



IJHE: CİLT / VOLUME 11, SAYI / ISSUE 25, S / P. 321 – 339.

Azerbaijan's Relations with Türkiye and Israel: a Constructivist Analysis

Elza Elif MEHDIYEV*

Abstract: The South Caucasian nation of Azerbaijan forms a unique case study on maintaining alliances from different blocs through its simultaneous and equally strong diplomatic relations with Türkiye and Israel. The relationship between these two regional powers is anything but cordial, and their disagreements have been amplified by the Palestinian conflict. In the context of the conflict, Azerbaijan seems to be in a difficult situation upon first glance, for it seems inevitable for the state to be in conflict with its allies, having to choose a side; however, Azerbaijan manages to maintain an independent stance even while vocally expressing opinions on the conflict, which contributes to creating this intriguing political portrait. In this article an analysis that contradicts the general perception is presented, and it is shown, through a constructivist analysis of Azerbaijan's multi-vectoral foreign policy, that Azerbaijan's dedication to preserving and acting in accordance with its national identity on the world stage has enabled the state to construct a foreign policy in which it can maintain strong relations with opposite sides and disagree with its allies without facing repercussions.

Key Words: Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Foreign Policy, Israel, Türkiye, Multi-Vectoral Foreign Policy, Constructivism.

Azerbaycan'ın Türkiye ve İsrail ile İlişkileri: Yapılandırmacı Bir Analiz

Özet: Güney Kafkasya ülkesi Azerbaycan, Türkiye ve İsrail ile olan eş zamanlı ve eşit derecede kuvvetli diplomatik ilişkileriyle, farklı bloklardan ittifaklar sürdürmek üzerine benzersiz bir vaka çalışması oluşturmaktadır. Bölgesel güçler olan Türkiye ve İsrail'in birbirleri ile olan ilişkileri dostane olmaktan çok uzaktır, ve aralarındaki anlaşmazlık Filistin krizi dolayısıyla artmıştır. Bu kriz bağlamında, Azerbaycan ilk bakışta zor bir durumdaymış gibi görünmektedir, şöyle ki bir taraf seçmenin zorunluluğu dolayısıyla Azerbaycan'ın iki ittifakından bir tanesiyle anlaşmazlık içinde bulunması kaçınılmazmış gibi bir görünüm arz etmektedir. Ancak, Azerbaycan kriz hakkındaki görüşlerini sesli olarak ifade etmesine rağmen bağımsız bir duruş sürdürmeyi başarmaktadır. Bu durum, bu ilginç siyasi tabloyu yaratmaya katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu yazıda, söz konusu algının tam tersi bir tahlil sunulmuş ve bu doğrultuda, Azerbaycan'ın çok yönlü dış politikası hakkında yapılandırmacı bir analiz yapıldığında, onun ulusal kimliğini korumaya ve dünya sahnesinde buna uygun hareket etmeye olan adanmışlığı, devletin karşıt taraflarla güçlü ilişkiler sürdürebileceği ve negatif sonuçlara yol açmadan müttefikleriyle fikir ayrılığı yaşayabileceği bir dış politika oluşturmasını sağlayabileceği gösterilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Azerbaycan, Azerbaycan Dış Politikası, İsrail, Türkiye, Çok Yönlü Dış Politika, Yapılandırmacılık.

* Independent Researcher. E-mail: mehdiyevelza@gmail.com. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8716-5653>.

Introduction

The South Caucasian nation of Azerbaijan forms a noteworthy case study of navigating alliances from different sides during times of conflict while protecting its stance on the world stage and maintaining an independent national identity. The former USSR state, independent since 1991, forms a unique example of geopolitical standing in the context of its two closest allies: Türkiye, whose alliance with Azerbaijan is often described as “one nation, two states,” and Israel, with whom Azerbaijan is engaged in major oil trades and partnerships on the world stage. The fact that Türkiye and Israel belong to two opposite blocs and are in disagreement makes Azerbaijan's simultaneously strong alliances with both countries a compelling point of analysis.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is located at the edges of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, in the region known as the South Caucasus. It neighbours Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Iran and Türkiye. The state was a part of the Soviet Union from 1920 until 1991, when it gained independence with the fall of the USSR.

In the nineties, Azerbaijan's development was stalled due to the Karabakh conflict with Armenia, which broke out just months after its independence. The conflict resulted in a lack of institutions, economic struggles, and loss of civilian lives in the Karabakh region. By preserving its national identity and sovereignty throughout this period, Azerbaijan highlighted its dedication to the notion of independence.

