

The international relations of Azerbaijan within the framework of the BSEC

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Abstract:

Due to land dispute with Armenia which is one of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization member countries, the activities of Azerbaijan within the organization delayed to a certain extent. But Azerbaijan participated in the preparation and realization of various projects of the organization. In addition, Azerbaijan established bilateral relations with the BSEC member states (Azerbaijan established wide relationship with those states in the international arena too). Azerbaijan still establishes relations with them. This article deals with these and other related issues.

Key words: The Black Sea Economic Cooperation - Azerbaijan's position – international relations – truths – perspectives

The idea of the formation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation was not new. In the early 1980 a new form of sub-regional cooperation was justified theoretically in Economics Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences in Odessa – The international maritime region assumed environmental integrity that requires joint and economic efforts for the protection of the natural environment as a basis.

After the collapse of the Soviet geopolitical space Turkey tried to become a regional power and showed political initiative to create cooperation in the Black Sea region. Turkey claimed to play the role of a communicative bridge between Europe and the Asia Pacific region.

The Black Sea was located at the intersection of Eurasian trade routes, there were a favorable climate conditions and it creates conditions the development of free trade. Geopolitical changes in Eurasia showed significant effects on the prosperity of the local cities. (1, 132-133).

Turkish President Turgut Ozal took the initiative to establish "The Black Sea cooperation and prosperity zone with the participation of Soviet Union, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria in 1990. Till the first document on the establishment of this organization - Istanbul Declaration on "the Black Sea Economic Cooperation", 1992, was signed, the Soviet Union had collapsed and the geopolitical map of the region fundamentally changed.

In 1992, during the realization of the idea of Turgut Ozal, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine acted as the main "locomotive". Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, Moldova, Romania and other Balkan countries - Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania joined them. One of the principal differences between BSEC and other regional integration groups is that, this organization unites the other countries which are involved in the institutionally developed international organizations. For example, many countries which are members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization try to be a member of European Union, NATO. Greece joined the European Union on 1 May, 2004. Therefore, Greece only focused on the economic aspect of the integration of the BSEC and distracted its attention and resources from political and defense sectors. This is especially due to the fact that, there are mutual territorial claims among the countries that are the members of this organisation. But economical interests, the Black Sea Unity have a positive impact on relations between these states. In comparison with other sub-regional groupings, another feature of the BSEC is that, unlike them, industrial cooperation (not trade) has already been set as basis for future activities in the declaration on the establishment of the organization. It is

reflected in professional approach to solving the overall economical problems of the region. (2)

International meetings of government and business circles confirm inclination of the Black Sea states to Sub-regional cooperation. But initial conditions for an open economy are fundamentally different.

During the transition from a centralized economy to a free enterprise Turkey's experience was different in the Black Sea region. Turkey's economy was closed for decades as it was in the Soviet Union. The agro- industrial country kept the remains of feudalism especially in agriculture. In the second half of the 1970s, economic reforms began on the basis of the export orientation strategy of the economy and foreign investment attraction. The development program of free economy was worked out taking into account the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund and it meant restriction of state control on the economy, promotion and competitiveness of the private sector and small business, formation of export production, expansion of cooperation and integration in highly developed countries. Western European living standards were determined as a reference and Turkey joining the European Union as the main strategic goal.

As a result of the liberalization of economy Turkey was transformed into the powerful state in the Middle East, according to a number of instructions it outstripped new industry countries of the Asia- Pacific region, the food problem was solved, and according to state and private investments the construction of settlements won the first place. The ultimate success of economic reforms was expansion of production and volatility of Turkish lira. After the collapse of the USSR, Turkey began to acquire markets in Eastern Europe and Central Asia successfully.

