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The unfreezing of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through changes to Azerbaijan's security policy

Abstract: Azerbaijan has been transforming its security policy since 2013. For years (since it regained independence), the country's policies have centered on strategic alliances with Turkey and the West. From 2013 onwards, Azerbaijan has markedly restored its strategic partnership with the Russian Federation. The new course, selected in order to adapt to the changed international environment in the South Caucasus, marked Azerbaijan's definitive departure from the principles of democracy and rule of law.

Key words: Azerbaijan, Russian Federation, national security, Nagorno-Karabakh War

Introduction

The armed clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan that broke out in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in early April 2016 were named the Four-Day War. This conflict, which saw the deployment of drones, tanks and artillery, was clearly escalated by Azerbaijan. These four days of clashes left dozens of troops on both sides and a handful of civilians dead. The fighting continued uninterrupted until April 5 and ended with an unexpected ceasefire declared by both the Armenian and Azerbaijani forces (Jarosiewicz, Falkowski, 2016).

The author attempts to discover whether the Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh resulted from a change of Azerbaijan's security policy. He hypothesizes that Azerbaijan was prompted to unfreeze the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by transformations in its international environment in the South Caucasus. In his research, the author relies mainly on the decision method (referring to the actions taken by Ilham Aliyev during his presidency) and the historical-genetic method (used to identify the historical events, mainly following the early 1990s, that have significantly influenced Azerbaijan's security strategy since it gained independence).

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a key determinant of Azerbaijan's security strategy

Next to the country's alliances, The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a key determinant of Azerbaijan's security strategy. Azerbaijan's central security document, i.e. the "National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan" (adopted in 2007), states clearly that the top priority for the rulers of this Caspian republic is "to restore the territorial integrity of the state by any means available under international law" (*National*, 2007).

An observation of the Baku government's track record reveals a marked change in its security policy in 2013. After many years (since the country gained independence) during which the policy centered around alliances with Turkey and the West, Azerbaijan pivoted towards a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation. The turnaround was prompted mainly by changes in the international environment in the region of the South Caucasus. Clearly, over the past few years (ever since the Euromaidan protests erupted in Ukraine in November 2013), Azerbaijan took stock of the threats it was facing and changed the course of its foreign policy. Evidently, the Baku government came to the conclusion that neither the West nor Turkey (which for many years was Azerbaijan's closest ally, but whose policy has become unpredictable under the reign of Recep Erdoğan) can continue to provide it with satisfactory security guarantees, especially given the Kremlin's aggressive policies (Jarosiewicz, 2016b).

Another reason behind Azerbaijan's resolve to forge a strategic security alliance with Moscow is the domestic situation in that country. For years now, Azerbaijan has been drifting away from the principles of democracy, rule of law and respect for civil rights and freedoms. In recent years, both the European Union and the United States have repeatedly called on Baku to revise its internal policies. Their key complaint (among many other issues raised by the West) concerned the constitutional amendment of 2009 (Sadurski, 2013), which lifted restrictions on the number of terms that a president can serve, as well as the manner in which the presidential election of October 2013, and the parliamentary elections of 2015, were conducted. During the elections, a number of concerns were voiced over the opposition being stripped of its rights during the campaign. To reassure its Western partners, Aliyev's regime portrayed its departures from democratic standards as attempts to avert alleged threats from Islamic fundamentalism (Jarosiewicz, 2016b). Notably, however, even in the

1990s, many Western countries turned a blind eye to Azerbaijan's human rights violations in return for access to Caspian oil.

Impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on political alliances in the South Caucasus in the 1990s

Without a doubt, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is having a huge impact on Azerbaijan's security. It is termed an *international conflict*, the notion being defined as an international dispute that has escalated to a point where a real threat exists of the imminent use of force, or where an armed conflict is already under way (Malendowski, 2000, p. 190). The notion of an *international dispute*, which is broader than that of *international conflict*, denotes a situation in which the parties involved are visibly at loggerheads (Potyrała, 2007, p. 7). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an international dispute exacerbated to the point of becoming a full-blown armed conflict.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is one of many disputes which to this day persist in post-Soviet territories. During the Soviet era, many conflicts were either suppressed or resolved centrally by the Kremlin. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict dates back as far as the inter-war period, namely 1921. At that time, the Caucasian Office of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (the Bolsheviks) resolved to incorporate Nagorno-Karabakh into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. The Soviets believed they could rule the two nations more effectively by sustaining their perpetual conflict. Two years later (in 1923), they established the Armenian Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh, covering most of its territory, within the borders of the SSR of Azerbaijan (Jastrzębski, 1999, p. 291). At that time, the decision was made to place the new capital in the city of Khankendi, which was soon renamed Stepanakert.¹ The territories were transferred to

