

POLITICAL SCIENCES

STRATEGIC VISION FOR RETURN TO WESTERN AZERBAIJAN

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Abstract

The issue of return to Western Azerbaijan holds significant strategic importance for restoring historical justice and national sovereignty of the Azerbaijani people. This article examines the historical context of Western Azerbaijan, including deportations during the Soviet era and the consequences of Armenia's mono-ethnic policies. Legal aspects are analyzed through the lens of international law concerning the right of return and Armenia's international obligations. The strategic approach encompasses diplomatic lobbying, public diplomacy, infrastructure planning, and non-violent methods. Additionally, the article discusses socio-cultural and diaspora activities, international cooperation, challenges, prospects, and information security issues. Finally, essential conditions for return and a proposed strategic roadmap aimed at contributing to long-term peace are presented. The study emphasizes the necessity of a multifaceted approach for resolving the Western Azerbaijan issue within regional stability and international law frameworks.

Keywords. Western Azerbaijan, right of return, deportation, diplomatic lobbying, public diplomacy, diaspora, infrastructure planning, regional stability, human rights, historical memory, information security

Introduction.

Relevance of the topic. The issue of the return of our compatriots deported from Western Azerbaijan occupies an important place in the modern foreign and domestic policy of Azerbaijan. This issue is of strategic importance not only in terms of restoring historical justice, but also in terms of international law, regional security and national solidarity. Against the background of the normalization process with Armenia, bringing the issue of Western Azerbaijan to the agenda on the legal and political level, as well as ensuring a planned and phased return, strengthens Azerbaijan's statehood position. The meeting of President Ilham Aliyev with the "Western Azerbaijan Community" in 2022 and the presentation of the "Return Concept" indicate that this issue is prioritized at the level of official state policy.

Purpose and methodology of the article. The purpose of this article is to comprehensively analyze the legal basis, diplomatic opportunities and regional geopolitical framework of the issue of return to Western Azerbaijan from a strategic perspective. At the same time, the stages of the return process, the challenges ahead and possible solutions are examined. The article is written using a scientific-theoretical approach, as well as analysis and forecasting methods. The data is systematized mainly on the basis of academic literature, state documents, international legal norms, and official sources of the West Azerbaijan Community.

Historical roots of the concept of Western Azerbaijan. The concept of Western Azerbaijan was formed not only as a geographical, but also as an ethno-historical and political term. This concept covers the regions of Goycha, Zangezur, Daralayaz, Aghbaba, Basarkechar, Amasiya, Vedibasir, Garagoyunlu, Gafan and other regions in the current territory of the Republic of Armenia, where Azerbaijani Turks have lived since

ancient times. In the 18th–19th centuries, several Azerbaijani khanates and districts existed in these territories, and the vast majority of the population living here were Azerbaijani Turks. After the Turkmenchay Treaty of 1828, a massive resettlement of Armenians to the region began, which led to serious changes in the ethnic composition of the population. As a result of this purposeful policy implemented by the Russian Empire, the demographic and ethnic structure of Western Azerbaijan was artificially changed. By the beginning of the 20th century, **The relevance and legal and political context of the idea of return.** The issue of the return of West Azerbaijani Turks is one of the important directions of the peace policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan based on international law and human rights. Although the idea of return may seem like a humanitarian issue at first glance, in fact, it is rooted in fundamental legal principles, especially international humanitarian law, property rights, minority rights, and the right of return of populations subjected to ethnic cleansing. According to Article 13 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to return to their country". At the same time, since "ethnic cleansing" is considered a crime under international law, the elimination of the consequences of this crime is also accepted as an international obligation. In this sense, the right of return of West Azerbaijani Turks has not only moral, but also legal legitimacy. The Azerbaijani state is trying to resolve this issue without resorting to force, but through diplomatic and political means. President Ilham Aliyev's support for the activities of the West Azerbaijan Community in 2022, the preparation of the "Return Concept" and the appeals addressed to the international community demonstrate the existence of political will in this direction. The relevance of the idea of return is also directly related to the formation of a peace

