

# Conditions and Factors for the Development of Inter-country Communications between Azerbaijan and Russia

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**Abstract.** In recent years, the priorities in relations between the countries of the post-Soviet region have been changing rapidly. In this situation, it is very important to see the trends and mindsets of the societies of our countries, including those expressed in the media and social networks. In this context, relations between Azerbaijan and Russia, or more precisely between our societies, are in many ways friendly. In Azerbaijan society, the attitude towards the Russian language, culture and education is consistently good. There is a growing interest in education in Russian, which is significant against the backdrop of not only popularity, but also restrictions on Russian-language education in some countries in the post-Soviet space. However, the external factor in the South Caucasus has a great influence on the Azerbaijan political discourse and leads to the spread of phenomena that are contrary to Russian national interests and can be considered by Russia as threats. The study used materials from some media, the results of personal observations and conclusions from numerous public events.

**Keywords:** Communication regime, Republic of Azerbaijan, political regime, information sovereignty, information space, media sphere

**For citation:** Huseynov R.N., Krylov A.B., Mobili R.B. Conditions and Factors for the Development of Inter-country Communications between Azerbaijan and Russia. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2023;1(7): 78-91, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-1\(7\)-78-91](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-1(7)-78-91)

## Introduction

Over the past 30 years after the collapse of the USSR, the media space and social processes in the post-Soviet countries were considered as a possible basis for creating a renewed general cultural and linguistic space based on the Russian language and culture, based on the experience of the former Soviet period. However, the changing geopolitical situation, the exit of many countries from the post-Soviet sphere, and even direct military conflicts between many states lead to the idea that Russia should give priority to the formation of bilateral relations in the aforementioned areas. Some of the participants in the discussion noted a problem in Russia's desire to create a common cultural space after the collapse of the USSR, from which some countries constantly fall out or they change their attitude towards Russian culture, language and education. It is important to identify the underlying causes of likes and dislikes for the Russian heritage in some post-Soviet countries, and after that to form a common cultural space based on new realities.

Without revealing the true reasons for a good relationship between our peoples, it will not be possible to build a stable joint communication regime. It is necessary to investigate the pragmatic reasons for the interest in the Russian language, education and culture in the post-Soviet countries, discarding the idealistic views developed only by Russian scientific centers.

It is necessary to understand what trends and clichés, replicated in the media space, social networks, bring a negative to the relations between our countries. After that, it is necessary to try to find mechanisms for influencing the identified irritants, develop sustainable approaches that can weaken this negative background, and propose new positive trends that meet the needs of the societies of both states.

## Materials and Methods

In the article, its authors used different methodological approaches, which, in the course of scientific discussion, made it possible to single out the most promising: systemic, problem-chronological and structural-functional approaches, and a comparative historical method. This made it possible to analyze the state of the Azerbaijani information space and identify the main features of the state of the communication regimes of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation in modern geopolitical conditions. The authors widely used materials from Azerbaijani and Russian media.

## Results

### Pluses and Minuses of the Dynamics of Intercountry Communication between Russia and Azerbaijan. The most Priority Areas of Cooperation (R.N.Huseynov)

Azerbaijani-Russian relations for the post-Soviet space are in many ways an example of mutual understanding, pragmatism and avoidance of mutual claims. Although in the early years of independence in the 1990s, our relations were slightly overshadowed by Russia's support for Armenia in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, Moscow and Baku managed to overcome these problems and prevent the negative from spreading to other areas of relations. In particular, it was possible to maintain and develop in Azerbaijan a positive attitude towards Russian culture, language and education. The Russian community of Azerbaijan, which is larger in number than the rest of the Russian population of Georgia, Armenia, Dagestan, Chechnya and a number of Caucasian regions, actively participates in the socio-political, cultural, economic life of the Azerbaijani state and society<sup>1</sup>.

There is no xenophobia or negative attitude towards Russians or other peoples in Azerbaijan. Despite the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, about 30,000 Armenians live in Baku, Ganja, Sumgayit and other cities<sup>2</sup>. Whereas the entire Azerbaijani population was expelled from Armenia - about 300,000 people, plus about 700,000 people from Karabakh and neighboring regions during the period of occupation of Azerbaijani lands. After the Patriotic War of 2020, Azerbaijan liberated its territories. This war became Patriotic, because not only the military, but also volunteers - Azerbaijanis, Russians, Lezgins, Talysh, Jews, Ukrainians and other peoples of multinational Azerbaijan participated in it and gave their lives.

