

Factors Influencing the Foreign Relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan

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ABSTRACT

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and the independence of the countries under its control, The Islamic Republic of Iran, on its northern borders, became neighbors with new countries. Azerbaijan is one of those countries that is located in the Caucasus region and declared independence on August 30, 1991, and the Islamic Republic of Iran recognized that country in the same year (1991) and established its relations with this country. During the years of the establishment of relations between the two countries, in spite of the religious and cultural commonalities, as well as the numerous opportunities and economic and security factors that could have exacerbated the interactions between the two sides, These relationships have been practically at a low level, and these joint factors not only did not increase interactions, but in some cases also led to conflicts and tensions between the two countries. According to the background, the question of this research is what factors influenced relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan? The hypothesis of this paper is that the factors affecting the relations between the two countries, Influenced by the negative attitudes of both countries towards each other and the involvement of transnational nations. Therefore, this research has sought to answer this question by adopting a constructive approach and using a descriptive-analytical method. The data collection in this research is done with library and internet tools.

Keywords: Republic of Iran, Republic of Azerbaijan, Bilateral Relations, Structuralism

INTRODUCTION

Among the governments that were formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the South Caucasus region, Azerbaijan has a special position in the region. This country has its own geopolitical, geopolitical, historical and cultural characteristics. In addition, the Republic of Azerbaijan has significant oil and gas resources, while this country has the second largest Shiite population in the world after the Islamic Republic of Iran, including one of the most important neighbors of Iran, with a total of 670 kilometers of common borders. (Bahman, 2011: 117). After the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991 (during the era of Ayaz Mutallibov), Iran had an active presence in the settlement of the Qarabagh conflict. Also, the first agreement between two countries on economic assistance and technical advice was signed during the President of Ayaz Mutallibov with Iran. For Azerbaijan, Iran is not just a normal country.

Both countries have shared values and some of the cultural elements are mutually exclusive. The membership of two countries in regional organizations, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), as well as the Eco Organization, is another important indicator that brings together the two countries; On the other hand, in the Caucasus region, the Republic of Azerbaijan has attracted Iran's attention more than other countries.

But the advancement of the Nation-State process in the Republic of Azerbaijan is based on increasing ties with the West, especially the United States, and also relying on some of the anti-Iranian myths and symbols, which seriously threaten the national interests of Iran and Tehran is to react. As noted above, despite the cooperation between the two countries, the volume of cooperation between Tehran and Baku has not reached the level expected since Iran's relations with the Republic of Azerbaijan

are still facing serious barriers which is part of these barriers derived from the domestic policies of the two countries that are influenced by their attitude toward each other and the other part is influenced by the interference of the powers of the region and outside the region.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Structuralism is not a theory, but rather regarded as an approach. This approach has become more important, especially since the late 1980s, when the ineffectiveness of dominant theories of international relations emerged in explaining and anticipating the events that took place. With the changes that have emerged in the philosophy of science, the provocative and rational attitudes of international relations were questioned and theories emerged within the framework of critical and over-structural commentary and critical hermeneutics, from which all social realities are built up by language, ideas and concepts and every meaning is in the light of the power of language and discourse. By denying any reality beyond the framework of language and discourse, these theories reject the possibility of definite knowledge (Jackson & Sorensen, 1999: 245). Structuralism, on the one hand, between two rational and reactionary theories, takes on the characteristics of rational and providential schools it focuses on responsive theories by focusing on the meanings that actors make to their behavior and the emphasis on ideas, beliefs, normative structures, and attention to the formation of the identity of actors (Smith, 1997: 168).

The constructivism approach in the field of international politics has an identity-based approach to foreign policy and focuses on the "identity" of states instead of emphasizing the ability of governments or the distribution of power as a feature of the structure of the international system. Action-oriented and constructivist theories, despite differences in other issues, share the view that they refuse to accept identity and interests as pre-determined. From their point of view, identities are not definite things, but the things we created them and because of have been created by us, can be created differently (Hopf, 2000: 175). The identities of states are interacting with each other and through participation in meanings and from within a developed social world and can change. If it can be seen that some types of identity and interests can become lasting, it does not mean that they cannot change (Blaise & others, 2004:552). Therefore, Constructors

argue that the identity of states is influenced by the social structure of interactions, norms and beliefs and has two distinct meanings: one is collective identity and the other is social identity.