Currently, its two closest allies on the world stage are Türkiye and Israel. On first glance, being able to form strategic alliances with Israel and Türkiye simultaneously may seem paradoxical. The unorthodox nature of these alliances is clearly visible in the context of the Palestine issue, for which Israel and Türkiye form two opposite poles. This has been the case symbolically since Erdogan's memorable “One Minute” speech at the World Economic Forum session in Davos in 2009¹, but in reality since the Islamist Turkish Prime Minister Erbakan came to power in 1996.

In this paper, I am analyzing this unusual diplomatic stance by examining Azerbaijan's pragmatic, multi-vectoral foreign policy, using the theoretical framework of constructivism in order to answer the question of how Azerbaijan is able to maintain mutually beneficial and equally significant alliances with two disagreeing poles. As I argue, Azerbaijan has constructed

¹ Referring to Erdogan's sharp criticism against Israel aimed at former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres. For further reading, see “Recep Erdogan storms out of Davos after clash with Israeli president over Gaza.” in *The Guardian*.

a foreign policy centered around maintaining the independence of its national identity on the world stage, and this construct enables Azerbaijan to form strong alliances with Türkiye and Israel simultaneously through the emphasis on not belonging to a single geopolitical bloc.

Historical Background on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

Azerbaijan's foreign policy as known today has been irrefutably shaped by Heydar Aliyev, the third Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, who served from 1993 to 2003. He is remembered for establishing what is today known as "the multi-vectoral foreign policy."² The policy refers to a foreign policy approach which aims to create diplomatic relations and alliances with a wide variety of regional and global powers, instead of one exclusive bloc. It was first articulated by the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1992 (Yuneman, 2023). It is additionally utilized by Ukraine, Russia, the USA, and the EU countries. It is a useful policy for protecting independence on the world stage, growing economically, and preserving national identity as well as sovereignty through enabling the state to not get caught between bloc conflicts, and form alliances with a larger variety of states.

During his term, H. Aliyev built and maintained strong relations with various countries. Relations with Türkiye were deepened with the "Agreement on the Development of Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation." The tarnished relations with Russia due to the first Karabakh war were on the mend with diplomatic visits and the signing of "On Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Security." Azerbaijan was declared a strategic partner to the USA during Aliyev's first official visit, with the signing of "On American-Azerbaijani Relations" (Mammadli, 2023).

H. Aliyev's presidency term highlights a vital notion which motivates the foreign policy approach: standing independently on the world stage, under no other state's influence, and thus preserving national identity. The importance assigned to sovereignty and independence has its roots in Azerbaijan's history. Established in 1918, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was independent for only two years when its government was overthrown by the Bolshevik Red Army and incorporated into the USSR. Throughout the Soviet rule, an Azerbaijani identity continued to develop, with music, literature and other media beginning to reflect an increased

² For a comprehensive overview of Heydar Aliyev's involvement in building this foreign policy see: Heydar Aliyev and the Foundations of Modern Azerbaijan, specifically Chapter 7, "Foreign Policy of Heydar Aliyev" by Araz Aslanli.

desire for independence. Thus, it naturally followed that when Azerbaijan gained its much-desired independence in 1991, the state grew determined to preserve it.

This expression of independence, throughout this context, is used to refer to beyond independence of the land; rather, it encapsulates all factors relating to acting and existing in a way which the state of Azerbaijan itself has constructed, and which is in accordance with the country's national identity. It signifies a construction of the Azerbaijani identity (constructed based on the state's national values, religion, ethnicity, economy, etc.), which has long been overshadowed by belonging to the Soviet Union. For Azerbaijan, independence, especially in the context of foreign policy, means the protection of Azerbaijani identity on the world stage.

Azerbaijan's national identity is a subject of rich and detailed discourse, whose depth makes the general analysis of the topic beyond the scope of this paper.³ So, we will analyze Azerbaijani national identity within the context of its foreign policy, and specifically how it refers to its relations with Türkiye and Israel, in the following sections. Before that, though, we must understand how Azerbaijan's partnerships on the world stage, being a state with a multi-vectoral foreign policy, relate to the notion of the state's identity and that of the protection of its independence.