and security environment in the region in the post-conflict phase. Against the background of the normalization of relations with Armenia and agreements that will be accompanied by mutual legal guarantees, the West Azerbaijan issue has become an integral part of the regional geopolitical agenda. Armenians had already gained numerical superiority in the region, and armed attacks, massacres and deportations were carried out against Azerbaijani Turks in stages. For this reason, the concept of "Western Azerbaijan" is valued not only as a lost territory in Azerbaijani history, but also as a national-political symbol preserved in the memory of an ethnos whose population was forcibly removed and whose rights were violated. This term is a concept that expresses both ethnic identity and the claim of national rights. Historical presence of Azerbaijani Turks in Western Azerbaijan. The territory of Western Azerbaijan, that is, the present-day Republic of Armenia, has been a region where Azerbaijani Turks have lived and created culture for centuries. According to historical sources and official documents, Azerbaijani Turks have dominated both rural and urban areas in regions such as the Goycha Lake area, Zangezur, Vedibasir, Daralayaz, Aghbaba, and Amasya. Ancient Turkic-language toponyms, mosques, cemeteries, and written monuments clearly reveal the traces of the Azerbaijani people in this geography. After the Turkmenchay Treaty concluded in 1828, the Russian Empire began to resettle Armenians from Iranian and Ottoman territories to the region. This resettlement policy was not only aimed at changing demographic proportions, but also aimed at forming the foundations of the Armenian statehood to be created in the future. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Azeri Turks constituted the majority of the population in the region.

Deportations during and after the Soviet era.

The mass deportation of Azerbaijani Turks from Western Azerbaijan was carried out in four main stages: 1905–1906: As a result of the first organized attacks by Armenian armed groups in the Caucasus, hundreds of Turkish villages were destroyed. 1918–1920: During the Dashnaksutyun government, a policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing was carried out against Azerbaijani Turks. 1948–1953: By decision of the USSR Council of Ministers, more than 100 thousand Azerbaijani Turks were deported from the Armenian SSR to the Kur-Araz lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR. This migration was forced and families were forced to leave their homelands. 1987–1991: With the collapse of the USSR and Armenia's independence, another wave of attacks against Azerbaijani Turks began. Taking advantage of the vacuum created by Gorbachev's "perestroika" policy, Armenian radical groups organized systematic attacks against Azerbaijani Turks. During this period, more than 250 thousand Azerbaijani Turks were expelled from Western Azerbaijan, and Armenia became a de facto mono-ethnic state. **Formation of a mono-ethnic policy in Armenia.** After the Republic of Armenia gained independence, a purposeful policy was pursued in the country towards the establishment of a mono-ethnic state. No mechanism was created in the Constitution and other legal documents to reflect ethnic diversity. The Armenian government, especially since the 1990s, has taken a negative position on the issue of

the return of Azerbaijani Turks. Their property rights were not recognized, international obligations on the right of return were not observed, and the historical and cultural heritage was either destroyed or falsified. All this indicates that the policy of intolerance towards national minorities in Armenia has deep roots. As a result, today Armenia is recognized as the only mono-ethnic state in the region, and this fact is also noted by international human rights organizations.

The right of return in international law. The right of West Azerbaijani Turks to return to their homeland is based on fundamental principles of international law. This right is clearly enshrined in several international instruments:

Article 13 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within their country" and "Everyone has the right to return to his country" [24].

Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: "No one shall be deprived of the right to return to his country" [25].

The European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights protect the right of individuals to return to their homes and property. According to these instruments, the right of return of persons displaced from their homeland as a result of deportation is unequivocally recognized and this right may not be violated on ethnic, religious or political grounds.

