

## The role of religious and geopolitical factors in the cold relations between Iran and Azerbaijan

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### Abstract:

*Azerbaijan after Iran, the second a country where Shiites form the majority of the population. In addition, the Azerbaijani part of Iran during the Achaemenid period until the Safavid state was formed. During this time the two nations shared history and heritage, cultural, social and economic lot together have accumulated. Azerbaijani population congruence with the North West of Iran, the other participants in this regard is noteworthy. Despite the commonalities and geographical proximity to good opportunities provides strategic alliance between Iran and Azerbaijan in the region; Political, economic and security are two of the government in recent years has been less favorable. Since the beginning of independence from the Soviet Union, relations between the two countries are affected by issues such as border disputes between Azerbaijani, Armenian and Karabakh war, Determine the legal regime of the Caspian Sea and Azerbaijan's close ties with America and Israel led to a cold. These factors, along with the growth of the Shia movements in Azerbaijan and security threats against Iran under different geopolitical orientation of the country. So that Azerbaijan together with Turkey, America and Israel, east-west axis, ran, Armenia and Russia have formed the axis of the North and South Caucasus; This, in turn, has increased levels of competition and tension between the two*

*governments. The present study describes the elements of convergence and divergence of the two republics, the religious and geopolitical factors affecting the relations between the tackles.*

**Key words:** Iran, Azerbaijan, geopolitical, Shiite

## **INTRODUCTION**

Azerbaijan is a country in the Caucasus region and in the passage between Europe and South-West Asia and the Caspian Sea in the East, the Black Sea in the West, Russia in the north, and Iran to the south with a 700 km common border is located. The country in the South Caucasus territories to size and population, relatively good fossil fuel resources, soil and water potentially has the greatest opportunity for economic growth and rising national power. In foreign relations with Iran, Due to geopolitical considerations and to validate the historical and cultural commonalities, the two countries have had together in the past one hundred years considerable communication. This interaction, whether under the political affiliation of Azerbaijan to the Soviet Union as part of the south of the country, And as a standalone entity it as a political unit that has followed the ups and downs. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union due to the lack of independence of restrictions on foreign policy on the one hand, And trying to separate the republics of the Soviet state in Central Asia and the Caucasus of religious identity. And history has created many difficulties in the development of relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, respectively. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Azerbaijan, there was good potential for the development of bilateral relations. However, there are some issues and political considerations and negative role and intervention of foreign powers as a deterrent variables, Prevents the development of

relations between the two countries to limit the capacity of the 1990s was complete( Vahedi, 2003: 234).

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

The approach of constructivism in international relations, identities, interests form. Interests are also the source of action and the actions and behaviors are in foreign policy. The government identity by changing norms and values (internally and externally) developed, And foreign policy interests of their countries and consequently changes. On this basis we can say that, what impressions Iran and Azerbaijan for each shape, And on their performance in foreign relations have, the identity of those governments which in turn influenced the foreign policy of the ruling beliefs. As the primacy of the word "Islam" on "Iran" in the definition of the Iranian government, reflects the fact that the Islamic trait determines the norms governing the political system in Iran (Chaboki, 2009: 68- 66). After the Islamic Revolution, revolution theory was introduced to Islamic countries. With regard to the fact that the majority of people in the Middle East were ruled by authoritarian governments and non-Muslim, it was a source of tension in Iran's relations with its neighbors. On the other hand the negative propaganda of the West and the East camp against the Islamic Republic and biased interpretation of the concept of revolution, And introduce Iran as a threat to regional authorities, design and implementation of foreign policy with the double whammy facing the building. Therefore, due to the fact that Iran's foreign policy played a crucial role in defining the concept of identity is constructivist theories to analyze the relations between Iran and Azerbaijan is capable of more functionality. On the other hand review geopolitical factors affecting the relations between the two countries, another section of this article. Geopolitics is the study of the geographic distribution of power among

