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## AZERBAIJAN'S MULTILATERAL RELATIONS AS PART OF ITS PRAGMATIC NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

**Leyla Shahhuseynbayova\***

**Abstract.** This article examines the development of Azerbaijan's national security concept in the years following the country's independence. The study focuses on how, in response to internal and external challenges- such as political instability, regional conflicts, and the complexities of state-building- strategic priorities were formulated. It analyzes the mechanisms, policies, and institutional frameworks established to safeguard national interests, maintain territorial integrity, and manage multilateral relations. By investigating official documents, policy statements, and secondary sources, this article identifies the key elements of Azerbaijan's security doctrine and the processes through which its national security priorities were established. **Primary Objective:** To analyze the role of multilateral relations in shaping Azerbaijan's pragmatic national security strategy and to highlight the main factors influencing the country's security policy during the early post-independence period. **Methodology:** This study employs a qualitative, document-based approach, drawing on official state documents, policy statements, and scholarly literature on Azerbaijan's security policy. It combines historical and policy analysis to trace the evolution of strategic priorities and evaluate their effectiveness in the post-independence context.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, national security, pragmatic security strategy, strategic priorities, multilateral relations, state-building, post-independence period

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## МНОГОСТОРОННИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА КАК ЧАСТЬ ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКОЙ СТРАТЕГИИ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ

Лейла Шахгусейнбекова\*

**Абстракт.** В статье рассматривается развитие концепции национальной безопасности Азербайджана в годы после обретения независимости. Исследование сосредоточено на том, как в условиях внутренних и внешних вызовов – таких как политическая нестабильность, региональные конфликты и сложности становления государства – формировались стратегические приоритеты. Анализируются механизмы, политики и институциональные рамки, созданные для защиты национальных интересов, обеспечения территориальной целостности и управления многосторонними отношениями. На основе официальных документов, политических заявлений и вторичных источников выявляются ключевые элементы доктрины безопасности Азербайджана и процессы, через которые определялись приоритеты национальной безопасности. **Основная цель:** Проанализировать роль многосторонних отношений в формировании прагматической стратегии национальной безопасности Азербайджана и выделить основные факторы, влияющие на политику безопасности страны в ранний постнезависимый период. **Методология:** Исследование носит качественный, документально-ориентированный характер и основано на официальных государственных документах, политических заявлениях и научной литературе по вопросам безопасности Азербайджана. Применяется сочетание исторического и политического анализа для отслеживания эволюции стратегических приоритетов и оценки их эффективности в постнезависимый период.

**Ключевые слова:** Азербайджан, национальная безопасность, прагматическая стратегия безопасности, стратегические приоритеты, многосторонние отношения, становление государства, постнезависимый период

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## AZƏRBAYCANIN ÇOXŞAXƏLİ MÜNASİBƏTLƏRİ: MİLLİ TƏHLÜKƏSİZLİYİN PRAQMATİK STRATEGİYASININ TƏRKİB HİSSƏSİ Leyla Şahhüseynbəyova\*

