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Jahangir Hasanov

Baku State University

Master student

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3741-6918>

hsnovcahangir978@gmail.com

Azerbaijan-Israel Relations: Strategic Partnership in the Humanitarian and Militarism Sphere

Abstract

The article talks about the process of establishment and development of relations between Israel and Azerbaijan. At the same time, it is emphasized that Azerbaijan is one of the most reliable places for Jews throughout history. Azerbaijan-Israel relations continue on an upward trend. Along with the states, peoples are expanding their ties more and more. Undoubtedly, the Importance of the cooperation of these two states should be emphasized from a strategic point of view. It is not excluded that these relations with historical roots will be further strengthened. The importance of cooperation, especially in the military field, is one of the facts that should be noted. Azerbaijan is developing further in the military field, taking advantage of Israel's experience. Assuredly, in modern times, we can understand how important it is when we see the financial resources allocated by the states to the military. Azerbaijan is also Israel's largest oil importer. Cooperation in the field of oil export and import is important nowadays, especially considering the demand for oil after the Russian-Ukrainian war. As a Result, cooperation between both countries promises important prospects. In the future, we will see Azerbaijan and Israel having even closer friendly relations with each other at the state and people's level.

Keywords: *strategic partnership, Azerbaijan-Israel relationships, humanitarian assistance, defense technology, arms trade, diplomatic relations, antisemitism*

Cahangir Həsənov

Bakı Dövlət Universiteti

magistrant

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3741-6918>

hsnovcahangir978@gmail.com

Azərbaycan-İsrail münasibətləri: humanitar və hərbi sahədə strateji tərəfdaşlıq

Xülasə

Məqalədə İsrailə Azərbaycan arasında əlaqələrin qurulması və inkişafı prosesindən bəhs edilir. Eyni zamanda vurğulanır ki, Azərbaycan tarix boyu yəhudilər üçün ən etibarlı məkanlardan biridir. Azərbaycan-İsrail münasibətləri yüksələn xətlə davam edir. Dövlətlərlə yanaşı, xalqlar da əlaqələrini daha da genişləndirir. Şübhəsiz ki, bu iki dövlətin əməkdaşlığının əhəmiyyəti strateji baxımdan vurğulanmalıdır. Tarixi Köklərlə bu əlaqələrin daha da möhkəmlənəcəyi istisna edilmir. Xüsusilə hərbi sahəsində əməkdaşlığın əhəmiyyəti qeyd edilməli olan faktlardan biridir. Azərbaycan İsrailin təcrübəsindən yararlanaraq hərbi sahədə daha da inkişaf edir. Şübhəsiz ki, müasir dövrdə dövlətlərin orduya ayırdığı Maliyyə resurslarını gördükdə bunun nə qədər vacib olduğunu anlamaq asandır. Azərbaycan həm də İsrailin ən böyük neft idxalçısıdır. Neft ixracı və idxalı sahəsində əməkdaşlıq indiki vaxtda, xüsusən də Rusiya-Ukrayna müharibəsindən sonra neftə olan tələbatı nəzərə alaraq vacibdir. Nəticədə hər iki ölkə arasında əməkdaşlıq mühüm perspektivlər vəd edir. Gələcəkdə biz Azərbaycan və İsrailin bir-biri ilə dövlət və xalq səviyyəsində daha da yaxın dostluq münasibətlərinin olmasını görcəyik.

Açar sözlər: strateji tərəfdaşlıq, Azərbaycan-İsrail münasibətləri, humanitar yardım, müdafiə texnologiyası, silah ticarəti, diplomatik əlaqələr, antisemitizm

Introduction

The strong friendship and cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel are rooted not only in mutual economic and strategic interests but also in shared historical and cultural ties.

Since gaining independence, Azerbaijan has seen a deepening of its relations with Israel, which was among the first nations to acknowledge Azerbaijan's sovereignty. On December 25, 1991, Israel recognized the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on April 7, 1992. (). The Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Israel have signed 13 agreements to strengthen cooperation across various sectors. Azerbaijan's close collaboration with Israel, a highly developed and modern nation, in areas such as military, education, healthcare, and agriculture reflects the effectiveness of Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its reputation as a reliable international partner. Israel supported Azerbaijan during the 44-day Patriotic War, and this support played a major role in our victory. Also, during the "April Wars" that took place in 2016, Israeli officials supported Azerbaijan's rightful position. In 2016, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman called it "absolutely right" (Bashirova, Sozen, 2017, s. 2-3). In addition, Lieberman emphasized that Armenia bears responsibility for instigating the conflict in April 2016. The Armenian state, in turn, has consistently condemned Israel for supporting Azerbaijan and even recalled its ambassador to Israel in 2020 for supporting Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War. Israel's failure to recognize the so-called "Armenian genocide," and even the fact that Shimon Peres, when he was Israeli Foreign Minister, called it "nonsense" and noted that "equating it with the Holocaust is incorrect," have "irritated" Armenians. For other reasons (Müasir dövrdə Azərbaycan-İsrail mədəni əlaqələri, 2013).