Azerbaijan's emphasis on preserving the independence of its identity is seen with the state's emphasis on not becoming a proxy while navigating a multi-vectoral foreign policy. Indeed, in contrast to most former Soviet nations, Azerbaijan does not wish to become a proxy to Russia, nor the West. Because of this perspective, Azerbaijan is able to establish and maintain alliances within multiple blocs, while also avoiding over-reliance on one particular group that might hinder its ability to act independently and preserve its identity. The country is careful to ensure that friendly relations don't carry over to this proxy level and that all alliances are equal for both parties involved. For example, Azerbaijan dismissed the EU's proposed Eastern Partnership Association Agreement (in contrast to its South Caucasian neighbours) on the grounds that it signaled an unclear position between a partnership and a membership, and instead advocated for and succeeded in the establishment of the 2016 Strategic Partnership Agreement, which was built on equal partnership. This way, Azerbaijan was able to avoid the requirement of a one-sided compliance with the EU and protect its independence on the world stage (Jafarova, 2021). Thus, Azerbaijan is solely focused on alliances and partnerships where

³ For further readings on this subject, see: A. L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* and T. Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*.

all signatory parties are equals, and the benefits are mutual as well as strategic, in order to maintain the independence of its national identity on the world stage.

The motivation of preserving the independence of its national identity, and consequent desire of not wishing to become a proxy, is epitomized in the state's interactions with intergovernmental organizations. In line with its multi-vectoral foreign policy, Azerbaijan maintains relations with a multitude of intergovernmental and multilateral organizations across blocs; For example, it is a member of the UN, WHO, Council of Europe, World Bank, OSCE, GUAM, Organization of Turkic States as well as Commonwealth of Independent States; its engagements include NATO's Partnership for Peace initiative and partnerships with the European Union. Similar to how it approaches its relations with state actors, Azerbaijan is careful to abstain from deeply aligned actions as a way of maintaining its independent identity.

However, with one particular organization, Azerbaijan maintains closer relations: the Organization of Turkic States. The organization was founded in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in 2003, and since then, Azerbaijan has kept extraordinarily close involvement within the organization. The Turkish Culture and Heritage Foundation as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States are housed in Baku, for example. During the inauguration ceremony on February 14, 2024, the current president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, used strong terminology to emphasize Azerbaijan's connection to OTS, calling it the main international organization, and stating that the Turkic world is family (Aliyev, 2024, as cited in Enveroglu, 2024).

For a state so set on remaining independent, an expression of such a close alliance on the world stage is an intriguing point to analyze. Within this context, Azerbaijan's commitment to the OTS adds dimension to one of the ways it portrays its identity: through the ethnic lens, as a Turkic state. This has impacts on Azerbaijan's relations with Türkiye and Israel, as we will examine in the upcoming sections.

Additionally, the notion of independence is seen economically as a tool for furthering independent involvement on the world stage. The Government of Azerbaijan has marked the preservation of independence as a major priority of foreign economic policy, which in turn has led to the formation of relationships with international finance credit and economic institutions, as well as admission into international institutions such as World Bank, EDRD, 1992 IMF, Islam Development Bank, and Asian Development Bank ("General information on Azerbaijani Economy," n.d.). This way, the economy is used as a tool of furthering involvement on the world stage, while preserving the notion of independence. This is corroborated by H. Aliyev,

who has stated regarding the “Contract of the Century,” an oil agreement that formed an economic milestone in Azerbaijan's independent development. The following statement by H. Aliyev as seen in summarizes the importance of the contract:

The foundation we laid with the contract of the century creates favourable conditions for the strengthening of the state sovereignty of independent Azerbaijan, the development and happy life of the people of the country in the 21st century. I believe that the 21st century will be the happiest period for the independent state of Azerbaijan. (“The Contract of the Century,” n.d.)

Aliyev’s emphasis on the correlation between this well-known and notable contract and the notions of state sovereignty as well as independence for Azerbaijan highlights how economics are used as a tool of furthering said notions. The concept of self-sufficiency is also present in Azerbaijan’s foreign economic policy, as expressed by I. Aliyev: “We have built a strong economy relying on our own resources. We have established an independent economy; we are not dependent on anyone” (Aliyev, 2024, as cited in Abdul, 2024). A significant part of the self-sufficient, independent economic foreign policy stems from oil exports, as seen within the context of Israeli relations later on in the paper.

