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## ANALYZING THE COOPERATION BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN NAVAL FORCES AND TÜRKİYE: STRATEGIC, OPERATIONAL, AND DIPLOMATIC ASPECTS

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the historical context and strategic evolution of the naval cooperation between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, highlighting its roots in the early years of Azerbaijan's independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As both nations embarked on building and modernizing their naval capabilities, their partnership became a cornerstone of regional security in the Caspian and Black Seas. The study emphasizes how this cooperation has grown from initial diplomatic ties into a robust military alliance, driven by shared strategic interests and mutual security concerns. The analysis delves into the strategic significance of this partnership, focusing on its role in enhancing the stability of a geopolitically sensitive region. The Caspian Sea, with its vast energy resources, and the Black Sea, a critical maritime zone, both play pivotal roles in regional dynamics. By fostering cooperation in these areas, Azerbaijan and Türkiye not only strengthen their own defense capabilities but also contribute to broader regional security frameworks. Operationally, the collaboration between the two nations' naval forces is characterized by joint exercises, training programs, and the establishment of information-sharing mechanisms. These efforts are designed to improve the interoperability of their naval forces, allowing them to respond more effectively to potential security threats. The study also outlines key areas for future collaboration, including maritime domain awareness, counterterrorism operations, and humanitarian assistance, which could further enhance the strategic partnership. By providing a nuanced and multidimensional analysis, this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the Azerbaijan-Türkiye naval cooperation. It explores the implications of this partnership for regional stability, security, and the balance of power, as well as its potential to influence future maritime and geopolitical developments in the wider region.

**Keywords:** Naval Forces, Azerbaijan, Strategy, Eurasia

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## INTRODUCTION

The cooperation between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan is a significant aspect of their broader strategic partnership. This cooperation is deeply rooted in the historical, cultural, and linguistic links between the two countries, as evidenced by the "Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance" signed in 2010 by Presidents İlham Aliyev and Abdullah Gül. Additionally, the establishment of the "High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" further solidified their bilateral relations, leading to discussions and reviews of all aspects of cooperation, including military and political dimensions (Gurbanova, 2016).

Moreover, the economic dimension, particularly in the energy sector, plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Energy projects have not only contributed to economic ties but have also influenced the political dynamics between the two countries (Yesevi & Tiftikcigil, 2014). This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted cooperation between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, encompassing historical, cultural, economic, and political dimensions.

### Background Of Turkish And Azerbaijan Naval Forces

The historical background of the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan is deeply rooted in their strong bilateral relations, which have evolved and consolidated over the years. The "Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance" signed by President İlham Aliyev and Turkish President Abdullah Gül in 2010, along with the establishment of the "High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" between the two countries, marked significant milestones in their relationship (Gurbanova, 2016). These agreements not only strengthened political and economic ties but also laid the foundation for strategic military cooperation, reflecting the close and special relations based on common history, religion, culture, and language factors.

The historical, cultural, and linguistic links between Azerbaijan and Türkiye have been pivotal in shaping their cooperation, with Türkiye consistently expressing strong support for Azerbaijan, particularly on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (Yesevi & Tiftikcigil, 2014). This background sets the stage for understanding the evolution and development of the naval capabilities of both countries, providing essential context for the subsequent analysis of their naval forces cooperation (Lotfi et al., 2016).

Additionally, this cooperation facilitates the protection of maritime trade routes, contributes to the stability of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions, and enables the sharing of resources and expertise for efficient maritime operations (Yesevi & Tiftikcigil, 2014). Furthermore, it strengthens the diplomatic ties between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, fostering a robust partnership that extends beyond naval operations to encompass broader economic and political collaboration.

### Historical Overview

The historical overview of the cooperation between Turkish and Azerbaijan naval forces dates back to the early 1990s. Following Azerbaijan's declaration of independence in 1991, Türkiye was the first country to recognize

its independence, laying the foundation for their bilateral relations. President Turgut Özal's emphasis on the "age of Turks" and the establishment of a Turkish Common Market and Turkish Development and Investment Bank during the First Turkish-Speaking Head of States Summit in 1992 highlighted the early efforts to strengthen ties. However, the period following the Khojaly Massacre in February 1992 and the change in Azerbaijani leadership led to fluctuations in the relations, with subsequent improvements marked by agreements for the transportation of Azeri oil through Türkiye and the continuation of Turkish military training for Azeri officers after Haydar Aliyev's visit to Ankara in January 1994 (Yesevi & Tiftikcigil, 2014).

