

GENDER AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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In post-Soviet Azerbaijan, as in other successor states to the Soviet Union, people are going through a semi post-colonial process of constructing a new and independent national identity. In their nation-building attempt, the Azeri elite, predominantly nationalist and male, seeks to reassess, re-imagine, and redefine ethno-cultural and national identity of Azerbaijan. One of the targets or objects of this redefinition is the role of women in society. This, however, has not been a totally one-way process prescribed merely by the male elite. Women have not remained simply as passive objects of nationalist transition, inter-ethnic conflict or inter-national contest. Despite all the odds and limits, many women in Azerbaijan strive for a subject status and demonstrate a considerable level of agency by taking part in various aspects of socio-economic restructuring and cultural redefinition.¹

As a borderland, geo-politically and geo-culturally situated between the “East” (Asia) and “West,” (Europe), Azerbaijan has a multifaceted national and cultural identity. It is among the most secularized and relatively modernized Islamicate republics. The interplay between several domestic and regional factors has shaped the gender dynamics and social status of women in Azerbaijan, including, the Caucasian cultural and historic milieu; the Islamic tradition; the Russian political and cultural influence; and the Azerbaijani nationalism. The definition of womanhood, manhood and Azerbaijani national identity in Soviet Azerbaijan were construed, in part, in comparison and contrast to the perceived image of the Russian “other”. Women were expected to be the main identity markers, the primary repositories of “authenticity” (*asalat*), tradition, ethnic codes and customs that would demarcate Azerbaijani cultural boundaries from those of Russian rulers.

Following its independence since 1991 and its entrance into market economy and capitalism, Azerbaijani nationalism is supposedly playing a central role in democratization of society and in articulation of its new national identity and gender regime. Yet, as will be discussed later, it is only within a new regional and international context and through a contest with certain new “others” (Turkey, Iran, ‘West’, and Armenia) that Azerbaijani “national idea” is being articulated. Similar to many other post-colonial nationalization and democratization, these processes have been based on a modernist male-normative implying a yet more unequal gender arrangement than the one in the former Soviet system.

Azerbaijan provides an interesting case for exploring a number of theoretical questions and practical concerns about the relation between women and nationalism in post-colonial context. Recent feminist studies have demonstrated the gendered nature of nation-building, nationalism, national identity-formation, and inter-ethnic and inter-national processes (e.g., Pateman, 1988; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1991; Peterson & Runyan, 1993; Sharoni, 1993; Moghadam, 1994; Einhorn, 1996; Rapp, 1997). For example, what can be made of the problematic relationship between nationalism and feminism? Must they always be in opposition? Some feminists have warned women all over the world to be suspicious of locally prevalent pictures of ‘national identity’ and ‘national traditions’ because “such images or pictures are used to privilege the views and values of certain parts of the heterogeneous national population as ‘definitive’ of national life and culture.” (Narayan, 1997).

It has been argued that conservative state-nationalist projects can instrumentalize and objectify women or may homogenize and deprive them of their subject status as citizens. Women often play an active, yet secondary and marginal role in nationalist struggles against colonial or semi-colonial domination.² In the often-cited case of Algeria, women activists were even pushed back to their domestic role following the victory of nationalists over the colonial forces. Feminist critique of nationalism and its male-centered citizenship precedes modern projects of national independence movements and post-colonial experience. Feminism has been, among other things, a critique of modernity and capitalism in general since both projects were based on a masculine conception of the ‘social contract’ and ‘civil freedom’ that presupposed a male-centered “sexual contract” and “patriarchal right” (Pateman, 1988). Extension of the universal suffrage, civil rights, and human rights to the female half of the society even in the Western countries began to materialize only thanks to the women’s movements and feminist redefinition of democracy and citizenship in the 20th century.

In the process of post-colonial modern nation-building, women benefited by gaining new rights and improving their educational and employment opportunities precisely because the nationalist elite has seen such an improvement as a necessary prerequisite for national independence, decolonization and modernization processes. Furthermore, a growing number of women in post-colonial contexts have negotiated and renegotiated with the nationalist elite for new spaces and diverse identities. By acting within but gradually moving beyond the narrow confines of the role and identity ascribed to women as custodians of national traditions or embodiment of ethnic or national codes of conduct, some women have succeeded in practically subverting the masculine and homogenizing prescriptions of anti-colonial nationalism. The degree of women’s success in moving beyond the boundaries dictated by conservative nationalists, however, has depended on the state

gender policies, strength of civil society, especially those of women NGOs (non-governmental organizations), institutionalization of democracy, and legal establishment of human rights at a general level.

This paper will examine how such theoretical patterns and practical issues concerning the gender dimension of nationalism apply to Azerbaijan in its post-Soviet quest for a new national identity. What are the predominant views and images of women and gender relations promoted by the Azerbaijani nationalist elite? What kinds of redefinition of women's roles in society are underway and how do the female and male elites configure these re/definitions with the construction of new national identity? How do women fare in the process of socio-economic transformation and how do they respond to new opportunities, challenges and adverse impacts of post-Soviet developments?

Why a Regional Perspective?

Azerbaijan, located in the eastern part of the Caucasus, occupies a territory of 33.4 square miles about the size of Portugal. Given the historical background, geopolitical and geocultural situation of Azerbaijan, any nationalist discourse and identity construction in this country would inevitably be a regional process involving the interplay of identity politics in Turkey, Iran, and Russia. Factors that contribute to Azerbaijan's unique geopolitics include the following. First, Azeris who make up over 83 percent of the population of the Azerbaijan Republic, are Turkic speaking and predominantly Shi'a Muslims who see themselves as a people who became divided between Russia and Persia in early 19th century. Over 20 millions of ethnic Azeris live in Iran and 7.3 millions inhabit the Republic of Azerbaijan proper who have undergone nearly two centuries of Russian domination. Second, Azerbaijan forms a borderland between Europe and Asia, Islam and Christianity, Russia and Turkey, Iran and Turkey. The historical, ethnic, and political ties between Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey and Russia represent a complex legacy that shapes contemporary Azerbaijani society. Third, Azerbaijani politics is deeply enmeshed in present international and regional rivalries over the oil reserves of the Caucasus and Caspian littoral states. And finally, the Armenian-Azerbaijani territorial dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, which again has a regional characteristic involving Russia and Turkey, casts a long shadow over Azerbaijan's society. With some twenty percent of its territory under occupation, one of every seven Azerbaijanis has become a refugee or been internally displaced, of which 55 percent are women and children.³ It is in such an inter-ethnic, war-stricken, and nationally and inter-nationally contested milieu that women and men

in Azerbaijan are going through a semi-decolonization process. All of these factors have turned Azerbaijan into a stage upon which regional politics, including gender politics, are played out.

Given Azerbaijan's historical background and present situation, it is only natural that it has maintained a multi-faceted and syncretistic identity, reflecting both local or indigenous characteristics of the Caucasus and the regional influences of Iran, Turkey and Russia. Azerbaijan's identity in modern times has been shaped and reshaped through several turning points or socio-political crises. The first major turning point as perceived by the Azerbaijanis themselves, was the Russian-Persian wars in the nineteenth century, which resulted in the treaties of Gulustan in 1813 and Turkmançay in 1828 that divided Azeris across the north and south of Aras River between Iran and Russia. After that point the "North Azerbaijanis" (under Russia) experienced a process of colonization and modernization first under Russian orthodoxy of Tsarist rule and later under atheistic Soviet style socialism.

The second major turning point was the short period of independence between 1918 and 1920, during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic formed under the leadership of secular nationalists like Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh and upon the collapse of the Russian Empire. It is this period to which today's Azerbaijani female and male intellectuals often refer proudly as the most important and inspiring turning point in their modern history. "Rationalism, liberalism and humanism advocated by Bakikhanov, Akhundzadeh, Topchubashev, Zardabi" and other Azeri intellectuals gave impetus to Azeri nationalism and helped transform the previous religious-based Muslim (*ummat*) identity into a nationality-based Azerbaijani identity (Hadjyzadeh, 1998). The formula for a new identity, posited by an Azeri intellectual (Ali bey Huseynzadeh) in the beginning of the 20th century, was "Turkism, Modernism, and Islam," embodied later in the three-colored banner of the short-lived independent republic of 1918-20 as well as the present independent state. Some Azeri nationalists have characterized this short-lived republic as "the first democratic republic in the entire Muslim world that provided universal suffrage guaranteeing all citizens full civil and political rights regardless of their nationality, religion, social position and sex."⁴

The third turning point was of the Bolsheviks takeover of Baku that led to the establishment of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan and the seventy years of Soviet era that followed. The fourth and latest turning point began during the disintegration of the Soviet Union when the parliament of Azerbaijan was among the first to adopt a resolution of independence on August 30, 1991.⁵ One of the most influential factors in the political process and identity construction of Azerbaijanis over the past seven years of independence has been the bloody conflict with Armenia. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict accompanied with a humiliating territorial loss and devastating consequences of refugees and internally displaced persons, has threatened Azerbaijan's territorial

integrity and has intensified nationalistic sentiments and the quest for national identity stronger than ever before.

The Impact of Transition on Women

The gender-specific effects of post-Soviet developments in Azerbaijan seems to have many common patterns with the ones reported about the former socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The following adverse effects have so far outnumbered the positive ones, at least in short-run. 1. Deteriorating living standards and health status for many people, especially women and children; 2. Increasing and disproportional unemployment and poverty among women; 3. Rising ‘cult of domesticity’ and traditional gender attitudes; 4. Decreasing women’s presence in government and formal politics, yet increasing activism of women in informal politics and new civil society; 5. Increasing commercialization of sex, especially trafficking in women’s bodies overt sex-discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence; and 6. Rising identity politics, inter-ethnic strife and ethno-nationalist discourse that renders women’s rights and freedom as hostage to their prescribed role as the primary guardians of national identity and cultural ‘authenticity.’ Though the main concern of this particular article is the 6th issue, that is, gender and national identity, the other five sets of issues have inevitably interacted with the question of identity and gender relations. Therefore, I shall briefly address all the above-mentioned main effects.

Despite its great potentials, rich natural resources, especially the vast Caspian oil reserves, and highly educated human power, Azerbaijan has experienced a drastic economic decline since its independence. Several oil contracts with Western oil consortiums in recent years, promising an economic boom and imminent prosperity, have not materialized yet mainly because of geopolitical reasons. An alarming socio-economic polarization, a small stratum constituting the new rich and an impoverished majority has already plagued Azerbaijani society. Instead of a productive industrial capitalism, what has so far replaced state socialism in the former Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan is what some have called “bandit capitalism.”

In comparison to women in many developing countries, especially those in the Muslim world, women in Soviet Azerbaijan had made a considerable level of achievement, particularly in the realms of education, employment, primary health care, and legal rights pertaining to matters of family and personal status. According to many Azerbaijanis, although women have maintained their “respected” and “protected” position in post-Soviet Azerbaijani culture, the new economic conditions and political changes have jeopardized their hard won accomplishments and some

positive legacies of the Soviet system, without correcting or removing the negative legacies of the past order.

With the onset of restructuring and economic reform (*perestroika*), the “over-employment” of women emerged as a central ‘woman question’ and some, including Gorbachev himself, attempted to refocus women toward their role at home. Women were called to “return” to the family and take care of the “decay of family life.” ‘Restructuring’ and ‘democratization’ of economy and polity did not include restructuring or democratization of the home, gender relations and gender division of labor in order to deal with the “decay of family life”. Instead women’s role outside the home was blamed for increasing juvenile delinquency and troubles in the family life hence women are called to redirect themselves toward their traditional roles. In 1992, the Russian media and television, still broadcast in Azerbaijan as well, launched a campaign stressing that women were supposed to be the “guardians of home and hearth.”

Both secular conservative nationalists and newly emerged Islamists in Azerbaijan and some Central Asian republics have given an extra nationalist color to this trend. They blame the bygone Soviet system for “super-employment” and “abuse” of Muslim women, especially in the jobs that they see as “disrespectful” of women’s “feminine qualities” and “dishonoring” of “motherhood as their primary duty.”

Ironically, many women who have been worn down from the ‘double burden’ and hazardous working conditions have not really minded to free themselves from the excessive toil in the sphere of production. The Soviet policy of promoting massive entrance of women into the formal economy did not accompany a corresponding provision of quality and adequate child-care, of the facilitating household appliances, and a change in gender-based division of reproductive labor. Lack of regard for a strategy of sustainable and human development and one-sided emphasis on military build-up, heavy industrial production and growth, left the housework, household maintenance and the daily reproductive tasks to be carried out by primitive tools and manual labor of, almost exclusively, women.

Both during the Soviet era and post-Soviet times, housework and household maintenance have remained as an arduous and most time consuming responsibility of women for the following reasons. The necessity of manual preparation of every type of foodstuff due to underdevelopment of food cycle technology and the lack of ready-made food supplies in the market and the limited access to mechanized kitchen and home appliances. While in today’s market economy such supplies have been imported and available in the stores, only a small segment of population can financially afford to purchase them. The ongoing shortage and poor quality of safe running water and the increasing

deterioration and inefficiency in public transportation in recent years have added to the difficulty of washing, cooking, and shopping the daily necessities.

Women's largest rate of participation in Azerbaijan's labor force was and still is in agriculture and manual farm work (54% in 1989 and 48.5% in 1993), especially in less mechanized sectors. While as of 1994 women constituted 44 percent of employees in urban industries, they held only 3.1 percent of administrative and managerial positions. In urban industrial regions such as Sumgayit and Baku as well as rural areas, particularly in cotton industry, workers majority of whom women, have been exposed to deleterious substances.⁶ Environmental and ecological hazards, one of the devastating legacies of the Soviet growth-centered strategy of development have affected women's health more directly. Between 10 to 13 percent of infant mortality has been attributed to pregnant women's exposure to chemical hazards during their farm work (Afandiyev, 1992).⁷

It should be noted that, although women have made up the greater number (60-70 percent) of the newly unemployed, but many of them seem to be showing more resilience, creativity and adaptability in the face of new realities than their male counterparts. Universal literacy and high level of educational attainment among women, an undeniable achievement of the Soviet era, has been an asset for them in dealing with present hardship. By utilizing their language proficiencies as well as manual and home-making skills, artistic and handicraft abilities, many women, either enthusiastically or reluctantly and out of economic necessity, have become engaged in sporadic or regular income-generating activities within the informal economy. Included among such activities are: free trade, buying and selling (*alish-verish*), sowing, carpet-weaving and other handicrafts, food production and catering, cosmetic and facial service, laundry and other domestic service as well as tutoring Azeri or Russian languages for the new rich or the increasing number of foreign residents in Azerbaijan.

A small, but significant segment of women population seems to have already benefited from some new opportunities that the post-Soviet socio-economic and political transitions have opened up. These are usually young or middle-aged women who have quickly adopted themselves to the new market and business world of fierce competition, self-initiative, and entrepreneurship. Though no reliable statistics are available yet, women constitute a small portion of new entrepreneurs managing or co-owning some of the newly opened 'joint-venture' shops, food stores, and home-based enterprises that usually employ women, especially refugees.

Also, women clustered in service sector such as banking, insurance, hotels, and housing might have ironically benefited from this particular occupational segregation of the Soviet times as these jobs are expanding, especially in the face of imminent foreign investment in oil industry. Some of the younger ones among these women have actually utilized their language skills, especially in

English, and have enhanced their computer skills and office management abilities in order to enter into the new private sector and to work for the newly arrived foreign companies. These women are making higher salaries than their male counterparts in the public sector and seem to be enjoying their exposure to a new and more cosmopolitan environment. But there are widespread rumors (not substantiated yet) about exploitation, sexually and otherwise, of such young women desperately in need of jobs, by their male employers in these foreign companies. This, rumor or fact, has become a source of resentment especially among the less advantaged male Azerbaijanis.

At present, Azeri women need no longer define themselves primarily in comparison with or in contrast to Russian women, as they did through the years of Russian domination. In the context of post-Soviet Azerbaijan, the non-Muslim Russian “other” is gradually being replaced by the new “others,” including the neighboring Muslim Turkey and Iran and the non-Muslim new comers from the West, especially the oil-enterprise related Westerners. They are exposed to and affected by new and multiple options, models and images of womanhood. As discussed throughout this article, one of the main sources of inter-national and regional influence on the course of identity formation of Azerbaijan, has been the ongoing emulation between Iran and Turkey over presentation of models for Azeri women and men to follow.

Gendering the Nation

Questions about the place or role of women in this period of transition have been raised and discussed in connection with an intense soul-searching on what Azerbaijaniness means in the post-Soviet era. This search is carried out against a background of regionally contested milieu and domestically war-stricken and socio-economically unstable situation. How should Azeris, as the ethnic majority, reconcile their Turkic ethnic loyalty, Islamic tradition, and cultural authenticity with the goal of building an independent modern secular state without antagonizing or alienating religious and ethnic minorities inside Azerbaijan (Lezgins, Talyshis, Russians, Jews, Armenians, Kurds, Tats, etc.) and outside neighbors (Russia, Turkey, and Iran). The latter three that have been competing over the hearts and minds of Azeris are faced now with the increasing presence of Western new comers (along with Western oil companies) as a new source of influence in not only Azerbaijan, but the geopolitics and geoculture of the entire region.

I shall begin to analyze this regional dynamism and its gendered nature by two post-Soviet illustrations; one concerning a campaign for restoration of *shari'a* (Islamic law) in the marriage and

family code and the other relating to a pictorial and symbolic gendered manifestation of national identity.

1. During the last year of the Soviet era (1991) and the political openness of *glasnost*, an anonymous “Open Letter” appeared in the Azerbaijani press that addressed a sensitive issue concerning gender relations, ethnic dynamics and national identity. Signed anonymously by 23 girls, under “23-lar” (23s), the letter appealed to the Sheikh ul-Islam of Azerbaijan, Allahshukur Pashazadeh (who is also head of the Muslim Directorate of the Caucasus), to legalize polygamy in Azerbaijan.⁸ Making their case in a strongly emotional yet articulate language, they complained that “out of every ten young women in Azerbaijan, four have become maidens with no chance for marriage.” This is in part because of catastrophic economic situation and imbalance in sex ratio due to exodus of many young men from Azerbaijan and loss of some to the war with Armenia. But another “more important” reason behind the large number of maidens, emphasized the letter, is the fact that “out of every ten young married men, at least one is married to a non-Azerbaijani woman, usually a Russian or a member of an ethnic group close to Russians.”

The letter went on describing the suffering and pain in the lives of this large number of Azerbaijani maidens for whom marriage has become a mirage and child-bearing, an extremely important part of women’s role within the cultural norms of Azerbaijan, an impossibility. These women “deprived of love and joy of motherhood, have to live their lives in shame as they get blamed for any improper, sinful and out of wedlock relationships.” The inter-ethnic marriage practiced by some Azerbaijani men has, stated the letter, historically served the colonial agenda of the Russian Empire.⁹ The Russian Tzar, Peter the Great, claimed the letter, had “advised Russians to let their daughters marry sons of the nationalities or ethnic groups under Russian rule. The purpose was to expand Russian race and spread Russian blood among colonized nationalities and thereby engender some potential support for Russia during future conflicts.”

The proposed polygamy by this “23 girls” was, however, of a very unusual type meant to solve a specific demographic and social problem within the Azerbaijani context. It was to be restricted to only those Azerbaijanis married to Russians or to members of non-Azerbaijani ethnic/national groups. And only if the second wife was of Azerbaijani origin, the man should not be required to divorce his first wife. By practicing this, the letter argued, “we can resolve not only the pain and agony of thousands of Azerbaijani maidens, but we can also strengthen our national identity and put an end to the plot of Peter the Great against Azerbaijanis.”

This “Open Letter” brought forth a vigorous open response by many women led by Aziza Jafarzadeh, former head of the National Women’s Organization (the then Zhensoviet), which effectively silenced this campaign for at least several years. The Azerbaijani elite women dismissed

the letter as disingenuous and actually a ploy by the mullahs (Muslim clergymen) to restore the *shari'a* (Islamic law) and increase their influence in Azerbaijani society. While, most likely some patriarchal mullahs and Islamists have been behind the formulation of the proposition of polygamy as the solution, the grievance brought up in the letter seems to be genuinely of women's. Interviews with Azerbaijani women of the common classes show that there was and still is a genuine mass sentiment among them against inter-ethnic marriage as an unfair male prerogative. Related to this is also a serious concern about the increasing number of maidens for whom finding a morally and socially accepted way to have at least a legitimate child, if not a complete family, is a real issue. In Azerbaijani society that is still centered around the family, kinship, and heterosexual marriage and where motherhood is still considered the primary goal for a woman, it is understandable how frustrating life can become for many young women seen as failed and unfulfilled in these regards. During my interviews, a number of desperate women, considered as "maidens", confided that they would go so far as to become a temporary wife based on *sigheh* (temporary marriage as practiced in Shi'a Iran) in order to have a legitimate child.¹⁰ Noticing my sense of dismay, one woman in the group, with no resemblance to a typical image of traditional or submissive women, shocked me further by the following argument.

"Why cannot we take advantage of the mechanisms that our Shi'a tradition has provided us? There are so many illicit and illegitimate relationships going on secretly between some maidens and some married Azeri men. Why cannot we stop this hypocrisy and pretension by legalizing and legitimizing what is already being practiced. Besides, I know of some friends of mine who have actually become *sigheh* or second wife of Iranian Azerbaijanis visiting Baku. We know these men are not going to stay here with us as our husbands, but our priority at this point is to have a legitimate child."¹¹

This is an unusually overt case of intersection of gender issues with ethnic identity and nationalist impulse. This issue, too, has regional implications; the above-mentioned campaign in Azerbaijan arose while Rafsanjani, the then President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was floating the idea of *sigheh* as a solution to adolescent waywardness or to economic barriers against an early marriage.¹² Also, restoration of polygamy was similarly being debated in various Central Asian republics.¹³

Though less publicly discussed these days, the existence of a large number of 'maidens' is still a real concern and a serious issue raised by many single women, sociologists, religious as well as secular political leaders in Azerbaijan. Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, for example, a 'people's poet' has also contributed to the publicization of this issue by his poem "Dool Gizlar" (Maidens), published in early 1990s. In a nationalistic tone, he too, scolds Azerbaijani men, who marry Russian, Armenian

or other non-Azeri women, leaving “our own Azeri girls” single forever. Instead of resorting to polygamy or *sigheh*, however, women’s rights advocates and intellectuals like Aziza Jafarzadeh and Hassan Quliyev have proposed other reform measures to resolve this issue. Emphasizing economic hardship as the main cause of an alarming trend toward a reduction in marriage rates and a rise in divorce rates, they argue that the main reason for some men’s preference for non-Azerbaijani wives over Azerbaijanis is also economic. They reason that, the Azeri brides, especially Azeri parents tend to demand too much from the prospective grooms in terms of jewelry, clothing and expensive wedding ceremonies. The outdated Azeri tradition of elaborate rituals and costly numerous wedding parties in contrast to a simple, quick and inexpensive procedure expected by Russian girls, has made marrying the latter more practical and attractive for many Azeri men.¹⁴ The “Open Letter”, however, attributed this simplicity and ease toward marriage ceremony on part of Russian women to their “cheapness, low class and easy availability.”

2. The second illustration that I have already used in a number of previous writings on Azerbaijan is a symbolic one. During 1991-92, my first year of field work that coincided with the beginning of transition of the Soviet Azerbaijan into the independent Azerbaijan Republic, I frequently encountered with a glamorous, blond and smiling Turkish beauty plastered on the walls of many stores, offices, and private homes in Baku. Even on the walls of a large office at the Institute for Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences where I used to study along with a number of Azerbaijani academics, the only picture I would see those days was nothing other than this Turkish beauty. “By winning the international beauty contest of the year, this woman has brought pride and fame for Turkey and Turkish women,” I was told.

Replacement of Lenin’s picture or other usual political posters of the Soviet times by a Turkish “beauty queen” in the Academy of Sciences was too striking to me to overlook just as a trivial matter or simply a bad choice on part of some academics. One could perceive this picture together with several other Western images visible in many republics, particularly Russia, as simply part of the influence of Western pop culture and byproducts of *glasnost* in those last days of the Soviet Union. In the context of Azerbaijan, however, this particular new image – a beauty queen from Turkey – conveyed certain gender-related messages and also important political statements relating to the growing ethnic (Turkic) and nationalistic orientation of society.

It was only one year later that the pictures of Lenin and the beauty queen in the offices of the Academy, as in many other places, were replaced by pictures of Haji Zeynalabdin Taqiyev (a pre-Soviet Azeri oil millionaire and philanthropist) and Mamed Amin Rasulzade (a pre-Soviet leading ideologue of Azeri nationalism and founder of the first Republic of Azerbaijan). This, to me, signified a beginning of Azerbaijanism more so than Turkism. In about four years later, however,

another new image entered into the fluid popular culture of the country in sharp contrast to both the secular pro-Russian and pro-Soviet ideals of the past and the secular nationalist pro-Turkish and pro-Western orientation of contemporary Azerbaijan. This new image superseding the Turkish beauty queen at private homes was that of a demure young girl veiled in a white headscarf, whose eyes timidly focussed on a rosary she held in her hands. The caption on the picture was a *hadith* (prophetic saying) extolling the merits of prayer. Clearly, like the earlier one, this new image was loaded with messages regarding gender roles and evolving identity of Azerbaijanis. While the previous image reflected the post-Soviet, post-Communist “culture of display,” emphasizing physical and sexual beauty, Western fashion, and consumerism, the second one signaled modesty, morality, and Islamic values. A Western observer may suspect that this latter religiously oriented image was reflective of the growing influence of the gender role model prescribed by the other Muslim neighbor of Azerbaijan, that is, the Islamic Republic of Iran. But, it is interesting to note that both of those contrasting posters were actually printed in Turkey, albeit in different years and by different publishers. This was indicative of change, diversity, and fluidity in women’s identities not only in Azerbaijan, but also in Turkey where Islamic discourses have been gaining prominence in identity politics.

The popularity of such contrastive images is suggestive of, firstly, the complexity, diversity and fluidity of national/cultural identity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, and, secondly, an assumption that in present-day Azerbaijan, as in other colonial and post-colonial contexts, gender issues intersect with those of class, nationality, ethnicity, and religion. Recent changes in identity politics of Azerbaijan and of its neighboring countries indicate that in this region, as elsewhere, national and political identities are fluid and shifting social constructs rather than fixed and primordial attributes. If a conflict does not force people to dichotomize or polarize their identities, many people may prefer multiple and complementary identities (Joan Linz and Alfred Stepan, 1996; Ronald Suny, 1997). In 1994, for example, I found many intellectuals feeling nostalgic for the peaceful co-existence of diverse ethnic groups that marked cities like Baku and Tbilisi in the Caucasus. They were lamenting about the loss of the “cosmopolitan and ethnically diversified identity” of Baku to its “polarized, conflict-ridden and dull” appearance in the early post-Soviet years. Lately, however, Baku is gradually gaining back its multifaceted identity, including a growing diversification in women’s images and roles. In the following pages, I will try to demonstrate how the major political forces and various elite groups in Azerbaijan view women and define women’s identity.

Gender Views of the Nationalist Political Actors

Since its independence, three trends have emerged as the major political tendencies in the identity politics of Azerbaijan: Turkism (Turkchilik), Islamism (Islamchilik), and Azerbaijanism (Azerbaijanchilik). Some Azeri elites such as Abulfaz Elchibey, the former President and leader of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan (PFA) ¹⁵, while declared the necessity of integrating the three tendencies, yet gave prominence to Turkism. Others, like the current President, Heidar Aliyev, have pursued a more pragmatic approach by trying to maintain a balance among all the three.

