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**MILITARY DIPLOMACY AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING FOREIGN
POLICY GOALS (THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN AS A CASE
STUDY)**

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Abstract.

Small states like Azerbaijan, which are strategically located between huge and ambitious neighbors, are forced to implement effective strategies that involve using all opportunities to ensure their vital interests. One such possibility is the realization of successful military diplomacy. The article examines the place of military diplomacy in international relations, analyzes the approaches of various researchers about military diplomacy, and justifies the role of military diplomacy in the implementation of foreign policy.

Keywords: *military diplomacy, military attache, “soft power”, foreign policy, “hard power”.*

1. Introduction

Experiences show that nations at different times have tried to use all elements of national power (whether through violent means or encouragement and cooperation) to achieve their goals. The strategy of achieving goals through cooperation falls within the scope of the “soft power” domain. Researcher Gregory Winger includes “military diplomacy” in this category (Winger, 2014).

Although it sounds strange, the term “military diplomacy” is often presented as a combination of two contradictory terms, because military is understood as the use of force and conflict. However, both military and diplomacy have a common goal, which is to protect the core values and vital interests important to the nation-state and to provide a safe environment for its citizens (Yadav, 2018).

Shafiqul Alam (2013) presents military diplomacy as the peaceful use of the military in the field of diplomacy to achieve the goals of national foreign policy. He lists several benefits of military diplomacy if done properly, such as building military ties, strengthening defense capabilities, trade in key defense products, building military capabilities, helping friendly countries develop their defense capabilities, and increasing military interoperability. Some researchers consider military diplomacy to be a form of “soft power” that involves government efforts (Bhatia et al., 2016). In addition, they emphasize that military diplomacy includes the whole complex of non-aggressive efforts carried out by the military, with the intention of creating a positive image of any country and ensuring the confidence of the international community. At the same time, they note both material and conceptual difficulties in military diplomacy. They believe that the biggest problem is that each side thinks that their “partnership” is important and that both sides are equal.



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The authors also state that in a state-centered world, national interests are paramount and may override cooperation (Rawal, 2019).

Iis Gindarshah (2015) states that military diplomacy serves two purposes: 1) it helps to establish friendly relations in the field of defense with regional powers; 2) facilitates military transformation in the direction of improving the defense industry. He further notes that military diplomacy can be achieved by appointing military attachés to partner countries, creating interaction between high-level military and civilian officials, expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of defense, facilitating the exchange of training for military and civilians, hosting bilateral or multilateral military training workshops.

Goran Svistek (2012) presents military diplomacy as a power to overcome hostility, as well as to build and maintain trust and confidence in partner countries. The researcher states that military diplomacy supports the creation of armed forces that effectively carry out the democratic orders of the government. Svistek claims that military diplomacy is “an activity in peacetime aimed at conflict prevention and resolution contrary to the traditional role of armed forces defined by the ability and readiness to use force and threat for the purpose of defense, deterrence, coercion or intervention”. He further notes that military diplomacy is achieved through defense cooperation between partner states, especially states that have transitioned from a post-conflict scenario to democracy and are able to develop a modern foreign and security policy.

Martin Edmonds (1998), based on his experience, interprets the term military diplomacy as the use of armed forces to achieve national and international goals beyond the borders of the country. S. Tan and B. Singh (2012) present military diplomacy as the collective application of peaceful and cooperative initiatives by national defense institutions in order to build trust, prevent or resolve conflicts. K.A.Mutanna (2011) evaluates military diplomacy as an important tool in maintaining stable cooperative relations, resolving conflicts, ensuring transparency in defense cooperation and contributing to relations in other fields. A. Kottey and A. Forster (2004) present military diplomacy as the use of armed forces and related infrastructure (mainly the Ministries of Defense) in foreign and security policy in peacetime. According to E. Pajtinka (2016), military diplomacy is a complex of activities carried out by defense and state institutions through negotiations and other diplomatic means to ensure state interests in the field of security and military policy. Although there are various theoretical approaches and definitions of military diplomacy from time to time in the scientific literature, there is no definition that completely covers the functional tasks and scope of modern military diplomacy (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022).