**Abstrakt.** Məqalədə Azərbaycanın müstəqillik əldə etdikdən sonrakı illərdə milli təhlükəsizlik konsepsiyasının inkişafı araşdırılır. Tədqiqat, daxili və xarici çağırışlar- siyasi sabitsizlik, regional münasibətlər və dövlət quruculuğunun mürəkkəbliyi kimi faktorlar- nəticəsində strateji prioritetlərin necə formalaşdığını işıqlandırır. Məqalədə həmçinin çoxşaxəli, yəni regional və beynəlxalq səviyyədə aparılan münasibətlərin milli təhlükəsizlik strategiyasının praqmatik əsaslarını necə gücləndirdiyi təhlil edilir. Milli maraqların qorunması, ərazi bütövlüyünün təmin edilməsi və çoxşaxəli münasibətlərin idarə olunması üçün tətbiq edilən mexanizmlər, siyasətlər və institusional çərçivələr araşdırılır. Rəsmi sənədlər, siyasət bəyanatları və elmi ədəbiyyat əsasında Azərbaycanın təhlükəsizlik doktrinasının əsas elementləri və milli təhlükəsizlik prioritetlərinin müəyyənəndirilmə prosesi müəyyən edilir. **Əsas Məqsəd:** Çoxşaxəli münasibətlərin Azərbaycanın praqmatik milli təhlükəsizlik strategiyasının formalaşmasındakı rolunu təhlil etmək və ölkənin təhlükəsizlik siyasətinə təsir edən əsas amilləri vurğulamaq. **Metodologiya:** Tədqiqat keyfiyyət yönümlü, sənəd əsaslı yanaşmaya əsaslanır və rəsmi dövlət sənədləri, siyasət bəyanatları və Azərbaycanın təhlükəsizlik siyasəti ilə bağlı elmi ədəbiyyatdan istifadə olunur. Tarixi və siyasət təhlilini birləşdirərək strateji prioritetlərin inkişafını izləyir və post-müstəqillik dövründə onların effektivliyini qiymətləndirir.

**Açar sözlər:** Azərbaycan, milli təhlükəsizlik, praqmatik təhlükəsizlik strategiyası, strateji prioritetlər, çoxşaxəli münasibətlər, dövlət quruculuğu, post-müstəqillik dövrü

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## **1.Introduction**

The independence of Azerbaijan in 1991 brought both opportunities and significant security challenges for the newly established state. Between 1993 and 2003, Azerbaijan faced internal political instability, regional conflicts- most notably the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict- and the complex task of building effective state institutions. In response to these challenges, the country developed a National Security Concept aimed at protecting its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interests. Understanding the formation of strategic priorities during this period provides crucial insights into the evolution of Azerbaijan's security policy and its approach to regional and global security dynamics.

### **1.1.Main Purpose:**

This article attempts to analyze the development of Azerbaijan's National Security Concept from 1993 to 2003, focusing on how strategic priorities were identified, formulated, and implemented in order to address the country's security challenges.

### **1.2.Methodology**

This research is a qualitative analysis, relying largely on the comprehensive review of official documents, government statements, policy papers, and relevant scholarly literature. The historical and policy analysis approaches have been employed in the paper to outline the transformation of security priorities and evaluate the institutional and strategic mechanisms that shaped the national security framework of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan, with its ancient statehood history, has established several significant states capable of influencing international relations, including the Safavid and Afshar states. In 1918, Azerbaijan became the first independent democratic state in the Muslim East. However, due to complex international conditions and internal and external factors, it could not maintain its independence for long. In 1920, the country was invaded, and its independence was terminated. A Soviet regime was established in Azerbaijan under the name of the Allied Republic.

From the mid-1980s, the national liberation movement gained momentum, coinciding with the collapse of the Soviet regime. As a result, in 1991, Azerbaijan restored its independence by adopting the constitutional act on the restoration of independence, thereby regaining its status as a subject in international relations.

During 1991-1993, Azerbaijan attempted to maintain and strengthen its position in international relations. However, unlike European countries, it could not normalize relations with Russia. In the early years of independence, the young republic faced military aggression from Armenia under Russian

patronage, internal instability, economic crises, transitional difficulties, and other serious challenges.

Despite these difficulties, under the leadership of the national leader Heydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan overcame these challenges, defined a proper strategic development path, and began transforming into a modern state with dynamic economic, political, and social development, strengthening its position both regionally and globally.

Azerbaijan has become a crucial state in the Caspian- Caucasus region for regional cooperation and often plays a decisive role, particularly in implementing energy and transport projects. The main goal of this overall strategy is the prosperity and sustainable development of Azerbaijan, the welfare of its population, and contributing to regional security and stability.

## **2.The main points of national security concept**

The national security concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan emphasizes:

- The country's independence, territorial integrity, and democratic development;
- Strategic choice for integration into the Euro-Atlantic space;
- A diversified and balanced foreign policy;
- Policies and measures aimed at protecting individuals, society, and the state from internal and external threats.