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Israel's constant support for us in the international arena also shattered Armenia's fantasies of characterizing the war as a "religious" conflict. We can also note that religion played no role in the Garabagh War, and that some Muslim countries did not speak out when Armenians destroyed mosques.

In particular, cooperation between the two countries has been continued at the highest level in recent times. Thus, the opening of our embassy in Israel by the relevant decree of the President of Azerbaijan is a joyful event for both countries in terms of diplomatic relations (Abilov, 2009, s. 1-2). The main roots of these relations are based on the coexistence of the Jewish and Azerbaijani peoples. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also noted this in his speeches and during his visit to Azerbaijan, and expressed his pride in Israel being the first state to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan (AR Xarici ticarətin gömrük statistikası 2021, s. 1). Of course, relations between Azerbaijan and Israel are not directed against any state and only serve development and peace. At the same time, by the decree of the President of Azerbaijan, a Representative Office is being established in Palestine (in the city of Ramallah). Azerbaijan is one of the main guarantors of peace in the Caucasus and the world (Manafova, 2008).

Azerbaijani oil is among the key exports purchased by Israel. In the report for the results of January-September 2019, Israel ranked second in the list of countries to which Azerbaijan exports oil. It pays a significant part of its oil demand at the expense of Azerbaijani oil. In recent years, there have been some agreements in the agricultural sector, and Azerbaijan will benefit from Israel's experience in this area. Israel is also one of Azerbaijan's most important partners in the military sector. Israel's. Security and military cooperation played an important role in building Azerbaijan's military potential and creating a local defense industry in Azerbaijan (Əhmədov, 2014, s. 1-2). Azerbaijan ranks first in Israeli arms exports (Bashirova, Sozen, 2017, s. 1-2). Israeli weapons also played an important role in our victory during the Second Karabakh War. Of course, being an ally and cooperating with a state like Israel, which has a major say in the Middle East and the world, is important in terms of security in the region and the world. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor

Lieberman said during his visit to Hakkari in April 2012: "Azerbaijan is more important to Israel than France." This sentence speaks volumes about the close friendly relations between the two countries.

Azerbaijan is pleased to be friends with a state like Israel and mentors other friendly countries in restoring relations with this state. We can note the recent normalization of relations between the brotherly countries of Turkey and Israel, as the two countries have established diplomatic relations after years and frequent visits are now being organized. İlham Aliyev said at the international conference on "Geopolitics, Security and Economy Along the Middle Corridor": "We contribute to this with our efforts, initiatives, statements and policies. Therefore, I think that in today's world, traditional alliances can be expanded. For example, we have already discussed the Turkey-Azerbaijan cooperation format. One of the advantages of the Turkey-Azerbaijan cooperation format is that we have established joint activities. For example, countries with which Azerbaijan has better relations or Turkey has better relations also create additional potential. You know, Azerbaijan played a role in the normalization of relations between Turkey and Israel. We also played a role in the normalization of relations between Turkey and some Arab countries. We consider this part of our duty. Because if we have such relations, we want our friends to be friends among themselves" (Abilov, 2009, s. 2-3). The statement was made in a number that indicates that Azerbaijan has an important stake in the re-establishment of cooperation between the two states (Ambrosio, 2002).

The Jewish community has been living in Azerbaijan for over 2,500 years. Historically, Azerbaijan has stood out as one of the safest and most welcoming places for Jews.

Even during a period of widespread anti-Semitism, the Azerbaijani people have welcomed Jews and helped them live comfortably and peacefully ("Azərbaycanın yəhudi icmasının tarixindən", 2013, s. 3).

There are three Jewish communities in Azerbaijan: the Mountain Jews, the Ashkenazi Jews, and the Georgian Jews. The total Jewish population in the country is 16,000. Among them, 11,000 are Mountain Jews, with approximately 6,000 residing in Baku, 4,000 in Guba, and the remaining 1,000 scattered across other cities (Murinson, 2014).

