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AZERBAIJAN WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SECURITY POLICY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: BILATERAL RELATIONS DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF ILHAM ALIYEV (2003–2021)

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This article examines the development of German-Azerbaijani relations during the presidency of Ilham Aliyev (2003–2021) through the prism of the security architecture of the South Caucasus. The main objective of the article, based on official sources, is to assess Germany's energy and security interests in the region and the development of bilateral relations. The analysis of German security policy is conducted chronologically based on Bundestag resolutions of 2009, 2012, and 2015. The article also examines discussions in the German parliament during the Second Karabakh War in 2020, as well as Germany's position on the South Caucasus in the resolution adopted by Germany in 2020 as part of its security policy in the South Caucasus in the context of new geopolitical realities after the 44-day war.

Keywords: Azerbaijan-Germany relations, South Caucasus, regional security, Bundestag transcripts and resolutions, Ilham Aliyev, Second Karabakh War.

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) stands as one of the most significant strategic partners in Europe for the Republic of Azerbaijan, which plays a central role in the economic and political architecture of the South Caucasus. Following the restoration of its state independence, the European vector-specifically relations with the FRG-became a priority direction in Azerbaijan's foreign policy strategy. The deep historical roots of these ties began to take shape as early as the beginning of the 19th century with the establishment of German settlements (such as Helenendorf, Annenfeld, etc.). The initial foundations for modern diplomatic rapprochement between the two countries were laid on the eve of German reunification. Relations entered an official plane in January 1992 with the FRG's recognition of Azerbaijan's independence, followed by the establishment of diplomatic relations in February of the same year. The fact that Azerbaijan's first embassy in Europe commenced its operations specifically in Bonn, and the pivotal role played by the prominent diplomat Huseynaga Sadigov in this process, underscores the special importance official Baku attaches to its partnership with Germany. In the initial phase spanning 1992-1993, the establishment of economic cooperation and direct air transport links formed the cornerstone of the future strategic partnership [7, p. 10-11].

A New Era of Strategic Cooperation with Germany: Ilham Aliyev and Protecting Political Succession in the Post-2003 Era

The change of political leadership in 2003 marked the beginning of a new stage in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, characterized by the resolute preservation and modernization of the strategic course towards Germany set by Heydar Aliyev. As the worthy successor to the political course of Heydar Aliyev, I. Aliyev has attached special importance to relations with the FRG within Azerbaijan's foreign policy. While serving as Prime Minister, I. Aliyev characterized Azerbaijan's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures as a continuation of H. Aliyev's policy and particularly emphasized the support of the FRG in this matter. Within this framework, during the opening ceremony of the “EUPES–Azerbaijan” German-Azerbaijani joint venture on October 2, 2003, his statement “I belie-



ve that we will need Germany's support regarding Azerbaijan's integration into the European family, and we do feel this support" [8, p. 215-217]. is a manifestation of the significant support provided by Germany on both political and economic levels towards Azerbaijan's entry into the European economic space.

From the mid-2000s onward, the course toward integration into the Euro-Atlantic space began to take on a more dynamic character within Azerbaijan's foreign policy. During President I. Aliyev's first official visit to Germany on August 24-26, 2004, during his meetings with German President Horst Köhler, Chancellor G. Schröder, and the head of the Bundestag's Caucasus Group Kristof Bergner, and the chairman of the Bundestag's foreign relations committee Volker Rühe, the situation in the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan's integration into European structures, the peaceful resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and regional security issues were discussed. The discussions held with Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder during the visit were remembered for their important messages in terms of both bilateral relations and the future of the region. Chancellor G. Schröder confirmed the main principles of Germany's South Caucasus policy and noted: "Germany has recognized and will recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be resolved peacefully." Germany's unequivocal support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and its support for the resolution of the problem within the framework of international law at these meetings prove that Germany is interested in changing the status quo in the South Caucasus and ensuring stability [1, p. 2].

During this period, the Federal Republic of Germany acted as one of the primary European states supporting official Baku's strategic course. Specifically, the statements made by the new FRG Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Detlef Lingemann, in February 2005 demonstrated FRG's resolve in this matter. In a press conference, the Ambassador noted: "The FRG government welcomes Azerbaijan's rapprochement with and accession to Euro-Atlantic structures, and is ready to continue supporting Azerbaijan on this path in the future." [1, p. 1]. Particularly, the views expressed during the visit of the German Bundestag delegation to Baku in May 2005 reaffirmed the strategic nature of the relations. For instance, Manfred Carstens, the Chairman of the Bundestag's Budget Committee, noted: "Germany is ready to provide Azerbaijan with all kinds of assistance in its integration into Europe, and Azerbaijan can be certain of this" [3, p. 7].