International obligations of Armenia. The Republic of Armenia is also a state that has ratified international legal instruments and is obliged to act in accordance with the requirements of these documents. Armenia has acceded to the following international documents:

The main human rights instruments of the UN (Declaration and Covenants),

As a member of the Council of Europe, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. According to these documents, Armenia must: Recognize the right of return of deported persons, Ensure their property and ownership rights, and Bear international responsibility for the crime of ethnic cleansing. Obstruction of return, discrimination, and destruction of historical and cultural heritage constitute violations of international humanitarian law and human rights principles [9].

The basis of the legal claims of the Azerbaijani government. The Republic of Azerbaijan defends the right of return of our compatriots deported from Western Azerbaijan based on international law. The following legal grounds are cited in this regard: Recognition of the forced deportation of our compatriots as an act of ethnic cleansing prohibited by international law. Documentation of the facts of violation of the property rights of Azerbaijani citizens and the demand for the restoration of these rights. Evaluation of the right of return not only as a humanitarian issue, but also as the restoration of violated norms and principles of international law [26]. The legal framework presented by Azerbaijan is prepared in accordance with international law. The "Return Concept" also systematizes these legal grounds and presents them openly to the world community.

Lobbying activities at the diplomatic and international level. In order to keep the issue of return to Western Azerbaijan on the international agenda and to promote it as a legitimate legal claim, targeted lobbying activities are necessary, along with diplomatic efforts. The Azerbaijani government should cooperate with various international organizations in this direction and regularly raise the issue on platforms such as the UN, OSCE, EU and the Council of Europe. At the same time, it is important for Azerbaijani diplomats, lawyers and representatives of the diaspora to specialize in this area. The main goals within the framework of this activity are: Documenting the facts of deportation and presenting them to international organizations, Substantiating the right of return in accordance with international legal norms, and bringing to the agenda the obligations that Armenia has undertaken but not fulfilled in this regard.

Public diplomacy and information warfare. A strong public diplomacy strategy is needed to properly and effectively communicate the issue of Western Azerbaijan to international public opinion. The main goal here is to introduce the history, ethno-cultural heritage and facts of deportation of Western Azerbaijan to the international media, academic circles and NGOs. The following tools should be used in this direction: Documentaries, articles and reports in foreign languages should be prepared, the access of the Western Azerbaijan Community to the international press, especially in Western countries, should be increased, effective response strategies should be developed against Armenian propaganda on social media platforms. In the context of information warfare, evidence-based responses, fact-rich digital archives and analytical content should be prepared against Armenia's attempts to falsify history.

Infrastructure planning and phased implementation for return. There are not only political and legal, but also practical organizational stages of return. Here, the following issues should be taken into account first: Restoration and documentation of property and land registries; Clarification of property rights in historical areas is the initial step for return. Construction of a living infrastructure that ensures the voluntary return of internally displaced persons; Basic needs, including housing, water, electricity, education and health facilities, should be planned. Social adaptation and employment programs Vocational training and social security programs should be implemented to integrate the returning population into the new environment. This process should be implemented in a phased manner, first with pilot projects, and then in an expanded form. Conducting the process in a transparent, voluntary and safe manner can attract the support of the international community.

Non-violent and legal approach. The Azerbaijani state prefers international law, mutual negotiations and a peace model rather than the use of force and military means in the return process. This approach forms the basis of international legitimacy and demonstrates Azerbaijan's peace-loving position. The idea of return: It should be implemented without the use of force, by persuading the other party with international pressure on the political and legal level, by mutually agreeing on

security guarantees, and by involving international mediators, especially the UN and OSCE mechanisms. This approach is also a necessary condition for ensuring long-term stability and peace with Armenia.

