



The Manufactured Geography of Azerbaijan

Historical Revisionism, Israeli-Azerbaijani Strategic Interests, and
Territorial Narratives Concerning Armenia and Iran

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Abstract

The first republic to adopt Azerbaijan as the name of an independent state in the eastern South Caucasus was proclaimed on May 28, 1918. Historical Azerbaijan, also rendered Azarbaijan or Atropatene in different contexts, primarily designated a region associated with northwestern Iran. Territories to the north of the Aras were known in different periods by other geographic and political names, including Arran and Shirvan. The linguistic and cultural connections across the river are real; the proposition that the Russian-Persian treaties divided an existing sovereign Azerbaijani state is a different and substantially more difficult claim.¹

This paper distinguishes the political creation of the 1918 republic from the earlier history of its inhabitants; reviews the 1813 Treaty of Gulistan and the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay; examines the Ottoman military role in 1918 and subsequent British administration; evaluates the relationship between historical naming and modern "Northern," "Southern," and "Western Azerbaijan" terminology; and situates those claims alongside Israel's strategic partnership with Azerbaijan and the unresolved consequences of the displacement of Artsakh's Armenian population.

Its central finding is that historical geography must not be used as a shortcut to sovereignty. Modern territorial rights arise from a complex body of law, treaties, state practice, self-determination, human rights, and adjudicated obligations. The absence of a state called Azerbaijan before 1918 does not by itself negate the rights of the present Azerbaijani state. Equally, the presence of Turkic-speaking communities in Iran or the historic residence of Azerbaijanis in Armenia does not establish a sovereign Azerbaijani title to those territories.

Key Findings

1. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was proclaimed on May 28, 1918. Its independence declaration described the territory of the new state as southeastern Transcaucasia; it did not proclaim sovereignty over Iranian Azerbaijan.²
2. The treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) rearranged Persian and Russian control of specified Caucasian territories. They did not partition a previously sovereign modern Azerbaijani republic, and neither treaty calls the territories ceded to Russia "Azerbaijan."³
3. The historical region called Azerbaijan is not identical to the territorial boundaries of the present Republic of Azerbaijan. The names Arran, Shirvan, and other regional designations require careful treatment rather than retrospective replacement.⁴
4. The 1918 republic emerged from an indigenous political movement, but Ottoman intervention was indispensable to its capture of Baku. Britain initially fought against the forces taking the city and later administered it after the armistice. A claim that either empire simply invented the republic fails to account for this chronology.⁵
5. The term "Western Azerbaijan," when applied by Azerbaijani state-backed institutions to the territory of the Republic of Armenia, is not an innocuous restatement of historical nomenclature. On December 24, 2022, President Ilham Aliyev declared that "present-day Armenia is our land." The term's official political uses, territorial implications, and accompanying claims require scrutiny against the internationally recognized sovereignty of Armenia.⁶
6. Israel and Azerbaijan have developed a substantial security relationship. Public arms-transfer research establishes Israeli provision of major weapons systems, including systems used in the 2020 attack. That fact does not by itself establish coordination between Israeli officials, particular scholars, and the editors of the *Jerusalem Post*.⁷
7. The role of Brenda Shaffer should be assessed by comparing her published historical and strategic arguments, institutional affiliations, and relevant disclosures against primary sources. Motive, payment, editorial control, or deliberate falsification should not be asserted without evidence.
8. The rights of displaced Armenians from Artsakh, including return and protection of property and identity records, cannot be settled by historical naming arguments or by public-relations campaigns. The International Court of Justice ordered measures concerning safe return in November 2023.⁸

Maps, Charts, and Tables

Maps

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Part I. The Claim That Azerbaijan Was “Split”

The claim that "Russian advances in the South Caucasus split Azerbaijan in two" performs more work than its brevity suggests.⁹ First, it asks the reader to imagine an identifiable unit called Azerbaijan before the nineteenth-century Russo-Persian treaties. Second, it treats that unit as though it possessed political continuity with the republic proclaimed in 1918. Third, it invites a conclusion about contemporary borders. Each step needs independent evidence.

The existence of an Azerbaijani people, the historical importance of Turkic languages, and the fact that communities now identify as Azerbaijani on both sides of the Aras do not establish that a sovereign nation-state of that name was divided by the treaties. Cultural continuity is not equivalent to institutional continuity. Nor is the lack of a nineteenth-century nation-state proof that the modern people lack a legitimate national identity. Those symmetrical errors must be avoided.

Part II. What the Historical Names Actually Designated

The geographic record begins with a distinction between Azerbaijan as a historical region and Azerbaijan as the name of a twentieth-century state. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* defines Azarbaijan as a "historical region of northwestern Iran, east of Lake Urmia," while Arran and Shirvan were long-established names for territories north of the Aras. These terms changed meaning over time and were not always used consistently by chroniclers. That variability is precisely why the modern state name cannot be imposed mechanically on every older map.¹⁰

The correct inquiry is not whether any medieval writer ever used an expansive regional label. It is whether the label, at the time and in the context cited, denoted a state, a province, a cultural zone, an administrative jurisdiction, or a retrospective geographic convention. A white paper that treats each occurrence of the word Azerbaijan as a territorial title commits the same methodological error it should be exposing.

The naming question has a second dimension. When the Muslim political leadership of eastern Transcaucasia chose the name Azerbaijan in 1918, the choice had implications for Iran, where the name was already associated with a historical province. The Iranian concern was registered at the time. The new government, to allay it, used the term "Caucasian Azarbaijan" in documents for circulation abroad, and in 1920 the autonomous government in Tabriz renamed the Iranian province in order to dissociate it from the Caucasian republic that had taken its name.¹¹

Modern political geography of the South Caucasus



Present-day boundaries only. Not a reconstruction of historical territorial claims.
Base: GSHHG political coastline/border dataset via Basemap; city markers approximate.

Map 1. Modern reference geography of the South Caucasus, showing present-day national boundaries only. Base data: GSHHG; city locations approximate.