The visit of President Ilham Aliyev to the FRG on September 22, 2006, as a significant indicator of his policy of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, constituted an important stage in the development of diplomatic and economic ties between the two countries. The primary purpose of the visit was to participate in the "**International Bertelsmann-2006**" forum held in Berlin. During the first session organized within the framework of the forum, titled "The Balkans and the Black Sea Region as a Litmus Test for Europe" the head of state shared his strategic views regarding Azerbaijan's role on regional and international levels. In his speech at the "**International Bertelsmann – 2006**" forum held in Berlin in 2006, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev voiced important theses on this issue and noted that "the South Caucasus region, especially in terms of transporting the rich hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea, is of strategic importance for Europe's energy security. Azerbaijan is now fully ready to act as a reliable and long-term partner in ensuring this security by becoming a global oil and gas supplier. However, the most serious geopolitical obstacle to lasting stability and European-South Caucasus integration in the region is the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; therefore, Europe must play a more active and decisive role in the process of restoring peace and the rule of law in the region.". Utilizing this authoritative platform, I. Aliyev brought Azerbaijan's principled position on the **Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**, based on international law, to the attention of the international community. This visit, while strengthening Azerbaijan's position as a reliable partner within the European space, also served to deepen bilateral relations with Germany [4, p. 1].

During President Ilham Aliyev's official visit to Germany in February 2007, the course of integration into the Euro-Atlantic space was once again declared a persistent priority of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. This visit confirmed the high level of political ties between the two countries. In the meeting held with Chancellor Angela Merkel on February 14 as part of the visit, Azerbaijan's economic progress, the democratization process, and the future of relations with the EU were discussed. The parties noted the necessity of raising cooperation in the field of energy security to a new stage, and Germany expressed its support in this direction. Ilham Aliyev also participated in a business forum and the discussions titled ***"Azerbaijan in the 21st Century Development and Security Perspectives,"*** organized by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Berlin in February 2007, succeeding in promoting a closer acquaintance with the country in Germany [5, p. 1].

The factor of Ilham Aliyev has held particular significance in the development of relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the FRG. It is precisely as a result of the consistent and pragmatic foreign policy course he implemented that bilateral ties have ascended to a new stage, and political dialogue has further intensified. In this context, the adoption of an important resolution by the German parliament in 2009 titled ***"Strengthening Security, Stability, and Democracy in the South Caucasus"*** was not of a coincidental nature. While reflecting Germany's position on ensuring stability and security in the region, as well as strengthening democratic values, the document in question serves as a clear indicator of the importance attached to the deepening of Azerbaijan-Germany relations. The primary focus of this document was directed toward the reinforcement of stability, security, and democratic values in the region. Simultaneously, the necessity of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity was explicitly stated. The resolution declares that lasting peace in the region is only possible if the internationally recognized borders of states are respected. In the large-scale debates held in the German Bundestag, the South Caucasus region remained in the spotlight as a strategic partner of Europe and a key link in energy security [18, p. 3].

The analytical document titled ***"Recalibrating Germany's and EU's Policy in the South Caucasus,"*** published by the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and extensively discussed in Berlin in July 2010, substantiates the necessity for Germany to assume the role of a primary political patron and "advocate" for the South Caucasus within the European Union. The author, Stefan Meister, notes that the "Eastern Partnership" initiative, put forward by Poland and Sweden, remains incomplete without Germany's active support. Germany's stance on this matter is regarded as the only force capable of bridging the internal strategic divisions within the EU specifically the rifts between "Old" and "New" Europe regarding relations with Russia. This DGAP document provides a critical analysis of Germany's traditional "Russia first" doctrine. It states that German foreign policy has long remained in the shadow of Russia, and Berlin has struggled to pursue an independent, "two-track" policy (engaging both with Russia and directly with regional countries) in the post-Soviet space without being constrained by the Russian factor. This "Russia-centric" approach is seen as having limited Germany's strategic opportunities in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The document concludes by emphasizing that for the EU to be successful in the South Caucasus, Berlin must assume absolute leadership and recalibrate its relations with Russia in a way that does not hinder the strategic ties established with other regional states, particularly Azerbaijan. The document characterizes Germany's South Caucasus policy as that of an "economic giant, yet a politically hesitant actor." It provides empirical evidence demonstrating that Azerbaijan is the absolute economic hub for Germany in the region, holding a strategic position in the country's energy security (ranking as Germany's 6th most important oil supplier at the time). The 7 core pillars proposed in the document reflect a fundamental shift in Berlin's regional outlook:

1. ***Role as an "Advocate" within the EU:*** Germany should utilize its economic power and political influence to act as the primary patron for the South Caucasus and Trans-Caspian region within the EU, strengthening the region's role as a strategic bridge for Europe.



2. **“Two-track” Policy:** FRG must rethink its traditional Eastern policy; while maintaining a partnership with Russia, it should simultaneously develop independent and parallel bilateral relations with other post-Soviet countries that are not contingent upon the “Russia factor.”
3. **Azerbaijan-centered Balancing:** Moving away from the old Georgia-centric policy, Germany should establish a strategic partnership in energy and economics with Azerbaijan, the region's “economic engine.” Furthermore, Germany should take a proactive role in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, even advocating for the EU to take over France's co-chairmanship in the Minsk Group.
4. **Southern Energy Corridor:** To ensure direct European access to Caspian resources, relations with Baku and Ashgabat must be elevated to the highest level, with active support provided for Trans-Caspian pipeline projects.
5. **Strategic Coordination with Türkiye:** Türkiye should be recognized as a key regional state, and the Berlin-Ankara axis should be strengthened to establish peace in the South Caucasus. Discussions regarding Turkey's EU membership should not hinder this strategic cooperation.
6. **Independent Decision-making from Russia:** Although Russia remains an important partner, Germany should not sacrifice the EU's strategic interests for the sake of a “conflict-free relationship” and must limit Moscow's ability to veto decisions regarding the region.
7. **Transatlantic Coordination:** US involvement in the region and the Obama administration's “reset” policy should be utilized coordinately by Germany, synchronizing the activities of Washington and Brussels in the region [15, p. 12-14].

