

Azerbaijan's foreign policy since independence

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Abstract

Two decades have passed since the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent restoration of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This article examines the major trends in the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan during 1991-2011. It discusses the key constraints and opportunities that have influenced Azerbaijan's foreign policy options and the chief goals of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in this period. The author argues that the existence of the conflict and the unresolved issues surrounding the status of Azerbaijan's occupied territories and refugee population have served as critical constraints on Baku's policy options as well as a useful lever for neighboring powers. The article will also look at the major milestones of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in the post-independence period.

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Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan's¹ foreign policy can be divided into two distinct periods: the first under President Abulfaz Elchibey (1992-1993); and the second under President Heydar Aliyev (1993-2003) and President Ilham Aliyev (2003-). Under Elchibey, Azerbaijan's foreign policy was guided by ideological considerations. In contrast, under the Aliyev presidencies, Azerbaijan conducted a very pragmatic foreign policy based on material and non-ideological factors.

On gaining independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan inherited a perilous foreign policy environment. Azerbaijan is a small state located between three major powers: Russia, Iran and Turkey. The South Caucasus serves as a focal point of Russia-US competition, due to its strategic location and Azerbaijan's significant energy resources. This adds both security challenges and opportunities to Azerbaijan's strategic environment. On the eve of independence, Azerbaijan's neighbor Armenia challenged the internationally recognized borders of the new republic, and the new states were at war from early independence.

Since 1994, a very tenuous ceasefire has reigned between Azerbaijan and Armenia. As a consequence of the war, close to twenty percent of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory remains under Armenian occupation and close to a million Azerbaijani citizens are refugees and internally displaced people. Azerbaijan is also a landlocked state, and thus is dependent on its neighbors to allow it to transit goods through their territories. This gives neighboring countries potential leverage over Baku, and creates a need for Azerbaijan to craft special foreign policies towards them. As an energy exporter, a landlocked state is particularly dependent on its transit states and vulnerable to their maneuvers, and often must give major concessions in order to keep its trade arteries open.² Azerbaijan also possesses a large ethnic Azerbaijani diaspora, estimated at over 30 million; approximately 25 million ethnic Azerbaijanis reside in neighboring Iran.³ This diaspora can serve as a modest foreign policy asset in the United States and Europe, but it is a liability in Azerbaijan's relations with Iran.

Azerbaijan's geographic location has significant influence on its foreign policy options and outcomes. Azer-

1 The modern Republic of Azerbaijan considers itself the successor of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920). This short-lived Azerbaijani state lost its independence following the Soviet takeover in 1920. Azerbaijan was subsequently incorporated into the Soviet Union, until it regained its independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The Republic of Azerbaijan formally celebrates its independence on May 28, the day the first republic declared independence, and considers itself a republic since 1918.

2 For more on the landlocked factor in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, see Avinoam Idan and Brenda Shaffer, "The Foreign Policies of Landlocked States," *Post-Soviet Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 3 (July 2011), pp. 1-37.

3 For more on the ethnic Azerbaijani minority in Iran, see Brenda Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren: Iran and the challenge of Azerbaijani Identity* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2002).

baijan's location on a strategic land bridge between Europe and Asia has

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endowed it with both opportunities and challenges in terms of foreign policy. Today, Azerbaijan's airspace is part of one of the globe's major air highways linking Europe, Asia, and the greater Middle East. Baku has positioned itself as a major air hub and location for refueling of inter-continental flights, including flights to Afghanistan. In addition, Azerbaijan is a major oil and natural gas producer and exporter. In 2011, Azerbaijan exported over a million barrels a day of oil and supplied natural gas to in Georgia, Turkey, Greece, Iran and Russia. The quantity of natural gas exports is also expected to grow significant in the coming decade. In addition, Azerbaijan serves as a potential transit route for Central Asian oil and gas exports.