nations. Geopolitics is a hybrid concept in which the three elements of geography, power and politics merge (Hersich and others, 2009: 230). Hofer German scientist believes that Bio stumbled prefix to the word Poloitics not in the sense of geopolitical front, But the prefix policy and its links with the soil dry and lifeless theories saved and connects with the ground (Mojtahidzadeh and others, 2008: 217). One of the variables involved in the formation of foreign policy is geopolitical issues. In other words, foreign policy is influenced by geopolitical constraints. Political behavior, strategies, objectives and national interests, security, territorial integrity and survival of the state of all the geopolitical realities affected. In the case of relations between Iran and the Azerbaijani should be noted that a function of various issues such as the proximity of the border, ethnic and religious homogeneity. Territorial discontinuity, landlocked, the need for Azerbaijan to Iran to reach global markets and maintain communication and provision of Nakhchivan is one of the issues, Which makes the Republic of Azerbaijan to the fact more sensitive geopolitical look. Against Iran to export agricultural products, oil and its export to North Caucasian and South America, Russia and Eastern Europe requires the use of roads Azerbaijan. In general, theoretical basis of this study combined analysis of constructivism in international relations between the two countries and the geopolitical realities of the day.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The main research direction, to describe the relationship between Iran and Azerbaijan is based geopolitical and Shiism. For this purpose, qualitative research methods to analyze the relationship between these components is required. But it's important, is only theoretical, And to collect and process data description method is used. The facts on the ground to analyze

and describe the way we work and use it for modeling the relationship is Iran against Azerbaijan. The main instrument information, library resources and documents.

## **FACTORS AFFECTING THE COLD RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN AND AZERBAIJAN**

In this article we intend to examine the religious, ideological and geopolitical factors in bilateral relations turn cold. Religious factors, differences in the structure and nature of political sovereignty is restored between the two countries. The role of the Shiite movement in Azerbaijan is also noteworthy. Geopolitical variables into two general categories of regional and trans-regional factors are divided. The origin of regional factors should be sought in the Caucasus and the presence and actions of America and Israel as trans-regional factors are cold relations between the two republics.

### **The Difference in the System of Government**

Iran and Azerbaijan are two types of different political system. While the political system in Iran and Islamic religious nature and overall direction of the country in the field of domestic and foreign policy will be determined on the basis of Islamic teachings, the political system of Azerbaijan with the pattern of the separation of the realm of religion in the West Laicism the policy has tended to. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former senior official of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan new leaders were not positive approach towards the role of religion in politics. Azerbaijan's political system and even the growth of political Islam as a threat to its integrity knows. In general, the difference between the nature of Iran's political system (religious) and political system of Azerbaijan (secular) preventive effects on the development of bilateral relations in the years following the Soviet collapse had. This is especially

concern the development of the Azeri-Iranian relations and their impact on the strengthening of Islamic tendencies in Azerbaijan can be explained (Amir, 2006: 264- 265).

### **Islamist Activism in Azerbaijan**

Shiite important factor in linking Azerbaijan with the Iranian people is. This factor has led to Azerbaijan, as a country with a Shiite majority finds its main objective to export the Islamic Revolution. The Azerbaijani people's desire to communicate with the Iranians, The cynicism about the intentions of Iran's Azeri officials added that republic and limits for the Islamists and the rapid shutdown and destruction of religious sites in the country. However, the authorities of the country with a secular trend toward Western values, Try the removal of Shiite culture of this land. Iran accuses Azerbaijan to shape the unrest in the country's Shiite community and has the support of Islamic extremism (101: 2008, Eastern Europe). It claims that since 1992 hundreds of young Azerbaijani embassy staff have been recruited by the Mujahideen against Azerbaijan to take action. Although Iran has denied all the charges, but such tensions represent a security outlook of both countries against each other.

