


## Yazar(lar) / Author(s)

Dr. Öğr. Ü. Ali Samir Merdan   
Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari  
Bilimler Fakültesi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü,  
Çankırı-Türkiye.  
e-posta: [samirmardanov@karatekin.edu.tr](mailto:samirmardanov@karatekin.edu.tr)  
(Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding author)

Doç. Dr. Çağlar Ezikoğlu   
Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari  
Bilimler Fakültesi, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu  
Yönetimi Bölümü, Çankırı-Türkiye.  
e-posta: [caqlarezikoglu@gmail.com](mailto:caqlarezikoglu@gmail.com)

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## Cooperation Period in Azerbaijan-US Relations (2001-2010)<sup>a</sup>

### Abstract

Following of independence in 1991 and the significant geopolitical role, the fundamental objective of Azerbaijan has been to establish itself as a prominent actor within the international community, whilst concomitantly endeavouring to preserve its independence and ensure its security. Azerbaijan faced challenges, including the threat of losing its territorial integrity due to the problems resulting from the Karabakh conflict, such as state of war with Armenia, internal upheavals, and economic difficulties. In order to achieve its objectives, the country has required the support of the international community. Azerbaijan constituted its foreign policy and given priority to the United States (US). Azerbaijan's foreign policy has been characterised by a search for equilibrium among global powers, or alternatively, the cultivation of a closer relationship with a particular global power. In this context, the US has assumed a leadership role on the global stage, thereby enhancing its international relationships. Following the events of 9/11/2001, certain changes were observed in the US's policy towards Azerbaijan. This shift in policy was accompanied by Azerbaijan's support for the US in the "mutual struggle against international terrorism", as well as the economic interests of the US in Azerbaijan with its bilateral cooperation until 2010.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, US, Karabakh, Mutual Struggle Against International Terrorism, Cooperation.

## Azerbaycan-ABD İlişkilerinde İş Birliği Dönemi (2001-2010)

### Öz

1991'de bağımsızlığını kazanan ve jeopolitik açıdan önemli bir konuma sahip olan Azerbaycan'ın temel amacı; uluslararası camianın eşit bir aktörü haline gelmek ve bağımsızlığını devam ettirerek güvenliğini korumak olmuştur. Karabağ sorunu sebebiyle ortaya çıkan Ermenistan'la savaş durumu, ülkedeki iç karışıklıklar ve ekonomik sorunlar gibi nedenlerle toprak bütünlüğünün parçalanması tehlikesiyle karşı karşıya kalan Azerbaycan, toprak bütünlüğünü sağlayarak bağımsızlığını korumak için uluslararası toplumun desteğine ihtiyaç duymuş ve buna yönelik olarak da dış politikasını oluştururken Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne (ABD) öncelik vermiştir. Küresel güçler arasında denge kurma veya bir küresel güçle daha yakın ilişki içerisinde olma şeklinde bir dış politika izleyen Azerbaycan, bu politikasını oluştururken dünyanın liderliğini üstlenen ABD'ye önem vererek uluslararası ilişkilerini bu yönde geliştirmiş ve 2001'den itibaren de iş birliğine yönelmiştir. 11 Eylül 2001 olayları sonrasında ABD'nin Azerbaycan'a yönelik politikasında değişimler görülmüştür. "Uluslararası terörizme karşı ortak mücadele"de Azerbaycan'ın ABD'ye tam destek vermesi ve ABD'nin de Azerbaycan'daki ekonomik ve stratejik çıkarlarının önem kazanmasıyla birlikte ikili ilişkiler "işbirliği" çerçevesinde gelişmiş ve 2010'a kadar devam etmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Azerbaycan, ABD, Karabağ, Uluslararası Terörizme Karşı Ortak Mücadele, İş Birliği.

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## **1. Introduction**

Azerbaijan, which declared its independence after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), has emerged as a strategically key location in terms of conflicts of interest and as the centre of the conflict between the Russian Federation and the United States, which is seeking its former position in the international arena. One of the reasons for this conflict and rivalry has been the capture or control of rich energy resources. Azerbaijan, which has newly formed its international relations, has also endeavoured to build its foreign policy on a new plane.

Since its independence, Azerbaijan has pursued a foreign policy orientated towards the United States and Western European states, taking into account the international rivalry in the region. The war environment and internal instabilities put Azerbaijan in a difficult situation in the first years of its independence. Azerbaijan's relations with the United States have played an important role in its foreign policy in order to preserve its independence and ensure its territorial integrity and security within the country.

The subject of this study is the analysis of Azerbaijan-US political, economic and military relations in the new process that started on 11 September 2001, ten years after independence, determination of positive and negative developments in these relations and evaluation of Azerbaijan-US relations in this new process. In the study, it is envisaged to make a scientific analysis of the issue within the scope of Azerbaijan's main foreign policy priorities and problems.

Relations with the United States in Azerbaijan's foreign policy should be considered within the framework of the Caucasus' position in the changing world order. Because the place of the US in Azerbaijan's foreign policy cannot be evaluated independently of Azerbaijan's relations with the Russian Federation, the ongoing tension between Azerbaijan and Iran, the possible impact of the rising power of the People's Republic of China on the region, the relationship with the economic interests of the US and the change in the US approach to the Caucasus. In this context, the evaluation of Azerbaijan-US relations after 11 September 2001 within the framework of the foreign policy concept constitutes the main purpose of the study.

## **2. Political Relations**

### **2.1. "Joint Struggle Against International Terrorism"**

There is no common definition of terrorism accepted by the world states. The definition of terrorism has become difficult since terrorist acts are considered as a fight for freedom in one state and as a criminal offence in another state (Altuğ, 1995, pp. 14-15). However, when it comes to international terrorism, the problem is based on the definition. Terrorist acts acquire international character if they are directed against foreigners and foreign targets and if they are carried out to influence the policies of foreign states and international organisations (Başaren, 2006-2007, pp. 7-8). This is called "international terrorism".

