New Knowledge Journal of Science

Списание за наука „Ново знание”

University of Agribusiness and Rural Development Academic Publishing House
Bulgaria

Академично издателство на Висше училище по агробизнес и развитие на регионите
Пловдив

http://uard.bg

INTEGRATION INTO EUROPE AS ONE OF PRIORITIES OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF AZERBAIJAN REPUBLIC

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Keywords:
security
republic
foreign policy
partnership
region
memorandum
strategy

Abstract

The paper is dedicated to the research of dialectics in the development of mutual relations between Azerbaijan and Union of Europe. Here the stages of formation of mutual relations with Union of Europe are revealed. The author attempts to bring to light political aspects of relations between Azerbaijan and Union of Europe. He also wants to reveal the true interests of Union of Europe in Azerbaijan. The question that Azerbaijan plays in policy of energetic security in Europe is raised.

In the period when the international relations system are passed to a new stage, the foreign policy of each state intending to be an independent actor of these relations has to be rest on the conceptual bases and the related principles, duties and priorities have to be determined. It is to be noted that several factors are of special significance in the foreign policy of any state, its determination and implementation. Among these factors, we would like to make an emphasis namely on the foreign policy priorities. Before speaking about the foreign policy priorities of Azerbaijan and determination of this factor in the foreign policy of any state, it would be purposeful to reveal the essence of the foreign policy priorities in whole.

The long-term foreign policy strategy requires the preparation of the real foreign policy program and determination of the priorities of the policy and the works to be implemented in this direction. In fact, the priorities in the field of foreign policy are integral parts of the long-term foreign policy activity and a part hereof, which was more specified, grouped, classified and underlined in the existent time and space framework. The foreign policy priorities of any state are determined based on general opinion shaped as a result of synthesis of demands and wishes of the state’s official and unofficial institutes, civil society and the community. In general, we have to note that the state’s foreign policy priorities are not a stable definition. The processes taken place in the world policy, the changes and any other factors to be occurred in the regional level in the inter-states relations cause the transformation of these priorities, loss of topicality of one or several of these priorities and giving birth to new priority matters.

As the experience of the world states proves, the foreign policy priorities in some states are determined in the framework of the strategic program.

Being an integral part of the Europe, Azerbaijan considers the matter of integration into the Europe family as a strategic goal as a state observing its culture, intellectual heritage and sharing its democratic values.

It is to be noted that the modern civil state may be built only based on protection of real democratic values and human rights, relaying on political and economic freedom and supremacy of the law. From this standpoint we can attest that Azerbaijan has entirely joined the European family. The geopolitical, geo-economic, historical and cultural features enable Azerbaijan not only to be a consumer of the achievements of the European partnership, but also to participate and make its contribution to the development of all fields of the social life and strengthening of dialog and relations taken place between Europe and Asia.

The integration into the Euro-Atlantic space is a matter meaning vital importance for Azerbaijan.

"Presently Azerbaijan cooperates actively with all European structures. In connection with the globalization process, Azerbaijan pays special attention on widening and improving of relations with the European Union in the economic context"[1].

It is not by chance that this matter is one of the strategic directions in the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. It is known that Azerbaijan shares the values of the Euro-Atlantic Union and developing the transatlantic security partnership programs contributes to the security and stability in the continent of Europe and beyond its boundaries.

In the speech given by the President Ilham Aliyev in the International Conference "Towards the widening Europe: new agenda" held on March 19, 2004 in Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia, characterizing the integration perspectives of Azerbaijan said: "The energy projects amounting to millions dollars will enable us to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic space. It is our real wish and strategic goal. Azerbaijan determines its future in more wide integration into the Euro-Atlantic space. We take big steps in this direction and I am sure that the relations with European and international structures will be more intensive in future"[2].

The cooperation of Azerbaijan with the Union of Europe leaving the country's security needs framework is widening in the economic, political and social fields as well. Azerbaijan and the European Union strengthen the political dialogue, develop the cooperation in the fields of economic, cultural and institutional reforms and establish foundations for in increasing of this cooperation to the new quality level. It would be expressed by the opinion of Mr. E.Mammadyarov, the minister of foreign affairs of Azerbaijan Republic so: "We welcome the Europe Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative and we hope for acceleration of cooperation with the Union of Europe"[3].