Against the background of the abovementioned facts, the main goal of the presented article is to study the historical relationship between military diplomacy and foreign policy and the role it plays in establishing relations with other countries. The Republic of Azerbaijan in broader regional context has been chosen as a case study. Theoretical research methods such as comparative analysis, synthesis, and idealization were used in the preparation of the article.

2. Military diplomacy as a tool in foreign policy. Historical perspective

Following the end of the Cold War, the traditionalist, widening, and critical schools of thought engaged in a debate about the expanding and widening security agenda that differed from the conventional focus on military-based threats. Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde proposed a constructivist method for security analysis as a way to restrict the application of security and create some potential for its reintegration in response to traditionalists' claims that the widening of the concept was rendering the issue incoherent. This means that security is not understood as the subject matter of a certain sector, but rather as a style of politics that defines itself in terms of risks and



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demands quick action to counter those threats. In order to “allow a scholar to study” “real-world” securitizations, some have argued for an even broader concept and application of security that goes beyond the “confines” of the Copenhagen School. One reason for this is that most social (and/or political) processes are not fully explained by a single speech act, rather, a series of articulations work together to create the perception and comprehension of danger (Sadiyev, et al., 2021).

Sun Tzu is one of the first theorists to point out the inextricable connection between military, diplomatic and other elements of national power. His “The Art of War” reflects the interaction of the art of war not only with diplomacy, but also with the aspects of economics and information. For example, Sun Tzu acknowledges the impact of war on the economy of states: *“With power and wealth thus depleted, households in the central plains will be completely impoverished and seven-tenths of their wealth will disappear”*. Contextually, the quote about the effects of prolonged war not only on one's own state but also on the enemy state demonstrates Sun Tzu's considerations beyond the purely military aspects of war. In his writings on offensive strategy, Sun Tzu indirectly mentions the role of both information and diplomacy: *“To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill”* (Willard, 2006). As can be seen from such quotes, Sun Tzu is well aware of the necessity of shaping the environment or circumstances to achieve a desired goal. A skilled and competent leader uses all the means at his disposal to shape the environment (whether to avoid war altogether or to ensure victory if war is inevitable). The essence of military diplomacy is to influence future outcomes by shaping the environment (conditions) in one's favor. In the Second Karabakh War, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan liberated 5 cities, 4 settlements and 286 villages from occupation (Guner et al., 2022; Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021a; Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021b; Iskandarov et al., 2022). It was about 20 percent of the total occupied territory. However, by signing the November 10 statement, President Ilham Aliyev succeeded in liberating other occupied regions. This is the most vivid example of Sun Tzu's approach “To subdue the enemy without fighting is the achme of skill”.

From the analysis of his articles in the field of diplomacy, it is clear that according to Machiavelli (16th century), the best foreign policy course that a state can take to prevent any interference is realized if it has sufficient military power. Machiavelli's main assumption is that mastery of military art is more important to a state than anything else, even diplomatic skill (Berridge, 2001). However, not every state always has enough military power to achieve its goals, and diplomacy was born out of this necessity. The question “What should leaders do at the beginning of their career” can be answered from the perspective of Machiavelli in the following way: *“States should rely on diplomatic skill until they have sufficient military power”*. Experience shows that if military power and diplomatic skill complement each other, it is possible to win an absolute victory. This argument is fully confirmed in the example of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Thus, the liberation of its lands, which were under occupation for about 27 years, was realized thanks to the formation of the intended military power. Machiavelli also points out that diplomacy is very important for states to do greater things after having military power. For example, as we know from history, the Romans never fought two major wars at the same time. Instead, their policy was to pick one military target at a time and “make peace with the others” (Berridge, 2001).