Generally speaking, the secular political parties of Azerbaijan fall under two broader categories: a) A conservative and ethno-centric (Turkistic) nationalism that tends to support a strong state. This is represented mainly in the PFA (Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan) led by Elchibey (a carry over from the earlier PFA). b) A pro-Western liberal nationalism represented mainly in the Musavat Party (led by Isa Gambar) that tends to a civil nationalism or a pluralistic identity inclusive of various ethnic groups of Azerbaijan (Azeris as well as Talyshis, Lezgins, Russians, Armenians, Kurds, etc.). Similarly the present government of Heidar Aliyev and the ruling party (New Azerbaijan Party) has pursued a pragmatic multi-ethnic Azerbaijanism. There are still smaller parties like the National Independence Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party of Azerbaijan that in regard to their views toward Azerbaijan's national identity can be roughly classified under the second category. Before discussing the gender views of these two main trends, I shall briefly address the third tendency in Azerbaijan's identity politics.

The third trend, Islamism (*Islamchiliq*), which is smaller than the first two, has been represented mainly in the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan (IPA). In the view of IPA, religion, that is, Muslimhood (*Musalmanliq*) rather than ethnicity or nationality, makes up the primary basis of Azerbaijani identity. The reputation of IPA among many Azerbaijanis, especially women's groups, has remained negative because of its close ideological and financial connections to the conservative Islamists in Iran on the one hand and its intellectually low caliber and anti-democratic, sexist and sectarian views on the other. Four leading members of the IPA were tried in 1996 and have been imprisoned since then under the charge of spying for Iran.

The gender agenda of the IPA has been similar to that of other conservative Islamists (fundamentalist) in the Middle East and North Africa. Enforcement of sex segregation and compulsory veiling, restoration of a male-biased law (*shari'a*) in the family law, and return to a more traditional and patriarchal gender roles in public and private life are among the explicitly or implicitly stated objectives of the IPA. ¹⁶ In recent years, some of the more enlightened women members of this party have become disillusioned with the patriarchal practices of its leadership and have joined more moderate Islamic groups.

The Islamic trend in Azerbaijan, however, is not limited to Islamism of the kind advocated by the IPA. While similar to post-Soviet Russia, interest in religion and even in some superstitious cults and practice is growing, political religion and fundamentalism is not. Islam and other religious beliefs are sought as the food of soul and spiritual resource in the face of ideological vacuum, economic hardship, increasing insecurity, and fast pace of change in social life. For many political activists of nationalist and secular orientation, male or female, Islam is seen as a significant national asset and an important dimension of national identity. For instance, not only President Aliyev made a highly publicized pilgrimage to Mecca in 1995, but also one of his main intellectual opponents, Isa Gambar, leader of the pro-Western liberal Musavat party, made a similar *hajj* pilgrimage in 1998.

Another factor that should be accounted for in an analysis of the role and place of Islam in the identity politics of Azerbaijan is again the regional dynamics. On the one hand, the growing prominence of Islam in Turkey has influenced the pro-Turkey political groups in Azerbaijan so that they are following suit by paying more serious attention to the Islamic factor in their own polity. On the other hand, the decreasing credibility of the fundamentalist Islamists in Iran in the face of a growing movement toward moderation, democracy and pluralism has turned the pro-Iran extremist groups like IPA toward revision and reconsideration of their Islamism. One interesting shift in the identity politics of Azerbaijan has been recent attempts of open dialogue and reconciliation between secular liberals and Islamic groups. Even the IPA is in process of changing its name to Democratic Muslim Party. This recently growing liberal and modern Islam, known as “new Islamic thinking” in Iran is akin to the *jadid* movement of early 20th century among Muslims in Azerbaijan and Central Asia.¹⁷ The gender implications of such undergoing moderation and secularization in Islam in the Caspian region along with the influence of growing feminist movements in both Iran and Turkey on Azerbaijani women are with no doubt quite intriguing.

The gender dimension of the two above-mentioned dominant trends: conservative ethno-centric and liberal nationalists, is of a more prevalence at this point. The initial Turkistic orientation promoted by the PFA and the Elchibey’s short-lived government was perceived as an alarming pan-Turkism by Iran and Russia. Azerbaijan’s refusal to join the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was seen as a further break away from Russia. An increasingly louder call on part of Baku nationalists for unification between the Azeris of the Azerbaijan Republic and the Azeris of Iran, made the authorities in Tehran particularly nervous about a potential for a nationalistic and separatist movement among the 25 million Iranian Azeris. For some Azeri nationalists in Baku, the demand for a unified or single (*vahid*) Azerbaijan has become an integral part of national ideology or “national idea” (Hadjyzadeh, 1998:4).

In the cultural sphere, this stage accompanied a debate over change of Azerbaijan's alphabet from Russian Cyrillic (adopted in 1940 under Stalin) to either Latin or Arabic. This debate ended with a decision approved by the parliament to return to the Latin alphabet similar to that of Turkey, a significant pro-Turkey step. Azeri language began to be identified as Turkic and many Azeris started to publicly identify themselves as Turks while many "Russified" elites who used to speak Russian much better than their own mother tongue, hurried to take private lessons in Azeri and improve their Turkic language skills. New books and publications came out in an attempt to rewrite Azerbaijan's history by narrating national stories, reviving some forgotten myths and creating some new ones.

The old cultural and historical traditions embodied in pre-Islamic and some pre-Christian dastans like *The Book of Dede Qorqud*, *Koroglu*, and the Zoroastrian *Avesta*, have been rehabilitated and emphasized from a nationalist perspective. This has been part of an attempt to trace the oldest repository of ethnic identity, history, customs, and the value systems of Azerbaijanis in order to imagine a nation with a longer history and an original identity. Such Turkic dastans (epic prose and poetry often recited to music) represent an integral part of Azeri identity, collective memory, example of heroism and morality, and codes of honor and conduct underlying gender norms and sexual attitudes. One example is the "required betrothal contest between a young man and woman that the man must win before they can marry." In one of the tales, *Beyrek* and his betrothed, *Lady Chichek*, have three contests—shooting arrows, horse racing, and wrestling. Elsewhere in the dastan, wives and mothers participate in hunting and battles.

Loyalty to the family, clan, or tribe is fundamental, as are bravery and honesty. Struggles to protect the tribe and homeland or to free the people from a foreign invader-conqueror are among the main themes of both dastans. Women and men are equally engaged in these endeavors (Altstadt, 1992:14). Such dastans are used to reinforce the current necessity for heroism in defense of the homeland in the war-torn Azerbaijan that has lost close to 20 percent of its territory to Armenians. The feminine metaphor of homeland denoted as the "motherland" (*ana vatan*) whose honor (*namus*) is to be protected and defended by all means adds to its emotional load as it becomes associated with the cult of honor (*namus*), still very strong in Azerbaijani culture. As put by Zamfira Verdiyeva, head of the Azerbaijan Women's Association before a large gathering of women in 1991, "Our land is our *namus*. We may give up everything, our wealth, houses, foods, clothing, and even our lives, but not our *namus/land*."¹⁸ Related to this, certain heroic female legends like *Tomiris* and *Rostameh* have been occasionally promoted in the media reinforcing the small, yet vocal group of Azeri militant women, who called themselves "Tomiris Daughters" and took part in armed struggle against Armenian invaders during the war in early 1990s (Onullahi, 1992).¹⁹

Yet, in practice, the predominant image or idea of womanhood and her role and place in society reinforced by the male leadership of the nationalist movement, has not been that of a publicly and politically active one represented by legends like Tomiris.²⁰ Many men and even some women activists within the PFA were lamenting the “de-feminization” of women by the Soviet system because of women’s “over-working and over-employment,” especially in some fields “unfit for female sex.” Men should be given priority for employment, particularly in the face of increasing unemployment rates, stated Elchibey during his reign. Women, while expected to be patriotic and actively supportive of the independence movement and the nationalist male leaders, were rarely present in the leadership roles of the PFA. Other than Leila Yunusova who soon split from the PFA over disagreement with the leader, and her later short-term position in Elchibey’s government as the speaker of the Defense Ministry, Elchibey had appointed no new woman in his cabinet. Lidiya Rasulova, the only woman minister in Elchibey’s cabinet, has amazingly survived a number of Soviet and post-Soviet governments even up to the present Aliiev government, hence she can hardly be considered an outcome of recent nationalist transitions.

Actually, in Azerbaijan, like in all successor states to the Soviet Union, the female proportion in the political organs and legislative bodies has drastically declined (Buckley, 1992). Removal of the fixed quota of representation practiced under the Soviet system can explain only part of the decline in female representation. Like many other parts of the world, women in Azerbaijan have not been socialized or encouraged to enter into politics and play leadership roles and most of the current nationalists do not seem to have an agenda to do otherwise. Furthermore, the nationalist government of PFA replaced many women in various administrative positions and many women state employees by its own male cadres. In response to this, the Vice Chair of the Women Association of Azerbaijan, Elmira Suleymanova, a well-respected academic and one of the prominent women’s rights activists, expressed women’s disappointment in the Azerbaijani press:

Our new government supposedly based on democratic principles has made a lot of promises for women. But many difficulties have arisen. In Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, and other cities, many of our women, both the ones with leading positions and the ones with less influential positions, have been removed suddenly and in a harsh manner with no explanation and for no wrong doings on their part.²¹

In the following pages, while reviewing recent political developments, I will address a few changes, some negative and some positive, in the gender discourses and women’s issues of Azerbaijan since the removal of the Elchibey government.

The PFA failed to fill up the post-Soviet ideological vacuum and respond to the quest of Azerbaijan for a new national identity with a balanced and convincing formula. Elchibey

government's excessive Turkism and pro-Turkish policies resulted in negative consequences not only in its foreign relations (especially with Iran and Russia), but also domestically, alienated ethnic minorities and the moderate intelligentsia. This was among the factors that contributed to an easy defeat of the PFA in the face of a coup d'état in the Summer of 1993 and the subsequent rule of Heidar Aliyev, a former KGB head and member of the Communist Party politburo.

Though far from being a democrat, Aliyev became popular for representing an image of an experienced and competent state man, who can serve the nostalgic quest for stability and a much needed father figure for Azerbaijan, a nation in making. Since his reign, Aliyev has pursued a more pragmatic and diplomatically balanced domestic and foreign policy. His heavy-hand policy against his critics, the rampant corruption and clientelistic power structure, poverty and increased socio-economic polarization of society, and the continuous stalemate in the Karabakh conflict, have turned away many of Aliyev supporters. Nevertheless, a sense of order and stability attributed to him seems to be a major reason behind his success in maintaining a considerable level of popularity.

In regard to gender policy, there have been some minor positive changes during Aliyev's reign. Aliyev began his term with a woman, Lala Shovkat Hajieva, as his chief of staff. In less than two years, however, she resigned from her position in the cabinet and also from membership in the ruling party (NAP) altogether. Later, she established her own party (Liberal Party of Azerbaijan) and ended up running as a presidential candidate against her former boss during the recent elections in 1998.²²

Aliyev and the women cadres around him, however, have demonstrated gender attitudes and norms not very distinct from the ones common in the Soviet times. The proportion of women in legislative bodies, specifically the number of women deputies in the parliament, has risen from 4.8 percent in 1992 to 6 percent in 1994 and 14 percent in 1996. Women do not hold only about 10 percent of the share of power in the high offices of the executive branch. Yet, the active presence of a number of seasoned women officials as ministers and deputy ministers in the present government has given a relative visibility to the political profile of women in 'high politics'. Included among these women officials are: Sudabe Hasanova, Minister of Justice; Lidiya Rasulova, Minister of Education; Fatma Abdullazadeh and her deputy Dilara Seyidzadeh, Director of Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Abdullazadeh has been also leading the State Commission on Women's Status.

Who Constitutes "We", the Nation?

Following the removal of the PFA from power, a debate over the reasons behind the defeat of the “national democrats” developed into a set of national debates over what should constitute “the national idea” or “a national concept of Azerbaijani statehood”. Who is included in the notion “we, the nation?” Is the formula ‘Turkism, modernism, and Islam’ applicable to present day Azerbaijan? “How to keep our country independent?” Do we need a “big brother,” as some Russian analysts have claimed about Azerbaijanis? “Modernization is necessary, but is Westernization necessary too?” What should constitute the priorities of Azerbaijanis, “Liberty or stability and order?” “Does democracy suit Azerbaijan?” “Human rights or national values?” “How free should a free market be?” (Hadjyzadeh, 98: 4)²³

Although gender issues were not specifically and explicitly included in the topics of such national debates, the gender implications of these debates have been significant. One important political and ideological outcome of these debates among Azerbaijani intellectuals and subsequent splits within the nationalists and democrats initially rallied behind the PFA, has been the emergence of “nationalistic”, “liberal” and “social democratic” alignments.

Among the major groups split from the PFA is the Musavat Party led by Isa Gambar that represents a more democratic and liberal tendency emphasizing a civil and inclusive nationalism and recognizing human rights and equal citizenship regardless of ethnicity, gender and religion. Women make up 13 percent of the Musavat Party, including prominent woman activists like Maryam Orujova in its leading board.²⁴ There has been a few smaller parties like the Social Democrats Party, the Liberal Party of Azerbaijan, and the Independent Democratic Party that are led or co-led by women like Arzu Abdullayeva, Shovkat Hajieva and Leila Yunusova, respectively.²⁵ During the last presidential elections (September 1998), Lala Shovkat Hajieva, Chairwoman of the LPA, was the only woman among those running for the presidential office. According to a number of pre-elections polls, Hajieva ranked among the five leading runners.²⁶

Another tendency related to the outcome of debates over the nature of national identity that seems to be more pronounced in recent years is “Azerbaijanism” versus the initial pro-Iran and pro-Turkey alternatives. Many Azeri women and men express disillusionment with their initial fascination with and infatuation toward both Iranian and Turkish “brethren” for several reasons, some of which are gender-related.

Despite an initially intense longing for closer ties with Iran, the latter lost its attractiveness for most Azerbaijanis very early on. During the last years of the Soviet regime and right after the outbreak of the conflict over Karabakh, a strong nationalist (Azerbaijanist) fervor emerged. One manifestation of this was a strong sense of urge to unite with Iranian Azeris and subsequent mass demonstrations and sit-ins held at the border between Azerbaijan and Iran. The Azerbaijani demon-

strators were demanding from the Soviet authorities to remove the border fences and visa regulations between Azerbaijanis and Iranians. Probably inspired by the bring down of the Berlin walls between East and West Germans, Azeri demonstrators finally torn down the border fences and crossed over the Aras River to join their ethnic brethren in Iran. The ultimate objectives of this earlier set of demonstrations were not clear then. Did it reflect just a quest for unification between Azeris of Iran and Azeris of the Republic in order to form a new separate state independent from both Iran and Russia? Or was it, as many Iranians, including Iranian Azeris prefer to assume, an indication of wanting to undo the 19th century Russian take over of Azerbaijan and return it to Iran as her previous “motherland?”

In either case, had the nature of polity at the Iranian national level been different, the whole orientation of Azerbaijan today would probably also be different. The dominant Islamist politics in Iran, its conservative, backward-looking and depressing social and cultural mode at the time, especially the gloomy and black-veiled image of womanhood that Iran has tried to impose on all Muslims inside and outside Iran, were enough reasons to damp down the earlier enthusiasm among many Azerbaijani men and particularly women.

The growing travel and visitation and subsequent social interactions, trade and economic exchanges between Iranians and Azerbaijanis seem to have resulted in further distrust and disillusionment on both sides. There have been claims and counter-claims on both sides about an unfair competition and dishonesty in the trade market between Azerbaijanis and Iranians. Moreover, many Azerbaijanis feel rejected or actually betrayed by their Iranian Muslim counterparts, especially by their Iranian Azeri brethren from whom so much support was expected in regard to Azerbaijan’s fight against Armenian separatists. The northern Azeris longing and call for unification have not been reciprocated from the other side of the Aras. Nor any material or genuine political support for the side Azerbaijan in the Karabakh bloody conflict has ever materialized. Worst of all, as far as Azerbaijanis are concerned, Iran has practically sided with Armenia and its policies have collaborated with those of Russia’s.

There has been another more subtle and less openly talked about issue as a significant source of resentment among Azerbaijanis against Iranians. Azerbaijanis resent what they perceive as immoral and exploitative sexual advantage taking by many Iranian male visitors from of the Azerbaijani women who are presently in a vulnerable and desperate situation. This has touched a sensitive nerve related to the cult of *namus* (honor), a very loaded gender issue in Azerbaijani culture.

The reasons for disappointment and at times bitterness on part of many Azerbaijanis toward Turkey and Turkish influence too have some *namus*-related dimensions. Not only some of the films

and programs broadcast by Turkish TV are seen as sources of moral decay in gender norms, promiscuity and looseness (*achik-sachiklik*) in sexual standards, but Turkish men too have been perceived to be taking sexual advantage of Azerbaijani women.

“What the godless Russians could not do to us in terms of dishonoring our women in seventy years, our own Muslim brethren from Iran and Turkey have done to us in the course of five years alone,” uttered angrily a middle-aged Azeri man in presence of several younger women and men, who nodded in agreement after him.²⁷

But other more openly complained-about sources of disappointment with Turkey, include the arrogance, ‘big brother’ and patronizing attitude on part of Turks toward Azerbaijanis. After visiting or living in Turkey for a while, many Azerbaijanis say their idealized image of Turkey did not match the realities of this country. Moreover, Turks have been buying best lands and construction projects in Baku and other cities and have taken over many areas in the new business market, “practically turning Azerbaijan to a new province of Turkey.” In return, they have not been the promised source of salvage for the Karabakh issue and Azerbaijan’s lost territories.

Women’s Responses to Social Changes and Identity Politics

Before discussing the current women’s activism and their collective and organized responses to recent developments, I shall present a brief historical and cultural background of women’s political role and social status.

Although the present activism of women in Azerbaijan is quite distinct from its initial stage at the turn of 20th century, there are some interesting similarities too. Political activism and social roles of Azerbaijani women outside the home date back to the years before the Bolshevik revolution. Women started to enter the public sphere through wage-labor in the oil industry, garment workshops, charity activities, women’s publications, women’s clubs and broad political groups that promoted women’s literacy, vocational training, legal rights, and improvement in their overall status.

With the introduction of new industries, capitalism and modern urban life in Azerbaijan around the turn of the century, Azeri women, like their counterparts in Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, had already become a “question”. The growing oil industry and Russian-European influence, especially in Baku, had further contributed to debate over the “woman question” and the socialization of women.

Several ardent supporters of the emancipation of women emerged from within the ranks of Azeri nationalists and Muslim reformers upholding a modernist and egalitarian approach to Islam,

known as the Jadid Movement. For most reformers, including secular nationalists, social democrats as well as Muslim modernists (*Jadidists*)²⁸, the major issues concerning women were their seclusion, illiteracy, the veil and polygyny. The emancipation of women was for them a prerequisite for the revival of Muslim civilization, formation of a new modern state of Azerbaijan and its economic, social and cultural development.

Among the reformers Mirza Jalil Mammedquluzadeh (1866-1932) and his wife, Hamide Javanshir (1873-1955)²⁹, used their most influential and popular journal *Molla Nasreddin* (1906-1930) to criticize the establishment, corrupt bureaucrats and religious conservatives. Through powerful satire and cartoons, the journal played a crucial role in raising women's issues, denouncing compulsory veiling and seclusion, polygyny, wife battering, violence and other oppressive practices against women.³⁰

Following that initiative, the first journal for and by women published in Azeri Turkic was founded by an Azeri woman (Khadija Alibeyova, 1884-1961) and her husband in Baku in 1911 as a bimonthly and later a weekly aimed at enlightening women regarding their rights. While carefully avoiding direct criticism of Islamic authorities, *Ishiq* (Light) quoted and emphasized certain egalitarian passages from the Qur'an and Hadith supportive of women's education. Although influential and circulating throughout the region, it lasted only a year due to pressures from conservative clerics and lack of financial support.

While *Ishiq* promoted women's education, the first school for Muslim girls had already been founded in 1905 by Haji Zeynalabedin Tagiyev, an Azeri oil millionaire and philanthropist. People like Tagiyev represented the new industrial bourgeoisie who played an important role in the modernization of Azeri society. Some of them remarked on women's education among the European women and Muslims of the Volga Tatars while postulating an egalitarian and progressive interpretation of the Qur'an.³¹

On the other hand, Russian colonizers, as in many other colonial contexts, were unconcerned about real emancipation of and improvement in women's status. For instance, Azeris had to petition the city council of the czarist regime in Baku for money to begin a pedagogical course for Muslim girls at the school for Russian girls. The Tagiyev school, the only existing school for non-Russian Muslim girls, was overcrowded and expensive. Azeri representatives on the city council, one of whom made a rousing "down with the veil" speech on the need for education to make women good citizens and good mothers (the two roles being inseparable to him)³², had to fight vigorously for allocation of funds necessary to start another girls' school for Azeris.

While Azeri bourgeois men and their wives contributed to the reform, modernization, and nation-building of Azerbaijan, several women and men from the working class mobilized women

for a more revolutionary agenda. As the social-democratic and Marxist movements grew throughout the Russian Empire, Azerbaijani workers in the oil industry organized around a group entitled *Himmat* (Endeavor). Muslim, Christian and Jewish women from the Tagiyev textile factory and other industries played a leading role in forming a women's wing of *Himmat*. As early as 1904-5 they raised specific demands for "maternity leave for women, time on the job for nursing unweaned children, and medical care for all workers."³³

Historically, the Ali Bayramov Women's Club, which predated Soviet rule, played an enormous role in the social integration of Azerbaijani women. With the spread of revolutionary changes in the Russian Empire and increasing participation of both Azeri and Russian women, the club's activities intensified. In 1920, by means of its seventeen chapters the club waged a successful campaign for adult women's literacy and vocational training. It spawned a garment workshop originally with a staff of seven women, which ultimately developed into a huge textile factory still operating in contemporary Baku.³⁴

In short, this period in the cultural history of Azerbaijan is distinguished by the emergence of a sense of national identity, modernist and reformist Islamic and secular elites, discourses on the "woman question" and a range of activities in support of women's emancipation.

The role of women during the seventy years of the Soviet era in Azerbaijan went through several stages as state policy and gender strategy changed from strict Marxist egalitarian ideological commitment and vigorous campaigning for women's rights to a later pragmatism centered on economic productivity. During the Soviet period, women's emancipation was generally declared to be a national objective of the Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan. An economic perspective assumed that women's emancipation would automatically follow their participation in social and productive labor in the formal economy. Their massive entrance into the labor force was therefore encouraged. Universal access to education and gainful employment together with the establishment of equal rights in social and political domains – especially egalitarian changes in family law – did contribute to a rise in the overall status of women in both public and private spheres. Nevertheless, most women remained circumscribed by the "double burden" and by the expected subordination to men and dependency on male kin. Here is how Kifayat, a 37-year old nurse working in a town nearby Baku expresses her feelings toward what is considered "respected, yet male-protected" status of Azerbaijani women: "One of the major difficulties in my life as a single woman is that I do not have any *arkha*, no father, and no brother. Russian women are luckier in this regard, as in their society a woman is accepted on her own. But in the case of an Azeri woman, people always ask, "Who is her man? Who is her guardian?" as if I am nobody without an *arkha*".³⁵

Even the very name of this Azeri woman, Kifayat and other female names like Basti (both meaning, enough! denoting the wish of parents for no more female child) are revealing indication of how sons are still preferred over daughters in this country.³⁶ This attitude has persisted to a considerable level despite equal rights under the Soviet modernization and women's high educational attainment and high rates of gainful employment.

As illustrated in previous pages, ethnic loyalty and the observance of endogamy by women (but not necessarily men),³⁷ the cults of honor,³⁸ chastity, shame, prudery, and virginity before marriage are among the ethno-religious customs prescribed as essential female attributes. A woman is valued for her physical beauty, advanced education (especially among urbanites), endurance, self-sacrificing motherhood, docility and subservience toward her husband, homemaking skills, hospitality, and delicacy. Such attributes constitute identity markers supposedly demarcating Azeris from "others", especially Russians and Armenians.

This persistence of and emphasis on traditional family and kinship system entails paradoxical implications for male and particularly female members.³⁹ On the one hand, it usually offers solidarity and trust. It can provide economic, political, emotional, and physical support during such difficult circumstances as in the recent warfare and economic hardship. On the other hand, it operates as a repressive device, limiting women's independence, individuality, and personal growth.

The persistence of the extended family structure has reinforced patriarchal norms. Some scholars have attributed the prevalence of the underground economy and corrupt political practices in the Caucasus also to this traditional heavy reliance on close familial ties.⁴⁰ Powerful obligations to one's relatives, clan, and region, especially on the part of women, may have delayed the constitution of citizenship and national-civic identity. This in turn may have contributed to the duality and dissociation in Azerbaijan's modernization in general and women's emancipation in particular.

It can be argued, on the contrary, that under a repressive state lacking a civil society with its network of political institutions mediating between the individual and the state, the family network becomes a substitute. The Soviet state was never actually hegemonic over people's ethnic and familial practices in the private sphere, where familial and religio-ethnic norms rather than the Soviet state ideology established the vision of the good and moral, especially with regard to women's behavior.

One may even argue that kinship networks have been intentionally organized to resist the state and to function as a buffer against politico-economic pressures. Rather than 'public' versus 'private' binaries, family and kin-related private, informal networks have actually constructed some important parts of the public or political life.⁴¹

Political factors aside, certain economic constraints have obviously contributed to the persistence of the traditional extended family structure. As in Soviet Russia, but even more so in the Muslim ‘peripheries’ of the former Soviet Union, the state’s productionistic emphasis and the reduction of the “woman question” to its economic base made women’s massive entrance into the labor force a priority without corresponding social and economic provisions for transforming the family structure and gender roles. The backwardness in food cycle technology; the housing shortage that forced young couples to live for years with parents; and the insufficiency of child care facilities made restructuring of the patriarchal and extended family infeasible. Azerbaijan has especially suffered in this regard as, for example, its child-care and pre-school education attendance has been one of the poorest in the former Soviet Union (16 to 18 percent versus 71 percent in Russia).

The following response by Betura Mamedova, a middle-aged college teacher, represents another Azeri voice contrasting with that of earlier noted resentment of women like Kifayat. Such contrasts are indicative of the contradictory implications or the ‘mixed blessing’ offered by the traditional family structure:

We women are tenaciously clinging to our family and instead of getting weary of oceans of duties, we are energized by them. We are thought to be the backbone of the family and a buffer when things go wrong spiritually. We enjoy playing this role, because this is our life, and it is due to this family tenacity that Azeri people never forget their language, their culture and religion. One Azeri poet called it “blood memory” (*qan yaddashi*).⁴²

As one can infer from Betura’s comment, women are seen again as the guardians of the nation who have succeeded in playing this role thanks to “family tenacity.” Her statement also implies that in a colonial or quasi-colonial interethnic situation the family would function as the bastion of resistance against assimilation (here Russification). The family, thus, is in effect the *dar al-Islam* to be protected from the penetration of the dominant “other”.

