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DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/78-2-1>**Balamirza MAMMADLI,**

orcid.org/0009-0007-4506-4840

PhD student at the Department of Source Studies, Historiography and Methods

Baku State University

(Baku, Azerbaijan) balamirzamammadli@gmail.com

THE FIRST RELATIONS OF THE AZERBAIJAN REPUBLIC WITH GERMANY AND FRANCE (1991–1993): ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AZERBAIJANI HISTORIOGRAPHY

The aim of this article is to analyze Azerbaijan's relations with the main leading states of Western Europe (Germany and France) in the context of historiography during 1991–1993, when fundamental changes have occurred in the course of international relations. The fact that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan, having restored its independent statehood, began to define its new foreign policy course, actively integrating into the international system, gives grounds to talk about this. At that time, the young independent Azerbaijan faced such an important task as the establishment and development of political-diplomatic relations with world states. From the first days of independence, one of the main priorities of the foreign policy of Azerbaijan, like other post-Soviet republics, was the establishment of successful relations with the leading world powers, including Germany and France. The relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with these Western European countries are reflected in the works of numerous Azerbaijani researchers in recent decades. The study of this problem in the context of historiography is of great scientific and political importance from the point of view of a deeper and more comprehensive study of the essence, nature and content of Azerbaijani-German and Azerbaijani-French bilateral relations.

Methodology and methods. *The study used several research and information methods of historical science, such as comparative analysis, generalization and analogy. For this purpose, numerous scientific works were used – monographs, scientific articles, textbooks, dissertations, etc.*

The novelty of the article *lies in the fact that for the first time in the context of historiography the relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with Germany and France are studied.*

Main result: *Conducting comparative analyzes and summaries on the problem of the relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with Germany and France by involving numerous research works from Azerbaijani historiography into the scientific circulation, provides an opportunity to study the relations in such fields as political, economic, cultural, humanitarian, etc. deeper and more comprehensively. This issue is of great scientific and political importance in terms of determining the development dynamics and prospects of relations with Germany and France, which are the leading countries of the world.*

Key words: *Republic of Azerbaijan, Germany, France, foreign policy, international relations, historiography.*

Баламірза МАММАДЛІ,

orcid.org/0009-0007-4506-4840

докторант кафедри джерелознавства, історіографії та методики

Бакинського державного університету

(Баку, Азербайджан) balamirzamammadli@gmail.com

ПЕРШІ ВІДНОСИНИ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОЇ РЕСПУБЛІКИ З НІМЕЧЧИНОЮ ТА ФРАНЦІЄЮ (1991–1993): АНАЛІЗ З ТОЧКИ ЗОРУ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОЇ ІСТОРІОГРАФІЇ

Метою даної статті є аналіз відносин Азербайджану з основними провідними державами Західної Європи (Німеччиною та Францією) в контексті історіографії протягом 1991–1993 років, коли відбулися фундаментальні зміни в ході міжнародних відносин. Про це дає підстави говорити той факт, що після розпаду Радянського Союзу Азербайджан, відновивши свою незалежну державність, почав визначати свій новий зовнішньополітичний курс, активно інтегруючись у міжнародну систему. У той час перед молодим незалежним Азербайджаном постало таке важливе завдання, як встановлення і розвиток політико-дипломатичних відносин з державами світу. З перших днів незалежності одним із головних пріоритетів зовнішньої політики Азербайджану, як і інших пострадянських республік, було встановлення успішних відносин з провідними світовими державами, зокрема Німеччиною та Францією. Відносини Азербайджанської Республіки з цими західноєвропейськими країнами відо-

бражені в працях багатьох азербайджанських дослідників останніх десятиліть. Вивчення цієї проблеми в контексті історіографії має важливе наукове і політичне значення з точки зору більш глибокого і всебічного вивчення сутності, характеру і змісту азербайджано-німецьких і азербайджано-французьких двосторонніх відносин.

Методологія і методи. У дослідженні використано декілька дослідницьких та інформаційних методів історичної науки, таких як порівняльний аналіз, узагальнення та аналогія. Для цього були використані численні наукові праці – монографії, наукові статті, підручники, дисертації тощо.