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon allowed the United States to conduct military operations (Aras, 2002, p. 37). After 11 September 2001, the US demonstrated its superpower status and its ability to redefine concepts in line with its own interests.

Under the name of "war against terrorism", the US has started to turn towards other areas that it sees as obstacles to its national interests, to expand the scale of its operations, and to turn the tragedy into strategic and economic gains (Arslan, n.d., para. 3). On 7 October 2001, following the

events of 11 September 2001, the US intervened in Afghanistan, which was in a position to control the Far East, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Thus, in addition to having the opportunity to control the nuclear-powered states, the US also gained a strategic position next to Iran, which it labelled as the "axis of evil" (Özşahin, 2003, pp. 14-15). However, the US military intervention in Afghanistan is contrary to the idea of ensuring peace and stability in the world. After 11 September 2001, Azerbaijan, which, like many other states, supported the "war against terrorism", turned towards cooperation with the USA. Heydar Aliyev issued a statement on the issue, stating that these terrorist acts threaten all states, even if the US is the target; that the Azerbaijani people, who have suffered from terrorism for a long time, understand the suffering of the American people better than anyone else and that they will support the US in the war against terrorism to the end (Azerbaijan, 2001, p. 1).

On 15 December 2001, US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, visiting Azerbaijan, met with Heydar Aliyev and stated that bilateral relations would further improve with the suspension of the enforcement of "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act" (Mammadov, 2002, pp. 149-150). Later, in November 2002, the Azerbaijani government issued a statement announcing the opening of its airspace to US aircraft as part of the war on terrorism (Azerbaijan, 2002, p. 6). Azerbaijan also supported the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan by sending 30 troops (Xalq Qazeti, 2002, p. 4).

After 11 September 2001, the war on terrorism created new opportunities for cooperation in bilateral relations. Azerbaijan's strategic position and its support in the war against terrorism led the US to make changes in its policy towards Azerbaijan (US Embassy Baku, 2006, para. 3). The most important of these changes is the suspension of the enforcement of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act". Another important change is the official statements made by the US administration in support of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. The US has already recognised Azerbaijan's territorial integrity through bilateral agreements signed at the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Moreover, in the UN Security Council vote on the Karabakh conflict in 1993 and in many international meetings, the US recognised Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. However, prior to 11 September 2001, the US administration was often ambivalent in its support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. This was exemplified by the US abstention during the vote on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity at the 54th session of the UN General Assembly on 15 December 1999. They also abstained from voting in co-operation talks between the UN and OSCE and in a meeting on the Karabakh conflict on the grounds that they were still undecided on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity (Huseynov, 2003, para. 7). After 11 September 2001, official statements from the US administration stated that the US supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and was in favour of determining the future status of Karabakh through the OSCE Minsk Group talks (Wilson, 2003, p. 206).

## **2.2. Heydar Aliyev's Second Official Visit to the United States and Cooperation in Relations**

After the first official visit, Heydar Aliyev visited the USA on various occasions in 1999, 2000 and 2001 and held some meetings. The main issue in these meetings was the suspension of the enforcement of the "Supplement to the Freedom Support Act No. 907" and the Karabakh conflict. Although positive statements were made by both sides after the visits, concrete steps could not be taken on the problems between the two states (The Washington Times, 2001, para. 3).

After 11 September 2001, positive developments were observed in the US policy towards Azerbaijan. The changing policy of the US towards Azerbaijan can be considered as a reward for Azerbaijan, which fully supports the US in the fight against international terrorism both in the state and in the international arena.

With the official invitation of George Walker Bush, Heydar Aliyev paid his second official visit to the USA on 23 February 2003 (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 2). On 24 February 2003, Heydar Aliyev met with US Secretary of Commerce Donald Ewans and talked about the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project, mentioned the obstacles to the realisation of this project and stressed that they expected more support from the US. Donald Ewans stated that the US administration fully supports the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project and will strengthen bilateral relations with Azerbaijan in all sectors, including shipping, telecommunications and transport (525-ci Qazet, 2003, p. 1). Following the meeting, Heydar Aliyev received the US representative to the OSCE Minsk Group, Ambassador Rudolf Perina and stressed the need to step up efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict as soon as possible (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 1).

On 25 February 2003, an international conference on "The East-West Energy Corridor is a Reality", jointly organised by the US-Azerbaijan Business Council, the US-Georgia Business Council and the US-Turkey Council, was held in Washington. Speaking at the conference, Heydar Aliyev stated that the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project is a part of the oil strategy implemented by Azerbaijan and will ensure security in the region. In addition, Heydar Aliyev stated that Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani territories and its refusal to settle the conflict prevented cooperation in the region (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 3). Following the conference, Heydar Aliyev met with US Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham. During the meeting, Spencer Abraham stressed that he supported Azerbaijan's membership to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and stressed that necessary work would be done in this regard. The United States has allocated one million dollars for Azerbaijan's accession to the WTO (İki Sahil, 2003, p. 5).

Heydar Aliyev met with US President George Walker Bush on 26 February 2003. During the meeting, which was also attended by US Secretary of State Colin Powel, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Secretary Condoleezza Rice, the current status of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project, the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict, the joint fight against international terrorism and the situation in the region were discussed. George Walker Bush emphasised the importance of relations with Azerbaijan and the readiness of the administration to develop relations in various sectors (Xalq Qazeti, 2003, p. 7). After the meeting, an agreement on Article 98 of the Rome Criteria of the International Criminal Court was signed between the USA and Azerbaijan. According to this agreement, the International Criminal Court will not be applied for the crimes committed by the citizens of the USA and Azerbaijan within the borders of the two states (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 4).

