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Azerbaijan Green Technologies: Challenges and Opportunities

Perspectives Papers / By Dr. Frank Musmar

Implementing green technologies has become a critical global concern as nations strive to address environmental challenges and pursue sustainable development. Azerbaijan, a developing country with a growing economy, is no exception to this need. The implementation of green technologies in Azerbaijan is not without obstacles. Limited awareness and understanding of sustainable practices among the population and inadequate regulatory frameworks pose significant challenges. Moreover, financial constraints can impede the adoption of green technologies, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. Despite these challenges, Azerbaijan presents numerous opportunities for the successful implementation of green technologies.

The country boasts abundant renewable energy resources, such as wind and solar power, which can be harnessed to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Additionally, Azerbaijan benefits from a young and educated workforce, which can drive innovation and entrepreneurship in the green technology sector. Furthermore, the Azerbaijani government has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development by participating in international agreements and establishing environmental policies and programs. This commitment provides a favorable environment for the implementation of green technologies and the promotion of sustainable practices. Innovation plays a crucial role in overcoming the challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities associated with green technology implementation in Azerbaijan. By fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, Azerbaijan can encourage developing and adopting new technologies that address environmental concerns while driving economic growth. Collaboration between government, academia, and industry



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is essential to nurturing innovation and ensuring the successful integration of green technologies into various economic sectors.

Environmental Challenges in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is not immune to the impacts of climate change. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events pose significant risks to the country's ecosystems, agriculture, and infrastructure. These challenges further reinforce the need for sustainable practices and green technologies. Addressing these environmental challenges requires a comprehensive approach integrating sustainable practices and innovative solutions. Implementing green technologies can play a pivotal role in mitigating these challenges and promoting ecological sustainability in Azerbaijan. By adopting renewable energy sources and implementing sustainable agricultural practices, the country can significantly reduce its environmental footprint and contribute to global efforts in combating climate change.

Opportunities for Green Technologies Implementation

While Azerbaijan faces various environmental challenges, it also presents promising opportunities for successfully implementing green technologies. These opportunities can pave the way for the country's more sustainable and innovative future. One significant opportunity lies in the abundance of renewable energy resources in Azerbaijan. The government is blessed with ample sunlight, wind, and geothermal potential, which can be harnessed to generate clean and sustainable energy. By investing in solar panels, wind turbines, and other renewable energy technologies, Azerbaijan can reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and contribute to the global transition towards a low-carbon economy.

Additionally, Azerbaijan benefits from a young and educated workforce. The country has significantly invested in education and technical training, producing a skilled labor force capable of driving innovation and



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entrepreneurship in the green technology sector. This human capital can catalyze developing and adopting new technologies and solutions that address environmental challenges. Moreover, the Azerbaijani government has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development. The country has actively participated in international agreements and initiatives to promote environmental protection and sustainability. This commitment provides a favorable policy environment for implementing green technologies and access to funding and support from international organizations.

Furthermore, the government's focus on diversifying the economy presents an opportunity to integrate green technologies across various sectors. Azerbaijan can foster a culture of innovation and create a vibrant green economy by incentivizing businesses to adopt sustainable practices and supporting green technology startups. Collaboration between government, academia, and industry is crucial in capitalizing on these opportunities. By fostering partnerships and knowledge-sharing, Azerbaijan can leverage the expertise and resources of different stakeholders to drive innovation and facilitate the implementation of green technologies. This collaboration can also help bridge the gap between research and practical application, ensuring that green technologies are effectively integrated into the country's infrastructure and industries.

Key Challenges in Implementing Green Technologies

While Azerbaijan has promising opportunities for implementing green technologies, it also faces several key challenges that must be addressed to ensure successful implementation. If not properly managed, these challenges can hinder achieving sustainability and innovation. One of the primary challenges is the limited awareness and understanding of green technologies among the general population in Azerbaijan. Many individuals may not be fully aware of the benefits and potential of these technologies, making it difficult to generate widespread support and adoption. Education and awareness campaigns are essential to inform and engage the public, highlighting the



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advantages of green technologies and their positive impact on the environment and economy.

In addition, inadequate regulatory frameworks can pose significant obstacles to implementing green technologies. Clear and comprehensive regulations are necessary for a supportive legal environment that encourages investment in green technologies. This includes establishing standards, incentives, and policies promoting sustainable practices and integrating green technologies into various sectors. Financial constraints also present a significant challenge. Green technologies often require substantial upfront investments, which can be a barrier for businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises. Access to financing options, such as loans, grants, and subsidies, is crucial to overcome these financial barriers and incentivize businesses to invest in green technologies.

Furthermore, the lack of research and development infrastructure and support systems can hinder the innovation and development of new green technologies in Azerbaijan. Collaboration between academia, research institutions, and industry is essential to foster innovation and drive the advancement of green technologies. Establishing research centers and funding research and development initiatives can help address this challenge. Another challenge is the need for capacity building and skills development. Successfully implementing green technologies requires a skilled workforce with the necessary technical expertise. Providing training programs and educational opportunities can help bridge the skills gap and equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to work with green technologies.

Lastly, integrating green technologies into existing infrastructure and industries can be complex. Retrofitting buildings, updating manufacturing processes, and transitioning to sustainable practices may require significant changes and investments. Collaboration between public and private sectors



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and effective planning and coordination is crucial to ensure a smooth transition and minimize disruptions.

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges and Maximizing Opportunities

It is crucial to develop effective strategies that address these issues head-on to overcome the challenges and maximize the opportunities for implementing green technologies in Azerbaijan. By adopting the following approach, Azerbaijan can overcome obstacles and unlock the full potential of green technologies for sustainability and innovation.

- 1. Education and Awareness:** Implement a comprehensive education and awareness campaign to inform the public about the benefits of green technologies. This includes initiatives in schools, universities, and communities to raise awareness about the importance of sustainability and the potential of green technologies in addressing environmental challenges.
- 2. Regulatory Framework:** Establish clear and robust regulations that support the adoption and integration of green technologies. This includes setting standards, providing incentives, and implementing policies encouraging businesses and industries to invest in and adopt sustainable practices.
- 3. Financial Support:** To ease the financial burden of implementing green technologies, create accessible financing options, such as low-interest loans, grants, and subsidies. Encourage partnerships between financial institutions, government agencies, and private sector stakeholders to provide financial support and incentives for sustainable projects.
- 4. Research and Development:** Foster collaboration between academia, research institutions, and industry to drive innovation and the development of new green technologies. Establish research centers and provide funding for research and development initiatives focusing on sustainable practices and advancing green technologies.
- 5. Capacity Building:** Invest in training programs and skills development initiatives to equip the workforce with the necessary knowledge and expertise



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to work with green technologies. Collaborate with educational institutions and industry partners to provide practical training and internship opportunities in sustainability and green technology.

6. Public-Private Partnerships: Foster collaboration between the public and private sectors to drive the implementation of green technologies. Encourage partnerships and knowledge-sharing between businesses, government agencies, and research institutions to leverage resources, expertise, and infrastructure for sustainable development initiatives.

7. Integration Planning: Develop comprehensive plans for integrating green technologies into existing infrastructure and industries. This includes conducting feasibility studies, identifying areas for retrofitting and upgrading, and providing support and incentives for businesses to transition to sustainable practices.

8. International Cooperation: Collaborate with international organizations and participate in global initiatives to leverage expertise, funding, and best practices in green technology implementation. Seek partnerships with countries successfully implementing green technologies to learn from their experiences and adapt relevant strategies to the local context. By implementing these strategies, Azerbaijan can overcome challenges and maximize opportunities for green technology implementation. This will drive sustainability and innovation and contribute to the country's economic growth, environmental protection, and the well-being of its citizens.

Dr. Frank Musmar

Faculty| Academic Researcher | Middle East Politics Expert | Best Selling Writer | Advisory Board President | Dissertation and Proofreading specialist | Journalist (Member of the International Federation of Journalists)



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INSTC, Where Azerbaijan is Significant Transport Hub

Perspectives Papers / By Ulviyya Shahin

India intends to sign an agreement with Iran on the management of the Chabahar port within the next ten years and connect it with the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), where Azerbaijan is a significant transport hub. The Economic Times reports about this.

According to the publication, Indian Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal will visit Iran on Monday to sign the agreement. This is the first time that India has taken over the management of a foreign port.

The new contract will be valid for 10 years and will be automatically renewed. In the future, it is planned to connect India to the INSTC through Chabahar port.

This trade route is intended for the transportation of goods from India and the Persian Gulf countries through the territories of Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia, as well as connecting the railways of these three countries to Western and Northern Europe.

The main advantage of the corridor is the reduction of cargo delivery time by two to three times. Chabahar port is located in the southeast of Iran. In 2003, India and Iran agreed to jointly develop the port, but the project was later shelved due to international sanctions against Iran.

During his visit to Tehran in 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his intention to invest \$500 million into the construction of the port infrastructure of New Delhi.



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In May 2016, India signed a tripartite agreement with Iran and Afghanistan for the construction of the Shahid Beheshti terminal at the port.

Several questions arise: What is the significance of India's intention to sign an agreement with Iran regarding the management of the Chabahar port? How does connecting the Chabahar port with the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) benefit India and other countries involved? What will be the profit of Azerbaijan in this matter? Against the background of the position of India and Iran against Azerbaijan, in what direction can the situation change economically and politically?

While answering questions for **Azernews**, British expert **Neil Watson** thought that this move was extremely significant.

"It is the first move by a westward-facing country - India - to actually work with Iran, which is usually considered a pariah state. Furthermore, it signals Iranian trust in a country that has excellent relations with the US and is a significant constituent part of the BRIC nations, which are shaping the new world economy. It also indicates that Iran no longer considers Russia to be its saviour and default partner, particularly in light of its ongoing distraction with Ukraine and the ramifications of that."

According to him, the benefits to India and other countries - both regarding imports and exports - are absolutely huge.

"The INSTC has already minimised the transportation time for Chinese products and India and the other countries involved will benefit from reduced transportation time and logistical economies of scale. However, conversely, it benefits India, Persian Gulf countries, and Azerbaijan, as their products can be easily be distributed far beyond their traditional territory, even into Europe. This comes at a time when demand for hydrocarbons is changing and



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ultimately reducing and the need for all oil-rich countries to diversify their economies is pressing."

Watson noted that the benefit to Azerbaijan is the ability to import goods from China, India, and other countries more effectively, thereby increasing the range available in the country and ultimately reducing prices. Also, Azerbaijani goods can be exported far and wide very easily with optimised logistical costs, thereby making them competitive on the world stage.

"In my view, this signals a thaw in the challenging Azerbaijani- Iranian-Indian relationship. India and Iran have been under Soviet/Russian/Armenian influence for decades, but given Armenia's defeat and Russian withdrawal from the South Caucasus, it is time for these countries to work together and cohesively on a business footing. This can only serve to ultimately enhance diplomatic relations," the British expert concluded.

But **Dr. Frank Musmar**, Executive Advisory Board President for the University of Maryland Global Campus, an advisory member at the Abrahamic Accord Business Circle, and a Board Member at Paris Metropolitan University, highlighted India's adoption of a strategy akin to China's earlier "string of pearls" by investing in strategic ports overseas.