Pleasure and Pain of Paradoxical Reality

To an outside observer the hierarchical structure of the family and society favoring male domination in Azerbaijan may appear more paradoxical than elsewhere in part because of the equal rights by law, women’s high level of literacy, and their massive presence in social and economic arenas. But many Azeri professional women seem to perceive this paradox differently. They consider it to be to women’s advantage, rather than disadvantage:

Our way of life might seem paradoxical to foreigners, but I want them to believe that our women enjoy living the pleasure of this paradox.⁴³

Perhaps dual realities result in dual perceptions, or the distinction between ‘constructed realities’ of men and women explains the pleasure of this paradox. As Pusta Azizbekova, a prominent academician in her 70s and director of the Azerbaijan Museum of History, explains:

Women’s apparent subservient or male-dominated position is exactly that: apparent... Like Russian and Western women, we enjoy equal rights and legal protection. But we feel even more privileged as, in addition to what they have, we also enjoy the respect, pampering and protection we receive from our men and families, why not? I enjoy having men open doors and wait for me to enter, pay the bill when we go out, and shelter me when we walk in streets and public places. What is wrong with that?

When I interjected: “But once you are a subject of protection, you become a subject, you become a dependent being,” she replied:

Oh, it just appears that way. Only men think that we depend on them and by thinking so they feel satisfied and powerful. Let them take care of us under this illusion. We know very well who in reality is the power here and who depends on whom... God forbid a household without a man. A man to a household is like a gem to a ring, we Azeris say. But the gem stands on top, is nothing without the ring.⁴⁴

Perhaps acting as assertive professional women in public, but showing docility and submission in private is a coping mechanism for Azeri women caught in the midst of the struggle against patriarchy on the one hand and the protection of their men’s sense of masculinity in the Soviet quasi-colonial context on the other.

A further paradoxical observation is that some women seem to feel that the household is their only territory to exert real power and that they are the owners of the entirety of their families. The husband is to be served in regard to everything, from a cup of tea to preparing the bathroom for his shower. At times there seems a deliberate attempt on their part to infantilize their husbands in order to keep them dependent on them in the household domain. Perceiving domestic responsibilities as empowering and gratifying rather than an oppressive burden is reflected in Betura’s comment, not unusual from an Azeri woman:

The Azeri woman at work and at home is two, often radically different people. At work she looks confident, relaxed, and attractive. At home she is a busy bee because she has to see to a myriad of things: dusting, washing, cooking, sending children to school, checking their homework, scanning the daily newspapers (every family has to subscribe to newspapers), receiving uninvited

guests. I can extend this list and you may stop believing me or you may ask what is the reward? And I will answer: the reward is my family and my children (emphasis added).⁴⁵

Changes within Women's Organizations

Some of the more subtle gender implications of post-independence identity politics can be seen in the changes at the level of 'low politics' and development of grass roots organizations of women, including women's press. Though an important means of construction of new identity, the women's press, has been badly effected by financial hardship and paper scarcity. The women's journals existing since the Soviet times, like the "Azerbaiyan Qadini" (Azerbaijani Woman), though adopted a more nationalistic tone, have not been able to publish regularly and maintain the same level of readership. A few new ones like "Ceyla" (edited by an Azerbaijani woman of Talysh origin, Anelya Ordukanova), seem to be more colorful and commercially attractive and at times more in tune with the needs and interests of younger generations.

The content analysis of women's press in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, however, needs to be done in a separate research report. Here, I shall limit myself to a chronological ordered brief review of a selective number of women organizations that have been more directly reflective of the processes of identity politics in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. This section will end with a glance cast over the new women NGOs and some latest developments concerning women's movement in Azerbaijan.

Named after a woman activist and supporter of the PFA, Dilara Alieva, who died during an accident in 1990, the Association in Defense of Azerbaijan Women's Rights (ADAWR) was formed in the fall of 1989 and officially registered in February 1991. This has been one of the first women's groups formed in opposition to the Soviet regime in the last years of its existence. As an active, vocal and aggressive political group, it functioned as the women's wing of the PFA. While occasionally engaging in charity and relief works among refugees, the main goal of this group was to provide the PFA with political support and carry out nationalistic and patriotic agitation and mobilization among women.

Despite its name, the practice of the ADAWR has not been based on a specifically 'women's rights' discourse or a gendered or feminist one, nor has it posited a defined plan of woman-centered or gender-related actions with a clear vision concerning gender issues. "Homai", the name of the monthly publication of the ADAWR, represents "a sacred bird that in Azeri mythology was believed to be the mother Goddess."⁴⁶ This kind of representation of women has been observed in other nationalist movements too. Narayan (1997), for example, demonstrates that in the Indian nationalist

agenda, women were “equated with motherhood and goddesses” and became the “last unpolluted sanctuary” who had the task of “guarding the essence of national culture.” In the views of ADAWR and other Azeri nationalists too, the “pure” (*tamiz*), “authentic” (*asil*), and “virtuous” (*ismatli*) patriotic Turk women are supposed to preserve and symbolize “purity” of the national identity of Azerbaijan. They should do this by their loyalty to ethnic heritage, devotion to the male-headed family and male-headed nationalist government, proper behavior, and proper dress code and appearance.

During the short-lived government of the PFA (1992-1993), as its women’s wing, the ADAWR naturally gained temporary prominence. Enjoying an official sanction, the ADAWR tried to assert itself as the national organization of women in Azerbaijan in order to replace the then largest women organization, the Association of Women of Azerbaijan (to be introduced later). ADAWR criticized the AWA for “its Communist past, continuous connection with Ayaz Mutallibov (the last head of the Azerbaijan CP), and its present lack of patriotic cause.”⁴⁷ The ADAWR tried to dismantle the AWA’s network and regional chapters in various cities and towns and attempted to claim the office buildings and resources allocated to the latter by previous Communist government. Before the tension and competition between the ADAWR and AWA could reach its highest level, however, the broader political developments in society turned against the PFA government. Following the exile of Elchibey to his home-village in Nakhchivan in June 17, 1993, head of the ADAWR, Khanim Khalilova, too left Azerbaijan for Turkey.

Throughout splits and fragmentation within the PFA in the years following its loss of state power, the ADAWR has remained loyal to Elchibey who is now leading the more conservative and ethnocentrist PFPA (Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan) a left-over from the much larger PFA. In recent years, a number of active members of the ADAWR who could not approve of a continuous tailing of a male-centered agenda, have left the group. This has turned the remaining entity into nearly an instrument of or a female appendage to an increasingly conservative male leadership in the PFPA.⁴⁸

The Association of Women of Azerbaijan (AWA) that represented women in a national level, was a carry over from the *Zhensoviet* (National Women’s Council) that used to operate under the control of the Azerbaijani Communist Party. Affected by rapid political changes, the growing independence movement and splits within the CP, the NWC too tried to adjust itself to new atmosphere. During its national congress in November 1991, the NWC declared itself as a new organization namely AWA and appointed a new leader, Zemfira Verdiyeva, the then rector of the Baku Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages and a deputy in the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan. It also presented a new statement of purpose with a nationalistic tone. Since its official registration

in December 1991, the AWA has declared itself as a non-partisan charity oriented women's group. It operated as a support network among mostly older or middle-aged and professional women, offering also charity and humanitarian services among refugees and war victims. During the early years of its existence and before the emergence of more recent women organizations, the AWA used to be the sole representative of Azerbaijani women in regional and international women conferences.

The AWA has not gone through any fundamental structural or ideological renovation. Its practice has remained limited to mainly charity work, its goals and vision have remained vague and out of touch with national debates, with the younger generation in Azerbaijan, and with new developments and discourses in international women's movements. Therefore, despite strong personality and leadership competencies of its chairperson, Verdiyeva, the support base of the AWA has been declining and some of its members have left the association.

Among them, has been Elmira Suleymanova, who used to play a key role in the AWA as its vice-chair before leaving it for unspecified reasons. An energetic, forward-looking and seasoned activist and academic, Suleymanova started a new NGO in 1996 named Women and Development comprised mainly of professional and academic women. Relative to most other women NGOs in Azerbaijan, the WAD seems to have been more in touch with new realities pursuing a more gender-specific and clear goal. Thanks to Suleymanova's exposure to and contacts with other women NGOs inside Azerbaijan and with regional and international women's groups and feminist networks outside, the WAD has been able to contribute to a rise in the level of discourse within and between various women NGOs.

Women NGOs and Emerging Civil Society

The nature and process of formation of recent women's groups, women NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have been perhaps unprecedented in recent history of Azerbaijan. Current political activism and the new NGOs among women and men in this post-Soviet era of increasing globalization do possess certain characteristics distinct from the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras. For one, internal concerns, domestic social issues and needs that would naturally shape the goals and nature of women's organization are not necessarily the main moving motors behind every new women NGOs (or any other NGOs for that matter). In addition to the role of regional politics, other external factors have been influencing the nature and direction of new women's groups in transitional countries like Azerbaijan. In this regard, one needs to examine the role of the United

Nations and its gender-related agencies like the UNDP and UNICEF; other international (mostly Western) donating and grant-giving foundations and aid agencies; and also the growing transnational feminist networks. This, however, needs to be done in a separate research report as more questions and concerns have arisen in regard to the advantages and disadvantages of the external-donation-oriented NGOs in the transitional economies.

The UN-sponsored regional and world conferences of women, for example, have been an important source of mobilization, consciousness raising and network building for the burgeoning women's movement in Azerbaijan. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNICEF have contributed to the gradually gender-oriented and better-focused activities of some of the women NGOs in Azerbaijan.

As of 1998, there were about 20 officially registered women NGOs in Azerbaijan, including the ADAWR, AWA and WAD, as discussed earlier; the "Women Oil Workers," led by Solmaz Hajiyeva; "Business-Women Association"; the "Baku Women's Council," led by Zarifa Salahova; "Cry of Mothers"; "Mothers of Soldiers"; "Sevil Women's Association", led by Sevil Aliyeva, President's daughter; and the "Charity Society of Tal'a" and "Umid"; the "Women's Dialogue for Peace in the Caucasus," and several other locally or provincially based women NGOs. Among them are also groups like "Jewish Women's Association" and "Muslim Women's Council" that are basically aimed at promoting cultural identity and religious ideas and values.

Until recently, the function of most of these organizations was mainly of charity nature or they operated loosely as social networks and support groups. The emergency of war-stricken situation and concern over basic needs and daily survival has preoccupied many Azeri women leaving little time and energy for gender-specific issues. Moreover, the continuing of economic deterioration and widening class disparity along with a sense of humiliation due to territorial loss have resulted in a growing disillusionment with political change and distrust toward political parties and political processes.

In addition to such motivational factors and a general decline in political activism compared to the early years of independence movement, several other factors have contributed to the smallness of women's representation in the 'formal politics' and the slowness of formation and maturation of an informal genuine feminist women's movement. A low level of political sophistication and organizational skills among women, and cultural discouragement of women's political ambitions, wide extent of conformism, and limited individual initiative are among hindering factors.

Following a Presidential decree in September of 1994, a "National Committee on Women's Issues" was created in an attempt to coordinate the activities of various women's groups in preparation for the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing. A few years later another

Presidential decree was issued in January 1997 calling for “strengthening of the role of women in Azerbaijan,” and establishment of the “State Committee on Protection of Women.” According to a GID report from Baku, as a result of this event, many ministries and institutions have been mobilized to formulate their own proposals based on the priority areas in the country, such as, women and economy (issues of poverty and property); refugees and internally displaced persons; women and health care; women and administration; women and labor; women’s rights; activities of women NGOs and international organizations.⁴⁹ Azerbaijan has joined the CEDAW and has officially adhered to several UN conventions concerning human rights and women’s rights. The success or sincerity of Azerbaijan’s authorities in implementations of these conventions, however, remains to be seen.

Since the creation of above-mentioned state committees and especially preparatory efforts to take part in the Beijing conference, a renewed sense of enthusiasm has emerged among women activists, at least the ones closer to the government. Although still limited to a small number of elite women and some political activists, this has set in motion a more gender-focused and systematic and so far sustained engagement of such women who may potentially be among the leaders of a more massive and grass roots women’s movement in future.

On the other hand, these newly created state organs, led by Fatma Abdullazadeh, head of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Office of the President, are to “oversee” all programs and activities dealing with women’s status in the country. The extent of this overseeing is not clear yet, nor is the relationship with such state organs and the women NGOs. The independence of NGOs from the state control, however, is a necessary factor for the emergence of civil society. Otherwise a process of statization, bureaucratization and uniformization of women’s activities, similar to the one seen in the Soviet and other authoritarian regimes, will take away women’s grass roots initiations, diversity and genuine voices.

One of the positive recent developments concerning women NGOs has to do with the establishment of a GID (Gender in Development) unit in Azerbaijan (in September 1997) under the auspices of the UNDP. Under the directorship of Rena Ibrahimbekova (a capable, gender-conscious, and democratic-minded Azerbaijani woman with training in psychology), this Center has embarked on a series of impressive and unprecedented educational and capacity building programs among women of different walks of life. Organizing national and regional conferences on issues like “Women’s Rights are Human Rights” and “Women in Conflict Resolution” (Baku, May 1998); dissemination of brochures on research reports about, so far untouchable, issues like violence, rape and sexual harassment⁵⁰; and production of educational and empowering TV serials dealing with gender relations are among innovative and timely activities of the GID in Baku.

The recent more liberal and social democratic developments within Azerbaijani intellectuals and political elites and the emergence of new women NGOs and centers like the GID in Azerbaijan seem to be promising. There appears that a genuine commitment to introduction and promotion of a more egalitarian gender-sensitive, civic, and inclusive discourse is about to emerge. Without growth of such a committed trend, the generation of a civil society, a civic and pluralistic national identity and egalitarian gender relations all necessary for any human-oriented socio-economic development and inclusive democratization will not be possible in Azerbaijan.

NOTES AND REFERNCES

1. I would like to express my gratitude to the Fulbright Foundation and IREX for sponsoring my research visits and to my students, colleagues and numerous women and men in different parts of Azerbaijan for their generous cooperation with me during my teaching and research in that country. I am especially grateful to my assistants Elchin Mamedov and Afaq Samadzadeh-Fazlullahi without whose help this research could not be accomplished.
2. See, for example, Jaquette, 1994, on cases in Latin America and Jayawardena, 1986, on cases in the Middle East and Asia.
3. For a brief analysis on the Karabakh conflict, see Leila Aliyeva, 1996. For detailed information, see the report by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *CSCE Digest*, vol. 19, no. 1 (January 1996), 5-14.
4. Nasib Nasibzadeh, *Azerbaijan Demokratik Respublikasi. Magalalar va Sanadlar* (Baku: Elm, 1990), 44, cited in Swietochowski, 1985, 129.
5. For a detailed history of modern Azerbaijan, see Altstadt, 1992 and Swietochowski, 1985 and 1995.
6. For detailed information and statistics on women's status in regard to work, education and politics, see my article "A Key Issue in Social Reform: Gender Relations" in *Azerbaijan: Human Development Report, 1995* Baku: United Nations Development Program, 1995: 36-45.
7. Cited from her report in the Baku weekly *Faryad* (Cry), 20 October 1992, p. 1.
8. The complete text of the letter in Azeri language and Cyrillic script appeared under the title "23-lar" along with an informative note by the editor in the journal *Ganjlik* (Youth), 1991, 50-51, Baku.
9. The official rate of inter-ethnic marriage in Azerbaijan in late 1980s was about 14% in urban and 2% in rural areas. For an analysis on this see Tohidi 1996 or 1997.
10. *Sigheh* or *mut'a* (temporary marriage) is a pre-Islamic tradition still retaining legitimacy among the Twelver Shi'ites. For more information on this practice see Haeri, 1989.
11. Cited from an interview by author with a group of three women (of age 30s), who worked as retailers in Baku, Spring, 1992.
12. Based on a related measure taken by the Iranian government in 1993, no Iranian man is allowed to marry a woman from Azerbaijan Republic without the state permission. According to Azeris in Baku, this move by the Iranian government in restricting of such kinds of marriages is not necessarily for moral reasons. Tehran, they argue, is more concerned about political implications that such close ties between Azeris in Iran and Azeris in the Republic may have for awakening of nationalistic sentiments among Iranian Azeris.
13. See, for example, Tadjbakhsh or Michaels for similar cases in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.
14. Quliyev, Hassan, "Toy Adatlarimiz," paper presented at the Conference on Women and Wedding Customs in Azerbaijan, Baku, February 18, 1995.
15. The Popular Front of Azerbaijan, established in 1989, represented the leadership of the anti-Soviet and independence movement in Azerbaijan. The Karabakh conflict with Armenia served as a catalyst for the creation of this front and its subsequent mobilization of population against Communist Party and eventual take over of power in 1992.
16. For more discussion on the role of Islam and women's status in Azerbaijan, see Tohidi, 1998. For an extensive research report on Islam in Azerbaijan, including the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, see my unpublished manuscript *Islam and National Identity in the Post-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan*, submitted to the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Washington, June 1998.

17. Ibid. See also Swietochowski, 1995: 223 and Altstadt, 1992: 55, 59, and 61.
18. Quotation from Verdiyeva's speech recorded by author in Baku, 5 November 1991.
19. See, for example, Seyidaga Onullahi "Qadinlarimizin Qehremanliq Tarikhinden" *Ond*, Baku, November 12, 1992, p. 3.
20. A legendary female heroine popular among people in the Caucasus, especially Azerbaijanis.
21. Cited from "Khanimlarimiz niya yola gedmirlar?" (Why Our Women Do Not Get Along?), *Azerbaijan*, Baku: 9 February 1993, p. 3.
22. In a recent press conference, Hajieva spoke out, for the first time, about the reasons for her resignation from the President's office. She claimed that she could not stand the "corruption and bribery in the governmental bodies and also in the ruling Party." *Ayna*, Baku: 19 September 1998.
23. Similar debates around similar topics were taking place in Russia and other post-Communist countries in the CIS during 1992-1996.
24. Reported by Hadjizade, 1998: 7.
25. Leila Yunusova who was one of the founders of the PFA, split from it early on and founded the IDP, splitting again later to join the Vahdat Party. She has recently broken away from all political parties advocating herself to an NGO "Peace and Democracy Institute" that she helped establish in 1996. Yunusova is one of the strongest and intelligent female political figures who like many women politicians in the male dominated world politics is reputed with some sexist rumors and controversy.
26. Reported by the Women's Rights Monitoring Group, the Center for Human Rights in Azerbaijan, *Information Bulletin*, no. 9, Part one, (1-10 September 1998).
27. Author's discussion with a group of students and faculty in the Institute of Politology, Baku, 1996.
28. *Jadid*, meaning 'new' in Arabic, Turkic and Persian, and *Jadidism*, derived from *usul-i jadid* (new methods), aimed at improving the curricula of the *maktab* (school) and their overall approach to teaching. In opposition to the conservative educators and ulema, known as *qadimists* (old thinkers), jadidism grew into a nationalist modernist interpretation of Islam by the endeavors of the Crimean Tatar journalist Ismail Gasprinski. See Tadeusz Swietochowski *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 30-35.
29. See my forthcoming book in Farsi on Hamideh Javanshir, containing her fascinating personal memories and observations on the Caucasus of the early twentieth century.
30. The journal was named after the legendary Molla Nasreddin (also called Nasreddin Hoja), a figure who appears in clever but didactic stories throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. The journal spanned borders and its articles were translated from Azeri-Turkic into many other languages. It was most influential in Iran, Turkey, Georgia, and Central Asia.
31. See Azade-Ayse Rorlich, *Volga Tatars: Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).
32. See Audrey Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 56.
33. Altstadt, 1992, 64. See also Sabir Mamedov, *Put k progresu* (Baku: Azerbaijan Dovlat Nashriyyat Komitasi, 1986), 4.
34. For a detailed history of the club, see Azade-Aysa Rorlich "The 'Ali Bayramov' Club, the Journal Sharq Gadini and the Socialization of Azeri Women: 1920-30" *Central Asian Survey* 5: 3/4 (1986b), 221-239 and Tohidi, 1998.

35. Author's interview, Baku, August 29, 1994. The word *arkha* literally means 'back,' implying kin, primarily male kin, to lean on.
36. I would like to thank Audrey Altstadt for drawing my attention to such female names.
37. See my discussion on endogamy, inter-ethnic marriage and nationalism in Azerbaijan: Tohidi, 1996.
38. The notion of honor (*namus*), so prevalent in the Muslim world is a very loaded, multidimensional and gendered term. One of its most important connotations is women's chastity, even though it is usually used in reference to men, because in both Shi'a Iran and Shi'a Azerbaijan the responsibility for the protection of *namus* falls primarily on the men. A woman's misbehavior, especially sexual misbehavior, brings shame and dishonor (*namussuzluq*) not only to her, but even more so to her male "protectors": father, brothers and husband. The findings of my studies in Azerbaijan attest to the continuing strength of the cult of *namus* among Azeris. In my sample, male respondents ranked *namus* as the most important theme in their early socialization and even more frequently than females did.
39. For patterns similar to the Caucasus, see Suad Joseph "Gender & Family in the Arab World" A Special *MERIP* Publication (October 1994).
40. Ronald Suny "Transcaucasia: Cultural Cohesion and Ethnic Revival in a Multinational Society" in Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger (eds.) *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 231.
41. For a related analysis on this, see Diane Singerman "Civil Society in the Shadow of the Egyptian State: The Role of Informal Networks in the Construction of Public" (paper presented at the Colloquium on the Civil Society Debate in the Middle East, Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 29 January 1996).
42. Comments received from Betura Mamedova in December 1995, as her feedback to one of author's earlier articles.
43. Ibid.
44. Author's interview, Baku, June 12, 1992.
45. Mamedova, December 1995. This part is cited from Tohidi, 1998.
46. Stated by Khanim Khalilova, one of the then leaders of the ADAWR, during the author's interview with the leading members of the ADAWR in Baku, November 12, 1991.
47. Cited from Khanim Khalilova reported in the Baku daily, *Azerbaijan* (9 February 1993), p. 3.
48. According to Leila Alieva, Director of the Center for Strategic Studies in Azerbaijan (interviewed by author on the phone), in a recent meeting between various women NGOs in Baku, in 1998, the women representatives of the PFFA (the ADAWR) opposed the idea of women's running for public office. They argued that women should limit their activities to supporting of their male politicians and charity or humanitarian services.
49. See "The GID Unit in Azerbaijan: A Growing Experience" Baku, February 1998.
50. See "Azerbaycanda Qadinlarin Veziyyeti" in the *Me'lumat Bulletin* no. 1, part 1 (January 1-15, 1999), published by the Center for Defense of Human Rights in Azerbaijan.

Хцлсся

POST-SOVET AZƏRBAYCANDA GENDER VƏ MİLLİ KİMLİK: REGIONAL PERSPEKTİV

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Digər keçmiş Sovet respublikalarında olduğu kimi, post-Sovet Azərbaycanında xalq yeni və müstəqil milli kimliyin formalaşdığı yarım post-kolonial dövrünü yaşamaqdadır. Əsasən millətçi kişilərdən ibarət olan Azərbaycan elitəsi öz milli quruculuq cəhdində ölkənin etnik-mədəni və milli kimliyini yenidən təyin etməyə, ona yeni imic qazandırmağa və bütün bu yeniləməni dəyərləndirməyə çalışır. Lakin bu, heç də o demək deyil ki, qadınlar bu prosesdə tamamilə fəaliyyətsiz olub, keçid dövrünün, etnik münaqişənin və beynəlxalq rəqabətin təsiri altında baş verən proseslərdən kənar qalmışlar. Əksinə, bütün ziddiyyət və məhdudluqlara baxmayaraq, Azərbaycan qadını əxsi statusu uğrunda mübarizə aparır və baş verməkdə olan iqtisadi, ictimai və mədəni yeniləmə prosesinin müxtəlif sahələrində öz əhəmiyyətli yerini tutur.

Geosiyasi və geomədəni baxımdan Qərbi ilə Şərqi arasında yerləşən Azərbaycanın milli-mədəni kimliyi çoxcəhətlidir. Azərbaycan ən dünyəvi və nisbətən daha modernləşmiş müsəlman respublikalardan biridir. Burada gender dinamikasının və qadınların sosial statusunun formalaşmasına təsir göstərən müxtəlif amillər mövcuddur. Məsələn, əsas amillər kimi Qafqaz mədəniyyətini, İslami adət-ənənəni, Rusiyanın siyasi-mədəni təsirini və Azərbaycan millətçiliyini göstərmək olar.

Azərbaycan qadınının Sovet dövründə milli kimliyin qorunub saxlanılmasındakı rolu böyük idi. İsmətli olması və milli-mədəni adət-ənənələrə uyğun hərəkət etməsi, Azərbaycan qadını xarakterizə edən və onu Rus qadınından "ayıran" əsas xüsusiyyət idi. Məhz bu faktor - "ruslardan fərqli olmaq" duyğusu, Azərbaycanla Rusiya arasında mədəni sərhəd qoyaraq, onun özünəməxsus milli kimliyinin Sovet kimliyi daxilində ariyib getməsinə kömək edirdi.

Azərbaycanın müstəqillik qazanmasından və bazar iqtisadiyyatına qədəm qoymasından sora vəziyyət bir qədər dəyişdi. 1991-ci ildən bəri Azərbaycan millətçiliyi cəmiyyətin demokratikləşməsində və yeni milli kimliyin formalaşmasında mərkəzi rol oynamaqdadır. Yaranmış yeni regional və beynəlxalq əlaqələrdə bir çox yeni "bağ"lar (Türkiyə, İran, 'Qərb', Ermənistan) meydana çıxdı ki, bu da formalaşmaqda olan yeni

“milli ideya”ya əhəmiyyətli təsir göstərdi. Digər bir çox post-kolonial milliləmə və demokratikləşmə təcrübələrində olduğu kimi, Azərbaycanda da bu proses Sovet dövründə olduğundan daha qeyri-bərabər gender münasibətlərini ehtiva edən və kişilərin aparıcı rol oynadığı modernist tendensiyaya əsaslanırdı.

Son dövrün feminist araşdırmaları milli quruculuq, millətçilik, milli kimliyin formalaşması proseslərinin, həmçinin etnik və millətlərarası münasibətlərin genderləşdirilmə təbiətini dəfələrlə göstərmiş və post-kolonial kontekstdə qadınlarla millətçilik arasında olan əlaqələrin əhəmiyyətini üzə çıxarmışdır. Adətən, qadınlar kolonial və ya yarım kolonial dominasiyaya qarşı mübarizədə aktiv, ancaq ikinci dərəcəli və məhdud rol oynayırlar. Mübarizə bitdikdən, milli quruculuq və demokratikləşmə başladıqdan sonra isə onlar cəmiyyətdəki öz ənənəvi yerlərinə qayıdır və kişilərin sahib olduğu ictimai-siyasi statusu əldə edə bilmirlər.

Son dövrdə Azərbaycanın intellektual və siyasi elitası daxilində liberal və sosial-demokratik axımların inkişaf etməyə başlaması, həmçinin yeni qadın QHT-lərinin və mərkəzlərinin yaranması Azərbaycanın gələcəyi baxımından vədədici görünür. Yəni burada daha sivil və gender məsələlərinə əhəmiyyət verən bir elita yaranmaq üzrədir ki, bu da yalnız Azərbaycanda gender münasibətlərinin inkişafına deyil, həm də ölkənin ümumi demokratikləşməsinə kömək göstərəcəkdir.

