

AZERBAIJAN-IRAN RELATIONS (1918-1920)

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Abstract

This article was devoted to the theme of "Azerbaijan-Iran relations (1918-1920 years). So, after declaring of the independence on May 28, 1918, Azerbaijan proclaimed the establishment of friendly and fraternal relations with neighboring states and also the recognition of sovereignty in the international community as main aims. In the article the Azerbaijan-Iran relations are divided into three parts and each period is analyzed separately. In initial stage, the first attempts of Azerbaijan representatives towards friendly relations with Iran resulted in failure. Although the appeal was sent to the Iranian Consulate for the recognition of Azerbaijan's independence in Istanbul in July 1918, the Iranian Consul rejected this appeal, even pretended territorial claims against Azerbaijan in the next meetings. Of course, there were several factors that caused to hesitant stance of Iran toward Azerbaijan. In the second stage of relationship some improvements have been achieved and mutual negotiations have begun to be implemented between two countries. With the sending of special delegation led by Ismail khan Ziyadkhanli and Adil khan Ziyadkhanli to Iran by Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs the first diplomatic relations were established. Continuation of negotiations was held in Paris Peace Conference. As a result, Azerbaijan-Iran joint commission was created in Paris and the four-point treaty was signed. Finally, since the beginning of 1920, relationship reached its peak. Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a special diplomatic delegation led by Sayyid Ziyaeddin Tabatabai to Azerbaijan. The negotiations which lasted for a long time, ended successfully and Iran recognized the independence of Azerbaijan de-jure on March 20, 1920. During the short period of time from the recognition of Azerbaijan sovereignty until the overthrow of independence on April 28, 1920, 6 treaties on trade, telegraph, customs, transit and other issues were signed between Azerbaijan and Iran. In the article the establishment of the mutual political and economic relations, the hesitant attitude of Iran towards Azerbaijan independence, positive developments in relations and the factors that lead to it, different position of other states, especially Russia and England to the recognition of Azerbaijan independence by Iran are investigated and analyzed.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Iran, relation, establishment, independence, contract

1. Introduction

As the result of February revolution of 1917 in Russia, the monarchy was overthrown; Russia signed Brest-Litovsk treaty and left the war. The overthrow of monarchy caused the increasing trends of independence and the rise of national awakening movement in tsar colonies, especially Azerbaijan. Thus, Azerbaijan, Georgian and Armenian representatives proclaimed the creation of Sejm of the South Caucasus in the meeting which held in Tbilisi on February 14, 1918. In this time, M. A. Rasulzadeh, the leader of Musavat party, which was founded in 1911, was appointed the head to the fraction of Azerbaijan representatives consisting of 44 persons. The members of the Sejm established the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic in order to combine the South Caucasus on April 22, 1918. The capital of Republic was Tbilisi. However, the federation was not existed long time, after a while, according to the territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan and Georgia, the members of the Sejm which realized the impossibility of combining of Transcaucasia as unit state, began to leave the federation. First of all, Georgian deputies left the Sejm on 26 May, 1918 and thus the Transcaucasian Federation collapsed. After a day, Azerbaijani deputies created the national Council of Azerbaijan in Tbilisi and the National Council accepted the Declaration of Independence consisting of 6 points on May 28 and declared the establishment of Azerbaijan state. According to the principle in the third paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, the members of government informed that, Azerbaijan had enough power to establish the friendly relations with all nations, especially neighboring nations and states. Azerbaijan government began to increase their efforts in this direction. On 30 May, Fatali khan Khoyski informed the establishment of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to all nations of the world through radiotelegraphic. The main two directions showed itself in the foreign policy of ADR.

1. The creation of friendly relations with neighboring states, countries and multilateral political, economic and cultural cooperation.
2. Recognition in the international arena and adoption of independence by the countries of the world. (Nəşibli N. 2011)

In order to strengthen the newly formed state from the political, economical and military point of view, the establishment of friendly relationship with both the countries of region and world, and expansion of cooperation in various field, was one of the most important issues. For this purpose, Azerbaijan government determined 4 main principles of foreign policy strategy.

1. To live in peacefully and neighborly conditions and creation of comprehensive relationship.
2. The establishment of normal diplomatic relations with the independent republics and governments, which were founded in Russia and Ukraine.
3. The recognition of Azerbaijan's independence by European countries and creation of formal diplomatic relations.
4. The establishment of political, economic and cultural relations with neighboring states, Iran and Turkey. (Həsənli C. 2009)

2. The initial attempts for the establishment of relations

2.1. The first diplomatic steps

Azerbaijan-Iran relations during 1918-1920 years are divided into 3 parts.