Part III. Gulistan and Turkmenchay

The Treaty of Gulistan, concluded in 1813, and the Treaty of Turkmenchay, concluded in 1828, marked successive stages in the transfer of authority from Qajar Iran to the Russian Empire in the Caucasus. They are indispensable documents because their territorial clauses can be read without relying on the terminology of a later national movement.¹²

The relevant question is what those treaties actually say. In the third article of the Treaty of Gulistan, the Shah recognizes Russian sovereignty over Karabakh and Ganja, then renamed Elizabetspol, and over Shaki, Shirvan, Kuba, Derbent, Baku, and the part of Talysh held by Russia. In the third article of the Treaty of Turkmenchay, he cedes the khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan. Neither treaty calls any of these territories Azerbaijan. The only appearance of the name in either instrument is the fifteenth article of the Treaty of Turkmenchay, which grants an amnesty to the inhabitants of "the Province called Azerbijan," the Iranian province south of the Aras that Russian troops then occupied.¹³ The treaties do not refer to an existing sovereign Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which would not be proclaimed for another ninety years. Describing them as a partition of the modern republic is therefore anachronistic. Describing them as separating related populations or regions that later came to be imagined within a wider Azerbaijani national geography is a different, historically arguable proposition.

Table 1. Treaty evidence

Treaty	Territorial provisions
Treaty of Gulistan, 1813	Russia and Iran. Arts. 2–3: Russian sovereignty over Karabakh, Ganja (Elizabetspol), Shaki, Shirvan, Kuba, Derbent, Baku, and part of Talysh. The word "Azerbaijan" does not appear.
Treaty of Turkmenchay, 1828	Russia and Iran. Art. 3: cession of the khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan. Art. 4: boundary along the Aras. Art. 15: amnesty for "the Province called Azerbijan," the Iranian province south of the Aras.

Source: Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, vol. 13, Persia app. nos. 5 and 7.

No treaty analysis should stop at the absence of a particular name. The legal status of present borders also depends on subsequent imperial administration, the dissolution of the Russian Empire, the formation of Soviet republics, Soviet internal boundaries, the collapse of the USSR, recognition, and international law. The distinction between a flawed historical slogan and a valid present state boundary is fundamental.

Part IV. The Republic of 1918 and the Limits of Two Creation Myths

The short-lived Transcaucasian federation collapsed in May 1918. Georgia declared independence on May 26; Armenia and Azerbaijan followed on May 28. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was declared in Tiflis, before its leaders controlled Baku. Its founding declaration described southeastern Transcaucasia and guaranteed political and civil rights to all citizens regardless of nationality, religion, class, or sex. The document deserves to be read as a contemporary constitutional statement rather than as an exhibit in an argument about ancient sovereignty.¹⁴

The Attack on Karabakh offers a particularly useful correction to competing narratives. It documents an indigenous political movement that existed before Ottoman forces captured Baku, while also establishing that the Ottoman military intervention made the republic's entry into that city possible. The book summarizes the relationship in a sentence that captures the distinction: "The honest verdict is that an indigenous movement, electorally real, was installed in its own capital by a foreign army it could not have entered without, and was deformed by the debt."¹⁵

That observation should guide the white paper. To argue that Azerbaijan was created solely by Ottoman or British fiat is to discard evidence of local political organization. To present the republic as the uninterrupted restoration of a state divided a century earlier is to discard the actual founding date and declaration. Neither mythology survives a chronological reading.

The British sequence is similarly instructive. British troops under Lionel Dunsterville opposed the Ottoman-led forces approaching Baku in 1918. After the Ottoman defeat, Britain returned and exercised substantial influence over administration and contested territorial arrangements. As *The Attack on Karabakh* states, "The claim that Britain conceived the republic dies on the calendar."¹⁶ The issue is not authorship alone but the political and administrative consequences of outside intervention.

Part V. Armenia, Artsakh, and the Dispute over Territorial Continuity

Historical Armenian political, ecclesiastical, and cultural institutions in Artsakh predate the twentieth-century Azerbaijani republic. The Armenian melikdoms, monasteries such as Gandzasar and Dadivank, and the historical record of Khachen are central to any investigation of the region. Yet the existence of these institutions, however important, must be distinguished from the modern legal question of sovereign title. The paper should present both kinds of evidence without conflating them.

The interwar record is decisive to the structure of the dispute. The collapse of the Russian Empire, competing Armenian and Azerbaijani claims, British provisional arrangements, Soviet decisions in 1921, and the later creation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast must be traced as distinct steps. The primary record includes the League of Nations proceedings of December 1920 on Azerbaijan's application for admission and the protocols of the Caucasian Bureau sessions of July 4 and 5, 1921, both examined in Part XI.¹⁷

The mass departure of the Armenian population of Artsakh in September 2023 introduced a separate and urgent legal dimension. Historical disagreement cannot extinguish the rights of displaced persons. The International Court of Justice's November 17, 2023 provisional-measures order called on Azerbaijan to ensure that persons who left Nagorno-Karabakh after September 19 and wish to return can do so in a safe, unimpeded, and expeditious manner, among other protections.¹⁸

Part VI. Israel, Azerbaijan, and the Strategic Uses of History

The Israeli-Azerbaijani relationship has identifiable strategic dimensions: security cooperation, arms procurement, energy trade, and shared concerns about Iran. The existence of those interests is relevant when examining how Azerbaijan is presented to international audiences. It does not establish that every favorable article about Baku was directed by a government or that a particular historian was instructed to advance a specific narrative.

Data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute show that Israel accounted for 69 percent of Azerbaijan's imports of major arms in 2016–2020. SIPRI records Israeli deliveries of loitering munitions, reconnaissance drones, ballistic missiles, and an air-defense system.¹⁹

The proper investigative question is therefore twofold. What is independently established about the material relationship? And what can be demonstrated about the production and dissemination of historical claims? The first can be answered substantially from public records. The second requires a defined corpus of articles, publications, interviews, disclosures, and organizational relationships. A rigorous white paper will not pretend the second question has already been answered merely because the first has.

