War, the challenges encountered during this period, and the significant developments experienced.

Chapter four describes the historical struggle over Karabakh, the First Karabakh War during the dissolution of the Soviet Union and explains the changes that have occurred since 2020. Türkiye's reactions and policies during this period, as well as Azerbaijan's expectations and struggle, will also be expressed. This section will also explore how messages of mutual support, resistance, brotherhood, cooperation, and solidarity were

used in discourse by Turkish and Azerbaijani officials, particularly by Turkish President Erdoğan and Azerbaijani President Aliyev, during the 44-Day War. The aim is to explore how relations developed and evolved in discourse within the context of Karabakh. For this purpose, the official presidential and foreign ministry websites of both states, as well as reliable and objective news sites, were used as sources.

The fifth chapter of the thesis focuses on how the Second Karabakh War, in addition to its role as a shifting factor in the balance of power in the South Caucasus, has qualitatively impacted the security dimension of Turkish Azerbaijani relations. It examines whether there has been a shift in the countries' security perspectives, the impact of mutual relations on their approaches to the region, and the evolving institutionalization processes. To this end, the content of the mutually signed Shusha Declaration, along with its symbolic and political implications, will be explored. The third chapter then briefly examines the history of the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process, how it changed after the 44-Day War, and how Azerbaijan was included. Finally, the chapter aims to discuss the security dimension of bilateral relations by comparing the pre- and post-war periods.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF TÜRKİYE-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS SINCE 1991

The end of the Cold War and the new emergence of post-Soviet states that gained independence had created many new possibilities for Türkiye's foreign policy preferences¹³. Determining priorities and developing relations with the Turkic world had also become important. Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin's visits to the Turkic Republics in 1992 and Prime Minister Demirel's subsequent trip to Central Asia clearly demonstrated Türkiye's determination to rapidly develop its relations with these newly independent states and its efforts to establish a foreign policy appropriate to the conditions of the period¹⁴. Moreover, the independence of the Turkic communities living in these regions made the historical and cultural ties that already existed in Türkiye more visible. The idea that relations, long limited under the Soviet regime, could be reestablished created an "as-yet-unnamed" excitement and drive within the Turkish public and official circles¹⁵. At the same time, Türkiye's activities in the region went as far as "using pro-Turk imagery", at least in the cultural field, and an increasing interest in Turks in various parts of the world was observed at all levels of society¹⁶. During this process, according to Aydın, before the 1990s, speaking of "Turks Outside" seemed almost racist. Between 1991 and 1993, interest in this topic grew, and social awareness increased. According to Aydın, there was no distinction

¹³ Ayça Ergun, "Special, Exceptional, and Privileged: Azerbaijani-Turkish Relations," *Baku Dialogues* 4, no. 2 (2020): 54.

¹⁴ Mustafa Aydın, "1990-2001: Küreselleşme Ekseninde Türkiye—Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'yla İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, cilt 2, 12. basım, editör Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 379. (Orijinal çalışma 2001'de yayınlanmıştır.)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 380.

between "Anatolian Turks" and "ethnic Turks" in Central Asia, but this distinction became increasingly blurred in those years¹⁷. In 1991, even The Economist magazine defined the post-Soviet world as encompassing Turkish-speaking communities in the region stretching from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China¹⁸. The biggest reason for the hesitation in these actions in the previous period was that during the Soviet period, to maintain good relations with the USSR, direct relations with the Central Asian and Caucasian republics were almost non-existent in many aspects¹⁹.

As mentioned, Türkiye's interest in the Central Asian and Caucasian regions increased with the effect of the rapidly changing international system after the 1990s²⁰. Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Türkiye possessed a great wave of excitement and hope among society and politicians, particularly by emphasizing its strong historical, cultural, and ethnic ties with the newly independent states in the region²¹. With that excitement in mind, she used 'redirection' elements such as collaborating on education with regional countries and establishing relevant institutions²². This emphasis on common ethnic ties, which was also frequently used in political relations with regional countries, emerged as an essential nuance²³. The reason was that highlighting ethnic ties has allowed Türkiye to base its relations with regional countries not only on strategic but also on emotional and historical foundations²⁴. This has made cooperation more enduring and profound, for example

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Pınar Akçalı and Cennet Engin-Demir, "Türkiye's Educational Policies in Central Asia and Caucasias: Perceptions of Policy Makers and Experts," *International Journal of Educational Development* 32, no. 1 (2012): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2010.11.017>.

²⁰ Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Türkiye's Soft Power in a Comparative Context: The South Caucasus and the Middle East," in *The Great Game in West Asia*, ed. Mehran Kamrava (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), chap. 7, 163.

²¹ Altunışık, "Türkiye's Soft Power", 163.

²² Lerna K. Yanik, "The Politics of Educational Exchange: Turkish Education in Eurasia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 2 (2004): 293, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966813042000190551>.

²³ Yanik, "The Politics of Educational Exchange", 293.

²⁴ Yanik, "The Politics of Educational Exchange", 293; Altunışık, "Türkiye's Soft Power", 163.

in strengthening inter-communal rapprochement and political harmony. Although this attitude gave way to more realistic relationship networks and policies in the following years, this emotional element in relations with the region did not completely lose its effect and at least emerged as a catalyst in the use of soft power²⁵.

Türkiye, finding herself in the middle of the Eurasian region, which has been one of the key points of international relations for over 30 years²⁶, has strongly supported the sovereignty and independence of the countries in the Caucasus and has deemed strengthening political stability and institutional capacity in these countries a strategic priority²⁷. Stable neighbours resistant to external influences offer new opportunities for Türkiye's security and for increasing its historical, economic, and cultural influence in the region²⁸. As part of Türkiye's Caucasus policy, this has not remained only in words but has also been supported by actions such as helping them recover their economy, the construction of new political institutions, and the promotion of recognition in the international arena. Although the different dimensions of relations with regional countries prevent a single or common policy from being pursued towards the region, the Caucasus appears as a very important and critical region for Turkish foreign policy makers, especially when it comes to regional stability²⁹.

This section of the thesis aims to explain Türkiye's approach to the post-Soviet Turkic states within the context of its multilayered and multifaceted relations with Azerbaijan and to examine the steps taken in both directions over the past thirty years. This will be achieved in light of the motto adopted by both countries, "one nation, two states." First, collaborations and events in areas such as diaspora activities, educational

²⁵ Altunışık, "Türkiye's Soft Power", 163.

²⁶ Mustafa Aydın, "Turkish Policy Toward the Caucasus," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 1, no. 3 (2002): 39, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.01.3.06>.

²⁷ Mustafa Aydın, "Turkey's Caucasus Policies, 2000-2022," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 22, no. 1 (2023): 80, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.22.1.32>.

²⁸ Aydın, "Turkey's Caucasus Policies", 80; Altunışık, "Türkiye's Soft Power", 163.

²⁹ Ayça Ergun, "Chapter 8—Türkiye and the South Caucasus: Role of Memory and Perceptions in Shaping Türkiye's Relations with Regional States," in *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, ed. S. Akgül Açıkmeşe and B. Özkeçeci-Taner (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 165-166.

opportunities, media, culture, and the arts will be discussed under the heading "cultural and social relations." The economic dimension of strategic relations will then be examined, encompassing both mutual investments, increased trade volumes, and cooperation in energy and transportation channels. Finally, military relations, which played a key role in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, will be examined within the framework of training activities, joint exercises, defence spending, and strategic agreements signed. The security dimension of bilateral relations will be addressed separately in the next chapter of the thesis and is not included in this section.

2.1. Social and Cultural Relations

Azerbaijan, as an important actor in the Caucasus, is not only a strategic partner for Türkiye, but also an ally shaped by deep historical, cultural and social ties. Indeed, from the 1990s to the 2000s, Azerbaijan was the country with which Türkiye developed the closest, most stable and, at the same time, the most intense multidimensional cooperation in the former Soviet geography³⁰, and since then it has been able to form the strongest pillar of Türkiye's communication with the Caucasus region³¹. The relations between the two countries offer a unique model of closeness and cooperation. Hence, examining the cultural and social dimensions of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations in depth is important in terms of understanding the dynamics and effects of these ties.

Strategic, economic or political purposes aside, this prediction has also been supported in using the closest language to each other. Bilateral relations have been maintained in socio-cultural areas with the understanding of "one nation, two states" and both states have seen each other as the most valuable in every sense³², and mutual dialogues in the social sense are continuous and intense with sympathy³³. This mutual

³⁰ Aydın, "Turkish Policy Toward the Caucasus," 44.

³¹ Ondrej Ditrych, "Türkiye in the South Caucasus: A Hesitant Power," in *Türkiye's Cards in the World Raising the Stakes*, ed. Dana Ghanem (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2024), 14, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2815/834143>.

³² Ergun, "Special, Exceptional, and Privileged," 52.

³³ Ergun, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus," 166.

understanding is “special, exceptional, and privileged” and has distinguished itself from possible bilateral relations between other states in the context of “a strong pattern of friendship, fraternity, brotherhood, and unity”³⁴. As indicated, Azerbaijan and Türkiye have many shared characteristics such as common history, culture, religion and language. Without ignoring the mutual intelligibility of the dialects spoken by the two peoples and their cultural similarities, it is possible to say that some of these commonalities are constructed to a certain extent rather than a natural process³⁵. There was almost no interaction between the two societies during the Soviet period, which prevented their perceptions of each other from being the product of a continuous evolution. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the common memory was preserved and revived, which created real ties, strategic depth and strong emotional connections between the two societies³⁶. Türkiye, initially aimed to act as a bridge for the former Soviet Turkic republics and the rest of the world, but over time, gave way to a more realistic and multifaceted relationship-building goals, developed many policies and established new institutions to serve them³⁷. Thus, Türkiye continued to strive to become an attractive partner by leveraging its soft power capabilities toward regional countries³⁸. Thereby, since the early 1990s, institutions such as TİKA, YTB, the Yunus Emre Foundation, and TÜRKSOY, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have increasingly served as key instruments of Türkiye’s public diplomacy³⁹.

One of the first institutions is the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA). Since its establishment, TIKA aims to develop cooperation in the economic, commercial, technical, social, cultural and educational fields with developing countries, especially Turkish-speaking countries and Türkiye's neighbouring

³⁴ Ergun, “Special, Exceptional, and Privileged,” 52.

³⁵ Ibid, 54.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Altunışık, “Türkiye’s Soft Power”, 168.

³⁸ Ibid, 168.

³⁹ Fırat Purtaş, “Türk Dış Politikasının Yükselen Değeri Kültürel Diplomasi,” *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 7, no. 13 (2013): 17.

countries, and to institute programs accordingly⁴⁰. The institution has adopted the project principle of giving priority to the national values, social and cultural characteristics of the countries with which cooperation is made, assuming equal responsibility in projects with the recipient countries and leaving the initiative to these countries after the projects are completed⁴¹. TİKA, which was established in 1992 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is currently under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and has developed 270 technical assistance and cooperation projects in just seven years until 1999⁴². TİKA opened the Baku Coordination Office in 1994, after Azerbaijan gained independence. This office is one of the first three offices of TİKA abroad and has implemented more than 1,500 projects in Azerbaijan until 2024⁴³. From healthcare personnel to tourism workers, from fine arts experts to judges and prosecutors⁴⁴, bureaucrats, university rectors, media channel officials, teachers and, as a result, nearly 6 thousand Azerbaijani citizens benefited from the trainings organized within the framework of these activities⁴⁵. In addition, with a protocol on the training of diplomats from the Turkic Republics, Türkiye has provided training services to diplomats from these states since 1992⁴⁶. Between 1992 and 1998, 297 diplomats participated in these trainings⁴⁷. Finally, the institution focuses on priorities such as the reconstruction of Karabakh region, the development of non-oil sectors, the elimination of social imbalances and the preservation of common cultural values. TİKA, which also provides support to the agricultural, industrial and service sectors,

⁴⁰ Dıtrych, “Türkiye in the South Caucasus”, 20; Aydın, “1990-2001: Küreselleşme Ekseninde Türkiye”, 382.

⁴¹ Aydın, “1990-2001”, 382.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ TİKA. 2024. *III. Türkiyat Kongresi Türk Dünyasından Akademisyenleri Bakü’de Buluşturdu*. December 3. <https://tika.gov.tr/iii-turkiyat-kongresi-turk-dunyasindan-akademisyenleri-bakude-bulusturdu/>.

⁴⁴ TİKA. 2021. *TİKA Has Implemented More Than 1200 Projects in Azerbaijan*. August 25. https://tika.gov.tr/en/detail-tika_has_implemented_more_than_1200_projects_in_azerbaijan/.

⁴⁵ Altunışık, “Türkiye’s Soft Power”, 168.

⁴⁶ Yanık, “The Politics of Educational Exchange”, 295.

⁴⁷ Altunışık, “Türkiye’s Soft Power”, 168.

develops projects for disadvantaged groups and organizes events and trainings aimed at preserving cultural and historical values⁴⁸. Examples of current activities include book donations to primary school students and city libraries, reading support for visually impaired individuals, food package support for families in need, and introducing innovations in the field of medicine⁴⁹.

Another one of these institutions is the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB). Established in 2010, this institution provides services to citizens of the Republic of Türkiye worldwide regarding their social, cultural, legal and economic needs⁵⁰. Efforts are carried out with the aim of supporting the school education of the new generations, guiding their families and encouraging the academic development of students in higher education since it is important for both the country they live in and their homeland to develop the foreign language skills of these new generations and to grow up as individuals who can compete in the academic field by receiving quality education⁵¹. Additionally, the post-Soviet Turkic states were dealing with social changes, political turbulence, and economic instability⁵². This created insufficient educational infrastructures and resources, making Türkiye's Great Student Project a regional need⁵³. By offering scholarships, particularly to young people from Azerbaijan and Central Asia, Türkiye has both contributed to the human resources of

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ For reference, see also: TİKA, "TİKA'dan Azerbaycan'daki İhtiyaç Sahibi Ailelere Gıda Kolisi Desteği," *Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı (TİKA)*, April 2, 2024, <https://tika.gov.tr/tikadan-azerbaycandaki-ihhtiyac-sahibi-ailelere-gida-kolisi-destegi/>; TİKA, "TİKA'dan Türk Dünyasına Kitap Desteği Sürüyor," *TİKA*, January 29, 2021, https://tika.gov.tr/detail-tika_dan_turk_dunyasina_kitap_destegi_suruyor/; TİKA, "The 1st Turkic States Cardiology Congress Was Held in Azerbaijan with TİKA's Support," *TİKA*, April 25, 2024, <https://tika.gov.tr/en/the-1st-turkic-states-cardiology-congress-was-held-in-azerbaijan-with-tikas-support/>; TİKA, "Azerbaycan Görme Engelliler Derneğine Braille Alfabesi Baskı Makineleri Temin Edildi," *TİKA*, May 23, 2024, <https://tika.gov.tr/azerbaycan-gorme-engelliler-dernegine-braille-alfabesi-baski-makineleri-temin-edildi/>.

⁵⁰ YTB, *Çalışma Alanları - Yurtdışı Vatandaşlar*, [Gov], accessed 30 July 2024, <https://ytb.gov.tr/daireler/yurtdisi-vatandaslar>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ergun, "Special, Exceptional, and Privileged", 58.

⁵³ Ibid.

these countries undergoing transformation and strengthened its soft power. Hence, enabling Türkiye to play a significant role in educating the next generation of elites in Eurasia⁵⁴. Thus, Turkish foreign policy has diversified its relations based on friendship, brotherhood and cultural closeness, primarily with the Great Student Project launched in 1992. The project has been one of Türkiye's most important soft power policies in Azerbaijan and Central Asia, and the internationalization of higher education has been used as a foreign policy tool⁵⁵ and “were part of a wider Turkish educational initiative to attract and form new post-Soviet elites in Türkiye”⁵⁶. This project maintained its continuity under the name of Türkiye Scholarships in 2012, with an expanded scope and affiliation with YTB⁵⁷. In this way, the project, which aims to provide better quality higher education to the first generation after independence and offers students the chance to graduate from Turkish universities⁵⁸, has provided more than 17,500 scholarships⁵⁹, and more than 3,650 of the students who received these scholarships were Azerbaijanis⁶⁰. Especially early Türkiye graduates were not made to feel like “foreigners”, they were protected and looked after⁶¹. Studying in Türkiye was a significant opportunity for Azerbaijan, facilitating Azerbaijan's opening to the outside world, fostering the development of qualified personnel, and a positive perception of Türkiye. While not directly seen as a model, Türkiye, with its secular and democratic structure, offered an inspiring example⁶².

⁵⁴ Ayça Ergun, “Bir Türk Dış Politikası Aracı Olarak Yüksek Öğretimin Uluslararasılaşması: Büyük Öğrenci Projesi ve Türkiye Mezunları,” *Panorama*, online publication, May 12, 2020. <https://www.uikpanorama.com/blog/2020/05/12/ayca-ergun-bop-turkiye-mezunlari/>.

⁵⁵ Ergun, “Bir Türk Dış Politikası Aracı”.

⁵⁶ Bayram Balcı ve Thomas Liles, “What Remains from Turkish Soft Power in the Caucasus?”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (2019): 39-40.

⁵⁷ Altunışık, “Türkiye's Soft Power”, 171; Ergun, “Bir Türk Dış Politikası Aracı”.

⁵⁸ Ergun, “Türkiye and the South Caucasus,” 168.

⁵⁹ Yanik, “The Politics of Educational Exchange”, 294.

⁶⁰ Ergun, “Special, Exceptional, and Privileged”, 58.

⁶¹ Ibid, 60.

⁶² Ibid.

Indeed, for the post-Soviet Turkic republics, education in Türkiye meant education in Western-type universities with up-to-date curricula in line with the world, in a multidimensional transformation process⁶³. According to Altunışık⁶⁴, strengthening educational ties in bilateral relations with the Caucasian and Central Asian states was pivotal in terms of the policies towards the region. In fact, the field of education is one of the areas where cooperation between Azerbaijan and Türkiye is most dynamically manifested both at the political and social levels⁶⁵. According to Yanık, the reason for attaching so much value to the field of education was to create human resources that would establish a bond between their country and Türkiye by training individuals who were proficient in Turkish culture and language, and to adopt the ‘Turkish identity’ that was thought to have taken shape since the Turkic republics gained their independence in 1991⁶⁶. Realizing early on that education was a powerful tool for identity construction and social transformation, Turkish authorities acted in this direction. Köksal Toptan, the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye between 1991-1993, also used the following expressions in his Opening Speech at the Conference of Ministers of Education of the Turkic Republics in 1992⁶⁷:

These children, during their education, will get the chance to know their Turkish friends closely and thus will become the foundation stones for the common cause. Furthermore, when they return to their countries after finishing their education, they will become the architects of the great Turkish world.

Also, in the early years of independence, Türkiye was seen as the only alternative and a reliable “brother country” in international education for Azerbaijan. The closeness of language and culture allowed Azerbaijani students to feel at home in Türkiye. The first generation of students who came to Türkiye in 1991-1993 described this experience as eye-opening, and the warm welcome and supportive environment they encountered led to the cultural and social blurring of the boundaries between the two

⁶³ Ergun, “Bir Türk Dış Politikası Aracı”.

⁶⁴ Altunışık, “Türkiye’s Soft Power”, 166.

⁶⁵ rgun, “Special, Exceptional, and Privileged”, 58.

⁶⁶ Yanık, “The Politics of Educational Exchange”, 294.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

countries. Azerbaijani graduates who received education in Türkiye continued to be closely interested in Turkish culture and politics, becoming an important group that strengthened the ties between the two countries⁶⁸.

Lastly, although the project encountered some problems and difficulties during these implementations from time to time, thousands of students have had the chance to receive education in Türkiye⁶⁹, and it was a project that had no other alternative at that time and achieved its goal⁷⁰. As “especially the negative opinions represented by the Soviet Union and Sovietism, namely authoritarian regimes, oppression, restrictions, borders, control and even conflict and hostility, all kinds of “new” were learned through Türkiye, through Türkiye and in Türkiye⁷¹.”

In the 2010s, Türkiye also has institutionalized cultural diplomacy. The Yunus Emre Foundation was established in 2007, and thus, non-formal educational activities abroad that teach and promote Turkish and Turkish culture have become widespread⁷². The foundation later established the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) in 2009⁷³. The Turkology Project, which began with the stationing of 13 faculty members to 15 Turkish Language and Literature Departments in 13 countries in the 2001-2002 academic year⁷⁴, was transferred to YEE to specialize in the field of Turkology⁷⁵. Beginning its activities in 2013, Baku YEE carries out conversation clubs and book

⁶⁸ Ergun, “Bir Türk Dış Politikası Aracı”.

⁶⁹ Aydın, “1990-2001”, 384-385.

⁷⁰ Ergun, “Bir Türk Dış Politikası Aracı”.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Birol Akgün and Metin Çelik. “Etkili Bir Yumuşak Güç Unsuru Olarak Uluslararası Eğitimin Türk Dış Politikasındaki Yeri.” *Liberal Düşünce Dergisi* 28, no. 111 (2023): 124. <https://doi.org/10.36484/liberal.1335556>.

⁷³ Ibid, 139.

⁷⁴ “Türkoloji Projesi Tek Elde Toplanıyor,” *TİKA*, 20 Eylül 2011, https://tika.gov.tr/announcement/turkoloji_projesi_tek_elde_toplaniyor/.

⁷⁵ “TİKA ile Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Arasında Türkoloji Projesinin Devrine İlişkin Protokol İmzalandı,” *TİKA*, 23 Ekim 2011, https://tika.gov.tr/detail-tika_ile_yunus_emre_enstitusu_arasinda_turkoloji_projesinin_devrine_iliskin_protokol_imzalandi/.

reading hours, and the Turkish Proficiency Exam (TYS) administered by YEE worldwide has the highest participation rate in Baku⁷⁶. The centre is also a place where doctors, academics and journalists who want to work in Türkiye come to improve their Turkish. In 2014, the president of the institute emphasized that “the Azerbaijani people are no different from those in Türkiye” and signed a cooperation protocol for the Turkology Project with Baku Eurasia University⁷⁷. This protocol aims to provide support in all areas such as academic staff and materials in the Turkology department of the university and to increase the quality of education. In addition to the Turkish language education provided at the YEE Baku Cultural Centre, Turkology departments and Turkish language teaching are supported through collaborations with educational institutions in different countries⁷⁸. Many events are organized to promote Turkish culture and art through cultural centres, and Türkiye is represented in national and international events.

An important contribution to the dimension of cultural relations is made by the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSOY) (formerly known as the Common Administration of Turkic Culture and Arts). In 1992, the Ministers of Culture of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Türkiye came together for the first time and signed a protocol of intent aiming at “the spiritual integration of the peoples speaking the Turkish language in the changing world conditions⁷⁹”, and in 1993, with the signing of the founding agreement by the Ministers of Culture, the first cooperation organization in the Turkish world was established⁸⁰. Since it was considered crucial to strengthen cultural ties to revitalize

⁷⁶ “Türkçeye en büyük ilgi Azerbaycan’dan,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 17 January 2015, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/egitim/turkceye-en-buyuk-ilgi-azerbaycandan/83223#>.

⁷⁷ “Bakü Avrasya Üniversitesi İle Türkoloji İşbirliği Protokolü İmzalandı,” *Yunus Emre Enstitüsü*, 29 Ağustos 2014, <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/haber/baku-avrasya-universitesi-ile-turkoloji-isbirligi-protokolu-imzalandi>.

⁷⁸ “Yunus Emre Enstitüsü,” *Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Türkiye-Merkez*, erişim 30 Temmuz 2025, <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/kurumsal/yunus-emre-enstitusu>; “Yunus Emre Enstitüsü—Bakü,” *Yunus Emre Enstitüsü*, erişim 30 Temmuz 2025, <https://baku.yee.org.tr/tr/kurumsal/yunus-emre-enstitusu>.

⁷⁹ Nadir Devlet, “Türkiye’nin Avrasya’ya Yönelik Kültür Politikaları,” in Türkiye’nin Avrasya Macerası 1989–2006, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2007), 187.

⁸⁰ History. [Gov]. TÜRKSOY. <https://www.turksoy.org/en-US/history>.

the relations with the countries in the region, this institution emerged, and at the same time, the Ministries of Education of the member states carried out parallel studies with TÜRKSOY in the development of the fields of language, literature and historiography⁸¹. TÜRKSOY has also been a significant organization for a long time in terms of contributing to official cultural relations between member states that could not be established in any other way⁸². Its activities have also been supported by the heads of state of member states, and its importance in developing and promoting the common cultural heritage of the Turkic world at the international level has been emphasized⁸³. Since 2012, TÜRKSOY has been selecting a different Turkish city as the cultural capital every year with the “Turkic World Capital of Culture” program to strengthen cultural and artistic interaction between member states⁸⁴. On this occasion, Sheki in Azerbaijan was selected as the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World in 2016, and Shusha in 2023. In addition, special celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the organization were celebrated with an enthusiastic concert in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2023⁸⁵.

During his time as the Prime Minister's Advisor to Türkiye, İbrahim Kalın stated that a state's soft power capacity is directly related to how much that country deserves to be an example⁸⁶. Soft power is determined by many things, from education to art, from printed and visual media to tourism, from science to technology, and this capacity also defines the success of a state's public diplomacy⁸⁷. Soft power is "the capacity to

⁸¹ Akçalı and Demir, “Türkiye’s educational policies”, 13; Altunışık, “Türkiye’s Soft Power”, 167.

⁸² Devlet, “Türkiye’nin Avrasya’ya Yönelik Kültür Politikaları”, 188.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Kültür Başkentleri. [Gov]. TÜRKSOY. <https://www.turksoy.org/kultur-baskentleri>.

⁸⁵ TÜRKSOY’un 30. Yılı Kutlamaları Azerbaycan’da. (2023, October 14). TÜRKSOY. <https://www.turksoy.org/haberler/turksoyun-30-yili-kutlamalari-azerbaycanda>.

⁸⁶ İbrahim Kalın, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Türkiye,” *Perceptions* 16, no. 3 (2011): 8-9.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

change the preferences of others⁸⁸". Thus, Türkiye has tried to use public diplomacy tools⁸⁹ (such as exchange programs, media tools, training and scholarships) in the most effective way in the development of its bilateral relations with Azerbaijan. Again, according to Kalın, public diplomacy, in this context, is not a propaganda tool, but images that show the identity of the state it belongs to⁹⁰. At this point, social interactions between Türkiye and Azerbaijan encouraged by the state have gradually taken on a natural, spontaneous form for the societies of both countries. An important dimension of these incentives has been through the media. Since the years of independence, elements such as television programs and popular culture have been quite popular in Azerbaijan⁹¹. The biggest catalyst for this was the establishment of the TRT-Eurasia channel by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) in 1992⁹². The channel, which has been broadcasting under the name TRT Avaz (voice/loud voice) since 2009, started its broadcasting life with an understanding that adopted Gaspıralı İsmail's⁹³ (Crimean Tatar, early Turkish-Islamic thinker, educator and writer) approach of "unity in language, idea, work" and aimed at Turkish-speaking peoples⁹⁴. All of these were implemented especially with Süleyman Demirel's aim to encourage the use of the Latin alphabet in the Turkic republics, which is how direct communication networks and the ability to watch private TV programs in Azerbaijan with satellite dishes were implemented⁹⁵. Today, many pop, traditional and classical music artists frequently perform in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijanis also perform in

⁸⁸ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Revisited," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14, no. 1–2 (2019): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-14101013>.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 12.

⁹⁰ Kalın, "Soft Power", 17.

⁹¹ Altunışık, "Türkiye's Soft Power", 171.

⁹² Devlet, "Türkiye'nin Avrasya'ya Yönelik Kültür Politikaları", 189.

⁹³ Hakan Kırımlı, "Hayatı-İsmail Bey Gaspıralı (Gasprinskiy) – 1851-1914," *İsmail Bey Gaspıralı*, accessed 1 Temmuz 2025, <http://www.ismailgaspırali.org/hayati/>.

⁹⁴ "Hakkımızda—TRT Avaz," *TRT Avaz* [News], accessed 1 January 2025, <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/hakkimizda>.

⁹⁵ Devlet, "Türkiye'nin Avrasya'ya Yönelik Kültür Politikaları," 189; Altunışık, "Türkiye's Soft Power", 166.

Türkiye and appeal to a large audience⁹⁶. Moreover, the Azerbaijani people regularly follow Türkiye's domestic and foreign policy developments and the competitions of Turkish sports teams on current media platforms⁹⁷. Similarly, in the early 2010s, a program called "Can Azerbaijan (*Beloved Azerbaijan*)" was broadcast on TRT Avaz, which was about the culture, art and natural beauties of Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani presenter Naile Ekberova hosted this program⁹⁸. Nevertheless, unlike the Azerbaijanis, the Turkish people do not have much information about the Azerbaijani agenda, except for the developments regarding the Karabakh issue and relations with Armenia⁹⁹. So much so that, although the societies of both countries use two close dialects of Oghuz Turkish, the Turkish people often have difficulty understanding the Azerbaijani dialect, while Azerbaijanis can read, understand and speak İstanbul Turkish relatively easily¹⁰⁰.

Nonetheless, the idea of 'Turkish solidarity' is engraved in the minds of both societies, and the real source of sustainable relations between the countries is social. For example, the victory of the Turkish football team in 2002 literally stopped traffic in Azerbaijan for hours, Turkish and Azerbaijani flags were waved side by side in the streets and victory slogans were chanted. Similarly, when tensions arose between Iran and Azerbaijan in 2001, the visit of Turkish General Kıvrıkoğlu to Azerbaijan and the demonstrations of Turkish air jets brought the largest crowd recorded in Azerbaijan after independence to the streets¹⁰¹.

⁹⁶ Cornell, Svante E., "Türkiye, Best Neighbor or Big Brother?" in *Azerbaijan Since Independence* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 389-390.

⁹⁷ Ergun, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus", 169.

⁹⁸ *Can Azerbaijan—Program*. [News]. TRT Avaz. <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/program/can-azerbaycan/30026>

⁹⁹ Ergun, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus", 169.

¹⁰⁰ Seyidov, Ilgar, (2020). "As quiet as a mouse": Media use in Azerbaijan. *Communications*, 45(s1), 893–911. <https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2020-0021>.

¹⁰¹ Cornell, "Türkiye, Best Neighbor or Big Brother?", 390.

The discourse of “one nation, two states”, primarily due to the common historical, cultural, religious and linguistic background being a catalyst¹⁰², has not only remained in discourse but has also come to life in practice over the past 30 years thanks to the mutual efforts of both Türkiye and Azerbaijan, both at the state and society levels. Since Türkiye has been the greatest supporter of Azerbaijan, especially regarding the border problems with Armenia, Azerbaijan is the country with the most developed bilateral relations in the Caucasus¹⁰³. Indeed, due to the limited information obtained from each other in the early years of independence, the existence of a common enemy, so to speak, was one of the first factors that brought the two countries closer¹⁰⁴. The motto of “one nation, two states” has also awakened in the minds of Azerbaijani elites and intellectuals the idea of Türkiye being the largest and most powerful alliance and brother country¹⁰⁵. As we mentioned, thousands of students have come from Azerbaijan to Türkiye and from Türkiye to Azerbaijan for education and continue to do so¹⁰⁶. Many academics and artists have settled in Türkiye permanently and there is a considerable migration from the other country in both countries.

In other words, in terms of cultural, social, and educational aspects, Turkish-Azerbaijani bilateral relations have a profound and sophisticated nature. Media initiatives and collaborations, student exchange and scholarship programs, projects carried out among young people -also with the effect of the common historical past and cultural ties- have been used as an important tool in shaping mutual positive social perceptions. Hence, the fraternal relations between the two countries have not been limited to the political and diplomatic fields but have also found their base at the social level.

2.2. Economic and Energy-Based Relations

¹⁰² Ergun, “Türkiye and the South Caucasus”, 165-166.

¹⁰³ Ditarych, “Türkiye in the South Caucasus”, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ergun, “Unpacking ‘One Nation, Two States’”, 59.

¹⁰⁵ Balçı and Liles, “What Remains from Turkish Soft Power in the Caucasus?”, 40-41.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 39-40.

Continuing and developing for 30 years, an essential dimension of the bilateral relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan is economic, commercial and energy based. Cultural, historical and linguistic closeness aside, regional closeness and the newly independent Azerbaijan's aim to balance Russian power also initiated and strengthened economic relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in the years to come¹⁰⁷.

Türkiye aimed to reach the natural resources in the Caucasus, first to create an alternative for its own needs, and then to help these resources reach international markets through Türkiye, thus generating direct economic income, and then to create an alternative route for the regional states¹⁰⁸. With its strategic bridge position between Asia and Europe, Türkiye has historically been one of the indispensable points of the Silk Road¹⁰⁹. She also has always been an important market for the energy resources waiting to be developed in the Caucasus and has always been eager to develop comprehensive energy transportation projects¹¹⁰. Türkiye, above all, recognised she was the connection and transit point between the “energy-poor Europe” and the “energy-rich East”, and was aware of the contribution she would make to the development of this vast geography extending from Central Asia to the Balkans in every sense¹¹¹. Indeed, when the Soviet republics gained their independence, Türkiye had a main goal that has not changed since then and has been working diligently for the past thirty years: to become an energy and transportation hub/centre between Asia and Europe¹¹².

¹⁰⁷ Ibrahimov, Rovshan. “Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations: Significant Leverage in the Implementation of the Foreign Policy Interests of Both Countries,” *Insight Turkey* 17, no. 2 (2015): 84.

¹⁰⁸ Aslanlı, Araz. *Yeni Küresel Mücadelede Kafkasya ve Karabağ Sorunu* (Ankara: EkoAvrasya Yayınları, 2013), 18.

¹⁰⁹ Pala, Cenk. Türkiye'nin Avrasya Boru Hatları Macerası in *Türkiye'nin Avrasya Macerası (1989-2006)*, Avrasya Üçlemesi II, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel, 2007), 175.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 176.

¹¹² Aydın, “Turkish Policy toward the Caucasus,” 39–47, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.01.3.06>; Ibrahimov, “Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations,”; Aslanlı, *Yeni Küresel Mücadelede Kafkasya*, 18; Iqra Yagubova, *The Growing Role of Türkiye in the South Caucasus: Possible Scenarios* (Policy Brief) (Baku: Institute for Development and Diplomacy, ADA University, December 27, 2022),

For Azerbaijan, the 1990s were marked by efforts to develop policies to solve the problems stemmed from the Soviet collapse and the outbreak of the Karabakh conflict¹¹³. For Elchibey, this meant ensuring territorial integrity and political independence through the resolution of the Karabakh issue and achieving economic development¹¹⁴. To this end, he pursued an extremely pro-Turkish, anti-Iranian, anti-Russian, and Western-oriented foreign policy. In contrast, the Aliyev era, aimed to resolve the Karabakh issue and consolidate independence by abandoning extremism, pursuing a balanced foreign policy among regional actors, and participating in regional cooperation mechanisms such as the CIS¹¹⁵. Additionally, politically, there were three changes of leadership between 1991 and 1993, a coup attempt was made against Elchibey's government during the war, and the defeats in Karabakh weakened the legitimacy of Mutalibov and Elchibey's governments¹¹⁶. Economically, supply and distribution chains depended on the Soviet Union, and with its collapse, these networks were severed. Inflation was high, and foreign investment was needed¹¹⁷.

Since Azerbaijan was a landlocked state, it had to export energy through neighbouring states, and in fact, Türkiye played the most important role in the construction and development of the energy route between Azerbaijan and Europe in the past thirty

https://idd.az/media/old/2022/12/27/idd_policy_brief_-_yagubova_-_27_december.pdf?v=1.1; Ondřej Ditrych, "Türkiye in the South Caucasus: A Hesitant Power," in *Türkiye's Cards in the World: Raising the Stakes* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2024), 16; Aydın, "Turkey's Caucasus Policies, 2000–2022," 81; Elxan Aliyev, *Azerbaijan-Turkish Relations (1992–2012): A Foreign Policy Account* (master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2012), 56; Bayram Balcı and Thomas Liles, "Turkey's Comeback to Central Asia," *Insight Turkey* 20, no. 4 (2018): 16, <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2018204.06>; Bülent Aras, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations," in *Global Türkiye in Europe* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center–Sabanci University, 2014), 4.

¹¹³ Ibrahimov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations", 94.

¹¹⁴ Cafersoy, Nazim, "Genel Olarak AHC'nin Dış Politikası ve Karabağ Sorunu" in *Elçibey Dönemi Azerbaycan Dış Politikası (Haziran 1992–Haziran 1993): Bir Bağımsızlık Mücadelesinin Diplomatik Öyküsü* (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2001), 71.

¹¹⁵ Aslanlı, Araz. "Foreign Policy of Heydar Aliyev," in *Heydar Aliyev and the Foundations of Modern Azerbaijan*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz, Michael M. Gunter, and Shamkhal Abilov (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 141–145, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-58265-3_7.

¹¹⁶ Cornell, Svante E. "Azerbaijan's Economy: The Primacy of Oil" in *Azerbaijan Since Independence* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 203–204.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

years¹¹⁸. Again, the low probability of political conflicts and problems between Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Georgia pushed Azerbaijan to construct energy channels through these three states¹¹⁹. These two countries, unlike Russia for example, had a near-zero probability of disrupting energy exports for political purposes or using energy transportation as a tool of pressure. As for Türkiye, its main goal in its relations with these border countries was to become an energy centre with a transportation system that would operate between the East and the West after all¹²⁰. As experts predicted, Turkish Azerbaijani relations have been quite strong in every sense since the beginning, most particularly in the field of energy¹²¹. Türkiye has always been one of the states that has always stood by and supported Azerbaijan in its struggle over Karabakh. This has contributed to the development of the military and political dimensions of bilateral relations, particularly with the military training that began in the post-independence period and continues to this day, the transition to a NATO-style military system, and the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2010. Nevertheless, economic relations, which have developed since the early years of independence through mutual investments, trade agreements, and regional and intercontinental energy and transportation networks, constitute one of the strongest and most robust pillars of bilateral relations¹²².

Although the economy in bilateral relations has largely improved from the mid-nineties, there have also been developments during the short term of power of Ebulföz Elçibey. Although there was no official agreement between the two countries at the time, the Elçibey administration stated that its foreign policy was conducted in a manner that would not harm Türkiye's strategic interests. In this context, a policy was

¹¹⁸ Shaffer, Brenda. Türkiye's Energy Engagement in Central Asia and the Caucasus, *Türkiye's Return to Central Asia and the Caucasus-Silk Road Paper*, 2024, 30.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 30-31.

¹²⁰ Yagubova, *The Growing Role of Türkiye in the South Caucasus*, 2.

¹²¹ Aydın, "Turkish policy toward the Caucasus", 44.

¹²² Azərbaycan Cumhuriyeti Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Büyükelçiliği, "Ticari ve Ekonomik İşbirliği," *Ankara.mfa.gov.az*, erişim 1 Ağustos 2025, <https://ankara.mfa.gov.az/tr/category/ticari-ve-ekonomik-isbirligi>; Aslanlı, 2018, 16.

pursued toward establishing a 'strategic partnership'¹²³. In Azerbaijani foreign policy, Türkiye was given a special position — placed, in the words of Elçibey himself, who identified as a Turkish nationalist, in the 'seat of honour'¹²⁴.

To supply these aims, during Elçibey's rule, Türkiye was asked for help in financial matters, and agreements were signed on issues such as trade and transportation¹²⁵. To develop the economic relations, tax reductions were also enforced to encourage Turkish businesspeople to invest in Azerbaijan¹²⁶. Facilitating laws were enacted to encourage investments in the oil field, not only by Türkiye but also by Western states, and preparations were made for an oil agreement that would bring the country approximately ten million dollars in June 1993¹²⁷. To develop and grow the country and balance regional relations, the oil industry has been opened to support from foreign countries since the year of independence¹²⁸. Both in the first years of independence and throughout the nineties, balancing Russia's influence on the region was of key importance for Azerbaijani elites in resolving the Karabakh issue and consolidating independence, at which point the only opportunity would be to use its abundant energy resources¹²⁹. This idea also aimed to change the foreign policy approaches of investing countries through energy policies¹³⁰. The Elçibey administration wanted Türkiye to be included in the oil agreement to be signed with Western companies, which had a very considerable importance at the time¹³¹.

¹²³ Cafersoy, *Elçibey Dönemi Azərbaycan Dış Politikası*, 123.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 124-125.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 125.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 57.

¹²⁸ BP, "From Vision to Value: 30 Years of ACG," *BP Azerbaijan: Operations & Projects* (accessed July 29, 2025), https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/operationsprojects/acg2/From-vision-to-value-30-years-of-ACG.html.

¹²⁹ Ibrahimov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations", 94.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 94.

¹³¹ Cafersoy, *Elçibey Dönemi Azərbaycan Dış Politikası*, 126.

Elchibey always wanted Türkiye to enter the Azerbaijani oil business, so BOTAŞ (Petroleum Pipeline Corporation - “Boru Hatları ile Petrol Taşıma Anonim Şirketi” in Turkish) and TPAO (Turkish Petroleum Corporation – “Türkiye Petrolleri Anonim Ortaklığı” in Turkish) from Türkiye participated in these talks with Western countries upon Elchibey’s request, and later, talks were held on the issue of transferring Azerbaijani oil to Ceyhan, which has been successfully implemented today. Nevertheless, with Elchibey's removal from power and Heydar Aliyev's rise to the presidency, the Aliyev administration suspended all negotiations regarding oil agreements. According to Cafersoy, this led to Türkiye being excluded from these processes, at least temporarily¹³².

However, during the Elchibey period, the legal foundations of economic relations were properly laid with the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement between the Governments of the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan, signed on November 1, 1992 (which would enter into force in 1993)¹³³. With the agreement, the parties granted each other the “most favoured nation status”¹³⁴, and decided to cooperate in areas such as industrial activities, energy, natural resources, transportation and infrastructure, and communication¹³⁵. In addition, on the same day, a total of 13 documents were signed regulating various aspects of Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations, including a protocol on technical cooperation in the field of developing small and medium-sized industrial enterprises, road transport, transport infrastructure, and cooperation in the field of tourism¹³⁶.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Aslanlı, “Türkiye-Azerbaycan Ekonomik İlişkileri,” 17; Ayça Ergun, “Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkileri,” in *Türkiye’nin Avrasya Macerası (1989-2006)*, Avrasya Üçlemesi II, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel, 2007), 260.

¹³⁴ Sinan Oğan, “Azerbaycan’ın Tanımlanamayan Ekonomisi ve Türkiye ile Ekonomik İlişkileri,” *Avrasya Dosyası - Azerbaycan Özel* 7, no. 1 (2001): 64.

¹³⁵ *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Arasında İşbirliği ve Dayanışma Anlaşmasının Onaylanmasının Uygun Bulunduğuna İlişkin Kanun*. (1993, May 11). Resmî Gazete. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc076/kanuntbmmc076/kanuntbmmc07603905.pdf.

¹³⁶ Aslanlı, “Türkiye-Azerbaycan Ekonomik İlişkileri,” 17.

Next year, by 1994, Heydar Aliyev had achieved a ceasefire in the First Karabakh War, calmed down separatist movements and neutralized potential rivals¹³⁷. The established stability in the country, gave rise to hope that economic changes would also be made¹³⁸. Aliyev visited Türkiye between February 8-10, and many important documents were signed that would bring Turkish Azerbaijani economic relations to their current state¹³⁹. The most important of these is the agreement signed between the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC) in Baku on September 20, 1994, after negotiations that lasted approximately three years¹⁴⁰. Going down in history as the “Contract of the Century”, the agreement gave authority to explore and extract in the relevant region to AIOC. Thus, “oil, which will be the most important factor in the ‘rich’ future that even ordinary people dream of” in Azerbaijan, was radically opened to foreign investment, and this agreement paved the way for many other developments¹⁴¹. Although the authority was given to AIOC, of course, there were 11 oil companies from 7 countries, including SOCAR, in the established consortium or cooperation of enterprises¹⁴² and the agreement was worth 7.4 billion dollars¹⁴³. At that time, Türkiye was also looking for different alternatives to meet its energy needs and the TPAO was chosen as the main subject for this work¹⁴⁴. Regarding TPAO's presence in Azerbaijan, it was considered to take part in the production with serious shares during the Ebulfez

¹³⁷ Ergun, “Azerbaycan’da Sovyet Sonrası Dönemde Değişim ve Dönüşüm”, 16.

¹³⁸ Oğan, “Azerbaycan’ın Tanımlanamayan Ekonomisi”, 57.

¹³⁹ Aslanlı, “Türkiye-Azerbaycan Ekonomik İlişkileri”, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Aslanlı ve İlham Hesenov, “Haydar Aliyev Döneminde Azerbaycan-Türkiye İlişkileri,” in *Haydar Aliyev Dönemi Azerbaycan Dış Politikası* (Ankara: Platin Yayınları, 2005), 90.

¹⁴¹ *The Contract of The Century*. [Gov]. Azerbaijan. Retrieved February 24, 2025, from <https://azerbaijan.az/en/related-information/132>; Oğan, “Azerbaycan’ın Tanımlanamayan Ekonomisi”, 57.

¹⁴² Aslanlı and Hesenov, “Haydar Aliyev Döneminde Azerbaycan-Türkiye İlişkileri”, 91.

¹⁴³ Cekuta, R. F. (2020). *25 Years After the “Contract of the Century”: The Implications for Caspian Energy*. Caspian Policy Center. <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/articles/25-years-after-the-contract-of-the-century-the-implications-for-caspian-energy>.

¹⁴⁴ Ibrahimov, “Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations”, 84.

Elchibey period, but ultimately TPAO was represented with a rate of 6.75% in the Agreement of the Century signed for the development of the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (ACG) oil fields during the Heydar Aliyev government¹⁴⁵. Today, SOCAR owns 31.65% of the shares, while TPAO owns 5.73%, leaving aside other shareholders.

The mentioned Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli oil field is in the Caspian basin, 120 km from the Azerbaijani coast and has been in production since 1997 following this agreement¹⁴⁶. Thanks to the 1993 agreement, which has the nature and size that shapes today's modern Azerbaijan, the amount of oil extracted from the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli field has reached almost 600 million tons¹⁴⁷. This agreement was extended until 2049 on September 14, 2017, and according to the new agreement, Azerbaijan's profit percentage was increased to 75%, and SOCAR's share, which was 11% until that year, was increased to 25%¹⁴⁸.

Fast forward to the 2000s, it is possible to see that the energy factor in Turkish Azerbaijani relations became more concrete with certain initiatives. At the OSCE summit in November 1999, Türkiye, Georgia and Azerbaijan, with the participation of US President Clinton, reached an agreement on the construction of a comprehensive pipeline that would transport Caspian oil to Western markets via the BTC pipeline¹⁴⁹. This agreement, which brought a regional dimension to bilateral relations centred on energy, is the "Agreement Between the Republic of Türkiye, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Georgia on the Transportation of Oil through the Countries of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Türkiye via the Baku-Tbilisi-

¹⁴⁵ Aslanlı, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan Ekonomik İlişkileri", 21-22.

¹⁴⁶ Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli Oilfield. (2006). *Offshore Technology*. <https://www.offshore-technology.com/projects/acg/>; *The Contract of The Century*.

¹⁴⁷ *The Contract of The Century*.

¹⁴⁸ *Oil Sector*. [Gov]. Official Web-Site of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://president.az/en/pages/view/azerbaijan/contract>; *The Contract of The Century*.

¹⁴⁹ Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "ABD'nin Kafkasya Politikaları," in *Kafkaslar Değişim Dönüşüm*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2012), 165.

Ceyhan Main Export Pipeline” signed in Istanbul on November 18, 1999¹⁵⁰. Named the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) project, the pipeline was completed in 2006 to transport oil extracted from the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli field to Europe via the Ceyhan terminal in Türkiye¹⁵¹, with a total length of 1,767 kilometres (1,098 miles) and a cost of approximately \$4 billion¹⁵². The importance of the BTC pipeline increased when Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan signed a Transition Agreement in June 2006 to connect Kazakh oil to the BTC pipeline, and Kazakh oil began to flow into the BTC pipeline as of October 2008¹⁵³.

In addition, the large natural gas reserve discovered in the Shah Deniz field in 1999 - which was the world's largest natural gas discovery since 1978- significantly increased Azerbaijan's production, but due to the continued dependence on the old distribution system from the Soviet period, it brought about the need for alternative pipelines, similar to the problems experienced in oil exports¹⁵⁴. Thus, to meet this need, the South Caucasus Pipeline or also known as Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) Natural Gas Pipeline started operating in 2007. Herein, the importance of the should not be forgotten because the Turkish idea of becoming an energy corridor has been further strengthened with this project coming to the agenda¹⁵⁵.

A problem that became more significant in the late nineties was Azerbaijan’s lack of access to the open seas and the difficulties in its land ties with Türkiye¹⁵⁶. For this purpose, in addition to the BTC and BTE, an agreement was reached in 2007 to build

¹⁵⁰ Mithat Çelikpala, “Bağımsız Gürcistan’ın 20 Yılı: Başarısız Devlet mi, Demokratik Model Ülke mi?” in *Kafkaslar Değişim Dönüşüm: (Avrasya Üçlemesi III)*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2012), 80.

¹⁵¹ Balci and Liles, “Turkey’s Comeback to Central Asia”, 15.

¹⁵² Yılmaz, “ABD’nin Kafkasya Politikaları”, 165.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Hayriye Kahveci, “Enerji Politikaları ve Uluslararası Rekabet,” in *Kafkaslar Değişim Dönüşüm*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2012), 279.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Oğan, “Azerbaycan’ın Tanımlanamayan Ekonomisi”, 64.

the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway¹⁵⁷. The main purpose of this railway was to strengthen the historical Silk Road and the relations between Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia located on this route¹⁵⁸. Thanks to this “Iron Silk Road”¹⁵⁹, which bypasses the Armenian border due to the problems between Türkiye and Azerbaijan with Armenia and reaches Europe from China, the distance between the east and the west has been shortened by 7 thousand kilometres¹⁶⁰.

Despite all the progress made, during the 2000s, Türkiye did not really have a cohesive energy policy towards the Caucasus region¹⁶¹. What changed this situation were both the revival of some problems from the past and some international changes that took place at that time. First, Russia was not going to give up its spheres of influence after the Soviet Union collapsed, and in late 1993¹⁶² she developed the “Near Abroad” doctrine¹⁶³. According to this doctrine, while Russia was withdrawing from these regions, she would also preserve its “cooperation, dialogue, and interests” in her zone of interest¹⁶⁴. Indeed, although Türkiye had the support of the West, especially the USA, she did not have the political power to enter a direct competition with Russia¹⁶⁵. Thus, Türkiye, while increasing its connections with Azerbaijan and Georgia politically, also began to pursue policies that would strengthen economic relations,

¹⁵⁷ Aydın, “Turkey’s Caucasus Policies”, 84.

¹⁵⁸ “Bakü-Tiflis-Kars Demiryolu’nda ilk tren yola çıktı,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2017, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/baku-tiflis-kars-demiryolunda-ilk-tren-yola-cikti/951643>.

¹⁵⁹ “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Demir İpek Yolu açılışında konuştu,” *TRT Avaz*, 2017, <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/haber/tur/avrasyadan/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ipek-yolu-acilisinda-konustu/59f715a001a30a1eac28ee43>.

¹⁶⁰ Aydın, “Turkey’s Caucasus Policies”, 84.

¹⁶¹ Aliyev “*Azerbaijan-Turkish Relations*”, 57.

¹⁶² Mustafa Aydın, “Kafkaslar Türk Dış ve Güvenlik Politikalarının Değişen Dinamikleri,” in *Kafkaslar Değişim Dönüşüm*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2012), 209.

¹⁶³ Oktay F. Tanrısever, “Rusya’nın Kafkasya Politikası: Sovyet Sonrası Geri Çekilme Söyleminden Emperyal Müdahaleciliğe,” in *Kafkaslar Değişim Dönüşüm*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2012), 179.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Aydın, “Kafkaslar Türk Dış ve Güvenlik Politikalarının Değişen Dinamikleri”, 209.

influenced by its interest in the energy resources in the Caspian Sea ¹⁶⁶. The mainstream projects mentioned above were also the outcomes of these. At this point, it would be important to mention the much-talked-about “Southern Gas Corridor” project initiated by the West, and other outcomes.

Russia’s Near Abroad doctrine, the problems regarding energy security between Russia and Ukraine in 2006 and 2009¹⁶⁷, the Russia-Georgia war in 2008¹⁶⁸ affected not only the whole of Europe but specifically the countries in Eastern Europe that were highly dependent on Russia in terms of energy. Besides, one-fourth of the natural gas consumption of the European Union (EU) members was met by Russia¹⁶⁹. In the early 2000s, ways to meet the West’s energy needs were discussed through projects such as Nabucco, the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and Türkiye-Greece-Italy pipeline, which were later planned as the “Southern Gas Corridor” (SGC), a kind of umbrella term initiated by the EU¹⁷⁰. During the same period, thanks to the BTC, Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia were already transporting considerable amounts of oil to Europe¹⁷¹. The talks on SGC covered the transportation of Caspian and Middle Eastern natural gas to Europe via Türkiye¹⁷², accordingly its importance was stated in the action plan published by the EU Commission on energy security in 2008 stating that “meeting the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 209-210.

¹⁶⁷ Nicola Sartori, *Energy and Politics: Behind the Scenes of the Nabucco-TAP Competition* (Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, July 2013), 9, CIAO, <https://ciaonet.org/record/28986>; Gareth M. Winrow, “The Southern Gas Corridor and Turkey’s Role as an Energy Transit State and Energy Hub,” *Insight Türkiye* 15, no. 1 (2013): 149-150, <https://www.insightTürkiye.com/file/501/the-southern-gas-corridor-and-turkeys-role-as-an-energy-transit-state-and-energy-hub-winter-2013-vol15-no1>.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 149.

¹⁷⁰ Blagovesta Stefanova, “European Strategies for Energy Security in the Natural Gas Market,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 5, no. 3 (2012): 58-59, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.5.3.4>; Winrow, “The Southern Gas Corridor”, 150; Sartori, *Energy and Politics*, 9.

¹⁷¹ Winrow, “The Southern Gas Corridor”, 146.

¹⁷² Stefanova, “European Strategies for Energy Security”, 59.

EU's future energy needs from the Middle East and the Caspian has the highest priority in terms of EU energy security"¹⁷³.

Thus, Europe attached great importance to the Nabucco project initiated by Türkiye, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria in 2002¹⁷⁴ because it was planned to transport Azerbaijani natural gas to all the way to Austria¹⁷⁵. The natural gas to pass through this line was to come from both Azerbaijan and Iran and from there to be distributed to Europe via Türkiye, but unfortunately the political conditions of the period led to another decision¹⁷⁶. As mentioned, the Nabucco project had the support of the European Commission and its priority in energy security¹⁷⁷, but as mentioned again, both Türkiye and Azerbaijan wanted to have a balanced relationship with Russia during these times¹⁷⁸. This was because, around the same time, the Russian gas company Gazprom announced the construction of a 'rival' pipeline called South Stream, which was largely for intimidation purposes¹⁷⁹. Finally, there were the fears that Azerbaijan would "grab Gazprom's share of the natural gas sector too quickly"; the lack of full support from the EU and the US despite the efforts¹⁸⁰; the problems

¹⁷³ European Commission, *An EU Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan*, COM (2008) 781 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0781:FIN:EN:PDF>.

¹⁷⁴ Stefanova, "European Strategies for Energy Security", 59.

¹⁷⁵ "Nabucco Project Fails, Placed by Trans Adriatic Pipeline Project," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2013, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/Türkiye/nabucco-project-fails-placed-by-trans-adriatic-pipeline-project/235841>.

¹⁷⁶ John Dempsey, "Victory for Russia As the EU's Nabucco Gas Project Collapses," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, July 1, 2013, <https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2013/07/victory-for-russia-as-the-eus-nabucco-gas-project-collapses?lang=en>.

¹⁷⁷ Vladimir Socor, "The Curtain Falls on Nabucco's Last Act," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 123 (2013), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-curtain-falls-on-nabuccos-last-act/>.

¹⁷⁸ Dempsey, "Victory for Russia".

¹⁷⁹ "Don't Cry for the Nabucco Pipeline," *Reuters*, May 9, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/opinion/dont-cry-for-the-nabucco-pipeline-idUS2328538655/>; Dempsey, "Victory for Russia".

¹⁸⁰ "Don't Cry for the Nabucco Pipeline".

with Iraq and the nuclear crisis in Iran¹⁸¹; the project's excessive cost, also because of the 2008–2009 economic crisis¹⁸². This left only Azerbaijan's positive enthusiasm for the pipeline¹⁸³ and finally, Nabucco was consigned to history when SOCAR proposed the Trans-Anatolia Pipeline Project (TANAP) as the main transportation line to the consortium of Shah Deniz, Azerbaijan's largest natural gas field¹⁸⁴.

Hence, the most recent stage of the complete weakening of Russia's influence over the West in terms of energy was the full start of operation of the SGC in 2020 and the completion of the TANAP and TAP lines¹⁸⁵. In October 2011, Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Aliyev signed two agreements during the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSC), which approved Azerbaijan's sale of gas to be extracted from Shah Deniz 2 to Türkiye starting from 2017 and the transportation of Shah Deniz 2 natural gas through Türkiye between 2017 and 2042¹⁸⁶. In this way, Azerbaijan increased its access to the European market, while Türkiye strengthened its goal of becoming an energy hub¹⁸⁷. In 2013, Azerbaijan was given approval for a new stage of development of the Shah Deniz natural gas reserve, Shah Deniz Stage 2¹⁸⁸, which was discovered in 1999, and production began in 2006. This was the main natural gas extraction area that would feed the SGC. Türkiye was also involved in this whole

¹⁸¹ Pınar İpek, "The Role of Energy Security in Turkish Foreign Policy (2004–2016)," in *Turkish Foreign Policy*, ed. Pelin Gözen Ercan (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 178, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50451-3_9.

¹⁸² "Nabucco Projesi İptal Oldu," *NTV*, 2013, https://www.ntv.com.tr/ekonomi/nabucco-projesi-iptal-oldu.jFjrPgRHu06_MlSYgc7OSw; İpek, "The Role of Energy Security", 178.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Winrow, "The Southern Gas Corridor", 150; Socor, "The Curtain Falls on Nabucco's Last Act"; "Don't Cry for the Nabucco Pipeline," *Reuters*, May 9, 2014; "Nabucco Project Fails, Placed by Trans Adriatic Pipeline Project," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Shaffer, "Türkiye's Energy Engagement", 31-32.

¹⁸⁶ Aras, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations", 3-4; Aliaksei Novikau and Jasmin Muhasilović, "Turkey's Quest to Become a Regional Energy Hub: Challenges and Opportunities," *Heliyon* 9, no. 11 (2023): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21535>.

¹⁸⁷ Aras, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations", 3-4.

¹⁸⁸ "Shah Deniz Stage 2," BP-Azerbaijan, accessed July 28, 2024, https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/who-we-are/operationsprojects/shahdeniz/shah-deniz-stage-2.html.

process. Turkish TPAO and BOTAŞ are important investors in Azerbaijan, and TPAO owns 19% of Shah Deniz and the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP/BTE)¹⁸⁹.