Despite being one of the founders of BSEC, Azerbaijan can not take an active participation in the work of the organisation because of the war between Armenia and

Azerbaijan. Though military operations were suspended in 1994, the current political and economic situation in the country in the post-war period did not allow establishing diplomatic relations with international organizations and developing them. The first participation of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, Heydar Aliyev, was in the BSEC meeting on October 25, 1996 and it was indicative of the fact that Azerbaijan's integration into the organization delayed because of the war. Heydar Aliyev, who was included in the heads of the BSEC member states for the first time, spoke about the prospects of the organization and the role it could play in the region in his speech. Heydar Aliyev met the Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and the President of Bulgaria during the visit. According to the results of the summit, the Moscow Declaration identifying the new prospects for the development of the BSEC was signed.

The next presence of the president Heydar Aliyev in The BSEC was on 28 April, 1997. Heydar Aliyev met and discussed with the heads of Ukraine, Turkey, Armenia, Romania, Moldova and Georgia as part of the business-conference of the member states of the organization held on "the new opportunities for the Black Sea region".

Heydar Aliyev participated in the next meeting of the heads of the BSEC member states held on June 4-5, 1998, in Yalta. Heydar Aliyev made a speech at the IV summit of heads of states and governments on 5 June. He spoke about the prospects of the cooperation within the framework of the BSEC and noted the possible cooperation spheres in his speech. In addition, Heydar Aliyev took part at the official reception organized in honour of the BSEC member states. The Yalta Declaration was signed in accordance with the results of the summit.

Heydar Aliyev took part in the meeting of the BSEC in Istanbul on 17 November, 1996. As a result of these meetings

cooperation projects, organizational issues, regional processes and economic cooperation were the subject of discussion. The last summit of the BSEC member states in which Heydar Aliyev took part was held on 24-28 June, 2002. Heydar Aliyev met the presidents of Georgia, Turkey, Romania and Ukraine during the summit held in Turkey on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the BSEC. As part of the summit meetings Heydar Aliyev discussed cooperation of Azerbaijan with the other BSEC member countries. Along with the participation of Heydar Aliyev in the summits of the BSEC, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and various Chinese officials also participated in the meetings within the framework of the organization.

The establishment of bilateral relations in the framework of the BSEC and the process of closer integration to the organization were successfully continued by President Ilham Aliyev. President Ilham Aliyev received the Secretary General of the BSEC Valery Chechevashvili on November 7, 2013.

Ilham Aliyev received the Ministers of Education of the BSEC member states on 16 April 2004.

As a result of an active policy of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, pace of development of relations between Azerbaijan and the BSEC was accelerated. For example, Ilham Aliyev received the heads of delegation assembled for the 10th session of Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States on April 30, 2004. During the meeting Ilham Aliyev valued highly the activities of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC member states and he noted that the projects that are of vital importance to the world were implemented with direct participation of our country in the region.

Ilham Aliyev received the Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat Tedo Chaparizden at the end of 2004, on 27 December. Ilham Aliyev noted that

Azerbaijan attached great importance to relations with the BSEC and he emphasized the active role of our country in the implementation of economic projects within the framework of the organisation. At the same time Ilham Aliyev noted that it was necessary to create new financial mechanisms for increasing the effectiveness of the organization.

President Ilham Aliyev received the new Secretary General of the BSEC Leonidos Khrizantopulos on June 12, 2006. Ilham Aliyev said that Azerbaijan expanded cooperation with the international and regional organizations, including the BSEC and spoke about the activity according to rapid development of the economy during the meeting.

President Ilham Aliyev took part in the summit of the heads of the BSEC member states (in Istanbul) dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the structure. President Ilham Aliyev, made a speech at the meeting, spoke about the activity carried out in the oil and economic sector and Azerbaijani lands occupied by Armenia. He noted that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict hindered the establishment of effective cooperation within the framework of the BSEC and of the peace in the region.

The 21st meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States was held on 22 October, 2009, in Baku. An event, dedicated to the passage of the presidency of the structure from Azerbaijan to Bulgaria, was held in the framework of the meeting.

A number of laws given impetus to the cooperation between the BSEC and Azerbaijan were passed by the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev signed a number of instructions. As an example, the following documents can be mentioned: the agreement on “The cooperation among the governments of the member countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization in accordance with fight against crime, especially its organized forms”, the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan about the approval of the additional protocol on “fight against terrorism”.