RUSSIAN POLICY IN SOUTH AZERBAIJAN DURING FIRST WORLD WAR

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Russian policy in South Azerbaijan during World War I was not studied in Azerbaijani historiography as a separate investigation object. Studying of some Azerbaijani archive documents which were kept secretly in the Soviet period give an opportunity to clarify the essence, aim and objectives of Russian policy in South Azerbaijan. These documents are kept in the State Archive of Azerbaijan Republic (SAAR), in the funds of State Archive of Political Parties and Social Movements of Azerbaijan Republic (SAPPSM), in the documents of foreign policy and in periodical.

On the eve of and during the war Russia pursued its South Azerbaijan policy by means of consulates and military units existing there. On the eve of the war B. M. Pisarev was the Russian Vice-Consul in Ardebil, A. A. Orlov was the General Consul in Tabriz, S. P. Golubinov was the Vice-Consul in Urmiya, G. B. Chirikov was the Vice-Consul in Khoy, and P. I. Smelov was the Vice-Consul in Anzali.¹

In 1915, Russian Consul in Ardebil was Edward Blum, A. A. Orlov was the General Consul in Tabriz, P. P. Vedenski was the Vice-Consul in Urmiya, B. I. Dolgopolov was the Vice-Consul in Khoy, P. I. Smelov was the Vice-Consul in Anzali, A. I. Iyas was the Consul in Savujbulag².

Russian army units were stationed on the territory of South Azerbaijan in 1905 under the pretext of supporting Russia's economic interests³. Even after the division of Iranian territory according to the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1907, Russian troops were not withdrawn from the territory of South Azerbaijan. On the eve of and during the war Russia had its own plans about South Azerbaijan. Russia was interested in strengthening its influence in this region because of South Azerbaijan's advantageous strategic position and rich natural resources, and because of the roads passing through the territory of South Azerbaijan and going to the Black Sea Channels, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. According to the Anglo-Russian treaty, the territories from South Azerbaijan till Qasri Shirin-Isfahan-Gezd-Hagg area were considered by Russia the territories of its interests. Russian military forces were stationed in Maragha, Resht, Astrabad and in other places. After the beginning of the war Russia sent new forces to South Azerbaijan⁴.

Russia was self-willed in South Azerbaijan and refused to withdraw its troops. It agreed to withdraw its military forces only on some conditions. These conditions and claims give us an opportunity to clarify the essence of Russian policy in South Azerbaijan.

First, Russia considered it necessary to hold elections to the governmental organs of South Azerbaijan in order to place its people in the governing body. In his answer to consul A. A. Orlov's question in Tabriz, an advisor of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia B. O. Klemm considered it timely to hold elections in Azerbaijan⁵.

Second, Russian government demanded not to allow Turkish and Kurdish groups seize Urmiya. If Urmiya surrendered, it would weaken Russian influence in South Azerbaijan. So, General Voropanov was given extensive authorities for punitive measures. Punitive forces were formed under the leadership of colonel Andreyevski and Vice-Consul Vedenski⁶.

Third, Russia tried to appoint officials in South Azerbaijan in favor of its government⁷.

Fourth, not only local population and Tehran government, but also English diplomacy was discontented by Russian government organs' levying taxes. The English Ambassador to St. Petersburg George B. Bukenen in his letter dated 25 December 1914 objected to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs S. D. Sazonov and asked him to cease levying⁸.

Fifth, Russia used South Azerbaijan's territory against Turkey for its terrorist purposes and formed groups there. Klemm in his telegram dated 10/09/1914, No. 2851, to the Russian Ambassador to Istanbul wrote: "According to the agreement with the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor of the Caucasus it was accepted to raise timely rebellions of Armenians, Assyrs, and Kurds in the case of war with Turkey. Those groups will be formed under the supervision of our Consuls and our groups in Azerbaijan. Rifles have been prepared, but they will be given in time. Groups will start their actions only with our permission"⁹. On 11 August 1914, Governor of the Caucasus Vorontsov-Dashkov sent a telegram (No. 445) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs S. D. Sazonov. The telegram included offers of separate Kurdish leaders and Armenian figures. They had assumed obligations to raise Kurds and Assyrs against Turkey. Vorontsov-Dashkov recommended to consider these offers seriously, to find out and/or form groups from forces hostile to Turks and to use them in military operations. Therefore, he asked S. D. Sazonov to contact the Military Minister, and place at his disposal 25 thousand rifles and 12 million cartridges. These weapons were to be shared according to plan made beforehand¹⁰. In his telegram dated 7 September 1914, No. 760, Vorontsov-Dashkov stated that small groups must be formed in Khoy and Dilman under the supervision of General Voropanov and Russian Consul in Khoy. He wrote: "Everybody must obey only one instruction: they must start their active operation in accordance with our agreement. I suggest to make all preparations secretly with assistance of consuls and army heads; Persian civil and official administration shall not be admitted to present"¹¹ Emperor Nikolay II approved Vorontsov-Dashkov's proposals. In his telegram dated 10 September 1914, No. 180, General Ganushkevich brought to the attention of S. D. Sazonov: "Commander-in-Chief completely

approves Vorontsov-Dashkov's draft measures and supports them"¹²

Sixth, using its army, border, customs and special service bodies, Russian authorities persecuted Turks and Muslims in South Azerbaijan.¹³

Seventh, in order to withdraw Turkish groups Russia sent new units to South Azerbaijan and invaded Tabriz. Turkish, German and Austria-Hungarian consuls had to leave the city. Those who were connected with Turks were persecuted too.

But later Turkish groups liberated Tabriz from Russians. Russian, English and French consuls moved to Tiflis¹⁴.

Russia could not agree with the liberation of Tabriz, so additional forces were brought from the Caucasus and with their assistance the city was invaded again. But Turks had already left the city voluntarily. The US Consul in Tabriz was against delivering of the city to the Russians¹⁵.

The occupation of Tabriz by Russian army dissatisfied Iranian government. Iran blamed the Russians, but Russian diplomacy blamed Iranian side for all destruction¹⁶.

The last, Russian diplomacy tried to take hold of ruling South Azerbaijan, not to let the prince come to Tabriz, and if he came keep him under control. The Russian government even formed a special group in Zangezur to accompany the prince. In his secret letter dated 6 May 1915, No. 240, Russian border commissioner gave information about this group¹⁷. After the prince's arrival to Tabriz, the Russian diplomacy tried to use Tabriz as a center against Tehran government, and to place its people around it.

To strengthen Russian position in South Azerbaijan, on 30 October 1915 General Barratov's expedition corps, consisted of 3 battalions, 39 hundreds, 20 artilleries, were sent to the port of Anzali in the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea. In November there were already 4 thousand soldiers in Anzali.

Russian army units were only withdrawn after October Revolution in 1917, but in early 1920s they were still kept in the territory of South Azerbaijan.

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Х ц л а с я

БІРІНСІ ДЦНІА МЦЩАРІБЯСІ ІЛЛЯРІНДЯ РУСІЯНЫН СЯНУБІ АЗЯРБАЙЪАН СІЯСЯТІ

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Биринги дцниа мцщарибяси илляриндя Русийанын Сянуби Азярбайсан сийасяти Азярбайган тарихщнаслыбында хцсуси тядгигат обйекти олмамышдыр. Мягальдя узун илляр бойу мяхфи сахланылмыш Азярбайган архив материаллары, дипломатик-сийаси сяндляр вя дюври мятбуат ясасында мцщарибя илляриндя Русийанын Ђянуби Азярбайган сийасятинин мягсядляр, форма вя методлары, щяйата кечирилмяси арашдырылыр.

Рус ордусу мцщарибядян бир неча ил яввял Русийанын марагларыны горумаг ады алтында Ђянуби Азярбайгана йеридилмишди. Мцщарибя башладыгдан сонра Русийа бу яразийа йени орду щиссяляри эюндярди.

Ђянуби Азярбайганда Тцркийя, Алманийа, Австрия-Маъарыстан дипломатийасы вя кящфийяты Русийа, Ёнэлтяря вя Франса нцфуз даирясиня гаршы мцбаризя апарырдылар. Русийа Ђянуби Азярбайгандакы орду, эюмрцк вя хцсуси хидмят органларынын кюмяйи иля мцстямялякчилик сийасятини йеридир, Тцркийяйя гаршы мцбаризядя ермянилярдян ибарят террор дястяляри йарадараг, динъ тцрк ящалисиня гаршы гятлиамда истифадя едирди. Русийа щакимийят даиряляри Ђянуби Азярбайсандакы идарячилик органларыны сайа салмайараг юзбашыналыг едир, Ёран щюкумятиня тязийгляр эюстярир вя бюлэяни юз нцйузу алтында сахламаъа чалышырды.

CASPIAN STRATEGY OF AZERBAIJAN

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The geopolitical situation in the Caspian region drastically differs from what it used to be in 1991. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent states, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and to some extent Armenia and Tajikistan, emerged in the south and embarked on the process of invigoration of their independence. Neither the Caucasus nor Central Asia (together Caspian region) can be regarded as Russia's backyard any longer. Attempts of the former imperial center (the Russian Federation) to preserve the region in its own sphere of influence are not giving positive results yet, as tendencies for integration with the West are still in place in the region.

Extraction of the Caspian's abundant hydrocarbon reserves has played a catalytic role in the process. The world's major oil companies have already invested over \$8 billion in exploration and development operations in the Azerbaijani and Kazakh sectors of the Caspian, while more than \$100 billion are expected to be invested in the next 25-30 years.¹ The Baku-Novorossiysk and Baku-Supsa early oil pipelines are already in operation. Important decisions have been made on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and Trans-Caspian gas pipeline projects. The Tengiz-Novorossiysk oil pipeline is expected to be put into operation in 2001. Sponsored by the European Union and launched in 1993, another major project TRACECA has played a tremendous role in the integration of the Caucasus and Central Asia with Europe. Another illustrative example of the profound political and strategic change was the establishment of GUUAM, the alliance of Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

In addition to the indicated geopolitical developments, it should also be mentioned that these geopolitical processes have not reached their logical conclusion yet. There is still a lot more in the "Great Game". No one can guarantee that geopolitical developments will not change direction. The struggle for the Caspian region has become one of the most pressing issues on the contemporary world. Results of this struggle will eventually affect the future panorama of Eurasia and lead to redrawing of the geopolitical map.

The way Azerbaijan has taken since 1991 is a clear example of the complicated processes that were and still are taking place in the region. Baku has turned into a center of Caspian oil boom and of the regional geopolitics in general. Crucial problems that Azerbaijan is facing today are the same as those faced by all countries of the region. At the same time, Azerbaijan has its own

specificity in a number of issues. Just like Central Asian republics and Armenia, Azerbaijan is a land-locked country, which does not have a direct access to the World Ocean. Unlike the majority of newly independent states, Azerbaijan would like to leave the Russian sphere of influence, but, as opposed to others (Armenia, for instance), Azerbaijan has its own specificity in historical and contemporary relations with the former imperial center.

Similarly to other countries of the region, Azerbaijan started building new relations with another regional power, the Islamic Republic of Iran, after 1991. However, in this issue as well Azerbaijan's individuality is not confined to sharing a long border with Iran. Azerbaijan is second in the world only to Iran for the proportion of the Shiite community. Besides, Azerbaijan is among the very few divided countries and nations in the world. Approximately twice as big as the Republic of Azerbaijan, another Azerbaijan is located in Iran's northwest, which is home to some three fourths of the world Azerbaijanis.

Just like other littoral states, Azerbaijan has oil and gas in its Caspian sector (80,000 square kilometers), but for the richness it is next only to the Kazakh sector (113,000 square kilometers). Oil has always played an essential role in the lives of all coastal countries. But Azerbaijan is noted for being the world's most ancient oil region, as well as the fact that oil has played priority role on all stages of the country's development.

And finally, Azerbaijan is currently in geopolitical blockade imposed by hostile Russian Federation, Armenia and Iran. The neighboring Armenia has occupied approximately 20% of Azerbaijan's territory and there is no end in sight to the 12-year-long Karabakh conflict. In other words, the situation in Azerbaijan, besides being an indicator of the situation in the region, is characterized with some peculiarities as well.

Attempts to Break the Geopolitical Blockade

The complicated nature of Azerbaijan's geopolitical location is first of all characterized by its geography. Absence of any natural protection factors or the country's weakness in the north (the Derbent pass) left Azerbaijan unarmed in the face of incessant raids from north to south, and vice-versa. There have been no conditions for a long-term development within this corridor. In addition to geography, two other historical and political events have pre-conditioned Azerbaijan's current geopolitical predicament. One of them occurred at the dawn of the 16th century, when the Sefevids Empire, established on the territory of Azerbaijan, forcefully converted the population to the Shiite creed. The fact that the Shiite creed became official in the reign of Sefevids (1501-1722) played a

significant role in Azerbaijan's subsequent development. Thus, Azerbaijan was eventually estranged from the rest of the Sunni Turkic world and as a result of a 150-year-long Sefevid-Ottoman wars Azerbaijan's road to the west and east (Central Asia) was cut off by the Sunni-Shiite stand-off. Instead, the Azerbaijanis (Azerbaijani Turks) ideologically and culturally merged with the Persians. The two Iranian-Russian wars at the beginning of the 19th century (1804-1813, 1826-1828) resulted in another tragedy for Azerbaijan: *de facto* independent Azerbaijani khanates were joined to the Czarist Russia and Gajar-ruled Iran. For about 5 centuries Azerbaijan had to take root in the North-South axis, which limited the country's relations with the East (Turkistan, Central Asia) and West (Georgia, Turkey, Europe).²

The new geopolitical situation, which emerged after 1991, divided states of the region in several groups. Russia's historical clients in the Caucasus, Armenians and the Republic of Armenia started taking advantage of a special patronage on the part of the Russian Federation. With the exception of Belarus, of all the former Soviet Union republics Armenia is currently considered closest to Russia. Thus, the Russian Federation began putting pressure on Azerbaijan and Turkey through supporting Armenia in every possible way. The Moscow-Yerevan relations have long assumed proportions of a strategic alliance, and a close economic, political and strategic cooperation between them is flourishing. The fact that Russia supplied Armenia with more than \$1 billion worth of weaponry between 1994 and 1996 is irrefutable.³

The newly shaped geopolitical situation, in particular the active role of the West and the growing involvement and authority of its closest ally Turkey in the Caspian basin, have brought the positions of two of the region's historical rivals, Russia and Iran, closer. It is therefore no wonder that the mentioned \$1 billion worth of weaponry, as well as a considerable portion of economic assistance sent to Armenia, passed through Iran. It is widely-known fact that Iran's aspiration to build its own nuclear weapon and the speedy armament of the country is easily explained by Tehran's close cooperation with Moscow.⁴ Another reason for the formation of the Moscow-Yerevan-Tehran triangle is the desire of these countries to thwart the process of revitalization of Azerbaijan and to restore the status-quo.⁵

Resistance to Russia's Revanchism

Public sentiments in Russia, which have had to retreat for the first time in the last 5 centuries, were seriously shaken by the collapse of the USSR. Disputes over pro-Atlantic or pro-Eurasian preferences were very frequent in Russia's political elite throughout 1992. Whereas the pro-Atlantic forces saw the future of the Russian Federation in the light of integration with the West, pro-

Eurasian forces thought the future of the two-headed eagle was bound to restoration of the Empire. Since a Western reader is fully aware of the content of this struggle,⁶ let us focus on something worthy of note.

Russia's then Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who possessed the reputation of an outright pro-Atlantic politician, was the first to use the definition of "near abroad" in an interview with "Izvestiya" newspaper in the first days of 1992.⁷ Later that year, speaking to an OSCE (then CSCE) conference in Stockholm, Kozyrev spoke of the necessity to establish a military and economic federation or confederation of former Soviet republics. The plea of Russian democrats to concentrate the "near abroad" countries around Russia again and to re-establish a new global power center received a lukewarm welcome on the part of pro-Eurasians, who, starting from 1993, made this idea a bottom-line of the Federation's foreign policy. Of course, it is possible to find differences in the attitudes of reformer/Atlantic and conservative/Eurasian forces toward the idea. In general, however, public sentiments on all levels of Russian political elite with regard to a doctrine envisioning preservation of Russian Federation's geopolitical authority were unanimously supportive. The fact that various Russian ministries (Foreign Affairs and Defense on the one hand and Fuel and Energy on the other) pursue differing tactics does not alter the general strategic course.⁸ In other words, despite the frequent changes of governments and foreign ministers, Moscow's interest to bring back its previous satellites under the same umbrella has not subsided.

The bottom-line of ideological and propagandistic aspects of Russia's foreign policy on the territory of the former USSR was based on the thesis that the country has historically been "responsible" for stability in the region. According to the thesis, the world community (including the United Nations) was to vest the task of safeguarding peace and stability in the region in Russia.⁹ In February of 1993, Russia's then President Yeltsin urged the United Nations to give Russian armed forces the status of peace-keeping troops in order to enable them to interfere in conflicts on the territories of the former Union member-states.¹⁰

In fact, the document entitled "Recommendations", prepared by Russian State Duma Committee for International Relations (chaired by ethnic Armenian Yevgeny Ambartsumov) and forwarded to the government, clearly stated: "The Russian Federation, which is internationally considered to be the legal successor of the USSR, must be governed by a doctrine (just like the US Monroe doctrine in the Latin America) envisioning protection of its vital interests on the entire geographical and political territory of the former USSR. Russia must also achieve the recognition of its interests by the international community. The Russian Federation must obtain international community's consent for playing the role of a guarantor of political and military stability in ex-USSR. It is necessary to urge the 7 super-powers of the West to assist Russia in this function and

provide hard currency aid for the formation of prompt operation forces (blue helmets).”¹¹

A particular place in Russia’s “near abroad” concept is occupied by the thesis that Russia is obliged to protect human rights of more than 20 million Russians and Russian-speaking population living in the former Soviet republics.¹²

Among most significant obstacles in Moscow’s objective of bringing the “near abroad” back under its sphere of influence was the independent Azerbaijan Republic. Despite the absence of pro-Russian tendencies in Azerbaijan (language, religion, historical background, and differences in other spheres), Azerbaijan keeps attracting Russia’s keen interest, because:

- Control over Azerbaijan would provide the Russian Federation with the opportunity of strengthening its *strategic interests* in the Caspian region and extend them to Middle East; the strategically important Gabala Radio-Location Station (RLS) that remained in a newly-independent Azerbaijan from the Soviet times has made this country even more luring for Russia; the territory of Azerbaijan could serve as an important outpost for Russia to keep the Middle East under control with its aviation and ballistic missiles;
- From the standpoint of *geopolitical interests* Azerbaijan plays an important role in Russia’s political sentiments; by keeping Azerbaijan under control, Moscow actually prevents the spreading authority of the West in the Caspian region; since Azerbaijan is geographically considered to be the center of the Turkic world, Russia thus puts up an insurmountable obstruction in the way of Turkic integration; in so doing (keeping Azerbaijan under control), Russia also thwarts the spread of Turkey’s influence in Central Asia, North Caucasus and along the Volga; this also prevents Iran from influencing Muslims of the former USSR;
- It is believed in Russia that in order to ensure this country’s *economic interests* in the Caspian region, it is necessary to keep Azerbaijan within the Russian sphere of influence; in addition to possessing abundant hydrocarbon reserves, Azerbaijan is home to the region’s overland, air, information and sea arteries.

Eager to preserve Azerbaijan in its sphere of influence but unable to do so due to the lack of material, technological and ideological capabilities, the Russian Federation has resorted to the means of military and political pressure. Russia’s military and diplomatic pressure on Azerbaijan is particularly worth of noting.

- By supporting Armenia and ethnic Armenians in the Upper Karabakh, Moscow is actually retarding the resolution of the Upper Karabakh conflict and trying to turn Azerbaijan into a hostage of this stand-off (see more about this topic in the next chapter);
- Moscow has attempted to spread separatist feud among ethnic minorities and to federalize Azerbaijan;

- Taking advantage of ambivalence among Azeri political forces, Moscow has attempted to undermine the internal stability in Azerbaijan, provided support for disruptive activities of the military opposition, and resorted to various provocative actions, including attempts on the life of the head of state;
- There have been attempts to station Russian military units on the territory of Azerbaijan and border guard troops along the republic's southern frontiers; Russia has tried to hamper the transfer of the Gabala RLS to Azerbaijan in accordance with an existing rule;
- Moscow has tried to thwart major foreign capital investment in the development of hydrocarbon reserves in the Caspian basin, to impose a condominium principle of utilization of the Caspian entrails on other littoral countries, and to prevent the division of the sea into national sectors; when this did not work, Russia attempted to direct the region's oil and gas export pipelines to the West through its own territory;
- The system of economic relations that was formed in the Soviet times made the Russian Federation Azerbaijan's key economic partner; the majority of communication lines pass via Russia; hundreds thousands of Azeris live in Russia, while Moscow was and still is using this factor as a means to pressure and blackmail Azerbaijan.

Since Azerbaijan gained independence in 1991, three modes of relationship (*modus vivendi*) with Russia have been empirically evident. The government of Azerbaijan's first president Ayaz Mutallibov (1991-1992) tended to make concessions to Russia under pressure from Moscow in an effort to win Moscow's neutrality in resolving the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict. For this, he regarded it necessary to sign the document on establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). However, after Russian troops perpetrated a brutal massacre in Azerbaijan's town of Khojali on February 26, 1992, president Mutallibov's authority vanished and he stepped down. The objectives of Azerbaijan's first democratically elected president Abulfaz Elchibey and his government were to safeguard and further invigorate the obtained independence. This course was adhered to in political, economic and military fields. Shortly afterwards, Azerbaijan's national currency unit, the *Manat*, was introduced. The Azeri parliament turned down the October 7, 1992 CIS agreement. The bilateral framework agreement on friendship and cooperation signed with the Russian Federation on October 12 envisioned development of bilateral relationship between the two states. Azerbaijan achieved certain progress in the settlement of the Upper Karabakh conflict. Russian troops left Azerbaijan. At the same time, the negotiations embarked on with foreign petroleum companies were accelerated. Reports were being spread by mass media concerning the future oil export pipeline Baku-Iran-Nakhchivan-Ceyhan. President Elchibey put forward the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Ukraine economic cooperation triangle as an alternative to the CIS integration.

Having experienced the shock of 1992, in early 1993 Moscow embarked on implementation of its “near abroad” concept. In their unofficial talks with the independent Elchibey government, Russia’s high-ranking dignitaries were overtly conveying the message that the time of “disobedience” was over and calling on Azerbaijan in an ultimatum-like fashion to join the “integration” within the CIS. After this effort was wasted, Moscow started to step up pressure on Azerbaijan in various directions. Among Russia’s 1993 trade tariffs with former Soviet republics, those with Azerbaijan were the highest, even higher than with Baltic states. In late March-early April, Azerbaijan’s Kalbajar province was seized by Armenian troops with direct participation of the Russian military units. Although this seriously undermined the authority of the Elchibey government, it was not enough to estrange him from power. After Elchibey brushed off the proposal of returning Russian army to Azerbaijan in the capacity of peace-keeping troops and on the eve of liberation of the Kalbajar province from Armenian troops under the trilateral supervision of Russia, Turkey and US in accordance with a UN-adopted schedule, Moscow made another disruptive move. This time, by supporting an armed opposition in Azerbaijan, it attempted to get rid of Azerbaijan’s national democratic government. Another reason behind this move of Moscow was the impending signing of important oil documents by the Azeri president in London following a series of oil negotiations. The insurgency that erupted in Azerbaijan’s second largest city of Ganja by colonel Surat Husseinov on June 4 reached as far as Baku. As Elchibey said later on, “in order to prevent a civil war” and “to upset Russia’s plot” (to prevent Moscow from bringing Mutallibov to power), he left the capital for a remote Kalaki village.

Having come to power at a very complicated period, an experienced politician Heydar Aliyev first of all had to please the instigator of the Ganja rebellion, or at least to neutralize him. To satisfy Russia, Azerbaijan’s new leader immediately suspended talks with Western oil companies. Heydar Aliyev started paying one visit to Moscow after another. In his meetings with Russian president Yeltsin, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin and other leaders of Russia, Heydar Aliyev vowed to pursue a foreign policy differing from that of his predecessor and to try to ameliorate relationship with Russia in every possible way. Besides, he was saying that Azerbaijan could enter the CIS. On September 20, 1993, when the issue of accession to the CIS was being discussed in the Milli Mejlis, Heydar Aliyev said entering the Commonwealth was inevitable. He also asked those opposed to the CIS idea a good question, “But where is *your* ally?” As soon as the Milli Mejlis approved the entry, Heydar Aliyev left for Moscow to sign for CIS membership and some other official documents, including the agreements on Collective Security and Economic Cooperation. Nevertheless, the still acting president Aliyev was in no hurry to implement the documents signed. Pursuant to the agreement on Collective Security, Russian military units were to be stationed on the Azerbaijan-

Iranian border, but he insisted that they be placed on the Azerbaijan-Armenian frontier. Heydar Aliyev was in no hurry either to agree to the provision concerning Russian troops in Upper Karabakh with the status of peacekeeping forces and on the issue of the Gabala RLS.

By making concessions to Moscow in the oil developments (for instance, giving Russian LUKoil a 10% stake in the oil consortium being established), Azerbaijan's new government was counting on creation of a pro-Azerbaijan lobby in Moscow and on an at least neutral position of Moscow in the Karabakh issue. As a matter of fact, Russian energy circles (Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, energy minister Shafrannik, president of LUKoil Alakbarov, etc.) contributed a lot to relaxing pressure on Azerbaijan. This, however, could not alter Moscow's traditional policy in the Caucasus. Despite the concessions made to Moscow, in the period between July and October 5 provinces located outside Karabakh – Agdam, Fizuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli and Zangilan – were occupied. Russia failed to change its unilateral pro-Armenian position in the Upper Karabakh conflict. Russia continued insisting on stationing its “peacekeeping” forces in the conflict zone. Furthermore, Moscow wanted to return the Caspian fleet, to place its troops on the Azerbaijan-Iranian border and to establish an anti-aircraft defense system in the South Caucasus. Under such circumstances, further compromises with Moscow would be absolutely useless. In December 1993, President Aliyev, with the mediation of Turkey, turned westwards.

In an effort to strengthen its independence and leave Russia's sphere of influence and pressure, the post-Soviet Azerbaijan covered a long way full of dramatic developments. As a result of an irrational anti-Azerbaijan policy, Moscow has significantly lost its authority in Azerbaijan.¹³ It has failed to introduce its “peacekeeping” troops in the Caucasus, to set up military units in Ganja and on the Azerbaijan-Iranian border, to hamper the process of attraction of Western capital to the development of Caspian hydrocarbon resources, to impose its own alternative solution to the Caspian legal status issue on other states, and to build the main oil export pipeline through Russia. A brief overview of Russo-Azerbaijani relations illustrates that Russia has long lost its monopolistic authority in the region and finds it extremely difficult to put up with the role of an equal partner. Moscow's having lost its image in the region is also explained by its unequivocal support for Armenia aggression and ethnic separatism.

Upper Karabakh Problem/Armenian Aggression

Ever since Azerbaijan restored its independence in 1991, the Upper Karabakh problem has paralyzed the country, having actually deprived the nation of the expectations of joy with independence. At the same time, the Karabakh problem was the bill Azerbaijan had to pay (to

Russia) for restoring its independence.