The Dutch statesman Hugo Grotius (17th century), who became famous for his writings on diplomatic law and took a strong stance against wars, notes that there are three methods in any case to prevent disputes from escalating into a large-scale war, the first of which is necessarily negotiation. Grotius calls this method the “conference” method. The second method is arbitration. Although Grotius sees it as more of a judicial process than mediation, he also emphasizes that diplomacy is necessary for the creation and joint holding of arbitral conferences. What he actually points out is that those who have no interest in the matter can settle the disputes of others. The third



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method introduced by Grotius is a single combat that will settle the dispute unequivocally (Berridge, 2001). When none of the mentioned methods are possible, countries are dragged into long-term wars. This can be seen today in the example of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Over time, significant progress has been made in the theory and practice of coordinating the elements of national power. Frederick the Great and Carl von Clausewitz, two famous symbols of European military art of the 18th and 19th centuries, proposed the coordination of military and diplomatic activities as integrated tools in a nation's arsenal of power. Carl von Clausewitz's book “On War” is the most powerful work ever written on military theory, which inextricably links diplomatic means and military activities in the conduct of foreign policy. The works of Frederick the Great and Carl von Clausewitz prove that the army plays an important and multifaceted role not only in war, but also in the achievement of foreign policy goals.

As King of Prussia and commander of the armed forces, Frederick the Great not only wrote about military theory, but also practiced it. Based on this experience, in 1747, Frederick wrote “Instructions for his Generals”. In this work, Frederick the Great gave extensive information about the importance of public and military diplomacy. In addition, the work emphasized the importance of understanding the countries and places where Frederick's generals could potentially operate. One element of this approach is to travel to those places in peacetime. As Friedrich noted, the purpose of such trips is “... to learn about the country where you will be operating... places are visited, camps are selected, roads are inspected, dialogue is established with village mayors, butchers and farmers” (Willard, 2006). Such visits allow not only to understand potential enemies, but also to identify potential allies and establish local contacts.

In addition to this aspect, the work touches on the need to create alliances with “neutral countries”. Friedrich notes: “*It is necessary to make friends with neutral countries. If you can win the whole country, so much the better*” (Willard, 2006). Although Frederick did not specifically call these activities military diplomacy, he and his generals engaged in diplomatic negotiations with foreign entities to shape the regional environment. This approach allowed Frederick to improve both the strategic position of his state and the operational situation of his army, diplomatic activities conducted under the auspices of the Prussian military structure.

Frederick's activities as a military leader are directly related to the activities of the modern combat commander. Frederick makes every effort to shape his environment through peacetime activities of military diplomacy, as defined in this work. Establishing formal alliances, professional connections, and personal associations in the region, Frederick maximized his potential influence in peacetime through various diplomatic activities. In short, Frederick's program of military diplomacy helped achieve Prussia's strategic goals.

Carl von Clausewitz, the next great military strategist of Prussia, who promoted the experience and works of Frederick, is the author of the most influential military publication in the modern western world. “On War” remains one of the most widely read military publications that continues to influence Western military operations to this day. In this work, Clausewitz seriously reveals the multifaceted nature of the army as a means of both war and policy implementation. Clausewitz's famous quote “*War is nothing but the continuation of politics by other means*” is indicative of this connection and forms one of the pillars of his work.

Taking into account the relationship between the army and politics, Clausewitz notes the need for a military leader to be a “soldier-statesman”. In other words, the commander must understand the political objectives of the state and implement the correct exercise of power to achieve them. A commander who is able to combine military means with diplomatic means creates a powerful weapon to influence his opponent. Like Sun Tzu, Clausewitz argues that a great leader is one who is capable of achieving goals through multiple means of influence. Clausewitz argues that a truly



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genius general is distinguished by his ability to understand “what he can achieve with the means at his disposal” provided he is aware of “the entire political situation”.

The requirements for a modern US combat commander are similar to the concept of the “soldier-statesman” put forward by Clausewitz. Those officers are expected to extrapolate various strategic foreign policy directives and translate those directives into action. In other words, the statesman understands his desired strategic political goals, develops programs and tasks to achieve those goals, and the organization transforms those goals into actionable activities.