Part VII. Brenda Shaffer and the Historical Narrative

Brenda Shaffer's writing on Azerbaijan, Iran, identity, and regional strategy deserves close examination because it participates in an influential English-language debate about the relationship between ethnicity, history, and state borders. Her claims are assessed here against the sources on which they depend and against the judgment of specialists in Iranian and Caucasian history.

Three tests apply. First, does a publication distinguish an ethnolinguistic community from a historically sovereign state? Second, does it use the term "Azerbaijan" consistently when moving between Iranian provinces, the nineteenth-century Caucasus, and the post-1918 republic? Third, does it treat political claims involving Iranian territory as established historical rights, or as contested contemporary aspirations?

Transparency is also a legitimate subject of inquiry. Institutional appointments, consulting relationships, and publicly documented funding or disclosure arrangements may bear on how readers assess advocacy. But criticism must rest on identified records, dates, and exact statements. Without them, allegations of intentional fabrication, undisclosed direction, or coordinated propaganda should be presented as research questions, not findings.

Part VIII. Northern, Southern, and Western Azerbaijan

The expressions "Northern Azerbaijan," "Southern Azerbaijan," and "Western Azerbaijan" do not perform the same political work. Northern and Southern Azerbaijan can be used in ethnonational discourse to connect communities on opposite sides of the Aras. Western Azerbaijan, in its present Azerbaijani state-supported institutional usage, refers to claims concerning the territory of the Republic of Armenia. A comparison must examine each phrase in its actual institutional context.

President Ilham Aliyev stated the doctrine plainly on December 24, 2022, at the new headquarters of the Western Azerbaijan Community in Baku: "Armenia was never present in this region before. Present-day Armenia is our land." He called Western Azerbaijan "our historical land" and said, "The primary objective is our return." On January 26, 2023, the Community adopted its "Concept of Return," which describes the Republic of Armenia only as "a political-legal reality" and demands the return of property and communal lands, the use of the Azerbaijani language in government, and the right of returnees "to form local security forces."²⁰

There is a critical distinction between individual rights of return and territorial sovereignty. People displaced from their homes may possess legitimate human-rights claims regardless of ethnicity. Such claims do not automatically entitle another state to annex or govern the territory in which those homes stand. A defensible legal framework must address Armenian and Azerbaijani displacement claims on their merits, without using either population's suffering to erase the sovereignty or rights of the other.

Part IX. The Legal Questions That Historical Narratives Cannot Decide

Historical priority is not a universal rule of title. International law contains principles governing sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination, the prohibition on the use of force, minority protection, property, restitution, and the prevention and punishment of international crimes. Those principles interact and sometimes conflict. No slogan about an ancient map can replace their application to a specific case.

Genocide is a legal characterization with a defined requirement of prohibited acts and specific intent. Allegations concerning the treatment of Armenians must be investigated and adjudicated on evidence. The International Court of Justice has issued binding provisional measures in proceedings between Armenia and Azerbaijan under the racial-discrimination convention; those measures should not be misrepresented as a final judicial determination of genocide.²¹

Claims concerning occupation likewise require identification of the territory, relevant legal period, applicable law, and the actor exercising effective control. The fact that one government labels territory "liberated," or another labels it "occupied," does not itself resolve the legal dispute. An impartial approach would preserve records, permit access to affected communities, protect cultural property, and leave contested legal conclusions to competent procedures.

Part X. Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1. The claim that the 1813 and 1828 treaties split an existing sovereign Azerbaijani state is not supported by the founding chronology of the republic or by the ordinary reading of the treaties. It confuses a later national geography with earlier imperial jurisdictions.

Finding 2. The historical names Azerbaijan, Arran, and Shirvan should be represented in their period-specific meanings. Selective modern labeling risks making territorial claims appear older and more settled than the documentary record permits.

Finding 3. The 1918 republic was neither a simple foreign invention nor an ancient state reappearing unchanged. Indigenous politics, Ottoman military intervention, and subsequent British administration must all be included.

Finding 4. Israeli-Azerbaijani strategic cooperation is documented and warrants analysis. Assertions of direct editorial control or coordinated disinformation by named individuals require further proof.

Finding 5. The Western Azerbaijan campaign warrants continuing scrutiny because its terminology is being deployed in relation to the internationally recognized territory of Armenia. Individual return claims and sovereign territorial claims must be separated.

Recommendation 1. Publish an annotated claims matrix matching each substantive statement in the *Jerusalem Post* article to contemporaneous primary documents and qualified scholarship.

Recommendation 2. Reproduce the independence declaration of May 28, 1918, the relevant treaty clauses, the League of Nations record of December 1920, the Caucasian Bureau protocols of July 1921, and the pertinent international legal orders in a single documentary collection.

Recommendation 3. Commission a transparent bibliographic audit of Brenda Shaffer's relevant writings, with page-precise quotations and independently documented affiliations.

Recommendation 4. Request corrections or a right of reply from the *Jerusalem Post* for any demonstrably inaccurate historical statements, specifying the original language and the source proving the error.

Recommendation 5. Demand impartial assessment of all displacement, cultural-property, occupation, and genocide allegations through appropriate legal and investigative mechanisms, without making territorial concessions a precondition of historical truth.

Part XI. The Documentary Record

1. What the *Jerusalem Post* Actually Asserts

The article under examination is Mem Husedin, "Baku Was Hitler's Target. Now It Is Erdogan's," published in the *Jerusalem Post* on October 22, 2026. Its subheading states that "true peace in our region can only be guaranteed by a grand alliance between Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Kurdistan, and a united Azerbaijan." The column states that "Russian advances in the South Caucasus split Azerbaijan in two," that "Northern Azerbaijan eventually became an independent state in 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Empire," and that Baku must champion "the unity of all Azeris under one umbrella," including those of what it calls South Azerbaijan, in Iran.²²

Three different propositions are embedded in this account. The first is that the historical geographical term Azerbaijan has a long history. The second is that Turkic-speaking communities on either side of the Aras possess substantial linguistic and cultural ties. The third is that a previously unified Azerbaijani political entity was partitioned by nineteenth-century Russo-Persian treaties. The first two propositions can be supported without accepting the third. The distinction is central to any responsible evaluation of the column.