Новизна статті полягає в тому, що вперше в контексті історіографії досліджуються відносини Азербайджанської Республіки з Німеччиною та Францією.

Основний результат: Проведення порівняльного аналізу та узагальнень з проблеми відносин Азербайджанської Республіки з Німеччиною та Францією шляхом залучення до наукового обігу численних досліджень азербайджанської історіографії дає можливість вивчати відносини в таких сферах, як політична, економічна, культурна, гуманітарний тощо глибше і всебічніше. Це питання має важливе науково-політичне значення з точки зору визначення динаміки розвитку та перспектив відносин з Німеччиною та Францією, які є провідними країнами світу.

Ключові слова: Азербайджанська Республіка, Німеччина, Франція, зовнішня політика, міжнародні відносини, історіографія.

Introduction (problem statement). Bilateral relations with Germany and France have occupied a very important place in the European direction of the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan since the very beginning of gaining state independence, which is not accidental. In Azerbaijani historiography, the reason for this is, first of all, connected with the fact that Azerbaijan's relations with these states have centuries-old historical traditions. A number of historians confirm that the historical roots of Azerbaijan's relations with Germany and France go back to the Middle Ages. Thus, first the Aghgoyunlu, and then the Safavid state established extensive diplomatic relations with these Western European states. During the Soviet period, Azerbaijan did not have the opportunity to establish independent relations with Germany and France; relations were possible only within the framework of the USSR. Mutual relations between Azerbaijan and these states became possible only after the restoration of independence in 1991.

The first political-diplomatic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Germany. After the restoration of independence, Azerbaijan, having defined the priorities of its foreign policy, received the opportunity to establish broad ties with Western European countries, including Germany, in accordance with these priorities. The fact that the young Republic of Azerbaijan was interested in establishing comprehensive relations with Germany, one of the leading countries in the world, from the very beginning was related to the need to achieve a worthy place in the international world. Historical studies emphasize that already in December 1991, the Azerbaijani side began the first attempts to establish diplomatic relations with Germany. In Azerbaijani historiography, Germany is characterized as the first Western European state to recognize the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, in Azerbaijani historiography there are disagreements regarding when exactly Germany recognized the state independence

of Azerbaijan. A group of researchers (Ali Hasanov, Abbas Piriyevev, Ismail Musa, Khatira Hajiyeva) note that the independence of Azerbaijan was recognized by the Republic of Azerbaijan on December 12, 1991 (Həsənov, 1998: p. 77; Piriyevev, 2005: p. 267; Musa, 2011: p. 497; Hacıyeva, 2001, p. 23). The second group of researchers (Musa Gasimli, Sona Maharramova, Zaur Adigozalov, Heydar Mirza, Tofiq Mustafazade) write that Germany announced its recognition of Azerbaijan's independence on January 12, 1992. (Qasımlı, 2015: p. 11; Məhərrəmovə, 2020: s. 44; Mirzə, 2017, p. 453; Mustafazadə, 2021: p. 356). To find out which of these positions is more accurate, it is necessary to consult a historical source. When referring to an archival document (AR XİN-nin TAI, f.28, siy.11, 1992) it becomes clear that the second position in the Azerbaijani historiography is correct. Official diplomatic relations between Germany and Azerbaijan were established on February 20, 1992. On the same day, in a note sent by the MFA AR to the MFA FRG, it was emphasized that the government of Azerbaijan believes that the establishment of diplomatic relations will stimulate the development and expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries, will create a basis for strengthening mutual understanding and trust between the peoples of Azerbaijan and Germany (Dornfeldt, Seewald, 2021: p. 133). Soon both countries began to establish embassies. Thus, in June 1992, the Azerbaijani embassy was opened in Bonn, and in September, the German embassy was opened in Baku. In Azerbaijani historiography, Germany is characterized as the first Western European state to open its embassy in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The first steps in Azerbaijani-German relations were made mainly in the economic sphere. Thus, during the visit of the Azerbaijani delegation to Germany in September and November 1992, negotiations were held on the establishment and expansion of economic ties between the two countries

and relevant documents were signed. M. Gasimli characterizes this as the first steps of great importance in the field of bilateral relations (Qasimli, 2015: p. 12). In general, from the very beginning there were broad prospects for the development of Azerbaijani-German relations, which always attracts the attention of Azerbaijani researchers in historiography. In this regard, Kh. Hajiyeva emphasizes the importance of paying attention to two points that create favorable conditions for the development of official Baku-Bonn relations (Hacıyeva, 2001: p. 24):