The neighboring Armenia's renewed claims on Upper Karabakh resumed since the period of *Perestroika*. In 1987, "Save the Karabakh Armenians" rallies were launched in Yerevan. Shortly afterwards, the main organization of the Armenian national movement – the Karabakh Committee – was formed. The organization and intellectuals that concentrated in it were spreading speculations that Armenians living in an enclave within Azerbaijan, the Upper Karabakh Autonomous Region (UKAR), are subject to "discrimination". To substantiate the alleged discrimination, it was maintained that UKAR was a backward region in terms of economic and cultural development and that Azerbaijan was seriously inhibiting any relationship between Armenia and UKAR. When these arguments were proven wrong as a result of counter-propaganda and following official statements by Moscow and Baku, new groundless speculations emerged, suggesting that "Upper Karabakh has always been a part of Armenia", and that this region was "presented to Azerbaijan" by Stalin. A particular importance was attached to the fact that the choice of self-determination of ethnic Armenians from Upper Karabakh (78% of the total population of 185,000 of Upper Karabakh) "is giving them the right to join with Armenia". In fact, this right is affixed by the USSR Constitution, they alleged.¹⁴

The "Karabakh" demands voiced in street rallies in Yerevan and then in Stepanakert raised many eyebrows in the Azerbaijani society. The 250,000 people strong Armenian community of Baku was calling on the population to condemn the "separatists" and "build an unshakable unity of Soviet peoples". The Azerbaijan state television, a monopolist in influencing public opinion, carried on its propaganda in this direction up until 1990. As opposed to the non-constructive position of the communist regime in the Soviet Azerbaijan, in Armenia and Upper Karabakh the dramatic developments were speedily unfolding. These developments can be briefly described in the following way.

In August of 1997, a group of Armenian Academy of Science representatives sent a petition to Moscow demanding that Upper Karabakh and Nakhchivan (according to the 1979 public census, 97% of the Autonomous Republic's population were Azerbaijanis) be separated from Azerbaijan and annexed to Armenia. In November of the same year, Gorbachov's economic adviser Aganbegian, an Armenian national, said in a statement in Paris that Karabakh was "an ancient Armenian territory" and suggested that if it were given to Armenia, "it would be economically appropriate". In parallel with launching the process of ousting Azerbaijanis from Armenia, the local administrative council of UKAR passed a decision on joining the Soviet Armenia. Several days afterwards, Armenians killed two young Azerbaijanis protesting the decision. During the clashes on February 28-29 in Sumgayit city, not far from Baku, 26 Armenians and 6 Azerbaijanis were slain.¹⁵

On the wave of rallies, the Armenian Supreme Council called on Moscow and Baku in June to join the Upper Karabakh with Armenia according to the article 70 of the Soviet Constitution (right of nations for self-determination). In response, the Azerbaijan Supreme Council, governed by article 78 of the same Constitution (borders of a republic cannot be altered without its consent) rejected the plea. In January of 1989, Moscow withdrew the UKAR from Azerbaijan's governance and established a special committee under direct supervision of Moscow. Under unending pressure of rallies in Baku and in many other parts of the republic, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted the law "On sovereignty", envisioning that only the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan must be enforced throughout its territory. The law also abolished the special committee for administration of Upper Karabakh. In retaliation, the Armenian Supreme Council adopted a law on December 1, 1989 on joining Upper Karabakh with Armenia. Also in December, in protest to the division of Azerbaijan (between Russia and Iran), local Azeris destroyed the Soviet Union's border with Iran and liquidated Soviet administrations in several southern regions. The developments were factually leading outside the USSR. Faced with such murky prospects, the Soviet KGB took advantage of the ethnic withstanding (Karabakh problem), masterminded the killing of several Armenians on January 13-17, brought considerable troops to Baku on January 20, who brutally slaughtered tens of peaceful residents of the city. The state of emergency was announced in Baku and many other parts of the republic, which actually lasted until the USSR collapsed.

Shortly after Azerbaijan re-established its independence (October 1991), the local administrative council of Upper Karabakh conducted a referendum and announced independence of the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic". With the aid of Soviet military units stationed there, Upper Karabakh separatists tried to forcefully drive the Azerbaijanis outside Upper Karabakh. In February of 1992, while presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia were meeting in Tehran, Azerbaijan's Khojali settlement was obliterated from the surface of the earth by Armenians with the aid of Russia's 366th regiment. Almost all of the residents of the former settlement, 700 people, were slaughtered. During the second round of the Tehran talks in May, the most strategic point of Karabakh Azerbaijanis, the city of Shusha, was taken over. Chairman of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Abulfaz Elchibey, who came to power in June 1992, announced that in order to return the occupied territories, establishment of the national army would be his priority policy. As a result of these measures, a considerable part of captured lands was liberated. As mentioned above, in early 1993 the Russian Federation took several steps in an effort to punish Azerbaijan for its aspirations to further consolidate its independence. In late March, with direct participation of Russian military units, Azerbaijan's strategic province of Kalbajar, located outside Karabakh, was occupied following simultaneous attacks launched from two directions (Armenia and Upper Karabakh). Later on, availing themselves of the

June rebellion and weakened government in Baku, Armenians seized 6 more provinces beyond the boundaries of Upper Karabakh. Thus, on the eve of signing the Russian-prepared cease-fire treaty in Bishkek in May 1994, Azerbaijan lost 20% of its territory, had about 1 million refugees and displaced persons and more than 20,000 people killed in action.

Azerbaijan and Armenia became members of the CSCE (OSCE) in January 1992 and of the United Nations in March 1992. It was not long before the war between these two countries entered the agenda of the two organizations. After the Khojali carnage, CSCE decided to convene a conference on Upper Karabakh in Minsk to be attended by 9 countries. The objectives of the conference was to normalize relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia and agree on the status of Azerbaijani and Armenian population of the Upper Karabakh. Azerbaijan and Armenia were full-fledged participants of the conference, whereas representatives of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities had to take part in the capacity of interested parties. After the occupation of the Kalbajar province, which was beyond the administrative boundaries of Upper Karabakh, the United Nations Security Council, by its resolution 822, demanded the Armenian aggressor forces immediately withdraw from it. In addition to demanding an unconditional pullout from the occupied territories, this and subsequent resolutions recognized Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Armenia made a point of rejecting the resolutions and disrupting the Minsk Group conferences. In May 1993, as liberation schedule of the occupied Kalbajar province was being finalized by the USA, Russia and Turkey (Yerevan had given its consent to that), the June 4 rebellion and new acts of aggression of Armenian armed forces frustrated the materialization of the plan. After the UN Security Council vested the Upper Karabakh problem in the OSCE, the issue has permanently been on the Organization's agenda. In Budapest Summit of December 1994 the OSCE decided to station multinational peacekeeping forces after the occupied lands are liberated, which actually meant that Russia was losing a monopoly over the conflict settlement. The OSCE Lisbon Summit (December 1996) outlined three main principles for a negotiated settlement of the stand-off (to ensure territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Armenia, to provide Upper Karabakh with a high self-administration status in accordance with the right of every nation for self-determination, and to provide security guarantees to the Upper Karabakh population). Of 54 OSCE members, only Armenia turned down the principles. Although president Ter-Petrossian was inclined to accept the OSCE-proposed stage-by-stage settlement of the conflict, the Armenian government (especially the separatist Upper Karabakh administration) brushed off the offer. Having come to power through a carefully-orchestrated coup d'etat, the leader of Karabakh separatists Robert Kocharian brought the negotiations to an impasse again. Shortly after being elected as president, Kocharian outlined his vision of the conflict solution: to abolish all forms of subordination of Upper Karabakh to

Azerbaijan (or to provide Karabakh with complete independence), not to agree to retaining Upper Karabakh as an enclave within Azerbaijan (or not to pull out from the Lachin corridor and, if possible, from the Kalbajar province), to provide Upper Karabakh with reliable security guarantees (or to build the Upper Karabakh army).¹⁶ Armenia's leaving no room for compromise could not but affect the position of the OSCE co-chairs (USA, France, Russia). Then, on the initiative of Russia's then Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, the OSCE co-chairs put forward the idea of setting up a condominium state between Azerbaijan (with population of 8 million and territory of 86,000 km²) and Upper Karabakh (with population of 150,000 and territory of 4,400 km²). After the Azerbaijan party vehemently dismissed the suggestion, it was withdrawn from the agenda. Then, the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia embarked on a series of closed-door meetings...

The brief overview of the 12-year Upper Karabakh withstanding illustrates that it is the very problem that has largely preconditioned relationship between the two countries. Since the two republics have been *de facto* at war with each other, even diplomatic relations has not been established. The continuing state of suspense, which retards the restoration of stability in the region, is only explained by Armenia's Moscow-backed aggression against Azerbaijan.

Struggling Pressure from Iran

As mentioned above, at the dawn of the 19th century Azerbaijan was divided in two parts by the Czarist Russia and Gajar-ruled Iran. The fact that Azerbaijan is among very few divided countries and nations in the world has largely contributed to the relations of the Azerbaijan Republic with its southern neighbor – the Islamic Republic of Iran. This factor has also played a significant role in the formation of the Moscow-Yerevan-Tehran alliance.

The “Tabriz! Tabriz!” slogans were particularly popular in the national democratic movement in Northern Azerbaijan in 1988. This was a voice of protest to the decades-long prohibition imposed on this subject and a symbolic plea by a nation in predicament. Pleas for unification with the South were at times even more powerful than those for independence.

The demolition of the “Berlin Wall” between two Azerbaijanians in late 1989 gave an impetus to broadening the national independent movement. The developments were followed by the January 20, 1990 carnage, which claimed lives of tens of innocent people. Iran's Foreign Ministry termed the “Tragic January” as an internal affair of the USSR and expressed its regret with what happened.¹⁷

Despite the dramatic nature of the evolving developments, the issue of unification was not losing its actuality. Almost all political organizations emerging one after another voiced their attitude toward the idea of a United Azerbaijan. The most popular organization of those days, the

Popular Front, was attaching a particular importance to relationship between two Azerbaijanians. One of the organization's most pivotal tasks was "to eliminate all obstacles in the way of cultural and economic cooperation with Southern Azerbaijan."¹⁸

The break-up of the USSR and Northern Azerbaijan's restoring its independence did not receive a universal welcome in Iran, which was in no hurry to recognize the Azerbaijan Republic's independence. It is indicative that in 1991, Iran's Foreign Minister Vilayati suggested to establish a powerful Soviet confederation, which, he believed, would prevent the West from keeping control over independent republics.¹⁹

The declaration of independence announced by the Azerbaijan Republic in October 1991 caused quite a stir in Tehran. A part of Iranian executives put forward the idea of joining (annexing) what used to be "Iran's ancient land" – the Republic of Azerbaijan – to Iran. The governing circles of Iran, however, did not back the idea. On the other hand, the Persian chauvinism was perturbed with the growing role of Turkic element and a potential threat of Iran's so-called Turkization. Therefore, Iran's theocratic regime was attempting to lure Azerbaijan to its political orbit in order to at least to neutralize Azerbaijan's influence on the Turkic population of Iran, especially South Azerbaijan.

Another sore point for Iran is the national and cultural revitalization on the other side of the Araz River. Iran was making no secret of its categorically negative attitude to the planned change of the Cyrillic alphabet and going out of its way to have the alphabet changed to Arabic. For this purpose, special propagandistic literature was printed in Iran in Cyrillic graphics and then sent to Azerbaijan for being disseminated. Azerbaijan's decision to return to the Latin alphabet was vehemently criticized by Iran.

A particular place in Iran's growing propaganda was occupied by Islamic revolution and Islamic governance. Groups of Iranian clergymen were coming to Azerbaijan to propagate for Islamic values among different categories of the population. The idea of exporting the Islamic revolution was advocated for by newspapers, books and other editions and sent to a newly-independent Azerbaijan. Besides, to expand its propaganda, Iran even established several newspapers and magazines in Baku.

In an effort to bring Azerbaijan to its sphere of influence, Iran was pursuing the following geopolitical objectives:

- to prevent the formation of an independent and democratic Azerbaijan in every possible way, to nip in the bud its influence over South Azerbaijan thus safeguarding Iran's territorial integrity and internal stability;
- to prevent the growing authority of the US and Turkey in the Caucasus and Central Asia;

- to prevent solidarity and integration of the Turkic world;
- to establish an outpost for pressure on Muslims in the North Caucasus, Central Asia and along the Volga;
- to use the territory of Azerbaijan for marketing Iranian goods;
- to create an Islamic regime in North Azerbaijan pursuant to the “Export of Islamic revolution” doctrine.

The first foreign visit of Azerbaijan’s first president A. Mutallibov was to Iran. Official Baku was holding out great hopes that the visit, paid in late 1991, would help enhance relations with Iran. An agreement was reached in Tehran to use the territory of Iran for contacts with Nakhchivan blockaded by Armenians. In addition, documents on setting up a Free Economic Zone in Nakhchivan and expanding comprehensive relations between the two countries were signed. In early 1992, during Iranian Foreign Minister’s visit to Azerbaijan, Baku and Tehran signed treaties on broadening trade, economic and political relations. By going to Iran on the occasion of an anniversary of the Iranian revolution with an extensive delegation, Mutallibov made another major step toward rapprochement with Iran. Official Baku made it clear that Azerbaijan had no intention to interfere in the internal affairs of Iran and “ruled out the idea of establishing a united Azerbaijan.”²⁰

Another step in the direction of rapprochement was Iran's assuming the role of a mediator in the Karabakh conflict settlement and expanding its activities in the first half of 1992. In this period, Iran was cautious of the threat of a war capable of undermining stability in the Caucasus. At the same time, Tehran was not interested in a comprehensive settlement of the dispute, as it wanted Azerbaijan to be preoccupied with this factor. Through brokering solution to the conflict, Iran was also hoping to keep the developments in the Caucasus under control and to promote its authority in the region.

Iran's mediation had tragic consequences for Azerbaijan. In late February of 1992, Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents signed a cease-fire accord in Tehran. However, hardly had the ink on the document dried out, when Armenians surrounded one of Karabakh's largest Azeri populated towns, Khojali, and slaughtered most of its residents. The carnage resulted in Mutallibov's resignation. One day after the signing of a cease-fire protocol by Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents in Tehran on May 7-8 Armenians took over Azerbaijan's strategic fore-post in Karabakh - the city of Shusha. Moscow was behind this occupation, which dramatically changed the course of the war. By activating its forces in the region, Russia thus punished Azerbaijan for turning to someone else, not to Russia itself, for solution. Besides, Russia showed to Iran too where it belonged, making it clear that Moscow is not going to stand Iran's growing authority in the Caucasus. Therefore, this mission

of Iran, which gave serious concessions to the Armenian party, caused a sharp public outrage in Azerbaijan. Media publications appeared describing the overlapping positions of Armenia and Iran.

At such a crucial period in the history of Azerbaijan, chairman of the Popular Front Abulfaz Elchibey was elected as president. Still as chairman of the PFA, Elchibey was noted for saying what there was to say, not what was necessary to say, of human right violations of non-Persian nationalities living in a multiethnic Iran, including the prohibition imposed on the study of their native language at school, which he said would bring this country to a collapse. This idea was strongly exaggerated and distorted by Iranian media.

Contrary to the widely spread literary opinion, relations were booming in a number of areas. A special joint commission for economic relations was established by the two governments. Shortly afterwards, Iran was leading Azerbaijan's foreign turnover list. The discontent of the Iranian party and the Islamic regime basically concerned Elchibey's internal and external ethnic policy, including the aspiration to achieve parity in relations with foreign countries. In mid-1992, it was discovered that the overwhelming majority of the 700 minor and major agreements signed with Iran were not operating and that the Iranian party was trying to implement only the deals it considers appropriate. Another direction in Iran's policy toward Azerbaijan was preconditioned by its desire to act as "elder brother". Therefore, the propaganda of proximity between the two nations was not sincere at all. In early 1993, the Iranian authorities passed a decision, which inhibited the process of marriage between citizens of the two countries. Indifferent toward the anachronistic nature of this decision, aimed at thwarting the expansion of relations between the two peoples, and toward the infringement upon a basic human right, the Iranian government did not even consider it appropriate to answer any of the repeated protests on the part of official Baku.

One of the key objectives of Azerbaijan's Iranian policy was to create a favorable environment for the reunion of families and relatives that had for many years been separated from each other and to facilitate the process of migration. The Azerbaijan party was trying to bring the relationship to equal standards. However, the proposal of Azerbaijan on signing a framework agreement on mutual recognition of the two countries' independence and state borders and non-interference with the internal affairs of each other (a similar agreement had been signed with Russia) did not receive a lukewarm response on the part of Iran. Neither did Tehran reply to Azerbaijan's proposal to exchange television broadcasts and ten-day festivities of each country. As if in continuation of the traditions inherited from the Shah period, Tehran was doing its utmost to prevent public awareness and propaganda of Azerbaijan's national and independent wealth in Iran. Besides, the Iranian government was trying to restrain the work of Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran and prevent the establishment of Azerbaijani consulate office in Tabriz (Iranian one had already existed

in Nakhchivan for a long time).

Discontented with Elchibey's policy with respect to Iran, which envisioned broadening of bilateral relations on parity terms, Tehran started supporting the opposition in Azerbaijan and encouraging it to take unlawful action against the legitimate government. In this light, two visits by the then chairman of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic's Supreme Mejlis Heydar Aliyev to Iran (in August of 1992 and in March of 1993) are well remembered. Iran's having been engaged even in espionage against Azerbaijan is a proven fact.

One of the countries particularly delighted by the June 1993 coup d'etat against the Elchibey government was Iran, which made no secret of its contacts with the insurgents.

Elchibey's stepping down in Azerbaijan gave Iran the chance to take a breath, as the country started giving Heydar Aliyev its backing in strengthening his authority. As a consequence of the coup d'etat, Azerbaijan's military capability to resist Armenian aggression was weakened and Iran officially warned Armenia to abandon its policy of aggression. Assisting the Azerbaijani refugees, Iran built a refugee camp at its own expense and started to provide other kinds of humanitarian aid. Iranian dignitaries were paying one visit to Azerbaijan after another and signing a great deal of new agreements.

In the meantime, the parity principle in bilateral relations was being violated again, as new concessions were made to the Iranian party. The Azerbaijani state television broadcast a one-and-half-hour program prepared in Tehran and propagating Iran and Iranian values. Representatives of Iran's spiritual leader appointed to all of the country's provinces were being sent to Azerbaijan.

Starting from late 1993, however, Heydar Aliyev's foreign policy priorities changed from Russo-Iranian to Turkish-Western. In September 1994, after Azerbaijan signed the so-called "Contract of the Century" for oil production from its national sector in the Caspian Sea, the Azerbaijani-Iranian relations entered a new stage. Iran's attitude towards Heydar Aliyev and the government of Azerbaijan drastically changed, as Iranian media started applying the label "servant of America and Zionism", which they had invented for Elchibey, to Heydar Aliyev. Iran's demand that Azerbaijan stop all official relationship with the USA and Israel became a talking point for Iranian officials.²¹ Iranian press published a series of stories advocating for joining "14 ancient Iranian cities" to Iran, claiming that such requests were arriving from citizens of Azerbaijan in their letters.²² The Iranian government started overtly expanding relationship with Armenia, a country at war with Azerbaijan.²³

In the issue of utilization of Caspian energy resources, Tehran began supporting the position of Russia (although earlier it was vowing to back the position of Azerbaijan). Despite cooperation with the Azerbaijan government in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian (on the Shah-Daniz PSA) and

intention to tap its own national sector of the Caspian in an established order, Iran took the course of pressure on Azerbaijan in the issue of Caspian oil.

The conviction of the leaders of Islamic Party in April 1997 on charges of espionage in favor of Iran triggered the latter's further indignation. The court also ascertained extensive destructive activities that Iran was engaged in on the territory of the Azerbaijan Republic.²⁴

The experience of Azerbaijani-Iranian relations of the last several years illustrates that they depend neither on politicians nor on governments. Of course, the personality/government factor does play a certain role in narrowing and even eliminating some of the differences. But the main difference between Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran is of a fundamental nature. For a normal development of bilateral relations, either Azerbaijan has to join Iran's political orbit (for this a pro-Iranian Islamic regime must be established in Azerbaijan) or the Islamic regime in Iran has to change its character (for this, it has to show respect for the ethnic rights of non-Persians living there).

Seeking East-West Exposure

In order to preserve its national independence, restore the territorial integrity and get the upper hand in resisting Iran's pressure, Azerbaijan has to break the blockade imposed on it by the Moscow-Yerevan-Tehran alliance. To carry out this task, Azerbaijan has to take an alternative course. In other words, it has to choose its alliance around Turkey, USA and Georgia in order to safeguard its security and insure the future. The experience of the past years has demonstrated Azerbaijan's having taken steps in this direction.

Proximity with Turkey, the USA and Georgia

After coming to power in Azerbaijan, President Aliyev was both maintaining extensive communication with Russia's different-level officials and resuscitating contacts with the Western oil companies and countries. Besides, in a move to eliminate the uncertainty in relations with Turkey, President Aliyev opted for enhancement of relations with Turkey, in particular with its President Suleyman Demirel, while he was still in Nakhchivan.

In this period, Turkey was getting a great deal of satisfaction in the establishment of new Turkic states, as several Turkish statesmen were claiming that the new century would be the century of the Turkic world. Turkey was the first country to recognize Azerbaijan's independence. The



richness of Caspian littoral states in hydrocarbon reserves made them even more important for Turkey. Having become NATO's coordinator in the region, Turkey was trying to contribute to the Organization's enlargement in the direction of the Caspian region. The political, economic and strategic interests, as well as ethnic and cultural factors, encouraged Turkey to join the struggle for the Caspian basin.

In the period elapsed since Azerbaijan re-gained its independence, bilateral relations with Turkey have been developing in an ever-expanding fashion. On the political front, Turkey, as a member of the OSCE Minsk Group, was aspiring to achieve a fair and impartial solution to the Upper Karabakh problem. However, Turkey's traditional foreign policy in favor of status quo could not make it influential in this area.²⁵

A particular attention of Turkish governments in Azerbaijan and in the Caspian basin in general was heeded to the

abundant oil reserves. In fact, Turkey's foreign policy over the past several years was largely preconditioned by oil and the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline, as the country is soon going to encounter problems with addressing a growing need for energy. In the coming decade Turkey's needs for energy are expected to double. Thus, the country's needs of 20.8 billion cubic meters of gas in the year 2000 are expected to amount to 53.6 billion cubic meters in 10 years from now.²⁶

One of the most palpable steps that Turkey has taken to assist Azerbaijan was the support Ankara provided Heydar Aliyev in opening an access to the West. With mediation of Suleyman Demirel, Heydar Aliyev paid his first Western visit to France in December 1993, which was followed by a series of visits to a number of European capitals.

In early 1994, negotiations with foreign companies were resumed. While in London on an official visit in February, President Aliyev signed an inter-governmental agreement with British Government on oil production, whereby British Government obtained the right of financing Azerbaijan's oil production projects. The Azerbaijan and British governments agreed to act as guarantors of the commitments assumed by BP and the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). Shortly afterwards, Russian Foreign Ministry sent a note to British embassy voicing its categorical protest to the deal. Nevertheless, during a CIS April Summit in Moscow, Baku overtly dismissed Russia's Karabakh settlement scheme.

In the summer of the same year, the USA started taking interest in the Caucasus developments. The then US representative in the United Nations Madeleine Albright stated in Baku on September 5-6 that the US does not recognize a "special role" of the Russian Federation in the Caucasus and can only agree to the stationing of Russian military units in Karabakh as part of a large contingent supervised by the OSCE.²⁷

A successful completion of the talks with the oil consortium and the positive changes in the international environment for Baku accelerated signing of the so-called "Contract of the Century" on September 20, 1994. The contract led to growing interest of Western countries, the United States in particular, in establishing stability in the region. In other words, this meant that Baku eventually reached the pro-Western track in its foreign policy (to achieve growing economic and political interest of the USA to oppose Russia's pressure) that was beaten by the Elchibay government. It was as a result of this policy that Azerbaijan managed to endure the unending pressure on the part of Russia (attempts on the life of the head of state, support for armed opposition, economic embargo, economic ultimatums, etc.) and in November 1997 the republic embarked on exporting its first contract oil to foreign markets. In this period (between September 1994 and late 1997), issues relating to oil pipelines had been resolved and agreements signed one after another on establishment of new consortia. The interest of the West and its capital in the region surged in an unprecedented

way. Finally, as Moscow consistently refused to investigate the arms supplies to Yerevan, Baku had to make its position clear as well. President Aliyev announced that he was firmly inclined toward the Baku-Ceyhan alternative of the main export pipeline and that Azerbaijan would not change its position in the Caspian status issue. The new Constitution of Azerbaijan adopted in November 1995 confirmed that the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea is an inseparable part of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The United States thus turned into the main author and advocate for the processes of strategic importance unfolding in the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the words of its dignitaries and through a number of legal documents, the United States announced that the region (Caspian basin) was in the strategic interests of the USA.²⁸ *Pax-Americana* considers the growing authority of the United States in the Caspian region as a tool for opposing the presumed unity of Russia, Iran and India/or China.

The US State Department's "Energy development in the Caspian basin" report (1997) outlines 4 key directions of the US policy in the region:

1. "Solution of regional conflicts". This provision dwells upon the solution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, other sources of ethnic tension in the Caucasus, as well as the civil war in Tajikistan. According to the authors of the document, these conflicts make it possible for foreign forces like Iran to get down to action. In addition, delaying solution of the disputes creates a favorable environment for the destructive Islamic movements.
2. The provision on "Increasing and expanding world's energy-supply" stipulates exploitation of Caspian energy resources in addition to those of the Persian Gulf and pursues the objective of insuring Western energy interests here.
3. "Sovereignty and independence of Caspian basin countries". According to the authors of the report, the main problem here is to eliminate the dependence on the oil pipeline going through the territory of Russia. Besides political problems, this dependence enables Russia to raise the fee for the use of the pipeline to an extremely high level. To resolve the problem, there is a need for different oil export routes. From this standpoint, the issue of oil pipeline through Iran emerges.
4. "Iran's isolation" needed to limit this country's revenues. These revenues are spent on building mass destruction weapons, augmenting the conventional destruction weapons arsenal and supporting terrorism. Authors of the report see the best way of attaining this goal through preventing Iran's any involvement in Caspian energy developments.