The collective identity includes the internal, material and ideological characteristics of the national level and social identity is the meaning that states take for itself in the eyes of others (other governments) (Price & Reus-Smith, 1998: 263). It should be noted that in this connection, norms and values play a fundamental role. Because of the primacy of the norms in the constructivist approach, governments cannot ignore the norms in their behaviors, and to achieve the benefits, take any action. As in the relations among the people of society, there are inter specific understandings, in relations between governments as well. From the point of view of constructivists such as Ruggie, What is considered to be true in international relations there is nothing but what all the actors agree on. This fact is created by the activists (Moshirzadeh, 2006: 329-326). In terms of constructivism; a state may have multiple identities and adopt specific interests and behaviors based on each individual identity. Alexander Wendt, analyzes the relationship between identity and interests through the concept of "role". The roles that governments undertake call them sets of actions that are consistent with this role (Karami, 2004: 30). Constructors communicate in three ways between identity and interests. First: the national values inherent in the state identity; the goals, rewards and benefits that are pursued by the state; Second, specific beliefs rooted in the identity of actors help determine the situations in which actions contribute to the completion of these interests. This affects the determination of government priorities about special behaviors. Third, "identities" embody specific rules and practices that determine which strategies should be prioritized. Of course, there may be restrictions on specific foreign policy choices (Kahl, 1999: 2-3).

COMMON HISTORY

In many periods of history, the Republic of Azerbaijan has been part of Iran and has been isolated in the past not far from the country. The existence of its ethnicity and Azeri language, which is communed by a large population in Iran, with the common religion, indicates the abundant subscriptions of these two states (Afshordi, 2002: 136). Because of common land

Iranians and Azeris, A strong interactive has been created between them. Naturally, there are some identities and imaginations over time that are still stable between them. One of these common identities is the ancient Norouz ritual, which in addition to Iran, Earth is magnificent in all the republics of the South Caucasus, Central Asia and even the Xinjiang province of western China. One of the territories that is always celebrated in Nowruz is Azerbaijan. In addition to Nowruz, the role of Iranian music is rooted in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and its devices such as Chaghah, Segah, Homayoun, Bayat, Shour and Turk have been immortalized in Azerbaijan (Afzali, Rashidi and Mottaghi, 2012: 7). Among other things, there is a common culture of poets such as Nezami Ganjavi, Khaghani, Khaje Nasir al-Din Tusi and hundreds of other examples that have solid reasons for the common history between Iran and Azerbaijan (Amiri, 2006: 255).

But Iran's attitude towards the Republic of Azerbaijan, which has been formed throughout history, is based on the ideas of Iranian nationalism. The Iranians believe that Azerbaijan was isolated from Iran in the battles between Iran and Russia in 1812 and 1828, but, nevertheless, Azerbaijan has a historical, cultural, and religious connection as an isolated part of Iran with its homeland. This area of civilization, the main feature of which is "being Persian and Persian," also includes Azerbaijan. In other words, Azerbaijani people are also Iranian. In addition to this, there is a hypothesis that they are Turks. According to this view, the Azerbaijani people are not "Turk" but Azeri. According to proponents of this idea, Northern Azerbaijan has never been Azerbaijan in history. In fact, an area that is today within the borders of Iran, That is, the provinces of Azerbaijan have always existed in the name of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan was named in 1918, by the leader of Azerbaijan, Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh who influenced by pan-Turkist ideas, considering the linguistic, religious and cultural unity of the people of the two sides of Aras River. This is while in history, instead of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Aran or Albania was said (Mojtahedzadeh, Pourpouyan and Karimipour, 2008: 217). According to the Iranians, there are many historical and geographic sources that prove that the name of Azerbaijan for the north of Aras River is artificial and selected for political purposes. In the attitude of the Azeri politician, there is a hostile issue with Iran and Iranian kings have always been condemned

