MILITARY-TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND UKRAINE IN 1994-2014

Abstract

This article examines the main stages in military-technical cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ukraine in 1994-2014. It shows the role Ukraine played in the deliveries of modern arms systems for the armed forces of Azerbaijan and in modernizing the combat systems at the disposal of the National Army of Azerbaijan, as well as the interaction between the sides in building up the productive capacities of Azerbaijan’s military-industrial complex.

KEYWORDS: Azeri-Ukrainian relations, military-technical cooperation, military-industrial complex.

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet empire, the states that emerged on its ruins chose different ways to ensure their military security. Some exerted immense efforts to become integrated into NATO,
others tied their interests in this sphere to the interests of Russia and joined the CSTO it patronizes, while the rest tried with more or less success to go their own way, attempting to cooperate with both the first and the second. These countries, which remain outside the control of NATO or the CSTO, often become serious partners for each other in the military sphere. This primarily applies to the military-technical cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ukraine in 1994-2014.

The historical-genetic, or, as it is also called, retrospective method was chosen as the main scientific means for analyzing the special features of cooperation between the two countries. It makes it possible to examine the cause-effect relations and patterns of development of a particular event or phenomenon and to identify the special features of the subjective and objective factors, in our case, the specifics of political and economic development, which is extremely important for understanding the processes being studied.

A wide range of sources in the public domain comprised the empirical base of this study. It stands to reason that this is an extremely limited source base for this type of research. However, this is a typical problem today for almost any research on the history of the post-Soviet countries—it is essentially impossible to gain access to archive documents that reflect the special features of the foreign and domestic policy of the named states. However, modern information technology makes it possible to draw extensive empirical material from open sources for studying different aspects of the foreign and domestic policy of essentially any state. The application of this technology is made easier by the widespread availability of this kind of source in electronic form—many printed media recognized by the scientific community can no longer manage without electronic versions of their publications and, moreover, are increasingly placing reports on their pages initially introduced into the information field precisely by Internet publications. This means it is possible to carry out an objective study of the special features of the history and politics of post-Soviet states with the help of contemporary information processing methods.

Unfortunately, today the flow of publications on the topic of this article, as well as on topics relating in general to the military security policy of the post-Soviet states pursued both in the West and in the East suffers from one serious shortcoming—works are often based on research studies that are in many ways duplicated.

For example, a Western expert proficient in Russian or even a prestigious Western research center notices a particular article in the Russian central media on the special features of the military security policy of the CIS countries; the information in this publication is then used to write a paper in English, which, in turn, some time later, is noticed by a Russian researcher, and he uses these data in his own work as though from a foreign source, and so the process goes on. The most surprising thing is that Russian-language “expert” media, as well as the Internet resources of the post-Soviet states, essentially go unnoticed by both the Western and Russian expert community.

Nor does the use by the post-Soviet states of the English-language versions of their media or Internet resources help to form an objective picture, while resources that publish information in the national languages are excluded even from the potential empirical field of such studies.

Based on the above, I tried to use data published in the media and Internet resources of Azerbaijan and Ukraine in this study.

A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed

In the time that has passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries that emerged on its ruins have been building their statehoods with different degrees of success. In so doing, it has
become clear that interaction between the once fraternal republics is occurring not along the vertical—through Moscow, as was the case during Soviet times—but along the horizontal—by means of intensified bilateral relations or joint participation in various regional organizations and unions, such as the CIS, CSTO, GUAM, CU, and CES. This development of events has been promoted by a great many factors, beginning with political and ending with cultural. We are interested in how these processes have been progressing within the framework of the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Ukraine in the military sphere.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorny Karabakh, which began in 1988, escalated into a full-fledged war. By the spring of 1994, Armenian armed formations had succeeded in seizing 20% of Azerbaijan’s territory.

The Bishkek truce signed by the sides in no way meant that the country’s military security had lost its priority importance for official Baku. On the contrary, Azerbaijan’s new political leadership headed by Heydar Aliyev began paying particular attention to defense policy. An analysis of the military-political situation that had developed by the spring of 1994 brought the Azeri side to the conclusion that one of the reasons for the country’s defeat at the first stage of the Nagorno-Karabakh war was that Baku did not have any real military or political allies.

This situation primarily developed due to the poorly conceived foreign policy of President Elchibei, who was in power in 1992-1993. He thought that Azerbaijan’s only ally in the international arena could be Turkey.