That organization was especially active during the years 1999-2007. The countries established that organization were not economically strong and were not in a passion to allocate necessarily resources for the activity of the BSEC, so that they turned the organization a relatively passive structure. Economic empowerment of the founders of the BSEC paved the way for financing activities of the organization and its more active functioning.

The economic crisis and the war between Russia and Georgia in the Caucasus region and attempts from the various powerful states to put pressure on the region weakened the activity of the BSEC and the integration processes within the structure: the cold relations between Turkey and Greece, the occupation of Azerbaijani lands by Armenia, Russia's support for Georgia's separatist structures to some extent influenced on the process of integration within the framework of the BSEC and weakened it too. Though the BSEC notified that, its attention would be focused on not political, but economical issues, political problems among some member states of the structure made implementation of economic projects impossible.

The expansion of bilateral economic relations of the BSEC member states and the implementation of the joint economic projects without involving the structure practically weakened the economic function of the organisation. All of those factors to some extent led to the development of relations between Azerbaijan and the BSEC with low-rate. Conditionally the history of the development of relations between Azerbaijan and the BSEC was usually divided into two stages: 1992-2003 and 2003-2009. In the first stage, the BSEC had recently been formed, so that its relations with Azerbaijan had an advisory character. But the relations had been characterized by the development of cooperation in concrete forms since 2003.

Diplomatic tactics of Azerbaijan within the framework of the BSEC was established taking into consideration the

characteristics of those historical periods. Azerbaijan used the BSEC as a political platform in order to realize economic cooperation and bring the truth about Karabakh conflict to the attention of the world community in 1992-2003. When final arrangements and structure of the BSEC were newly formed, using that organization for political propaganda was quite right policy.

Azerbaijan conducted outreach activity within the framework of the BSEC and cooperated in the sphere of energy resources, transport, education, fight against terrorism and etc. In short, using the cooperation with the BSEC, Azerbaijan as an independent political activist was able to establish broader ties within the framework of international relations, and to operate more actively. (3)

When Heydar Aliyev came to power in 1993, the Azerbaijani-Turkish relations entered a new stage of development.

When Heydar Aliyev came to power in 1994-1998, there were numerous meetings, consultations of the of state and government delegations of Azerbaijan and Turkey, mutual visits, correspondence and telephone conversations between the heads of the states.

In subsequent periods cooperation between the fraternal countries were also continued and developed in various fields. A new phase started in relations of Azerbaijan and Turkey after President Ilham Aliyev had come to power in 2003.

Relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are also very important to develop the independence of our country, to carry out its state-building successfully, to make substantial changes in the economy. Development of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey in all areas strengthens our position in the international arena too (4, 23).

The position of Turkey in the Caucasus is ensured mainly by Azerbaijan and Georgia which needs alliance with Azerbaijan and to establish close relations with it. Turkey's

interests in the Caucasus have always clashed with the interests of Russia, Iran and Armenia. Iran, Russia and Armenia consider Georgia as a serious rival, because it is located on the strategic transport-communication road which is directed westward from Azerbaijan and Central Asia. Therefore, under any circumstances they don't want to give the opportunity to Georgia to get rid of the zone of influence of them and establish good relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey (5, 562-563).

Representation of "the Turkish Petroleum" company in the consortium of foreign oil companies, which signed "Contract of the Century" on September 20, 1994, was a real manifestation of the development of strategic cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan always pays special attention to Turkey's active participation in implementation of the global economic projects carried out in the region. Turkish President S. Demirel also took part in the international conference held in Baku on September 8-9, 1998, on the restoration of "The Great Silk Road" which was important in creating of transport and communication relations among Europe and Eastern countries. Implementation of that project gave a new impetus to the deepening of the strategic partnership between the two countries. In addition, implementation of other economic projects and establishment of sustainable cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey in works, carrying out in the field of transportation of Caspian energy resources to world markets, serve to protect the interests of both countries (5, 568).