Normally, all railways between China and Europe passed through Russia, but the complete SGC line has changed this and reduced the travel time from 30 days to 12 days¹⁹⁰. The new railway, which is 838 kilometres long, has 76 kilometres in Türkiye, 259 kilometres in Georgia and 503 kilometres in Azerbaijan; the cargo departing from China on the line is transported via Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to the Caspian Sea and Baku Alat Port, and from there to Europe via Georgia and Türkiye¹⁹¹.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of TANAP, known as the Turkish part of the SGC, was held on March 17, 2015, in Kars, Türkiye with the participation of the presidents of Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia¹⁹², and the opening ceremony was held in Eskişehir, Türkiye on June 12, 2018¹⁹³. TANAP was put into operation with the aim of transporting 6 billion cubic meters of natural gas extracted from the Shah Deniz 2 field for Türkiye's use and 10 billion cubic meters to Europe via TAP¹⁹⁴. The TAP line is also of great importance as the European leg of the SGC¹⁹⁵ and starts from the Turkish Greek border, passes through Albania, The Adriatic Sea and finally

¹⁸⁹ Shaffer, "Türkiye's Energy Engagement", 32.

¹⁹⁰ Ayşegül F. Işık, "Iron Silk Road: Türkiye-China Ties Grow Stronger," *Daily Sabah*, December 29, 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/iron-silk-road-turkiye-china-ties-grow-stronger>.

¹⁹¹ "Bakü-Tiflis-Kars Demiryolu'nda İlk Tren Yola Çıktı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 30 October 2017, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/baku-tiflis-kars-demiryolunda-ilk-tren-yola-cikti/951643>.

¹⁹² *President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, "Groundbreaking of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Was Held in Kars," *President.az*, March 17, 2015, <https://www.president.az/en/articles/view/14566>.

¹⁹³ BOTAŞ, "Enerjinin İpek Yolu TANAP Açılış Töreni," *BOTAŞ Resmî Web Sitesi*, 2018, <https://www.botas.gov.tr/Icerik/enerjinin-ipek-yolu-tanap-acil/51>;

Novikau and Muhasilović, "Türkiye's Quest".

¹⁹⁴ Emre Erşen and Mithat Çelikpala, "Türkiye and the Changing Energy Geopolitics of Eurasia," *Energy Policy* 128 (May 2019): 587, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2019.01.036>; Aras, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations", 3-4.

¹⁹⁵ Ariel Cohen, "Why TANAP/TAP Is a Better Alternative Than Turkish Stream," in *Developing a Western Energy Strategy for the Black Sea Region and Beyond*, (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, November 18, 2015), 6.

reaches Italy¹⁹⁶. TAP was fully connected to TANAP in 2020, 4.5 years after its construction began¹⁹⁷, and natural gas transportation to Europe began on December 31, 2020¹⁹⁸.

The importance of BTC and BTE towards the end of the 2000s had broken the Russian leadership in transporting the rich energy resources of the Caucasus and Europe's excessive dependence on Russia and Middle Eastern countries such as Iran¹⁹⁹. The SGC, which was implemented approximately 15 years after these projects, supported this phenomenon with the BTE-TANAP-TAP network and increased their energy transport capacity²⁰⁰. TANAP is the longest (1811 km) and largest diameter (56") natural gas pipeline in Türkiye, the Middle East and Europe²⁰¹. Baku exported more than 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2023, 9.5 billion cubic meters of which were to Türkiye and 11.8 billion cubic meters to Europe²⁰². TANAP's current partners are Southern Gas Corridor Company-SGC (%51), BOTAŞ (%30), BP Pipelines (TANAP) Limited (%12), SOCAR Türkiye Energy Inc. (%7)²⁰³.

It would be appropriate to elaborate on the value of TANAP in the development of bilateral relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and the developments regarding the goals of these two states. First of all, Azerbaijan, upon the possibility of the failure of the Nabucco project, came up with a proposal for a direct pipeline network system

¹⁹⁶ TAP route and infrastructure. Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). Retrieved February 28, 2025, from <https://www.tap-ag.com/infrastructure-operation/tap-route-and-infrastructure>.

¹⁹⁷ Emre Gürkan Abay, "TAP, Avrupa'ya doğal gaz vermeye hazır," *Anadolu Ajansı*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/tap-avrupaya-dogal-gaz-vermeye-hazir/2004419>; Aydın, "Turkey's Caucasus Policies", 85.

¹⁹⁸ Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan, "The Southern Gas Corridor," *Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan*, March 13, 2024, https://minenergy.gov.az/en/layiheler/cenub-qaz-dehlizi_2196.

¹⁹⁹ Balci and Liles, "Turkey's comeback to central asia", 15-16.

²⁰⁰ Ditrych, "Turkey in the South Caucasus", 15-16.

²⁰¹ TANAP, "TANAP – Trans Anadolu Doğal Gaz Boru Hattı Projesi," *TANAP Resmî Web Sitesi*, accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.tanap.com/tanap-projesi>.

²⁰² Shaffer, "Türkiye's Energy Engagement in Central Asia and the Caucasus", 2.

²⁰³ TANAP, "Ortaklar," *TANAP Official Website*, accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.tanap.com/ortaklar>.

that would deliver its own gas to Europe, and became one of the most important actors in the revival and implementation of the SGC ideal, which also had begun to fall out of favour in Europe at the time²⁰⁴. Additionally, Azerbaijan found the opportunity to carry its energy imports to global markets²⁰⁵. Moreover, these export routes, which do not rely on Russia, have strengthened Azerbaijan's existing and potential ties with the West and allowed her to act more independently in its foreign policy decisions²⁰⁶. For Türkiye, she had already determined its energy-focused goals and strategies, which were aimed to achieve through the SGC, as “diversifying resources and routes to ensure the security of energy supply” and “becoming a regional trade centre in ensuring regional and global energy security”²⁰⁷. Especially during the period when the said export lines were still in construction, the ongoing Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which made a route passing through Armenia impossible, made the Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Georgia trio strategic partners in energy, and it is possible to say that they achieved this goal in the long term by creating dependency relations between the subjects through regional dialogue and cooperation²⁰⁸.

TANAP, which is defined on the official website as “one of the most important indicators of the successful cooperation between the two brotherly countries of Türkiye and Azerbaijan in the field of energy that has continued to this day”, has also been an important step towards protecting the energy security of both Europe and Türkiye, bringing Türkiye and Azerbaijan closer to the EU and reshaping their energy geopolitics²⁰⁹. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev described the opening day of TANAP as a “historical day” and stated that “if it were not for the unity and

²⁰⁴ Aras, “*Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations*”, 3-4.

²⁰⁵ Azerbaijan.az, “The Contract of the Century,” *Azerbaijan.az*, <https://azerbaijan.az/en/related-information/132>.

²⁰⁶ Shaffer, “Türkiye’s Energy Engagement in Central Asia and the Caucasus”, 2.

²⁰⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, “Türkiye’nin Uluslararası Enerji Stratejisi,” *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı*, accessed 28 February 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/Turkiyes-energy-strategy.en.mfa>.

²⁰⁸ Aydın, “Turkey’s Caucasus Policies”, 81.

²⁰⁹ TANAP, “TANAP - Trans Anadolu Doğal Gaz Boru Hattı Projesi,” *TANAP*, 2025, <https://www.tanap.com/tanap-projesi>.

brotherhood between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, the project would have remained on paper”²¹⁰. He also emphasized the importance of Azerbaijan’s investments in the Turkish economy. President Erdoğan described the project as “a regional peace project” and defined it as “a concrete example of the mutual trust-based relations between Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia, a symbol of the deep-rooted friendship between the countries”²¹¹. Currently, the natural gas transported by TANAP to Europe and Türkiye has exceeded 75 billion cubic meters, which was stated on TANAP’s official social media accounts as a sign of “the uninterrupted continuation of the brotherhood between Türkiye and Azerbaijan”²¹².

One of the biggest outcomes of the good relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan focused on energy, as mentioned, was the increase in the importance Europe gave to energy diversity due to the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war²¹³. This situation also accelerated the work on the development of existing cooperation areas for the regional states²¹⁴. Indeed, the recurrence of the war in February 2022 worried Europe, and in July 2022, the "Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy" was signed between the EU and Azerbaijan, and in the following period, Azerbaijan became a country that exported natural gas to 12 countries by signing

²¹⁰ İlham Aliyev, "Speech by İlham Aliyev at the Official Opening Ceremony of TANAP Project," *Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, June 12, 2018, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/29094>.

²¹¹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, “TANAP: Bölgesel Kalkınma ve Barış Projesi,” *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı*, 30 April 2020, https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/cumhurbaskanimizin_kaleminden/detay/tanap-bolgesel-kalkinma-ve-baris-projesi.

²¹² Aghakazim Guliyev, “Azerbaijan’s Gas Exports via TANAP to Türkiye, Europe Reach 75 bcm,” *Caliber*, February 4, 2025, <https://caliber.az/en/post/azerbaijan-s-gas-exports-via-tanap-to-turkiye-europe-reach-75-bcm>.

²¹³ Fuat Kabakcı, “Ukrayna’dan Rus Gaz Akışının Durması Türkiye’yi Avrupa’nın Enerji Tedarikinde Kritik Hale Getiriyor,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 4 January 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/ukraynadan-rus-gaz-akisinin-durmasi-turkiyeyi-avrupanin-enerji-tedarikinde-kritik-hale-getiriyor/3441565>.

²¹⁴ Eric Rudenshiold, *Trans-Caspian Trajectory: A New U.S. Strategy for Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Washington, DC: Caspian Policy Center, January 15, 2025), <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/south-caucasus/trans-caspian-trajectory-a-new-us-strategy-for-central-asia-and-caucasus>, 15.

agreements with 10 European countries²¹⁵. In this case, Türkiye also reinforced its aim of becoming an energy centre²¹⁶.

Lastly, it is helpful to touch upon some more recent developments in bilateral relations. The two most important of these are SOCAR's investments in Türkiye and the STAR Refinery projects. During the period when all these meetings about pipelines were being held, SOCAR initiated talks regarding the construction of a refinery in İzmir in 2013, covering an investment of 5 billion dollars²¹⁷. Before this, in 2008, SOCAR had purchased a large share of 51% of PETKİM, one of Türkiye's leading petrochemical companies, for development purposes²¹⁸. The STAR Refinery, SOCAR's largest investment in Türkiye, is located in the Aliaga district of İzmir, similar to PETKİM. It was opened in 2018 by the heads of state and high-level official members of both countries, and became operational on October 19, 2019²¹⁹. At the opening, the close relations between the two countries were emphasized again with Erdoğan's words "in opening STAR Refinery, Türkiye and Azerbaijan will take brotherly strategic ties to the next level", and Aliyev's words "bilateral relations between the countries have been at the highest level, this was quite normal for people who have been together for centuries"²²⁰. This refinery, the importance of which is also emphasized by the leaders, was established considering the raw material needs of PETKİM and for the long-term

²¹⁵ Rehimov, Ruslan, "Avrupa'da 10 ülke Azerbaycan gazıyla ısınıyor," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2 Haziran 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/avrupada-10-ulke-azerbaycan-gaziyla-isiniyor/3473543>.

²¹⁶ Kabakcı, "Ukrayna'dan Rus Gaz Akışının Durması".

²¹⁷ Aras, *Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations*, 4.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ "Türkiye's Petkim achieves highest ever petrochemical production in 2019," *Daily Sabah*, 2 March 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/Turkiyes-petkim-achieves-highest-ever-petrochemical-production-in-2019>; "Türkiye declares oil refinery as special industrial zone," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 20 Ekim 2018, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Turkiye-declares-oil-refinery-as-special-industrial-zone-138096>.

²²⁰ "Giant refinery opens in Türkiye's İzmir for \$6.3 bln investment," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 19 Ekim 2018, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/giant-refinery-opens-in-Turkiyes-izmir-for-6-3-bln-investment-138078>.

support of international petrochemical integrated sectors²²¹ and produces a quarter of Türkiye's petroleum products²²². In fact, SOCAR Türkiye had made a total investment of \$18 billion in the last 15 years by 2023²²³. In an evaluation made by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO) in the same year, STAR Refinery ranked third among "Türkiye's 500 Largest Industrial Enterprises"²²⁴.

Finally, the decision for the Iğdır-Nakhchivan natural gas pipeline project, which will provide a direct energy connection between Azerbaijan and Türkiye and has a total length of 85 kilometres, was made in 2020, and the groundbreaking ceremony was held in 2023²²⁵. The pipeline was implemented in cooperation with SOCAR and BOTAŞ, with an annual natural gas transportation capacity of 500 million cubic meters²²⁶. This project is expected to contribute to regional energy security by eliminating Nakhchivan's need to supply gas via Iran²²⁷. According to Erdoğan, the pipeline would not only strengthen Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations but also Europe's energy supply security²²⁸. This pipeline, which is important in terms of Nakhchivan not having a land connection with other regions of Azerbaijan, aims to secure the energy supply of Nakhchivan, which has a population of approximately 500

²²¹ "STAR Rafineri'nin ilk petrol kargosu Azerbaycan'dan," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 21 Mayıs 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/star-rafinerinin-ilk-petrol-kargosu-azerbaycandan-/1152372>.

²²² "Socar Türkiye invests \$18 bln in 15 years," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 28 April 2023, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/socar-turkiye-invests-18-bln-in-15-years-182702>; Shaffer, "Türkiye's Energy Engagement", 32.

²²³ "Socar Türkiye invests \$18 bln in 15 years".

²²⁴ "Grup şirketlerimiz STAR Rafineri ve Petkim 'Türkiye'nin 500 Büyük Sanayi Kuruluşu 2023' listesinde," *SOCAR Türkiye*, accessed 28 February 2025, <https://socar.com.tr/basin-bultenleri/grup-sirketlerimiz-star-rafineri-ve-petkim-turkiyenin-500-buyuk-sanayi-kurulusu-2023-listesinde>.

²²⁵ Shaffer, "Türkiye's Energy Engagement", 33.

²²⁶ "Erdoğan, Aliyev Attend Foundation-Laying for Nakhchivan Gas Pipeline," *Daily Sabah*, September 25, 2023, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/erdogan-aliyev-attend-foundation-laying-for-nakhchivan-gas-pipeline>.

²²⁷ Shaffer, "Türkiye's Energy Engagement", 33.

²²⁸ "Erdoğan, Aliyev Attend Foundation-Laying for Nakhchivan Gas Pipeline," *Daily Sabah*, September 25, 2023, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/erdogan-aliyev-attend-foundation-laying-for-nakhchivan-gas-pipeline>.

thousand²²⁹. Since the pipeline, which was opened on March 5, 2025, will also be the third natural gas project between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, Erdoğan said the following about the project: "This project will complete our strategic initiatives in the field of energy and will be a symbol of our common destiny." Aliyev also stated that "this transportation connection has great meaning and benefit, especially in uniting the Turkic world; naturally, the unity and brotherhood between Turkey and Azerbaijan contributes greatly to the Turkic world²³⁰." To conclude, according to Veliyev:

These projects, which will serve the economic development of Nakhchivan and Turkey's Eastern Anatolia Region, will not only strengthen alliance relations but also mutually connect the geographies, people and economies of the South Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, which constitute a strategic integrity for both countries, and make Nakhchivan a part of Türkiye's security and Eastern Anatolia a part of Azerbaijan's security²³¹.

The energy focused economic relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan constitute one of the crucial elements of the two countries' strategic partnership, and brotherhood. Thus, after Azerbaijan gained its independence in 1991, the economic ties have been consolidated with various projects, especially in the field of energy. The BTC oil pipeline, and the BTE natural gas pipeline, have ensured that a large portion of Azerbaijan's energy exports are carried out through Türkiye. Later, with the TANAP project, Azerbaijan has begun to transport her natural gas to Europe, reinforcing Türkiye's position as an energy transit country. SOCAR, one of Azerbaijan's largest investors in Türkiye, has further strengthened the economic ties between the two countries with critical projects such as investing in PETKİM and leading STAR Refinery.

²²⁹ "İğdir-Nahçıvan Doğal Gaz Boru Hattı Açıldı," *BBC Türkiye*, March 5, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cj92vd8l2j0o>.

²³⁰ "İğdir-Nahçıvan Doğal Gaz Boru Hattı Açılış Töreni Yapıldı," T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, March 5, 2025, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/igdir-nahcivan-dogal-gaz-boru-hatti-acilis-toreni-yapildi>.

²³¹ Veliyev, Cavid, "Azerbaycan ve Türkiye'nin Birleşme Noktası: Nahçıvan'ın Güvenliği," *Anadolu Ajansı*, March 6, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/azerbaycan-ve-turkiyenin-birlesme-noktasi-nahcivanin-guvenligi/3501473>.

The "one nation, two states" approach has been transformed into a real strategic cooperation, supported by solid projects in the economic and energy fields. Meanwhile, the regional and global economic goals of Türkiye and Azerbaijan have driven both countries to engage in cooperative projects and conclude agreements on them. These economic goals have led to the institutionalization of bilateral relations and increased continuity. Regional energy projects have also required intense diplomatic and political coordination, and both states have become mutually dependent on each other through energy. Azerbaijan has achieved its goals of diversifying its energy exports, while Türkiye has achieved its goals of both meeting its energy supply and becoming an energy transportation hub. This interdependence has rekindled trust and bolstered the rhetoric of brotherhood on an institutional level.

2.3. Military and Defence Related Relations

One of the cornerstones of Turkish Azerbaijani relations, and the most concrete indicator of the evolution of historical, cultural, and linguistic ties into a strategic and security-based partnership, is cooperation in the military and defence fields²³². The establishment and development of high-level political and military dialogues, as well as the organization of joint exercises and military programs, have been the primary focus of these relations in the post-Soviet era. Furthermore, factors such as the unresolved Karabakh conflict, ensuring territorial integrity, and protecting border security made the existence of a strong Azerbaijani army critical, especially in the 1990s²³³. Furthermore, Azerbaijan faced the challenge of choosing a Western-style or Soviet-style military system, and under Türkiye's influence, it opted for the Western

²³² Veliyev, Cavid, "Azerbaijan–Turkey Military Relations in the Shadow of the Negotiations with Armenia," in *Turkeyscope: Insights on Turkish Affairs*, vol. 7, no. 4 (July–August 2023), ed. Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak and Joel D. Parker, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, <https://dayan.org/content/azerbaijan-turkiye-military-relations-shadow-negotiations-armenia>; Levon Hovsepyan and Artyom A. Tonoyan, "From Alliance to 'Soft Conquest': The Anatomy of the Turkish-Azerbaijani Military Alliance before and after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 35, no. 4 (May 18, 2024): 622, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2024.2312957>.

²³³ Ergun, Ayça, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkileri," in *Türkiye'nin Avrasya Macerası (1989-2006)*, Avrasya Üçlemesi II, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel, 2007), 261-262; Araz Aslanlı ve İlham Hesenov, "Haydar Aliyev Döneminde Azerbaycan-Türkiye İlişkileri," in *Haydar Aliyev Dönemi Azerbaycan Dış Politikası* (Ankara: Platin Yayınları, 2005), 161-162.

path²³⁴. Thus, the military dimension of bilateral relations began with the signing of an agreement on mutual military training between the two countries on August 11, 1992²³⁵. With this agreement, the Azerbaijani army became the first post-Soviet country to initiate military cooperation with a NATO member state²³⁶ and was trained by Turkish commanders²³⁷, first in Türkiye and then in Azerbaijan²³⁸, for the next 30 years. Along with the training provided at the Military Academy and the Gülhane Military Medical Academy, assistance was also provided in the exchange of military training institutes in Azerbaijan and the opening of new ones²³⁹.

The military relations that were fostered in the 1990s were crucial to the development of bilateral relations, but they were also shaped by Azerbaijan's expectations and Türkiye's capabilities and were not without disappointments²⁴⁰. As the war continued, the massacres in Khojaly that took place on 26 February 1992 (also known as The Khojaly Genocide), sparked a strong reaction from Turkish politicians and the public, leading to a growing support for Türkiye's military involvement. According to Cornell, Turkish leaders were likely willing to give more than they had, but several obstacles needed to be removed before they could do so²⁴¹.

²³⁴ Yalçınkaya, Haldun, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War," *German Marshall Fund*, January 21, 2021, <https://www.gmfus.org/download/article/18950>.

²³⁵ Ekşi, Muharrem, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkileri: Söylemden Reelpolitığe," *Avrasya Etüdleri* 36, no. 2 (2009), 102; Edward J. Erickson, "The 44-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh: Turkish Drone Success or Operational Art?," *Military Review* (Army University Press online exclusive, August 2021), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2021-OLE/Erickson/>; Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role".

²³⁶ *Türkiye-Azerbaycan Relations: The Building of an Alliance*, aze.media, 29 April 2024, <https://aze.media/turkiye-azerbaijan-relations-the-building-of-an-alliance/>.

²³⁷ Veliyev, "Azerbaijan-Türkiye Military Relations"; Ahmet Yüce, "The Caucasus and the World," *International Scientific Journal* (Tbilisi), no. 21 (2016): 56; Aslanlı and Hesenov, "Haydar Aliyev Döneminde Azerbaycan-Türkiye İlişkileri" 162.

²³⁸ Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role".

²³⁹ Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role".

²⁴⁰ Ergun, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkileri," 263.

²⁴¹ Cornell, Svante E. *Azerbaijan Since Independence*. Studies of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2011, 360-374.

Turkish foreign policy, as dictated by Kemalism, opposed cross-border military adventurism unless there was a direct threat. At this point, Azerbaijan was an independent country, and Türkiye should not have been involved in this conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Furthermore, the Cyprus Peace Operation of 1974 was still negatively impacting relations with Türkiye and the West, and military intervention could have further deteriorated these relations. Demirel also feared the reaction of the powerful Armenian diaspora in the West, believing that military intervention would turn the entire world against Türkiye²⁴². Russia responded with equal force whenever Türkiye raised its voice, and balancing this power was crucial. Clearly, the West's response was paramount. Because military intervention would provoke a response from Russia and Iran, the West wanted Türkiye, a NATO member state, to remain silent on the matter²⁴³.

Meanwhile, after the Cold War, numerous diplomats, police officers, and security personnel from Azerbaijan were sent to Türkiye for training, and a related Military Cooperation Agreement was signed regardless of the setbacks²⁴⁴. Under this agreement, military visits to units, headquarters, and institutions were organized, personnel exchanges were conducted, and Turkish observers were sent to ongoing trainings. Between 1993 and 2000, 853 Azerbaijani officers were trained thanks to military personnel sent to Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan. By 2000, 520 officers and non-commissioned officers were being trained, with the training costs covered by the Republic of Türkiye²⁴⁵. Indeed, the acceleration of development in military relations only occurred during the Heydar Aliyev administration²⁴⁶. In 1996, the parties signed an "Agreement on Educational, Technical, and Scientific Cooperation in the Military

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Mustafa Aydın, "Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'yla İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Cilt III, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 387.

²⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁶ Aslanlı and Hesenov, "Haydar Aliyev Döneminde Azerbaycan-Türkiye İlişkileri" 162.

Field²⁴⁷." Azerbaijani Defence Minister at the time, Sefer Ebiyev, described this agreement as a historic event for the Azerbaijani people and armed forces²⁴⁸. That same year, with the guidance of the Advisory and Coordination Board established in Azerbaijan, Land and Air War Academies were established in the country, and Türkiye undertook to upgrade its armed forces to NATO standards at the brigade level in 2001²⁴⁹. At the first graduation ceremony of the Azerbaijan Military Academy, held on August 26, 2001, then-President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, emphasized the importance of bilateral relations with the words, "Azerbaijani soldiers should strive to emulate Turkish soldiers in everything" and "Glory to the heroic, brave Turkish soldiers, the Turkish army, and the Turkish Armed Forces! Long live the indestructible and eternal Turkish-Azerbaijani friendship and brotherhood!" Thus, military relations, which began within the framework of the Karabakh conflict in the early years of independence and during the Elchibey government, continued vigorously during Heydar Aliyev's term²⁵⁰.

When discussing the military dimension of bilateral relations, it would be appropriate touch on the NATO factor; indeed, Türkiye's NATO membership is a decisive factor in these relations²⁵¹. While the US and NATO were reluctant to allow Türkiye to provide direct military support to Azerbaijan in the 1990s, NATO's influence on the development of military relations between the two countries is undeniable. In this

²⁴⁷ Azərbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ndeki Büyükelçiliği, "Kültürel ve İnsani İşbirliği," accessed 11 Temmuz 2025, <https://ankara.mfa.gov.az/tr/category/kulturel-ve-insani-isbirligi#:~:text=T%C3%BCrkiye%20ve%20Azərbaycan%2C%2011%20A%C4%9Fustos,askeri%20e%C4%9Fitim%20alan%C4%B1nda%20i%C5%9Fbirli%C4%9Fi%20yapmaktad%C4%B1rlar>.

²⁴⁸ Aslanlı and Hesenov, "Haydar Aliyev", 162.

²⁴⁹ Aydın, "Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'yla İlişkiler," 387; Veliyev, "Azerbaijan–Türkiye Military Relations"; Ahmet Yüce, "The Caucasus and the World," *International Scientific Journal* (Tbilisi), no. 21 (2016): 59.

²⁵⁰ Ergun, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkileri," 262.

²⁵¹ Bahar Özsoy. "1918'den 2023'e Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkilerinin Askeri Boyutu." *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi* 19, no. 46 (December 30, 2023): 589. <https://doi.org/10.17752/guvenlikstrjtj.1354438>; Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role".

regard, Azerbaijan first became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1992 and then, following the Brussels Summit in 1994, was included in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program²⁵². Turkish-Azerbaijani relations began to be conducted bilaterally within the PfP framework, and the Military Cooperation Coordination Center was established in Baku²⁵³. In other words, Türkiye acted as a "contact country" between NATO and Azerbaijan until 2009, providing assistance with the establishment of Azerbaijan's education system and the provision of necessary equipment to enhance cooperation between the Turkish Armed Forces, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, and NATO²⁵⁴. In early 1999, military relations gained momentum when the Azerbaijani President's Foreign Policy Advisor, Vefa Guluzade, suggested that Azerbaijan should cooperate militarily with the West to ensure its own security and, as part of this, proposed moving the NATO base in Incirlik, Türkiye, to the Absheron Peninsula. Although frequently discussed in the coming years, hesitation was exercised due to the Russian factor. This was later changed by Ebiyev to the establishment of a military alliance. On March 1, 2001, bilateral agreements were made on non-reciprocal military and financial assistance, with Türkiye providing approximately \$3 million in military aid to Azerbaijan²⁵⁵.

The early 2000s also witnessed other developments in military relations. In 2001, Iran's stance toward Azerbaijan, for some reason, became harsher and more persistent. At times, it even came close to escalating into conflict. During this time, it had managed to control the surface areas of 20% of the Caspian Sea. Around the same time, it forcibly expelled an Azerbaijani-flagged oil exploration vessel from the region and was conducting daily flights in waters belonging to Azerbaijan, intimidating it. Iran, which maintained its harsh diplomatic stance, received little international

²⁵² Yüce, "The Caucasus and the World," 57. Yalçinkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role".

²⁵³ Elkhan Mehdiyev, *Security Sector Reform in Azerbaijan: Key Milestones and Lessons Learned*, ed. Grazvydas Jasutis and Elizaveta Chmykh (Geneva, Switzerland: DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, May 21, 2021), 7, https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/SSR_in_Azerbaijani_feb2021.pdf.

²⁵⁴ Özsoy. "1918'den 2023'e Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkilerinin Askeri Boyutu", 589.

²⁵⁵ Aslanlı and Hesenov, "Haydar Aliyev", 163-164.

response, prompting Türkiye to issue warning messages²⁵⁶. The Turkish Air Force's demonstration team held a grand ceremony in Azadliq Square, Azerbaijan, on August 25, 2001, to present diplomas to the first graduates of the Azerbaijan Military Academy, with the participation of Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev, Turkish Chief of General Staff General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, and a audience of thousands of people²⁵⁷. With 10 F-16s, Turkish Stars performed a stunt-flight over Azerbaijan. Iran stated that it watched the demonstrations with concern, believing them to be a show of force and that Türkiye was taking provocative steps in the region²⁵⁸. Turkish and Azerbaijani officials stated that these were not a show of force but rather a representation of military cooperation between two sovereign states, and that the demonstrations had been planned about a year in advance. Nevertheless, Heydar Aliyev himself told Kıvrıkoğlu, "At least 1 million people watched the demonstration; something like this has never been seen in Azerbaijan." He also emphasized, "Your visit has gained great importance due to recent developments. It will be very grandiose²⁵⁹." The incident was echoed in newspapers with headlines such as "A suitable message to the enemies of the Turks" and "Kıvrıkoğlu will call on Iran to abandon its threats against Azerbaijan." According to Cornell, although pan-Turkism was not a prominent topic at the time, this event was a significant representation of Turkic solidarity²⁶⁰. This level of support, especially during a time of tension for Azerbaijani politicians and the public, was indescribable. The demonstration was also attended by the largest crowd ever seen in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. In this sense, it shed

²⁵⁶ Cornell, *Azerbaijan Since Independence*, 331.

²⁵⁷ Turan Gafarlı, *One Nation, Two States: Türkiye's Stance on the Recent Escalation Between Armenia and Azerbaijan*, info pack, TRT World Research Centre, September 24, 2020, <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/info-packs/one-nation-two-states-Türkiyes-stance-on-the-recent-escalation-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan/>; "Orgeneral Kıvrıkoğlu Azerbaycan'da," *Bianet*, August 26, 2001, <https://bianet.org/haber/orgeneral-kivrikoglu-azerbaycanda-4189>.

²⁵⁸ "Orgeneral Kıvrıkoğlu Azerbaycan'da"; "Türk Yıldızları Bakü'de," *Yeni Şafak*, 25 Ağustos 2001, <https://www.yenisafak.com/arsiv/2001/agustos/25/dunya.html>

²⁵⁹ *Milliyet*, "Türk Yıldızları Bakü'de," 25 Ağustos 2001, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/bu-mesaj-anlasilir-380978>.

²⁶⁰ Cornell, *Azerbaijan Since Independence*, 390.

significant light on future relations and conveyed the message that "Azerbaijan's and Türkiye's skies are one common sky"²⁶¹."

The legal foundations of Turkish-Azerbaijani military relations were based on the agreements signed in the 1990s. This was followed in 2006 by the "Agreement on Military Training, Technical and Scientific Cooperation," during which High-Level Military Dialogue meetings began to be held²⁶². In 2008, the two countries' defence ministries signed another agreement to establish a parallel structure for the Azerbaijan Air Force Academy with the Turkish Air Force Academy. Turkish military personnel were assigned to the agreement. All these activities, combined with the agreements signed in the 1990s, ensured the development and vibrancy of the military dimension in bilateral relations. However, there was still no basic framework document on mutual military assistance²⁶³.

The "Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan," signed in December 2010 and approved by the Azerbaijani National Assembly on December 21 and by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on February 2, 2011, filled this gap²⁶⁴. The agreement led to the institutionalization of security relations and the acceleration of military relations²⁶⁵. The first two headings of this agreement constituted "military-political and security issues" and "military and military-technical cooperation"²⁶⁶." Article 1 stipulated that "If either of the Parties considers that its territorial integrity, sovereignty and the inviolability of its state borders are threatened or endangered, the Parties shall hold urgent consultations on measures that can be taken to eliminate such threats and

²⁶¹ Ibid, 360.

²⁶² Özsoy. "1918'den 2023'e Türkiye-Azerbaycan", 597.

²⁶³ Hovsepyan and Tonoyan, "From Alliance to 'Soft Conquest'", 625.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ergun, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus", 170.

²⁶⁶ 29 Mart 2011 Tarihli Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Resmi Gazetesi, "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Arasında Stratejik Ortaklık ve Karşılıklı Yardım Anlaşması", Resmî Gazete No. 27889, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/05/20110528M1-30-1.pdf>.

dangers.” Article 2 included the provision that, “In the event of an armed attack or military aggression against one of the Parties by a third country or a group of countries, the Parties agree to provide mutual assistance to each other in taking all necessary measures within their available means, including the use of military means and capabilities, to realize the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the UN Charter²⁶⁷.” Articles 7 and 9, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of joint institutions and operational coordination, which will be necessary for the full implementation of defence cooperation, considering the parties’ national and international legislation, and guarantee the development of the defence industry and the organization and expansion of regular joint military exercises²⁶⁸.

According to Kasapoğlu, Hovsepyan & Tonoyan, the agreement's second article may represent a "casus foederis," similar to NATO's well-known Article 5. This term specifies the conditions under which alliance members will act using their defensive capabilities²⁶⁹. According to Kasapoğlu, the agreement does not clearly define the military assistance to be provided; its meaning is left open-ended, creating a deterrent effect by creating strategic uncertainty²⁷⁰. In any case, it was agreed that in the event of an attack against either party, mutual support would be provided at all possible means²⁷¹. This agreement laid the foundations for bilateral relations to reach an alliance level, and articles regarding military coordination paved the way for joint strategic action. In the period following this agreement, as hoped, military cooperation, joint exercises, and the development of the defence industry were realized, and Türkiye's place in the international arms industry was clarified²⁷².

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Fellmeth, Aaron X., and Maurice Horwitz. “Casus Foederis.” In *Guide to Latin in International Law*. Oxford University Press, 2022.
<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780197583104.001.0001/acref-9780197583104-e-325>.

²⁷⁰ Kasapoğlu, “Türkiye-Azerbaycan: Savunma”.

²⁷¹ Ergun, “Türkiye and the South Caucasus”, 170.

²⁷² Veliyev, “Azerbaijan–Türkiye Military Relations.

Between 2010 and 2020, relations developed primarily through joint military exercises, training, and the development of the defence industry. In July 2013, a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Conduct of Exercises and Host Nation Support" was signed. This document included the approval of various protocols, memorandums, and memoranda for cooperation in the military field²⁷³. It stated that all activities would be carried out in accordance with the parties' national legislation and budgets, based on equality and reciprocity. Cooperation was primarily focused on military training, personnel exchange, logistical support, the organization of joint exercises, and the sharing of information and technology in the defence industry²⁷⁴. This agreement was signed for five years and was extended in 2018²⁷⁵. In accordance with the agreements, Türkiye provided assistance to Azerbaijan in the development of its defence industry and the training of military specialists. Numerous Azerbaijanis received education at military academies in Türkiye, and with Türkiye's contributions, the Azerbaijan Military Academy has become an institution providing education at NATO standards²⁷⁶. Within the scope of the agreement, joint firing exercises have been held annually since 2013. For example, the annual "TurAz Eagle" and "TurAz Falcon" exercises have strengthened coordination and cooperation between the two countries' air forces²⁷⁷. As we approach the war in 2020, it will be useful to examine these exercises in detail.

²⁷³ "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükûmeti ile Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Hükûmeti Arasında Askerî Alanda İşbirliği Protokolleri ve Mutabakat Muhtıralarının Onaylanması Hakkında Karar," Resmî Gazete, 12 Temmuz 2013, Sayı 28704, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/07/20130712-1-1.pdf>.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ahmet Alemdar, "Türkiye, Azerbaycan ve Gürcistan Savunma Alanında İşbirliği Yapacak," *DefenceTurk*, 20 July 2019, <https://www.defenceturk.net/turkiye-azerbaycan-ve-gurcistan-savunma-alaninda-isbirligi-yapacak>.

²⁷⁶ Rehimov, Ruslan, "Azerbaycan Ordusunun 105. Kuruluş Yılı Kutlanıyor," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 26 June 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-ordusunun-105-kurulus-yili-kutlaniyor/2931239>.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Annual exercises, conducted under the agreement signed in 2010²⁷⁸, began in Azerbaijan in 2013 and 2015, and in Türkiye in 2014 and 2016. In 2017, the Turkish Armed Forces stated that these activities aimed to "develop friendship, cooperation, and coordination between elements of the Turkish and Azerbaijani Land Forces, to mutually share information and experience, and to enhance interoperability²⁷⁹." It was announced that firing exercises had begun with military units using aircraft, helicopters, air cannons, armoured vehicles, artillery batteries, and air defence systems.

In the 2017 TurAz Eagle exercise held in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani MiG-29 and Su-25 aircraft and Turkish F-16s tested interception, protection, and attack missions. The Turkish delegation's commander, İnce, stated that he felt at home and was honoured to fly there. He stated, "We have full confidence that such joint exercises between the Turkish and Azerbaijani armed forces, which embrace the principle of one nation-two states, will further strengthen our existing brotherly bonds²⁸⁰." Tur-Az Falcon exercise was held in Konya, Türkiye, in 2018, and Tur-Az Eagle 2019 was held in Azerbaijan. In addition to learning about mutual manoeuvring capabilities, search and rescue activities were conducted, and aircraft and helicopters fired at designated targets²⁸¹.

The exercises held in 2020 are more distinctive than in previous years for several reasons. The exercises coincided with the aftermath of the clashes between Azerbaijan

²⁷⁸ Vasif Huseynov, "Azerbaijan, Turkey Hold Large-Scale Military Drills Amidst Escalation of Tensions With Armenia," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 17, no. 121 (August 14, 2020), accessed via Jamestown Foundation, <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-turkey-hold-large-scale-military-drills-amidst-escalation-of-tensions-with-armenia/>.

²⁷⁹ "Türkiye ve Azerbaycan'dan ortak askeri tatbikat," *A Haber*, 21 April 2017, <https://www.ahaber.com.tr/dunya/2017/04/21/turkiye-ve-azerbaycandan-ortak-askeri-tatbikat> [ahaber.com.tr+7ahaber.com.tr+7ahaber.com.tr+7](https://www.ahaber.com.tr/7ahaber.com.tr/7ahaber.com.tr/7).

²⁸⁰ Rehimov, Ruslan, "TurAz Kartalı-2017 tatbikatı kardeşlik bağlarımızı daha da artıracak," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 26 September 2017, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turaz-kartali-2017-tatbikati-kardeslik-baglarimizi-daha-da-artiracak/919797>.

²⁸¹ Rehimov, Ruslan, "TurAz Kartalı 2019 Tatbikatı Başladı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2 Eylül 2019, günc. 3 Eylül 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turaz-kartali-2019-tatbikati-basladi/1571428>; Rehimov, Ruslan, "TurAz Kartalı 2019 Tatbikatı Sürüyor," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 5 Eylül 2019, günc. 6 Eylül 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turaz-kartali-2019-tatbikati-suruyor/1577708>; Ahmet Sertan Usul, "TSK, Turaz Şahini Tatbikatı'nın Görüntülerini Paylaştı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 14 Eylül 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/pg/foto-galeri/tsk-turaz-sahini-tatbikatinin-goruntulerini-paylasti/146>.

and Armenia in Tovuz in mid-July 2020. While Azerbaijan suffered 12 casualties in these brief clashes, the Turkish Foreign Ministry immediately stated that support would be provided "with all its capacity"²⁸². A week later, Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar hosted his Azerbaijani counterparts and stated that no one should doubt Türkiye's position on the conflict²⁸³. While Armenia viewed the joint exercises as a provocation at such a time, Russia announced that it urged the parties to act with restraint. During this period, Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay stated that they would "continue to act together with Azerbaijan under all circumstances" regarding the exercises²⁸⁴. Despite Turkish and Azerbaijani claims to the contrary, these exercises resonated globally and were interpreted as a message to Armenia and preparations for a potential war with her. Another important point is that the exercise, which was carried out with the participation of almost all military units, was kept broad in terms of military and geographical scope, as it was carried out in a wide geography of Azerbaijan²⁸⁵.

In 2010, following the "Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement," the "High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council" mechanism was also established between the two countries²⁸⁶. Indeed, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, "Türkiye's relations with Azerbaijan are multidimensional and strategic, and the intensive mutual high-level visits are the most important driving

²⁸² Jeyhun Aliyev. "Tensions Rise Along Armenian-Azerbaijani Border." *Anadolu Agency*, July 18, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/tensions-rise-along-armenian-azerbaijani-border/1914729>.

²⁸³ Mushvig Mehdiyev, "Azerbaijan, Türkiye Team Up for Large-Scale Military Drills," *Caspian News*, 29 Temmuz 2020, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-türkiye-team-up-for-large-scale-military-drills-2020-7-28-58/>.

²⁸⁴ Euronews, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan ortak askeri tatbikatında özel kuvvetler sahada," *Euronews*, 9 Ağustos 2020, <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/08/09/turkiye-azerbaycan-ortak-askeri-tatbikatinda-ozel-kuvvetler-sahadareddit.com+13>.

²⁸⁵ Aslanlı, Araz. "10. Yılında Azerbaycan-Türkiye Stratejik Ortaklık Anlaşması ve Ortak Askeri Tatbikatlar." *Anadolu Ajansı*, November 10, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/10-yilinda-azerbaycan-turkiye-stratejik-ortaklik-anlasmasi-ve-ortak-askeri-tatbikatlar/1937068>.

²⁸⁶ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan Siyasi İlişkileri," accessed July 11, 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-azerbaycan-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>.

force behind these relations²⁸⁷." Turkish President Erdoğan described this development as, "Türkiye and Azerbaijan are two brotherly countries with unprecedented relations in the world, and the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council will be a lasting achievement crowning this brotherhood²⁸⁸." On October 25, 2011, the first meeting of the HLSCC was held in Izmir, Türkiye, with the participation of the leaders and Defence Ministers of both countries²⁸⁹. In the subsequent period, the Azerbaijan-Türkiye HLSCC, described as "virtually a joint cabinet meeting between the two countries," has been held almost continuously every year²⁹⁰. The only interruption occurred when the fifth meeting, originally planned for Baku in 2016, was postponed twice due to terrorist attacks in Ankara. However, Aliyev came to Ankara to support Türkiye in this process, and the meeting was arranged accordingly²⁹¹. The meeting emphasized the importance of mutual support in difficult times and cooperation in areas ranging from energy and transportation to military and technological development and defence²⁹². Subsequently, the sixth meeting of the council was held in Baku on October 31, 2017, the seventh in Ankara on April 24,

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ "Türkiye-Azerbaycan Arası Stratejik İmza Atıldı," *Hürriyet*, 16 Eylül 2010, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/turkiye-azerbaycan-arasi-stratjik-imza-atildi-15791668>.

²⁸⁹ Richard Weitz, "Türkiye-Azerbaijan Summit Consummates Reconciliation," *Türkiye Analyst* 5, no. 18 (September 26, 2012), <https://www.Turkiyeanalyst.org/publications/Turkiye-analyst-articles/item/323-Turkiye-azerbaijan-summit-consummates-reconciliation.html>.

²⁹⁰ Araz Aslanlı, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan ekonomik ilişkileri stratejik boyutlar kazanıyor," *Anadolu Ajansı*, January 10, 2020 (updated January 23, 2020), <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/turkiye-azerbaycan-ekonomik-iliskileri-stratejik-boyutlar-kazaniyor/1698615>.

²⁹¹ Aslanlı, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan ekonomik"; Faik Bağirov, *25th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations Between Azerbaijan and Türkiye*, Republic of Azerbaijan Embassy in Türkiye, January 2017, https://ankara.mfa.gov.az/files/file/25th_Anniversary_of_Diplomatic_Relations_Between_AZERBAIJAN_and_TURKIYE.pdf.

²⁹² "5th Session of Azerbaijan-Türkiye High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Held," *Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, March 15, 2016, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/18113>.

2018²⁹³, and the eighth in Baku on February 25, 2020²⁹⁴. In fact, the 100th anniversary of military cooperation was celebrated in 2018, and a military ceremony was held in Baku, attended by the armies of both countries, emphasizing that mutual cooperation is still remembered and valued²⁹⁵. These ongoing meetings aimed to strengthen existing ties, ensure that these ties are passed on to future generations, and support the development of bilateral relations in every sense. At the time, these meetings represented the highest level of relations for deepening communication and cooperation between the leaders²⁹⁶.

The 2010s weren't just about unity in rhetoric, high-level talks, and joint exercises. Azerbaijan's heavy imports of Turkish-origin defence industry products also significantly impacted military and economic relations. This interaction wasn't just about exchanges; it also impacted the regional balance of power. While Azerbaijan was seeking to modernize its military, Türkiye was also taking steps to advance its defence industry, suggesting a convergence of objectives. For this reason, it's worth examining the vehicles Türkiye marketed and how they changed the course of the war.

In June 2020, the Azerbaijani government announced that it would purchase unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Türkiye, citing their success in Syria and Libya²⁹⁷. The vehicle in question was the Bayraktar TB2, offered and produced by the

²⁹³ “Türkiye-Azerbaycan Stratejik Ortaklık Konseyi 5. Toplantısı Gerçekleşti,” *AzerNews*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.azernews.az/nation/121409.html>; and “Joint Statement by the Presidents of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Türkiye at the Summit of the Türkiye–Azerbaijan Strategic Cooperation Council,” *Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, June 8, 2018, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/28266>.

²⁹⁴ “Eighth Meeting of Azerbaijan–Türkiye High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Held,” *Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, February 25, 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/35961>.

²⁹⁵ Gafarlı, “*One Nation, Two States*”.

²⁹⁶ “Türkiye-Azerbaijan Relations: Ideological Ties or Strategic Relations?,” *Trends Research*, accessed July 11, 2025, https://trendsresearch.org/insight/turkiye-azerbaijan-relations-ideological-ties-or-strategic-relations/?srsId=AfmBOoo4Yb4bL1rGdm7fLWTTbnsIpsAU1XMiZoYirq9Mkgz7_cJhOPi; and “Azerbaijan, Türkiye Establish Council for Strategic Cooperation,” *AZERTAC*, July 11, 2019, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/azerbaijan_turkiye_establish_council_for_strategic_co_op-596139.

²⁹⁷ “Azerbaijan to Purchase Turkish-Manufactured Combat Drones,” *Daily Sabah*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defence/azerbaijan-to-purchase-turkish-manufactured-combat->

Turkish private defence company Baykar. Mass production of the vehicle began in 2012. It completed its first full flight in 2014, remaining airborne for over 24 hours and reaching an altitude of 8,230 meters, a record-breaking flight that same day. It then surpassed another milestone by hitting its target from an altitude of 16,000 feet at the end of 2015, a feat followed with great interest by the media and the military. This was Türkiye's first test of an unarmed aerial vehicle (UCAV). Selçuk Bayraktar, Baykar's director and creator of the Bayraktar TB2, denied the UK's claims that the vehicles were not domestically produced, claiming that they had domestically produced a lower-cost, more advanced version of the critical component they were referring to²⁹⁸.

All of this demonstrated the rapid development of the Turkish defence sector over the past decade, which has been working steadily since the early 2010s, particularly to avoid external dependency on defence²⁹⁹. As a result of this process, Turkish armed drones have reached a level where they can compete with industry leaders like the US and Israel, becoming a factor that will shift the balance in Karabakh, following Libya and Syria³⁰⁰.

While the war was still ongoing in 2020, Azerbaijani leader Aliyev, in an interview with France24 on October 15th, was asked how many Turkish drones he had. He preferred not to answer the question definitively but said, "They have enough to

[drones](#); and "Azerbaycan Türkiye'den SİHA alacak," *Anadolu Ajansı*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-turkiyeden-siha-alacak/1885948>.

²⁹⁸ Hülya Kınık and Sinem Çelik, "The Role of Turkish Drones in Azerbaijan's Increasing Military Effectiveness: An Assessment of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War," *Insight Türkiye* 23, no. 4 (Fall 2021): 178, <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2021234.10>.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Çelik and Kınık, 179; Dan Gettinger, "Türkiye's Military Drones: An Export Product That's Disrupting NATO," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, December 2019, accessed via The Bulletin, <https://thebulletin.org/2019/12/Turkiyes-military-drones-an-export-product-thats-disrupting-nato/the-guardian.com+10>; Alaattin Doğru, "Türkiye Becomes One of World's Leading Manufacturers of Armed Drones: Le Monde," *Anadolu Ajansı*, July 10, 2021, updated July 11, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/science-technology/Turkiye-becomes-one-of-worlds-leading-manufacturers-of-armed-drones-le-monde/2300004>.

achieve their goals³⁰¹." In the same interview, he emphasized that the armed vehicles used were purchased by Azerbaijan and that the purchased equipment was being used, and that the Turkish-made drones were highly sophisticated and modern, and that they had destroyed \$1 billion worth of Armenia's equipment with Turkish drones alone³⁰². According to reports, before the war, Türkiye had made \$123 million worth of military purchases from Türkiye in the first nine months of 2020, compared to \$20.7 million in the first nine months of 2019. Of this spending in 2020, \$77 million was spent in September alone³⁰³.

Defence industry experts believe the role of UAVs and UCAVs is critical. While traditional warfare methods still maintain their importance, UAVs provided Azerbaijan with significant advantages in conflicts in Karabakh, where aircraft manoeuvrability was limited due to the geographically mountainous terrain³⁰⁴. This war was significant in demonstrating the role UAVs could play against an enemy employing more traditional warfare methods³⁰⁵. Armenia's counterattack was thwarted before it could even begin, weakening its defences. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence released footage from the war in October 2020, while the war was still ongoing. The footage indicated that Bayraktar TB2s were used to autonomously reconnaissance and locate targets, and to capture images of the area by acting as kamikazes³⁰⁶. Kamikaze missions were carried out by the vehicle circulating

³⁰¹ "İlham Aliyev Interviewed by France 24 TV Channel," *Official Web-site of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, October 14, 2020, accessed via [President.az, https://president.az/en/articles/view/43037](https://president.az/en/articles/view/43037).

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ "Turkish arms sales to Azerbaijan surged before Nagorno-Karabakh fighting," *Reuters*, October 14, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/turkish-arms-sales-to-azerbaijan-surged-before-nagorno-karabakh-fighting-idUSKBN26Z237/>; "Türkiye İhracatçılar Meclisi Eylül 2020 ihracat rakamlarını açıkladı," *DefenceTurk*, September 2020, <https://www.defenceturk.net/turkiye-ihracatcilar-meclisi-eylul-2020-ihracat-rakamlarini-acikladi>.

³⁰⁴ İrem Köker, "Dağlık Karabağ: İHA ve SİHA'ların rolü ne oldu, Azerbaycan'a nasıl avantaj sağladı?," *BBC Türkçe*, 12 Kasım 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-54917938>.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Pavel Aksenov, "Dağlık Karabağ: İHA ve SİHA'ların rolü ne oldu, Azerbaycan'a nasıl avantaj sağladı?," *BBC Türkçe*, 12 Kasım 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-54917938>.

ammunition, towing targets, and then destroying incoming targets by detonating them³⁰⁷. Drones served as Azerbaijan's eyes and ears by transmitting live information to command centres, making it significantly more difficult for the enemy to hide³⁰⁸. Upon detection, long-range artillery fire and airstrikes were launched. According to one expert, Türkiye was using similar methods in Syria, and it's possible these tactics were transferred to Azerbaijan³⁰⁹. Defence sector expert Can Kasapoğlu draws the following military conclusions from the 44-day war: unless tanks and similar ground combat vehicles possess systems capable of combating UAVs, they will easily become targets for them; Azerbaijan employed artillery and rocket systems in conjunction with UAVs, even at night, effectively supporting ground warfare with air support; and although Azerbaijan began the war with UAV superiority, it succeeded in winning the war through tactical, complex, and multifaceted methods, supported by conventional military methods³¹⁰.

The most significant step taken after the war was the Shusha Declaration signed between the two states on June 15, 2021. However, the provisions of this document and its importance in bilateral relations will be discussed in the fifth chapter of the thesis. Still, it is also worth mentioning other post-war military developments. For example, in December 2022, France responded to its actions in disrupting the ongoing peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia in November 2022 by saying, "Those who have insidious plans against Azerbaijan or Türkiye should know that the Turkish army is not alone. The Turkish army is not only (the) Turkish army; it is also our army, and our army is also Türkiye's army³¹¹." A few days after these statements, Türkiye

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Alex Gatopoulos, "The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is ushering in a new age of warfare," *Al Jazeera*, October 11, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/10/11/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-ushering-in-new-age-of-warfare>.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Kasapoğlu, Can, "Five key military takeaways from Azerbaijani-Armenian war," *Anadolu Ajansı*, October 30, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-five-key-military-takeaways-from-azerbaijani-armenian-war/2024430>.

³¹¹ Veliyev, Cavid, "Azerbaijan-Türkiye Military Cooperation: One Nation, One Army," *Daily Sabah*, 23 Aralık 2022, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/azerbaijan-turkiye-military-cooperation-one-nation-one-army>; "Bakan Akar: Gerektiğinde tek ordu, tek güç, tek yumruk olmayı biliriz," *TRT Avaz*, 6 Aralık 2022, video haber, <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/haber/tur/avasyadan/bakan-akar->

and Azerbaijan conducted joint military exercises, dubbed "Fist of Brotherhood" by Aliyev and "One Army! One Power! One Fist!" by the Turkish Ministry of Defence³¹². The Turkish Defence Minister at the time emphasized, "We see our enemy as an enemy together"³¹³.

Subsequently, the Azerbaijan National Defence University, established in 2022, as a part of efforts to bring the Azerbaijani army into line with Turkish Armed Forces standards, the goal was to improve management in military education³¹⁴. After the war, mountain commando units were also established, the number of special forces units increased, and these units received their initial training in Türkiye³¹⁵. As the year 2024 approached, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence began to convey the message that, in addition to joint training and exercises, military relations in the defence sector were deepening and that Azerbaijan's modern weapons needs would be met by utilizing Türkiye's capabilities³¹⁶. In his statements at the beginning of 2024, Aliyev emphasized that "the Turkish Army model is fully integrated into the Azerbaijani one" and "our armies are a single fist"³¹⁷.

[gerektiginde-tek-ordu-tek-guc-tek-yumruk-olmayi-biliriz/638f16cb01a30a1908dbdc68](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruN5h8VbWOo); T.C. Milli Savunma Bakanlığı. "Bakan Akar'dan Azerbaycan'da Güçlü Mesaj: 'Tek Ordu, Tek Güç, Tek Yumruk.'" *YouTube video*, 5 Aralık 2022. 3:26. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruN5h8VbWOo>.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Veliyev, "Azerbaijan-Türkiye Military Cooperation"; "Azerbaycan'dan Türkiye ile ortaklık yolunda önemli adım: Azerbaycan Milli Savunma Üniversitesi kuruldu," *Kırım Haber Ajansı (QHA)*, Mayıs 23, 2022, <https://www.qha.com.tr/haber-arsivi/azerbaycan-dan-turkiye-ile-ortaklik-yolunda-onemli-adim-azerbaycan-milli-savunma-universitesi-kuruldu-407925>.

³¹⁵ Veliyev, "Azerbaijan-Türkiye Military Cooperation"; Veliyev, Cavid, "Azerbaijan-Turkey Military Relations in the Shadow of the Negotiations with Armenia," in *Turkeyscope: Insights on Turkish Affairs*, vol. 7, no. 4 (July-August 2023), ed. Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak and Joel D. Parker, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, <https://dayan.org/content/azerbaijan-turkiye-military-relations-shadow-negotiations-armenia>.

³¹⁶ Rehimov, Ruslan, "Azerbaijan to Boost Defence Production with Turkish Collaboration, Defence Minister Says," *Anadolu Ajansı*, June 26, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/azerbaijan-to-boost-defence-production-with-turkish-collaboration-defence-minister-says/3259217>.

³¹⁷ Karimli, Ilham, "President Aliyev: Turkish Army Model Fully Integrated into Azerbaijani Armed Forces," *Caspian News*, February 20, 2024, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/president-aliyev-turkish-army-model-fully-integrated-into-azerbaijani-armed-forces-2024-2-20-0/>.

Moreover, post-war exercises continued, particularly in the context of the fight against terrorism. In 2023, the "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk - 2023" joint tactical exercise was held with the participation of personnel from the Azerbaijani Army and the Turkish Armed Forces, aiming to share experience and enhance the professionalism of personnel between the armies of the two brotherly countries³¹⁸. This exercise took place in various directions, including Baku, the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, and the liberated territories, with the participation of up to 3,000 personnel, 130 armoured vehicles, up to 100 artillery vehicles, and more than 20 aviation and air vehicles from various types of units from both countries³¹⁹. This exercise was one of two exercises planned by the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Türkiye and the 100th anniversary of the birth of Heydar Aliyev. The exercise in Türkiye was named the "Heydar Aliyev 2023 Exercise"³²⁰. The same exercise was held in 2025, aiming to "develop friendship, cooperation, and coordination"³²¹. Furthermore, in the summer of 2024, the Turkish Armed Forces' largest exercise to date, EFES-2024, was held³²². This event aimed to strengthen the Turkish Armed Forces' military capabilities and inter-unit coordination. Eleven thousand personnel, including observers from 45 countries, including Azerbaijan, participated in the

³¹⁸ “‘Mustafa Kamal Atatürk – 2023’ birgə taktiki təlimi başa çatıb,” *Azərbaycan Respublikasının Müdafiə Nazirliyi*, 25 Ekim 2023, <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mustafa-kamal-ataturk-2023-birge-taktiki-telimi-basa-catib-video-49910.html>.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Özer, Sarp, “Türkiye ve Azerbaycan’dan 100. yıla özel ortak tatbikatlar,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 20 Ekim 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/turkiye-ve-azerbaycandan-100-yila-ozel-ortak-tatbikatlar-/3026904>.

³²¹ Rehimov, Ruslan, “Türkiye ve Azerbaycan, Nahçıvan'da 'Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 2025' Tatbikatı Yapacak,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 12 Haziran 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turkiye-ve-azerbaycan-nahcivanda-mustafa-kemal-ataturk-2025-tatbikati-yapacak/3595394>; ve “Türkiye, Azerbaycan Nahçıvan'da Ortak Askerî Tatbikat Düzenleyecek,” *Daily Sabah*, 12 Haziran 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkiye-azerbaijan-set-to-launch-joint-military-drills-in-Nakhchivan>.

³²² Nurullah Aydın, “GÖRÜŞ – Efes-2024 Tatbikatı: Yerli Savunma sanayi askerin gücüyle birleşti,” *Anadolu Ajansı (Analiz)*, 30 Mayıs 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/gorus-efes-2024-tatbikati-yerli-savunma-sanayi-askerin-gucuyle-birlesti/3235046>; ve Hüseyin Bağış ve Utku Şimşek, “EFES-2024 Tatbikatı başarıyla tamamlandı,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 30 Mayıs 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/efes-2024-tatbikati-basariyla-tamamlandi/3236597>.

exercise. Naval, land, and air units demonstrated simultaneous live ammunition firings, and domestic and national defence industry products were introduced³²³.

Ultimately, it's not the state-of-the-art technology that enables a country's army to protect its interests in any conflict, but rather the possession of the most highly equipped commanders and relevant strategies³²⁴. For nearly three centuries, Azerbaijani and Turkish officers from different generations have worked shoulder to shoulder since the end of the Cold War³²⁵, and indeed, thanks to Türkiye's hard work and extensive assistance, Azerbaijan has achieved a position of strength, training, and the necessary military equipment, far superior to that of the days it declared its independence³²⁶. In other words, Türkiye's greatest contribution to the Second Karabakh War was not ammunition, but three centuries of effective military training³²⁷. The implementation of the Turkish Armed Forces' rigorous and disciplined training approach, which has been ongoing since the 1990s, into our brotherly nation, has produced soldiers with strong personal and commanding skills. This, in turn, has resulted in the replacement of Soviet influence with a modern, Western, and Turkish-style military³²⁸. Again, according to Yalçınkaya, the main difference between the 1990s and 2020 was the transfer of Türkiye's army-building capacity to Azerbaijan through joint exercises and collaborations³²⁹.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role".

