

The implementation mechanism of military diplomacy (the republic of Azerbaijan as a case study)

Механізм реалізації військової дипломатії (на прикладі Азербайджанської Республіки)

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Received: April 3, 2024 | Revised: April 16, 2024 | Accepted: April 30, 2024

DOI: 10.33445/sds.2024.14.2.1

Purpose: is to study the relationship between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in formulating effective military diplomacy.

Method: comparative analysis, and synthesis.

Findings: Military capabilities and means have always been used in diplomacy. As a result, military potential plays an important role in supporting state diplomacy and creates conditions for ensuring the country's national interests. The formation of diplomatic strategy at the national level can be systematically implemented. In order to improve military diplomacy, a document on diplomatic policy (white paper) should be prepared. Currently, the Azerbaijani Army has a branch within the International Military Cooperation Department that coordinates the activities of military attachés, but this branch does not have the potential to carry out special tasks related to military diplomacy or prepare for long-term strategies. From this point of view, a Center for military diplomacy might be established at the base of that department, and one of the priority issues should be the formation of the potential to develop strategies that reflect the long-term perspectives of Azerbaijan's military diplomacy.

Theoretical implications: There are many different approaches and theoretical lenses with which to study international relations and to make sense of events, trends and processes. Although such established theoretical lenses as realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism and others exist, neoclassical realism has been chosen as the means to make sense of this case study.

Practical implications: Practitioners in the field of foreign relations will be able to understand the role of the military diplomacy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in ensuring national interests and they will be able to have a clear picture of the ways of its optimization and the factors influencing this role.

Value: the study examines the role of the military diplomacy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in ensuring national interests and presents a clear picture of the ways of its optimization and the factors influencing this role.

Paper type: theoretical.

Мета роботи: є дослідження взаємовідносин між Міністерством оборони та Міністерством закордонних справ у формуванні ефективної військової дипломатії.

Метод: порівняльний аналіз і синтез.

Результати дослідження: військовий потенціал відіграє важливу роль у забезпеченні державної дипломатії та створює умови для забезпечення національних інтересів країни. Формування дипломатичної стратегії на національному рівні може здійснюватися системно. Для вдосконалення військової дипломатії необхідно підготувати документ про дипломатичну політику (white paper). В даний час в азербайджанській армії є підрозділ Департаменту міжнародного військового співробітництва, який координує діяльність військових аташе, але цей підрозділ не має потенціалу для виконання спеціальних завдань, пов'язаних з військовою дипломатією, або підготовки до довгострокових стратегій. З цієї точки зору на базі цього відомства може бути створений Центр військової дипломатії, і одним із пріоритетних питань має стати формування потенціалу для розробки стратегій, що відображають довгострокові перспективи військової дипломатії Азербайджану.

Теоретична цінність дослідження: Існує багато різних підходів і теоретичних лінз, за допомогою яких можна вивчати міжнародні відносини та розуміти події, тенденції та процеси. Хоча існують такі усталені теоретичні погляди, як реалізм, лібералізм, конструктивізм, марксизм, фемінізм та інші, неокласичний реалізм був обраний як засіб для осмислення цього прикладу.

Практична цінність дослідження: Практики у сфері зовнішніх відносин зможуть зрозуміти роль військової дипломатії Азербайджанської Республіки в забезпеченні національних інтересів і зможуть мати чітке уявлення про шляхи її оптимізації та фактори, що впливають на цю роль.

Цінність дослідження: у дослідженні розглядається роль військової дипломатії Азербайджанської Республіки в забезпеченні національних інтересів і представлено чітке уявлення про шляхи її оптимізації та фактори, що впливають на цю роль.

Тип статті: теоретичний.

Key words: military diplomacy, national interest, soft power, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ключові слова: військова дипломатія, національні інтереси, м'яка сила, Міністерство оборони, Міністерство закордонних справ.