Under Presidents Heydar Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev, the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan encompassed six major features: 1) balancing of relations with major global and regional powers, instead of being

a member of any exclusive alliance; 2) the absence of religious and other identity factors in determining the state's alliance and main vectors of cooperation; 3) maintenance of full independence and not serving as a de facto vassal state of any regional power; 4) policies that serve the state of Azerbaijan and not the greater Azerbaijani ethnic group 5) transportation policies and energy export as an integral element of foreign policy; 6) active attempts to ensure the state achieves safe and recognized permanent borders through the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia.

Azerbaijan's early foreign policy: the Elchibey period

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Abulfaz Elchibey was the first democratically elected president of Azerbaijan in the post-independence period (1992-1993). Under Elchibey, a professor of Middle East studies, ideological considerations superseded considerations of material factors in foreign policy and alliance selection. Thus, under Elchibey, Baku rejected institutionalized and especially security cooperation with Russia. It did not join the Moscow-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) at its inception and called for the removal of troops under Russia's command from the territory of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, under Elchibey Baku sought alliances with states

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- Turkey and the U.S. - that did not want to perform the role of Azerbaijan's strategic backer. Elchibey had assumed that a shared Turkic identity would serve as a basis for an alliance with Ankara, despite the fact that Turkey showed no desire in this early period to enter into a military alliance with Azerbaijan. Particularly in the early 1990s, Ankara was guided by pragmatic interests, choosing not to get entangled in the conflicts in the region but to focus on promoting its economic interests among the new states of the former Soviet Union. Throughout most of the post-Soviet period, Ankara has also given precedence to its relations with Moscow, even at times when these policies have impinged on other partners in the post-Soviet space. In addition, Elchibey assumed that the pro-Western orientation of the early state at independence and its establishment of democracy would lead Washington to support Azerbaijan's security and prosperity. In reality, Washington's policies toward the South Caucasus in the early 1990s were highly constrained by the activities of the American-Armenian lobby in Congress and thus Washington did not extend support to Azerbaijan in this

period. In fact, under the pressure of the American-Armenian lobby, the U.S. Congress enacted Section 907 to the Freedom Support Act, which barred direct U.S. government aid to Azerbaijan and government-to-government cooperation, including in the military sphere.⁴ Further to miscalculation of anticipated alliances, Elchibey's policies toward Iran provided an additional impetus to Tehran to support Armenia in its war with Azerbaijan. Based on his ideological beliefs, Elchibey championed the language and cultural rights of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran (which comprise a third of the population of Iran, and the majority of the population of the north-west provinces of Iran that border the Republic of Azerbaijan). Due to Baku's promotion of liberation of the "South Azerbaijan"⁵ issue and Baku's strong pro-US orientation during the early period of independence, Tehran supported Armenia in its war with Azerbaijan.⁶

4 Section 907 has subsequently been waived by US Presidents since 2002, in recognition of Azerbaijan's important role in facilitating US led anti-terrorism policies and as a major transit state of US supplies to Afghanistan.

5 This is the term used by President Elchibey to refer to the ethnic Azerbaijani populated provinces in northwest Iran.

6 Iran's assistance to Armenia during the 1992-1994 Nagorno-Karabagh War included supplying food and fuel, and providing a conduit through its territory for other states' supplies to Armenia. For more on Iran's support of Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabagh War, see Brenda Shaffer "Iran's Internal Azerbaijani Challenge: Implications for Policy in the Caucasus," in Moshe Gammer (ed.), *The Caspian Region Volume I: A Re-emerging Region* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 119-142. Iran continues to conduct extensive economic, political, security and infrastructure cooperation with Armenia, despite its occupation of lands of Muslim-majority Azerbaijan. For more on Iran's policies toward the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, see Brenda Shaffer, "The Islamic Republic of Iran: Is It Really?" in Brenda

President Elchibey took a very idealistic view of alliances choices, and ignored many of the realities of the regional power dynamic. Consequently, during his presidency, Baku engaged in the conflict with Armenia with no allies, while Armenia enjoyed support from Iran and Russia. Accordingly, Azerbaijan incurred significant losses in the war, leading to loss of close to twenty percent its of territory and the creation of over 800,000 refugees. In light of these strategic losses, a popular uprising emerged against the Elchibey government, with wide public support for the return of Heydar Aliyev and a more pragmatic strategic and foreign policy.