Clausewitz notes: *“No proposal for war can be made without knowledge of the political factors.... [Similarly] if the war is fully suited to the political ends, and if the policy is compatible with the means available to the war, the only sensible thing to do is to make the commander-in-chief a member of the cabinet”* (Willard, 2006). By recommending that the commander-in-chief becomes a member of the cabinet, Clausewitz emphasizes the importance of fully synchronizing the multifaceted capabilities of the military with other means of policy implementation. The inclusion of the commander-in-chief in the cabinet promotes full scrutiny, coordination and synchronization of government activities across the spectrum of power. This approach is fully confirmed in the example of the Second Karabakh war. Thus, during the 44-day Patriotic War, Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev introduced a strategy into modern world history that perfectly synthesized diplomatic and military skills. In other words, by entering the “cabinet” described by Clausevich, President Ilham Aliyev personally led the struggle on all fronts, listened to the reports of the unit and formation commanders of the Armed Forces, and concentrated the capabilities of other institutions and organizations on a common goal. Damjan Miskovich expressed it as follows: *“By restoring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of his country thanks to the thoughtful combination of military skills and active diplomacy in the Second Karabakh War, President Ilham Aliyev demonstrated a skill that no leader has been able to show in the 21st century”* (Miskovich, 2020).

Clausewitz clarifies his comments about war and politics in this way: *“War is caused by a political goal. Therefore, politics will permeate all military operations and have a lasting impact on them”* (Willard, 2006). Apparently, from the point of view of the “soldier-statesman” concept, Clausevich considers the integration of politics and military activity not only desirable, but even an absolute necessity. It should be noted that the concept of “soldier-statesman” is still the backbone of modern diplomacy and is often applied by today's leaders in many regions.

Ernest Satov, who is considered a well-known person among the diplomats of his time and who showed a strong stance against the use of military force in international relations, notes that diplomatic relations were formed only after the application of military force in the example of securing the interests of Great Britain in China and Japan in the 19th century. According to Satov, the use of military force can have both benefits and harm, it requires careful use, and it can give any results only if it is applied to a limited extent (Berridge, 2001).

Henry Kissinger, who is considered a brilliant figure in the history of diplomacy of the 20th century, presents diplomacy as the continuation of relations between states that are not at war. But he does not claim that diplomacy is completely separate from military affairs. Indeed, as a historian, Kissinger points out that throughout history the political influence of nations has always been directly proportional to their military strength. According to him, therefore, diplomacy and military strategy should support each other. But as much as diplomacy depends on military power for its effect, it can also use military means to serve its ends. For example, Kissinger justifies the US bombing of Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, as a diplomatic signal to the Vietcong leadership. Thus, the use of military means has been a means to strengthen the position of the US in negotiations against North Vietnam (Berridge, 2001).



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There have been many examples of countries strengthening their international relations by using the military for peaceful purposes. Although the link between armed forces and “hard power” is very clear, it is not easy to justify the use of a country's military power and military institutions as a means of “soft power”. The primary task of the absolute majority of military personnel of any country is to defend the country's territorial integrity, national independence and sovereignty. However, the analysis shows that only military power is not enough to resolve modern conflicts. In this regard, the integration of the elements of “soft power” into the mechanisms of “hard power” is considered one of the priority issues of foreign policy. That is why, the power of a country is not measured by the ability to drop bombs on the enemy, but by the ability to achieve its interests using non-violent means (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022). The participation of the armed forces in transnational peacekeeping operations and humanitarian activities is well known and this trend is increasing. The military personnel of two or more countries often come together to conduct bilateral and multilateral exercises and increase their readiness levels, thereby develop not only military but also diplomatic relations between the states.

The term “military diplomacy” first entered the system of international relations in the 90s of the last century after the fall of the communist regime in Eastern Europe. Immediately after the end of the Cold War, the countries of Eastern Europe posed a unique challenge to the Western community. Thus, the Western governments were afraid that the large Soviet-style armies of the former Warsaw Pact countries would be the main obstacle in the process of transition to democracy. An unreformed military could not only disrupt the transition process, but also rekindle certain historical grievances. The fear of Eastern Europe descending into chaos led Western governments to develop an effective strategy of using their own military forces to help rebuild the armed forces of former Warsaw Pact countries. Through activities such as officer exchanges and the development of training programs, Western governments mobilized their defense establishments to reform the armies of Eastern Europe (Winger, 2014). The Clinton administration took a step that would enable the integration of Central and Eastern European countries into the Alliance without excepting Russia. In January 1994, President Bill Clinton proposed a Partnership for Peace (PfP) program at the historic summit of NATO in Brussels to strengthen cooperation between the East and NATO and to attract new democracies to the Western Union.