The document also offers the US policies with regard to Russia and Turkey. It is indicated that there is no need for irritating Russia without a reason, because Washington is "sharing a number of [important] interests with Russia pertaining to control over nuclear weapon and NATO

enlargement". It is suggested that political pressure should not be applied to Russian companies operating in the Caspian region, because this market "has historically been managed by Russia". As far as Turkey is concerned, the authors propose: by providing assistance to Turkey, a NATO fellow ally, to take control over security in the region surrounded by hostile states and to promote economic revitalization capable of thwarting the discontent that may provoke Islamic movement. For this, it is necessary to provide support for the idea of building the main export pipeline through the territory of Turkey and to assist Turkey in addressing its growing need for energy.²⁹

In keeping with its strategic course, the US Government is lobbying for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan main export oil pipeline and division of the Caspian among 5 littoral states by a middle line. Beginning from 1995, the US government has been noticeably active and coherent in its policy in the region. Thus:

- in January 1995, the US embassy in Azerbaijan announced that its government would not agree to the Baku-Iran-Nakhchivan-Ceyhan oil pipeline alternative, while shortly afterwards the US embassy in Turkey offered another option – Baku-Armenia-Ceyhan. It was highlighted that this line would positively affect settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict.³⁰
- While in Baku in the summer of 1995, the US Energy Secretary first mentioned the "multiple pipeline" idea.
- In the second half of 1997, heads of states that would join the Eurasian transport corridor – Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Edward Shevardnadze of Georgia, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan – and the then Turkish prime minister Mesut Yilmaz were invited to Washington to a tumultuous welcome. A little later, President Saparmurat Niyazov of Turkmenistan visited Washington as well.
- In November 1997, the US Energy Secretary Federico Pena visited Trans-Caucasian and Central Asian republics on behalf of the US president and urged leaders of these states to clear up their attitude toward the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline and Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline projects before October 1998. A little later, the First Lady of the US paid a courtesy visit to Central Asia.
- In February 1998, following an appeal by the US Government, foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan embarked on negotiations concerning the disputable Kapaz/Sardar field. The US government allocated \$750,000 to Ashgabat to finance the Turkmenbashi-Baku gas pipeline to be built along the Caspian seabed. At the same time, by appealing to the Turkish government the White House urged it to make the Baku-Ceyhan project commercially viable.
- In the summer of 1998, the US President and Secretary of state established the position of a special counselor for Caspian energy diplomacy and appointed an experienced diplomat Richard Morningstar to the post. The US Congress embarked on active discussions of the "Silk Route

Strategy” draft law, which envisioned expansion of cooperation among countries of the Southern Caucasus, increasing US investment in the regional economy and abolition of the notorious Section 907 of the US Freedom Support Act. Pending discussion of this draft law, the White House dignitaries, including the secretary of state, were lobbying for the repeal of the unfair Section in the Congress.

- Besides military forces of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan, 235 American military men took part in the “Central Asia Battalion, 98” military training in the vicinity of Tashkent in September. This was the first joint military training session to be attended by US military men on the territory of the CIS. In this period, Washington announced that the CIS territory is the area of America’s “military responsibility”.³¹
- In October 1998, the new US Energy Secretary Bill Richardson and 5 regional countries signed the Ankara Declaration calling forth construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. In the same month, the White House administration met with America’s largest 15 oil companies in order to convince the latter that the Baku-Ceyhan line was more preferable to others from the geo-strategic and geopolitical standpoint.

The enumerated facts illustrate that the United States, which in 1992-1994 considered that the region was falling under Russia’s traditional sphere of influence, did a lot after 1994 to step up its own image in the Caucasus and, just like in the majority of other regions of the world, was held in high esteem. Washington is determined on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and considers it nucleus of geopolitical developments in the region. Expressing the position of the White House in the issue, the US Energy Secretary indicated at the signing ceremony of the Ankara Declaration that it is not the matter whether or not the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline will be implemented, it is the matter when it will be implemented.³²

Since the fate of all geopolitical developments in the region depend to a great extent on Georgia, the United States has attached a particular importance to this country in its Caspian strategy. Georgia’s being a transit country for Caspian oil and gas, as well as its determination to invigorate its own independence (intention to leave Russia’s sphere of influence), has turned this country into America’s and West’s most supported state of the region. Turkey too has displayed keenness on enhancing contacts with this neighbor. Over the past several years, Georgia has received substantial financial, military assistance from the West and won its political backing.³³

Due to the overlapping vital, economic and political interests, Georgia and Azerbaijan have become even closer over the recent years and assumed the proportions of a strategic alliance. Bilateral relations became particularly warm after the Azeri President’s visit to Tbilisi in March 1996. During the visit, Azerbaijan and Georgia signed a declaration "On peace, stability and security

in the Caucasus", which rests on the "Common Caucasian House" concept. Besides Azerbaijan, Georgia was also a co-founder of GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) and participant in the new Silk Road project (first of all, TRACECA program).

Georgia is currently integrating with political and economic entities of NATO and the West. Regarding Georgia as Azerbaijan's only access to Europe under the geopolitical circumstances, Baku has given preference to this country in its oil and gas exports to world markets. Baku-Supsa and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil routes, as well as the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline (or Azerbaijani-Turkish gas pipeline), not only increase Georgia's geopolitical significance, but also promise vast revenues to the country. According to the president of the Georgian International Oil Corporation (GIOC), the country will earn \$200-250 million per year for running the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan main export pipeline (MEP) through its territory.³⁴ As a result of such course of developments, the union of Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey has come to the fore in the region.

Despite vivacious geopolitical developments in the region for the last few years, the process has not yet reached its logical conclusion. Authoritative US experts have pointed out the noticeably weakened interest of the United States (and Western Europe) since 1998. This should not be explained by the fact that hydrocarbon reserves in the Caspian are not as abundant as it had been claimed. The explanation of the withdrawal of the Caspian region from the sphere of US vital interests lies in the very US policy towards the region, Azerbaijan in particular.³⁵

The point is that being the world's strongest superpower, the United States intends to solve three mutually contradicting issues at the same time: to establish normal relations with the future democratic Russia and address its own vital security concerns (the traditional "Russia first" concept); to end Russian influence in Armenia and take South Caucasus into undivided US sphere of influence; and to further connect Central Asia to Western entities using Azerbaijan's hydrocarbon and geopolitical resources. Moreover, Washington's inclusion of Iran in the list of its vital interests has further complicated the already difficult situation. Therefore, despite Azerbaijan's whole-hearted effort to develop strategic, economic and political contact with the United States, the latter has yet to display active involvement both in the solution to the Karabakh problem and other issues relating to the stability and security in South Caucasus. It was agreed by a number of influential experts at a 1999 Harvard conference dedicated to Caspian basin issues that, "...one should recognize that while local powers often want and demand a strong American role, that does not necessarily mean it is in the US interest to provide it".³⁶ It should also be highlighted that illogical and unfair Section 907, an obstacle in the way of developing US-Azerbaijani relations, is still in effect.³⁷

Cooperation with Europe

Since December 1991, Western European countries began recognizing the state independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan one after another: Germany on December 12, United Kingdom on December 31, 1991 and France on January 3, 1992. Shortly afterwards, statements were made on establishing diplomatic relations on the level of embassies and diplomatic missions accredited to Baku. In its turn, Azerbaijan appointed diplomatic corps in these countries, though with some delay.

Pending the first diplomatic contacts, the Elchibey Administration put forward the pro-Western course, expressing a hope for expansion of ties with West European countries. However, in 1992-93, the negative stereotyping of Azerbaijan established back in the years of *Perestroika* had enormous effect in Europe. Moreover, Western Europe was still considering former Soviet republics to be the traditional sphere of interest of the Russian Federation. Nonetheless, when visiting Baku, European dignitaries were promulgating that their countries were behind a peaceful solution to the Karabakh problem and recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.³⁸

In May 1993, the European Commission announced commencement of the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) program at a Brussels conference of 8 trade and transport ministers from the Caucasus and Central Asian republics. The purpose of the program was to establish direct contacts with the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions, the Caucasus and Central Asia via the East-West transport corridor and to contribute to the political and economic independence of the newly independent republics in the region by opening an access to Europe and world markets. Azerbaijan's geographical status was very sensitive to the program. In September 1998, Baku hosted a "Restoration of Ancient Silk Road" conference attended by 32 heads of state and representatives of 12 international organizations. During the Baku Summit, the agreement on TRACECA and 4 other documents on customs, maritime, overland and railway transport were signed. In addition to the Baku declaration, a communiqué was also included into the list of Summit documents. The conference decided to set up the TRACECA permanent secretariat in Baku. By 1999, 25 technical assistance projects totaling 35,000,000 Euro and 11 infrastructure projects totaling 47,000,000 Euro had been funded as apart of the program.³⁹

Another source of attraction of the Caspian region for Europe was its abundant hydrocarbon resources. British Ramco and BP, as well as Norwegian Statoil were among the companies taking a particular interest in Azerbaijan's oil business. Later on, French Total and Elf Aquitaine and Italian Agip joined the process of oil production. After the takeover of Amoco, British Petroleum's activities in Azerbaijan left many other foreign companies behind.

Azerbaijan has covered a very long distance in the area political and military integration with the Euro-Atlantic union. In January 1992, Azerbaijan was admitted to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (currently OSCE). In May 1994, the country joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" program. Finally, in May 2000, the Council of Europe began the admission process of Azerbaijan to this organization and opened its office in Baku. Establishment of GUAM consultative union (1997) can also be regarded as part of Azerbaijan's integration with Europe.

While underscoring the significance of the above-mentioned developments for Azerbaijan's integration with political, economic and military structures of Europe, it should also be indicated that the process was not always smooth. The insistence of European Union member-states on including the aggressor Armenia into the TRACECA program triggered Azerbaijan's fair discontent. Disagreement over the issue is still in evidence. Despite setting up the Minsk Group to attend to the solution of the Karabakh conflict, the European Union member-states are not displaying due perseverance in reaching a negotiated settlement. European oil companies were for a long time opposed to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan MEP and deliberately delayed its implementation by supporting the alternative of building the MEP via Black Sea to Europe.

So, since gaining independence, Azerbaijan has done a lot towards economic, political and military integration with Europe. No doubt that all this has had a positive effect on Azerbaijan's economic and political independence. However, the described stage of integration was not sufficient to ensure the irreversibility of Azerbaijan's independence and its territorial integrity. Neither did it give impetus to the solution of the country's vital problems.

Restoration of Relations with Central Asia

As mentioned above, the course of history separated Azerbaijan, which had taken root in the North-South axis, from the East for decades. In particular, the excessive centralization in the Soviet times envisioned implementation of all contacts through Moscow. Despite being parts of the same empire, Azerbaijan's ties with Central Asia were restrained. Even separate attempts of cultural and literary rapprochement were portrayed as pan-Turkic trends and were nipped in the bud.

The demise of the Soviet Empire prompted restoration of relations between Azerbaijan and Central Asia via Caspian. The Republic also received an opportunity to break through the geopolitical encirclement. The overlapping Caspian oil and geopolitical interests turned into additional factors for materialization of these chances. However, further developments proved that resumption of relations between Azerbaijan and Central Asia, ethnically and culturally close but separated for a long time, is no easy task.

President Elchibey took a peculiar approach in forging relations with what he believed were "fraternal" republics of Central Asia. After being elected the president, the front-runner of the Azerbaijani democracy lambasted Central Asian presidents, termed them as "feudal communist leaders" and supported democratic movements in the region. This could not but lead to a strain in relations with these republics. Things went so far that President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan ordered to suspend the Baku-Tashkent flights.

In the meantime, Azerbaijan's geopolitical and geo-economic interests demanded the establishment of relationship with the region. One by one, newly independent states of Central Asia opened embassies in Baku. Turkey-led meetings of Turkic presidents led to establishing close relations among the heads of state, as the latter have gathered on six occasions since 1993. During the CIS and ECO Summits, Turkic presidents discussed specific issues concerning bilateral relations and regional problems. Presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan paid repeated official visits to Azerbaijan. However, the Caspian oil factor proved to be the bottom-line in expanding relations.

Kazakhstan's growing oil exports and search for a reliable route compelled the country to coordinate its steps with Baku. As a result, Kazakhstan began to export a portion of its oil along the Baku-Batumi railway to world markets. For the time being, a part of Kazakh oil is transported to the Black Sea through the railway. 2,200,000 tons of Chevron oil were transported in 1998, while in 1999, the figure was expected to amount to 5,000,000 tons.⁴⁰ The Kazakh Prime Minister has announced that 10,000,000 tons of crude will be delivered to Batumi via Azerbaijani and Georgian railways.⁴¹ Besides, Kazakhstan has asked Baku for a go-ahead in using the Baku-Supsa early oil pipeline.

In June 1997, Presidents of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan signed a letter of intent on cooperation in transporting oil to foreign markets. Pursuant to the document, construction of a pipeline from the Caspian Sea was to commence in 2000 and complete in 2003.⁴² President Nursultan Nazarbayev was among those signing the Ankara Declaration on Baku-Ceyhan MEP in October 1998. In December of the same year, according to a contract signed in Washington, Mobil, Chevron and Shell, in conjunction with the State Oil Company of Kazakhstan, embarked on implementation of the Caspian sub-sea oil and gas pipeline to be hooked to the Baku-Ceyhan MEP. \$20,000,000 was allocated for the work.⁴³ While on an official visit to Baku in April 2000, President of Kazakhstan said, "We support the Baku-Tbilisi- Ceyhan layout and we will immediately join this project as soon as we discover more oil reserves."⁴⁴ Kazakhstan's world-scale discovery of the East Kashagan field further boosted the chances of Baku-Ceyhan. Shortly after the discovery, President Nazarbayev said in a televised address that Kazakhstan "must actively integrate with the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project."⁴⁵

Unlike Kazakhstan, relations with another Caspian nation, Turkmenistan, did not go along a smooth track. Differences and disagreements between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan affected three mutually intertwined issues, the first and foremost of which was the disagreement over the issue of an international legal status of the Caspian.

Despite Turkmenistan's support for the principle of dividing the Caspian into national sectors in the first post-Soviet years, since mid-1995 Ashgabat started backing the condominium principle proposed by Russia and Iran.⁴⁶ It was in this period that Turkmenistan declared itself an "eternally neutral country". In fact, the neutrality in foreign policy was aimed at winning some concessions from Russia and Iran. Despite insignificant successes of Ashgabat's gas diplomacy (for instance, an agreement with Iran on construction of a low-capacity gas pipeline), this conduit proved to be contradicting the logic of regional developments pretty soon. In 1997, Russian "GasProm" suspended gas purchases from Turkmenistan. Having encountered financial constraints, President Turkmenbashi turned to Washington. The White House vowed to assist Ashgabat in construction of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline to transport Turkmenian gas to Turkish markets via Azerbaijan and Georgia. In the same year, Turkmenistan put forward the idea of dividing the Caspian in 5 "independent seas"⁴⁷, which was not exactly what Baku (and partly Astana) was advocating for but was definitely different from what the Moscow-Tehran alliance proposed.

The second point of disagreement in the Azeri-Turkmen relations is related to Caspian oil fields. The Turkmenian party has had claimed the Chirag, Azeri and Kapaz fields (the last is referred to as "Sardar" in Turkmenistan) –the last two fully and the first partly – belonging to the Turkmen sector of the Caspian.⁴⁸ The talks mediated by the US State Department have so far given no outcome.

Another bone of contention between the two countries concerns the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline. Supporting the conduit, Baku maintains that after a recent discovery of immense gas reserves in Shah Daniz, Azerbaijan should have a 15 billion cubic meter quota in the pipeline with a total capacity of 30 billion. However, Ashgabat has turned down the demand, which threatens with a failure (or delay) of the pipeline project.

Azerbaijan's relations with Central Asia's most independent nation Uzbekistan are not directly determined by the oil factor. Geopolitical interests precondition the establishment of amicable relations with this country – the only Central Asian country not to have taken a neutral position in the Karabakh conflict and to have declared Armenia an aggressor state. Of all the Central Asian countries, only Uzbekistan joined the GUAM organization. Besides, Azerbaijan has its embassy only in Tashkent among all Central Asian capitals.

Thus, Azerbaijan's relations with Central Asia, interrupted for many decades, are being

gradually restored as important steps have been made. However, the “Eastern gateways” necessary to break the geopolitical blockade have not been fully “opened”, while some of the opportunities available have not been duly availed of. In the meantime, close relations with Central Asia, as well as the oil factor, may turn Azerbaijan into a transit state and earn it more allies in strengthening its independence and safeguarding its territorial integrity. For this, first of all, it is essential to expand relations with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and resolve outstanding problems with Turkmenistan.

Azerbaijan’s Oil Diplomacy: *Pros and Cons*

In 1991, when independence was just re-gained, citizens of Azerbaijan were optimistic about the country’s future. After Moscow had played its last card in the Karabakh conflict, there was hope for a soonest solution to the conflict. Despite mistrust toward the political elite inherited from the Soviet communist regime, it was widely believed that the economic potential and resources would be sufficient for the country to start flourishing. The hopes were largely connected with oil. By then, Scottish Ramco had opened its representation in Baku (May 1989) and promised to Azerbaijan’s “CaspianOilGas”, a company engaged in Caspian oil production, to find major foreign partners (August 1990). Then, Amoco chose the Azeri field for operations (June 1991) and had agreed on its joint development with BP, Statoil, Ramco, Unocal and McDermott (September 1991). Later on, the attraction of huge oil companies to Azerbaijan was rapidly progressing and in February 1992, Pennzoil and Ramco launched talks on Gunashli field. In June 1993, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), Amoco, BP, Statoil, Pennzoil, McDermott, Ramco, TPAO and Unocal signed the Declaration of Utilization on a joint development of Chirag, Azeri and Gunashli fields. Finally, in September 1994, a 30-year and \$7.5 billion contract on tapping the Chirag, Azeri and Gunashli fields was signed.⁴⁹ The contract was then labeled “The Contract of the Century”. It was promising both to lay foundation for a second oil boom in Azerbaijan, an ancient oil center, and to lead the country to prosperity.

As a matter of fact, in continuation of “the Contract of the Century”, the country achieved significant progress in oil business in the preceding six years. This includes:

- 19 international contracts have been signed with 33 oil companies representing 15 countries; investment totaling \$60 billion has been envisioned by these agreements; reserves of oil in the contract area are estimated at 4 billion tons. To date, a total of \$3.2 billion has been invested in Azerbaijan’s oil sector;⁵⁰
- Early oil of the “the Contract of the Century” was produced in November 1997; currently 115,000

bpd are produced from the license area, while 5.4 million tons of oil was to be produced in 2000;⁵¹ although a total of 14 million tons of oil was to be produced in the year 2000, five years later the figure is expected to amount to 30 million, in 2010 to 70 million and in 2020 to 120 million (pessimists put these figures at 25, 45 and 90 million tons respectively);⁵²

- One trillion cubic meters of gas and 300 million tons of oil condensate were discovered from Shah Daniz field, which gave Azerbaijan the opportunity to transform from a country importing gas into a gas exporter. The Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC) announced its intention to construct a pipeline to export gas to Turkey;⁵³
- The “early oil” Baku-Novorossiysk (since 1997) and Baku-Supsa (since 1999) pipelines with combined capacity of 220,000 barrels per day were in operation; preparations for construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan MEP were drifting to a close, while talks between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey were completed in May 2000; shortly afterwards, parliaments of the three countries ratified the MEP-related agreement;
- Azerbaijan stood out for dividing the Caspian in national sectors by a middle line pursuant to the 1970 decision. Despite the suggestion of neighboring Iran and Russia to apply the condominium principle, certain progress was achieved in dividing the Caspian seabed in national sectors. At present, Russia and Iran no longer insist on the condominium principle and in principle agree to the division of Caspian hydrocarbons; their latest suggestion was on an equal division of the resources.

Oil contracts and other oil-related developments contributed to the establishment of political stability in Azerbaijan. It should also be reiterated that the oil factor promoted a profound geopolitical transformation in the country. Azerbaijan obtained the opportunity to shake off the venomous dust of the North-South axis and rapidly integrate with Europe and West. Thanks to the new communication links running through Azerbaijan, the country was also turned into a transit one for Central Asia.

However, the hopes for a crucial role of oil in the solution of the country’s vital problems have not been justified yet. In some spheres, Azerbaijan’s situation has gone from bad to worse.

Conflicting interests in Caspian oil on the part of Russia and Iran, on the one hand, and US and partly Europe, on the other, brought Azerbaijan’s independence and security to jeopardy. If not adequately backed by the U.S. and European countries, the clearly pro-Western Azerbaijan can appear helpless vis-à-vis the pressures imposed by the Moscow-Tehran-Yerevan triangle. This largely results from Clinton’s “Russia first”, “Dual containment” policy, as well as the ambiguity displayed toward the Karabakh conflict. A renowned U.S. regional expert S. Frederick Starr is very accurate in saying, “U.S. deeds fall short of its rhetorical support for the new countries of the region.

Particularly in the crucial energy sector, U.S. actions are having the effect of undermining these countries' sovereignty."⁵⁴

Azerbaijan's oil diplomacy did not prove effective in countering Armenia's aggression either. The policy of reliance on transnational oil companies and countries that have stakes in Azeri oil in the issue of a fair solution to the conflict turned out to be erroneous. Moreover, oil can easily trap the country, while Baku can be compelled to sign an unfair and disgraceful accord entitled "Prosperity instead of Karabakh", which, as a matter of fact, plays into the hands of certain political and business circles (including oil companies).

The oil interests of Western companies and countries (including geopolitical interests of the latter) brought about political stability trends in the republic. The experience of certain countries illustrates that such tendencies may pose a threat not only to the countries in question, but may also undermine the interests of oil companies and Western countries. Therefore, an economic interest should not be transformed into a factor retarding political progress, including democratization, in these countries. Otherwise, the latent contempt for the ruling regime may inevitably turn into overt animosity toward its main partners, Western countries and companies, as well as Western values, including democracy and democratic forces within the country. Needless to say that there are forces in Azerbaijan that are eagerly waiting for their chance and can at least count on support of the Iranian regime. Latest public opinion surveys have ascertained the symptoms of deteriorating reputation of Western countries in the wake of their ambiguous policy in the region.⁵⁵ For instance, 21% of respondents believe that foreign oil companies actually represent a threat to the country's sovereignty.⁵⁶

Oil factor is destined to have a direct effect on social and economic status of the country. It can be said that Azerbaijan too has contacted "the oil-dollar disease" that is so widely spread in many oil exporting countries. Symptoms of the so-called "Dutch disease" are already surfacing:

- While privatization is still underway and structural changes in economy just moving off the ground, Azerbaijan has already begun producing profit oil and earning oil revenues, as 30-40% of state budget's income part is made up of oil revenues.⁵⁷ Oil products constitute 55-70% of exports.⁵⁸ 74% of foreign investment (68% of total investment volume) is made in oil industry.⁵⁹ The 1998 international slump in crude prices caused a huge budget deficit in Azerbaijan.
- Living standards of most of the population have reached a catastrophically low level with a minimum wage of only \$1,2 per month (!). An average wage (if paid) constitutes \$ 45, while the subsistence minimum is approximately \$ 80. On the other hand, those in the government are getting richer by the day, thereby further alienating themselves from rank-and-file people. Expensive hotels, luxurious foreign cars and spectacular villas are too dazzling on the

background of a deplorable Baku infrastructure, roads in particular. Sharp social stratification is evident, as there is no middle class. The majority of the population lives beyond poverty margin. The temptation to use the oil revenues to balance the social status of the population is very big both for the present government and a future short-signed regime. This is also strengthened by the presence of over 1 million refugees.

- Rife corruption, lack of flexibility and mismanagement are characteristic of the Aliyev Administration. Transparency International has placed Azerbaijan as 96th out of 99 governments in its corruption perception index for 1997, while a joint survey by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank (WB) ascertained that Azerbaijan is the most corrupt country of Eastern Europe.⁶¹ In 1999-2000, the country faced an acute energy problem following rampant sales of Azerbaijan's heating fuel abroad. Since the republic regained independence in 1991, an effective tax system has not been established. A complete tax collection is not in evidence as lack of discipline reigns the area.

In late 1999, Azerbaijan earned its first \$25 million from the sale of the profit oil. Since then, there have been various conflicting figures as to the speed and volumes of the country's oil revenues.⁶² One thing remains certain, however: the role of oil revenues in the future will only rise. Therefore, the proper use of these revenues has become a crucial issue for the present Azerbaijan.

In December 1999, under pressure from the World Bank, President Aliyev decreed the establishment of the Oil Fund. According to the decree, the Oil Fund shall accumulate the revenues from the sale of the Azerbaijan crude oil and gas, per acre payments starting from the year 2001, payments for the lease of state property under agreements concluded with foreign companies, money earned through the Fund's activities, revenues from the sale of assets under the contracts, etc.⁶³ Different suggestions have been made on ways of organizing and managing the Fund, making it directly accountable to the Milli Mejlis in order to ensure transparency in its work and prevent misuse of oil revenues, and having it regulated by a special law.⁶⁴ However, the key issue is where the oil revenues will be spent on. According to media publications, President's son, SOCAR vice-president Ilham Aliyev is expected to be appointed as director of the Oil Fund. According to him, oil revenues will largely target social needs, elimination of the budget deficit and development of small business.⁶⁵ In my opinion, this choice of mentioned fields for potential application of oil revenues is completely wrong and if this or a similar concept that does not take into consideration the existing international experience is accepted in Azerbaijan, there is little doubt that oil revenues will further complicate Azerbaijan's already precarious status.⁶⁶

Conclusion

The struggle for Caspian oil is not yet over. It would be naive to believe that the Moscow-Tehran-Yerevan triangle can back down from its previous positions. Despite the growing effort and success of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ankara alliance (and then Washington and Tel Aviv) and GUUAM (Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), a dramatic change in the geopolitical balance is still not ruled out. The logic of these developments reveals that the region Azerbaijan is situated in is currently on the eve of crucial changes. Azerbaijan has already turned into one of Eurasia's significant geopolitical orbits. Whether or not the Caspian oil and Eurasian corridor ideas will be materialized depends to a great extent upon Azerbaijan. Implementation of the energy corridor project can turn Azerbaijan into a transit country as early as today, which can greatly compensate for its disadvantageous status of a closed country. Implementation of the Baku-Ceyhan project gives a tremendous opportunity for transporting Kazakh and Uzbek oil and Turkmenian gas via Azerbaijan, which would turn the country into a gateway to Central Asian republics.

The experience of last years demonstrates that, unlike previous decades, oil has created favorable conditions for the solution of Azerbaijan's vital problems. At the same time, the oil factor has significantly jeopardized the future of Azerbaijan. Solution of these problems requires the establishment of a constructive and democratic regime in the country.

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Х ц л а с я

АЗЯРБАЙЪАНЫН ХЯЗЯР ДЯНІЗІ СТРАТЕЭІЙАСЫ

Нясиб НЯСІБЛІ

(Хязяр Университяси, Бакы, Азырбайъан)

Хязяр дянизи реэионунда эеосийаси ситуасийа 1991-ъи илдякиндян кюклц сурятдя фярглянир. Совет Ёттифагынын дабылмасындан сонра онун ьянубунда йаранмыш йени мцстягил дювлятляр юз мцстягиллийини мюцкямлятмяк истигамятиндя хейли мясафя гят етмишляр. Ня Гафгазлары, ня дя Мяркязи Асийаны (икиси бирликдя Хязяр реэионуну) артыг Русийанын арха

бахчасы щесаб етмяк олмаз.

Хязярдя йени зянэин щидрокарбон ещтийатларынын кяшфи бу просеслярдя катализатор ролу ойнамышдыр. Хязярин Азэрбайъан вь Газахыстан секторларында нефт ишиня Гярбин нящяне нефт ширкятляри артыг 8 миллиард АБШ долларындан чох сярмайя гоймуш, йахын 25-30 илдя щямин сащяляря сярмайя гойулушунун 100 миллиард доллардан артыг олмасы ещтималлары йайъындыр. Бакы-Новороссийск вь Бакы-Супса илкин нефт кямярляри артыг ишляйир, Бакы-Тбилиси-Ъейщан вь Транс-Хязяр газ кямярляри лайищяляри шаггында принсипиал гярарлар гябул едилмищ, Тенэиз-Новороссийск нефт кямяринин 2001-ъи илдя ищя дщшмяси эюзлянилер. Авропа Бирлийинин спонсорлуъу иля 1993-ъц илдя башланмыш даща бир нящяне лайищя – ТРАСЕКА Гафгазлары вь Мяркязи Асийанын Авропайа интеграсийасында мцщцм аддым олду. Сийаси-стратеъи сащядяки дйишикликлярин диэяр бариз нцмуныси ЭЮУАМ дьвлятляр бирлийинин йаранмасыдыр.