Putting the issue on the international agenda through diplomatic means. In order to put the issue of Western Azerbaijan on the international agenda, the existing diplomatic tools should be used first. The Azerbaijani state should strengthen the following directions in this direction: Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy: The issue should be consistently raised in the negotiations with Armenia, as well as on the agendas of organizations such as the OSCE, the UN, the Council of Europe and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. It is of strategic importance for Azerbaijan to keep this issue on the agenda within the framework of the peace agreement with Armenia. International recognition of the West Azerbaijan Community: It is important to present this public entity as a legitimate actor and to submit legal and political documents to international organizations through it. Cultural diplomacy: Documenting historical facts, forced deportations, and the destruction of national and cultural heritage and communicating them to international academic and legal circles is an important means of gaining international sympathy [9]. This approach aims to draw the attention of the international community to the ethnic cleansing policy that Armenia has implemented in the past and for which it is still responsible.

Reintegration within the framework of peace and security mechanisms. The process of return to Western Azerbaijan should not be limited to legal and diplomatic steps alone, this process should take place within the framework of peace and security. The main issue here is ensuring the security of both Azerbaijani Turks and those currently living in the region. The reintegration model should be based on the following mechanisms: A reintegration plan to be implemented with the participation of international observers can guarantee the prevention of violence during the return of the population. Confidence-building measures: Reducing tensions in mutual relations through historical dialogues, cultural exchange programs and non-governmental initiatives. Necessary security guarantees: The functioning of legal and executive mechanisms should be ensured for the physical safety, property rights and protection of cultural heritage

of the population returning to the territories [3]. In this context, the sustainability of peace and the success of reintegration are possible only with mutual agreement and compliance with international law.

Gradual resolution of the issue in the process of normalization with Armenia. The process of normalization of relations with Armenia creates an important window of opportunity for a peaceful and gradual resolution of the West Azerbaijan issue. The rights of Azerbaijani Turks deported from West Azerbaijan should be included as a separate agenda item in the negotiations between the parties. For this process to be carried out effectively: Determination of legal and political mechanisms in the peace agreement: The right of return and the practical guarantee of this right should be reflected in relevant legal documents. Development of a stage-by-stage return model: At the first stage, it is

important to select pilot regions and villages, accompany them with infrastructure planning and security measures. Legal resolution of property and property issues: Special mechanisms should be created regarding properties lost as a result of deportation, and compensation or restoration options should be discussed. Legal recognition of the West Azerbaijan issue and Armenia's demonstration of a constructive position within the framework of the normalization process may be possible with the support of the international community.

Activities of the West Azerbaijan Community.

The West Azerbaijan Community began to take shape in 1989, but since 2022, upon the initiative of President Ilham Aliyev, it has become an important public organization operating at the state level, taking on an official and institutional character. The main goal of the community is to protect the rights of our compatriots deported from West Azerbaijan, plan the return process, and carry out activities based on international law in this direction. The community's areas of activity include the following: Preparation of the Return Concept and compilation of documents based on international law; Activities of research and information collection centers, documentation of historical facts and deportation processes; Cooperation with the diaspora, raising the issue of West Azerbaijan at international events; Awareness and propaganda work, especially holding events to involve the younger generation in this topic. These activities serve to strengthen national unity in Azerbaijani society, and to recognize the legal and political position of the deported population at the international level

The role of the Azerbaijani diaspora in this direction. The Azerbaijani diaspora, especially diaspora organizations located in Europe, the USA and Turkey, play an important role in communicating the issue of Western Azerbaijan to the international community and in lobbying activities. The activities of the diaspora are of particular importance in the following areas: Establishing relations with foreign political circles and presenting the issue to members of parliament and government bodies; Implementing broad awareness campaigns on multinational media and social platforms; Cooperation with international legal experts and human rights organizations; Scientific and public substantiation of the issue by organizing academic and cultural events. These activities ensure that the diaspora supports the international diplomacy of the Azerbaijani state and that the issue of Western Azerbaijan remains on the agenda of international politics.