"This strategy will enhance India's global strategic presence and maritime access. India has secured investments in ports in Iran, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Oman and is planning to invest in the Philippines. The Indian Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, and the Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister, Mehrdad Bazrpash, signed the 10-year contract. The plan is to connect India to the INSTC through Chabahar port, where Azerbaijan is a significant transport hub, to reduce the cargo shipping cost and delivery time by two to three times.



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The instability caused by the ongoing war in Gaza and Houthi attacks on ships transiting the Red Sea has put the projected India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) on hold until further notice. India seems to be reassessing its position within international transport routes in this context. Attention is now turned towards an 'old acquaintance': the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Among the ports that were projected to connect on the west coast of India are Mundra (Gujarat), Kandla (Gujarat), and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (Navi Mumbai). In the Middle East, at least five ports have been shortlisted to be connected to the Indian ports, including Fujairah, Jebel Ali, and Abu Dhabi in the UAE and Dammam and Ras Al Khair ports in Saudi Arabia. "Multiple routes are being considered to reduce the freight load on one route prospectively. Accordingly, and if the situation calms down in the Middle East, India could utilise the Chabahar port to pursue the immature plan of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) without needing other ports."

Dr. Frank Musmar recalled that the port of Chabahar is located on the Makran coast of Sistan and Baluchistan Province, next to the Gulf of Oman and at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz.

"It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean. Being close to Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and others, it has been termed the "Golden Gate" to these landlocked countries. To India, it is the perfect plan to access markets in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Eurasia while bypassing its rival, Pakistan.

As for the other countries in the region, the INSTC will bridge different regions and pursue the intra-regional development of energy-rich countries. Its significance has grown immensely, particularly after the Ukraine war. Moscow and Iran could use the INSTC as a potentially vital economic escape route into the larger Asian region to circumvent Western sanctions prohibiting specific goods."



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Dr. Musmar asserted that the modern India-Azerbaijan relationship is built on cultural and economic ties that materialised via the ancient Silk Route.

"Azerbaijan became part of INSTC in 2005, and its well-developed railways and a strategic seaport in Baku paved the way for the Western Route of INSTC that runs west of the Caspian Sea. The Western Route links the Iranian ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas in the Arabian Sea to the vast railway networks in Eurasia, especially with the Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi or the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars transnational rail connections constructed under the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, which makes the Western Corridor of INSTC via Azerbaijan the most critical strategic part of the entire project for India."

"India recognised Azerbaijan's independence in 1991, and India's bilateral trade with Azerbaijan has been growing steadily in recent years. As for Iran, Iran and Azerbaijan will defuse the tensions and change rhetoric. The construction of a cargo terminal in Astara, on the Caspian Sea next to the Azeri border, by the end of 2024 and the latest development in the INSTC will help bridge the disagreements. The prize is clear: an opportunity to put aside their differences and tone down tensions to reap geo-economic dividends," Dr. Musmar added.

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Ulviyya Shahin
Journalist at AZERNEWS



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Azerbaijan Green Economy Plan Ahead of COP29

Perspectives Papers / By Ulviyya Shahin

The Conference of the Parties (COP) stands as more than just a gathering of nations; it serves as a pivotal global platform dedicated to addressing the pressing issues of climate change. As we approach COP29, there is optimism among world experts regarding the event's potential impact.

One of the key issues to be addressed at COP29 is the gradual reduction of dependency on fossil fuels. While proposals in this regard are not new, the urgency to implement stronger measures has never been greater.

Dr. Frank Musmar, Executive Advisory Board President for the University of Maryland Global Campus, an advisory member at the Abrahamic Accord Business Circle, and a Board Member at Paris Metropolitan University, answered several questions in an interview with **AZERNEWS**.

Q. Dr. Musmar, as we know, COP is not just an international event but a global platform dedicated to discussing climate change issues with the participation of world countries and finding solutions to similar problems. The most pressing issue is the readiness of world countries to address these issues. So, do you think the world is ready for this monumental task?

A. Countries worldwide face a critical challenge- the need to halve global emissions in the next eight years. Without this, by the 2040s, we will likely breach the 1.5°C climate guardrail. This could leave a world of 10 to 12 billion people grappling with global warming of 3°C or more by 2100. The vast majority of actively publishing climate scientists (97 percent) agree that humans are causing global warming and climate change. In December 2015, 195 states signed up to the Paris Agreement. This is not just a pact but a



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lifeline for international cooperation in tackling climate change, and countries are taking steps to deliver on it. The UK, Norway, France, and New Zealand are some of the countries that have legally committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

Steps in the right direction are being taken by countries that set targets for reaching net-zero emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases. Sweden and Norway were some of the first countries to legally commit to net-zero targets, and the UK was the first of the G7 major economies to do so with a commitment to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, closely followed by France. In 2020, China committed to reaching carbon neutrality by 2060, while South Korea and Japan committed to net zero emissions by 2050. Chile and Fiji are also among the countries that have proposed net-zero targets. Net zero targets have gained increased momentum, and analysts suggest that from November 2021, 90% of global GDP was covered by net zero pledges. These are not just targets, but beacons of hope in our fight against climate change.

Q. World experts are quite optimistic about the COP event. In your opinion, what exceptional significance can this international event have in reducing unemployment worldwide?

A. Reducing poverty through productive, decent employment is essential for greater environmental sustainability. Economic growth at the expense of environmental quality is unsustainable and self-defeating, even in narrow economic cost/benefit terms. Private enterprises can significantly contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the ecological footprint in general through labor-management initiatives resulting in greener workplaces. Gains are often quickly achieved at a meager cost and without significant capital investment.



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Moreover, the success of the whole range of mitigation policies and measures will depend on the capacities of those who need to respond and implement these decisions in enterprises and society. An effective response to climate change must mobilize millions of entrepreneurs and workers. Skill development among employers and workers and capacity building among government and administration services will significantly tackle climate change at all levels: national, regional, local, sectoral, and employment.

Q. Many countries currently depend on fossil fuels, and it is possible to reduce this dependency gradually. What new proposals do you think COP29 could put forward on this issue?

A. The proposals have existed since the first COP. However, the increase in green energy dependency is based only on the current policy settings of governments worldwide. If countries deliver on their national energy and climate pledges on time and as a whole, clean energy progress will move even faster. However, even stronger measures would still be needed to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 °C alive. Natural gas producers will still be looking to build their green energy supplies while investing in gas production because the globe still needs more gas now and in the coming years. For example, the EU is Azerbaijan's largest Gas trading partner, accounting for 66% of Azerbaijan's exports. Especially after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Azerbaijan has become an important energy supplier for the EU. In July 2022, Brussels and Baku agreed to more than double gas supplies from Azerbaijan by 2027. However, this would require expanding the transit infrastructure and gas production itself.

Q. How is Azerbaijan's role evaluated on a global scale regarding the organization of COP29?

A. The most global impressions are that the COP will be chaired for the second year in a row by a country linked to the oil industry, which could lead



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to a potential conflict of interest. Some other anti-Azerbaijan countries will play the cards of freedom of speech, human rights, and Armenia's relations as a critic of the country's policies to discredit Azerbaijan's legitimacy of holding the global event. However, holding the presidency of a U.N. climate summit has a massive influence on Azerbaijan's economic agenda and outcomes. The COP28 summit in the UAE has been the biggest yet, with more than 90,000 delegates registered.

Q. What support do you think Azerbaijan needs to continue its mission more successfully in the future?

A. First, to gain global support, Azerbaijan has to update and submit its national climate plan ahead of COP29. This plan is aligned with the 1.5C warming goal of the Paris Agreement. The last plan submitted to the UN pledged a 40 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 from 1990 levels, conditional on international support.

Second, advertise the latest agreements with the United States (a Major Player in the Russia-Ukraine war), which support boosting Azerbaijani gas exports to Europe. Both countries agreed to cooperate in the direction of US support for the expansion" of the Southern Gas corridor - the three pipelines that carry Azerbaijani gas exports to Europe.

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Ulviyya Shahin
Journalist at AZERNEWS



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Green Energy to Mitigate Geopolitical Conflicts

Perspectives Papers / By Ulviyya Shahin

The production of "Green Energy" plays a significant role in minimizing carbon emissions that create ecological damage, combating environmental pollution, and ensuring energy security.

The production and adoption of green energy are crucial in addressing climate change, mitigating environmental pollution, and promoting energy security. By transitioning to renewable energy sources, societies can reduce their carbon footprint, preserve ecosystems, safeguard public health, and enhance resilience to energy-related risks.

Speaking to **Azernews** on the issue, Dr. Frank Musmar said that diversifying the energy mix and ramping up renewable energy sources are among the most effective strategies to bolster energy security.

"This helps reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels and significantly mitigates the risk of supply disruptions due to geopolitical tensions or market instability. Energy security is crucial for economic stability, national security, and quality of life.

A reliable and uninterrupted energy supply can prevent geopolitical conflicts, support economic growth, and protect vulnerable communities from price fluctuations. However, green energy, solar, wind, biomass, bioenergy, geothermal energy, and hydropower are essential and vary depending on each country's technological abilities and strategic planning.

According to him, one of the biggest challenges facing the widespread adoption of green energy is the cost of production.



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“Currently, traditional fossil fuels are cheaper than renewable sources. While the price of renewable energy has decreased over the years, it remains higher than conventional power sources. The second obstacle is electronic waste. Green technologies, such as solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicle batteries, contribute to electronic waste, creating proper disposal and recycling challenges. Moreover, regulatory uncertainty and market resistance will remain obstacles.”

He stressed that the government should adopt several policies to support investment in and adoption of renewable energy technologies.

“Some policies will be public benefits funds for renewable energy, renewable portfolio standards, interconnection standards, output-based environmental regulations, net metering, feed-in tariffs, and financial incentives. It’s important to mention that policies may vary according to every country’s technological abilities and strategic planning.”

Dr. Musmar believes that green energy can mitigate climate change, reduce air pollution, enhance energy supply independence, and stimulate employment in various sectors.

“The investment spent on energy efficiency improvements drives direct and indirect job creation in labor-intensive industries such as construction, contracting, maintenance, and engineering. Moreover, switching to green requires less investment in the power sector than building new coal or nuclear power plants. That means a lower electricity price, which impacts everything in the economy. A lower electricity price reduces the cost of production and increases profit.”

“Accordingly, the demand for skilled workers in the renewable energy industry is rising. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, by 2030, the renewable energy sector could create up to 30 million new jobs globally.



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According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), there are over 8 million jobs in renewable energy today,” he added.

He considers that by promoting awareness and action, the involvement of individuals and communities becomes instrumental in facilitating lasting behavior change and adopting sustainable practices.

“Governments should design education that addresses the goals and values of green energy, supporting the understanding of green energy objectives and guidelines. Everyone at his level, government officials, researchers, practitioners, and teachers, may contribute to the green energy goals and future plans,” he concluded.

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Ulviyya Shahin
Journalist at AZERNEWS

Azerbaijan Stimulates Its Share in Renewable Energy

Perspectives Papers / By Qabil Ashirov

Green energy is a new concept with a broad horizon. The International Energy Agency noted that the capacity of renewable energy expanded by 50 percent between 2019 and 2024. The sector is new and promising. Innovations are discovered or invented in the sector daily, affecting daily life. Currently, 26



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percent of electricity demands worldwide are met by renewable energy, and it is expected to expand shortly.