The historical ties between Azerbaijan and Iran, with shared religion, history, and culture, have also influenced the dynamics of their relations. The years 1993 to 1995 were characterized as a golden era for economic relations between Azerbaijan and Iran, but subsequent policies favoring the West led to a decline in Iran's economic position as a trade partner (Akbarova, 2023). Factors such as espionage accusations, negative media advertisements, and military cooperation with the U.S. have contributed to cooling relations between the two countries. Despite these challenges, there is significant economic potential in sectors like commercial activity, transport, and energy transmission if security relations between Azerbaijan and Iran improve (Lotfi et al., 2016).

The early relations between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan were deeply influenced by the broader diplomatic and political landscape of the time. Following Azerbaijan's declaration of independence in 1991, Türkiye was the first country to recognize it, emphasizing a model of support for newly independent Caucasian and Central Asian Republics. However, the early 1990s saw fluctuations in the relationship, with political shifts impacting military cooperation (Akturk, 2020). For instance, the suspension of agreements signed during Elchibey's period and the subsequent improvement in relations under Aliyev's leadership marked a significant turning point. Aliyev's declaration of Azeri oil transportation through Türkiye and the continuation of Turkish military training for Azeri officers were pivotal in shaping the foundation for their contemporary cooperation (Yesevi & Tiftikcigil, 2014).

The historical and cultural links between Iran and Azerbaijan also played a significant role in shaping early relations. The years 1993 to 1995 were marked as the golden era of bilateral relations and trade, with Iran being Azerbaijan's primary partner. However, various factors, such as the expulsion of Iran from the oil consortium of Azerbaijan and the cooling of relations due to geopolitical shifts, have impacted the economic and trade cooperation between the two countries (Lotfi et al., 2016). These early interactions and developments laid the groundwork for the contemporary cooperation between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, reflecting the intricate interplay of political, economic, and military factors in shaping their relationship (Biro, 2021).

Cooperation agreements have played a pivotal role in shaping the collaborative efforts between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan. These formal accords and arrangements have provided a framework for joint exercises, information sharing, and capacity building. Notably, the agreements have facilitated the exchange of

best practices in maritime security, as well as the coordination of efforts to address common security challenges in the Caspian Sea region (Lotfi et al., 2016).

One significant agreement that has contributed to the cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan is the 2008 accord, which delineated the territorial integrity of both nations and established guidelines for the exploration and production activities in the Caspian Sea (Demir, 2022). This agreement not only resolved previous tensions but also set the stage for enhanced collaboration in various areas including transportation, education, and economic cooperation (Gurbanova, 2016). Such agreements have been instrumental in fostering a conducive environment for mutual cooperation and understanding between the naval forces of the two nations.

### **CURRENT NAVAL CAPABILITIES**

The current naval capabilities of Türkiye and Azerbaijan offer valuable insights into their individual strengths and operational capacities (Hasanoglu, 2020). Türkiye's naval forces possess a diverse fleet, including frigates, corvettes, submarines, and amphibious vessels, showcasing their technological advancements and maritime power projection capabilities. On the other hand, Azerbaijan's naval capabilities have been bolstered by acquisitions of modern patrol boats and naval assets, enhancing their maritime surveillance and security capabilities in the Caspian Sea (Gurbanova, 2016). The convergence of these capabilities sets the stage for potential collaboration, leveraging Türkiye's established naval prowess and Azerbaijan's strategic positioning in the Caspian region for enhanced maritime cooperation.

These developments align with the broader strategic partnership and mutual assistance agreements between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, which have fostered deepening ties in political, economic, and strategic interests, including military cooperation. The synergies in naval capabilities between the two countries create opportunities for joint exercises, information sharing, and coordinated maritime operations, contributing to regional stability and security (Irkhin et. Al, 2024). Furthermore, the historical, cultural, and linguistic links between Türkiye and Azerbaijan underpin their collaborative approach in addressing common maritime challenges and advancing their shared interests in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea regions.