Hoping that Moscow would help it to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in 1993 Azerbaijan joined the Collective Security Treaty (CST). However, Baku subsequently lost faith in Russia’s ability to regulate the conflict and achieve the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories. And since it did not think that membership in the same military organization as Armenia could meet its national interests, on 2 April, 1999, Azerbaijan left the CST along with Uzbekistan and Georgia. The latter had also been placing its hopes on Moscow up to the last with respect to settling the conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Judging by everything, at that time, no one in Moscow seriously perceived the consequences of Azerbaijan and Georgia’s withdrawal from the CST (later the CSTO), since most politicians, military experts, and other officials were sure that without close military-technical cooperation with Russia Baku and Tbilisi would, at the very least, be unable to ensure the need of their armed forces for various arms systems and, at the very most, be unable to cope at all with the task of creating national armed forces.

It was precisely at this time that Azerbaijan and Georgia turned their sights to Ukraine as an alternative supplier of hardware and arms. What is more, Azerbaijan already had a certain amount of experience in cooperation with Ukraine in this sphere.

As though confirming their intentions to establish special relations with Kiev in the military sphere, on 14 April, 1999, Azerbaijan and Georgia, along with Ukraine, held trilateral exercises aimed at protecting the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline from possible terrorist strikes. The participants in the exercises stated through the then Georgian Minister of Defense David Tevdzadze that “the exercises are being held within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program.”

It cannot be said that intensification of military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ukraine, and in passing with Georgia too, initially rested on any clear and well-conceived political or economic base—each of the sides primarily resolved its own problems. But since Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Georgia were the key players in creating the regional organization GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Ukraine,

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Azerbaijan, and Moldova—The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development) in 1997, Russia perceived the interaction of these countries in the military sphere as anti-Russian. Moreover, on 24 April, 1999, at NATO’s anniversary summit in Washington, Uzbekistan, which, as noted, had also left the CST, joined GUAM. This was the NATO summit that adopted the historical decision on the accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO, and it took place against the background of the bombings of Yugoslavia.

Without any real levers of influence on the situation at that time, Russia limited itself to diplomatic statements criticizing the actions of the West, while beginning to relate with growing suspicion to any forums and organizations that, from the Russian viewpoint, were acting under Washington’s aegis.

For the same reason, Russia became very sensitive to any activity of the GUAM countries (after April 1999, GUUAM) in the military sphere. For example, in August 1999 the Peace Shield-99 exercises were held near Lvov. It was reported that “within the framework of the exercises, a meeting will be held of the defense ministers of these countries [GUUAM], at which questions of stepping up and coordinating military cooperation will be examined.” And immediately following this, the sensational conclusion was made that “the matter concerns establishing the military component of GUUAM.”

In actual fact, neither then, nor some time later, nor even at the present stage, when Ukraine has now encountered the problem of separatism, was GUAM (GUUAM) capable of creating a cooperation mechanism in the military sphere that could have grown into an effective military-political union. The national interests of these countries prevail over general interests, including in fighting separatism. However, this does not exclude the fact that the listed countries were actively involved in bilateral relations in the military sphere in the past and continue to expand military-technical cooperation. Moreover, such cooperation not only promotes an increase in the combat capabilities of the national armed forces, but is also a high-income sphere of foreign economic relations, or to put it more simply, profitable business.

It would seem that Ukraine realized earlier than the other CIS countries that Azerbaijan’s growing economic power and financial potential were turning it into a very attractive partner in military-technical cooperation. However, for some time, Kiev was in no hurry to cooperate with Baku in expanding the military-industrial complex, which Azerbaijan began to develop after the State Committee of the Azerbaijan Republic for Special Machine-Building and Conversion, which used to be engaged in military production, was eliminated in December 2005 and the Ministry of the Defense Industry (MDI) created in its place.

This action (or to be more precise, inaction) on the part of Ukraine was possibly due both to the low evaluation of the effectiveness of such cooperation and to the worries that development of the Azeri defense complex would deprive Kiev of some of its hardware and arms contracts with Baku. Nevertheless, Ukraine’s interest in close cooperation with Azerbaijan, both in petroleum product deliveries and in advancing its own technology to the foreign markets, prompted Kiev to establish cooperation with Baku in military production.

