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Islamic Solidarity

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Islamic Solidarity



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Editor's Note

The current issue of Caucasus International (CI), titled “Islamic Solidarity”, is dedicated to the changing nature of solidarity in the Islamic world. It seeks to shed light on the challenges faced by Islamic countries as well as their achievements. Thus, the authors from around the world and from diverse backgrounds have contributed to the current issue of CI, providing much-needed analysis of key topics and cooperation patterns in the context of Islamic solidarity among the Muslim states; the importance of the Islamic Solidarity on the issues of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the issue of Jerusalem.

Azerbaijan has been one of the main centers of Islamic civilization for centuries. The country is also a peaceful multi-confessional society, where groups of different denominations co-exist in amity and fraternity. Last year was declared the “Year of Islamic Solidarity” in Azerbaijan by presidential decree. During 2017, a number of international conferences and events on “Islamic Solidarity” were held in Azerbaijan as well as in many other countries. Azerbaijan hosted 204 local and seven international events in during the year. Azerbaijan was also host to the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku, Azerbaijan from 12 to 22 May 2017, as well as the International Conference on “2017-Islamic Solidarity: Religions and Intercultural Dialogue”, held on 21 December 2017. Therefore, the winter-2017 issue of the Caucasus International Journal was dedicated to the Islamic Solidarity.

This issue opens with two colloquies. The first addresses the latest developments concerning the United Nations’ responsibility to protect civilians. **Richard Falk**, Professor Emeritus at Princeton University and University of California, and the Former UN Special Rapporteur, provided the journal with vital insights on how the internal functioning of the UN resulted in its flawed response to Syria. The second colloquy was conducted with the Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Republic of Azerbaijan **Nassir Abdul Karim Abdul Rahim** on the relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Palestine.

The issue contains eleven articles. In his article, **Anar Naghiyev**, former Dean of the Faculty for Regional Studies and International

Relations at Azerbaijan University of Languages, evaluates the influence and role of Islam in global politics, and the extent of Islamic influence in foreign policy implementation in the context of identifying religious identities. **Pınar Akpınar**, a Scholar and Project Manager at Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University, analyzes the role of Islamic solidarity in the conceptions, motivations, and practices of Turkish humanitarian NGOs. **Najiba Mustafayeva**, Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies (SAM) under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, examines the clause of “responsibility to protect” through an analysis of the role of state responsibility as it relates to national sovereignty in the light of mass atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. **Estella Carpi**, a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Development Planning Unit at University College London, reflects on how social membership and acts of solidarity and charity interact within Lebanese philanthropic activities.

Hüsrev Tabak, Assistant Professor at Recep Tayyip Erdogan University and **Özgür Tüfekçi**, Assistant Professor at Karadeniz Technical University, in their co-authored article, analyze Azerbaijan’s relations with Turkey following the failed military coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016. They confirm that the attempted coup and its consequences have not had any kind of negative impact on bilateral relations. **Fuad Shahbazov**, Expert at the Center for Strategic Studies, looks at the importance of the strategic partnership between Azerbaijan and Pakistan and the key moments in Azerbaijani–Pakistan relations. **Mesiaga Mahammadi**, Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies, outlines the dynamics and potential of Azerbaijan–Iran cultural relations, and puts forth specific proposals for the realization of this potential and further expansion of cultural relations. **Galina M. Yemelianova**, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham, provides a historical account of the role of religion in the geopolitics of the Caucasus with particular focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. She argues that throughout history, the religious factor has played an indirect role in first fomenting and then perpetuating the conflict. **Narmina Mamishova**, an

independent researcher from Azerbaijan, analyzes relations between the post-Soviet Central Asian republics and Muslim-majority Azerbaijan, which is concerned with gaining political and diplomatic support in the international arena in order to secure the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. **Javid Alisgandarli**, a lecturer at Baku State University, argues that BTK railway project constitutes major breakthrough for Central Asia and Azerbaijan, not only by helping them to overcome the economic development limitations entailed by lack of maritime access, but also by providing easy access to global markets and significantly increasing their role as transit countries connecting East and West. **Rafis Abazov**, Visiting Professor at Al Farabi Kazakh National University, analyzes the potential of land-based transportation and communication infrastructure networks to open the door for greater regional trade.