The more the sector expands, the more opportunities for people emerge. According to the information, in 2021, at least 12.7 million people were employed in the renewable energy sector worldwide, both directly and in wider supply chains, with the majority of these jobs concentrated in China, Brazil, the EU, the USA, and India.

But above all, the most crucial point is to join efforts to prevent a dangerous natural disaster like global warming that the world is facing.

Speaking to **Azernews** on the issue, Dr. Frank Musmar noted that the Paris Agreement signed in December 2015 during the COP has the ambition to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 °C compared to the pre-industrial level. He said the world has used over 65% of the carbon dioxide budget, allowing it to stay within the 2 °C limit.

“To stay within this limit, global carbon neutrality should be achieved between 2055 and 2070. Renewable energy helps mitigate climate change, reduce air pollution, enhance energy supply independence, and stimulate employment in various sectors. Accordingly, the demand for skilled workers in the renewable energy industry is rising. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, by 2030, the renewable energy sector could create up to 30 million new jobs globally,” the expert emphasized.

Musmar pointed out that there is no doubt that China's Green Economy is a role model, with investment in research that propelled it to positive results and growth even in times of economic crisis. He said that green is an ethical investment avenue, and the financial impacts of green energy can be seen in creating new jobs, lowering consumer expenses, facilitating universal energy access, and reducing disaster recovery and rebuilding costs.



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“Azerbaijan has a vast solar and wind energy potential. In addition to the advantages of contributing to cleaning ambient air from pollutants with concomitant health benefits, especially in large cities, the local government is growing aware of the eventual finiteness of the national oil and natural gas reserves. Azerbaijan has many reasons to go green. First, the country's average per capita gas emissions level is high due to fossil fuel-intensive energy systems; with climate change mitigation efforts mounting worldwide, there is a growing desire to curb emissions. Second, fuel requirements for electricity and fresh water supply consume a significant share of domestic oil production; especially with current high oil prices, retaining oil predominantly for foreign exports is attractive. Third, over the coming years, the government will likely attempt to enhance the number of jobs in the private sector to meet an imminently increasing demand from new job market entrants in the rapidly growing young population.,” the expert said.

He added that Azerbaijan's currently installed renewable energy capacity is 4.5 MW. Azerbaijan began the installment of its first primary solar plant in 2023. The government of Azerbaijan aims to increase the share of renewables in total electricity production to 30% by 2030.

“Accordingly, switching to solar or green requires far less investment into the power sector than building new coal or nuclear power plants. That means a lower electricity price, which impacts everything in the economy. A lower electricity price reduces the cost of production and increases profit. Moreover, doubling the share of renewables by 2030 would bring a range of positive impacts, including an increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) by up to 1.1 percent, an improvement of welfare by 3.7 percent, and over 1 million people working in the renewable energy sector,” Dr. Frank Musmar concluded.

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Qabil Ashirov

Qabil Ashirov is AzerNews' staff journalist

Azerbaijan and China Collaboration on COP29

Perspectives Papers / By Ulviyya Shahin

Against the background of the expansion of relations between Azerbaijan and China, it is observed that many serious steps have been taken recently. The fact that Azerbaijan forms the main segment of the Great Silk Road between the East and the West and the growing interest of Europe in the Chinese economy in this regard stimulates the development of both political and economic relations between the two countries.

It is no coincidence that this year, Azerbaijan is hosting the COP29 international conference on climate change, which is the main goal of the world. From this point of view, the cooperation of a state with wide opportunities like China with Azerbaijan in this sphere is very important.

Hikmet Hajiyev, Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration, expressed Azerbaijan's eagerness to engage in discussions with China regarding COP29 issues in an interview with Global Times.

The relationship between Azerbaijan and China is characterized by mutual respect, cooperation, and growing economic ties. Both countries continue to explore opportunities for collaboration across various sectors, contributing to regional stability and development.



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Commenting on the views of Hikmat Hajiyeu, as well as touching on Azerbaijan-China relations, Dr. Frank Musmar, an Executive Advisory Board President for the University of Maryland Global Campus, an Advisory member at the Abrahamic Accord Business Circle, a Board Member at Paris Metropolitan University answered several questions in an interview with **AZERNEWS**.

Q: Mr. Frank Musmar, why does Hikmet Hajiyeu emphasize the importance of initial consultations and discussions with China regarding COP29 negotiations?

A: Relations and partnerships with China have been a top priority for Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev set new priorities for developing the country, which will focus on further digital transformation, renewable energies, economic and social development, and strengthening ties with friendly countries and partners such as China. Azerbaijan perceives China as a source of knowledge, expertise, and technological advancement.

It is worth mentioning that the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29) will convene in November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Accordingly, Hosting COP29 in Azerbaijan and receiving support from the international community demonstrates the respect and confidence that the international community has for Azerbaijan. The importance of initial consultations and discussions with China regarding COP29 appears from the People's Republic of China's position as one of the leading countries in the world. Therefore, having initial consultations and discussions to understand China's position in the negotiation process is crucial for Azerbaijan.

Q: How does Azerbaijan intend to collaborate with China within the framework of COP29, particularly concerning the voice of the Global South?



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A: As one of China's leading trade partners in the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan attaches particular importance to developing relations with China in all spheres. Azerbaijan is willing to collaborate with China within the framework of COP29 to emphasize the importance of the south corridor. One of the most remarkable examples of this successful cooperation could be observed in the field of economy and trade, which is fundamentally a result of the partnership created by the "BRI" Initiative. Azerbaijan was among the first countries to support this important global initiative, and our government has significantly contributed to its realization. In this context, projects like the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, initiated by Azerbaijan, and the commissioning of the Baku International Sea Trade Port in Alat, eventually resulted in the formation of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route.

Q: Can you elaborate on Azerbaijan's expectations regarding its role as the host of COP29 and its relationship with international partners, including China?

A: The Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in Azerbaijan is a highly significant event, with outcomes that hold relevance for Azerbaijan and the world. It will be a mark in history to comment on the new climate plans from Baku and determine whether the world can get back on a global emissions trajectory in line with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5C this century, as required by science under the Paris Agreement. China is leading the world in renewables. Wind and solar energy are expected to overtake coal in the country's electricity production capacity for the first time in 2024, making up 40% of total installed capacity. Accordingly, the relationship with China is significant to learn from their experiences in green Energy.

Q: How do you evaluate China and Azerbaijan's economic and political relations?

A: China recognized Azerbaijan's independence in December 1991 and established official diplomatic channels with Azerbaijan shortly after in April



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1992. President Ilham Aliyev has visited China five times since his tenure as president began in 2003. Azerbaijan's energetic foreign policy, for example, its term on the UN Security Council and its current role as head of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as its efforts to build international understanding and support for its position in the conflict with Armenia over Karabakh, are likely factors in Baku's engagement with Beijing. The geographic realities make Azerbaijan and China integral to each other's overland transit ambitions. From January to November 2018, the trade volume between China and Azerbaijan was 1.165 billion US dollars. In 2015, the two countries signed the Memorandum of Understanding of the Silk Road Economic Belt between China and Azerbaijan, which has provided opportunities for cooperative development.

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Ulviyya Shahin
Journalist at AZERNEWS

Political Dialogues and Regional Changes: Peace in South Caucuses

Perspectives Papers / By Prof.Dr.Nushaba Mammadova

Abstract: Background: Increasing regional wars and geopolitical changes in the world cause deep anxiety among people, the destruction of millions of people, displacement, refugees, and violence. What are the causes of wars? War is always a choice: resorting to arms instead of dialogue, compulsion instead of negotiation, coercion instead of convincing. We have our most



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excellent perspective: if war is a choice, so can peace be a choice. It is time for a renewed commitment to peace. In the presented article, we examined the results of international political dialogues in regional changes in the South Caucasus region in the last 200 years. It is a small part of the history of a nation, the people of Azerbaijan, which was under imperial slavery and politically persecuted for two centuries, and at the same time, it is an experience for the world.

Keywords: #South Caucasus #Eurasia #war #Peace negotiations #Political dialogues #ethnic-political conflicts #nations #IDPs #refugees

INTRODUCTION: Historically, the South Caucasus has always been the center of attention due to its geopolitical and strategic importance. One of the main points that increase the region's importance is the location of the Caspian basin on the transportation route of energy resources to world markets on the historic Silk Road. The many-branched Eurasian transport corridor passing through this region 2 even today increases the geopolitical and geoeconomic value of the South Caucasus. After the collapse of the USSR, the involvement of the independent states in the South Caucasus in ethnic-political conflicts created severe obstacles to the region's development. As a result, the area has become one of the world's most unstable and conflicted regions.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE KARABAKH WAR IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict has a 200-year history. A brief look at this history is necessary to understand the parties' positions in the negotiation process. Understanding the historical background that led to the great gulf between the positions in the heated disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan makes it possible to perceive the evolution of the conflict. It provides opportunities to predict possible future directions. Planned Armenian resettlement to the South Caucasus region was the beginning of the



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Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict: starting from the 20s - 30s of the 20th century, Tsarist Russia forcibly changed the ethnopolitical and religious landscape of this region by relocating Armenians to the lands of the South Caucasus, where the Turkish-Muslim population was densely populated. A new Christian ethnos was settled in the borderlands of Northern Azerbaijan with Iran and Türkiye. To destroy the historical statehood traditions of the Azerbaijani people, tsarist Russia began to carry out administrative-territorial reforms.

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ARMENIAN RELOCATIONS TO THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

After the signing of the Gulistan Treaty (October 12, 1813) and Turkmenchay Treaty (February 10, 1828), Armenians were moved to the lands of Azerbaijan very quickly and massively, and artificial territorial division was carried out after that. According to official sources, only in the years 1828-1911, more than one million 3 Armenians were moved from Iran and Ottoman Turkey to the South Caucasian region, including the territories of Azerbaijan. On March 21, 1828, by the decree of Emperor Nicholas I, the Iravan and Nakhchivan Khanates were abolished, and the so-called “Armenian province” was created for the Armenians who were being resettled from Iran and Turkey in the territory of these Khanates. Only Azerbaijani Turks lived in 1111 out of 1125 villages in the “Armenian province.” Russian general Paskevich admitted that after the Armenian resettlement, three-fourths of the population of the Iravan region were Azerbaijani Turks. In 1911, the well-known Russian researcher N. Shavrov, after researching the process of resettlement of Armenians to the South Caucasus and the number of resettled Armenians, wrote: “More than 1 million of the 1.300.000 Armenians currently living in the South Caucasus are not the local population of this land. We (i.e., the Russians - ed.) we brought and resettled them here”.

IN 1905-1906: CLASH BETWEEN TWO PEOPLES IN SOUTH CAUCASUS



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In the context of Russia's imperial policy in the South Caucasus, the roots of the enmity between the two nations appeared in 1905. These two nations, who did not hate each other, clashed over mastering several regions of the Caucasus. Steps were taken towards implementing the "Greater Armenia" plan by Armenian political organizations, including the "Dashnaksutyun" party and others. To de-Turkize the South Caucasus, acts of mass murder and bloody events were committed against the Turkish Muslim population. Despite the bloodshed on both sides, the tsarist authorities made practically no effort to stop the war.