Эеосийаси эялищмялярин истигамятляри шаггында эюстярилянляря йанашы, ону да хцсуси гейд етмялийик ки, бу эеосийаси инкишаф щялялик мянтиги сонуну тапмайыб. “Бьйцк ойунун” баша чатмасына щяля хейли вар. Щяля эеосийаси инкишафын истигамятинин дйищмяйъяйиня щеч кяс тяминат веря билмяз. Хязяр реэиону уьрунда мцбаризя йашадыъымыз дьврдя дцнйанын ян актуал проблеминя чеврилиб. Бу мцбаризянин нятиъяляри Аврасийанын эяляъяк мянзярясинин вь эеосийаси хяритясинин бичилмясиня бирбаша тясир едяъяк.

Азэрбайъан Республикасынын 1991-ъи илдя сонра кечдийи йол, реэионда баш вермищ вь бу эцн дя давам едян мцряккъаб просеслярин бир нцмунысидир. Бакы, Хязяр нефт бумунун, цмумийятля, реэион эеосийасынин мяркязиня чеврилмищдир. Азэрбайъан Республикасынын щяйати проблемляри реэион юлкяляринин проблемляри иля ейнидир. Бунунла беля, бир сыра мясялялярдя Азэрбайъан юзяллийя маликдир. Мяркязи Асийа юлкяляри вь Ермянистан кими Азэрбайъан Республикасы да гапалы юлкядир, йяни ачыг дянизляря бирбаша чыхышы йохдур. Йени мцстягил дьвлятлярин чохусу кими, Азэрбайъан Республикасы да Русийанын тясир даирясиндя чыхмаг истяйир, лакин яски метрополийа иля тарихи вь мцасир мцнасибятляриндя диэярляриндя (мясялян, Ермянистандан) фяргли юзялликляря маликдир.

Диэяр йени мцстягил дьвлятляр кими Азэрбайъан Республикасы да 1991-ъи илдя сонра реэионун диэяр бьйцк дьвляти - Ѐран Ѐслам Республикасы иля йени мцнасибятляр гурмаъа башлады. Лакин бу мясялядя дя Азэрбайъанын юзяллийи бу юлкя иля (Ѐранла) бирбаша, эенищ сярщядляринин олмасы иля мящдудлащмыр. Азэрбайъан Республикасы шия иъмасынын бьйцккцйцня эюря Ѐрандан сонра дцнйада икинъидир. Цстялик, Азэрбайъан дцнйанын азсайлы бюлцнмцш юлкяляр вь бюлцнмцш миллиятляр групуна дахилдир. Азэрбайъан Республикасындан яразиъя ики дяфя бьйцк диэяр Азэрбайъан, Ѐранын шимал-гярбиндядир; дцнйа азэрбайъанлыларынын тяхминян дюрддя ццц дя мящз бу мямлякятдя (Ѐранда) йашайыр.

Диэяр Хязярсащили юлкяляр кими, Азэрбайъанын Хязярдя пайына дцщян секторда (80 мин км²) да нефт вь газ вар, лакин зянэинлийиня эюря о, йалныз Газахыстан секторундан (113 мин км²) эери галыр. Нефт Хязярсащили юлкялярин щамысынын тарихиндя юнъямли рол ойнайыб вь

ойнамагдадыр. Амма Азърбайъан Республикасы дцнйанын ян гядим нефт бюлэяси олмасы етибары иля, елягъа дя нефтин юлкя тарихиндя ойнадыгы бирингъи дяръяяли ролу иля дя фярглянир.

Вя, нящайт, Азърбайъан Республикасы она дост мцнасибятдя олмайан Русийа Федерасийасы, Ермянистан вя Ёранын эеосийасы мцщасирясиндядир. Гоншу Ермянистан онун яразисинин тяхминян 20%-ни ишъал едиб, 12 илдян артыг чякъан Гарабаъ проблеминин щялли йолу щялялик эюрцнмцр. Бир сюзля, Азърбайъан Республикасынын вязиййяти бцтцн реэионун вязиййатинин эюстяригъиси олмагла йанашы, бир сцрц дя юзялликляря маликдир.

Азърбайъан Республикасынын эеосийасы вязиййатиндяки мцряккъяблик илк нювбядя онун тюърафийасы иля щяртлянир. Тябии горуйуъу амиллярин олмамасы, йа шимал тяряфдя онун зяиф олмасы (Дярбанд кечиди) тарихян шималдан гъануба вя яксиня олан щярби йцрцщляр гаршысында бу юлкяни мцдафиясиз гоймушдур. Бу коридорда узунмцддятли еволйусийалы инкишаф ццн щяраит олмамашдыр. Тюърафийадан башга даща ики тарихи-сийасы щадися Азърбайъанын буэцнкц мцряккъяб эеосийасы вязиййатини щяртляндирмишдир. Бириси XVI ясрин башларында Азърбайъан яразисиндя йаранмыш йени Сяфявиляр империйасынын ящалини шия мязщябини гябула мяъбур етмяси щадисядидир. Сяфявиляр дюрцндя (1501-1722) шиялийин рясми мязщябя чеврилмяси Азърбайъанын сонракы инкишафында мцщцм талейцкцц рол ойнады. Беля ки, Азърбайъан галан сцнни тцрк дцнйасындан айрылды, 150 илдян чох чякъан Сяфяви-Османлы мцщарибяляри нятигъясиндя Азърбайъанын йолу гярбя, сцнни-шия зиддийятляри сябъиндян елягъа дя щяргя - Мяркязи Асийайа (Тцркцстана) йолу кясилди. Явзяиндя азърбайъанлылар (Азърбайъан тцркляри) идеолоъи-кцлтцр бахымындан фарсларла гайнайыб гарышдылар. XIX ясрин башларында олмуш ики Ёран-Русийа мцщарибясинин (1804-1813, 1826-1828) нятигъяляри Азърбайъан ццн даща бир фабья иля нятигъялянди: фактики мцстягил Азърбайъан ханлыглары ики дювлятин – чар Русийасы вя Гаъар Ёранын тяркибиня гатылды. Тяхминян беш яср Азърбайъан Шимал-гъануб охуна кюклянмиш олду, ондан щяргдя (Тцркцстан, Мяркязи Асийа) вя гярбдя (Эцръцстан, Тцркийя, Авропа) йерляшмиш юлкяляря ялагяляри мящдудлашдырылды.

1991-гъи илдян сонра йаранмыш йени эеосийасы ситуасийа реэион дювлятляри арасында групплашма йаратды. Русийанын Гафгазларда тарихян ян садиг елементи олан ермяниляр вя Ермянистан Республикасы Русийа Федерасийасынын хцсуси щимайясиндян файдаланмагъа чальшдылар. Белорус истисна олмагла, кечмиш совет республикаларындан Русийайа ян йахыны бу эцн Ермянистан щесаб едилир. Русийа Федерасийасы бу дювлятдян Азърбайъана вя Тцркийягъа тязийг васитяси кими истифадя етмяйя вя ону щяр сащядя дястяклямяйя башлады. Москва-Йереван мцнасибятляри стратежи мцттяфиглик характери дашыйыр вя игтисади, сийасы, стратежи сащялярдя сых ямякдашлыгы ещтивя едир. 1994-96-гъы иллярдя Русийанын Ермянистана 1 миллиард доллардан артыг явзяи юдянилмяйян силащ йардымы тякзибедилмяз фактдыр.

Азърбайъанла Мяркязи Асийа арасында ониллярля кясилмиш ялагялярин бярпасы башланмыш, бу истигамятдя мцщцм аддымлар атылмышдыр. Лакин эеосийасы мцщасирянин дагыдылмасы ццн тяляб едилян “щярг гапысы” щяля тамамия ачылмамыш, мювъуд имканлардан

эярйинъя, там истифады едилмямишдир. Щалбуки Мяркузи Асийа иля йахын мцнасибятляр вь нефт фактору Азырбайъаны транзит юлкяйя чевиря биляр, мцстягиллийини мюцкямлятмяк вь ярази бцтвовлцйцнц бяра етмяк цццн она ялавя мцтгяфигляр газандыра биляр. Бунун цццн илк нювбядя Газахыстан вь Юзбьакистанла ялагялярин эенишлянмяси, Тцркмянистанла мювьуд проблемлярин щялли тяляб олунур.

Нефт амили юлкянин сосиал вь игтисади дурумуна бирбаша тясир едяъяк. Бу эцн беля дейя билярик ки, Азырбайъан да артыг нефтдолларын бир сыра нефт ихраъ едян юлкялярдя тюрятдийи хястялийя дцчар олуб. “Щолланд хястялийи”нин симптомлары артыг цздядир.

1999-ъу илин сонунда Азырбайъан щюкумяти илк мянфяят нефтинин сатышындан 25 миллион АБШ доллары ялды етди. Сонракы иллярдя онун щансы темп вь мигдарда артмасы шаггында бир-бирини тякзиб едян мцхтялиф рягямляр вар. Амма бир шей тамамия айдындыр ки, артыг нефтя индекслянмиш Азырбайъанын йахын эяляъяйиндя нефт эялирляринин ролу даща да артаъаг. Одур ки нефт эялирляриндя истифады мясяляси Азырбайъан цццн щяйати мясяляйя чеврилмишдир.

1999-ъу илин декабрында президент Ялийев Дцнйа Банкынын исарындан сонра Азырбайъан Нефт Фондунун йарадылмасы шаггында фярман верди. Бу фярмана ясаян, Азырбайъанын пайына дцщян хам нефтин вь газын сатышындан ялды едилян эялирляр, 2001-ъи илдян башлайараг акрщесабы юдянишляри, хариъи ширкятлярля баъланмыш мцгавиляляр чярчивясиндя дювлят ямлакындан истифады цццн иъаря шаггы, фондун фяалиййятиндя ялды едилян вьсаит, хариъи ширкятлярля баъланмыш мцгавилялярля уйъун олага Азырбайъан тяряфиня верилян активлярин сатышындан вь башга дахилолмалардан ялды едилян эялирляр бу фондда топланаъаг. Фондун тяшкили вь идаряедилмяси гайдалары шаггында мятбуатда мцхтялиф тяклифляр верилмиш, онун ишиндя шяффафлыъы тямин етмяк, нефт эялирляринин таланмасынын вь гейри-еффеktiv хяръянмясинин гаршысыны алмаг цццн онун бирбаша Милли Мяълиса табе едилмяси вь фяалиййятинин хцсуси ганунла низамланмасы шаггында фикирляр сяслянмишдир. Лакин ясас принципал мясяля нефт эялирляринин йюнялдийи сачялярля баълыдыр. Ёгтидардан вь мцхалифятдян олан бир сыра шяхсларин вердийи бйанатлара эюря, нефт эялирлярля ясаян сосиал ещтийаъларын юдянилмяси, бцдъя кясиринин гапанмасы вь йерли сачибкарлыъын инкишафына сярф едиляъяк. Бизим фикримизъя, нефт эялирляринин йюнялдиляъяйи сачяляр арасында эюстярилянляр ян уьурсузудур вь бу, йа да дцнйа тяърцбясини нязря алмайан бунаохшар диэяр концепсийа гябул едилдийи тягдирдя, нефт эялирляринин Азырбайъанын йахын эяляъякдя проблемлярини даща да мцрякъябляшдиряъяйи щцбщя доьурмур.

Хязяр нефти уьрунда мцбаризя щяля битмяйиб. Москва-Тещран-Йереван цчлцйцнцн асанлыгла юз мювгеляриндя ял чякяъяйини дцщцнмяк реаллыгдан узаглашмаг оларды. Бакы-Тифлис-Анкара (даща сонра Вашингтон вь Тел-Явив) иттифагынын, еляъя дя ЭЮУАМ дювлятляр бирлийинин артан къащдляриня вь уьурларына бахмайараг, эеосийаси просеслярдя драматик дяйишмялярин мцмкцнлцйц щяля истисна едилмир. Анъаг бу просеслярин мянтиги исарла нишан верир ки, бу эцн Азырбайъанын йерляшдийи реэион чох мцщцм, талейцкцц эеосийаси дяйишмяляр

яряфясиндядир. Артыг бу эцн Азърбайъан Аврасийанын мцщцм эеосийаси мящвярляриндян бириня чеврилмишдир. Хязар нефти вя Аврасийа дящлизи комплексинин эерчякляшмяси хейли дярягядя Азърбайъанын гятиййятли мювгейиндян асылыдыр. Артыг бу эцн енержи коридору лайищясинин эерчякляшмяси Азърбайъаны транзит юлкяйя чевирир. Бу, онун гейри-мцнасиб гапалы юлкя вязиййятини хейли дярягядя компеисасийа едя биляр. Бакы-Бейщан лайищясинин эерчякляшмяси Газакыстан вя Юзбакыстан нефтинин, елягя дя Тцркмянистан газынын Азърбайъандан кечмяси цццн реал ясас йарадыр. Бу да Азърбайъаны ейни заманда Орта Асийа цццн килид нюгтя мювгейиня чыхарыр.

Сон иллярин тяърцбяси сцбут едир ки, нефт яввялки ониллярдян фяргли олараг мцстягил Азърбайъанын бир чох щяйати проблемляринин щялли цццн ялверишли щяраит йаратмышдыр. Ейни заманда нефт фактору Азърбайъан Республикасынын эялягяйини тящдид едян хейли проблем дя йаратмышдыр.

COOPERATION IN THE CASPIAN REGION: PAST AND PRESENT

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Introduction

Since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, one of the problematic issues in the inter-state relations of the ex-Soviet republics has been the issue of cooperation in economic, political and many other fields. Cooperation would increase the effectiveness of their transformation process and would consolidate newly obtained independence of these countries.

As they had common needs and problems in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR, initially one would expect them to come together and cooperate for overcoming those problems. However, soon it was realized that the expected level of cooperation was difficult to achieve. This was due to two basic reasons: First, as a legacy of the Soviet period there were many ongoing conflicts and grounds for major confrontations among many of these newly-independent states (NIS). This made it difficult for them to find a common denominator, which is a prerequisite for cooperation. Second, immediately after the dissolution of the USSR, different NIS took different economic and political orientations. For example, in 1992-93 Azerbaijan and Georgia, experiencing the peak of their nationalist movements, tilted towards the West and pursued anti-Russian policies, whereas, Armenia, Belarus and the Central Asian countries remained in 'good' relations with Russia. Mark Webber pointed out that because of this kind of differences in their economic-political orientations, NIS were divided among themselves, which made the cooperation among them even more difficult to achieve.¹

Within this general context, cooperation among the NIS of the Caspian region was crucial for their transformation, development and prosperity. Since 1991 there have been taken many initiatives and put forward many strategies, by different states or groups of states, to achieve cooperation in the region. But today, it is still hard to talk about a genuine and mutual cooperation in the Caspian. Even those cooperation schemes that have been successful to some extent, do not include all states of the region and do not cover all important issue-areas, such as trade, finance, security, environment and so on.

In this article I will examine the developments regarding cooperation in the Caspian region that have taken place since 1991, point out failures and successes of the cooperation schemes put

forward in so far and discuss implications of all this for the future cooperation in the region.

Previous Cooperation Schemes: Rivalry between Regional Powers

As all NIS in the Caspian region have been weak in terms of regional influence, the issue of cooperation in the region has, until recent years, depended more on the initiatives of regional and outside powers than on the NIS themselves.² Moreover, as the perceived interests of these countries were different, there was no consensus among them on what kind and degree of cooperation was needed in the region. The combined effect of these two factors was that none of the Caspian NIS was either able or enthusiastic to put forward region-wide cooperation projects.

Thus, cooperation has been subject to the policies of the regional powers, such as Russia, Iran and Turkey. Especially in the early years of independence, regional powers were competing for creating their spheres of influence in the region. In this context, each of them proposed, initiated or got involved in various regional cooperation schemes, thus trying to use these schemes as means of political and economic penetration into the region.

In this section, I will discuss the cooperation plans put forward by the regional powers and their effectiveness in promoting actual cooperation in the region.

Russian Dominance and Russia-led Cooperation

To begin with, it is worth noting that Russia has never developed a particular cooperation project for the Caspian region. It has, rather, been included within general ex-Soviet-area cooperation and integration schemes led by Russia, a prime example of which is the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The CIS, as an organization and a framework for cooperation, has proved to be misleading since its establishment in 1991, because it was based on “an illusion of the commonality in the post-Soviet space”, thus being indifferent to different economic-political circumstances and needs of different ex-Soviet republics.³

It was aimed more on the expansion of Russian influence into the post-Soviet area than on cooperation. Many NIS saw it as a tool for *new Russian expansionism* and institutionalization of the forthcoming Russian domination. In fact, some Caspian NIS joined the organization, not because they believed that it would foster regional cooperation or integration, but because they either were forced by Russia to join or had no better alternative. For example, Georgia joined the CIS (1993), because it was, as the Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze stated, “the last chance to rescue the

country from disintegration.”⁴ Otherwise, the increasing Russian support to separatist, secessionist and opposition groups in Abkhazia, Mingrelia and South Ossetia, would eventually result in Georgia’s splitting into pieces.

In Azerbaijan the case was very similar: Russian backed Armenian forces were on the offensive in the Garabagh war, while a Russian supported Colonel Suret Huseynov withdrew a major Azeri troop from the war to commit a coup d’etat against then-president Abulfaz Elcibey in 1993. That is why, when Heydar Aliyev came to power as a result of this coup, he immediately applied for CIS membership, in order to show that Azerbaijan was no more outside the Russian sphere of influence.⁵

Even the most enthusiastic member of the CIS in the Caspian region – Armenia – favored membership in this organization, not because it promoted cooperation among NIS, but because it preferred the expansion of the Russian influence in the Caucasus to that of Turkey or Iran, due to the fact that Russia has been its strongest political, economic and military supporter in the war against Azerbaijan.⁶

Thus, only those states that had anyway had good bi-lateral relations with Russia favored the CIS, because the increasing Russian influence was to their benefit. And those that were forced to join and did not have any mutual benefit from cooperation with Russia have frequently tried to paralyze the working of the CIS, because increasing Russian influence would violate rather than serve their interests.

The idea that the CIS is not about cooperation, but about the creation of a security zone in the ‘near abroad’ of Russia is evident in the fact that Russia, by and large, proposes military and political cooperation plans, and ignores economic cooperation demands coming from other CIS members. For example, when the issue at stake was the signing of Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security, Russia was eager to persuade and/or force the CIS members to sign it, because the treaty was a legal basis for the creation of a military-security zone for Russia.⁷ But when Kazakhstan proposed a deeper CIS economic cooperation and integration plan, it was refused by Russia, and Belarus, as always, followed suit.⁸

In brief, as far as cooperation in the Caspian region is concerned, neither the CIS, nor its leader – Russia is helpful. The CIS is not helpful, because it is more about the expansion of Russian influence than about cooperation. To put it more correctly, it is about cooperation, but cooperation under Russian dominance in a hierarchical form. Russia is not helpful, because its major aim is to expand its influence in the region rather than to promote cooperation. Thus, cooperation on horizontal-mutual basis in the region contradicts with Russian foreign policy interest of extending its influence in the Caspian. Accordingly, Russia is eager to promote only those kinds of cooperation

that helps Russia to keep the region under its influence, thus ignoring the needs and demands of other countries in the region.

Even so, Russia's state capabilities, except its military capability, are not sufficient for keeping the region under its influence. Especially in economic terms, Russia is unable to act as a hegemonic power in the region, because the Russian economy can hardly bear the burden of promoting economic cooperation.⁹

But is it only Russia that wants to bring the region under its influence? Empirical data about the foreign policy behavior of the other two regional powers show that cooperation plans initiated by Turkey and Iran also were aimed at penetration to the region.

Iran, Turkey and Regional Cooperation in the Caspian

Unlike Russia, Iran and Turkey have been trying to extend their influence mainly into the regional economy and politics, rather than military affairs. This is apparent in the regional cooperation schemes launched by these countries. Particularly, the economic competition between them has resulted in the rise and fall of a few cooperation schemes in the region.

The first cooperation initiative, in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR, came from Iran as early as on April 1992. Upon Iranian proposal, the Caspian Sea Organization (CSO), composed of the five Caspian littoral states, namely, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan, was established.

Although the organization was aimed at increasing cooperation in technical matters, such as shipping, transport, tourism, etc., cooperation in such matters of minimal importance would have significant impact on regional trade. However, the CSO could not promote a considerable degree of cooperation even on these basic technical matters. Disagreement over the legal status of the Caspian Sea and the insufficiency of the institutional structure have been the main problems of the organization in promoting cooperation.¹⁰

The establishment of the CSO was apparently a result of the Turco-Iranian rivalry. Taking into account the economic weakness and political instability of Russia at that time, the major rival of Iran in the region was Turkey. By creating an organization composed exclusively of the Caspian littoral states, Iran aimed to isolate Turkey and avoid its penetration into the region. As Dilip Hiro put it: "To the further embarrassment of Turkey, Rafsanjani [then Iranian president – H.A.] announced that a Caspian Sea Cooperation Council composed of the countries around the Caspian Sea... had been formed at the initiative of Teheran".¹¹

So, just as the Russian foreign policy aim through the CIS, the Iranian aim through the CSO

was to expand its influence in the region. And to achieve this Iran had to isolate its main rival – Turkey.

Turkey's foreign policy aims in the Caspian have been similar to those of Iran, but Turkey's political power has been much higher than that of Iran, due to the following factors: First, its cultural and linguistic similarity to four of the Caspian NIS – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, Turkey has historically had good relations with Georgia as well. Second, Turkey's image in the eyes of NIS as a “democratic Muslim” country added to its prestige in the region vis-à-vis “Islamic-fundamentalist” Iran. Third, Turkey's geopolitical situation: it is seen as the best link to the West, with which the Caspian NIS have been trying to establish good economic and political relations. All these enhanced Turkey's opportunity vis-à-vis Iran in expanding its influence into the Caspian region.

Turkey has effectively used this advantage, to a considerable extent, for establishing its sphere of influence in the region, and avoiding domination of the other regional powers. Mozaffari points out that the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone (BSECZ) in June 1992 at the initiative of Turkey, was a response to the initiation of the CSO by Iran in April of that year.¹² As the main aim of Turkey was to increase its influence in the Caspian region, non-Black Sea NIS of the region, such as Armenia and Azerbaijan, were also invited to the constitutive conference of the BSECZ held in Istanbul.

Another cooperation framework put forward by Turkey is the Turkic Summitry founded in 1992 with the participation of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Although it has been successful to promote cooperation in cultural and educational affairs, it could hardly have any impact on economic and political cooperation among the Turkic states. Moreover, being based on ethno-cultural ties and excluding the other NIS of the Caspian area, the organization's potential to foster cooperation in the region is very low. However, its role as a means of expanding Turkish influence in the region is considerably high.

Thus, the regional cooperation schemes put forward by Turkey and Iran, have been, by and large, ineffective and were mainly aimed at serving particularistic interests of the respective states, rather than at fostering a mutually beneficial, region-wide cooperation.

Potentially most capable regional cooperation organization championed by Turkey and Iran together – Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) – has been an arena for rivalry as well.¹³ Since 1993, the organization has initiated many sound projects on improvement of trade and economic relations, transport and communications, etc, among the member states. However, all these projects either faced implementation problems or had disappointing results.¹⁴

The ECO's ability to foster cooperation in the Caspian region is not very high mainly due to

three reasons: First, being a ‘Muslim club’ it excludes non-Muslim NIS of the region – namely Armenia and Georgia – without whose participation a proper regional cooperation will be hard to achieve. Second, traditional rivalry between the three original members of the ECO paralyses the functioning of the organization. While talking about future prospects of the ECO, Pomfret argues that the future of it will heavily depend on the willingness of the members to cooperate rather than compete, because in so far they have been competing over influence within the organization, instead of cooperating.¹⁵ And the last, the ECO lacks economically powerful members to share the burden of re-structuring it into an effective institution by setting up issue-specific organs and funds.

In short, neither the CIS nor the ECO, the CSO and the BSECZ have been effective in terms of promoting cooperation in the Caspian region, because all of them have been used by their champions as tools for achieving foreign policy goals, rather than for fostering mutual cooperation. That is why today the region is characterized more by the rivalry of regional powers over spheres of influence than by cooperation. The competing regional powers have been not only paralyzing the dynamics of cooperation in the Caspian, but also intensifying confrontations between weaker states (mainly NIS) in the region, whenever it served their interests to do so. Accordingly, most of the cooperative activities in the region have taken place on bilateral and non-institutional basis.

However, the recently increasing Western involvement in the region and developments in intra-CIS affairs seem to have given a new impetus for cooperation in the Caspian region.

Recent Developments: Is Something Changing?

The failure of the above-discussed organizations to provide cooperation made it clear for the NIS that any cooperation scheme initiated by one of the regional powers would increase tensions in the region instead of promoting cooperation. This left the NIS no chance other than initiating their own small-scale cooperation plans on non-institutional and/or bilateral basis.

A major movement towards cooperation of this kind was the emergence of the informal GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova) group, which became GUUAM after Uzbekistan’s joining.¹⁶ The origins of this grouping of NIS go back to the initial resistance of these countries to the new Russian expansionism through the CIS in 1993-94. However, they were able to realize this only in 1997. Geographical location of the GUUAM states increases the geopolitical importance of it, because it covers the Caspian – Black Sea corridor, thus limiting or diminishing the expansion of Russian influence in the region.¹⁷

GUUAM’s potential to promote cooperation is minimal, but necessary for Azerbaijan and

Georgia, in conjunction with the export of Caspian oil. Two other Caspian NIS that may become interested in the cooperation via GUUAM are Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Since their only way of transporting oil and gas passes through Russia, they are eager to diversify their export routes, in order to decrease dependence on Russia. Turkmenistan has already signed Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP) agreement with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and the USA on 18 November 1999 in Istanbul.¹⁸ If economic feasibility of the project is approved and the pipeline is built, this pipeline, transporting Turkmen gas to Turkey through the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, will increase the involvement of Turkmenistan in the Caspian cooperation process.

However, Kazakhstan still remains vulnerable to Russia in social-demographic, economic and political terms. Therefore, it cannot ignore the Russian interests in the region as easily as Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkmenistan can. But paradoxically, in order to decrease its vulnerability and to develop more alternatives for exporting its hydrocarbon resources, Kazakhstan has to develop its cooperative relations with the Caspian members of GUUAM.

Cooperation within GUUAM is not limited to pipelines only. As an anti-CIS group, they developed their own economic, political and military cooperation frameworks as well. For example, when the Russia-led CIS Joint Air Defense Exercise was held on 5 April 2000, Ukraine invited Azerbaijan and Georgia to a trilateral air defense exercise in Crimea in the summer of this year. "Baku has accepted the invitation and Tbilisi has signalled its acceptance of the proposal..."¹⁹

Despite all this, GUUAM, as an anti-Russian grouping, is not a proper framework to promote cooperation for two reasons: First, the strongest common denominator among the GUUAM member states is the fear of Russia. In other words, the cooperation has emerged as a response to the Russian new expansionist strategy. If Russia abandons this strategy and accepts to establish relations with NIS on a mutually beneficial basis, the whole rationale behind GUUAM will lose its meaning.

