

AZERBAIJAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS: DEVELOPMENT, CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTS

The work is devoted to the history of Ukrainian-Azerbaijani relations. The article deals with issues of political, economic and cultural cooperation. The article also touches on the problems of the current state of bilateral relations. The position of Azerbaijan in the Ukrainian-Russian war, as well as the prospects of military cooperation between the two states, are considered.

It turns out that today there are several "points of reference" in Ukrainian-Azerbaijani relations - military-technical cooperation, supply and transit of energy resources, conflicts with the Russian Federation, as well as the position on Crimea, relations within the framework of GUAM and the Eastern Partnership.

The development of Ukrainian-Azerbaijani economic relations is of great importance, which is caused primarily by the special geopolitical situation of both countries.

The article outlines the projected directions of further cooperation in the near and long term.

Keywords: bilateral relations. Azerbaijan, Ukrainian politics, regional cooperation.

Introduction. The history of Ukraine's foreign policy is connected with the dynamics of bilateral and regional relations after gaining state independence. Of particular importance in this regard are ties with the countries of the former USSR, including the states of the Caucasus region. Long-standing strong economic, political and cultural ties between Ukraine and Azerbaijan have determined the main vector of bilateral relations, but the military events in both countries pose challenges for bilateral cooperation.

The purpose of the article is to study the current state and prospects for the development of bilateral cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Analysis of recent research and publications. A specific contribution to the study of the problems of economic cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan was made by domestic and foreign economists, including: Nazim Gidayat oghly Akhmedov, Sh. Hajiyev, I. Geets, E. Emir-Ilyasov, P. Krugman, A. Magherramov, M. Naumenko, R. Dornbusch, R. Fathutdinov, S. Fisher and others.

The state and prospects for the development of military-technical cooperation are considered in the works of A. Hasanov, O. Honcharenko, M. Doroshko, Niyazov Niyazi Sabir Oglu, A. Pospelov, V. Shevchenko and others.

Highlighting previously unsolved parts of the general problem, to which the article is devoted. Despite numerous studies, there is a need to determine promising directions for the development of cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Main research results. The modern history of relations between the two states dates back to the end of 1991, when the Belovezhskaya agreement was signed, which fixed the collapse of the USSR. Official diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Azerbaijan were established in 1992. For various reasons, the final formalization of relations in the form of opening embassies dragged on for several years, until 1996–1997.

The period of the first presidents of Azerbaijan A.N. Mutalibov and A.G. Elchibey, as well as L.M. Kravchuk in Ukraine coincided with the solution of critical internal problems and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the leading states of the world. Accordingly, in the first half of the 1990s. Kyiv and Baku, for objective reasons, did not consider each other as important partners.

Fundamental changes began to occur after G. Aliev came to power in Azerbaijan in October 1993 and L.D. Kuchma in Ukraine in July 1994. The latter's election program was based on rapprochement with Russia, the states of the post-Soviet space and the intensification of relations within the framework of international organizations, in particular the Commonwealth of Independent States. In general, it is the period 1995-2005 became the starting point when the legal framework for interaction between Ukraine and Azerbaijan was laid.

Today, there are several "reference points" of Ukrainian-Azerbaijani relations:

1. Military-technical cooperation.
2. Deliveries and transit of energy resources.
3. Conflicts with Russian Federation, as well as the position on Crimea.
4. Relations within the framework of GUAM and the Eastern Partnership.

Today, the development of Ukrainian-Azerbaijani economic relations is of great importance, which is primarily due to the special geopolitical situation of both countries. Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan are at the crossroads of trade and transport routes from East to West and from North to South, which creates broad prospects for the development of close cooperation between these countries in the economic and energy spheres, and this is extremely important for Ukraine in the search for alternative supply routes energy resources.

One of the important aspects in relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Ukraine is cooperation in the economic sphere. The development of Ukrainian-Azerbaijani economic relations is determined by close and multilateral industrial and scientific-technical ties that have developed in the past, as well as common strategic interests. Economic difficulties, the need to create new mechanisms of economic interaction, encouragement of entrepreneurship and coordinated movement to the market in the interests of consumers determine the importance of establishing full-fledged cooperation between the two states.

First of all, both countries face the task of establishing direct contacts and providing full freedom of activity to direct business entities based on current legislation.

A significant place in Ukrainian-Azerbaijani economic cooperation is occupied by the problem of investment cooperation. Active participants in the investment process in the Republic of Azerbaijan are structures such as JSC "Azerbaijan Investment Company" (AIC), created in accordance with the decree of the President of Azerbaijan "On additional measures to encourage investment activity", and the Azerbaijan Export Promotion Fund and investment, which specializes in the organization and implementation of large investment events both within the country and abroad. International business forums are organized through the efforts of the Foundation, which give an impetus to the development of foreign economic relations.