The article also depicts President Aliyev as resisting Turkish imperial ambition. Its evidence is that Erdoğan's advisers and AKP lawmakers attacked Azerbaijan's secular school dress code, and that Aliyev answered that "everyone should know their place."²³ That exchange does not establish that Azerbaijan's security posture is primarily anti-Turkish, and it must be set against documented Turkish-Azerbaijani military cooperation, including the 2020 offensive. Disagreement over school dress codes or political rhetoric is not a substitute for a full accounting of security relationships.

The comparison of Erdoğan with Hitler is an analogy, not evidence. German strategy in 1942 assigned great importance to Caucasian petroleum, but the proposition that a present-day Turkish leader is pursuing the same objective must be established from contemporary conduct and policy. The original article does not bridge that evidentiary gap.

2. The Critical Correction in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*

The *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry "Azarbaijan" explicitly defines the historical region in northwestern Iran. Its online text describes the 1918 adoption of the name for Arran and other former Iranian khanates in the Caucasus, and notes the term "Caucasian Azerbaijan" in diplomatic usage to allay Iranian concern. More importantly, the encyclopedia's published addendum corrects an earlier formulation that had characterized the historical region as "divided between the present-day territories of Iran and the Soviet Union" by the treaties of 1813 and 1828. The corrected wording instead distinguishes the historic Iranian region from Arran and Shirvan, which "had been annexed to Russia by the treaties of Golestān (1813) and Torkamānčāy (1828)."²⁴

This is a decisive source-critical point. A critic need not insist that the name Azerbaijan was never used north of the Aras, nor deny the history of Turkic-speaking communities there. It is enough to show that a major reference work corrected a formulation susceptible to the very

geographical confusion repeated in the newspaper article. The existence of that editorial correction also warns against quoting an older encyclopedia entry without checking its addenda.

The historical names Arran, Shirvan, Karabakh, Nakhichevan, and Azerbaijan designate different types of entities at different times: regions, principalities, khanates, administrative jurisdictions, and eventually modern states. The fact that Qajar Iran lost control of territories in the Caucasus to Russia is not proof that a sovereign state called Azerbaijan was cut in two. An imperial transfer and a national partition are different legal and historical claims.

The strongest version of the argument does not deny continuity of communities. It insists that population, language, dynastic rule, provincial designation, and independent statehood be documented separately. A cultural map cannot silently become a sovereignty map.

3. The 1918 Naming Dispute and the Iranian Evidence

Iran's objection to the name was registered when the republic was founded. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* records that the new government, to allay Iranian concern, "used the term 'Caucasian Azarbaijan' in the documents for circulation abroad."²⁵ A state does not qualify its own name for foreign consumption unless it understands that the name is read abroad as a claim.

The objection was carried further inside Iran. *Encyclopaedia Iranica's* entry on Shaikh Mohammad Khiabani records that in 1920 the autonomous government in Tabriz renamed the province Āzādisetān to "dissociate the province from the former Arrān, which had been renamed 'Azarbaijan' in May 1918." The entry notes that the name has been frequently confused by later commentators with Āzādistān, and that the Tabriz government repeatedly affirmed its commitment to the preservation of Persia's territorial integrity. Khiabani's action was an objection to the naming of the Caucasian republic, not a modern separatist program.²⁶

The diplomatic and intellectual significance is considerable. The 1918 naming controversy was not invented by later Armenian polemicists. It was registered by Iranian actors at the time and was reflected in the language of contemporary regional politics. The evidence does not prove that every subsequent use of Azerbaijan north of the Aras is illegitimate. It does prove that a newspaper cannot responsibly describe the new republic's name as though its historical application were beyond dispute.

4. The League of Nations: What Can and Cannot Be Concluded

The question of the first republic's borders was put directly to the League of Nations. Azerbaijan applied for admission on November 1, 1920. On December 1, 1920, the Assembly's Fifth Committee, acting on the report of its sub-committee, concluded that it was difficult to ascertain the exact limits of the territory within which the Azerbaijani government exercised its authority, that frontier disputes with neighboring states did not permit an exact definition of Azerbaijan's boundaries, and that the provisions of the Covenant did not allow Azerbaijan's admission under the circumstances.²⁷

This evidence is important but must not be overclaimed. A finding that frontiers were unsettled in 1920 does not automatically determine modern sovereignty over Artsakh, and non-admission to the League had more than one diplomatic context. It does rebut the narrower proposition that

Azerbaijan's proclamation in 1918 fixed universally accepted borders covering all later Soviet Azerbaijani territory.

5. Soviet Decisions and the Legal Limits of Historical Arguments

The Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party took up Mountainous Karabakh at two sessions. At its evening session of July 4, 1921, the Bureau resolved: "Include Mountainous Karabakh in the Armenian SSR; hold a plebiscite in Mountainous Karabakh only." At Nariman Narimanov's request it then referred the question to the Central Committee for final decision. On July 5 the Bureau resolved instead to leave Mountainous Karabakh within the Azerbaijan SSR, with broad regional autonomy and its administrative center at Shusha.²⁸ A decision of a Soviet party body is not a treaty between sovereign Armenian and Azerbaijani states. Neither is it by itself sufficient to decide every legal consequence of Soviet dissolution in 1991.

The protocol of July 4 also disposes of the familiar story that Stalin personally cast the decisive vote. Stalin attended, but the recorded votes are those of Ordzhonikidze, Miasnikov, Kirov, Figatner, Nazaretian, Narimanov, and Makharadze.²⁹ A rigorous criticism of the 1921 process is stronger than a dramatic but inaccurate anecdote.

International law requires a separate treatment of territorial integrity, the rights of populations, the effect of Soviet administrative boundaries, claims of self-determination, the prohibition on force, and the rights of displaced persons. These doctrines overlap but are not synonyms. The historical fact that Armenians inhabited and administered an area does not by itself answer every modern question of territorial title; equally, international recognition of a state's borders does not extinguish claims arising from forced displacement, discrimination, or private-property confiscation.