Preservation of historical memory and informing new generations. The issue of Western Azerbaijan is not only a political and legal problem, but also a matter of collective historical memory. Preserving historical memory and passing it on to future generations plays an important role in preserving national identity. For this purpose, it is important to work in the following areas: Including topics related to Western Azerbaijan in educational programs and textbooks; Organizing seminars, competitions, scientific conferences and summer schools for young people; Preparing literary and artistic examples, documentaries, theatrical performances, conveying historical facts in an emotional and artistic way; Creating and sharing educational content

on social media, especially focusing digital literacy on this area among young people. These areas contribute to the formation of public consciousness and keeping alive the idea of historical justice.

Documentation and dissemination of cultural heritage. Thousands of material and cultural monuments belonging to Azerbaijani Turks, including mosques, cemeteries, tombs, ancient settlements, stone inscriptions and toponyms, are located in the territories of Western Azerbaijan. A significant part of this heritage has been destroyed, and some has been Armenianized. Therefore: Systematic documentation of historical and cultural heritage, collection and digitization of maps, archival documents and photo and video materials are important; Preparation of international reports on cultural heritage and submission to organizations such as UNESCO, activation of international legal mechanisms for the protection of heritage; Creation of virtual museums, web archives and interactive platforms can provide access to this heritage for both scientists and the general public. All these activities are of strategic importance in terms of both transferring historical facts to future generations and attracting the attention of the international community to the acts of vandalism committed by Armenia against cultural heritage.

International activities of the West Azerbaijan Community. The West Azerbaijan Community is active not only within the country, but also internationally. One of the main goals of the community is to introduce the rights of our compatriots deported from West Azerbaijan to the international community, to put this issue on the international agenda as a legitimate legal and political issue. For this purpose, the community: Prepares appeals to international organizations and human rights institutions; Submits reports documenting the facts of deportation and ethnic cleansing; Creates dialogue platforms with the international community, organizes events and forums; Holds scientific and theoretical conferences on the cultural heritage of West Azerbaijan and the history of deportation. The activities of the community, carried out synchronously with the diplomatic initiatives of the Azerbaijani government, allow the problem to be presented at the international legal level [29].

Legal and humanitarian cooperation with international organizations. Purposeful cooperation with international organizations is necessary for the recognition and support of the West Azerbaijan issue in the context of international law. This cooperation can be expanded in the following directions: introducing the right of return and launching legal mechanisms through the UN and its relevant agencies (UNHCR, OHCHR); organizing hearings on the issue in the Council of Europe and the European Parliament and initiatives for the adoption of resolutions; achieving the adoption of acts of solidarity within the framework of organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement; cooperation with cultural heritage organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS, registering and protecting destroyed and falsified cultural monuments in West Azerbaijan; conducting joint investigations with interna-

tional lawyers and legal organizations and preparing legal claims for international courts. Working with the international community in this context is important both in terms of creating legal responsibility and promoting the political and humanitarian status of the problem at the global level [21].

Preservation of historical memory and informing new generations

The issue of Western Azerbaijan constitutes an important part of the collective memory of the Azerbaijani people. In order to preserve historical memory and pass it on to future generations, the following measures are being taken: Including topics related to Western Azerbaijan in textbooks in schools and higher education institutions; Organizing scientific conferences, seminars and projects to research and present historical facts; Preparing documentaries, books, multimedia projects and other educational materials to educate new generations; Holding competitions, exhibitions and events to strengthen the sense of patriotism and national identity among young people. As a result of these measures, the continuity of the issue of Western Azerbaijan is ensured and the involvement of the younger generation in the struggle for historical justice is ensured. The historical and cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani Turks living in Western Azerbaijan is rich and diverse. However, this heritage has been systematically destroyed or falsified by the Armenians. Therefore, the protection of cultural heritage and its dissemination to the international community is one of the important priorities. The work carried out in this direction is as follows: Documentation, digitization and mapping of historical and cultural monuments, mosques, cemeteries and other cultural heritage samples; Submission of appeals and reports to international organizations for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage; Disseminating this heritage to a wide audience through the creation of virtual museums and interactive platforms; Introducing the historical heritage and the facts of deportation to the world through multimedia projects and social media campaigns. These activities serve both to protect national identity and to increase responsibility for Armenia's cultural vandalism at the international legal level.

