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In the article of Nasibova A. [1] it is considered the formation of foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AR) after getting its independence in 1991. The author analyzes the foreign policy course of the first presidents of the state. Particular attention is paid to the domestic factors that determined the international situation of the country.

The historical events of the late 20th century led to transformation of the existing system of international relations. The end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the USSR and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact Organization changed the system of international relations that existed for almost half a century. Azerbaijan, the author notes, could quickly build a foreign policy and integrate in the system of international relations. With the adoption in August 1991 of the Declaration on Restoration of State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in October 1991 of the Constitutional Act, the country embarked on the course of development a foreign policy course based on its national interests – principles of democracy and sovereignty.

Within current system of international relations, the official Baku was supposed to establish a mutually beneficial dialogue, where the national interests of Azerbaijan should not encounter the interests of the states of the world. This was a difficult task for the country's diplomacy, given its vulnerable situation in the region and in the world on the whole. The Republic of Azerbaijan began its way to independence with serious economic and political problems caused by the war with Armenia for Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, in the early periods of independence, Azerbaijan did not actively participate in international affairs. The main task of the new leadership of the country since the end of 1991 was to prevent separatism, nationalism, ensure the territorial integrity and security of the state, strengthen its international positions, and eliminate the socio-economic consequences of the war.

The first president of the RA Ayaz Mutalibov (1991–1992) paid great attention to the country's international activities. During the short period of his presidency, Azerbaijan became a member of a number of regional and international organizations. In December 1991, the state was admitted to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Membership in the OIC helped Azerbaijan strengthen relations with the countries of the Middle East. Adhering to

the principle of multilateral diplomacy, A. Mutalibov was eager to establish mutually beneficial partnership at other political poles. On January 20, 1992, Azerbaijan was admitted to the CSCE, which laid the foundation for the country's European policy. The accession of the RA to the CSCE brought the Nagorno-Karabakh problem to a new international level. At meetings of the organization, they increasingly began to discuss ways to resolve the conflict and stabilize political situation in the South Caucasus. In February 1992, the CSCE Conflict Prevention Center was tasked to take steps to establish a dialogue between the parties of the conflict and civilians of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Thus, the ground was laid for creation of the Minsk Group, which is a mediator in resolving the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict until now.

Following the acceptance of the Declaration of Independence on October 29, 1991, the RA government made an application to the UN requesting the country to join the UN. On March 2, 1992, Azerbaijan was admitted to the UN. Diplomacy pursued specific goals: to strengthen international situation of the RA, consolidate its regional significance, bring the Karabakh issue to the international legal level, restore the territorial integrity of the country and profitably use its geostrategic position. However, all this would not have been possible without establishment of bilateral relations.

Azerbaijan established its first diplomatic contacts with the Republic of Turkey. The factors of interstate rapprochement were ethnic, cultural and historical contacts that have connected countries for centuries. Ankara recognized the sovereignty of Azerbaijan on November 9, 1991. The establishment of diplomatic relations revealed considerable prospects in bilateral relations. In January 1992, Azerbaijani President A. Mutalibov made an official visit to Turkey, during which the countries defined the course for further cooperation and collaboration in various fields. Azerbaijan first received guarantees of military assistance from outside. A country that entered a difficult path of building independence under

conditions of war and economic crisis needed support of its closest stronger neighbor. For Turkey, cooperation with Azerbaijan was also necessary: the country would be able to solve the urgent energy problem, strengthen its position in the South Caucasus, become an intermediary in the dialogue of the West and Azerbaijan and take part in solving problems of ensuring security of the Caucasus.

Having come to power, A. Mutalibov got a young state, which was absorbed by economic and military problems. Since 1989, the Karabakh problem was acute in the country, which was the result of difficult interethnic relations in the region. Against this background, the oppositional Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF) pushed for resignation of the country's president. After the tragic events in Khojaly on January 26, 1992 and a series of failures of the Azerbaijani army in Nagorno-Karabakh, A. Mutalibov resigned under the pressure from the APF.

The new president of Azerbaijan was one of the leaders of the APF, Abulfaz Elchibey (1992-1993). He became the first popularly and democratically elected president of the country. The foreign policy course of the new president was radically different from the policy of his predecessor. An ardent nationalist according to his political beliefs, a Turkist and Turanist, he held a course for the building of friendly relations with Western countries and Turkey. Calling them strategic partners, Elchibey declared an unspoken struggle against communism, all remnants of the Soviet past and Iran, which became considered the most dangerous neighbor for Azerbaijan. Elchibey did not conceal his pro-Turkish course in foreign policy.

Pan-Turkism in Azerbaijan's foreign policy created the most favored nation regime for Turkey. In November 1992, a number of agreements were signed between the two countries concerning trade and economic, credit, investment, industrial and technical cooperation. Turkish President T. Ozal spoke more often about Azerbaijan's support in the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. In 1992, Ankara first broke off economic relations with Armenia, and in

1993 closed the Turkish-Armenian border. And to date, bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia are almost reduced to nothing.