The working visit of President Ilham Aliyev to Germany on February 3–4, 2012, held significant importance in terms of strengthening Azerbaijan's strategic partnership with both Germany and the European Union as a whole. Among the primary topics discussed during the meetings, alongside bilateral relations, the decisive role of the Caspian region in Europe's energy security and several pressing regional and international issues were brought to the forefront. Within the framework of the visit, the head of state participated in the 48th Munich Security Conference and expressed our country's position during the debate titled “Energy, Resources, and the Environment: New Security Parameters.” In his speech, Ilham Aliyev particularly emphasized the significance of the energy corridors established at Azerbaijan's initiative, stating that the massive pipeline projects delivering Caspian oil to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea serve not only the welfare of the Azerbaijani people but also create strategic dividends for international partners. He declared that this successful infrastructure has prepared a solid foundation for new and even larger-scale projects to be implemented in the future [15, 13].

Germany's foreign policy in the South Caucasus is fundamentally anchored in its national interest of maintaining a stable “security belt” along Europe's eastern periphery, where the resolution of protracted conflicts is viewed as a prerequisite for regional integration. In the process of evolution of the security policy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the South Caucasus, the position paper **“20 years of conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: a new impetus for the peaceful resolution of the conflict”** adopted by the CDU/CSU faction in February 2012 is of particular conceptual importance. The structural analysis of the document shows that official Berlin has for the first time functionally integrated the geoeconomic interests of the European Union (EU) and regional security dilemmas in relation to the region. The leadership of the faction openly declares that ensuring stability in the South Caucasus is directly conditioned by the interests of Germany and the EU as a whole in diversifying energy sources, in particular ensuring long-term security of gas supplies through direct pipeline projects with Azerbaijan. The seven-point action program proposed to the federal government in the document reveals the model of a multilateral regional order in Germany's South Caucasus strategy. The geopolitical essence of the document is based on the need to redistribute the influence of transregional actors. Thus, German conservatives have tried to increase Brussels' collective weight in the region by proposing to replace France's individual and unilateral mediation status with

hin the OSCE Minsk Group with institutional representation of the EU and to expand the mandate of the EU Special Representative. At the same time, the document proposes using the lever of the EU-Russia security dialogue, modeled on the “Meseberg Memorandum”, to draw the Russian Federation, which is interested in preserving the status quo and stimulating the regional arms race, into a constructive channel. The proposal to eliminate Yerevan's military-strategic dependence on Moscow (the need for the presence of Russian military bases) through the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations in order to neutralize the impact of the conflict on the regional security architecture is the most proactive geopolitical element of the document. By accepting Ankara's regional geopolitical weight and responsibility and supporting its constructive participation in resolving the Karabakh conflict, official Berlin implicitly determined in 2012 that the future fate of the region depends on the consensus of the great powers [19].

Under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, the German direction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy entered a qualitatively new stage, where the strategic line established by the National Leader Heydar Aliyev was continued with a more resolute defense of national interests. One of the most significant indicators of this political succession is the diplomatic progress achieved within the German Bundestag regarding Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. In the resolution **“Demanding respect for human rights in Azerbaijan”** adopted by the German Bundestag in June 2015, upon the motion of the CDU/CSU and SPD factions, the severe internal political challenges facing Azerbaijan were highlighted. It was stated that 586,000 internally displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories occupied by Armenia since 1993, as well as 250,000 Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia, created a serious economic, social, and political burden for the country. The resolution also noted that the Azerbaijani government had taken significant steps toward improving the conditions, resettlement, education, and employment of these refugees. Compared to the 2009 resolution, this document explicitly identified Armenia as the occupying party, which was met with serious dissatisfaction from the Armenian side [20].

The working visit of President Ilham Aliyev to Germany on January 20–21, 2015, conditioned the transition of these relations to a new qualitative stage on both political and economic levels. The political significance of the visit is characterized by discussions held with the highest-level representatives of the German leadership. President Ilham Aliyev's meetings with members of the German-Azerbaijani Forum and deputies representing various factions of the Bundestag brought the role of parliamentary diplomacy in interstate relations to the forefront. In these meetings, Azerbaijan's integration into European structures and the prospects of cooperation within the framework of the “Eastern Partnership” program were the primary topics of discussion. During the visit, in meetings held with both Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the ways to resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were reviewed in detail. The Azerbaijani head of state particularly emphasized the necessity of restoring the country's territorial integrity based on the norms and principles of international law, while the German side noted Azerbaijan's role in maintaining stability in the region. The high-level meetings held in Berlin in January 2015 reaffirmed Azerbaijan's growing role in Europe's changing energy and security architecture, especially following the Ukrainian crisis. The statements by Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Ilham Aliyev demonstrate that the relations between the two countries are of global rather than merely bilateral significance. In Chancellor Angela Merkel's speech, Azerbaijan's indispensable role in diversifying Europe's energy supply was specifically emphasized. Against the backdrop of the events in Ukraine, Germany's and Europe's overall attempts to reduce energy dependence on Russia turned the “Southern Gas Corridor” (TANAP and TAP projects), initiated by Azerbaijan, into a strategic alternative for the continent. President Ilham Aliyev declared that by undertaking both the political will and the primary financial burden in the implementation of these projects, Azerbaijan is reshaping the energy map of Europe. This cooperation is a vital guarantee for industrial giants like Germany in terms of the security of energy sources. On the political