Heydar Aliyev's contributions to protecting Azerbaijan's national security are undeniable. His work in the field of national security can be divided into two stages:

### **1. Pre-independence period**

### **2. Post-independence period [1]**

In June 1993, upon the insistence of the people, Heydar Aliyev returned to political power and saved Azerbaijan from losing independence and from the threat of civil war. He restored civil peace and stability in society and reinforced the principle of the rule of law.

Years of state destruction were brought to an end, and the genuine process of state-building began. Heydar Aliyev played a crucial role in the establishment of the **National Army** and the **Border Troops**, which today consist of a professional army and a well-trained border force. Under his leadership, the National Army delivered decisive blows to the enemy, halted military operations, and forced negotiations.

One of the unparalleled contributions of President Heydar Aliyev to the formation and consolidation of Azerbaijan's national security system should be considered the creation of geopolitical safeguards to preserve the country's state independence.

After returning to power, Heydar Aliyev oversaw the development of the state's foreign policy as a whole, as well as Azerbaijan's relations with the

world's leading countries and prestigious international organizations, which began to develop along an upward trajectory. Throughout his years in office, the Azerbaijani President attached exceptional importance to foreign policy issues, took bold steps that were acknowledged even by our adversaries on the international stage, and skillfully utilized the world's most influential platforms. These actions were extremely significant for both the present and future of our republic.

During his meetings, President Heydar Aliyev did not speak solely about the difficulties and problems facing Azerbaijan; he also showcased the country's natural and spiritual wealth to the world.

President Heydar Aliyev consistently emphasized that the main objectives in the field of security for Azerbaijan were, first and foremost, the preservation of state independence, ensuring territorial integrity, protecting the security of the population, and establishing equal, mutually beneficial relations in this sphere with all countries of the world and the region [Həsənov Bakı, 2010, s.32-48].

### **3.Azerbaijan's Security and Foreign Policy Since 1993**

Since 1993, under the leadership of President Heydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan has formulated its pragmatic security policy and balanced foreign policy activities, initially defining its unique position as an independent state within the world system, its strategic objectives and tactical tasks in international relations, the contours and priorities of its foreign security policy, its interactions with the outside world, and its cooperation with leading foreign countries. At the same time, the country pursued comprehensive integration into the global community and sought collaboration with the existing regional and global security systems to safeguard its geopolitical security.

Between 1993 and 1995, Azerbaijan, which had become a field of intelligence and espionage activity for foreign security agencies and deeply influenced by political, military, religious, and missionary organizations, began to restore order in its international and national security affairs. During this period, steps were taken toward:

- Restoring the country's violated territorial integrity;
- Expelling occupying forces from Azerbaijani lands;
- Strengthening state independence and sovereignty;
- Ensuring regional and national security.

In achieving these objectives, efforts were made to gain the support of the international community, first and foremost from reputable international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, and major world powers.[ Həsənov Bakı, Zərdabi LTD, 2016, s.244]

At that time, Azerbaijan established security partnerships with major regional states whose inter-state relations had been disrupted and whose geopolitical relations had been strained- Russia and Iran- as well as with the United States, which had imposed various restrictive sanctions on Azerbaijan under the influence of the Armenian lobby, and with influential European countries such as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, the CIS member states, neighboring republics of Central Asia, and other countries of the world and the region.

It intensified relations with international and regional organizations, including security agencies, and undertook measures to utilize their capabilities for solving the country's problems.

Significant work was carried out within the country to organize foreign propaganda and information activities, which are of crucial importance in international security, and the disruptive information activities of foreign intelligence, information, and espionage agencies in Azerbaijan were brought under control.

At the end of the 20th century, after regaining its state independence, Azerbaijan clearly demonstrated its support for global peace, mutual security, friendship, and cooperation by signing the main international documents in this field.

In 1992, in addition to the UN Charter, Azerbaijan also signed the Helsinki Final Act of the OSCE (1975), demonstrating its commitment to the ten fundamental principles reflected in this document [4].

