



By Jeyhun BAYRAMOV,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

DIPLOMACY LEADING TO VICTORY



The historic victory of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan under the leadership of Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev in the second Karabakh war and the liberation of the occupied territories have been inscribed in the history of Azerbaijan in golden letters. Along with the courage and heroism of the Azerbaijani army, the diplomatic activity of President Ilham Aliyev played an important role in this victory.

Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan and its consequences. Negotiations on the cessation of the occupation of our territories.

From the very first days of its independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan was faced with the occupation of 20 percent of its internationally recognized territories (former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region and seven adjacent districts) by Armenia. The Armenian armed forces conducted ethnic cleansing of these ter-

Valdai | Discussion Club

The words by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev spoken at the Valdai discussion club, “Karabakh is Azerbaijan. Exclamation mark!”, have become a popular expression. 3 October 2019

in the decisions and resolutions of international organizations. The documents adopted by international organizations as a result of Azerbaijan’s diplomatic efforts (UN Security Council Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 adopted in 1993, decisions of the OSCE, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Council of Europe, the Non-Aligned Movement and other organizations) cover several important aspects of conflict settlement. First of all, they recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and confirm that Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan. Secondly, they require that an end be put to the occupation and that the occupying forces vacate the territories of Azerbaijan. Third, they recognize the right of refugees and IDPs to return to their homes.

The documents adopted by international organizations also dwell upon Armenia’s illegal activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the policy of illegal settlement, the destruction and looting of the historical, cultural and religious heritage of the Azerbaijani people, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, private and public property in these territories, embezzlement and other illegal actions.

In accordance with the norms and principles of international law, as well as decisions and resolutions of international organizations, Azerbaijan remained committed to the negotiating process for nearly 30 years, in the hope that Armenia would vacate Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized territories. Azerbaijan’s position in the negotiations on the settlement of the conflict was underpinned by the norms and principles and remained unchanged for many years. This position was based on respect for the principles of international law on the sovereignty of states, inviolability of borders and territorial integrity, the elimination of the factor of illegal occupation, and the restoration of displaced persons’ rights in ensuring their safe return to their homes. Continuing its aggressive policy, Armenia deliberately slowed down the process of negotiations, sought to reinforce the consequences of its occupation of Azerbaijani lands and their annexation, and took consistent steps in this direction.

Stepped up military and political provocations following change of government in Armenia.

The policy of aggression Armenia had pursued for decades left the country facing serious socioeconomic

territories by expelling all Azerbaijanis from their homes. Armenia has also committed the Khojaly genocide, the most horrific of the acts of genocide in the modern history of the world. The fundamental human rights of about one million Azerbaijanis, who had become refugees and internally displaced, were violated.

The position of the international community on the settlement of the former Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is reflected in the documents adopted on a bilateral basis and

President Ilham Aliyev managed to expose the lies of Armenian Prime Minister N. Pashinyan at the Munich Security Conference. 15 February 2020



problems and a profound crisis. In this context, the change of government in Armenia in 2018 gave rise to some hopes for a negotiated settlement, but these expectations were not materialized. The provocative steps taken by Armenia’s new government, the attempts to change the format of the talks, visits to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and attempts to justify the occupation had a serious impact on the negotiating process. Statements by new Armenian leaders such as “a new war for new territories”, “Karabakh is Armenia, full stop” were actually evidence of the Armenian government’s clear intention to expand their policy of aggression.

On 12-16 July 2020, the Armenian armed forces attacked Azerbaijani positions at the Tovuz section of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, killing 12 Azerbaijani servicemen and one civilian. Attempts to commit acts of terror against individuals dealt a serious blow to peace talks. On 23 July 2020, following the Tovuz provocation, Armenia put forward seven conditions for its further participation in the negotiations, including the claim that “the illegal regime must become a fully-fledged party to the negotiations”. The Armenian government’s numerous political and military provocations turned the negotiations brokered by international mediators into a completely meaningless process.