level, both leaders demonstrated that they are like-minded regarding the preservation of regional stability. Ilham Aliyev conveyed our country's principled position on the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict the necessity of eliminating the fact of occupation and implementing the UN Security Council resolutions to the international audience with academic and legal foundations. Chancellor Merkel, in turn, noted that Germany supports mediation efforts for the peaceful resolution of this conflict and emphasized the importance of European structures playing a more active role in this process [11, p. 335-342].

The official visit of German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel to Azerbaijan in August 2018 marked the transition of bilateral relations to a qualitatively new level active strategic alliance. Chancellor Merkel's statement, "Azerbaijan is Germany's largest trading partner in the region," formally consolidated Azerbaijan's central role in Germany's South Caucasus policy. This visit is also characterized as the beginning of a new era in the architecture of institutional cooperation between Azerbaijan and the European Union. A statistical analysis of bilateral economic ties clearly demonstrates Azerbaijan's dominance in the region. By the end of 2017, Azerbaijan accounted for approximately 66% of Germany's total trade turnover with the South Caucasus countries. Currently, the presence of nearly 150 German-origin enterprises in the country and the participation of German companies in state projects exceeding \$1 billion signify the depth of economic integration. This dynamism constitutes a vital component of the \$25 billion total investment portfolio placed into the Azerbaijani economy by the European Union since the country's independence. On a strategic level, Azerbaijan is valued as a "powerful factor" and an indispensable partner in the diversification of Europe's energy map. The commissioning of the "Southern Gas Corridor" was assessed as a decisive step in ensuring the continent's energy security, while the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line was presented as a crucial logistical artery optimizing trade links between Europe and Asia. These projects further solidify Azerbaijan's status as a regional economic locomotive. During the visit, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the most pressing issue for regional security, was a primary topic of discussion. The German side reaffirmed its principled position regarding the resolution of the problem within the framework of international legal norms and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, declaring its readiness to increase diplomatic efforts in this direction. In conclusion, these high-level contacts have internationally re-legitimized Azerbaijan's position as a reliable strategic partner of Europe and the geopolitical center of the South Caucasus [25]. The Azerbaijan-Germany Business Forum on "Energy and ICT," scheduled for October 2018, is viewed as the next step toward transforming this political will into practical economic outcomes [21, p. 150-151].

The scientific-practical discussions held in Berlin in 2018 on the theme "Azerbaijan-Germany Relations: Shared History and Perspectives" demonstrate that Germany's security priority in the South Caucasus is built upon the insurance of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and the diversification of energy routes. Evaluating the military conflicts in the region as a direct threat to the European security architecture, German political circles officially acknowledge Azerbaijan's decisive role within this architecture. In particular, the economic-strategic ties established through the Southern Gas Corridor are the primary factor conditioning Germany's assumption of a more active diplomatic role for the sake of peace and stability in the region [6]. The visit of Johannes Kahrs, the head of the German Bundestag's parliamentary group for the South Caucasus, to Azerbaijan in May 2019 stands as a clear example of the development of bilateral relations on a parliamentary level. As noted in the official statement by the head of the delegation, Johannes Kahrs, the FRG holds strategic interests in deepening relations with Azerbaijan across all fields, particularly within political and economic platforms. This visit and the views expressed therein once again reaffirmed Azerbaijan's central role in Germany's South Caucasus policy and demonstrated the existence of a direct and sincere dialogue between the legislative bodies of both countries [16].

The Second Karabakh War in the Foreign Policy Debates of the German Bundestag

On October 29, 2020, the Second Karabakh War and the new geopolitical realities emerging in the South Caucasus became the subject of extensive discussion at the meeting of the German Bundestag. The discussions held in the German Bundestag on October 29, 2020, at the joint request of the CDU-CSU and SPD factions during the Second Karabakh War, on the topic of ***“Strengthening the EU's capacity to act in the field of foreign and security policy for an immediate ceasefire and a sustainable peace settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh”***, are of particular importance in terms of Germany's security policy in the South Caucasus. Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas from the SPD party, who presented the government's foreign policy line in the discussions, made an extensive report and justified the Federal Government's perspective on the Second Karabakh War within the framework of Germany's security policy in the South Caucasus. The humanitarian crisis resulting from the war was highlighted in the speech of the German Foreign Minister. H. Maas expressed great concern over the damage to civilian infrastructure and the intensification of the flow of internally displaced persons within the region. It was noted that the federal government had allocated 2 million euros in humanitarian aid in the initial stage through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in order to mitigate the effects of the crisis and that this financial support was planned to be increased taking into account the difficulties of the winter season. During the discussions, the German side emphasized that a military solution to the conflict was unacceptable and that the international community would not accept the parties' attempts to gain leverage in the future negotiation process through tactical advantages on the battlefield. H. Maas stated that Baku and Yerevan should cease military operations without setting any preconditions and resume political dialogue within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. One of the central lines of the discussions in the Bundestag was the position of regional powers, especially Türkiye, on the participation of the war. Minister H. Maas and deputies representing the relevant factions sharply criticized Ankara's active military-political support in the conflict and its steps that contributed to the regional escalation. The German side accused Türkiye of failing to adhere to its international legal obligations and its responsibility to maintain regional stability as a member of the OSCE Minsk Group. It was emphasized in the discussions that in order to prevent the crisis from developing into a regional war, Ankara should weaken its military support and direct its existing influence to de-escalation. In conclusion, H. Maas touched upon the future role of the European Union in the South Caucasus region and expressed the intention of the structure, through the Eastern Partnership program and special representative institutions, to participate as a more active partner not only in maintaining the military status quo in the region, but also in the processes of recovery, reconstruction and economic and political reintegration in the post-conflict phase [22, p. 23429-23430].

