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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

GENDER EQUALITY CHALLENGES IN AZERBAIJAN'S RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PAPER

The relevance and the extent of research on the study. The study of gender equality remains highly relevant in contemporary social science due to persistent disparities and biases that continue to affect individuals globally. Despite legal advancements and increased educational and workforce opportunities for women, significant inequalities persist in areas such as political representation, economic participation, and access to healthcare. Additionally, gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, and human trafficking, continues to be widespread, further highlighting the urgency of addressing these issues. Understanding the socio-cultural and historical constructions of gender is critical for developing effective policies and interventions aimed at achieving genuine gender equity. Moreover, by examining the influence of entrenched stereotypes and cultural norms on limiting individuals' roles and opportunities, this study contributes to broader efforts in fostering a fair and inclusive society where all genders can thrive without discrimination or bias.

The examination of gender equality challenges within international organizations holds substantial relevance due to its critical impact on global governance, human rights, and socio-economic development. Despite international commitments to gender equality, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and various international treaties, gender disparities persist across many international institutions. Women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, decision-making processes, and peacekeeping missions, which often results in the neglect of women's issues and gender aspects in policy formulation and implementation. Furthermore, international organizations play a pivotal role in setting norms and standards that influence national policies and practices worldwide. Addressing gender inequality within these organizations is crucial for ensuring that they uphold the principles of fairness, inclusivity, and justice, which they proclaim. The persistence of gender biases and stereotypes within these institutions can undermine their legitimacy and effectiveness in promoting peace, security, and

sustainable development. By focusing on gender equality challenges in international organizations, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how institutional practices and policies can be reformed to promote gender-inclusive governance, enhance the representation and participation of women, and ensure that gender considerations are integral to global decision-making processes. This research not only informs academic discourse but also provides valuable conclusions for policymakers and specialists working towards a more equitable and inclusive international system.

The study of gender equality challenges in Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations is highly relevant, reflecting both the country's cultural heritage and its contemporary political landscape. Historically, respect for women has been an integral part of Azerbaijani culture, with deep roots in the traditions and values of the Azerbaijani people. Throughout its history, Azerbaijan has seen women actively participate in social, economic, and political life, with a strong emphasis on gender respect and equality. This cultural foundation is reinforced by the commitment of Azerbaijan's leadership, particularly by Great Leader Heydar Aliyev and his successor, President Ilham Aliyev. Both leaders have underscored the importance of women's participation in public life, recognizing that gender equality is essential for the country's development and for maintaining its reputation on the global stage.

In this context, the relationship between Azerbaijan and international organizations highlights the ongoing importance of addressing gender equality challenges. As Azerbaijan engages with various international bodies, including the United Nations, the European Union, and other global and regional entities, aligning national policies with international gender equality standards becomes crucial. This alignment not only strengthens Azerbaijan's international standing but also facilitates the implementation of progressive reforms within the country. By addressing gender equality challenges in these interactions, Azerbaijan demonstrates its commitment to upholding human rights, fostering inclusive governance, and enhancing social and economic development.

Regarding the degree of extent of the research, it can be divided into several parts: conceptual literature on the understanding of gender, literature on the study of gender issues in Azerbaijan, and literature on gender challenges in Azerbaijan's foreign policy. There is an extensive body of literature on the first topic. For example, studies such as those by G.M.Reyes & K.Chirindo¹, E.Tissier-Desbordes & L.M.Visconti², L.T.Stickney Lstickney & A.M.Konrad³, foundational research of J.A. Tickner and L. Sjoberg⁴, the monograph by J.A.Tickner⁵, as well as the works of B. Ackerly, M.Stern and J.True⁶, which played a significant role in the development of this topic.

There are some studies, albeit limited, related to gender issues and gender policy in Azerbaijan. For instance, N.Tohidi's article compares Soviet Azerbaijan with post-Soviet Azerbaijan in this field⁷. Similarly, F.Heyat's article examines the impact of globalization on gender equality in Azerbaijan⁸. Additionally, the textbook by E. Safarov and N. Safarova on gender equality has been

¹ Reyes, G.M. *Theorizing Race and Gender in the Anthropocene* / G.M.Reyes, K.Chirindo // *Women's Studies in Communication*, – 2020. No. 43:4, – pp.429-442.