Introduction

Military diplomacy is becoming more and more important in the foreign and security policies of modern states. Each state has different tools at its disposal, and they try to shape military diplomacy in their own way, taking into account the characteristics of their national interests and the environments in which they operate (Drab, 2022). The question of which countries have stronger military diplomacy can be answered simply based on observations (without conducting any in-depth scientific research) that countries such as the United States, China, the United Kingdom, France, Türkiye, Germany, India, and Pakistan are considered to be more successful models of the recent decades. Having compared the strength of the armies of these countries, it can be seen that all of these countries have strong armies. Then the thesis "strong army, strong military diplomacy" appears here. However, this thesis is not always true. For example, Iran is a country with a strong army, but its military diplomacy is not strong. Military diplomacy of Russia, which has one of the strongest armies, cannot be considered as strong as it should be. On the contrary, Singapore is a country with a very small army, but its military diplomacy is considered pretty strong. Consequently, military diplomacy is a complex matter and requires the involvement of many factors. From this point of view, the activity of institutions that ensure the successful implementation of military diplomacy is also of special importance. It is not so simple to answer the question of what these institutions are. We will try to clarify this point in this research. In order to obtain a more consistent result, a number of research studies have been analyzed and theses reflected in those research studies have been compared against the background of the geopolitical realities of the region where the Republic of Azerbaijan is located. The analysis of the scientific literature shows that the research works written in this context are a minority. There is no solid scientific work on the study of countries with strong military diplomacy, such as Sweden and Finland. In this research, the military diplomacy of the countries has been studied whose geostrategic position and defense resources are almost at the same level as Azerbaijan. For example, Davor Ćutić discusses new approaches to military diplomacy and emphasizes its importance in creating a secure environment, presents changes in the field of military diplomacy on the example of Croatia, as well as new trends in international defense policy (Ćutić, 2022). The "Military Diplomacy Plan" prepared by the Spanish Ministry of Defense reflects the scope, principles, goals and all possible means of military diplomacy (Defence Diplomacy Plan 2012). Carvalho (2016) examines some elements of military diplomacy in the case of Brazil and justifies its place in foreign policy. Sudarsono et al. (2018) examines the role of military diplomacy in achieving Indonesia's national interests and ways to optimize it, as well as the factors influencing it. Sabina Olszyk (2022) justifies the role of think tanks in the successful implementation of military diplomacy in the example of Poland. Valery Ratchev (2005) presents the experience of Bulgaria in the implementation of activities within the concept of military diplomacy. Tomáš Szunyog and Adéla Vondrovicová's (2017) research assesses the current legal basis of Czech military diplomacy in defense of national security and interests, and proposes solutions that contribute to better coordination and effectiveness of activities.

Against the background of the abovementioned facts, the main goal of the presented article is to study the relationship between Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in formulating effective military diplomacy. The Republic of Azerbaijan in broader regional context has been chosen as a case study. To achieve this goal, the following tasks have been defined: 1) to study the role of the military diplomacy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in ensuring national interests and the ways of its optimization; 2) to examine the factors influencing this role. There are many different approaches and theoretical lenses with which to study international relations and to make sense of events, trends and processes. Although such established theoretical lenses as realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism and others exist, neoclassical realism has been chosen as the

means to make sense of this case study. Qualitative research methods such as comparative analysis, and synthesis have been used in the preparation of the article.

Results

Practicing diplomacy of war and peace. Historical perspective

Since the second half of the 1980s was a period of significant changes in world politics, all the realities undoubtedly have dramatically changed the environment in which diplomatic dialogue takes place over the last decades, making it necessary to reconsider the role of diplomacy in modern international relations. In fact, all this suggests that, even if it is difficult to predict future events, the methods and role of diplomacy in global governance should be regularly reviewed (Sadiyev & Iskandarov, 2018).

Following the end of the Cold War, the traditionalist, widening, and critical schools of thought engaged in a debate about the expanding and widening security agenda that differed from the conventional focus on military-based threats. Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde proposed a constructivist method for security analysis as a way to restrict the application of security and create some potential for its reintegration in response to traditionalists' claims that the widening of the concept was rendering the issue incoherent. This means that security is not understood as the subject matter of a certain sector, but rather as a style of politics that defines itself in terms of risks and demands quick action to counter those threats. In order to "allow a scholar to study" "real-world" securitizations, some have argued for an even broader concept and application of security that goes beyond the "confines" of the Copenhagen School. One reason for this is that most social (and/or political) processes are not fully explained by a single speech act, rather, a series of articulations work together to create the perception and comprehension of danger (Sadiyev, et al., 2021).