During the discussions in the Bundestag, Armin-Paulus Hampel, foreign policy representative of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) faction, criticized the traditional framework of the approach of Germany and other parties, which approach the military crisis in the South Caucasus more through the prism of regional and global geopolitical scenarios. The deputy linked the escalation of the conflict to the strategies of regional powers, especially Turkey, in the Middle East and North Africa, and brought to the parliamentary level the claims behind the diplomatic curtain about Ankara's intention to keep Russia strategically busy in the Caucasus: "There are rumors that this conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was deliberately ignited by Turkey in order to keep Russia busy in the Caucasus and thus ensure Turkey's freedom of action in Syria and Libya. Time will tell to what extent this is true and can be confirmed, it is still uncertain. But it is not difficult to imagine it." A.P. Hampel, assessing the scale of the crisis in a wider geographical area, drew attention to the factor of the multi-million (more than 15 million) ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Iran. He warned that if this factor gets out of control, it will affect Tehran and, as a result, create a huge explosion risk that could engulf the entire region. He directly referred to four well-known UN Security Council resolutions and clearly stated that these territories are recognized by the international community as sovereign territory and an integral part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In his speech, the German politician



accused the Federal Government and the European Union (EU) of making statements but not fulfilling their legal obligations. Although the official documents on the partnership priorities signed between the EU and Azerbaijan contain direct clauses on supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, he sharply criticized Germany's failure to take these principles into account in practical policy. The MP emphasized that Azerbaijan's objections to Germany on this issue are completely legitimate. Regarding Germany's position in the Karabakh war, the MP said: "As for Germany's position: we can try to offer ourselves as a mediator there, but this is the maximum we can do. We can only offer our role as a mediator. We have no mechanism, no tools to intervene in the conflict. Although the agreement on priorities between the European Union and Azerbaijan clearly states that the EU supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, you have been criticized by Baku. Azerbaijanis rightly criticize that Germany, the leading EU country, is unaware of this official document. Unfortunately, we have to prove them right in this matter." Touching on the mechanisms for resolving the conflict, A.P. Hampel stressed the importance of recognizing that European structures do not have real influence in the region. He summed up the impotence of German foreign policy, claiming that the key to resolving the crisis lies not in European capitals, but only in strategic compromises and a common denominator between Ankara and Moscow: "Germany does not have the necessary means of influence and we must admit that we cannot intervene in this conflict. Everyone knows that the solution to this problem does not lie in Berlin; the key lies in Ankara and Moscow. These two governments must come to a common denominator and find a solution in the Caucasus as soon as possible. We do not have such great interests there to protect. The most important and decisive point is that we do not have the strength to participate in this geopolitical game. This is, in essence, a declaration of the bankruptcy of German foreign policy in the context of the Caucasian conflict." [22, p. 23430-23431].

Y. D. Vadephul, objecting to the passive approach of AfD representative Armin-Paulus Hampel to the region, argues that Germany has real geopolitical and security interests in the South Caucasus. He puts the tension in this geography on the same level as other hot spots in Europe and states: "Unlike you, I am of the opinion that official Berlin has absolutely real interests in this region; because this is another war that has broken out in Europe after the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine and the severe interstate conflicts that we are facing elsewhere, for example in the Eastern Mediterranean. For this reason, it is entirely in the interests of both Germany and Europe to take action and put forward initiatives to resolve the problem." Y. D. Vadephul, appreciating the line of the German Foreign Ministry and the Chancellery to maintain a balanced dialogue with the parties to the conflict, refers to the Madrid Principles of 2007 as the main international-legal basis for resolving the crisis.

Y. D. Vadephul emphasizes the need for the implementation of the six components of the Madrid Principles in an equal and unconditional manner in order to ensure sustainable peace in the region. This framework includes the following fundamental steps:

1. The return of the regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan;
2. Determination of an interim status that ensures the security and self-government of the region;
3. Creation of a corridor that ensures geographical and logistical connectivity between Armenia and Karabakh;
4. In the future, the final legal status of the region will be resolved through an expression of will (self-determination of the people);
5. Determination of the right of internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their native lands;
6. Formation of security guarantees, including international peacekeeping operations.

Y.D. Vadephul specifically touched on the role of Türkiye as an external factor increasing regional tensions. Large-scale military support provided by Türkiye to Azerbaijan and unofficial in-



formation about mercenaries allegedly brought from Syria cause serious concern in Germany. Y. Vadeful assessed this policy of Türkiye, a member of NATO, as an attempt to ignite the hotbed of conflict, and declared that the strategic patience of Western states with Ankara's geopolitical steps is already running out [22, p. 23432].