IN 1918, FIRST ARMENIAN STATE IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION

On May 28, 1918, after the declaration of the first democratic republic of the East, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Armenian representatives aimed at 4 regions that were part of Azerbaijan. Due to the influence of foreign and international powers, on May 29, 1918, Iravan, the historical city of Azerbaijan, and its surrounding areas, approximately 9.5 thousand square kilometers of land, were given to the Armenians. Armenia was established on the land of Northern Azerbaijan - the territory of the former Iravan Khanate. After the establishment of the Soviet power, keeping Karabakh and Nakhchivan as part of Azerbaijan, the Zangezur / Sunik region was given to Armenia.

CREATED BY THE SOVIET REGIME: "NAGORNO-KARABAKH AUTONOMOUS REGION"

In 1923, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region was created. The Bolsheviks chose Khankendi as the capital city of NKAR and named this settlement "Stepanakert" in honor of the Armenian communist leader Stepan Shaumyan. For Armenian nationalists, these and other territories represented the legacy of Greater Armenia, which they claimed existed 2000 years ago.

1948-1953: FORCED DEPORTATION OF AZERBAIJANIS FROM THE TERRITORY OF THE ARMENIAN SSR



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Based on decisions of the USSR Soviet of Ministers No. 4083 dated December 23, 1947, and No. 754 dated March 10, 1948, more than 150.000 (one hundred and fifty thousand) Azerbaijanis were forcibly deported from their historical homelands in the territory of the Armenian SSR in 1948-1953. During the implementation of these decisions, the existing rules of repression of the authoritarian-totalitarian regime were widely applied, and thousands of people, including the elderly and babies, died because they could not endure the harsh conditions of relocation, drastic climate change, physical shocks, and moral genocide.

IN 1987-1989: FORCED DEPORTATION OF AZERBAIJANIS FROM THE TERRITORY OF THE ARMENIA

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict emerged in 1987-1988 when the Soviet government started its “perestroika” (reconstruction) policy. Armenian nationalists took advantage of the political instability within the Soviet empire to make territorial claims against Azerbaijan. In this process, Armenians won the support of Russian and Western liberals who defended them only for the sake of “Christian solidarity.” During these years, Armenian nationalists hoped that it would be possible to separate Karabakh from Azerbaijan and merge it with Armenia with this support. On December 1, 1989, the Soviet parliament of Armenia passed a decision on unification, but this decision was considered invalid by the Soviet central government. On the other hand, the leadership of Armenia carried out a complete ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis in Armenia in 1987-1989, which caused a similar flow of the Armenian population from Azerbaijan. In 1990, not a single Azerbaijani remained in Armenia.

FIRST KARABAKH WAR

After Azerbaijan regained its state independence (October 18, 1991), as a result of Armenia’s territorial claims, it entered the stage of the Karabakh war. Armenia launched a full-scale war against Azerbaijan in late 1991 and early 1992 to implement its illegal and groundless territorial claims. As a result, more than 20 percent of Azerbaijan’s territories were occupied by Armenia.



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The war has put an end to the lives of tens of thousands of people; cities, towns, and villages have been destroyed. More than one million Azerbaijanis were subjected to ethnic cleansing in all occupied territories. At the same time, at the end of the 1980s, more than 250 thousand Azerbaijanis living in Armenia were brutally expelled from their ancestral lands. 6 Since Armenia was able to occupy Karabakh and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan in 1992-1994, these “opportunities of perspective” were actively promoted by Armenia at all levels. The entire Azerbaijani population of the occupied Karabakh and other territories was subjected to ethnic cleansing; all cities and villages were destroyed to erase the traces of their historical existence.

WAYS TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT. INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS

International mediation efforts to settle the conflict began in 1991 with the Zheleznovodsk initiative. After joining Azerbaijan and Armenia to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1992, the OSCE, through the Minsk Group of member states of the Minsk Conference, began to make efforts to resolve the conflict. In February 1992, the first mission of the OSCE, in its report on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, confirmed that Karabakh is the territory of Azerbaijan and decided to convene a peace conference. In December 1994, at the summit meeting of the heads of state and government of the OSCE member countries in Budapest, a document on the appointment of the co-chairs of the Minsk Conference on the solution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was adopted.

The OSCE member countries (except Armenia) confirmed the possibility of resolving the conflict only under the conditions of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh remaining as part of Azerbaijan, and ensuring the safety of the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh (including Azerbaijanis living in the area). Thus 1992, the Minsk Group of the OSCE, led by France, Russia, and the United States, was established. On May 12, 1994, an agreed ceasefire was announced with the mediation of the Russian



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Federation in cooperation with the Minsk Group of CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). 7 After the ceasefire agreement was reached, many political attempts were made to resolve this conflict. Nevertheless, the “war or peace” situation continued over the years. In the mediation work of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, even though the co-chairs often declared that the status quo was unacceptable, they focused mainly on preventing escalation, not on the implementation of the resolution. Resolution No. 1416 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe regarding the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan was adopted on January 25, 2005. The draft resolution was prepared by the Political Affairs Committee of PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe).

The explanatory memorandum prepared by David Atkinson from Great Britain, a member of the Group of European Democrats, stated that in 1991, when the country was recognized as an independent state, Azerbaijan’s borders were internationally recognized and that territory of Azerbaijan included Nagorno-Karabakh. In this resolution, the co-founders of PACE once again emphasize that “a great part of the territory of Azerbaijan is still under occupation of the armed forces of Armenia, and the Nagorno-Karabakh region is still controlled by separatist forces.” At the same time, PACE expresses its concern that “the military operations and the ethnic hostility that started earlier and became massive have led to large-scale ethnic expulsion and the creation of mono-ethnic territories, reminiscent of the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing,.” Noting that “separation and independence of a regional territory from the territory of a state can be achieved only through a legitimate and peaceful process based on the democratic support of the population of this territory, not through an armed conflict that leads to ethnic expulsion and the de facto annexation of such territory to another state,” PACE rejects claims that regional areas inhabited by minorities have an absolute right to secede.

The legal and political bases of the conflict resolution are the norms and principles of international law, especially the principles of respect for the



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sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of international borders of states, as well as UN Security Council Resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) and 8 reflected in relevant documents and decisions of the OSCE and other international organizations.

The aforementioned resolutions of the Security Council were adopted in response to the occupation of Azerbaijani lands in 1993 and reaffirmed that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of the international borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan should be respected. The resolutions demanded the immediate cessation of all hostile acts and the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan. They assessed Armenia's actions as an illegal use of force contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The resolutions also formed the basis of the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group and its co-chairs and provided a framework for conflict resolution. Thus, in the decision adopted at the Budapest Summit on December 5-6, 1994, the OSCE member states, including Armenia and Azerbaijan, "confirmed that they are loyal to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and that the CSCE is committed to the peaceful settlement of this conflict" and welcomed the political support provided by the Security Council. Despite all this, the resolutions adopted by international organizations and the main requirements of the UN Security Council, including the demand to withdraw the occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, have not been fulfilled by Armenia.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Since 1992, various international organizations, NGOs, and private foundations have implemented 2nd track initiatives related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The proposed plan by OSCE for public diplomacy (2016) At that time, the Chairman of the OSCE and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Frank Walter Steinmeier, emphasized the importance of "Public diplomacy" regarding the settlement of the Nagorno-



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Karabakh conflict within 9 the framework of his 2016 visit to the region. He stated that meeting the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian community of Karabakh civil societies in the direction of solving the Karabakh conflict is an integral part of this big plan. F.W. Steinmeier prepared a plan of 7 articles for reducing violence in Karabakh, resolving the dispute sustainably and peacefully, and proposing proposals. The plan discussed strengthening the ceasefire regime and settling the conflict based on dialogue, confidence-building, and stabilization measures.

AZERBAIJAN - ARMENIA PEACE PLATFORM

On December 6, 2016, some human rights defenders and political experts in Azerbaijan and Armenia announced the creation of a platform for peace between the two countries. In an appeal to international organizations and the presidents of both countries, the Armenian and Azerbaijani founders of the platform called on “civilian public institutions, non-governmental organizations, public and religious figures, experts, scientists, and ordinary citizens of Armenia and Azerbaijan” to join the new initiative for peace, and as a result of this call, the platform the number of those joining continues to grow day by day. The April battles on the contact line created new realities in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and actually changed the status quo in two directions: 1) A part of the occupied lands of Azerbaijan was liberated. 2) Everyone, especially the Armenian people, understood that the ceasefire was very fragile and temporary and that it was confirmed that Azerbaijani lands could be liberated through war. In such circumstances, the presidents of both countries had a meeting in Vienna and St. Petersburg, giving everyone a little hope of solving the problem. However, the negotiations yielded no results because the Armenian leadership did not want peace. The representatives of the Armenian community, fearing the repetition of the events of April, appealed to their Azerbaijani colleagues and offered to discuss ways to resolve the conflict jointly. 10 On November 8, 2016, for the first time in the history of the conflict, a conference was held in Baku with the participation of 3 human rights defenders and NGO heads from Armenia, organized by the



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International Dialogue and Development Alliance. The platform's founders are 3 NGOs and human rights defenders from Armenia and 3 from Azerbaijan. The platform was signed by Vahe Avetyan (human rights defender), Vaan Martirosyan (Chairman of the National Freedom Movement public organization), Suzan Jaginyan (Vice-Chairman of the “Meridian” human rights organization, journalist) from the Armenian side, and Rovshan Rzayev (Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh Public Organization), Council member of the Union), Kamil Salimov (professor of Baku State University) and Shalala Hasanova (Chairman of the Public Union “Support for the Development of Public Relations”) from the Azerbaijani side. The number of people who wanted to join the platform was increasing daily. Dozens of examples can be brought to Armenian-Azerbaijani public diplomacy meetings. However, since Armenia did not reach a peace agreement, public diplomacy yielded no results. Ignoring the resolutions of the UN Security Council, Armenia directed all its efforts to the colonization of the territories it occupied under the cover of a ceasefire and peace process by means such as the transfer of people from abroad to the occupied Azerbaijani lands, the destruction and appropriation of historical and cultural heritage, the exploitation of natural resources and other resources. The lack of adequate response of the relevant international institutions to Armenia's provocations, aggressive actions, and illegal activities increased its sense of impunity. It drew this state to continue the policy of using armed force.