Foreign policy under Heydar Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev

President Heydar Aliyev served as president of Azerbaijan from 1993 to 2003. He was succeeded by his son President Ilham Aliyev in 2003. Ilham Aliyev was elected to a second term as president in 2008. During the tenure of Presidents Heydar Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's foreign policy features six major trends: 1) balancing of relations with major global and regional powers, instead of being a member of any exclusive alliance; 2) the absence of religious and other identity factors in determining the state's alliance and main

vectors of cooperation; 3) maintenance of full independence and not serving as a de facto vassal state of any regional power; 4) policies that serve the state of Azerbaijan and not the greater Azerbaijani ethnic group 5) transportation policies and energy export as an integral element of foreign policy; 6) active attempts to ensure the state achieves safe and recognized permanent borders through resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict with Armenia. The major document enshrining the foreign policy approach during the tenure of Presidents Heydar and Ilham Aliyev is the *National Security Concept of Azerbaijan*, which was adopted on 23 May 2007.⁷

In contrast to the Elchibey period, under the Aliyev presidencies, ideological and identity considerations were removed from alliance formation, and the state adopted a policy of balancing its relations toward various powers, especially Russia the United States, Turkey and Iran. In its *National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, it declares that "The Republic of Azerbaijan pursues a multidimensional, balanced foreign policy and seeks to establish it with all countries."⁸ Azerbaijan has pursued multiple alliances and cooperation with states that often possess

Shaffer (ed.), *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 219-239.

7 Ministry of National Security of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan," Baku, May 23, 2007.

8 Ibid.

opposing strategic orientations. Baku maintains multidirectional security cooperation with a number of alliances, including opposing alliances such

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as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In September 2011, Azerbaijan officially joined the non-aligned movement. In addition to ties with multiple states that belong to varying alliances systems, Azerbaijan has joined a large number of regional and international political groupings and has been very active in these organizations. In the Aliyev period, Azerbaijan's religious or ethnic ties have not affected Baku's choice of alliances and partners. While maintaining excellent ties with many Muslim-populated states and Muslim international organizations, neither Aliyev regime has developed special alliances with states on the basis of shared religious identity.

With Georgia serving as its main transit state, Azerbaijan has viewed Georgia's stability as part of its own national security interests. Accordingly, Azerbaijan conducts a special foreign policy toward Georgia. On

multiple occasions, Azerbaijan has attempted to strengthen Georgia's stability, at times through voluntary concessions on issues of major interest to Baku. For instance, Baku chose, contrary to the advice of and despite pressure from the World Bank and other international institutions, to sell natural gas to Georgia at a relatively low price in order to strengthen Tbilisi's economic stability. Next, Baku strongly encouraged the ethnic Azerbaijani minority in Georgia to support the ruling governments in Tbilisi and to integrate into Georgian state institutions, often to the chagrin of the local Azerbaijani minority. This minority constitutes close to 7 percent of the population of Georgia and 10 percent of the population of the capital.⁹ Third, Azerbaijan has offered conciliatory positions on border delimitation with Georgia in order to smooth the process. In addition, Azerbaijan invests funds in infrastructure in Georgia, especially in the transport sector. Azerbaijan has taken it upon itself to fund the Georgian section of a major railway project—the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway—that is being established to link Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.

As a small state located adjacent to three powers—Russia, Turkey and Iran, and involved in a territorial conflict with neighboring Armenia, Azerbaijan's foreign policy neverthe-

9 Major Findings of First General National Population Census of Georgia, 2004.

less serves the goal of retaining its independence and refusing to serve as a vessel state of any power. As part of this policy and in contrast to neighboring Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan has not agreed to the deployment of foreign forces in its territories.¹⁰ In addition, Baku purchases arms to build its military capability from a variety of states, not one dominant supplier.