The balanced and relatively neutral position of Russia during the 2020 war and after it made it possible to significantly improve the attitude towards Russian policy in Azerbaijan and strengthen the position of the Russian Federation in the South Caucasus region. But at the same time, there are several factors that continue to be an irritant in Azerbaijani-Russian relations. Let's try to review them briefly.

If we make an indicator of friendliness towards Russia in Azerbaijan, we get a scale: from positive to negative<sup>3</sup>. The best attitude is to the Russian language, culture and education. Restrainedly positive or relatively neutral attitude towards the policy of President Vladimir Putin towards Azerbaijan. Some negative attitude towards the rhetoric and policy of the Russian Foreign Ministry. A negative attitude was expressed towards the actions of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Karabakh, the position of the Russian Defense Ministry on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, as well as the military actions of the Russian

Federation in Ukraine (monitoring results are shown in the table below). Here, in the line of the most negative attitude, one can enter the information policy of some Russian media, especially TV and NGOs in relation to Azerbaijan and the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. That is, from positive to neutral to negative, the scale looks like this (Table 1):

**Table 1.** Indicator of friendliness to Russia in Azerbaijan

Russian language, culture and education	+++
President Vladimir Putin position	+ -
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation	-
Russian peacekeeping contingent, Ministry of Defense, Media and NGOs	---

Source: compiled by the author

Against this background, common research projects between Azerbaijani and Russian specialists and scientists stand apart. In general, there is a lot of general scientific research, activities and publications. There are some problems in cooperation and understanding of new challenges of historical science in such areas as Oriental studies, Caucasian studies and Turkic studies. Unfortunately, a significant part of Russian researchers and scientific centers in these disciplines, according to the author, adhere to Eurocentric concepts imposed on Russia from outside in the 18th-20th centuries. At the same time, there are a considerable number of Russian scientists who are actively involved in the formation of a new view of history, ethno-political processes and the role of Russia in the Muslim East, the Caucasus and the Turkic world<sup>4</sup>. However, according to the author, all this is not yet very supported by academic science in the Russian Federation.

Our Center for the History of the Caucasus has been cooperating for over 8 years with orientologists, researchers of the Caucasus, Turkologists, archaeologists, ethnographers, culturologists and specialists in other fields from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia and European countries. One of the goals of this dialogue is to form a discussion platform for discussing the causes of conflict, the origins of which are in historical concepts that have developed over the past 2-3 centuries. The projects are carried out with the support of UNESCO, a number of expeditions have been organized by

<sup>1</sup> "İnzibati – ərazi bölgüsü, əhalinin sayı və tərkibi" // Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi. URL: [https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/az/001\\_11-12.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/az/001_11-12.xls).

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Head of Azerbaijan: Armenians are appropriating our history, <url>. Pravda.ru - 06.04.2016. Available from: <https://www.pravda.ru/world/1297509-karabakh/>

<sup>3</sup> The author's opinion.

<sup>4</sup> "Conference on Karabakh with participation of Armenians opened in Baku", Sputnik-Azerbaijan -14.03.2017. Available from: <https://az.sputniknews.ru/20170314/baku-mezhdunarodnaja-konferencija-po-karabahu-409359623.html>; "Strengthening the dialogue of civilizations". "Caspian", the newspaper - 27.12.2019, <https://kaspiy.az/ukreplyaya-dialog-civilizacii>; "In Search of the Sun" held a number of events in Azerbaijan. New Era" - 30.07.2019, <https://novayaepoxa.com/v-poiskakh-solnca-provela-ryad-meropri/307777/>

state, scientific and non-governmental organizations, international conferences have been organized, a number of articles and collections have been published<sup>5</sup>.

At the same time, there is a dialogue between Azerbaijani and Armenian experts, scientists, journalists and NGOs in order to develop peacekeeping initiatives, discuss the causes of the conflict, its historical and ideological background and ways out of the situation (9)<sup>6</sup>.

The Azerbaijani side is interested in developing cooperation with Russian colleagues in these areas, primarily with the National Research Institute for the Communications Development and other research centers of the Russian Federation.

### **Russian-Azerbaijani Relations in the Context of Information Wars (A.B.Krylov)**

The long conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia is accompanied by a fierce information and propaganda confrontation, which has a great influence on the coverage of the topic of Russian-Azerbaijani relations.