In November 2006, sensing the advantage of military cooperation with Baku, the Ukrainian side became an initiator of “activating military and military-technical cooperation” with Azerbaijan, and

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a month later, during his visit to Azerbaijan, the then Ukrainian prime minister Viktor Yanukovich said that “Ukraine and Azerbaijan see great prospects for cooperation in the military-industrial complex and will implement several joint projects.”

In the spring of 2007, Azerbaijan summed up the results of the MDI’s work for the first time. In so doing, Ukraine, along with Turkey, Russia, Belarus, and Rumania, figured among the countries whose experience was used to establish military production. Despite the great potential of joint bilateral projects in military production, Ukraine, as before, was primarily interested in carrying out large arms deliveries to the Azeri market, since this promised Kiev significant monetary infusions. In turn, Azerbaijan, aiming to strengthen its armed forces, was eager to buy various systems from Ukraine.

According to the information published in Moscow Defense Brief and relying primarily on data supplied by countries for the U.N. Register of Conventional Arms and posted on the Organization’s website, between 2000 and 2007, Azerbaijan purchased from Ukraine 12 MIG-29 and 2 MIG-29UB bombers of Soviet manufacture and 12 L-39 training combat planes of Czech manufacture; 36 M-46 130-mm towed guns, 45 T-72 tanks, two Soviet BMP-1, three Ukrainian BTR-3U, 85 PM-38 mortar launchers, and 12 9RK58 Soviet Smerch multiple rocket launcher systems. What is more, according to the same U.N. Register, Azerbaijan purchased 55 122-mm D-30A howitzers, and in 2007, four BTS-5B, as well as a SU-25 UTG fighter bomber, which at one time was created for deploying on the Tbilisi aircraft carrier, now better known as Admiral Kuznetsov.

In 2008, Azerbaijan continued to buy Soviet armored vehicles from Ukraine and acquired 70 BTR-70, as well as 18 2S1 artillery systems, better known as Carnation SAU. In so doing, The Military Balance for 2009 claims that the Azerbaijani army has 12 Carnations at its disposal. In our opinion, this is a discrepancy, a result of The Military Balance obtaining its data from different publications in the public domain, while the U.N. Register of Conventional Weapons relies on data that are officially presented by the Participating states.

At the same time, it should be noted that publications in the media are faster off the mark. For example, one of the first facts about Azerbaijan purchasing another batch of heavy arms systems in Ukraine in 2009 was published by the Milaz.info agency. It reported directly in the title of one of its publications, “This year, Azerbaijan has bought armored vehicles from Ukraine.” Admittedly, no precise information was published at this point about the items purchased. It did not become known until the end of 2010 that between February and November 2009, Azerbaijan had purchased an additional 29 of the mentioned self-propelled Carnation units. This information later appeared in the U.N. Register of Conventional Arms, where it was also reported that in 2009, Azerbaijan purchased

12 “This Year, Azerbaijan has Bought Armored Vehicles from Ukraine,” available in Azeri at [http://www.milaz.info/news.php?id=8796].
from Ukraine an MIG-29UB bomber and 11 Mi-24\textsuperscript{14} strike helicopters modernized for carrying out combat action at night. In Azerbaijan, they were designated as MI-24 G (Gecə/night). According to S. Zgurets, editor-in-chief of the Ukrainian journal \textit{Defense Express}, these vehicles (MI-24 G), “were modernized by South Africa’s Advanced Technologies and Engineering, the Konotop Air Repair Plant \textit{Aviakon} and the \textit{Luch} State Kiev Design Bureau enterprise. The improvements were based on a set of modernized Mi-24 Super Hind Mk.4 developed by the South African company.\textsuperscript{15} However, another statement by the Ukrainian expert attracted more attention: “It has almost become a rule that first arms samples are modernized or made under contract with the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and then this hardware finds its place in the combat ranks of the Ukrainian army.”\textsuperscript{16} The interest of the Azerbaijani side in these vehicles was promoted by the fact that Baku proposed investing in the Ukrainian military-industrial complex in order to carry out joint production of rotorcraft. Ukrainian Prime Minister N. Azarov announced this in the fall of the same year after his meeting with Ilham Aliyev.\textsuperscript{17}

By the end of 2010, it became known that the Azeri side was showing an interest not only in modernized helicopters, but also in the latest antitank guided missile launchers developed by the Ukrainian military-industrial complex along with colleagues from Belarus. As a result, Azerbaijan, along with Belarus and the armed forces of Ukraine itself, became one of the first customers of the \textit{Skif} portable antitank guided missile launcher.\textsuperscript{18}