The program provided the following basic principles:

- conducting consultations within NATO;
- inviting the participant countries to meetings;
- allowing each partner nation to develop specific individual programs with NATO’s assistance.

The program thus contributed to expanding political and military cooperation across Europe, ensuring stability, building strong security based on democratic principles, facilitating dialogue and cooperation between partner countries and NATO. States that signed the PfP program would cooperate with NATO to achieve the following specific objectives:

- providing transparency in national defense planning and budgeting;
- exercising democratic control over defense forces;
- maintaining the capability to assist UN or CSCE operations;
- establishing relations based on cooperation with NATO in order to conduct joint planning and training;
- creating forces that are ready to cooperate with the armed forces of NATO countries in the long term (Iskandarov, 2019).

Thus, NATO's Partnership for Peace program began to be implemented precisely for the purpose of instilling democratic norms of civil-military relations and integrating Eastern Europe into



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the existing collective security organization such as NATO (Nasirov et al., 2017). These efforts led to the evolution of the armed forces as a non-violent instrument. The success of the Western Union's efforts to implement military reforms in Eastern European countries was not based on the ability of Western forces to impose their will, but rather on their ability to constructively involve their Eastern counterparts and use cooperation to achieve a result based on mutual interests (Winger, 2014).

3. The use of military diplomacy against the backdrop of great power competition. Azerbaijani perspective

International military cooperation is often rooted in historical ties, but national interests usually take precedence. Military diplomacy is an integral part of foreign policy and a means of protecting national interests, as a different field of military intelligence, the general framework in which it is implemented never goes beyond the framework of the state's foreign relations (Codrean, 2017).

In addition to protecting the territorial integrity of the country, military personnel perform a number of duties. Their involvement in transnational peacekeeping and humanitarian operations is a well-known and growing aspect of their activities. Historically, they have been involved in joint defense and diplomatic activities with other countries and their forces. The militaries of two or more states often come together to conduct bilateral and multilateral exercises, develop their interoperability, thereby improving not only military but also diplomatic relations between states (Rawal, 2019).

It is very difficult to define the term “military diplomacy”. This is due to the frequent use of “defense diplomacy”, “security diplomacy” and other similar terms. Although they share overlapping concepts and goals due to certain features, “military diplomacy” differs from them in terms of goal setting and practice (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022).

The researchers point out that “defense diplomacy” refers to diplomacy that covers all security-related issues in addition to military. “Military diplomacy” is used mostly in the military domain, but the term “defense diplomacy” refers to the use of military as well as other national resources. The term “military diplomacy” is used in this study because it deals with the implementation of foreign policy through military means.

The traditional role of the Armed Forces is defined by their ability, as well as their readiness, to use force for protection, deterrence, coercion or intervention. Military diplomacy today is primarily a peacetime activity and has become a key task for the armed forces and their responsible agencies. It is established on the basis of cooperation between other foreign states, especially the countries in the process of transition to post-conflict and democratic societies, and is used as a tool in the implementation of modern foreign and security policy. As part of a comprehensive approach to security, military diplomacy is one of the main pillars of foreign policy today.

External actors (countries or organisations) play a crucial role in shaping events in the South Caucasus; often not by meeting their own policy objectives but by blocking the policies of other actors. It would be relevant to elaborate on each and every actor involved in the region.

The United States considers the region as a part of Europe and wants to see the South Caucasus as a Western-oriented region, since the latter plays a crucial role in the European energy security. Therefore the stability of the region and the settlement of the conflicts are in the interest of the United States.