George Tenneset, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who met with Heydar Aliyev on 27 February 2003, expressed readiness to work together to ensure Azerbaijan's border security (İki Sahil, 2003, p. 1). Answering the questions of media members after his contacts in the USA, Heydar Aliyev summarised his visit as "useful talks leading to cooperation in relations" (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 7).

### **2.3. US Intervention in Iraq and Azerbaijan's Attitude**

After the events of 11 September 2001, two more dimensions emerged in the US Middle East policy besides its strategic and economic interests. These are; preventing the Middle East from becoming a repository of weapons of mass destruction and a source of international terrorism (Kuloğlu, n.d., para. 9). Moreover, the US intervention in Iraq on 20 March 2003 constituted a small part of the overall strategy it adopted and wanted to implement in the post-Cold War period. This overall strategy, centred on Eurasia, was based on market and market efficiency and natural resource sovereignty (Hacısalıhoğlu, 2005, para 13).

In this period, Azerbaijan, despite its co-operation with the USA, also attached importance to its relations with the Russian Federation (Xalq Qazeti, 2003, p. 3). Although Azerbaijan announced that it supported the US intervention to demilitarise Iraq and opened its airspace to the use of the US, it endeavoured to do so in a way that would not spoil its relations with the Russian Federation.

Azerbaijan sent 150 peacekeepers to Iraq with a farewell ceremony held by Defence Minister Sefer Ebiyev. Speaking at the ceremony, Sefer Ebiyev stated that he fulfilled the directives of Heydar Aliyev. Sefer Ebiyev also stated that the issue of sending the peacekeeping force was voted in the National Assembly on 7 May 2003 and the decision was implemented. The peacekeeping force, which entered Iraq under the US command, ensured the security of state buildings and cultural centres (Hürriyet, 2003, p. 14).

After 11 September 2001, with the suspension of the enforcement of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act", the US military relations with Azerbaijan have improved. In particular, Azerbaijan has come to the fore in the discussions on the US intervention in Iran and the redeployment of US troops in Eurasia.

### **2.4. Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine and Azerbaijan**

The events that led to the change of government in Georgia were called the "Velvet Revolution" and in Ukraine the "Orange Revolution". The trigger for both developments was the killing of journalists who had opposed the government (Yapıcı, 2007, p. 24). Moreover, the despair caused by the economic crisis in these countries, combined with the US priorities of human rights and democracy, led to the change of governments.

In Georgia, where events escalated in November 2003, Eduard Shevardnadze was forced to resign and Mikheil Saakashvili, supported by the US, became president in January 2004 (Global Leaders TV, 2004, para.1). The US was active in the developments in Georgia during and after the revolution. In the November 2004 elections in Ukraine, the opposition led by Victor Yushchenko claimed that Victor Yanukovich's vote share was rigged. The protests that followed received support from the US. The election results, which meant the continuation of Victor Yanukovich's power, were supported by the Russian Federation and Victor Yushchenko's objection was supported by the USA. Victor Yushchenko won the elections, which were repeated in December 2004 due to the protests, with 52% of the votes. It was observed that the USA was personally active in the developments and that the Soros Foundation and its affiliated Open Society Institute played a guiding role (Radikal, 2004, p. 5). With these results, the US has taken a step forward in the struggle for influence in these states, which are the backyard of the Russian Federation.

In Azerbaijan in 2005, the US questioned whether the murder of Elmar Huseynov, like the murder of opposition journalists in other states, would lead to a change of government in the National

Assembly in 2005 and the presidential elections in 2008 (Xalq Qazeti, 2008, p. 5). For the US, however, the protection of its interests, especially energy resources, was at stake. Azerbaijan's cooperation with the US, as well as its geopolitical position and its neighbourhood to Iran and the Russian Federation, are among the factors that prevented the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine from taking place in Azerbaijan.

## **2.5. Hillary Clinton's Visit to Azerbaijan**

Until 2009, the process of co-operation in relations continued. However, the "modernisation policy" implemented since February 2009 has made Azerbaijan more dynamic and active in foreign policy. In this context, Hillary Clinton paid a historic visit to Azerbaijan with the concern that US interests were in danger. During Hillary Clinton's tour of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, Azerbaijan became the third state visited by the Secretary of State after Poland and Ukraine.

On 3 July 2010, Hillary Clinton visited Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan, 2010, p. 1). On 4 July 2010, Hillary Clinton met with İlham Aliyev and stated that she was in favour of a peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict, that the solution of this conflict was in the hands of the parties and that the US would help the parties to reach an agreement (The White House, 2010, para. 3). In addition, energy security, regional problems, military cooperation, joint fight against international terrorism, economic cooperation, defence cooperation, the legal status of the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan's rapprochement with the EU, human rights and democratisation in Azerbaijan were discussed during the meeting (Xalq Qazeti, 2010, p. 1). The most important aim of Hillary Clinton's visit was to ease the tensions in bilateral relations. The failure to send the US ambassador to Baku for a year, the unilateral negotiation of the Karabakh conflict with Armenia when Azerbaijan was not invited to the nuclear summit in April 2010, and the US support for the process of establishing diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia have led Azerbaijan to question the relations (525-ci Qazet, 2010, p. 3). In addition, the clashes in Karabakh signalled an increase in tension in the region. These conflicts and the pro-war statements of both state administrations made the US realise that the Karabakh conflict, which it thought to be frozen, was actually not frozen.

Hillary Clinton's visit to Azerbaijan conveyed the message that the rapprochement between the US and the Russian Federation does not mean that this state has left the Russian Federation's sphere of influence. Hillary Clinton, who did not meet with the opposition in Azerbaijan, showed with her visit not to press for more democracy, but to show the importance she attaches to co-operation in bilateral relations.

