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**THE DEVELOPMENT DYNAMICS AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF
AZERBAIJAN'S MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE MODERN ERA**

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**MÜASİR DÖVRDƏ AZƏRBAYCANIN HƏRBİ TƏHSİL SİSTEMİNİN
İNKİŞAF DİNAMİKASI VƏ STRATEJİ ƏHƏMİYYƏTİ**

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**ДИНАМИКА РАЗВИТИЯ И СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКОЕ ЗНАЧЕНИЕ СИСТЕМЫ
ВОЕННОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА В СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ ПЕРИОД**

Abstract. In the article, the importance of forming Armed Forces capable of responding adequately to modern challenges as one of the main attributes of independent statehood is highlighted, and the strategic role of military science and the education system in this process is emphasized. By examining the dynamics of the formation and development of Azerbaijan's military education system, it is noted that the reforms implemented in recent years have contributed to updating the content of military education, creating effective management mechanisms, and improving the quality of personnel training. In the context of globalization and technological development, modern military education places particular importance on developing both professional competencies and 21st-century skills among officers. Likewise, increasing the share of military education in the structure of state expenditures is considered a strategically significant investment.

Keywords: *innovative curriculum of the military education, professional military personnel training, management mechanisms, modern challenges*

Xülasə. Məqalədə müstəqil dövlətçiliyin əsas atributlarından biri kimi güclü və müasir çağırışlara adekvat cavab verə bilən Silahlı Qüvvələrin formalaşdırılmasının əhəmiyyəti qeyd edilmiş və bu prosesdə hərbi elm və təhsil sisteminin strateji rolu ön plana çəkilmişdir. Azərbaycanın hərbi təhsil sisteminin formalaşması və inkişafı dinamikasına nəzər salınaraq son dövrlərdə həyata keçirilən islahatların isə hərbi təhsilin məzmununun yenilənməsinə, səmərəli idarəetmə mexanizmlərinin yaradılmasına və kadr hazırlığının keyfiyyətinin artırılmasına xidmət etdiyi vurğulanmışdır. Qloballaşma və texnoloji inkişaf şəraitində müasir hərbi təhsil zabitlərdə həm peşə kompetensiyalarının, həm də XXI əsr bacarıqlarının formalaşdırılmasına xüsusi əhəmiyyəti ön plana çəkilmişdir. Eyni ilə dövlət xərcləri strukturunda hərbi təhsilin payının artırılması strateji əhəmiyyət kəsb edən əsaslı investisiya kimi qeyd edilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: *innovativ hərbi təhsil məzmunu, peşəkar hərbi kadr hazırlığı, idarəetmə mexanizmləri, müasir çağırışlar*

Аннотация. В статье отмечена важность формирования Вооружённых Сил, способных адекватно отвечать на современные вызовы, как одного из основных атрибутов независимой государственности, а также подчеркнута стратегическая роль военной науки и системы образования в данном

процессе. Рассмотрев динамику формирования и развития системы военного образования Азербайджана, подчеркнуто, что реформы, реализованные в последние годы, способствуют обновлению содержания военного образования, созданию эффективных механизмов управления и повышению качества подготовки кадров. В условиях глобализации и технологического развития современное военное образование придаёт особое значение формированию у офицеров как профессиональных компетенций, так и навыков XXI века. В то же время увеличение доли военного образования в структуре государственных расходов рассматривается как стратегически важная инвестиция.

Ключевые слова: инновационное содержание военного образования, подготовка профессиональных военных кадров, механизмы управления, современные вызовы

Introduction. One of the key indicators of an independent statehood is the formation of Armed Forces capable of operating effectively in accordance with modern challenges, where the military science and education system plays a special role and importance. Military science and education act as a strategic direction in strengthening national security and defense potential, and at the same time constitute a purposeful training and upbringing system based on the sequential acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies [1, p. 22]. The formation of a formal military education system and a professional officer corps is closely linked to the development of military service as a profession and the emergence of the nation-state. Until the eighteenth century, military commanders' education mainly consisted of practical training gained in combat conditions. In fact, most commanders of the early periods were more warriors than professionals, and many of them obtained their positions due to political status or noble origin.