² Desbordes, E.T. *Gender after gender: fragmentation, intersectionality, and stereotyping* / E.T.Desbordes, M.Luca // *Consumption Markets & Culture*, – 2019 No. 22:4, – pp.307-313.

³ Lstickney L.T. *Societal Institutions and Work and Family Gender-Role Attitudes* / L.T.Stickney Lstickney, A.M.Konrad // *Organization Management Journal*, – 2012. No. 9:4, – pp 236-246.

⁴ Tickner, J.A. *Feminism and International Relations: Conversations about the Past, Present and Future* / J.A.Tickner, L.Sjoberg. – London: Routledge, – 2011. – 288 p.

⁵ Tickner, J.A. *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post Cold War Era* / J.A.Tickner. – New York: Columbia University Press, – 2001. – 200 p.

⁶ Ackerly, B. *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* / B.Ackerly, M.Stern, J.True. – Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, – 2006. – 303 p.

⁷ Tohidi, N. *Soviet in Public, Azeri in Private – Gender, Islam, and Nationality in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan* // *Women's Studies International Forum*, – 1996. – 19(1 2), – pp.111-123.

⁸ Heyat, F. *Globalization and changing gender norms in Azerbaijan* // *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, – 2006, No.8(3), – pp.394-412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740600793010>

significant for our research⁹. Furthermore, a comprehensive report on gender equality and gender issues in Azerbaijan was conducted by the ICSR in 2018¹⁰.

Among other official primary documents, Azerbaijan's official documents, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan¹¹, the Presidential Decree on the Implementation of State Policy on Women in the Republic of Azerbaijan¹², the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Approval of the Statute of the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs, Determination of the Structure of the Committee, and the Number of its Staff¹³, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Guarantees of Gender Equality (Men and Women)¹⁴, the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the National Action Plan on Women's Issues, the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2022-2025, and the statistics on women and men in Azerbaijan published by the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2023 etc., have been instrumental for our study.

⁹ TRT WORLD. Türkiye, Azerbaijan share 'strategic alliance' under Shusha Declaration: [Electronic resource] / URL: <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/t%C3%BCrkiye-azerbaijan-share-strategic-alliance-under-shusha-declaration-57510>

¹⁰ Fund (UNFPA); Azerbaijan State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Family, Women and Children's Affairs; International organization "Promundo"; International Center for Social Research (ICSR) // – Baku: Azerbaijan, – 2018. – 72 p.

¹¹ Azərbaycan Respublikasının Konstitusiyası / – Bakı: Hüquq ədəbiyyatı nəşriyyatı, – 1997. – 64 s.

¹² Azərbaycan Respublikasında dövlət qadın siyasətinin həyata keçirilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Fərmanı: [Elektron resurs] / URL: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/597>

¹³ Azərbaycan Respublikasının Ailə, Qadın və Uşaq Problemləri üzrə Dövlət Komitəsi haqqında Əsasnamənin, Komitənin strukturunun təsdiq edilməsi və aparatının işçilərinin say həddinin müəyyən edilməsi barədə Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Fərmanı: [Elektron resurs] / URL: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/12320>

¹⁴ Gender (kişi və qadınların) bərabərliyinin təminatları haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu: [Elektron resurs] / URL: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/12424>

The object and the subject of the study. The object of this study is to explore the gender equality challenges that arise within Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations, focusing on how these issues impact Azerbaijan's ability to align with global gender equality standards and policies. The subject of the study encompasses the socio-political dynamics of gender equality in Azerbaijan, the role of national leadership in promoting women's rights, and the interactions between Azerbaijani institutions and international bodies like the United Nations and the European Union.

The purpose and the objectives of the study. The purpose of the study is to analyze and understand the specific gender equality challenges that Azerbaijan faces in its relations with international organizations, with a view to identifying strategies for aligning national policies with global gender standards and enhancing women's participation and representation in both national and international spheres. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To define the concept of gender and explore various theories of gender equality to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding gender dynamics.

- To examine the role of gender-oriented approaches within the contemporary international relations system and how these influence global governance.

- To assess the position of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the current system of international relations, focusing on its interactions and engagements on gender issues.