Today, the integration into the Euro-Atlantic space is an important priority in the Azerbaijani foreign policy, which doesn't cause any doubt. And the National Security Conception approved by Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Azerbaijan Republic on May 23, 2007 proves it once again. The point 1.2 of the Section 4 of the conception styled "Main directions of the national security policy" explains the preference to the matter of integration into the Euro-Atlantic space made by the Republic of Azerbaijan: "Integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic political, security, economic and other institutions constitutes the strategic goal of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan views its partnership with the Euro-Atlantic structures as a means for contributing to security, economic prosperity and democracy in the whole Euro-Atlantic area"[4].

There is no doubt that Azerbaijan is of special importance for the European Union from the strategic point of view. And it is proved first of all in the steps undertaken by the guidance of the European Union during the last years in connection with energy security of the region.

The reality is that today the Union of Europe is intending to simplify the Russia and Near East energy dependence. Within the last years the tendencies of abuse this dependence are reflected clearly in Russia foreign policy. This situation increases the importance of the Caspian basin countries hydro-carbonic reserves and scales up the geopolitical significance of this region for its geographical and strategic state.

It is to be noted that the European Union is really interesting in strengthening the mutual relations with Azerbaijan. During 2004-2007, the widening of this organization towards the East, increasing of its possibilities of influence in the regional level determined the approach of Azerbaijan towards this organization and member-states. The security strategy elaborated by the European Union in 2003, considers Azerbaijan as a main and decisive subject in the South Caucasus region. It is not by chance that Mr. Relex E.Landaburu, the chairman of the European Commission on foreign relations under the European Union estimated the position of Azerbaijan in the meeting of the foreign affairs committee of the European Parliament held in February 2007 as follows: "Increasing of this state's geopolitical importance is related to the influence of the energy policy implemented by the western states in connection with decreasing the dependence on Russian and Near East energy resources. And today we have to estimate highly the activity made by some states aimed at preventing the monopoly related to the transit of energy bearers in Eurasian region and establishing the alternative energy corridor. During the last 10 years, the construction and finishing of "Baku-Subsa", "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan" oil and "Baku-Tbilisi-Arzurum" gas pipelines between Azerbaijan and Turkey may be obvious examples hereof"[5].

Mr. G.Tarkhan-Muradov, the chef of Tbilisi political researches Institute defines the geopolitical significance of Azerbaijan as follows: "The transit roads passing through region and the big energy reserves of the Caspian Sea are of great interest for Western, especially the European countries. Azerbaijan has not to miss the chance of control on the European-Asian energy corridor in the region of

[1] Mehdiyev R. By the way of national ideology, statehood and idnependence. Baku 2007

[2] Newspaper "Azerbaijan". March 19, 2004

[3] Mammadyarov E. The foreign policy of Azerbaijan: factors and priorities / *Azerbaijan diplomatic service*

[4] http://az.wikisource.org/wiki/Azerbaycan_Respublikasinin_milli_tesizlik_siyasetininesas_istiqameAzrbaycan_Respublikasinin_Milli_Tehlukesizlik_Konsepsiyasi"

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/energy/docs/speech_el_280207.pdf

Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. This region carries out today the key conductor function between the Central Asia and the West. But we may suggest that in future this region will be a key corridor on the North-Southern route as well"[6].

Factually, the European Union's policy of Southern Caucasus is established on Azerbaijan. The enormous oil reserves of Azerbaijan are of vital importance for Europe. Besides, Azerbaijan is considered as a main transit country in transportation of the Central Asia gas reserves towards Europe[7].

The establishment of the initial mutual relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan has been started within a period next to the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is to be noted that there was elaborated an assistance program in connection with realization of the passage to the market economy and setting up of the democratic administration ways (TASİS) after the collapse of the aforementioned Soviet Union. Namely within the framework of this program in 1993, Azerbaijan was invited to the discussion of the project "European-Caucasus-Asia Trans-Caucasus transport corridor" (TRASEKA) in Brussels held on the initiative of the European Union[8]. On the initiative of the working group engaging in implementation of the program TRASEKA during 1993-1998ç there were held five important meetings in Germany, Vienne, Venetia, Athena and Tbilisi. In these meetings there were approved several programs related to the undertakings necessary for amelioration of the existent infrastructures. Finally, in September 1998, there was held an important meeting in Baku in connection with the program TRASEKA. The multilateral international treaty on development of the European-Caucasus-Asian transport-communication corridor was signed in this conference by 32 participant states. Thereafter, there was adopted the Baku declaration on behalf of these participants. The said declaration reflects the key principles of regional integration and cooperation amongst the Asian countries.

