

Initiative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Formation of a Global-Regional Partnership: UN – OIC Model

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Abstract—Modern international relations are marked by increased instability, the emergence of new armed conflicts and exacerbation of old ones, threats coming from international terrorism, as well as challenges to international peace and security. In such conditions, not a single subject of international law is able to cope with these negative trends alone. In this regard, collective efforts of states at the sites of international intergovernmental organizations, as well as the expansion of inter-organizational cooperation, in particular between the UN and the OIC, can make a significant contribution to collective measures to maintain international peace and security and ensure human rights in the modern world. Azerbaijan's proposals to develop a model of a global-regional partnership in the framework of cooperation between the UN and the OIC are designed to strengthen the international security system, intensify the fight against the growing geography of international terrorism and extremism, and also promote the ideas of tolerance and multiculturalism.

Keywords—Azerbaijan; UN; OIC; EU; international organizations; peace; security global-regional partnership

I. INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the USSR and restoration of state independence in 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan became a full member of the world political system. Having received the recognition of the international community as a subject of international law, Azerbaijan began to shape its foreign policy on the basis of the principles of good neighborliness, respect for sovereignty and the inviolability of state borders.

For recognition of Azerbaijan as an independent participant of international relations and a full actor of international dialogue, it was essential, in addition to bilateral relations with sovereign states, to enter international intergovernmental organizations. The admission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN in 1992 and the de-jure recognition of the country as a subject of international law endowed with rights and obligations arising from this status can be considered a landmark event in this direction.

Along with this international universal platform, the Republic of Azerbaijan joined international regional

organizations, thereby having established itself as a reliable partner in ensuring both international and regional security. One of such international intergovernmental organizations became the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (the OIC). For 27 years, cooperation with the OIC is of particular importance for the Republic of Azerbaijan, which successfully initiates and implements international projects to maintain peace and security in the Islamic world, as well as to spread the ideas of Islamic solidarity, religious and national tolerance, and multiculturalism. One of the important initiatives put forward by the Republic of Azerbaijan is the need to develop interregional cooperation between the UN and the OIC, as two international platforms, called upon to prove the importance of solving global problems in the framework of diplomacy and multilateralism, which is today more relevant than ever before. The initiative of Azerbaijan is intended to make a significant contribution to the formation of a global-regional partnership system in order to maintain international peace and security, as well as ensure universal respect for human rights.

In order to analyze the activities of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the OIC, the author used a method of descriptive comparative analysis. The modeling method used in this article allowed to predict the future institutional and substantive forms of the OIC activities in the framework of initiatives and proposals of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

II. GLOBAL-REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

In view of rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Second World War that eventually culminated in the founding of the United Nations, cold-war polarization and ideological conflicts struck a serious blow to the system of collective security. Therefore, states employed traditional mechanisms of conciliation and dispute settlement amidst unsuccessful attempts to centralize the prohibition of the use of force. Further elaboration of the principle of non-aggression served the legitimate development needs, as the divergences between blocs continued to emerge [13].

Contemporary international relations are marked by the confrontational nature of relations between the West and

Russia, the new growth of the arms race, as well as abstraction from the principles of international law and the decisions of international organizations. At the same time, the challenges to peace and security coming from terrorism, armed conflicts, extremism, and propaganda of national and religious hostility dictate the need to unite the collective efforts of states for a timely and effective response. However, recent decades have shown that states, judging from their geopolitical interests, sweep aside the issues on the agenda of international organizations or make decisions in accordance with their national interests. Such an approach not only undermines the effectiveness of international organizations [6] and creates the impression that international law is ephemeral, but also poses a threat to the system of international relations [7].

In Reference [5], the UN member states recognize the fact that today's threats to peace and security transcend the national borders of states, and therefore it is necessary to unite collective efforts based on the norms and principles of international law. For this reason, leaders of all states reaffirm their commitment to "security consensus based on the recognition that many threats are interlinked, that development, peace, security and human rights are mutually reinforcing, that no State can best protect itself by acting entirely alone and that all States need an effective and efficient collective security system pursuant to the purposes and principles of the Charter".

It is regrettable to state the following fact: international relations of the last 70 years since the end of the Second World War and the creation of the UN showed that the international community again failed to prevent wars, the eradication of which was the main statutory task of the UN. Moreover, not a single state is capable of fighting alone with modern challenges and threats. It became an urgent task to adopt a strategy of a global-regional partnership, which would unite effort to respond decisively to the existing negative trends under the auspices of a universal international organization, the UN, and such regional subjects of international law as the OIC.

The choice of the OIC among regional actors is not accidental. If one pays attention to the above-mentioned negative trends, it is easy to notice that the geography of its distribution falls on the share of states and regions belonging to the OIC.