Thus, we get a sense of Azerbaijan’s multi-vectoral foreign policy: its origins, motives, execution, and outcomes. Most prominently shaped by H. Aliyev, Azerbaijan’s multi-vectoral foreign policy enables the state to cooperate and form diplomatic relations with a multitude of nations and organizations regardless of their geopolitical blocs. It is strongly influenced by a motive of protecting the independence of the state’s national identity, which is seen in Azerbaijan’s determination not to become a proxy through only entering mutually beneficial partnerships where the signatories are deemed parties of equal standing.

Within this context, we are better able to explore Azerbaijan’s relations with its two closest, disagreeing allies: Türkiye and Israel.

Azerbaijan-Türkiye Relations

Azerbaijan and Türkiye’s relations are at a level of such extraordinary closeness that the two countries are oftentimes called “one nation, two states.” This phrase, most notably used by H. Aliyev, has been circulated in multiple national and international journalistic and academic literature; it highlights the linguistic, cultural and historical similarities between the countries that strengthen their diplomatic relations.

Türkiye, being the first state to ever recognize Azerbaijan, played a key role in the continuation of Azerbaijan’s political existence. In return, Azerbaijan invests in Türkiye significantly,

particularly in terms of energy, with notable investors such as SOCAR (State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic). SOCAR is currently Türkiye's largest foreign investor, having invested over \$18.5bn in the past seventeen years and planning to invest an additional \$7bn in the upcoming years (Soylu, 2024).

Türkiye has expressed support for Azerbaijan during the Karabakh conflict. Alongside expressing verbal support, it has also supplied Azerbaijan with Bayraktar TB2 drones during the second war, which have been called a 'game-changer' by UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace (Kımk & Çelik, 2021, p. 180).

This mutually beneficial relationship, impactful in social, political, and cultural areas, has led to an increase of military cooperation between the two states with the 2021 Shusha Declaration, which, among other things, led the Azerbaijan abandoning the Soviet Model and adopting a Turkish-style military, as well as Türkiye expressing its support to Azerbaijan's Zangezur corridor project, a route designed to connect Azerbaijan with its exclave Nakhichevan.

Overall, Türkiye and Azerbaijan have a strong alliance, based on ethnic, religious, and cultural ties, as well as a Turkic identity, that manifests in their economic partnerships, military partnerships and political support.

Azerbaijan-Israel Relations

As mentioned previously, the decade after Azerbaijan's independence was an uncertain time, due to the lack of institutions and economic struggles stemming from the Karabakh conflict. After navigating through the turbulence, Azerbaijan started to gain a more prominent place on the world stage, a development which was seen most prominently after the signing of "The Contract of the Century." By the twenties, Azerbaijan was established as a globally involved country, hosting more than 300 internationally scaled economic, cultural and sporting events within the last decade (such as COP29 in 2024 and the 18th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in 2019).

The advancements during the 2010s were not the only change for Azerbaijan. During said time, the Israel-Azerbaijan alliance also began to develop. Previously, within the context of its Periphery strategy, Israel had been in search of non-Arabic allies in the Middle East. Relations with Türkiye were thus placed on the radar; however, Erbakan coming to power in the 90s, and President Erdogan walking out of Davos in 2009 led to a hindrance of their diplomatic relations, reaching a breaking point with the 2010 Mavi Marmara. Thus, the strategy had shifted gears, evolving into the New Periphery Strategy, and Israel began seeking new alliances to counter

the powers of Iran and Türkiye. Considering Azerbaijan's energy sources and highly politically advantageous location as a neighbour to Iran, it came naturally that Israel saw a beneficial ally in Azerbaijan (Özdaşlı, 2017, pp. 180-184). This close interest, combined with Azerbaijan's self-benefiting agendas on further expressing itself in the world arena, led to the formation of a strategic partnership between the two states.

Within Azerbaijan, the Muslim majority is integrated with the Jewish population, such that trading cultural values like customs or even names is not uncommon. The general public supports both religious groups, and as expressed in the concise statement of Tural Ahmadov of Azerbaijan State University of Economics, "Public support is in favour of the Palestinians, but not always against Israel" (2022). And yet another researcher describes the situation as such: "To many Azerbaijanis, Palestinians are Muslim brothers and sisters, while Israelis are valued friends" (Harshbarger, 2023). This is furthermore endorsed by instances of comradeship expressed throughout the conflict years: Following the October 7 Hamas attacks, Muslim citizens from Azerbaijan visited the Israeli Embassy in Baku, expressing support with flowers and memorial candles.