- To analyze the influence of international organizations as key factors in shaping the foreign relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, particularly regarding gender equality.

- To investigate the inclusion and prioritization of gender equality issues within the foreign policy framework of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

- To identify and analyze the specific gender equality challenges that complicate Azerbaijan's participation and engagement with international organizations.

The methods of the research. The research utilizes a multi-methodological approach to thoroughly examine gender equality

challenges in Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations. Conceptual analysis is employed to dissect and interpret the theoretical frameworks related to gender equality, exploring how these concepts are defined and applied within the context of international relations. This analysis provides a foundational understanding of key gender-related terms and their implications for policy and practice. Document analysis involves a detailed examination of primary sources such as national legislation, international treaties, policy papers, official statements, and reports from both Azerbaijani institutions and international organizations. This method helps to identify the formal commitments, regulatory frameworks, and strategic priorities related to gender equality that shape Azerbaijan's interactions on the global stage. The historical method is used to trace the development of gender equality initiatives in Azerbaijan, examining how historical events, cultural shifts, and political decisions have influenced current policies and attitudes towards gender issues. This method provides a chronological perspective that highlights the evolution of gender equality in Azerbaijan and its integration into foreign relations. Comparative analysis is applied to evaluate Azerbaijan's gender equality policies against those of other countries, particularly those within similar socio-political contexts or those that engage with the same international organizations. This comparison helps to identify best practices, highlight gaps, and suggest potential strategies for enhancing gender equality outcomes in Azerbaijan's international relations. By combining these methodologies, the study offers a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality in Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its relations with international organizations.

The provisions submitted for defense. The following provisions are submitted for defense:

- Azerbaijan bases its gender policy within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

- Azerbaijan collaborates with UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, PACE, and other international organizations to promote gender equality.

– The underrepresentation of women in Azerbaijan's foreign policy and international organizations hinders the full implementation of international standards and commitments aimed at ensuring gender equality, thereby weakening the country's global reputation and effectiveness.

– Azerbaijan's inclusive state policy is enhancing the role of women in foreign policy.

– Azerbaijan promotes coordinated action among various state bodies, such as the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs, the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population (MLSPP), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman), the Ministry of Healthcare, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), to regulate gender issues in its relations with international organizations.

The scientific novelty of the study. The scientific novelties of the study can be summarized as follows:

– This study is the first to analyze gender issues specifically as an independent direction of foreign policy, particularly in the context of Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations.

– This study is the first to systematically and comparatively analyze gender challenges in the context of Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations such as UNFPA, UNDP, and PACE.

– This study is the first to compare the gender balance in Azerbaijan's foreign policy representations, such as its delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), with other European countries, and to discuss the results of these comparisons.

The theoretical and the practical implications of the study. Theoretical implications of the study lie in the fact that the findings of this dissertation offer significant discussions for academic research. Another theoretical implication is connected with the further development of scientific research in the directions outlined in this dissertation, which will contribute to the expansion and deepening of scientific knowledge in this field.

As for practical implications, the main practical implication of the research is that it can serve as a valuable knowledge source for representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani embassies abroad. By analyzing gender issues in Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations, this research can act as a valuable practical guide for specialists working in this field.

The approbation and the dissemination of the study. The main provisions and results of the dissertation research were tested at international and national scientific conferences and were also reflected in peer-reviewed academic articles.

The name of the institution where the dissertation paper was conducted. The work was performed at the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Department of International Relations and Foreign Policy.

The volume of each structural section of the dissertation and the total volume of the dissertation in characters. The total volume of the dissertation with marks, indicating the volume of the structural sections of the dissertation separately. The submitted dissertation consists of "Table of Contents", "Introduction", three Chapters, six paragraphs, "Conclusion", "List of used literature". The volume of the structural sections of the dissertation is: "Introduction" – 7 pages, 13315 marks, Chapter I paragraph 1.1 – 19 pages, 37883 marks, 1.2. paragraph – 19 pages, 37551 marks, Chapter II paragraph 2.1. – 18 pages, 34191 marks, 2.2. paragraph – 19 pages, 36815 marks, Chapter III paragraph 3.1. – 19 pages, 34661 marks, 3.2. paragraph – 20 pages, 36683 marks, and the "Conclusion" section consists of 5 pages, 8133 marks. At the end of the dissertation there is a "List of used literature".