6. The Strategic Alliance and the Problem of Attribution

SIPRI's records are the foundation for any account of the arms behind the 2020 assault. Israel accounted for 27 percent of Azerbaijan's imports of major arms over 2011–2020 and 69 percent in 2016–2020. Russia accounted for 60 percent over the decade and 17 percent in 2016–2020.³⁰

The significance for the *Jerusalem Post* rebuttal is not that every Israeli citizen, Jewish community, or Israeli institution supports Azerbaijani territorial claims. The relevant subject is the policy of particular states, arms suppliers, political advocates, and media contributors. Conflating those actors would weaken the analysis and obscure responsibility.

The paper can establish that Israeli-Azerbaijani cooperation developed during the 1990s and has had military and energy dimensions. It cannot infer from that cooperation alone that a specific opinion article was commissioned by either government. The defensible finding is that the article advances positions compatible with certain strategic interests while leaving out historical evidence and Armenian claims that complicate its argument.

7. Brenda Shaffer: Disclosures Versus Allegations of Coordination

The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project examined Brenda Shaffer's relationship with Azerbaijani interests in 2015. It reported that Foreign Agents Registration Act filings by

DCI Group, "a lobbying firm then under contract with Azerbaijan's embassy in Washington," record an October 10, 2012 email to Shaffer about "a white paper examining Iran's footprint in the South Caucasus and its ties to Armenia," a meeting on December 5, 2012, the day she testified before a House subcommittee, "to introduce her to media," and a meeting on February 5, 2013, "to discuss possible future writings on Azerbaijan issues." OCCRP also reported that Shaffer "has worked as an advisor to SOCAR, the state-owned State Oil Company of Azerbaijan."³¹ In September 2014 the *New York Times* appended an editors' note to her op-ed "Russia's Next Land Grab," stating that it had not disclosed that she had been an adviser to Azerbaijan's state-run oil company.³² The Atlantic Council's biography states that she has advised the Israeli Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Energy on natural gas policy and "has advised several companies involved in Caspian energy production and export."³³

These records are relevant to transparency. They do not establish that her 2002 book *Borders and Brethren* is wholly false, that she was paid for particular testimony, or that she coordinated Husedin's 2026 article. A defensible analysis must distinguish documentary disclosure failures alleged by investigative reporters from claims of fabrication or direction that require separate evidence.

Shaffer's claims are therefore tested at the level of citations: how she defines Azerbaijani identity, what dates and territorial categories she uses, how she treats Iranian Azerbaijani political agency, and whether her account acknowledges the 1918 naming controversy. The publisher's description of *Borders and Brethren* states that "the Azerbaijani people have been divided between Iran and the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan for more than 150 years." That formulation dates the division to the treaties of 1813 and 1828 and makes the people, not a state, the divided unit.³⁴

8. The Three Geographical Labels and Their Different Implications

"Northern Azerbaijan" can refer to the modern republic in nationalist discourse; "Southern Azerbaijan" commonly denotes Azerbaijani-speaking areas of Iran; and "Western Azerbaijan" is used by Azerbaijani state-linked institutions for territory in the Republic of Armenia. The terms have different genealogies. Treating them as a single centrally designed project without documentary proof would be an overstatement.

Yet the political relationship among the labels merits close scrutiny. A narrative that depicts the present republic as the northern half of an ancient whole invites a conclusion about the southern half. A separate narrative that recasts Armenia as western Azerbaijani homeland can influence expectations about migration, toponyms, monuments, and political borders. The existence of legitimate return and property claims does not establish a right to annex territory.

The distinction is visible in the texts themselves. Aliyev's address of December 24, 2022 calls present-day Armenia "our land" while saying, "We want to secure our rights through peaceful means." The Community's Concept of Return frames its demand as the return of individuals and "ensuring their individual and collective rights after the return," while declining to affirm Armenia's territorial integrity and describing it only as "a political-legal reality."³⁵

The Armenian and Azerbaijani displaced populations should be treated under consistent standards. Neither group forfeits individual rights because its government advances an excessive

territorial claim. A rights-based response must examine lawful return, safety, citizenship, compensation, property records, cultural heritage, and adjudication independently.

9. A Comparative Test of the *Jerusalem Post* Article

Claim: "Russian advances in the South Caucasus split Azerbaijan in two." Assessment: misleading as a statement about a pre-existing sovereign Azerbaijani state. The 1813 and 1828 treaties concerned Qajar Iran and imperial Russia; the historical geographical label and the modern republic must be distinguished.

Claim: "Northern Azerbaijan eventually became an independent state in 1991." Assessment: incomplete. The republic established in 1991 followed a prior Azerbaijan Democratic Republic proclaimed in May 1918, followed by Soviet incorporation. The dates are compatible only when the two different statehood episodes are identified.

Claim: the principal present threat to Azerbaijan is Turkish imperial expansion. Assessment: a geopolitical opinion requiring substantiation. The article's evidence of political friction must be weighed against substantial Turkish-Azerbaijani military cooperation.

Claim: "the unity of all Azeris under one umbrella," across the Iranian border, is necessary for peace. Assessment: political advocacy, not an established consequence of history. Shared language and ethnic identity do not establish a right to revise an international boundary.

Claim: a regional alliance of Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Kurdistan, and a united Azerbaijan would guarantee peace. Assessment: a policy proposal, not a factual proposition. Its consequences for Armenia, Iran, displaced populations, and the prohibition on force must be examined before it can credibly be described as a peace settlement.