### **TURKISH NAVAL FORCES OVERVIEW**

The Turkish Navy is the naval branch of the Turkish Armed Forces. Also known as the Türk Deniz Kuvvetleri Command, it is responsible for conducting naval operations, anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare in order to defend Turkish interests and establish the necessary maritime superiority. Its motto is: "The Sea is Our Home." Naval operations are conducted by the "Naval Forces Command," which reports directly to the chief of staff of the Turkish Armed Forces. Since July 2016, the Commander of the Turkish Navy is Admiral Adnan Özbal. The navy currently operates 17 frigates, 11 corvettes, 12 submarines, and numerous amphibious warfare ships and support vessels, including a helicopter carrier, a landing platform dock, a fleet replenishment ship, and a ship that can be outfitted as a repair or a floating hospital. However, despite its ambition to develop

its own naval capabilities, Türkiye remains dependent on foreign countries for several key needs, especially in the submarine sector (Mehmetcik & Celik, 2022).

The mission of the Turkish Navy is outlined under three main headings and numerous elements.

First is securing the seas and the straits: Secure maritime routes against threats from states or non-state organizations. Secure Turkish territorial waters (the seas adjacent to Türkiye) against all kinds of threats. Maintain control in the passage regimes subject to the Montreux Convention on the Straits. Operate as a deterrent against threats to Turkish interests. Create a peaceful environment through the capability to respond to threats by the use of force. Protect the general supplies of Sea Lines of Communication.

Second is ensuring Türkiye's international commitments: Participate in joint and combined operations and exercises. Maintain close liaison with navy forces of states friendly to Türkiye. Inform influential states of Türkiye's opinions and decisions.

Third is providing peace and security: Provide naval contributions to such regional or global organizations as the United Nations, NATO, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Organization of American States, and European Union.

The Turkish naval forces are composed of two separate types of units, major surface units such as submarines, frigates, destroyers, corvettes, minesweepers, amphibious warfare vessels, and light surface vessels, and smaller vessels such as attack craft micro and mini submarines, patrol boats, training ships, personnel carriers, and hovercrafts. The size of these forces is given below: Major surface units 199 units, minor surface units 98 units, commercial vessels 209 units, Coast Guard service 81 units.

#### **AZERBAIJAN NAVAL FORCES OVERVIEW**

The naval forces of Azerbaijan have undergone significant development in recent years, enhancing their capabilities and fleet composition. With a focus on modernization and operational readiness, Azerbaijan has made strides in strengthening its maritime defense. The fleet includes a range of vessels, including patrol boats, corvettes, and support ships, reflecting a diverse and adaptable naval force (Lotfi et al., 2016).

Organizationally, the Azerbaijani Navy includes (In NATO's Wake, 2024):

Main Headquarters

Surface Ship Brigade

Water Area Protection Division

Division of Landing Ships

Division of Minesweepers

Division of Search and Rescue Vessels

Training Courts Division

Brigade of Patrol Ships  
Marine Infantry  
641st Naval Special Operations Brigade  
Sea Sabotage and Reconnaissance Brigade  
Reserve  
Azerbaijan Coast Guard  
Patrol Ship Brigade  
Mobilization reserve  
Azerbaijan Merchant Fleet

Moreover, Azerbaijan's strategic location on the Caspian Sea contributes to its significance in regional maritime security. As the analysis delves into the details of Azerbaijan's naval forces, it becomes evident that their potential for collaboration with Turkish counterparts is rooted in their evolving capabilities and commitment to maritime defense. This overview lays the foundation for assessing the prospects of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Türkiye in the naval domain.

#### **JOINT EXERCISES AND OPERATIONS**

Joint exercises and operations between the Azeri and Turkish naval forces have been very active since the latter's independence in 1991. Joint navy exercises are conducted for three or four days, in accordance with annual plans between the two countries. These exercises are important because they are one of the most crucial elements in worthwhile cooperation and coordination across naval commands and activities.