The current issue also includes a review of **Alexander Betts & Paul Collier**'s joint book titled "Refuge: Rethinking Refugee Policy in a Changing World" (Oxford University Press; 2017. Last but not least, this issue of CI includes reviews of recently published books on Russia's policy in Southeast Europe, the geopolitics of natural gas, Russian media policy, and energy politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Azerbaijan's foreign policy and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Finally, on behalf of the CI team, we hope this issue provides food for thought and for discussion.

Sincerely,

Javid Valiyev, Editor-in-Chief

Ilgar Gurbanov, Deputy Editor-in-Chief

Syria: The United Nations' Responsibility to Protect Civilians under Question

Colloquy with Richard Falk,
by Salwa Amor*

The current global powers have been unable to prevent the worst humanitarian crisis since WWII, leaving a gigantic humanitarian gap in Syria. Sadly, in the lack of a global people's movement, this gap remains. Questions need to be asked as to why did those in power failed Syria; why individuals have also failed; and why there seems to be no collective human conscience that is tantamount to the scale of the suffering.

Richard Falk – Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University and distinguished professor in Global and international Studies at University of California and the Former UN Special Rapporteur – provides Caucasus International with vital insights into how the internal functioning of the UN resulted in its flawed response to Syria, as well as the factors that prevented the UN from applying the R2P charter. The R2P charter was created to prevent exactly the kind of atrocities unfolding in Syria. Most importantly, Falk provides us with important advice on what must be done, both within the UN as well as on the part of the international community in order to prevent further atrocities in future.



* Salwa Amor lives in London and works as a war correspondent and broadcast journalist. Specialising in Middle East affairs she has covered events in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, the West Bank and Israel for News Networks including Al Jazeera, BBC, MBC, Current TV, Reuters Thomson, Sky and Euronews. Her Masters was in Creative Media at the University of Bournemouth.

A missed chance

1. In 09/09/2015 Middle East Eye you referred to Syria as “an ideal case for humanitarian intervention”. However, two years on, it has turned into one of the greatest humanitarian crises the world has seen, with half of the country refugees or internally displaced.

What turned this “ideal case for humanitarian intervention” into one of the worst humanitarian responses we have seen in recent times?

The reference to Syria as ‘an ideal case,’ was meant in a hypothetical sense, that is, as if ‘humanitarian intervention’ was ever called for, it was here in Syria, and yet it was at all stages a mission impossible. We should keep in mind that the record of actual instances of what is called ‘humanitarian intervention’ has been dismal, and rarely was the motivation predominantly humanitarian, but rather strategic interests of one sort or another.

Sometimes, the intervention is a cover for non-humanitarian goals, as in Afghanistan (2002), Iraq (2003), and Libya (2011) and may be effective in attaining its immediate goals of regime change but is extremely costly from the perspective of humanitarianism if assessed from the perspective of prolonged violence, societal chaos, and human suffering.

Sometimes, the intervention is a cover for non-humanitarian goals, as in Afghanistan (2002), Iraq (2003), and Libya (2011) and may be effective in attaining its immediate goals of regime change but is extremely costly from the perspective of humanitarianism if assessed from the perspective of prolonged violence, societal chaos, and human suffering. At other times, the humanitarian rationale is present, as in Syria, but there is no strategic justification of sufficient weight, and what is done by external actors or the UN is insufficient to control the outcome, and often ends up intensifying the suffering of the population. In effect, humanitarian intervention rarely achieves a net benefit from the perspective of the population that is being benefitted. Perhaps, Kosovo (1999) is the best recent case where an alleged humanitarian intervention enjoyed enough strategic value to be effective, and yet did leave the Kosovar population better off afterwards.

Failures & implications of inaction

2. The humanitarian failures in Syria and for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries, including Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon

and Iraq, have had far-reaching implications for the EU, with millions of refugees choosing to risk their lives in order to enter Europe causing the largest exodus since WWII.

Could the surge of refugees fleeing to Europe have been avoided through a more positive and organized humanitarian intervention?

It is possible that had Syria possessed oil, the intervention against the Damascus regime would have been robust enough to topple the regime, and create stability before combat conditions prompted massive internal displacements and gigantic refugee flows, including the European influx. In this sense, Libya, with oil, did prompt such an intervention, although it was an easier undertaking, as the Qaddafi regime had much less popular support than did the Assad regime, and was less well equipped militarily and lacked regional allies. In Syria, because of regional and global geopolitical cleavages, the politics of intervention and counter-intervention was far more complicated, and inhibited potential interveners. At the early stages of the conflict Turkey and the United States miscalculated the costs and scale of a successful intervention in Syria, supposing that an indirect and low level effort could be effective in achieving regime change, which misunderstood the conditions prevailing in Syria.