In the Aliyev period, Baku has conducted a very calculated policy toward the ethnic Azerbaijani diaspora, guided by foreign policy considerations. Over 8 million citizens re-

Thus, in the Aliyev period the government's policies toward the Iranian Azerbaijanis were shaped by the state of relations with Iran

side in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the vast majority of whom are ethnic Azerbaijanis. Outside the borders there are approximately 30 million more ethnic Azerbaijani diaspora members. The largest diaspora community is in neighboring Iran (numbering approximately 25 million); ethnic Azerbaijanis comprise the majority of the population in the provinces of northwest Iran that border the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the Aliyev

¹⁰ The only exception to this policy is the lease to Russia of the Qabala radar station, which houses a small contingent of Russian forces.

period, Azerbaijan has established a state agency, the State Committee for the Diaspora, which maintains regular ties with the diaspora. In addition, since 2001, the Government of Azerbaijan sponsors a World Azerbaijani Congress meeting in Baku every five years. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs views many of the diaspora communities as useful contributors to Azerbaijan's foreign policy efforts, and its embassies maintain ties with Azerbaijani diaspora communities in a variety of locations, especially in the United States and Europe. However, in contrast to the approach many states take toward diaspora communities, the Republic of Azerbaijan has not granted special citizenship rights to ethnic Azerbaijanis from abroad, nor has it encouraged their immigration to Azerbaijan.

In contrast to the Elchibey period, under President Heydar Aliyev and President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijani state institutions have been cautious in promoting ties with the Azerbaijani community in Iran. Attempts at direct ties with this community could jeopardized bilateral relations with Tehran, and under both Aliyevs, Baku prioritized its ties with Tehran, as opposed to supporting the rights of the co-ethnic population in Iran. Thus, in the Aliyev period the government's policies toward the Iranian Azerbaijanis were shaped by the state of relations with Iran. When relations were cooperative, Baku took steps

not to aggravate Iran on this issue. In contrast to other Azerbaijani diaspora communities, Baku does not maintain formal ties with the Iranian Azerbaijani diaspora. For instance, Baku refrained from inviting representatives from Iran to the various meetings of the World Congress of Azerbaijanis, despite the fact that this group comprises the largest diaspora community of Azerbaijanis.

At the same time, Heydar Aliyev did at points use the issue to signal to Tehran on a variety of security issues, in response to Iran's threats to Azerbaijan. For example, in 1994-96, Iran closed its border with Azerbaijan a number of times, often simultaneously with Russia. In response, Baku would broadcast a television show called *Shahriyar*, which dealt with the culture of Iran's Azerbaijanis, which was also picked-up in Iran, evidently attempting to signal to Tehran that Baku had means to strike back at Iran if the border remained closed. In addition, following the July 2001 threats to Azerbaijani-commissioned survey boats in the Caspian Sea and tens of intentional violations of Azerbaijani airspace by Iranian warplanes, Baku renewed broadcasts of television programs in the Azerbaijani language in Iranian territory.¹¹

Although Azerbaijan has refrained from courting the ethnic Azerbaijani

community in Iran and has not pursued irredentist policies toward its neighbor, Iran has still maintained a very hostile policy toward Azerbaijan throughout the post-Soviet era. This policy includes support for terrorist groups that operate to destabilize the regime in Azerbaijan, and maintenance of close ties and cooperation with Armenia, despite its occupation of Azerbaijani territory and Yerevan's expulsion of over 800,000 Azerbaijanis from their homes. As part of its cooperation with Armenia, Iran officially inaugurated a natural gas supply pipeline to Armenia in 2007 and has supplied its neighbor with natural gas since 2009. Iran also imports electricity from Armenia. On multiple occasions, the Armenian leadership has also called for greater Iranian involvement in the Nagorno-Karabagh negotiations process and hailed the Iranian role in this process.¹² During a September 2011 visit of the Armenian Foreign Minister to Tehran, the Armenian representative praised "Iran's stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue."¹³

Transportation and energy issues form a significant sphere of Azerbaijan's foreign policy activity. This is due to Azerbaijan's special trade and transportation challenges as a land-

¹¹ *ANS TV (Baku, in Azerbaijani)* 25 July 2001, reported by BBC broadcasting, 26 July 2001.