## **2.6. Karabakh Conflict**

### ***2.6.1. Suspension of the execution of "Annex 907 to the Law on the Promotion of Freedoms"***

The efforts made by the US administration to repeal the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act", which prevented the development of Azerbaijan-US relations, were not successful due to the resistance of the Congress, which was open to the influence of ethnic groups (Guluzade, 2001, para. 2). With this article, the US Congress prioritised domestic political calculations over the foreign policy interests of the state.

Following the events of 11 September 2001, the US administration had the opportunity to take steps regarding the "Supplement to the Freedom Support Act No. 907". The attention of all states around the world turned to the fight against international terrorism and Azerbaijan declared its full

support for it. The US administration announced that it would co-operate with Azerbaijan in the context of operations in Afghanistan and in general in the fight against international terrorism. In this context, initiatives were launched to suspend the execution of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act" in order to provide assistance to Azerbaijan through official channels (Aslanlı, 2002, p. 61).

On 9 October 2001, when the news on this issue spread, Armenian President Robert Kocharian sent a letter to US President George Walker Bush, stating that the repeal of "Amendment No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act" or the mitigation of the provisions of the resolution would harm the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict (The Wall Street Journal, 2001, para. 2). However, this initiative of Robert Kocharian was not effective. On 15 October 2001, US Secretary of State Colin Powell sent a letter to Congress on behalf of the president, stating that Azerbaijan had agreed to share intelligence information and requesting a stay of execution of "Amendment 907 to the Freedom Support Act", which prevents US assistance to Azerbaijan (The Washington Post, 2001, para. 5). Before the debate on the issue began in the Senate, the Armenian lobby in the US organised an intensive campaign to prevent the amendment. On the other hand, prominent people of Jewish origin and leading Jewish organisations made efforts to remove or soften this article. Thus, two important ethnic lobbies in the US confronted each other on the issue of aid to Azerbaijan (Lütem, 2002, para. 38). On 25 October 2001, the Senate approved a bill proposed by Senator Sam Brownback to amend the "Amendment 907 to the Freedom Support Act". On 14 November 2001, the Conciliation Commission between the two houses of Congress and on 19 December 2001, the House of Representatives approved a bill authorising the President of the United States to suspend the operation of Amendment 907 to the Freedom Support Act until the end of 2002. Accordingly, the President of the United States may not implement this article if he deems it necessary in the interests of national security and national interests. However, this behaviour of the US President will not prevent the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict and will not be used for the purpose of aggression against Armenia. This amendment will remain in force until 31 December 2002 and the President of the United States may reintroduce it every year if he deems it necessary in the interests of national security and national interests (The White House, 2002, para. 17). On 25 January 2002, the law was signed into law by US President George Walker Bush (525-ci Qazet, 2002, p. 1).

The Senate approved military aid to Armenia in the amount of 4.4 million dollars, together with the suspension of the execution of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act" (US Department of State, 2003a, para. 9). The Senate partially consoled Armenia, which was disappointed by the suspension of this article. With the suspension of this article, Azerbaijan had the opportunity to receive US aid through official channels without lifting the economic embargo against Armenia (Akifqızı, 2002, p. 63). In 2002, following the suspension of this article, Azerbaijan received \$54.9 million in US aid (US Department of State, 2003b, para. 4). With this aid, the US administration aimed to support the development of democracy in Azerbaijan, the promotion of respect for human rights and the rule of law, the independent functioning of the media and the free market economy (US Embassy Baku, 2003, para. 2). Armenia received \$103 million in 2002 and \$106.5 million in 2003 (US Department of State, 2004, para. 6).

On 30 December 2003, "Amendment 907 to the Freedom Support Act of 2004" was again suspended for one year by a decree issued by US President George Walker Bush (US Department

of State, 2003c, para. 13). The stay of execution of this article continued under US President Barack Obama (The Washington Post, 2010, para. 3).

The new situation after 11 September 2001 was a major factor in the US President George Walker Bush's decision to suspend the enforcement of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act". In this context, due to the growing geopolitical importance of Azerbaijan after 11 September 2001 and the economic interests of the United States, the George Walker Bush administration seized the opportune moment to remove this last obstacle in bilateral relations. Azerbaijan did what was necessary for the commercial interests of the USA and established close relations with other lobbies in the USA. During this period, the perception of Azerbaijan in the US has changed significantly. The US Congress reconsidered its national interests and bilateral relations with Azerbaijan. The US policy towards Armenia began to be seen as a serious obstacle to its relations with Azerbaijan (Huseynov, 2003, para. 12). The US Ambassador to Baku, Ross Wilson, who expressed his satisfaction with the suspension of the enforcement of "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act", stated that they were in a position to do many things that this article prevented them from doing and that many of the things they could not do in time caused the cost of the events of 11 September 2001 to be higher (Wall, 2001, para. 17).

### ***2.6.2. OSCE's Approach and Initiative to the Karabakh Conflict***

Karabakh is one of the most risky regions of the former USSR geography with its conflict potential. Experts categorise these conflicts in Karabakh under three headings. These are the struggle for influence of various power centres and rival groups, the struggle of political units to raise their status, border and territorial disputes between states and ethnic groups (Kozlov, 1995, p. 72). The Karabakh conflict, first of all, has ceased to be a central state problem, turned into an issue of territorial occupation and gained an international character. This problem did not take place within a state, but between two states.