Dr. Gregor Gysi, one of the leading figures of the Left (Die Linke) faction in the German Bundestag, touched upon the historical roots of the ethno-political conflict in the South Caucasus and recalled that during the Soviet period, Nagorno-Karabakh was formed as an autonomous entity within Azerbaijan through the Caucasus Committee of Nagorno-Karabakh by Stalin's decision, and this legal status remained unchanged until the collapse of the USSR. Touching upon the fact that the Republic of Armenia took control of other Azerbaijani territories in order to create a geographical and strategic connection (corridor) after the unilateral declaration of independence in the region in 1991, Dr. Gregor Gysi gave a principled legal assessment of this process. Just as Gysi resolutely characterized the West's Kosovo policy and Russia's steps towards Crimea as a violation of international law, Armenia's military-political activities in the territories of Azerbaijan were similarly defined as a "violation of international law." Although G. Gysi officially admitted that the Armenian side occupied Azerbaijani territories under the pretext of creating regional communication lines, he defended the importance of changing the current status quo only through peaceful, political-diplomatic methods in resolving the problem. However, trying to place the main responsibility for the activation of the military stage on Azerbaijan and Türkiye, which provided him with military-political support in the fall of 2020, G. Gysi demonstrated a critical position, claiming that the strategy of liberating all territories by using military force in this just war contradicts the Madrid Principles of the OSCE Minsk Group. Dr. Gregor Gysi emphasized that Germany cannot remain neutral in this regional crisis and demanded that Berlin take a more decisive, different political position on the conflict. The biggest political demarche in the MP's speech was aimed at Türkiye's regional role and Germany's domestic arms export policy. Referring to the historical events of the Ottoman Empire and the relevant resolution of the Bundestag dated 2016, G. Gysi claimed that Turkey should remain completely out of this conflict for ethical and moral reasons and strongly condemned Turkey's claims that it sent military forces and mercenaries from Syria to the region.

During the discussions in the Bundestag, the approach of Manuel Sarrazin, a representative of the Greens (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN) faction, is characterized by the recognition of the international community's historical responsibility for the regional crisis and a critical analysis of the passivity of the European Union (EU) in its policy in the South Caucasus. The most important point of M. Sarrazin regarding the war is his open statement that Western diplomacy bears joint responsibility for preserving the status quo that has developed over decades. M. Sarrazin emphasized that the international community has long come to terms with the reality that the problem remains unresolved and, although it has observed that the moment when the Azerbaijani side will resort to military means is approaching, has not exerted the necessary political pressure on the parties to change the situation diplomatically. Although Manuel Sarrazin acknowledged that the unconstructive position of the Armenian governments (both previous and current administrations) during the 26-year negotiation process deserves serious criticism, he argued that this does not give legitimacy to the military advance of official Baku and defended the importance of stopping military operations in order to return to political dialogue. Assessing the changes in the geopolitical arena, M. Sarrazin characterized this war as a dangerous manifestation of the tendency of the use of force to become a means of conducting politics and called it a negative signal for the security architecture of Europe's "Eastern Partnership" in the South Caucasus. M. Sarrazin also noted that leaving the fate of the South Caucasus solely to the sphere of influence of Russia and Türkiye is contrary to the geopolitical interests of Europe and Germany.

In the discussions in the Bundestag, the speech of Dr. Barbara Hendriks, a representative of the Social Democrats (SPD), another leading party in the ruling coalition, on the historical and legal



dimensions of the conflict is of particular importance. Linking the historical roots of the regional crisis to the period after the First World War and the stage of the formation of the USSR, Dr. Barbara Hendriks drew attention to the chronological sequence in determining the administrative-territorial affiliation of the region. One of the most important points in the deputy's speech was the unequivocal recognition of the sovereignty and international legal superiority of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the context of the final legal settlement of the issue, despite the unfounded Armenian claims that the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh constitutes a demographic majority. Referring to the decision adopted by the Communist Party of Russia in July 1921, Dr. Barbara Hendriks noted that the principle of keeping Nagorno-Karabakh within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic was established, and Azerbaijan's international legal claim (or right of sovereignty) over the region followed from this. This was also confirmed by the relevant UN resolutions of 1993. The SPD representative said that this historical legacy was not limited only to the decisions of the Soviet era, but was also confirmed and firmly established by the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council of 1993, which are important acts of the modern international system. At the same time, touching upon the artificial change in the demographic structure of the region, H. Hendriks said that although the share of the Armenian population was approximately 75 percent at the initial stage, this indicator became monoethnic and reached 100 percent as a result of the forced expulsion and ethnic cleansing of the local Azerbaijani population. Correlating the humanitarian consequences of the conflict with official statistics, the deputy officially confirmed from the Bundestag podium that, according to official data from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 700 thousand Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions occupied by Armenia have become internally displaced persons and refugees. In this context, the parliamentarian's official reference to the "Madrid Principles", which have served as the main basis for resolving the conflict since 2007, is particularly noteworthy.