After the collapse of the USSR, the information background in Russia was much more favorable for Armenia than for Azerbaijan. Pro-Armenian politicians occupied important government posts and had a great influence on Russian policy in the South Caucasus. The negative perception of Azerbaijan during the First Karabakh War (1992-1994) was also promoted by the nationalist and anti-Russian policy of its then president A. Elchibey.

Thanks to Baku's many years of efforts, an Azerbaijani lobby was created to counterbalance the traditionally strong Armenian influence in Russia. It includes both representatives of the Azerbaijani diaspora and Russian businessmen, experts, journalists, cultural figures, and others representing different nationalities. The large-scale information and propaganda activity of Baku and the local Azerbaijani lobby contributed to a change in the information background and public sentiment in Russia in a direction favorable to Azerbaijan. The importance of Armenia as a key ally of Russia in the Caucasus was gradually devalued, it was increasingly viewed as one of the post-Soviet countries, not as problematic as Georgia or Ukraine, but standing on a par with others, including Azerbaijan<sup>7</sup>.

5 Meeting of International Working Group 'In Search of the Sun'. Available from: <https://unesco.spb.ru/reporting-event-of-the-international-working-group-in-search-of-the-sun/>; Final Report (In Russian). Available from: <https://unesco.spb.ru/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/FinalReport.pdf>; Reporting Event of the International Working Group "In Search of the Sun". Available from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zsLg1N6UyauORM1tT5I9BTrXnLajVQOV/view> ; UNESCO-nun "Günəşin axtarışında" beynəlxalq işçi qrupun 2018-19-cu illərdə yekun fəaliyyət hesabatı. Available from: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Mbyv2TEVLR09VOE\\_jHk8oPhc\\_YSvecl1AW44-n7wlqM/edit#slide=id.p1](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Mbyv2TEVLR09VOE_jHk8oPhc_YSvecl1AW44-n7wlqM/edit#slide=id.p1)

6 Huseynov P. "Brief history and background of the Karabakh conflict". Council of State Support of NGOs under the President of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2015. Publishing house "QHT NƏŞRİYYATI" 65 C. Available from: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7BEevnub\\_DNdnJ3R0cwZnFUYWw/view?resourcekey=0-eNCxWgrMbP9dHW27az1DSg](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7BEevnub_DNdnJ3R0cwZnFUYWw/view?resourcekey=0-eNCxWgrMbP9dHW27az1DSg)

7 Krylov A. B. The goal of the campaign of Turkey and Azerbaijan against Armenia is the maximum deterioration of Russian-Armenian relations. 01.09.2020. Available from: <https://yerkramas.org/article/173834/celyu-kampanii-turcii-i-azerbajdzhana-protiv-armenii-yavlyaetsya-maksimalnoe-uxudshenie-rossijsko-armyanskix-otnoshenij>

For Azerbaijan, the demand for the return of the territories lost after the First Karabakh War turned into a national idea, which first made it possible to overcome the defeatist syndrome, and then consolidate society and ensure military revenge in the 44-day Second Karabakh War in 2020. Thanks to an active information and propaganda policy, Baku managed to limit the influence of the Armenian lobby in the international arena, to achieve unconditional support for military actions from the Azerbaijani society, including even political opponents of I. Aliyev, who previously harshly criticized the ruling regime for corruption, repression, etc. The head of the leading opposition party, the Popular Front of Azerbaijan, A. Karimli, the leader of the Republican Alternative opposition party, I. Mammadov, and almost all opposition politicians, activists, human rights activists, etc., declared their unconditional support for a military solution to the Karabakh problem. As representatives of the opposition emphasized, in a war any politician who criticizes the authorities will become the object of harassment by the state and the whole society and, thus, will completely lose the support of the electorate<sup>8</sup>. According to the Azerbaijani political scientist A. Yunusov (now a political emigrant), such a unification of society during any war is normal: "in peacetime, you can be objective, but when war comes, the mosaic of colors disappears and a black and white picture remains 'friend or foe'. This is especially true in ethnic conflicts"<sup>9</sup>. In Armenia, the situation was the opposite: a sharp confrontation between the current government and the opposition split society and weakened the country's position in the international arena (5).

Azerbaijani authorities announced the end of the Karabakh conflict by returning the entire disputed territory under the control of Baku<sup>10</sup>. Yerevan refused to carry out the delimitation and demarcation of the border, as this would mean abandoning the requirement for a special status for the Armenian-populated territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, which should be determined through negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. According to the Armenian leadership, the provision of the Armistice Agreement of November 9, 2020 on the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from Nagorno-Karabakh does not apply to the Defense Army of the People's Karabakh Republic, which "in parallel with the activities of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, must improve the defense resources we have in order to have opportunity to ensure long-term peace in the region"<sup>11</sup>.