On 26 June 2010, at a time when the process between Azerbaijan and Armenia had reached a stalemate, in Toronto, the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, Presidents Barack Obama, Nicolas Sarkozy and Dmitri Medvedev, held a wide-ranging discussion on the Karabakh conflict and signed a joint statement. In the joint statement, the progress made in the negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the Karabakh conflict was noted and the drafting of a peace agreement was requested to begin (525-ci Qazet, 2003, p. 2). On 10 July 2010, at the L'Aquila Summit, in the declaration issued by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, the principles of the agreement were outlined and proposed to the parties. These are; the evacuation of the occupied territories around Karabakh, the creation of a corridor connecting Karabakh to Armenia, the establishment of a provisional administration to ensure the security of Karabakh and self-governance, the provision of security guarantees including international peacekeeping forces and the determination of the final status of the region at a later date by the will of its people (Azerbaijan, 2010, p. 6).

The OSCE work within the framework of the Minsk Group, which began in 1992 and has continued to this day, has continued for many years with the co-operation of various states. These efforts have had some preventive and deterrent benefits. However, when we look at the ongoing occupations in parallel with the initiatives, the course of developments and the overall outcome of the efforts, the OSCE has failed to reach a concrete result in the Karabakh conflict. The first reason for this is that the structural problems in the OSCE's activities and decision-making mechanism prevent a permanent solution. The main example is the acceptance of the decisions of the Minsk Group,



which is the main initiative of the organisation in the resolution of the conflict, through "joint decisions". As is the case in the rest of the world, the adoption of decisions based on this principle in the resolution of regional conflicts has resulted in either failure or failure to finalise the initiative on time. In the Minsk Group activities, Armenia took advantage of this situation in order to create a basis for its occupations and to prevent the adoption of a possible international resolution that could eliminate these occupations, and prevented a permanent solution to the problem by relying on the joint resolution rule. Although the OSCE had the right to utilise the "joint resolution plus one" practice, as in the case of Yugoslavia, it did not resort to it, which led to allegations of double standards. Another reason for the OSCE's failure to reach a result in the Karabakh conflict is the organisation's inability to impose sanctions on the party violating international law and norms. In general, the lack of effective pressure tools encouraged the Armenian side, which resulted in new occupations. Another reason for the OSCE's failure to achieve results in the Karabakh conflict is the lack of actual intervention factors to support diplomatic initiatives. For all these reasons, the OSCE could not produce a permanent and effective solution.

### **3. Economic Relations**

#### **3.1. US Economic Interests in Azerbaijan**

The main factor determining the US policy towards Azerbaijan has been its economic interests. In this context, the focal point of interest has been the exploitation of oil and its export to international markets. The US aimed to diversify the energy supply to the world and to exploit the Caspian region's oil at the same time with the oil deposits in the Persian Gulf (Nesibli, 2000, pp. 65-66). The Caspian region is the second source of oil after the Middle East. In this context, the region will supply oil to the West for 40 years (Aras, 2001, p. 35).

A decrease in oil supply or interruption of oil exports has a negative impact on the world economy. This situation first manifested itself with the oil embargo in 1973 and oil prices rose from 1.7 dollars to 11.6 dollars. The same was the case with the Iran-Iraq war and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, when oil prices rose from \$13 to \$40 (Ari, 1999, p. 59). This is important in terms of showing that the interests of the USA and other Western states in the region are vital.

The USA meets 40 per cent of its energy needs from oil. Half of this is imported from the Persian Gulf (Ari, 1999, pp. 60-61). Although the discovery of oil in other parts of the world temporarily reduced the US dependence on the Persian Gulf in the 1970s in the 1980s, the dependence reasserted itself with the increase in consumption. The increase in oil consumption has led to a policy of seeking additional resources. The decline in US reserves has also increased dependence on foreign oil (Gouliev, 1997, pp. 13-15). In the context of the policy of developing oil production outside the US and away from the Persian Gulf, the administration supported US companies that wanted to participate in the exploitation and development of oil and gas deposits in Azerbaijan. The US administration considered it an important task to protect the interests of its companies because of their identification with the long-term interests of the state. Thus, Azerbaijani oil has become important in terms of reducing the US dependence on the Persian Gulf.

In its economic policy towards Azerbaijan, the USA has aimed to support the private sector, to implement a free market economy and to increase trade. The main objective is to create a political and legal basis for US companies to work comfortably, to promote the free market economy, to ensure competition for oil and natural gas resources and to ensure free trade (Erdoğan, 2006, p. 236). Therefore, Azerbaijan-US economic relations have developed with a focus on oil.

### **3.2. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline Project and the USA**

#### **3.2.1. *Different Approaches to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline Project in the USA***

During this period, US companies made statements against the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project. These companies argued that the oil pipeline was not economically viable, that the oil to be transported from the Caspian region was enough to fill the Baku-Novorosisk and Baku-Supsa pipelines, that Kazakhstan oil was also needed for this pipeline and that it was necessary to wait ten years for this pipeline. The US Carnegie Endowment has published a report on the energy resources of the Caspian region. Criticising the US administration's political support for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project, the report stated that the administration should adopt a different approach, that the location of the oil pipeline should be decided according to market conditions and that the passage of the oil pipeline through Turkey would not be advantageous for the US administration. Stating that the US should also cooperate with the Russian Federation, the report said that expectations that the administration would support the oil pipeline project harmed energy-related developments in the region (Evrensel, 2004, para. 9).

During this period, the US public opinion began to comment that the administration was trying to convince the oil companies of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project and that the propaganda for this project was unsuccessful. In addition, the public opinion was in favour of the idea that it would be possible to export Caspian oil to international markets by increasing the capabilities of the Baku-Supsa pipeline (The New York Times, 2002, para. 17). In response to these developments, the administration announced that the United States supported the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project and that Eximbank would support the work on the pipeline (Boucher, 2002, para. 7).