Operation "Dogu", known as the "Trident" exercise, was the first joint naval exercise between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. The exercises included two ships of the Turkish Naval Command and the Caspian Sea Fleet, for a total of nine ships. Due to the participation of Azerbaijan, the exercise was named "Dogu". Although the fleet was transferred to Kazan, vessels of the Azerbaijani Navy and classes of Missile Boats were included in the exercises. The exercise lasted about six days, including arrival and departure.

The Partnership Interoperability Initiative was signed in 1994, providing naval cooperation between NATO member Türkiye, the Turkish and Azeri Navies. The agreement was later expanded to include exercises with the other navies of the region, such as Georgia and Kazakhstan, under the umbrella of the Alliance. This widespread initiative through exercises with friendly Muslim nations reflects Ankara's desire to counterbalance Russia's influence and NATO's expansion. The "Common Maritime Security" vision is aligned not only with national but also with NATO goals.

Furthermore, the continued naval cooperation between Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Georgia requires the remaining Caspian States to either join this gathering and normalize relations with the above three nations, allowing the latter to widen their clout, or risk further isolation. At best, Iran remains to the south under its

revolutionary regime and pariah-state status, bordering and backing two of Türkiye's main foes, Armenia and Syria, while attempting to obtain nuclear weapons (Mischenko et. al., 2022). At worst, one forceful day, in an effort to provide security for its southern energy infrastructure, the Turkish Navy may even have to enter the mouth of the Caspian.

### **Past Exercises**

In the context of past joint exercises and operations between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, it is essential to consider the broader bilateral relations between the two countries. The "Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance" signed in 2010 by President Ilham Aliyev and Turkish President Abdullah Gul, along with the "Joint Statement on the establishment of High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" between President Ilham Aliyev and the Prime Minister of Türkiye Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, laid the foundation for a robust strategic partnership. These agreements underscored the commitment to mutual cooperation and paved the way for collaborative efforts in various domains, including joint naval activities (Gurbanova, 2016).

Furthermore, the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council meetings held in subsequent years provided a platform to discuss all aspects of bilateral relations, indicating a strong desire for comprehensive collaboration. It is within this framework of strategic partnership that past joint naval exercises and maneuvers between Türkiye and Azerbaijan can be comprehensively analyzed, shedding light on the nature and scope of their collaborative endeavors.

### **Future Plans**

The Turkish and Azerbaijani naval forces are planning several joint exercises and operations to enhance their capabilities and strengthen their cooperation. In 2023, they will conduct the exercise "TurAz - 2023," which is aimed at ensuring maritime security, combating piracy, and enhancing the interoperability of naval forces. Additionally, they are planning to participate in the multinational exercise "Sea Breeze 2023," which will focus on search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response.

Furthermore, the Turkish and Azerbaijani naval forces are planning to conduct joint search and rescue exercises in the Caspian Sea and increase the frequency of patrols in their exclusive economic zones. They are also exploring opportunities for cooperation in the fields of maritime domain awareness, information sharing, and joint training and education. Overall, the future plans for cooperation between the Turkish and Azerbaijani naval forces reflect their mutual interests in ensuring maritime security and enhancing their operational capabilities.

### **Strategic Importance**

The strategic importance of Turkish and Azerbaijan naval cooperation is multifaceted, with regional security concerns and energy security dynamics playing a pivotal role. The maritime collaboration between the two

nations is closely linked to their energy investments and infrastructure projects. For instance, Türkiye's substantial energy investments in Azerbaijan, exceeding 6 billion dollars, underscore the strategic significance of their partnership. The functioning Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan (BTC) Oil Pipeline and Baku-Tiflis-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipeline, along with planned projects such as the Baku-Tiflis-Kars (BTK) railway and Trans-Anatolia Pipeline Project (TANAP), highlight the interconnectedness of their strategic interests in the maritime domain (Yesevi& Tiftikcigil, 2014).

### ***Regional Security Concerns***

The strategic partnership between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in the naval domain is underpinned by a complex web of regional security concerns. The Black Sea region, where both countries are situated, has been a focal point for various multilateral initiatives aimed at fostering economic cooperation and regional stability. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) are some of the key platforms that have sought to enhance trade, economic, and cultural ties among member states. Additionally, energy investments by entities like the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) in Azerbaijan have further cemented the bilateral relationship, with significant investments in key projects such as the Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline and the Baku-Tiflis-Erzurum natural gas pipeline (Yesevi& Tiftikcigil, 2014).