Challenges and Perspectives

Regional and international political situation.

One of the main challenges affecting the resolution of the issue of return to Western Azerbaijan is the political dynamics existing in the region and at the global level. The South Caucasus region is characterized as a place where both geopolitical conflicts and the interests of great powers intersect. The different strategies and rivalries of Russia, Turkey, Iran and Western states in the region directly affect the pace and content of the return process. In such conditions: Regional security and stability issues have not yet been fully met; Different geopolitical goals of great powers lead to different tactics and priorities in approaching the issue of return; The attention of the international community is mainly focused on Nagorno-Karabakh and other border conflicts, which prevents the issue of Western Azerbaijan from receiving sufficient attention. These factors complicate the resolution of the issue of Western Azerbaijan in the

international legal context and require a multifaceted strategic approach [5].

Political positions within Armenia. The attitude towards the West Azerbaijan issue within Armenia is mainly negative and cautious. Some political forces in the country assess the open discussion of the issue as a risk to the peace process and prefer to preserve the status quo. On the other hand, certain political circles and some parts of the public want the issue to be used in regional and international diplomacy. This situation: creates internal political fragmentation in Armenia, which prevents a constructive solution to the issue; makes it difficult for the West Azerbaijan issue to become a turning point in Armenian policy; slows down the establishment of mutual trust and finding territorial compromises in the peace process. This uncertainty in Armenia's internal policy is one of the main challenges in resolving the West Azerbaijan issue [7].

The role of this issue in the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace process. The West Azerbaijan issue is both sensitive and strategic in the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In the negotiations on the peace treaty, this issue: is in a priority position as ensuring the right of return within the framework of the full restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity; acts as a key component in the resolution of mutual security guarantees and humanitarian issues; The development and implementation of phased and transparent return plans is essential for the process to be successful. In this context, resolving the West Azerbaijan issue through a constructive and realistic approach in the peace process can ensure long-term stability and open up new opportunities for mutual understanding in the region [8].

Restoration and documentation of historical-geographical memory. Restoration and documentation of historical-geographical memory in the West Azerbaijan issue is of strategic importance for the protection of national identity and justice. The main goal of this process is the systematic collection, archiving and digitization of facts related to the historical territories of the region, toponyms, material and cultural heritage and events related to deportation. The work carried out in this direction includes the following activities: Collection and study of archival documents, including statistics, settlement documents and deportation protocols from the Soviet era; Creation of a digital database of historical maps, photographs and field studies; Mapping the geographical location of toponyms and historical monuments, as the main source for the restoration of the ethnic and cultural landscape of the region; Organization of academic research and documentary publications, cooperation with international scholars in this field. This documentation process ensures the presentation of the West Azerbaijan issue on an objective and factual basis, both at the local and international levels [17].

Propaganda and information struggle in foreign media. A purposeful propaganda and information struggle should be carried out in order to present the issue of Western Azerbaijan correctly and balancedly in the international media space. This struggle, in addition to reacting to Armenia's attempts to distort and falsify the topic, is to convey the true voice of Azerbaijan

to the world. The main tasks to be carried out in this direction are as follows: Organizing information campaigns in international media, preparing and distributing positive and factually based news and analytical articles; Active activity on social media platforms, providing fact-based responses to false information, creating video and multimedia content; Preparing resources in foreign languages (English, Russian, French, etc.), bringing the issue to a wider audience; Involving experts in the field of information warfare, preparing and implementing strategies. Activities carried out in this direction serve to form international public opinion, support Azerbaijan's rightful position, and better understand the issue of Western Azerbaijan in the international arena [15].