In this regard, since its foundation, the OIC has been concerned with the various conflicts in the Middle East. The first internal conflict broke out between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Jordan in 1970. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and President Abdul Nasir of Egypt jointly led an OIC initiative to settle differences. Consequently, the situation was resolved in a manner satisfactory to all the participants. In 1974, the OIC played a significant mediating role in resolving the conflict between Pakistan and the newly-independent state of Bangladesh and acquired credibility in the eyes of many Muslims. The Iran-Iraq war in the early 1980s was a turning point for the OIC's sustained involvement in crises. As soon as the conflict broke out, the OIC formed an Islamic Peace Committee and formulated a comprehensive proposal for a lasting cease-fire. The UN, which was also involved in addressing the question, later passed a resolution endorsing the OIC proposals. However, the OIC failed to reach a peaceful settlement and

persuade the conflicting parties to replace the logic of confrontation with that of negotiation. Now a major issue is whether or not the organization will have enough potential to combat contemporary challenges, including external interference in the Muslim world. The OIC seems to be an appropriate venue to effectively tackle such problems [14].

In the end, the tragic consequences of the so-called "Arab spring" that shook the Middle East and North Africa are enough to fill the agenda of the UN Security Council. In addition to issues of ensuring peace and security that fall within the competence of the Security Council, the need for international protection of human rights, both within the UN and the OIC, acquires special significance.

However, it is initially important to mention that in the model of a global-regional partnership, the UN Security Council will continue to play the role of the main international body to ensure peace and collective security. At the same time, involvement of the OIC in this process can significantly ease the burden of an "overloaded" Security Council, as well as take into account the views and interests of regional actors when making decisions at the global level.

The fact that the UN Security Council itself initiated the expansion of inter-organizational cooperation deserves special attention. Moreover, there was a reservation that regional subjects of international law are more aware of the root causes of conflicts. This in turn is the key to greater efficiency in their resolution [4].

For example, a constructive dialogue between the United Nations and the European Union has turned into a long-term, reliable and trustful institutionalized partnership. The EU participated in civilian and military crisis management alongside the UN, such as EUFOR Tchad/RCA in support of MINURCAT in 2008–2009, EUFOR RCA as a bridging operation to the UN Mission in the Central African Republic in 2014, etc., and demonstrated its ability to work together, meet challenges in various regions and address emergencies [16].

A significant contribution to the overall efforts to maintain peace and collective security, made by international regional organizations, is also noted in [5]. At the time of the summit, the UN member states spoke "for the expansion of relations between the UN and regional organizations on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter". Moreover, a clear intention was expressed: "to expand cooperation by formalizing agreements between the respective secretariats, and, if necessary, by involving regional organizations in the work of the Security Council; to ensure that regional organizations that have the potential for conflict prevention or peacekeeping consider the possibility of making such a potential part of the UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS); to strengthen cooperation in the economic, social and cultural fields" [10].

The special significance of regional organizations, in particular the OIC, lies in the fact that they take measures at the level of regional actors which take into account the circumstances prevailing in a particular country or region, and thereby reflect a different nature of political priorities and economic resources. In addition, according to a study conducted by the United Nations University in the framework of the program of comparative studies in the field of regional integration, international regional organizations have

considerable authority at the local level, which in its turn contributes to their greater influence on the member states that are bound by structures, as well as the norms and principles of international law.

Further, this study notes that “all regional organizations have the potential to prevent conflict, which is embodied both in their legislative mandates and in the framework of operational mechanisms”.

Data on distribution of policy topics reflect deep perceptions on the global development agenda and the policy-making process. The first eye-catching thing is the equitable allocation of agenda items, where a small set of issues prevails in the political discourse. This can be witnessed in relation to all IOs, with the top five topics accounting for between 67 and 83 per cent of the agenda. Secondly, foreign-policy orientation rests mostly on common values and needs. IOs give recurring attention to substantive concerns under the pillar of global governance, including economic development and security [15].

Thus, development of a unified model of a global-regional partnership will make a significant contribution to the overall efforts to maintain peace and security, in case of detailed regulation of the role of each member of this partnership.

The Republic of Azerbaijan came forward with a similar initiative in 2013, being represented in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member. Azerbaijan, as a member of the UN and the OIC, has put forward similar proposals, guided by the “need for collective efforts to ensure international security, combat the growing geography of international terrorism and extremism, and strengthen the ideas of tolerance and multiculturalism” [12].

III. UN-OIC: DIALOGUE OF ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE INITIATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

The first special meeting in the history of cooperation between the UN and the OIC was organized at the initiative of Azerbaijan in 2013, when the country performed its functions of maintaining international peace and security as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. During the meeting, a presidential statement was adopted, in which “a commitment to continue international dialogue in order to promote ideas of tolerance and strengthen international peace” was emphasized. Moreover, the statement included the intention to take coordinated actions “to prevent and resolve armed conflicts, combat terrorism, and ensure the international protection of human rights” [8].