The beneficial relationship between two states can be most directly exemplified by their prosperous energy ties, which are already strong but are experiencing additional continuous growth. 40% of all Israel's crude oil imports are stated to be sourced from Baku, and just during the first half of 2024, those imports rose 28% (Gouliev, 2025). In 2025, the USA, Israel and Azerbaijan have engaged in discussions to create a trilateral cooperation format in security, energy, and diplomacy. Although this trio may seem unrelated at first glance, in reality, it is a natural result of current alliances: the USA and Israel are certainly very strong allies, and the fact that Azerbaijan is also a part of the discussions for an international cooperation setting highlights the strong ties between Azerbaijan and Israel.

Israel, in reciprocation, quietly supported Azerbaijan during the Karabakh conflict, becoming its biggest arms supplier alongside Türkiye. A report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows that Israel supplied 60 percent of Azerbaijan's arms imports between 2015 and 2019. In 2016, Aliyev claimed that Azerbaijan had bought Israeli weapons

worth US\$5 billion (von Essen, 2023). Although that time frame does not directly overlap with times of armed conflict, it isn't a stretch to infer the arms supplied were used during 2020.

Seeing the level of diplomatic closeness between Israel and Azerbaijan, it is important now to turn our attention to Azerbaijan's stance on the Palestine issue. Indeed, it might be expected that, considering the close alliance with Israel, Azerbaijan might be on its side. However, that is not the case.

Azerbaijan's Stance on Palestine

The Palestine issue is a leading problem of the history of international diplomacy, unsolved after nearly centuries (Gherardini, 2024, p. 2). In this sense, the stance of a state regarding this issue forms a standard in evaluating said state's place in international diplomacy and general diplomatic capacity. This generalization can naturally be applied to Azerbaijan as well.

Azerbaijan's relationship with Palestine seemed quite stagnant until Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas's visit to Baku. This was due to the fact that the first Palestinian Prime Minister, Yasir Arafat, had been supporting Armenia in the Karabakh conflict. However, following Abbas' 2011 visit to Baku, which was the first recorded official visit to Azerbaijan from Palestine, the relations between the two nations began to thaw. In this visit, Abbas vocalized disapproval of Armenia's occupation and stated the Palestinian state would support Azerbaijan in all international settings, including the UN. This statement was the first the Palestinian President gave in support of Azerbaijan against the Armenian occupation (Veliyev, 2023).

In response, Azerbaijan's Prime Minister Ilham Aliyev reciprocated by expressing that Azerbaijan supported and would continue to support Palestine. Azerbaijan remains a steadfast supporter of the two-state solution, as emphasized in 2024 when Prime Minister Aliyev made the following statement in a Cairo news conference:

Azerbaijan's attitude is clear. An independent Palestinian state should be established and East Jerusalem should be its capital. The tragedy in Gaza must end as soon as possible, the war must be stopped and all problems must be resolved through negotiations. (Aliyev, 2024, as cited in Teslova, 2024)

Azerbaijan's stance on the Palestinian issue reinforces an important aspect of the multi-vectoral foreign policy discussed above: the emphasis on independence on the world stage. Azerbaijan's independence and lack of association with a single bloc give the state freedom to go against its allies or certain topics, and act in a way that is not influenced by other actors. Thus, even though conflict seems inevitable for Azerbaijan (with Israel while defending the Palestinian people, and with Türkiye while criticizing the armed wings of the Palestinian freedom movement), due

to the multi-vectoral policy and its non-proxy stance, Azerbaijan is able to navigate its alliances with conflicting sides.

In summary, Azerbaijan's relations with Türkiye and with Israel are both uniquely mutually-beneficial and have manifested in tangible interactions, not just existing verbally. The unorthodox nature of a country having its two closest allies be from such polar blocs, as well as in high disagreement, makes this a compelling case study. We will now explore the theoretical analysis I will be using to make sense of this intriguing geopolitical portrait: constructivism.

Constructivism: The Lens of Analysis

When analyzing the nature of Azerbaijan's alliances with Türkiye and Israel, the unorthodox appearance of this political portrait stumps realist and liberalist approaches. Azerbaijan's emphasis on preserving its national values through independence, in place of gaining power, its central goal in the supposedly anarchic political system, goes against realist principles. As for liberalism, the emphasis on universal values fails to account for the unique situations faced by individual states in influencing global politics. Within both these approaches, we see a continuous description of international relations that does not align with the dynamic nature of Azerbaijan's foreign policy, and a central disregard of the unique circumstances of a state's history in influencing its current motivations for and perspective on intergovernmental interactions. Thus, to reach a thorough analysis of the political situation, we must turn to constructivism, which aids the analysis through its flexible, mutable perspective on international relations and accounts for a nation's beliefs and ideas in influencing its maneuvers on the world stage.