The legal basis of relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union (EU) has been laid by the Partnership and Cooperation Treaty (PCT). This document was signed on April 22, 1996 in Luxemburg city and came into legal effect on July 1, 1999 after being ratified by all states signed it. The Partnership and Cooperation Treaty was a new stage in shaping of mutual relations between Azerbaijan and European Union. Joining of Azerbaijan to this Treaty was a key argument for determination of directions and mechanisms of relations with the European Union.

According to the Partnership and Cooperation Treaty, there were established the Cooperation Board, the Cooperation Committee, Inter-Parliaments Cooperation Committee, the sub-committee on trade, economy and other related matters, including the sub-committee on energy, transport and environmental matters aimed at conducting of bilateral regular dialog with the European Union. The sub-committees on the trade, economic and related legal matters, including those engaging in energy, transport and environmental issues carry out their activity under the common surveillance of the Cooperation Committee[9].

One of the main directions of cooperation between AR and EU includes the energy dialogue. The "Understanding Memorandum on the strategic partnership in the field of energy between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan" signed on November 7, 2006 while the visit of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Brussels created new opportunities in direction of widening of the energy dialogue between AR and EU. The main goals of this Memorandum include the diversification and security of the energy supply of EU, as well as the development and modernization of the energy infrastructures of Azerbaijan, effective use of energy resources and the use of restored energy resources[10].

This Understanding memorandum will contribute to the securing the multi-branch supply of the energy resources and their transportation ways, development and modernization of the energy infrastructures in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the effective use of energy resources.

The decree on "the establishment of the state committee on the integration of the Republic of Azerbaijan into the Europe" signed by Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on June 1, 2005 was a decisive step in widening of the mutual relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan[11].

The Eastern Partnership Initiative (EI) was advanced while the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the European Union held on May 26, 2008 by Poland and Sweden. The said initiative embraces Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus (the Eastern partner countries).

According to the key fields of the Eastern partnership, there were established four thematic platforms (democracy, improved administration and stability;

6 http://www.europesworld.org/EWSettings/Article/tabid/78/De-fault.aspx?Id=42adeeeO-lbdl-4bff-bc43-decb9bdflOa6

7 http://euobserver.com/9/22808 (от 07.11.2006)

8 Hasanov A. Modern international relations and the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. Baku. 2005.

9 http://www.mfa.gov.az/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=596&Itemid

10 http://ec.europa.eu/energy/international/international_cooperation/doc/mou_azerbaijan_en.pdf

11 Hasanov A. Modern international relations and the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. Baku. 2005.

economic integration and approaching to the policy of EU)[12].

It is considered that only after full implementation of the energy projects by the European Union with the participation of Azerbaijan there may be reached the considerable decrease of the influence of Russia. Presently the relations between the European Union and Russia cannot be examined as normal. Quite contrary, these relations may be worsened in due course. We consider that the only reason of this coldness is a regional energy policy being a basis of the European Union and Russia's foreign policy strategy. Presently, the Europe is not able to demonstrate full resolution as regards the relations with Russia because of dependence on its energy resources. And it is obliged to stand the caprices of Russia. But, in near future, the transportation of the Caucasus energy resources to the Europe, joining of the Central Asian countries these projects, including the fact that Iraq, rich in oil resources is interesting in transportation of energy resources via the Trans-Caucasus-Turkey route will create favorable conditions for the states-members to the European Union to set free from the Russian energy shackles. To this effect, it is not by chance that as it is defined in the memorandum of the European Union related to Azerbaijan, "The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the state independence has to be completely restored and the problem of Highland Garabagh has to be settled in the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The success of the policy conducted by the Europe in the Southern Caucasus region in connection with the energy security depends namely on this factor"[13].

The strengthening and development of the mutual relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan is related to the internal processes as well. It is to be noted that within the last years the acceleration of the economic and social development in Azerbaijan is paid attention by the European Union. The Europe, for this reason, considers Azerbaijan as one of members of its family. Azerbaijan is spoiling for coordinating to the requirements of the globalization process all over the world, makes all efforts to implement the policy of open doors and secures the full liberalization in the internal economic sphere.

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[12] http://www.aamik.az/azerbaycan-avrointeqrasiya-milli-ictimai-komitesi/about_aamik/about_committee.html

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