Armenia’s systematic provocations were aimed at aggravating the situation in the region and disrupting

the negotiations. Azerbaijan, in turn, provided an appropriate response to the provocations. The reaction to each provocation, in many cases even at the level of the head of state, was not long in coming. President Ilham Aliyev addressed the plenary session of the 16th annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club on 3 October 2019, which was also attended by the President of Russia and leaders of four other countries. “Karabakh is historically the land of Azerbaijan. So Karabakh is Azerbaijan, exclamation mark,” the President said. Participating in panel discussions on the conflict within the Munich Security Conference on 15 February 2020, the President of Azerbaijan provided accurate and complete information on both the historical and legal aspects of the conflict, as well as Azerbaijan’s position on resolving the conflict, leaving his Armenian counterpart in an awkward situation.

Speaking at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly on 24 September 2021, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan informed the international community about Armenia’s renewed provocations. “The illegal presence of Armenian armed forces in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan poses a major threat to regional peace and security. Armenia is trying to disrupt the peace process mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. Armenia’s goal is to maintain the current status quo, which involves continued occupation and an-



During the 44-day war, President Ilham Aliyev managed to turn the tide of the information war by giving more than 30 interviews to the world's leading news agencies

nexation of the occupied territories. Contrary to Azerbaijan's constructive position, Armenia deliberately undermines the format and essence of the talks. We have the only condition for peace – Armenian armed forces must withdraw from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The whole world recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan."

In his numerous meetings, interviews and addresses to international forums, the President of Azerbaijan provided detailed information about the results of Armenia's military and political provocations and their goals. However, the international legal framework, the adopted decisions and resolutions and the warnings of Azerbaijan did not deter Armenia from continuing its aggression. On the contrary, it attempted to strengthen and expand the results of this policy. Under such circumstances, an adequate response to provocations and resolute measures within the framework of international law were inevitable.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy during the 44-day war. President Ilham Aliyev's addresses to the nation and the international community.

On 27 September 2020, in response to yet another large-scale Armenian provocation, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan launched a counter-offensive operation called "The Iron Fist".

The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 27 September 2020 indicated that the counter-offensive operation by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan was aimed at stopping yet another Armenian provocation and ensuring the security of the population in the settlements located close to the line of contact. It also stated that responsibility for the situation rested squarely with the political and military leadership of Armenia.

As a result of the Azerbaijani Army's victory in the 44-day Patriotic War, Azerbaijan succeeded in implementing the decisions and resolutions of the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, OSCE, Non-Aligned Movement, Turkic Council, NATO, GUAM, European Parliament and other international organizations, which called for an unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces and a settlement of the conflict on the basis of the norms and principles of international law.

During the Patriotic War, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan addressed the nation eight times, providing updates on the situation on the frontline, accurately and honestly informing the international community and sending specific messages to the world, including Armenia. The head of state shared information about each liberated Azerbaijani district, village

At crucial moments of the 44-day war, the President addressed the people



and settlement, and reported on large-scale destruction and war crimes committed by Armenia.

In his nationwide address dated 17 October 2020, the President said that the Armenian armed forces fired rockets at the Azerbaijani cities of Ganja and Mingachevir, targeting innocent civilians. The President noted that despite the inhuman and illegal conduct of the opposite party, Azerbaijan remained committed to its values. Throughout the 44-day war, the President repeatedly stated that it was possible to stop the war, but the Armenian forces must undertake to vacate Azerbaijani lands.

However, not only did the Armenian side fail to respond to these calls, it also flagrantly violated the agreements reached on a humanitarian ceasefire. In particular, a humanitarian ceasefire was agreed between the parties following a meeting of the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow on 9 October 2020. The agreement was of a humanitarian nature and was supposed to enable an exchange of bodies, hostages and prisoners of war. However, shortly after the agreement was reached, Armenia violated it, firing rockets at the sleeping city of Ganja, Azerbaijan's second largest city. Ten innocent civilians were killed and 35 injured. Although the next humanitarian ceasefire was declared between the parties on 17 October, Armenia violated

it minutes later by launching another cowardly attack on the city of Ganja. Following a meeting of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs with the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Washington on 24 October, a new humanitarian ceasefire was declared on 26 October, but Armenia shattered it again.