#### **3.2.2. *US Position on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline Project***

The US has acted within the framework of the east-west route strategy towards the region. It supported the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project in line with its own oil strategy (Wolf, 2002, para. 13). In order to realise this project, it continued its initiatives towards the regional states and oil companies. Despite the lobbying activities of the oil companies against their commercial interests, the US administration made important arrangements in the top management to monitor and support the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project. By establishing a committee chaired by a National Security Council advisor, the US adopted a policy of closely monitoring the issue (Maresca, n.d., para 12).

The most important way for the US to achieve its strategic goal towards the Caspian region is the realisation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project. With the realisation of the project, the oil pipeline will not be monopolised by any state, the development of economic relations between the states of the region will be ensured and regional problems will be eliminated (Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu, n.d., para. 3). With the oil pipeline project, the US will also prevent the regional states from being under the influence of the Russian Federation and Iran. The US supported the project for its strategic objectives rather than economic reasons. The economic aspect of this project was prioritised.

Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project is a high cost project compared to other projects. Another important problem is the possibility of not finding enough oil in the region to cover the cost of the project. Despite these negativities, the US administration supported the realisation of the project to the end. Although the oil companies wanted the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline, which cost almost half of

the project, they were convinced when it came to the strategic goals of the USA (Kurtulusonline, n.d., para. 7).

The US company Betchel has undertaken the engineering works for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project covering Georgia and Azerbaijan for the export of Azerbaijani oil to international markets. The Turkish part of the project was to be coordinated by the Pipeline Petroleum Transport Corporation (BOTAS). However, although the USA has supported the project politically, it has not attempted to support it financially (Alirza, 2003, para. 7). The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which broke ground in 2002, was completed and put into service in 2005 (Xeber.net, 2005, para. 1).

### **3.3. US Aid Programmes to Azerbaijan**

#### **3.3.1. Programmes in the field of Security**

Azerbaijan's main goal in its domestic and foreign policy is to ensure its territorial integrity and preserve its independence. In this context, Azerbaijan has tried to strengthen its security by cooperating with other states. Azerbaijan has received assistance from the USA, especially in ensuring border security. After the suspension of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act", the US administration supported Azerbaijan with programmes in the field of security. The programmes in this field are generally training oriented (Hasanov, 2003, pp. 55-59). Within the framework of these programmes, representatives from the European Command visited Baku to discuss Azerbaijan's security issues (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 5). In addition, Azerbaijan sent a selected group from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the National Assembly to courses on security provided by the "Marshall" Centre (Xalq Qazeti, 2003, p. 2).

During this period, the Azerbaijani government implemented measures to ensure the security of its borders by controlling export goods. To this end, a delegation of representatives of border troops travelled to the USA to attend short-term courses. Azerbaijan also sent four security experts to the USA. The experts made observations at the atomic laboratory in the state of California and participated in seminars on ensuring security in the export of chemical products arranged for the Caucasian states (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 3). During this period, a group from the US Navy arrived in Baku to take care of the security of the Baku port and conducted exercises together with the Azerbaijani Border Forces. In addition, the United States provided financial resources to the security system created to ensure border security in the north of Azerbaijan (525-ci Qazet, 2004, p. 4).

During this period, it was agreed between the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence and the US Department of Defence to implement a special security programme for the demining of mines. Within the framework of the programme, 15 Azerbaijani lieutenants received training from US experts on the disarming of mines using modern techniques. These training programmes for the Caucasian states were held in Georgia. After the end of the courses, the US specialists left a number of technical equipment used for demining to Azerbaijan (Xalq Qazeti, 2007, p. 3).

#### **3.3.2. Democracy Development Programme**

Within the framework of the programme for the development of democracy, the US administration aimed at the creation of civil society organisations and the strengthening of the multi-party system in Azerbaijan. With this programme, the US aims to modernise the means of information, to ensure the free functioning of the press and media outlets, to ensure transparent political developments

within the rule of law, to promote the use of the Internet and to raise public awareness on this issue (Orujov, 2006, pp. 154-160). Internet usage training in Azerbaijan was carried out by the non-governmental organisation International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) on the initiative of the US Embassy in Baku (IREX, 2009, para. 1).

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has allocated a loan for the weekly programme Space Bridge on the Internews channel. Through this programme, USAID aimed to soften the negative attitudes of the people of Azerbaijan and Armenia towards each other that had developed after the war (Nasirov, 2003, para. 19). In addition, USAID, through its representatives in the region, implemented the project "Women are the Pioneers of Civil Society Organisations in the Region". Within the scope of this project, 16 Azerbaijani women were sent to Armenia and 16 Armenian women were sent to Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan, 2004, p. 3).

During this period, non-governmental organisations such as the National Democracy Institute (NDI) in the USA and the International Fund for Electoral Systems came to Baku to cooperate with the Azerbaijani government. After the suspension of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act", NDI provided technical assistance to the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) for the 2003 presidential elections (Xalq Qazeti, 2003, p. 5). USAID also organised a number of seminars to inform the public about the duties of voters and candidates. Prior to the 2003 presidential elections, USAID arranged assistance programmes for the SBE, aiming to ensure democratic elections. USAID has also established a number of programmes to assist private media outlets. Internews, with USAID's assistance, organised short-term courses in "communication basics" for local journalists, photographers and cameramen. USAID also helped to publish the 104th issue of Güzgü magazine, the 93rd series of the Perekrestok programme and the 26th series of the Biznes Nedelya programme. In addition, USAID sponsored the creation of a press centre for the 2003 presidential elections and the publication of a press release for the 2005 parliamentary elections (USAID, 2005, para. 13).

With the financial assistance of USAID, the non-governmental organisation "Initiative for Social Action and the Peace of Eurasia" continued its activities in seven large cities of Azerbaijan. This NGO provided financial assistance for the creation of local civil society organisations (Xalq Qazeti, 2003, p. 7).