¹ Stepanakert was named after Stepan Georgevich Shaumian, an activist in the Russian labor movement. After 1900, Shaumian was a member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Russia, and from 1917 onwards, a member of the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Russia (the Bolsheviks). He also served as chairman of the Council of Worker and Soldier Deputies in Baku. He was known mainly for his role in adopting decrees on the nationalization of industry, trade and land, as well as for spreading terror and political repressions. After Baku's capture by English forces, he was executed by firing squad.

the SSR of Azerbaijan at the express request of the Moscow authorities, which at the time were pursuing a policy of freezing ethnic conflicts in areas conquered by the Red Army (Świętochowski, 2006, p. 96).

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remained frozen from 1923 to 1988, i.e. throughout almost the entire existence of the Soviet Union. As the superpower neared collapse in 1988, the Nagorno-Karabakh community raised the question of the region's political affiliation. In 1988, Moscow firmly supported the *status quo*, triggering widespread popular protests in both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. Seeking to regain control, the government of the Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan took radical action. It chose to impose an economic blockade of the Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh and resort to the most extreme of measures, which was to exterminate ethnic Armenians. The biggest pogrom of Armenians took place in Sumgait on February 27, 1988, leaving 32 dead (Świętochowski, 2006, p. 163). The atrocities caused an immediate reaction from the other side of the conflict. Responding to Azeri extremism, the legislative authorities of the Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh adopted a resolution to annex the oblast to the SSR of Armenia. The document was received enthusiastically in Armenia. In December 1989, the Yerevan authorities officially declared the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh (Siwec, Baluk, 2007, pp. 201–202) triggering further pogroms of ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan as soon as January 1990.

The events of 1988 raised tensions in the conflict zone. As a consequence, on September 2, 1991, the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself an independent state (Kardaś, 2008, p. 168). Importantly, however, no state, including Armenia, has recognized the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as of yet. Armenia refused to recognize the Republic, despite the military support for the Armenians residing in Nagorno-Karabakh in their fight against Azeri forces, which was extended since the outbreak of the armed conflict. The clashes lasted from early 1992 until the ceasefire agreement of May 1994. Civilian casualties were extraordinarily heavy given the scale of the conflict, with 11,000 fatalities and nearly 30,000 wounded on the Azerbaijani side and 6,000 dead and 20,000 wounded on the Armenian side. Importantly, these statistics are limited to the 1992–1994 period. The casualties resulting from individual skirmishes and clashes that followed 1994 further inflated the death toll of this war. To compound the problems, the conflict displaced a huge population. Many researchers put the number of refugees and displaced people at around one million (Mammadov, 2017).

As a result of Azerbaijan's military defeat, the Baku authorities made it a priority to regain control over the areas lost in the war (i.e. not only Nagorno-Karabakh, but also the either fully or partially lost regions of Lachin, Kalbajar, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Qubadli, Agdam and Fuzuli, which were formerly part of Azerbaijan). This, in turn, defined Azerbaijan's national security strategies and the alliances it forged with regional powers. In the 1990s, Turkey firmly backed Azerbaijan, due largely to the ethnic, cultural and religious affinities between the two nations. The Turks were particularly appalled at the extermination of Azerbaijani people by Armenians in the town of Khojaly on February 25–26, 1992. It should be noted, however, that Turkey's support was limited to political commitments and never translated into actual military aid. Ankara repeatedly condemned Armenia's invasion of this integral part of Azerbaijan as a violation of international law. In an expression of solidarity with Baku, Turkey sealed its border with Armenia, effectively imposing an economic blockade on its eastern neighbor (importantly, the Turkish border with Armenia remains closed to this day) (Falkowski, 2016b).