Excluding the list of literature, the dissertation itself consists of 127 pages and 239,232 characters.

MAIN CONTENT OF THE PAPER

The introduction to the dissertation substantiates the enduring relevance of researching gender equality, particularly within the context of Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations. It analyzes the degree of scholarly development of the topic, formulates the aim and objectives of the research, defines the object and subject of the study, reveals the methodological foundations of the research, its scientific novelty, theoretical and practical significance, and presents the provisions submitted for defense.

The study's relevance is determined by the continuing gender imbalances and persistent stereotypes affecting various spheres of public life. In this regard, particular importance is attached to the study of gender as a socio-cultural and historically conditioned category, which is necessary for the development of effective mechanisms for achieving equality. The importance of introducing the principles of gender inclusiveness into governance practice is emphasized.

A conceptual analysis is carried out in the **1.1 sub-chapter "Concept of Gender and Theories of Gender Equality"** of the **I chapter "Analysis of Theoretical-Methodological Approaches to Gender Equality Challenges"** of the study. The sub-chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of theoretical and methodological approaches to gender equality, emphasizing the importance of understanding gender as a socially constructed concept rather than a fixed biological determinant. It delves into the historical evolution of gender roles, shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors, and discusses how traditional societies often reinforced rigid roles based on biological sex, leading to patriarchal structures that marginalized women and gender-diverse individuals. The persistence of gender disparities in the spheres of employment, political representation, education, and healthcare is noted. It highlights the prevalence of gender-based violence, including domestic abuse and sexual misconduct, as well as the role of entrenched stereotypes and cultural norms in perpetuating inequality by limiting the opportunities and roles available to individuals based on their gender.

Moreover, the sub-chapter explores different feminist theories that provide frameworks for understanding and addressing gender inequality. It discusses liberal feminism's focus on legal and political reforms, radical feminism's critique of deep-seated patriarchal structures, Marxist and socialist feminism's analysis of the intersections between gender and economic oppression, and intersectional feminism's emphasis on the overlapping axes of identity, such as race, class, and sexuality. These perspectives collectively advocate for challenging traditional gender norms, promoting diversity and inclusivity, and fostering environments where individuals can freely express their gender identities without fear of discrimination. The document concludes that achieving gender equality requires systemic changes, including policy reforms, the development of public activity, and educational initiatives, to challenge stereotypes and create more equitable and inclusive societies for all genders.

The sub-chapter on the concept of gender and theories of gender equality discusses the evolution of gender roles, the influence of socio-cultural factors on these roles, and the various theoretical frameworks that analyze gender dynamics. It highlights how traditional societies often enforced rigid gender roles based on biological differences, leading to a patriarchal system where men held power, and women were confined to domestic duties. However, this binary understanding of gender is challenged by historical studies and social constructionist theories, which argue that gender is a fluid and socially constructed phenomenon influenced by cultural, social, and historical contexts.

Social constructionist theory is emphasized as a critical framework for understanding how gender roles are not innate but are learned behaviors shaped by social interactions, institutions, and cultural practices. This perspective underscores the need to challenge traditional gender norms, promote inclusivity, and advocate for policies that support gender equality. Feminist theory further enriches this discussion by critiquing patriarchal power structures and advocating for systemic change to dismantle gender-based oppression. Both theoretical approaches stress the importance of

intersectionality, recognizing that individuals experience gender inequality differently based on overlapping aspects of identity, such as race, class, and sexual orientation. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding gender equality and the pathways to achieving a more inclusive society.

The **1.2 sub-chapter** of the **I chapter** is called “**Gender-Based Approach in the Contemporary International Relations System**”. The sub-chapter discusses the significance of a gender-based approach in contemporary international relations, emphasizing its importance for understanding and addressing global issues such as conflict, security, development, and human rights. It highlights how traditional approaches like realism, liberalism, and post-colonialism have provided foundational frameworks for analyzing international dynamics but often overlooked the critical role of gender in shaping global politics. The gender-based approach brings to light how gender norms and inequalities intersect with other aspects of international relations, influencing everything from diplomatic negotiations and conflict resolution to economic development and environmental sustainability. This approach calls for addressing gender-based violence, discrimination, and exclusion, aiming to create more inclusive and equitable international policies and practices.