Due to its strategic and geopolitical significance, the South Caucasus has long been in the forefront of major world powers' foreign policy. (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2020). After the fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of newly independent states, the region – which was previously seen as being on the fringe of the world agenda – became far more significant to both its neighbors and powerful non-regional actors (Iskandarov, 2019). The South Caucasus is a multifaceted geopolitical area that plays a key role in the transportation of Caspian gas and oil today. However, the fall of the Soviet Union has left the region with unresolved disputes as well as sociopolitical and economic issues. The geopolitical trajectories of the three South Caucasus countries have diverged; Georgia appears to be displaying a pro-NATO stance, while Azerbaijan has pursued a multivector policy with respect to global powers. Armenia is a member of the CSTO (Iskandarov et al., 2019). Key factors in comprehending the current state of affairs in the region include the absence of NATO, Russia's growing assertiveness in the area, and the decades-long confrontation that resulted in the lack of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It proves that Russia and the West view the South Caucasus as a complicated playground (Nasirov et al., 2017).

Events in the South Caucasus are significantly shaped by external players (nations or organizations); frequently, these actors obstruct the goals of other players rather than achieving their own policy goals. It would be necessary to go into further details about every player in the area.

The United States considers the region as a part of Europe and wants to see the South Caucasus as a Western-oriented region, since the latter is essential to Europe's energy security. Therefore, the United States has an interest in the region's stability and the resolution of the conflicts.

The EU hopes to create stronger connections and advance stability and development in the region through the Eastern Partnership (EaP) program. The West places a great deal of importance on the South Caucasus region as a reliable transit route avoiding Russian and Iranian territories due to the growing need for diversification and cooperation in energy transit. Brussels' influence in the South Caucasus is still limited, though. Russia believes that the national security of Russia is directly

threatened by the West. The European Union is expanding politically even though it lacks any organization that even remotely resembles a common military force. Claiming the post-Soviet space in its principal foreign policy documents, Russia continues to be a significant actor in the region. Notwithstanding its limited influence, Russia is heavily involved in the South Caucasus, where it has been reinforcing its position and holding significant leverage. Moscow has influence over the area on a political, domestic, military-strategic, and economic level.

Iran, on the other hand, supports the "3+3" model, which takes into account the engagement of just three nations: Iran, Russia, and Türkiye. Iran opposes the involvement of non-regional powers in the processes in the South Caucasus. It is unclear, meanwhile, what Iran's future involvement in the South Caucasus will be. Given that it will take several years to develop energy infrastructure, even if it is decided upon and constructed, it appears unlikely that Tehran will play a significant role very soon.

As a bridge between the Soviet successor states in the region and the West, Türkiye, a steadfast ally and the cornerstone of NATO in Central Asia and the Caucasus during the Cold War, continues to be a vital ally. The majority of regional cooperation projects are spearheaded by Türkiye, with Azerbaijan's assistance. A significant accomplishment of this cooperation has been the start of key projects including the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipelines, as well as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway. Azerbaijan's new Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project was created after the BTC major export pipeline was completed. Transporting natural gas from the Shah Deniz-2 to the west is one of the key functions of the SGC, involving the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and its successor, the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). Russia's larger capacity to thwart Türkiye's efforts if they were not seen as mutually beneficial, and Türkiye's limited capacity to project itself in the South Caucasus, were highlighted by the largely unsuccessful attempts to improve relations with Armenia (Sadiyev & Iskandarov, 2018; Iskandarov & Gojaye, 2023).

There is a chance for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan after thirty years of hostility, which is essential for the economy and security of the area. Still, there are international players who seek to obstruct and undermine it. For instance, the Zangezur corridor, which offers greater economic benefits to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, is one of the most often discussed subjects following the Second Karabakh War. The establishment of the Zangezur Corridor will create opportunities for all of the region's nations, fostering greater mutual confidence and regional collaboration. A new "artery" of the transport network connecting Europe and Asia will be created with the development of the Zangezur corridor, which will eventually improve commercial and economic ties between the West and East as well as between the nations in the area. One of the important initiatives that has a genuine chance of helping to bring about enduring peace and put an end to decades-long hostility is the Zangezur Corridor (Gawliczek & Iskandarov, 2023).

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

One of the most significant findings is that the situation in the South Caucasus is a component of the broader geopolitical and geoeconomic landscape. Even if the South Caucasus is seen as a bit of a side issue, this could alter based on developments and the geopolitical perspective on rivalry and confrontation between Russia and the West. Because of this, the situation in the area has the potential to be extremely volatile because what happens there does not always originate in the South Caucasus. Some have a different perspective on the circumstances (Iskandarov et al.,

2019). In the next paragraphs we will try to delineate how the geopolitical location affects the process of shaping diplomacy, more precisely military diplomacy against the backdrop of power competition.