The speech of Steffen Kotre, a member of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) faction, representing the right-wing radical opposition, demonstrates an approach based on a sharply pro-Armenian and anti-Turkish position, which is completely different from Germany's balanced foreign policy course. S. Kotre tried to characterize the legal military operations carried out by the Republic of Azerbaijan to liberate the territories of the Second Karabakh War in 2020 as an "aggressive war" that violates international law, and described Armenia's aggressive policy as a "just defensive struggle". The AfD representative tried to transfer the process to a purely ideological level, interpreting Türkiye's legal geopolitical support for Azerbaijan in the context of "neo-Ottomanism" and "support for international terrorism". Another striking point in the speech was the complete distortion of the historical and legal status of the region. Thus, in order to question Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Karabakh, S. Coutre presented the 1921 chronology as the subjective will and "arbitrariness" of Joseph Stalin, thereby choosing the line of denying the legal and administrative succession of the Soviet era and the territorial integrity imperative of modern international law. Undoubtedly, this is an example of how the position of the right-wing populist circles in the Bundestag on the Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the 44-day Patriotic War is approached not from the perspective of the fundamental principles of international law, but from an anti-Islamic, anti-Turkish and Eurocentric ideological perspective.

The speeches of representatives of the leading political parties represented in the German Bundestag (CDU/CSU, SPD, AfD, FDP, Greens, Left) and Foreign Minister Heiko Maas during the Second Karabakh War (44-day Patriotic War) in the fall of 2020 are of great importance for Germany's regional security and conflict management in the South Caucasus. A systematic analysis of parliamentary debates shows that Germany's South Caucasus policy was formed under the influence of a sharp imbalance between the norms of international law and the new geopolitical realities emerging in the region. The most important feature of the debates is the existence of an unshakable legal consensus on the sovereign belonging of Nagorno-Karabakh among the different political par-

ties represented in the Bundestag. The military-political support provided by Türkiye to Azerbaijan by the deputy leader of the Christian Democrats' faction, Johann Wadephul, and other coalition representatives became the target of sharp criticism. The German political elite viewed Türkiye's active intervention in the regional conflict to such an extent as a direct threat to its own close-neighborhood policy and the security interests of the European Union in the South Caucasus. These criticisms, in fact, stem from the fear of the weakening of the West's institutional mechanisms of influence in the region (OSCE, EU) and the South Caucasus falling into the sphere of influence of regional powers. On the other hand, in the speeches of Armin-Paulus Hampel, foreign policy spokesman for the right-wing-conservative Alternative Party (AfD), and other critics, the 30-year inaction of the West and the OSCE Minsk Group, as well as Russia's dual role in the conflict, were exposed. A. P. Hampel and his colleagues clearly emphasized that the key to resolving the conflict is no longer in the hands of Brussels or Berlin, but directly in the hands of Türkiye and Russia. The fact that the Russian Federation maintains regional dependence by arming both sides and manages the conflict for the sake of its geopolitical interests was openly voiced from the Bundestag.

In our opinion, Germany's view of Türkiye's strengthening in the region as contrary to its interests, but its inability to bypass Turkey in resolving the crisis, has revealed deep cracks in Germany's foreign policy between liberal values and realism. The fact that the actual resolution of the conflict is subject to the military-diplomatic consensus along the Ankara-Moscow line confirms that Germany remains a mere passive observer in the South Caucasus security architecture.

The resolution titled ***“Support for the preparation of a long-term peace settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh,”*** passed by the CDU-CSU parliamentary group the primary conservative bloc in Germany's Bundestag on November 24, 2020, directly following the intense combat operations of the Second Karabakh War, serves as a cornerstone document that codifies FRG's official strategic stance regarding the reconfigured security landscape of the South Caucasus in the post-conflict era. Consistent with the foreign policy doctrine of the FRG, this text firmly defines the prolonged status quo in Karabakh and its adjacent administrative districts, sustained by the Republic of Armenia, as an unlawful occupation that violates fundamental international legal norms. This stance reaffirms the FRG's legislative dedication to upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity for the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized boundaries. Conversely, the resolution places significant analytical emphasis on mechanisms designed to halt regional escalation. Specifically, it evaluates the trilateral declaration signed on November 10, 2020, which followed the most severe and destructive military confrontations in the area in recent history, along with the ceasefire framework it established. The document characterizes these developments as a crucial and unavoidable practical measure aimed at initiating de-escalation, thereby reducing tensions in the South Caucasus and creating a foundation for enduring stability. The resolution particularly focuses on the geopolitical roles of Russia and Turkey in the conflict. Berlin expects both countries to fully support the sovereignty of Armenia and Azerbaijan, avoiding a position based solely on unilateral interests. Türkiye's significant military and political support for Azerbaijan, combined with allegations of the deployment of Syrian mercenaries, has raised serious legal concerns. The text emphasizes that Türkiye's attempts to implement its foreign agenda through exclusive negotiations with Moscow, bypassing existing multilateral frameworks such as the OSCE Minsk Group, undermine the peace initiative [23].