The idea that officers should not be limited to practical training and experience but require specialized military education emerged in the eighteenth century. Technological development, particularly advances in artillery, engineering, and fortification, made it necessary for officers to possess broader knowledge of applied sciences, especially mathematics. In addition, the transition from mercenary armies to professional standing armies fundamentally changed the concept of the military serviceman. In mercenary armies of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, commanders and officers were mainly entrepreneurs driven by personal gain. In contrast, officers in professional armies became individuals who chose military service as a lifelong profession. In professional armies, commanders increasingly required young candidates to complete specialized training

courses before taking up their duties. This gave rise to higher military education, a process that began to take shape only at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century [2, p. 7]. As armies gradually expanded, the increasing complexity of supply and logistics, as well as management requirements, led to a growing demand for highly trained and professional officers in the command staffs of large military formations.

History of Military Education in Azerbaijan. The development of military education in Azerbaijan has been shaped through various historical stages and is closely linked to the country's political and military development dynamics. The formation of national military education became more evident during the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918–1920). Within the framework of national army building, special attention was paid to officer training, and efforts were made to develop human resources through short-term military courses and training programs. One of the well-known historians of Azerbaijan, Doctor of Historical Sciences M. Suleymanov, notes in his research the significant contributions of General A. Shikhlinski, known as the “God of Russian artillery,” in the establishment of the military education system in Northern Azerbaijan in the 20th century. According to his studies, at the beginning of 1918, as the commander of the Muslim Corps, Shikhlinski issued an order to establish a military school. Although it was initially planned to open in Baku, due to the complicated military situation, it was decided that the school would be opened in Ganja [3, p. 223]. Therefore, 1918 is considered the starting stage of national military education in Azerbaijan.

Even during the Soviet period, despite resistance from the USSR leadership, the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, foresaw the future need for military

personnel and their training. Through his personal initiative in 1971, he succeeded in establishing the Jamshid Nakhchivanski Military School and ensured preferential admission of Azerbaijani youth to the Baku Higher Combined Arms Command School, the Baku Higher Naval School, and other military educational institutions of the country. In 1997–2001, the establishment of the Military Academy of the Armed Forces, officer improvement courses, a warrant officer training school, the Nakhchivan branch of the Jamshid Nakhchivanski Military Lyceum, reserve officer training courses, the Military Medical Faculty of the Azerbaijan Medical University, and the Training and Education Center of the Armed Forces played a vital role in preparing professional, knowledgeable military personnel loyal to their homeland and people.

After the restoration of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the national military education system was rebuilt and its institutional foundations were formed. During this period, the creation of national military education institutions, improvement of personnel training, and alignment with international standards were identified as priority directions.

After the historic victory in the Second Karabakh War, large-scale structural and institutional reforms were launched in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, making the modernization of the military education system necessary. The requirements of the modern security environment, technological development, and the need to improve the quality of professional personnel training have made the introduction of new management and organizational models in military education highly relevant. Accordingly, by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, dated March 5, 2022, No. 1626, the National Defense University was established based on the experience of advanced foreign armies [4]. Its main purpose is to ensure the training of secondary specialized and highly qualified specialists, scientific and scientific-pedagogical personnel for the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to organize the education of government officials in military-strategic, military-economic, and military-political issues, as well as to conduct scientific research in

the field of military sciences and implement additional professional training.

Features and Development Challenges of Modern Military Education

Rapid scientific and technological progress, innovations, modernization, and similar changes have significant implications for professional military education. For this reason, every military institution must continue to “learn how to learn” and transform into a learning organization. A balance must be established between learning and control, and learning should occur in a proactive and creative manner. Thus, a learning educational institution must be capable of forming a general vision and increasing situational awareness—that is, the ability to timely understand, correctly assess, and appropriately respond to events, changes, and risks occurring within the institution or environment [5, p. 11].

In the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan, the professional education system has become a comprehensive framework for preparing officers for military service. However, in order to reflect the changing nature of warfare and society, this system must continuously develop and is indeed evolving. First of all, the ability of the military education system to cover all levels of warfare—tactical, operational, and strategic—is of particular importance, as proper interaction between these levels determines the success of modern operations [6, p. 12]. In addition, the level of integration and coordination between different branches of the armed forces and structural units must be evaluated, and a joint approach ensuring interaction between land, air, and naval forces within a unified command and control framework should be among the priority objectives [7, p. 62]. An effective system must ensure fast and reliable information exchange and operate in accordance with principles of cooperation. At the same time, synchronization of decision-making processes and coordinated use of resources are key indicators of joint operations. In this regard, the compliance of the military education system with joint operational requirements is a fundamental condition for its operational effectiveness and alignment with modern military challenges.