The sub-chapter further elaborates on how gender dynamics shape various facets of global politics. In the realm of conflict and security, women often face disproportionate harm, including and displacement, yet their roles as peacebuilders and mediators are frequently marginalized. In economic contexts, gender disparities limit women's access to education, employment, and financial resources, impeding sustainable development and economic growth. Additionally, recognizing gender considerations is crucial for environmental sustainability, as women in rural and developing regions play vital roles in resource management and climate change adaptation. By integrating a gender perspective into international relations, policymakers can better address these complex issues, promoting a more just and equitable global system that values the contributions and rights of all genders.

Building on the recognition of gender-based approaches, the sub-chapter delves into the specific mechanisms and strategies that can effectively integrate gender perspectives into international relations. One key strategy is the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all aspects of policy development and diplomatic engagements. This involves not only ensuring that gender considerations are included in policy analysis but also that gender impact assessments are conducted regularly. Such assessments can help identify potential gender disparities in the outcomes of policies, allowing for adjustments that promote fairness and equity. By institutionalizing gender mainstreaming, international organizations and state actors can better ensure that their initiatives contribute to gender equality, rather than inadvertently perpetuating existing inequalities.

Additionally, the sub-chapter stresses the importance of increasing women's representation in decision-making roles within international organizations, diplomatic missions, and peace negotiations. Women's participation at all levels of decision-making has been shown to lead to more comprehensive and sustainable solutions, particularly in peace and security contexts. For instance, peace agreements are more likely to be successful and long-lasting when women are involved in the negotiation process, as they often bring unique perspectives and prioritize community needs. Encouraging women's leadership in international relations can help address power imbalances, ensure diverse viewpoints are considered, and promote policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all genders. This approach not only advances gender equality but also strengthens the overall effectiveness of international diplomacy and cooperation.

The II chapter of the paper is titled “Analysis of Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and International Organizations”. 2.1 sub-chapter of this chapter, “The Position of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Current System of International Relations”, discusses the position of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the current system of international relations, emphasizing its strategic maneuvers amidst the evolving multipolar

world order. The emergence of a multipolar global structure has led to the rise of new influential actors alongside established powers, creating a dynamic where multiple centers of power coexist. This shift marks a departure from the unipolar framework dominated by a single superpower, notably the United States, following the Cold War. The rise of countries such as China, India, Brazil, and regional powers like Russia, Turkey, and Iran has introduced complexity and fluidity into global geopolitics. For Azerbaijan, this multipolarity presents both challenges and opportunities, influencing its foreign policy and strategic alliances. As a pivotal state in the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan's geopolitical significance is underscored by its energy resources, strategic location, and the necessity to navigate relations with major powers, including the United States, European Union, Russia, as well as with regional partners such as Turkey and Iran.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy reflects a pragmatic and flexible approach to balancing these relationships to maximize its national interests under conditions of contemporary geopolitical tensions. The country maintains strong ties with Turkey, marked by deepening political, military, and economic cooperation, highlighted by the Shusha Agreement and shared initiatives in energy and regional connectivity projects like the transport corridor projects.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan maintains a strategic partnership with Russia, focused on security cooperation and energy collaboration, while also engaging in economic and diplomatic exchanges with the United States to enhance energy security, trade, and counterterrorism efforts despite changes in the regional security architecture, preserving cooperation in specific areas of mutual interest. Additionally, Azerbaijan's involvement in China's Belt and Road Initiative demonstrates its aspiration to integrate into Eurasian transport and economic processes and contributes to strengthening its transit potential. At the same time, relations with Iran are characterized by a balanced approach amid continuing regional disagreements. Thus, by implementing a multi-vector foreign policy combining interaction with both Western and Eastern centers of power, Azerbaijan aims to secure its sovereignty, foster regional

stability, enhance the sustainability of its foreign policy position, and enhance its role as a key player in the South Caucasus and broader international arena.