1. The first stage covered from the declaration of Azerbaijan's independence on May 28, 1918, to the spring of 1919.
2. The second stage continued from the spring of 1919 to the end of the same year.
3. The third stage proceeded from the January of 1920 to the collapse of ADR on April 28, 1920.

In the first stage Azerbaijan took the first diplomatic steps for the establishment of friendly relations with Iran. The initial attempts for the creation of relations were done in Istanbul. Thus, treaty about friendship and brotherhood was concluded between Azerbaijan and Ottoman Empire on June 4, 1918, Turkey declared his recognition of Azerbaijan independence and for this purpose embassy of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in Turkey was opened. It is believed to be the first diplomatic treaty that Azerbaijan government concluded with foreign countries. Meantime, one of the members of Azerbaijani delegation in Turkey, Muhammedhasan bekh sent special declaration to the Iranian Consulate in Istanbul and notified the creation of an independent Azerbaijan Republic and the desire of this republic to establish friendly relations with neighboring states and especially Iran. But the Iranian Consulate gave back the declaration, even notified no recognition of state named Azerbaijan and claimed being of Iran's ingredient of Azerbaijan in the sheet that was added to the declaration. Iran's this position didn't discourage the Azerbaijani representatives; on the contrary the next attempts were taken initiatives for the intensification of relations.

2.2. Reasons which prevents the establishment of relations

There were several reasons averted Iran to establish relationship with ADR. The first of them was the naming of newly formed state specially Azerbaijan. Iran reserved the establishment of a new independent Turkic state in adjacent area. Because as the Gulistan(1813) and Turkmenchay(1828) agreements which was concluded between Russia and Iran, Azerbaijan's territory was divided into two parts: The North Azerbaijan and the South Azerbaijan. The North Azerbaijan was given under the dominion of Russia, but South Azerbaijan to Iran. After the collapse of Tsarist Russia, North Azerbaijan separated from Russia and declared it's independence on May 28, 1918. However, South Azerbaijan continued to be under the authority of Iran still, Iranian officials feared the influence of events taken place in the north, to south and starting of national awakening movement in South Azerbaijan. Also, at this time, the Ottoman troops were in South Azerbaijan, Tabriz and Mush, that is why Iran worried Tabriz province would taken back from Iran and could be connected to North Azerbaijan. The protesting of Iran to the naming of newly formed state "Azerbaijan" came from exactly this reason. Therefore, Azerbaijan government began to write "Caucasus Azerbaijan" in the diplomatic documents for putting an end to the hesitation of Iran.(Vahid Öməröv, 2003) In fact, the suspicions of Iran confirmed itself in the Khyabani movement taken place later. Also, Adil khan Ziyadkhanli, the head of diplomatic representation of Azerbaijan in Iran, noted in his letters Iranian Azerbaijanis approach positive to the independence of North Azerbaijan and they desire to get independence. In his letter dated March 1920, he wrote: "Though week at the moment, propaganda in Iranian Azerbaijan for secession from Iran and joining the Azerbaijan Republic is growing. The Azerbaijan Republic must be ready for the events that are developing in Iran and use these to the Republic's advantage." In the letter dated April 11, the ambassador wrote: "The Persian people have no sympathy for our Republic at all: in contrast the Turks of Iranian Azerbaijan are showing signs of brotherly friendship. Iranian Azerbaijan is hoping to gain autonomy, independence and secession from Farsistan." (Cemenzeminli 1994)

One of the other factors that caused the hesitant position of Iran were the uncertain situation after the collapse Tsarist Russian and also the opposite standing of Russia and British government against the positive improvements in ADR-Iran relations. So, after the First World War and the collapse of Tsarist regime, there was a tense political situation in the international arena. Russia didn't agree with the independence of North Azerbaijan and tried to subordinate it again. The British government had his own plans for both Iran and Caucasus. Azerbaijan-Iran rapprochement was contrary to plans of Russia and UK. Iran tried to analyze the political process that occurred in this time and for this purpose, later exactly Said Ziyaaddin Tabatabai was appointed the leader to the delegation which was sent to Azerbaijan. Because Tabatabai previously lived in Russia for two years and he could better analyze the political events taken place there.