SECOND KARABAKH WAR

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan took counter-attack measures within the framework of the right of self-defense to repel the military aggression of Armenia and to ensure the safety of civilians and densely populated settlements deep in the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. 11 Azerbaijan acted on its sovereign land and took adequate and proportionate measures necessary to overcome the threat to its sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of its civilian population. As a result of the counter-offensive operation, Fuzuli, Gubadly, Jabrayil, and Zangilan regions,



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Shusha city, and more than 300 cities, towns, and villages of Azerbaijan were freed from occupation, and Armenia was forced to peace. The statement of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and the President of the Russian Federation, signed on November 10, 2020, ended the nearly thirty-year armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The implementation of this agreement ensured the cessation of all military activities and the liberation of the Agdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin regions of Azerbaijan from occupation. Ending aggression and occupation was a celebration of justice and international law. On January 11, 2021, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, stated: “The situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan arose for many years and was finally resolved. I am sure the Armenian side will not attempt to revise the November 10 Statement; both nations shall find the will and wisdom to think about the future and reconciliation. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has already become history, and now we must think about how to live together in the future, how to open transport arteries, and how to work on strengthening regional stability and security”. According to the tripartite agreement, Azerbaijan retained control over the territories it liberated from occupation during the war. Armenia returned the occupied territories of Karabakh to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan also gained a corridor to Nakhchivan, which borders Turkey and Iran. 2.000 Russian soldiers have been deployed as peacekeeping forces along the Lachin Corridor between Armenia and Karabakh for at least 5 years. At the same time, in January 2021, the Turkiye-Russia Joint Center for monitoring the ceasefire regime was established in the Agdam region of Azerbaijan. Creation of a reliable security environment in Azerbaijan, South Caucasus, economic development of the area, coexistence of the peoples of the region, etc., proposed to work on recognizing each other’s territorial integrity with development goals.

AZERBAIJAN'S PEACE PROPOSALS TO ARMENIA

The Azerbaijani side sent a new five-point proposal to Armenia to normalize relations. Offers published on 14 March 2022 include



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1. Mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of international borders, and political independence of states;
2. Mutual confirmation of the absence of territorial claims against each other by the states and taking a legal commitment that such a claim will not be raised in the future;
3. Refrain from threatening each other's security, threats, and use of force against political independence and territorial integrity in interstate relations, as well as other situations inconsistent with the goals of the UN Charter;
4. Delimitation and demarcation of the state border, establishment of diplomatic relations;
5. Opening transport and communications, establishing other relevant communications, and establishing cooperation in other areas of mutual interest. Although the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, has stated that he is ready to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan and start peace negotiations immediately, the peace agreement is still pending.

MODEL OF TOLERANCE AND MULTICULTURALISM OF AZERBAIJAN

Throughout history, Azerbaijan has been inhabited by various ethnic groups and confessions. It is currently recognized as a country that presents and promotes the model of multiculturalism to the whole world. Long historical experience shows that assimilation and isolation against ethnic groups and 13 confessions have never been applied in Azerbaijan. About 35 ethnic groups live there, and various non-Muslim confessions exist peacefully in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, cultural diversity and multiculturalism are applied in the context of state policy.

SUMMARY

Above, referring to historical facts, we noted that the relocation of Armenians to the South Caucasus and their massive resettlement here in different periods was due to the political interests of the great powers. After the 44-day Patriotic War, the Armenian community of Azerbaijan, especially the Armenian community in Karabakh, has a direct relationship with the multicultural security



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principle of the state. Thus, protecting national and religious communities within the country is an essential national security component. This new paradigm envisages multiculturalism within the country as a guarantor of political stability. Therefore, the principle determining multicultural security is preserving and developing the multicultural situation created by different ethnic, religious, social, political, economic, and intergenerational stratifications living in a single state. Of course, since the primary source of this situation is the factor of ethnic and religious diversity, attention was mainly focused on ensuring the coexistence of interests of individual ethnic and religious communities. According to the principles of Azerbaijan, the Armenian community, like other ethnic and religious groups that live and will live in the country, will have the same equal rights from now on.

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Prof.Dr.Nushaba Mammadova

Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences of History Institute, scientific researcher on the history of the world, President of the International Dialogue and Development Alliance.

PACE: The Future Consequences will not Harm Azerbaijan but Europe

Perspectives Papers / By Zuleykha Aghasieva

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) concluded that Azerbaijan has "not fulfilled major commitments" since joining the Council of Europe 20 years ago. A resolution was adopted today with 76 votes in favour, 10 against, and 4 abstentions. PACE claimed that there is a concern about Azerbaijan's ability to conduct free and fair elections (Claiming that Azerbaijan did not invite the organization to send representatives to observe the special presidential election in the country, the separation of powers, the weakness of its legislature and



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executive systems, the independence of the judiciary, the humanitarians and human rights concern over the Nagorno-Karabakh situation.

Axar.az reports that Dr.Frank Musmar, academic researcher, expert on Middle East geopolitics, bestseller writer, and Chairman of the Advisory Board, said these words in his statement.

Accordingly, Azerbaijan is considering exiting the Council of Europe if the rights of its delegation in PACE are not restored within a year, claiming that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has been turned into a toy of France and the Armenian lobby.

PACE resolution has no ground to support any of the claimed points against Azerbaijan and contradicts many resolutions and political stands from the same voters on the resolution, including France. Previously, the UN Security Council has reaffirmed the need to protect Azerbaijan's territorial sovereignty and emphasized that Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan. European countries, led by France, voted in favour of these resolutions. Moreover, Nagorno-Karabakh was occupied by an authority of the self-proclaimed separatist entity that is unrecognized by any country, including Armenia, who encouraged the residents to leave after being liberated by Azerbaijan.

The future consequences will not harm Azerbaijan but Europe. Europe depends on Azerbaijan as a key player in energy and international transport. The region's stability is vital to Europe's overall equilibrium, especially if Europe wants to avoid handing over its economic and political influence solely to Russia and China.

In 2022, Azerbaijan exported 11.4 bcm of gas to Europe; in 2023, this volume increased to 12 bcm. Azerbaijan exports gas to Europe from the Shah Deniz field via the Southern Gas Corridor and has plans to raise exports to 20 bcm/year by 2027 under a Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the



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European Commission in July 2022. Moreover, UK supermajor BP started gas production from the East-North flank on 13 February (The Largest BP's Caspian Sea's first subsea development operated subsea infrastructure worldwide, according to the company) as a part of the field's \$28 billion second development phase.

Considering the fair election, the last election in Azerbaijan represented a mature election system that it was the first election that has been held on the entire territory of Azerbaijan with 6,320,500 registered voters, and a total number of 49 polling stations were set up in 37 countries; mobile voting boxes were set up to enable sick people and older people to vote during the election process and ensure election transparency, 65,000 observers from 19 political parties accredited and monitored the election, and 512 international observers from 70 countries and 49 international organizations was certified for the election.

France's influence on the PACE decision was immature, contradictory to France's interests, and driven by lost influence in Africa and the Russian-Ukrainian war. To understand that Armenia has two allies: Russia and Iran. Neither country is on good terms with France and other Western countries. To highlight this point, Armenia utilized the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, playing the victim and actively sabotaging Russian efforts to control the situation to praise Western efforts, which are purely demonstrative and not even entirely pro-Armenian, except when the right spin is attached to them.

It is rather comical unless you are an Armenian immersed in all the non-stop propaganda. The Armenian propaganda describes the deployment of the Russian Forces as betrayal, while the deployment is killing and looting on the side of Azerbaijan. In reality, the status of the Russian troops there is peacekeeping, which means they're not authorized to take sides. At the same time, Armenia is begging the EU and NATO to send their troops, supposedly



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to replace the Russian betrayal, and running to support anti-Russian speeches from Western politicians, which are very opaque concerning the fundamental Azerbaijani-Armenian situation. It is very comical because Europe considers Nagorno-Karabakh to be Azerbaijani territory.

The West will never side with Armenia against Azerbaijan and Türkiye, both heavily supported by the US as a counterweight to Iran. Besides, Azerbaijan has oil, and Armenia has nothing. Also, if the Armenians think that Azerbaijan's territorial claims will be limited with Karabakh, they are dead wrong.

The problem with Armenia is that it has very little geopolitical importance and has become a sentimental value that has chosen to turn into a scorpion on top of the frog in the stream. Armenia's new supporters will change the relationship with Azerbaijan and USA. Azerbaijan and the United States belong to several international organizations, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Azerbaijan observes the Organization of American States and the World Trade Organization. Azerbaijan also participates in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace program.

Moreover, Relations between the United States and Azerbaijan have historically centred on energy transit, most significantly the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor. Officials in Brussels see the importance of diversifying energy imports away from Russia and considering Azerbaijan a reliable partner in the bloc's renewed emphasis on energy security. Azerbaijan's geography is a gateway to the countries of Central Asia and the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), also known as the Middle Corridor, which provides the inverse opportunity for Central Asian countries to reduce dependency on transit through Russia to the European market. Washington's strategic interest is to help develop



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alternative trade routes cooperating with Azerbaijan between Europe and Central Asia that minimize opportunities for Russian malign interference.
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Zuleykha Aghasieva

Zuleykha is a political analysts and writer at axar,az

The Upcoming Election Denotes Maturity of Azerbaijan's Democracy

Perspectives Papers / By Elnur Enveroglu

Western experts are increasingly interested in the processes as the extraordinary presidential elections in Azerbaijan approach. Many political experts expressed a very positive attitude to the preparatory works related to the elections. However, the main thing that attracts public attention is the democratic and transparent conduct of the presidential elections, as well as the attitude of the opposition parties to the process.

Speaking to Azernews, Dr. Frank Musmar, a political journalist from Texas, USA, shared his views on the upcoming presidential elections in Azerbaijan. When talking about President Ilham Aliyev's candidacy, he attracted particular attention by touching on some important points.

"President Ilham Aliyev's popularity in Azerbaijan has recently increased, reaching 75 percent of the population approval after the government took



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complete control of the liberated Garabagh region, representing a new era in the history of the country and succeeding in turning a republic once thought of as a Soviet backwater into a flourishing energy supplier to Europe,” doctor Musmar said.

He added that Azerbaijan, as the first post-Soviet country, is holding presidential elections as a country that has fully secured its territorial integrity.

“President Aliyev marked the 20th anniversary of his own time in power, and marking the victory with a new election for the first time in post-Soviet Azerbaijan in Garabagh is a perfect timing to announce the official start of the new era. Conducting the elections now will sum up this chronological period.

The upcoming election is necessary to represent the maturity of the democratic system of Azerbaijan globally. It is the first time an election has been held on the entire territory of Azerbaijan with 6,320,500 registered voters, and a total number of 49 polling stations has been set up in 37 countries; mobile voting boxes will be set up to enable sick people and older people to vote during the election process and ensure election transparency, 65,000 observers from 19 political parties have been accredited to monitor the election, and 512 international observers from 70 countries and 49 international organizations have been certified for the election,” he said.

Saying that the elections are by democratic rules, the US pundit added that the absence of the opposition in the elections in the country damages the principles of democracy.

“However, the opposition parties are all boycotting the race, which is a globally wrong move that many opposition parties make. If the opposition parties believe in Democracy, they should participate and help electoral authoritarian regimes transform into democracies because boycotting



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strategies tend to derail rather than promote democratization,” he emphasized.

At the same time, Dr. Frank Musmar characterized the concept of democracy in Azerbaijan through the eyes of the West. He also compared the approach to democratic principles between the West and Azerbaijan.

“Democratic elections are pivotal to a country's governance quality and reflect the free expression of the people's will. In Western societies, Democracy is considered liberal, a sovereign democracy limited by a constitution that guarantees individual freedoms and rights. However, these essential freedoms should not be subject to a democratic vote. Moreover, Democracy does not have to be liberal, and many nations today have illiberal democracies where voting continues, but liberal characteristics, such as an independent judiciary and free press, have been compromised.