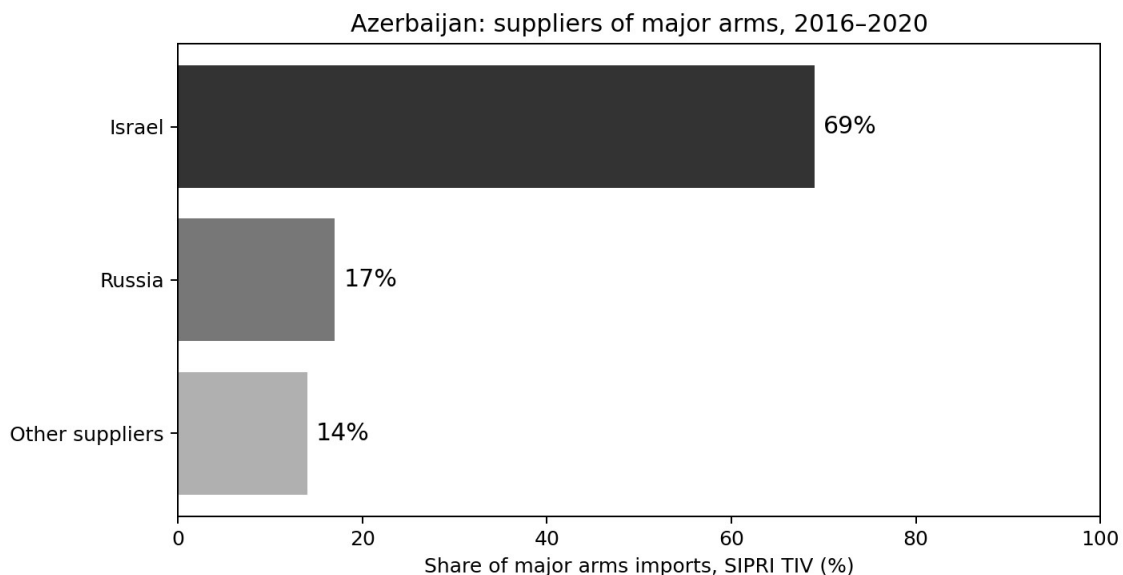
Part XII. Israel, Azerbaijan, and the Documentary Record: An Integrated Investigation

Political Zionism and the Armenian Question (2026), chapters 12, 13, and 15, supplies three research leads that substantially extend the chronological reach of this white paper: early Zionist organizing in Baku, measurable modern Israeli arms transfers, and American influence over certain Israeli defense exports.³⁶

Chapter 12 places Hovevei Zion activity in Baku in the late nineteenth century and cites later Zionist congress participation. That record does not establish that early Baku Zionist groups founded the Azerbaijani republic or directed the post-1991 bilateral alliance. A continuous institutional relationship cannot be inferred across the Soviet period merely from geographical coincidence.

Israel recognized Azerbaijan's independence on December 25, 1991, and the two states established diplomatic relations on April 7, 1992.³⁷ Israel's embassy in Baku opened in August 1993. Azerbaijan moved far more slowly: its parliament approved an embassy in Tel Aviv only in November 2022, and the embassy opened in March 2023.³⁸

The quantitative record comes from SIPRI. For 2016–2020, Israel supplied 69 percent of Azerbaijan's imports of major arms as measured by SIPRI's trend-indicator value. In the longer 2011–2020 interval, Russia was the largest supplier, accounting for 60 percent, while Israel accounted for 27 percent. These are distinct measurement periods, and neither percentage represents the cash value of all defense purchases.³⁹



Source: SIPRI, 2021. Share of transfer volume, not financial value.

Chart 1. SIPRI major-arms transfers to Azerbaijan. 2016–2020: Israel 69%, Russia 17%, other 14% (calculated remainder). SIPRI TIV, not dollar value. Source: Wezeman, Kuimova, and Wezeman, “Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020,” 11.

SIPRI identifies among Israeli deliveries Harop loitering munitions, first delivered around 2015; Hermes-900 reconnaissance drones; LORA surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, supplied in 2018; and a Barak-8 air and missile defense system, supplied in 2016. It reports that the Harop munitions "saw widespread use in 2020."⁴⁰ Delivery records do not by themselves show that a particular weapon was used in a particular strike; that requires event-level documentation.

Israeli-Azerbaijani cooperation also intersects with energy and Iran policy. A Middle East Institute analysis describes the relationship as resting on "two main pillars: patient and cordial political relations as well as defense cooperation and arms sales."⁴¹ The column under review belongs to this policy context, but a shared strategic interest is not evidence of a centrally commissioned newspaper article.

Part XIII. The Arms Flights and the Limits of Open-Source Proof

Silk Way Airlines, an Azerbaijani cargo carrier, flies Ilyushin Il-76 freighters between Baku and Israel's Ovda airbase, the only airfield in Israel through which explosives may be flown into and out of the country. *Haaretz* reported in March 2023 that Silk Way aircraft had landed at Ovda at least 92 times over the previous seven years, with peaks in mid-2016, late 2020, and late 2021, and that a 2013 exemption from Israel's Civil Aviation Authority had allowed the airline to carry explosives from Ovda to a military airfield near Baku.⁴² The Associated Press identified at least six Silk Way flights from Baku landing at Ovda between September 1 and September 17, 2023, in the days before Azerbaijan's assault on Artsakh. Israel's Defense Ministry declined to comment.⁴³

Flight records establish aircraft movements and timing. They do not disclose the cargo of any specific aircraft, and neither government has made that cargo public.

The legally consequential question is whether an identified system was delivered, whether it was used during a documented attack, whether the attack violated applicable international humanitarian law, and what the supplier knew at the relevant time. Those are different propositions requiring different records. The mere fact of an arms sale is not a judicial finding that the exporter aided genocide.