Thus, the military education system must prepare officer personnel not only for traditional

combat operations but also for the dynamic and uncertain nature of future conflicts, particularly in terms of decision-making, leadership, and innovative thinking.

The State Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan envisages the implementation of a set of comprehensive measures aimed at ensuring the development of the education system in accordance with international standards in terms of quality and accessibility, the training of competent teachers and educational managers, and the formation of modern infrastructure based on advanced technologies [8].

The content of military education, as one of the priority directions defined in the State Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, must be aligned with this document and include objectives such as adapting educational content to modern requirements, implementing a competence-based training model, and preparing competitive personnel with information literacy and strong communication skills who meet labor market demands.

The aim of higher and professional military education is not only to develop self-confident individuals who protect and promote national, moral, and universal values, and who are independent, creative thinkers and patriotic citizens, but also to prioritize the characteristics of the operational environment, the needs of the defense sector, and future security challenges. In addition, considering that in the modern security environment military personnel require not only technical knowledge but also analytical thinking, situational assessment, and responsible decision-making skills, the content of modern military education has an integrative nature [9, p. 4]. This approach, by combining technical, humanitarian, natural, and social sciences, also fosters the development of “soft skills” such as communication and behavioral competencies among military personnel.

Strategic Directions in Military Education. This strategic direction, which encompasses competence-based and personality-oriented education content, shows that military education is not limited to the transmission of knowledge but also requires its systematic structuring and application in practical activity. In this context, the essence of military knowledge

and its various dimensions are of particular importance. According to Kenney, military knowledge is generally grouped into three main categories, each playing a distinct yet complementary role in the formation of professional military competence [10, p. 3]:

1. The ethos of military service, which refers to professional standards, discipline, codes of professional conduct, and cultural norms;

2. The technical and tactical skills required to conduct warfare;

3. The wisdom and decision-making ability applied in a wide range of situations.

In recent years, due to scientific and technological progress, innovation, and modernization processes, an education model that is not enriched with practical knowledge and skills and remains purely theoretical has gradually lost its effectiveness. For this reason, modern military education is increasingly based on information technologies and is taking successful steps toward ensuring a more practice-oriented and competence-based training model through the use of simulation and virtual training environments. The competence-based education model is particularly important in the military sphere, as modern operational environments require officers and cadets not only to possess theoretical knowledge but also practical skills such as rapid decision-making, use of technologies, teamwork, and adaptation to complex situations [11, p. 45]. Ultimately, this approach contributes to strengthening military-political stability, increasing defense capability, and supporting the socio-economic development of the state.

The second strategic direction of the strategy concerns the modernization of human resources in education. This approach emphasizes the importance of improving human capital quality and enhancing professional training in the modern era. Any targeted training process can only be considered effective if both trainers and trainees possess sufficient theoretical knowledge and an adequate level of education. In this context, Kime notes that the boundaries between “those in need of education” and “those in need of training” have gradually become blurred and in some cases lost their relevance [12, p. 3]. In Azerbaijan’s military sphere, especially in combat units, providing only theoretical education without

practical training has traditionally not been considered appropriate. However, in the modern era, military education faces a new reality: effective training is not possible without sufficient theoretical knowledge and intellectual foundation. Critical thinking and analytical skills are among the core requirements of both modern battlefields and peacetime military environments [13, p. 256]. Thus, the future serviceman must be not only an executor but also a strategically thinking individual with flexible intellectual capabilities. Military intellectual agility refers to the ability of military personnel to quickly analyze information, think flexibly in uncertain situations, develop alternative decision options, and effectively apply existing knowledge and experience in new operational environments characterized by complexity, dynamics, and risk [14, p. 3].