Through the Eastern Partnership (EaP) program, the EU aims to to promote stability and development in the region and forge closer ties. The ever-increasing need for the diversification of



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energy sources and cooperation in energy transit issues has made the West attach a great deal of importance to the South Caucasus region as a reliable transit route avoiding Russian and Iranian territories. Nonetheless, Brussels' clout in the South Caucasus remains modest. Russia perceives the West as an utterly direct threat to Russian national security. Even though, the European Union does not have any institution of any resemblance to a common military force, its expansion is a political one. As the former “ruler” and most powerful state in the post-Soviet area, Russia remains a fundamental actor, claiming the post-Soviet space in its main foreign policy documents. Russia is very much engaged in the South Caucasus, despite not having unlimited influence there, but still retains substantial leverage and has been reasserting its influence in the area. Moscow has a military-strategic, economic (especially in energy field), as well as domestic and political leverage over the region.

Iran, in its turn, does not want the participation of non-regional powers in the processes in the South Caucasus and considers the “3+3” model that considers the engagement of only three countries: Türkiye, Russia and Iran. However, Iran's role for the foreseeable future in the South Caucasus is unclear. It seems unlikely that Tehran will become a substantial factor in the near term as energy infrastructure (if agreed on and built) will take many years to come into being.

Türkiye, the staunch ally and the linchpin of NATO in Central Asia and the Caucasus during the Cold War remains an indispensable partner of the West as an intermediary between the Soviet successor-states in the region and the West. Türkiye is the driving force behind most of the regional cooperation projects with the contribution of Azerbaijan. The initiation of strategic projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipelines, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway are milestones of this cooperation. Following the realization of the BTC, main export pipeline, Azerbaijan's new Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project was generated. The Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and its follow-up Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) are one of the main parts of the SGC, transporting the natural gas from the Shah Deniz-2 to the West. The failed attempts to normalize relations with Armenia more or less had underscored Türkiye's limited ability to project itself in the South Caucasus, and Russia's greater potential to undermine Türkiye's efforts if they were not deemed mutually advantageous (Sadiyev & Iskandarov, 2018). After 30 years of confrontation there is a hope of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan which is a sine quo non for regional prosperity and security. However, there are still foreign actors which want to sabotage and prevent it. For instance, one of the most commonly discussed topics after the Second Karabakh war is Zangezur corridor, which promises wider economic benefits both for Armenia and Azerbaijan. All the countries of the region can benefit from the opportunities arising from the realization of the Zangezur Corridor, which will serve to expand regional cooperation and increase mutual trust. With the opening of the Zangezur corridor, a new “artery” of the transport network between Europe and Asia will be established, which will ultimately have a positive effect on the economic and trade relations between the West and East, as well as among the countries of the region. Zangezur Corridor is one of the major projects which has a true potential to contribute to the establishment of long-lasting peace to end decades long enmity (Gawliczek & Iskandarov, 2023).

In the second Karabakh war, Azerbaijan clearly proved its military might, and at the same time, thanks to the military-diplomatic skills of Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev, other occupied territories were handed over to the control of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan without a single shot being fired. As a result, Azerbaijan achieved its strategic goal using an alternative means - non-violent means. Thus, the Republic of Azerbaijan considers military diplomacy an important tool for achieving foreign policy goals. Azerbaijan's military diplomacy, which is located in the neighborhood of huge, ambitious countries and at the junction of particularly important trans-regional routes, is also distinguished by a number of specific features. Taking into



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account the changes in geopolitics and the nature of the management system in different periods, assumptions about Azerbaijan's military diplomacy are based on the following three arguments (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022):

1. When conducting military diplomacy with reason and logic, any state can both maintain its existence and obtain more concessions from larger states. In recent years, serious steps have been taken in this direction in the foreign strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the effectiveness of that strategy was proven once again with the Second Karabakh War.

2. In forming and developing relations of a small country like Azerbaijan with big powers, its military diplomacy should take the geopolitical sensitivities into account, otherwise diplomacy will not have the expected effect. This can be seen in the example of other countries of the region. Thus, Azerbaijan managed to solve the same problem with different diplomacy.