1) Unlike other Western countries, especially the USA and France, the Armenian community in Germany is weak and its lobby is practically absent;

2) The fact that the Turkish community in Germany is large and organized, has extensive lobbying activities, strong influence and power in business circles.

The points highlighted by researcher Kh. Hajiyeva – the diaspora factor and lobby really play an important role in interstate relations. As a striking example of this, in 1992, under the strong influence of the Armenian diaspora and lobby, the US Congress added the Section 907 to the Freedom Support Act. Germany is one of the leading countries where the Turkish diaspora is superior in both quantity and quality. According to German sociologist Susanne Schürer, 2.9 million people of Turkish origin live in Germany, and about half of them (1.5 million people) have Turkish citizenship (Schürer, 2018: p. 5). This fact shows that Turks are currently the largest ethnic minority in Germany. It should be noted that Germany is also the country in Western Europe with the largest Azerbaijani diaspora (more than 200 thousand people).

Despite the fact that several important events (opening of diplomatic missions, establishment of economic ties, etc.) took place in Azerbaijani-German relations during the administration of Mutallibov and Elchibey, a number of researchers of Azerbaijani historiography have found that there were some shortcomings in Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards Germany at that time. For example, A. Hasanov writes that at first, relations with Germany were not given serious importance in Azerbaijan (Həsənov, 2000: p. 94). The author also links this with the fact that for some time the German ambassador to Georgia was in charge of the embassy in Azerbaijan – that is, Germany did not appoint its own independent ambassador to Azerbaijan. In another research work, A. Hasanov expresses a critical attitude towards this period due to the fact that in the first years of independence no steps were taken in the area of signing and implementing regulatory documents regulating cooperation relations between

the Republic of Azerbaijan and Germany (Həsənov, 2005: p. 276). S. Maharramova, who separately studied Azerbaijani-German relations in Azerbaijani historiography, explains the passivity observed in the relations between the two countries at the first stage by two factors (Məhərrəmov, 2020: p. 27):

1) The newly united Germany paid more attention to its internal problems;

2) The absence of a stable foreign policy course of the then leadership of Azerbaijan, the lack of a clear definition of foreign policy priorities.

Both factors rightly noted by the author are confirmed by the facts. In our opinion, one of the reasons for weak cooperation in various spheres in the first years of bilateral relations was the emergence of socio-economic problems in Germany after the unification of the FRG and the GDR into a single country. So, in 1990, with the unification of the eastern and western lands, a unique macroeconomic process began in Germany. The uniqueness of this process consisted in the fact that two states with completely different social and economic systems united. Of course, the unification of two states with different levels of development gave rise to a number of serious problems in all spheres of political and socio-economic life. In the united Germany, prices began to rise, inflation intensified, and the unemployment rate grew rapidly. That's why, in 1991–1994, Germany dropped from 2nd to 6th place in the welfare rating of European countries (Lehmbruch, 1995: p. 73). In this regard, the elimination of the country's internal problems became a priority task for the German government. As a result of the government's privatization policy in the east of the country and the constant measures taken by the Federal Bank to stabilize the national currency, a period of economic growth began in Germany in 1995–1997, the country's GDP doubled compared to the last 30 years, and the inflation rate decreased. On the other hand, in the first years of independence, the political and economic crisis that arose in Azerbaijan, the growing military aggression of Armenia, the inability of the republic's leadership to pay due attention to the effective continuation of diplomatic relations with Germany, had a negative impact on bilateral relations. It is enough to mention the fact that at that time even the necessary conditions for the normal work of the German mission in Azerbaijan were not created. This is confirmed by the opinion of the Chargé d'Affaires of Germany in Baku Thomas Terstegen in an interview with the newspaper "Azerbaijan". Thus, Terstegen complained about the lack of conditions and attention, and stated that an uncertain situation reigns in Azerbaijan (Məhərrəmov, 2020: p. 28). In such a