³²⁵ Ayça Ergun, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus: Role of Memory and Perceptions in Shaping Türkiye's Relations with Regional States," in *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023): Historical and Theoretical Reflections*, ed. Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner and Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023): 171, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3>; Ayça Ergun, "Special, Exceptional, and Privileged: Azerbaijani-Turkish Relations," *Baku Dialogues* 4, no. 2 (Winter 2020–2021): 62, published by ADA University.

³²⁶ Ayca Ergun & Anar Aliyev, "An Account on Karabakh War: Why Now and Then What?", *Panorama*, E-publication, 10 Kasım 2020, <https://www.globalpanorama.org/blog/2020/11/09/an-account-on-karabakh-war-why-now-and-then-what/>.

³²⁷ Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role".

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

The long-standing exercises between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, along with Azerbaijan's intense interest in the Turkish defence sector, have strengthened the "one nation, two states" narrative and provided the intellectual framework for stronger geopolitical relations. The development of ammunition and defence tactics that could be considered "game changers" in the military sense in Karabakh, Türkiye's replacement of Israel's defence dominance, and the "army-building capacity" transferred from Türkiye to Azerbaijan in general are all significant in this regard. Indeed, this strong military dimension of bilateral relations ultimately resulted in the following: “while the first war took place between two forces with a Soviet military background, the second was between an army still existing in the previous century and a Western-standard new army³³⁰”.

³³⁰ Çelik ve Kımık, 185-186.

CHAPTER 3

TURKISH AZERBAIJANI SECURITY PERSPECTIVES BETWEEN 1991-2020

This chapter aims to address how security perspectives between Türkiye and Azerbaijan were structured between 1991 and 2020. Following the demise of the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan's independence, Türkiye took various steps to strengthen diplomatic, political and military alignment with Azerbaijan in this new era. Within this framework, Türkiye's security approaches towards Azerbaijan will first be evaluated within the context of regional dynamics and challenges. Then, as the overarching security concern shaping Azerbaijani foreign policy priorities, the impact of the Karabakh issue will be analysed. Lastly, the security-related disagreements, and external obstacles that occasionally arose between the two countries will be evaluated.

3.1. Turkish Approach to Azerbaijan: Security Challenges and Regional Dynamics

Türkiye faced the reshaping of geopolitical dynamics in the Caucasus after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This continuum caused significant changes in Turkish foreign policy and led the country to increase its influence in the Caucasus. Türkiye's approach to the Caucasus was shaped under the influence of political developments in the region as well as its historical, cultural and strategic ties. This section aims to provide a framework for understanding the Turkish role and strategic goals in the region.

The last years of the Ottoman Empire were adorned with pan-Turkist ideas. Taking these ideas into consideration, the basic foreign policy strategy of the Republic of

Türkiye founded in 1923, was based on the rejection of interest in Turks outside the border and especially within the Soviet borders³³¹.

Türkiye, whose borders were established in the 1920s and 1930s, had the distinction of being a border state in every sense, and as a matter of fact, the main purpose of the country was to protect territorial integrity and ensure national security³³². This situation has directly led to the adoption of self-serving, defensive policies such as not engaging in adventurism and sticking to the status quo. This doctrine, put forward and put into practice by Atatürk, represented an identity that demanded introversion, respect for its own territorial integrity and not interfering with the territory of other countries³³³. Even though being of Central Asian origin was emphasized in Turkish historiography, in another sense, linguistic and ethnic connections were somewhat forgotten. Despite everything, yes, the most important of Türkiye's republican goals were to strengthen the newly established state, consolidate independence and protect territorial integrity³³⁴. However, it would be correct to comment that there will be no peace within the country without peace in the world, and to understand the necessity of ensuring peace, especially in places bordering with Türkiye.

Although Türkiye has always turned its face towards the West, this has accelerated with Stalin's claims on the Straits³³⁵. Despite everything, the Cold War had created decades of stability and predictability for Türkiye, as well as internationally, and Turkish foreign policy was fundamentally based on balancing the Soviet threat by cooperating with the West and NATO. However, with the benefit of the closed Soviet

³³¹ Mustafa Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Turkish Studies* 5, no. 2 (2004): 2-3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1468384042000228576>.

³³² Igor Torbakov, "Türkiye and Post-Soviet Eurasia: Seeking a Regional Power Status," *Insight Türkiye* 7, no. 2 (2005): 116, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26328734>.

³³³ Cornell, Svante E., "Türkiye: Priority to Azerbaijan," in *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of the Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 275–85.

³³⁴ Beril Gültekin Punsmann, "The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform: An Attempt to Foster Regional Accountability," ICBSS Policy Brief 13, International Center for Black Sea Studies, 2009, https://www.academia.edu/35937772/The_Caucasus_Stability_and_Cooperation_Platform_An_Attempt_to_Foster_Regional_Accountability.

³³⁵ Torbakov, "Türkiye and Post-Soviet Eurasia".

system, which began to open and relax with Gorbachev's policies, the possibility of establishing relations with the Soviet republics one by one emerged³³⁶. Nevertheless, Türkiye was trying to follow a very careful foreign policy in order not to damage the existing Soviet presence. In addition, the beginning of the Cold War fuelled Ankara's desire to become a member of NATO, as its east bordered the Soviet Union, and this membership became an important limiter in its foreign policy³³⁷. However, it was not possible to communicate freely with the members of the Warsaw Pact and the Non-Aligned Movement and to maintain a foreign policy focused solely on the West.

Türkiye drew its pro-Western security policies after the Second World War based on its strategic importance against the Soviet Union and did not welcome the end of the Cold War well with the collapse of the Soviet Union³³⁸. NATO's post-Cold War position was being debated, liberal democracies were emerging in Eastern Europe, and these countries had become new buffer zones between Western Europe and Russia. Türkiye, on the other hand, found herself in a state of uncertainty amid all these developments. Although Türkiye entered a competition for influence with Iran, she did not want to trigger Russia by being too insistent. As a matter of fact, although Russia first welcomed the Turkish presence in the region and saw her as a hindering factor against a possible wave of pan-Islamism, these views changed in a short time, she became more sceptical about Türkiye's policies and adopted more of an aggressive attitude in political and military terms in her 'near abroad'³³⁹.

Meanwhile, Türkiye emerged as a regional power, albeit unintentionally, and since perceived as the centre of Eurasia, she could not abstain from the disputes unfolding in the region³⁴⁰. The Prime Minister of the time, Süleyman Demirel, underlined that

³³⁶ Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum".

³³⁷ Sinan Ülgen, "A Transformed Turkey: What Is the Role for Ankara as a Regional Power?" *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2012): 41–50, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2012.0038>.

³³⁸ Mustafa Aydın, "Turkish Policy toward the Caucasus," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 1, no. 3 (2002): 39, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.01.3.06>.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum".

Türkiye could play a more dynamic role rather than a static one, and mentioned that she could be an important intermediary in the relations of the newly independent Caucasian and Central Asian states with other states, especially the West. Also, as mentioned, Türkiye did not meet the end of Cold War with a strong sense of security³⁴¹. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hikmet Çetin, stated in 1993 that Türkiye had the most unstable geographical and political position in the world and that she was almost always likely to be drawn into possible disputes and conflicts. Similarly, Mufti draws attention to the words of Şükrü Elekdağ, one of the diplomats of the period, in 1996 and states that, in the context of foreign relations, the Republic of Türkiye has gone through the most problematic years since its foundation and has been surrounded from all sides³⁴². Therefore, one of the tools that Turkish foreign policy experts frequently use for Eurasian regional security is establishing bilateral relations³⁴³. For this reason, in the 1990s, she focused on some common perceptions in the region and made these perceptions the centre of good relations. These were separatism, religious extremism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This new orientation has also been strengthened regionally with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)³⁴⁴. In fact, for Türkiye, the good functioning of these organizations meant strengthening cooperation and mutual benefit between parties and, as a result, making progress in regional peace and stability.

Turkish politics was quite turbulent in the late 80s and early 90s. First, the issue of becoming a member of the European Community (EC) (as it was called at the time) was on the agenda. Turgut Özal led this process and an application was made for full membership in 1987. As a matter of fact, the application was rejected by most

³⁴¹ Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 1 (1998): 32–50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4329152>.

³⁴² Mufti, *Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy*, 34.

³⁴³ Veysel Korkmaz, "The New Power Calculations and 'Structured' Relations in the Fluctuating Security Environment of Eurasia," in *Contentious Issues of Security and the Future of Türkiye*, ed. N. Ateşoğlu Güney (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).

³⁴⁴ Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum".

Community members. While this rejection created a feeling of exclusion and loneliness in Ankara, it also mobilized politicians to develop alternative foreign relations. Türkiye had started to develop its BSEC plan at that time, together with the idea of rapprochement with the USA. Although the idea of preserving the status-quo still dominated politics in general, several intellectual changes were also taking place. The Ottoman past was re-evaluated, "neo-Ottoman" thought began to emerge in these periods, and a modern Ottoman thought began to be presented as an ideological basis, emphasizing the need for changes in foreign policy. Turgut Özal will also be a supporter of this idea³⁴⁵.

As mentioned, in the 90s, when the Soviet threat was no longer present, it created a fear of exclusion from Europe in Türkiye, especially with the fragile feelings brought about by its changing international position³⁴⁶. Along with Western analysts, Turkish analysts and politicians began to ponder NATO's position in the new international security balances and Türkiye's role in this context. However, for the West, the dissolution of the Soviets did not directly mean that Türkiye was not needed, and that both sides needed each other, especially due to Türkiye's geographical location and NATO's new regional objectives.

While Türkiye served as a middleman to connect the newly independent republics with the West³⁴⁷, especially by emphasizing language and cultural ties³⁴⁸, another role of Türkiye was about whether she could be an applicable 'model' for the states in the region. In other words, Türkiye's role in the Caucasus and Central Asia was not only a matter of domestic politics, but also on the agenda of the West³⁴⁹. Türkiye, with its

³⁴⁵ Shireen Hunter, "Bridge or Frontier? Turkey's Post-Cold War Geopolitical Posture," *The International Spectator* 34, no. 1 (1999): 63–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729908456847>.

³⁴⁶ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "A Tale of Two Centuries: Continuities in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy," in *Contentious Issues of Security and the Future of Türkiye*, ed. N. Ateşoğlu Güney (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).

³⁴⁷ Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum".

³⁴⁸ Philip Robins, "Between Sentiment and Self-Interest: Türkiye's Policy Toward Azerbaijan and the Central Asian States," *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 4 (1993): 593–610, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4328631>.

³⁴⁹ Mustafa Aydın, "Twenty Years Before, Twenty Years After: Turkish Foreign Policy at the Threshold of the 21st Century," in *Türkiye's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics*,

liberal economy and secular democratic identity, could be a model that would fill the gap that might arise in the region after the collapse of the Soviets and prevent the revival of Islamic radicalism, which rose globally in the 80s³⁵⁰. Nevertheless, at that time, that is, in the mid-90s, it was noticed that early conclusions were made for predictions about the acceptability of the "Turkish model" in the region. One reason for this was Türkiye's uncertainty in being a model, and the other reason was related to Türkiye's membership in the EU³⁵¹. Because relations with Europe were very important in an economic context for the countries in the region, how would a state that was not nor could not become a member connect these states to the West?

Subsequently, Türkiye had difficulty adjusting to its new role and in this course, she misinterpreted the new changes, thinking that Russia had withdrawn from the region wholly and that there was a power vacuum in the Caucasus and Central Asia³⁵². In fact, this phase has evolved into Türkiye assuming a "big brother" role in Central Asia and the Caucasus. As a matter of fact, this had an adverse effect on the newly independent countries, because after decades of long Russian influence, they did not need a new big brother, but an independent international identity³⁵³. Although the insistence on cooperation by Turkish politicians in the 1990s had an egalitarian basis, many Turkish politicians, such as TİKA President in 1993, Ambassador Umut Arık, adopted the big brother attitude. Arık said that the language spoken in Central Asia should be Istanbul Turkish and that the language currently spoken here is not sufficient to be the state language³⁵⁴.

ed. Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydın (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2003; reissued 2019 by Routledge), 15–31.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Cornell, "Türkiye: Priority to Azerbaijan".

³⁵³ Kürşat Cinar, "Türkiye and Turkic Nations: A Post-Cold War Analysis of Relations," *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 2 (2013): 256–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2013.802925>.

³⁵⁴ Cornell, "Türkiye: Priority to Azerbaijan".

Finally, the Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan gave priority to their relations with Ankara to both strengthen their independence and earn respect and gain a place in the international world³⁵⁵. In other words, this excitement experienced immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union was not only on the Turkish side. However, as every Soviet expert knows, these republics were economically very weak and underdeveloped, and in the same period, Türkiye could not provide the expected socio-economic support to these republics. Ankara, on the other hand, realized that these newly independent states had become dependent on Russian power in every sense because of decades of Soviet rule. For this reason, it can be said that the excitement experienced in the early nineties evolved into more realistic relationship networks in the following years³⁵⁶.

3.1.1 Türkiye and The Karabakh Problem

Türkiye's relationship with Azerbaijan in a geographical, cultural, and historical context has taken deep roots over centuries and played a decisive role in the geopolitical dynamics of the region. In particular, the Karabakh conflict has been a critical element of Türkiye's relations with Azerbaijan. The Karabakh crisis, which flared up again with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1990s and reached a sharp turn in 2020, has shaped Türkiye's position in the regional and international arena and has also reflected its close relations with Azerbaijan. This section aims to examine the evolution of Turkish foreign policy in the context of security dynamics and strategic interests in the region by discussing Türkiye's approach to the Karabakh issue and its relations with Azerbaijan from the early 1990s to the present.

From the very beginning, Türkiye supported the independence, political stability, and territorial integrity of all Caucasian countries. This policy, the strategic importance of these states for Türkiye can be explained by factors such as a deep-rooted foreign policy principle, concern about external powers competing in the region, and concern that if instability occurs in the region, it may spread to Türkiye. An understanding that was effective in determining Türkiye's Caucasus policy and continues today was that

³⁵⁵ Aydın, "Twenty Years Before, Twenty Years After."

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

the stability of the countries with which it borders would also affect Türkiye's own security and stability³⁵⁷.

Since the United States, Russia and Iran pursued pro-Armenian policies towards the Karabakh region, Azerbaijan was largely left alone internationally. Türkiye has been the state that has tried to elucidate Azerbaijan's theses in every international arena, has always tried to prevent pro-Armenian theses from gaining weight on the international agenda. Since 1992, she has followed joint embargo policies with Azerbaijan against Armenia and has always stated that she will not develop diplomatic relations unless Armenia withdraws from occupied Azerbaijani territory. However, during the conflicts that continued in the nineties, Türkiye never came close to military intervention and remained inadequate in terms of weapons support³⁵⁸.

During all, Turkish officials did not limit or restrict their relations to Azerbaijani leaders disjunctively. For example, even when Ebulfaz Elchibey, with his extremely secular, anti-Iran and anti-Russian, and completely pro-Turkish worldview, came to power, relations were kept very diligently. During his short, Elchibey frequently expressed his wishes for the unification of Northern and Southern Azerbaijan and even viewed a federal union with Türkiye very positively. As a matter of fact, these extreme views disturbed Russia and Iran and were too Turkist and romantic even for Türkiye³⁵⁹.

Undoubtedly that, the pressures of Turkish citizens prevented Türkiye from remaining neutral, and the media frequently criticized the government's policies towards the region and expressed doubts about Türkiye's leadership desire in the region if adequate actions were not taken³⁶⁰. The harshest criticism came from members of the Nationalist

³⁵⁷ Aydın, Mustafa, "Kafkaslar Türk Dış ve Güvenlik Politikalarının Değişen Dinamikleri," in *Kafkaslar Değişim Dönüşüm*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2012), 203–204.

³⁵⁸ Cornell, Svante E., "Türkiye: Azerbaijan's Only Ally," chap. 5 in *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, Report no. 46 (Uppsala: Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, 1999), 60–81.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 89.

³⁶⁰ Cornell, Svante E., "Türkiye and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh: A Delicate Balance," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 1 (1998): 51–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701209>.

Movement Party (NMP/MHP), and the leader of the party, Alparslan Türkeş, stated the necessity of military intervention at a very early date. Former Prime Minister, founder and former leader of the Democratic Left Party, Bülent Ecevit, also stated that uncertain policies would harm Türkiye's prestige in the region. With the influence of the Karabakh struggle against Armenia, the subsequent development of Turkish Azerbaijani relations was considered natural and normal by these nationalist writers³⁶¹. In addition, many Turkish nationalists and Turkish politicians believed that Azerbaijan's geopolitical position and strategic importance lay in being an unbreakable bridge between Anatolia and Turkestan/Turkic states. With reference to MHP member Özcan Yeniçeri, Erşen emphasized that Azerbaijan, like Türkiye and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, is an important element of the Western fragment of the Turkic world³⁶².

Additionally, between 1992 and 1995, the Bosnian War was taking place and the Turkish public showed similar reactions regarding the lack of action against both Karabakh and Bosnia. According to Aydın, there were two possible reasons for the public's reaction with the rise of Islam in the 90s and the development of Islamic affinities. These reactions were either due to the existence of Islamic connections in these two regions or were related to the enemies' cleansing of ethnic Turks from Karabakh and the Ottoman past from Bosnia³⁶³.

In other words, Türkiye's failure to act more insistently and decisively regarding the dispute was met with great reaction within the country. Criticisms such as "lack of vision", "failure", "loss of hope against the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the government" were made by politicians, mostly by the opposition³⁶⁴. Mufti, with the words of academician and former member of parliament Aydın Yalçın against the

³⁶¹ Emre Erşen, "Geopolitics versus Ideology: Azerbaijan in Turkish Views on Eurasia," in *Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations: One Nation – Two States?* ed. Murad İsmayilov and Nasir A. Graham (London: Routledge, 2016), 54–71.

³⁶² Ibid, 60.

³⁶³ Aydın, "Twenty Years Before, Twenty Years After", 23.

³⁶⁴ Mufti, *Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy*, 46.

government, "... you are merely going to wait with hands tied on the grounds that the enemy has not yet crossed our borders", shows us the other alternative that Türkiye had at that time: the chance to act more courageously³⁶⁵. Thus, Atatürk's status quo would no longer be enough for Türkiye. Türkiye should "say no to the West" and look to take on a more regional role³⁶⁶.

However, according to Cornell, Türkiye was facing certain obstacles in the 90s³⁶⁷. The first of these, as mentioned, was the status quoist idea of Kemalism³⁶⁸. Except for the Turkish Cypriots and the Mosul issue, there should be no interference in the internal affairs of any independent and sovereign country. In the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, for nationalists like Türkeş, Azerbaijan was as critical as Cyprus. The second and most important element was the Western, that is, pro-NATO, security perception³⁶⁹. The pressure of being a member was the biggest obstacle to Ankara acting independently enough. The third was the issue of membership in the European Union, which was frequently on the government's agenda in the 90s and 2000s³⁷⁰. Fourth, there was the need to respect Russian power due to the existence of major energy businesses and the aim of maintaining good relations³⁷¹. Fifth, in the early 90s, Türkiye was fighting terrorism in the east of the country³⁷². In fact, the army was fighting the most powerful Kurdish separatist movement/rebellion in a long time, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Sixth, Turkish leaders were afraid that a more insistent approach to Karabakh and a possible military intervention would attract an international reaction, just like

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Cornell, "Türkiye and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh", 63.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid, 65.

³⁷² Cornell, Svante E., "İlham Aliyev's Azerbaijan, The Shadow over Azerbaijan: Karabakh, Caucasus Context: Formulating Foreign Policy, Türkiye, Best Neighbor or Big Brother?" in *Azerbaijan Since Independence* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2011).

the Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974 because the Cyprus issue was a critical source of disagreement in relations with the USA and Europe³⁷³. Additionally, there was a danger that support for Azerbaijan would be reflected to the world as a more aggressive attitude by the Western Armenian diaspora³⁷⁴.

According to Mufti, another obvious obstacle came from the CIS. Özal said that he would send Turkish troops to Nakhchivan on the border in May 1992, and the military units of the CIS warned Türkiye not to trigger a "Third World War"³⁷⁵. As a matter of fact, Özal's discourse remained insubstantial. One of Türkiye's internal obstacles was the precautionary policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, although Turkish leaders took the initiative and moved towards a more tenacious policy, the foreign ministry argued otherwise. When the war broke out on the Armenian side in 1993, there were strong objections from the foreign ministry even against Özal, who was planning a more active intervention³⁷⁶.

As a matter of fact, according to Torbakov, by the mid-2000s, the Turkish presence in Eurasia could not gain the expected weight³⁷⁷. One of the important reasons for this is the economic and political problems the country experienced at that time. Türkiye, which was seen as an important rival in the 90s, began to be seen as less effective by Russia and other post-Soviet states in the mid-2000s. Torbakov also referred to Prof Ziya Öniş and touched upon the effects of these feelings such as loneliness, exclusion and insecurity, which have become traditional and come especially from the West, on Türkiye's interest in the Turkish republics³⁷⁸. It would be correct to explain the enthusiastic approach towards the region, which was seen in the 90s, with an emphasis on cultural and linguistic ties. Despite everything, Turkish foreign policy has remained

³⁷³ Cornell, "Türkiye and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh", 66.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy", 37.

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 47.

³⁷⁷ Torbakov, "Türkiye and Post-Soviet Eurasia", 117-119.

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 117.

oriented towards the West for a long time, for example, it has become a little more independent from the West and able to assume its own role in the Caucasus.

According to Soltanov³⁷⁹, “Turkish foreign policy in the last century has been acutely and pragmatically aware of the state's limitations”. For this reason, especially when Armenian troops occupied Kelbajar for the second time in March 1993, Türkiye rejected Elchibey's call for help and did not send an aid helicopter to the region for the transportation and rescue of civilians. Thus, “the limits of Turkish power finally became clear to the Azerbaijani leadership³⁸⁰”.

From a realistic perspective, the Caucasus is at a very critical point in Türkiye's security. The region has been the scene of both Iran's efforts to influence and Moscow's struggle to re-establish its influence. Therefore, Türkiye's exclusion from this competition carries political and economic meaning as well as significant security risks. Hence, maintaining good relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan has become one of the priorities of foreign policy. For as much as, the establishment of military, defence and security-based relations is quite open to the interventions of regional-global actors and factors. So much so that, in the beginning, military relations between Azerbaijan, a former Soviet country, and Türkiye, a NATO country, were among the most controlled and slowest developing areas of cooperation³⁸¹.

Türkiye's NATO membership can be considered as one of the determining factors in the establishment phase of Türkiye-Azerbaijan military relations. In 1992, Azerbaijan became a member of NATO's North Atlantic Cooperation Council, which oversees the political and military process and has political decision-making authority on security issues affecting the Alliance. Following the Brussels Summit held in 1994, Azerbaijan was included in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. The main purpose of

³⁷⁹ Elnur Soltanov, “Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations: Brothers in Arms or Brothers in the Dark?” in *Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations: One Nation – Two States?* ed. Murad İsmayilov and Nasir A. Graham (London: Routledge, 2016), 29.

³⁸⁰ Ibid, 29.

³⁸¹ Bahar Özsoy, “1918’den 2023’e Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkilerinin Askeri Boyutu,” *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi* 19, no. 46 (2023): 588–589, <https://doi.org/10.17752/guvenlikstrjtj.1354438>.

this program is to increase stability based on adherence to democratic principles, reduce possible threats to peace and establish strengthened security relations with non-NATO countries. The program allows the preparation of Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAPs) for countries wishing to deepen their cooperation with NATO. At this point, Türkiye acted as a contact country between NATO and Azerbaijan until 2009. Considering its cooperation with NATO from a broad perspective, Azerbaijan sent 34 personnel to Kosovo to take part in the 'Turkish Peace Force' between 1999 and 2008³⁸².

In other words, despite everything, Türkiye's diplomatic efforts in the 1990s in establishing international integration and making Baku an actor of the global system cannot be denied. Hence, during the same time, the support coming to Azerbaijan from international and regional great powers was very little. The United States was only involved in the solution of the problem through OSCE, and since the Armenian diaspora's lobbying activities in Congress were quite effective, it could not remain objective in resolving the conflict. Throughout the war, Russian support was directed towards Armenia because they thought they were in favour of preserving the status quo, which was something the Soviets used to want. Due to the extreme anti-Russian sentiment of nationalist leaders, including Elchibey in Azerbaijan and Gamsakhurdia in Georgia, and their refusal to enter the Commonwealth of Independent States, Armenia was the only country left next to Russia in the Caucasus. Naturally, Russia's main support was towards Armenia, and this situation was turned into a tool to draw Georgia and Azerbaijan back into its sphere of influence. Other than that, no aid came to Azerbaijan from the Central Asian republics in order not to damage their relations with Moscow. The only thing that was not clear whether it could be called aid or not was the participation of Kazakhstan president Nursultan Nazarbayev in a mediation initiative led by Boris Yeltsin. This initiative was made 4 months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union anyways³⁸³.

³⁸² Özsoy, "1918'den 2023'e Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkilerinin Askeri Boyutu," 589-590.

³⁸³ Cornell, "Türkiye and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh," 57-59.

The most important element that should be noted in Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations in the 1990s is that Azerbaijan had no demands from Türkiye in terms of military intervention. Former Azerbaijani Ambassador to Türkiye Mehmet Novruzoglu also stated that Azerbaijan's primary wish was for Türkiye to attract the attention of the West regarding the dispute³⁸⁴.

For Soltanov, the place of the Karabakh War in bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye is important for both states because, considering the great defeat of Azerbaijan and the ineffectiveness of Türkiye, today would not be so peculiar if it were not for the Karabakh conflict³⁸⁵. The war was a struggle for existence for Azerbaijan, and relations with this newly independent republic began in this context. Although the impact of other factors cannot be ignored, “without Karabakh, there might not have been enough ideological motivation and passion to push for the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Erzurum gas pipeline and the Baku-Kars railroad³⁸⁶.” Thus, “Karabakh is what has made the relationship special and is also an issue with the capacity to destroy it, at least in the short run³⁸⁷.”

To conclude, regarding the dispute, Türkiye mainly followed a policy of neutrality and tried to act as a mediator between the subjects. Then-Chief of Foreign Affairs Hikmet Çetin and other Turkish diplomats played a critical role in attracting the attention of the West and bringing the conflict to the OSCE due to the shuttle diplomacy they carried out between the conflict zone and European powers. These mediation actions did not last long due to President Özal's concerns about having to make concessions towards Armenia. Thereupon, following the massacre of the Azerbaijani people by Armenia in Khojaly in 1992, anti-Armenian movements in Türkiye grew significantly. As a result, the Özal government could not remain silent about these actions, and Özal himself said that the Armenians should be "a little afraid", which terribly frightened the Armenians at the time. As expected, this discourse triggered a new "genocide"

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 60.

³⁸⁵ Soltanov, “Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations”, 22.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, 23.

threat on the Armenian side at that time. After all, Demirel began to change his approach, and in an interview at the time, he stated that he had not completely discarded the option of military intervention, but that he was under great pressure to take an active role. In this process, although the relations with Armenia did not reach the diplomatic level because the war with Azerbaijan continued, the ties were not completely severed. From time to time, Türkiye has opened its borders with Armenia, allowing humanitarian aid to reach the region. It was even possible to sign an agreement that would provide electricity assistance to the region and provide heating for thousands of Armenian citizens. The reactions from the public were not delayed and Azerbaijan experienced a great disappointment. Therefore, this agreement was never implemented³⁸⁸.

3.2. Azerbaijan's Security Concerns: Effects of the Karabakh Conflict on Foreign Policy

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan, which declared its independence, was faced with the necessity of reconsidering and reshaping its security policies. During this period, she encountered various difficulties in the process of formulating and implementing security policies under the influence of its geopolitical location, richness of energy resources and ethno-cultural dynamics. Azerbaijan has faced the need to combat various security threats along its borders, and this has necessitated the development of mechanisms to deal with internal and external threats. The country's security policies are shaped around basic principles such as regional balance, national sovereignty, and preservation of internal stability. In this section, how Azerbaijan's security policies evolved in the post-Soviet period and how the country coped with the challenges it faced will be examined and analysed in detail.

Li Chen claims that for Azerbaijan, which was seen as a weak state that has not yet completed its first decade of independence, issues that threaten the state are escalated to extreme political levels, causing them to be perceived as a threat to the regime. Accordingly, a strong state is obliged to protect the territory it dominates, its founding ideology and its governing institutions against external threats. In the case of

³⁸⁸ Cornell, "Turkey and the Conflict in Karabakh".

Azerbaijan, it has become an instrument to ensure the security of the state and strengthen the regime. As a matter of fact, the Karabakh conflict has been the basis of the rise and fall of Azerbaijani leaders and governments since the 90s³⁸⁹.

Ipek additionally emphasizes that the Karabakh issue has been largely politicized as an internal issue and underlines that the conflict is perceived by the regime not only as a threat from outside, but also as a threat to domestic political stability³⁹⁰. Like Li Chen, Ipek states that conflict, which is an important reason for the change of power, is also used as a tool by opposition groups³⁹¹. Thus, the war forced foreign policy makers to establish new regional lines and determine priorities in a very short time, that is, in the first few years of independence.

Until the 44-day war in 2020, the Karabakh issue was the most important reason why the democratic nation-state process in Azerbaijan could not be completed for many years due to the violation of the principles of inviolability of borders and territorial integrity. The solution of the Karabakh conflict is always the priority of Azerbaijan's foreign policy, and the first goal of the country's national security strategy is to ensure territorial integrity. It is stated that the principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders have been adopted in all regional and international platforms. Particularly in the perception of a friendly country, being on Azerbaijan's side and defending its rightfulness in the Karabakh issue is a decisive factor. In fact, when evaluated from this perspective, Türkiye's decision to not establish diplomatic relations with Armenia on the condition of resolving the Karabakh conflict in favour of Azerbaijan always has a special meaning for Azerbaijani leaders and people³⁹².

³⁸⁹ Sim Li-Chen, "In Search of Security: Azerbaijan and the Role of Oil in the Caspian Sea," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 15, no. 3 (1999): 29-30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523279908415412>.

³⁹⁰ Pınar İpek, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy and Challenges for Energy Security," *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 2 (2009): 237, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25482635>.

³⁹¹ Li-Chen, "In Search of Security"; İpek, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy", 237.

³⁹² Ayça Ergun, "Azerbaycan'da Sovyet Sonrası Dönemde Değişim ve Dönüşüm," in *Kafkaslar Değişim Dönüşüm*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2012), 34-38.

Another reason was that, in the 90s, Azerbaijan was defeated by Armenia, which was much smaller in population, and suffered great humiliation and disappointment due to the Karabakh defeat, and its national pride and identity were damaged. The biggest reason for these feelings was that it lost not only Karabakh, but also many important cities with an Azeri majority population. Thus, whoever agrees Azerbaijan's thesis on the Karabakh issue is the friendly country to Baku³⁹³.

Until the small-scale conflicts in the 2010s, the ongoing conflict in the region was often described as "frozen" and Azerbaijan was developing its energy industry, especially with its oil revenues, and gaining an admirable place for itself internationally both regionally and universally. These changes, along with military developments, caused Azerbaijan to become increasingly uncomfortable with the status quo and to find it unfair³⁹⁴.

According to Cornell, one element that shaped Azerbaijan's security perception in the first 10 years after independence was the approach of Western powers towards the Karabakh conflict. The loss of the war allowed the creation of a "pernicious culture of victimization" in Azerbaijan³⁹⁵. It is debatable whether this phenomenon is unfounded or not, because it is seen that the West clearly took sides in many massacres that took place in the nineties. For example, the Gulf War in 1990 ended with the initiative of 37 countries in total, including major western powers such as the USA, the UK and France, and Kuwait was saved from the occupation of Saddam Hussein. However, in the same years, when most of the lands under Azerbaijan's sovereignty were occupied, nothing was done despite calls for help, and Azerbaijan even remained under the US embargo until 2003. In 1999, NATO intervened in the massacres/ethnic cleansing of Serbian leader Sloban Milosevic and stopped the war. However, although the same ethnic cleansing was carried out by the Armenians against the Azerbaijani people, Armenia continued to be seen as a respectable, friendly state by the West. That's not all, although intense diplomatic pressure was exerted on opening the Türkiye-Armenia

³⁹³ Cornell, "Ilham Aliyev's Azerbaijan", 130.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, 126-127.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, 131.

border - which is a huge threat to Azerbaijan - they did not aim to find a useful way to resolve the Karabakh conflict³⁹⁶.

As mentioned, in post-independence Azerbaijan, like many countries that host conflicts that could not be resolved after the collapse of the Soviets, the constant existence of the threat of war is a permanent determining factor of national security³⁹⁷. This threat perception also systematized, creating a "central institution" phenomenon that transformed the war into a "systemic working paradigm with its subsystem categories and functional components"³⁹⁸.

Therefore, the alliance formation strategy is a frequently preferred and popular security strategy for Azerbaijan, which directs the country's power distribution more balanced. For example, as mentioned, Elchibey cut off ties with many regional organizations, as if declaring that he trusted only Türkiye, and did not cooperate with almost any state. As a result, this approach produced very bad results because Türkiye was busy with its own internal and external security problems at that time. Additionally, the idea that the southern side of the CIS would come under Turkish influence worried Russia, and Russia was very happy when Elchibey was dismissed in 1993³⁹⁹.

As soon as Elchibey came to power, he left the CIS and tried to reduce the Russian influence in the region to zero. Heydar Aliyev, who came to power afterwards, calculated that Russia's involvement in the conflict would balance the Armenian forces, and the first thing he did was to make Azerbaijan a member of the CIS again⁴⁰⁰. Despite everything, by the end of the nineties and the beginning of the 2000s, Russia remained Armenia's most important alliance and was increasing cooperation. One of

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, "Framing National Security Objectives: The Cases of Georgia and Azerbaijan," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 13, no. 3 (2013): 325–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2013.812774>.

³⁹⁸ Ter-Matevosyan, "Framing National Security Objectives", 327.

³⁹⁹ Li Chen, "In Search of Security", 34-35.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

the factors that pushed Azerbaijan to cooperate with the West, along with regional powers, was both these actions and the failure to act simultaneously with Russia. To soften the threats against his regime and Russia's behaviour, Aliyev did not want to renew the participation in the collective security pact of the CIS and proposed to start the construction of a NATO air base on the shores of the Caspian Sea to assist NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo⁴⁰¹. Naturally, Russia did not welcome these actions. Despite everything, Baku tried to be very careful in the management of the issue to avoid accusations from the opposition that it was using the Karabakh issue as a tool⁴⁰². In June 2000, he stated that the Russian factor was the key element in regional disputes such as Karabakh⁴⁰³. Another important reason for this was that there was not enough support from Türkiye and the West for the solution of the problem at that time. However, it should be noted that Türkiye remained the most important ally of Azerbaijan for a long time, and relations with Russia began to improve since the early 2000s⁴⁰⁴.

After these events, Azerbaijan tried to draw its international image on being stable in all matters, to pursue a balanced post-war foreign policy⁴⁰⁵. For example, it has built its relations with every country, including Türkiye, in a predictable manner, gaining the trust of the states and taking care not to give impulsive or emotional reactions because “indeed, states are much more likely to trust a partner with a straight and stable foreign policy record, without zigzags, sudden turns or changes of mind⁴⁰⁶”.

Cornell explains that, thanks to the policies managed by Heydar Aliyev for a decade, Azerbaijan differed from other states in the region in many senses and gradually gained

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 35.

⁴⁰² Dina Malysheva, “The Conflict in Karabakh: Its Impact on Security in the Caspian Region,” in *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, ed. Gennady Chufrin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 260.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Cornell, “Ilham Aliyev’s Azerbaijan”, 389-391.

⁴⁰⁵ Kamal Makili-Aliyev, “Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy: Between East and West...,” *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)*, 2013, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09669>.

⁴⁰⁶ Makili-Aliyev, “Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy”, 3.

sovereignty in many areas⁴⁰⁷. Just as the Elchibey government did in the early nineties, Aliyev, when he came to power, paid attention to his relations with the West, especially the United States, and Türkiye to build economic and commercial cooperation. The biggest goal was to resolve the Karabakh conflict in an uncompromising and acceptable way, which is why the country's rich energy resources and geostrategic importance were often used as a instrument.

In fact, this geostrategic importance, that is, being a transit country, creates self-confidence in terms of the importance it attaches to itself⁴⁰⁸. For example, although Azerbaijan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 1999, it does not have plans to become a member of both this organization and NATO⁴⁰⁹. It supports NATO's peace operations from time to time and also makes alliances with the European Union. Already in 1994, with the support of Türkiye, it took part in NATO's Partnership for Peace initiative. Azerbaijan was the first country to offer support in the events of September 11, it also cooperated with NATO in conflicts such as Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq⁴¹⁰. This meant that Baku could make independent decisions without going too far when it came to its own interests⁴¹¹.

Without diminishing the quality or importance of the relationship, Aliyev softened Elchibey's extreme pro-Turkish rhetoric a little; He also improved his relations with Iran⁴¹². In addition, despite Russian pressure, it did not allow the resettlement of Russian peacekeepers and border forces on the Iranian border. In fact, unlike the other two Caucasian countries, "had no foreign troops on its territory⁴¹³." According to Cornell, "by the beginning of the twenty-first century, Heydar Aliyev had managed to

⁴⁰⁷ Cornell, "Ilham Aliyev's Azerbaijan", 81.

⁴⁰⁸ Ter-Matevosyan, "Framing National Security Objectives", 328.

⁴⁰⁹ Shamkhal Abilov and Beyrak Hajiye, "Why the Neutrality of Azerbaijan Is Important for the European Union?," *Insight Türkiye* 21, no. 3 (2019), 55, <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2019213.04>.

⁴¹⁰ Cornell, "Azerbaijan Since Independence", 389-391.

⁴¹¹ Abilov and Hajiye, "Why the Neutrality of Azerbaijan", 57.

⁴¹² Cornell, 313-314.

⁴¹³ Ibid, 315.

turn Azerbaijan into the only truly independent state of the Caucasus⁴¹⁴.” Although it is generally said that Armenia pursued more independent policies, in real terms it was Azerbaijan that became increasingly independent in foreign policy. As mentioned, on September 11, 2001, it implemented its own policies for the region without any external obstacles.

Thanks to his father's careful preparations, Ilham Aliyev came to power in 2003 with elections that could not be considered very democratic, and in the first three years of his coming to power, he further radicalized the country's anti-Armenian attitude⁴¹⁵. Energy resources were already expected to serve the country's interests, but especially the oil-based economy experienced a great rise in 2005. This rise meant increasing military spending for the Azerbaijani government.

Two years later, on May 23, 2007, Azerbaijan published its National Security Concept. In this document, Azerbaijan viewed actions against energy infrastructure as a priority threat area⁴¹⁶. About a year later, on June 8, 2008, the Azerbaijan National Doctrine was published. The two critical elements of this doctrine were⁴¹⁷: first, “foreign military bases and armed troops could be deployed in the country soils if the security conditions changed”; second, “the military intervention could be realized, if the intervention became inevitable for the solution of Karabakh conflict under the geopolitical circumstances”. The Karabakh problem, which has been given priority in foreign policy for every leader and government that came to power since independence, was a priority when it came to national security, and the first condition of ensuring national security was to ensure "territorial integrity"⁴¹⁸.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ter-Matevosyan, “Framing National Security Objectives”, 325.

⁴¹⁶ Cagla Gul Yesevi and Burcu Yavuz Tiftikçigil, “Türkiye-Azerbaijan Energy Relations: A Political and Economic Analysis,” *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy* 5, no. 1 (2015): 29.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, 29.

⁴¹⁸ Shaffer, “Foreign Policies of the States of the Caucasus”, 58.

Ilham Aliyev was slightly ostracized by the USA after the elections, which were questionable whether they were democratic or not, as mentioned. At this time, Putin was trying to influence the government to establish closer relations with Azerbaijan. Baku was very careful about this move too. In fact, when the Justice and Development Party (JDP/AKP) from Ankara tried to achieve normalization with Armenia, albeit for a short time, in 2009, Baku managed not to be sucked into the vacuum again, even when Moscow followed the same policies⁴¹⁹.

In November 2010, Aliyev announced that "Baku is in a position to resolve the Karabakh issue militarily at any time"⁴²⁰; In June of the following year, at the funeral ceremony for soldiers who lost their lives in military operations, he stated that "negotiations will continue with the hope that territorial integrity will be restored, and even if this seems impossible, the Azerbaijani state will restore its territorial integrity by using the military option"⁴²¹.

Shaffer explains 6 topics that Heydar Aliyev and his son Ilham Aliyev followed in foreign policy⁴²²: 1) not only being a member of an alliance, but instead keeping balanced relations with regional and global powers; 2) not to pursue ethnic and religious-based identity politics in main cooperation networks and alliances; 3) not to become a de facto vassal of a regional state, that is, to maintain full independence; 4) pursuing policies that will serve only the interests of citizens of the Azerbaijani state (and not the general population who are part of the Azerbaijani ethnic community); 5) the existence of transport and transport infrastructure agreements as part of the state's foreign policy instrument and foreign policy agenda; 6) actively ensuring the safe and recognized permanent borders of the state through the solution of the Karabakh conflict with Armenia.

⁴¹⁹ Cornell, "Azerbaijan Since Independence", 316.

⁴²⁰ German, Tracey. 2012. "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Security Issues in the Caucasus." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32 (2): 217. doi:10.1080/13602004.2012.694666.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Shaffer, "Foreign Policies of the States of the Caucasus", 56.

As a result, ideology and identity politics have little place in post-Cold War bilateral or multiple foreign policy relations and alliances in Azerbaijan⁴²³. In all areas of its foreign policy, Azerbaijan has followed a policy of balance and strengthened its state monopoly in power and military terms. Failure to ensure territorial integrity was seen by the government as the most important problem and a threat to national existence, and it was successfully securitized at a high level⁴²⁴.

Azerbaijan sometimes got closer to Russia by signing an alliance agreement with Moscow on the eve of the Russia-Ukraine war; Before that, it showed that it was not that dependent on Moscow by signing an even more binding alliance agreement with Türkiye⁴²⁵. In addition, it has pursued national interest-based policies against Russia, become a member of the Non-Alignment Movement, and pursues a statist and realistic foreign policy⁴²⁶. Moreover, it is very difficult to approach issues of national interest realistically, since the solution of land/ethnic problems is vital for the governments that come to power and may cause internal instability. Although its strategic position between East and West is beneficial, Baku, aware that it is in the middle of conflicts of interest of regional and global powers, has had to build its foreign relations on balance and interest, whether it wants it or not⁴²⁷. Additionally, according to some academics, gaining territorial integrity means for Baku to play a more active and leading role in regional issues, to be more insistent in its strategies, in other words, to transform from a "small" to a "great" power⁴²⁸.

3.3. Obstacles in Turkish Azerbaijani Relations from a Security Perspective

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ter-Matevosyan, "Framing National Security Objectives", 328.

⁴²⁵ Babayev, Azar, and Kavus Abushov. 2024. "State Survival vs Leaders' Survival: How Ethnic Conflicts Affect a State's International Alignment Behavior." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 35 (4): 606. doi:10.1080/09592318.2024.2331262.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Makili-Aliyev, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy", 3.

⁴²⁸ Ibrahimov ve Öztarsu, "Causes of the second karabakh war", 606.

Coming from a common ethnic identity and language family has positively affected the relations between the two states. However, these are not the only factors in bilateral relations, and it is even more important to have similar ideas in foreign policy, economy, international relations and to act accordingly, and to be geographically close. This is what brought Türkiye and Azerbaijan closer. Moreover, while intellectual effort has created the ideological base, linguistic proximity has developed common social understanding, and geographical proximity has facilitated military and energy cooperation. In the 90s, in the words of Heydar Aliyev in 1994, relations began to be referred to as "one nation, two states", and especially in the second half of the nineties, relations were raised to the level of strategic partnership. In the strengthening of bilateral relations, the common enemy perception created against Armenia, Türkiye's geostrategic position and Azerbaijan's rich energy resources have been factors that have strengthened the relations from the nineties to the present day⁴²⁹.

In this section, the development of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations from the early 2000s to the 44-day Second Karabakh War in 2020 will be discussed. These relations will be examined within the framework of how and to what extent state-based security concerns affect bilateral security relations. The basis of the security dimension in Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations lies in Azerbaijan's conflict with Armenia and the Karabakh problem⁴³⁰. Although Türkiye could not provide aid as the Azeris expected, considering the risk of Russia's intervention in the Azerbaijan-Armenia war, it stood by Azerbaijan by providing unconditional support in the Karabakh conflict. This situation was decisive for Azerbaijanis to see Türkiye as the protector of Azerbaijan⁴³¹.

With the JDP coming to power in Türkiye in the 2002 elections, changing foreign policy orientations began to aim to improve the strategic importance and autonomy of

⁴²⁹ A. Gencehan Babiş, *Azerbaijan-Turkey Relations (1988–2018): "Evaluating 'One Nation Two States' Discourse"* (MSc thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2018), 18.

⁴³⁰ Muharrem Ekşi, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkileri: Söylemden Reelpolitiğe," *Avrasya Etütleri* 36, no. 2 (2009): 101.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

the country⁴³². The process, which changed slowly and carefully, also played an important role in the consultancy of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was the Prime Minister at the time before becoming the Minister of Foreign Affairs. As he mentioned in his book "Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position", which he published in 2001⁴³³, Davutoglu defined Turkish foreign policy as "a comprehensive historical-cultural reading of Türkiye's position in international politics, which emphasized the country's He based it on "Ottoman legacy and Islamic traditions"⁴³⁴.

The emphasis on Ottoman identity included a comment on Türkiye's central character in the region and the fact that it could have different regional approaches and thus become strategically important in general⁴³⁵. Nevertheless, during this period, Ankara gave priority to the Middle East and Arab states in terms of strategic importance⁴³⁶. So much so that the Central Asian states and Azerbaijan lost their importance in Türkiye's eyes in the 2000s, compared to the 90s⁴³⁷. For example, the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2010 further strengthened relations with this region.

To go into more detail, in his words in 2013, Davutoglu stated that Ankara faced many difficulties such as the US intervention in Iraq after the September 11 events, the Russia-Georgia War, and the normalization processes with Armenia, and in a sense,

⁴³² Sinan Ülgen, "A Transformed Turkey: What Is the Role for Ankara as a Regional Power?," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (Summer–Fall 2012): 42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2012.0038>.

⁴³³ Ülgen, "A Transformed Turkey", 42; Seçkin Köstem, "Geopolitics, Identity and Beyond: Türkiye's Renewed Interest in the Caucasus and Central Asia," in *Türkiye's Pivot to Eurasia*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2019), 114, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429023064>; Erşen, "Geopolitics versus ideology", 64.

⁴³⁴ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, interview published in *AUC Cairo Review (Egypt)*, March 12 2012, "How do you define Türkiye's strategic interests today?"; Ülgen, "A Transformed Turkey", 42; Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Speech Delivered by Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye at the Conference of Ambassadors in Ukraine, 2 October 2012, Kiev." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 2 Ekim 2012. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-delivered-by-mr_-ahmet-davuto%C4%9Flu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-Türkiye-at-the-conference-of-ambassadors-in-ukraine_-2-october-2012_-kiev.en.mfa.

⁴³⁵ Ülgen, "A Transformed Turkey", 42.

⁴³⁶ Köstem, "Geopolitics, Identity and Beyond", 114.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

"a chronic conflict with all its neighbours"⁴³⁸. He stated that he was "struggling with foreign policy disagreements"⁴³⁹. He proposed to Erdoğan about six basic foreign policy approaches during his prime ministry. These were "a balance between security and freedom, zero problems with neighbours, a multidimensional foreign policy, a proactive regional foreign policy, an altogether new diplomatic style, and rhythmic diplomacy"⁴⁴⁰. The decades-long perception of constant threats from the environment would change and "Turkish people would begin to see their neighbourhood as an area of cooperation and partnership, not as a source of problems and potential threats"⁴⁴¹. In addition, Türkiye should aim to "guarantee its own security and stability by playing an active and constructive role in ensuring the security, stability and order of not only itself but also neighbouring states"⁴⁴².

According to Köprülü, the principle of zero problems with neighbours followed in the 2000s was not that compatible with Türkiye's foreign policy goals, but it certainly sounded pleasant⁴⁴³. For example, it was not parallel to the JDP's aim of becoming a member of the EU, and it did not serve the roles assigned to Türkiye in the nineties, such as 'spreading democracy and setting an example'⁴⁴⁴.

However, it cannot be said that this policy, which was put forward to solve the ten-year-old problems with countries such as Cyprus, Armenia, and Greece, along with the Arab Spring, was received that badly. As a matter of fact, Ankara stepped back

⁴³⁸ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Zero Problems in a New Era," *Foreign Policy*, March 21, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/21/zero-problems-in-a-new-era/>.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ülgen, "A Transformed Turkey", 42; Davutoğlu, "Zero Problems in a New Era".

⁴⁴³ Kemal Koprulu, "Paradigm Shift in Turkey's Foreign Policy," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 16, no. 1 (2009): 185, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24590749>.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

from aggressive approaches, developed its regional commercial and economic ties, and preferred to resort to soft power by strengthening its ties with these regions⁴⁴⁵.

There are certain turning points in Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations and certain regional and international factors that may cause the relations to reach their current level.

Ankara's relations with Baku after the Karabakh crisis in the nineties got off to a bad start with the coup attempt carried out by members of the special police force called OMON under the leadership of Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Rovshan Javadov in 1994⁴⁴⁶. This occasion created a crisis in relations between the two states, and it was revealed that Turkish officials were also involved in this incident. Aliyev even claimed that officials from the Turkish Embassy in Baku, and that the Turkish Prime Minister of the time, Tansu Çiller, was also involved in the coup⁴⁴⁷. Although Prime Minister Çiller went to Baku to apologize, Aliyev was not convinced enough. The relations were shaken to their core, and the main reason why they did not break completely was the close relations between Demirel and Aliyev, and Demirel had warned Aliyev about the coup in advance⁴⁴⁸.

In the nineties, there was this resentment experienced by Azerbaijan. During this period, in mid-2001, the Iran-Azerbaijan dispute over the Caspian Sea brought the parties "to the brink of military conflict"⁴⁴⁹. After the coup crisis in the nineties, a move that could be considered important, although not critical, in bilateral relations came from Ankara at this very moment. In August of the same year, Turkish military jets were flown in Azerbaijani airspace, an action that marked the first time that Turkish support against Azerbaijan, which remained in the rhetoric for many years, was seen⁴⁵⁰. After this action, which was well received by Baku, Ankara sent a warning

⁴⁴⁵ Ülgen, "A Transformed Turkey", 44.

⁴⁴⁶ Cornell, "Azerbaijan Since Independence", 85-86.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, 372.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, 373.

⁴⁴⁹ Hovsepyan and Tonoyan, "From alliance to 'soft conquest'", 628.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

memorandum to Tehran after the dispute, and then Chief of General Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu made an official visit to Azerbaijan with Turkish F-16s in the same month. According to Cornell, Iran's pressure was most likely aimed at preventing the progress of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline⁴⁵¹. After these flights and the visit, Türkiye made public statements that this was only related to the graduation ceremonies of Azerbaijani soldiers, but the message was clear for Tehran. This move, Cornell said, was a sign that Türkiye was “formulating its policy towards the Caucasus and showed very clearly where Turkish foreign affairs were heading”⁴⁵². In other words, as Kıvrıkoğlu declared, “Azerbaijan's and Türkiye's skies are one common sky”⁴⁵³.

The most important event that soured relations between brother countries after the coup attempt in 1994 was that Türkiye started the normalization process with Armenia⁴⁵⁴. In 2008, the then President of Türkiye, Abdullah Gül, attended the first match of the national teams of the two countries in Armenia, thus starting the process called “football diplomacy”⁴⁵⁵. According to Reynolds, this move by Gül represents a break from the tendency to act moderately in Turkish foreign policy⁴⁵⁶. Ali Babacan, who was Deputy Prime Minister at that time, also held meetings with Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Edward Nalbadian, and the foreign ministers of the parties met in non-public meetings. Again, at that time, such movements were very promising, especially in terms of bilateral relations, and were a sign that positive changes could be made in these relations⁴⁵⁷. These steps to normalization, which lasted approximately two years until the parties signed an agreement called the Zurich Protocols in 2010, failed. The circumstantial of this process and the reasons for its failure are detailed in

⁴⁵¹ Cornell, “Azerbaijan Since Independence”, 374.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 361.

⁴⁵⁴ Hovsepyan and Tonoyan, “From alliance to ‘soft conquest’”, 629.

⁴⁵⁵ “Bursa’da Futbol Diplomasisi,” *BBC News Türkçe*, October 15, 2009, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2009/10/091015_newarmenia.

⁴⁵⁶ Michael A. Reynolds, “Türkiye's Troubles in the Caucasus,” *Insight Türkiye* 10, no. 4 (2008): 21, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26330808>.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

the fifth chapter of this thesis. Nevertheless, this failed normalization, initiated in 2008, increased the importance of Azerbaijan and the Karabakh issue in Türkiye's regional foreign policy priorities. Indeed, this culminated in the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in 2010. Until the document, which officially known as the Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan, there was no fully predictable alliance relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, or rather, Türkiye's approach towards the region was vague enough to confirm the concerns in Baku⁴⁵⁸. Therefore, the signing of this agreement formed the basis of the mutual military partnership⁴⁵⁹. In this way, the trust lost by Baku was regained by Ankara and determination was shown regarding relations.

Additionally, here were several international and regional problems in the 2000s that affected Turkish Azerbaijani relations and Türkiye's orientation towards the Caucasus and specifically Azerbaijan. The first of these is the global financial crisis in 2008-9 and, more importantly, the Russian Georgian war in 2008.

The global financial crisis highlighted the economic system of China and Russia against US capitalism, and the crisis that broke out in the Eurozone also created economic problems in the EU and relatively reduced the interest in the Union⁴⁶⁰. Therefore, changing international financial conditions pushed Ankara towards alternative trade-economic cooperation on a regional basis. Excessive reliance or reliance on Western-based organizations no longer seemed very sustainable⁴⁶¹. As already mentioned, Davutoğlu's foreign policy change proposals were also on the rise during this period. In his speech at the 69th General Assembly of the United Nations,

⁴⁵⁸ Cornell, "Azerbaijan Since Independence", 389.

⁴⁵⁹ Hovsepian and Tonoyan, "From alliance to 'soft conquest'", 633.

⁴⁶⁰ Emre Erşen, "Introduction: Understanding the Dynamics of Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia," in *Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia: Geopolitics and Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order*, ed. Emre Erşen and Seçkin Köstem (London: Routledge, 2019), 16-17.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

President Erdoğan called on the UN to act on global problems and said⁴⁶², “The United Nations should put its weight behind the problems before any further delay, before more innocent people lose their lives, before the global conscience is further injured. I would like to underline that the world is bigger than 5. The fact that five permanent members of the UN Security Council neutralize the United Nations in a way that is incompatible with world realities is not a situation that the global conscience can accept”. Criticisms against the UN, such as “the world is bigger than 5”, represented the divergence in Ankara's relations with the West. For example, when there was open US support for the Gezi Park protests in Ankara in 2013; When there were problems regarding the extradition of Fethullah Gülen, who was accused of being the name behind the July 15 coup attempt in Türkiye; When the European Parliament criticized the repressive measures implemented afterwards, this divergence became more evident⁴⁶³. To this end, the anti-European rhetoric that Erdoğan used from time to time was welcomed positively by Azerbaijan⁴⁶⁴. The most natural reason for this is their pro-Armenian stance and unclear policies in the Karabakh conflict.

The dynamics in the Caucasus changed greatly with the invasion of Georgia by Russia in August 2008⁴⁶⁵. This initiative of Russia emerged as a display of power and revealed the ineffectiveness of the West in the region. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow exerted its influence in her near abroad for the first time, and the Turkish side was very worried in the light of these active attacks⁴⁶⁶. While Türkiye immediately prepared a proposal for the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform, excluding the United States and the EU, İlham Aliyev preferred to approach the events more

⁴⁶² Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, “Dünya 5’ten Büyüktür; BM Küresel ve Bölgesel Sorunlara Ağırlığını Koymalıdır,” *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, September 24, 2014, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/1373/dunya-5ten-buyuktur-bm-kuresel-ve-bolgesel-sorunlara-agirligini-koymalidir>.

⁴⁶³ Erşen, “Introduction: Understanding the Dynamics”, 21.

⁴⁶⁴ Babiş, *Azerbaijan-Turkey Relations (1988–2018)*,

⁴⁶⁵ Cornell, “Azerbaijan Since Independence”, 114.

⁴⁶⁶ Hovsepyan and Tonoyan, “From alliance to ‘soft conquest’”, 628-630.

carefully⁴⁶⁷. The Russian power in the region pushed Baku to prioritize military cooperation with Moscow, and this cooperation was put to the test until the Armenian-Azeri conflict in 2016⁴⁶⁸. In addition to its relations with Russia, Baku has also attributed critical value to its military relations with Ankara in order to change the decades-old border status quo, taking advantage of Türkiye's changing active foreign policy approaches⁴⁶⁹.

Azerbaijan has started to patiently direct its gains in the political and economic fields to the field of defence. At this point, thanks to the equipment received from Russia, Israel and Türkiye, Azerbaijan has reached a significant military power against Armenia. Although problems such as one million refugees and the occupation of twenty percent of its territory were initially the subject of diplomatic efforts, the deadlock that continued for many years forced Baku to invest in the military field, which can also be expressed as the use of hard power, as well as soft power strategies. As a matter of fact, it seems that this policy implemented by Azerbaijan, rather than diplomatic efforts, was decisive in winning the war in 2020⁴⁷⁰.

The Justice and Development Party came to power in Türkiye in 2002 and İlham Aliyev became the new president of Azerbaijan in 2003, ensuring that the relations between the two countries progressed under the leadership of them and on a more solid basis. It is worth reiterating that during this period, relations between Baku and Ankara were affected and reshaped by developments in the global arena. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its increasing influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia had important consequences for Türkiye's security policies, expanding the framework of

⁴⁶⁷ Köprülü, "Paradigm Shift in Türkiye's Foreign Policy," 193; Cornell, "Azerbaijan Since Independence", 114.

⁴⁶⁸ Hovsepian and Tonoyan, "From alliance to 'soft conquest'", 630.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Özsoy, "1918'den 2023'e Türkiye-Azerbaycan", 591-592.

security relations between the two countries during this period; topics such as energy security, cyber security, regional peace was included in the scope of cooperation⁴⁷¹.