The authorities of another regional power, Iran, were also anxiously observing the Nagorno-Karabakh war. As both Armenia and Azerbaijan border Iran, the war posed (and continues to pose) a potential threat to this Ayatollah-ruled state. Especially in the years 1992–1994, a real threat existed of the armed clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis spilling over to northern parts of Iran, destroying property and sending the locals fleeing from the conflict. There was also a religious undertone to the conflict, with the potential to escalate tensions among the Iranian population. And yet, despite their offer to mediate, Tehran was more politically inclined to support the Armenians. The conflict is a clear example of geo-strategic and economic interests taking precedence over religious and cultural considerations in today's international relations. It may surprise some to see the Islamic state of Iran and Christian Armenia form an alliance against Azerbaijan, which after all is inhabited by Muslims (and Shiites to boot). The unofficial support for the Armenian side, consisting largely in supplying natural gas fuel, building roads and moving weapons from Russia, was a display of opposition to the policies of Abulfaz Elchibey, Azerbaijan's president in 1992–1993. His views, and extreme nationalistic slogans about the creation of a "Great Azerbaijan" that would soon extend over parts of Iran, greatly upset Tehran. Elchibey staunchly supported Turkey while labeling Iran a "fanatical regime" (Świętochowski, 1998, p. 258).

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was heavily influenced by Russia. Moscow's position actually changed over the years. Early during the conflict, the Russians backed the Azeri forces, only to subsequently switch sides in favor of the Armenians. Russia's decision to support Azerbaijan resulted from two factors. Firstly, as the conflict began, Azerbaijan's president was Ayaz Mutallibov, a member of the communist nomenclature. Secondly, by supporting the authorities in Baku, the Russians sought to punish the Armenians for having excessively manifested their affiliation with the Armenian Church throughout the Soviet era (Modrzejewska-Leśniewska, 2000, p. 487). However, Russia soon realized it could better protect its interests by becoming a mediator in the conflict. Among other moves, Russia's President Boris Yeltsin and the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev offered to resolve the conflict as early as the autumn of 1991 (Bryc, 2008, p. 55). In turn, in 1992, Russia played a key role in having the foreign ministers of all Southern Caucasus states sign a declaration that called for a stop to the fighting and for sending peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States into the hotspot region (Włodkowska-Bagan, 2006, p. 188).

Another initiative of the Kremlin was to form the OSCE Minsk Group. The aim of this forum (which brings together the thirteen foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, France, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, the United States, Hungary and Italy) is to have the parties to the conflict and other states jointly resolve the conflict.² Interestingly, Moscow never officially commented in the Minsk Group

² As the Minsk Group pushed ahead with its mission, preparations were also made for a possible OSCE peace operation in Nagorno-Karabakh that would lay the groundwork for implementing a future peace agreement. In 1994, the conclusions document of an OSCE summit in Budapest proposed a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It provided for the appointment of Minsk Group co-chairmen to coordinate mediation activities and called on member states of the group to uphold the May 12, 1994 accord between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In 1996, in the so-called Lisbon Agreement, the three countries of Russia, the United States and France named three prerequisites necessary for resolving the conflict, i.e. ensuring the territorial integrity of Armenia and Azerbaijan, defining Nagorno-Karabakh's legal status and security guarantees for Nagorno-Karabakh (Bryc, 2004, p. 53).

In the late 1990s, two ideas for peacefully resolving the conflict were put forward by Minsk Group co-chairs. One proposed a package approach (made up of an agreement to cease military operations and define the official status of Nagorno-Karabakh), the other: a "step-by-step" approach (seeking a gradual resolution adopted successively, by agreeing on issues on which both parties saw eye to eye).

