

PROSPECTS OF DEFENCE COOPERATION BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND GEORGIA

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Abstract

This article examines the main factors determining defence cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia, the directions of Azerbaijan-Georgia and Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey defence cooperation, and the impact of this cooperation on the security environment of the South Caucasus.

Keywords:

Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey, NATO, Caspian Sea, South Caucasus, transport-energy-communication projects, defence cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

Taking advantage of the historical conditions created by the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the peoples of Azerbaijan and Georgia expressed their national will and regained their independence rights. After the restoration of their independence, the foundation of the national development policy, future socio-political, socio-economic, defence-security and cultural-spiritual development of both states were laid, including the main priorities of the internal and foreign policy.

After regaining their independence, both states tried to find a way out of the difficult geopolitical situation and to formulate pragmatic political courses for their foreign policies. Azerbaijan, which has rich oil and gas deposits, is vital for Georgia in order to eliminate its energy dependence on Russia; also when it comes to alleviating the political and economic pressures of the powerful actors of the region, in terms of exporting the hydrocarbon reserves in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea to foreign markets and diversifying export routes, Georgia is very important to Azerbaijan.

Ensuring the stability and continuity of the activities listed above, as well as the transport-energy-communication projects connecting Asia and Europe (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, TAP, TANAP pipelines and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, etc.) cooperation between the two countries in the field of defence and security is rational in terms of joint protection.¹

The main factors determining the defence cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia

Institutionalization of defence cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia was made necessary by the following main factors:

- The expansion of relations between the two countries in all fields boosted our cooperation in the field of defence;
- Growing of separatist tendencies in the internationally recognized territories of the strategic partners located in the same region - the former Nagorno-Karabakh, Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) and Abkhazia regions and the occupation of approximately 20% of the territories of both countries (as a result of the Second Karabakh War, on November 10, 2020, based on the tripartite declaration signed by Azerbaijani, Armenian and Russian officials, Azerbaijani side liberated its occupied territories);
- A similar foreign policy strategy of both countries regarding security issues and reducing the influence on the region of other powerful actors in the South Caucasus;
- The desire to modernize the armies of both countries and strengthen defence-security cooperation with Euro-Atlantic security structures;²
- Expansion of cooperation within the framework of GUAM, as well as support for peacekeeping missions conducted under the auspices of NATO, UN and OSCE;
- The need to exchange experience in the field of military intelligence, as well as in other areas of defence, in order to prevent threats that may occur in the region;
- Joint protection of critical energy-transport-communication projects connecting Europe in the Caspian-Black Sea basins region and providing joint flexible response at any time of danger, ensuring stability and security in the region, etc.

Directions of Azerbaijan-Georgia and Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey defence cooperation

Bilateral and tripartite cooperation between Azerbaijan-Georgia and Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey is implemented annually, based on the “Bilateral Cooperation Plan between the Ministries of Defence of Azerbaijan and Georgia” signed by the parties, as well as a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding.³

Both countries contributed to the “Resolute Support” (RSM) peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan under NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program (PfP). Georgia, which is integrating into NATO, participated in the “Resolute Support” international security mission with the largest contingent among non-NATO countries.⁴

Within the NATO-Georgia substantive cooperation package, the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evalu-

1 Azad Garibov, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey: Advancing the Military Dimension of the Trilateral Partnership/ Dans L’Europe en Formation 2018/1 (n° 385), pages 37 à 44.<https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-europe-en-formation-2018-1-page-37.htm>

2 Cooperation with NATO.<https://mod.gov.az/en/cooperation-with-nato-028/>

3 Bilateral Defence Cooperation. <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/40/bilateral-defence-cooperation>

4 Cooperation with the United States. <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/119/cooperation-with-the-united-states>

ation Center operates in Georgia, and the representatives of the Alliance member countries support Georgia in fulfilling its obligations.⁵

Azerbaijan-Georgia and Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey defence cooperation is carried out in the following directions:

- Implementation of high-level mutual visits between the parties in bilateral and tripartite formats;
- In order to ensure the safety of transport-energy-communication projects, holding a computer-supported joint team-headquarters “Eternity” tripartite training every year;⁶
- Conducting the tripartite exercise “Caucasian Eagle” by the special forces of the parties;⁷
- Participation of the parties in the “Noble Partner” and “Agile Spirit” multinational exercises held annually in Georgia under the leadership of the United States and NATO;⁸
- Participation of the parties in summer and winter seasons training courses on basic, intermediate and full, held at Sachkheri Mountain Training School of Georgia;
- Conducting exchange of experience between the National Defence Universities of the Armed Forces (in this context, holding bilateral and tripartite meetings between rectors of the National Defence Universities of the parties and conducting sports competitions among the students of those educational institutions);
- Exchange of experience between the parties in the field of cyber defence in a bilateral and tripartite format;
- Exchange of experience in the field of military medicine between the parties, and etc.

CONCLUSION

Bilateral defence cooperation of Azerbaijan-Georgia and trilateral strategic partnership platform of Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey based on mutual trust, protection of transport-energy-communication projects connecting Asia and Europe, and joint flexible response at the moment of any threat, including peace and sustainable stability in the South Caucasus region, is critically important in terms of ensuring sustainable development, as well as the well-being and security of our people.

Finally, referring to the famous Arabian sociologist, philosopher, and historian Ibn Khaldun’s phrase “Geography is our destiny”, we would like to emphasize that, considering that we can’t change our geography and our neighbors, we should further develop our rational cooperation in bilateral and trilateral formats and form new cooperation priorities.

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