The Central and Eastern European Law Enforcement Initiative, supported by the American Lawyers Association and USAID, has started technical assistance to Azerbaijan. The organisation organised a training programme for judges at the Azerbaijani Ministry of Justice. It also established a legal resource centre for lawyers, students and civil society organisations and provided assistance. In 2003, the organisation established the Institute of Law for the Study of Criminal Cases at Baku State University (Azer Web, 2008, para. 8).

During this period, USAID provided financial assistance, supporting the development of trade unions and business organisations in Azerbaijan. Within the framework of the USAID Eurasia Fund's "Cooperation in the South Caucasus" project, civil society organisations from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia met. At the same time, USAID has taken initiatives to establish a legal basis for human rights in Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan Mellimi, 2005, p. 1).

### **3.3.3. Trade and Agriculture Programmes**

During this period, USTDA implemented two projects to support private property in Azerbaijan. The first one is the project to improve education on taking measures against natural disasters. The

second is the project on the creation of a security system for environmental control in Azerbaijan (Embassy of Azerbaijan, n.d., para. 8). At the same time, USTDA allocated 17 thousand dollars for the joint exploitation of oil products in Azerbaijan, 375 thousand dollars for the construction of a cardiology centre and 425 thousand dollars for the research of the Azerbaijani sector in the Caspian region. In addition, a group of businessmen from Azerbaijan was sent to the USA to learn trade methods and to benefit from the experience of experts in the construction industry (Azerbaijan, 2004, p. 9).

During this period, the US administration provided various assistance for the development of agriculture in Azerbaijan. In order to contribute to the development of private agribusiness, loans were allocated for the establishment of a banking system in the districts. Volunteer farmers from the USA came to Azerbaijan to teach Azerbaijani farmers modern methods of agricultural management (Xalq Qazeti, 2005, p. 4). The loans allocated for agriculture were aimed at the strong development of the agricultural sector.

#### **3.3.4. Programme for the Support of Reforms in the Field of Education**

During this period, a group of students from Azerbaijan were sent to Edmund Community College in Seattle, Washington with scholarships to continue their education through the education programme of the US-Azerbaijan Fund. In addition, at the invitation of US scientists, Azerbaijani scientists lectured at various universities in the USA (Azerbaijan Mellimi, 2004, p. 3). Tadeush Svyatokovskiy, who conducted research on Azerbaijan, contributed to the recognition of this state in the USA. At the same time, Tadeush Svyatokovskiy is one of the founders of the International Association for Azerbaijan Studies (USACC, n.d., para. 7). Another US expert, Michael Smith, has visited Azerbaijan several times and conducted research. Michael Smith has also written a book on Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan, 2003, p. 1).

During this period, relations between Azerbaijan and the USA in the field of education developed. 1300 Azerbaijani students studied in various high schools and universities of the USA with scholarships. 200 students continued their doctoral studies at universities through the "Diplomacy in the Social Field" programme established by the US administration. 55 students studied at various high schools in the USA through the "Leaders of the Future" programme. 1045 students continued their undergraduate and graduate studies at US universities under the "Edward Maskey" programme (525-ci Qazet, 2010, p. 1). In addition, relations were established between the schools of the state of Georgia and the Azerbaijan Petroleum Academy. Cooperation in various fields was established between Gerb in Azerbaijan, Baku State University and the University of Alabama. At the same time, a student exchange programme was carried out between four public high schools of Azerbaijan and schools in the state of Florida (Azerbaijan Mellimi, 2008, p. 2).

#### **3.3.5. Social and Humanitarian Aid Programmes**

During this period, the US Department of Agriculture provided food aid under the "Food for Development" project. Azerbaijan received 96 tonnes of food aid from the USA. At the same time, Azerbaijan received a five million dollar loan guarantee for exports within the framework of the GSM-102 programme (525-ci Qazet, 2010, p. 5). In addition, US-based non-governmental organisations have provided financial assistance to 170,000 refugees in Azerbaijan for psychological treatment. Care and Save the Children Foundation provided assistance to improve the economic situation and health care. During this period, USAID sent assistance for the provision

of health services for refugees. USAID also provided technical assistance to establish a Capital Fund for social development in Azerbaijan (Xalq Qazeti, 2009, p. 2).

During this period, the US administration provided medical assistance to refugees in Azerbaijan under the "Partnership between Hospitals" project. US hospitals Baylor College of Medicine, Oregon Health Sciences University and Virginia Common Health University cooperated with three major public hospitals in Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan, 2005, p. 2).

During this period, the US Department of Defence took advantage of the opportunity to provide humanitarian assistance and conducted training programmes for officials of various ministries in Azerbaijan. In addition, the US Department of Defence sent twenty million dollars of humanitarian aid to Azerbaijan through the United Methodist Committee on Relief, International Relief and Development, Eaton-Hap, Counterpart Consortium and Heart to Heart (Azerbaijan, 2006, p. 7).

#### **4. Military Relations**

After the events of 11 September 2001, Azerbaijan supported the war against international terrorism and entered into military cooperation with the United States. In 2002, Azerbaijan opened its airspace to US military aircraft as part of the war against international terrorism. Azerbaijan also supported ISAF in Afghanistan by sending troops (Xalq Qazeti, 2010, p. 1).

With the US intervention in Iraq in 2003, Azerbaijan entered into military co-operation with this state. Azerbaijan supported the US intervention to demilitarise Iraq and opened its airspace to the use of the US. Azerbaijan also sent its peacekeeping force to Iraq. The peacekeeping force, which entered Iraq under US command, ensured the security of state buildings and cultural centres (525-ci Qazet, 2010, p. 1).