on its desired ultimate status for Nagorno-Karabakh (Topolski, 2008, p. 259). Despite its declared willingness to resolve the conflict peacefully, the Kremlin is obviously protecting its own interests and, to this end, seeking to maintain the *status quo* by covertly supporting one party or the other depending on the circumstances (Kardaś, 2008, p. 179). Playing the role of a super-mediator is Russia's utmost foreign policy goal, enshrined in the foreign policy concepts and war doctrines of the Russian Federation. In addition, ever since fighting broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh, Moscow has been seeking to secure the international community's acceptance for Russia's assumption of a central role in resolving conflicts in post-Soviet territories. As early as the 1990s, the international community postulated deploying peacekeeping forces composed largely of Russian troops in the region. Behind such proposals was Russia's desire to limit the impact and influence of third countries in the South Caucasus. This applied primarily to the United States, Turkey, Iran and European Union member states (Jastrzębski, 1999, pp. 314–315). At the turn of the 20th century, many superpowers expressed their willingness to act as mediators between the warring parties. An example is the proposals put forward by the presidents of France and the United States. In March 2001, French President Jacques Chirac held a meeting in Paris with both sides of the conflict. In April 2001, a similar summit was held in Key West, Florida, attended by the presidents of both countries, Robert Kocharyan and Heydar Aliyev. However, neither mediation effort succeeded in resolving the conflict (Brodowski, 2006, p. 93). Since 2004, to revive dialogue, the Minsk Group has initiated a series of meetings of the foreign ministers of both countries in Prague under the name of the Prague Process. As part of this initiative, multiple meetings between the presidents of both countries, Kocharyan and Aliyev, took place in 2005–2006 (in Warsaw, Astana, Kazan, and Rambouillet, among others). However, none of these meetings helped to successfully develop a position that would be acceptable to both sides of the conflict.

The Four-Day War as another attempt to recover from the trauma of the 1990s

Since 2013 (the year in which Euromaidan protests began in Ukraine), a marked increase has been observed in tensions in other parts of the former Soviet Union. This includes the Southern Caucasus and Nagorno-

Karabakh conflicts in which shelling targeted at both feuding parties killed 22 people in July and August 2014. The so-called Four-Day War broke out in the morning of April 2, 2016. While the Azeris and Armenians blamed each other for starting the conflict, many international relations researchers are inclined to believe that Azerbaijan was the one that began hostilities. Their presumption is supported, among other things, by the fact that it was not in Armenia's interest to have the borders shifted in the conflict zone. Moreover, the Baku government cared a great deal about alleviating the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, which exacerbated the internal problems that had long plagued Azerbaijan. The country's predominant domestic challenge was its economy, which deteriorated in the wake of drops in oil prices,³ impoverishing its citizens. In early 2016, this sparked spontaneous protests in several cities across Azerbaijan. The protesters explicitly demanded that the authorities reverse the economic decline and improve the welfare of the local population (Jarosiewicz, 2016a).

The fighting continued until April 5, when both sides declared a cease-fire and expressed willingness to engage in peace talks. The offensive on Armenian-held territories had come from both the south and the north-east. This was not a blitz war aimed at capturing all of Nagorno-Karabakh. During the clash, both Armenia and Azerbaijan deployed a wide range of weaponry, including tanks, heavy artillery and missile launchers, but made little use of air forces (Jarosiewicz, Falkowski, 2016). Many experts believe that Azerbaijan's offensive was designed to test Armenian defenses. The attack broke through the first line of defense and was only stopped by the terrain's topography. The Karabakh Mountains form a natural barrier that greatly impedes military operations. The exact death toll in the conflict remains unknown. Both sides issued similar estimates of roughly 60 soldiers having been killed in action and a few extra civilian fatalities (Jarosiewicz, Falkowski, 2016). As could be expected, both sides additionally engaged in propaganda and deliberate misinformation during the fighting (the Armenians, for instance, reported an alleged extermination of Armenian civilians in the village of Talish).

As soon as the armed conflict erupted, the Russian Federation sought to assume the role of mediator between the parties. Once the hostilities were over, President Vladimir Putin spoke on the telephone with the presidents of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is worth emphasizing that Rus-

³ Oil prices fell by nearly 60% from May 2014, marking the biggest drop in early December 2015. This was the outcome of the OPEC decision to maintain output at the same level despite the global surplus in oil supplies.

sia was the only member of the Minsk Group to become truly involved in the conflict. The other states that were purportedly interested in a quick resolution (i.e. other members of the Minsk Group) limited their reactions to demanding a stop to the fighting (Краснов, 2016). Iran (which neighbored both Armenia and Azerbaijan) was the most anxious about the unfreezing of the conflict. Its border zone sustained several missile hits that caused extensive damage. Since the fighting began, full support for the Baku government has been expressed by another regional power with vested interests in the Southern Caucasus, namely Turkey. This, in turn, evoked prompt criticism from the Kremlin. Moscow deemed it unacceptable for any regional power to explicitly favor either party to the conflict (Dyner, Zasztowt, 2016).