The third strategic direction involves the creation of transparent, efficient, and results-based management mechanisms in education. In this regard, military governance in educational institutions includes not only efficient resource management but also the systematic development of human capital, purposeful use of knowledge and skills, and ensuring the quality of education. Following the establishment of the National Defense University, management mechanisms in the military education system have been improved, a unified management model has been introduced, new curricula have been implemented, and significant structural and content reforms have been carried out to align the education process with modern requirements. As an example, according to the relevant concept on military service in the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, highly intellectually capable military personnel are expected to continue their service in specialized units within the National Defense University [15]. In these units, they are engaged in scientific, technical, and innovative projects in accordance with their specialization. At the same time, graduates of foreign universities ranked among the top 500 globally serving in these units contributes to efficient use of human capital and the implementation of innovative governance approaches.

Participation of officers in NATO courses ensures that military personnel are trained in accordance with international standards while accelerating the integration of innovative

development and advanced management practices into the military education system. The foundation of cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and NATO was laid in March 1992, and since 1997 it has developed through Azerbaijan's participation in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, formerly known as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. On 4 May 1994, Azerbaijan joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) program. Within this framework, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan effectively uses various NATO partnership mechanisms, including the PfP program, the Individual Partnership Action Plan, the Planning and Review Process, the Operational Capabilities Concept, Partnership Staff Posts, the Defense Education Enhancement Program, the Science for Peace and Security Program, and other relevant cooperation tools [16, p. 3].

The fourth strategic direction prioritizes the creation of a modern education infrastructure based on lifelong learning principles. In particular, professional military education must be continuous and ensure a systematic learning process throughout the entire military career. This educational model must be adapted to operational requirements and changes in the security environment, ensuring the rapid and efficient delivery of knowledge and skills when needed. The true test of a nation's army is not only the level of education it provides, but how effectively knowledge is applied on the battlefield. Professional military education must evolve through a learning process that combines continuity, change, renewal, and development [17, p. 4].

The fifth strategic direction concerns the development of a defense-economic sustainable education financing model aligned with advanced international standards. One of the main directions of military education reform is the improvement of financial mechanisms and expansion of incentive-based management tools. In accordance with the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "Measures to Promote Military Education Among Youth," several incentive mechanisms have been introduced to strengthen social support for students at the Heydar Aliyev Military Institute, including a one-time payment of 500 AZN, a monthly scholarship of 150 AZN, monthly financial support of 200 AZN for family

members, and an additional 200 AZN monthly savings account contribution [18].

Conclusion. The article examines the military education system as a strategic field closely connected to the state education policy, since it is an integral part of it. Although its principles are based on institutional statutes and Ministry of Defense regulations, the system mainly follows national education policy as its core direction.

Military education management, human capital development, curriculum renewal, innovation, and resource efficiency are guided by the state education strategy and the Law "On Education." The modern model, based on international standards and supported by simulation and virtual training, ensures competence-based, practice-oriented learning, enabling officers to work effectively in multinational environments and contribute to peacekeeping.

In conclusion, military education policy ensures unified management, continuity, and adaptation to modern security needs. It supports integration into international education systems and advanced technologies, strengthens officer training, enhances intellectual capacity, and contributes to the sustainable development of defense capabilities.

Relevance of the Problem. In the modern era, globalization, rapid technological development, and

changes in the security environment place new demands on states' defense capabilities. Despite recent reforms in Azerbaijan's military education system, the rapidly changing and uncertain security environment makes issues such as the development of 21st-century skills, improvement of management mechanisms, increased budget allocation, and integration with international standards highly relevant. Therefore, analyzing the current state and development dynamics of the system and adapting it to modern requirements is an urgent scientific and practical issue.

Scientific Novelty of the Problem. The novelty of the study lies in analyzing Azerbaijan's military education system within the context of modern security challenges using an integrated approach covering institutional, content, and management aspects. It highlights the strategic role of the system in ensuring combat readiness and personnel supply of the Armed Forces. The impact of recent reforms on updating educational content, improving management mechanisms, and implementing results-oriented personnel policy is also systematized.

Practical Significance of the Problem. The findings can be used to improve the management of the military education system, modernize curricula based on 21st-century skills, and enhance personnel training quality. They are also important for strategic decision-making and education policy development in the military education sector. In addition, the results provide a scientific and methodological basis for updating training processes and improving officer education aligned with modern competencies.

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