In Syria, because of regional and global geopolitical cleavages, the politics of intervention and counter-intervention was far more complicated, and inhibited potential interveners.

The ideal humanitarian response

3. In your experience, what would have been the ideal humanitarian response to the war in Syria? And who would have been best positioned to implement it?

As my earlier responses hinted, there is no ideal response, and the current world order is not really capable of handling humanitarian intervention in a situation such as existed in Syria. To have any chance of effectiveness would require entrusting the undertaking to one or more powerful states, but even then the situation that would follow is highly uncertain. In a postcolonial setting, there is bound to be strong nationalist resistance and chaos produced by foreign intervention followed by occupation unless the country is very small and can be overwhelmed (as in Granada, for instance).

There is no ideal response, and the current world order is not really capable of handling humanitarian intervention in a situation such as existed in Syria.

Iraq serves as clear example of an intervention that did rid the country of a brutal tyrant, but produced internal violence among competing regions, tribes, and generated extreme sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shiites, as well as a series of ethnic, tribal, and regional battles.

In an ideal world, which is far from existing, the UN would have acted robustly and with the support of the regional governments in the Middle East, the geopolitical actors (U.S. and Russia) would have not pursued their strategic agendas, and a politically neutral intervention would have created the conditions for a post-Assad democratic political transition, including a reckoning for past crimes. Merely mentioning this desirable scenario is enough to reveal its utopian character. Especially in the Middle East, geopolitics of a regional and global scope undermines all efforts to fashion a humanitarian response to repression and severe violations of human rights. In the background, but not far in the background, is the relevance of oil. The countries that have experienced intervention possessed abundant oil reserves, those that endured bloody conflict, of which Syria is the worst case, have been the scene of competing and offsetting interventions motivated by political and strategic ambitions with only a propaganda rationale associated with alleviating a humanitarian crisis, which at best, is a much subordinated goal.

Lessons for the Future

4. How can the world learn from the humanitarian failures and inaction that have plagued Syria over the past seven years? What opportunities to protect, defend, or support the Syrian people have we missed?

What intervention achieved in Syria was largely a matter of magnifying the conflict, and attendant suffering.

In my view, it is a mistake to speak of ‘inaction’ in the Syrian context. There have been massive interventions of all sorts on both sides of the conflict by a variety of actors, but none decisive enough to end the conflict, and none primarily motivated by humanitarian concerns. Of course, here and there, lives could have been saved, especially if the balance of forces within Syria had been better understood at an early stage of the conflict in the West. What intervention achieved in Syria was largely a matter of magnifying the conflict, and attendant suffering. The conflict

itself was surrounded by contradictory propaganda claims making the reality difficult to perceive by the public, and therefore there was political resistance to more explicit and possibly more effective regime changing intervention.

Indifference to suffering

5. Is there any correlation between the rise of Islamophobia and the world's inaction in regard to the Syrian people's suffering? Has the growing hatred towards Islam as a religion created a generation of indifference towards those of them who are suffering? Or is this indifference a natural response to such an overwhelming humanitarian crisis?

The indifference in relation to Syria is a matter of public confusion and distrust; confusion about the nature of the conflict and distrust of the motives of political actors that have intervened on either side. The spike in Islamophobia is mainly attributable to the interplay of the European refugee crisis and the occurrence of terrorist incidents that are perpetrated by ISIS and its supporters. Of course, the massive refugee flow was prompted by the violence in the combat zones, which made Europe most interested in resolving the conflict even if it meant allowing the current regime to remain in power. I suppose that the indifference observed in your question is more evident in relation to the plight of the Rohingya people in Myanmar than in response to Syria where, as I have been suggesting, the political context dominates the human suffering, and the Islamic identity of the victimized people is secondary. Also, it is worth recalling the global indifference to genocide in Rwanda (1994) that could have been prevented, or at least minimized, by a timely, and relatively small scale intervention. And on occasion, if the strategic context is supportive, the West will intervene on the Islamic side as in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, and in opposition to the Christian side.

The spike in Islamophobia is mainly attributable to the interplay of the European refugee crisis and the occurrence of terrorist incidents that are perpetrated by ISIS and its supporters.