3. The establishment of ADR-Iran friendly relations

3.1. The first diplomatic embassies

Despite Iran's hesitant position, Azerbaijan delegations was persistent to the establishment of ADR-Iran friendly relations. After period of time, positive improvements happened in relations. Alikhulu khan, who was appointed the head of the Iranian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, met with the Azerbaijani officials and during a meeting proposed the establishment of Azerbaijan-Iran Joint Commission. He explained this proposal for various reasons. So, the Iranian representatives emphasized that, the confederation of states in the South Caucasus is impossible according to the territorial claims of Armenia toward Azerbaijan. Also, the ADR government signed a friendship treaty with Turkey and both countries supported each other in their foreign policies. Turkey was defeated in the First World War, therefore Entente countries would not approach from positive side to ADR-Turkey relations, the independence of ADR wouldn't be recognized by the world countries. The Iranian Foreign Ministry said that another reason was the danger of Russia from the north and emphasized the importance of Azerbaijan-Iran confederation. Expressing the falling danger of the state that newly declared it's sovereignty and separated from Russia, in Iran's bondage, Azerbaijan representatives objected to this proposal. The second stage of Azerbaijani-Iranian relations finally, the first diplomatic relations were established. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry sent a delegation to Tehran, the capital of Iran led by Ismail khan Ziyadkhanli. Since April 1919, Ismail khan held several meetings with the representatives of Iran, even achieved to conclude the agreement consists of 14 clauses between two countries. But as the contract wasn't confirmed, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry decided to establish new diplomatic representations in Iran on 16 July, 1919 and Adel khan Ziyadkhanli was appointed as the head of delegation. Representations were greeted very well in Iran, even Adel khan was accepted by the Shah of Iran.

3.2. Continuation of diplomatic relations in Paris Peace Conference

In order to achieve the recognition of the independence, Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to participate in Paris Peace Conference and sent the delegation to Paris led by Alimardan bhek Topchubashov. Relations with Iran were continued in Paris and Iran which had no a special role in the First World War, nominated territorial claims against Azerbaijan in conference. Iran claimed that, Azerbaijan lands which were given to Russia by means of Turkmenchay treaty that concluded in 1828 belong to Iran and population of North Azerbaijan supposedly wished to join to Iran. This time, Russia has lost its previous position in Iran and Russian-Iranian agreement has been canceled. Despite all efforts, the territorial claims of Iran were rejected by the conference participants. The Iranian officials were not allowed to participate in conference work after the signing of contract between Iran and UK on 9 August, 1919. Iran organized a new delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Firuz Mirza and sent to Paris. After his coming to Paris, there was positive change in the relationship. Firuz Mirza said that, Iran respect the independence of Azerbaijan and he proposed to establish a joint commission: "Our delegations must work together. We have opportunity in order to focus the attention of British leaders on your issue. Joint performance can also help you. For this, equal, mixed commission consisting of representatives of both countries must be established." (Nasrollah. S. F.1952) As the result of negotiations taken place in Paris Peace Conference, Azerbaijan-Iran joint commission was founded. In the first meeting held on October 29, it was determined that the main mission of commission was preparing the principles and causes of the agreement, which would be concluded in future. The work of commission resulted in treaty consisting of 4 causes on November 1.

a) Regardless of establishing any power and structure of state in Russia, Caucasian Azerbaijan with the boundaries which was reflected in the map and requisition submitted to Paris Peace Conference, decompose from Russia for ever.

b) ADR was established through the general election and is known as presidential, parliamentary, independent and democratic republic. The capital of Republic is Baku.

c) ADR establishes political and economic relations with Iran in foreign affairs. This relationship is defined by mutual consent of both countries. The consolidation of activities of both countries is desired.

d) Azerbaijan need the help of United Kingdom in order to achieve the aim mentioned in the previous terms, recognition of independence, protection of any kind of encroachment, security of state, the political, economic, cultural and military development. (Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyətinin ensiklopediyası. 2004)

An important issue was reflected in the fourth paragraph on the contract that, it was the request of UK's help to Azerbaijan as the same doing to Iran in accordance with the agreement which was concluded on August 9, 1919. (Həsənlı, 2009. p. 408) Azerbaijani delegations achieved great success in Paris Peace Conference. Thus, both the relations with Iran were arranged and the independence of Azerbaijan was de-facto recognized by international community on January 11, 1920. Azerbaijani delegation successfully completed their mission in conference, was concealed on March 5 and the negotiations with Iran were continued outside the conference.