The escalation of the conflict in early April 2016 was an unquestioned success for Azerbaijan. Having regained control over even a small swathe of land, the Baku government was finally in a position to put behind it the mental trauma caused by its military defeat in 1992–1994. The recovery of territories previously controlled by the Armenians aroused great euphoria in the Azeri public. It also solidified support for the ruling elite centered around President Aliyev. The Baku authorities benefited greatly from the line taken by the Russian Federation, which not only tacitly agreed to the resumption of fighting but also withheld its official support for Armenia. Armenia, for years considered the Kremlin's most faithful ally in the South Caucasus, received no military or political support from Moscow, despite its membership of all the relevant bodies, i.e. the Eurasian Economic Union and, even more importantly, in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Falkowski, 2016a). The Treaty of Tashkent stipulates that an attack on any member state will be deemed to be an aggression on all other signatories. This time, however, neither the Russian Federation nor any other member of the organization helped Armenia militarily. During the years that followed (i.e. in the run-up to the Four-Day War), the Russians continued to sell military equipment to the Armenian and Azeri side ignoring the fact that, as of 2002, Azerbaijan no longer belonged to the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Russia's only response was to mediate between the parties and propose the so-called Lavrov plan, providing for the deployment of Russian troops in Nagorno-Karabakh (Górecki, 2016). In addition, the Kremlin postulated a transfer of the land captured during the conflict to the Azerbaijani side and security guarantees for the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. The plan greatly disappointed Armenia, sparking protests in front of the Rus-

sian embassy in Yerevan, with crowds demanding that Armenia withdraw from the Eurasian Economic Union and that Russia cease selling arms to Azerbaijan. Another upset to the Armenians was the cancellation of the heads of government summit of the Eurasian Economic Union in Yerevan scheduled for April 8. The resulting sense of distress prompted the opposition party Heritage to propose, in the parliament, a law by which Armenia would officially recognize the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Falkowski, 2016a).

“New Azerbaijan” bets on Russia?

The strategic alliance with the Russian Federation has already brought Azerbaijan tangible benefits during the Four-Day War (*Новый*, 2016). Although the country only recovered a small strip of land (which it lost in 1992–1994), it succeeded in dispelling the myth of the Armenian army being invincible. Moreover, as an indirect effect of Baku’s policy review, Russia withheld its political and, above all, military support from Armenia during the conflict despite Armenia’s membership of every Russia-led organization covering the former USSR, i.e. the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union. The Kremlin’s backing for Aliyev’s policy is also critical for stabilizing Aliyev’s regime. The regime has been forced to seek powerful allies, especially in the time of a major economic crisis that has visibly struck Azerbaijan. Needless to say, a stronger alliance with the Kremlin makes it all the less likely for Azerbaijan to join the club of keen democracies. As it tightens its ties with Moscow, the country is regrettably bound to slip into authoritarianism. This tendency is highly evident even today, exemplified by Azerbaijan’s failures to respect civil rights and freedoms. Baku’s bet on a strategic alliance with the Kremlin will obviously force it to limit its political influence internationally. After all, Moscow’s goal is to permanently bring Azerbaijan into its own sphere of influence and compel it to agree all of its activities (especially energy-related ones) with Russia. Blocking the access of Western countries to energy sources, a great deal of which are located in the Caspian region, has for years been Russia’s prime policy objective. Presumably, the Kremlin’s dream for the region is to create a permanent anti-Western bloc comprised not only of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan but also of Turkey and Iran.

Another factor that drove Azerbaijan to modify its security policy was the approach of the European Union and the United States. Post 2008, Western countries were no longer seen as allies offering reliable security guarantees (Jarosiewicz, 2016b). One obvious case in point is the Russo-Georgian war. After Georgia set its sights on establishing close links with NATO and the European Union under the rule of Mikheil Saakashvili, the West failed to provide it with satisfactory assistance during the ensuing armed conflict with Russia. To make things worse, the conflict turned Abkhazia and South Ossetia into two Tbilisi-independent para-states, while causing the then Georgian president to lose the support of his compatriots and see his camp removed from power through the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2012–2013.