Finally, regarding Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations, Hovsepyan and Tonoyan make the following essential comment:

... As for the goals of the alliance parties, they are common here. As a common goal we can mention securing Azerbaijan's revenge in the Karabakh issue, the desire to balance Russia and Iran in the South Caucasus, and the increase of Turkey's military-political role. Through the establishment of a military alliance, Azerbaijan aimed to leverage Turkey's military strength and defence technological assets, while Turkey, in return, perceived it to bolster its military and political influence over Azerbaijan and South Caucasus⁴⁷².

It should always be noted that the Karabakh conflict was an important constraint on Ankara's Caucasus policies, as it faced difficult choices. Although the government initially avoided direct military intervention in order not to strain its relations with other major powers, whether with Russia or the USA, and preferred to put the dispute on the table of international organizations, it also faced a large public supporter of Azerbaijan. With the balanced foreign policies implemented by Heydar Aliyev, who came to power in 1993, Azerbaijan strengthened its cooperation with the West but did not act in extreme opposition against Russia and Iran. Still, the bilateral relationship started quite enthusiastically, with the emphasis on cultural, ethnic, and linguistic ties. While great importance was given to economic and strategic relations, Türkiye was the only state that supported Azerbaijan in its territorial struggle from the beginning, taking the risk of damaging its relations with Russia and Armenia⁴⁷³.

In particular, relations based on the 'one nation, two states' discourse prevented the pursuit of realistic policies between the two countries for a while. Mythifying and sentimentalizing the relations between the two countries through the themes of friendship and brotherhood makes the relations even more sensitive. On the other hand, the fact that Türkiye's image in Azerbaijan largely depends on its stance on the

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, 597.

⁴⁷² Hovsepyan and Tonoyan, "From alliance to 'soft conquest'", 627.

⁴⁷³ Aydın, "Turkish Policy toward the Caucasus," 39–47.

Karabakh issue has constantly emerged as an important problem in the relations between the two countries⁴⁷⁴.

Security relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye are based on deep roots in a long history, a strategic alliance, and a strong foundation of mutual interests. These relations provide examples of cooperation and solidarity in a wide range of areas, from military fields to the fight against terrorism, from energy security to regional stability. However, considering the challenges and changing security dynamics that both countries may face, continued efforts and adaptation are required for the sustainability of this partnership. In this context, it is anticipated that Azerbaijan and Türkiye will continue to cooperate determinedly to further strengthen their common security interests and support regional stability.

⁴⁷⁴ Ekşi, “Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkileri”, 98-99.

CHAPTER 4

THE HISTORY OF THE KARABAKH CONFLICT FROM THE 1990S TO THE PRESENT, AND OFFICIAL DIALOGUES BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND AZERBAIJAN DURING THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR

This chapter delves into the historical background of the Karabakh conflict, focusing on the recent developments in the region. It begins by studying the origins of the dispute prior to the Soviet annexation, followed by an analysis of the conflict's evolution during the approximately seventy years of Soviet rule. Subsequently, the narrative turns to Azerbaijan's struggle for independence and the First Karabakh War (1988–1994). The chapter then explores the reemergence of the “frozen conflict” with the brief but intense April 2016 clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia, tracing how these tensions escalated into the 2020 war and discussing the factors that signalled the outbreak of hostilities. A detailed chronological account of the 44-day war in 2020 and subsequent developments is presented. Thereafter, the chapter offers reflections on the roles and interests of regional states and organizations. A central focus is placed on the uninterrupted close dialogue between Türkiye and Azerbaijan throughout the Second Karabakh War. Official communications from both governments are analysed to highlight the evolving dynamics of their bilateral relations during the conflict. Albeit the impact of the Second Karabakh War on the security perspectives within the bilateral relations, as well as its implications for both states, will be examined in the following chapter.

4.1. The Origins of the Karabakh Conflict: Conflict Shaped Over Time

The historical dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia represents a long-standing conflict that has deep roots in the Caucasus region. The complex relations between these two South Caucasus countries have been shaped by changing borders, ethnic

dynamics, and geopolitical factors throughout history. The conflict around the Karabakh region became more complicated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the war that broke out in the 1990s caused great losses. In this title, the historical roots, important turning points and current situation of this complex conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia will be examined.

Karabakh was essentially ruled by the Khazar kingdom until 965, and in this year the Khazar kingdom was destroyed as a result of a military agreement between the Oghuz Turks and the Russians⁴⁷⁵. Afterwards, it is not possible to say anything clear for the communities that have been here, as the theses of the parties often contradict each other. For example, there is plenty of evidence that Caucasian Albanians and Iranians were present in the region, but if so, it is very likely that they were assimilated by the Oghuz Turks who came to the region in the 10th century⁴⁷⁶. In fact, both Azerbaijani and Armenian academics have frequently discussed the Caucasian Albanians, claiming that the Albanians in the region have assimilated into their own ethnicity over the years. According to Azerbaijan, the Albanian population here mixed with the Turkish tribes that later flocked to the region and became Turkified in terms of language⁴⁷⁷. Speaking of Azerbaijan, the history of the region dating back to the 10th century is quite diverse. According to Rasizade, Turkish tribes raided the region in the 11th century, and in the 15th century it became a part of the Seljuk states, and then the management of the upper parts of Karabakh was given to the Armenians by the Seljuks, and the region took the Turkish-derived name 'Karabakh' during this period⁴⁷⁸. Likewise, according to Altstadt, the Turkish presence in the region dates to the Seljuks who came in the 11th century and was completely strengthened and established with

⁴⁷⁵ James J. Coyle, *Roots of the Conflict*, in *Russia's Interventions in Ethnic Conflicts: The Case of Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Springer International Publishing, 2021), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59573-9>.

⁴⁷⁶ Coyle, *Roots of the Conflict*, 2.

⁴⁷⁷ Cornell, Svante E., "Azerbaijan Before Soviet Rule," in *Azerbaijan Since Independence* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2011), 4–5, *Studies of Central Asia and the Caucasus Series*.

⁴⁷⁸ Rasizade, Alec, "Azerbaijan's Prospects in Nagorno-Karabakh," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 142, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48505076>.

the Mongol invasion⁴⁷⁹. However, it can be said that the people of the region first became Turkified with the dominant Turkish invasions and then converted to Islam with the Arab invasions⁴⁸⁰. For Azerbaijani researchers, the Albanian Christians in the region converted to Islam and left behind the Albanian churches, and these churches belong only to the Albanians (according to the Armenians' claims, these churches belonged to the Armenians, indicating their presence on these lands)⁴⁸¹. By the 14th century, most of the population of Karabakh was made up of Turks, but it was ruled by Armenians, and this continued until the 18th century, that is, until the administration collapsed due to internal conflict⁴⁸². After this date, in 1748, Karabakh was seized by Panakh Ali Khan, an ethnic Azerbaijani, and established an independent Khanate. This Khanate continued its existence until the Russians captured the region in 1805⁴⁸³.

Taking advantage of the weaknesses of the Ottoman and Iranian empires of the time, the Russian Empire emerged as the dominant power, especially in the South Caucasus, at the beginning of the 19th century⁴⁸⁴. At that time, Russia was a prominent power, militarily surpassing the Persian Empire, and under the diplomatic influence of England and France, the Shah confirmed Russia's new gains in the Caucasus with the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813⁴⁸⁵. However, in 1826 the Persians started a new war in the Caucasus, but the conflict lasted only fifteen months. The Persians had initially achieved significant victories, capturing much of modern-day Azerbaijan, but the Russians recovered by conquering Yerevan and eastern Armenia, forcing them to

⁴⁷⁹ Altstadt, Audrey, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), chap. "Origins of the Azerbaijani Turks," 2.

⁴⁸⁰ Rasizade, "Azerbaijan's Prospects in Nagorno-Karabakh", 141.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁸² Coyle, *Roots of the Conflict*, 2-3.

⁴⁸³ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁸⁴ Cornell, "Azerbaijan Before Soviet Rule", 7-9.

⁴⁸⁵ Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40, chap. "Russia's South."

retreat under their new leader Ivan Paskevich⁴⁸⁶. By signing the humiliating Treaty of Turkmenchay of 1828, the Persians were forced to accept the entire territory under Russian control, including Armenia. Paskevich then continued his war against the Ottomans and captured the Anatolian cities of Kars and Erzurum, the Meskhetian fortress and the port of Poti (in modern Georgia)⁴⁸⁷. In the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople, the Turks officially renounced their claims to Transcaucasia, accepting that the region was under the definitive control of the Russian Empire⁴⁸⁸. These peace agreements determined new borders, led to major demographic changes and the migration of thousands of Armenians to the region⁴⁸⁹. Russia implemented Christianization and settlement policies along with the restructuring of regional administration, and this process led to the abolition of the Karabakh khanate, as well as the Erivan and Nakhchivan khanates, in 1828⁴⁹⁰. In place of these two khanates previously ruled by the Azerbaijanis, a new administrative region called the Armenian Oblast was established in 1828, which would form the basis of the later Republic of Armenia⁴⁹¹. The decision to create this region arose from geo-strategic and power-political concerns rather than ethnological reasons. That is, these changes had an impact on the demographic structure and land ownership both in the short term and in the long term⁴⁹². Another radical change was the population change. While an average of 57,000 to 200,000 Armenians left the Ottoman and Iranian lands and migrated to Karabakh and Yerevan, approximately 30,000 of this population migrated to Karabakh alone, increasing their density in the region from 8.4% to around 34.8%⁴⁹³. According

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Azerbaijan, 1920–40*, Routledge Studies in the History of Russia and Eastern Europe 27 (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2, chap. 1, “The Azerbaijani Enlightenment: Constructing and Disseminating a Turkic Identity.”

⁴⁹⁰ Heiko Krüger, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Legal Analysis* (Berlin: Springer, 2010), chap. A, “The Territorial Status of Nagorno-Karabakh,” 9.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Altstadt, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Azerbaijan*, 3.

⁴⁹³ Krüger, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, 8.

to another supporting information, during the same period, St. Petersburg was favouring the Georgian and Armenian Christian elites and helping them attain military and political positions⁴⁹⁴. Likewise, Russia encouraged the migration of Armenians to Transcaucasia to create a buffer zone against Muslim countries. Russian imperial statistics put the immigration figures at approximately 84,000 Armenians from the Ottoman Empire and approximately 40,000 from Iran in 1911⁴⁹⁵. When the 1915 dispatches on the east of the Ottoman Empire were added, an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 Armenians were settled in the region including Karabakh⁴⁹⁶. In addition, while approximately 30% of the Muslims living in these two regions escaped from Russian rule, new villages were established on the lands purchased from Muslims with state support to accelerate the settlement of Armenians there⁴⁹⁷. As mentioned, with these acts of concentration, Russia wanted to create an advantageous region leading to the Middle East.

Despite all, in the 19th century, Transcaucasia became properly urbanized for the first time, and Baku differentiated from the surrounding regions, especially because it contained different ethnicities⁴⁹⁸. Starting from the 1870s, there was a great 'oil boom' in Baku, and Europe simply "came to Baku" with western investors and bankers⁴⁹⁹. Between 1821 and 1872, the Russian Empire had a monopoly on oil, which was itself extracted and traded. The oil boom occurred when drilling pipes were installed in 1972⁵⁰⁰. At this point, it is normal to predict that population balances would change. For example, in the census conducted in 1897, the number of Muslims in the empire constituted 17% of the total population, and during the same period, the Armenian and

⁴⁹⁴ Yemelianova, Galina M. 2023. "The *De Facto* State of Nagorno-Karabakh: Historical and Geopolitical Perspectives." *Europe-Asia Studies* 75 (8): 1341. doi:10.1080/09668136.2023.2214708.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Krüger, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, 21.

⁴⁹⁸ de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, 46.

⁴⁹⁹ Altstadt, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Azerbaijan*, 7.

⁵⁰⁰ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 21.

Russian population in Baku increased rapidly⁵⁰¹. While Russian peasants rushed to work in oil wells, Armenians rushed to work both as labour and trade. By the early years of the 20th century, the Russian population constituted the largest ethnic group in the region, and all these population imbalances would cause problems, especially in terms of housing and nutrition⁵⁰².

Due to social and political conflicts, Baku became the hearth of the revolution and tensions broke out. The West, which came to the region in droves due to its oil wealth, brought not only its money but also its ideas⁵⁰³. For those in Baku, these people were both hard-working and educated, and secular and romantic currents of thought had pushed Azerbaijanis to codify their language, to do things such as writing down folk tales and common traditions and history, which had awakened national consciousness in Western society in the 19th century⁵⁰⁴.

From February to November 1905, incidents took place in Yerevan and its surroundings, Nakhchivan, Shusha, Ganja, and Tbilisi, and it was reported that 128 Armenian and 158 Azerbaijani villages were destroyed and plundered⁵⁰⁵. For decades, starting from 1905 until the war that broke out in 1988, there was a Russian presence that could not bring definitive and clear aid to the region except for “ethnic manipulations”⁵⁰⁶. Nevertheless, in Azerbaijan, which experienced a cultural enlightenment at the end of the 19th century, there were developments, especially in the field of literature, along with the freedom brought by the events of 1905⁵⁰⁷. Games and stories on social reforms, women's place in society and religion, national

⁵⁰¹ Altstadt, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Azerbaijan*, 4.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, 28.

⁵⁰⁴ Altstadt, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Azerbaijan*, 21.

⁵⁰⁵ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 40.

⁵⁰⁶ Cornell, Svante E., ed., *The International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict: The Original “Frozen Conflict” & European Security* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 5, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-60006-6>.

⁵⁰⁷ Altstadt, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Azerbaijan*, 21-24.

consciousness, secularism, and many other subjects were written and performed in Azerbaijani Turkish⁵⁰⁸.

The First World War (1914-1918), which broke out about 10 years later, brought with it the possibility of Ottoman Türkiye returning to the old borders of its lands in the Caucasus (before 1878) with the collapse of the Russian Empire. Istanbul attempted to gain control over the Baku oil fields, the road between Baku and Batumi, and other strategic transportation routes. Following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Türkiye took back Ardahan, Kars and Batumi and advanced towards Baku, which was under the control of the Bolshevik Baku Commune and captured the city in May 1918. Baku then came under the control of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR, 1918–1920). ADR's pro-Türkiye stance was also expressed by including Türkiye's star and crescent on its national flag⁵⁰⁹.

ADR was founded as a parliamentary republic and emerged as the first Muslim republic with a constitution that included freedom of expression and civil rights⁵¹⁰. In addition, Turkish, not Russian, began to be used officially⁵¹¹. The parliamentary system of ADR had many coalition governments, but the emerging communist idea was opposed to this⁵¹². In the autumn of 1918, following the failure of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, it was predicted that it would lose its military superiority in the Caucasus region and be unable to support Azerbaijan's interests in Karabakh⁵¹³. In April 1920, a weak coalition government fell into the hands of the Red Army and the Azerbaijani Bolsheviks who cooperated with them, and the process of Azerbaijan's Soviet Socialist Republic began⁵¹⁴. According to the agreement signed

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Yemelianova, “The *De Facto* State of Nagorno-Karabakh”, 1342.

⁵¹⁰ Audrey L. Altstadt, *Frustrated Democracy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 8.

⁵¹¹ Ibid, 9.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Krüger, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, 13.

⁵¹⁴ Altstadt, *Frustrated Democracy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*, 9.

by the Armenians in the same period, Karabakh was initially planned to remain an autonomous region of Azerbaijan, and its final status was expected to be determined at the Paris Peace Conference held after the First World War⁵¹⁵. However, the peace conference in the spring of 1920 confirmed Azerbaijan's claim to Karabakh⁵¹⁶.

4.1.1. Changing Dynamics Under Soviet Rule

By 1920-21, the Bolsheviks had secured the South Caucasus and began to aim to suppress the nationalist feelings triggered by the collapsed Russian Empire in the region and to establish a socialist soviet society⁵¹⁷. Ethnic conflicts were tried to be resolved through indigenization policies and by giving official state rights and land to existing ethnic groups. Nevertheless, drawing the border was not as easy as it seemed and different options were reviewed. The solution for Azerbaijan and Armenia was brought in 1921-23 by calling both entities the Soviet Socialist Republic and creating the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region and connecting it to the Azerbaijan SSR. While Zangezur was annexed to the Armenian SSR, Nakhchivan became an Autonomous Republic⁵¹⁸. These decisions, did not satisfy the parties, but the conditions of the period pushed both republics to 'live together in peace'.

Until the late 80s, there were population changes and many requests for border changes on the Armenian side. For example, between 1946 and 1949, approximately 360,000 Armenians immigrated to Soviet Armenia from abroad. On February 22, 1946, Stalin approved the document regarding the implementation of these migrations, and according to the plan, Armenians from many countries, from the USA to Iran, from France to Palestine, from Greece to Türkiye, were settled in Soviet lands⁵¹⁹.

⁵¹⁵ Krüger, 13.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid, 13, 45.

⁵¹⁷ Farid Shafiyev, "The Forced Resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia, 1948–1953," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2019): 180, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2019.1620002>.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Shafiyev, "The Forced Resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia", 181.

In addition, the Karabakh issue was brought to the agenda again with every change of power in the USSR⁵²⁰. The 1936 Soviet Union Constitution mentioned the absolute necessity of the consent of the relevant republics in border changes. Karabakh was seen as an exceptional and special case for the region, and if these requests were fulfilled, the territorial integrity of the two republics would have changed significantly⁵²¹. This migration project, which ended after Stalin's death in 1953, provided Armenians with new hopes in the context of expansionism.

Regarding this problem, which became an indicator of Armenian national identity, during the 1963-1965 Khrushchev period, petitions were submitted by the Armenian administrators of the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) to condemn Azerbaijan and to annex the NK to Armenia⁵²². These demands were also expressed by Yerevan in 1966, but no positive results were obtained⁵²³. The inconclusive demands of the Armenians came to the fore again with the *perestroika* (reform) and *glasnost* (transparency) policies implemented by Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985, and the Armenian lobby, encouraged by this situation, accelerated its work again⁵²⁴. Although it is not correct to say that the population influx is the source of the conflicts experienced in the nineties and today, it is likely to be one of the triggering factors⁵²⁵.

Aganbekyan, one of Gorbachev's advisors, mentioned in his statements that Armenians should evaluate this reform period correctly⁵²⁶. As a matter of fact, according to observations and allegations, Armenian activists in Karabakh had already created their networks of people and weapons for their actions in 1986, two years

⁵²⁰ Demet Ş. Acar and Murat Çemrek, "Kafkasya'nın Kronikleşen Çatışma Alanı: Dağlık Karabağ Özerk Bölgesi," *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, no. 8 (Winter 2005): 125.

⁵²¹ Shafiyev, "The Forced Resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia", 183.

⁵²² Acar and Çemrek, "Kafkasya'nın Kronikleşen Çatışma Alanı", 125.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Shafiyev, "The Forced Resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia", 194.

⁵²⁶ Krüger, 18.

before the start of the war⁵²⁷. The termination of the Politburo member of that period, Heydar Aliyev, was also represented as a resignation⁵²⁸. In late 1987, the unification request of Karabakh Armenians was welcomed and directly supported by Armenia⁵²⁹.

4.1.2. Struggle for Independence: 1988-1994 Karabakh War

Nationalists and local communist parties had begun to organize in both regions. By 1988, Armenians in Karabakh and Armenia had started their actions with flyers and mass demonstrations⁵³⁰. In February 1988, Armenians held demonstrations in Stepanakert, the capital of Karabakh, demanding the unification of Karabakh with Armenia, and these demonstrations were also responded to in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia⁵³¹. In the chaos that ensued, Soviet troops had to intervene in the region, and Azerbaijanis in the region began to leave Karabakh due to security concerns⁵³².

On February 22, 1988, a Soviet general's statement on Azerbaijani radio that two Azerbaijanis had been killed in Karabakh -in Askeran Village on the administrative border- sparked the beginning of the war⁵³³. On February 27, Azerbaijanis launched attacks against Armenians in the city of Sumgait, near Baku. Most of these attacks were individual, carried out at night, and were organized in ways such as hostage taking and stock destruction⁵³⁴. Different allegations emphasized the passiveness of

⁵²⁷ Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden* (New York ve Londra: New York University Press, 2003), 17; Krüger, 18.

⁵²⁸ Krüger, 18.

⁵²⁹ Shale Horowitz, "Explaining Post-Soviet Ethnic Conflicts: Using Regime Type to Discern the Impact and Relative Importance of Objective Antecedents," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 29, no. 4 (2001): 638, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990120102129>.

⁵³⁰ Krüger, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, 18.

⁵³¹ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), 1.

⁵³² Erik Melander, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Revisited," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 64, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26925121>.

⁵³³ Popjanevski, Johanna, "International Law and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," in *The International Politics of the Armenian Azerbaijani Conflict*, ed. Svante E. Cornell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 25.

⁵³⁴ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 3.

the police and pointed out that the incident could be an official provocation⁵³⁵. Gorbachev arrested many Azerbaijanis for "anti-Armenian" activities and sent troops to Sumgait. However, there was no similar reaction to the Armenian attacks on Azerbaijani victims, and the Soviet and Western media described the incident as "extremism" within "Muslim" Azerbaijanis⁵³⁶. The news usually originated in Yerevan and Stepanakert, rarely from Baku, and Azerbaijani victims were generally ignored. 32 people, 26 Armenians and 6 Azerbaijanis, lost their lives, and houses in the city were burned and destroyed⁵³⁷. Although the exact cause of the Sumgait tension is unknown⁵³⁸, the existence of a provocation by the KGB is highly likely⁵³⁹.

The root of the conflict was the "unification" of the Armenians, that is, the administration of Karabakh was taken from Azerbaijan and given to Armenia⁵⁴⁰. The summer of 88 was peaceful, but conflicts continued in the region. To put the situation more clearly, at the end of November, nearly 180,000 Armenians left Azerbaijan and nearly 160,000 Azerbaijanis left Armenia⁵⁴¹. One of the noticed facts was that Moscow underestimated the Armenians' desire for unification. On March 24, 1988, large investments were made in Karabakh by Moscow and promises of cultural development were made, but this was not enough to suppress the demands of the Armenians⁵⁴². Naturally, the Azerbaijani side was firmly opposed to these separatist actions. The authorities in Baku could not foresee that the conflicts would result in great losses after

⁵³⁵ Altstadt, "The Azerbaijani Turks", 197.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Popjanevski, "International Law and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict", 26.

⁵³⁸ Melander, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Revisited," 59.

⁵³⁹ Krüger, 19.

⁵⁴⁰ Yemelianova, "The *De Facto* State of Nagorno-Karabakh", 1349.

⁵⁴¹ Popjanevski, "International Law and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict". 26.

⁵⁴² Melander, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Revisited," 62.

4 years, and they hoped that the USSR administration would take the necessary precautions⁵⁴³.

On the Azerbaijani side, a local opposition arose in this context. The academic community organized an anti-communist people's movement in 1988, and it was established in secret meetings under the name of the Azerbaijan People's Front (APF) in 1988-89. Ebulfəz Elçibey (Aliyev), a historian and academic who was in and out of prison for his anti-Soviet activities in the 1970s, emerged as the leading figure of the APF and was elected president of the movement at the Popular Front congress held in 1989. The first step taken to demand independence was the organization of demonstrations against the passivity of the Soviet administration in "Azadlıq (Freedom) Square" (Lenin Square) in 1988. Due to police intervention, the demonstrators were dispersed on December 3, and many demonstrators were arrested. During the same period, the Popular Front would impose itself on the current authorities, and with the support gained in the following years, Elçibey would be elected the first president of independent Azerbaijan in the elections to be held in 1992⁵⁴⁴.

The failure to control Sumgait events by the AzCP was the catalyst for this process. APF politicians have organized many debates and publications regarding their economic, political, and social demands⁵⁴⁵. The parties never backed down from their demands. Another triggering event, which can be interpreted as an intimidation to Moscow, was that in December 1989, the Armenian Supreme Soviet "gave" Karabakh to Armenia and expanded its citizenship rights to include the people of this region⁵⁴⁶. This action was condemned by Azerbaijan as a major violation of its border rights⁵⁴⁷.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Altstadt, *Frustrated Democracy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*, 11-20.

⁵⁴⁵ Süha Bölükbaşı, *Azerbaijan: A Political History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), chap. 7 The Road to Independence, 185.

⁵⁴⁶ Johannes Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy*, Post-Soviet Politics series (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 177.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

Again, at the end of November of the same year, Moscow returned Karabakh to Azerbaijan because she could not find a common solution and maintain order, did not want to govern the region itself⁵⁴⁸. The Armenian side commented that Gorbachev wanted to continue the current situation and over time they took on an anti-Soviet identity. Like Azerbaijan, the Armenian National Movement took over the political administration with the elections held in 1990⁵⁴⁹. At the same time, since Azerbaijan retained the current administration, it relied on Moscow to maintain this situation. Ultimately, this led to the self-development of the Armenian administration and the establishment of a regular army⁵⁵⁰.

Azerbaijan declared its independence on August 30, 1991, and Armenia declared its independence on September 21, and when the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, the war emerged as a dispute between two independent states⁵⁵¹. The collapse of the Soviet Union left behind a large amount of military ammunition and became the catalyst for the conflict to reach a deadly level⁵⁵². As a matter of fact, the Khojaly Massacre (known as The Black January) took place in the Khojaly town of Azerbaijan on 25-26 February 1992 and went down in history as the final catalyst of the conflict⁵⁵³.

This massacre was carried out by forces under the control of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, supported by Armenia. Khojaly is a town in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and had a strategic location in the Karabakh region, where the conflict took place. In 1992, Armenian-controlled troops captured Khojaly and

⁵⁴⁸ Johannes Geukjian, *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace: Opportunities, Obstacles, Prospects*, Post-Soviet Politics series (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 10.

⁵⁴⁹ Cornell, "The Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict and European Security" in *The International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict*, 7.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Laurence Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), chap. A "Violent Unravelling," 32.

⁵⁵² Melander, 72.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

launched a major attack against the town's residents, opening fire for two days against hundreds of innocent Azerbaijani civilians, women, and children⁵⁵⁴.

According to Goltz, the Armenian media softened the events and then reflected them to the international community. Again, according to Goltz's figures, 613 people lost their lives, approximately 1000 people were injured and 1275 people were taken hostage. Nevertheless, the incident caused great outrage in the international community and was condemned by the United Nations. The Khojaly Massacre went down in history as one of the most painful events of the Karabakh War and is still a part of the political tensions in the region⁵⁵⁵.

Meanwhile, Shusha and Lachin were captured by Armenia in May. During this period, Soviet leader Ayaz Muttalibov was the head of the Azerbaijan Soviet, and these events increased unfavourable reactions against him. On June 7, 1992, in the first elections of the independent republic, Elchibey became the president⁵⁵⁶. Although some success was achieved at the beginning, he lost elite and social support with successive territorial losses due to the lack of military and political experience. As a result, Armenian forces gained control of the targeted regions and Nagorno-Karabakh⁵⁵⁷. Elchibey, who could only remain president for about a year, withdrew to his hometown Nakhchivan in June 1993, and former Soviet leader Heydar Aliyev took over the administration from that point on⁵⁵⁸.

As can be seen, the early nineties were a period in which turmoil continued. As mentioned above, while the Armenian side was rapidly arming, the conflict, which had become an issue of two independent states, became international with the coup against

⁵⁵⁴ Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan*, 142.

⁵⁵⁵ Thomas Goltz, "The Successes of the Spin Doctors: Western Media Reporting on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2012): 189, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2012.694664>.

⁵⁵⁶ Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan*, 38.

⁵⁵⁷ Cornell, Svante E. 1998. "Religion as a Factor in Caucasian Conflicts." *Civil Wars* 1 (3): 51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249808402381>.

⁵⁵⁸ Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan*, 38.

Gorbachev in 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union⁵⁵⁹. Whenever third parties tried to resolve this imbalance in the region, conflicts damaged these efforts⁵⁶⁰. Boris Yeltsin, who was elected as the president of the Russian Federation in June 1991, and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev attempted mediation efforts in September of the same year, but mutual gunfire made this unsuccessful⁵⁶¹. In mid-1992, after the Armenian attacks on Nakhchivan, Türkiye also attempted mediation, but this did not reach a conclusion due to Russia's indifference⁵⁶².

When the NK Problem was brought to the OSCE meetings, the issue gained a completely international dimension. As a result of the mediation of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Iran, as well as the USA and France, a ceasefire agreement was signed in April 1994. After the ceasefire agreement, which remained in force despite many violations, efforts for a solution were expressed at the CIS and OSCE summit meetings. Leaders who came together in line with intensifying pressures, domestic political calculations, and economic interests with the support of mediators began to approach the problem more moderately⁵⁶³.

The 1994 ceasefire agreement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Nagorno-Karabakh administration, which remained in force until the conflict broke out in 2020, was as follows⁵⁶⁴:

Responding to the call for a cease-fire, as set out in the Bishkek Protocol of May 5, 1994, and based on the Protocol of 18 February 1994, the conflicting Parties agreed on the following:

1. Ensure the full cease-fire and cessation of hostilities from 00 hours 01 minutes of May 12, 1994. Relevant orders to cease-fire will be given and communicated

⁵⁵⁹ Cornell, "Religion as a Factor in Caucasian Conflicts," 51.

⁵⁶⁰ "Karabakh and the South Caucasus." 2001. *The Adelphi Papers* 41 (338): 30-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/05679320108449662>.

⁵⁶¹ "Karabakh and the South Caucasus," 31.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Acar and Çemrek, "Kafkaslar Kronikleşen Çatışma Alanı", 127.

⁵⁶⁴ "Cease-fire Agreement," 1994, accessed August 10, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140702050059/http://nkr.am/en/ceasefire-agreement/147/>.

to the commanders of military units responsible for their implementation, not later than May 11, 1994. On May 12 until 23.00, the Parties shall exchange the texts of their cease-fire orders with a view to their possible mutual complementarities and further harmonization of substantive provisions of similar documents.

2. Request the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation to convene in Moscow no later than May 12 an urgent meeting of defence ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh army commander to agree on the lines of troops pullback and other urgent military-technical issues and prepare the deployment of an advance team of international observers.

3. This agreement will be used to complete the negotiations in the next 10 days and conclude an Agreement on Cessation of the Armed Conflict no later than May 22 of this year.

4. This agreement will take effect immediately after the Mediator notifies that he has received from the opposing forces completely identical documents signed by authorized representatives.

Within the framework of the important steps taken for the solution of the Karabakh problem, some principles foreseeing the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan were accepted at the Lisbon Summit organized by the OSCE in 1996. OSCE Minsk Group brought together the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and NKAO in 1997 and presented a proposal. According to this proposal, NKAO would be granted autonomy, and the Armenians would withdraw from the Azerbaijani lands they occupied, including the Shusha and Lachin Corridor, and these lands would be given under the control of the OSCE. However, the fact that this proposal was insufficient to solve the problem made diplomatic attempts for a solution unsuccessful, which led to the end of the Armenian president of the time, Ter-Petrosyan. With the coming to power of Robert Kocharyan in Armenia, Diaspora Armenians further increased their influence on Armenia's foreign policy. In the first years of his rule, Kocharyan avoided negotiations regarding the solution of the Karabakh problem, saying that Azerbaijani President Aliyev's interlocutor was the NKAO administration. Armenia diplomatically emphasized that no other status other than independence could be accepted for NKAO⁵⁶⁵.

⁵⁶⁵ Acar and Çemrek, "Kafkaslar Kronikleşen Çatışma Alanı", 127-129.

4.2. Reignited Conflict: Second Karabakh War

The Second Karabakh War, which broke out in 2020, created a new aspect of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The combination of deep historical disagreements, territorial claims and ethnic tensions from the past turned this war into an escalating crisis in the Karabakh region. The long-standing hostility between the two sides and the accumulation of conflicts in the post-Soviet period led to violent clashes in 2020. This conflict, which lasted especially for 44 days, caused serious changes in the region and strategic gains for Azerbaijan. Understanding the course and consequences of the Second Karabakh War will provide a deep perspective on the complexity of political dynamics in the region.

The Four-Day War, which started on April 1, 2016, and lasted until April 5 of the same year, caused the ceasefire declared by the parties in 1994 to be damaged and the "frozen conflict" that had been ongoing for more than 20 years to become dynamic⁵⁶⁶. The conflicts came to the fore as a reminder of the First Karabakh War, which broke out after independence, and Azerbaijan liberated nearly 5000 acres of land⁵⁶⁷. Nevertheless, the success achieved by Azerbaijan because of this short skirmish was seen as more symbolic and healing the traumas of the heavy defeat experienced in the 90s⁵⁶⁸. In his statements on April 2, İlham Aliyev stated that "they are not guilty of anything", especially that they "responded to the provocations", that they were currently "fighting on their own territory" and "they did not invade Armenia's territory"⁵⁶⁹.

⁵⁶⁶ Gunay Hajiyeva, "Seven Years Pass Since Armenia–Azerbaijan Four-Day War in Karabakh Region," *Caspian News*, April 2, 2023, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/seven-years-pass-since-armenia-azerbaijan-four-day-war-in-karabakh-region-2023-4-2-0/>.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Aleksandra Jarosiewicz and Maciej Falkowski, "The Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh," *Analyses*, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), April 6, 2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>.

⁵⁶⁹ İlham Aliyev, "Speech by İlham Aliyev at the Meeting of the Security Council under the President of Azerbaijan," Azerbaijan Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2 April 2016, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/19323>.

In this duration, aside from the debate about whether a sustainable ceasefire could be reached, the conflicts revealed the facts about the balance of power between the parties⁵⁷⁰. Both sides used many different weapons, both from the air and on the ground, such as rocket launchers, tanks, and kamikaze drones⁵⁷¹. Although Russia mediated the end of the conflict on April 5, minor clashes continued from time to time until April 11. While both sides blamed each other for the beginning and escalation of the conflict, as well as the deaths and injuries, the USA stated that a military solution to the conflict could not be found⁵⁷².

Among the major reasons why the conflict escalated further in 2016 and beyond, the inadequacy of international public opinion became the target of criticism. Especially, the OSCE Minsk Group had “failed to make progress in negotiations” for years⁵⁷³. Nevertheless, the co-chairs of the group expressed their concerns by publishing a statement on the same day that the conflicts started, stating that the ceasefire in 1994 was violated, that war would not offer a solution and that peaceful means should be chosen⁵⁷⁴. During the peace process, the unconditional support of the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was also noted, with all eyes turned to Russia, which is also the military ammunition provider of Azerbaijan, with its close relations with Armenia and military presence in the country⁵⁷⁵. In May 2016, the heads of the parties agreed on the need for a full ceasefire and developments regarding the OSCE's presence in the region⁵⁷⁶. In any case, the difficulty of diplomatic negotiations

⁵⁷⁰ Jarosiewicz and Maciej, “The Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh”.

⁵⁷¹ International Crisis Group, “Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Visual Explainer,” accessed August 10, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-visual-explainer>.

⁵⁷² Greg Botelho and Gul Tuysuz, “Azerbaijan Declares Unilateral Ceasefire Amid Nagorno-Karabakh Violence,” *CNN*, 3 April 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/02/asia/azerbaijan-armenia-violence/index.html>.

⁵⁷³ Jarosiewicz and Maciej, “The Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh”.

⁵⁷⁴ Aslanlı, Araz. “The Politics of Ceasefire and the Occupation,” in *Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Historical and Political Perspectives*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Michael M. Gunter (New York: Routledge, 2023), 161. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003261209>.

⁵⁷⁵ Jarosiewicz and Maciej, “The Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh”.

⁵⁷⁶ Aslanlı, “The Politics of Ceasefire and the Occupation,” 161-162.

added to the deadlock in international solutions, and the assistance of third parties became of great importance⁵⁷⁷. Nevertheless, both in the post-independence period and after the 2016 conflicts, Azerbaijan has sought solutions to the conflict in international organizations. In his speech at the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings held on 8 and 9 December 2016, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov stated that Armenia's military presence in the captured Azerbaijani lands is illegal, and that the existence of armed conflicts and displaced people are the most important factors that threaten peace in the OSCE region⁵⁷⁸.

Coming to 2020, there were changes in both states. Nikol Pashinyan, who came to power in Armenia in 2018, signalled that he would approach the Karabakh issue with a more conciliatory attitude⁵⁷⁹. He stated in many national and international platforms that Armenian citizens elected him and that it would not be right for him to decide on behalf of Karabakh and that NK should represent itself⁵⁸⁰. Pashinyan, who came to the Presidency after Serzh Sargsyan, who was deposed after the failure in 2016, stated that he would focus more on internal problems and focus more on Armenia's democratization process⁵⁸¹. He was not from Karabakh like his predecessors, and as a matter of fact, he was not closely connected to the elites in Karabakh like them⁵⁸². In addition, unlike the previous leaders, the fact that someone who was not from

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Farid Malikov, "Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Speaks at OSCE Ministerial Council," *Caspian News*, 13 Aralık 2016, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-foreign-minister-speaks-at-osce-ministerial-council-1493373296963/>.

⁵⁷⁹ Dilaver, Tutku. "Nokta Atışlardan Silahlı Çatışmaya: Azerbaycan-Ermenistan Savaşın Eşiğine Nasıl Geldi?" *Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi (AVİM)*, 21 Temmuz 2020. <https://avim.org.tr/tr/Analiz/NOKTA-ATISLARDAN-SILAHLI-CATISMAYA-AZERBAYCAN-ERMENISTAN-SAVASIN-ESIGINE-NASIL-GELDI>.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ "The Uneasy New Status Quo in Nagorno-Karabakh." 2022. *Strategic Comments* 28 (1): x. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2022.2045079>.

⁵⁸² Azar Babayev, and Kamran Mahmudov. 2023. "The Provocative Effects of Democratization: Assessing the Relationship between the Regime Transition in Armenia and the Escalation of the Karabakh Conflict in 2018–2020." *Democratization* 30, no. 5 (2023): 908. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2023.2195168>.

Karabakh became the head of Armenia also worried the Armenians of Karabakh⁵⁸³. In the process following all this elite crisis, opposition, and public criticism, Pashinyan especially started to adopt a more nationalist attitude⁵⁸⁴. Before September 2020, in his speech on August 5, 2019, in the city of Stepanakert, which is considered the capital of Karabakh, he appeared before the public with the slogans "*miatsum* (unification)", which was very popular in the 1980s and 90s and was common among Armenian nationalists⁵⁸⁵. This attitude of Pashinyan, who met with Ilham Aliyev four times between May 2018 and March 2019 and aimed to improve bilateral relations, was not considered normal⁵⁸⁶. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, who responded to Pashinyan's statement "Karabakh is Armenia, full stop" two months later with "Karabakh is Azerbaijan, exclamation"⁵⁸⁷, also criticized the OSCE Minsk group in his statements at the beginning of July 2020. Requesting "clarity", Aliyev stated that the 'Karabakh is Armenia' discourse harmed the negotiation process shaped by the Minsk Group and criticized the group for not showing sufficient reaction⁵⁸⁸.

Additionally, on July 12, 2020, attacks by Armenia took place on the Tovuz border, and immediately afterwards, Azerbaijani armed forces responded with countermeasures, stopping further Armenian advances⁵⁸⁹. What is interesting at this point was that the Tovuz region was far from Nagorno-Karabakh⁵⁹⁰. The region has a very important position in terms of regional cooperation between Azerbaijan, Türkiye,

⁵⁸³ Ibid, 900.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Kucera, Joshua. "Pashinyan Calls for Unification between Armenia and Karabakh." *Eurasianet*, August 6, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/pashinyan-calls-for-unification-between-armenia-and-karabakh>.

⁵⁸⁶ "The Uneasy New Status Quo in Nagorno-Karabakh," x.

⁵⁸⁷ Joshua Kucera, "Azerbaijan Escalates 'Punctuation War' with Armenia," *Eurasianet*, October 7, 2019, <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-escalates-punctuation-war-with-armenia>.

⁵⁸⁸ Rehimov, Ruslan, *Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev: AGİT Minsk Grubundan somut açıklamalar bekliyoruz*, Anadolu Ajansı, July 6, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyev-agit-minsk-grubundan-somut-aciklamalar-bekliyoruz/1901778>.

⁵⁸⁹ Jeyhun Aliyev, "Tensions Rise Along Armenian-Azerbaijani Border," *Anadolu Ajansı*, July 18, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/tensions-rise-along-armenian-azerbaijani-border/1914729>.

⁵⁹⁰ Dilaver, *Nokta Atışlardan Silahlı Çatışmaya*.

and Georgia. The Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, part of the Southern Gas Corridor and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway appear to pass through this region. The day after the attack, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated that "what Armenia did was unacceptable" and that "they will stand by Azerbaijan no matter what Baku chooses as a solution"⁵⁹¹. The United Nations, the European Union, NATO and the OSCE insisted on ending the conflicts immediately and continuing the talks⁵⁹².

For Azerbaijan, the recovery of Karabakh and other lost territories and the acquisition of jurisdiction over these regions were both one of the definers of today's Azerbaijani identity and the "unfinished business" of independence gained in 1991⁵⁹³. For Armenia, the existence and acquisition of Karabakh as an independent entity meant the correction of the Soviet Union's "irreparable" border decisions through democracy⁵⁹⁴. Therefore, although it would be wrong to characterize the disputes as merely a "post-Soviet frozen dispute", especially in the period after 2010, it would be best to characterize them as a more dynamic dispute⁵⁹⁵.

4.2.1. The Course of the 44 Day War

The war in Karabakh officially broke out on September 27, 2020, following clashes and tensions that erupted in July 2016 and 2020. The war began on the morning of September 27 with intense clashes along the Nagorno-Karabakh border crossing. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence stated that Armenian armed forces had initiated hostilities by targeting civilian settlements and were defending themselves with a counterattack. In response to Azerbaijan's claims, Armenia claimed that Azerbaijan

⁵⁹¹ Aliyev, "Tensions Rise Along Armenian-Azerbaijani Border."

⁵⁹² Dilaver, *Nokta Atışlardan Silahlı Çatışmaya*.

⁵⁹³ Laurence Broers, "From 'Frozen Conflict' to Enduring Rivalry: Reassessing the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 43, no. 4 (2015): 558, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1042852>.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid, 558-559.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid, 570.

had launched a large-scale, pre-planned attack. Following the clashes, Azerbaijan declared general mobilization and martial law⁵⁹⁶.

By the second day of fighting, both sides had suffered dozens of casualties. This was the most since the 2016 conflict, which saw hundreds of casualties, and there were reports of civilian deaths. The day after the fighting began on Sunday, Azerbaijan reported capturing key areas of Talysh, and Turkish security sources reported that Azerbaijan had neutralized some 400 targets, 10 military aircraft, and 20 armed vehicles. Regional states and global powers had begun to fear the war would escalate further, and the US, EU, and Russia had called for an immediate end to the clashes⁵⁹⁷.

During the clashes, the Armenian side claimed that Turkish troops were present in the region, that they were directing Azerbaijani drones, and that Turkish weapons were being used in the fighting. They also claimed that Türkiye had sent approximately 4,000 Syrian troops to fight in the region and that Türkiye was also providing intelligence assistance to Azerbaijan. These claims were immediately and strongly denied by both Türkiye and Azerbaijan, emphasizing Armenia's discomfort with Turkish Azerbaijani solidarity⁵⁹⁸.

By September 29, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence reported that Armenian forces were moving to regain lost ground in the Fuzuli and Cebail, Aghdere, and Terter directions, and that Azerbaijan had countered the attacks by preventing them. By the

⁵⁹⁶ Virtual Karabakh. "The Second Karabakh War: Patriotic War or 'Operation Iron Fist.'" Accessed July 31, 2025. <https://www.virtualkarabakh.az/en/post-item/52/2871/the-second-karabakh-war.html>.

⁵⁹⁷ Max Seddon and Laura Pitel. "Dozens Killed in Second Day of Fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh." *Financial Times*, September 28, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/774ca0f4-9b13-424f-9b6d-7deab76e7e33>; Michael Safi. "Dozens Dead as Armenia-Azerbaijan Clashes Continue." *The Guardian*, 28 September 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/dozens-dead-as-armenia-azerbaijan-clashes-continue>.

⁵⁹⁸ Safi. "Dozens Dead as Armenia-Azerbaijan Clashes Continue"; Michael Safi, "Why Are Armenia and Azerbaijan Fighting? What Are the Implications?" *The Guardian*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/why-are-armenia-and-azerbaijan-fighting-what-are-implications>.

third day of the war, Baku was making significant military progress, such as destroying an enemy regiment in the Khojavend region and destroying four tanks⁵⁹⁹.

Immediately following the clashes, the UN Security Council discussed the events in a closed session and issued a joint statement expressing its grave concern over the clashes. The UNSC urged the parties to immediately cease hostilities, reduce tensions, and resolutely return to negotiations without delay, condemning the civilian casualties and the use of force⁶⁰⁰.

In fact, the main reason the Karabakh conflict had not been resolved until then, and the main reason for the counter-offensive launched by the Azerbaijani army, were the ceasefire resolutions adopted by the UNSC in 1993. Four resolutions, 822, 853, 874, and 884, were adopted because of the ongoing occupations during the First Karabakh War. They demanded the unconditional, immediate, and complete withdrawal of the Armenian army from the occupied Azerbaijani territories, but Armenia had ignored them for nearly thirty years⁶⁰¹.

Meanwhile, international reactions were swift. Russia emphasized that it would maintain contact with the parties, that the issue should not be resolved militarily, called for restraint, and maintained its neutrality, also maintaining its traditional mediation role. While US President Trump kept his statements superficial and neutral, Biden stated that the number of observers should be increased and that he favoured a more active US role and a resolution of the war within the framework of Minsk Group

⁵⁹⁹ Rehimov, Ruslan. "Ermenistan-Azerbaycan Cephe Hattında Çatışmalar Sürüyor." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 29 Eylül 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/ermenistan-azerbaycan-cephe-hattinda-catismalar-suruyor/1988962>.

⁶⁰⁰ Haber Türk. "BMGK'dan Dağlık Karabağ Çağrısı: Çatışmalara Derhal Son Verin." *Haber Türk*, 30 Eylül 2020. <https://m.haberturk.com/bmgk-dan-daglik-karabag-cagrisi-catismalara-derhal-son-verin-2819393>.

⁶⁰¹ Rehimov, Ruslan. "Dağlık Karabağ'daki İşgale Son Verilmesini Öngören BMGK Kararları Uygulanmıyor." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 29 Eylül 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/daglik-karabagdaki-isgale-son-verilmesini-ongoren-bmgk-kararlari-uygulanmiyor/1989110>.

decisions. As a regional actor, Georgia expressed concern over the developments and called for a return to negotiations and increased peace efforts⁶⁰².

Clashes continued rapidly and with increasing intensity on the seventh day of the war. Azerbaijani leader Aliyev announced on October 3 that they had destroyed numerous enemy armoured vehicles and captured Madagiz in their fight against Armenia. That same day, Aliyev declared, "We are not in a position to listen to statements like 'Stop, we will work, we will negotiate, we will help.' We have heard these statements many times. We cannot wait another 30 years. The problem must be resolved now," demonstrating his firm commitment to the war⁶⁰³.

In an interview a few days later, Aliyev stated, "We have been participating in these negotiations for 30 years, but Armenia, disregarding everything, has launched attacks against us again, and we are launching a counter-operation and liberating our lands from occupation." In this interview, Aliyev also expressed his gratitude for the support of Türkiye and President Erdoğan, stating that the UAVs purchased from Türkiye were critical to the course of the war⁶⁰⁴.

Approximately 20 days had passed since the start of the war, and Azerbaijan was continuing its highly successful liberation efforts. By the second day of the operation, six villages had been captured in the Fuzuli and Jabrayil regions. Operations were being conducted on two main fronts, north-south, under the commands of Major General Hasanov and Major General Barkhudarov. Both were members of the post-

⁶⁰² Caucasus Watch, "Second Day of the Revived Nagorno-Karabakh War," *Caucasus Watch*, September 28, 2020, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/news/second-day-of-the-revived-nagorno-karabakh-war.html>.

⁶⁰³ Independent Türkçe. "Azerbaycan Ordusu Madagiz'i Aldı: Dağlık Karabağ'da Son Durum Ne?" *Independent Türkçe*, 3 Ekim 2020. <https://www.indyturk.com/node/253211/d%C3%BCnya/azerbaycan-ordusu-madagiz%E2%80%99i-ald%C4%B1-da%C4%9Fl%C4%B1k-karaba%C4%9Fda-son-durum-ne>.

⁶⁰⁴ Emre Gürkan Abay. "Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev: Türkiye Karabağ'daki Çözüm Sürecinde Yer Almalıdır." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 5 Ekim 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyev-turkiye-karabag-daki-cozum-surecinde-yer-almalidir/1996140>.

Soviet generation who had been forced to flee the occupation during the First Karabakh War⁶⁰⁵.

Azerbaijan, which for a long time refrained from officially reporting its own military losses, had more than 200 tanks, 16 command centers, and approximately 170 military trucks destroyed, while 33 Armenian tanks were captured intact. The Azerbaijani army was making excellent use of modern weapon systems, including Turkish Bayraktar TB2s and Israeli-made drones, significantly weakening enemy forces on the front lines and in deep defence lines⁶⁰⁶.

During this period, efforts were made to reach a ceasefire to prevent mounting losses. For example, on October 10, following 11 hours of trilateral talks, a humanitarian ceasefire agreement was reached through Russian mediation, aimed at recovering casualties and exchanging prisoners. Hours after the ceasefire was implemented, Baku announced that Armenia was continuing its attacks in Aghdere-Tartar and Fuzuli-Jabrayil, and that residential areas were also affected by the incidents. On October 11, Armenia launched a missile attack on Ganja, killing 10 people and injuring 35. On October 15, Armenian forces targeted civilians visiting a tomb in Terter, killing four and injuring four more. On October 17, they retargeted the city of Ganja, killing 13 civilians and injuring 50. This was Armenia's second deadly attack on Ganja in less than a week. Azerbaijan has declared these attacks a war crime⁶⁰⁷.

The OSCE Minsk Group reached another ceasefire between the parties on October 18, but it was violated within 24 hours. On the morning of October 19, Baku claimed that Armenian forces had shelled the Aghdam region on the Karabakh border, while

⁶⁰⁵ Fuad Chiragov, "Azerbaijan Makes Strategic Advances Along Karabakh's Northern, Southern Flanks," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 146 (October 19, 2020).

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Ceyhun Aliyev. "Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: New Horizons after 3 Decades." *Anadolu Agency*, October 20, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/armenia-azerbaijan-conflict-new-horizons-after-3-decades/2022245>.

Armenia claimed that Azerbaijan had fired twice during the night. However, Azerbaijan claimed these attacks were in self-defence⁶⁰⁸.

On October 22, President Aliyev announced the liberation of the villages of Mollaveli, Yukari Refiddinli, and Agha Refiddinli in the Fuzuli district, as well as the villages of Sirik, Shıhlar, Mestelibeyli, and Derzili in the Jabrayil district. The army also liberated the villages of Kolluğuşlag, Malatkeşin, Kend Zangilan, Genlik, Veligulubeyli, Garadere, Chopedere, Tatar, Tiri, Emir Khanlı, Gargulu, Bartaz, and Dellekli, as well as the settlement of Agbend in Zangilan. Thus, 20 villages and one settlement were liberated from Armenian occupation⁶⁰⁹.

By the end of the first month of the war, Azerbaijan had completely liberated Karabakh's border with Iran from Khojavend to Zangilan and had recaptured a section of the northern and northeastern parts extending along Murovdagh and Sukovuşan. The severance of the region's connection with Iran increased the pressure on Armenian forces in the region⁶¹⁰.

Approximately two weeks after these progresses, four urban centers, three towns, approximately 220 villages, and several important hills had been captured by Azerbaijan. On November 8, the Azerbaijani army announced that Shusha, the symbolic city of Karabakh, had been liberated from occupation and returned to Azerbaijani territory after 28 years. This was seen as a historic turning point in the course of the war. Aliyev stated that the blood of the Khojaly Massacre's martyrs did not remain on the ground, and that the liberation of Shusha was "one of the happiest days of his life." As people poured into the streets in celebration, calling for victory,

⁶⁰⁸ Sarah Wheaton, "Armenia-Azerbaijan Ceasefire Proves Short-Lived Again," *Politico*, October 18, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/armenia-azerbaijan-ceasefire-proves-short-lived-again/>.

⁶⁰⁹ Seda Sevensan, "Azerbaycan Liberates 20 More Villages from Occupation," *Anadolu Ajansı*, October 22, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/azerbaijan-liberates-20-more-villages-from-occupation/2015628>.

⁶¹⁰ Arda Mevlütoğlu, "2020 Dağlık Karabağ Savaşı'na Dair Askeri-Stratejik Gözlemler", *Panorama*, Çevrimiçi Yayın, 5 Kasım 2020, <https://www.globalpanorama.org/blog/2020/11/05/2020-daglik-karabag-savasina-dair-askeri-stratejik-gozlemler/>.

Turkish and Azerbaijani flags waved side by side. Azerbaijanis and Turks living abroad celebrated this victory together in their respective countries⁶¹¹.

Furthermore, throughout the war, both sides used social media extensively as a propaganda tool, sharing updates on the damage inflicted on the other side and the situation on the ground. Both sides have effectively used popular social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to create a public opinion that will support them and, especially, to defend their theses internationally⁶¹².

Two days after the capture of Shusha, the war officially ended on November 10, 2020. This was achieved through a ceasefire brokered by Russia. The signed document declared that the parties would cease all hostilities. According to the agreement, Armenian forces would withdraw, and approximately 2,000 Russian peacekeepers would be deployed in the Lachin Corridor for five years. Furthermore, the Aghdam District was ceded to Azerbaijan, and Armenia would cede Kalbajar to Azerbaijan on November 15 and Lachin to Azerbaijan on December 1. Moreover, a decision was made to build a Nakhchivan-Azerbaijan corridor, the terms and date of which were not specified⁶¹³.

Following the war, Azerbaijan regained the vast majority of the territories lost nearly 30 years ago and regained control of most of the seven occupied regions. Armenia,

⁶¹¹ Jeyhun Aliyev, Burak Bir, and Merve Aydoğan, "Shusha City Freed from Armenia's Occupation: Azerbaijan," *Anadolu Ajansı*, December 9, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/shusha-city-freed-from-armenias-occupation-azerbaijan/2036192>; Ruslan Rehimov, "Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev: Kritik Önele Sahip Şuşa Kenti İşgalden Kurtarıldı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 9 Aralık 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyev-kritik-oneme-sahip-susa-kenti-isgalden-kurtarildi/2036118>; Daily Sabah, "Azerbaijanis Celebrate Shusha's Liberation After 28 Years," *Daily Sabah Gallery*, November 9, 2020, https://www.dailysabah.com/gallery/azerbaijanis-celebrate-shushas-liberation-after-28-years/images?gallery_image=25651.

⁶¹² Mevlütöğlu, "2020 Dağlık Karabağ Savaşı'na Dair Askeri-Stratejik Gözlemler".

⁶¹³ President of Russia, "Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation," *President of Russia*, November 10, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>; International Crisis Group, *Getting from Ceasefire to Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh*, November 10, 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-conflict/getting-ceasefire-peace-nagorno-karabakh>.

having suffered a heavy defeat, escalated into intense opposition against Prime Minister Pashinyan⁶¹⁴.

Although the 44-day conflict ended, tensions persisted in the region. For instance, in July 2023, Azerbaijan announced the closure of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Armenia and Karabakh. Baku announced that it had detected smuggled goods being transported from Armenia to Azerbaijan using vehicles belonging to the International Organization of the Red Cross (ICRC). The smuggled goods, found in vehicles driven by Armenian citizens, were confiscated. Consequently, crossings at the Lachin border checkpoint were temporarily suspended⁶¹⁵.

Problems had already erupted in the same region in December 2022. Baku had sent expert teams to investigate illegal mining operations at the Kızılıbudak gold and Demirli copper mines in Karabakh. When the teams encountered obstacles from the Armenians, who are heavily concentrated in the region, Azerbaijani civil society organizations launched protests in the Lachin Corridor on December 12th, calling for an end to ecological terrorism, which continued until April 2023⁶¹⁶.

In September 2022, a two-day conflict erupted, resulting in the deaths of approximately 300 soldiers from both sides. On September 1, 2023, clashes erupted in the shared border region in the northwest of Karabakh. While casualties continued, Russia's silence was criticized by Armenia. Nonetheless, on September 9, both sides

⁶¹⁴ International Crisis Group, *Getting from Ceasefire to Peace*.

⁶¹⁵ Euronews Türkiye, “Azerbaycan, Laçın koridorunu geçici kapattı, Ermenistan uluslararası topluma çağrı yaptı,” *Euronews*, 11 Temmuz 2023, <https://tr.euronews.com/2023/07/11/azerbaycan-lacin-koridorunu-geci-kapat-ermenistan-uluslararasi-topluma-cagri-yapti>

⁶¹⁶ Council on Foreign Relations. (2025, March 20). *Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Global Conflict Tracker. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/nagorno-karabakh-conflict>; Associated Press. (2024). Azeri protesters say they’ll end blockage of key road. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/armenia-azerbaijan-lachin-corridor-nagorno-karabakh-649b7bfc785d9aa13f870c7eea985ad>; Rehimov, Ruslan, “3 Soruda – Azerbaycanlı STK’lerin Laçın Koridoru’ndaki maden protestoları,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 14 January 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/3-soruda-azerbaycanli-stklerin-lacin-koridorundaki-maden-protestolari/2787503>.

announced an agreement to simultaneously open both the Lachin Corridor and the road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan⁶¹⁷.

On September 19, 2023, another major incident occurred in the region. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence announced the launch of a counter-terrorism operation to restore constitutional order in Karabakh, the destruction of legitimate military targets, and called on Armenians there to surrender and end the illegal regime. It was also reported that "Armenian forces have been identified as reinforcing their positions with personnel, armoured vehicles, artillery, and other equipment, bringing their units to a high level of combat readiness, establishing reinforcements, expanding their intelligence activities against the Azerbaijani army, and engaging in actions such as re-mining areas cleared of mines." Azerbaijan also reported that civilians were not being targeted and that a humanitarian corridor was established through Lachin for their evacuation. The day after the operation began, Armenian forces accepted a ceasefire, and while most of the Armenian population in the region fled to Armenia, the Armenians officially ended their struggle for independence. Thus, after two days of fighting, Azerbaijan gained full control of the Karabakh region through a mutually agreed-upon agreement reached with the Armenian population in the region, following both military intervention and a ceasefire⁶¹⁸.

In April 2024, Russia called for a complete withdrawal from Karabakh. By June of that year, the Russian peacekeepers deployed in 2020 had completely withdrawn from Karabakh, leaving the country with all personnel, equipment, and weapons⁶¹⁹. A

⁶¹⁷ Council on Foreign Relations, "Azerbaijan's Pressure on Nagorno-Karabakh: What to Know," *Global Conflict Tracker*, updated March 20, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/nagorno-karabakh-conflict>.