The 2.2 sub-chapter of the II chapter is titled “International Organizations as Important Drivers in the Foreign Relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan”. This sub-chapter discusses the vital role of international organizations in shaping the foreign relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, highlighting their impact on diplomatic engagement, socio-economic development, and conflict resolution. Azerbaijan's strategic partnerships with various international entities, such as the European Union (EU), NATO, the United Nations, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), are central to its foreign policy objectives. The EU-Azerbaijan relationship, anchored in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) since 1999, emphasizes trade, investment, and policy alignment, positioning the EU as one of Azerbaijan's key trading partner and investor. Additionally, the EU supports Azerbaijan in peace and stability efforts, particularly in the post-conflict period through initiatives aimed at confidence-building and the promotion of sustainable development. Similarly, Azerbaijan's engagement with NATO under the Partnership for Peace (PfP) framework focuses on security cooperation, defense reforms, and counterterrorism, bolstering Azerbaijan's defense capabilities and regional stability.

Beyond European partnerships, Azerbaijan actively collaborates with global and regional organizations to promote its economic, security, and cultural interests. Its cooperation with OPEC+ and participation in regional energy initiatives highlight Azerbaijan's commitment to ensuring energy security, market stability, and the development of regional cooperation. In addition, Azerbaijan's leadership role within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and active participation in the OIC highlight its dedication to maintaining a balanced foreign policy and promoting Islamic solidarity. Engagement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO reflects Azerbaijan's focus on sustainable development, cultural preservation, and addressing socio-

economic challenges. By leveraging these multifaceted relationships, Azerbaijan seeks to navigate the complexities of international politics, safeguard its sovereignty, and contribute to regional and global peace and prosperity.

III chapter – the research chapter of the paper is titled “**Analysis of the Influences of Gender Equality Challenges on Foreign Relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan**”. The chapter is divided into two sub-chapters. **3.1 sub-chapter**, “**The Position of Gender Equality Issues in the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan**”, discusses the integration of gender equality issues into the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, emphasizing the significant role gender equality plays in shaping the country's international relations. Azerbaijan has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality, grounded in historical experience and contemporary policies that reflect its commitment to women's rights. Since the early 20th century, Azerbaijan has been a pioneer in gender equality within the Muslim world, granting women the right to vote in 1918 and continuing to advance women's rights during the Soviet era and after gaining independence. Today, Azerbaijan actively participates in international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and aligns its policies with global standards set by frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These efforts underscore Azerbaijan's commitment to upholding gender equality as a fundamental principle in both its domestic policies and its diplomatic engagements.

During the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijani women demonstrated remarkable dedication and bravery. Out of the 74,000 military personnel involved, around 2,000 were women, with 600 actively participating in combat operations on the front lines. These women were not confined to support roles but were directly engaged in the conflict. National heroines like journalist Salatyn Asgarova and doctor Gultekin Asgarova, who lost their lives during the war, became symbols of sacrifice and resilience, epitomizing the commitment and patriotism of Azerbaijani women. The socio-economic and emotional impacts on these women were significant as

they faced the challenges of displacement while working to maintain family unity and support. Their experiences underscore the broader effects of conflict on civilian populations, particularly on women who often endure the harshest consequences of war.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has remained committed to gender equality, embedding these principles in both national and international policies. The 1995 adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan was a pivotal moment, establishing a legal framework that ensures women's active participation in the democratic process alongside men. Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees equal rights and freedoms for all individuals, explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on gender¹⁵. That same year, Azerbaijan showcased its commitment to women's rights on the global stage by preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The National Committee for Women's Affairs in Azerbaijan played a vital role, compiling a detailed report on the status of women's rights in the country, which was presented at the conference. The outcomes of this conference led to further national discussions and actions, shaping policies and strategies to enhance women's rights and participation across various aspects of society.

In Azerbaijan's foreign policy, gender equality is integrated across various dimensions, including diplomatic representation, development aid, and cultural diplomacy. The country promotes gender equality in its international partnerships, focusing on areas such as education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and political participation, particularly in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Azerbaijan's diplomatic corps includes prominent female leaders who advocate for gender equality at international forums, enhancing the country's representation and influence on the global stage. Moreover, Azerbaijan's emphasis on gender equality in economic diplomacy and cultural exchanges bolsters its international image as a progressive and inclusive nation. These initiatives not only contribute to Azerbaijan's national development but also strengthen its bilateral

¹⁵ Azərbaycan Respublikasının Konstitusiyası: [Elektron resurs] / URL: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/897>

relations, showcasing its commitment to fostering an equitable and just society both domestically and internationally.