The role and place of the Armed Forces in a foreign policy strategy

Although diplomacy is generally defined as the conduct of international relations through negotiation and dialogue or any other means that can promote peaceful relations between states, it is difficult to deny that threatening and coercion play an important role in international relations. Despite the relative decline in the role of military power in world politics, there is no compelling evidence that coercion will disappear. In this regard, the number of research studies dedicated to the study of "coercive diplomacy" is increasing. Coercive diplomacy can be presented as a defensive strategy used against an adversary's attempts to change the status quo. Coercive diplomacy should be distinguished from offensive strategies. The latter uses threats aggressively against target states. Coercive diplomacy is also quite distinct from the strategy of deterrence (taking preventive measures to deter an adversary from aggressive action). It was certainly a particularly important and controversial type of diplomacy during the Cold War, but it has largely lost its relevance today. According to the proponents of coercive diplomacy, three main types of coercive strategy can be used when peaceful options such as "negotiated settlement" fail. First, it simply tries to deter the rival country from enmity, secondly, eliminates the consequences of the event that has already happened, and thirdly, and undoubtedly the most difficult, it tries to neutralize the rival country by promoting changes in its internal political system. Undoubtedly, since coercive diplomacy is considered a violation of modern international law, its diplomatic nature can be questioned. However, it is difficult to deny the relevance of these experiences for contemporary international relations. In recent years, those who argue that diplomacy plays a more active role in peacebuilding, human development and global environmental sustainability have prevailed.

Diplomacy has always played an important role in ensuring national interests. In its implementation, the state uses all its national resources, including military power, economy, politics, intelligence and any other available resources. The use of the Armed Forces as a tool in diplomacy is inevitable. The general consensus is that negotiation is a key component of diplomacy. So, winning the negotiations can be presented as a victory in diplomacy. Having a stronger position to gain leverage over the other side during negotiations is an important requirement, and in this respect, military power cannot be separated from state diplomacy. Thus, the potential of the Armed Forces plays an important role in increasing the country's maneuverability and reputation in the international arena. Whether these issues are in the context of international, bilateral or multilateral cooperation, in all cases the direct or indirect participation of the Armed Forces is necessary, and military or non-military actors are involved in its implementation. The analysis of scientific literature shows that there are also researchers who deny the role of military diplomacy in securing national interests, and they claim that the success of military diplomacy is limited to defense issues.

One of the most debatable issues is the application of the structure and resources of the Armed Forces as a foreign policy tool in the maintenance and promotion of peacetime security. The very wrong approach is that military diplomacy is presented as the only duty of the Armed Forces. Over the past decades, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been involved in very important operations (mainly the battles of April 2016, the Second Karabakh War in 2020, counterinsurgency operations in 2023), and at the same time, have gained remarkable experience in ensuring international security (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq). These experiences form the basis of the modern configuration of the defense system of the Republic of Azerbaijan and are very important not only in terms of improving doctrines, but also in terms of understanding the role of the Armed Forces in the national context and in the international arena. Factors affecting the role of military diplomacy include the potential and capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Republic of

Azerbaijan, cooperation between institutions and the formulation of a diplomacy strategy, but military diplomacy is not only related to the activities of the Armed Forces, it is necessary to approach the problem in a wider context, which in turn highlights the relevance of the cooperation between the Armed Forces and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this regard, the following activities are of particular importance:

- establishment of relations between high-level military and civilian security experts;
- training of civilian and military personnel for foreign missions;
- providing advice on defense management and military-technical fields;
- communication with military personnel and units of friendly countries, their exchange and organization of the visits of military ships;
- mutual appointment of experts on defense issues of friendly countries to certain positions in the Ministry of Defense or military units;
- use of mobile training teams;
- organization of bilateral or multilateral military exercises (Carvalho, 2016);
- establishment of bilateral and multilateral relations between high-level military officials;
- appointment of military attachés;
- signing bilateral cooperation agreements in the field of defense;
- providing expert advice on democratic control of the Armed Forces, defense management and military technical fields;
- providing assistance with materials and equipment (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022).

Having scrutinized the list, it can be seen that most of these activities are carried out by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan. As a result, the potential of the Ministry of Defense is taken as a basis in the study, and the Azerbaijani Army is presented as the leading institution that implements military diplomacy. However, it should be taken into account that the resources of the Ministry of Defense are also limited, so they should be used with maximum economy in order to implement the activities listed above, and the potential should be formed for the implementation of some activities. In this sense, there are three important aspects of the application of the Azerbaijani Army in increasing the effectiveness of military diplomacy.

