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AZERBAIJAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF HEYDAR ALIYEV IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NORTH CAUCASIAN PEOPLES

SUMMARY

Azerbaijan-Russian Relations during the Presidency of Heydar Aliyev in the context of the North Caucasian peoples. The Caucasus region is one of the most interesting regions of the world for its unique history, favorable geographical location and due to the existence of diverse population groups. The article examines the national leader Heydar Aliyev's role in the preservation of peace, political and economic stability in the Caucasus and implementing interreligious and intercultural integration. In the article, as well as the relations between Azerbaijan and Russia in the context the cultural and humanitarian relations of the peoples of the North Caucasus, taken actions to protect the cultures and languages of the mountain people living in Azerbaijan during the presidency of Heydar Aliyev.

Key words: National leader Heydar Aliyev, Caucasian region, Caucasian peoples, cultural and humanitarian relations.

The Caucasus, the most ancient inhabited place in humankind's history, is one of the unique regions in the world, where different nations, ethnos and different cultures are crossed. The Caucasus is the second region in the world where a lot of

people inhabited. It was noted that during the Roman Empire, Roman representatives brought approximately ninety interpreters with themselves when traveled to the region. The Caucasus region has attracted attention not only with its nature, but also with the settlement of different peoples. Barry Rodriques states, “Almost thirty million people who speak forty different languages live in the Caucasian hills, valleys and plains [5, 7].

At the same time, the Caucasus region is located in a very favorable geographical area, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, between Europe and Asia, East and West. A favorable geographical and strategic location of the Caucasus region has led to conquer this land by various ancient and modern empires – Byzantine, Roman, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Mongolian, and Russian.

Nowadays, the Caucasus region for its geopolitical location, rich natural resources, and hydrocarbon reserves remains an area that the national and state interests of the world’s leading states are crossed.

It must be mention that the preservation of peace in the Caucasus, political and economic stability, the implementation of religions and intercultural integration, the development of the idea “Peace in the Caucasus” and “Common Caucasian Home” have undoubtedly developed during presidency of Heydar Aliyev. Today, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev successfully continues his political ideas.

Cultural, military, political, and economic relations between Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus have existed since ancient times. Relations between Azerbaijan and the mountainous people root in rich common historical legacy. Azerbaijan developed relations with North Caucasus during 17-18th centuries and later in the early 20th century in the period of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan 1918-1920 years. During the Soviet era, especially in the 1960 years Azerbaijan-Dagestan relations expanded, and with the national leader Heydar Aliyev’s strong support these relations embarked on a new stage.

The North Caucasus republics of the Russia Federation play a significant role in the development of Azerbaijan-Russia relations. Two Chechen-Russia wars and armed conflicts in the North Caucasus led to the mutual misunderstanding between Azerbaijan and Russia during 1991-1995 years. In October 1991, after collapse of the Soviet Union relation with Azerbaijan Republic and the republics of the Northern Caucasus, particularly Dagestan severed. The early years of independence for Azerbaijan were marred by the threat of separatism coming from its Lezgin minority living in the northern part of the country. Several nationalistic organizations, including Sadval, freely operating on the territory of Russia, instigated this separatism. All these factors caused the weakening of the relations with the North Caucasian peoples in cultural and economic spheres.

According to the experts, the development of relations between Azerbaijan and Russia can be divided into several stages. Under the rule of Heydar Aliyev, from October 1993 to January 2001 is characterized as the beginning of constructive dialogue in these relations [6, 174].

In 1993, after Heydar Aliyev's return to the government by the request of the people is laid significant changes in Azerbaijan-Russia relations. Heydar Aliyev began to restore relations with the Russia Federation. He tried to do all his best in order to soften Russia's anti-Azerbaijani position. As the result of Heydar Aliyev's far-sighted policy, the problems that have emerged with Russia have begun to erode and ice between the two countries has begun to melt. During this period relations between two countries have developed in almost all areas, dynamism has increased, different forms and methods of cooperation have been applied, and mutual visits of delegations have increased [2, 10].

Heydar Aliyev played a key role in the establishment of cultural, humanitarian and economic relations with the Chechen Republic and Azerbaijan. He made a great contribution to the advancement of the bilateral relations. First of all, it should be noted that the war for freedom, the bloody wars and the refugee

problems have been closely linked to each other. During the Chechen war, Azerbaijan was a safe place for Chechen refugees who sought asylum. In 1994, if there were 4,700 Chechen refugees in Azerbaijan, the number of Chechen refugees in Azerbaijan grew to 10,000 by the year 2000.