⁶¹⁸ *Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Global Conflict Tracker; Rehimov, Ruslan, Ali Cura, Emre Gürkan Abay, and Yavuz Aydın, "Azerbaycan Savunma Bakanlığı: Karabağ'da Anti-Terör Operasyonu Başlatıldı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-savunma-bakanligi-karabagda-antiteror-operasyonu-baslatildi/2995388>; "Azerbaycan'ın Dağlık Karabağ'daki son operasyonunun bölgedeki sonuçları ne oldu?" *BBC News Türkçe*, 26 September 2023 (updated 28 September 2023). <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/c4nvxmlzkeko>; *Associated Press*, "Ethnic Armenian separatists in Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh surrendered arms to Russian peacekeepers," *AP News*, published earlier (note: date unspecified), <https://apnews.com/article/azerbaijan-armenia-nagorno-karabakh-5488386cb18c4333d00721365730cdf9>.

⁶¹⁹ Burç Eruygur, "Russian Peacekeepers Withdraw Completely from Karabakh: Azerbaijan," *Anadolu Ajansı*, June 12, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/russian-peacekeepers-withdraw-completely-from-karabakh-azerbaijan/3247852> [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)+15; "Russian Peacekeepers Complete

month earlier, a ceremony was held to mark the completion of the peacekeeping force's mission, emphasizing that the Russian peacekeepers had fulfilled their duties and responsibilities and made a tremendous effort to establish peace in the region⁶²⁰.

After Azerbaijan fully seized Karabakh in 2023, negotiations for a peace agreement began. In March 2025, the parties officially announced an agreement on the text of the peace agreement. This was a rather straightforward and simple document, focusing solely on the establishment of diplomatic relations, excluding issues such as territorial claims and legal disputes. No date has yet been set for the signing of the agreement, as the parties still lack full trust in each other. For example, Azerbaijan maintains that Armenia continues to engage in minor clashes on its border, thus maintaining its claims to Karabakh, while Armenia expresses concern that Azerbaijan will continue to seize territory from it. Furthermore, even if they have agreed on a text, Baku demands that Armenia amend its constitution as the first condition for signing a peace agreement. This is because this document, which also serves as Armenia's declaration of independence, claims the unification of the Karabakh region with Armenia⁶²¹.

Lastly, Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev and Armenian leader Nikol Pashinyan held a meeting in Abu Dhabi on July 10, 2025, as it was a neutral city for both sides. In the new post-war era, both sides decided that direct talks were more instrumental than mediated ones, and they took this initiative. The talks lasted approximately five hours,

Withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh,” *The Moscow Times*, June 12, 2024, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/06/12/russian-peacekeepers-complete-withdrawal-from-nagorno-karabakh-a85385>.

⁶²⁰ Burc Eruygur, “Azerbaijan Holds Ceremony on Completion of Russia’s Peacekeeping Contingent in Karabakh,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, May 28, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/azerbaijan-holds-ceremony-on-completion-of-russia-s-peacekeeping-contingent-in-karabakh/3220660>.

⁶²¹ Gunay Hajiyeva, “Azerbaijan, Armenia Conclude Negotiations on Peace Treaty,” *Caspian News*, March 13, 2025, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-armenia-conclude-negotiations-on-peace-treaty-2025-3-13-40>; International Crisis Group, “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Getting the Peace Agreement across the Finish Line,” *International Crisis Group*, May 22, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/armenian-azerbaijani-conflict/armenia-and-azerbaijan-getting-peace-agreement-across-finish-line>; Olesya Vartanyan, “The Window for an Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Deal Is Closing,” *Carnegie Politika*, March 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/03/azerbaijan-armenia-peace-talks?lang=en>; Felix Light and Nailia Bagirova, “Armenia and Azerbaijan Agree Treaty Terms to End Almost 40 Years of Conflict,” *Reuters*, March 14, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/armenia-says-it-is-ready-sign-peace-agreement-with-azerbaijan-2025-03-13/>.

with both the participating delegations and Aliyev and Pashinyan discussing. During the talks, it was agreed to continue the border demarcation process and to confidence-building measures in bilateral relations, and it was declared that bilateral talks were the most beneficial path to normalization⁶²².

4.2.2. From Frozen Conflict to War: How Did the Tensions Build Up?

After the ceasefire reached in 1994, considering both the international and regional systems and balances, it would not be wrong to say that the borders and the status quo were preserved for a considerable period⁶²³. In the First Karabakh War, compared to Azerbaijan, Armenia had a more stable administration and a local army/defence already established in Karabakh⁶²⁴. However, they had relatively closer networks of relations with the West, Iran and Russia. In Azerbaijan, there was an ongoing nation-state construction and an ever-changing and inexperienced group of administrators⁶²⁵. The changing balance of power over time made the new situation created in 1994 unacceptable for Azerbaijan. Until the conflicts in 2016, there were some tensions, especially around the Line of Contact (LoC)⁶²⁶. As mentioned, the Velvet Revolution leaders who came to power in 2018 focused more on democratization. However, at the same time, Armenia's search for solutions to its foreign policy problems was

⁶²² Veliyev, Cavid, "Path to Lasting Peace: Azerbaijan and Armenia Embrace Dialogue," *Daily Sabah*, July 17, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/path-to-lasting-peace-azerbaijan-and-armenia-embrace-dialogue>; Daily Sabah with Agencies, "Azerbaijan, Armenia Agree to Maintain Direct Peace Dialogue," *Daily Sabah*, July 10, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/azerbaijan-armenia-agree-to-maintain-direct-peace-dialogue/news>; Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "No:304/25, Press-Release on the Outcome of the Meeting Between the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Held in Abu-Dhabi, United Arab Emirates," *MFA of Azerbaijan*, accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no30425>.

⁶²³ Rovshan Ibrahimov and Mehmet Fatih Oztarsu, "Causes of the Second Karabakh War: Analysis of the Positions and the Strength and Weakness of Armenia and Azerbaijan," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 24, no. 4 (2022): 595–596, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2022.2037862>.

⁶²⁴ Vicken Cheterian, "Technological Determinism or Strategic Advantage? Comparing the Two Karabakh Wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 47, no. 2 (2022): 219–220, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2022.2127093>.

⁶²⁵ Ibid, 220.

⁶²⁶ Ibid, 224.

continuing, and the effectiveness of Russia and CSTO began to be questioned⁶²⁷. The fact that alternatives to solve the problems began to be sought in the United States and the European Union caused the Russian-Armenian relations to be damaged in 2018, and in the eyes of some, Putin's statement that "the war took place on internationally recognized Azerbaijani territory" and Russia's The relative decrease in its interest in the region was interpreted as punishing Armenia⁶²⁸. They were also very busy with restrictions from the West due to the Russia-Ukraine crisis⁶²⁹.

During and before the war that broke out in 2020, Türkiye gave full support to any possible action of Azerbaijan against Karabakh, both militarily and morally with the discourse of "one nation, two states"⁶³⁰. Although Türkiye's support always existed from 1991 to 2010, the basic framework for mutual military support relations was drawn only in 2010, when the "Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance" was signed by the parties⁶³¹. Additionally, exciting factors such as the political system strengthened and stabilized by the great financial return generated by Azerbaijan's rich oil fields, the enthusiasm of the 2016 conflicts, and the military budget increasing from 177 million dollars to 3 million dollars between 2003 and 2015, were slowly preparing Azerbaijan for war⁶³².

Thus, conflicts exist in two ways, you either use weapons, or you don't. Which of these two a state chooses depends on the context she is in at the time. The process that led Azerbaijan to war was complex but also multifaceted: the existence of national myths that had been going on and ignited for years, the failure and weakening of mediation

⁶²⁷ Arthur V. Atanesyan, Bradley M. Reynolds, and Artur E. Mkrtichyan, "Balancing between Russia and the West: The Hard Security Choice of Armenia," *European Security* 33, no. 2 (2023): 265, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2023.2258528>.

⁶²⁸ Ibrahimov and Oztarsu, "Causes of the Second Karabakh War", 601.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Levon Hovsepyan and Artyom A. Tonoyan, "From Alliance to 'Soft Conquest': The Anatomy of the Turkish-Azerbaijani Military Alliance before and after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 35, no. 4 (2024): 625, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2024.2312957>.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² "A Frozen Conflict Explodes," *The Economist*, April 9, 2016, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2016/04/09/a-frozen-conflict-explodes>.

processes, the pandemic that broke out at the end of 2019, the 'unpredicted' military development of Azerbaijan, the ongoing crisis in 2018, and Russian Armenian conflict, etc. Davtyan talks about the "lessons that led to war" and examines Azerbaijan's decision to go to war almost three centuries later. According to him, not only the short clashes in 2016, but also the first plundering of many Armenian cross stones in Jugha, near the Azerbaijan-Iran border, in 2005; Secondly, the killing of an Armenian soldier who was in a NATO-sponsored program held in Budapest together with an Azerbaijani soldier named Ramil Safarov was one of Azerbaijan's 'tests'. In the following years, for example in 2012, Safarov was extradited to Azerbaijan by Hungary, and he was pardoned by Azerbaijan and returned to his military position, and his action was described as patriotism. Both events did not generate the expected reaction in the international arena. By 2020, European states in the OECD have become buyers of 65% of Azerbaijan's crude oil. Considering that more than 90% of Azerbaijan's export revenues are from oil, it would not be wrong to say that military expenditures are funded by these resources⁶³³.

In addition, an official cooperation agreement on mutual military cooperation was reached between Azerbaijan and Türkiye in 1992, when the republic's declaration of independence was still fresh⁶³⁴. The military cooperation in 1992 was approved by Türkiye the following year and was strongly implemented⁶³⁵. The training first started in Türkiye and then continued in Azerbaijan, and Türkiye also aided and continued its financial support in organizing these trainings and reforming military education in Azerbaijan. These relations were advanced with financial aid and the fighting of

⁶³³ Erik Davtyan, "Lessons That Lead to War: Foreign Policy Learning and Military Escalation in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," *Problems of Post-Communism* 71, no. 1 (2023): 26–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2023.2183410>.

⁶³⁴ Edward J. Erickson, "The 44-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh: Turkish Drone Success or Operational Art?," *Military Review* (Army University Press online exclusive, August 2021), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2021-OLE/Erickson/>.

⁶³⁵ Haldun Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War," *German Marshall Fund*, January 21, 2021, <https://www.gmfus.org/download/article/18950>.

Azerbaijani soldiers under Türkiye's command in Kosovo in 1996 and 1999, and the export of modern weapons to Azerbaijan in 2000⁶³⁶.

The aim of this entire process was to leave the 'old' Soviet-type armament behind and accelerate the transition to Western/NATO-type, modern armament, with the funding of oil revenues in the country. The important point here is that, with the influence of Türkiye's membership in NATO, the military development and transformation in Azerbaijan has progressed along this line⁶³⁷. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War ended, and immediately afterwards, NATO built "partnership tools and mechanisms" that included "capability building, interoperability, and transformation through education, training, and exercises". Azerbaijan's process with NATO began with its membership in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992 and continued with its participation in the Partnership for Peace Program and Turkish Azerbaijani military cooperation in Kosovo⁶³⁸. A few months before the war, in July and August, many joint military tests were organized in Türkiye's border Nakhchivan, with the presence of up to 11 thousand Turkish military personnel, to determine whether Azerbaijan was 'ready for war'⁶³⁹. Azerbaijan, which aims to keep its inter-state relations in balance with other states in this process, also received significant military support from Israel. Azerbaijan was a very large energy seller for Israel, in return for arms expenditures of up to 1.6 billion dollars in 2012, 5 billion dollars in 2016 and 127 million dollars in 2017⁶⁴⁰. Most of these military purchases were for satellite technologies and unmanned aerial vehicles. Not only Azerbaijan, but also Armenia has improved its relations with other countries and international organizations. Some of these are military aid from the USA, the signed Paris Treaty on Concord and

⁶³⁶ Erickson, "The 44-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh".

⁶³⁷ Yalçınkaya, "Türkiye's Overlooked Role in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War".

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Erickson, "The 44-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh".

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

Cooperation, and NATO's Partnership for Peace initiatives such as Azerbaijan⁶⁴¹. In other words, “the friendly and in many cases even close relations of some western countries with both Armenia and Azerbaijan are often rather complicating than facilitating any process towards a lasting settlement” and “indirectly feeding into their respective conflict-specific approaches and narratives⁶⁴².”

Another development was cross-country projects. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project and the South Caucasus natural gas pipeline, which opened in July 2006, not only connected Azerbaijan and Georgia with the West, but also improved Azerbaijan's relations with Türkiye and Western countries and reached Europe⁶⁴³. It also reduced Türkiye's energy dependence on Russia. All these developments provided Azerbaijan with not only economic but also political advantages. Indeed, during the implementation of these projects, expectations were raised that Azerbaijan would increase its international influence, decrease its dependence on foreign aid, and adopt a more decisive stance in the reconciliation process regarding the Karabakh issue. In the following years, Azerbaijan strengthened its economic and diplomatic capacity thanks to rising energy revenues. This, combined with its adoption of a more confident foreign policy stance and its more robust and uncompromising diplomatic attitude on the Karabakh issue, demonstrates that, compared to the pre-war period, these expectations were largely met.

One element that attracted attention between the parties was the image making of the leaders. For example, Armenian leaders (Pashinyan in 2020, Sargsyan in 2023) drew more attention to the democratic structure of Nagorno-Karabakh, especially to gain Western support, and claimed the 'democratic country' identity for NK, which they

⁶⁴¹ Tobias Schumacher, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Why the ‘Black Garden’ Will Not Blossom Any Time Soon,” *Egmont Institute*, April 2016, 5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06643>.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ Waal, Thomas de, and Anna Matveeva. “The South Caucasus: An Uncertain Trajectory.” *Central Asia and the Caucasus: A Vulnerable Crescent*. International Peace Institute, 2007, 6. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09529.5>.

have used for their own country for years⁶⁴⁴. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has placed itself at the intersection of East and West since the 90s, and has frequently emphasized the solidarity of Muslim countries since 2003⁶⁴⁵. While encountering the phenomenon of 'multiculturalism', which is frequently advertised especially by Ilham Aliyev, to gain the support of the West, it is seen that an emphasis on Turkish identity to gain the support of Turkic states and especially Türkiye is made⁶⁴⁶.

Thus, territorial disputes in the Karabakh region have shaped the ethnic and political dynamics in the region throughout history. However, the second Karabakh War, which started in 2020 and caused great concern around the world, once again highlighted these complex realities in the region. This conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia turned into a tragedy filled with displaced people, destroyed cities and strategically important lands changing hands. This conflict, which determined the fate of Karabakh, went beyond being just a regional problem and attracted great attention in the international arena.

To conclude, after the Second Karabakh War, it became inevitable to confront the complex problems and bitter realities that have occurred throughout history in the region. Although the ceasefire agreement provides temporary stability among the parties directly affected by the conflict, the deep wounds left by the destruction and casualties are unlikely to heal for a long time. Territorial shifts and refugee tragedies highlight the complexity of historical conflicts in the region, showing that peace is not an easy solution. Future steps must include efforts by all parties in the region to engage in honest dialogue on the conflicts of the past and build a common future. However, the difficulties and realities in this process should not be ignored. More efforts will be required to achieve peace, but this effort must be based on a strong foundation that supports mutual understanding and the desire of people in the region to live in peace.

⁶⁴⁴ Naira E. Sahakyan, "Framing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: An Analysis of the Narratives of the State Leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Türkiye, 2002–2022," *Central Asian Survey* 43, no. 3 (2024): 391, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2024.2308627>.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid, 389

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid, 390.

4.2.3. The Shifting Balance of Power in the South Caucasus

The Second Karabakh War affected not only Armenia and Azerbaijan but also other regional powers in the South Caucasus, acting as a geopolitical turning point. While Azerbaijan emerged victorious from the war, Armenia lost the occupied territories, leading to radical changes in the status quo. This section will assess the effects of the war within the framework of Azerbaijan and Armenia as the warring party, and Türkiye, Russia and the OSCE Minsk Group as regional actors.

Azerbaijan

The 44-day Patriotic War ended the nearly 30-year Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan and, as one of the most significant developments in the post-Cold War era, shifted the balance of power in the South Caucasus. For Azerbaijan, the first and the most crucial outcome of this war was securing its territorial integrity, a primary foreign policy priority it had fought for since gaining independence. The war also demonstrated the positive transformation and development of the Azerbaijani army since the 1990s, as well as its deterrent power. The victory strengthened Azerbaijan's geopolitical position in the region, and the symbolic significance of Karabakh contributed to the construction of its national identity⁶⁴⁷.

The victory in Karabakh also led to a shift in Azerbaijan's foreign policy priorities and regional security perspectives⁶⁴⁸. Until the victory in 2020, Azerbaijan's foreign policy, diplomatic language, and international pursuits were largely driven by the Karabakh conflict. Today, however, its foreign policy agenda has evolved from a focus

⁶⁴⁷ Murat Yeşiltaş, “The Post-Karabakh Geopolitical Landscape in the Caucasus,” *SETA – Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research*, October 29, 2023, <https://www.setav.org/en/the-post-karabakh-geopolitical-landscape-in-the-caucasus>; Ayça Ergun, “Azerbaijani Perspectives on the Geopolitical Situation,” in *Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War: Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, ed. Siri Neset, Mustafa Aydın, Ayça Ergun, Richard Giragosian, Kornely Kakachia, and Arne Strand (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2023), [sayfa numarası ekle], <https://www.cmi.no/publications/8730-changing-geopolitics-of-the-south-caucasus-after-the-second-karabakh-war>.

⁶⁴⁸ AzeMedia, “Azerbaijan’s Multi-Vector Foreign Policy as a Key Pillar of Sovereignty, Stability and Strategic Development,” *Aze.Media*, May 13, 2025, <https://aze.media/azerbajjans-multi-vector-foreign-policy-as-a-key-pillar-of-sovereignty-stability-and-strategic-development/>; Ergun, “Azerbaijani Perspectives on the Geopolitical Situation”, 30.

on Karabakh to a broader framework. For example, this has been implemented from improving its relations with the West through energy ties, to signing Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreements with China to broaden strategic ties⁶⁴⁹. Aliyev expressed this perspective at the International Forum held in April 2025, saying, “During all those years of occupation, our main foreign policy priority was the restoration of territorial integrity. All our efforts had the ultimate goal of restoring sovereignty and territorial integrity. That's why many other important issues of our potential foreign policy agenda were overshadowed, and it is understandable because that was the national idea of the Azerbaijani people and the Azerbaijani state. Now that this issue has been resolved, we have much more time and many opportunities to build stronger relations with countries we consider friendly—those that have never done anything harmful to Azerbaijan⁶⁵⁰.” Aliyev defined the relations he is striving to develop in the new period as having “mutual respect, good relations, and non-intervention,” and strives to be the most active implementer of a new multi-vector foreign policy approach⁶⁵¹. He also promotes good relations with neighbours, emphasizing his preference for cooperation, not power competition.

In this context, Aliyev stated that his new foreign policy priority is the Organization of Turkic States, Azerbaijan's number one international organization. In his speech following his assumption of office, he, who was re-elected as President in February 2024, emphasized this goal by saying, “We will take our own steps regarding international organizations. First, we will continue our efforts within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States. This is a priority for us. The current policy makes it clear to everyone. This is the main international organization for us, because it is our family. We have no other family. Our family is the Turkic world.” He also emphasized the military and security partnership between Azerbaijan and Türkiye in the post-war

⁶⁴⁹ AzeMedia, “Azerbaijan’s Multi-Vector Foreign Policy”.

⁶⁵⁰ *President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, “International Forum Themed ‘Facing the New World Order’ Was Held at ADA University with Participation of Ilham Aliyev,” *President.az*, April 9, 2025, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/68514>.

⁶⁵¹ “Perspectives from the Region,” in *Prisoner of the Caucasus?: Toward a U.S. Strategy for the South Caucasus* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 1, 2024), 18–19, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep65617.8>.

period. He stated that, considering their shared historical roots and linguistic unity, the ODT possesses a more harmonious and stable structure compared to other regional organizations. In this context, increasing cooperation and integration within the ODT is a top foreign policy priority for Azerbaijan⁶⁵².

Armenia

For Armenia, the defeat in the Second Karabakh war represents a multifaceted phenomenon that has questioned the regional balance of power and led to a shift in foreign policy orientation. According to Giragosian, the democratic reform process that began in Armenia with Pashinyan's rise to leadership in 2018 was also supported by the aim of improving relations with the West. However, despite all this, the war resulted in a major loss, and in this sense, "authoritarian Azerbaijan" triumphed for both the West and Armenia. While Armenia attempted to maintain good relations with Russia and to establish economic and political rapprochement with the West during this period, this was not sustainable. Furthermore, Russia was unable to provide Armenia with sufficient support while it was grappling with its occupations in Ukraine. Moreover, Russia's loss of interest in the Minsk Group and the ineffectiveness of the group itself have triggered the emergence of regional platforms such as the 3+3 under the leadership of Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Russia, making Armenia regionally vulnerable⁶⁵³.

Still, following the war, the Armenian public and political elite no longer consider Russia a reliable ally. Russia's ineffectiveness in the 2023 conflicts and the subsequent mass exodus demonstrate the transformation in this breach of trust. In this context, given their dependence on Russia for energy, the government aims for a smooth

⁶⁵² *President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, "International Forum Themed"; Azerbaijani President, "Organization of Turkic States Is the Main International Organization for Us, Because It Is Our Family," *Azertac*, February 14, 2024, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/azerbaijani_president_organization_of_turkic_states_is_the_main_international_organization_for_us_because_it_is_our_family-2922781; Veliyev, Cavid, "Azerbaijan's New Foreign Policy Priority: Elevating OTS Globally," *Daily Sabah*, February 23, 2024, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/azerbaijans-new-foreign-policy-priorityelevating-ots-globally>.

⁶⁵³ Giragosian, "Armenian Perspectives," in *Changing Geopolitics*, 28–29.

transition rather than completely damaging relations and becoming its adversary. To this end, efforts have been made to improve relations with the West and even launching a new normalization process with Türkiye in 2021⁶⁵⁴.

In an interview he gave on February 2025, Pashinyan discussed foreign policy innovations. He noted that a process of integration with the European Union has been initiated, emphasizing democratic values, and that integration with the West has a foundation in identity and ideology. Pashinyan also emphasized that Armenia's security must be ensured not only militarily but also through regional integration and economic relations. He reemphasized the security factor, stating that a new security architecture would be established in the South Caucasus, including logistical and commercial lines⁶⁵⁵.

According to Ertuğrul, Pashinyan was compelled to implement these reforms from a security perspective to meet public expectations. With the withdrawal of Russian border guards in 2025, Armenia began assuming control of the border, a significant catalyst for Armenia's shift in foreign policy. According to Ertuğrul, in the post-war years, Armenia has moved both verbally and practically away from the Russian sphere of influence. During this period, defence cooperation with France and India was enhanced, a strategic partnership agreement with the US and new draft legislation focused on the EU were signed, a new normalization without “preconditions” process was initiated with Türkiye, and in this sense, the "genocide" and Karabakh issues were

⁶⁵⁴ Zolyan, Mikayel. “Defeated Armenia Looks to a New, Post-Russia Foreign Policy.” *Carnegie Politika*, November 27, 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2023/11/defeated-armenia-looks-to-a-new-post-russia-foreign-policy?lang=en>.

⁶⁵⁵ Republic of Armenia. “We Have Decided to Adopt a Balanced and Balancing Foreign Policy, Which Means That We Will Try to Balance Relations with the EU, Russia and Regional Powers. Prime Minister.” *Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia (Official Website)*, January 23, 2025. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/01/23/Nikol-Pashinyan-Panel-discussion/>.

separated. In other words, this is how the pursuit of a multilateral foreign policy came to fruition in practice⁶⁵⁶.

Türkiye

Following the Second Karabakh War, Türkiye participated in efforts to establish peace in the region. While not directly mentioned in the ceasefire agreement signed through Russia, it shared roles with Russia in the joint monitoring center. According to a separate agreement signed between Russia and Türkiye in November 2020, monitoring the ceasefire declared in Karabakh would be a joint effort between both countries. Regarding this center, which opened in January 2021, Turkish Defence Minister Akar stated, "We hope that the ceasefire will become permanent with the contribution of this center, together with all other efforts carried out to ensure stability, peace, and tranquillity in the region⁶⁵⁷."

Another outcome for Türkiye was the guarantee, in the ceasefire agreement signed between the parties, of a planned corridor between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, passing through Armenia. Work has begun on this route, also known as the Zangezur Corridor. This corridor holds geopolitical importance as a gateway to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, uniting the Turkic world, and is also expected to boost trade and economic relations between the countries involved⁶⁵⁸.

The end of the war and the resolution of the Karabakh conflict removed obstacles to Türkiye's regional economic and commercial objectives, such as the Zangezur Corridor and the Middle Corridor. It reduced the dominance of Russia and China in the region while strengthening Türkiye's transportation. This strengthened strategic

⁶⁵⁶ Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, "Pashinyan's Visit: New Parameters of Armenia-Türkiye Normalization," *Daily Sabah*, July 3, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/pashinyans-visit-new-parameters-of-armenia-turkiye-normalization>.

⁶⁵⁷ Sarp Ozer, "Turkish-Russian joint Karabakh center to maintain peace", Anadolu Ajansı, 1 February 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkish-russian-joint-karabakh-center-to-maintain-peace/2130228>.

⁶⁵⁸ Natalia Konarzewska, "Türkiye and the Post-Ceasefire Security Design in Nagorno-Karabakh", *The Türkiye Analyst*, 30 December 2020, <https://www.Turkiyeanalyst.org/publications/Turkiye-analyst-articles/item/658-Turkiye-and-the-post-ceasefire-security-design-in-nagorno-karabakh.html>.

relations with Azerbaijan and opened Europe-Asia connectivity to development through Türkiye⁶⁵⁹.

The war was a significant factor in the rise and success of the Turkish defence industry, as well as in the understanding of military tactical training. Bayraktar TB2 UAVs, developed by the Turkish company Baykar, were effectively used in combat. Operational applications and military tactics, which synthesize traditional and modern weapons, enhanced the prestige of the defence industry and the military⁶⁶⁰.

Türkiye has taken steps in the past to ensure cooperation in the Caucasus. These initiatives included the Stability Pact for the Caucasus in January 2000 and the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform in 2008. Following the war, a similar 3+3 South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform emerged. Türkiye proposed this platform to maintain regional peace, resolve problems, and promote diplomatic dialogue for mutual benefit⁶⁶¹.

Türkiye is also pursuing a balanced foreign policy in the new era, one that prioritizes regional dynamics. As a NATO member and EU candidate country, it is advancing its resolve to address regional issues without compromising its commitment to this path, while also establishing close relations with organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Treaty Organization. This pursuit of a balanced policy differs from the 3+3 initiative in the South Caucasus, which has largely sidelined Western actors like the US and the EU. In other words, Türkiye has a better understanding of regional dynamics in the post-war period, and who is and isn't influential in the region. Additionally, as a country maintaining a resolute presence in the region, Türkiye's

⁶⁵⁹ Caspian-Alpine Society, "Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: The New Geopolitical Reality of the South Caucasus", 4 March 2025, <https://caspian-alpine.org/Türkiye-azerbaijan-and-georgia-the-new-geopolitical-reality-of-the-south-caucasus/>.

⁶⁶⁰ *International Crisis Group*, "Türkiye's Growing Drone Exports," *Crisis Group*, December 20, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkiye/turkiyes-growing-drone-exports>; Çelik and Kınık, "The Role of Turkish Drones".

⁶⁶¹ Gizem Nisa Çebi and Muhammed Yasin Güngör, "South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform calls for cease-fire in Middle East", Anadolu Ajansı, 19 October 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/south-caucasus-regional-cooperation-platform-calls-for-cess-fire-in-middle-east/3366830>; Caucasus Watch, "3+3 Initiative as a New Order in the South Caucasus", 5 April 2025, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/insights/33-initiative-as-a-new-order-in-the-south-caucasus.html>.

importance has increased for the EU, both in terms of energy transit and as a rising balancing force in resolving these issues⁶⁶².

Russia

Jafarov and Aslanlı claims that Russia had four objectives it was determined to pursue throughout and after the war. The first of these was to maintain its long-standing alliance with Armenia. In this context, Russia provided arms support to Armenia and occasionally supported Armenian claims that Türkiye was involved in the war from Azerbaijani side, expressing its discomfort with this situation. Another policy was to continue its mediating role in the Karabakh conflict, which it has held since the 1990s. To this end, it declared a humanitarian ceasefire, albeit unsuccessfully, on October 10, 2020, and finally, the definitive complete ceasefire that ended the war on November 10. The third objective was to preserve existing strategic relations with Azerbaijan. In this context, Russia, particularly considering the Azerbaijani population living in Russia, recognizes the Karabakh territories as belonging to Azerbaijan within the framework of international law. Finally, another objective was to prevent the multifaceted relations with Türkiye, which have been developing in recent years, from being irreversibly damaged. To this end, diplomatic and political dialogue with Ankara has been maintained, the close relationship between Azerbaijan and Türkiye has been officially acknowledged, and efforts have been made to include Türkiye in the post-war peace efforts. While the first two of these four policies are already traditional components of Russia's policies for the Caucasus, the other two policies involving Türkiye and Azerbaijan are new⁶⁶³.

According to Nadir Devlet, Russia undoubtedly played the primary role in the war and had the power to stop it even before the loss of life increased. Indeed, because of the Minsk Group's failure to achieve results for nearly thirty years, Azerbaijan was forced

⁶⁶² Dennis Sammut, "Türkiye's changing and growing role in the South Caucasus", commonspace.eu, 7 April 2025, <https://www.commonspace.eu/monday-commentary/turkiyes-changing-and-growing-role-south-caucasus>.

⁶⁶³ Nazim Jafarov and Araz Aslanlı, "Russia's Policy During the 44-Day Karabakh War," *Insight Türkiye* 23, no. 4 (2021): 222, 226–227, <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2021234.12>.

to fight, and in his view, Russia watched as both sides gradually armed themselves and then clashed. The new order that emerged after the war presented a new opportunity for Russia to reassert its regional influence. Devlet argues that Pashinyan's rise to power, driven by Western leanings and hopes of rapprochement with the West, coupled with Azerbaijan's pursuit of a more independent foreign policy, along with its energy revenues, was undermining Russia's traditional hegemony in the region. As the war rapidly began to turn in Azerbaijan's favour, a ceasefire was signed on November 10th, ensuring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and providing Russia with the opportunity to establish a military presence with a peacekeeping force in the region. Russian peacekeepers took control of the connection with Armenia via the Kalbajar corridor and decided to deploy border forces in the corridor to be established between Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan. Thus, Russia established a de facto military presence in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, enabling it to strengthen its strategic influence in the South Caucasus bilaterally. Türkiye's activity in the process was monitored by Russia; the planned Turkish Russian Joint Observation Center was located outside Karabakh, preventing Turkish observers from directly operating in the field. In other words, while maintaining diplomatic relations with Türkiye, Russia was also left to assume the role of a decisive actor in the region's security architecture⁶⁶⁴.

Neset and Aydın also point out that Russia has deployed approximately 2,000 peacekeepers to Karabakh, establishing a military presence in Azerbaijan for the first time since the 1990s. Thus, in addition to Armenia and Georgia, Russia has a military presence in all three Caucasus countries, including Azerbaijan, effectively establishing its own sphere of influence in a spatial sense. Furthermore, the presence of peacekeepers, implemented without the approval of any international mechanism, demonstrates Russia's intention to unilaterally intervene and shape the landscape⁶⁶⁵.

Sirbiladze claims, Russia not only secured a ceasefire but also established a military presence on Azerbaijani territory for the first time thanks to this war. Due to the

⁶⁶⁴ Nadir Devlet, "Karabağ'da Kim Kazandı Kim Kaybetti?," *Independent Türkçe*, November 18, 2020, <https://www.indyturk.com/node/273811/t%C3%BCrki%C4%B1yeden-sesler/karaba%C4%9Fda-kim-kazandı%C4%B1-kim-kaybetti>.

⁶⁶⁵ Siri Neset and Mustafa Aydın, "Changed Dynamics After the Second Karabakh War," 11–12.

inadequacy of the international community, and particularly the Minsk Group, Russia demonstrated its capacity to resolve regional problems through its own initiative, demonstrating the growing Russian military and political influence in the region. However, this does not mean that Russia is the sole or even the most powerful force in the region. He argues that Azerbaijan's efforts to fully involve Türkiye in the post-war processes, and Azerbaijan's bolder steps in the region with Türkiye's support, highlight the strong coexistence of these two states in the post-war period. In this sense, the establishment of a peacekeeping force as a Turkish Russian partnership is significant for Türkiye's inclusion in the process⁶⁶⁶.

Hence, there is the fact that after the Second Karabakh War, the balance of power in the region shifted from a Russia-cantered unipolarity to a Türkiye-Russia-cantered bipolarity. With its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia reduced its focus on the South Caucasus and depleted its resources on Ukraine, increasing Türkiye's influence in the SC. Furthermore, with the Shusha Declaration signed in 2021, Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations strengthened, rising to the level of an alliance, and Azerbaijan adopted the Turkish model in military terms. Russia remained silent during Azerbaijan's brief interventions in 2023 to clear terrorist elements from the Karabakh region, and the effectiveness of its peacekeeping force was questioned. In other words, while Russian influence in the region has never disappeared, new balancing factors are present⁶⁶⁷.

OSCE Minsk Group

The OSCE Minsk Group, established in 1994 as an actor in resolving the Karabakh conflict under the co-chairmanship of France, the US, and Russia, demonstrated its 26-year ineffectiveness in the war that broke out in 2020. It was established to resolve the issue through diplomatic means. Separatist Armenian elements had abandoned the negotiating table, and three decades of mutual tensions had directly culminated in war. Co-chair France, particularly under the strong influence of the Armenian diaspora, had

⁶⁶⁶ Irakli Sirbiladze, *Russia's Leverage Before the War in Ukraine: The End of Russia's "Unipolar Moment" in the South Caucasus*, September 1, 2024, 9-10, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep62978.6>.

⁶⁶⁷ Narek Sukiasyan and Erik Davtyan, "The South Caucasus Reconstructed: Polarity and Regional Security Order after the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020," *The International Spectator*, advance online publication (2025): 11-12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2025.2500407>.

developed a marked sensitivity toward Armenia and began to take a clear pro-Armenian stance. It sought to maintain this mediation role primarily through the EU and played an active role through these mechanisms. To this end, it was attempting to facilitate international mediation between Baku and Karabakh. The US, on the other hand, kept its diplomatic influence lower than other actors, primarily supporting the parties by assuming a facilitating role, requiring them to resolve the issue among themselves. However, when the war ended with Azerbaijan's military superiority and Armenia's major defeat, the failure of this collective was exposed⁶⁶⁸.

More specifically, while criticism of the US was less pronounced, French President Macron's overtly pro-Armenian stance and rhetoric had shaken faith in the group's neutrality. Azerbaijan, in particular, had long since lost faith and trust in the Minsk Group. The Minsk Group has failed to implement a coherent or fundamentally conflict-solving policy, implement sanctions, or exert its leverage regarding the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territories. The US, France, and Russia have met numerous times at summits over the past three decades, but they have failed to deliver a tangible solution ((even the four-day clash in July 2016 failed to accelerate the process))⁶⁶⁹.

By 2025, Azerbaijani President Aliyev openly stated, "The head of state stated that the time has long come to abolish the OSCE Minsk Group, which had completely failed in resolving the former Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, and all institutions related to it", and reiterated that Armenia should also take steps in this regard⁶⁷⁰.

⁶⁶⁸ Marilisa Lorusso, "The Fate of the Minsk Group: Reflecting the Contradictions of the International Community in the Karabakh Conflict," *Caucasus Watch*, November 30, 2023, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/insights/the-fate-of-the-minsk-group-reflecting-the-contradictions-of-the-international-community-in-the-karabakh-conflict.html>.

⁶⁶⁹ "The Karabakh Conflict and the Minsk Group: A Case of Failed Mediation," *UoS PolSoc Paper*, February 26, 2025, <https://uospolsocpaper.com/2025/02/26/the-karabakh-conflict-and-the-minsk-group-a-case-of-failed-mediation/>.

⁶⁷⁰ Burç Eruygur, "Azerbaijan's President Says Time to Dissolve OSCE Minsk Group Has 'Long Come'," *Anadolu Ajansı*, August 14, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/azerbaijan-s-president-says-time-to-dissolve-osce-minsk-group-has-long-come-/3548965>.

Consequently, Western actors, both nationally and internationally, were inadequate in bringing a solution to the region. Their influence was significantly weakened by the fact that the management of the post-war period largely fell to Russia, while acting as a co-chair of the Minsk Group. While the Minsk Group has provided the main negotiating framework for a diplomatic solution to the conflict since 1992, the failure of the European Union and the United States to ensure stability and France's open unilateralism have significantly weakened the West's influence in the region⁶⁷¹.

4.2.4. Official Discourses of Türkiye and Azerbaijan During the War

Exactly one month after the ceasefire and victory in the 44-day Second Karabakh War, in which Azerbaijan fought for the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and for its occupied territories, a joint march was held in Azadliq (Freedom) Square in Baku with Turkish and Azerbaijani officials. Both Azerbaijani leader Aliyev and Turkish leader Erdoğan emphasized the motto of “one nation, two states”⁶⁷². Aliyev used the words “My brother said that Azerbaijan was right in this war! He said that Azerbaijan was not alone, and Türkiye was always with Azerbaijan. This is a manifestation of our unity and brotherhood” for all the support Erdoğan gave during the war⁶⁷³, while Erdoğan said that they would be with Azerbaijan throughout the war and that the partnership would continue with all its strength in the post-war period with the words “As Türkiye and Azerbaijan, our goal, from now on, is to render these lands more prosperous and developed and more pleasant to live in for our children. As long as Türkiye and Azerbaijan join forces, they will continue to overcome obstacles and achieve many more victories”⁶⁷⁴.

⁶⁷¹ Neset and Aydın, “Changed Dynamics,” 11-14.

⁶⁷² “As Long as Türkiye and Azerbaijan Join Forces, They Will Continue to Overcome Obstacles and Achieve Many More Victories.” *The Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*, December 10, 2020, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/123140/-as-long-as-Türkiye-and-azerbaijan-join-forces-they-will-continue-to-overcome-obstacles-and-achieve-many-more-victories->.

⁶⁷³ “Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Victory Parade Dedicated to Victory in the Patriotic War.” *Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, December 10, 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/48793>.

⁶⁷⁴ “As Long as Türkiye and Azerbaijan Join Forces,” 2020.

With these words uttered after the war, it is understood that this 44-day war not only ended a 30-year conflict, but also that relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan have deepened in every sense, evolving into a multi-layered process at the diplomatic and leadership levels. In this section, within the framework of official dialogues, press releases and interviews conducted between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, the messages Türkiye has given to the international community, the diplomatic language and discourses used, and in addition, the determination of the Türkiye-Azerbaijan duo towards their theses will be shown; an attempt will be made to shed some light on the content of bilateral relations and how it may have influenced the Shusha Declaration that would come into effect approximately one and a half years later.

4.2.4.1. Türkiye

Statements of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

On September 27, immediately after the official start of the war, the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called his counterpart, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and first of all, expressed his condolences for the loss of life in the clashes. He also stressed that “Türkiye always stands with Azerbaijan.” Aliyev informed Erdoğan about the measures taken against the provocations of Armenia and thanked Erdoğan for his continuous support in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In addition, both heads of the states expressed their confidence that friendly and brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye would continue to develop successfully”⁶⁷⁵.

President Erdoğan, on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), stated on September 27 that especially international solutions and public response were ineffective against Armenian attacks, and emphasized that the OSCE Minsk Group could not bring a permanent solution to the 30-year dispute and that the region was not sufficiently concerned. President Erdoğan, who announced Türkiye’s and his personal stance on this dispute to the world public opinion with this post, said that Armenia

⁶⁷⁵ “President Ilham Aliyev Had a Telephone Conversation with President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan,” President.az, September 27, 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/40970>.

posed the greatest threat to regional peace and emphasized the unique Turkish-Azerbaijani solidarity by saying, “The Turkish nation continues to stand by its Azerbaijani brothers and sisters with all its means, as it has always been done. As I said to my brother İlham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan, the sagacious and determined stance of whom I once again witnessed during our phone call today, Türkiye will increasingly maintain its solidarity with its Azerbaijani brothers and sisters with the understanding of ‘one nation, two states’”⁶⁷⁶.

Speaking at a symposium held combinedly with two universities at the Dolmabahçe Office of the Presidency on September 28, Erdoğan stated that he would continue to stand by brotherly Azerbaijan, support them with all his heart and means, and once again condemn Armenia for its attacks on Azerbaijani territory. President Erdoğan anew expressed the inadequacy of the Minsk Group in resolving this issue with the following sharp words:

They have done everything they can to avoid resolving this issue. Now they are giving advice and sometimes threatening... (they say) ‘Is Turkey here? Are there Turkish soldiers here?’. ‘Let’s resolve this issue. Let’s not drag this out any longer,’ they said. Whose lands are the occupied lands? They are Azerbaijan’s lands. You all accept this. You accept Nagorno-Karabakh. The people there, more than 1 million, are far from their lands, currently living in Azerbaijan. The occupiers are there. No one is asking for an account of this. Azerbaijan, which says that the time for accountability has come, has inevitably had to take matters into its own hands⁶⁷⁷.

⁶⁷⁶ “The Turkish Nation Stands by Its Azerbaijani Brothers and Sisters with All Its Means,” Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, September 27, 2020, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/122187/-the-turkish-nation-stands-by-its-azerbaijani-brothers-and-sisters-with-all-its-means->; “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: ‘Türk Milleti Her Zaman Olduğu Gibi Bugün de Tüm İmkânlarıyla Azerbaycanlı Kardeşlerinin Yanındadır,’” İletişim Başkanlığı, October 13, 2020, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turk-milleti-her-zaman-oldugu-gibi-bugun-de-tum-imkanlariyla-azerbaycanli-kardeslerinin-yanindadir>.

⁶⁷⁷ “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Ermenistan işgal ettiği Azerbaycan topraklarını derhal terk etmelidir,” Anadolu Ajansı, 28 Eylül 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ermenistan-iskal-ettigi-azerbaycan-topraklarini-derhal-terk-etmelidir/1988229>; “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Uluslararası Deniz Hukuku ve Doğu Akdeniz Sempozyumu’nda Konuştu: ‘Bölgede Dağlık Karabağ’ın İşgaliyle Başlayan Krize Artık Bir Son Verilmesinin Vakti Gelmiştir,’” İletişim Başkanlığı, 28 Eylül 2020, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-uluslararasi-deniz-hukuku-ve-dogu-akdeniz-sempozyumunda-konustu-bolgede-daglik-karabagin-iskaliyle-baslayan-krize-artik-bir-son-verilmesinin-vakti-gelmistir2809>.

On October 1, President Erdoğan gave a great deal of space to the ongoing Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict in his address to the deputies of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM). He stated that the Caucasus region is a region prone to crises and that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the most obvious example of this, in addition to reiterating that he stands by Azerbaijan. Continuing his words by criticizing the international community and their attitudes, especially the Minsk Group's call for a ceasefire, Erdoğan said that he met with French Prime Minister Macron and Russian President Putin and that no result was achieved, and said, "Now is the time for the result. Our Azerbaijani brothers and sisters also took a step towards cutting their umbilical cord. The attitude presented today by those who were blind, deaf, and mute against the occupation of the age-old Azerbaijani territory Karabakh, and the massacres carried out against the civilians by the Armenians is also hypocritical." Emphasizing the phrase "one nation, two states," Erdoğan insisted that the words of those who remain silent against the actions of the occupiers mean nothing to him, that Türkiye will continue to stand by Azerbaijan with all its means, and that the only condition for a lasting peace is for Armenian forces to completely leave the occupied Azerbaijani lands⁶⁷⁸.

In his speech at the opening ceremony of Konya City Hospital on October 2, Erdoğan mentioned that Azerbaijan was conducting a successful counter-operation on the front to liberate Karabakh and other occupied territories. He continued his words by saying, "As Türkiye, we wholeheartedly and with all our capabilities, stand with the friendly and brotherly Azerbaijan, and we will continue to do so"⁶⁷⁹.

In his address to the public after the Presidential Cabinet meeting on October 5, Erdoğan pointed out that Türkiye has the power to implement its policies on the field

⁶⁷⁸ "President Erdoğan: 'We Will Continue to Extend Support with All Our Facilities and Hearts to Our Azerbaijani Brothers and Sisters,'" Directorate of Communications, September 28, 2020, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/president-erdogan-we-will-continue-to-extend-support-with-all-our-facilities-and-hearts-to-our-azerbaijani-brothers-and-sisters>.

⁶⁷⁹ "We Are Now a Country Which Has an Essential Place Both on the Ground and at the Table," Directorate of Communications, September 28, 2020, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/we-are-now-a-country-which-has-an-essential-place-both-on-the-ground-and-at-the-table>.

with active military support if necessary, and also the capacity to stand by and support its every close friend. Immediately afterwards, he emphasized that the international community and the Minsk Group have failed to solve the Karabakh conflict, as he has been saying since the first day of the war, and that Armenia still carries out its occupation actions but also its massacres in the region. Emphasising that Türkiye has always been in full solidarity with Azerbaijan, Erdoğan also stated that “it is every honourable state’s duty to support Azerbaijan’s fight to liberate its lands that are under occupation.” The President concluded “it is impossible for humanity to achieve lasting peace and serenity unless the world is rescued from rogue states and their rogue leaders”, hence ceasing them is the only solution to the 30-year-long problem in the Caucasus and that justice can only be brought to the region in this way⁶⁸⁰.

In an interview with a foreign newspaper on October 8, President Erdoğan once again drew attention to Armenia’s massacres of civilians, the indifference of the international community, and the fact that Armenia has become “spoiled” and engaged in occupation activities due to this indifference. He also mentioned that Azerbaijan is rightfully combating to regain its occupied territories and that Armenia has acquired these territories through banditry. Erdoğan also described Azerbaijan’s decision to resolve this 30-year-old problem, which has been exacerbated by Armenia’s attacks, as “a necessity of history, law, and the facts of geography” and said that the implementation of UN resolutions and international law is a necessity for the permanent resolution of the problem. Finally, he said that Armenia is “the biggest obstacle to peace, stability, and tranquillity in the region” and added, “I repeat my call for the international community to see this fact and abandon the double standards it has been implementing for years and taking steps to end the occupation of Armenia on Azerbaijani territory”⁶⁸¹.

⁶⁸⁰ “As the Humanity’s Common Conscience, Türkiye Is Now Capable of Making Its Words Heard in Every Issue,” Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, September 28, 2020, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/122277/-as-the-humanity-s-common-conscience-Türkiye-is-now-capable-of-making-its-words-heard-in-every-issue->.

⁶⁸¹ Directorate of Communications. “President Erdoğan Gives an Interview to Qatari Newspaper the Peninsula.” October 8, 2020. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/president-erdogan-gives-an-interview-to-qatari-newspaper-the-peninsula>.

In his speech at the JD Party congress held in Şırnak on October 18, President Erdoğan emphasized the ongoing disputes on Türkiye's close border and that these disputes only led to "small gains, blood and tears", and expressed with stern words that the Minsk Group had not achieved any results in the war to regain Azerbaijan's lands for 30 years, and underlined the following:

Why do we stand with our brothers and sisters in Azerbaijan? Who is the Minsk Trio? The US, Russia, and France. Well, then who did they side with? They sided with Armenia. Do they support Armenia and the Armenians with all kinds of weapons? Yes, they do. While all these are being done, our Azeri brothers and sisters are currently in a substantial struggle against the Armenians. Why do they wage this struggle? They wage this struggle because they aspire to liberate the occupied territories of Azerbaijan from the Armenians. What could be more natural, more subsistent than that? Now, our Azerbaijani brothers and sisters are struggling to liberate their occupied territories, May Allah help them. I believe that they will take back and liberate their occupied territories from the Armenians. We pray for them, and I hope they will be successful in this regard⁶⁸².

Condemning the frequent criticisms of Türkiye's unconditional and continuous support for Azerbaijan by international actors, and stating that Armenia violated the ceasefires reached during the war, Erdoğan responded to the criticisms with the words, "Are we not going to secure our borders? Why does this bother some circles? Sorry, but we are there and we will be there." He stated that the West remained silent against Armenia's actions, and that Türkiye was criticized when it did not remain silent, and pressed, "We will not remain silent. We will stand by the right and the righteous"⁶⁸³.

In another public address at the Presidential Cabinet meeting on October 20, Erdoğan mostly touched on Türkiye's strong relations with border and regional states, including relations with Azerbaijan. Stating that the issues Türkiye is involved in many ways have increased, Erdoğan affirmed that they will continue to be on the side of the right and justice. Regarding Azerbaijan, he said, "We have not and will not escape from any responsibility placed on our shoulders," and concluded, "We will give those who do

⁶⁸² "President Erdoğan: 'No Political, Ideological, Social, Cultural or Economic Consideration Is More Important Than Our Unity and Fraternity,'" Directorate of Communications, September 28, 2020, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/president-erdogan-no-political-ideological-social-cultural-or-economic-consideration-is-more-important-than-our-unity-and-fraternity>.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

not give upon their dreams to remove us from this geography that we have defended as our homeland, when needed, at the cost of our lives, many more nightmares”⁶⁸⁴.

In his speech at the JD Party Parliamentary Group meeting held on October 28, he mentioned that the Minsk Group had failed in ending the struggle in Karabakh. He also declared that if Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Armenian President Nikol Pashinyan, he could personally meet with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and find a solution to this problem, and he concluded by saying, “I believe the victory belongs to my Azerbaijani Turkish brothers and sisters. May our Lord help and guide them! We have always stood with them in their struggle there and will continue to do so”⁶⁸⁵.

In his message to celebrate Azerbaijan’s National Flag Day on November 9, President Erdoğan emphasized that Türkiye and Azerbaijan act with the understanding of “two states, one nation” and stated that in the international sense, brotherly relations are not only verbal, but also active in many areas such as politics, diplomacy, energy and defence. He highlighted that the liberation of Shusha is very essential in the course of the war and that his only wish is for Armenia to completely withdraw from Azerbaijani territory without further losses. Erdoğan, who commemorated all the martyrs who lost their lives for this cause, stressed, “Türkiye will continue to stand by its Azerbaijani brothers until the glorious Azerbaijani flag flies freely throughout Nagorno-Karabakh”⁶⁸⁶.

⁶⁸⁴ “Türkiye, with Its Strong Political and Economic Structure, Is the Rising Star of the New Global and Regional Quests,” Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, October 10, 2020, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/122431/-Türkiye-with-its-strong-political-and-economic-structure-is-the-rising-star-of-the-new-global-and-regional-quests->.

⁶⁸⁵ “Türkiye Is in a Historic Struggle during the Current Critical Period When the Political and Economic Power Balances Are Being Reshaped Globally,” Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, October 13, 2020, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/122562/-Türkiye-is-in-a-historic-struggle-during-the-current-critical-period-when-the-political-and-economic-power-balances-are-being-reshaped-globally->.

⁶⁸⁶ “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: ‘Türkiye, Dağlık Karabağ’ın Tamamında Şanlı Azerbaycan Bayrağı Özgürce Dalgalanana Kadar Azerbaycanlı Kardeşlerinin Yanında Durmaya Devam Edecektir,’” İletişim Başkanlığı, November 9, 2020, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turkiye-daglik-karabagin-tamaminda-sanli-azerbaycan-bayragi-ozgurce-dalgalanana-kadar-azerbaycanli-kardeslerinin-yaninda-durmaya-devam-edecektir0911>.

On November 10, following the victory that came with the end of the war, on a phone call, Erdoğan thanked Aliyev for highly appreciating his country's support, while Aliyev thanked Erdoğan and the Turkish people once again for their political and moral support to during the war. The leaders gave the message that the mutual support will continue to be provided in the context of friendship and brotherhood, and they also spoke about the Turkish-Russian peacekeeping force to be developed in the region⁶⁸⁷.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has shown his support for Azerbaijan in one-on-one meetings with other countries on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, in addition to speeches, social media posts and interviews. The most frequent example of this is his meetings with Russian leader Putin. The two leaders, who remained in contact from the beginning to the end of the 44-day war, made great efforts to maintain cooperation and dialogue on regional issues. Erdoğan particularly emphasized that Armenia was working “to make its nearly 30-year-old occupation permanent,” that it continued to violate even the ceasefires led by Russia, and that the attacks threatened the natural gas and oil channels that are of great importance to the countries in the region. He frequently stated that he was in favour of a permanent solution within the framework of international mechanisms. In their meetings towards the end of the war, Putin conveyed the outputs of the meetings with the Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders to Erdoğan, while Erdoğan, as always, emphasized that the solution to the problem lies in using peaceful methods, Armenia’s complete withdrawal from the occupied territories and persuading it to negotiate⁶⁸⁸.

During this period, the President also discussed Azerbaijan’s just war with leaders such as the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the then German Chancellor

⁶⁸⁷ “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev’i kutladı.” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 10 November 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyevi-kutladi/2038509>.

⁶⁸⁸ “Türkiye’s Erdogan Tells Putin That Armenia Must Negotiate over Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Al Arabiya English*, November 8, 2020, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2020/11/08/Türkiye-s-Erdogan-tells-Putin-that-Armenia-must-negotiate-over-Nagorno-Karabakh>; “Türkiye’s Erdogan Tells Putin That Armenia Must Negotiate over Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Reuters*, November 7, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/erdogan-tells-putin-that-armenia-must-negotiate-over-nagorno-karabakh-idUSKBN27O057/>.

Angela Merkel, and the then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In these meetings, he emphasized that in order to achieve and sustain peace in the Caucasus region, Armenia must completely withdraw from the occupied Azerbaijani territories and the Karabakh, and that the decisions taken by the UN and the rules of international law must be implemented. He also told the then European Council President Charles Michel that the Armenian attacks also threatened the natural gas and oil pipelines in Azerbaijan, in other words, the energy security of Europe, and for this reason, President Erdoğan called for the EU to assume a consistent stance regarding the ‘territorial integrity of Azerbaijan’⁶⁸⁹.

As many other Turkish officials, Erdoğan has frequently repeated the motto of "one nation, two states" as the current leader of the Republic of Türkiye. This shows the emphasis on brotherhood and historical ties, especially in war conditions, and emphasizes emotional and spiritual bonds. While the emphasis on Armenia as the greatest threat of peace in the region represents the harsh and unilateral stance often exhibited; stressing the abolition of this obstacle for the end of the war describes Türkiye's insistence on the solution and an active support. Erdoğan has repeated frequently that the OSCE Minsk Group has been ineffective in the solution of the conflict between the parties and that Azerbaijan was compelled to defend its own rightful case in the field. Erdoğan emphasized that Türkiye is with Azerbaijan always and in every way, that Azerbaijan is not alone in this sense, that political support is not only supposed to be so called, and that a comprehensive support always exists even if it is not a military. During the war, the regaining of the territory of Azerbaijan was met with appreciation and joy, the whole process was followed in detail and day by day and it was emphasized that Karabakh is a historical part of Azerbaijan. This also shows that Erdoğan's victory has a pre-proclaiming tone, morale, and an over-engage attitude to war.

⁶⁸⁹ “President Erdoğan, President of European Council Michel Talk over Phone,” Directorate of Communications, April 6, 2020, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/haberler/detay/president-erdogan-president-of-european-council-michel-talk-over-phone0609>.

Statements of the Then Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

On September 27, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu first spoke to his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, and then to his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov on the phone to obtain information about the events. Çavuşoğlu reported that Türkiye supported Azerbaijan in every sense, that Armenia had “crossed the line” and that the Turkish Foreign Ministry was in contact with the members of the Minsk Group and other relevant states⁶⁹⁰.

Minister Çavuşoğlu stated in interviews with Anadolu Agency on September 30 that Armenia has been disregarding international law, UN resolutions and the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group by continuing to occupy Azerbaijani lands for the past 30 years and has clearly shown that it is not approaching a solution to the problem through diplomacy or negotiations. Referring to the Tovuz clashes that took place in July 2020, Çavuşoğlu said, “We also sent a very strong warning to Armenia in July. (We said) Come to your senses, we are with Azerbaijan with all our means, whatever Azerbaijan wants, these attacks will not go unpunished. Azerbaijan did what was necessary on the field after all.” Stating that he is in contact with many other states and will discuss the Karabakh issue with them, the Minister emphasized, “We say that we are with Azerbaijan on the field and at the table, this is not an empty promise, we continue our efforts”⁶⁹¹.

Çavuşoğlu stated that the Minsk Trio had not taken any concrete steps, that Armenia had gained courage from this whole situation, and that Azerbaijan was currently fighting within its own territory. Asking, “In which country in the world, namely when a fight is being fought within its own territory, are the occupiers and the countries whose lands are being occupied treated equally?” Çavuşoğlu emphasized that if the

⁶⁹⁰ “Çavuşoğlu Discusses Nagorno-Karabakh Clashes with Russia's Lavrov, Azerbaijan's Bayramov.” *Daily Sabah*, September 27, 2020. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/cavusoglu-discusses-nagorno-karabakh-clashes-with-russias-lavrov-azerbajians-bayramov>.

⁶⁹¹ Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, “AA Editör Masası’na Verdiği Röportaj,” Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 30 September 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-mevlut-cavusoglu_nun-aa-editor-masasina-verdigi-ropartaj-30-9-2020.tr.mfa.

problem is to be solved through diplomacy, Azerbaijan will always defend its rights at the table, but Armenia has never chosen this path until now. He stated that Azerbaijan does not need anyone and that its capacity in this fight is quite sufficient, yet with the understanding of “one nation-two states”, Türkiye will always be by the side of brotherly Azerbaijan wherever and however it wishes, as a state, nation, and government⁶⁹².

In a joint press conference held with Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio on October 2, Çavuşoğlu gave considerable place to Azerbaijan’s struggle against Armenia and answered questions from members of the press on the subject. Minister Çavuşoğlu remarked that the Minsk Group had not made any real effort to resolve the 30-year Karabakh issue, that it was not objective in the face of this situation and was taking sides, and that the key to a fundamental solution to the issue was Armenia’s complete withdrawal from Azerbaijani territory. Regarding Türkiye’s relations with Azerbaijan, he expressed, “We are of course one nation with the Azerbaijani people, and even if we are two separate states, we will act as one state if need be. Therefore, no one should find our support for Azerbaijan strange or criticize it, there is nothing more natural and legitimate than this”⁶⁹³. In response to the questions asked by the reporters, Çavuşoğlu iterated that they have always been on the side of international law, that they advocate for the resolution of the issue in the context of decisions to be made by the UN Security Council and OSCE Minsk Group, in a way that does not harm Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, and that “if this issue is not resolved and Azerbaijan makes any demands from them, they will not hesitate to provide support no matter what anyone says”, and Azerbaijan and Türkiye “one nation, two states”⁶⁹⁴.

In a joint press statement made after his meeting with his Kyrgyz counterpart immediately after the ceasefire reached on November 9 regarding the war, Çavuşoğlu also gave great importance to Azerbaijan’s victory in his speech. Stating that the

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, “İtalya Dışişleri Bakanı ile Ortak Basın Toplantısı,” Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, erişim 6 June 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-mevlut-cavusoglu-nun-italya-db-ile-ortak-basin-toplantisi.tr.mfa>.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

ceasefires reached in the past were always broken by Armenia and that they eventually “paid a heavy price” for this, the minister emphasized that the post-ceasefire process was of utmost importance from now on and said that “they have been on the side of brotherly Azerbaijan both on the field and at the table since the beginning and will continue to be on the side of Azerbaijan in the future”⁶⁹⁵.