The first is Azerbaijan's contribution to NATO and UN operations. Azerbaijan, which is considered a reliable partner in ensuring international peace and security, is an active participant in maintaining and restoring peace. Since 1999, more than 3,000 servicemen of the Azerbaijani Army have participated in peacekeeping operations in various regions (KFOR in 1999-2008, ISAF in 2002-2015, MNF-I in 2003-2008, NATO's RSM in 2015-2021). Since 2019, the Azerbaijani Army has been contributing to the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan with two military observers (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022).

The second is the participation of representatives of the Azerbaijani Army in the international arena, either bilaterally or multilaterally. Currently, the military attaché apparatus of the Republic of Azerbaijan operates in more than 20 foreign countries, the National military representation in the OSCE, NATO HQ and SHAPE. In addition, since 2002, within the framework of NATO's PSP concept, the officers of the Azerbaijani Army have been serving in NATO's tactical, operational and strategic headquarters. By using this mechanism, the Republic of Azerbaijan has sent more than 40 military personnel to various NATO headquarters and thus become one of the leading countries among the CIS countries. At present, six servicemen of the Azerbaijani Army serve in different NATO headquarters (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022).

The third aspect involves active international cooperation. In this regard, the Republic of Azerbaijan has a legal basis with 38 foreign countries. As a result, Azerbaijan gained the opportunity to influence not only the processes taking place in the region, but also the processes taking place in

the international arena. There is no doubt that the Ministry of Defense is active in the implementation of a series of measures in this field jointly or individually. This, as an important means of active military diplomacy, enables the prediction of the defense perspective of Azerbaijan as a whole and contributes to the formation of regional stability. The activity of Azerbaijan's military attachés in foreign countries strengthens this aspect of military diplomacy and underpins its role in implementing "soft power" and contributing to stability and mutual trust between countries (de Carvalho, 2016). "Soft power" is understood as "the ability to influence others in order to achieve desired results without using force or money". A nation's resources in terms of culture, values, and policies form the basis of its "soft power" (Nye, 2008). As it can be seen, all three aspects of the application of the Azerbaijani Army in increasing the effectiveness of military diplomacy are inextricably linked and cannot yield any consistent results separately.

Thus, military diplomacy understood as a means of exercising "soft power" is a valuable mechanism used to strengthen a country's position globally through the peaceful use of defense institutions. The future prospects of incorporating this mechanism into the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and systematically coordinating it are pretty high.

The implementation mechanism of military diplomacy. Challenges and prospects

Every country has its own national interests in international relations. Often, the national interests of one country intersect and even collide with the interests of other countries. This situation may lead the countries to tension and sometimes conflict. The state uses diplomatic means to secure its national interests. Consequently, diplomacy is the ability to secure national interests without creating hostility. Military diplomacy, on the other hand, is the process of securing national interests by using military capabilities as a tool or resource, not to incite hostility. Military diplomacy can generally be understood as a series of activities carried out by representatives of the Ministry of Defense or other government agencies in the direction of ensuring national interests in the field of security and defense. Undoubtedly, the use of negotiations and other diplomatic means is considered a priority here. The mechanism of implementation of the abovementioned series of activities differs from country to country. In some countries, this is a white paper of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In some countries, it is implemented on the basis of a mission paper of the Embassy, in some countries, on the basis of the National Security Concept and Military Doctrine, and in some countries, it is simply based on the Military Diplomacy plan. Regardless of the form of the document, the implementation goals of military diplomacy should be clearly stated, the efforts of the Armed Forces/Ministry of Defense should be prioritized taking into account political and geographical criteria based on coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the financial and human resources of the Armed Forces/Ministry of Defense should be identified based on the national interests of the country and all possible means of military diplomacy.