Constructivism in politics developed around the 1980s, due to the fact that liberals and realists had failed to articulate an explanation for the sudden and unaccounted end of the Cold War. In its core, constructivism offers the argument that anarchy is what states make of it; differing from the realists, constructivists dispute that there is a singular, *de facto* nature of international politics, and instead they argue that the system of international politics is constructed based on the interests, beliefs, and norms of state and non-state actors (Wendt, 1995, as cited in Theys, 2017, p. 37).

Constructivist theory holds that identity shapes world politics. States can have multiple identities, which are socially constructed from their past interactions with other states as well as their specific beliefs and interests. These identities affect the formation of alliances,

economic trade, diplomatic relations, and the formation of armed disputes. The effect of national values in forming a national identity means that the preservation of a national identity is directly correlated with the preservation of national values.

Wendt illustrates the existence of social constructs in political perception with the following example: For the United States, the existence of 500 nuclear weapons in the UK is significantly less threatening than 5 nuclear weapons in North Korea (as cited in Theys, 2017, p. 36). A realist would not be able to account for this, for the material value of the weapons would be expected as the sole indicator of threat. However, constructivists argue that the social constructs that are of effect here, such as historical interactions, belonging to political blocs, and diplomatic relations, outweigh the sole material construct of the amount of weapons in forming a threat.

The point above highlights an important notion that will prove of significant value to our analysis: hard power is not the sole indicator of whether a country poses a threat to another nation. Rather, the formation of a threat is largely dependent on social constructs in accordance with a nation's identity (Parker, 2012).

The emphasis of identity is relevant to Azerbaijan; the main focus of Azerbaijan, while engaging in foreign policy, is preserving the independence of its national identity. Thus, the defence of Azerbaijan's identity on the world stage is the state's primary goal, and due to this perspective, the state is able to construct a foreign policy system where it is able to simultaneously form strong diplomatic relations with the disagreeing states of Türkiye and Israel.

Within this paper, constructivism is a valuable tool of analysis due to its recognition of growth and change in world politics, as well as its argument that an actor's unique historical circumstances, beliefs, and interests have the effect of generating a national identity to influence world politics.

Azerbaijan's Alliances with Israel and Türkiye Through a Constructivist Lens

Throughout this paper, we have acknowledged time and time again the unorthodox nature of Azerbaijan's close alliances with Türkiye and Israel. In the context of Azerbaijan's multi-vectoral foreign policy, we are now able to look through the lens of constructivism with the following claim: Azerbaijan's construct of a foreign policy centered around maintaining independence of its national identity on the world stage enables Azerbaijan to form strong

alliances with Türkiye and Israel through the emphasis on not belonging to a single geopolitical bloc.

Constructivism argues that states can have multiple identities. The way I interpret this phenomenon in this paper is that a state's identity is multifaceted; it can house a variety of factors of influence, and can be portrayed through many perspectives. For Azerbaijan, an influential facet of its identity, the facet which particularly enables it to construct a reality of warm relations with Türkiye and Israel simultaneously, is seen through the lens of ethnicity, as being a Turkic state, first and foremost.

As discussed in the background section, Azerbaijan's emphasis on being a Turkic state as a part of its identity has manifested itself through its close relations with the Organization of Turkic States. An official government discourse from the webpage entitled "Relations between Azerbaijan and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS)" on the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official website states that, "The Republic of Azerbaijan has always paid special attention to its relations with the Organization of Turkish States" (n.d.). Furthermore, as discussed in the background section, I. Aliyev has spoken about the significance of OTS for Azerbaijan with the following words during the inauguration ceremony: "For us, the OTS is the main international organization, because this is our family. We have no other family. Our family is the Turkic world" (Aliyev, 2024, as cited in Enveroğlu, 2024).

To further corroborate Azerbaijan's connection to the Turkic ethnicity, we can turn to Azerbaijan's flag. The flag consists of three horizontal strips of color; from top to bottom, these colors are blue, red, and green. On the webpage entitled "National symbols of the Republic of Azerbaijan" on the official website of President of Azerbaijan Republic the following is stated:

The blue color of the National Flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan has the meaning of Turkic origin of the Azerbaijani people, red color reflects the desire to establish a modern society, and develop democracy, while the green color - belonging to the Islamic civilization. (n.d.)