In addition, the elite gathered around Aliyev and the people forming the New Azerbaijan party are convinced that the Western states could spark another revolution that would ultimately strip them of power. The current president commonly resorts to anti-Western rhetoric. An example of expressing such sentiments is Ramiz Mehdiyev's platform manifesto. Acting as head of the presidential administration, Mehdiyev drew up the document in December 2014 stating that the aim of the United States and the European Union is to stage a revolution in Azerbaijan similar to that seen in Georgia and Ukraine (Jarosiewicz, 2014). Aliyev himself also blamed the West for having destabilized the Middle East through irresponsible actions in 2011 (during the so-called Arab Spring) and having done the same in Ukraine in 2013 (during the start of Euromaidan). In many of his public appearances, the President of Azerbaijan expressed the opinion that although both the United States and the European Union promise to support the democratic process in post-Soviet countries, they abandon them and withhold real assistance at critical moments. He believes that the West has lost credibility for Azerbaijan, by failing to put their own house in order. Much of his criticism focuses on the European Union's policy on Middle Eastern and Northern African refugees (Aliyev, 2015). The relations between the West and Azerbaijan have grown tense not only in words, but also in deeds. Before the parliamentary elections of 2015, Azerbaijani authorities made an official written call for the closure of the OSCE Project Coordinator's Office in Baku. The country barred Amnesty International from accessing its territory and demanded that the number of OSCE observers sent to oversee its elections be reduced by about 2/3rds. In response to criticism from the European Parliament, it decided to additionally pull out of the Euronest: the assembly of members

of the European Parliament and the parliaments of the states participating in the Eastern Partnership (Jakóbić, 2015).

Growing unrest in Azerbaijan is fomented also by Turkey, which for years has been Baku's key ally. Under the rule of Recep Erdoğan, Turkey is pursuing a highly unpredictable policy, raising considerable concerns in Azerbaijan. Its main fears concern Turkey's involvement in a series of internal and external conflicts. The former include conflicts between the Ankara government and the opposition, the Kurds, and the conservative preacher Fethullah Gülen, whom Erdoğan accused in the summer of 2016 of staging a coup designed to overthrow the current government. Under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey has also become highly unpredictable internationally. With astonishing ease, it enters into conflicts, including those with the European Union, the United States (over US-Kurdish cooperation in Syria) (Repetowicz, 2017) and Russia itself (over the downing of a Russian bomber in November 2015) (Markedonov, 2016). In addition, Azerbaijan finds attempts to incite the reislamization of political life very dangerous (Szkudlarek, 2014, p. 65). Its secular regime views any departures from secularism as being highly perilous, fearing they may boost the popularity of movements with political agendas similar to that of the AKP. Although many projects (especially in the energy sector) currently link the Baku and Ankara regimes, they have visibly grown mistrustful of each other as of late.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is notable that, ever since Azerbaijan gained independence, two mutually antagonist blocs of countries have emerged in the South Caucasus that have defined the security strategies of the region's three countries. While one of the blocs may be said to include Russia, Iran and Armenia, the other (which is anti-Russian in many ways), comprises Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Western countries. Clearly, the split was largely the result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Nevertheless, the division into two blocs of countries has begun to fade lately. As Russia tightened its grip on the South Caucasus and international relations in the region changed, Azerbaijan was forced to modify its security strategy. Baku tangibly benefited from the change, especially on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (as exemplified by the outcome of the Four-Day War), which for years has defined Azerbaijan's domestic and for-

eign policy. As a result of the armed conflict of early April 2016, Baku gained not only the strip of land lost through the defeats of 1992–1994, but also overcame the mental trauma to its society caused by military defeats to the Armenians.

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Rozmrożenie konfliktu o Górski Karabach jako efekt zmiany polityki bezpieczeństwa Azerbejdżanu

Streszczenie

Azerbejdżan od 2013 r. zmienia swoją politykę bezpieczeństwa. Przez wiele lat (od momentu uzyskania niepodległości) Azerbejdżan starał się prowadzić politykę, której podstawowym celem było tworzenie strategicznego sojuszu z Turcją oraz z państwami zachodnimi. Od 2013 r. zauważane jest odbudowywanie strategicznego partnerstwa z Federacją Rosyjską. Zmieniła się bowiem sytuacja międzynarodowa w samym regionie Kaukazu Południowego oraz widoczne jest odchodzenie Azerbejdżanu od standardów demokratycznego państwa prawa.

Słowa kluczowe: Azerbejdżan, Federacja Rosyjska, bezpieczeństwo narodowe, wojna o Górski Karabach

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