\section*{Not Only Business, But Also Politics}

By the turn of 2009-2010, the sides were ready to continue mutually advantageous cooperation in different spheres of foreign policy, including in military cooperation. In April 2009, during President Viktor Iushchenko’s visit to Azerbaijan, an Action Plan for Ukrainian-Azeri Cooperation for 2009-2010 was signed, which also included a Protocol between the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers and the Azerbaijan Government on Making Amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Military-Technical Cooperation of 24 March, 1997 (Minister of Defense Yuri Ekhanurov signed for the Ukrainian side).\textsuperscript{19}

So it comes as no surprise that during the meeting between the Ukrainian President and journalists of \textit{Ayna} and \textit{Zerkalo}, he was asked whether military-technical cooperation would continue between the two countries and whether this cooperation would cause pressure to be exerted on Ukraine from the side. The head of the Ukrainian state answered this question as follows: “Our cooperation [in the military sphere] is carried out in strict compliance with the regulations of international law and in conditions of openness, so any foreign pressure on Ukraine in this question is pointless. To sum

\begin{itemize}
  \item See: United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA).
  \item Ibidem.
  \item See: “Azerbaijan is Willing to Invest in the Joint Production of Helicopters in Ukraine,” available in Russian at [http://1news.az/politics/20101030100124321.html].
  \item See: “Kiev predlagaet ‘Skifov’,” \textit{Natsionalnaia oborona}, No. 12, December 2010.
\end{itemize}
up, I will note that our countries have immense opportunities for implementing large-scale projects both in the military-technical and in the military-industrial sphere.**20**

The question asked the Ukrainian president and his reply were not a simple formality. The thing is that the increase in deliveries of hardware and arms from Ukraine to Azerbaijan made Armenia very nervous, which apparently at first was seriously hoping to retain its supremacy in the regional arms race due to essentially free deliveries of various arms systems from Russia. However, as quantitative and qualitative supremacy began going to Azerbaijan, Erevan began criticizing Kiev for its desire to cooperate with Baku in the military sphere.

What is more, after the Five-Day War on the wave of Russia’s discontent over Ukrainian-Georgian relations in the military sphere, Armenia also began giving negative evaluations of Ukraine’s international military cooperation policy, primarily criticizing its interaction in the military sphere with Azerbaijan.

In March 2009, against the background of another Russian-Azeri scandal relating to the delivery of Russian arms to Armenia totaling $800 million, a Moscow-Erevan-Kiev-Tbilisi satellite TV link-up took place.

During the TV linkup, an Armenian journalist asked former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma the following question: “What goals is official Kiev pursuing as the main supplier of arms to Azerbaijan, which is in no way hiding its aggressive intentions?” Despite the fact that this was more of a statement than a question called upon to express yet again the Armenian viewpoint on Azerbaijan’s foreign policy, Leonid Kuchma replied very reasonably that if Ukraine did not supply the arms, it would not be difficult for Azerbaijan to buy them from the U.S. or another country.**21**

There can be no doubt that the former Ukrainian leader was bluffing a little by saying that Azerbaijan could easily buy arms from the U.S., but he was absolutely right in suggesting that Baku’s financial possibilities allowed it to find alternative arms suppliers in other parts of the world. So Kiev is striving to strengthen military-technical cooperation with Baku. After all, according to the data of the Kiev Research Center of the Army, Conversion, and Disarmament, which S. Zgurets used in the mentioned work, Azerbaijan accounted for “7% of the total volume of Ukraine’s arms export at year-end of 2009.”**22**

The dynamic growth of Azerbaijan’s defense spending prompted the country’s political and military leadership, at the turn of 2010-2011, to give serious thought to purchasing new samples of armored vehicles for the needs of the Azerbaijani National Army, which were superior in terms of combat capabilities the large number of Soviet T-72 tanks at the disposal of the Azerbaijani army.

Judging by everything, it was precisely within the framework of this approach that Azerbaijan showed an interest in January 2011 in the *Oplot* combat vehicle created in Ukraine on the basis of the Soviet T-80 tank. It was proposed that closer acquaintance with the new tank be made at the 10th International Arms Exhibition IDEX-2011, which was held in Abu-Dabi between 20 and 24 February.**23**

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22 S. Zgurets, op. cit.