from Azeri politicians. Because the Iranian kings always tried to seize the lands of Azerbaijan. For example, in any of the scientific, political, literary and cultural works of the Caucasus that were published before 1918, the current territory of Azerbaijan, was not said "Azerbaijan". In order to prove this theory, they are cited by some famous historians such as: Baladhuri, Ahmad ibn Abi Yaghouband Hamdollah Mostowfi (Amir Ahmadian, 2005: 14-16). In this attitude, Iran and Russia Splited up the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan with each other. They pretend that during the pre-Gulestan and Turkmenchai treaties, There is a country called unit Azerbaijan (Koulaei & Osouli, 2012: 80). As a result of the two battles between Iran and Russia (1828-1826 and 1813-1814) in the early nineteenth century, the people of Azerbaijan under the rule of the two Russian states were Tsarist and Iran Qajar. In the history books of Azerbaijan, characters such as Ganjavi, Khaghani, Shahriar, Sattar Khan and Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani have been considered as Azerbaijani figures and cities such as Tabriz and Ardabil as Azerbaijani cities (Mojtahedzadeh, Pourpouyan and Karimipour, 2008: 218).

COMMON RELIGIOUS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

Islam is the common religion two country, and Azerbaijan after the Islamic Republic of Iran is the second largest country with Shi'a majority. Having a common religion is an important factor in positive identity, and creating spiritual and cultural backgrounds for the close relationship between the people of both countries. In Azerbaijan, for a long time, religion has been an important and vital part of society's life. In the past, almost all of the wars and political processes in Azerbaijan have been influenced by the factor of religion.

This characteristic also applies to Iran, so that many of the political and social developments in Iran have been influenced by Islamic teachings. This factor has also created a common identity between the two countries. In fact, religion is the main reason for the proximity of Azerbaijan people to Iran. Since Shi'a declared the Iranian religion in 1501, the strongest factor is linking Azeri Turks with Persian and other Persian-speaking nations (Amiri, 2006: 257). This caused the Islamic Republic of Iran, after independence of Azerbaijan, in its relations with this republic clearly emphasized the factor of religion. Since Iranian political activists always believe that Shi'a plays an important role in

shaping the ties between the two countries, it provides the ground for Iranian influence in Azerbaijan. This led to the Republic of Azerbaijan, as the country with its Shi'a majority, the main objective of Iran for issuing the Islamic Revolution. For this reason, Baku attempted to establish a secular system, preventing the historical-religious identities of its people based on the two elements of Shi'ism and Iranian culture and civilization (Chaboki, 2009: 71). Although Azerbaijan is the second largest Shiite country in the world, it should be noted that due to the remnants of during the 70 years of communist rule, the sensitivity of the government to any religious activity has prevented the exploitation of religious commonalities for the purpose of securing common interests. (Seidi, 2009: 86). On the other hand, in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the clergy have a weaker structure than Iran. Although the Shiite religion is intensifying in Azerbaijan, this tendency is towards a society that is deeply non-religious. On the other hand, it is not clear in any way whether the people of Azerbaijan agree on the coming of a government like the Tehran system in Azerbaijan (Mojtahedzadeh, Pourpouyan and Karimipour, 2008: 220-219).

It should also be noted that Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan have two different political systems. While the political system of Iran has a religious and Islamic nature and the general orientation of the country in the field of foreign domestic politics is determined by Islamic teachings (especially Shi'a Islam), the political system of the Republic of Azerbaijan is inclined to express the Western to a separation of religion from politics. In fact, the political system of the Republic of Azerbaijan sees the spread of political Islam as a threat to its existence (Koulaei & Osouli, 2012: 83). Hence, the conflicting thoughts and political beliefs of Iranian and Azerbaijani politicians have led to a divergence in their bilateral relations, as these two particular perspectives specifically seek to eliminate one another, As Ayatollah Khomeini, in one of his lectures, considers countries such as Turkey and Azerbaijan to be the perpetrators of global arrogance, and it is the duty of the Islamic state to save the Muslim people from the captivity of these regimes And in front of the Azeri, one of the principles of foreign policy has been to prevent the ideological influence of the Iranian government (Afzali, Rashidi and Mottaghi, 2012: 11). In addition, Azerbaijan increased its distance with Iran by arresting the