The key messages of the President of Azerbaijan to the international community during the 44-day war included the justification of Azerbaijan's position under international law, the fact that the counter-offensive operation was carried out in the territory of Azerbaijan, was fully aligned with the right to self-defense and with international humanitarian law. It was also aimed at exposing the Armenian aggression and its war crimes on the one hand, and conveying the truth to the general public, on the other.

Contacts and meetings with world leaders during the war. Fighting on the battlefield during the Patriotic War was accompanied by the struggle the President of Azerbaijan waged on the diplomatic front. The President's telephone conversations with world leaders, meetings with foreign delegations during their visits to Azerbaijan, participation in international events and numerous interviews with foreign media were an important component of the victory diplomacy.



The leaders of Turkey, Russia, Iran, France, Germany, Qatar, Belarus, the UN Secretary General, the President of the European Union Council telephoned the President of Azerbaijan during the war. During the telephone conversations, the President spoke about yet another military provocation Armenia committed against Azerbaijan on 27 September, as a result of which Azerbaijani civilians and servicemen were killed by heavy artillery shelling of the positions of the Azerbaijani Armed For-



The updates posted on the President's Twitter page were a source of reliable information not only for Azerbaijani but also international news agencies

es and settlements along the frontline. The President also noted that responsibility for a further deterioration of the situation rested squarely with the political and military leadership of Armenia.

Another noteworthy aspects was that Azerbaijan never avoided peace talks and dialogue proposals and responded to calls for a humanitarian ceasefire even during its successful operation to liberate our territories from occupation. In the talks with foreign leaders, the President's responses to the calls of the other side for a "peaceful solution" were quite coherent and consistent. Demonstrating patience, Azerbaijan had been negotiating for decades to end the occupation of its territories, implement the decisions of international organizations and ensure international law. However, the failure of these talks, the continuation of provocations and attempts to disrupt the existing talks forced Azerbaijan to launch a counter-offensive and restore justice.

Turkey's political and moral support played an invaluable role in the war. In an interview with a Turkish TV channel, the head of state recognized Turkey's support. "The support provided by brotherly Turkey from the first days and hours of the war, the statements by my brother, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and other senior officials gave moral support to Azerbaijan and showed the world that Turkey stands by Azerbaijan."

President's interviews with the world's leading media agencies – victory in the information war.

Azerbaijan was also engaged in information war with dignity and in accordance with the rules of war. From the very first days of the hostilities to the end of the war, the head of state was interviewed by about 30 of the world's leading media agencies from Turkey, Russia, the United States, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Qatar, Japan and other countries.

In the interviews, the President state provided detailed information on the latest situation in the region, Azerbaijan's position based on international law, the results of Armenia's policy of aggression, and the war crimes. The

The Foreign Ministry contributed a lot to communicating the truth about the 44-day war

The head of state conveyed Azerbaijan's legitimate demands and position to the world at all international meetings and events



head of state referred to specific arguments, decisions of international organizations, principles of international law, historical facts, while claims by some journalists were answered using the example of the countries they represented. Responding to provocative questions, the President stressed that Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory. "This is a matter of justice, this is a matter of national pride and this is a matter of international law. International law and the entire international community recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan. We are restoring justice and implementing the UN Security Council resolutions that have remained on paper for 27 years."

At the same time, the head of state strongly condemned the bias shown by some countries in relation to the conflict. Stressing that if any state wanted to give Armenians the right to self-determination, they could do that in relation to the Armenians living in their own territories, adding that such accusations should be stopped.

The prompt and accurate responses by relevant agencies during the war, especially the videos circulated by the Ministry of Defense, the widespread use of social networks, the organization of numerous visits of

foreign journalists to Azerbaijan and, most importantly, the opportunity to receive firsthand information at the presidential level effectively prevented Armenia's disinformation campaign.