situation, the anti-Azerbaijani propaganda carried out by the Armenian state – the dissemination of biased and untrue information – also had a negative impact on Azerbaijani-German relations. The visit to Baku in early March 1992 of the deputies of the German Bundestag headed by H. Vogel did not produce the expected result. Thus, the visit of German deputies to Azerbaijan could have been extremely important in terms of developing Azerbaijani-German relations and conveying the truth about Armenia's occupation policy to the world. However, the German deputies, who were influenced by Armenian propaganda during their visit to Yerevan before Baku, returned to their country with biased views and negative impressions of Azerbaijan.

The first political-diplomatic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and France. In Azerbaijani historiography, France is characterized as one of the first countries in the world to recognize Azerbaijan as an independent state after the announcement of the restoration of independence on October 18, 1991 (Həsənov, 1998: p. 62; 20. İbrahimov, 2020: p. 40). This Western European country, which officially recognized the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on January 3, 1992, soon took concrete steps to establish the first diplomatic relations: in February 1992, French diplomat Bernard Kouchner made an official visit to Baku, and during the negotiations, the French side expressed its readiness for economic cooperation with Azerbaijan, as well as mediation in a peaceful settlement Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On February 21, a protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was signed in Baku (Əsədova, 2013: p. 24). From this point of view, Kouchner's visit is considered in the Azerbaijani historiography as an event that marked the beginning of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and France. In March 1992, the French embassy opened in Baku, in September of the same year, the embassy of Azerbaijan opened in Paris.

It is no coincidence that France's active interest in this young state has increased since the first days of the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Most researchers of Azerbaijani historiography explain this by the fact that Azerbaijan is a state with rich resources and an advantageous geostrategic position. A. Abdullayev writes about this in his monograph: *"Azerbaijan's rich natural resources prompted a number of countries to establish comprehensive relations with it and consistently develop these relations. One of such states was France"* (Abdullayev, 2007: p. 31). I. Musa comes to a similar conclusion: *"Azerbaijan is in the sphere of France's interests because of its geopolitical position, economic*

opportunities and natural resources" (Musa, 2011: pp. 491–492). However, the first political and diplomatic relations were not encouraging. Thus, in November 1992, the French Ambassador J. Perrin conveyed France's proposal on cooperation with Azerbaijan in various fields (economic, military, cultural and educational, etc.). However, as A. Hasanov and M. Gasimli note, the Azerbaijani side did not take any serious practical measures to implement these proposals (Həsənov, 2000: p. 93; Qasimli, 2015: p. 54). Meanwhile, against the backdrop of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenia's military aggression, Azerbaijan was in dire need of support from influential world powers. Ambassador J. Perrin drew attention to the growing interest to Azerbaijan in France and his country's desire to establish close economic ties with Azerbaijan. However, this could not raise relations between the two countries to the required level. A. Hasanov explains this by the fact that France's initiatives were not adequately assessed by the Azerbaijani government at that time: *"The efforts of such an influential country as France, which was interested in expanding cooperation, were not properly assessed by Azerbaijan at that time"* (Həsənov, 1998: p. 64).