In his address to the 12th Ambassadors Conference held on the same day, he expressed his comments and thoughts on the Karabakh conflict. Describing the conflict as a “conflict whose *solution* has been frozen,” Çavuşoğlu said that Türkiye has always supported what is “legitimate and just” and that the support given to Azerbaijan is also because it is “justified in terms of international law,” and emphasized that they have been representing Azerbaijan’s justness on the basis of international law since the first day of the war through diplomatic and political mobilization. Minister Çavuşoğlu underlined the importance of the deep affinity with Azerbaijan with the following words and addressed the international community⁶⁹⁶:

Naturally, Azerbaijan is not just any country for us. It is a country with which we are connected with the understanding of “one nation, two states”. They are “flesh and blood” to us... We will keep defending Azerbaijan’s rights in every possible platform, in contact with all the relevant actors. As Turkey and Turkish nation, we are “one nation, two states” in this process just like before. It is our duty to serve the well-being of brotherly Azerbaijan and its people... We appeal to the international community: Let’s resolve this conflict, as we always argued, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions, based on Azerbaijan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Official Statements and Press Releases of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In his statements throughout the war, the spokesman of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hami Aksoy, stated that Armenia’s attacks were a violation of international law and that the Armenian presence in the region was the greatest threat

⁶⁹⁵ “Çavuşoğlu: Dağlık Karabağ’da kalan tüm bölgeler Azerbaycan’a teslim edilecek.” *Euronews Türkçe*, 10 November 2020. <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/11/10/cavusoglu-dagl-k-karabag-da-kalan-tum-bolgeler-azerbaycan-a-teslim-edilecek>.

⁶⁹⁶ Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, “*Opening Address at the 12th Ambassadors Conference*”, Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 10, 2020, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-bakanimizin-buyukelciler-konferansinda-yaptigi-konusma.en.mfa>.

to peace. He called on the international community to act justly, condemned the Armenian attacks and emphasized that Azerbaijan was right to defend itself and that it had Türkiye's unconditional and unlimited support in this regard.⁶⁹⁷

Official press releases emphasized that Armenia was carrying out attacks on areas where civilians lived and would take any action to achieve its goals, while Türkiye was always on the side of Azerbaijan, which was fighting against them, and that Azerbaijan was exercising its right to defend itself on its internationally recognized territory⁶⁹⁸. Following the immediate termination of the ceasefire reached on October 10, Armenia's attacks on the Azerbaijani city of Ganja and civilians were strongly condemned, and it was underlined that the international community should take immediate action against these actions and that Türkiye always stands by Azerbaijan⁶⁹⁹. These were also supported by the words "Showing no traits of humanity, Armenia does not even let our Azerbaijani brothers lay their beloveds to rest. With this latest attack, Armenia once again demonstrated to the whole world its total disrespect for humanitarian values and laws. Türkiye stands with brotherly Azerbaijan in full and eternal solidarity" in response to the ongoing Armenian

⁶⁹⁷ "SC-94: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü Hami Aksoy'un Bu Sabah Başlayan Ermenistan'ın Azerbaycan'a Saldırısına İlişkin Sorulara Yönelik Açıklaması." *T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı*, 27 September 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-94_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-a-karsi-baslattigi-saldiri-hk-sc.tr.mfa; "SC-94: Response by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hami Aksoy to the Question Regarding Armenia's Attack on Azerbaijan This Morning." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 27, 2020. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-94_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-a-karsi-baslattigi-saldiri-hk-sc.en.mfa; "SC-101: Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Remarks of Greece's Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias in Armenia." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 16, 2020. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-101_-yunan-disisleri-bakani-dendias-in-ermenistan-daki-ifadeleri-hk-sc.en.mfa; "No. 228, 4 Ekim 2020: Ermenistan'ın Azerbaycan'ın Gence Kentine Saldırıları Hk." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 4, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-228_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-in-gence-kentine-saldirilari-hk.en.mfa.

⁶⁹⁸ "No. 228, 4 Ekim 2020: Ermenistan'ın Azerbaycan'ın Gence Kentine Saldırıları Hk." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 4, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-228_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-in-gence-kentine-saldirilari-hk.en.mfa.

⁶⁹⁹ "No. 239, 10 October 2020: Press Release Regarding the Ceasefire Between Azerbaijan and Armenia." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 10, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-239_-azerbaycan-ile-ermenistan-arasinda-ilan-edilen-ateskes-hk.en.mfa; "No. 241, 11 October 2020: Press Release Regarding Armenia's Attack on Ganja." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 11, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-241_-ermenistan-in-gence-ye-saldirisi-hk.en.mfa.

attacks⁷⁰⁰. During the war, Armenian provocations, attacks and crimes against humanity were condemned, a sense of responsibility, support and a call for solutions were made to the international community, and the lack of reaction by the Minsk Group members was highlighted⁷⁰¹.

Reactions of Turkish Political Parties and Other Officials

From the first days of the 44-day conflict, not only President Erdogan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, but also the Ministry of Defence, political parties and other political figures have provided both political and moral support to Azerbaijan.

On September 28, the Justice and Development Party, Republican People's Party (RPP/CHP), Nationalist Movement Party, and İYİ Party groups in the Turkish Grand National Assembly issued a joint statement, signed by the party group deputies, condemning Armenia's attacks. The statement said that Armenia had violated international law and that the signatories supported Azerbaijan's defensive actions. In this statement, the parties stated that Armenia had been an occupier in the region for 30 years and that this issue should be resolved peacefully and in the context of the UN Security Council and OSCE decisions and called on the international community to be just⁷⁰². Throughout the war, the parties continued to condemn Armenia's attacks and

⁷⁰⁰ "No. 246, 15 October 2020: Press Release Regarding Armenia's Attack on the City of Tərtər." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 15, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-246_-ermenistan-tarafindan-azerbaycan-in-terter-sehrine-saldirisi-hk.en.mfa.

⁷⁰¹ "No. 248, 16 October 2020: Press Release Regarding Armenia's Attack on the Nahcivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 16, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-248_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-in-nahcivan-ozerk-cumhuriyeti-ne-saldirisi-hk.en.mfa; "No. 260, 27 October 2020: Press Release Regarding Armenia's Attack on Barda City of Azerbaijan." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 27, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-260_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-in-berde-kentine-duzenledigi-saldiri-hk.en.mfa; "No. 261, 28 October 2020: Press Release Regarding Armenia's Anew Attack Today on Barda City of Azerbaijan." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 28, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-261_-ermenistan-nin-berde-ye-bugun-tekrar-duzenlenen-saldiri-hk.en.mfa.

⁷⁰² "AK Parti, CHP, MHP ve İyi Parti'nin TBMM Grupları Ortak Bildiriyle Ermenistan'ı Kınadı." *Euronews*, September 28, 2020. <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/09/28/ak-parti-chp-mhp-ve-iyi-parti-nin-tbmm-gruplar-ortak-bildiriyle-ermenistan-k-nad>; "TBMM'de Ermenistan'a Ortak Kınama Bildirisi." *DW Türkçe*, 28 Eylül 2020. <https://www.dw.com/tr/tbmmde-ermenistana-ortak-k%C4%B1nama-bildirisi/a-55084878>.

constant violations of international law through their social media accounts and to support Azerbaijan in its just cause⁷⁰³.

Director of Communications Fahrettin Altun warned Armenia with the words, “Armenia must take this (warning) into account in their calculations before launching their belligerent attacks,” and also drew attention to the lack of reaction from the international community, emphasizing that Armenia is an occupier in Azerbaijani lands and saying that Türkiye will keep the slogan “one nation, two states” alive⁷⁰⁴. Altun also promised to continue to fight disinformation about Azerbaijan and support Azerbaijan’s just cause in the Karabakh issue during his meetings with Hikmet Hacıyev, Head of the Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan⁷⁰⁵.

Following the ceasefire decision reached on November 10, many politicians and officials, such as the then-TBMM speaker Mustafa Şentop, Vice President Fuat Oktay, the Ministry of Defence, and the CHP, showered Azerbaijan’s victory with congratulations on their social media accounts. The support came to life in statements such as “the enemy finally accepted Azerbaijan’s legitimacy in the region,” “30 years

⁷⁰³ "CHP, MHP Condemn Armenian Attack on Azerbaijan." *Hürriyet Daily News*, October 5, 2020. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/chp-mhp-condemn-armenian-attack-in-azerbaijan-158842>; "Türkiye in Steadfast Support of Azerbaijan as Clashes Continue." *Daily Sabah*, September 29, 2020. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Türkiye-in-steadfast-support-of-azerbaijan-as-clashes-continue>.

⁷⁰⁴ "Director of Communications Altun: 'We Call on All Sensible Nations to Stand with Azerbaijan in Its Rightful Struggle Against Foreign Occupation and Attacks.'" *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications*, September 28, 2020. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/director-of-communications-altun-we-call-on-all-sensible-nations-to-stand-with-azerbaijan-in-its-rightful-struggle-against-foreign-occupation-and-attacks>.

⁷⁰⁵ "Director of Communications Altun: 'We Will Continue to Support Azerbaijan in All Areas, Including the Fight Against Disinformation.'" *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications*, October 15, 2020. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/haberler/detay/director-of-communications-altun-we-will-continue-to-support-azerbaijan-in-all-areas-including-the-fight-against-disinformation>.

of suffering ended today,” “Armenia’s barbaric attack ended,” and “We proudly welcome Azerbaijan’s victory”⁷⁰⁶.

On the first day of the war, then-Defence Minister Hulusi Akar had a phone conversation with his Azerbaijani counterpart, General Zakir Hasanov, and said, "We will stand by our Azerbaijani Turk brothers with all our means in the struggle to protect territorial integrity until the end"⁷⁰⁷. Akar also made statements about the war at the opening ceremony of the new academic year of the National Defence University Turkish Military Academy held on October 12. Stating that Armenia has no respect for international law and human values, Akar said, “There is no stopping Armenia without evacuating the lands it occupied and removing the mercenaries and terrorists there from its lands. Azerbaijan is demanding its rights, it will get them”⁷⁰⁸. In a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart on the same day, he emphasized that “Azerbaijan cannot wait another 30 years for a solution, and Türkiye stands by Azerbaijan in the operation it has launched to take back its native lands”⁷⁰⁹.

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu's rhetoric includes a sturdy and decisive attitude towards war, and its solution. Çavuşoğlu's highlight that ‘what needs to be done will be done regarding the resolution of the war’, that ‘Türkiye does not make empty promises’, and that ‘the support given to Azerbaijan is unconditional’ particularly demonstrates this. Support is presented not only in spiritual or emotional, but also in a concrete sense. The motto "one nation, two states" is also at the centre of the speeches and is even said to act like a single state if necessary. This discourse of Çavuşoğlu also gave

⁷⁰⁶ "Türkiye Welcomes Azerbaijan's Victory in Nagorno-Karabakh." *Daily Sabah*, November 10, 2020. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Türkiye-welcomes-azerbaijans-victory-in-nagorno-karabakh>.

⁷⁰⁷ Milli Savunma Bakanı Akar: “Sonuna kadar Azerbaycan Türkü kardeşlerimizin yanında olacağız.” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 27 September 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/milli-savunma-bakani-akar-sonuna-kadar-azerbaycan-turku-kardeslerimizin-yaninda-olacagiz/1987230>.

⁷⁰⁸ Milli Savunma Bakanı Hulusi Akar: “Bir gün gelecek hem tarih önünde hem de uluslararası hukuk önünde bunların hesabını verecekler,” *Defence Turk*, 12 October 2020, <https://www.defenceturk.net/hulusi-akar-bir-gun-gelecek-bunlarin-hesabini-verecekler>.

⁷⁰⁹ “Milli Savunma Bakanı Akar, Rusya Savunma Bakanı Şoygu ile görüştü”. *Anadolu Ajansı*, 12 October 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/milli-savunma-bakani-akar-rusya-savunma-bakani-soygu-ile-gorustu/2003760>.

the signals of a geopolitical integration and emphasized that the close relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan have a special and separate place in Turkish foreign policy. Cavusoglu, like Erdogan, often criticized the Minsk Group, emphasizing that in Karabakh the occupier and the occupied are treated equally by the international community, and in that sense, Azerbaijan was given an international law-based, fair and principled support by Türkiye rather than an empty one. Çavuşoğlu emphasizes that full support is given not only on the table but also in the field. All these discourses reflect diplomatic efforts, a shared sense of identity, determination on the ground, and an unconditional loyalty to the bond of brotherhood demonstrates the multilayered nature of the relations developed between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. In line with this stance, the official statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also asserted that Armenia had violated international law and unlawfully occupied Azerbaijani territories, repeatedly emphasizing Türkiye's steadfast solidarity with Azerbaijan.

4.2.4.2. Azerbaijan

Statements of the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev

President Ilham Aliyev has welcomed and expressed his gratitude for the peace calls and support for Azerbaijan made by his Turkish counterpart Erdogan since the first day of the war⁷¹⁰. Aliyev held a telephone conversation with the Turkish leader on September 27, informed Erdogan about the progress on the front and thanked him for his support⁷¹¹.

In an interview with the foreign press on October 2, Aliyev denied the allegations of Türkiye's military involvement in the war and said that it was baseless information. Regarding relations, he said, "Türkiye is our brotherly country from the very first day

⁷¹⁰ "Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a phone call to President Ilham Aliyev," President.az, 27 September 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/40970>.

⁷¹¹ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Aliyev ile görüşti: Her zaman olduğu gibi bugün de Azerbaycan'ın yanındayız", Independent Türkçe, 27 September 2020, <https://www.indyrturk.com/node/250146>; "Azerbaijan leader hails Turkish support against Armenia," Anadolu Ajansı, 28 September 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/azerbaijan-leader-hails-turkish-support-against-armenia/1988889>; "Azerbaijani President Aliyev thanks Türkiye for support against Armenia," Daily Sabah, 29 September 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/azerbaijani-president-aliyev-thanks-Turkiye-for-support-against-armenia>

of the Armenian attack, from the very first hour, Türkiye expressed its full support to Azerbaijan. My brother, President Erdoğan many times made very important statements. And yesterday speaking at the opening session of the parliament he made another very important statement that Türkiye is next to Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan is not alone. We feel the support. We are very grateful to our Turkish brothers and the president, and other officials.”⁷¹².

In his letter to President Erdoğan on October 3, Aliyev informed him about the losses suffered in the war and Azerbaijan's ongoing defence efforts and said that Armenian rhetoric and attacks were undermining the negotiation processes. He emphasized that the articulate and determined rhetoric and condemnations, especially by Erdoğan, showed that Azerbaijan was not alone in this cause. He also expressed his gratitude to the Turkish press and the Turkish people for their support on behalf of himself and the Azerbaijani people⁷¹³.

In an interview conducted by TRT News on October 5, President Aliyev stated that they are willing to ceasefire if Armenian forces agree to withdraw from Azerbaijani territory and that Türkiye must be involved in the process following the ceasefire. Stating that Türkiye's determination on this issue is important for the war not to grow any further, Aliyev thanked all Turkish people and especially Erdoğan, whom he sees as a brother. He also clarified Türkiye's role in the process by saying, “Türkiye has said that it stood by Azerbaijan, and it was with Azerbaijan until the end. That Azerbaijan is on the path of truth; justice is on its side. That was a warning to many other actors. Therefore, Türkiye must be involved in the subsequent peace process”⁷¹⁴.

⁷¹² “Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Al Jazeera TV channel,” President.az, 2 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/41429>.

⁷¹³ “Dear Mr President, Dear Brother...,” President.az, 3 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/41609>.

⁷¹⁴ “Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by TRTHaber TV channel,” President.az, 5 Ekim 2020, erişim 6 Haziran 2025, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/41763>.

Stating that Türkiye and Azerbaijan are “one nation, two states,” the President made the following remarks regarding the display of Turkish and Azerbaijani flags together in both countries and the true depth of bilateral relations:⁷¹⁵:

... Our brotherhood is eternal, and our brotherhood has stood the test of time. You know that the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are an example for the whole world. I have repeatedly spoken about this. I have often said at joint press conferences with my dear brother, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, that there are no other countries in the world as close to each other as Turkey and Azerbaijan, and these are not empty words. These are heartfelt sentiments. Our unity is based on our history, our common ethnic roots, language, religion and brotherhood. The historic service of my dear brother Tayyip Bey and myself is that we have created a modern Turkish-Azerbaijani union on a very solid foundation. Turkish flags have been present everywhere already in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani flags are everywhere in Turkey. We are not separate from each other. We are together. These events have once again shown that Turkey was the first to support us unequivocally and decisively. The President of Turkey's very bold and resolute statements were a warning to many countries – stay away, do not interfere, Azerbaijan is not alone, Turkey is next to it, and Azerbaijan is always with Turkey! We support each other in all matters, across all platforms, and our unity must last forever.

In another interview on October 7, when asked about his thoughts on the Turkish and Azerbaijani flags being seen together in both the capital Baku and in the regions where conflicts took place, Aliyev similarly emphasized, “The flag of Turkey is a native flag for us, as native as the flag of Azerbaijan,” and said that this was a sign of true brotherhood and solidarity and that Azerbaijan would never be alone⁷¹⁶.

Aliyev proposed a new format in which Türkiye could play a more active role in resolving the war, and in an interview, he gave on October 12, answered the question of what role Türkiye should play. He said that in essence, the co-chairs in the Minsk Group were greatly influenced by the Armenian diasporas, that these countries were already quite distant from the region where the war was taking place, and that they were generally carrying out formalities. He emphasized that this was unfair, that the balance of power in the region had changed compared to 30 years ago, and that this

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ “Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by CNN-Türk TV channel,” President.az, 7 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/42038>.

problem could not be solved without Türkiye. Stating that this had been the case from the beginning, that high-level officials in Türkiye were taking action regarding the solution of the problem with both Azerbaijan and other states, Aliyev said that Türkiye was already the main actor in the solution process, in other words, “it is already a reality, we just have to turn de facto reality into de jure reality”⁷¹⁷.

In another interview on October 15, Aliyev reiterated that Türkiye already “de facto” influenced the process in resolving the Karabakh issue and the mechanisms after a possible permanent ceasefire, and that Türkiye’s presence was absolutely necessary in the process’ transition from a military to a political one⁷¹⁸. He also emphasized that “the discourse of ‘one nation, two states’ is a reality” and that this reality has been implemented by Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Finally, he said that although there can be certain historical, cultural or ethnic commonalities between other states, there is no other two states as close as Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and that this closeness – with the contributions of future generations – will be eternal⁷¹⁹.

In a different interview the next day, he spoke about Türkiye’s involvement in the Karabakh conflict and the criticism of other states for its close affiliation to Azerbaijan. He emphasized that others should not interfere in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, that this relationship brings stability to the region, and others should “not touch them, they should step aside” and that Türkiye will stand by Azerbaijan “until the end”. President Aliyev, who anew specified that Türkiye is “already de facto at the negotiating table”, stated if Türkiye had been a co-chair in the Minsk Group, the problem in the region would have been solved long ago and that it was already making a lot of diplomatic efforts and that it was not possible to completely remove Türkiye from these processes. When asked how he would describe President Erdoğan, he said, “Recep Tayyip

⁷¹⁷ “Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish Haber Global TV channel,” President.az, 12 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/42723>.

⁷¹⁸ “Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish NTV TV channel,” President.az, 15 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/43149>.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

Erdoğan is my brother. We have a very close relationship. Both as presidents and as two people. I have deep respect for him”⁷²⁰.

Aliyev hosted the speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Şentop in the capital Baku on October 19 and welcomed his visit and as another indicator of brotherhood and solidarity. Aliyev said, "My dear brother, esteemed President, has made very positive and precise statements," and mentioned that they have always felt the support from Türkiye in every sense since the beginning of the war⁷²¹.

In addition, in his letter to Erdoğan on October 29 Republic Day, one of Türkiye’s national holidays, he both congratulated the holiday and touched on the “uniqueness” of bilateral relations. He stated that solidarity could be maintained thanks to Erdoğan’s determined stance on the war and his unconditional support for Azerbaijan and said that unity and solidarity in their relations were strengthened as a result of mutual efforts⁷²². On November 1, he hosted the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and his delegation, and once more accentuated that this visit was an indication of solidarity and that Türkiye always stands by Azerbaijan⁷²³.

On November 8, when the city of Shusha was also won by the Azerbaijani forces, Aliyev hosted Minister Çavuşoğlu and the Minister of Defence Hulusi Akar saying that their presence there on this special day was very valuable, that it was a sign of brotherhood, and that the political support shown in every sense was very precious and expressed his gratitude⁷²⁴.

⁷²⁰ “Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish A Haber TV channel,” President.az, 16 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/43250>.

⁷²¹ “Ilham Aliyev received delegation led by Speaker of Grand National Assembly of Türkiye,” President.az, 19 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/43555>.

⁷²² “To the President of the Republic of Türkiye,” President.az, 28 October 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/44702>.

⁷²³ “Ilham Aliyev received delegation led by Turkish Foreign Minister,” President.az, 1 November 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45188>.

⁷²⁴ “Ilham Aliyev received Turkish Foreign Minister and Minister of National Defence,” President.az, 8 November 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45789>.

In his address to the people on November 10, 2020, the last day of the war, President Aliyev explained that Türkiye would officially play a role based on the agreement signed on the same day, and that this would be possible by working together with Russia in a peacekeeping centre to be established in the region⁷²⁵. Later in his remarks, he said that he was grateful for the peaceful efforts made by both Türkiye and Russia throughout the war, and that Azerbaijan's relations with both states were at an unprecedented level⁷²⁶.

On the same day, Erdoğan and Aliyev had a phone conversation and Aliyev reiterated his appreciation for Turkish political and moral efforts and support, while Erdoğan expressed his gratitude for these words and congratulated Azerbaijan for its successes in the war. They also added, that “the two friendly and brotherly states and peoples will continue to stand by each other”⁷²⁷.

Again, on November 10, Aliyev hosted the Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu, the Minister of Defence Akar, and the then Director of the National Intelligence Organization Hakan Fidan. Aliyev, who received the Turkish delegation as his first meeting after the war, thanked the entire Turkish people for their joy and support, evaluated the events as “Our Turkish brothers rejoiced in this victory as in their own. This is the case. This is our joint victory; it is a confirmation of Türkiye-Azerbaijan unity” and thanked all the media and Turkish politics⁷²⁸.

In Aliyev’s official discourse, like Türkiye’s, the motto “one nation, two states” is frequently echoed. This indicates both the cultural and emotional closeness, as well as the long-term strategic partnership between the two countries. President Aliyev places

⁷²⁵ “Ilham Aliyev, Russian President Vladimir Putin met in a videoconference format,” President.az, 10 November 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45920>.

⁷²⁶ “Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation,” President.az, 10 November 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45924>.

⁷²⁷ “Ilham Aliyev held a phone conversation with President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan,” President.az, 10 November 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45998>.

⁷²⁸ “Ilham Aliyev has received Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye Mevlut Cavusoglu, Minister of National Defence Hulusi Akar and Director of National Intelligence Organization Hakan Fidan,” President.az, 10 November 2020, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/46077>.

great importance on the support provided by Türkiye and often emphasizes that this support gives Azerbaijan political and moral strength. By referring to Erdoğan as a brother and to Türkiye as a brotherly state, Aliyev defines the relationship not only on a personal level but also politically through this perspective.

Azerbaijan does not merely view Türkiye as a supportive and fraternal state. From Azerbaijan's point of view, Türkiye plays a crucial role in resolving the Karabakh issue, highlighting Türkiye's importance in both regional and international contexts. Türkiye's criticism of the Minsk Group is also seen as a valuable reference by Azerbaijan. Moreover, Türkiye is perceived as a critical actor in achieving lasting peace and stability in the region.

By standing with international law, Türkiye also aligns itself with Azerbaijan, since Azerbaijan's struggle is regarded as consistent with international legal norms. In this sense, Türkiye's unwavering, firm, and resolute stance against Armenia has always been welcomed and appreciated by Aliyev. Even the post-war victory was not celebrated solely by Azerbaijan, but jointly with Türkiye; in Baku, the flags of both nations waved side by side. From Aliyev's speeches to the events held, the Karabakh victory has been seen as the peak of shared joy and unity.

Statements of the Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs Ceyhun Bayramov

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, who took office in July 2020, paid his first official visit abroad to Ankara, in August⁷²⁹. Bayramov, who has been in face-to-face and telephone conversations with his Turkish counterpart Çavuşoğlu since the first days of the war, explained that Armenia violated both international law and UN Security Council resolutions, as well as the 1949 Geneva Convention, with its

⁷²⁹ "No. 170, 10 August 2020: Press Release Regarding the Visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ceyhun Bayramov, to Our Country." *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, August 10, 2020, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-170-azerbaycan-cumhuriyeti-disisleri-bakani-sayin-ceyhun-bayramov-un-ulkemizi-ziyareti-hk.en.mfa>.

occupation actions, and expressed his gratitude for Türkiye's continuous support in Azerbaijan's just war during this period⁷³⁰.

Bayramov stated that Türkiye's support was within the framework of international law and aimed at maintaining peace in the region⁷³¹, denied Armenian claims that Türkiye was directly and militarily involved in the war, and emphasized that it was quite normal for Türkiye to be on Azerbaijan's side by emphasizing the rules of international law as a permanent member of the Minsk Group⁷³².

He continued his talks with his counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, particularly throughout October 2020, and informed Çavuşoğlu about Azerbaijan's talks with other countries, especially Russia, and informed that Armenia continued to launch attacks on areas where civilians live despite the ceasefires. During this process, he frequently emphasized that Azerbaijan was grateful to all of Türkiye for its endless support for the legitimacy of Azerbaijan's just cause, which is based on international law, and for the words "Türkiye would only support solutions that Azerbaijan agrees with"⁷³³.

⁷³⁰ "No 392/20, 30 October 2020: Information of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Telephone Conversation Between Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, September 28, 2020. <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no27520-information-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-on-the-telephone-conversation-between-jeyhun-bayramov-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-and-mevlut-chavushoglu-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-Turkiye>.

⁷³¹ "No 293/20: Information of the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on [Telephone Conversation Between Jeyhun Bayramov and Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu]." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, October 1, 2020. <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no29320-information-of-the-press-service-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-enru>.

⁷³² "No 305/20: Statement of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, October 3, 2020. <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no30520-statement-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan>.

⁷³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. *Press Releases on the Telephone Conversations between Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu* (No. 330/20, 339/20, 358/20, 392/20, 396/20). October 2020. <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no33020-information-of-the-press-service-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-on-the-telephone-conversation-between-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-jeyhun-bayramov-and-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-Turkiye-mevlut-cavusoglu-enru>
<https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no33920-information-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-on-the-telephone-conversation-between-minister-jeyhun>

Foreign Minister Bayramov emphasizes the intensity of diplomatic dialogue and contacts between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and mentions Türkiye's support on many platforms. It is particularly significant that Bayramov denies Armenian allegations claiming Türkiye's military involvement in the war and underlines that Türkiye is a country that acts strictly in accordance with the rules of international law. In this way, while Türkiye's international reputation is also defended by Azerbaijan, it becomes clear that a coordinated diplomatic and strategic partnership exists between the two countries.

Like President Aliyev, Bayramov stresses that Türkiye is not merely a brotherly country or a friendly ally, but rather a game-setter, balancing actor, and influential regional state in the South Caucasus.

4.2.4.4. Joint Celebrations After Victory

At the very beginning of the section, the ceremony held 1 month after the end of the 44-day Homeland War was mentioned, which was an important event in terms of the closeness between the two countries immediately after the war. During the ceremony, Turkish and Azerbaijani soldiers marched, and saluted the leaders, state officials and commanders, and war veterans also attended the ceremony. Afterwards, to demonstrate the military capacity of the Azerbaijani army, the artillery, armoured vehicles, missile systems and tanks owned by the army were exhibited, including the Bayraktar TB2 UAVs, which played a major role in the defeat of Armenia in the

[bayramov-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-Türkiye-mevlut-cavusoglu-enru
https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no35820-information-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-on-the-telephone-conversation-between-minister-jeyhun-bayramov-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-Türkiye-mevlut-cavusoglu](https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no35820-information-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-on-the-telephone-conversation-between-minister-jeyhun-bayramov-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-Türkiye-mevlut-cavusoglu)

<https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no39220-information-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-on-the-telephone-conversation-between-minister-jeyhun-bayramov-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-Türkiye-mevlut-cavusoglu>

<https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no39620-information-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-on-the-meeting-of-minister-jeyhun-bayramov-with-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-Türkiye-mevlut-cavusoglu-enru>

Patriotic War, were also exhibited⁷³⁴. In addition, Armenia's damaged military vehicles captured in Karabakh were exhibited⁷³⁵.

Citizens, burst with joy, watched the ceremony, and completely flooded the area, waved the Turkish and Azerbaijani flags side by side. One citizen said, "... Türkiye and Azerbaijan will be one, God willing, the Turkish nation will be one. There will be no borders between Azerbaijan and Türkiye anymore"⁷³⁶.

Turkish President Erdoğan and Azerbaijani President Aliyev and their families, as well as foreign ministers, defence ministers and high-level state officials of both states were present at the parade and watched the ceremony side by side.

President Erdoğan used the expressions in his speech, "In the concise words of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, we considered Azerbaijan's sorrow as our sorrow and its joy as our joy," and pressed that the struggle was not over yet and that from now on, the struggle given in the political and military fields would also be given in the reconstruction of the cities that were regained. Erdoğan also warned the Armenian people about their leaders and said, "It should be seen that nothing will be achieved by the fuelling of Western imperialists, and instead of hostility, relations should be reconsidered on the basis of good neighbourliness." Congratulating the Azerbaijani and Turkish armies, İlham Aliyev, and remembering all the martyrs with mercy and grace, he concluded his words by saying⁷³⁷:

Today is a day of victory and pride for all of us, for the entire Turkic world. I thank God infinitely for making us experience this day. Today, I would like to repeat once more with all my heart: Karabakh is Azerbaijan. Karabakh has now

⁷³⁴ "Azerbaycan Dağlık Karabağ zaferini askeri geçit töreniyle kutladı." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 10 December 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/azerbaycan-daglik-karabag-zaferini-askeri-gecit-toreniyle-kutladi/2072445>.

⁷³⁵ "Azerbaycan'da Zafer Geçidi Töreni Düzenlendi." *Anadolu Ajansı* (foto galeri), 10 December 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/azerbaycanda-zafer-gecidi-toreni-duzenlendi->

⁷³⁶ "Azerbaycan halkı zafer geçit törenini coşkuyla izledi." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 11 December 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/azerbaycan-halki-zafer-gecit-toreni-coskuyla-izledi/2072588>.

⁷³⁷ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Azerbaycan destan yazmaya devam edecek." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 10 Aralık 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-azerbaycan-destan-yazmaya-devam-edecek/2071946>. [aa.com.tr+2](https://www.aa.com.tr)

embraced its homeland, and 30 years of longing have come to an end. From now on, our goal as Turkey and Azerbaijan is to struggle to make these lands more prosperous, more developed, and more liveable for our children. As long as Turkey and Azerbaijan stand back-to-back, they will continue to overcome difficulties and run from one success to another, with God's permission. I pray that God be our helper and guide.

Azerbaijani President Aliyev, at the beginning of his speech, thanked his “dear brother” Erdoğan, then the Turkish soldiers and other official guests for accepting his offer to participate in this event, and stated that this was once again a sign of “unity, friendship, and brotherhood.” He emphasized that Erdoğan’s “unequivocal and harsh” rhetoric since the beginning of the war was quite effective in Azerbaijan’s just war and was another symbol of unity and brotherhood. Aliyev, who continued his speech by stating what happened in this 44-day war and his views on the upcoming process, concluded his words by saying⁷³⁸: “Today, the whole world sees that Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Glory to the victorious Armed Forces of Azerbaijan! Long live Azerbaijani-Turkish friendship and brotherhood! Long live Azerbaijani soldiers!”

This splendid parade held in Baku clearly demonstrated to the world that the victory in Karabakh was a jointly achieved success by Azerbaijan and Türkiye. The exhibition of Turkish-made weapons that were effectively used during the war, the shoulder-to-shoulder march of Turkish and Azerbaijani soldiers, and the presence of many political leaders and masses from both countries symbolized the military, political, and societal dimensions of the deepening bilateral ties shaped by the war.

In his speech, Erdoğan referred to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, thereby anchoring the closeness between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in a historical context and framing it as a long-standing friendship, with an emphasis on shared identity. His statement that the struggle would continue even after the war, now shifting to reconstruction, highlighted the unity of purpose concerning the region’s future. While pointing out the West’s

⁷³⁸ “A Victory Parade Dedicated to Victory in the Patriotic War Was Held at the Azadlig Square, Baku.” *Official Web-site of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, December 10, 2020. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/48788>.

inadequacy in resolving the conflict, Erdoğan also underlined that the Turkish Azerbaijani unity would be a source of peace in the region.

Aliyev, in turn, reiterated the importance of Türkiye's clear and unwavering support for Azerbaijan at the international level and stressed its role as an influential actor. The victory was jointly claimed, with phrases such as "Karabakh is Azerbaijan!" and "Long live Azerbaijani Turkish brotherhood!" used together, expressing not only political will but also emotional unity.

The victory was celebrated with great joy and unity by the people of both nations. In this sense, the deepening interstate relations also resonated at the societal level, fostering a sense of community, strengthening both national and shared perceptions of victory. Therefore, the contribution of the Karabakh victory to bilateral relations rests on multilayered foundations—both emotional and pragmatic.

4.2.4.4. Conclusions

As is seen, during the war, the discourses on the Turkish side emphasized *friendly and brotherly* extent in bilateral relations with Azerbaijan, and it was stated that Türkiye would always be by Azerbaijan's side, and that it would provide all kinds of support, no matter what. In addition, solidarity was emphasized every time, and in the discourses, it was clearly highlighted that there would be determination *on the ground and at the table*, and that military intervention would not be avoided if necessary, especially when it comes to with Azerbaijan's just struggle, while also underlining the relations were still defined as "*one nation, two states*" after 30 years. Another aim of Türkiye was to draw attention to the Karabakh issue in the international sense. This was reflected in the discourse as the Armenian side 'violating the rules of international law', 'continuously breaking the ceasefire reached in the region', and 'being the biggest anti-peace element in the region'. Furthermore, it has always been emphasized that Türkiye 'will not remain silent' against these provocations, that 'Azerbaijan is trying to defend its territorial integrity and is in a just war', that a solution-oriented approach to the region and 'a permanent and internationally lawful peace' are being sought.

The Azerbaijani side also emphasizes that Türkiye and Azerbaijan are first and foremost “*one nation, two states*”, and that this is not only in name but a reality. It has been emphasized that Erdoğan’s ‘*unequivocal and harsh*’ words towards Armenia, and the fact that there was no hesitation in the support given, gave them strength and morale, and that they were always grateful for them. Aliyev has frequently reiterated that these brotherly relations established based on equality are an example for the world, that there is *constant solidarity* in bilateral relations, and even when he says ‘Karabakh is Azerbaijan’, Karabakh is seen as a common victory. The statement ‘*Türkiye has always been by our side*’ has also been frequently repeated.

The official contacts and diplomatic dialogues between President Erdoğan and President Aliyev, as well as the speeches and public statements of officials from both countries, represented the solidarity efforts of the two brotherly states during the war, and also shaped the security perspectives that would change in the region. All of these, along with the search for a common international legitimacy that would support Azerbaijan’s arguments in the war, provided a real opportunity for the deepening of bilateral relations, the evolution of relations from an emotional dimension to a strategic one, and the transformation of the motto “one nation, two states” into a reality⁷³⁹. While Türkiye defends Azerbaijan everywhere and, in every sense, based on international rules, Azerbaijan has also frequently stated that Türkiye needs to take part in all kinds of mechanisms that are developing and could develop in the region, and that Türkiye is, in fact, a transformative power in the region.

⁷³⁹ Ergun, Ayça. “Türkiye’s Presence, Involvement and Engagement in the Armenia Azerbaijan Conflict: A Reflection on Azerbaijani–Turkish Relations.” *Caucasus Strategic Perspectives* 1, no. 2 (2020): 125–29.

CHAPTER 5

TURKISH AZERBAIJANI SECURITY PERSPECTIVES AND EVOLVED RELATIONS AFTER THE WAR

This chapter focuses on how the shared regional and global security perspectives between Türkiye and Azerbaijan deepened and shifted after the Second Karabakh War. Three key developments were selected for this purpose. First, the articles/content of the Shusha Declaration signed between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in 2021, its significance, and its place in relations will be discussed. Then, the newly revived post-war normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia will be compared with the process of 2008, and the impact of the Azerbaijani element in this regard will be analysed. Finally, the outcomes of the Zangezur Corridor for regional and bilateral relations will be briefly reviewed, and a general assessment of all these developments will be examined in the conclusion.

5.1. From Strategic Partnership to Alliance: The Shusha Declaration

The 44-day Patriotic War, or the Second Karabakh War, led to the redrawing of borders in the South Caucasus and the shifting of political and military balances. During and after this period, relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan reached a new dimension. With the Shusha Declaration, bilateral relations became more institutional and multidimensional. The solidarity maintained on the ground was resolutely reiterated at the table, elevating existing relations to the level of alliance. This document declared a common political will, while its vision of security and cooperation was poised to reshape the regional security architecture. The Declaration contributed to establishing the "one nation, two states" approach based on international law and addressed a wide range of areas, from defence and energy to trade and military partnerships.

Additionally, The Declaration, signed in the critically important city of Shusha in Azerbaijan, not only includes plans for projects such as the Zangezur Corridor and the Middle Corridor, but also has inferences regarding the Organization of Turkic States thus holding strategic importance regionally and internationally.

This section will first briefly explain the importance of Shusha as a city, and then the value that states attribute to the Declaration. It will then examine the content of the Shusha Declaration, highlighting its key paragraphs, its distinction from previous agreements, and its significance for bilateral relations. Finally, an analysis on the Declaration will be provided, explaining the framework the document offers for Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations and its implications for the region, the international arena, and the Turkic world.

Shusha, the heart of abundance and dynamism, the "conservatory of the Caucasus," the "Jerusalem of Karabakh," and the "cradle of music and poetry"⁷⁴⁰, possessed meanings that had symbolic importance⁷⁴¹. The city, which was imbued with the words of Azerbaijani national leader Heydar Aliyev, "there is no Karabakh without Shusha, and no Azerbaijan without Karabakh"⁷⁴², has always been crucial for both Azerbaijanis and Armenians in controlling Karabakh due to its strategic location⁷⁴³. This was also due to its proximity to Khankendi, the largest city in Nagorno-Karabakh.⁷⁴⁴ The city's location has been a safe haven and a residential area for everyone who has the

⁷⁴⁰ De Waal, Thomas. "12. Shusha: The Last Citadel." In *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, 10th-year anniversary edition, revised and updated ed., 196–206. 2003. Reprint, New York: New York University Press, 2013.

⁷⁴¹ Rehimov, Ruslan. "Shusha, more than Just a City for Azerbaijanis." News. Anadolu Ajansı, November 8, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/shusha-more-than-just-a-city-for-azerbaijanis/2036511>.

⁷⁴² Memmedov, Reşad. "GÖRÜŞ - Türk Dünyasının Kültür Başkenti: Şuşa." News. Anadolu Ajansı, May 2, 2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/gorus-turk-dunyasinin-kultur-baskenti-susa/2577988>.

⁷⁴³ Yeşilot, Okan, and Gülcan İnalçık. "Kadim Türk Şehri Şuşa ve İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nda Şuşa Muharebesi." *Avrasya İncelemeleri Dergisi/Journal of Eurasian Inquiries* 14, no. 1 (April 16, 2025): 142. <https://doi.org/10.26650/jes.2025.1624280>.

⁷⁴⁴ Rehimov. "Shusha, more than Just a City for Azerbaijanis."

opportunity to visit, from artists to merchants, not only today but throughout history. It has been a cultural hub where everyone has contributed something of their own.⁷⁴⁵

Shusha, recaptured by Azerbaijani forces on November 8, 2020, in the final days of the Patriotic War⁷⁴⁶, had been under Armenian occupation for 28 years prior to this, a priority target for the Armenians⁷⁴⁷. Founded in 1752 by Panakh Khan, the city's prosperity by the 19th century surpassed that of Baku and Yerevan. It was known for its architecture, textile craftsmanship, music, poetry, and its wealth and leadership in the silk trade extending from East to West⁷⁴⁸. Master carpet weavers, such as Meshedi Bayram Gurban-oglu and Fatima Aga Sherif-gizi, whose works have been exhibited in Europe and Russia, emerged from this city, setting trends in the region. The city pioneered the mugham tradition in music, influencing the region in this regard. It was home to Uzeyir Hajibeyli, the architect of Azerbaijani music and opera, and the renowned female poet Khurshudbanu Natavan⁷⁴⁹.

Following the recapture of Shusha in November 2020, steps were taken to restore the city to its former glory and revitalize its people. The decision to rebuild the city, where over 300 historical structures, including mosques, schools, and residential areas, were destroyed during the occupation, was made in January 2021. This process, which was planned to last one and a half years, was initiated. It was announced that construction of residential and business centers for the public would begin, and that ongoing road

⁷⁴⁵ Alakbarov, Fuad. "Visit to Shusha: Inside Azerbaijan's Most Enigmatic City." November 15, 2023. <https://www.dailysabah.com/arts/visit-to-shusha-inside-azerbaijans-most-enigmatic-city/news>.

⁷⁴⁶ Daily Sabah. "Azerbaijan Liberates Shusha from 28 Years of Armenian Occupation." *Daily Sabah*, November 8, 2020. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/azerbaijan-liberates-shusha-from-28-years-of-armenian-occupation>.

⁷⁴⁷ Rehimov. "Shusha, More than Just a City for Azerbaijanis".

⁷⁴⁸ De Waal. "12. Shusha: The Last Citadel", 200-201; Türksoy, Timuçin. "Shusha Officially Launched as Cultural Capital of Turkic World". *Caspian News*, May 15, 2023. <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/shusha-officially-launched-as-cultural-capital-of-turkic-world-2023-5-14-0/>.

⁷⁴⁹ De Waal. "12. Shusha: The Last Citadel", 202; Türksoy. "Shusha Officially Launched As Cultural Capital of Turkic World"; Azertac. "Shusha: The Cultural Capital of Azerbaijan, the Pearl of Karabakh." News, January 6, 2022. https://azertag.az/en/xeber/shusha_the_cultural_capital_of_azerbaijan_the_pearl_of_karabakh-1968644.

construction would be advanced⁷⁵⁰. The social and cultural development of the city is equally important to the Azerbaijani government and the people. That same year, cultural and artistic events such as the Khari Bulbul Music Festival were launched, aiming to unite not only Azerbaijanis but the entire Turkic world⁷⁵¹. Over the next two years, plans were drawn up to restore the historic Khankendi State Drama Theater, the process of converting Uzeyir Hajibeyli's house into a museum officially began, and construction of the new Flag Square was completed. In addition, hotels and accommodations, large-capacity and advanced schools, and kindergartens were opened to sustain the city⁷⁵².

In 2022, the 270th anniversary of the city's founding was celebrated, and President Ilham Aliyev declared 2022 the "Year of Shusha." The city was also designated the capital of culture in January 2021⁷⁵³. Hundreds of international events are organized with the participation of visiting artists and scientists as part of the Turkic World Capitals of Culture program, which selects a city from the Turkic World every year. Shusha was selected as the capital in December 2023⁷⁵⁴. TÜRKSOY Secretary General Sultan Raev also emphasized the city's importance to the Turkic World, saying, "Shusha is a temple of art for us, the cradle of Azerbaijani music that inspires the world, the representation of our unity, the source of our strength, the excitement of

⁷⁵⁰ Sajid, Islamuddin. "Azerbaijan Struggles to Restore Culture, Historical Capital Ruined by Armenia." News. Anadolu Ajansı, November 15, 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/azerbaijan-struggles-to-restore-culture-historical-capital-ruined-by-armenia/2414181>.

⁷⁵¹ Yaşar, İrem, and Ahmet Koçak. "Cultural Revival Key in Shusha Reconstruction: Azerbaijani Minister." News. Daily Sabah, February 6, 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/arts/cultural-revival-key-in-shusha-reconstruction-azerbaijani-minister/news>.

⁷⁵² Vusala, Abbasova. "President Aliyev Tours Reconstruction Projects in Khankendi, Shusha." News. Caspian News, September 20, 2020. <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/president-aliyev-tours-reconstruction-projects-in-khankendi-shusha-2024-9-20-0/>.

⁷⁵³ Mehdiyev, Mushvig. "President Aliyev Declares 2022 'Year of Shusha.'" News. Caspian News, January 3, 2022. <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/president-aliyev-declares-2022-year-of-shusha-2022-1-2-0/>; Azertac. "Shusha: The Cultural Capital of Azerbaijan, the Pearl of Karabakh." News, January 6, 2022. https://azertag.az/en/xeber/shusha_the_cultural_capital_of_azerbaijan_the_pearl_of_karabakh-1968644.

⁷⁵⁴ Altun, Tuğba. "Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti Açılışı İçin Şuşa'da Geri Sayım Başladı." News. Anadolu Ajansı, May 10, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/kultur/turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-acilisi-icin-susada-geri-sayim-basladi/2894361>.

our soul. That's why we are so excited." On the same day in Shusha, a decision was made to establish the Union of Turkic World Capitals of Culture (TÜRKBİR), and a memorandum of understanding was signed, aiming to increase the socio-cultural development and international recognition of the cities selected as cultural capitals⁷⁵⁵.

On June 15, 2021, the Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan was signed in this city by the Presidents of the participating states, Erdoğan and Aliyev. Indeed, the opening paragraph of the Declaration emphasizes "the historical significance of their meeting in Shusha, the ancient cultural cradle of the Turkic world as a whole." Erdoğan became the first foreign leader to visit Shusha after the war. He was welcomed with an official ceremony. Aliyev and Erdoğan departed for Shusha in the same car, and the Azerbaijani President himself briefed his counterpart on plans for the city's reconstruction⁷⁵⁶.

In his speech regarding the declaration and his visit, Erdoğan stated that the Shusha Declaration was a historic step toward advancing the "one nation, two states" narrative and served as a "roadmap for the new era" of bilateral relations. He also stated that the Declaration served as proof of Türkiye's resolve not only for bilateral relations but also for the region, announcing Türkiye's plans to open a consulate in Shusha. Erdoğan stated that he supports and follows all activities undertaken to revitalize the city, expressing his belief that Karabakh will thus regain its "essential identity"⁷⁵⁷. Erdoğan also emphasized the historical significance of the signing of this declaration in Shusha, a deeply rooted intersection of the Turkic world. His speech also addressed other relations, from energy and military cooperation to trade goals, emphasizing the

⁷⁵⁵ TÜRKSOY. "Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkentleri Birliği Şuşa'da Kuruldu," December 10, 2023. <https://www.turksoy.org/haberler/turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskentleri-birligi-susada-kuruldu>.

⁷⁵⁶ Erkan Özbay, Nur. "Erdoğan Visits Azerbaijan's Liberated Shusha." News. Daily Sabah, June 15, 2021. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/erdogan-visits-azerbaijans-liberated-shusha>.

⁷⁵⁷ İletişim Başkanlığı. "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: 'Türkiye Olarak Kadim Şehir Şuşa'da En Kısa Sürede Bir Başkonsolosluk Açmayı Planlıyoruz.'" Gov, June 15, 2021. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turkiye-olarak-kadim-sehir-susada-en-kisa-surede-bir-baskonsolosluk-acmayi-planliyoruz-15-6-21>.

significant mutual efforts being made in the development of these areas⁷⁵⁸. For example, he stated that the Turkish Housing Development Administration (TOKİ), through joint efforts with its Azerbaijani counterpart, would contribute to launching housing construction in the liberated Azerbaijani territories and in Karabakh; that the opening of the Zangezur Corridor would help revitalize the region; and that cooperation in the defence industry and joint production projects would continue in the post-war period. He also conveyed his aspirations that Azerbaijan would become a key defence sector production center soon.

President Aliyev emphasized that Erdoğan's visit was a historic one and that with the signing of the agreement, bilateral relations would reach their highest level ever. He stated that the declaration was a "guarantor of future cooperation," that the very name of the agreement clarified the current state of relations, and that Türkiye and Azerbaijan set a precedent as "a unique example of cooperation and alliance on a global scale." Aliyev emphasized the words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic of Türkiye, "Azerbaijan's joy is our joy, and its sorrow is ours too," and Azerbaijani leader Heydar Aliyev's famous words, "Türkiye and Azerbaijan are one nation in two states," stating that the signing of this declaration demonstrated both the determination to follow in the footsteps of past leaders and the foundations of the path that will be opened for future generations. Aliyev also expressed his complete confidence that the Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood is eternal and that both countries will ensure each other's security. He sincerely expressed his satisfaction with the visit, saying to Erdoğan, "My dear brother, we were looking forward to seeing you in Shusha. I invited you. In December last year, we, the two countries' presidents, agreed to hold our next meeting here, and this is what happened. Welcome again, welcome to your homeland, welcome to Shusha!"⁷⁵⁹.

The Shusha Declaration, after being approved by President Erdoğan of the Republic of Türkiye, entered into force upon its publication in the Official Gazette on March

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁹ Aliyev, İlham. "Joint Press Statements of Presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkish." Gov. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, June 15, 2021. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/52173>.

23, 2022, for Türkiye⁷⁶⁰. This declaration, referred to by media outlets and experts as a "landmark event"⁷⁶¹, "cementing relations"⁷⁶², "a historic achievement"⁷⁶³, "a new level of relations"⁷⁶⁴, "paving the way for deeper harmony"⁷⁶⁵, "strengthening ties"⁷⁶⁶, and "a manifesto that influences regional balances, supports regional stability, and is of particular concern to the Turkic world"⁷⁶⁷ is the first official document to define Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations as "allied,"⁷⁶⁸ and thus represents a significant milestone in both bilateral relations and the post-Karabakh War relations.

In the document, the parties stated that Azerbaijan's defence and struggle against Armenia had resulted in victory and that both historical justice and international law had been fulfilled. They also emphasized that the Azerbaijani side highly values any

⁷⁶⁰ İletişim Başkanlığı. "Şuşa Beyannamesi Onaylanarak Resmî Gazete'de Yayımlandı." Gov, March 23, 2022. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/susa-beyannamesi-onaylanarak-resmi-gazetede-yayimlandi>.

⁷⁶¹ aze.media. "Türkiye-Azerbaijan Relations: The Building of an Alliance." News, April 29, 2024. <https://aze.media/turkiye-azerbaijan-relations-the-building-of-an-alliance/>.

⁷⁶² Shahbazov. "Shusha Declaration Cements Azerbaijani-Turkish Alliance."

⁷⁶³ aze.media. "Shusha Declaration: A Balancing Act." News, June 19, 2021. <https://aze.media/shusha-declaration-a-balancing-act/>.

⁷⁶⁴ Azernews. "Turkish Presidential Administration: Shusha Declaration Brings Azerbaijan-Türkiye Ties to Completely New Level." News, February 13, 2022. <https://www.azernews.az/nation/189170.html>.

⁷⁶⁵ Shahbazov, Fuad. "Shusha Declaration Cements Azerbaijani-Turkish Alliance." *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 18, no. 100 (June 23, 2021).

⁷⁶⁶ Mehdiyev, Mushvig . "Azerbaijan, Türkiye Show Solidarity in New Joint 'Shusha Declaration.'" News. Caspian News, June 16, 2021. <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-Türkiye-show-solidarity-in-new-joint-shusha-declaration-2021-6-16-0/>.

⁷⁶⁷ Pirinççi, Ferhat. "Şuşa Beyannamesi'nin Anlamı." *SETA*, June 19, 2021. <https://www.setav.org/strateji-arastirmalari/susa-beyannamesinin-anlami>.

⁷⁶⁸ "Şuşa Beyannamesi", Resmî Gazete No. 22059; "3 Soruda Şuşa Beyannamesi," *IndyTurk* (erişim 3 Temmuz 2025), <https://www.indyturk.com/node/469271/t%C3%BCrk%C3%BCn%87yeden-sesler/3-soruda-%C5%9Fu%C5%9Fa-beyannamesi>; "Türkiye-Azerbaycan diplomatik ilişkilerinin 30 yılının özeti," *Kriter Dergi* (erişim 3 Temmuz 2025), <https://kriterdergi.com/dis-politika/turkiye-azerbaycan-diplomatik-iliskilerinin-30-yilinin-ozeti>; Metin Çelik ve Kenan Aslanlı, "Geopolitical Analysis of the Shusha Declaration: Constructing Theoretical Framework in the Regional Order Context," *Bilig*, no. 111 (31 Ekim 2024): 55–78, <https://doi.org/10.12995/bilig.11103>; "Shusha Declaration is pinnacle of Türkiye-Azerbaijan ties: PM," *Daily Sabah* (erişim 3 Temmuz 2025), <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/shusha-declaration-is-pinnacle-of-turkiye-azerbaijan-ties-pm>; aze.media, "Türkiye-Azerbaijan Relations: The Building of an Alliance".

support from Türkiye and that Türkiye's role in ensuring regional peace and stability is critical⁷⁶⁹.

They emphasized that the 1921 Treaty of Kars Declaration, the 1994 "Agreement on the Development of Friendship and Multilateral Cooperation" and the "Protocol on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance," and the 2010 "Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement" agreements would be honoured, and that every international agreement signed between the two countries thus far remains valid⁷⁷⁰. In addition to these agreements, the Declaration announced to everyone that bilateral relations had risen to the level of alliance. Thus, the terms "friend and brother"⁷⁷¹ in 1994 and "strategic partner"⁷⁷² in 2010 were redefined as *alliances* after the war⁷⁷³.

Above all, this declaration, by emphasizing the significance of strategic communication channels and cooperation in every sense, is reflected as a mutual defence agreement. It clarifies that the mutual military personnel exchanges, military training, the modernization of the Azerbaijani army, and joint exercises that have been ongoing since the 1990s will once again be supported⁷⁷⁴. While the document states that "the Security Councils of the parties... will discuss regional and international security issues affecting the interests of the parties"⁷⁷⁵, it also implies that both

⁷⁶⁹ "23 Mart 2022 Tarihli Resmî Gazete".

⁷⁷⁰ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Resmî Gazete, "23 Mart 2022 Tarihli Resmî Gazete".

⁷⁷¹ 22 Eylül 1994 Tarihli Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Resmi Gazetesi, "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İle Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Arasında İşbirliği ve Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma Protokolünün Onaylanmasının Uygun Bulunduğuna Dair Kanun", https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc078/kanuntbmmc078/kanuntbmmc07804028.pdf

⁷⁷² "Stratejik Ortaklık ve Karşılıklı Yardım Anlaşması", Resmî Gazete No. 27889, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/05/20110528M1-30-1.pdf>.

⁷⁷³ Çelik and Aslanlı, "Geopolitical Analysis of the Shusha Declaration", 66.

⁷⁷⁴ Ergun, Ayça, "National Perspectives on the Changing Geopolitics-Turkish positions in the changing geopolitics of the South Caucasus," in Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War: Prospects for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry, ed. Siri Neset, Mustafa Aydın, Ayça Ergun, Richard Giragosian, Kornely Kakachia, and Arne Strand (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2023), CMI Report 2023:4, 49.

⁷⁷⁵ "23 Mart 2022 Tarihli Resmî Gazete".

countries will, in fact, have a "common agenda and policy regarding their aggregated security interests"⁷⁷⁶. Thus, Azerbaijan became the first post-Soviet state to be included under the "security umbrella" of a NATO member state⁷⁷⁷.

From this viewpoint, arguable the most critical paragraph of the declaration states⁷⁷⁸:

In the event of a threat or attack by a third state or states against, in the opinion of either Party, its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders, or its security, the Parties shall hold joint consultations and take initiatives consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter to prevent such threat or attack. They shall provide each other with the necessary assistance in accordance with the UN Charter. The scope and form of this assistance shall be determined through urgent consultations, and decisions shall be made to take joint measures to meet defence needs, and the coordinated activities of the Armed Forces' forces and administrative units shall be ensured.

Furthermore, sections such as "the necessity of mutual coordination of activities on regional and international strategic issues of common interest," "the importance of coordination in foreign policy and regular bilateral political consultations," and "joint efforts to resolve conflicts and regional and global security and stability issues"⁷⁷⁹ further confirm the existence of a common security agenda in bilateral relations. Moreover, the mention that the Security Councils of both countries will hold regular meetings to address national, international, and regional issues, even in the absence of any external threat, supports this idea⁷⁸⁰.

These parts of the Declaration remind us of the Article 51 of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter which highlights the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs"⁷⁸¹. Then, recalls the NATO Treaty Article 3 which

⁷⁷⁶ Ergun, "National Perspectives", 49.

⁷⁷⁷ aze.media. "Türkiye-Azerbaijan Relations".

⁷⁷⁸ "23 Mart 2022 Tarihli Resmî Gazete".

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Mehdiyev. "Azerbaijan, Türkiye Show Solidarity"; Ergun, "National Perspectives", 49.

⁷⁸¹ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter VII, Article 51, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-7>.

emphasizes “separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid”, and Article 4 which says to “consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened”. Finally, it reminds us of the discourse in Article 5, “an armed attack against one or more of them... shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence.”⁷⁸²

As mentioned, the defence and military sphere is one of the most frequently mentioned topics in the declaration⁷⁸³. The parties also strongly support issues such as joint activities by competent institutions in the defence field, military exercises and training, mutual military personnel exchanges, development of military ammunition production, and cooperation in research and development and the international market⁷⁸⁴.

In the declaration, the parties frequently emphasize that all of these activities will be undertaken to ensure, develop, and sustain long-term “peace, security, and stability, and international relations based on sincere neighbourliness,” both globally and regionally⁷⁸⁵.

Beyond defence, common security, and military policies, the party countries, Türkiye and Azerbaijan, have also expressed their strong support for issues such as the importance of the Southern Gas Corridor in regional and global energy security; the diversification of trade and the development of investment; cooperation in the fight against terrorism; activities aimed at deepening interaction between the peoples of the

⁷⁸² North Atlantic Treaty, Articles 3–5, Washington, DC, April 4, 1949, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm.

⁷⁸³ Çelik, and Aslanlı. “Geopolitical Analysis”, 66.

⁷⁸⁴ aze.media. “Shusha Declaration: A Balancing Act”; Cavid Veliyev, “Analysis: Shusha Declaration Sets Out New Horizons in Türkiye–Azerbaijan Relations,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, June 18 2021, accessed July 4 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-shusha-declaration-sets-out-new-horizons-in-turkiye-azerbaijan-relations/2278544>; *Daily Sabah*. “Türkiye, Azerbaijan mark 4th year of reinforced alliance.” June 15, 2025. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkiye-azerbaijan-mark-4th-year-of-reinforced-alliance>.