Trilateral statement of 10 November 2020 and its significance. The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict ended with the signing of a trilateral statement by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on 10 November 2020. The statement is a comprehensive document containing a number of important provisions.

The trilateral statement was a diplomatic confirmation of Azerbaijan's victory on the battlefield. It called for a cessation of hostilities, the deployment of a Russian peacekeeping contingent to ensure security in the region, the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the rest of Azerbaijani territory, the return of IDPs, the exchange of prisoners of war and hostages. It also contained provisions related to the economic development of the region and restoration of transport links.

The joint statement reflected the commitment President Ilham Aliyev had been insisting upon from the first day of the military operation – to provide a timetable for the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territory. According to the statement, Armenia was

In a speech at the UN General Assembly, the President exposed Armenia's aggressive policy



forced to withdraw its forces from Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin districts of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan regained these territories without further bloodshed.

The statement envisaged the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in the region, the number its troops, equipment and location, and said that the deployment would be carried out within a specific time frame. A Memorandum was signed on 11 November 2020, leading to the establishment of a ceasefire monitoring center. On 30 January 2021, the Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Center was opened in the liberated Aghdam District. This enabled Turkey's participation in the ceasefire monitoring process.

The trilateral statement ensured the restoration of the fundamental rights of about one million IDPs who had fallen victim to Armenia's policy of ethnic cleansing and whose right to live in their native land had been grossly violated. The statement also reflected the return of IDPs and refugees to Karabakh under the supervision of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Another important provision of the statement is a paragraph on establishing an overland link of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the rest of Azerbaijan. The historic overland connection of Nakhchivan with the rest of Azerbaijan is also important for the future economic development of the region. Although the Armenian side attempted to block the implemen-

tation of this provision afterwards, it is in fact in the interests of all countries of the region from an economic point of view.

One of the most important aspects of the statement is that it does not mention a word about the status of Karabakh. As is known, the Azerbaijani side had been stating for many years that it could grant Karabakh the status of autonomy within Azerbaijan, and this position was repeatedly expressed during the negotiations. The Armenian side, however, could not abandon its unreasonable "independence" claims. After Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity in the Patriotic War, the head of state announced that the status issue had been consigned to history. According to a presidential decree dated 7 July 2021, the East Zangazur and Karabakh economic regions were established. The Armenians living in this region, of course, like other citizens of Azerbaijan, will enjoy all the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy in the post-war period. The victory Azerbaijan achieved in the war wasn't only a glorious page in the history of Azerbaijan, it also created a new reality in the region. Azerbaijan regained its territories, restored the fundamental rights of about one million Azerbaijanis and established historical justice. As the President of Azerbaijan noted at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly on 24 September

President Ilham Aliyev personally raised the Azerbaijani flag on the liberated lands



2021, "Azerbaijan has created a new reality in the South Caucasus, and everyone should take this into account. Armenia must now choose between regional cooperation and illegal and baseless territorial claims against its neighbors," the President stated unequivocally. "Azerbaijan will continue to defend its just position based on international law and carry on efforts to develop our country and people within our internationally-recognized borders. We do hope that the long-awaited peace, security and stability will finally be established in the South Caucasus. Otherwise, if there is a threat to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of our people, we will not hesitate in exercising our legitimate right to self-defense."

The success of the domestic and foreign policy of any state is, first of all, underpinned by a unity of the people. The 44-day Patriotic War was the most obvious indicator of the unity of the Azerbaijani people. In his address to the nation on the occasion of victory, President Ilham Aliyev made it very clear: "I felt the support of the people. I saw the confidence of the people. Nothing could stop me because I knew we were right. We are restoring our territorial integrity and returning our lands. This war has shown the world how great the Azerbaijani people are – an invincible people, an iron-willed people, a victorious people and a victorious army! We are proud of our people and our army!" 🌟