### **Karabakh conflict**

Nagorno-Karabakh War officially began in February 1988 and the beginning of massive attacks on Azerbaijani territory by Armenia became an international crisis. Due to the conflict 50 thousand killed and about a million people were left homeless and issue them with a future status of the country of residence, Among the major issues were Caucasian ( RezaZadeh, 2010: 54). For this purpose the Iranian government steps in order to resolve the crisis in the 1991 harvest and even to Tehran invited the two leaders to negotiate a truce was temporary (Bagheri, 2010: 18). But at the same time using the opportunity

Armenian forces launched a huge offensive and occupied parts of Azerbaijan. The negotiations failed and undermined the political position of Iran in the Caucasus region entered the equation. Baku-time opposition propaganda in the media, the occupation of Shusha blamed on Iran. In the later stages of adopting neutral position, However, the positions of Russia and Armenia Azeri nationalists were approached and this causes discomfort. Iran has also orientated causing the protests in Tabriz and Tehran against Iran's regional policy was, that it had a negative impact in terms of national security. On the other hand Armenia because of Azerbaijan's diplomatic blockade, Turkey and America was to develop relations with Iran and at the same time increasing diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries has witnessed conflict and reduce the level of relations between Iran and Azerbaijan as well. From Iran to Azerbaijan as a country that is considered strategic relations with Armenia, And because of the increased complexity of relations between the two countries. How America in this conflict as well as the relations between added. America's opposition to Iran's membership in the Minsk Group or unwillingness America and Russia to mediate in the conflict in the Caucasus, Iran, actually weakened the position of Iran in the region. America pursuant to policy making isolation of Iran in the region and the world and the slogan "everything without Iran," Iran's effective role in this regard was prevented (RezaZadeh, 2010: 69).

### **The legal regime of the Caspian Sea**

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caspian Sea, as domestic water and was run jointly by Iran and the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and added three other countries neighboring the sea, Its legal status changed. Legal gap disputes between coastal states were beginning to divide the sea. In the legal regime of the Caspian Sea littoral

states it was common between the two major perspectives. First view of the lake knowing the Caspian, to mutual respect and common use of resources by governments lake is. Accordingly, each of the five littoral states can be specified, And is exclusive for the joint Caspian and the rest is owned by all stakeholders. The second view of the sea knowing it believes to divide the Caspian into national sections and separated from each other. According to this view seabed resources within each country based on the Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) belongs to that country. Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, divided border between Iran in the Caspian Sea, And Azerbaijan were disputed (ibid.: 83). New alignments took shape gradually in the sea in accordance with the three Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia with close up views mounting and trying to attract Turkmenistan, In this group tried to make its stance against Iran's Caspian legal regime to enforce. The Islamic Republic of Iran to geopolitical reasons, And having a common border with Azerbaijan, the highest stress on the legal regime of the Caspian Sea with the country. Iran initially said that prior agreements continue to govern the legal regime of the sea. How to deal with the issue of Iran's isolation was among the Caspian countries; also supported the principle of joint and joint and then against other littoral states on the principle of division, It stressed the sea. This is despite the fact that Azerbaijan wants to divide the Caspian Sea (substrate, surface and water space together with its natural resources) to the national sections under the full sovereignty of the littoral states. The history between the two is that the Azerbaijani government in 1988 to operate oil fields of Alborz agreements, Signed with oil companies. When the agreement was signed, Azerbaijan was met with no objections from Iran, but in 2001, Iranian officials stated that the oil fields of Iran. Subsequently, Iran gradually stronger stands on his position. In June 2001, Iranian military aircraft, Flights to over

Azerbaijani ships involved in exploration activities in this field were carried out. When this did not suffice Iran, the Iranian military fleet approached the ship petroleum to the opposite side, otherwise leave the region and Iran's use of military weapons is Rakhvatar (Mojtahidzadeh, 2008: 225). It is noteworthy that this event, Tensions between the two countries led to its highest level. However, if the final acceptance reasoning Azerbaijan Iran's share of the Caspian Sea will be 13%. Iran principles to determine the legal regime of the sea are as follows: (1) the need for consensus to determine the legal regime 2. The principle of legal equality littoral countries in all fields without discrimination 3. The closure of a maritime treaty between coastal states, 4. The non-militarization of the Caspian Sea 5. prioritize the protection of the environment (Zarghari, 2008: 92).