Part XIV. United States Export Controls: Authority, Exceptions, and Evidence

Chapter 15 of *Political Zionism and the Armenian Question* argues that Washington possessed influence over Israeli defense exports and did not use it to halt deliveries to Azerbaijan. The legal claim needs narrowing. Under the Arms Export Control Act and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations, retransfer of United States-origin defense articles and technical data can require American consent. That authority does not create an automatic United States veto over every wholly Israeli-designed and manufactured weapon.⁴⁴

The United States has used broader leverage before. In July 2000, under pressure from Washington, including a congressional move to withhold \$250 million in aid to Israel, Prime Minister Ehud Barak cancelled the sale of Phalcon airborne early-warning radar systems to China.⁴⁵ In 2005 the United States suspended Israel's participation in the Joint Strike Fighter program over a planned Israeli upgrade of Harpy drones previously sold to China. Israel cancelled the work, and on August 16, 2005, the two defense ministries announced an understanding on consultation over future Israeli arms transfers, which the Congressional Research Service reports has been described as giving the United States "de facto veto power over Israeli third-party arms sales that the United States deems harmful to its national security interests."⁴⁶ These precedents do not establish that identical authority applied to each Israeli weapon supplied to Azerbaijan.

The question is system-specific: which weapons delivered to Azerbaijan contained United States-origin components or technical data, what licensing and retransfer conditions applied to them, and what Washington did with the approval rights it held.

Absence of a public intervention is not proof that no private diplomatic discussion occurred, and any claim of American inaction rests on the public record alone.

Part XV. Historical Documents: Five-Source Cross-Examination

First, the Treaty of Gulistan of 1813 and the Treaty of Turkmenchay of 1828 were concluded between the Russian Empire and Qajar Iran. Their territorial articles name khanates and provinces, never "Azerbaijan," and the Treaty of Turkmenchay's single use of the name refers to the Iranian province south of the Aras.⁴⁷

Second, the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* "Azarbaijan" entry and its formal addenda and corrigenda provide unusually significant source criticism. The correction replaces wording about a divided historical Azerbaijan with wording that identifies the historical region as northwestern Iran and treats Arran and Shirvan separately. This is a documented editorial correction, not an inference.⁴⁸

Third, Iran's contemporary objection to the name is recorded in the Azerbaijani government's own use of "Caucasian Azarbaijan" in documents sent abroad and in the Tabriz government's 1920 renaming of the Iranian province to dissociate it from the new republic.⁴⁹

Fourth, the League of Nations record of December 1920 distinguishes unsettled frontiers, effective government, and admission. Its finding that Azerbaijan's frontiers could not be exactly defined does not itself settle contemporary territorial title.⁵⁰

Fifth, the Caucasian Bureau protocols of July 4 and July 5, 1921 must be read together. The party bureau's action is distinct from Soviet constitutional implementation and from subsequent international legal questions.⁵¹

Table 2. Primary documents and where they are published

Document	Where published
Declaration of Independence of Azerbaijan, May 28, 1918	Presidential Library of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828)	Aitchison, <i>A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads</i> , vol. 13, Persia app. nos. 5 and 7
League of Nations, Fifth Committee, December 1, 1920	<i>Journal of the First Assembly</i> , no. 17, 139; <i>Records of the First Assembly, Meetings of the Committees</i> , vol. 2, 173–74
Caucasian Bureau protocols, July 4 and 5, 1921	RGASPI, f. 64, op. 1, d. 21, ll. 6–7, and d. 1, l. 125; Barseghov, <i>Genotsid armian</i> , vol. 2, pt. 1, docs. 1200–1201
Aliyev address, December 24, 2022	President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, president.az
ICJ orders, February 22 and November 17, 2023	International Court of Justice, case 180

Part XVI. Brenda Shaffer: A Source Audit Rather Than an Attribution by Association

OCCRP reports that a United States lobbying firm retained by Azerbaijan's embassy recorded contacts with Brenda Shaffer concerning a white paper on Iran's footprint in the South Caucasus, introductions to media, and possible future writings. It also reports her advisory relationship with SOCAR. These facts justify a detailed disclosure audit; they do not independently establish that a particular historical assertion was fabricated or that she directed the October 2026 *Jerusalem Post* article.⁵²

Shaffer was the principal witness at the December 5, 2012 hearing of the House Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia, "Iranian Influence in the South Caucasus and the Surrounding Region." OCCRP reports that on her Truth in Testimony form she left blank the field for the organizations she represented.⁵³

Credible arguments that do not support this paper's interpretation must also be acknowledged. Acknowledging that Azerbaijani-speaking populations have a history on both sides of the Aras, and that modern Azerbaijani nationalism arose before 1918, does not require accepting the theory of a pre-existing sovereign Azerbaijan divided by the nineteenth-century treaties.

Part XVII. Artsakh, the Right of Return, and Adjudicable Claims

On November 17, 2023, by thirteen votes to two, the International Court of Justice ordered Azerbaijan to ensure safe, unimpeded and expeditious return for persons who left Nagorno-Karabakh after September 19, 2023 and wish to return; it also addressed those wishing to depart or remain, and the protection of registration, identity and private-property records. These are binding provisional measures under the racial discrimination convention, not a final judgment on genocide, sovereignty, or damages.⁵⁴

Several categories must be kept apart: judicially ordered measures; alleged breaches of those measures; independently documented displacement; cultural-heritage concerns; property and compensation claims; and disputed legal characterizations. The treatment of Armenian and Azerbaijani displaced persons should use the same individual-rights principles, while examining the particular history and security conditions of each population.

Read in the original, Aliyev's speech and the Community's Concept of Return combine a claim of historical homeland with a demand for return, for local Azerbaijani security forces, and for "an appropriate role in courts," while stopping short of an explicit claim to state borders.⁵⁵ An asserted right of displaced persons to return is legally distinct from a sovereign entitlement to annex the territory in which they formerly lived.

Conclusion: The Name Is Not the Title

The decisive question is not whether Azerbaijanis have a history. They do. Nor is it whether Azerbaijan is a sovereign state today. It is. The question is whether a historical name, moved across changing political boundaries and used in different senses over centuries, can be treated as a deed to territories that belong to other contemporary states.

When the story of a nineteenth-century "division" is told without the 1918 founding declaration, the treaties' actual language, or the older geography of Arran and Shirvan, the reader is being given a conclusion in place of an argument. When "Western Azerbaijan" is presented without the internationally recognized Republic of Armenia, the same method is being extended into the present.