Active military-technical cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan began from the moment Ukraine gained independence. Since 1992, contacts between Kyiv and Baku in the military sphere have been among the most active in the post-Soviet space. During the first Karabakh war, arms deliveries from Ukraine helped to stabilize the situation at the front in the most critical moments. And after 1994, Ukraine was primarily a reliable supplier of Soviet-made weapons, which remained in large quantities in warehouses in Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the 2000s, the vector of cooperation gradually shifted towards the modernization of equipment: for example, in 2006, a batch of MiG-29 front-line fighters was modernized at the Lviv Aircraft Repair Plant, and Mi-24 combat helicopters were modernized in Konotop [6].

But even then, Azerbaijan was increasingly in need of more modern weapons, which Ukraine could not offer for various reasons. Moreover, very often the "stumbling block" for export sales was an agreement with Russia, according to which those Ukrainian products in which Russian components were used could not be sold.

The spring of 2014 made the situation even worse. The entire military-industrial complex of Ukraine smoothly switched to the provision of its own armed forces. At first, it was the restoration of existing equipment, and later, as the situation at the front stabilized, the continuation of programs for the development of new types of weapons, which began immediately after the collapse of the USSR and were frozen due to a lack of funds. The situation was so critical that options for purchasing weapons and ammunition were even seriously considered in Azerbaijan, where a powerful military-industrial complex has been created over the past ten years.

Today, the military-technical cooperation between Ukraine and Azerbaijan is almost at its lowest level in recent years. The largest projects are only the contract for the supply of An-178 transport aircraft to the Republic of Azerbaijan, which is planned to be mass-produced by the Antonov State Enterprise for the Silkway airline, as well as the project for the production of anti-tank systems and missiles by the Luch Design Bureau [6].

However, both of these large projects are still very far from the implementation stage. Despite the fact that the Azerbaijani airline confirmed its intention to buy 10 Ukrainian machines, today this project is at the stage of serious changes due to the rejection of Russian components for obvious reasons. The fact is that in July 2018, at the Farnborough - 2018 air show, the Antonov State Enterprise signed a general agreement with the American company Aviall Services, Inc., which provides for the cooperation of the companies in the production of modernized An-148, An-158, An-178. In fact, it is planned to create a new line of transport aircraft, which will have the designation An-1X8 NEXT. It is envisaged, among other things, the use of American-made engines. It is natural that the price of the plane for the buyer will increase, and this will require additional negotiations with the Azerbaijani side with an as yet unknown result. And starting serial production, conducting flight tests of a virtually new aircraft is a difficult and slow process.

Another large-scale, but also problematic project is the joint production of the Korsar portable anti-tank missile complex (PPRK). Negotiations on this issue began back in 2016. It should be noted that the Azerbaijani army is armed with the Skif anti-aircraft missile defense system, and the Corsair is actually its lighter version.

Azerbaijan is interested in technology transfer and direct participation of Azerbaijani companies in missile production. However, the anti-tank missile production technology is one of the important components of the competitiveness of the Kyiv Design Bureau "Promin" in the arms market, so the negotiations are progressing extremely difficult, and there is a high probability that they will end with an unsatisfactory result [6].

At the moment, both countries are in the stage of military conflict. A military confrontation with Armenia continues in Azerbaijan, which from time to time passes into an active phase. The military events of recent years have shown the military advantage of Azerbaijan, effective military cooperation with Turkey, as well as the military and economic problems of Armenia.

The protracted military conflict in the Donbas and the annexation of Crimea became the catalyst for a large-scale military invasion of Ukraine and the occupation of about 20% of its territory.

Coverage of the military problems of both countries is becoming an important issue in the development of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Ukraine. The second Karabakh war was actively covered in the Ukrainian media, social networks, public pages and various Telegram channels. Among the most common points of view on the conflict, the following prevailed: problems of a political solution to the conflict situation, drawing analogies with attempts to resolve the Ukrainian-Russian confrontation within the framework of the Munich and Minsk agreements. Attention is drawn to the desire of Ukrainian analysts to take a neutral position in the Azerbaijani-Armenian war. The fact of the occupation of part of the Azerbaijani territory by Armenia, the destabilizing role of the Russian Federation, remains outside the sphere of attention of the Ukrainian side.

On September 30, 2020, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated: "One of the cornerstones of Ukraine's foreign policy is support for the territorial integrity of states. And we consistently supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, just as Azerbaijan supported our territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders."

A similar statement was made by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to international organizations in Vienna Yevhen Tsymbalyuk during a special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council regarding the aggravation of the situation along the line of contact in the conflict zone in Nagorno-Karabakh.