The Caspian Sea region, which holds immense hydrocarbon potential, has also emerged as a focal point for regional competition and cooperation. The division of resources among coastal states, environmental concerns, and the increasing energy demand of countries have added layers of complexity to the regional security landscape. As such, understanding the geopolitical dynamics of this region is crucial for comprehending the imperatives driving naval cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan (Gurbanova, 2016).

### ***Energy Security***

In the context of Turkish and Azerbaijan naval cooperation, energy security plays a pivotal role in safeguarding energy infrastructure and maritime resources. The collaborative efforts between the two countries are instrumental in addressing key energy security considerations in the region. This includes ensuring the protection of energy infrastructure such as pipelines and maritime routes, as well as contributing to the diversification of energy sources and routes to enhance regional energy security (Yesevi& Tiftikcigil, 2014).

Furthermore, the energy relations between Türkiye and Russia highlight the significance of Türkiye as a crucial transit country for Caspian basin and Central Asian oil and natural gas. The strategic positioning of Türkiye enables it to facilitate the transfer of energy resources from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to Europe, thereby contributing to European energy security (Yavuz Tiftikcigil & Gul Yesevi, 2014). This underscores the broader impact of Turkish and Azerbaijan naval cooperation on regional and international energy security dynamics.



**CHALLENGES and OPPORTUNITIES**

Chief of General Staff, Defence Ministers, Commanders of the Naval Forces, chiefs of general staffs of navies from over 50 countries regularly participate in the International Defence Industry Fair. Türkiye organizes one of the few naval parades in the world, which is attended by many countries, including Azerbaijan, during the naval forces week. Azerbaijan also has the opportunity to participate in the Turkish Navy's international maritime exercises and games.

The primary aim of the Turkish and Azerbaijan naval cooperation projects is to work jointly to establish strong maritime security capabilities ranging from early warning to battles, with an architecture of modern defence systems in a layered manner. The cooperation envisages integrating Turkish-made missile and torpedo defence systems to be manufactured under license in Azerbaijan on ships as well as coastal defence systems. There are plans to equip some ships with anti-ship, air defence, and anti-submarine warfare systems (Irkhin et. al., 2024).

The update of the Turkish Navy's Anti-ship Missile System (ATMACA), which is currently at the stage of tests, will be integrated into the 4 Corvettes to be delivered newly constructed by the Turkish company STM to the Azerbaijani navy. It is planned to procure the Turkish Land-Sea Port and Sea-Based Tactical Early Warning Radar System under a joint project, which is currently being constructed for the Turkish navy. It is important to note that this project will be the first joint defence system procurement project carried out between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. The Turkish company Aselsan is to manufacture coastal defence radar systems for both Azerbaijan's Caspian coast and the Black Sea. This radar will be integrated with Türkiye's air defence fire control system supplying coastal naval bases with long-range air defence system.

Other defence cooperation projects that were signed between two countries include the establishment of a defence education institution as a defence and security school under the Ministry of Defence Industry of Türkiye and the establishment of the maritime security training centre under the defence ministry of Azerbaijan. At the maritime security training centre which was inaugurated in 2021, Turkish experience regarding maritime security and strategy, littoral control, operation centre management system trainings will be provided to Azerbaijani naval forces. It is also foreseen to provide maritime safety and security education to a third country (Irkhin et. al., 2024). The Coast Guard Academy of Türkiye is expected to provide joint education opportunities in maritime law enforcement.

**Technological Challenges**

The technological challenges in the cooperation between the Turkish and Azerbaijani naval forces encompass several key aspects. One significant challenge is the need for interoperability between their respective naval technologies, including communication systems, radar capabilities, and weapon systems. Achieving seamless integration and compatibility between these technologies is crucial for effective joint naval operations. Additionally, the development and maintenance of advanced naval capabilities, such as anti-submarine

warfare, mine countermeasures, and maritime surveillance, present ongoing technological challenges that require sustained investment and collaboration.