The answer is not another mythology. It is the record: the treaty clause, the declaration, the archive, the court order, the displaced family, and the document that can be read by anyone. That is the standard this white paper asks journalists, scholars, governments, and its own author to meet.

Annex A. Documentary Chronology

Documentary chronology

Date	Event
October 12/24, 1813	Treaty of Gulistan transfers Karabakh, Ganja, Shaki, Shirvan, Kuba, Derbent, Baku, and part of Talysh from Qajar Iran to Russia.
February 10/22, 1828	Treaty of Turkmenchay cedes the khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan to Russia and fixes the boundary along the Aras in important sectors.
May 28, 1918	The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic is proclaimed in Tiflis.
September 1918	Ottoman-led forces capture Baku.
November 1918	British forces return after the Ottoman armistice.
April 1920	The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic is absorbed into the Soviet system.
December 1, 1920	The League of Nations Fifth Committee reports that Azerbaijan's frontiers cannot be exactly defined and that it cannot be admitted under present circumstances.
July 4–5, 1921	The Caucasian Bureau first resolves to include Mountainous Karabakh in Soviet Armenia, then resolves to leave it within Soviet Azerbaijan with regional autonomy.
1991	The Soviet Union dissolves and Armenia and Azerbaijan emerge as independent states.
December 25, 1991	Israel recognizes Azerbaijan's independence; diplomatic relations follow on April 7, 1992.
2020	Azerbaijan launches a forty-four-day military attack in and around Artsakh with extensive external military support.
December 24, 2022	President Aliyev tells the Western Azerbaijan Community that "present-day Armenia is our land."
January 26, 2023	The Western Azerbaijan Community adopts its "Concept of Return."
February 22, 2023	The International Court of Justice orders Azerbaijan to ensure unimpeded movement along the Lachin corridor.
September 1–17, 2023	At least six Silk Way Airlines flights from Baku land at Israel's Ovda airbase.
September 2023	Azerbaijan's attack on Artsakh and the mass

Date	Event
	displacement of its Armenian population.
November 17, 2023	The International Court of Justice orders provisional measures addressing, among other issues, safe return of those who left Nagorno-Karabakh.
October 22, 2026	The <i>Jerusalem Post</i> publishes Mem Husedin's column calling for "a united Azerbaijan."

Annex B. Source Integrity and Interpretation

In the October 22, 2026 *Jerusalem Post* opinion column, Mem Husedin advocates "a united Azerbaijan" in a proposed regional alliance. The column states that Russian advances "split Azerbaijan in two." The original article, rather than a paraphrase of it, is the principal object of criticism.⁵⁶

Encyclopaedia Iranica's Azarbaijan entry includes an explicit published correction to an earlier phrase describing the historical region as divided between Iran and the Soviet Union. The replacement text distinguishes historic northwestern Iran from Arran and Shirvan. The online entry dates the declaration of independence to May 26, 1918; the declaration itself is dated May 28, 1918, at Tiflis.⁵⁷

SIPRI's 69 percent figure concerns the estimated volume of major arms imported by Azerbaijan from Israel in 2016–2020, not 69 percent of all Azerbaijani military spending. Its ten-year figure for 2011–2020 is 27 percent. The different measurement windows must not be interchanged.⁵⁸

In *Political Zionism and the Armenian Question*, chapters 12, 13, and 15 provide a research trail concerning early Zionist activity in Baku, Israeli weapons, and American export leverage. The historical organizations and the modern interstate partnership are not presumed to be one continuous organization.⁵⁹

Public records of flights to Ovda establish aircraft movements and timing, not the cargo on each flight.⁶⁰

Legal claims are differentiated by authority: ICJ provisional measures are binding orders, not final rulings on genocide, sovereignty, or damages; a claim of forced displacement does not by itself establish a criminal conviction.⁶¹

About the Author

Ara Khachig Manoogian is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Global Peace International. He is an author, investigative researcher, and human rights advocate whose work concerns Armenian history, the geopolitics of the South Caucasus, international law, and the documentation of atrocity and its aftermath.

He is the grandson of Shahan Natalie, architect of Operation Nemesis, whose final student he was, and of Vahan Ivan Manoogian, an officer of the Tsar's army who organized the evacuation of Armenian civilians from Erzurum and Van to Iran during the Armenian Genocide and who spent the remainder of his life in exile after refusing Stalin's invitation to return to Soviet Armenia. Through his maternal grandmother his lineage traces to the Bagratuni royal house.

His connection to the subject of this paper is not academic. He first worked in Artsakh in 1993 and lived there full time from 1998 to 2006, where he acted as an advocate for the population against abuses committed against them. His house, his factory and his land in Artsakh remain behind the line of occupation. His investigative work has addressed human trafficking, illegal adoption networks, and institutional corruption in Armenia, Artsakh, and the United States, and has been carried by Radio Free Europe, Hetq, Kechart, and other outlets.

His books include *Betrayal: The Promise Never Kept*; *Betrayal Unfinished: Oil, Law, and the Duty to Resolve the Armenian Genocide*; *Western Azerbaijan: The Next Stage After Artsakh*; *Artsakh Is Armenia: A Legal Examination of Armenia's Reunification Record*; *The Armenian Genocide and the Architecture of Power*; *The Attack on Karabakh*; *Political Zionism and the Armenian Question: How Faith Was Used to Sell a Political Project*; *Tala'at's Confession: Not Holy War, but Plunder*; *Operation Nemesis: The Final Act*; *The Armenian Civil Contract*; and *The Great Lie*. He is the author of Global Peace International White Paper No. 1, *Western Azerbaijan: A Conspiracy Against the Armenian People*; White Paper No. 2, *A Vote Without Consequences*; White Paper No. 3, *Artsakh Is Not Lost*; and White Paper No. 4, *Armenia Is Next: Azerbaijan Said So, and the West Is Making It Possible*.

About Global Peace International

Global Peace International is an independent research and advocacy organization based in Burbank, California. GPI produces investigative and legal research on the South Caucasus, documents violations of international law affecting the Armenian people, and places that research directly before legislators, institutions, and the public.

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Notes

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