Today, the use of the military in matters of public diplomacy is no longer considered purely violent, as many countries have turned the role of military into a diplomatic tool to achieve their goals, excluding the elements of violence or hostility. Many countries are already demonstrating that the use of the military is not limited to defense and security issues. Sudarsono et al. presents an interesting example of the use of the military in diplomatic relations in matters not directly related to security. Thus, China, which tried to win the tender for the construction of airports and roads in Tanzania, used its military capabilities as a diplomatic tool by providing military aid to the Tanzanian Army and contributing to the construction of thousands of houses for Tanzanian soldiers. By using such a method, China gained the favor of the Tanzanian government and eventually won the tender (Sudarsono, 2018). For the time being the Chinese Armed Forces has a significant role in shaping and implementing China's foreign policy. Apart from the abovementioned fact, China began to use arms sales decades ago to promote military diplomacy and further its foreign policy interests (Sachar, 2004). In pursuit of global power status Russia has also found success by providing security

solutions to fragile states and weak regimes in Africa without political strings attached, thus making Russia a preferred security partner (Eguegu, 2022). Military hardware and technology transfer (especially, the S-400 air defence missile system) is also a crucial factor in shaping the military diplomacy of Russia and (Arduino & Shuja, 2021).

The analysis of the law "On Armed Forces" shows that the involvement of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan in state diplomacy is still limited to diplomacy directly related to national interests in the field of defense and security. The participation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the diplomacy of other fields, especially in economic and political processes, is not yet considered relevant enough.

There are certainly valid reasons why the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan are less involved in the country's general diplomacy, except for defense and security issues. Firstly, against the background of the aggression policy of the Republic of Armenia against Azerbaijan, the capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan have not been mobilized on a large scale for the general diplomacy of the country. Second, there is no systematic cooperation format between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the implementation of military diplomacy; Thirdly, the potential of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan is underestimated in the diplomatic maneuvers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

All of the instruments and tactics used in military diplomacy address different facets of collaboration, including politics, business, culture, defense, and diplomacy. In order to accomplish the nation's foreign policy objectives, military diplomacy is employed as a tool. Diplomatic endeavors at the international, regional, and bilateral levels are crucial to military diplomacy. The most significant of these is bilateral diplomacy. The success of the country's military diplomacy is achieved as a result of cooperation between the diplomacy, defense and development components. From this point of view, military diplomacy is of particular importance in increasing the reputation of a country in the international arena, increasing its defense capabilities, and developing the Defense Industry. Azerbaijan-Georgia-Türkiye cooperation format can be shown as the best example of this. This format is an important initiative in terms of discussion of regional issues, strengthening of cooperation relations and implementation of joint projects. In recent years, the cooperation relations formed between the military educational institutions of all three countries, as well as trainings and sports competitions involving military personnel and representatives of relevant state institutions, are also very important in terms of exchange of experience between the armies. In addition, the signing of the "Shusha Declaration on alliance relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Türkiye" on June 15, 2021 is considered one of the most significant events in the 30-year history of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. First of all, it should be noted that although the provisions of the aforementioned declaration cover many aspects of the national security of the Republic of Azerbaijan, they are of particular importance in neutralizing or balancing external military and political threats stated in the Military Doctrine (Piriyev et al., 2022). At present, there are quite favorable conditions and potential for the creation of the Azerbaijan- Türkiye-Central Asia military cooperation format, and in the future, the possibility of expanding this format to Türkiye-South Caucasus-Central Asia is pretty high.

The strategy for effective implementation of military diplomacy

Considering that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the central executive authority that implements the efforts of the Republic of Azerbaijan to ensure international peace and security through diplomatic means, cooperation and coordination with various relevant institutions, especially with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the leading sector of state diplomacy, is very important in the implementation of military diplomacy. The activities of the Ministry of Defense in the international field should be in accordance with the general framework of the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and have to be limited to it, and should be implemented on the basis of

the principle of uniform foreign activity of the state in agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This, in turn, determines the format of cooperation between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

So far, normal cooperation relations have been formed between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are military attachés in vast majority of the embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan operating in foreign countries. The aspects used in this cooperation format could be regional diplomacy, international security diplomacy, economic diplomacy, humanitarian diplomacy, technical cooperation, etc. However, the activities of other institutions, including the State Border Service, are also important in the implementation of military diplomacy. In particular, after the liberation of the occupied lands, especially during disputes regarding demarcation and delimitation, the activities of the State Border Service are closely linked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This also reflects the regional diplomacy aspect of cooperation.

Military capacity or military power is one of the main factors determining the successful implementation of military diplomacy. It is well known that diplomacy generally aims to change or influence the policy of a country either through "hard" or "soft" power. Very serious work is being done to optimize the potential of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which proved their strength both in the Second Karabakh War and in counterinsurgency operations. Different aspects of the Second Karabakh War, including military diplomacy have been delineated in different academic papers (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021a). Increasing the effectiveness of military diplomacy should also be an element of these complex works. Although the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan have a sufficiently prepared staff in terms of the ability to perform the diplomatic mission, it must be admitted that the work done in terms of the preparation of a general and specific strategy is not satisfactory.