The most important step in establishment and development of bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and Bulgaria was taken, when the delegation headed by Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev visited that country officially on 29 June, 1995. Zhelyu Zhelev who met Heydar Aliyev during the visit said that his country showed a special interest in development of mutually beneficial cooperation with Azerbaijan

in all areas, and broad opportunities in economic fields, trade, culture etc. had to be used to strengthen relations between Azerbaijan and Bulgaria. And President of Bulgaria said that it was very important to create joint entities in a number of areas and he put forward some concrete proposals. He noted that organization of collection of “rye” branded buses in Azerbaijan, which were produced in Bulgaria, was one of the ways to develop cooperation between the two countries. Zhelyu Zhelev also said that Bulgaria was ready to negotiate on going the pipeline, which would be built for the export of Azerbaijani oil, to the vicinity of the Adriatic Sea passing through Bulgaria.

The first official meeting between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Romania was in December of 1994, in the OSCE summit in Budapest. The heads of the countries spoke about the need to establish and develop diplomatic relations, to strengthen cooperation between Azerbaijan and Romania and investigated the issue of establishment of diplomatic relations in the meeting. Romanian President Ion Ilyesku expressed his support for the territorial integrity and state independence of Azerbaijan and he assured our president that just demands of Azerbaijan in accordance with the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem would be protected by Romania. (6, 148)

The second meeting of the presidents of Azerbaijan and Romania was on March 12, 1995, in Copenhagen.

The presidents gave necessary instructions to relevant agencies of the two countries to establish bilateral relations between those countries, to prepare legal-normative documents and to coordinate the official positions.

The highest point of intergovernmental relations and ties is conditioned by the official visit of heads of states and important documents signed during this visit. In this sense, June 30, 1995 was the beginning of a new stage in the history of relations between Azerbaijan and Romania. On the same day Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev came to the capital of

Romania, Bucharest with the official delegation accompanied him. On the same day the President of Azerbaijan participated in the summit of the heads of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (The BSEC) member countries, and the program of the official visit to Romania started on July 1. (6, 150-151)

The participation of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization was connected with the facilities of the expansion of the transit functions and it was reflected in the initiatives for the creation of a special international union based on the realization of Eurasian transport corridor through the Black Sea.

The development of port-industrial complexes, international tourism, resort industry, rational use of biological, chemical and mineral resources, environmental and economic problems of the coastal zone, environmental problems of the sea and socio-economic development of the coastal cities are the basis of the economic cooperation in the field of marine farm.

At the end of the 1980s the Soviet Union was distinguished by scale of development of its sea transport, shipbuilding and resort recreation industry in the Black Sea. 54 % of cargo turnover of the trading ports and 71 % of sea transports of the country's foreign trade were in the Azov-Black Sea region. Especially the port-industrial complex Odessa developed intensively. The port-industrial complexes Novorossiysk and Azov-Don develop successfully in Russia. Novorossiysk port-industrial complex (Novorossiysk, Tuapse) specialized in providing exports of oil and oil-products and in ocean and coastal fishing.

Port-industrial complex in Georgia (Batumi, Poti) is formed on the basis of the foreign trade relations, and of providing the ocean and coastal fishing. Prospects of its development are associated with the export of Caspian oil and the development of sea ferry crossings. There are not major ports aiming at promoting foreign trade relations of the

country, on the Black Sea coast of Turkey. Ereğli-Zonguldak port industrial complex is distinguished with developed metallurgy and extraction and transportation of coal. The role of the ports Samsun and Trabzon has increased in the coastal trading with Russia and Ukraine.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Istanbul port-industrial complex (Istanbul, Izmit, and Golcuk) that was located on the coasts of the Bosphorus and Marmara seas began to play a leading role in the Black Sea trade. It is the largest commercial and financial center, port industrial complex and the main naval base in Turkey and Near East. 20% of the industrial products of the country are produced here. There are big shipbuilding and ship repair factories in this port industrial complex. Oil refineries and petrochemical plants have been located in Izmit.

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