CONCLUSION

The place of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the security policy of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the South Caucasus and the dynamics of the evolution of bilateral relations in the chronological period covering 2003–2021 demonstrate Germany's attempts to create a balance between regional national interests and the norms of international law. Under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's active foreign policy and energy diplomacy strategy has taken the



FRG's perspective on the region out of the context of a mere post-Soviet crisis zone and elevated Azerbaijan to the level of a reliable partner within the scope of diversification in the strategic architecture of European energy security and trans-Eurasian logistics corridors. The article examines the fundamental resolutions adopted by the German Bundestag on regional security and the Karabakh conflict (especially the resolutions of 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2020, which coincided immediately after the Second Karabakh War) as important in terms of tracking the evolution of the FRG's legal and political position on the issue. The structural analysis of the aforementioned documents proves that the German legislature and state elite, with an unshakable consensus across parties, characterized the status quo of Karabakh and its surrounding administrative districts maintained by Armenia as a fact of occupation contrary to international law, and unequivocally recognized the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan. However, although human rights, strengthening of civil society and humanitarian calls, which are elements of the doctrine of liberal values, are often prioritized in the documents, the principle of inviolability of Azerbaijan's sovereign borders is preserved in the legal sphere. The first official visit of President İlham Aliyev to Germany on August 24–26, 2004, created the basis for a legal and political inventory of relations against the background of new geopolitical realities. Following this, the participation of the Azerbaijani head of state in the International Bertelsmann Forum in 2006 ensured the integration of official Baku with the intellectual and strategic think tanks of Europe and the direct attention of the Western elite to the challenges of regional security. As the highest political and diplomatic peak of bilateral relations, the official visit of Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel to Azerbaijan in 2018 demonstrated the growing importance of Azerbaijan as an energy producer in the South Caucasus in Germany's geopolitical balancing policy in the South Caucasus region. The high-level negotiations held within the framework of this visit put into motion two main pillars of Germany's regional security interests: reducing Europe's energy dependence through the "Southern Gas Corridor" and maintaining a peaceful regional order in the region. The discussions taking place in the Bundestag against the backdrop of the 44-day Patriotic War of 2020 and the resolution adopted on November 24, 2020 also confirm that Germany has been forced to accept the decisive hegemony of the Ankara-Moscow military-diplomatic line in the settlement of regional crises.

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ALMANİYA FEDERATİV RESPUBLİKASININ CƏNUBİ QAFQAZDA TƏHLÜKƏSİZLİK SİYASƏTİ ÇƏRÇİVƏSİNDƏ AZƏRBAYCAN: İLHAM ƏLİYEVİN PREZİDENTLİYİ DÖVRÜNDƏ İKİTƏRƏFLİ MÜNASİBƏTLƏR (2003–2021)

C.P. Məmmədli

Bu məqalədə İlham Əliyevin prezidentliyi dövründə (2003–2021) Almaniya-Azərbaycan münasibətlərinin inkişafı Cənubi Qafqazın təhlükəsizlik arxitekturası prizmasından araşdırılır. Rəsmi mənbələrə əsaslanan məqalənin əsas məqsədi Almaniyanın regiondakı enerji və təhlükəsizlik maraqlarını və ikitərəfli münasibətlərin inkişafını qiymətləndirməkdir. Almaniyanın təhlükəsizlik siyasətinin təhlili Bundestaqın 2009, 2012 və 2015-ci il qətnamələrinə əsasən xronoloji ardıcılıqla aparılır. Məqalədə həmçinin 2020-ci ildə İkinci Qarabağ müharibəsi zamanı Almaniya parlamentində aparılan müzakirələr, eləcə də Almaniyanın 2020-ci ildə Cənubi Qafqazda təhlükəsizlik siyasətinin bir hissəsi olaraq 44 günlük müharibədən sonrakı yeni geosiyasi reallıqlar kontekstində qəbul etdiyi qətnamədə Almaniyanın Cənubi Qafqazla bağlı mövqeyi araşdırılır.

Açar sözlər: *Azərbaycan-Almaniya münasibətləri, Cənubi Qafqaz, regional təhlükəsizlik, Bundestaqın stenoqramları, parlament qətnamələri, İlham Əliyev, İkinci Qarabağ müharibəsi.*

АЗЕРБАЙДЖАН В РАМКАХ ПОЛИТИКИ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ ФЕДЕРАТИВНОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ ГЕРМАНИЯ НА ЮЖНОМ КАВКАЗЕ: ДВУСТОРОННИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В ПЕРИОД ПРЕЗИДЕНТСТВА ИЛЬХАМА АЛИЕВА (2003–2021)

Дж.П. Мамедли

В данной статье рассматривается развитие германо-азербайджанских отношений в период президентства Ильхама Алиева (2003–2021 гг.) через призму архитектуры безопасности Южного Кавказа. Главная цель статьи, основанной на официальных источниках, — оценка энергетических интересов и интересов безопасности Германии в регионе и развития двусторонних отношений. Анализ политики безопасности Германии проводится в хронологическом порядке на основе резолюций Бундестага 2009, 2012 и 2015 годов. В статье также рассматриваются дискуссии в немецком парламенте во время Второй Карабахской войны в 2020 году, а также позиция Германии по Южному Кавказу в резолюции, принятой Германией в 2020 году в рамках ее политики безопасности на Южном Кавказе в условиях новых геополитических реалий после 44-дневной войны.

Ключевые слова: *азербайджано-германские отношения, Южный Кавказ, региональная безопасность, стенограммы и резолюции Бундестага, Ильхам Алиев, Вторая Карабахская война.*