3.3. Factors which affects the improvement of relations.

There were several reasons for the positive development of Azerbaijan-Iran relations in Paris Peace Conference. Caucasus, especially Azerbaijan was the way of passage to Europe for Iran. Even the Iranian Shah has passed through Azerbaijan territory while going to Paris and has met with the representatives of the Azerbaijan government in Baku. This meeting had significant impact on the relations. In addition, the important trade routes, postal service were passing through Azerbaijan. Iran feared that, if didn't recognize the independence of Azerbaijan, could be deprived of trade via this area. At the same time, Azerbaijan government was favor of establishment of trade relations with Iran. It can be seen in the letters of Y. V. Chamanzaminli, the ambassador of Azerbaijan in Turkey. He wrote in his letters: We would like that Iran's economy could be strengthen. Because, the products of Iran will be transported to other countries via Azerbaijan and we also will benefit from this. On the other side, the creation of an independent state in Caucasus against Russia was profitable for Iran and Azerbaijan was playing the role of buffer state between Iran from the south and Russia from the north. With the recognition of Azerbaijan's independence, Iran got shield for himself against the threat of from the north. It was reflected in interviews of Iranian officials. Muslim factor also was saying its word in the relations. M. Rasulzadeh, the leader of ADR inscribed about it in his letters: in fact, he creation of the independent, powerful and influential Muslim state in Caucasus must be pleased the Iranian government.

4.Results

A number of successful meetings were held between the Foreign Minister of Iran Firuz Mirza and the leader of Azerbaijani delegation A.M. Topchubashov and sending a special committee to the Caucasus, especially Azerbaijan was proposed in the letter of Firuz Mirza. Consequently, creating a Caucasus emergency staff of Iran was sent to Azerbaijan. S. Z. Tabatabai was appointed as the leader of delegation. After the recognition of Azerbaijan's independence in the conference which was held on January 11, 1920. S. Z. Tabatabai has taken part in the celebrations on this occasion on January 14, and he noted that Iran had attention the recognizing of Azerbaijan's independence in the near future. Finally, Iran recognized the independence of ADR in 1920. It should be noted that, the first state which de-jure recognized Azerbaijan's independence was exactly Iran. The contract consisted of 4 articles. According to the first article, Iran professed it's recognition of Azerbaijan independence. In accordance with the terms of the second article, 5 contracts about post, telegraph, transit, consular convention have been concluded between Azerbaijan and Iran in addition of friendship treaty. According to the third article of the treaty, the diplomatic missions at ambassadorial level in Baku and Tehran, Adil khan Ziyadkhanli has been selected the first diplomatic envoy. In the fourth article, the signing of agreement in two copies, in French language, ratification during a month and exchanging of ratification pacts in Baku were noted. (The State Archive of Azerbaijan Republic, fund 2598)

Azerbaijan-Iran contracts have been reviewed in the 141 session of Parliament on April 15, 1920. After discussions, the members of Parliament have confirmed these contracts unanimously, but after 12 days, as the Azerbaijan was occupied by Russia, the agreements have been canceled.

5.CONCLUSION

Although Azerbaijan Democratic Republic existed only 23 months, during this period achieved a number of successes: was recognized by both the neighboring states and also the countries of world, established diplomatic relations, embassies of Azerbaijan was opened in abroad and also the embassies of other countries in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. However, since the beginning of 1920, the political situation has been aggravated in the country and the threat from the north to the independence of the country was approaching. Though Azerbaijan attempted to create diplomatic relationship with Russia since the beginning of its establishment, Russia didn't recognize the independence of Azerbaijan and was trying to interfere in

the internal affairs of Azerbaijan by all means. At last, Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was occupied by Russia on April 28, 1920 and thus, Azerbaijani government collapsed. (Азербайджанская Демократическая Республика - Внешняя политика. 1998) After the occupation of Azerbaijan by Russia and incorporating into the Soviet Empire in 1922, the representatives of the government were deprived of the power to pursue an independent foreign and domestic policy. After this, the diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Iran were broken and Azerbaijan became one of the integral parts of Soviet Socialist Republic for a long time and during this period the General Consulate of Iran started its activity in Baku in 1971. Finally, after 69 years of existence, the Soviet Union collapsed on December 30, 1991, Azerbaijan declared its independence again on October 18, 1991. After Azerbaijan gained its independence, the political, economic and cultural relations re-established between two countries. On December 25, 1991, Iran recognized the independence of Azerbaijan and the diplomatic relations were restored on March 12, 1992. The General Consulate, which was founded in 1971, has become the embassy of Iran Islamic Republic in Azerbaijan.

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