¹² See for instance speech of Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian on June 22, 2010 in Berlin, http://www.rferl.org/content/Iran_Against_Any_US_Peacekeeping_Role_For_Karabakh/2081078.html

¹³ <http://tehrantimes.com/index.php/politics/2666-iran-says-concerned-over-nato-radar-system-in-turkey>

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locked state and the prominence of energy in Azerbaijan's economy and foreign policy strategy. As stated by Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, "An Azerbaijani foreign minister deals a lot with transportation."¹⁴ Baku is also striving to become a major transit state itself, for trade by other states in the Caspian region. It has already become a major hub for flights to Afghanistan. In addition, Baku promotes export projects that would transport Central Asia's natural gas through Azerbaijan. Baku's intensive foreign policy efforts to realize the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway link reflect the importance of transport as part of the country's foreign policy.

Azerbaijan's decisions on its energy element reflect a variety of foreign policy considerations. As a landlocked energy exporter, Azerbaijan's oil export infrastructure passes through neighboring states before reaching world markets. In this state, decisions on energy export pipelines have larger political weight than those of sea-abutters, since they involve designating permanent transit

states. Azerbaijan's choice of an east-west route through Georgia and Turkey for its main energy export pipeline route reflects its primary alliance orientation in the 1990s. By choosing the route through Georgia and Turkey, Baku indicated that a security alliance with these states was the most beneficial of its various options. In addition, a landlocked state tends to choose as its transit state one that has the strongest interest in maintaining the flow of trade through its territory and therefore least likely to disrupt it in the service of foreign policy and other goals. Thus, Georgia was selected as Azerbaijan's main transit state.

During the independence period, Baku's view of the role of energy export as a foreign policy tool has evolved. During the first decade following independence, Baku attempted to leverage its energy export as a foreign policy tool. The Azerbaijani leadership estimated that its role as an energy exporter would build a strong interest on the part of the U.S. and Europe in stability in the South Caucasus, and thus they would actively work towards the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. Moreover, linking with the west via permanent energy export infrastructure was viewed as a conduit for greater cooperation and a close relationship with European-Atlantic institutions. However, during President Ilham Aliyev's second term of office, Baku seems to have become

¹⁴ Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, 5 July 2009, speech Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, Baku (author's notes).

aware of the limitations of energy as a political tool,, namely that it can't be successfully leveraged to achieve many of its main security goals, especially in terms of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

In the first stage of Caspian energy export, Azerbaijan adopted a "multiple-pipeline" export strategy in order to limit its vulnerability to disruptions by a single transit state and to expand its international connections. In the second round of energy export, centered on the export of Shah Deniz natural gas, Azerbaijan is most likely to continue its "multiple pipeline" policy and thus attempt to encompass new markets, in addition to those it reached during its first round of establishment of energy export infrastructure.¹⁵

Azerbaijan's growing natural gas exports will require an expansion of foreign policy activity and agreements. The nature of gas trade renders it much more susceptible to political considerations than that of oil or coal. Petroleum and coal are primarily traded on international markets with little direct connection between supplier and consumer. Natural gas, on the other hand, is supplied chiefly via pipelines, creating direct, long-term linkages between suppliers and consumers. The high cost of the majority

of today's international natural gas export projects means that consumers and suppliers must agree to mutual long-term commitments. Thus, as Azerbaijan brings online new natural gas exports in the coming decade, building the framework for the right export venue, will occupy a prominent part of its foreign policy agenda.