Furthermore, the utilization of emerging technologies, such as unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and advanced sensor systems, offers opportunities for enhancing the naval capabilities of both countries. However, the adoption and integration of these technologies also pose challenges related to training, infrastructure, and resource allocation. Overcoming these technological challenges will be instrumental in strengthening the collaborative naval initiatives between Türkiye and Azerbaijan (Gurbanova,

### **Training and Education Opportunities**

Training and education opportunities play a crucial role in enhancing the cooperation between the Turkish and Azerbaijan naval forces. The exchange of knowledge and skill development is essential for capacity-building and strengthening collaborative maritime efforts. One avenue for this is through joint training exercises, where personnel from both navies can learn from each other's expertise and operational methods. Additionally, educational programs focused on maritime strategy, navigation, and maritime law can further deepen the understanding and cooperation between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Furthermore, language and literature education can also be a vital aspect, as it fosters cultural understanding and effective communication within the naval cooperation framework (Yesevi& Tiftikcigil, 2014), (Eskimen, 2018).

These training and education initiatives can contribute to the development of a shared maritime strategy, enhance operational coordination, and promote mutual understanding of each other's cultural and historical contexts. By investing in training and education opportunities, both Turkish and Azerbaijan naval forces can strengthen their collaboration and effectively address maritime security challenges in the region.

### **Diplomatic Relations**

In the context of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, it is essential to highlight the multifaceted nature of their cooperation. The diplomatic dimensions encompass bilateral relations as well as participation in multilateral platforms that facilitate and enhance collaborative engagements in the maritime domain. Notably, both countries are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). These memberships provide avenues for promoting regional trade, strengthening historical ties, and fostering peace and stability in their respective regions (Lotfi et al., 2016) ; (Yesevi& Tiftikcigil, 2014).

Moreover, the economic ties between Türkiye and Azerbaijan play a pivotal role in their diplomatic relations. For instance, Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) has made significant investments in Azerbaijan, and there are over 800 Turkish companies in Azerbaijan, with substantial total investments. The energy investments,

including projects such as the BTC Oil Pipeline and BTE natural gas pipeline, underscore the depth of their economic cooperation, further solidifying their diplomatic relations.

### **Bilateral Relations**

Türkiye and Azerbaijan share a significant diplomatic relationship, particularly in the context of naval cooperation. The two countries have historical and cultural links that provide a foundation for their collaboration. However, various factors have influenced the dynamics of their relations. For instance, Türkiye's membership in the EU Customs Union affects its independent trade policy with countries outside the EU, while Azerbaijan's agreements with the Commonwealth of Independent States have implications for its trade relationships. Additionally, the presence of over 800 Turkish companies in Azerbaijan highlights the substantial economic ties between the two nations, with investments exceeding billions of dollars. Furthermore, ongoing and planned energy projects, such as the Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline and the Trans-Anatolia Pipeline Project, underscore the depth of their cooperation (Lotfi et al., 2016).

### **Multilateral Platforms**

Multilateral platforms play a pivotal role in facilitating the cooperation between the naval forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan. The Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance signed by President Ilham Aliyev and Turkish President Abdullah Gul in 2010, as well as the Joint Statement on the establishment of High Level Strategic Cooperation Council signed between President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan, have been instrumental in solidifying the bilateral relations between the two countries (Gurbanova, 2016). These diplomatic engagements have provided a framework for regular high-level meetings where various aspects of their relations, including military cooperation, are discussed and reviewed. Furthermore, the strong historical, cultural, and linguistic links between Türkiye and Azerbaijan have contributed to the focus on political, economic, and strategic interests, particularly in the oil and gas field, as well as in military cooperation.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the analysis of Turkish and Azerbaijan naval forces cooperation highlights the significant potential for further collaboration in the maritime domain. The historical, cultural, and linguistic links between Azerbaijan and Türkiye have laid a solid foundation for their bilateral relations, with Türkiye expressing strong support for Azerbaijan in various aspects, including the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (Gurbanova, 2016). Moving forward, there are promising prospects for enhanced cooperation, especially in the context of creative initiatives to overcome current challenges and contribute to regional stability and security.