3. Effective military diplomacy with big powers also means balancing military cooperation with them. The Republic of Azerbaijan maintains bilateral and multilateral relations in the military field, organizes joint military exercises and exchanges many high-level military visits. One of the most successful steps taken by Azerbaijan in the arms trade in recent years has been the increase in the range of weapons and diversification of imports. In general, on the basis of mutual national interests, President Ilham Aliyev has formed a management model that includes multi-vector cooperation with the United States, the European Union, GUAM and CIS countries, Türkiye, Iran, Israel and Pakistan. As a result of such a strategy, Azerbaijan managed to acquire effective weapon systems not only from Russia, but also from countries with developed defense industries such as Israel and Türkiye.

Azerbaijan as a reliable partner in ensuring international peace and security, is an active participant in maintaining and restoring peace. Since 1999, more than 3,000 servicemen of the Azerbaijani Army have participated in peacekeeping operations in various regions, including the NATO-led peacekeeping operations KFOR in Kosovo (1999-2008), ISAF (2002-2015) and RSM (2015-2021) in Afghanistan, and as part of the multinational coalition forces in Iraq in 2003-2008. Since 2019, the Azerbaijani Army has been contributing to the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan with two military observers.

Azerbaijani military diplomacy is successfully continuing its work in the field of army build-up. Thus, since 2002, within the framework of NATO's PSP concept, the officers of the Azerbaijani Army serve in NATO's tactical, operational and strategic HQs and institutions, contribute to international cooperation, and also garner experience and practically apply it after returning back. By using this mechanism, the Republic of Azerbaijan has sent more than 40 military personnel to various NATO headquarters and thus become one of the leading countries among the PfP countries. At present, six officers of the Azerbaijani Army serve in various headquarters of NATO. Since the selection of PSP officers is a pretty rigorous process, the result is crystal clear, they become very good ambassadors of Azerbaijan in NATO. The OCC E&F program which Azerbaijan has joined since 2004, is an ideal mechanism to bring its units to NATO standards. In this regard using the OCC E&F program fully corresponds to the foreign policy priorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan. For the time being Azerbaijan has a NEL-2 certified Infantry Battalion, Recce Company, Helicopter Detachment and a Boarding party declared to OCC Pool of Forces. The ambition is to have at least an infantry brigade declared to OCC Pool of Forces by 2025. DEEP and SPS are other tools which continue to play a critical role in improving the professional military education system and increase opportunities for dialogue and practical cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and NATO, based on scientific research, technological innovation and knowledge exchange.

The course of military diplomacy conducted by the Republic of Azerbaijan and based on national interests has created a foundation for it, which has a favorable geopolitical position, to play



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the role of a power center in regional and global peace and security processes. Meetings of high-ranking representatives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and NATO hosted by Baku are a clear example of Azerbaijan playing the role of a power center of military diplomacy. In the South Caucasus and the Caspian region, Azerbaijan acts as the main initiator of new military regional cooperation formats. All these efforts are aimed at the development of the region and the regional states, and the preservation of peace and stability. Azerbaijan-Turkey-Georgia cooperation is a clear proof of this. Such regional projects have aroused great interest not only in the region, but also at the global level. In fact, these projects are based on common interests and mutual respect that protect the interests of regional states and nations.

Thus, military diplomacy has a special importance for every state, it plays an important role in ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, in shaping its place and role in the international world, as well as in army build-up.

4. Conclusions

In general, it can be concluded that military diplomacy has become a tool of foreign and security policy in crisis prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. It is used in efforts to create stability and security by changing the attitudes and perceptions of parties to a conflict, which is why military diplomacy has been characterized as “disarmament of the mind”. Thus, one of the main goals of security in the future may be to establish new partnership relationships or further develop existing partnership opportunities. Military cooperation and military diplomacy are a means of international politics in maintaining the balance of power by supporting allies and balancing enemies. Today, military diplomacy is actively used to create opportunities for cooperation with former adversaries and new partners. Therefore, in order to increase the effectiveness of the general process, it is appropriate to prepare a conceptual document on military diplomacy and implement it more systematically. This document sets out the most important provisions for the deep understanding, planning, coordination, execution and improvement of military diplomacy, starting from the strategic level (dialogue, memorandum, treaty, etc.) to the technical level (military industry and scientific research). It should include the existing structures, the methodology of implementing military diplomacy, as well as short and long-term goals.

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