Today, gender equality is a key aspect of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. The country has ratified international conventions like CEDAW and actively participates in global forums advocating for women's rights. Azerbaijan's diplomatic engagements emphasize the role of gender equality in sustainable development and peace, aligning with international standards. Initiatives such as the National Action Plans for Gender Equality (2019-2022, 2022-2025) demonstrate Azerbaijan's ongoing commitment to addressing gender disparities. These efforts not only enhance the nation's social cohesion but also bolster its international image as a progressive and inclusive state. Despite these advancements, challenges such as underrepresentation in political roles and societal norms still need to be addressed to achieve full gender parity.

3.2 sub-chapter, titled “Gender Equality Challenges as Problematic Components of Azerbaijan's Participation in International Organizations”, explores the challenges Azerbaijan faces regarding gender equality in its participation in international organizations, highlighting the complexities of integrating gender perspectives into foreign policy. Despite progress in addressing gender disparities, issues such as underrepresentation of women in high-level diplomatic roles and persistent cultural biases remain significant hurdles. In Azerbaijan, societal norms often dictate traditional gender roles, with men perceived as primary decision-makers, particularly in areas like trade, security, and foreign policy. These perceptions limit women's participation and leadership in international diplomacy, resulting in a lack of diverse perspectives and undermining the effectiveness of Azerbaijan's engagement in global forums. For example, Azerbaijani delegations to international bodies like PACE show a notable gender imbalance compared to other European nations, reflecting a broader trend of male dominance in political representation.

Moreover, the challenges are compounded by institutional barriers, including insufficient gender mainstreaming in policy formulation and implementation. Policies that do not consider the

differentiated impacts on men and women often fail to address the unique needs and experiences of women, thereby perpetuating existing inequalities. Economic inequalities also play a critical role, as women in Azerbaijan have limited access to economic resources and opportunities, which restricts their ability to participate in political and diplomatic activities. Additionally, the emphasis on projecting a strong image in the context of the Karabakh conflicts has led to prioritizing male representatives in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, further marginalizing women's roles. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, incorporating gender perspectives into all aspects of policy-making, enhancing women's representation in leadership positions, and fostering cultural shifts that value women's contributions in both domestic and international spheres.

The sub-chapter highlights the gender equality challenges that Azerbaijan faces in its participation in international organizations. It identifies several critical factors contributing to these challenges, including cultural norms, institutional biases, and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles. Despite international collaborations and initiatives, such as those with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which have led to certain progress in promoting gender equality, significant disparities persist. For example, rigid gender norms continue to shape attitudes and limit women's roles both domestically and in foreign policy arenas.

A major issue identified is the pervasive underrepresentation of women in high-level political and diplomatic positions, which undermines the diversity of perspectives in foreign policy formulation. This is compounded by cultural and institutional barriers that favor male leadership and exclude women from crucial discussions and negotiations. Consequently, policies often fail to adequately address gender-specific issues, such as the unique vulnerabilities women face during conflicts. Overcoming these challenges requires comprehensive strategies to integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of foreign policy, bolster women's representation in leadership, and dismantle entrenched gender biases.

The conclusion of the dissertation provides a comprehensive summary of the research findings, highlighting the importance of

addressing gender equality challenges in Azerbaijan's relations with international organizations. It underscores that, despite notable progress in aligning with global gender equality standards, significant barriers such as cultural norms, socio-political dynamics, and institutional limitations continue to hinder the full implementation of gender-inclusive policies. The dissertation identifies the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within Azerbaijan's foreign policy and international organizations as a key issue, which compromises the effectiveness of Azerbaijan's advocacy for gender equity on the global stage. The lack of comprehensive integration of gender perspectives into policy formulation and decision-making processes further weakens Azerbaijan's diplomatic efforts in promoting sustainable development and human rights.