United Nations Aid to the Assad Regime

6. The UN has handed over a large portion of the \$4bn of its aid efforts in Syria to the Syrian regime, or partners

approved by Bashar Al Assad. How does the UN justify providing tens of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid to the Syrian regime?

I suppose the basic justification is that from the viewpoint of the UN, the Damascus regime remains the legitimate government of Syria. This is of course a legalistic justification, and evades the real humanitarian crisis as well as the actions of Assad's regime. So far, because there is a geopolitical standoff, regionally (Iran v. Saudi Arabia) and globally (Russia v. the U.S. and Turkey), the UN has tried to remain outside the zone of controversy to the extent possible while doing what it can to alleviate human suffering. I am not knowledgeable about whether its aid is reaching the civilian population as claimed.

The UN's Responsibility Not to Protect Civilians

7. Human rights groups have estimated that no less than half a million people have died in the last seven years in Syria. Although there are many violent factions in Syria, more than 90% of all deaths (SNHR) have been caused by either the Syrian Government or Russian strikes.

In comparison Libya's Muammar Gaddafi killed 257 people including combatants and injured 949 with less than 3% being women and children when the United Nations Security Council intervened. On March 17, 2011, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 (2011), authorizing "regional organisations or arrangements...to take all necessary measures...to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack" in Libya. The resolution was adopted with ten votes in favor, none against, and five abstentions. In hindsight, many have now questioned whether that intervention was purely to "protect civilians".

Is the UN Security Council a reliable body that can be relied upon to protect civilians?

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) UN practice is governed by the UN Security Council, and hence is completely subordinated to the vagaries of geopolitics. In this regard, the lesser humanitarian

hazard in Libya led to a UN regime-changing mission because the Permanent Members opposed (China, Russia) were not prepared to cast their veto for what was being proposed, which was a limited humanitarian mission to protect the entrapped civilian population of Benghazi. In fact, the NATO undertaking expanded the mission beyond the Security Council mandate from its inception, angering Russia and China that had abstained out of deference to the humanitarian claims. They later justified their opposition to a more pro-active UN role in Syria by reference to this failure of trust, the unwillingness of the intervening states to respect the limits of the mandate. What is important to appreciate is that R2P and other UN undertakings must adhere to the constraints of geopolitics. As disturbing as inaction with respect to Syria is the UN's silence with regard to the abuse of the civilian populations of Gaza and Rakhine (Myanmar). It is only when a geopolitical consensus exists, which is quite rare (e.g. failure with respect to Yemen) that it is possible for the UN to play an important role in shaping behavior.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) UN practice is governed by the UN Security Council, and hence is completely subordinated to the vagaries of geopolitics.

How can the Responsibility to Protect the civilian (R2P) be implemented?

8. Why has the UN's responsibility to protect (R2P) been invisible during the past seven years in Syria? What must be done now to implement an R2P operation in Syria to avoid further suffering?

I would only add here that the abolition of the veto would be a crucial step, or at least its non-availability in humanitarian contexts such as Syria. The problem is that the veto powers are extremely unlikely to give up their right of veto, partly because such states do not voluntarily give up power and partly because humanitarian issues are almost always inseparable from diverse geopolitical tensions, and therefore are not perceived as purely humanitarian. This is certainly the case with regard to Syria. The takeaway conclusion is that the international system as it now functions is rarely motivated by humanitarian considerations when they come into conflict with strong political preferences, and this is true even if the humanitarian crisis is as severe and prolonged as Syria.

The correct response is to advocate global reform, but this will not happen without a major mobilization of people throughout the world or under the impetus of some earthshaking catastrophe.

Normalizing the atrocities

9. I understand that there was a veto by Russia and thus a resolution was not passed. However, in cases when one of the countries that is involved in the atrocities is allowed to exercise its veto power, does this not raise the alarm? Surely, this situation in Syria and the human cost provides enough of a precedent for a new charter to be drafted and implemented into the UN?

Do you believe that it is time for the UN to adopt a new charter that would prevent dictators or countries with vested interest in a war from overpowering UN security council votes?

Yes, there was much criticism of Russia for blocking action on Syria, but it was acting in accord with the constitutional structure of the UN. The U.S. uses its veto in the same way to protect

The idea of the veto was designed to persuade all major states to participate, with the goal of universality of membership, but the cost is paralysis whenever veto powers disagree sharply.