A diplomatic mission is a state institution located outside national borders and tasked with developing relations with other countries in the political, economic, social, cultural and defense sectors. These duties and powers are carried out by diplomatic corps, i.e. ambassadors, business lawyers and military attachés. A military attache is a diplomatic officer assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their job is to provide military, defense and security advice to the ambassador. The military attaché makes full use of all possible potential opportunities while performing his duties. In this regard, the mission of the Military Attaché and the Ambassador should be carried out simultaneously, the preparation of mission papers by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Armed Forces should be carried out in a coordinated manner. A mission paper is a guide for conducting diplomacy in a country that includes priority objectives and strategies to be used to achieve diplomatic goals.

The military capabilities are one of the main factors determining the successful implementation of military diplomacy. Military personnel with good potential and ability are very likely to succeed in their diplomatic mission. As it was stated, diplomacy generally aims to change or at least influence the policy of a country, either through "hard" or "soft" power. In this context, strong bargaining power becomes the guarantee of a successful transaction. The negotiating position of a diplomatic tool, such as the military, is based on its capabilities (Sudarsono, 2018).

In any matter, the international ranking of the Armed Forces reflected in popular sources such as "Global Firepower", "CIA Handbook", "Armed Forces.eu" is of great importance. From this point of view, the rating achieved by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the last couple years is considered quite commendable. The personnel of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan have a high level of cooperation with the military personnel of a number of countries through joint training, education and operations. Azerbaijan, which is considered a reliable partner in ensuring international peace and security, is an active participant in maintaining and restoring peace as it was highlighted in previous paragraph (Iskandarov & Sadiyev, 2022).

However, there is a need to optimize the implementation of military diplomacy in

Azerbaijan. In order to successfully carry out the diplomatic mission, the Armed Forces must have a certain strategy, and its personnel must have the necessary knowledge and skills. Although there is an existing mechanism in terms of personnel training, it is also a fact that it needs to be improved. Knowledge of a foreign language is shown as the biggest obstacle in the performance of diplomatic tasks. However, the analysis shows that the absolute majority of the military attachés of the two countries with the strongest military diplomacy in the world (the United States and the United Kingdom) know only their mother tongue, namely, English. In this regard, a very commendable step has been taken in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Thus, in 2015, a Foreign Language Center was established under the Azerbaijani Army (currently at the National Defense University). Dozens of military personnel receive foreign language education at various levels in this center every year. In addition, our military personnel are sent to various foreign countries to study in the framework of a number of programs.

In order to implement military diplomacy more effectively, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan should formulate a more comprehensive strategy. Diplomatic activities are continuously carried out by the Azerbaijani Army, which is considered the leading force of military diplomacy, but a comprehensive diplomatic strategy that the attaché apparatuses can use as a reference has not been formed. Diplomatic efforts carried out by each attaché are still carried out individually without a clear pre-defined strategy, in short there is no comprehensive approach. In this regard, the strengthening of military diplomacy should be included in state programs as one of the priority goals.

Having considered that one of the functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the implementation of foreign relations and foreign policy, communication and coordination with various relevant institutions, especially with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the leading sector of state diplomacy, is necessary in the implementation of military diplomacy. At present, the appropriate relationship has been established between the Azerbaijani Army and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but this cannot be considered satisfactory in the political-strategic context. This can be seen from the level of participation of representatives of the Azerbaijani Army in the adoption of important decisions related to foreign policy. It is possible to see that the coordination between the Azerbaijani Army and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not satisfactory in terms of the preparation of the diplomatic strategy. Although cooperation between representatives of both institutions is good at the technical level, this cooperation at the higher level is limited. The main reason why cooperation between the Azerbaijani Army and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the formulation of diplomatic strategy does not give the desired results is the lack of a strategic document (white paper) on diplomatic policies that can be referred to at the national level. Without such a document, they can only cooperate on day-to-day coordination. The document on diplomatic policy (white paper) should be kept in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as it is the main reference document for the formulation of diplomatic strategy by the government agencies responsible for diplomatic affairs.