leaders of the Islamic Party and attributing their espionage to Iran and the severe measures of its political propaganda apparatus against the Islamic Republic of Iran (Ezzati, 1994: 13). This move, which has been attributed to Baku's concerns about the issuance of the Iranian revolution, points to the negative attitude of Baku towards Tehran.

QARABAGH CRISIS

The Nagorno-Karabakh crisis began in 1988, and began military conflicts in 1992-1991. The crisis has led to the loss of about 20 percent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and forced displacement of more than a million of its inhabitants. This area is legally within the boundaries of Azerbaijan, although the majority of its inhabitants are Armenian (Chaboki, 2009: 71-70). The Karabakh War seems to be more reliant on political and ethnic aspects and fewer religious wars between Armenians and Muslims. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran has initiated mediation measures from the beginning to prevent the bloodshed and killing of the Muslim people of Azerbaijan and the establishment of a ceasefire in the region and has emphasized the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the outset. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued its efforts to establish peace in Nagorno-Karabakh, and talks between the authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia were held in Tehran from May 16 to 18, 1992. At the summit, it was agreed to resolve disputes between the two countries in a friendly and negotiated manner by imposing a temporary cease-fire and ending the economic blockade of the Qarabakh Republic under the supervision of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran issued a statement announcing that any change in the geographical boundaries of the region and the use of force and violence was an offense and declared that in order to restore peace, military forces should return to their positions before the Tehran summit (Azerbaijan, Political Bureau And International, 2008: 236-235). The Islamic Republic of Iran, despite mediation efforts in the settlement of the Qarabakh conflict, has not hesitated in any effort in the areas of relief and relief, the delivery of food, medicine and clothing, tent hangings, gas and gasoline, flour and citrus. Among the actions of Iran is the creation of a camp in the region of Saberabad in the Republic of Azerbaijan for the settlement of

the refugees of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in June 1994 and Azeri settlement in the Amishli camp, which was organized by the Red Crescent in November 1993 (Asadi Kia, 1995: 235). Due to the Qarabakh issue and the occupation of a large part of the Azerbaijani territory by Armenia, the relationship between Armenia and Iran is at the heart of the attention of the Azeri authorities. Azeris are sensitive to any Iranian-Armenia cooperation agreement and accuse the Iranian government of intimidating relations with the enemy of Azerbaijan (Armenia). The Republic of Azerbaijan has always objected to the development of relations between Tehran and Yerevan and believes that these relations are contrary to the Islamic and human principles, which should not help the aggressor. Iran, considers its economic ties with its neighbors to be a legitimate right and only stop military exchanges with Yerevan. Even during the Armenian war with Azerbaijan, Iran had close ties with Armenia. Iran takes note that the common borders with Armenia have an important geopolitical character that prevents joining territory of Turkey to Azerbaijani. However, the Azeri officials expected the Islamic Republic of Iran, like Turkey, to take a biased and not meditational position against the conflict, and that in a situation such as Ankara cut diplomatic ties with Armenia to be held, they were reluctant to reduce their relations with Yerevan to supports the position of Baku during the conflict (Koulai & Osouli, 2012: 87).

This conflict is a national and vital issue for the Republic of Azerbaijan. The continuation of this conflict over the past decade has depended on a set of racial, ethnic, historical factors as well as the role of regional powers (especially Russia) and trans-regional. At present, how to deal with this conflict and the role of the powers involved is one of the main concerns of the leaders of Azerbaijan.

EXTENSIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND THE UNITED STATES

After independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan has always tried to have close relations with the United States and have the support of the country. The desire of the Azerbaijani government to establish close relations with the United States has begun since the reign of Abulfaz Elchibey (Taghvaeinia, 2011).

These relations did not include widespread military support until 2001, but after the 9/11 incident in the United States, this country in the context of security cooperation with the

countries of the Middle East, the controlling of Azerbaijan's borders and its internal security was great importance for U.S. two countries established a defense console in Baku in 2002, and according to one US military expert, this country will contribute 4.4 million to the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry along with the "Security Assistance Program" (Vahedi: 2003: 250).

Since 2002, the two countries have also tried to direct their trade relations from large companies to small and medium businesses, which will make optimal use of the potential in Azerbaijan, and the majority of Azerbaijani and the majority of Azerbaijani people who will have little financial support will be part of this process. The US is cooperating with the Azeri, Chiran and Guneshli oil fields. Also, the creation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the operation of the Shah Deniz natural gas field are among the most important areas of cooperation. Buying American Boeing Airplanes from Azerbaijan is also considered as one of the other areas of business relations between the two countries (Vahedi, 2003: 251).

America as a Trans-regional power in the Caucasus, in Iran's stance has taken a stand against Iran and has created serious obstacles to the goals and interests of Iran in the Caucasus region, in particular Azerbaijan. Iran has consistently expressed its serious concerns about the presence of the United States in the region, especially in the Republic of Azerbaijan (Zeb, 2005: 464). In response to Iran's criticisms of its relationship with the United States and Israel, Baku officials say that its foreign policy is independent.

And as Iran, despite the occupation of 20 percent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan by Armenia, has friendly relations with this country (Armenia), Iran should not object to the establishment of relations between Baku and Tel Aviv and expansion of cooperation with the United States. Iran should also respect the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan and its foreign policy decisions (Taghvaeinia, 2011).

AZERBAIJANI-ISRAELI RELATIONS

One of the important factors preventing the rapid expansion of relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, the growing relations between Azerbaijan and Israel, which has caused concern to Iranian foreign policy officials and in the future it will also seriously hinder the expansion

of bilateral relations. The Relations between Israel and Azerbaijan are considered by Iran as a strategic threat. For this reason, Iran sees the improvement of bilateral relations (Israel and Azerbaijan) as a permanent threat to itself and one of the main obstacles to not improving its relations with Azerbaijan. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Israel has been active in a major political approach to develop and maintain good relations with the former Soviet republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Israel's main political goal in the region was to prevent Iran from expanding its influence in the former Soviet republics. Baku's relations with Tel Aviv have expanded since the early 1990s, including trade-economic, security and cultural cooperation. In December 1991, Israel recognized the independence of Azerbaijan and established diplomatic relations with the country in April 1992. The relationship widened after Benjamin Netanyahu met Baku in 1997. Also during the Qarabakh War, Israel supported Azerbaijan (Chaboki, 2009: 74). Israeli relations with Azerbaijan are important for many reasons. Azerbaijan, a coastal country, has the potential to be a major exporter of hydrocarbons. According to some analysts, there is even the idea that Caspian crude oil will be available to Israel on day. This is very appealing to US politicians, as Washington guarantees the preservation of Israel's oil. On the other hand, because of the experience of the Soviet era, Azerbaijan is secularized today. This issue (secularism in Azerbaijan) for Israel, which is challenging mainly with Shiite countries like Iran, Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon, can be an important opportunity. Azerbaijani authorities are pursuing various goals in close proximity to Israel, such as establishing contacts with the United States and European countries through Israel. Also, the recognition of more assistance from these countries towards Azerbaijan is one of the factors that has led to the expansion of relations with Tel Aviv (Vahedi, 2003: 252). The Azerbaijani authorities want to use the Jewish lobby against the influence of the Armenian lobby in the United States to stop their movements against themselves in the Qarabakh conflict (Zargari & Rezazadeh, 2012:30). Israel Given the geographical proximity of Azerbaijan to Iran, has a strategic look at the development of its sphere of influence in the Republic of Azerbaijan and it does this plan with a precise, non-promotional. In economic terms, while the Israeli exports to Azerbaijan of \$ 50,000 in 1992 and the import of Israel from Azerbaijan by an insignificant