In general, until the second half of 1993, within the framework of the foreign policy course implemented by the government of Azerbaijan, there were practically no serious steps taken to improve relations with France. That is why in Azerbaijani historiography, 1991–1993 is considered a cold period in Azerbaijan-France relations. At this time, the following question arises: why was the government of Azerbaijan not inclined to broad cooperation with France at that time? According to M. Gasimli, the reason for this was the pro-Armenian position of France. The author writes that such a position of France created a gap in relations and such a situation was harmful for both sides (Qasimli 2015, p. 55). Taking the same position, Z. Adigozalov writes that it is impossible to deny the fact that France is known in the Azerbaijani public as a state that intensively cooperates with Armenia: *"France has always shown special care for Armenia and tried to protect it"* (Adigözəlov, 2015: p. 51). I. Musa concludes that the emergence of obstacles and difficulties in the development of interstate political relations was associated with such factors as the anti-Azerbaijani activities of the Armenian diaspora and lobby, which have strong positions in France, on the one hand, and the insufficient diplomatic experience of the Republic of Azerbaijan, financial impossibility, on the other hand (Musa, 2011: p. 492). According to I. Musa, it is wrong to blame the mutual coldness and alien attitude of official Baku towards France on the

incorrect policy of the then Azerbaijani authorities. The author substantiates this opinion with three factors:

- 1) The recognition of France as a “friend of Armenia” and “enemy of Turkey” does not affect the positions of the official political circles of Azerbaijan;
- 2) The presence of such an indisputable fact as the pro-Armenian position of France;
- 3) The activities of France as one of the co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group (Musa, 2011: p. 492–493).

However, A. Gasanov comes to the conclusion that the reason for the coldness of the Azerbaijani-French relations during the specified period is also the Azerbaijani government: “In order to establish friendly and cooperative relations, both sides, especially the state of Azerbaijan, which needs it more, had to act with special effort and initiative. However, instead of conducting special affairs with France and ridding it of the influence of Armenia and the Armenian lobby, which has very strong mechanisms of influence in this country, they declared a “cold war” on this influential European state” (Həsənov, 2000: p. 80-81). A. Hasanov considers the position of Azerbaijan in relation to a country like France a political and diplomatic ignorance. Kh. Hajiyeva, speaking from the same position, writes that the leadership of Azerbaijan did not make efforts to develop bilateral relations, underestimating the position of France in the world community and the decisive role in the system of pan-European security (Hacıyeva, 2001: p. 48). M. Gasimli emphasizes that the foreign policy pursued in Azerbaijan before 1993 was unipolar and unidirectional, which led the state to a dead end (Qasımlı, 2021: p. 167). E. Gasimov notes that in practice, instead of consistent and deliberate diplomatic steps, official Baku did not go far to describe and present France as “the enemy of Azerbaijan, friend of Armenia (Qasımov, 2013, p. 23–24).

As it seems, in Azerbaijani historiography, the causes of coldness and mutual mistrust in the first stage of Azerbaijani-French relations (1991–1993)

are explained from different perspectives. However, seeing the problem only on the side of France or only on the side of Azerbaijan would be a one-sided approach to the issue. In this sense, from the comparative analysis of different positions in the historiography, it can be concluded that the emergence of the mentioned situation between Azerbaijan and France was related to the following two main reasons: **Firstly**, the existence of a strong Armenian lobby and diaspora in France (according to various estimates, 350–750 thousand Armenians live in France. – B.M.). So, Armenians in France have mainly occupied positions in the business sector, mass media and state bodies. In contrast, the number of Azerbaijanis in France is smaller (about 70,000 people), and they do not have a great impact on the social and political life of mentioned Western European country. Continuous Armenian propaganda led to the formation of an unobjective position about Azerbaijan in France. **Second**, the Azerbaijani government’s passive foreign policy in relations with France, exaggerating the fact of the existence of French-Armenian friendly relations. In international relations, such a position is not evaluated positively. Because this does not correspond to the principle that “there are no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, only permanent interests”.

Thus, although the first relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic were initially mostly weak and passive, bilateral relations gradually became more active towards the end of the 1990s. On the one hand, the unstable foreign policy of the Azerbaijani government at that time, and on the other hand, the peculiarities of the foreign policy of Germany and France did not allow establishing relations at the proper level at first, but then bilateral relations began to develop gradually at an increasing pace. Research of the Azerbaijan's relations with Germany and France in the context of historiography with the involvement of numerous materials in scientific circulation has great scientific and political significance from the point of view of a comprehensive and deeper study of the problem.

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