One of the means of implementing military diplomacy is the appointment of the Military Attaché as the spokesman for the national defense policy. In addition to fulfilling his main duties, the military attaché also plays an important role in ensuring defense interests and is able to develop bilateral relations by improving the quality of relations and cooperation in the field of defense. However, it should be noted that while performing diplomatic duties, military attachés are part of the diplomatic mission led by the Ambassadors. As part of the diplomatic mission, it is appropriate for the Military Attaché to carry out his mission in accordance with the diplomatic mission formulated by the ambassador as head of mission. Improper or lack of coordination between the missions carried out by the Ambassador and the Military Attaché undoubtedly has a negative impact on the efforts of diplomatic missions to achieve national interests. As explained in the article, the main reason for inconsistency and sometimes even conflict between the mission of the Military Attaché and the Ambassador is the lack of coordination between the two in drafting the mission

paper. As the head of the diplomatic mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan abroad, it is important that the ambassador and the diplomatic components, including the Military attaché under their leadership, have a common vision in fulfilling the diplomatic task. The existence of a common vision facilitates synergy between the diplomatic components of different institutions, which leads to the achievement of national interests. However, against the backdrop of the capacity of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, their success in the field of military diplomacy cannot be considered ideal. As in many matters, the role of financial support in this case is undeniable, but it is not the main factor. The financial capacity of the Armed Forces can be leveraged in the implementation of successful military diplomacy. This can be clearly seen in the example of military diplomacy adopted by the US Army. The US Army successfully applies the military assistance method to military diplomacy, spending billions of dollars annually to provide military assistance to dozens of countries around the world, such an approach undoubtedly strengthens the influence of the United States on the target country. Azerbaijan certainly cannot follow the example of the USA in strengthening the position of its army through military aid, because the country's military budget does not allow it. However, the military budget is not the main factor in this matter. For example, Qatar is one of the richest countries in the world and has a fairly high military budget, but it cannot be said that it has strong military diplomacy. Consequently, military aid and a high military budget are not the only ways to strengthen military diplomacy. Military assistance is not limited to financial or military support, but joint exercises, training courses, and participation in operations are tools that contribute to successful military diplomacy. Examples of small countries with strong military diplomacy include Israel, South Korea, Switzerland, Singapore, Sweden, Finland, Austria, and South Africa. Therefore, in addition to the military budget, the formation of military diplomacy is influenced by a number of factors, including the geographical location of the country, the number of personnel of the Armed Forces, the military system (professional or conscript), the military education system, the morale of its soldiers, the ability to produce weapons, and dependence on imported equipment (Asemani, 2020).

It should be taken into account that until late 2020, the absolute majority of the Azerbaijani Army was stationed on the former so-called "front line". After 2020, the Border Security Service took over control of the Azerbaijan-Armenia border. Between 2021-2023, as the remnants of the Armenian army and separatist militants remained in the Karabakh territory, the Azerbaijani Army focused its attention on this area. Finally, in September 2023, with the successful counterinsurgency operations, Azerbaijani Armed Forces neutralized all the militants and eliminated the current threat. It should be recognized that, the Azerbaijani Army is an experienced army that has restored the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and is able to contribute to the global security system. With this, the Azerbaijani Army can allocate a certain part of its resources to the strengthening of military diplomacy.

Conclusion

Diplomacy has always been the first and foremost choice in achieving state interests. In its implementation, the state uses all possible resources, including military, economic, political, intelligence, etc. Military capabilities and means have always been used in diplomacy. As a result, military potential plays an important role in supporting state diplomacy and creates conditions for ensuring the country's national interests. For this, first of all, a military diplomacy strategy should be adopted, standard operating procedures (SOP) should be prepared for the formation of a diplomatic strategy in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to coordinate military diplomacy issues. It is appropriate to sign a Joint Agreement between the institutions to implement coordination in the formulation of diplomatic strategy. Thus, the formation of diplomatic strategy at the national level can be systematically implemented. In order to improve military diplomacy, a

document on diplomatic policy (white paper) should be prepared. Currently, the Azerbaijani Army has a branch within the International Military Cooperation Department that coordinates the activities of military attachés, but this branch does not have the potential to carry out special tasks related to military diplomacy or prepare for long-term strategies. From this point of view, a Center for military diplomacy might be established at the base of that department, and one of the priority issues should be the formation of the potential to develop strategies that reflect the long-term perspectives of Azerbaijan's military diplomacy.

Funding

This study received no specific financial support.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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