### **Turkey's geopolitical rivalry with Iran in the region**

In terms of geopolitics promoting pan-Turkism policy is the prime concern of Turkey in Azerbaijan. Turkey aims in the Caucasus will be as follows: 1. expanding sphere of influence in the Caucasus by promoting the idea of pan-Turkism and strengthen the connection to the ground immediately, And active participation in security and defense system of Azerbaijan and Georgia (2) increased geopolitical role in the Caucasus and Central Asia (3) to gain much share in regional markets 4 - model of secularism for the region, 5. The adoption of this model on their behalf and trying to contribute to the region's energy resources and transmission lines into global markets and meet the needs of Turkey's domestic energy, And obtaining the benefits of transit 6. rivalry with Iran and prevent it from getting model of governance in the region (Maleki, 1998: 49). Turkey, citing cultural and linguistic ties with countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus on the one hand and political emphasis on similarities, And ideological

Western secular states on the other hand, is trying to focus its reliance on the West, particularly the EU policies in these areas will introduce Europe. Turkey has been playing a role in the region is actually a combination of components, Geopolitical and strategic considerations. Turkey, unlike Iran immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union recognized the independence of Azerbaijan and the beginning of economic activity, And Azerbaijan began its cultural and Myka could help a worthy contribution to the economic and security equation Akhsas Azerbaijan to the (Asadi, 2006: 89). Turkey supported Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was also formally of economic sanctions and even in Armenia, By not allowing the passage of economic aid from Turkey to Armenia, supported. In 1992 as part of its military forces sent to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the threat of serious intervention in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh Azeris and Armenians that (ibid., 72). In contrast Azerbaijan to revive their culture to leave civilization and for the same reason cited by Turkey turns. Due to the separation of religion and politics in the Turkish model of governance that contrasts. The political system of the Islamic Republic is a suitable model for religious worrying trends is people of Azerbaijan. America also has to deal with Iran and Turkey, in order to prevent Iran's influence in the Caucasus, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project be implemented without Iran's role. However, Western experts as the best way of Iran, Economically knew. Turkey to achieve its goals range of cultural activities in the country have expounded. Such as television broadcasts, using satellites for television coverage, press releases, granting more than a thousand exchange student and seminarian, adjustments to the style of the Azerbaijani alphabet Turkey (ibid., 74).

## **Russia's role**

South Caucasus is part of Russia's territory near abroad. Russia has long borders and geographical proximity to the region's long history of presence and domination of the Caucasus region is the most powerful actors. The course of events has also shown that the solution of the political and economic crisis in the Caucasus will not be successful without the participation of Russia. At the end of the Cold War, Russia first tried to reunite the lands newly independent, Under the Commonwealth (ibid., 97). However, before the rise of Putin, on the whole range of Russian influence, despite the declining use of leverage that was in their possession (saghafi Ameri, 1379: 18). The power exercised by Putin in the Caucasus to Russia's foreign policy became a matter of priority. The most important strategic goal of Russia in the Caucasus, putting pressure on coastal states and Western governments to transfer energy sources, Of its territory and is hit Western companies and Russian partners. The relationship between Russia and Iran in the Caucasus must be said that the country with the world's superpower America has is very different to the competition need to help countries such as Iran. However, Russia also strengthened Iran's serious competitive with them to prevent active role in the affairs of the Caucasus. That's why Russia's role, Iran and Azerbaijan are so complex equations. In some countries that have a common border with Russia, Muslims make up a significant portion of their population and Russia to consider this issue to the elegance, the Islamic factor in foreign policy terms. That is why Russia hinders Iran's role in the Caucasus, especially Azerbaijan. Russia also in the field of energy, Russia Unlike other Caspian countries since the beginning of the legal regime that has no fixed position (Ndsa, 1381: 125). Changes in the positions of Russia in the late 1990s, And has been strengthened positions of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Russians initially said that the Caspian is a lake