The colors of Azerbaijan's flag are reflective of the multiple facets of the state's identity. Seeing the color blue placed first and top in the flag is testimony to Azerbaijan's particular importance for Turkic ethnicity. As for the green color which is at the bottom of the flag, it is a representation of the religious affiliations of the people, rather than that of the state; in other words, Azerbaijan is a secular state which does not use religious motifs in foreign policy, but at the same time provides all the necessary conditions for the people to pursue their religion.

For a state bent on not aligning itself with a single political bloc, within the context of its multi-vectoral policy, this alignment with the OTS and the Turkic world is notable; it reveals Azerbaijan's construction of its identity as a Turkic state and the state's determination to preserve its identity through its involvement with the OTS. This construction is seen in effect in shaping the state's relations with Türkiye and Israel simultaneously.

Certainly, the fact that Türkiye is a Turkic state as well as a founding member of the OTS makes Azerbaijan-Turkey relations warmer within the context of the former's emphasis on belonging to the Turkic world. The extraordinarily close relations of these two "one nation two states" countries seem even more probable when looking through the lens of ethnic kinship. Turkish President Erdogan corroborates the kinship of the two nations by stating Türkiye and Azerbaijan are "sister nations" (Erdogan, 2023, as cited in "Turkey's Erdogan praises," 2023).

Azerbaijan's construction of its identity as a Turkic state positively benefits its diplomatic relations with Israel as well. As discussed at the beginning of the first section, Israel's goal for finding allies in and around the Middle East to counter the powers of Iran and Türkiye, known as the New Periphery strategy, was one of the factors which led to the state's alliance with Azerbaijan (Özdaşlı, 2017, pp. 180-184). Through identifying as a Turkic state rather than a Muslim state, Azerbaijan is able to build an alliance with Israel by avoiding clashes based on religion.

Thus, we can see how Azerbaijan's construction of a Turkic identity, and the preservation of the independence of said identity, has enabled it to form warm diplomatic relations with both of its closest allies. Aside from establishing a kinship with Türkiye and meeting Israel within the context of its New Periphery Strategy, Azerbaijan's Turkic identity gives place to diplomatic relations with both of these disagreeing states.

The common goal Azerbaijan has for all the different facets of its identity is a determination to preserve its independence. This is seen in the state's determination not to become a proxy, in valuing economic independence, and in preserving its national sovereignty. The latter point has

been an area of discourse due to the threat to Azerbaijan's national sovereignty posed by the Karabakh conflict. According to Global Conflict Tracker, Armenia invaded around 20% of Azerbaijani land in 1994, an occupation which lasted until 2020 (“Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,” 2025). The occupation highlighted the threat to Azerbaijan's national sovereignty for Azerbaijan's leaders. Discourse produced regarding this conflict by Azerbaijani officials once again highlights the emphasis placed on the principle of independence, such as the following excerpt of I. Aliyev’s speech on the 2017 Republic Day:

Azerbaijan has made great strides in the foreign policy sphere. We will continue to defend our national interests in the international arena. Today in the world we are known as a country that is highly respected. The number of countries wishing to cooperate with us is growing. We have no problems with any country, except for Armenia, in the bilateral format. We have put forward a number of trilateral formats of cooperation. (Aliyev, 2017)

This fragment’s mention of defending national interest on the world stage highlights the importance of the independence of identity. The argument of not having any problems with any country, except Armenia, showcases how a state actor is portrayed as a threat or is fenced off from diplomatic relations when it poses a risk to harm Azerbaijan’s principle of independence. This is in line with the constructivist perspective on the effects of identities on how threats are formed.

Within the context of alliances with Türkiye and Israel, we can observe how defending national sovereignty to preserve the independence of its identity has affected Azerbaijan’s stance on the Palestine issue. As discussed above, even against its cordial relations with Israel, Azerbaijan has been in support of Palestine and vocally expressed support for the two-state solution. This supportive view towards Palestine hasn’t remained in words, but has been seen tangibly in international settings as well. This stance once again highlights Azerbaijan’s emphasis on national sovereignty for independence: it is a principle the state values for itself, but it also influences its perception of international conflicts. Azerbaijan is in support of Palestine because the former supports the latter’s national sovereignty and independence on the world stage. To corroborate this, we can turn to the UN Watch Database, where it is stated that since 2015 to the present (2025), Azerbaijan has voted 100% against Israel among all resolutions. These resolutions include “Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” and “The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination,” epitomizing Azerbaijan’s emphasis on independence and how it affects its support for the Palestine issue (“Azerbaijan,” 2025).