Historically, and during Azerbaijan's first independent era, Azerbaijan created the first parliament with 11 parties and factions, including two Armenian factions within the parliament on May 28, 1918. Moreover, Azerbaijan was the first functional Democracy in the entire Muslim world and gave parity to women to receive the right to vote in Baku before most European and American countries.

Modern Azerbaijan society believes in Democracy, equal opportunity, the right to access information, and the right to association at the same level as the western democratic societies. Moreover, the independence and vibrancy of its mass media always protect transparency and fairness in elections. Azerbaijan succeeded in creating a democratic system after a long era of a Soviet-style political and economic system and foreign policy of their creation.

In the end, the expert also touched on the economy of Azerbaijan. He emphasized the efficiency of economic reforms in the country in the last few years and added that the Azerbaijani authorities managed to establish a



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balanced policy both in the region where it exists and outside the region through a perfect strategy.

“Azerbaijan has the largest population in the South Caucasus region and the fastest-growing economy in the world. Geographically, it straddles the border between East and West, enjoys positive relations with Turkey, Russia, the United States, Israel, and the European Union, besides France, and possesses essential oil and natural gas resources, which enhances its global importance. Azerbaijan's budget has increased 30 times in the last 20 years, decreasing the poverty level in 2022 from 44.7 % to 5.5 %, increasing the average monthly salary 12 times from 45 \$ to 543\$, and increasing employment by 25 %, from 4 million people in 2017 to 5 million people in 2023. Moreover, the GDP of the non-oil sector has grown 3.4 times, showing the success of diversification of the macro-economy.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy is a delicate balance between pursuing national interests, restoring territorial integrity, and expanding its international influence. However, the ongoing global competition over the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea and the ambitions of regional powers to maintain influence in this strategic location are always a challenge to foreign policies. The country's cooperation with the United Nations programs, NATO peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, public diplomacy and education programs, and engagement on other non-sensitive issues are winning foreign policies that are giving the country the international community's support on its foreign policy objectives. Maintaining military de-facto neutrality helps ensure Azerbaijan's safety and alleviates potential pressures and risks from regional powerhouses,” Dr.Musmar concluded.

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Elnur Enveroglu

Elnur Enveroglu is AzerNews' Deputy Editor-in-Chief of AZERNEWS

Azerbaijan's Relations with PACE; Changing realities

Perspectives Papers / By Rustam Taghizade

After the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan's influence increased both in the South Caucasus and the world. Along with the countries cooperating with Azerbaijan with increasing military power and economy, some countries took biased steps against it.

There are reasons for the aggravation of relations between Azerbaijan and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. On September 20, 2023, after the complete restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereign rights on its lands, France in Europe made provocative comments against Azerbaijan under the pressure of the Armenian diaspora. According to France's claim, the Armenian population of Karabakh was forcibly removed from Karabakh. But the reason is that the Armenian population left these lands of their own accord. They did not want to accept Azerbaijani citizenship. When analyzed in general, since 1991, the Armenian population of Karabakh committed the Khojaly genocide and other inhumane murders against Azerbaijanis. Armenians understand very well that coexistence with Azerbaijanis is not possible. Because Azerbaijan and other world countries saw the crimes they committed in 1992-1993, how can they live together with the Azerbaijani people? PACE, however, does not want to see these processes and publishes statements as if Azerbaijan does not want to fulfill its obligations.



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Of course, a peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2024 can be concluded. However, this depends very much on Armenia's will. Azerbaijan has created new political realities in the region. Armenia should understand these realities. In addition, Armenia should work together to open the Zangezur corridor. Through the Zangezur Corridor, Armenia can benefit economically in the 3+3 format. The presence of the Russian factor in the region also works against Armenia. The location of Russia's 102nd military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri and the protection of its borders by Russia reduce Armenia's maneuverability. Although the power of Armenia is Western-oriented, it has not yet completely separated from Russia. It is no secret that Armenia has the most trade relations with Russia.

At this point, PACE should cooperate more with Azerbaijan instead of speaking harsh rhetoric. France has a significant role in spoiling PACE relations with Azerbaijan. France wants to strengthen itself in the South Caucasus over Armenia. The Russian factor hinders France in this process.

I think Azerbaijan should abandon the balance policy and formulate a new political strategy. The geopolitical processes in the world, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the conflict in the Middle East require this. Currently, Azerbaijan has highly developed relations with Turkey. Azerbaijan and Turkey, which are ethnically the same, continue cooperating in the political and military spheres. This cooperation causes dissatisfaction in some countries in Europe. The increase in dissatisfaction is logical. Because, understandably, there are rivals against the growing power. Azerbaijan should now be more cautious and take pragmatic steps.

Rustam Taghizade

Political scientist and analyst from Azerbaijan



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Armenia; France Modern Colonization Strategy

Perspectives Papers / By Qab Ashirov

France continues to deteriorate its relations with Azerbaijan due to the influence of the Armenian lobby in Paris. It is worth noting that the 44-day war became a milestone in Azerbaijani-French relations. When Azerbaijan liberated its territories from Armenian invasions, France stopped pretending to be a mediator in the peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan and commenced to conduct a more aggressive foreign policy. In a nutshell, adopting the anti-Azerbaijani resolution by the French Senate exemplifies it.

However, Paris does not have enough leverage to impact Azerbaijan. First of all, France, military-wise, is not strong enough to confront Azerbaijan over Armenia. Most importantly, Paris does not have military infrastructure in the Caucasus.

As regards economic power, France's activities are limited as well. In 2023, the GDP of France amounted to \$3.2 trillion, making up 3 percent of the world's GDP. With 3 percent, France cannot impact any country in the world, let alone Azerbaijan, which gradually turns into the energy hub of Europe. Secondly, Azerbaijan and France do not have close economic cooperation. In 2023, the trade turnover between the two countries totaled \$0.5bn, equaling 0.9 percent of Azerbaijan's foreign trade turnover. Azerbaijan's exports to France amounted to \$133mn which made up 0.39 percent of Azerbaijan's total exports.

Generally, in a confrontation with Azerbaijan, the losing side will likely be France, beyond all exaggerations. Neither France nor Azerbaijan have big



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mutual investments. However, several French companies are operating in Azerbaijan, and the biggest is TotalEnergy. The company has been present in Azerbaijan since 1996, where it is a 50% partner of the Azerbaijani SOCAR group in the Absheron gas and condensate field and holds a 5% stake in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline.

Given the present situation and the inadequate steps taken by the French Senate against Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijani parliament adopted a statement and proposed expelling French companies from Azerbaijan, including Total. In this case, Total will be deprived of gas extracted in the South Caucasus and of Azerbaijan's green energy initiative, in which the company is eager to participate. In short, as the statistics show, France's resources to use as leverage against Azerbaijan are limited. Paris thinks it can impact Baku through Azerbaijan's business partners, such as Italy, Israel, Hungary, etc. Considering the share of France's GDP in the world's GDP, its external debts, and so on, it also seems impossible. For example, despite the USA adopting the 902 amendment against Azerbaijan, neither Israel nor Italy (the biggest trade partner of Azerbaijan) stopped cooperation. Thus, it is not reasonable that the countries that did not follow the USA will follow France.

So, why is France so interested in deteriorating its relations with Azerbaijan? Speaking to **Azernews** on the issue, a French political analyst, Dr. Frank Musmar, noted that the resolution's multiple points have no political meaning except for the last one, which emphasizes "the importance of taking the most severe measures, including seizing the assets of Azerbaijani leaders, embargoing gas and oil imports from Azerbaijan, and imposing sanctions in response to Azerbaijan's military operations".

"Undoubtedly, the Armenian diaspora in France is playing a toxic and dangerous game (the resolution was co-authored by the head of the France-Armenia friendship group in the Senate, Gilbert-Luc Devinaz) that is against peace in the South Caucasus. France's blind support for Armenia will inflate a



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new regional conflict. The Armenian diaspora in France plays the victim of “Turkish/Azerbaijani aggression”. Besides, Armenia is smaller than both Azerbaijan and Turkiye and the question of the “Armenian genocide” lingers above the relationship and gives Armenia, in sum, the victim role in that conflict. Accordingly, France is still thinking about colonization and imperialism, especially after losing the African ex-colonies one after another. France does not want to get out of the big boys club and does not want to fight for it; it will choose a new colony (Armenia) to fight its war against Azerbaijan. France wants to be able to hold on to some influence, especially since the rest of the countries in the Middle East are not fond of France, and the United States and Russia have already stepped in for Iraq and Syria. Lebanon is too weak to exert influence, and France could not influence Israel or Iran,” he said.

The pundit added that France will do whatever it takes to escalate the aggravation against Azerbaijan. Armenia is the last point of influence that was left for France. Moreover, France was gradually getting in dire need of oil and gas supplies, and by intervening in the area, the colonizing French mind still wanted to play the role of the pirate in the South Caucasus, trying to get whatever the superpower left behind: Baku Oil.

“Azerbaijan must impose sanctions on French companies, especially Total Energy, and partner with other superpower-represented gas companies. It’s all about gas and several other players in the energy field. The relationship between France and Azerbaijan will not improve. It will keep getting worse due to the influence of the Armenian Diaspora in France and due to France's Gas and Oil Target at Baku,” said Dr. Frank Musmar.

Qabil Ashirov

Qabil Ashirov is AzerNews’ staff journalist



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Azerbaijan Entering 2024 with a Growing Economy & Achievements

Perspectives Papers / By Leyla Rasulzade

2023 was the year of many accomplishments for Azerbaijan.

Rising to the challenge, the country did show resilience and well-calculated politics and has "planted" plenty of future successful seeds into the local economy. So much so that the number of business-oriented and business-supportive events, projects, training, and seminars grew in numbers. Baku - the capital city- has been under the spotlight so often with mega international events during 2023 that it spontaneously trended on all global platforms for several days.

Keeping the pulse running, 2023 closed with the most significant event confirmation in Azerbaijan - Cop29 confirmed to be hosted in Baku in 2024. Number of guests is expected to be close to 1 million attendees in 10 days. Let's dive into some significant numbers and facts we have been observing during 2023:

- In 2023, 12 enterprises started operating in the industrial zones managed by Azerbaijan's Economic Zones Development Agency. These enterprises have invested 79 million USD in industrial zones, and 744 permanent jobs have been created.
- In Q4 of 2023, the financial flow in Azerbaijan amounted to 25,4 billion USD, 12.4% more than in the same period of 2022.
- Entrepreneurial activity in Azerbaijan has become large-scale. Improvement of the environment of free competition, simplification of administrative procedures, tax



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concessions and subsidies, financial support to the real sector, and other measures are implemented in Azerbaijan. As a result, business activities in the country have expanded in the past period. Azerbaijan's business people also actively participate in projects implemented in foreign countries.