The future prospects for Turkish and Azerbaijan naval forces cooperation also benefit from the positive economic advantages brought about by joint projects, such as the pipeline from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Türkiye, which has not only established closer ties between the states but also garnered support from political

and military elites in Türkiye. As such, the potential for strengthening collaborative endeavors in the maritime domain remains high, with opportunities for the development of effective mechanisms and platforms to address regional challenges and further solidify the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The analysis of Turkish and Azerbaijan naval cooperation reveals several key takeaways. Firstly, the bilateral relations between the two countries are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, as evidenced by the "One nation - Two States" expression, signifying strong relations. This historical connection has led to the development and consolidation of various agreements, such as the "Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance" and the "Joint Statement on the establishment of High Level Strategic Cooperation Council," which have strengthened political, economic, and strategic interests between the two nations (Gurbanova, 2016). Additionally, the significance of energy pipelines, such as the Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline and the Trans-Anatolia Pipeline (TANAP), underscores the economic and strategic cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, with energy infrastructure playing a pivotal role in their partnership (Yesevi& Tiftikcigil, 2014).

Furthermore, the military cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan is highlighted as a significant aspect of their partnership, with both countries being close partners in this domain. This is exemplified by Türkiye's strong support for Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and its active participation in the OSCE Minsk Group to address the conflict, reflecting a shared strategic interest and commitment to regional stability. Overall, the analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of Turkish and Azerbaijan naval cooperation, encompassing historical, political, economic, and strategic dimensions, which collectively contribute to the strength and depth of their collaborative maritime engagements (Irkhin et. al., 2024).

## SUGGESTIONS

The cooperation between Turkish and Azerbaijan naval forces presents several potential areas for further collaboration. One key area is joint training and exercises, allowing the navies to enhance interoperability and coordination. Additionally, joint maritime security operations, including efforts to combat piracy and illegal fishing, can be a focal point for future cooperation. Furthermore, the exchange of information and intelligence regarding maritime threats and challenges in the region can significantly strengthen the collaborative efforts of the two naval forces (Gurbanova, 2016).

Another potential area for cooperation is joint naval research and development initiatives. By sharing expertise and resources, the navies can work together to develop advanced maritime technologies and capabilities, enhancing their overall effectiveness and preparedness. Moreover, joint patrols and surveillance activities in shared maritime zones can bolster the security and stability of the region, demonstrating the commitment of both nations to safeguarding their maritime interests (Yesevi& Tiftikcigil, 2014).

Through these concerted efforts and endeavors, nations can effectively lay the groundwork for significantly enhanced maritime security. This includes the protection of critical sea lines of communication, ensuring freedom of navigation, combating maritime piracy, and responding to natural disasters. Moreover, enhanced

naval cooperation fosters a more harmonious and balanced international order that benefits all parties involved. By working together, Türkiye and Azerbaijan can contribute to the preservation of peace, stability, and prosperity not only in the Black Sea region but also beyond. In conclusion, the naval cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan holds tremendous potential for advancing their shared interests and promoting regional security. As maritime nations, they have an inherent responsibility to reinforce their naval capabilities, establish mutual understanding, and collaborate on addressing emerging challenges. By doing so, Türkiye and Azerbaijan can play a pivotal role in shaping a secure and stable future, where the maritime domain remains a catalyst for cooperation, rather than confrontation.

We strongly recommend further exploration and development of naval cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan as a vital area of study in international relations and maritime security. This cooperation has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the academic literature by highlighting the importance of bilateral naval collaboration in maintaining and enhancing regional security. It emphasizes the strategic role of maritime partnerships in protecting critical sea lines of communication, ensuring freedom of navigation, combating maritime piracy, and effectively responding to natural disasters. By documenting and analyzing the naval strategies and joint initiatives of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, researchers can provide valuable insights into how such alliances can foster a more harmonious and balanced international order. This research can also explore the broader implications for peace, stability, and prosperity in the Black Sea region and beyond, serving as a model for other nations seeking to enhance their maritime security through cooperative efforts. Ultimately, the scholarly examination of Türkiye and Azerbaijan's naval cooperation can contribute significantly to the field by demonstrating how collaborative maritime efforts are crucial for promoting a secure and stable future, transforming the maritime domain into a space for cooperation rather than confrontation.

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