Under the presidency of A. Elchibey, relations with Iran plunged into crisis. A. Elchibey openly pursued anti-Iranian policy, declaring Iran “an enemy of the entire Muslim and Turkic world.” The reason for such sharp criticism was the impairment of rights and freedoms and cultural discrimination of the population of so-called South Azerbaijan (the northwestern part of modern Iran which borders Azerbaijan), where mainly Turkic peoples live, mostly Azerbaijanis. Instead of diplomatic methods for resolving disagreements with Iran, A. Elchibey called on reunification of Southern and Northern Azerbaijan and supported the far-right nationalist party of Iran “Bozkurt” (“Gray Wolves” in Turkish), advocating the separation of South Azerbaijan from Iran.

During the presidency of A. Elchibey, serious damage was caused to the international image of the country. The President's harsh and sometimes contradictory appeals to his neighbors (Armenia, Iran, Russia, and the Central Asian region) had led Azerbaijan to diplomatic isolation, and an anti-Azerbaijani coalition of states had formed around the country. All this was accompanied by ethnic separatism, the Karabakh war, attempted military coup and an overdue civil war. As a result, by 1993, Azerbaijani statehood faced a deep crisis and spelling destruction. In summer of 1993, Milli Mejlis brought up a question of trusting the president in a popular referendum. In August, 97.5% of the country's citizens voted to change power and oust A. Elchibey from power.

With the arrival of the new President G. Aliyev (1993–2003), Azerbaijan's foreign policy experienced significant changes. The country embarked on a multifaceted policy and peace-building and stability around state borders. The “balance policy”, which G. Aliyev introduced into political life, established complex goals for Azerbaijan – to eliminate the mistakes made by previous

presidents, to build a new foreign policy course that reflects the strategic interests of the state. The first priority was to resolve the Karabakh problem. During the active diplomatic position of G. Aliyev, through the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group and the CIS Interstate Parliamentary Assembly on May 4, 1994, the Bishkek Protocol on a Ceasefire in the Nagorno-Karabakh Zone was signed. On May 12, 1994, the Ceasefire Agreement between Armenia, the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Azerbaijan, came into force. However, to date, the conflicting parties cannot find consensus on this issue, and regular violations of the ceasefire aggravate the political situation in the South Caucasus.

G. Aliyev strengthened trade and economic relations with Russia. The trend founded by Aliyev the senior was inherited by his son I. Aliyev, who maintains partnership relations with Russia. Another merit of G. Aliyev was that in September 1994 he adopted the "oil strategy" of the country's development, as a result of which a contract was signed with a consortium of foreign companies for the development of oil fields. Thus, Azerbaijan switched over to the course of building mutually beneficial relations with the West. It strengthened the country's authority, contributed to the infusion of foreign investment into the state treasury and improvement of the economic situation on the whole.

The "balance policy" of G. Aliyev covered not only the West. The president understood the need for rapprochement with the Muslim world. In such a situation, the first priority was to stabilize relations with neighboring Iran. The principle of democracy, multi-vector and restraint in the politics of G. Aliyev stabilized the growing conflict between the countries. In 2002, G. Aliyev made an official visit to Tehran. Following the results, 10 documents on bilateral cooperation in the field of customs control, transport, road construction, communications and culture were signed.

Repeated visits of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Turkey are an indicator of the fact that G. Aliyev devoted strategic importance to Ankara in his foreign policy. His statements about brotherhood, national unity, affinity of languages, culture and religion demonstrated that Turkey became not only a political partner in foreign policy for Azerbaijan, but also an integral part of the country's social life.

Foreign policy of Azerbaijan in the first years of independence was built on a religious-ethnic principle. However, such a system, according to the researcher, could not stand up against the test of time, as by the beginning of the 1990s the already formed system of civilized relations required states to build foreign policy on the balance of international actors' interests. From 1993, the country's leadership has been building a foreign policy based on the current realities and national interests of the country. Since that time, Azerbaijan has become a state with a multifaceted foreign policy, which occupies a rightful place in international and regional integration.

M. Agazade [2] examines the history of studying international relations in Azerbaijan. The author emphasizes the key role of universities in the study of international politics and international relations in the republic. The article reveals reasons why it has not yet been possible to create research centers in the RA that could compete with foreign ones on this issue.

After gaining independence in Azerbaijan, special attention began to be paid to the study of international relations as a separate area of humanitarian science. For that purpose, new faculties and departments, as well as research centers, were opened at universities. During the period when Azerbaijan was a part of the Soviet Union, there were no education institutions in the Azerbaijan SSR where disciplines related to international relations could be taught. Hence, there were few Azerbaijani diplomats in the Soviet times. In 1991, after regaining of state independence, there was a dire need for professionals in the

sphere of international relations and diplomats to ensure the participation of the republic in world politics. For this purpose, in 1991, the Faculty of International Relations and International Law was established at Baku State University (BSU), where the Department of International Relations began to function, which went down into history of Azerbaijani science as the first department studying international relations in Azerbaijan. Since 2011, the faculty became known as the Faculty of International Relations and Economics. Currently, the faculty has 6 departments: 1) international relations; 2) diplomacy and modern integration processes; 3) economics and management; 4) the world economy; 5) mathematical economics; 6) political science and sociology.