In December 1993, Azerbaijan signed another important international document concerning international and regional security- the Paris Charter of the OSCE. It should be noted that this document, adopted in 1990, occupies a unique place in the formation of the system of international relations in Europe after the Cold War. The states that signed it reaffirmed their full adherence to the ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act of the OSCE and their determination to implement them in practice.

After coming to power, Heydar Aliyev succeeded in obtaining the support of various influential international organizations and states through the successful policy he implemented to restore the country's territorial integrity- a key component of national security- and to repel Armenian aggression.

In all meetings and press conferences he conducted, the President explained the essence of Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijani lands, highlighted the damage inflicted on the emerging new, civilized international relations by the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, and reminded the world of the dangers posed by Armenian separatism, which was based on extreme nationalism.

At the Lisbon Summit, attended by 52 European countries, the United States, Canada, as well as ten Asian and African countries in observer capacity, thanks

to Heydar Aliyev's determination, a statement was issued on behalf of the OSCE Chairman, which had significant legal, moral, and political importance for Azerbaijan [Əliyev Bakı, 1998, 488 s].

At this forum, OSCE member states confirmed the inviolability of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and stated that Armenia's policies were contrary to international law. Thus, for the first time, the OSCE clarified the essence of the processes taking place in the Caucasus, particularly the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, as well as the legal-political framework for their resolution. This was a brilliant victory of Heydar Aliyev's peace diplomacy over the Armenian tactics aimed at prolonging the conflict.

As Heydar Aliyev stated: "If Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan had been completely forgotten when I arrived at the summit, within two to three days it became the number one issue. This happened because all states realized how acute this issue is and how broad an opinion we were able to generate" [Əliyev Bakı, 1997, s.39].

When an agreement was signed between the UN and the OSCE, a provision confirming the Nagorno-Karabakh region as belonging to our republic was included as an amendment related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in the OSCE's activities.

As a result of Heydar Aliyev's policies, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation adopted documents recognizing Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan and Armenia as an aggressor state [7].

Heydar Aliyev consistently worked toward resolving the conflict through peaceful means in his bilateral meetings and at conferences with the leadership of Armenia.

It is precisely due to Heydar Aliyev's actions that a ceasefire was declared in 1994. However, this does not mean that Azerbaijan intended to accept this situation for a long time.

Regarding this, Heydar Aliyev stated: *"Through our efforts, we will achieve the liberation of our lands, ensure the territorial integrity of our republic, and allow our displaced citizens to return to their lands. We want to solve this issue peacefully, which is why we show patience. But everyone should know that Azerbaijan can never give its lands to anyone"* [8].

As a result of Heydar Aliyev's far-sighted policy, our republic condemned the terrorist acts that occurred in the United States, expressed support for anti-terrorist operations, and allowed the use of its airspace by US planes participating in these operations, thereby earning the respect and goodwill of peace-loving peoples around the world.

Additionally, as a result of a purposeful and correct political line in recent years, the suspension of the famous Amendment 907 of the Freedom Support



Act, which had been unfairly applied against our republic since 1992 due to the policies of incompetent previous leaders, was achieved. These steps, along with measures taken in the fight against terrorism, also played a role.

Among the results of the President's far-sighted policy, it is worth noting the support gained from developed countries such as the United States and Western states.

One of the most important areas in Heydar Aliyev's multifaceted political activity to comprehensively strengthen the national security system was the implementation of Azerbaijan's modern oil strategy.

As a result of Heydar Aliyev's serious efforts, the oil strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which began with the signing of the "Contract of the Century" in 1994, rapidly developed year by year and continues to positively impact the country and the region to this day.

The nationwide leader Heydar Aliyev, highly valuing the Production Sharing Agreement, which came to be known as the "Contract of the Century," said: "This document is of great importance for Azerbaijan to pursue a free economy and market economy and for close integration with the world economy" [Məsimov Bakı, 2017, s.5].

Thanks to Heydar Aliyev's initiative, international prestige, and activities, a new oil strategy in the history of independent Azerbaijan began with the signing of the "Contract of the Century" in 1994.