and it does not apply to the 1982 Convention on the Rights seas and coastal states in the exploitation of its unilateral action is illegal. But in 1996 they were 45 miles off the coast of any country as the region's economic monopoly, And ownership of oil resources that developing countries accepted they started. They also bilateral contracts with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in the Caspian Sea division and the joint use of surface water, including shipping, fishing and the environment were signed. Finally, Russia has strengthened the positions of the other riparian countries through bilateral agreements, to prevent Iran achieving its goals have been raised in this case. Iran's mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not had much success. As with the participation of the parties in the present, Were negotiated, but a gradual abandonment of the talks, And lead Russia in this issue was the passivity of Iran in the Caucasus, so that Iran after the war has followed Russia's policy in the region.

### **America and Israel's influence in the region**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States think of the superpower's influence in the newly independent countries as far as China to expand political participation. In this context, in 1997 announced that the Caspian Sea as a region is America's strategic interests and therefore their Air Force, Deployed to Georgia and military cooperation with Azerbaijan began in 1999 (Asadi, 2008: 136). In subsequent years, with the construction of military bases in the country, threats to the security of Iran. Azerbaijan also, t was the very beginning of independence to pursue close ties with America to support the country's political and economic gain. Since the arrival of abulfaz elchibey deep connection between Azerbaijan, Turkey and America was established. America officials, especially senators and MPs in the Nagorno-Karabakh War was openly supporting Armenia. Because the Armenian lobby in

Congress, America in terms of providing assistance to the newly independent states of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan was sanctioned. After 11 September 2001 by the joining of Azerbaijan to the Group of 40 countries supporting global action against terrorism, America due to the need for the republic; it dates to the first sentence of George W. Bush for a one-year mandate revoked ( *ibid.*, 126). In 2003, Azerbaijan is the only Muslim country in providing multinational coalition forces to Iraqi forces helped the interim government appeared. With the Heydar Aliyev tried to balance a relationship with, America and Turkey on the one hand, and Iran and Russia on the other hand is established. This policy has been followed more or less the period of Azerbaijan elhham Aliyev also partly regional relations with Iran have shown. In general, relations between the two countries in the oil and gas sector, information technology, telecommunications and agriculture form. Expanded security cooperation after 2001. Paving the way for Azerbaijan's NATO membership and the establishment of military bases in the country and defense of such contracts. America in the exploitation of oil fields "Azeri", "Cheraghi" and "Guneshli" is working. It also creates oil pipeline, Baku-Ceyhan and operation of a natural gas field "Shah Deniz" The economic relationship between the two countries has been (Amir ahmdyan, 2003: 141). On the things America has acted against the interests of Iran in Azerbaijan, it should be noted that Azerbaijan because of opposition from America and Russia by building power transmission lines routes in Iran, the country withdrew from participation. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline with America, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran opened the competition with the route. Finally America to contain Iran in the Caucasus, is looking to expand NATO to the East with Israel and Lebanon to Iran intends symmetrically through the influence of Israel created in Azerbaijan. Israel's ally Azerbaijan and neighboring Iran. Israel to deal with Iran's