At the exhibition itself, the conviction of the observers that Azerbaijan would become the first purchaser of the new Ukrainian tanks only grew. In any case, even the Russian experts participating in the exhibition boldly declared that “Azerbaijan will most likely become the first foreign buyer of Oplot.” However, the transaction did not take place, and in the spring of 2011, the media of Ukraine and several post-Soviet countries reported, with reference to the Thai newspaper Bangkok Post, that “the command of Thailand’s land troops has decided to purchase 200 Ukrainian main battle tanks, Oplot T-84U, while in the fall of the same year, it was confirmed that Thailand, to which Kiev initially promised to sell 49 vehicles, would be the main purchaser of the new Ukrainian tanks.

We think the reason the Azeri side decided not to purchase the Ukrainian tanks is obvious—Baku was not happy with the deadline Kiev declared for carrying out the order. As general director of the Malyshev Ukrainian Plant N. Belov admitted recently, the Ukrainian side will execute the Thai contract for Oplots as early as 2015, while the production cycle of the new tank amounts to 9 months.

As a result, Baku signed a contract with Russia for the delivery of the tanks, and on 10 February, 2012, it became clear that Azerbaijan intended to buy T-90S tanks from Russia. The contract for this was signed between the Azerbaijan Ministry of Defense and Rosoboronexport as early as 2011, while in the fall of 2012, the sale of T-90S tanks to Azerbaijan was also confirmed by the Russian media. In so doing, no one knows for sure about the dimensions of this transaction, presuming that, as in the case of other post-Soviet countries, Azerbaijan would purchase a batch of 10-30 vehicles from Russia. This is why the information that Baku immediately bought 94 T-90S tanks had the effect of a bomb being dropped on the expert community. It is worth noting that Azerbaijan also purchased all the servicing technology for these vehicles. It was also reported that the Azerbaijan Republic had signed an option for the purchase of another large batch of T-90S tanks. In addition, in 2011-2012, Azerbaijan bought 93 T-72 tanks from Belarus.

As the figures show, Azerbaijan was interested in receiving large numbers of modern tanks and service vehicles in a short time, which the Ukrainian side could not guarantee. However, the breakdown in the talks on tank deliveries did not deal a serious blow to the military-technical cooperation between the two countries.

In March 2011, the then Ukrainian Defense Minister M. Ezhel was received by Azeri President Ilham Aliyev, and then he met with Azeri Prime Minister A. Rasizade and Azeri Defense Minister

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S. Abiev, as well as head of the Milli Mejlis O. Asadov. According to Ukrainian information resources, the sides not only noted the role of the leaders of both countries in strengthening ties between Azerbaijan and Ukraine, but also agreed on the possibility of modernizing various Soviet arms systems at the disposal of Azerbaijan’s armed forces at the enterprises of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex. In so doing, the sides deemed it necessary to note that “an efficient regulatory legal base of bilateral cooperation, including in the military and military-technical spheres, has been created” between the two countries.

It is possible that precisely the existence of this base prompted Azerbaijan’s Minister of the Defense Industry Yaver Jamalov to announce in May of the same year that joint production was beginning with Ukraine of Skif and Barier antitank guided missile launchers. In so doing, the Azeri minister noted that Azerbaijan’s Ministry of the Defense Industry initially planned to engage in joint production of antitank guided missile launchers with South Africa’s Denel Company, but preference went to the Ukrainian enterprise Luch, since its products could be installed both in helicopters and in land-based vehicles.

After showing an interest in Skif, Azerbaijan willingly or not supported another post-Soviet country with which it has close ties in military-technical cooperation. The matter concerns Belarus, since the antitank guided missile launchers mentioned are a joint Ukrainian-Belarusian project. It stands to reason that integration of the enterprises of Azerbaijan’s Ministry of the Defense Industry into the joint manufacture of this kind of weapons system not only raises the combat potential of the Azeri National Army, but also gives official Baku additional opportunities for strengthening its political position in the post-Soviet region.

The impression may be created that the development of Azeri-Ukrainian relations in military-technical cooperation are problem-free, but certain difficulties have nevertheless arisen, and they are mainly related to the political processes in Ukraine itself. For example, after Viktor Ianukovich came to power at the beginning of 2010, certain forces tried to interfere in the development of military-technical cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ukraine. However, keeping in mind that the new Ukrainian president’s team stated that it wanted to help the country recover from the economic crisis, Kiev did not curtail its cooperation, but on the contrary, began intensifying and expanding it. In so doing, Azerbaijan and Ukraine began talking about “forming and implementing large-scale long-term projects.”