Schools were opened for Chechens students, various committees were found in order to provide jobs. In this period they found job and received permit residence in the country [4, 42-43].

In 1995, a Cultural Center of the Chechen Republic-Ichkeria was opened in Baku. Azerbaijan President Heydar Aliyev considered the political problem of Chechnya as an internal affair of Russia, but the Chechen issue as a humanitarian problem. Despite its own refugee problems, Azerbaijan could not close its borders to suffering people who were hostages [1].

Since July 2000, the Azerbaijani leadership has re-examined the Chechen issue. The situation in the North Caucasus has gradually improved and peace restored. Chechens who fled to Azerbaijan during Chechen-Russia war returned to their homeland. Due to the relative improvement of the socio-economic situation in Chechen Republic many Chechen refugees improved their financial position, found a job. In 2000, after the election of Vladimir Putin as the President of the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan-Russia relations developed on the rising line. In January 2001, he became the first Russian president who visited Azerbaijan. During his visit to Baku, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin emphasized the national leader Heydar Aliyev's indispensable role in Azerbaijani-Russian relations: "For many years Heydar Alirza oglu Aliyev's efficient activity has been directly linked to the common history of our peoples. He laid the foundation for strategic partnership between Russia and Azerbaijan, made a great contribution to strengthen and develop the friendship and solidarity between our countries" 7].

Today, the relations between Azerbaijan and Chechen Republic are improving. The Azerbaijan government invited the Chechen president to Azerbaijan several times. Ramzan Kadyrov visited Baku and met with its president in November

2009 and 2018 years. Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov, who was on an official visit to Azerbaijan, appreciated national leader Heydar Aliyev's support and care for Chechen people in hard time. He stated that Chechen people would never forget Heydar Aliyev's service. Ramzan Kadyrov emphasized that Azerbaijan was one of the destinations where Chechen refugees went to avoid atrocities and Azerbaijan has sheltered from 10,000 to 13,000 refugees during 2002-2003 years[1].

In November 2018, during his second visit the President of Azerbaijan Republic Ilham expressed confidence that strengthening of cooperation between Azerbaijan and republics of the Russian Federation would contribute to Azerbaijan-Russia relationship. He described Ramzan Kadyrov's second visit to Azerbaijan as a vivid evidence of friendly and fraternal relations between the two countries' peoples. The Azerbaijani leader underscored the importance of enhancing of bilateral cooperation in economic and humanitarian spheres.

In 1998, the documents in the field of culture and art signed between Azerbaijan and Russia gave a strong impetus to the development of cultural relations. In February 1998, Azerbaijan-Dagestan Friendship Society was established in order to promote the cultural relations between the two peoples. The newly created Dagestan-Azerbaijan Friendship Society had to play a significant role in further strengthening of friendship and brotherhood between two nations, a comprehensive role in the development of socio-cultural relations. The main objective of the Society was to develop comprehensive, long-term cultural relations based on equal, mutual respect and trust between two countries [2, 147].

The North Caucasus peoples always plays a special place in the development of relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation and the national leader Heydar Aliyev had invaluable services in development and strengthen friendly and good-neighborly relations among these peoples. Nowadays, the president of Azerbaijan Republic Ilham Aliyev successfully continues this policy and pays special attention to the enhancing these relations.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Отношения между Азербайджаном и Россией во время президентства Гейдара Алиева в контексте народов Северного Кавказа. Кавказский регион является одним из самых интересных регионов мира благодаря своей уникальной истории, благоприятному географическому положению и различным культурам. В статье рассматривается роль Гейдара Алиева в сохранении мира на Кавказе, политической и экономической стабильности, межкультурной интеграции. В статье, а также были изучены отношения между Азербайджаном и Россией в культурно-гуманитарных отношениях народов Северного Кавказа, были предприняты шаги по защите культур и языков горных народов, проживающих в Азербайджане в период Гейдара Алиева.

Ключевые слова: Национальный лидер Гейдар Алиев, Кавказский регион, народы Кавказа, культурные и гуманитарные отношения.