- Currently, 11 trading houses, four wine houses, and four branches of trading houses of Azerbaijan are operating in foreign countries and actively promoting countries' export potential in many F&B categories.
- The rate of economic growth in Azerbaijan has increased during 2023: 41.2 % of GDP production in Azerbaijan was under the category of - industry, 9.9 % trade, vehicle repair, 6.3 % transport and warehousing, 6.1 % agriculture, forestry and fishing, 5.0 % construction, 2.4 % tourist accommodation and public catering, 1.7 % information and communication fields, 18.0 % fell under other sectors, net taxes on products and imports made up 9.4 % of GDP.
- By the end of 2023, Azerbaijan will have exceeded the country's 10% share of alternative energy supplies. With the government paving the way for the new industrial era of 4.0, the below projects have been ongoing:

2022: The government agreed with UAE Company Masdar to construct solar and wind power plants. This is currently ongoing.

2023 Q1: Executive Agreement on implementing a wind project up to 1.5 GW in the sea and MoU on developing energy storage systems in the Republic of Azerbaijan agreed with Saudi Arabia's "ACWA Power" company.

2023 Q4: OPEC Fund has approved a \$50 million loan to ACWA Power Wind Azerbaijan Renewable Energy to support the construction of a 240 MW Khizi-Absheron wind power plant, strengthening the electricity supply, diversifying the energy mix and reducing carbon emissions.

What's Next?

Expansion. More green areas. I am becoming MEGA city with multiple city centers available for various communities.



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Baku was never meant to remain small. Since 1998, plans have been set in motion to expand Baku to make it more comprehensive and add more communities around it.

The Baku 2040 Project is the official master plan for the long-term development of Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan. It was officially adopted in 2020 and covers 20 years, from 2020 to 2040. The plan aims to transform Baku into a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous city with a thriving economy, a high quality of life for its residents, and a solid cultural identity.

Key objectives of the Baku 2040 Project:

- **Developing a polycentric city:** The plan envisions Baku as a network of interconnected urban centers, each with a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses. This will help to distribute the city's population and economic activity more evenly and make it more accessible and livable for everyone.
- **Creating a new urban economy:** The Baku 2040 Project aims to diversify the city's economy beyond its reliance on oil and gas. The plan focuses on attracting new industries, such as technology, tourism, and creative industries, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Improving mobility:** The plan calls for a significant overhaul of Baku's transportation system, focusing on developing a more efficient and sustainable public transport network, reducing car dependence, and promoting walking and cycling.
- **Protecting the environment:** The Baku 2040 Project emphasizes safeguarding the city's environment and natural resources. The plan includes reducing air and water pollution, improving waste management, and increasing green spaces.
- **Preserving cultural heritage:** The plan recognizes the importance of Baku's rich cultural heritage and includes measures to protect its historical buildings and sites.

Challenges facing the Baku 2040 Project:

Despite its progress, the Baku 2040 Project faces several challenges, including:



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- Securing funding: Implementing the Baku 2040 Project will require significant investment from the public and private sectors.
- Ensuring effective governance: The plan's successful implementation requires strong coordination between government agencies and stakeholders.
- Raising public awareness: The public needs to be more informed and invited to participate more actively in the Baku 2040 Project and its benefits to support its implementation.

Overall, the Baku 2040 Project is an ambitious and visionary plan for the future of Baku. If it is successfully implemented, it has the potential to transform Baku into a world-class city that will be fully sustainable.

Leyla Rasulzade

Business Development Manager (BDM) | Consultant & International Communication Manager

Baku-Paris Relations: France and Zangezur Corridor

Perspectives Papers / By Elnur Enveroglu

A sharp incline in France-Azerbaijan relations towards tension remains high on the agenda. While Azerbaijan is a country allied with the European Union, such a situation with France also raises a number of questions. Most importantly, it is very interesting how long this tension will last and what will this end up with.



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First of all, we addressed our questions to Dr. Frank Musmar, a political analyst and expert in the Middle East, Turkiye and the Caucasus, in order to find out more about the causes of the tension. Speaking to **AZERNEWS**, the expert explained the fact that France has recently been more active in the center of the South Caucasus with several reasons.

“First up, we should agree that France has the world's third-largest Armenian diaspora community behind Russia and the United States. It has the largest Armenian community in the European Union, with estimates of nearly 750,000 people and more than half a million French-Armenian citizens.

Moreover, the private sector is also represented extensively, with approximately twenty French local governments involved in twinning schemes and cooperation projects with Armenia in various areas, including tourism and healthcare. In addition, France is the second-largest foreign investor in Armenia, behind Russia,” the expert said.

However, the reasons that attract France to the South Caucasus cannot be limited to this. Of course, France’s spoiling the relations with an ally of EU like Azerbaijan, is not a simple matter. Clarifying the issue from different angles, Dr. Musmar noted that the Russian factor also plays an important role here.

“Increasing the support to Armenia includes the Russian, Great Britain, and Turkish dimensions. France and NATO, in general, are working to distance Armenia from Russia despite being a member of the Moscow-led CSTO military bloc, especially after Russia and President Vladimir Putin neglected to support Armenia in the conflict against Azerbaijan,” he said.

The political analyst also touched on the long-standing contention between France and Great Britain.

“France's historical geopolitical rivalry with Great Britain is an underestimated



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driver of its actions in the South Caucasus. Intense rivalries across multiple continents marked the opposition between the French and British Empires. Despite being NATO allies today, Parisian diplomacy remains imbued with deep-rooted competition with London,” Dr. Musmar added.

Approaching the issue from another angle, the expert also connected it with the Ottoman history, as well as with the further development of the modern Turkiye-Azerbaijan relations. Dr. Frank Musmar noted that France's jealousy of Ottoman and its surrounding geography arose in the 16th-19th centuries. “This is the historical fact that the Ottoman Empire and France dominated the Mediterranean from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

Initially, they formed alliances against common adversaries, but as France's colonial ambitions expanded, they began to conflict with Ottoman interests in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The relationship with modern Turkiye continued to be sensitive, especially considering the military alliance between Turkiye and Azerbaijan. More importantly, the Zangazur Corridor is a Turkish corridor that could unite the Turkish race and help the economies of Azerbaijan and Turkiye flourish. The tract is running along Armenia's border with Iran. France is monitoring Baku's forces to make the move to capture it, such a move that could inflame a broader conflict in the Southern Caucasus, an area where all French rivalries have interests, such as Turkiye, Russia, and Iran, all have core strategic interests,” the expert emphasized.

Of course, Azerbaijan does not want any critical issues to emerge in relations with France or the West. Even at a moment when the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan is progressing, more support from the is needed across countries. According to Dr. Musmar, the West's support for the processes in the South Caucasus is primarily determined by its interests.



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“The Western superpowers always welcome normalization of the relationship with any country; however, it all depends on what the West will gain and lose from such a move. The secret of the success of any Diaspora is the corporations. The West is operated and controlled by corporations, and the Armenian diaspora is always successful in influencing the political decisions of the West by getting involved in business with the corporations that are considered the real decision-makers in the Western world,” he noted.

It is interesting whether the change of the current government in France can affect the relations with the region relatively. In response to this question, the expert said that Western policy is unchanged.

“The Western foreign policies do not change; they follow a line of continuations that every government adheres to. However, the policy application looks different for the inexpert from one government to another,” he concluded.

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Elnur Enveroglu

Elnur Enveroglu is AzerNews' Deputy Editor-in-Chief of AZERNEWS

The Current and Future Policies in the Caucasus

Perspectives Papers / Dr. Frank Musmar

The Current and Future Policies in the Caucasus



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The caucuses' war is both a humanitarian catastrophe and a significant failure for the decaying European Union to be a strategic actor. The Caucasus area became a battleground for other international players, including Turkey, Russia, Iran, and Israel. Because the South Caucasus is just north of the Middle East, south of Russia, and east of Turkey, it is unavoidable that the changing Middle East will impact it.

For Iran, Dr. Bekir Atacan mentioned that "Iran has the natural right to stand with Armenia against Azerbaijan because 65% of Azerbaijan's territory is inside Iran. The rise of Azerbaijani power is a future threat to the survival of the Iranian state."

For Israel, Iran has been critical of Armenia's relations with Israel; Iran's threat will predominate for years to come, and Azerbaijan has much more to offer than Armenia. Accordingly, Dr. Atacan mentioned that "Israel is a historical ally of the Turks against Europe. It is allied with the Turks, and the Turkish-Jewish relationship is ancient and has strategic and historical depth. It defends Turkey, Northern Cyprus, and Azerbaijan in all international forums, is present today in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, and defends the Turks against the Armenians.

Azerbaijan had no history of antisemitism, and it is the land of the most prominent Jewish community in the caucuses, while in a survey of 1,900 people in 2005 by the Armenian Centre for Strategic and National Research, 5.2 percent of the Armenians said that Jews were responsible for organizing the Armenian Genocide along with Turkey.

The Israeli option to attack Iran's nuclear sites using Azeri air bases and spy drones might help Israeli jets pull off a long-range attack. The most prominent Israeli weakness to attack Iran's nuclear site is refueling, reconnaissance, and



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rescuing crews. The Azeri alliance could tilt Israeli thinking on the feasibility of acting without U.S. help.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is a secular Shiite Muslim relatively independent of Turkish foreign policy decisions despite their "brotherly ties." Israel has a sizeable Azeri-Jewish population, and Israel and Azerbaijan have a strategic partnership that has been successfully blossoming in economic, cultural, developmental, and military cooperation. Azerbaijan has a 2,500-year-old Jewish community that has benefited from religious tolerance. Azerbaijan was the rare majority-Muslim country to recognize Israel after the fall of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, no country in Eurasia has closer or warmer ties with Israel than Azerbaijan. The relationship between the two countries is astonishing because Azerbaijan is a majority Muslim country over the 25-year history of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Israel. Moreover, the top Jewish-American organizations quietly support Azerbaijan.

The Israeli economy in the Middle East is the most developed, requiring uninterrupted and secure energy supplies. Since 2010, Israel and Azerbaijan's core relationship has been based on a weapons-for-energy calculation. The latest \$1.6-billion arms deal involving dozens of Israeli drones, Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile and rocket system for Azerbaijan's Caspian Sea crude is well documented. Israel received almost half of its oil needs from Azerbaijan. Like Israel, Azerbaijan views Iran as a geostrategic rival. It reportedly agreed to allow Israel to use its territory to conduct intelligence operations and even airstrikes against the Islamic Republic. Baku is concerned about Iran's expansionist plans, genociding the Iranian Azeri minority, supporting Armenia, and the historical occupation of the Azeri land. Israel considers Azerbaijan an alliance regardless of Azerbaijan voting in favor of the Palestinians in the U.N. Israel understands that Azerbaijan maintains ties with other Muslim countries that might feel uncomfortable with its partnership with Israel.



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Armenia

Armenia is cut off from most of the region and depends on trade and economic survival with Russia and Iran, which are hardly friends of Israel. Yerevan's relations with Iran and Jerusalem's with Turkey have generated an atmosphere of mistrust between the two capitals. Armenia has consistently voted in favor of the Palestinians at the U.N. Many Armenians in Arab countries have supported "resistance" against Israel even though Israel is home to an Armenian population.

Future Policies

The Geopolitical changes and peace agreements in the Middle East and the region necessitate a new Israeli strategy to maintain ties with Azerbaijan while expanding them with Armenia. Jerusalem will adopt a balanced policy in the area, cultivating a profound friendship with Armenia without abandoning Azerbaijan's alliance.