To date, there has been a tendency in Ukrainian politics to support Azerbaijan in the war against Armenia, especially since, in the face of a large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, calls for an immediate ceasefire look like a way to promote the Russian political narrative in foreign policy.

The change in the political position of the Ukrainian leadership gives reason to positively assess the dynamics of political relations between the two countries.

Another surge of attention to the AR was caused by a sharp escalation of the situation and the resumption of armed clashes in mid-September 2022.

Ukrainian experts also call for a comprehensive study and use of Azerbaijan's experience in restoring the infrastructure of the de-occupied territories.

The Azerbaijani experience of restoring these territories and "bringing them back to life" is defined as extremely valuable for Ukraine after the upcoming victory in the Russian-Ukrainian war.

We will analyze the position of Azerbaijan during the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Baku's actions, at least in the public sphere, show that Azerbaijan is looking for a format to avoid conflict with either Ukraine or the Russian Federation.

It is significant that already on February 26, Azerbaijan sent the first planes with humanitarian aid, primarily with medicines, to Ukraine. To date, six aircraft have already been sent with a cargo weighing more than 500 tons. In addition, the Azerbaijani network of SOCAR filling stations provides free fuel to Ukrainian doctors and rescuers.

But at the same time - at the vote in the UN General Assembly on March 2 to condemn the aggression of the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan was one of 12 countries that abstained from voting. In the same way, the Azerbaijani deputies did not vote for the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe.

Since the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine, that is, since 2014, the Azerbaijani media have tried to present the conflict as neutrally as possible.

And this despite the fact that Azerbaijani society as a whole is rather pro-Ukrainian, and the leadership of Azerbaijan recognizes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The large-scale invasion of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation has changed a lot, including the mood of the Azerbaijani media. As a result, extensive materials appeared there about the bombing of Ukrainian cities, about mass casualties among the civilian population. After all, this was the reason for the ban.

Today, the business community of Azerbaijan supports Ukraine - it brings the highest quality Azerbaijani-made M1 glass to the country, negotiates with Ukrainian companies interested in such products as urea, polymer, primary polypropylene, fuel, bitumen. When the problem of fuel shortages arose in Ukraine, the Azerbaijani company SOCAR immediately decided to provide emergency vehicles, ambulances and fire services with its fuel. Today, SOCAR Company supplies a large amount of fuel to Ukraine.

The return to peaceful life in Ukraine will be the basis for increasing mutually beneficial trade. Ukraine is interested in strengthening energy security and expanding transport routes. These same areas are of interest to Azerbaijan, which, in turn, is interested in strengthening its food security. Both countries can join forces, using the capabilities of Ukraine's agro-industrial complex and its traditional experience in land reclamation and animal husbandry.

Conclusions and prospects for further investigations. Ukrainian-Azerbaijani relations have a rather long history and have always testified to the intentions of both countries to establish mutually beneficial relations, to spread economic, political and cultural relations. However, there are certain problems in the development of bilateral relations. Both countries take a very cautious position in the military conflicts in which these states are involved. They mean the Azerbaijani-Armenian or Karabakh war and the Ukrainian-Russian war, which actually began in 2014.

The only thing is that, in fact, from the very beginning, Baku started talking about its readiness to act as a mediator in the negotiations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Likewise, Ukraine's policy regarding the Karabakh conflict is quite cautious and does not represent unconditional support for the government of Azerbaijan.

Countries can and should expand cooperation in the field of education, science and technology, without which the development of modern society and economy is impossible.

Given the rich military experience of Ukraine and Azerbaijan, we have every reason to develop cooperation in the military-technical sphere. We have something to complement each other in this sensitive aspect for us.

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АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКІ ВІДНОСИНИ: РОЗВИТОК, СУЧАСНИЙ СТАН ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

Стаття присвячена історії українсько-азербайджанських відносин. У статті розглядаються питання політичного, економічного та культурного співробітництва. Матеріали статті також торкаються проблеми сучасного стану двосторонніх відносин.

З'ясоване, що сьогодні в українсько-азербайджанських відносинах є кілька «точок відліку» – військово-технічне співробітництво, постачання та транзит енергоресурсів, конфлікти з РФ, а також позиція щодо Криму, відносини в рамках ГУАМ і Східне партнерство. Підкреслено, що розвиток українсько-азербайджанських економічних відносин має велике значення, що зумовлено насамперед особливим геополітичним становищем обох країн.

Розглянуто позицію Азербайджану в українсько-російській війні, а також перспективи військового співробітництва двох держав, окреслено прогнозовані напрямки подальшої співпраці на найближчу та довгострокову перспективи.

Ключові слова: двосторонні відносини, Азербайджан, українська політика, регіональне співробітництво.