Now arises the question of how Azerbaijan can support Palestine openly and vocally on the international stage without creating a rift in its relations with Israel. Or, vice versa, how its relations with Israel do not harm its relations with Türkiye, which has currently ceased all diplomatic relations with Israel.

To answer this, we must address a crucial distinction in Azerbaijan's foreign policy that forms a unique example. When Azerbaijan's actions diverge from those of Türkiye or Israel, these actions do not stem from a desire to take sides or favour a political bloc over another, but rather through abiding by the set of principles it has constructed regarding its national identity. Azerbaijan does not support Palestine due to an agenda of being in line with a bloc or a group of states; it is a result of the state's emphasis on national sovereignty and independence of identity, seen not just towards itself but also reflected in international politics. Through this distinction, Azerbaijan is able to construct a foreign policy which enables the state to remain allies with contrasting countries, and voice opinions that diverge from those of said allies without repercussions: the state manages to make clear its objectivity and multi-vectoral stance in all relations, keeping the primary focus on the preservation of its national identity's independence. This way, even when going against its allies on certain issues, Azerbaijan is able to avoid conflict through the mutual understanding that its actions are not done with a desire to align with a political bloc or pick a certain side, but rather are natural consequences of following the state's central principle of preserving an independent national identity on the world stage. In sum, Azerbaijan can go against its allies because of the clear understanding it establishes that the act of disagreement does not stem from alignment with a political bloc, but rather from abiding by its own set of rules to protect the independence of its national identity.

Constructivism argues that the international system is dynamic and ever-changing. Through this lens, we are able to make sense of Azerbaijan's unique political portrait of managing to maintain such close alliances with such opposite and disagreeing states of Türkiye and Israel. Azerbaijan is able to create this state of alliances through constructing its own foreign policy that is centred around the preservation of its own independent national identity and its many facets. The clear understanding in the construct that Azerbaijan is not picking sides, but working

in favour of the central goal of preserving its identity, makes it so that the state can diverge in its actions from those of its allies without repercussions.

Conclusion

On the world stage, Azerbaijan forms a unique case study by maintaining close alliances with the disagreeing states of Türkiye and Israel simultaneously. This is an unorthodox stance because conflict seems inevitable with one side or another, especially in the context of the Palestine issue. Approaching Azerbaijan's foreign policy through the lens of constructivism aids us in comprehending the intriguing stance Azerbaijan maintains on the world stage to maintain its two close allies. Azerbaijan's multi-vectoral foreign policy enables the state to maintain an independent stance in international diplomacy. Though not aligning itself with one side over another, and by not becoming a proxy, Azerbaijan paves the way for its diplomatic relations to transcend geopolitical blocs.

Azerbaijan's alliance with Türkiye is deeply rooted in their shared kinship, reflected in the form of common history, values, and ethnicity. As for its alliance with Israel, although newer, the two countries maintain a singular diplomatic relationship based on mutual development. The same cannot be said for Türkiye and Israel, who have ceased diplomatic relations since 2024.

Azerbaijan manages to be such close allies with such disagreeing states through constructing a foreign policy system based on the preservation of its own national identity. As a constructivist analysis helps us show, Azerbaijan's emphasis on protecting the independence of its identity, including but not limited to national sovereignty and Turkic ethnicity, has enabled the state to construct a foreign policy which enables Azerbaijan's actions to diverge from those of its allies without facing repercussions. Since the understanding is that Azerbaijan's actions are not a way of picking sides on the world stage but rather a natural reflection of acting in accordance with its own national identity, Türkiye and Israel do not perceive Azerbaijan as a threat when it acts in disagreement with one.

The constructivist analysis of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in the context of its two disagreeing allies forms a unique case study, which may prove beneficial in furthering the research on the concept of identity in international relations and the transcendence of geopolitical blocs in

foreign policy. In the increasingly globalized twenty-first century, these topics may increase in relevance as we observe shifting patterns of global diplomacy.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my academic advisor and mentor, Dr. Midzain-Gobin. I am forever grateful for all your support, encouragement, and feedback.

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