⁷⁸⁵ Azernews. “Turkish Presidential Administration”; “23 Mart 2022 Tarihli Resmî Gazete”.

two states; the opening of the Zangezur Corridor and the subsequent development of transportation relations; and the increase and continuity of national and international efforts for the advancement and well-being of the Turkic world⁷⁸⁶.

Analysis and Conclusions

After the Second Karabakh War, Türkiye initiated a political and military comeback in the Caucasus, expanding its areas of cooperation. Azerbaijan, while Armenia's regional influence waned, strengthened its own in terms of energy, politics, and military. Furthermore, Türkiye and Azerbaijan further strengthened their long-held, unique mutual relations after the war⁷⁸⁷. The rhetoric of brotherhood, solidarity, and unity that continued throughout the war solidified the perception of "exceptional, deepened cooperation and strategic partnership," strengthened the bilateral perception of common security, and significantly contributed to the sustainability of peace in the South Caucasus⁷⁸⁸. The success in liberating Karabakh from occupation was jointly embraced by Azerbaijan and Türkiye and presented in the Declaration as a source of sustainable peace⁷⁸⁹. This stance, which has gained popular support, has always been a manifestation of the "one nation, two states" narrative, demonstrating a "rare" relationship not found between any other two states⁷⁹⁰. This ongoing rhetoric of unity, solidarity, and support has not remained merely rhetorical over the past 30 years; it has evolved over time, focusing more on defence and trade, and continues to provide official "common stance on many international and regional issues"⁷⁹¹.

⁷⁸⁶ “23 Mart 2022 Tarihli Resmî Gazete”.

⁷⁸⁷ Siri Neset and Mustafa Aydın, “Changed dynamics after the Second Karabakh War,” in *Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War: Prospects for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, ed. Siri Neset, Mustafa Aydın, Ayça Ergun, Richard Giragosian, Kornely Kakachia, and Arne Strand (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2023), CMI Report 2023:4, 11-13.

⁷⁸⁸ Ergun, “National Perspectives”, 47-48.

⁷⁸⁹ Çelik, and Aslanlı. “Geopolitical Analysis”, 67.

⁷⁹⁰ Hajizade, Ali, “Türkiye–Azerbaijan Relations: The Building of an Alliance,” in *Türkiye’s Return to Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Svante E. Cornell (Washington, DC, and Stockholm: Central Asia–Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, June 2024), 49–50.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

Javid Veliyev highlights how the Turkish Azerbaijani alliance, with Russia's contributions, has served as a key source of stability in the Caucasus over the past three years, as well as several benefits for the Turkic world and the West⁷⁹². He argues that the Donald Trump administration's desire to withdraw from its role as a security guarantor for Ukraine and Europe is crucial for Türkiye's strategic presence for Europe⁷⁹³. Regarding the importance placed on Türkiye's contribution to sustainable peace in the region, he highlights the meetings held by both US Secretary of State Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on regional normalization. Like Türkiye, Azerbaijan holds strategic importance for the West because it has an alternative energy and transportation network outside of Russia, as well as a military alliance with Türkiye⁷⁹⁴.

In addition, according to Outzen, a "Turkic security architecture" catalyzed by the alliance, supported by cultural and political influences, will both counterbalance the Russian-Chinese-Iranian dominance in the region and lead to a deepening of the Turkic world within itself. Multiple military exercises and security-information exchanges among Turkic states, along with diversified military personnel training, will play a key role in identifying and warding off national and shared threats, leading to "the growth of security capabilities and coordination among these states"⁷⁹⁵. Furthermore, according to Cornell, Türkiye's prioritization of security and military matters in its relations with neighbouring countries, and particularly its emphasis on strengthening the defence industry overall within the framework of cooperation, sheds light on Türkiye's role in this regard. Indeed, the West's inadequacy or limited influence in both the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Second Karabakh War

⁷⁹² Veliyev, Cavid, "Strengthening Caucasus: Azerbaijan-Türkiye Alliance in a Changing World," *Daily Sabah*, March 27 2025, accessed July 6 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/strengthening-caucasus-azerbaijan-turkiye-alliance-in-a-changing-world>

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁵ Outzen, Richard, "Security and Military Cooperation among the Turkic States in the 2020s", in *Türkiye's Return to Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Svante E. Cornell (Washington, DC, and Stockholm: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, June 2024), 28-29.

demonstrates the importance of Türkiye, a powerful military power operating within a NATO-style defence system⁷⁹⁶.

The Shusha Declaration, in relations to of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), serves as an example for the development and elevation of strategic, security, and military cooperation among member states. The victory in Karabakh was also supported by the Turkic states. The organization, previously known as the Turkic Council, was renamed the Organization of Turkic States at the official summit in 2021. Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu described this change as "visionary" and emphasized the necessity of interstate cooperation⁷⁹⁷. While some agreements were made among the Turkic states after the Soviet era, a decision made under the umbrella of an international organization encompassing the Turkic world would be different. Indeed, the Shusha Declaration represents de facto defence solidarity, the elevation of the security dimension in bilateral relations to new levels, the establishment of mutual trust and strategic coordination, the integration of common defence and security perspectives, and integration in every sense. It is a declaration for the ODT member states that promotes sustainable peace, development, regional security, and a multifaceted vision⁷⁹⁸.

The Organization of Turkic States does not officially have a common security agenda. While strengthening mechanisms for protecting common interests in foreign policy and regional relations is supported, and the Karabakh victory created a positive environment, other member states' hesitancy regarding security and military

⁷⁹⁶ Cornell, Svante E. "Implications for the Region and Western Policy", in *Türkiye's Return to Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Svante E. Cornell (Washington, DC, and Stockholm: Central Asia–Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, June 2024), 84.

⁷⁹⁷ Duz, Zehra Nur, "Organization of Turkic States Countries Must Maintain Close Consultations: Top Turkish Diplomat." *Anadolu Ajansı*. December 10, 2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/organization-of-turkic-states-countries-must-maintain-close-consultations-top-turkish-diplomat/2734229>; Daily Sabah. "Turkic Council Revamps Image, Aims to Boost Ties through Transformation." *Daily Sabah*. November 13, 2021. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkic-council-revamps-image-aims-to-boost-ties-through-transformation>.

⁷⁹⁸ Duz. "Organization of Turkic States". Daily Sabah. "Turkic Council Revamps Image".

cooperation⁷⁹⁹ has led to support for cooperation in areas such as cultural and linguistic unity, energy, trade, and trade routes⁸⁰⁰. The Turkic World Vision 2024, approved by member states on November 11, 2021, addresses relations between states in this way. At the ODT summit held on the same day this document was approved, Erdoğan stated, "Effective solutions to regions pressing security problems necessitate more robust collaboration and coordination, especially in the realm of security, to address these multifaceted and urgent concerns⁸⁰¹". He also emphasized that "members of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) should develop a common security concept"⁸⁰². In December 2023, in response to a question about the possibilities of military cooperation within the Organization, Azerbaijani President Aliyev highlighted the Russia-West struggle, the fragile situation in the Caucasus, and the problems surrounding neighbouring Central Asian states. He implicitly stated that security should be paramount in relations, implying the need to establish joint cooperation in the defence sector and military and defence fields, and to engage in joint efforts⁸⁰³. Later, for example, while the Samarkand, Karabakh, and Budapest declarations did not mention any existing partnership in the fields of security and defence, they did state that efforts would be made to develop defence industry and military coordination and cooperation to support common interests in these two areas⁸⁰⁴. Hence, the

⁷⁹⁹ Koçak, Muhammet. "Potential of Organization of Turkic States in the International System." *Insight Türkiye*, Fall 2025, no. 4 (25): 129.

⁸⁰⁰ "Turkic World Vision - 2040." Organization of Turkic States, November 12, 2021. <https://turkicstates.org/u/d/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf>, 2-7-11.

⁸⁰¹ Koçak. "Potential of Organization of Turkic States", 130.

⁸⁰² Daily Sabah. "Turkic States Should Develop Common Security Concept, Erdoğan Says," November 11, 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkic-states-should-develop-common-security-concept-erdogan-says>.

⁸⁰³ Shafiyev, Farid. "Azerbaijan and the Rise of Turkic Unity." *Insight Türkiye*, Fall 2023, no. 4 (25). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48754790>. 20.

⁸⁰⁴ "Samarkand Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the Organization of Turkic States." Organization of Turkic States, 11 November 2022. <https://www.turkicstates.org/u/d/basic-documents/ninth-summit-declarataion-16-en.pdf>; "Garabagh Declaration of the Informal Summit of the Organization of Turkic States." Organization of Turkic States, 6 July 2024. https://www.turkicstates.org/u/d/temel_belgeler/garabagh-declaration.pdf; "Budapest Declaration of the Informal Summit of the Organization of Turkic States." Organization of Turkic States, 21 May 2025. <https://turkicstates.org/u/f/budapest-declaration.pdf>.

indicators of the Karabakh victory, and the subsequent emphasis on solidarity and alliance in the Shusha Declaration, demonstrate that the development of such a relationship among all Turkic states is still possible, and that this maintains the potential to positively impact the balance of power, particularly in Central Asia, and to protect and even enhance regional security⁸⁰⁵.

As mentioned, the Shusha Declaration also emphasized the importance of "opening the corridor (Zengezur Corridor) between the Western districts of the Republic of Azerbaijan, connecting Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of the Republic of Azerbaijan," and the construction of the complementary Zangezur railway⁸⁰⁶. This corridor, crucial for establishing direct transportation routes between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, "meant the emergence of a new and powerful transportation network from Edirne to the Chinese border, via Azerbaijan, with all Central Asian states"⁸⁰⁷. This corridor is crucial, first and foremost, for connecting Türkiye and Azerbaijan, then for connecting the Turkic world with Türkiye, excluding Georgia and Iran, and for contributing to the development of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic⁸⁰⁸. This corridor can enhance regional connectivity, economic integration, economic development, and comprehensive cooperation. It can also serve as a strategic route for regional international actors such as the Middle Corridor, the trade route serving Europe and Asia, and for expanding it⁸⁰⁹.

According to Shafiyev, the Shusha Declaration not only deepened relations between the two fraternal states in every sense but also served as a cornerstone in solidifying these relations within the framework of the OTS⁸¹⁰. The fact that the two member

⁸⁰⁵ Koçak. "Potential of Organization of Turkic States", 133.

⁸⁰⁶ "23 Mart 2022 Tarihli Resmî Gazete".

⁸⁰⁷ Pirinççi. "Şuşa Beyannamesi'nin Anlamı".

⁸⁰⁸ Koçak. "Potential of Organization of Turkic States", 121.

⁸⁰⁹ Gozalov, Gismat. "Görüş – Yeni Nahçıvan Koridoru ve Bölgesel İşbirliğine Katkıları." *Anadolu Ajansı*, Mayıs 28, 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/gorus-yeni-nahcivan-koridoru-ve-bolgesel-isbirligine-katkilari/2256165>.

⁸¹⁰ Shafiyev. "Azerbaijan and the Rise of Turkic Unity,"14.

states of the organization adopted a common stance on regional disputes and became military allies would inspire other Turkic states and strengthen the organization's international reputation. Consequently, the post-war increase in communication between Türkiye and Azerbaijan led to an increase in communication in other OTS states. This is due, as mentioned, to the increasing geostrategic importance of Central Asia in the context of both the Russo-Ukrainian war and the US-China conflict. According to Shafiyev, another reason for the Turkic states' increasing desire to act within the OTS is the equal representation of all members within the organization. Particularly after the Cold War, due to the ongoing power struggles, security threats, and problems in both the Caucasus and Central Asia, these additional, or perhaps even fundamental, collaborations and solidarities are of great importance to regional states. It's safe to say that all this activity within the OTS has increased with the formalization of the alliance dimension in bilateral relations, resulting from Azerbaijan's great victory, Azerbaijan's military cooperation with Türkiye, and Türkiye's moral and political support⁸¹¹.

Finally, the military success of Azerbaijan and Türkiye demonstrated the weakness of the Russian-Armenian military. Turkic communities from all countries who followed the war were drawn into a nationalist and pro-Turkish movement due to the tragic losses they suffered. The unity strengthened within the organizational context was also rooted in society. The Karabakh victory and the Shusha Declaration, "potential cooperation in the broader Turkic geography more attractive," became the Turkic states' greatest "strategic success" and "marked the beginning of a new stage in the strengthening of Turkic unity"⁸¹². Even Azerbaijani President Aliyev, in his speech following the 2024 presidential elections in his country, described the Turkic world as the country's "single family" and insisted on cooperation in military and security matters. He emphasized both the Turkish-Azerbaijani unity and the unifying role played by Turkish President Erdoğan. According to Veliyev, these statements are

⁸¹¹ Ibid, 15.

⁸¹² Ibid, 21.

crucial for the unity of the Turkic world amidst regional and international uncertainties⁸¹³.

The Shusha Declaration, signed by the participating states on June 15, 2021, following the 44-day Patriotic War, elevated the relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan from brotherhood and strategic partnership to alliance. It provided a structural and institutional leap forward in nearly 30 years of close relations. It is a key symbolic and practical document that has deepened and developed common security and defence policies, as well as energy, trade, and transportation. It has declared in every sense that the two countries share a common destiny, not only in brotherhood but also in a strategic context, beyond rhetoric.

The city of Shusha represents lived experience and shared historical memory for the Turkic world and the South Caucasus. Just as documents like Lausanne and Montreux have become synonymous with the places where they were signed, so too has Shusha become characterized. It represents reconstruction, sovereignty, and most importantly, victory, and the integration of unconditional support in bilateral relations with the place. The city's recapture by Azerbaijan on November 8, 2020, marked the end of the war. The signing of the declaration in this city carries geopolitical and commemorative significance. It can be interpreted as a demonstration to the international community of the practical and symbolic existence of Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood, the value placed on restoring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and national honour, and a clear stance against Armenia's invasive stance.

While the declaration prioritizes military and political alliances and defence cooperation, it also supports coordination across a broader spectrum, including cybersecurity, digital transformation, inter-people cooperation and solidarity, media partnership, digital transformation, transportation, energy, and trade. In this sense, it represents not only a declaration of alliance and a deepening of diplomatic relations,

⁸¹³ Veliyev, "Strengthening Caucasus".

but also a unity, a shared vision, and a geopolitical direction for the two peoples to live together.

The Shusha Declaration, which outlined a roadmap for the integration of the members of the Organization of Turkic States and all other Turkic peoples, served as a reference source for coordination in defence and foreign policy, laid the groundwork for joint action, and led to the deepening of relations among the states within the OTS. It also served as an example of the institutionalization of the OTS and served as a model of cooperation.

5.2. Post-War Normalization: Türkiye's Armenia Policy and Coordination with Azerbaijan

Efforts to establish peace and stability in the South Caucasus have been influenced by factors such as Azerbaijani-Armenian territorial disputes, national identity discourses, and historical traumas. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this region emerged as a multilayered conflict zone, a region where the geopolitical and political interests of global and regional countries intersect. The consequences of the Second Karabakh War in 2020 led to the dissolution of long-standing knots, allowing for the start of new processes of cooperation and normalization. In the post-war period, a new era of alliance and the highest level of closeness and mutual trust in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations began. A ceasefire was reached between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and while peace-oriented steps continued, a new and evolving normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia also began. This section will examine past attempts at normalization in Turkish-Armenian relations, highlighting the differences between Türkiye and Armenia and their place in current Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations. As a matter of fact, the ongoing process of interstate dialogue and normalization will be considered a catalyst not only for the two participating states but also for achieving lasting regional peace.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Türkiye recognized the independence of Azerbaijan on November 9, 1991, and then, in December 1991, of all the other newly

established post-Soviet states, including Armenia⁸¹⁴. Despite this, Türkiye did not recognize Armenia diplomatically, and to this day, there is no diplomatic dimension to bilateral relations. The reason for this lies in certain Armenian attitudes at the time. In the Armenian declaration of independence issued in 1990, Armenia referred to Türkiye's eastern region as "Western Armenia," declared that it did not recognize the Turkish-Armenian border established by the 1920 Gyumri and 1921 Kars Treaties, and internationally recognized the events of 1915 as "genocide"⁸¹⁵. Another significant reason for the stagnation of relations stemmed from Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan during the First Karabakh War, which lasted from 1988 to 1994. Defining the 1915 events as "genocide" challenged both Türkiye's stance on the events and its territorial and border integrity. Another significant reason for the lack of diplomatic relations in the 1990s was the mutual hostility that had grown alongside the genocide allegations and the Karabakh War⁸¹⁶. During the war, in 1993, Armenian forces seized the Kalbajar region of Azerbaijan, a crucial region between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, effectively beyond Karabakh. The Turkish-Armenian border, normally used for wheat and humanitarian aid, was therefore closed by Türkiye, and it was announced that neither the border would be opened, nor diplomatic relations would be developed until Armenian forces completely withdrew from Azerbaijani territory⁸¹⁷. As a result,

⁸¹⁴ Görgülü, Aybars, "Towards a Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement?," *Insight Türkiye* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 20, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26331171>; Thomas de Waal, *Armenia and Turkey: Bridging the Gap* (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 2010); 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26702>; Ergun, Ayça, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus: Role of Memory and Perceptions in Shaping Türkiye's Relations with Regional States," in *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023): Historical and Theoretical Reflections*, ed. Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner and Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023): 172, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3>.

⁸¹⁵ Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, *Turkish-Armenian Relations: Will Football Diplomacy Work?*, SETA Policy Brief no. 24 (September 2008): 2, <https://www.setav.org/en/domestic-policy/turkish-armenian-relations-will-football-diplomacy-work>; Görgülü, "Towards a Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement?," 21; Laçin Idil Öztig, "A Comparative Analysis of Turkish Foreign Policy on the Azerbaijan-Armenia Conflicts (1988–2020)," *Insight Türkiye* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2023): 149, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48732438>.

⁸¹⁶ Ergun, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus", p. 173.

⁸¹⁷ Cory Welt, "Turkish-Armenian Normalisation and the Karabakh Conflict," *Perceptions* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 209; De Waal, "Armenia and Türkiye: Bridging the Gap", 2.

Armenia was excluded from communication networks with the outside world and from important energy and transit routes, becoming regionally isolated⁸¹⁸.

Despite all this, significant steps were taken in bilateral relations for the first time between 2008 and 2010, raising some hopes for normalization in the region. According to experts, there were several regional and international reasons for both Armenia and Türkiye to adopt a positive stance in bilateral relations. Between 2000 and 2002, the "Armenian issue" became a frequent topic of discussion in Turkish politics and academia, largely with the support of the international community, organizations, and the Armenian diaspora. This issue reached its peak in 2005, particularly with Türkiye's accession process to the European Union, which began in 1999, and was further fuelled by debates among EU members concerning Türkiye's potential to become a European country. The European Parliament increased this pressure on Türkiye by renewing its approval of the "genocide" declaration in 2000, 2002, and 2005. In this regard, Türkiye's EU membership was linked to its opposition to the "genocide" debate⁸¹⁹.

Additionally, a signal from the West to Türkiye came from the US. In the 2008 US elections, Democratic candidate Barack Obama promised, "If elected, he would support a resolution labelling the Armenian massacres of 1915 as genocide"⁸²⁰. This situation caused great unease for Ankara, who believed that any potential closeness with Armenia would both thwart Obama's goal and hinder Armenian efforts to secure

⁸¹⁸ Emil Avdalani, "Armenia and Turkey Are Close to Reaching Full Rapprochement," Turkey Analyst, April 30, 2025, <https://www.Turkeyanalyst.org/publications/Turkey-analyst-articles/item/732-armenia-and-Türkiye-are-close-to-reaching-full-rapprochement.html>; Armenia–Türkiye Rapprochement Advances, But Peace Hinges on Baku, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia- Eurasia/politika/2025/06/armenia-turkiye-rapprochement?lang=en>; Natalia Konarzewska, "Normalization between Armenia and Türkiye: Can It Succeed?," Türkiye Analyst, January 14, 2022, <https://Türkiyeanalyst.org/publications/Türkiye-analyst-articles/item/678-normalization-between-armenia-and-Türkiye-can-it-succeed?.html>.

⁸¹⁹ Bayraktar, Seyhan, "The Grammar of Denial: State, Society, and Turkish-Armenian Relations," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 4 (November 2015): 803-804, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43998044>; Ohannes Geukjian, "Trying to Get a Breakthrough (2007–12)," in *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace: Opportunities, Obstacles, Prospects, Post Soviet Politics* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 179.

⁸²⁰ Cornell, Svante E., "Türkiye's Role: Balancing the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict and Turkish-Armenian Relations," in *The International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict*, ed. Svante E. Cornell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 96, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-60006-6>.

international recognition of the "genocide"⁸²¹. This was an extension of the "zero problems with neighbours" policy that then-President Abdullah Gül and then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, along with Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as their foreign policy advisor from 2003 to 2009, were determined to pursue⁸²². A willingness to develop good relations with Armenia would also demonstrate a commitment to this doctrine⁸²³.

Other than that, the war that broke out between Russia and Georgia in 2008 served as a wake-up call for both Türkiye and Armenia. This war signalled a shift in the regional status quo, and that some disputes were still dormant and that Russian power still held sway over the region, demonstrating that long-standing unresolved issues were disrupting regional stability. The fact that the regional states were dependent on Russian energy was also unsettling. It served as a catalyst for signals of normalization for both sides. Following the five-day war, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan proposed the "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" (CSCP), which would include Russia, Türkiye, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. This platform, which also served Davutoğlu's foreign policy objectives, and similarly proposed by former President Süleyman Demirel in 2000 as the "Stability Pact for the Caucasus," also aimed to counteract any potential negative Russian stance on Türkiye's regional policies. With this platform, Türkiye would balance Russia in the Caucasus, act as a mediator in resolving long-standing unresolved issues, and bolster its regional and international power. Normalization and the opening of borders between Türkiye and Armenia following the Russo-Georgian war would also reduce Armenia's economic dependence on Russia and improve its economic relations with Türkiye. As

⁸²¹ Geukjian, "Trying to Get a Breakthrough," 179.

⁸²² The policy of "zero problems with neighbors" was a foreign policy approach that aimed to maintain diplomatic dialogue and cooperation to the maximum extent, to resolve problems in a timely manner, focused on solutions rather than conflict, and to pursue a balanced foreign policy. For further research: Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2014), 600 s., ISBN 978-9756614518; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Zero Problems in a New Era." March 21, 2013. Accessed July 13, 2025. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/zero-problems-in-a-new-era.en.mfa>.

⁸²³ Geukjian, "Trying to Get a Breakthrough (2007–12)," 179; De Waal, "Armenia and Turkey: Bridging the Gap," 3.

mentioned, Armenia was also isolated regionally and strategically, unable to develop relations with the West to the level it desired due to Russian influence. This rapprochement and platform would also be in Armenia's interest⁸²⁴. Although this attempt failed due to reasons such as the dislike of this cooperation platform by first the US and then other Western countries, the heated tensions between Russia and Georgia, and the fact that Türkiye's influence in the region was not as strong at the time compared to today⁸²⁵, the first concrete steps towards normalization of bilateral relations were taken in 2008.

Despite the lack of diplomatic relations between the two states at this time, behind-the-scenes diplomatic talks were ongoing. Similarly, Türkiye's invitation to Armenia to join the CSCP signalled its positive attitude toward Armenia⁸²⁶. In June 2008, Türkiye even proposed to Armenia that a joint commission of Turkish and Armenian historians be established to examine the events of 1915. This proposal was made again by Erdoğan in 2005 but rejected by then-Armenian President Robert Kocharian. The same proposal, this time by current President Serzh Sargsyan, stated that this would be possible "after Türkiye agreed unconditionally to establish diplomatic relations and open its closed border with Armenia"⁸²⁷. Even before this, the normalization process, which began in April under Swiss leadership, had begun when Turkish and Armenian Foreign Ministers Ali Babacan and Eduard Nalbadian announced the start of a process

⁸²⁴ Zaur Shiriyev and Celia Davies, "The Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan Triangle: The Unexpected Outcomes of the Zurich Protocols," *Perceptions* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 188,190; Geukjian, "Trying to Get a Breakthrough (2007–12)," 179; De Waal, "Armenia and Turkey: Bridging the Gap," 3; Cornell, "Turkey's Role," 98; Aras and Özbay, "Turkish-Armenian Relations," 4; Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişçi, and Andrew Moffatt, "Armenia and Türkiye: From Normalization to Reconciliation," Brookings, February 24, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/armenia-and-türkiye-from-normalization-to-reconciliation/>; Burcu Gültekin Punsmann, *The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform: An Attempt to Foster Regional Accountability*, ICBSS Policy Brief No. 13 (Athens: International Centre for Black Sea Studies, April 2009): 5-6; Eleni Fotiou, "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform": *What Is at Stake for Regional Cooperation?*, ICBSS Policy Brief No. 16 (Athens: International Centre for Black Sea Studies, June 2009), 3–6.

⁸²⁵ Aslanlı, Araz. "Altılı Platform Kalıcı Barışın Teminatı Olabilir," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 18 December 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/altili-platform-kalici-barisin-teminati-olabilir/2081083>.

⁸²⁶ Aras and Özbay, "Turkish-Armenian Relations," 4; Shiriyev and Davies, "The Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan Triangle," 190.

⁸²⁷ Geukjian, "Trying to Get a Breakthrough," 177.

with Switzerland as a mediator, and unveiled the protocols under development. In February of that year, President Gül sent a message of congratulations to President Serkisian. The two met again on July 6th at the capital celebrations in Kazakhstan, where Sarkisian invited Gül to a FIFA World Cup match in Yerevan⁸²⁸. What began as "football diplomacy" continued until 2010.

Abdullah Gül attended the match held in Yerevan on September 6, 2008, becoming the first Turkish leader to visit Armenia. The issue of "genocide" was not discussed during the visit, and upon his return, Gül stated that he had "broken down the psychological barriers in the Caucasus" and that "Sarkisian had taken a very important step by inviting him to the match"⁸²⁹. This invitation, despite opposition from the two countries, Armenian propaganda following Gül's arrival, and public objections, marked the first steps toward a potential rapprochement⁸³⁰. The New York Times called the event a "historic visit"⁸³¹, and Reuters interpreted it as a "turning point" in bilateral relations⁸³². Following this match, the protocols were officially signed by the foreign ministers of the two sides in Zurich, Switzerland, on October 10, 2009, the culmination of nearly a year of efforts⁸³³. The protocols, which will be submitted to the parties' national parliaments for approval, were signed with the participation of the

⁸²⁸ Ibid, 176.

⁸²⁹ "Soccer Diplomacy Brings Türkiye's Gül to Armenia." *AzerNews*, September 10, 2008. <https://www.azernews.az/region/6815.html>;

⁸³⁰ *Milliyet*, "Dış basın: 'Tarihi bir ziyaret oldu'", accessed September 8, 2008, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/dis-basin-tarihi-bir-ziyaret-oldu-988082>; "Turkish President's Football Visit Turns Political," *France 24*, September 6, 2008, <https://www.france24.com/en/20080906-turkish-presidents-football-visit-turns-political-Türkiye-armenia>.

⁸³¹ David E. Sanger, "Türkiye's President Makes Historic Visit to Armenia," *New York Times*, September 7, 2008, accessed July 14, 2025.

⁸³² Paul de BERNIER, "Türkiye's Gül Makes Landmark Armenia Visit," *Reuters*, September 6, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/economy/Türkiyes-gul-makes-landmark-armenia-visit-idUSL6345007/>.

⁸³³ Liz Fuller, "Türkiye, Armenia to Sign Landmark Agreement to Normalize Ties," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 12, 2009, https://www.rferl.org/a/Türkiye_Armenia_To_Sign_Landmark_Agreement_To_Normalize_Ties/1848293.html; Robert Micallef, "Armenia–Türkiye Normalisation Process: What Next?," *Commonspace*, 28 April 2025, <https://www.commonspace.eu/opinion/opinion-armenia-Türkiye-normalisation-process-what-next>.

US, Russian, and French Foreign Ministers, stipulating that the borders would be opened within two months and that the process would be conducted for six weeks under Swiss observation⁸³⁴. Fuller emphasized the significance of the first protocol, which "concerns not only diplomatic relations but also good neighbourly relations," while the second covers the steps to be taken after these relations are developed⁸³⁵.

Azerbaijan's reaction to the normalization steps taken was not positive. While the parties promised to open the borders in October 2009, Obama visited Türkiye in April of the same year and addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly. According to Shiriyev and Davies, Azeri discontent first began there and then solidified with the signing of the protocols⁸³⁶. In his speech, he emphasized that Turkish and Armenian leaders had taken "historic" steps, that opening the borders would create a peaceful environment between the two states, and that "the United States strongly supports the full normalization of relations"⁸³⁷. Factors such as the support of the normalization process by major powers, the fact that it proceeded largely behind closed doors, and the lack of reference to the First Karabakh War as a condition for normalization in relations created significant unease in Baku. On the day of Obama's speech, İlham Aliyev did not attend the Alliance of Civilizations Summit in Istanbul. While both sides were determined to adhere to the "normalization without preconditions" approach, Turkish officials were somewhat late in raising the Karabakh issue and addressing Azerbaijan's concerns. In response, Türkiye visited Baku in May 2009 with a delegation that included Foreign Minister Davutoglu and Prime Minister Erdoğan, along with other high-profile ministers. Holding a joint press conference with Azerbaijani President Aliyev, Erdoğan emphasized that there was no room for doubt in their stance on Nagorno-Karabakh:

⁸³⁴ "Türkiye-Ermenistan: Normalleşme Sürecinde Bir Adım," *BBC Türkçe*, 10 Ekim 2009, erişim 14 Temmuz 2025, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2009/10/091010_armenia_Turkiye.

⁸³⁵ Fuller, "Türkiye, Armenia to Sign Landmark Agreement";

⁸³⁶ Shiriyev and Davies, "The Türkiye-Armenia-Azerbaijan Triangle," 190.

⁸³⁷ Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament," *The White House*, April 6, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament>.

The Turkish-Armenian border will not open until the complete liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh. Fraternal relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey have never been the subject of discussion; Turkey closed its border with Yerevan in connection with the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia⁸³⁸.

Throughout the process, Azerbaijani politicians, the public, academics, and civil society organizations continued to respond unfavourable, supported by domestic politicians and pro-Azerbaijani groups in Türkiye. For example, immediately after the signing of the protocols in October 2009, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that Armenian forces' determination to normalize relations with Armenia without a complete withdrawal from Azerbaijani territory would undermine both Azerbaijan's national interests and the fraternal relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. It also stated that opening the borders would further destabilize the region⁸³⁹. Immediately after the signing of the protocols, in a continuation of football diplomacy, Armenian President Sargsyan paid a return visit to Bursa, Türkiye, and watched a football match with Turkish President Gül⁸⁴⁰. Turkish officials refused to allow Azerbaijani flags to be displayed during the match, which provoked strong reactions from both Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Following this crisis, the Turkish flags at the Turkish Martyrs' Memorial in Baku, Azerbaijan, were lowered for two weeks⁸⁴¹. According to Aslanlı, Erdoğan's following words were a catalyst for the normalization

⁸³⁸ Shiriyev and Davies, "The Türkiye-Armenia-Azerbaijan Triangle," 190; "The Issue of Opening Borders with Armenia Was Put an End after Turkish Senior Officials' Unequivocal Statements: President of Azerbaijan," *Today.az*, May 13, 2009, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://today.az/view.php?id=52229>.

⁸³⁹ "Azerbaijan Rejects Armenia–Turkey Deal," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 2009, accessed July 14, 2025, https://www.rferl.org/a/Azerbaijan_Rejects_ArmeniaTürkiye_Deal/1848733.html; Aslanlı, Araz. "Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkilerinin Niteliği," in Karabağ Sorunu ve Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkileri (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2015), 215; Ergun, "Türkiye and the South Caucasus", 174; Shiriyev and Davies, "The Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan Triangle," 199.

⁸⁴⁰ "Türkiye ile Ermenistan Arasında Yeni Gelişmeler," *BBC Türkçe*, 15 Ekim 2009, erişim 14 Temmuz 2025, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2009/10/091015_newarmenia; "Turkish–Armenian Football Diplomacy Heads for Rematch in Bursa," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 2009, accessed July 14, 2025, https://www.rferl.org/a/TurkishArmenian_Football_Diplomacy_Heads_For_Rematch_In_Bursa/1851889.html.

⁸⁴¹ Aslanlı, "Türkiye-Ermenistan," 215; "Azerbaycan ile Bayrak Krizi Büyüyor," *NTV*, 21 Ekim 2009, erişim 14 Temmuz 2025, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/azerbaycan-ile-bayrak-krizi-buyuyor,3axSjUNRWEGsvJC4MHltTA>; "Türkiye and Azerbaijan: Flag Row Ended," *Eurasianet*, October 2009, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://eurasianet.org/Türkiye-and-azerbaijan-flag-row-ended>.

process, both the extreme opposition within Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and the return to normal Turkish-Azerbaijani relations⁸⁴². Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Erdoğan said that "The unjust occupation of Azerbaijani lands, which has been going on for years, must end. It is unacceptable for the Nagorno-Karabakh issue to remain unresolved in this way. Finding solutions before international problems become gangrenous is our political and moral responsibility⁸⁴³," and continued to defend Azerbaijan's just struggle on other international platforms, such as the Council of Europe⁸⁴⁴.

As a result, the Zurich Protocols signed in 2009, the initial normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, and the process of establishing diplomatic relations, effectively ended with Türkiye's failure to ratify the protocols. Despite ratifying the protocols and temporarily suspending its outright rejection of the process, Armenia halted the constitutional process and officially terminated their validity in 2018. Western countries had expected the Nagorno-Karabakh issue not to impact this process, and Armenia, in turn, demanded unconditional normalization. For Türkiye, after two years of efforts, the priority was ultimately to prevent the damage to its close brotherly relations with Azerbaijan and to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Furthermore, Armenia's persistent recognition of the 1915 events as genocide and its assertion that all efforts targeting Nagorno-Karabakh would continue, which deeply disturbed Türkiye. This normalization process, triggered and accelerated by the West, continued to receive negative reactions from the Turkish and Azerbaijani public opinion, with opposition parties like the CHP and MHP opposing the protocols' ratification in parliament⁸⁴⁵. Furthermore, the fact that the normalization process

⁸⁴² Aslanlı, "Türkiye-Ermenistan," 217.

⁸⁴³ Başbakan Erdoğan'ın BM Genel Kurulu'na Hitabı," *Hürriyet*, 23 Eylül 2011, erişim 14 Temmuz 2025, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/basbakan-erdoganin-bm-genel-kuruluna-hitabi-18811394>.

⁸⁴⁴ Aslanlı, "Türkiye-Ermenistan," 217.

⁸⁴⁵ For background on the Türkiye-Armenia protocols, see "Türkiye-Ermenistan Protokolleri'nde Son Durum," *BBC Türkçe*, January 12, 2010, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2010/01/100112_armenia_protocols; "One Year On, Turkey-Armenia Rapprochement Stalled," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 13, 2010, <https://www.rferl.org/a/One-Year-On-Turkey-Armenia-Rapprochement-Stalled/2186246.html>; Joris Gjata, "Lessons from the Turkish-Armenian Protocols," *Türkiye Analyst* 3, no. 7 (April 12, 2010), Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Joint Center,

resonated so strongly with Turkish domestic politics pleased Azerbaijan as well. The Karabakh issue and Azerbaijan's just cause had never been discussed to this extent since the 1990s, and the signing of the protocols had sparked this kind of debate for the first time⁸⁴⁶. According to Mehtiyev, the Turkish authorities' primary goal was never to anger Baku or their Azerbaijani brothers or to cause resentment⁸⁴⁷. On the contrary, normalization aimed to bring peace to the region and to facilitate a more harmonious and peaceful environment for Azerbaijan to defend its rights in the future. Nevertheless, this has made it clear that regional cooperation and lasting peace, accessible to all, are currently impossible without resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Following the Second Karabakh War of 2020, new hopes arose for improved relations between Türkiye and Armenia. Just one month after the ceasefire, in December, President Erdoğan presented the "3+3" platform at a meeting with Azerbaijani leader Aliyev in Baku. This platform, as a mechanism for regional actors to develop solutions among themselves after the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, included the Caucasus countries of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, and the regional power trio of Türkiye, Iran, and Russia. While Georgia has never participated in the platform due to its ongoing negative relations with Russia, the participating states have stated that they would always welcome Georgia's participation and have continued to hold 2+3 meetings to this day. Similar to the initiatives of 2008, this platform serves Türkiye's goals of peace-making and diplomacy-focused problem-solving in the region⁸⁴⁸.

<https://www.Turkiyeanalyst.org/publications/Turkiye-analyst-articles/item/207-lessons-from-the-turkish-armenian-protocols.html>; Thomas de Waal, *Armenia and Türkiye*, Conciliation Resources, 2010, 4; Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişçi, and Andrew Moffatt, *Armenia and Türkiye: Opening Minds, Opening Borders* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2010); Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş, "Son Dönem İç ve Dış Politik Gelişmeleri Işığında Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri," *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, no. 39 (Fall 2013): 48–49.

⁸⁴⁶ Elhan Mehtiyev, "Turkish-Armenian Protocols: An Azerbaijani Perspective," *Insight Türkiye* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 43, published by SETA Foundation, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26331431>.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, 46.

⁸⁴⁸ For assessments of the 3+3 regional cooperation platform proposed for the South Caucasus, see "Time for 3+3 in South Caucasus?," *Topchubashov Center*, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://top-center.org/en/analytics/3718/time-for-3-in-south-caucasus>; "South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform Calls for Cease-fire in Middle East," *Anadolu Agency*, accessed July 14, 2025,

While Türkiye was taking constructive steps in this regard, Armenia similarly signalled the possibility of starting a new process with Türkiye. After Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan won the 2021 elections, he began to articulate this more concretely, saying, "Starting a conversation with the aim of normalizing our relations with Türkiye is another factor that could play a catalyst role in this issue," referring to the expected outcomes for the future of Nagorno-Karabakh⁸⁴⁹. This process was also tied to the Pashinyan government's "peace agenda," which aimed to bring Armenia closer to the West⁸⁵⁰. Factors such as the apparent shift in the balance of power in the region, Armenia's major defeat in the 44-day war, and its traditional over-reliance on Russia for security purposes also led to changes in foreign policy⁸⁵¹.

Erdoğan emphasized that, during this process, "Türkiye has never had any intention of closing its doors to Armenia. It has no grudge against the Armenian people. Peace and cooperation are possible, and for this to happen, Armenia must abandon its aggressive rhetoric and policies." Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that "the future of Türkiye-Armenia relations will be decided together with Azerbaijan. Armenia will be a part of this cooperation if it abandons its territorial claims against its neighbours. Armenia and its people will benefit from this"⁸⁵². At this point, it has become clear that, unlike the 2009 initiatives, Türkiye will not proceed without a definitive green light from Azerbaijan in this new normalization process and will prioritize Türkiye-Azerbaijan

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/south-caucasus-regional-cooperation-platform-calls-for-cease-fire-in-middle-east/3366830>; "3+3 Initiative as a New Order in the South Caucasus," *Caucasus Watch*, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/insights/33-initiative-as-a-new-order-in-the-south-caucasus.html>; Aslanlı, "Altılı Platform Kalıcı Barışın Teminatı Olabilir".

⁸⁴⁹ Elena Teslova, "Armenia Eyes Normalization with Türkiye, Says Prime Minister," *Anadolu Agency*, October 14, 2021, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/armenia-eyes-normalization-with-turkiye-says-prime-minister/2393436>; Amanda Paul and Benyamin Poghosyan, "Acts of Normality? The Potential for Turkey–Armenia Rapprochement," *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*, April 7, 2022, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/acts-of-normality-the-potential-for-turkiye-armenia-rapprochement/#a-surprising-outcome>.

⁸⁵⁰ Micallef, "Armenia–Türkiye Normalisation".

⁸⁵¹ Avdaliani, "Armenia and Türkiye".

⁸⁵² Aslanlı, "Altılı Platform Kalıcı Barışın Teminatı Olabilir,"

relations and the progress of the peace agreement on Nagorno-Karabakh⁸⁵³. Indeed, this process has been approved by Azerbaijan, and its smooth continuation is dependent on both this continued approval and the completion of the normalization process between Azerbaijan and Armenia⁸⁵⁴. Compared to the 1990s, Armenia is not as important for Türkiye economically today but considering that relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan continue to strengthen after the war, Ankara's position in the South Caucasus will be further strengthened, and the corridor between Türkiye and Azerbaijan will be important in terms of gaining diplomatic certainty⁸⁵⁵.

In this context, in 2022, both sides appointed special representatives for each other and began periodic meetings. Türkiye appointed former ambassador to Washington and experienced diplomat Serdar Kılıç, while Armenia appointed Ruben Rubinyan as its representative. Since 2022, communication between the representatives has continued continuously, both face-to-face and by phone. The first meetings took place in Moscow on January 15, 2022. Although the meetings took place in Moscow, compared to previous meetings and the signing of the protocols in 2009, only Türkiye and Armenia were present at the table. This signalled the beginning of a "new era without intermediaries"⁸⁵⁶. Reportedly, along with the face-to-face meetings, Turkish and Armenian officials have met more than 500 times solely on normalization, with Türkiye stating that it wants to proceed "slowly and deliberately" during this process⁸⁵⁷. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu insisted that establishing a lasting peace

⁸⁵³ Paul and Poghosyan, "Acts of Normality?"

⁸⁵⁴ Ergun, Ayça, "Türkiye ve Güney Kafkasya: 2022'den Kalanlar, 2023'ten Beklenenler", Panorama, Çevrimiçi Yayın, 30 January 2023, <https://www.globalpanorama.org/blog/2023/01/30/ac/>.

⁸⁵⁵ Avdaliani, "Armenia and Türkiye".

⁸⁵⁶ "Armenia Appoints Special Representative for Normalization with Türkiye," *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 19, 2021, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/armenia-appoints-special-representative-for-normalization-with-türkiye-170163>; "Türkiye Appoints Former US Envoy to Lead Dialogue with Armenia," *Daily Sabah* (with Anadolu Agency), December 16, 2021, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/türkiye-appoints-former-us-envoy-to-lead-dialogue-with-armenia>; Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş, "Karabağ Savaşı Sonrası Türkiye-Azerbaycan-Ermenistan İlişkileri," *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 5, no. 8 (June 2022): 144–149.

⁸⁵⁷ Veliyev, Cavid, "One Critical Step Left for Turkish–Armenian Normalization," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 19, no. 163 (November 2, 2022), accessed July 14, 2025, <https://jamestown.org/program/one-critical-step-left-for-turkish-armenian-normalization/>.

between Azerbaijan and Armenia should be “parallel” to normalization in order to benefit regional peace, while there is “some hope to separate the two processes from each other, but this is impossible”⁸⁵⁸.

By September 2024, Erdoğan was stating that “significant progress” had been made in the normalization without “preconditions” process and that he sincerely supported the continuation of dialogue⁸⁵⁹. Special representatives Kılıç and Rubinyan held their fifth meeting in July 2024 at the Alican-Margara border on the Türkiye-Armenia border and confirmed “the agreement to continue this process, the ultimate goal of which is full normalization, without preconditions”⁸⁶⁰. Furthermore, as a result of the meetings held between the representatives, direct flights resumed on February 2, 2022, and an agreement was reached to open the border to third-country citizens and to begin air cargo trade between the two countries starting July 1⁸⁶¹. Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan, who was invited to and participated in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum held in Türkiye in March 2022 and April 2025, and who participated in 2025, stated that “both sides understand that the ultimate goal is the full normalization of relations, including the establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of borders”⁸⁶².

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁹ Diyar Gündoğan, “Significant Progress Made Towards Türkiye–Armenia Normalization: Erdoğan,” *Anadolu Agency*, June 9, 2024, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/significant-progress-made-towards-turkiye-armenia-normalization-erdogan/3340494>.

⁸⁶⁰ Mehmet Şah Yılmaz, “Türkiye–Ermenistan özel temsilcileri Kılıç ve Rubinyan sınırda bir araya geldi,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, February 22, 2023, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turkiye-ermenistan-ozel-temsilcileri-kilic-ve-rubinyan-sinirda-bir-araya-geldi/3289439>.

⁸⁶¹ Rabia İclal Turan, “Armenia Receives 1st Flight from Türkiye amid Normalization Process,” *Anadolu Agency*, July 22, 2022, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/Turkiye/armenia-receives-1st-flight-from-turkiye-amid-normalization-process/2492451>; “Relations between Türkiye and Armenia,” *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-and-armenia.en.mfa#:~:text=After%20a%20series%20of%20meetings,countries%20on%201%20July%202022>.

⁸⁶² Can Efesoğlu ve Ayşe İrem Tiryaki, “Ermenistan Dışişleri Bakanı Ararat Mirzoyan, Türkiye'yle İlişkilere Dair Konuştu,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, April 12, 2025, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/ermenistan-disisleri-bakani-ararat-mirzoyan-turkiyeyle-iliskilere-dair-konustu/3536653>; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, “IV. Antalya Diplomasi Forumu, 11–13 Nisan 2025, Antalya,” accessed 14 Temmuz 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iv-antalya-diplomasi-forumu-11-13-nisan-2025--antalya.tr.mfa>.

Moreover, after the massive and painful February 6 earthquake in 2023, the border between Türkiye and Armenia was opened after 35 years to provide humanitarian aid to Türkiye⁸⁶³.

Over the past five years, Armenia has undergone a restructuring process, shifting its foreign policy priorities to prioritize improving and normalizing relations with Türkiye. This was not only political but also culturally based. Beyond symbols like Mount Ararat, the Armenian national symbol, Pashinyan invited the public to draw attention to the symbols within its own borders⁸⁶⁴. He stated that direct diplomatic dialogue with Türkiye continues uninterrupted, that representatives are in constant contact, and that he believes that if political efforts continue, a full normalization process can be achieved with the opening of the borders⁸⁶⁵. He even backed down from the "genocide" allegations, stating that this discourse no longer constitutes a foreign policy priority⁸⁶⁶. In June 2025, Erdoğan hosted Pashinyan at Dolmabahçe Palace, emphasizing his full support for a win-win development and peace process in the region and stating that he was currently utilizing all available resources to achieve this goal⁸⁶⁷. According to Vartanyan, "Armenia's message was clear: it acknowledges Turkey's rising influence" and "this shift marks a major turn"⁸⁶⁸. Tulun interpreted this as "For the first time, an Armenian leader is engaging in direct, high-level talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, signalling a willingness on both sides to move

⁸⁶³ Handan Kazancı, "Türkiye-Armenia border reopens after 30-year hiatus to aid quake zone," *Anadolu Agency*, September 11, 2023, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkiye-armenia-border-reopens-after-30-year-hiatus-to-aid-quake-zone/2815736>.

⁸⁶⁴ Olesya Vartanyan, "Why Armenia Is Seeking to Normalize Relations With Türkiye," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, July 1, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia- Eurasia/politika/2025/06/armenia-turkiye-rapprochement?lang=en>.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ Aghakazim Guliyev, "Pashinyan: International Recognition of 'Armenian Genocide' Not a Priority for Armenia," *Caliber.az*, March 14, 2025, <https://caliber.az/en/post/pashinyan-international-recognition-of-armenian-genocide-not-a-priority-for-armenia>.

⁸⁶⁷ Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Ermenistan Başbakanı Paşinyan'ı kabul etti," *İletişim Başkanlığı* (Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications), June 20, 2025, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ermenistan-basbakani-pasinyani-kabul-etti-20-06-25>.

⁸⁶⁸ Vartanyan, "Why Armenia Is Seeking to Normalize Relations with Türkiye".

beyond entrenched grievances and explore a pragmatic path forward”⁸⁶⁹. Despite all, there is a significant Azerbaijani element in the relations.

Although several years have passed since the end of the war, Türkiye awaits the normalization process, namely the opening of diplomatic representatives, the commencement of diplomatic relations, and the signing of a just and equitable peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia to facilitate the opening of borders⁸⁷⁰. While there is a draft peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, it is limited to diplomatic relations⁸⁷¹. Azerbaijan's most important requirement is the removal of the call for the unification of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the Armenian Declaration of Independence⁸⁷². While the Armenian side emphasized that this would require a referendum and would likely take several years, Pashinyan stated during a meeting held in the United Arab Emirates on July 10, 2025, that revising Armenia's founding document would be appropriate⁸⁷³. During this meeting, Azerbaijan also expressed requests for the opening and development of the Zangezur corridor, ensuring border security, and reaching a lasting peace agreement, and the parties engaged in a highly constructive exchange of ideas⁸⁷⁴. For now, positive steps in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations raise hopes for a full normalization between Türkiye and Armenia. The continuation of this hope lies in Azerbaijan's continued approval of the process and the achievement of a peace agreement⁸⁷⁵. According to Aslanlı,

⁸⁶⁹ Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, “Pashinyan’s Visit: New Parameters of Armenia-Türkiye Normalization,” Daily Sabah, July 3, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/pashinyans-visit-new-parameters-of-armenia-turkiye-normalization>.

⁸⁷⁰ Vartanyan, “Why Armenia Is Seeking to Normalize Relations With Türkiye”.

⁸⁷¹ Olesya Vartanyan, “The Window for an Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Deal Is Closing,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 26, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia- Eurasia/politika/2025/03/azerbaijan-armenia-peace-talks?lang=en¢er=russia- Eurasia>.

⁸⁷² Ibid.

⁸⁷³ “Azerbaijan, Armenia agree to maintain direct peace dialogue,” Daily Sabah, July 10, 2025, by Daily Sabah with Agencies, 11:41 am GMT+3, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/azerbaijan-armenia-agree-to-maintain-direct-peace-dialogue/news>.

⁸⁷⁴ Tulun, “Pashinyan’s Visit”.

⁸⁷⁵ Ergun, “Türkiye ve Güney Kafkasya: 2022’den Kalanlar, 2023’ten Beklenenler”

"Armenia must absolutely renounce all territorial claims against its neighbours, abandon its aggressive rhetoric toward Türkiye, and amend any statements in its official documents that could be considered attempts to disregard Türkiye's territorial integrity. Otherwise, Türkiye and Azerbaijan will continue to pursue the projects they have been developing for years and add new ones to them. The loser will be Armenia, which imprisons itself by remaining outside these projects and whose rhetoric and actions only aid the imperialist policies of non-regional powers in the region"⁸⁷⁶.

To conclude, the normalization process initiated by Türkiye and Armenia in 2009 was not fully coordinated with Azerbaijan but rather focused on unconditional advancement of relations and the opening of borders. This was not welcomed by Azerbaijan and had negative repercussions in Turkish domestic politics. This awakened Ankara, prompting it to act more cautiously, more in line with regional realities, and with Azerbaijan's approval and in full coordination with the normalization efforts that resumed in 2021. With the Shusha Declaration, Ankara prioritized the geopolitical sensitivities and security priorities of Azerbaijan, with which it had elevated its relations to the highest level. A lasting peace between Yerevan and Baku and a softening of Armenia's national rhetoric will pave the way for this process, which includes Azerbaijan and whose efforts are not limited to just two states.

5.3. A Search for Connectivity: Zangezur

Following the war, another development in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations was the steps taken to open the Zangezur Corridor, a road connecting Türkiye and Azerbaijan through Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Work on the corridor's opening began after the war. Prior to the European Union Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels on December 15, 2021, European Council President Charles Michel held a trilateral meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, during which a decision was made to build a railway along the Zangezur Corridor. This decision was made in response to the envisaged road development

⁸⁷⁶ Aslanlı, "Altılı Platform Kalıcı Barışın Teminatı Olabilir,"

between Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan, which was included in the trilateral declaration signed on November 10, 2020⁸⁷⁷.

The resolution of the Karabakh conflict opened up a series of new opportunities for regional states, and in this regard, the opening of transportation corridors was a top priority. The Zangezur Corridor aims to connect Azerbaijan and Türkiye, ultimately serving as a critical transit route connecting the Asian continent to Europe and the Middle East. Furthermore, this strengthening of regional networks is also seen as crucial for achieving long-term peace in the South Caucasus⁸⁷⁸.

In 2021, the Transport and Infrastructure Ministers of Türkiye and Azerbaijan began talks, and Azerbaijan, in particular, had intensively advanced its efforts to open this corridor. The ceasefire agreement agreed to reopen all corridors that had been closed during the Karabakh conflict. Zangezur is located near the Syunik region of southern Armenia. The region, which belonged to Azerbaijan before the 1920s, was given to Armenian administration by the Soviets, and Azerbaijan's connection with Nakhchivan had been severed for many years. Aliyev stated that the opening of the corridor, as a result of post-war initiatives, would have a strengthening effect on Azerbaijan's ties with Türkiye. He also stated that in 2021, they planned for the corridor to become active within two and a half years, and that this decision was made by the deputy prime ministers of Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia⁸⁷⁹.

Aliyev also wants the Zangezur Corridor to be subject to the same legal regulations as the Lachin Corridor, which connects Armenia and Karabakh. This means there will be

⁸⁷⁷ Veliyev, Cavid, "Building the Zangezur Corridor, Normalization in South Caucasus," *Daily Sabah*, 24 Aralık 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/building-the-zangezur-corridor-normalization-in-south-caucasus>.

⁸⁷⁸ Lavrina, Anastasia, "Zangezur Corridor: New Transport Route to Connect Europe and Asia," *Daily Sabah*, 9 Ağustos 2022, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/zangezur-corridor-new-transport-route-to-connect-europe-and-asia>.

⁸⁷⁹ Daily Sabah with AA, "Zangezur Corridor Between Türkiye, Azerbaijan to Revive Region," *Daily Sabah*, 1 Haziran 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/zangezur-corridor-between-Türkiye-azerbaijan-to-revive-region>; Daily Sabah with AA, "Zangezur Corridor to Boost Türkiye-Azerbaijan Ties: Aliyev," *Daily Sabah*, 30 Mayıs 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/zangezur-corridor-to-boost-Türkiye-azerbaijan-ties-aliyev>.

no customs inspections, which will foster trust-building between the parties and provide a significant step toward regional stability⁸⁸⁰.

Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu also stated in his statements that the corridor's functionality is crucial for connecting the countries in the region through regional economic cooperation. Referring to the normalization steps with Armenia, Çavuşoğlu stated that Türkiye's desire is "the development of stability and peace in the South Caucasus, as well as the realization of projects that contribute to the economy that connects countries, just like the Zangezur corridor⁸⁸¹."

The Zangezur Corridor, a 43-kilometer stretch of land along the border between Iran and Armenia and a key transportation route connecting Baku to Kars, has the potential to become one of the most important transportation corridors in Eurasia and the South Caucasus, a catalyst for peace, economic development, and regional cooperation⁸⁸².

President Aliyev, in a way that will alleviate Armenia's concerns on this issue, stated that they made no territorial claims against Armenia, but that "Armenia must fulfill its obligations regarding the ceasefire and ensure unhindered passage from Azerbaijan to *Azerbaijan* (Nakhchivan)" and that they had been working diligently since the end of the war to open the corridor, but Armenia has been damaging the processes⁸⁸³. Aliyev also stated that the functioning of the corridor would also benefit Armenia, as otherwise, Armenia would remain in a stalemate. He emphasized that the borders

⁸⁸⁰ Anadolu Ajansı, "Zangezur, Lachin Corridors Must Have Same Legal Structure: Aliyev," Daily Sabah, 15 Aralık 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/zangezur-lachin-corridors-must-have-same-legal-structure-aliyev>.

⁸⁸¹ Daily Sabah, "Türkiye Aims for Stability, Peace in South Caucasus: FM Çavuşoğlu," Daily Sabah, 20 Aralık 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/Türkiye-aims-for-stability-peace-in-south-caucasus-fm-cavusoglu>.

⁸⁸² "Zangezur Corridor: A Pathway for Peace," *Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC)*, 22 Temmuz 2022, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/zangezur_corridor_a_pathway_for_peace-2834743.

⁸⁸³ Rehimov, Ruslan, "Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev: Biz Zengezur'u unutmadık ve unutmayacağız", Anadolu Ajansı, 28 January 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyev-biz-zengezuru-unutmadik-ve-unutmayacagiz/3464586>.

would not be opened if the corridor did not pass through the Mehri region in Armenia which has significant history of trade and transit⁸⁸⁴.

Turkish President Erdoğan, for his part, emphasized the value of this issue for Türkiye by saying, “If we resolve the Zangezur issue swiftly, it will provide us with two significant steps. With steps taken both by road and rail, Türkiye’s connections with Nakhchivan will become much stronger, allowing access to these areas from Iğdır to Nakhchivan. Furthermore, these connections will strengthen relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan⁸⁸⁵.” He also stated, “The Zangezur corridor will bring new opportunities not only for Azerbaijan but also for the entire region. We see this line not only as a geopolitical but also as part of a geoeconomic revolution. The opening of the Zangezur Corridor will also be a strategic development for the Middle Corridor. When the corridor opens, Turkish goods will cross the Caspian Sea to Central Asia and China more quickly, and goods from Europe to China will also begin to pass through Türkiye,” reiterating the Turkish support for and the importance they attribute to the corridor⁸⁸⁶.

This project, which Erdoğan and Aliyev laid the groundwork for in October 2021, aims to support the economic development of the countries through which it will pass. Furthermore, the corridor passes through underdeveloped regions of all three countries. Another benefit for Türkiye is that the Türkiye-Central Asia connection will be established through Azerbaijan instead of Iran. This goal was already underway through oil and natural gas transportation networks through Georgia. Moreover, the construction of a new transit route between Türkiye and Russia that does not pass through Georgia. The Zangezur Corridor will enable China to establish a goods

⁸⁸⁴ Rehimov, Ruslan, “Aliyev, Zengezur Koridoru açılmazsa Ermenistan’la sınırları açmayacaklarını söyledi”, Anadolu Ajansı, 10 January 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/aliyev-zengezur-koridoru-acilmazsa-ermenistanla-sinirlari-acmayacaklarini-soyledi/3105586>.

⁸⁸⁵ Mümin Altaş and Mehmet Tosun, “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Zengezur konusunu halletmemiz Türkiye-Azerbaycan ilişkilerinin güçlenmesine vesile olacak”, Anadolu Ajansı, 13 June 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-zengezur-konusunu-halletmemiz-turkiye-azerbaycan-iliskilerinin-guclenmesine-vesile-olacak/2921186>.

⁸⁸⁶ TRT Avaz, “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Zengezur hattının önemi fazlasıyla artıyor ve artacak”, 5 July 2025, <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/haber/tur/turkistandan/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-zengezur-hattinin-onemi-fazlasiyla-artiyor-ve-artacak/6868fedcd66cd1882d6530db>.

transportation network extending to Europe through Türkiye, helping China achieve its transportation diversification goals, and will become a key trade route between Europe and Asia⁸⁸⁷.

Ultimately, the Zangezur Corridor has deepened relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in terms of restructuring regional transportation lines and harmonizing geoeconomic strategies. Strategic cooperation has been solidified, ensuring uninterrupted land transportation from Türkiye to the Turkic world, while Azerbaijan has become a central hub for this purpose. The corridor will provide geographical continuity and transportation advantages for both countries by establishing a Türkiye-Nakhchivan-Azerbaijan-Central Asia line. This will also enhance integration and foster rapprochement for the OTS community.