At the NATO Istanbul Summit on 27-28 June 2004, special attention was paid to the Caucasus and Central Asia region. At the Summit, it was decided to appoint a Special Representative of the NATO Secretary General for the region and to open liaison offices. Through these offices, NATO has further strengthened its relations with the states in the region. On 15 September 2004, Robert Simmons was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General of NATO (Ateşoğlu Güney, 2006, p. 59). Since then, Azerbaijan has strengthened its cooperation with NATO in the fight against international terrorism. Azerbaijan also opened its territory for the transit of NATO forces (Azerbaijan Mellimi, 2005, p. 1).

In June 2010, US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates visited Azerbaijan. During his meeting with İlham Aliyev, Robert Gates stated that NATO aircraft should continue to fly from Azerbaijan to Afghanistan and that the United States would repay its debts to Azerbaijan in this regard (Azerbaijan, 2010, p. 1). In addition, Robert Gates met with Azerbaijani Defence Minister Sefer Ebiyev and stated that Azerbaijan is of strategic importance in the fight against international terrorism and smuggling and that military relations should continue in cooperation in all areas, including border security (525-ci Qazet, 2010, p. 1).

After the events of 11 September 2001, Azerbaijan fully supported the fight against terrorism and sent its troops to Afghanistan and Iraq for the joint fight against international terrorism and the establishment of peace. After 2005, military relations between the two states generally continued within the framework of NATO. After 11 September 2001, Azerbaijan opened its airspace to the USA, and from 2005 onwards, it also opened its territory to NATO forces. During this period, Azerbaijan strengthened its military cooperation with the USA and NATO.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the study; Azerbaijan's relations with the USA, which constitute the focus of Azerbaijan's foreign policy after 11 September 2001, were examined within the framework of the concept of foreign policy, the factors determining bilateral relations and the interests of the USA towards the region were taken into consideration and these bilateral relations were evaluated within the framework of Azerbaijan's foreign policy.

After the collapse of the USSR, geopolitical power vacuum areas emerged with the emergence of independent states in Eurasia. One of these areas was the newly independent Azerbaijan in the Caucasus region.

Azerbaijan, which has a significant geopolitical and economic potential, has endeavoured to establish its international relations on a new plane. This position of Azerbaijan provided the US, the sole superpower, with an opportunity to gain a new sphere of influence. The foreign policy institutes of the USA started to investigate the strategic, economic and political situation of Azerbaijan. After the collapse of the USSR, the concepts of "spreading democracy" and "greater respect for human rights" became the main objectives of the US foreign policy towards Azerbaijan. These concepts also formed the basis of the US policy towards Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's main goal was to preserve its independence by ensuring its security and to gain an equal position in the international arena. Azerbaijan, which pursued a policy of balancing between global powers, but having closer relations with one global power, has developed its international relations in this direction by attaching importance to the US, the only superpower, while forming its foreign policy.

Azerbaijan faced the risk of jeopardising its territorial integrity and independence due to the war environment and economic problems. Azerbaijan needed the support of the international community in order to preserve and strengthen its independence and prioritised the USA in this period while formulating its foreign policy. In this context, Azerbaijan took steps to fulfil the conditions put forward by the US to improve relations as soon as possible, while at the same time enabling US oil companies to invest in Azerbaijan, aiming to be a balancing power against the Russian Federation. The fact that the US oil companies have modern technology and the financial power to invest made it necessary for Azerbaijan to pursue this policy.

In the post-11 September 2001 period, especially with Azerbaijan's full support to the US in the fight against terrorism, relations entered into a process of cooperation. Despite the increasing political and economic relations between the two states, the Armenian lobby in the US has continued its activities against Azerbaijan. However, the influence of the Armenian lobby on the Congress has decreased compared to the 1990s.

After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the USA has made positive changes in Azerbaijan by taking a broader view of its political, economic and security interests. The most important change in this context is the suspension of the enforcement of the "Supplement No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act". Another important change in the US policy towards Azerbaijan is the official statements of the US administration in support of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

In the period 2001-2010, Azerbaijan has done everything necessary for the development of bilateral relations and for US companies to come and invest in the country. It can be said that this policy of Azerbaijan stems from the positive image of the US in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has also

established close relations with other interest groups in the US. In this context, it can be said that compared to the 1990s, the lack of information about Azerbaijan in the US public opinion has disappeared and the understanding has changed to a great extent. Thus, it is seen that this new understanding is reflected in the US policy towards Azerbaijan after 11 September 2001: The US administration, which supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity more than ever and increased its initiatives towards the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, suspended the enforcement of the "Amendment No. 907 to the Freedom Support Act", which constituted an obstacle to bilateral relations, despite the pressures of the Armenian lobby. These new policies implemented by the US have been a kind of reward for Azerbaijan, which has given full support both in the state and in the international arena in the fight against terrorism.

In general, the US policy towards Azerbaijan in this period was based on the geopolitical position of the Caucasus, economic and strategic interests related to the exploitation of Caspian energy resources and their transportation to international markets. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, responded to this policy of the USA and aimed to receive the support of the USA in the solution of the economic and political problems it faced and in the realisation of the prioritised foreign policy goals. With the signing of oil agreements, the US interests in Azerbaijan were largely secured.

The US has supported stability and prosperity in the region in terms of ensuring the security of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline with its oil companies. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which is still unresolved despite the initiatives, and the widespread use of war-related statements nowadays threaten the realisation of this approach of the US, which supports the stability and prosperity of the region. In this context, the US was expected to take a more active role in the peace process. In this period, the resolution of the Karabakh conflict will make a significant contribution to ensuring stability and prosperity in the region, improving Azerbaijan-US relations and increasing co-operation in bilateral relations.



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