A certain threat to military cooperation between the sides arose in September 2011 when representatives of the Party of the Regions in Ukraine stated in the words of deputy chairman of the faction M. Chechetov that military relations with Baku might be reexamined in order to maintain regional security, adding that talks in the region about arms deliveries should take place with the participation of Russia. It is worth noting that this statement was published in the pro-Armenian

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36 See: “Ukrainian Defense Minister M. Ezhel and Representative of the Milli Mejlis O. Asadov Note the Role of the Heads of Azerbaijan and Ukraine in Reaching a High Level of Bilateral Relations.”


39 A. Alieva, “The Date of the Ukrainian President’s Visit to Azerbaijan is Clarified,” available in Russian at [http://www.aze.az/news_utochnena_data_vizita_56503.html].
Ukrainian news portal Analitika.at.ua and, for this reason, came to the direct attention of Azeri journalists.\(^{40}\) Ukrainian expert T. Berezovets also expressed a similar opinion regarding Kiev’s arms deliveries to Baku. It is interesting that the extreme pro-Russian position of these people did not permit them to notice that Russia itself was increasing deliveries of hardware and arms to Azerbaijan during the same period. In turn, Azeri military expert U. Jafarov deemed it necessary to note that this development of events would in no way affect the combat potential of the Azeri armed forces, since the country has other partners in military-technical cooperation throughout the world.\(^{41}\)

It is difficult not fall victim to temptation and, against the background of the 2014 events, accuse these gentlemen from the political and expert community of pro-Russian sympathies or even of deliberately damaging Ukraine’s military-industrial complex. However, we feel that what happened is more related to the active efforts of the Armenian diaspora in Ukraine than to Russian policy. This is shown in particular by the fact that it was the above-mentioned information resource of the Armenian diaspora that supported this initiative, although the first interpretation cannot be completely excluded.

Whatever the case, Kiev’s real economic interests did not permit it to reject military cooperation with Azerbaijan. And as early as November 2011, after meeting in Almaty at the sitting of the CIS Council of Defense Ministers, the then defense ministers of Azerbaijan, S. Abiev, and of Ukraine, M. Ezhel, signed an Action Plan for Bilateral Cooperation for 2012.\(^{42}\)

Information first spread by the Ukrainian website mil.in.ua, which specialized in covering military security problems, and then reprinted by Azeri information resources showed that the two countries were continuing their military-technical cooperation. The report said that the Azerbaijan Republic entered a contract for the delivery of defense production manufactured at the Topaz plant in Donetsk. Journalists concluded that the matter concerned the deliveries of *Kolchuga* radar stations—this was precisely what the Topaz plant specialized in.\(^{43}\) There was no official confirmation or denial of the information on the planned deliveries of *Kolchugas* from either the Azeri or Ukrainian side, but nor did anyone deny a contract had been signed.

Now, two years after this information appeared, it is difficult to say whether the Ukrainian side was able to at least partially carry out the contract, or whether its implementation was halted due to the fact that the Topaz plant was in the combat zone and its equipment, according to the Ukrainian National Security Service, was removed to Russia.\(^{44}\)

But let us return to the events of 2012. The fact that the sides continued to actively engage in military cooperation was also mentioned at the meeting between Azeri Defense Minister S. Abiev and his Ukrainian colleague D. Salamatin, who was appointed to this post in February 2012, and before that occupied the post of general director of the Ukroboronprom state concern, that is, was the very person who, due to his work, promoted in every way military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ukraine. It comes as no surprise that the Ukrainian minister was warmly received in Baku, where the


\(^{41}\) See: Ibidem.


sides came to terms not only about Mr. Abiev’s return visit to Ukraine, but also about the development of bilateral relations in the defense sphere.\textsuperscript{45}

Not only the information reports about the meetings between officials mention the continuation of military cooperation with Ukraine, a few other facts also indirectly show it. For example, in October 2012, the Azeri information portal Aze.az reported that modernization of Mi-24 strike helicopters was continuing in the country under the Mi-24 Super Hind program of the ATE Aerospace company and Azerbaijan’s Azairtechservice company, together with other\textsuperscript{46} “foreign partners.”\textsuperscript{46} It can be claimed with a large degree of probability that there were also Ukrainian enterprises among the latter, since beginning in 2009 they delivered some of the equipment and arms for improving these vehicles, as mentioned above.