Baku, not recognizing Karabakh as a special territory, insists on the complete demilitarization and liquidation of all armed formations not controlled by the Azerbaijani authorities, which should be carried out by the Russian peacekeeping contingent<sup>12</sup>. At

8 The Karabakh war forced Azerbaijan to forget about other problems. What is this fraught with? BBC, 29.10.2020. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-54718730>

9 Ibid.

10 Aliyev announced the end of the Karabakh conflict. 24.09.2021. Available from: <https://ria.ru/20210924/karabakh-1751549770.html>

11 The President of Nagorno-Karabakh held a meeting of the Military Council of the Defense Army. 29.01.2022 Available from: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20220129/prezident-nagornogo-karabakha-provel-zasedanie-voennogo-soveta-armii-oborony-38105855.html>

12 "Б": Russian peacekeepers will have to disarm Armenian militants in Karabakh. December 28, 2020. Available from: <https://news.rambler.ru/world/45521276-rossiyskim-mirotvortsam-pridetsya-razoruzhit-armyanskix-boevikov-v-karabahe/>

the same time, the parties to the conflict interpret in their favor the 4th paragraph of the ceasefire agreement of November 9, 2020, according to which “the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is being deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces”<sup>13</sup>.

More than two years have passed since the end of the 44-day war, but the level of hostility of the conflicting parties has not decreased. A high level of tension remains both on the line of delimitation of the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, and on the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia. So far, the situation is developing towards a new military confrontation, and not a peaceful settlement along the path that was outlined in the Armistice Agreement of November 9, 2020.

The desire of the parties to solve the set tasks with the help of Russia comes into conflict with the desire of the Russian leadership to maintain the neutral position of the mediator, which contributes to the settlement of the conflict by peaceful means. The goal of Russia's policy is to stabilize the situation in the region, however, under the current conditions, it is subject to sharp criticism both in the information space of Azerbaijan and in Armenia<sup>14</sup>.

The most radical anti-Russian propaganda in Azerbaijan is carried out by pro-Western parties (People's Front, Musavat, etc.) and NGOs, which call for breaking off relations with Russia and solving the problems of the South Caucasus with the help of the collective West. At the same time, they accuse President Ilham Aliyev that in 2020 he “returned the Russian occupation army to the territory of Azerbaijan”<sup>15</sup>.

### **Ethnic Factor in the Formation of Worldview, Value and Cultural Meanings of Post-Soviet Societies (R.B.Mobili)**

Intercountry communication (and the development of its norms and rules), as well as globalism, is now considered as an actual concept that determines the current stage of civilization development, and problems that exist and continuously arise in the course of human development. For ethnic groups that are in conditions of transitivity, the transition from tradition to modernity, the idea and practice of recognizing the equality and equivalence of all cultures and civilizations, nations and ethnic groups are significant.

Considering the inconsistency of the processes of globalization and regionalization, we note that the main factor in preserving the subjectivity and identity of the Udins is their own ethnic group. Thanks to the ethnic group, the individual chooses a model of his subjective image, forms of identification. It allows him to perceive the worldview, value and cultural meanings of his ethnic group as significant components of his own being. The

<sup>13</sup> Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation. November 10, 2020. Available from: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>

<sup>14</sup> The Russian Foreign Ministry responded point by point to the criticism coming from Baku and Yerevan. 11.08.2022 Available from: <https://rusarminfo.ru/2022/08/11/mid-rossii-po-punktam-otvetil-na-zvuchashhuyu-iz-baku-i-erevana-kritiku/>

<sup>15</sup> An anti-Russian rally was held in Baku: “Down with the occupation troops”. 07.10.2022. Available from: <https://news.am/rus/news/724014.html>

subjective manifestation of identification is the involvement of a person in real life, native culture, norms of linguistic communication, his participation in various events, formation, citizenship and public opinion.

The study of the modern life of the Udins as representatives of a small ethnic group shows that, living in a transitional environment, they are among the first to feel the crisis of the social system, the presence of risks, tensions, threats and conflicts in multinational post-Soviet societies, including Russian-Azerbaijani cultural relations. . Now in various countries of the CIS and the world there are about 12 thousand Udins, there are just over 3.5 thousand in the Russian Federation (2:373). During the crisis and the collapse of the USSR, a significant part of them were forced to move to the CIS countries and other countries of the world. Today, the Udins are compact, about 4 thousand people, live in their historical homeland, in the multinational village of Nij in the Gabala region of the Republic of Azerbaijan (6:211).