Despite the fact that there are 51 public and private universities in Azerbaijan, only a few of them teach international relations: ADA University (Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy), Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku Slavic University, Khazar University, Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan State University of Economics, Nakhichevan State University, West Caspian University and Baku Engineering University.

Among these universities, ADA University is different because of the presence of external relations and experts in the field of international relations. The Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, founded at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2006, was renamed ADA University in 2014 after merging with the University of Information Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main task of the university, in which students and professors from 46 countries study, is to train politicians, diplomats and specialists in the field of foreign policy, public relations, business, information technology.

BSU is the first modern university not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the entire Muslim East. The university was founded in 1919. Education is conducted in three languages – Azerbaijani,

Russian and English. About 1000 foreign students study at the university.

Despite teaching of disciplines on international relations at universities, scientific schools with their leaders have not yet been formed on the basis of Azerbaijani universities. Only ADA University differs from others in its unique system of learning and teaching, the author emphasizes. The main advantages of ADA University are joint training programs with foreign universities and direct support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Besides universities, there are research centers that study international relations and politics. Among them, there is the Center for Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM), which had financial support from the authorities. The main goal of the Center, which functioned in 2007–2018, was to promote the development of various spheres of the country's life, including scientific research in the field of geopolitics, security, state building, regional development, as well as providing the highest bodies of state authorities with predictive and analytical information. In January 2019, by decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, SAM's activities were ceased.

To this date, among the main research centers dealing with various problems of international relations in Azerbaijan, there are:

1. Atlas Research Center. Created in 2005 by political scientist E. Shahinoglu. The Center studies regional security issues, including relations with Azerbaijan's closest neighbors and international organizations, monitors the negotiation process for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

2. Center for Caucasian Ethnosocial Studies (QESAM). This center, established in 2006, prepares reports that correspond to the strategic interests of the RA. The Center makes forecasts based on processes taking place in the region and in the world.

3. Global Research Center. The main goal of the centre, established in 2013, was to study the role and place of

Azerbaijan in the world economy and also to convey the RA's point of view on the territorial issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan to the international community.

4. Karabakh Research Center. The center was founded in 2013 by joint efforts of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The purpose of the center is to train young specialists to study the problems of Karabakh, as well as to make efforts for peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

5. Caspian Energy Research Center. The main activity of the center established at the Khazar University is the study of energy resources of Azerbaijan, monitoring and research of the activities of international energy companies in Azerbaijan. The Center is also engaged in academic and educational activities and is recognized as one of the best independent expert institutes in Azerbaijan.

6. Caucasus Research Center (QAFAM). The center pays priority attention to the study of relations between the countries of the South Caucasus, the preparation of reports within the framework of the interests of the RA and the analysis of possible influence of other countries on the Caucasus region.

7. Caucasian Center for International Relations and Strategic Studies. The center, founded in 2006, is distinguished by the width of its scope of activities. The center attracted the best Azerbaijani specialists who were educated in American and European universities. The center studies not only the Caucasus region, but also Europe, Africa, America, the Middle East, the Far East and Central Asia. Within the framework of the activities of the center, a special place is occupied by the study and analysis of ethnic conflicts.

In general, the main focus of all these centers is the study of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and assistance to the authorities in the information confrontation with Armenia. It should be noted, however, that despite their

links with public authorities, they are not publicly financed, unlike universities, either sponsored by businessmen or self-financed. For this reason, some centers do not even have official websites.

The researcher notes that nowadays the study of international relations and international policy as a science in Azerbaijan significantly remains short of other humanitarian special fields. Nevertheless, thanks to ADA University, in recent years the number of specialists in this field has increased. Despite the fact that the study of international relations is observed in only one university, it gives hope that other higher educational institutions will follow the example of ADA.

Summing up the study of the problems of studying international relations in the RA, the author of the article notes that at present their level in Azerbaijan is in arrearages of the global one. There are several reasons for this. One is that international relations are not studied as science anywhere except universities. The lack of the necessary research and policy centres is therefore another reason for preventing the emergence of rigorous research on the topic. To overcome all these obstacles, new research and policy centres must be established to cooperate with universities, official government bodies, and universities must use global practices to train professionals. Special attention should be also paid to cooperation with foreign universities. Cooperation with Russian universities, which should develop, plays a valuable role in this. Inviting specialists from leading Russian universities to Azerbaijani universities and using their experience can give an impulse to the development of the study of international relations in Azerbaijan, the researcher concludes.