Necessary conditions for return. One of the main conditions for the successful implementation of the return process to Western Azerbaijan is the full provision of political and diplomatic preparation. At this stage: creating and strengthening trust between Azerbaijan and Armenia; supporting the issue on a legal level in the international community, recognizing the right of return in the peace process; providing guarantees of peace and security through international organizations; preparing and agreeing on phased return plans in diplomatic negotiations is important. This political and diplomatic preparation ensures that the return process is carried out on the basis of mutual agreement and in conditions free from violence [3].

Restoration of property rights. One of the main legal issues during the return of internally displaced persons is the restoration of their lost property rights. The following measures are important in this direction: Registration of lost property and recognition of ownership rights; Establishment of mechanisms for the restoration or compensation of property; Simplification of legal procedures and ensuring transparency; Organization of the activities of independent and fair bodies for the resolution of judicial and administrative disputes. These conditions are vital for improving the socio-economic status of IDPs and protecting their rights [14].

Infrastructure and reintegration plans. In order for the return to be sustainable and safe, it is necessary to reconstruct the infrastructure in the areas and prepare reintegration plans. The main directions in this area are: Restoration of housing and social infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, education and health facilities); Promotion of economic activities, creation of jobs and preparation of social support programs; Provision of psychological and social services to support the reintegration process; Taking appropriate legal and physical measures to ensure the safety of the population. The phased implementation of infrastructure restoration and reintegration plans ensures the effectiveness and long-term stability of the return process [4].

Conclusions and Recommendations

The issue of return to Western Azerbaijan is not only a regional problem, but also a complex issue that combines international law, humanitarian and geopolitical aspects. It is important to establish a sustainable, multifaceted and coordinated strategy in solving this problem. It is necessary for the return strategy to be sustainable and multifaceted. Strengthening the legal basis, conducting political-diplomatic initiatives, and

forming cultural and public awareness should be considered as complementary elements. Such a strategy allows us to see the return process not only as territorial restoration, but also in a broader context such as social integration, security and restoration of historical justice.

The importance of coordinated activity on the legal, diplomatic and public fronts should be particularly emphasized. Synchronized cooperation between state institutions, the West Azerbaijan Community, the Azerbaijani diaspora and international partners will increase the effectiveness of return. This coordination will strengthen both legal protection and information struggle, and will provide support from the international community. Ultimately, a successful resolution of the Western Azerbaijan issue will ensure long-term peace and regional stability, and will pave the way for the full restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and the implementation of national justice.

Strategic Roadmap Proposal. It is necessary to develop an effective and realistic roadmap for resolving the issue of return to Western Azerbaijan. This roadmap should include a multifaceted, phased and flexible approach, so that both legal, political and humanitarian aspects are fully covered. The main elements of the roadmap are as follows:

- Strengthening diplomatic negotiations and the recognition of the right of return within the framework of international law;

- Ensuring mutual security and humanitarian guarantees between Armenia and Azerbaijan;

- Establishing mechanisms for the restoration of property rights and compensation;

- Phased implementation of infrastructure reconstruction and social reintegration programs;

- Public awareness, protection of cultural heritage and restoration of historical memory;

- Strengthening cooperation with the diaspora and international organizations;

- Ensuring information security and implementing effective communication strategies against misinformation.

Importance in terms of Regional Stability and Long-Term Peace. The implementation of this strategic roadmap will directly impact on ensuring long-term peace and stability in the region. A fair and legal solution to the West Azerbaijan issue will:

- Contribute to the restoration of mutual trust in the region and the strengthening of the peace process between the parties;

- Create conditions for the reduction of tensions on ethnic and political grounds;

- Create a favorable environment for the development of economic integration and cooperation in the region;

- Support the balancing of the strategic interests of the great powers in the region;

- Ensure the implementation of human rights and international humanitarian law principles by restoring the rights of internally displaced persons.

In this regard, the roadmap will lay the foundation for peace and prosperity for both Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as the entire South Caucasus region [18].

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