An additional major vector of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in the post-independence period centers on ensuring that the state achieves safe and recognized permanent borders through resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict with Armenia. Throughout the post-Soviet period, the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict has occupied a major portion of Baku's foreign policy activity. In its *National Security Concept of Azerbaijan* document, restoring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is listed as the first goal of its national security strategy. The conflict is the major determinant of its decisions in the United Nations, for instance. The need to cultivate resolutions in its favor on the Nagorno-Karabagh issue shapes its votes and coalitions in this international organization, as well as in other international and regional institutions.

Over the first two decades of independence, Azerbaijan's foreign policy strategy toward the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has evolved. In

¹⁵ For more on Azerbaijan's second stage of energy export strategies, see Brenda Shaffer, "Caspian energy export phase II: Beyond 2005," *Energy Policy* 38 (2010) pp. 7209-7215.

the first decade, there was a strong belief in the role of international institutions and law in helping Azerbaijan resolve the Nagorno—Karabakh conflict and regain control of its occupied territories. In parallel, Azerbaijan conducted a strong cultural diplomacy effort. Azerbaijan attempted to “make its case” on a variety of foreign policy stages, believing that once the world heard the facts, the international community would adopt stances in its favor, and support from a variety of states and international institutions would have a meaningful impact on the resolution of the conflict. During President Ilham Aliyev’s second term of office, there seemed to emerge an awareness of the limited impact of the various resolutions and judgments of the various international institutions and states not directly affected by the outcomes of the conflict.

The existence of the conflict and the unresolved issues of the status of Azerbaijan’s occupied territories and refugee population have served as a critical constraint on Baku’s policy options as well as a useful lever for neighboring powers. The conflict significantly affects Azerbaijan’s relations with most global and regional powers, especially Russia. External support, mainly from Russia, has been a key factor in the emergence of the conflict and thus external support is also key to its resolution.

The improvement of the military and Azerbaijan’s domestic economic and social situations has also increased the assertiveness of its foreign and security policies

Towards the future

Beginning in 2005, with the inauguration of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, Azerbaijan’s revenues dramatically increased, allowing it to expand its foreign policy and security policy capacity, as well as to greatly improve the standard of living and quality of government services. As part of its improvement of state institutions and power, Azerbaijan has significantly raised the level and quality of the Azerbaijani military forces, and is making efforts to increase enlistment rates, training quality of the recruits and the overall professionalism of the military. The improvement of the military and Azerbaijan’s domestic economic and social situations has also increased the assertiveness of its foreign and security policies. During the 2011 military parade on Armed Services’ Day, President Ilham Aliyev stated that the “The military build-up will be continued...The country, which is at war, must first of all pay attention to the military build-up. Military expenditures take the first place in the

state budget. Our army must demonstrate perfect readiness in any conditions. We will use all opportunities to strengthen the material and technical basis of the army.”¹⁶

Azerbaijan is also highly aware that it is a small country with limited power, located next to a number of strong powers, as well as being situated at the center of U.S.—Russia strategic competition. Accordingly, Azerbaijan adjusts its foreign policies to the changes in the level of commitment and policies of various powers toward the region. For instance, Washington’s level of commitment and activity in the South Caucasus has changed a number of times during the post-Soviet period. As stated by Novruz Mammadov, Chief of the Foreign Relations Department in the Administration of the President of Azerbaijan, “After independence, we thought that the U.S. could offer all solutions for their problems. But through experience, we learned that it was not the case in actuality.”¹⁷ In addition, Russia has become increasingly assertive in the region, including in the military sphere.

During the second term of office of President Ilham Aliyev, some shifts in Baku’s bilateral relations are emerging in response to changes in Azerbaijan’s strategic environment.

Among the important changes are the relative retreat in terms of US presence and activity in the South Caucasus, especially under the Obama Administration, Russia’s invasion of Georgia during the August 2008 war, and Turkey’s agreement in principle to open its border with Armenia and other policy overtures to improve ties between Ankara and Yerevan. These shifts dramatically affect Azerbaijan’s strategic environment and thus its foreign policy challenges and strategies.

¹⁶ *APA news service*, June 28, 201.

¹⁷ *Author’s interview with Novruz Mammadov, Baku, April 2011.*