In 2012, Azerbaijan continued to purchase special armored vehicles in Ukraine, since there was a report on the purchase of 14 evacuation BTS-5B vehicles created on the basis of the T-72 tank.\textsuperscript{47}

Since the beginning of 2013, the flow of information about new contracts between Azerbaijan and Ukraine in the military sphere has noticeably decreased. There are two possible explanations for this.

- First, by the indicated time, the Azeri side had completed equipping its armed forces with heavy weapons of the previous generation, while the Ukrainian side was not ready to offer Baku any exclusive samples of new combat systems, which cannot be said of Kiev’s competitors—Russia, Turkey, and particularly Israel.
- Second, by this time, performance of earlier signed agreements was underway, so there was no urgent need to sign new ones.

Admittedly, the sides continued to cooperate in the modernization of technology and established joint production of some types of arms.

All the same, a certain amount of information about military-technical cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ukraine continued to come in. For example, in August 2013, it became clear that along with a few NATO countries, Azerbaijan was the purchaser of Ukrainian radar stations manufactured by the Iskra plant.\textsuperscript{48}

The events in Kiev (the opposition demonstrations of forces dissatisfied with the then president Viktor Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, which began in the fall of 2013) did not at first influence the interest of the Ukrainian side in continuing military-technical cooperation with Azerbaijan. For example, on 29 November 2013, Azeri Minister of the Defense Industry Ya. Jamalov received a delegation headed by General Director of Ukraine’s Ukrspetseksport A. Kovalenko. At the meeting, the sides came to terms on the development of cooperation between the Ministry of the Defense Industry of Azerbaijan and Ukrspetseksport.\textsuperscript{49}

Nor did the employees of Ukroboronprom lag behind their colleagues. They too, ignoring the processes going in Ukraine, were willing in December 2013 to offer the Azeri military BTR-4MB


\textsuperscript{46} I. Jafarov, “Azerbaijan is Increasing the Number of Helicopters Modernized under the Mi-24 Super Hind Program,” available in Russian at [http://www.aze.az/news_azerbaycan_uvelichivaet_ch_83612.html].


armored transporters. It was presumed that the Azeri side would be able to acquaint themselves more closely with the combat capabilities of the vehicle at the First Azeri Exhibition of the Defense Industry ADEX-2014, which was to be held in September 2014.50

The many experts and ordinary visitors to the exhibition were able to acquaint themselves with the leading manufacturers of hardware, arms, and auxiliary equipment in the halls of Baku Expo Center. A total of 200 companies and 23 official delegations from 34 countries of the world51 participated in the exhibition, including from Azerbaijan and Ukraine.

According to the author of this article’s personal observations, the Ukroboronprom stand did not particularly stand out at ADEX 2014, particularly since it did not have any full-scale models of heavy vehicles, including the promised BTR-4MB. The representatives of the Ukrainian delegation themselves did not hide the fact that the capacities of Ukrainian defense enterprises are currently engaged more in fulfilling various contracts for their own armed forces than carrying out foreign contracts. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian side showed it was willing to establish cooperation with new partners. Admittedly, this mainly applied to deliveries of various engineering vehicles and electronic aviation technology defense systems.

Conclusion

The military-technical cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ukraine has come a long way. During this time, Kiev has always shown itself to be a relatively reliable supplier of a variety of combat systems for the needs of Azerbaijan’s defense and security structures and equipment for the needs of Azerbaijan’s Ministry of the Defense Industry, while Baku has always paid for its purchases on time and in full.

The healthy pragmatism in this sphere has also promoted a strengthening of interstate relations. In so doing, relations in the military-technical cooperation have not undergone any serious revision during the changes in political regime in Kiev. In our opinion, the accumulated experience of interaction between Azerbaijan and Ukraine will make it possible for the countries to continue enjoying all the advantages of the military-technical cooperation they have created between themselves. In so doing, it cannot be excluded that Ukraine may become a purchaser of Azeri military-technical hardware, for example, drones, which Azerbaijan has already been successfully manufacturing for several years and is now offering in the international markets.

In any case, despite the circumstances Ukrainian gunmakers are currently experiencing, Azeri-Ukrainian military-technical cooperation will not become a thing of the past.