Second, since the cooperation in the framework of GUUAM is aimed against the expansion of the Russian influence, Russia will always try to counter this cooperation by strengthening with its allies in the region, thus keeping intra-regional divisions alive. It may strengthen its footholds in the region by increasing tensions and supporting regional anti-*status quo* powers, such as Armenia and Abkhazia. Russia is, at least militarily, capable of doing this. For example, according to preliminary reports, Russia agreed to transfer the troops that it is going to evacuate from Georgia in 2001, to Armenia, in order to keep its military presence in the region intact.²⁰

In brief, any cooperation scheme not agreed with one of the regional powers may come to a deadlock, unless the cooperating states are capable of coercing that regional power when necessary. Russia, still being a military great power, may use its military might to destabilize the region, when destabilization becomes Russia's perceived 'security interest'.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude with, thus far cooperation in the Caspian has been problematic due to many intervening factors, such as, different needs and interests of NIS, rivalry between regional powers, and so on. The problem seems to continue in the years to come, unless the Western actors, mainly the USA and the EU, get actively involved in cooperation schemes in the region. Financial power and high political status of these actors in world politics enable them to provide necessary funding for cooperation, to bargain effectively with the regional powers and to achieve their commitment to regional cooperation. In this regard, “Silk Road Strategy Act” put forward by the US Congress in 1998 and the TRACECA (Transport Corridor of Europe-Caucasus-Asia) program funded by the EU constitute a good starting point, but are not sufficient. Another important issue to affect the future of cooperation in the Caspian region is resolution of the regional conflicts. It would have multiple positive results: it would enhance the establishment and restoration of transport and communication links, decrease hostilities and bring about certainty in the region. All these would collectively contribute to the emergence of an atmosphere conducive to cooperation.

Overall, cooperation in the Caspian Sea region can be described better by skepticism than by great expectations. Given the existing economic and political circumstances, discussed in this paper, integration of different Caspian states to different groupings, alliances or institutional structures is more likely to happen than the achievement of a genuine Caspian cooperation.

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X u l a s y

ХЯЗЯР ТРАФИ БЮЛГЯДЯ ЯМЯКДАШЛЫҚ: ДЦНЯН ВЯ ВU ГЦН

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SSRİ-nin дабылмасындан вяр Хязяртрафи бюлгядяки кечмиш Sovet respublikаларынын мцстяқиллик ялдя етмясиндян бярй, бу бюлгядяки ян мцццм мясяялярдян бири regional ямякдашлық олмушдур. Чцнки regional ямякдашлық бюлгядя stabilliyin yaranмасына, yeni мцстяқиллиyinи qazanмыш юкялярин iqtisadi-siyasi инкшавына вяр цмумиликде regionun тяряққисиня чох мцсбят тясир гюстярдй. Ансақ бюлгядяки бир чох дювлятлярасы вяр юкядяхили мцнақишялярин, һямчинин, бюлгя дювлятляринин мцхтяlif iqtisadi-siyasi истиqамятлярдя ирялимяляринин нятисяси оларақ, бу гцня қядяр regional ямякдашлық ящямийятли явяуудя qurula билмямишдйр.

1991-сй ildян бярй, бюлгядя ямякдашлыбын инкшав етдйрилмясй учун бир чох plan, проект вяр програмлар ortaya qoyulub; Мцстяқил Дювлятляр Birliyi (MDB), Хязяр Дянизи Тяшкйлаты (ХДТ), İqtisadi Ямякдашлық Тяшкйлати вяр s. integrasiya вяр уа ямякдашлық qurumлары ilk evvel бу ишде хейли iddialы гюццнсяляр дя, қыса мцддядтян сонра мяlum oldu ki, бу qurumларын һеч бири бюлгя юкялярй арасында бярабярһуқуқлу esasда ямякдашлық yaratмаба хидмят етмйр. Мясяяян, MDB-nin ямякдашлық чярчивясй deyiл, Rusiyanын post-Sovet мяканында юз гцсцц тюһкямлятмяк ццц istifadi етдййй bir qurum olduьу, еунй шякйлдя, Iranын ХДТ-ны, Тцркйуянин дя Qara Дяниз İqtisadi Ямякдашлық Zonasыны юз ццфузлагымы бюлгядя бярярар етмяк ниууятй иля qurduqlары бялли oldu. Belylikля, regional ямякдашлық мясяяясй, regional гцсляр – İtran, Rusiya вяр Тцркйуя – арасындакы бярябятин тясйрй алтында қаларақ, арха plana кечдй. Нятисядя, бюлгядяки юкяляр regional ямякдашлыбын инкшав етдйрмякдянся, мцхтяlif regional гцслярин тясйр даирясиня гйрмяуй daha мяқсядяуугун гюрдцляр.

Мювсуд шяртляр алтында, regional ямякдашлық мясяяясй, бюлгядяки юкялярин цмумй марабьындан daha чох, onларын maraqlары арасындакй фяряқлйликляря яsaslanйр. Бу юкяляр, region харисиндякй мцхтяlif (вя адятян, bir-birиня zidd) ямякдашлық вяр уа integrasiya структурларына daxil olмаба сан атырлар ki, бу да onларын юз араларында regional ямякдашлыгынын ццццляринй daha da darалдыр...

THE WEST, HEGEMONY AND EURASIA

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Any analysis of the West's role in Eurasia, its interests and objectives, has to be undertaken in relation to the West's main rival in the region: Russia. A number of concepts are useful in order to understand this relationship in its most salient points. These include the concepts of hegemony, globalization, regionalization and core-periphery relations.

In order to consider Russia as a hegemonic power, it needs to fulfil certain function.¹ The notion of hegemony in international relations is, according to both Western and Russian scholars, generally associated with the political forces of the United States as the sole remaining hegemonic power. Another related view of a hegemonic power is that it has a preponderance of resources – of both material sources and military might. The Gramscian use of hegemony is useful here. Hegemony in this sense means that global leadership is attained through the active consent of the subordinated.² A hegemonic power thus is regarded as legitimate by its subordinate powers; who are dominated not by force, but by acquiescence of the dominated members. From another perspective, a hegemon should be able to provide collective security. This function of a hegemon in the global arena is similar to the role of a domestic government. Linked to this is the concept of hegemonic stability where the hegemon is not only the main beneficiary of the institutional environment; but is also the main provider of externalities to the other members. It receives disproportionate benefits, but also accepts disproportionate burdens.³ The hegemon is interested in providing goods, and according to hegemonic stability theory the absence of a hegemon will impede the procurement of public goods.⁴

In terms of Russia, and in relation to the above noted functions of a hegemon, most commentators agree that Russia's capacity to act as a hegemon in the Eurasian region is declining.⁵ Moscow's regionalist policies are encountering significant opposition from other CIS members. Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, for instance, have refused the stationing of Russian troops at the former Soviet borders. It should also be noted that Russia is unable to provide its CIS partners with the public goods they are requesting. Russia is failing to provide stability. It is unable to go beyond the freezing of conflicts, or outright military operations as witnessed both times in Chechnya. In addition, Russia does not have sufficient preponderance in economic or even military power to establish its role as a hegemon.⁶ What the majority of countries in the region desire is more Western involvement. Thus, Russia's hegemony in Eurasia, and contrary to many commentators, is gradually being replaced by Western hegemony. In short, the West has an absolute preponderance of

economic and military resources over all Eurasian countries, including Russia. Eurasian states can today almost count on Western economic involvement and its military policies in the region. With regard to the latter point, we only need to note the popularity of the Partnership for Peace, and the support for NATO's idea to create peacekeeping battalions in Central Asia – although not in a peace-enforcing capacity. There is even the possibility of Western peacekeeping forces through the OSCE in Nagorno-Karabakh; or even a possibility, although admittedly remote, through the UN in Abkhazia – in cooperation with CIS troops. There are not, moreover, consistent expectations of China, Iran, Japan or Turkey. The West is poised for lift off in the region, not least because the West has the potential to incorporate the bulk of Russia's natural resources. Even Yeltsin remarked in May 1997 that both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were turning nearly all their industrial resources over to 'foreign partners.'⁷ Although such involvement by Western capital investment is a far cry from any notion of an alternative to the economic relations pertaining between Russia and the states of Central Eurasia, such investment is, along with cooperation in other fields, leading to radical altering relations between CIS countries and Russia to the latter's disadvantage. Western institutions are also involved in the procurement for the Eurasian countries of some public goods such as monetary stability loans. Hence, it is probable that the above factors will lead to the further subordination of Russia in the competition between Russia and the West.

The evolving Western ascendancy over Russia's Near Abroad is not as a result of sub-regional arrangements between Central Asian and other CIS states with the exclusion of Russia. The reason lies in the combination of the above factors, along with, for instance, military cooperation policies as provided through Partnership for Peace. In this context, a hegemonic West is the emerging hope of an historical alternative to Russia. However, it remains to be seen as to whether Western hegemony could offer a new chance for the settlement of ethnic conflicts. One danger here for the West in Eurasia is that in its attempts to enhance regional integrationist efficiency, it may suffer the fate of a Western imperial overstretch. It is also worth bearing in mind the potential for conflict within the Western camp between Western Europe and the United States over competition for resources in the region.

For Western hegemony to take root in Eurasia, it is absolutely vital that Western organizations respond positively to the expectations of governments in the region – several in Central Asia and the Caucasian countries.

As noted earlier, some authors, such as Brezinski, have pointed their analysis at a 'Great Game' between Russia and Western powers. Others disagree, noting that such a nineteenth-century analysis, along with its romantic Great Powers-can-do-rhetoric, is no longer applicable to today's competition between various state or oil and gas company interests in the Caspian region. Moreover,

unlike the nineteenth-century, in a period of Russian expansionism and Western imperialism, countries in Russia's Near Abroad were not sovereign players in the international arena.⁸ Notwithstanding, the decline of Russia and the ascendancy of the West have to be seen, in significant part, in the light of the failure of the CIS.

Most commentators on Eurasia have rated the chances of the CIS to provide a foundation for the integration of the region, of linking Russia and the other former Union republics on the basis of equality and sovereignty. For one thing the CIS does not possess the political structures for the integration of its members. Even the one attempt at integration took place outside the CIS – i.e. the creation of a Union between Belarus and Russia begun in May 1997.

Russia's leading integrationist role in the CIS is indisputable, but this is no longer a condition for its recognition as a global power by the international community.⁹ Russia cannot stop NATO's expansion eastwards, and Russia's more assertive attitude to its Near Abroad since the mid-1990s has not had any direct consequences for the Central Asian states. CIS members here have in degrees disassociated their own security outlooks from that of Moscow. This does not mean that these states in the region are no longer independent of Moscow and the CIS arm, but it does mean that they are attempting to find the most appropriate form of dependence.¹⁰

For the majority of governments in the region, the CIS should function not as a supranational organization, but rather as a regional organization. Except for countries poor in resources – Belarus and Kyrgyzstan – CIS member states see this organization as a provisional integrationist process. The CIS is not seen as a long-term option. It is simply too problematic. The setting up of a customs union within the CIS, for instance, would preclude Georgia's membership of the World Trade Organization. The political elites of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, moreover, view their relations with Russia within the CIS as global relations; they view cooperation with each other as regional relations and are regarded as more productive.

From a positive angle, the CIS has contributed to stability in the region (Tajikistan), but it has failed to create integrationist organs on a par with regional experiences in Western Europe. Other integrationist projects have also largely failed. The Assembly of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus (AGNK), created in 1989, which later changed its name first to become the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus (KGNK), and then to the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus (KNK) is an example of smaller groups and nations of the North Caucasus aiming at integration. On the whole, however, they have failed to unite the groups, with the Chechen leadership of the organization frequently blamed. The unifying idea of a Chechen home as a particular political interest remains a contradiction. This attempt at integration, moreover, sometimes referred to in Western literature as 'soft regionalism' has not thus far activated processes of trade

and investment flowing between different parts of the North Caucasus region; neither has it achieved the role of an informal, communicating force of social interaction. The concept remains on the table, rather than in practice, despite the fact that the concept of a Caucasian home does not exclude Russia.

Declining Russian power in the region has led right-wing forces to periodically call for a form of pan-Slavism in countering the 'Islamic threat', or the 'pan-Turkist threat'. However, as Russia's strained relations with Ukraine attest, such an idea is viewed in Kyiv as a cover for Russian imperialism. Cultural affinities do not lead to integration, or even in the deepening of ties, as Turkey has found out in the Central Asian Turkic republics.

The current agenda of Central Eurasia is dominated by the decline of Russia as a global power, and the emerging ascendancy of the West in Eurasia. Russia and the West, both involved in conflicts in the post-Soviet space, appeal to the international community in criticizing each other's efforts at solving ethnic conflicts, and in pursuing their *realpolitik*. Moscow is currently adamant that it observes the UN Charter and the CSCE Final Act and indeed countless other legal documents intended to foster peace in the international community. It rejects all Western criticism.

While disagreeing with this assessment, the foreign policies of Western governments are not aimed at excluding Russia, but rather at the attainment of strengthening their positions in Eurasia as part of a certain balance with Russia. It is simply not in the interests of the West to marginalize Russia since mutual exclusion in the region is not possible. Western interests dictate foreign policy objectives that focus on a balance of interests between the smaller states in the region and those of external regional powers. Russia is part of this set up, not in the sense of a competitive Great Game being played, but rather as a participating regional power. However, the decline of Russia will accelerate as Russia's leadership of regionalist policies is degraded. This process has already started to bite. The Western factor is slowly, but surely becoming the dominant factor in Central Eurasia.

The Western factor is more neglected than the Russian factor in literature on Eurasia.¹¹ And yet the European Union's perspective on Eurasia is of vital interest. The EU conceives of a regional integration in Central Eurasia in its own way, linking technical assistance policies with integrationist goals, and in the case of the TACIS Program, is devoted to the transfer of know-how to promote economic transformation and the development of democracy in the CIS countries. Central Asia, including Mongolia, and the Transcaucasus are seen as two regions, which may gradually transform themselves into some kind of regional units.¹² Cooperation within the Economic Cooperation Organization of which Iran and Turkey are members is favored, not least because it is seen as a solution to the transport and economic problems in the Transcaucasus.¹³ The United States, furthermore, supports regional cooperation at a military level in Central Asia. Aside from its huge

subsidies to Armenia, and not thus far to Azerbaijan (although this could well change in the near future) the United States follows an integrationist line similar to the European Union, but differs from the EU in its forthright attempts to isolate Iran in its pipeline policies.

According to the core-periphery model of European integration, the construction of Europe should be conceived as the result of a process that started from a core and is gradually encompassing large peripheries of the European continent. The core refers to the given actors in the European integration process and the periphery to its future players. The periphery should gradually become part of its core and take part in the common decision-making process. The idea of a European identity underpins the institutional unification process in Europe and runs counter the idea of national sovereignty.¹⁴ This integrationist process will encompass parts of Eastern Central Europe in the future. However, this does not mean that all other parts of the European periphery will take part in the future unification process. The European Union, with its 286 million citizens, will in all probability continue to represent the affluent part of Europe, while in a contradictory sense maintaining its claim to represent the destiny of the whole of Europe (and therefore Eastern Europe's 269 million citizens). The Transcaucasus, which considers itself as European is not a candidate for EU membership. In fact, the European Union's foreign policy does not make any distinction in principle between the Transcaucasus and Central Asia.

Globalization can either work in favor of regionalism or against it.¹⁵ For instance, economic development may favor regionalisation, but the financial and productive forces that are the basis of such development cut across those regions and are generally far too powerful to be constrained by any regional arrangement. And as Western interests largely dominate specialized regional international institutions, and specific-issue ones that are not regionally based, the globalization process favors the West, and further enhances its future credibility as hegemon. Moscow centered forms of regional organization cannot withstand the onslaught of these globalising tendencies – 'rational' economics, global markets and global capital investments – which are under Western hegemony. On the other hand, the Central Asian states' dependence on Russia will remain for the near future. For example, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan remain economically dependent on Russia, and although the Uzbek government has made Uzbekistan less dependent on Russia for energy and grain, it still relies on Russia and Kazakhstan (as a double-locked country) for transport to world markets (and pays substantial transit fees into the bargain). Uzbekistan believes that Western financial investment will help strengthen its economic sovereignty. Kyrgyzstan needs the Russian market as an outlet for its substandard processed goods, and has to export its mineral ores to international markets through Russia.¹⁶ Turkmenistan, on the other hand, has at least found a partial solution to its transport problem with the help of Iran - a new railway connection to Iran and the

Persian Gulf, and the construction of a gas pipeline. The Customs Union, which was established in March 1996, includes Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, along with Russia and Belarus; Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have not joined. However, there remains a major problem with the Customs Union. In short, the World Trade Organization's emphasis on multilateral trade is not consistent with the privileges that Customs Union members extend to each other's exports. Kazakhstan has especially experienced problems as a potential WTO member, applying to join in 1997 because of its membership of the Customs Union. It is likely that Kazakhstan will, if necessary, leave the Customs Union sometime in the near future as it views WTO membership as providing the advantage of improving global market access. The Western factor cannot be escaped.

Moscow remains suspicious of Western integrationist policies. It sees a struggle for influence in the new Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.¹⁷ They see the West as being opposed to any new integration between the newly independent states and Russia. Moscow feels restrained as a great power in the region by Western designs. Since the mid-1990s Moscow has held an enhanced geopolitical view of the region, and views integration between the motherland and the newly independent states as historically inevitable. Moscow also believes, and frequently states, that it has a unique and deep understanding of the region's problems, and that it is responding creatively to the challenges of the post-Cold War era. For instance, Russian diplomats have pointed out that the Russian Federation has used force to protect peace, just as NATO did in its enforcement actions in ex-Yugoslavia in 1995 and 1998. The West, on the other hand, has serious doubts as to whether Moscow always secures the consent of all parties involved, or whether the consent is genuine. More importantly Western governments generally view Russian military forces in the conflict areas as part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

Nuclear proliferation is a major concern for the West, and especially the United States. With the break up of the USSR, the West was worried about access to nuclear arsenals in the weak successor states, as was Moscow. The interests of Russian Federation, which claimed itself as the sole successor of the Soviet nuclear power, and the interests of the West, were thus in agreement. Kazakhstan, Belarus and especially the Ukraine had nuclear strategic arms on their territory (the Ukraine was the third most powerful nuclear state in the world, and Pervomaïsk was home to more than 700 warheads aimed at the United States. All of those have been shipped back to Russia). All three countries have now signed the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as non-nuclear states. The United States has gained a good advantage here as it is now a third partner between Moscow and Kyiv and to a lesser extent between Moscow and Astana. Only Minsk has gravitated towards Moscow.

As the West gradually extends its influence in Central Eurasia it is involved in a holding

operation, in the operationalisation of a major foreign policy objective: to maintain stability, while at the same time defending the independence of the new republics. Ukraine's continued independence is seen as absolutely essential. Moscow views the Collective Security Treaty signed by Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Armenia and later Belarus, as the best way to prevent conflicts between these states. However, no integrated forces or command structures have been established under the CST, and its role outside of the Tajik conflict is minimal. Belarus, for example, is reluctant to commit troops beyond the country's borders; and Armenia has tried unsuccessfully to use the Treaty in the conflict over Karabakh. Western fears, furthermore, over Russian neo-imperialist expansionism are now diminishing as any incorporation of a CIS state, or a breakaway province, like Transdnistria or Abkhazia, into the Russian Federation is prohibitively costly. But the West remains wary of Russian control of the CIS, and sees it as an arm of Russian control in the region. Moscow denies that it usurps its position as the main power in the CIS, and that it has no intention of turning the CIS into another Warsaw Pact II. This remains an issue between Western and Russian foreign policy shapers.

Within a broader context, Western governmental perceptions of Eurasian international politics can be found within a liberal context of world politics. In the international community, every state in this perspective is responsible for its own fate. However, the world community may provide every state with a stable international legal framework, and thereby preserve its means for attaining wealth. Where the fate of minorities in particular states is concerned, the international community will only intervene when the major world powers consider it politically opportune. The Ingush-Ossetian conflict of 1992 was regarded as an internal Russian affair. Western Europe did not protect the rights of the Ingush, although it is interested in a settlement of the conflicts in the Caucasus. In principle, the European Union's foreign policies on the Caucasus and Central Asia can be summed up as follows:

- to defend stability, democratization and the defense of human rights— seen as intrinsically linked to economic reform;
- to defend the interests of European companies in the region, particularly as the EU will be a major consumer of Caspian oil gas reserves. The EU will rely on US military help in this matter.
- to promote environmental security (e.g. concerning the nuclear plant of Medzamor NPP in Armenia) and drilling for Caspian Sea oil in line with environmental standards.¹⁸

The EU will in all probability be the region's major trading partner in the near future. The EU is currently the major humanitarian donor in the region. EU economic interests now favor a higher political profile for the EU. EU governments are now offering political support to European companies in their competition with American firms. Partnership and Cooperation Agreements

(PCAs) are one of the EU's instruments in gaining ground in Central Eurasia – i.e. used to develop political and trade relations between the parties, and in the process strengthen the democratization process. The EU sees cooperation in the form of political dialogue between itself and the states of the region as necessary for the strengthening stability and security in Europe.

The function of a bridgehead for Western interests in the Central Eurasian region is attributed to Turkey, and lately also to Israel. Ankara has offered itself as bridgehead for Western economic and political interests wishing to penetrate the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. Armenia was originally thought to be a possible Western bridgehead, but this has not been realized as Armenia has maintained a careful balance between the West, Russia and to a lesser extent Iran.

Western government's liberal model of core-periphery relations is a positive assessment. However, a different negative model, a structural theory of imperialism initially generated in the 1970s, is Johan Galtung's center/periphery model.¹⁹ Unlike Lenin's approach, Galtung does not consider imperialism to be a specific historic stage of capitalism. Galtung notes that the world consists of Center and Periphery states, and that every state in turn has a center and a periphery. Imperialism is to be conceived as special type of domination in which the center of the Periphery is used by the center of the Center as bridgehead in order to establish a harmony of interests between both, whereas there is a disharmony of interests between the periphery of the Center state and the periphery of the Periphery state. This disharmony of interests is greater within the Periphery than within the Center. The center of the Periphery serves as, for instance, a transmission belt for the procurement of raw materials for the Center, whereas the subsidiary economic effect of the extraction of raw materials for the development of the Periphery is seen as negligible.

Unlike other economic definitions of imperialism where the unequal exchange of value takes place in the economic field, Galtung distinguishes between different types of imperialism. Imperialism can be economic, political, military, communication or cultural. In the political and cultural spheres, for instance, the Center State provides decision-making models and cultural models to the periphery. In all types, the Center establishes a monopoly position in its vertical relationship with the Periphery states, impeding interaction between them. This is fundamentally a feudal relationship, and any modification of the vertical interaction structure (e.g. as a result of competing different Centers) cannot change this basic structure. Galtung notes that any significant changes to this dominant core-periphery structure will occur in a reduction of the vertical interaction and the horizontalisation of Center/Periphery relations – i.e. division of labor and exchange products on more equal terms. A second strategy to change the international dominance system would be provided by the defeudalisation of international organizations, and the development of viable organizations of Periphery states.

Georgia's relationship with the West, for instance, can be described as a dependency relationship characteristic of Galtung's center-periphery model, where the political and cultural types of imperialism are concerned – e.g. in which models from the center are implemented in the periphery.

This model, however, encounters problems when we note that Western Europe has produced a universalistic approach to politics and culture that transcends each individual center/periphery relationship. The Western European center regards its own model of civilization as being emancipatory for its periphery. In addition, Galtung's model ignores the notion of free choice. His structural theory notes that players cannot always be considered to be aware of their own real interests. Under Galtung's model, furthermore, relations say, between Georgia and Russia, and Georgia with the West can be seen as political and cultural types of imperialism. This model stresses the similarities between both forms of dependence on a foreign model. There is however, a basic significant difference between Georgia's relations with Russia, and its relations with the West. The Russia/USSR model was imposed; whereas the Western model is freely chosen. This choice itself may be explained as a reaction against dependence on the cultural and political Russian/Soviet model. Dependency analysis is guilty of neglecting not only free political choice existing in Georgia, but also of human agency in general.

Galtung's structural theory of imperialism, despite its claim to be ahistorical, is based on an analysis of the capitalist system during the Cold War period and seems inappropriate for analyzing the new dependencies created by the demise of the USSR. The application of Galtung's model fails to ascertain the significance of universal norms and models.

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Хцл а с я

QÄRB, HEGEMONİYA VÄ AVRASIYA

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Qärbın Avrasiyada äsas räqıbı Rusiya olduđu için, onun bu regiondaki rolunu, maraqlarını və məqsədlərini araáıran hər hansı bir elmi tədqıqat iái mütləq Rusiya faktorunu ähatə etməlidir. Qärb-Rusiya münasibətlərini anlamaq və bu münasibətlərin Qärbın Avrasiya siyasətinə necə təsir etdiyini görmək için, “hegemoniya”, “qloballaama”, “regionallaama” və s. kimi mühüm nəzəri anlayışları bu mövzuya tətbiq etməyin böyük faydası olar.

“Hegemon qüvvə” anlayışının bir neçə tərifi və ya izahı vardır. Ānənəvi sayılan “hegemonluq” konsepsiyası iqtisadi, siyasi və hərbi gücə istinad edən hər hansı bir dominasiyaya əsaslanır. Antonio Qramanın beynəlxalq münasibətlər elminə gətirdiyi “hegemonluq” anlayışı isə daha fərqlidir. Qramaniyə görə, hegemoniya bir dövlətin digər dövlətlərin könüllü razılığı vasitəsilə əldə etdiyi dominasiya formasıdır. Bu halda, hegemon qüvvə legitim (məaru) sayılır, çünki onun üstün statusu başqaları tərəfindən normal olaraq qəbul edilir.

Digər nöqtəyi-nəzərdən, hegemon dövlət (qüvvə) beynəlxalq və ya regional miqyasda təhlükəsizliyi təmin edən dövlətdir. “Hegemon sabitlik” nəzəriyyəsi də məhz buradan gəlir: hegemon qüvvə ümumi bir global təhlükəsizlik mühiti yaradır və onu qoruyur. Doğrudur, bu mühitdən ən çox fayda götürən hegemon özü olur, ancaq öz üzərinə ən çox məsuliyyət götürən də məhz odur.

“Hegemon qüvvə” nəzəriyyəsi çərçivəsindən baxdıqda görürük ki, Rusiyanın Avrasiya məkanında hegemon dövlət kimi gücü get-gedə azalmaqdadır. Moskvanın regional siyasətinə bir çox MDB üzvü ölkələr ciddi müqavimət göstərir. Məsələn, Azərbaycan və Özbəkistan artıq rus qoşunlarının keçmiş Sovet sərhədlərini qorumasına qarşı öz etirazlarını əməli əhkildə göstərmişlər. İqtisadi cəhətdən baxsaq, Rusiya öz MDB partnyorlarını lazımlan istehlak malları ilə təmin edə bilmir. Eyni zamanda, onun siyasi gücü regional münasibətləri həll etməyə yetmir, sadəcə onların dondurulmasına çatır. Yəni artıq Rusiyanın hərbi, siyasi və iqtisadi gücü ona Avrasiyada hegemon dövlət kimi çıxış etmək imkanı vermir. Məhz buna görə də, Rusiya bölgədəki dövlətlərin etimadını və razılığını qazanmaqda çətinlik çəkir. Beləliklə, bölgə dövlətləri daha

çox Qərbîn bu regionda öz hegemonluđunu qurmasını istäyirlär.