Modern life is very dynamic, reality is rapidly transforming, goals and values, motives and incentives, people's behavior are constantly changing. Today, adaptation to the rapidly changing reality, socio-cultural, spiritual and moral spheres is significant for every Udin. The comprehension of the surrounding world by the Udins, as well as by all national and ethnic groups, largely occurs not on the basis of specific realities, events, which would contribute to active personal self-realization, but as a result of the influence of the media, mass culture, primitive standards and stereotypes.

The development of the information society, the dominance of the Internet, a variety of technologies are constantly changing the nature of socialization and identification. They speed up the processes of “appropriation” of information, understanding of the environment, the sphere of social relations, connections and meanings. The uniqueness of the Udins' perception of everyday life lies in the fact that in his inner world several positions seem to oppose: firstly, deep antiquity, the past; secondly, the present, quickly “fluid” realities; thirdly, the future, the unknown “tomorrow”, which is filled with fears or even closed. Therefore, everyone has to spontaneously, with the help of rules, cash, communication and dialogue, master the continuously changing space of life, cultural standards and moral norms. In transitive societies, adaptation to reality occurs spontaneously and in a deeply individualized form, because they continuously reproduce the imbalance between vertical and horizontal communications.

Modernity destroys the social essence of ethnic groups, undermines rootedness, connection with history, alienates, “overturns”, “turns” space and time, making their objective characteristics unnecessary. Udins, like representatives of any ethnic group, strive to preserve their identity, essential features, and immanent foundations. Finding themselves in conditions of transition, loss of their former roots, they try to overcome their marginality, to acquire a new social essence. Moving along the path of a new emerging identity, they have to constantly realign their strategy and tactics in accordance with the rules of the market. For the Udins, an appeal to the past, its ancient history, the experience of past generations, social memory is necessary for “genuine” being in the conditions of “elusive” modernity. It is important for the construction of a new identity, self-identification and the implementation of goals, the formation of guidelines for the future.



Today, the development by each ethnic group of various forms of time (past, present, future) is more important than ever, it is a necessary condition for rooting in everyday life, the continuity of social life and the identification process. In close contact with representatives of other cultures, Udins gain not only the experience of interethnic and intercivilizational dialogue and solidarity, respect for other beliefs and traditions, but also an understanding of their own “I”, their identity (3:108).

In the constantly changing conditions of modernity, the paradoxical nature of being is one of the important features of the adaptation of the individual to the environment, the formation of identity. The public consciousness is demoralized, often people are not able to understand reality. For the ethnophore, the continuously changing everyday life turns into an environment with different types of alienation. Under these conditions, a person's own activity acquires significance, aimed at identifying with the constantly changing structures of society, mastering historical traditions and social qualities, and forming one's own responsibility. A rapidly changing reality puts a person in front of a difficult choice. He is faced with the need to form his own “life world”, to determine the purpose and meaning of life, to realize his place and role in society.

## Conclusions

Cross-country communication between Russia and Azerbaijan, the acceleration of the pace of social dynamics give each person real opportunities for adaptation and integration, the opportunity to find the meaning of life. A person of the post-Soviet society strives to identify himself with his ethnic community, to adapt to reality on the basis of the conditions of its existence, to understand the meanings of his history, the peculiarities of his native culture, traditions and attitudes (7:151). Representatives of the same nationality, confession feel closer to each other, opposing themselves to “strangers”, that is, others. On the basis of their “native” history, language, culture, values, traditions, customs, they acquire their selfhood, identity, “define” the boundaries of their being.

In the context of Russia's acute conflict with the collective West, the US/NATO/EU-funded pro-Western political forces in Azerbaijan and Armenia are relays of foreign propaganda and come up with a common set of radical anti-Russian slogans.

The Azerbaijani side is interested in developing cooperation with Russian colleagues, primarily with the National Research Institute for the Communications Development and other research centers of the Russian Federation.

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## Contribution of the authors

The authors contributed equally to this article.

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

## Article info

Submitted: January 16, 2023. Approved after peer reviewing: January 23, 2023.

Accepted for publication: March 1, 2023. Published: March 7, 2023.

The authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

## Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.