Cooperation with the OIC and the formation of a global-regional partnership in the framework of the UN-OIC model are of particular importance for the Republic of Azerbaijan, because via both international platforms the country is trying to present to the world community fair information about the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict [3]. It is noteworthy that both the UN and the OIC adopted resolutions calling for a peaceful settlement of the conflict within the framework of the principles of territorial integrity and the inviolability of state borders [9].

Armed conflicts and terrorism pose the greatest threat to international peace and security, therefore cooperation of the

UN and the OIC in the framework of the global-regional partnership model proposed by the Republic of Azerbaijan should be implemented in order to unite the collective efforts of states to develop a response to these threats. Thus, of particular interest is the need to support the UN in developing common preventive strategies, as well as strategies to resolve armed conflicts and combat terrorism. This, in turn, requires an institutional approach, in particular, an effective system for coordinating the activities of the UN bodies and the OIC responsible for ensuring international peace and security. The issue of reforming bodies and mechanisms operating within the framework of both organizations with exclusive functions for the implementation of these statutory goals becomes more urgent.

Special attention should be paid to the institution of closed meetings of the UN Security Council, which is reasonably criticized for the fact that a number of countries that are directly affected by the issues under discussion are not invited to these meetings. Among these countries are OIC member states. Taking into account this significant flaw in the working methods of the Security Council, the Republic of Azerbaijan advocates an open dialogue between the Security Council and countries that are not represented in the Security Council, which, as a result, “will significantly increase the level of confidence in the decision-making process within the main international universal platform for cooperation states” [11]

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Republic of Azerbaijan attaches special importance to the OIC as a fruitful international intergovernmental platform for state cooperation. Thus, on January 10, 2017, at a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers dedicated to the results of the socio-economic development of Azerbaijan in 2016, President Ilham Aliyev noted that the country occupies a special place in the Islamic world: “Look at what the leaders of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation say about our country, how highly they appreciate it. Muslim countries that sometimes do not get along with each other also treat us with great respect. This is our policy. Our policy is sincere, loyal, fair, principled and courageous” [1].

In 2017, Azerbaijan that has been one of the main centers of Islamic civilization for centuries successfully hosted the Games of Islamic Solidarity. This way Azerbaijan once again proved its adherence to its religious values, as well as effort to unite the countries of the Islamic world.

Moreover, the model of multiculturalism, which in Azerbaijan is regarded not only as a state policy, but also a way of life of people, is recognized worldwide as an example for the development of an inclusive society, in which human rights and freedoms have the highest value, regardless of national, religious or racial accessories. This is of particular importance in the modern world, when religious values are at gunpoint, religion itself is used as a screen for extremist propaganda, and the states of the Islamic world become centers of terrorism and religious intolerance.

Although there are various opinions regarding the OIC’s role in the global area, the organization remains the world’s second largest inter-governmental body after the United Nations, and it is open-minded. The OIC enjoys the vast potential that needs to implement positive change [17].

The analysis revealed the main directions of close cooperation between the UN and the OIC in the framework of the global-regional partnership in order to maintain international peace and ensure collective security. To implement this, without exaggeration, fateful mission proposed by the Republic of Azerbaijan and supported by both international intergovernmental organizations, it is necessary to carry out a reform in the structures of these international platforms. Reforming the institutional structure and building a close dialogue between the UN and the OIC will reduce the level of workload of the Security Council, which performs the basic statutory function of ensuring peace and maintaining international security, and will also lead to democratization in international politics by taking into account the opinions of all participants in the international dialogue. Such an approach, based on the idea of multilateralism and on the principles of international law and the common interests of the world community, can be a key to the predictability and stability of the modern system of international relations. It is obvious that success in this direction depends on the political will of the states of the international community, which must give up their geopolitical interests and show due interest in making collective efforts to ensure a peaceful future for mankind.

V. CONCLUSION

Thus, there is no doubt that collective security in the modern multipolar world depends on the effective cooperation of all the states of the world community. To ensure such cooperation, it is necessary to strengthen the role of international institutions designed to maintain international peace and security. Enhancing the effectiveness of international organizations to make timely decisions on pressing issues of international life with the broad agreement of all interested parties is possible by strengthening inter-organizational cooperation. The model of a global-regional partnership proposed by Azerbaijan through the example of the UN and the OIC cooperation is intended to unite the collective efforts of states from different geographic regions in order to respond promptly to the negative trends of a rapidly globalizing, post-bipolar world.

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