On November 9, 1991, Türkiye became the first state to recognize the Republic of Azerbaijan, which declared its independence on August 30, 1991. The diplomatic relations were established on January 14, 1992, and the Consulate General in Baku was upgraded to the Embassy level. The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSC) mechanism was established in 2010 at the Presidential level to strengthen bilateral relations further.

Moreover, with the Şuşa Declaration, which was signed on the occasion of the visit of the Türkiye President to Azerbaijan on June 15, 2021, Türkiye's willingness to elevate the relations to the level of alliance has been recorded. The Şuşa Declaration was approved by the Parliaments of both countries on the 1st and 3rd of February and entered into force. Turkey and Azerbaijan have strong economic, military, cultural, and linguistic ties. President Erdogan said the countries are "one nation, two states."



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Israel's peace agreement with UAE and Bahrain created an alternative oil supplier competing with Baku oil. Baku should consider different approaches with Israel and Turkey to keep the Turkish and Israeli arms supplies flowing. Accordingly, Israel may balance arms supplies to Armenia and Azerbaijan, empowering the Israeli and NATO role in the area and offset the Russian and Iranian influence in the caucuses.

Israel's gas production is anticipated to exceed demand by 80% in 2025, enabling Israel to become a gas exporter in the Eastern Mediterranean. (The Karish field, which has recoverable reserves of 1.7 tcf [60 bcm], Connecting the Levantine basin with Europe via Turkey Cehan port will change the equation of gas corridors in the area.

2016 Israel proposed transporting natural gas to Europe via the Azari-based southern Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline [TANAP] through Turkey. Accordingly, on June 26, Israel and Turkey agreed to normalize their relations, hoping that a diplomatic rapprochement might smooth the way for an agreement on transporting Israeli gas to Turkey. Such a deal would diminish Turkey's gas dependence on Russia and help Turkey diversify its sources of energy supplies. Turkey was not included in the agreement to build the EastMed pipeline signed by Greece, Cyprus, and Israel, which never reached any maturity level according to the complexity of applying the project from cost to geographic standpoints.

In October 2020, MED-RED Land Bridge, an Emirati/Israeli-owned company, and EAPC, the Israeli-owned pipeline company, signed a memorandum of understanding to store and transport oil from the UAE to Europe. The pipeline, which will run across Israel from the Red Sea port of Eilat to the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon, will significantly cut the time and expense needed to transport fuels from the UAE to Europe.



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Israel, being at the heart of the growing geostrategic war conflict in the Middle East and East Mediterranean region, expects the potential for conflict in an already unstable region, expanding the power play to include Cyprus, Greece, France, Italy, and Libya, as well as Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, the caucuses and Russia.

It's essential to mention the **Zangezur corridor**, which, if implemented, would give Azerbaijan unimpeded access to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic without Armenian checkpoints via Armenia's Syunik Province and, in a broad sense, for the geopolitical corridor that would connect Turkey to the rest of the Turkic world. Armenia denies the project and refuses to permit the corridor to pass through their territories. However, President Erdogan said, "If Armenia does not pave the way for the corridor, where will it pass? It will pass through Iran commenting that Iran currently considers this positively. So, it would be possible to pass from Iran to Azerbaijan."

Iran objected to the project, repeatedly hinting that it would not allow its border with Armenia to be obstructed. Armenia's fears were exacerbated by barely veiled threats from Aliyev to impose the corridor by force: "The Zangezur Corridor is a historical necessity," the president said in January. "It will happen whether Armenia wants it or not." Iran has not officially commented on the issue since the Karabakh surrender; however, it hinted that it might accept the project only if it goes through its territory.

Iran primarily considered the project a "Conspiracy to Create NATO's Turan Corridor." indicating that the corridor's completion would have significant geopolitical consequences for Iran, Russia, and China. This corridor has been introduced to NATO's "Turan Corridor," a project ostensibly supported by Israel and NATO. Turkey and Azerbaijan allegedly want to foment ethnic unrest in Iran, where Turks live, by building this corridor.



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Undoubtedly, the caucuses' area is witnessing more attention, and it might be key player in the future geopolitical developments in East Europe and north of the Middle East.

Dr. Frank Musmar

Faculty, Academic Researcher, Middle East politics expert, Best-selling writer, Advisory Board President, Dissertations and proofreading specialist, and Journalist

Azerbaijan: the Homeland of Cultural Diversity and Human Rights

Perspectives Papers / Dr. Frank Musmar

Cultural and religious diversity and peace in the South Caucasus are the only way to prosperity and development of the region.

Azerbaijan's population is indigenous Caucasian; however, they were subsumed into other cultures that clashed in the area, such as the Albanians, Romans, Persians, Arabs, and Turks, over several centuries. Moreover, the development of the oil industry increased the migration of people from Europe and other regions to Azerbaijan. As a result, the religious composition of the population in Azerbaijan became richer. Accordingly, the country combines the three major religions and several Persian and Turkish dialects. In October 2016, during his visit to Baku, Pope Francis assessed Azerbaijan, a historically multi-confessional country, as a place of religious tolerance.



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Azerbaijan is a land of diversity even in its climate; the country's climate diversity is a natural gift to grow an array of crops that range from tobacco and cotton to vegetables and citrus fruits to grains and grapes.

The first example of diversity and intolerance was during the first independent era. On May 28, 1918, Azerbaijan created the first parliament with 11 parties and factions, including two Armenian factions within the parliament. Second, Azerbaijan gave parity to women to receive the right to vote in Baku before most European and American countries.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Azerbaijan regained its independence, ending the dark era (1920-1991) of Soviet Union control where religious worship was discouraged and most mosques and churches were destroyed. However, some religious monuments survived, such as The Kish church temple (the first Albanian-Christian temple in the caucuses) in the Sheki region of Azerbaijan, the Albanian churches in Gabala, and the Shamakhi Juma Mosque. Today, Azerbaijan enjoys the freedom of religion. Muslims, Jews, and Christians can all worship openly and freely.

Azerbaijan is a uniquely diverse country.

Azerbaijan is a secular state (Article 7 of the Azerbaijani constitution, paragraphs 1–3 of Article 18 of the Azerbaijani Constitution, confirming that each religion is equal before the law) that provides religious freedom, tending toward ethnic/nationalistic identity rather than religion.

About 95% of the population is Muslim. 85% of Muslims in Azerbaijan are Shia Muslims adherents of the orthodox Ithna Ashari school of Shi'a Islam, while 15% are Sunni Muslims.

The 5% of the population are:

1- Jews: There are three separate Jewish communities (Mountain Jews, Ashkenazi Jews, and Georgian Jews) in Azerbaijan. The total number of adherents of the religion is 16,000 that live across the country and in a Jewish



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village called Qırmızı Qəsəbə. Six thousand Mountain Jews were concentrated in Baku and 4,000 in Quba. The Ashkenazi Jews count 4,300 and live in Baku and Sumqayıt—the Georgian Jews' adherents equal to 700.

2- Christians: The Christians of Azerbaijan follow the Armenian Apostolic Church (in Nagorno-Karabakh) and the Russian Orthodox Church.

3- Other religions such as:

A- The Bahá'í Faith, with about 2,000 adherents

B- Zoroastrian: The Zoroastrian religion, culture, and traditions of Zoroastrianism remain highly respected in Azerbaijan, and Novruz continues to be the main holiday in the country. Traces of the religion are still visible in Ramana, Khinalyg, and Yanar Dag.

C- Hinduism: Hinduism in Azerbaijan has been tied to cultural diffusion on the Silk Road. The Hindus have the Fire Temple of Baku. Today, there are over 400–500 Hindus in Azerbaijan.

The world's latest crisis and its influence on cultural diversity, heritage, and human rights

The world's latest crises, including COVID-19 and military clashes, threaten the world's cultural heritage and diversity. Three-quarters of military conflicts in the world are caused by ethnic, religious-racial, and national intolerance involving more than 220 million people. In 2022, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons globally exceeded 100 million for the first time in history. The latest Russian-Ukrainian war has displaced half a million people to date. In 2021, the Syrian civil war refugees reached 6.8 million people.

For example, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was disastrous for cultural diversity, heritage, and human rights. The 30-year occupation by Armenia was on ethnic grounds and national discrimination, and Azerbaijan's cities, villages, and cultural and religious monuments have been destroyed. Nine cities and hundreds of villages in Azerbaijan were wiped out. The city of Aghdam has been called "Hiroshima of the Caucasus" by foreign experts.



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Azerbaijan emerged to be the homeland of cultural diversity and human rights.

Azerbaijan has a multi-party system and about 4,500 NGOs with representatives from more than 30 European countries registered. UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage listed 15 monuments from Azerbaijan. 13 of them were included in the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity"

Azerbaijan hosts 2253 mosques, 16 churches, and seven synagogues, of which many are preserved, such as "Mikhail-Archangel" Orthodox Church (1855), St. Nino Church (1871), St. George Church (1888), Six-domed Synagogue (1888), St. Sameba Church (1892- 1894), German Lutheran Church (1896-1899), Alexander Nevsky Pro-Slavic Church (1887), St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church (1907) and Armenian Church (1863).

Accordingly, the government of Azerbaijan launched an internal and external cultural restoration program as follows:

- 1- Construction of the Chabad-Or-Avner center for Jewish children living in Baku.
- 2- Repair Catholic and Orthodox churches and synagogues located in Azerbaijan.
- 3- Restoration of the sacred catacombs in Rome.
- 4- Construction of a new school for girls in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan, in 2005
- 5- Restoration of the Berlin castle in Germany
- 6- Restoration of ancient monuments in Versailles.
- 7- Restoration of the church and Louvre museum in France
- 8- Restoration of the ancient manuscripts and catacombs of St. Marcellini and Pietro.
- 9- Restoration of the Catacombs of San Sebastian in the Vatican, the Hall of Philosophers, and the Capitoline Museum in Italy.
- 10- Restoration of the Trapezitsa Museum in Bulgaria.



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The recent restoration of Armenian churches

Azerbaijan's government turned the page of the war with Armenia and launched programs to restore many monuments, especially Armenian churches in the liberated territories. Accordingly, the restorations included but were not limited to the Christian monuments in the Khojavand and Tarlar regions and the Aghdam Juma Mosque.

Growing cooperation with the Armenian population in Karabakh

In 2022, the 30th anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership in the UN was celebrated with the participation of UN agencies in Shusha, the cultural capital of Azerbaijan, which was freed from occupation. The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda direct efforts to ensure the sustainable urbanization of liberated cities. The Azerbaijani government is determined to develop the liberated area while stretching its hands to the Armenian residents, creating a culture of trust, diversity, and peace. In September 2023, Azerbaijan succeeded in ending the self-declared state and its ambitions as a separate country with its president, army, flag, and government, the Republic of Artsakh — recognized by no other country — inside the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan in the mountainous enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh after more than three decades of on-off war. The Azerbaijan official said that Armenians decided to stay in Karabakh to be granted Azerbaijan citizenship.

Dr. Frank Musmar

Faculty, Academic Researcher, Middle East politics expert, Best-selling writer, Advisory Board President, Dissertations and proofreading specialist, and Journalist