presence in Lebanon and specifically in Azerbaijan have attended. Israel's strategy in the development of relations with Azerbaijan can be in the form of general policies of the country since the beginning of the formation so far explained. Based on the teachings alliance of the periphery "Ben Gurion," Israel's first president, foreign policy should be based on the peripheral countries and non-Arab. Israel surrounded by hostile Arab countries and to develop political and economic relations with its neighbors, and so must the periphery, Be related. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Israeli authorities the opportunity to track the Union in Central Asia and the Caucasus were re-test. It should be noted that in Azerbaijan there is little history of anti-Semitism and the Jewish community in Azerbaijan unlike other republics of the Soviet Union has a long history. On the other hand unwavering support for America and, along with Turkey, the Caucasus and Azerbaijan has strengthened Israel's position. As well as oil and gas resources and benefits due to Israel's desire to make, Relations with Azerbaijan is, in such a way that the country is the second largest importer of oil from Azerbaijan. Among the many factors that has led Israel's presence in its territory of Azerbaijan also supports that include: 1. The fight against Islamic fundamentalism (Iran), 2. closely with America<sup>3</sup>. The acquisition of Israeli technology expertise 4. Buy oil 5. Access to powerful Jewish lobby against the Armenian lobby in America to retake the occupied territories in Karabakh Congress (ibid., 114). Israel has carried out various cultural activities to influence Azerbaijan. Including the launch of the Azerbaijani branch of the American Jewish community cultural center "GCC" in 2003 in Baku, Azerbaijan Jewish Women's Rights Association founded and taught Hebrew at the Baku State University, In the undergraduate and graduate levels (ibid., 56). Israel as well as in agriculture and telecommunications Azerbaijan has huge investment. The purchase of land near the

borders of Iran and Iranian businessmen from other commercial surrogacy Jewish rather than Israeli actions in order to participate more in the region (Central Asia and the Caucasus events, 1994: 283). Israel strongly support Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh War began. In 2002 security pact "Trabzon, Turkey" with the aim of expanding military alliance Turkey, And Israel, Azerbaijan and the Caucasus in the name of so-called Greater Middle East, to remove Israel from regional isolation signed (Kazemi, 2002: 22). The Azerbaijan-Turkey axis of America and Israel against Russia-Armenia-Iran axis, and it must be said consolidating Israeli presence and influence in Azerbaijan, increase the legitimacy of global and regional government through the establishment of relations with Muslim countries and regions with and prevent Iran's success in this field.

## **CONCLUSION**

Azerbaijan consistency religious, linguistic and economic with the Islamic Republic. There are poets Nizami Ganjavi, the Emperor Shervani and Muslim thinkers such as lankarani and nakhjavani and hundreds of other examples of proof of the existence of a shared history of the two nations of Iran and Azerbaijan. So Azerbaijan is part of the range of Iranian civilization, is Shiite. But in recent years the focus of America and Israel against Iran's influence and power has become. This caused many politicians and military sensitivity Iran. The risks of America expansion, And Israel in Azerbaijan is increasing in the republic's ethnic provocations. In this connection can be interventionist statements of Israel's ethnic Azeris in Iran and the world congress mentioned in the synagogues of Israel. Israel also in the field of psychological warfare and spreading rumors to incite ethnic issue has unleashed. Other risks Israeli influence in the country is spying activities of the Jewish

community of Azerbaijan against Iran, Some Israeli politicians and military experts because Iran's hard stance against his government believe that the intelligence (the hard part) Mossad in better psychological operations (war) will be effective. This witness acts of sabotage and espionage Mossad in the past few years that Iran claims these actions are done with the help of Baku and the territory of Azerbaijan. But the problems of Israel and other countries opposed to Iran's influence in the Muslim country of Azerbaijan, what should we do? It seems that the republic's strategic geopolitical importance for Iran's foreign policy has not been established. Instead of building strategic relations with Iran because this country has been seeking to establish relations with Armenia. While cultural and social affinities and shared more with the people of Azerbaijan. It is therefore essential that Iran's foreign policy in the Caucasus region has changed and the political and economic relations with Azerbaijan proceed. This official Iranian diplomacy against Azerbaijan and according to unofficial diplomacy, Or public plays an important role in this regard. By definition, public diplomacy efforts to influence attitudes and other nations to shape public opinion and foreign policy; So that the objectives and national interests to run out and find optimal routes will guide citizens in other countries. In this regard, identify and strengthen the non-official Iranian influence in Azerbaijan such as mass media (newspapers and press cinema-sound cinema), staff exchanges, cultural / academic (university professors, teachers, artists), Encourage businesses and the private sector to provide fields Azeri political elite to establish reasonable relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran can increase soft power in this country.

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