

## **LEGAL BASIS OF AZERBAIJAN-GEORGIA-TURKIYE BILATERAL AND TRILATERAL DEFENSE COOPERATION**

Imamverdiyev E.R., Mammadzada V.M.  
National Defense University, Baku, Azerbaijan

The similar fate of Azerbaijan and Georgia after gaining independence with the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the occupation of approximately 20% of the territory of both countries and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people) has prompted these countries to draw closer and take each other's interests into consideration in their foreign policies. Despite the threats they faced, both countries recognized each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty and have consistently demonstrated support for each other on international platforms. In this framework, Türkiye has also supported the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and Georgia and has not spared any effort to resolve the frozen conflicts in the region (South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at that time).

Definitely, one of the factors that rationalizes trilateral cooperation includes Azerbaijan-Georgia-Türkiye (AGT), whose interests overlap in the economic, political, and commercial spheres, also stands by each other on critical issues such as territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, which declared its independence on August 30, 1991, was first recognized by Türkiye on November 9, 1991. Within the framework of diplomatic relations established since January 1992, the embassies and consulates general of both countries have been opened in each other's territories [1].

Relations between the two countries have further expanded and deepened in all fields through successful activity of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council within the framework of Azerbaijan-Türkiye cooperation, established on September 15, 2010.

256 documents have been signed, forming the legal basis of Azerbaijan-Türkiye cooperation in various fields. In addition, an interparliamentary working group is also operating between the parties [2].

Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia were established on November 18, 1992, and since 1995, the parties have opened embassies and consulates general in each other's territories.

The "Treaty on Strengthening Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Security between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Georgia" signed between the parties on March 8, 1996, and the "Joint Declaration between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Georgia" signed between the parties on March 4, 2004, are considered the legal foundation of the strategic cooperation between the two countries [3].

Georgia, which declared its independence on April 9, 1991, was recognized by Türkiye on December 16, 1991. On May 21, 1991, a Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was signed, and embassies and consulates general of both countries were opened in each other's territories. Georgia's

strategic relations with Türkiye, its largest commercial investor, began on July 19, 2016, with the holding a meeting of High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council between the two countries [4].

The "Trabzon Declaration", signed at the trilateral meeting of the AGT foreign ministers on June 8, 2012, covering the priorities of trilateral cooperation in all areas (jointly implemented energy-transport-communication projects, mutual support in international forums, high-level meetings, etc.), is the basic legal basis of the aforementioned trilateral cooperation.

The Trabzon Declaration contains provisions on common political, economic and trade interests, jointly implemented energy-transport-communication projects, regional security and peaceful resolution of frozen conflicts in the region, etc.

The Trilateral Summit between the Presidents of the AGT countries held in Tbilisi on May 6, 2014, stimulated further development of trilateral cooperation.

The Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Defense, signed in Giresun, the city of Türkiye, on March 31, 2018, during the meeting held between the Minister of Defense of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, the Minister of National Defense of Türkiye, Nurettin Canikli, and the Minister of Defense of Georgia, Levan Izoria, has established trilateral cooperation in defense between the aforementioned countries [5].

In consequence, the AGT trilateral platform, based on historical friendship, not only promotes economic development of the three countries, but also serves the national interests of the countries.

In this regard, the continuously developing trilateral defense cooperation between the AGT, which creates a balance against other actors with interests in the region and serves to maintain peace and stability in the region, has great importance.

### References

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