There are 4,300 Ashkenazi Jews. Most of them live in Baku and Sumgayit (Avdaliani, 2017). Georgian Jews number about 700. The Red Settlement in Guba stands as a profound illustration of this principle. It stands out for its remarkable history and distinct culture. Established in the mid-18th century, it was under the protection of the Guba Khanate. The settlement in question, formerly called the "Jewish Settlement", was once even known as the "Jerusalem of the Caucasus" (Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin İşlər İdarəsi Prezident Kitabxanası). Over the centuries, they have preserved their culture and traditions, including the rare Chuvash language, despite all the difficulties. Jews and Azerbaijanis, who are always in friendly relations, show the world what tolerance means. Jews and other peoples living in Azerbaijan have always considered this place their homeland (Əliyev, 1997). It is no coincidence that among the first heroes who died in the Karabakh war, the name of our National Hero of Jewish origin, Albert Agarynov, is mentioned in particular. He destroyed a significant number of Armenians and their armored vehicles. When asked by a journalist, "What makes Jews protect the land of Azerbaijan?", he answered: "I am a child of this land, I was born here, I live here, nothing else makes me do it." This answer, in fact, reflects the attachment of the Jews living in Azerbaijan to our land and nation. Is clear evidence. Azerbaijani society also highly values Azerbaijani-Israeli relations. During the Patriotic War, the hanging of Israeli flags in houses, cars, and everywhere is a clear example of friendship between the states. Following the war, delegations of Israeli ophthalmological surgeons visiting Azerbaijan to treat injured soldiers significantly bolstered the nation's favorable perception of Israel (AR Xarici ticarətin gömrük statistikası 2021, s. 1-3).

Azerbaijan can be considered the center of tolerance in the world. Thus, even nations that were called enemies in world history lived together in prosperity and established family life in Azerbaijan. Every year, on the occasion of the Jewish New Year holiday "Rosh Hashanah", the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan sends his congratulations to the Jewish community in our country. Here, the activities of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, headed by the First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mehriban Aliyeva, should be specially noted. Thus, within the framework of the project

“Azerbaijan, the Address of Tolerance”, the “Chabad-Or-Avner” Educational Center was built for Jewish children living in Baku by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the “Or-Avner” International Foundation. The groundbreaking ceremony for the center took place on May 31, 2007, with Mehriban Aliyeva, President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, in attendance (Ambrosio, 2002, s. 1-2).

On October 4, 2010, President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev, his wife Mehriban Aliyeva, as well as President of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS and the Or-Avner International Foundation Lev Levayev attended the opening of the Education Center (“Azərbaycanın yəhudi icmasının tarixindən”, 2013, s. 1-2).

About twenty Jewish socio-cultural and charitable organizations operate in Azerbaijan. At the republican level, various organizations operate, including the “Jewish House,” the “Azerbaijan-Israel Society,” the “Azerbaijan Jewish Women’s Association,” the “Jewish Cultural Center,” and the “Azerbaijan branch of the Sokhnut International Jewish Organization,” among others. Azerbaijan’s friendly attitude towards Israel and local Jewish communities has significantly increased its influence in Washington. Thus, currently the Jewish lobby is considered the most powerful lobby in the world, and of course, their support for Azerbaijan further increases the prestige of our country in the international arena (Azərbaycan-İsrail münasibətləri, 2012).

Conclusion

The humanitarian ties between Azerbaijan and Israel are rooted in a strong historical foundation. The fact that Azerbaijanis and Jews have lived in friendly and cooperative conditions for centuries is one of the main factors determining these relations. There has never been antisemitism in Azerbaijan, where historically formed Jewish communities have developed freely from both ethnic and religious points of view, and have been able to preserve their traditions. Jews also actively participate in the political, socio-economic, and scientific-cultural life of Azerbaijan. Today, Jewish communities in the republic are also under the protection of the state and government. This tolerant attitude towards Jews in Azerbaijan is highly appreciated by both Israel and world Jews and has a positive effect on the development of Azerbaijani-Israeli Humanitarian relations. The role of the meetings of the heads of state in the formation and Development of humanitarian relations between Azerbaijan and Israel is Great. Humanitarian issues were also discussed during the meetings of National Leader Heydar Aliyev and his worthy successor President İlham Aliyev with Israeli leaders at various international events. In general, Azerbaijan-Israel humanitarian relations are distinguished by their high level, diversity, and richness, and at the same time, the Countries have additional potential to further develop these relations. The enhancement of humanitarian ties lays a solid foundation for fostering collaboration between Azerbaijan and Israel across various fields.

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