In an interview, the nationwide leader Heydar Aliyev assessed the national oil strategy as follows: "I created the oil strategy and I am implementing it. I know what the oil industry is. I have worked in the Azerbaijani oil industry for 40 years... I know what is needed. I knew we had no other way." The subsequent developments vividly confirmed this [Mahmudov, Bakı: Turxan NPB, 2013, s.305].

Through the implementation of the new national oil strategy laid by the nationwide leader Heydar Aliyev and the signing of agreements with internationally reputable oil companies, significant foreign investments were attracted for the exploitation of the country's oil resources.

After this agreement, the interest of world states in Azerbaijan's economy increased, and the country's international relations expanded significantly.

After the signing of the "Contract of the Century," certain internal and external forces, wishing to use Azerbaijan's independence and economic development for their own interests, spread false and misleading information claiming that the oil agreements would not be recognized internationally, that the Caspian Sea's status issue could lead to its division into national sectors, that oil and gas reserves in the Azerbaijani sector would be depleted, and that transporting these resources to global markets would be inefficient.

In addition, they tried to engage in political terrorism and directly pressure the republican leadership.

However, Heydar Aliyev's policy of openness for all foreign oil companies, without discrimination, and the successful implementation of his oil strategy based on mutual benefit and fairness, thwarted their malicious intentions.

The attempts of these forces, based on former imperial ambitions, were successfully neutralized by Heydar Aliyev through diplomatic means, and as a result of extremely tense struggles, the set objectives were achieved.

The oil strategy implemented by the Republic of Azerbaijan created conditions for forming a secure environment in the region. By ensuring regional energy security, Azerbaijan also contributed to the formation of a regional security complex through its successful oil strategy.

The transnational projects implemented within the framework of the "Contract of the Century" significantly increased Azerbaijan's geopolitical and geoeconomic value compared to other countries in the South Caucasus and the Caspian basin, elevated its regional and international prospects, and positively affected its socio-political, scientific, theoretical partnerships, and national development.

The foundations of the republic's security, dynamic development, and future progress were firmly established [Həsənov Bakı, Zərdabi LTD, MMC, 2016, s.88].

On November 18, 1999, at the OSCE Summit held in Istanbul, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev; Turkey, Süleyman Demirel; and Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, signed the agreement on the transportation of crude oil from Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey through the main export oil pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) [Həsənov Bakı, Zərdabi LTD MMC, 2015, s.665].

The BTC pipeline, whose construction began on September 18, 2002, with a length of 1,768 km, was commissioned on July 13, 2006.

In his speech at the foundation-laying ceremony, Heydar Aliyev emphasized the global and regional significance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project and its important role in expanding cooperation between countries, stating: "These works are for the future of our peoples. These projects have only been possible after Azerbaijan gained state independence".

As an independent state, we own our resources. We establish relations with the countries we wish and carry out such projects. But the second pipeline is also in line. A gas pipeline from the Shah Deniz field, with reserves of 1 trillion cubic meters, will also be built, running from Baku through Tbilisi to Erzurum.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Thus, the number of pipelines is increasing. Naturally, these projects have a very significant economic character. However, we also believe that our work,

the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project, has a political character. This project and its implementation can serve as a guarantor of peace, stability, and security in the Caucasus region. This pipeline will bring Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey closer together” [13].

What was earlier viewed as a dream geostrategic project has come true and serves not only the energy security of Azerbaijan but greatly enhances the stability and reliability of energy supplies across the broader region and in Europe. With the successful development and operation of strategic pipelines and energy corridors-like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor-Azerbaijan has earned a reputation as a reliable and irreplaceable partner within the global energy market. Hence, its international profile has increased, its strategic weight is growing day by day, and its influence on developing regional and global energy policy is increasing. The fact that such projects have been realized shows the capability of turning Azerbaijan's natural resources into real factors in reaching broader geopolitical and economic goals while reinforcing both national development and regional security. In this way, energy strategy has already become a basic tool in the geopolitical influence of the country and in its long-term national security policy.

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