amount of 12,000\$, the current volume of economic relations between the two sides exceeds 4 billion\$ per year. More than one-sixth of Israel's oil comes from Azerbaijan, but it's not the high level of political and economic relations that have brought ties of importance to two countries. A factor that has exacerbated a lot of sensitivities in Azerbaijan and Israel relations, especially for Iran, is the unprecedented expansion of defense, intelligence, and military cooperation between the two countries, which the Iranian authorities clearly recognized as a threat to Iran's national security.

DISAGREEMENT OVER THE DIVISION OF THE TERRITORY IN THE CASPIAN SEA

The issue of dividing the Caspian Sea and its legal regime is another important factor in determining the relations between the two countries. The Caspian Sea region has a geopolitical importance, especially for reasons of oil and gas resources (Ahmadi Pour & Lashgari, 2010: 6). Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the 1921 and 1940 agreements determined the legal arrangements for this sea, according to which the Caspian was jointly exploited by Iran and the Soviet Union (Ataei, 2012: 127); but then From the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of the coastal countries of the sea from two to five countries raised the issue of establishing a new legal system for this sea, which was the beginning of the emergence of disputes between coastal countries. The five surrounding countries of the sea are still unable to provide or accept a clear definition of the interests of coastal countries. Each coastal country also proposes special legal rights based on its Favorites and interests (Karimipour, 2000: 91). According to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the legal regime of the Caspian Sea should be in line with the 1921 and 1940 contracts. Because until the countries have reached a new agreement.

The basis of all the actions is the previous agreements. According to these contracts, According to these contracts, Iran's portion is 50% has been set; however, as coastal states insisted on dividing the sea, Tehran has emphasized the Split equal division of the sea, and according to this division, Iran's minimum share is 20% at the level of water resources, as well as The seabed will be in common (Koulaei & Hafeznia, 2010: 401). It is in the meantime that the Republic of Azerbaijan calls for the division of the Caspian Sea (the bed, surface and

water space together with its natural resources) into the nationally owned areas under the full sovereignty of the coastal states. By dividing the sea by the middle line, the countries with a contiguous coast will have a larger share and Iran's share will be 13%. That's the same as Baku is considering for Iran (Khosravi, 2007: 6). The adoption of these opposing views on the legal regime of the Caspian Sea by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan has caused differences in their views in the Caspian region, and this is one of the factors affecting the relations between Tehran and Baku.

CONCLUSION

In this article, by examining the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, it became clear that some of the factors splicer two countries, such as: common history and culture, the holding of the New Year's Eve (Nowrouz), as well as religious unity between the two countries, not only made Baku's proximity to Tehran But it has been a distraction. Examples include the escalation of ethnic and separatist issues and contradictions in the form of governments (Iran's Islamism against the secular political system of Azerbaijan), which resulted from negative attitudes toward each other, along with some other factors, such as the Qarabakh crisis, the issue Determining the legal regime of the Caspian Sea has created elements of distrust and suspicion toward the goals of the other side. In addition to the elements that determine the relations between the two countries, Azerbaijani politicians see their country's security in cooperation with foreign forces. Thus, in spite of Iran's concerns, we see an expansion of military and economic cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United States, in order to maintain the independence of Baku from Russia and counteract Iran's influence in this region. In this regard, relations with Israel have also expanded. The long-term presence of America will make the natural balance of power in the region shrink and complicate matters. This has led the Islamic Republic of Iran to expand its relations with Armenia, and is essentially on the axis of Tehran-Moscow-Yerevan, which has been formed in the direction of the Baku-Ankara axis-Tel Aviv-Washington.

In the end, according to the items mentioned, As long as this negative attitude comes with suspicion and incitement of the countries of America, Israel, Russia and Armenia, There will

be no political, security and economic expansion between the two countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Azerbaijan.

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