5.4. Subtle Tensions

The long-standing relations, strengthened by elements such as historical, cultural, and linguistic kinship, but progressing on a strategic and realistic basis, are not always as flawless as expected. Similar to the ruptures in 1994 and 2008, there has been a brief, albeit tepid, period of tension in relations in 2024.

On July 28, 2024, in a speech to party members at the JDP Rize rally, President Erdoğan, regarding Israel's oppression of Palestinians, said, "We must be very strong to prevent Israel from doing what it is doing in Palestine. Just as we entered Karabakh and Libya, we can do the same to them⁸⁸⁸." Thus, Erdoğan's statement was met with considerable negative reaction in Baku. In an editorial published on August 1st in the

⁸⁸⁷ Javidan Ahmadkhanli, "The Importance of the Zangezur Corridor in Three Dimensions," Topchubashov Center, 27 Ekim 2021, <https://top-center.org/en/expert-opinion/3247/the-importance-of-the-zangezur-corridor-in-three-dimensions>.

⁸⁸⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İletişim Başkanlığı, "Erdoğan: Türkiye, İsrail'e Girebilir ve Filistinliler'e Yardım Edebilir," 30 Temmuz 2024, https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/dis_basinda_turkiye/detay/erdogan-turkiye-israile-girebilir-ve-filistinlilere-yardim-edebilir; Daily Sabah, "Erdoğan to Israel: 'We Can Do What We Did in Karabakh, Libya,'" , Istanbul, July 29, 2024, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/erdogan-to-israel-we-can-do-what-we-did-in-karabakh-libya/news>; Ben Hubbard and Safak Timur, "Turkey's President Says His Country Could Enter Israel to Help Palestinians," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2024, <https://archive.is/20240729130031/https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/29/world/middleeast/turkey-israel-erdogan.html>.

"Azerbaijan" newspaper published by the Azerbaijani National Assembly, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's remarks regarding the Karabakh Victory during his statements against Israel were reacted to, and it was emphasized that the "brotherly" bond between the two countries should not be "turned into a football match played with a single goal" and that "mutual duties" should not be forgotten⁸⁸⁹.

The article also stated, "When we hear the Armenians' despicable lie from our brothers, we are heartbroken and saddened; we regard these words, heard from an unimagined source, as a heavy moral blow." It also remarked that the statements made by Turkey "damaged the realities of the 44-day war and poured water into the Armenian mill." The article also indicated that the ammunition sent from Turkey during the Karabakh War was not aid, but munitions "paid for down to the penny," and that every bullet, ammunition, and equipment purchased under military cooperation agreements was paid for⁸⁹⁰.

Although Türkiye did not officially correct or retract the statement "We entered Karabakh" regarding this issue, the official discourse in Ankara continued to emphasize the "brotherhood" narrative, and relations progressed on diplomatic and political platforms. For example, on August 27, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Bayramov visited Ankara. During this meeting, it was stated that "an exchange of views on bilateral relations, as well as current regional and international developments, was envisaged," emphasizing the common "coordination" principle in bilateral relations⁸⁹¹. Furthermore, in his address to the Turkish Grand National Assembly Planning and Budget Committee in November 2024, Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan emphasized that relations with Azerbaijan were maintained at an "exemplary level"

⁸⁸⁹ Euronews, "Azerbaycan'dan Erdoğan'ın 'Karabağ zaferi' sözlerine sert tepki," *Euronews Türkçe*, August 18, 2024, <https://tr.euronews.com/2024/08/18/azerbaycandan-erdoganin-karabag-zaferi-sozlerine-sert-tepki>; T24, "Azerbaycan Resmi Gazetesi'nden Erdoğan'a yanıt: Zaferin mimarı Azerbaycan ordusudur...", *T24*, August 16, 2024, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/azerbaycan-resmi-gazetesi-nden-erdogan-a-yanit-zaferin-mimari-azerbaycan-ordusudur.1179664>.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, "No: 170 – Azerbaycan Dışişleri Bakanı Ceyhun Bayramov'un Ülkemizi Ziyareti Hk.," *T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı*, 26 August 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-170_-azerbaycan-disisleri-bakani-ceyhun-bayramov-un-ulkemizi-ziyareti-hk.tr.mfa.

and that "the effort to resolve many international issues was being jointly demonstrated." Moreover, Fidan stated that "permanent peace in the South Caucasus is closer today than ever before" and that "undoubtedly, the basis for reaching this point is brotherly Azerbaijan ending the occupation of its territories in Karabakh⁸⁹²."

In the following months, there is also evidence that bilateral relations have followed a normal course. Erdoğan celebrated Azerbaijan's Independence Day on October 18th on social media with a visual of Turkish and Azerbaijani flags waving side by side. He wrote, "I wholeheartedly congratulate Azerbaijan, our friend and brother, with whom we share the understanding of one nation, two states, on October 18th Independence Day⁸⁹³." In an interview in December, Aliyev commented on military relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, saying, "Our military relations with Turkey were established in the early days of our independence and continue today. Turkey played a major role in the modernization of the Azerbaijani army and its achievement of high standards⁸⁹⁴."

In January 2025, Erdoğan and Aliyev discussed bilateral relations, regional, and global issues during one of their regular phone calls. President Erdoğan stated that "Turkey fully supports the establishment of lasting peace in the South Caucasus region and will always continue to stand by Azerbaijan⁸⁹⁵." In a statement made around the same time, Aliyev stated that the Shusha Declaration, which elevated Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations to the level of alliance, was being enriched daily by new factors. Expressing his support for the developments in Syria following the collapse of the Assad regime

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Azerbaycan'ın Bağımsızlık Gününü Kutladı, October 18, 2024," *T.C. İletişim Başkanlığı*, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-azerbaycanin-bagimsizlik-gununu-kutladi-18-10-24>; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (@RTErdogan), "Tweet," X (formerly Twitter), October 18, 2024, <https://x.com/RTErdogan/status/1847299096811299043>.

⁸⁹⁴ Anadolu Ajansı, "Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev: Türkiye'yle Her Yıl 10'dan Fazla Ortak Tatbikat Yapıyoruz," *Anadolu Ajansı*, May 18, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyev-turkiyeyle-her-yil-10dan-fazla-ortak-tatbikat-yapiyoruz/3427638>.

⁸⁹⁵ İletişim Başkanlığı, "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev ile Telefonda Görüştü," *İletişim Başkanlığı*, January 8, 2025, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyev-ile-telefonda-gorustu-08-01-25>.

and the relations Turkey established with the new Syrian government, and his satisfaction with this process, Aliyev stated⁸⁹⁶:

What is in Turkey's interest is also in our interest. Our security, our interests, and our future are all one. A completely new situation has emerged in the Middle East. The strong Turkey factor will play a major role here. We stand with it. In other words, our power will grow even further. Nowhere in the world will you find countries as closely interconnected as Turkey and Azerbaijan. We are very hopeful.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, during a working visit to Baku, held a joint press conference following his meeting with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Ceyhan Bayramov at the ministry. Fidan emphasized the long-standing close relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, saying, "You can only walk the most difficult paths together with your brothers." He also said, "We have always stood by each other in all difficult times, with all our resources and all our strength. Turkey stood by Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan stood by Türkiye. God willing, this will continue in the future. From now on, as two brothers, we will continue to walk the same path and share a common destiny⁸⁹⁷."

Ultimately, relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan—anchored in unity and an integrated perception of regional security—exhibit a quality that strengthens their own resilience through successive tests. While this rhetorical tension experienced in 2024 may initially appear to be a sign of fragility, it rather represents the level of crisis management capacity and maturation in relations. It highlights that the occasional fluctuations in rhetoric do not disrupt the structural framework established after the war; common interests and institutionalized alliances act as buffers, easing potential tensions. During this period, the public dissatisfaction from Azerbaijan was calmed

⁸⁹⁶ TRT Haber, "İlham Aliyev: Türkiye'nin Çıkarına Olanlar Bizim de Çıkarımızdır," *TRT Haber*, September 1, 2024, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/turk-dunyasi/ilham-aliyev-turkiyenin-cikarina-olanlar-bizim-de-cikarimizadir-893960.html>; Rehimov, Ruslan, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan Diplomatik İlişkilerinin 33 Yılı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, September 5, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turkiye-azerbaycan-diplomatik-iliskilerinin-33-yili/3449566>.

⁸⁹⁷ Büşranur Keskinkılıç, "Dışişleri Bakanı Fidan: Türkiye ve Azerbaycan Tüm İmkanlarıyla Kader Birliğine Devam Edecek," *Anadolu Ajansı*, September 12, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/disisleri-bakani-fidan-turkiye-ve-azerbaycan-tum-imkanlariyla-kader-birligine-devam-edecek/3454425>.

through phone calls, inter-ministerial interactions, and diplomacy, while Türkiye maintained its narrative of solidarity and brotherhood. This demonstrates that institutional mechanisms act more automatically and consistently in such situations. Factors such as the ongoing and developing defence cooperation before and after the war, the institutionalized shared regional vision and alliance frame created by the Shusha Declaration, in other words, institutionalized integration, appears to have insulated close relations from the resulting rhetorical tensions.

5.4. Conclusions

The regional geopolitical balances following the Second Karabakh War, while affecting all actors involved, have also impacted the close relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, particularly in terms of security. For over 30 years, the "one nation, two states" motto, Türkiye's unconditional and unwavering support for Azerbaijan through the Karabakh conflict, the perception of a common enemy built through Armenia, and openness to cooperation in military and security fields have represented continuity in bilateral security relations. However, the new era has diverged from the classical alliance modality by evolving into foreign policy harmony, mutual trust, and a common security architecture.

With the Shusha Declaration signed in 2021, Azerbaijan strengthened its military and strategic capacity at the regional level, while Türkiye began to play an indispensable and active role in the security of the South Caucasus. This declaration promotes joint efforts and integration between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in areas such as military, defence, and intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and border security. Furthermore, the parties agreed to develop an intertwined security understanding through regular sessions of their respective National Security Councils. The Shusha Declaration defined relations as alliances for the first time, establishing a mechanism requiring either party to rely on the other's judgment if they felt threatened by a third country. In this sense, the relationship, which was defined as a "strategic partnership" before 2020, has evolved.

The Patriotic War was critical to the shared threat perception and regional security planning between the two countries, and Armenia was declared the number one threat

to peace for both states. While military relations were previously framed by bilateral defence cooperation agreements, they have now been institutionalized as an alliance thanks to the Shusha Declaration. Furthermore, close military proximity, the coordination of activities among authorized institutions and organizations, and the promotion of close cooperation in the management of modern-technology weapons and ammunition are also symbols of this integration.

The value attributed to the Turkic world in bilateral relations was put into writing with this document, and the increase of national and international efforts to serve the unity and prosperity of the Turkic world was encouraged.

The rapprochement, deepening, and evolution of bilateral relations as a result of the resolution of the Karabakh conflict through Turkish-Azerbaijani solidarity and Azerbaijan's great victory in this war were not limited to these two states alone but also found repercussions within the Organization of Turkic States. It would certainly be a source of inspiration for the future in terms of integrating security perspectives within the organization and determining a common Turkish world security agenda.

Moreover, the steps taken to implement the Zangezur Corridor, envisioned in the ceasefire agreement signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia, are crucial for ensuring and maintaining the integrity of the Turkic world. Another change that the war has brought about compared to the past is the physical establishment of a connection between Türkiye and the Turkic world through Azerbaijan, effectively putting the vision of a Turkic world into practice in Eurasia and the world. This geopolitically significant route had been closed since the Soviet era. Hence, this advancement, which came after a long period of non-alignment, transcends this project from merely an economic network and signals cultural, strategic, and political rapprochement.

Finally, the uninterrupted dialogue between Ankara and Baku throughout the war demonstrates its importance and continuity in the new normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, even also after the war. Unlike the process initiated in 2008, Türkiye's primary condition for the normalization process, which began with Azerbaijan's approval and continues, is the existence of a peace agreement on Karabakh signed on terms acceptable to Azerbaijan. In this regard, Türkiye fully

considers Azerbaijan's interests and acts in coordination with it. This also represents a perception of a common enemy and security that has been strengthened compared to the past.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis argued that the relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, which had endured for nearly 30 years, deepened further through and following the Second Karabakh War, thus consolidating the states' shared security perspectives. The evolution of bilateral relations since 1992 was examined, and the socio-cultural, economic, military, and, more importantly, security dimensions of these relations were explored. Türkiye's political and emotional support for Azerbaijan throughout the war, and Azerbaijan's approach to Türkiye, were analysed within the context of the official discourses of both states' decision-makers. Post-war events such as the Shusha Declaration and the Türkiye-Armenia normalisation were also discussed within the context of the security dimension of bilateral relations.

The special, close ties between Türkiye and Azerbaijan began with Türkiye's recognition of Azerbaijan's independence in 1992. Azerbaijan was fighting for independence during this period, while also embroiled in the First Karabakh War with Armenia. While Türkiye was unable to provide military assistance during this period due to unfavourable regional circumstances, it offered strong emotional and political support to Azerbaijan and demonstrated its determination by deciding to close its borders with Armenia in 1993. The only significant setback in bilateral relations over the next three decades was the normalisation process between Türkiye and Armenia, which lasted from 2008 to 2010. While Ankara initially took certain steps, the failure to resolve the Karabakh conflict, Armenia's territorial claims against Türkiye in its constitution, and accusations of "genocide" hampered this process. After this period, relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan began to improve, with, for example, the signing of a Strategic Cooperation Agreement between the two countries in 2010. This

agreement defined relations as a strategic cooperation, guaranteeing mutual assistance in the event of any military attack. The same year, the Türkiye-Azerbaijan High-Level Strategic Council mechanism was established at the presidential level to ensure rapid, orderly, multidimensional, and high-level progress in relations and decision-making processes.

Energy cooperation, economic relations, mutual investments and development projects between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, especially in the 2000s, have fostered political rapprochement between the two countries and have been an important tool in shaping both their individual and joint regional foreign policy strategies. Oil and natural gas pipeline projects such as the BTC, BTE, and TANAP have established strategic partnerships, making Azerbaijan an exporter and Türkiye a bridge country. The investments made by the Azerbaijani state oil company, SOCAR, in Turkish companies such as the STAR Refinery and Petkim, and the increasing mutual trade volume each year are also significant in this regard. The emotionally grounded relations have been institutionalised thanks to the steps taken to achieve regional strategic economic goals. All these steps, taken and sustained until 2020, have strengthened the ability to act jointly between Ankara and Baku, built mutual trust, and ensured integration in foreign policy objectives, particularly regarding meeting Europe's energy needs.

The "one nation, two states" understanding between Türkiye and Azerbaijan is most clearly reflected in the cultural and social spheres. The interaction between the two communities represents the social reflection of interstate closeness, a sense of belonging, and cultural unity. Türkiye's sympathy for Azerbaijan stems from historical ties and a shared perception of hostility toward Armenia, providing social legitimacy for the leaders' policies. The fact that both communities speak two close Turkish dialects has strengthened linguistic ties. Turkish TV series, music, and literature are closely followed in Azerbaijan, and similarly, the Turkish community is interested in Azerbaijani music and has closely followed developments related to the Karabakh conflict from the outset. Azerbaijan's return of its occupied territories after nearly thirty years was seen as a shared victory between the Azerbaijani and Turkish communities, sharing both sorrows and joys. Educational collaborations and public diplomacy

institutions have strengthened artistic and cultural ties between the two countries, forming an intellectual bridge.

The military sphere has played a transformative role in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. Indeed, the development of military relations was the most tangible factor influencing the Second Karabakh War. As a result of the Karabakh conflict in the 1990s, Türkiye addressed Azerbaijan's need for a regular and well-trained army through aid and training agreements. The first Military Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1993, marking the beginning of the training of Azerbaijani officers in Türkiye and the initial phase of the Azerbaijani army's evolution into a Western and NATO-style army. In accordance with the Strategic Cooperation Agreement signed in 2010, the parties strengthened their military relations, which had already existed since the 1990s, over the next 10 years and conducted regular joint military exercises and training. During this period, partnerships such as TurAz Kartalı (Tur-Az Eagle), the Brotherhood Brigade Exercise, and the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Heydar Aliyev Exercises were established, enhancing the operational and strategic power of the Azerbaijani army. During the same period, Azerbaijan showed considerable interest in Turkish Baykar-made UAVs and UCAVs, becoming one of the largest buyers of these vehicles. These weapons and tactical training influenced the course of the 44-day war, were a key factor in Azerbaijan's victory, and demonstrated innovations in modern warfare. Thanks to these cooperations, the combat capabilities developed jointly by Türkiye and Azerbaijan, along with Türkiye's visible support, resulted in significant losses for Armenia and illuminated the deterrent dimension of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations.

Turkish-Azerbaijani relations have evolved since the Second Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict. From the very beginning of the war, Ankara has offered its full support and solidarity to Azerbaijan, upholding its territorial integrity and right to self-defence on national and international platforms. All high-level officials, including President Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and Defence Minister Hulusi Akar, issued simultaneous statements condemning Armenia's aggression and emphasising their support for Azerbaijan. In this way, Azerbaijan was not left alone in the face of international public opinion but also gained a moral advantage. Decision-makers followed every moment and development of the war through official channels and

shared relevant posts on their social media accounts. Turkish and Azerbaijani media outlets jointly promoted Azerbaijan's just war and delivered a resolute message to the international public.

The most substantial element that stood out throughout the war and played a role in the evolution of relations was the official dialogue between the two sides. For 44 days, the motto "one nation, two states" was repeated. Türkiye argued that Azerbaijan was exercising its right of self-defence, that Armenia was the primary aggressor, and that this stance posed a grave threat to regional peace. Azerbaijan emphasised that international law was on its side, that it was rightfully defending its territory, and that Armenia was an occupier that even attacked civilians. In response to criticism that Turkish Azerbaijani solidarity posed a threat, both sides stated that this solidarity was quite natural and that the support of two brotherly states for each other was not a threat. The differences and operational capabilities of Turkish UAVs on the ground, as well as the success and capabilities of the Azerbaijani army, were frequently extolled by both sides. Both Türkiye and Azerbaijan, in a coordinated effort, emphasised that the OSCE Minsk Group had been dysfunctional for nearly thirty years, that the international community needed to see the truth, and that everyone should be objective and fair. The perception of a legitimate partnership was created through rhetoric, and the sense of collective belonging between the parties was officially reinforced. Following the war, celebrations were held in Baku with joy and the participation of a large Turkish delegation and the Turkish army.

Two essential developments in post-war bilateral relations are noteworthy. The first is the new normalisation process that began between Türkiye and Armenia. What distinguishes this from the previous one is that Armenia initiated it without preconditions, while Türkiye participated with full consideration of Azerbaijan's sensitivities. Another distinctive aspect is that, compared to 2008, this process began without any intermediaries between the states, with the direct appointment of mutual special representatives—in other words, under the guise of a new era without intermediaries. When the 2009 protocols were signed, Armenia's occupation of Karabakh was still ongoing, and Azerbaijan was not included in the process. Switzerland, the US, and the EU played a crucial role as intermediaries, supporting the

process in every way. The normalisation process, formalised with the appointment of representatives in 2021, followed Azerbaijan's victory. As evidence of this new security-based rapprochement and strategic enlargement, the post-war normalisation steps between Türkiye and Armenia were carried out in coordination with Azerbaijan at every step, with its interests and approval in mind. Türkiye took these diplomatic steps in line with Azerbaijan's security concerns and to serve regional peace. Furthermore, Türkiye directly links the opening of its borders with Armenia to the Karabakh peace process. If Azerbaijan and Armenia agree to and sign a peace agreement, this normalisation will undoubtedly accelerate. This normalisation phase, although slowly developing since 2021, has been ongoing without interruption.

The second, and perhaps most significant development was the Shusha Declaration, signed in June 2021. This document is critical because it is the first to define the relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan as an "alliance." The declaration stated that the parties would exercise their internationally recognised rights of self-defence if a third state or group of states threatened or attacked either party. Furthermore, the parties announced that their national security councils would hold regular meetings to discuss regional and international security issues that could affect the parties. While the agreement does not create a NATO-style automatic collective defence responsibility, it does establish that a single party's conviction is sufficient to establish the existence of a threat. In other words, if one party feels threatened, the other party is obligated to take the threat seriously. This has meant coordinated activities and joint measures by the Armed Forces, the continuation of exercises and military cooperation, and integration on an operational level. The joint meetings to be held by the Security Councils demonstrate strategic planning, partnership, and integration in security agendas not only in times of war but at all times.

In relations following the Second Karabakh War, the rather asymmetrical perception of security, such as Türkiye's role as a foreign state supporting Azerbaijan, was replaced by a more active and visible security partnership, deepening relations. The Shusha Declaration institutionalised and brought relations closer than ever before. During this period, regional cooperation platforms such as the 3+3 and issues such as the security of energy lines increased in importance, and Türkiye and Azerbaijan

maintained their influence in these areas. While Russian influence in the region persisted in the post-war period, it diminished significantly compared to the past, giving way to Turkish Azerbaijani solidarity. The Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood evolved into a true alliance model. Furthermore, for both Türkiye and Azerbaijan, the importance of the Organisation of Turkic States as a regional cooperation mechanism gained significance, and the closeness of the two states within the ODT furthered the integration within the organisation.

This study can explain and illuminate the multidimensional and historical relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan for students of International Relations, Security Studies, Eurasian Studies, or Regional Studies, or for academics, diplomats, decision-makers, foreign policy advisors, or anyone interested in these fields.

This thesis broadly examined the evolution of relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan from a strategic partnership and emotional base to an operational, full-fledged alliance. The role of the Second Karabakh War, in particular, in the integration of shared security perceptions between the two states and the development of their capacity for joint action is problematized. The motto "One nation, two states" provided the legitimating basis both in the 1990s and since 2020. Today, with more concrete and institutional steps, relations have progressed to a true alliance, and interests such as regional security and connectivity have become united. Compared with the cautious steps and emotional framing of 25–30 years ago, today's approach advances operational, realist goals and activities, underpinned by an explicit security commitment, standardised coordination across all fields, and institutionalisation.

Within this framework, the significance of this thesis lies in its explanation of how the policies and discourses pursued by friendly states during the war influenced existing security perspectives and relations. Given that the existing post-war literature focuses primarily on military-political relations, this time, the focus is on the semantic characteristics of these relations. This thesis finds that security relations are given meaning, guided, and, in a sense, constructed not only through agreements, alliances, declarations, or military cooperation, but also through strategic narratives and official discourses. It aimed to explain what Türkiye and Azerbaijan mutually did during the war, as well as why and how these actions were taken.

This study explored how the close and unique bilateral relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, which have endured since 1992, have evolved following the Second Karabakh War. Security perspectives between 1990 and 2020 are analysed, and the rhetoric used during the war is studied. While the consolidation of relations catalysed by the war has created a new dimension of strategic and emotional rapprochement, the vitality and dynamism of the relations remain, and it appears they are open to further development and evolution. Hence, while the research has provided the reader with insights into the changing security perspectives in bilateral relations, this discussion is open to further exploration.

A limitation of this thesis is the lack of interviews with official decision-makers and field research. Therefore, for instance, the impact of the Shusha Declaration on military, political, and security perspectives can be examined more deeply through interviews with academics and decision-makers specialised in these fields. Indeed, while the Declaration is very comprehensive, it is still very new, and its impact on bilateral relations will continue to grow.

Furthermore, the potential post-war normalisation process between both Azerbaijan and Armenia and Türkiye and Armenia remains. This new phase, initiated without intermediaries by Türkiye and Armenia, and the peace agreement expected to be signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia, particularly since 2021, are facilitating the normalisation and development of regional relations in the South Caucasus. A new study covering future cooperation will be illuminating in this regard.

Another regional development, as mentioned, is the 3+3 platform. This platform, particularly valued by Türkiye and Azerbaijan, is a significant initiative for maintaining peace in the region and resolving disputes through diplomatic channels. With Georgia actively participating, it is possible to investigate positive changes in the region or the potential changes in the regional context between Türkiye and Azerbaijan.

Finally, proverbially, the fraternal relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan have a fundamentally social origin. The people of both countries are always eager to maintain and develop these close relations. In this respect, future research could examine how

official discourses articulated by Türkiye and Azerbaijan during the war contributed to the construction of a renewed sense of solidarity and shared identity, particularly through the lens of social and traditional media platforms.



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C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu tez, Birinci ve zellikle İkinci Dağlık Karabağ Savaşı'nın Trkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin gvenlik boyutu zerindeki etkisini sorunsallaştıran nitel bir vaka çalışması sunmaktadır. Resmî web siteleri ve medya kuruluşlarından elde edilen gemiş araştırma makaleleri, kolektif araştırma kitapları ve raporlar ile Trk ve Azerbaycanlı karar vericilerin sylemleri, rportajları, konuşmaları ve ortak basın bltenleri analiz edilmektedir. Bu analiz tarihsel bir bağlam içinde yorumlanmakta ve gemişle karşılaştırmalar yapılarak yrtlmektedir. Ayrıca, okuyucuya ilişkilerin genel seyri ve Karabağ sorununun tarihi hakkında genel bir bakış sunmak için bir literatr taraması yapılmaktadır.

Bu tezdeki bulgular tek ve belirli bir teorik çerveye dayanmamakla birlikte, analiz blgesel gvenlik temaları ve inşacılığın temel kavramlarıyla ilişkilendirilebilir. İnşacı bakış açısının, sylemin, sylemde tekrarların ve kimlik algılarının çıkarlar ve kurumsal çerveler yarattığı grş bu bağlamda kritik neme sahiptir. Başka bir deyişle, Karabağ Savaşı, sylem ve kimliğin kurumsallaşmasına yol aan sreteki nedensel bağlamın merkezinde yer almaktadır. Aynı zamanda, bu srete resmi karar vericiler tarafından sıklıkla tekrarlanan sylem hem devletlerarası hem de toplumsal çıkarlar, tehditler ve gvenlik algıları için bir çerve oluşturmaktadır. Dostluk-dşmanlık, tehdit algısı, birlikte çalışabilirlik, iş birliği, caydırıcılık, bağlantısallık vb. kavramlar ncelikle blgesel gvenlik temalarını temsil etmektedir. Bunlar, Karabağ Savaşı unsurunun ikili ilişkilerdeki roln vurgulamak için kullanılmaktadır.

Tez, ikili ilişkilerin tarihsel arka planını aıklamak için byk lde 1990-2020 zaman dilimini kullansa da 2020 sonrası dnem daha kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmektedir. Gncel literatr, Trkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki savaş sonrası ilişkilerin ncelikli olarak askeri ve enerji boyutlarına odaklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu tez, Karabağ Savaşı'nı bu ilişkilerde sorunsallaştırarak, 1991-2020 dnemi ve sonrası için benzer gstergelerle (tehdit algısı, iş birliği, kapasite ve gvenlik algısı) karşılaştırmayı ve İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'ndan sonra Trkiye-Azerbaycan ilişkilerinde

güvenlik boyutunun dönüşümünü ve bu alanda sağlanan entegrasyonu açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu tez, her iki devletin resmi söylemlerinde tekrarlanan ifadelerin savaş sonrası süreci etkilediğini, ilişkileri kurumsal olarak derinleştirdiğini ve güçlendirdiğini savunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, söylemin yapıcı doğasını, tarafların yakın ilişkiler geliştirme ve dış politikada birliğe doğru yaklaşma niyetleri ve dost-düşman algıları üzerinden yorumlamaktadır.

Azerbaycan'ın İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'ndaki zaferi, sahada sonuçlar doğurarak Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki dost-düşman algısını netleştirmiştir. Türkiye'nin siyasi ve diplomatik desteğinin ve iki devlet arasında savunma ve güvenlik araçlarının koordineli kullanımının etkisi de gözle görülür hale gelmiştir. Bu koordinasyon, bölgesel caydırıcılığın ve ortak eylemin kurumsallaşmasıyla sonuçlanan bir güvenlik ortaklığına dönüşmüştür. Bu bağlamda, bu tez, İkinci Karabağ Savaşı sırasında iki devlet arasındaki kesintisiz siyasi ve diplomatik diyalogun, uluslararası kuruluşlarda yapılan konuşmaların, medya kanallarına verilen röportajların ve devlet liderlerinin kamuoyuna yaptığı konuşmaların, ilişkileri stratejik ortaklıktan "eşit kardeşlik ve birliğe" nasıl dönüştürdüğünü açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, ortak güvenlik gündeminin, bölgesel temsilcilik iddialarının ve kurumsallaşmanın ilişkileri nasıl derinleştirdiğini, "tek millet, iki devlet" sloganının ortak bir savunma bilinci olarak nasıl ortaya çıktığını ve bu yakınlığın uluslararası alanda nasıl temsil edildiğini inceleyecektir.

Bölgesel bir savaş sırasında daha da artan iki dost devlet arasındaki sık diyalog, karşılıklı güvenin güçlendirilmesi ve ortak bir uluslararası duruş sergilenmesi, gelecekte bu ilişkileri güçlendirecek kurumsal adımların önünü açmak için hayati önem taşımaktadır. Bu nedenle, literatür zenginliğine rağmen, bu tez, 2020 ve sonrasında ilişkilerin resmi söylem temelli yorumlarının eksikliğini ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, esas olarak şu iki soruya cevap vermeyi amaçlamaktadır: i) Birinci ve İkinci Karabağ Savaşları'nın Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki yakın ilişkilerdeki yeri nedir ve savaş sonrası ilişkilerde bölgesel ve ortak güvenlik algılarında ne gibi değişiklikler meydana gelmiştir? ii) Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki karşılıklı resmi söylemlerin karşılıklı siyasi ve güvenlik ilişkileri üzerindeki etkileri nelerdir?

Tez, oldukça uzun bir zaman aralığını detaylıca konu edindiğinden Türkçe özet, konunun olabildiğince özünü anlatmayı hedeflemekte ve betimleyici birçok ögeyi içermemektedir.

Türkiye-Azerbaycan ilişkilerinde ekonomik ve enerji temelli, sosyo-kültürel, askeri ve savunma bazlı boyutlar 30 yılı aşkın bir süredir ön plana çıkmaktadır. Sosyal ve kültürel ilişkiler, özellikle “bir millet, iki devlet” söylemi üzerinden ortak tarih, dil ve kültürel geçmiş vurgusu yapılarak duygusal bir zemine oturtulmuştur. Bu, zamanla toplumsal temaslar ve kamu diplomasisi gibi yumuşak güç unsurlarının da aktif olarak kullanılmasıyla daha gerçekçi bir hal almıştır. TİKA, YTB, Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, TÜRKSOY gibi kurumlarla Türkiye, eğitimden sanata pek çok alanda her iki ülkenin halkları arasındaki yakın teması güçlendirmiş, bu durum Azerbaycan’da da benzer şekilde ilerlemiştir. Medya girişimleri ve iş birlikleri, öğrenci değişim ve burs programları, gençler arasında yürütülen projeler -ortak tarihi geçmiş ve kültürel bağların da etkisiyle- karşılıklı olumlu toplumsal algıların şekillenmesinde önemli bir araç olarak kullanılmıştır. Bunlar, yıllar içinde siyasi boyutta gelişen stratejik ilişkilerin yanı sıra, iki ülke toplumlarının da bütünleşme yolunda olduğunun göstergeleridir.

İkili ilişkilerin güçlü sütunlarından diğeri ekonomik, enerji-ulaştırma odaklıdır. Bağımsızlıktan bu yana gelişen bu ilişkilerin ana amacı, Azerbaycan’ın enerjisinin çeşitlendirilmiş hatlarla, güvenli bir şekilde dünya pazarına ulaştırılması ve Türkiye’nin de taşımacılık bağlamında bir enerji kavşağı haline gelmesi ve arz güvenliğinin sağlanmasıydı. Bu doğrultuda 1994 yılında taraflar arasında “Asrın Anlaşması” imzalanmış, gelecek 30 yılda BTC ham petrol boru hattı, BTE (Güney Kafkasya Boru Hattı), BTK demiryolu gibi faaliyetler hayata geçirilmiştir. Güney Gaz Koridoru, TANAP ve TAP ile oluşturulmuş, Azerbaycan’ın Şah Deniz 2 gazı Türkiye üzerinden Avrupa’ya akmaya başlamış, Azerbaycan Avrupa pazarına doğrudan erişim sağlamıştır. Bu süreçte Azerbaycan SOCAR ile Türkiye’deki petrokimya endüstrisine pek çok yatırımda bulunarak stratejik katkılarda bulunmuş, STAR Rafinerisi tam anlamıyla çalışır hale gelerek Türkiye’nin petrol ürünlerinin dörtte birini üretecek hale gelmiştir. Ayrıca 2022’de patlak veren Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı, Avrupa’da enerji arzı kaygıları yaratmış, bunun üzerine aynı yıl AB ve Azerbaycan arasında enerji alanında

stratejik mutabakat imzalanmış ve Güney Gaz Koridorunun değeri artmıştır. Azerbaycan güvenilir bir tedarikçiye, Türkiye ise bir enerji koridoruna dönüşmüş ve böylece Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki bağımlılık ilişkisi derinleşmiştir.

Bunun yanında Türkiye-Azerbaycan askeri ilişkileri, Azerbaycan'ın bağımsızlığını kazandığı yıldan beri gelişmektedir. Azerbaycan'ın öncelikli hedefi, düzenli ve Batı standartlarında bir ordu inşa etmek idi. Karabağ sorunu ve sınır güvenliği gereksinimleri Bakü'yü bu anlamda 90'lardan itibaren NATO tipi bir askeri yapıya itmiş, Türkiye ise NATO üyesi bir devlet olarak bu sürecin ana aktörü olmuştur. 1992'de başlayan askeri eğitim anlaşmaları, Azerbaycanlı askerlerin, subayların eğitimlerine ve buna ilişkin kurumların oluşturulmasının yolunu açmıştır. Türkiye, 2009 yılına kadar NATO ile Azerbaycan arasında temas ülkesi görevini üstlenmiş, Azerbaycan'ın askeri eğitim sisteminin kurulmasına katkı sağlamıştır. Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, Azerbaycan Silahlı Kuvvetleri ve NATO arasındaki iş birliğini artırmak için gerekli teçhizatın sağlanmasına da katkıda bulunmuştur. 2010 yılında Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasında Stratejik Ortaklık ve Karşılıklı Yardım Anlaşması imzalanmış, taraflardan herhangi birine yönelik bir saldırı durumunda, mümkün olan her yolla karşılıklı destek sağlanacağı konusunda mutabakata varılmıştır. Bu anlaşma, ikili ilişkilerin ittifak düzeyine ulaşmasının temellerini atmış ve askeri koordinasyonla ilgili maddeler, ortak stratejik hareketin yolunu açmıştır. Bu anlaşmayı takip eden dönemde, umulduğu gibi, askeri iş birliği, ortak tatbikatlar ve savunma sanayinin geliştirilmiş, Türkiye'nin uluslararası silah sanayisindeki yeri kuvvetlenmiştir. Böylece 2010-2020 yılları arasında ilişkiler, öncelikle bu bağlamda gelişmiştir.

Bu noktada ilişkilerin güvenlik boyutuna da ışık tutmak doğru olacaktır. 90'lar ve özellikle 2010'larda Türkiye-Azerbaycan güvenlik ilişkileri daha çok Türkiye'nin Kafkasya politikası ve bölgesel güvenlik dinamikleri, Karabağ meselesi ve Azerbaycan'ın güvenlik algısı ve ikili ilişkilerdeki kırılmalıklar ve dönemsel uyumsuzluklar temelli şekillenmekteydi. Bu süreçte, başlarda daha duygusal kalan “bir millet, iki devlet” söyleminin daha gerçekçi ve kurumsallaşmış bir zemine taşınmasının temelleri atılmıştır. Türkiye için bu zaman aralığı, Sovyetler'in dağılmasının ardından hem riskler hem de yeni fırsatlar taşımaktaydı. Ankara hem Rusya'yı kışkırtmayacak hem de Batı ittifakı yani NATO aidiyetini muhafaza ederek

bağımsızlığını yeni kazanmış Türk devletleri ile ilişkilerini iyi bir zeminde geliştirmeyi hedeflemekteydi. Başlarda Türkiye tarafından edinilen “ağabey” ve “model ülke” rolleri, zamanla daha ihtiyatlı ve eşitlikçi bir zemin bulmuştur. 2000’lerde Türk Dış Politikasında çok boyutlu ve aktif dış politika gündemdeydi ve bu amaçla daha çok Orta Asya ülkeleriyle ilişkilere öncelik verilmekteydi. 2008 yılında yaşanan Gürcistan-Rusya savaşı ise Kafkasya’da çözülmemiş sorunların ‘donmuş’ olmaktan ziyade oldukça dinamik olduğunu tüm bölgesel ve küresel aktörlere göstermiş oldu. Nitekim Türkiye de bu doğrultuda, Kafkasya İstikrar ve İşbirliği Platformu gibi bölgesel çözüm arayışlarına yönelmiştir.

Aynı dönemlerde, Türkiye Dışişleri Bakanı Ahmet Davutoğlu tarafından ortaya atılan ve gelecek yıllarda da etkisini hissettirecek “komşularla sıfır sorun” politikası Türkiye’nin başlıca dış politika yaklaşımını temsil etmekteydi. Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki güvenlik ilişkilerinde o dönem en büyük kırılma ve dargınlık, bu dış politika anlayışıyla 2008 yılında başlatılan Ermenistan-Türkiye normalleşmesi idi. 2010 yılına kadar süren bu normalleşme süreci, Karabağ’ın hala Ermenistan tarafından işgal altında olması, Türkiye ve Azerbaycan kamuoyundan ve siyasilerinden gelen büyük tepkiler sebebiyle başarısız olmuştur. Özellikle Azerbaycan’ın birincil ulusal güvenlik endişesi olan Karabağ meselesinin bu süreç boyunca Türkiye tarafından pek de göz önünde bulundurulmamış olması Bakü’de büyük bir tepkiyle karşılanmıştı. Ayrıca 1915 Olaylarının Ermenistan tarafından hala “soykırım” olarak anılması ve Ermenistan’ın anayasasında Türkiye’nin doğusunda toprak iddialarında bulunması da normalleşmeye ilişkin protokollerin onaylanmamasına neden olmuştur. Türkiye-Azerbaycan ilişkilerindeki bu soğukluk ancak 2010 yılında imzalanan Stratejik Ortaklık ve Karşılıklı Yardım Anlaşması ile tekrardan ısınmıştır.

Anlaşılabileceği üzere, iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin dostluk ve kardeşlik temaları üzerinden mitleştirilmesi ve duygusallaştırılması, ilişkileri bir süre hassas hale getirmiştir. Yine de Azerbaycan ve Türkiye arasındaki güvenlik ilişkileri, köklü bir geçmişe, stratejik bir ittifaka ve güçlü bir karşılıklı çıkar temeline dayanmaktaydı. Bu ilişkiler, askeri alanlardan terörle mücadeleyle, enerji güvenliğinden bölgesel istikrara kadar geniş bir alanda iş birliği ve dayanışma örnekleri sunmaktadır. Ancak, her iki ülkenin de karşılaşılabileceği zorluklar ve değişen güvenlik dinamikleri göz önüne

alındığında, bu dönemde bu ortaklığın sürdürülebilirliği için sürekli çaba ve uyum gerektiği görülmektedir.

Bu noktada, Karabağ sorununun tarihsel arka planını ele alarak bölgedeki daha güncel gelişmelere odaklanmak önemlidir. Birinci Karabağ Savaşı, Karabağ'daki Ermeni millî konseyinin 1988 yılında bölgenin statüsünü Azerbaycan'dan Ermenistan'a bağlama yönündeki talepleri ve bunu takip eden düşmanca bir ortamın gelişmesiyle başlamış; Sovyetler Birliği'nin çözülüşü, zayıflayan merkezî otorite ve yerel güvenlik boşlukları şiddeti hızla tırmandırmıştır. Çatışmanın kökeni Ermenilerin "birleşme" (*miatsum*) isteğiydi. Azerbaycan 30 Ağustos 1991'de, Ermenistan ise 21 Eylül'de bağımsızlığını ilan etmiş ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin Aralık 1991'de dağılmasıyla savaş iki bağımsız devlet arasında bir anlaşmazlık olarak görünüş değiştirmiştir. Bu süreçte Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması, geride büyük miktarda askeri mühimmat bırakarak çatışmanın ölümcül bir boyuta ulaşmasına yol açmıştır. Nitekim Hocalı Katliamı (Kara Ocak), 25-26 Şubat 1992'de Azerbaycan'ın Hocalı kasabasında gerçekleşmiş ve tarihe çatışmanın son katalizörü olarak geçmiştir. Doksanların başları, kargaşanın devam ettiği bir dönemdi. Ermeni tarafı hızla silahlanırken, iki bağımsız devlet meselesi haline gelen çatışma, 1991'de Gorbaçov'a karşı yapılan darbe ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla uluslararası bir nitelik de kazanmıştır. Üçüncü taraflar bölgedeki bu dengesizliği çözmeye çalıştıklarında, çatışmalar bu çabaları etkisiz bırakmıştır. Haziran 1991'de Rusya Federasyonu Devlet Başkanı seçilen Boris Yeltsin ve Kazakistan Devlet Başkanı Nursultan Nazarbayev, aynı yılın Eylül ayında arabuluculuk girişimlerinde bulunmuşlar, ancak karşılıklı çatışmalar bu çabaları başarısız kılmıştır. 1992 ortalarında, Ermenilerin Nahçıvan'a saldırılarının ardından Türkiye de arabuluculuk girişiminde bulunmuş, ancak Rusya'nın kayıtsızlığı nedeniyle bu girişim sonuçsuz kalmıştır. Karabağ sorunu AGİT toplantılarına taşındığında, konu tamamen uluslararası bir boyut kazanmıştır. Rusya, Kazakistan, İran, ABD ve Fransa'nın arabuluculuğu sonucunda Nisan 1994'te ateşkes anlaşması imzalanmıştır. Birçok ihlale rağmen yürürlükte kalan ateşkes anlaşmasının ardından BDT ve AGİT zirve toplantılarında çözüm çabaları dile getirilmiştir. Bu süreçte Türkiye'de kamuoyunun desteği hatırı sayılabilecek ölçüde büyüktü. Türkiye bölgesel engeller ve kendi iç meseleleriyle mücadele ederken manevi desteğini Azerbaycan'a her zaman

hissettirmiş, sürece ilişkin diplomatik yollar tercih etmiş, bu süreçte uluslararası hukuk kurallarına ve uluslararası mekanizmaların önemine dikkat çekmiştir.

2020'deki 44 Günlük Savaş'a giden süreçte Azerbaycan ve Türkiye, 2010'da imzaladıkları Stratejik İşbirliği Anlaşması çerçevesinde onlarca ortak askeri tatbikatlar gerçekleştirmişlerdi. Yani Türkiye'nin desteği 1991'den 2010'a kadar her zaman mevcut olsa da karşılıklı askeri destek ilişkilerinin temel çerçevesi ancak 2010 yılında çizilmişti. Azerbaycan Türk savunma sanayisine oldukça büyük ilgi göstermiş, çok fazla Türk malı İHA ve SİHA'lar edinmişti. 2016 yılında Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan arasında dört günlük çatışma yaşanmış, bu, Karabağ sorununun donmuş bir ihtilaftan ziyade dinamik bir nitelik taşıdığını göstermişti. Türkiye'nin tam destek verdiği bu çatışmalar, bağımsızlığın ardından çıkan Birinci Karabağ Savaşı'nı hatırlatarak yeniden gündeme gelmiş ve Azerbaycan yaklaşık 5 bin dönüm araziyi özgürleştirmişti.

Karabağ'daki savaş, Temmuz 2016 ve 2020'de patlak veren çatışma ve gerginliklerin ardından 27 Eylül 2020'de resmen başlamıştır. Savaş, 27 Eylül sabahı Dağlık Karabağ sınır kapısı boyunca şiddetli çatışmalarla başlamış. Azerbaycan Savunma Bakanlığı, Ermeni silahlı kuvvetlerinin sivil yerleşim yerlerini hedef alarak çatışmalara başladığını ve karşı saldırıyla kendilerini savunduklarını belirtmiştir. Çatışmaların ikinci gününde her iki taraf da onlarca kayıp vermiştir. Bu, yüzlerce can kaybının yaşandığı ve sivil ölümlerin bildirildiği 2016 çatışmasından bu yana en yüksek kayıptı. Bölgesel devletler ve küresel güçler, savaşın daha da tırmanacağından korkmaya başlamış ve ABD, AB ve Rusya çatışmaların derhal sona erdirilmesi çağrısında bulunmuştur. Çatışmalar sırasında Ermeni tarafı, bölgede Türk askerlerinin bulunduğunu, Azerbaycan İHA'larını yönlendirdiklerini ve çatışmalarda Türk silahlarının kullanıldığını iddia etmiştir. Ayrıca, Türkiye'nin bölgeye yaklaşık 4.000 Suriye askeri gönderdiğini ve Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan'a istihbarat desteği sağladığını iddia etmişlerdi. Bu iddialar hem Türkiye hem de Azerbaycan tarafından derhal ve sert bir dille yalanlanmış ve Ermenistan'ın Türkiye-Azerbaycan dayanışmasından rahatsızlık duyduğu belirtilmiştir.

Savaşın üstünden bir aydan fazla süre geçmiş, Azerbaycan ordusu, 8 Kasım'da Karabağ'ın sembol şehri Şuşa'nın işgalden kurtarıldığını ve 28 yıl sonra Azerbaycan

topraklarına geri döndüğünü duyurmuştu. Bu, savaşın gidişatında tarihi bir dönüm noktası olarak görülmüştür. Aliyev, Hocalı Katliamı şehitlerinin kanının yerde kalmadığını ve Şuşa'nın kurtuluşunun "hayatının en mutlu günlerinden biri" olduğunu belirtmiştir. Zaferi kutlamak için sokaklara dökülen halk, Türk ve Azerbaycan bayraklarını yan yana dalgalandırmış, yurt dışında yaşayan Azerbaycanlılar ve Türkler, bu zaferi bulundukları ülkelerde birlikte kutlamışlardır.

Şuşa'nın ele geçirilmesinden iki gün sonra, savaş 10 Kasım 2020'de resmen sona ermiştir. Bu, Rusya'nın arabuluculuğunda sağlanan ateşkesle sağlanmış, imzalanan belge, tarafların tüm düşmanlıklara son vereceğini beyan etmiştir. Anlaşmaya göre Ermeni güçleri geri çekilecek ve yaklaşık 2.000 Rus barış gücü askeri Laçın Koridorunda beş yıl süreyle konuşlandırılacaktı. Ayrıca, Ağdam Bölgesi Azerbaycan'a devredilmişti ve Ermenistan, Kelbecer'i 15 Kasım'da, Laçın'i ise 1 Aralık'ta Azerbaycan'a devredecekti. Şartları ve tarihi belirtilmeyen bir Nahçıvan-Azerbaycan koridoru inşa etme kararı da alınmıştır.

Savaşın ardından Azerbaycan, yaklaşık 30 yıl önce kaybettiği toprakların büyük çoğunluğunu geri almış ve işgal altındaki yedi bölgenin çoğunun kontrolünü yeniden ele geçirmiştir. Ağır bir yenilgi alan Ermenistan kamuyou, Başbakan Paşinyan'a karşı yoğun bir muhalefet beslemeye başlamıştır.

19 Eylül 2023'te bölgede bir başka önemli olay daha yaşanmıştır. Azerbaycan Savunma Bakanlığı, Karabağ'da anayasal düzeni yeniden sağlamak, meşru askeri hedefler gerçekleştirmek ve bölgedeki Ermenileri yasadışı rejime son vermeye ve teslim olmaya çağırarak amacıyla bir terörle mücadele operasyonu başlatıldığını duyurdu. Operasyonun başlamasından bir gün sonra Ermeni güçleri ateşkesi kabul etmiş ve bölgedeki Ermeni nüfusunun büyük bir kısmı Ermenistan'a kaçarken, Ermeniler bağımsızlık mücadelelerini resmen sonlandırmışlardır. Böylece, iki gün süren çatışmaların ardından Azerbaycan hem askeri müdahale hem de ateşkesin ardından bölgedeki Ermeni nüfusuyla varılan bir mutabakatla Karabağ bölgesinin tam kontrolünü ele geçirmiştir.

Savaş sırasında resmi Türk söylemleri dayanışmayı her zaman vurgulanmış ve söylemlerde sahada ve masada kararlı olunacağı, özellikle Azerbaycan'ın haklı

mücadelesi söz konusu olduğunda gerektiğinde askeri müdahaleden kaçınılmayacağı açıkça vurgulanırken, ilişkilerin 30 yıl sonra bile hâlâ "tek millet, iki devlet" olarak tanımlandığı görülmüştür. Türkiye'nin bir diğer amacı da uluslararası alanda Karabağ meselesine dikkat çekmektir. Azerbaycan tarafı da Türkiye ve Azerbaycan'ın her şeyden önce "tek millet, iki devlet" olduğunu ve bunun sadece sözde değil, gerçekte de böyle olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Aliyev, eşitlik temelinde kurulan bu kardeşlik ilişkisinin dünyaya örnek teşkil ettiğini ve ikili ilişkilerde sürekli bir dayanışma olduğunu sık sık dile getirmiştir.

Tüm bunlar, Azerbaycan'ın savaştaki argümanlarını destekleyecek ortak bir uluslararası meşruiyet arayışıyla birlikte, ikili ilişkilerin derinleşmesi, ilişkilerin duygusal boyuttan stratejik boyuta evrilmesi ve "tek millet, iki devlet" söyleminin gerçekliğe dönüşmesi için gerçek bir fırsat sunmuştur. Türkiye, uluslararası kurallar temelinde Azerbaycan'ı her yerde ve her anlamda savunurken, Azerbaycan da Türkiye'nin bölgede gelişen ve gelişebilecek her türlü mekanizmada yer alması gerektiğini, Türkiye'nin bölgede dönüştürücü bir güç olduğunu sık sık dile getirmiştir.

Savaş sonrası ikili ilişkilerde iki önemli gelişme dikkat çekmektedir. Birincisi, Türkiye ile Ermenistan arasında başlayan yeni normalleşme sürecidir. Bu süreci öncekinden ayıran özellik, Ermenistan'ın ön koşulsuz olarak süreci başlatması, Türkiye'nin ise Azerbaycan'ın hassasiyetlerini tam olarak dikkate alarak sürece katılmasıdır. Bir diğer ayırt edici husus ise, 2008 yılına kıyasla bu sürecin devletler arasında herhangi bir aracı olmadan, doğrudan karşılıklı özel temsilciler atanmasıyla, yani aracısız yeni bir dönem adı altında başlamış olmasıdır. Zürih Protokolleri 2009 yılında imzalandığında, Ermenistan'ın Karabağ işgali devam etmekteydi ve Azerbaycan sürece dahil edilmemişti. İsviçre, ABD ve AB, sürece her şekilde destek vererek aracı olarak önemli bir rol oynamışlardı. 2021'de temsilcilerin atanmasıyla resmileşen normalleşme süreci, Azerbaycan'ın zaferini takip etmiştir. Türkiye-Azerbaycan arasındaki bu yeni, güvenlik temelli yakınlaşmanın ve stratejik genişlemenin kanıtı olarak, Türkiye ile Ermenistan arasındaki savaş sonrası normalleşme adımları, her adımda Azerbaycan ile koordinasyon içinde, Azerbaycan'ın çıkarları ve onayı gözetilerek yürütülmektedir. Türkiye, bu diplomatik adımları Azerbaycan'ın güvenlik endişeleri doğrultusunda ve bölgesel barışa hizmet etmek amacıyla atmakta,

Ermenistan ile sınırlarının açılmasını Karabağ barış sürecine doğrudan bağlamaktadır. Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan'ın bir barış anlaşması üzerinde anlaşması halinde, bu normalleşme şüphesiz ki hız kazanacaktır.

İkinci ve belki de en önemli gelişme, Haziran 2021'de imzalanan Şuşa Beyannamesi'dir. Bu belge, Türkiye ile Azerbaycan arasındaki ilişkiyi "müttefiklik" olarak tanımlayan ilk belge olması nedeniyle kritik öneme sahiptir. Beyanname'de, üçüncü bir devlet veya devletler grubunun herhangi bir tarafı tehdit etmesi veya saldırması halinde, tarafların uluslararası alanda tanınan meşru müdafaa haklarını kullanacakları belirtilmiştir. Ayrıca taraflar, kendi ulusal güvenlik konseylerinin, tarafları etkileyebilecek bölgesel ve uluslararası güvenlik konularını görüşmek üzere düzenli toplantılar düzenleyeceğini duyurmuştur. Anlaşma, NATO tarzı otomatik bir kolektif savunma sorumluluğu oluşturmaya da tek bir tarafın kanaatinin bir tehdidin varlığını tespit etmek için yeterli olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, bir taraf tehdit altında hissediyorsa, diğer taraf tehdidi ciddiye almakla yükümlüdür. Bu, Silahlı Kuvvetler tarafından koordineli faaliyetler ve ortak tedbirler, tatbikatların ve askeri iş birliğinin devamı ve operasyonel düzeyde entegrasyon anlamına gelmektedir. Güvenlik Konseyleri tarafından düzenlenecek ortak toplantılar, yalnızca savaş zamanlarında değil, her zaman güvenlik gündemlerinde stratejik planlama, ortaklık ve entegrasyonu göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nı izleyen ilişkilerde, Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan'ı destekleyen yabancı bir devlet rolü gibi oldukça asimetrik bir güvenlik algısı, yerini daha aktif ve görünür bir güvenlik ortaklığına bırakarak ilişkileri derinleştirmiştir. Şuşa Beyannamesi, ilişkileri her zamankinden daha yakın ve kurumsal hale getirmiştir. Bu dönemde, 3+3 gibi bölgesel iş birliği platformları ve enerji hatlarının güvenliği gibi konular önem kazanmış ve Türkiye ve Azerbaycan bu alanlardaki nüfuzlarını korumuştur. Savaş sonrası dönemde bölgedeki Rus nüfuzu hissedilse de geçmişe kıyasla önemli ölçüde azalmış ve yerini Türkiye-Azerbaycan dayanışmasına bırakmıştır. Türkiye-Azerbaycan kardeşliği gerçek bir ittifak modeline dönüşmüştür. Ayrıca hem Türkiye hem de Azerbaycan açısından Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı'nın bölgesel işbirliği mekanizması olarak önemi daha da artmış, iki devletin TDT içindeki yakınlığı örgüt içindeki entegrasyonu daha da ileri götürmüştür.

Bu tez, 30 yılı aşkındır süren Türkiye ve Azerbaycan ilişkilerinin, İkinci Karabağ Savaşı ve sonrasında daha da derinleştiğini ve böylece devletlerin ortak güvenlik perspektiflerinin pekiştiğini savunmuştur. 1992'den bu yana ikili ilişkilerin evrimi incelenmiş ve bu ilişkilerin sosyal-kültürel, ekonomik, askeri ve daha da önemlisi güvenlik boyutları araştırılmıştır. Türkiye'nin savaş boyunca Azerbaycan'a verdiği siyasi ve duygusal destek ile Azerbaycan'ın Türkiye'ye yaklaşımı, her iki devletin karar vericilerinin resmi söylemleri bağlamında analiz edilmiştir. Şuşa Beyannamesi ve Türkiye-Ermenistan normalleşmesi gibi savaş sonrası gelişmeler de ikili ilişkilerin güvenlik boyutu bağlamında ele alınmıştır.

Araştırma, Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki ilişkilerin stratejik ortaklık ve duygusal temelden operasyonel, tam teşekküllü bir ittifaka dönüşümünü kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemiştir. Özellikle İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nın, iki devlet arasındaki ortak güvenlik algılarının bütünleşmesinde ve ortak hareket etme kapasitelerinin geliştirilmesindeki rolü sorunsallaştırılmıştır. "Tek millet, iki devlet" sloganı, hem 1990'larda hem de 2020'den bu yana meşruiyet zeminini oluşturmuştur. Bugün, daha somut ve kurumsal adımlarla ilişkiler gerçek bir ittifaka doğru ilerlemiş ve bölgesel güvenlik ve bağlantısallık gibi çıkarlar bütünleşmiştir. 25-30 yıl önceki temkinli adımlar ve duygusal çerçeveye karşılaştırıldığında, günümüz yaklaşımı, açık bir güvenlik taahhüdü, tüm alanlarda standartlaştırılmış koordinasyon ve kurumsallaşma ile desteklenen operasyonel ve gerçekçi hedefleri göstermektedir.

Bu çerçevede, bu tezin önemi, iki dost devletin savaş sırasında izledikleri politika ve söylemlerin mevcut güvenlik perspektiflerini ve ilişkilerini nasıl etkilediğini açıklamasında yatmaktadır. Mevcut savaş sonrası literatürün öncelikli olarak askeri-enerji ilişkilerine odaklandığı göz önüne alındığında, bu kez odak noktası bu ilişkilerin anlamsal boyutu ve güvenlik eksenidir. Bu tez, güvenlik ilişkilerinin yalnızca anlaşmalar, ittifaklar, bildiriler veya askeri iş birlikleri aracılığıyla değil, aynı zamanda stratejik anlatılar ve resmi söylemler aracılığıyla da anlamlandırıldığını, yönlendirildiğini ve bir anlamda inşa edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Türkiye ve Azerbaycan'ın savaş sırasında karşılıklı olarak neler yaptıklarını ve bu eylemlerin neden ve nasıl gerçekleştirildiğini açıklamaktadır.

Bu tez, yazarın birebir görüşmeler ve saha araştırması gibi temel yöntemleri kullanamaması ve bunun yerine büyük ölçüde araştırma kitaplarına, akademik yazılara, yorumlara ve resmi söylemlere dayanması gibi sınırlılıklara sahiptir. Bu nedenle, örneğin Şuşa Beyannamesi'nin askeri, siyasi ve güvenlik perspektifleri üzerindeki etkisi, bu alanlarda uzmanlaşmış akademisyenler ve karar alıcılarla yapılacak görüşmeler yoluyla daha derinlemesine incelenebilir. Nitekim, Beyanname oldukça kapsamlı olmasına rağmen, henüz çok yenidir ve ikili ilişkiler üzerindeki etkisi artmaya devam edecektir. Dolayısıyla, savaşın hızlandığı ilişkilerin pekişmesi stratejik ve duygusal yakınlaşmada yeni bir boyut yaratmış olsa da ilişkilerin canlılığı ve dinamizmi devam etmekte ve daha fazla gelişmeye ve evrime açık görünmektedir. Dolayısıyla, bu tez okuyucuya ikili ilişkilerdeki değişen güvenlik perspektifleri hakkında fikir verirken, bu tartışma daha fazla araştırmaya açıktır.

Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki kardeşlik ilişkileri temelde toplumsal bir kökene sahiptir. Her iki ülkenin halkları da bu yakın ilişkileri sürdürme ve geliştirme konusunda her zaman isteklidir. Bu bağlamda, gelecekteki araştırmalar, Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasında savaş sırasında dile getirilen resmi söylemlerin, özellikle sosyal ve geleneksel medya platformları aracılığıyla, yenilenen bir dayanışma ve ortak kimlik duygusunun inşasına nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu inceleyebilir.

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