The research emphasizes the crucial role of international organizations like the United Nations and the European Union in shaping Azerbaijan's gender equality agenda. These entities not only provide frameworks and benchmarks but also serve as platforms for advocacy and accountability. The findings suggest that enhancing cooperation with these international bodies and fostering a culture of inclusivity within national institutions are essential for advancing gender equality and strengthening Azerbaijan's international standing. The conclusion calls for comprehensive gender mainstreaming strategies across all levels of foreign policy and diplomatic engagement, alongside fostering partnerships with international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector to support gender equality initiatives. By embracing these approaches, Azerbaijan can not only improve its international image as a progressive and inclusive nation but also promote sustainable development and peace.

The recommendations provided are essential for advancing both scholarly understanding and practical implementation of gender equality in Azerbaijan's foreign relations. By encouraging future research that delves deeper into the specific impacts of gender-based policies and initiatives, these recommendations highlight the need for empirical evidence to demonstrate how gender equality can influence diplomatic negotiations, economic partnerships, and security issues. This focus on concrete outcomes will help to underscore the strategic

value of integrating gender perspectives, making a compelling case for policymakers to prioritize gender inclusivity. Additionally, the exploration of intersectionality within the gender equality discourse is crucial as it allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the multiple dimensions of inequality that Azerbaijani women face. This approach ensures that gender policies are not one-size-fits-all but are instead tailored to address the unique needs of diverse groups, promoting inclusivity and equity across all societal and diplomatic engagements.

For practitioners, the recommendations emphasize the practical steps needed to institutionalize gender mainstreaming within foreign policy frameworks. Implementing robust gender mainstreaming strategies, along with training programs and advisory councils, ensures that gender considerations are integrated into every stage of policy-making and diplomatic engagement. This not only enhances the inclusivity and responsiveness of Azerbaijan's foreign policy but also aligns the country with global best practices. Forming strategic partnerships with international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector is equally important as it leverages external expertise and resources to support gender equality initiatives. These collaborations can help Azerbaijan develop comprehensive gender equality programs that resonate with its socio-economic goals, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and progressive society. Engaging in such partnerships also strengthens Azerbaijan's international reputation as a leader in promoting gender equality, thereby enhancing its standing and influence on the global stage.

The following publications have been published on the topic of the dissertation:

1. Baghirli, A.Z. Empowering equality: Azerbaijan's journey towards gender parity in international partnerships // Doktorantların və gənc tədqiqatçıların XXVI Respublika Elmi konfransının materialları, – Bakı: 10-11 noyabr, – 2023, – s. 293-296.
2. Bagirli, A.Z. Exploring gender: Theories of Equality in Gender Dynamics // – Bakı: Bakı Avrasiya Universiteti, “Sivilizasiya” elmi-nəzəri jurnal, – 2024. №2(58), – s. 38-43.

3. Baghirli, A.Z. Gender problem in international relations: a review // – Bakı: Pedaqoji Universitetin xəbərləri, “Humanitar, ictimai və pedaqoji-psixoloji elmlər” seriyası, – 2024. №1, C72, – s. 64-73.
4. Baghirli, A.Z. Azerbaijan’s position in international organizations on gender equality issues // Vestnik BIST (Bashkir Institute of Social Technologies). – 2024. 4(65), – pp. 21–26.
5. Baghirli A.Z. Transition to the New World Order and the Republic of Azerbaijan // – Bakı: Azərbaycan Respublikasının Prezidenti yanında Dövlət İdarəçilik Akademiyası, “Dövlət idarəçiliyi” nəzəriyyə və təcrübə jurnalı, – 2024. №1(85), – s.307-313.
6. Baghirli, A.Z. Position of international organizations in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy // – Bakı: Azərbaycan Respublikasının Prezidenti yanında Dövlət İdarəçilik Akademiyası, “Dövlət idarəçiliyi” nəzəriyyə və təcrübə jurnalı, – 2024. №3(87), – s. 233-238.
7. Багирли, А.З. Гендерное равенство в системе мягкой силы Азербайджана: социологический анализ международного имиджа государства // “II Международная научно-практическая конференция «Актуальные вопросы научного поиска: фундаментальные и прикладные аспекты». – Россия, Петрозаводск, КОФ – 1534, – 25 мая, – 2026.

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