Israel and other allies. It should be remembered that the League of Nations fell apart because major states would not participate, including the United States. The idea of the veto was designed to persuade all major states to participate, with the goal of universality of membership, but the cost is paralysis whenever veto powers disagree sharply. Your questions raise the crucial issue if too high a price has been paid to achieve this universality, and that one consequence is to weaken respect for the UN as an agency for the promotion of justice and decency in global affairs.

As specified in Article 108 of the UN Charter requires the approval of two-thirds of the entire membership of the UN as well as all five Permanent Members of the Security Council, which means that it will not happen in the foreseeable future in relation to any politically sensitive issue. When World War II ended there was the hope and illusion that countries that cooperated against fascism would continue to cooperate to maintain the peace. As might have been anticipated, it was a forlorn hope.

Fighting ISIS but leaving Assad to his own devices

10. Many Syrian groups have released statements expressing their dismay at the international community regarding the decision only to intervene to strike ISIS. The Global Coalition planes hover over Deir Al Zour and Raqqa to target ISIS (often causing civilian casualties) while in the same space, Assad's planes carrying deadly barrel bombs hover over nearby towns undisturbed. ISIS became a threat to Western countries as terrorist attacks killed and injured civilians in the West, which led to the "Fight against ISIS" in Syria.

Is there balance in the international community's actions in Syria?

Yes, this is certainly a perceptive observation. When the issue is fairly large scale and internal, and where Muslims are the victims, any effort to intervene is bound to be feeble, at best, which it was in the early stages 2011-2013 where Turkey and the U.S. cooperated in supporting Friends of Syria, which was mistakenly thought capable of shifting the balance sufficiently to produce the collapse of the Damascus regime. When that failed, it became obvious that the costs of an effective intervention were viewed as too high, especially given the Iranian and Russian alignments with the Syrian government.

And as you suggest, the interest with respect to ISIS is much higher because Western security is at stake. ISIS is an enemy of the West, Syria is not, being at most an unattractive regime, partly because hostile toward Israel. In these circumstances, the political realist seeks a ceasefire in Syria while pursuing the destruction of ISIS.

ISIS, as horrible as it is, has not been nearly as responsible for the quality and quantity of suffering inflicted upon the Syrian people by the Damascus regime. At this point, and given the unavailability of humanitarian intervention, the best Plan B is to seek a sustainable ceasefire, and this would require making some unpalatable compromises, including the possible retention of Assad as head of state.

The way the world is organized makes it unable to impose criminal responsibility on the leaders of sovereign states except in special circumstances of total victory as in World War II, or more recently, in relation to the criminal prosecutions of Saddam Hussein and Milosevic.

Concluding remarks by Richard Falk

From my earlier responses I am skeptical about what can be done beyond the obvious: give up any hope of securing support for an R2P mandate to protect the Syrian people, and pursue a ceasefire so as to end the suffering. This is not justice, but it may at least spare the Syrian people further trauma and bloodshed. What the Syrian tragedy and ordeal reveals vividly is the inability of the international community, as now organized, to deal with a humanitarian crisis unless a geopolitical consensus is present in a relatively strong form, regionally and globally. Such a consensus is not even enough if the difficulties of intervention are seen as producing heavy casualties for the intervening side and the burdens of a prolonged occupation. In Syria at the present time, Europe would benefit from a ceasefire and the restoration of political normalcy. It would undoubtedly reduce the pressure created by the Syrian refugee flow, which has given rightwing political parties their greatest strength since the end of World War II.

Concluding remarks by Salwa Amor

The current global framework has failed in preventing or alleviating the worst humanitarian crisis since WWII, in part due to bureaucratic barriers preventing the UN from implementing its *responsibility to protect* the civilian. The United Nations Responsibility to Protect (R2P) exists in order to “prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”; however, Syria has exposed its dysfunctional nature. The many failings in Syria demonstrate that the current UN charter does not permit it to assign human suffering as its leading and primary catalyst for humanitarian intervention. Seven years of war in Syria have resulted in half the population either living as refugees or internally displaced while the death toll is estimated to have hit half a million. Half a million. Half a million human lives lost between the interests of competing geopolitical powers and the people’s reliance on the United Nations. As Professor Falk suggested, “the correct response is to advocate global reform, but this will not happen without a major mobilization of people throughout the world or under the impetus of some earthshaking catastrophe.”

Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Palestine

Colloquy with Nassir Abdul Karim Abdul Rahim* by CI Team

Azerbaijan as a secular Muslim country attaches a great importance to the strengthening of Islamic Solidarity with other Muslim countries. In the light of weak support from the Western countries on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan strongly relies on the support of the Muslim states. A differentiated support also is obvious in the case of Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Therefore, the CI team conducted the next serie of their interviews with Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Republic of Azerbaijan Nassir Abdul Karim Abdul Rahim. The interview's text covered the multiple issues such history of Azerbaijan-Palestine relations, role and importance of Azerbaijan in the Muslim world, Israeli-Palestine dispute, as well as the U.S's recent decision concerning Jerusalem.



* Nassir Abdul Karim Abdul Rahim is an Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Republic of Azerbaijan

Palestine is eager to benefit from Azerbaijan's experience

1. When was your embassy in Azerbaijan opened, and what are your main activities here?

The Embassy of the State of Palestine was opened in Azerbaijan in February 2011. However, diplomatic relations were first established in 1992. This year we are marking the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Palestine. Prior to 2011, when the Embassy became operational, we had non-resident representation. The focus of our Embassy here is obviously the political sphere, while working simultaneously on other different aspects of bilateral relations in order to enhance coordination and cooperation between our two nations across a multitude of fields, including trade, culture, and education. We are also interested in gaining an insight into Azerbaijan's unique experience after independence. Thus, ties are not limited only to the political sphere, but also extend to other different areas.

2. How would you evaluate the overall relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Palestine?

The relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Palestine are excellent and are on a positive trajectory with an increased level of cooperation and coordination, especially in the last few years.

3. What can you say about the geopolitical role of Azerbaijan in the region and its importance, particularly for Palestine?

Obviously, Azerbaijan is located in a very important geopolitical region. But the relationship goes beyond geopolitics, dating back hundreds of years. Azerbaijan and Palestine share history and culture as well as challenges. Azerbaijan has regained its independence, but the Palestine remains occupied. In the long term, Palestine can benefit from Azerbaijan's geopolitical role.

The relationship goes beyond geopolitics, dating back hundreds of years. Azerbaijan and Palestine share history and culture as well as challenges.

Strategically located on the crossroads of the historical Silk Road, Azerbaijan connects and bridges West and East. This location potentially provides enhanced opportunities for cooperation, particularly in the field of trade, allowing for shorter routes to the East and Far East. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has been exposed over centuries to multicultural influences from both the West and the East. While deeply proud of its Islamic and oriental heritage, it has been open to embracing and connecting with different cultures. Thus, while providing an excellent example of coexistence between different cultures and followers of different religious denominations,

Azerbaijan has also been a very good representative of Eastern culture to the rest of the world. This helps lay the foundations for constructive cooperation in the wider context between the East and the West. I think from the Palestinian perspective, this is very positive, as Palestine is secular in its outlook, and is a tolerant and inclusive multi-confessional society, just like the Azerbaijan society. We have had some successes, but of course the reality is that Palestine is a state under occupation. This geopolitical reality provides Azerbaijan with an opportunity to bring people and cultures together.

Ambassador: “My family and I feel comfortable in Azerbaijan”

4. How do you think the Azerbaijani society feels toward Palestine, and do you feel settled here?

I feel very at home and comfortable. Azerbaijani society is generous, gracious, welcome, and very supportive of Palestine. This is palpable. My family and I feel very comfortable here. While travelling across Azerbaijan, people generally met us with warmth, and they make you feel very comfortable. You never feel out of place. This reflects the deep-rooted tradition of Azerbaijani hospitality and warmth of character.

5. How do you think Azerbaijani society regards Palestine, and how do they see Palestine?

Azerbaijani society is very supportive of the Palestinian people in the challenges that they face on a daily basis, emanating from the ongoing Israeli occupation - which, as you may know, is the longest occupation in modern history. The support of Azerbaijani society expresses itself in different, tangible ways, reflecting genuine empathy and sympathy.

Azerbaijan is a rising star in the Muslim world

6. How would you describe the position of Islamic world on the state of Palestine? Are there different positions, or is there solidarity in regard to the situation in Palestine?

All countries are different due to the uniqueness of each country. Thus, naturally differences may naturally arise among them on diverse issues. Differences rise even from within members of

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the same family. This has also been the case for Muslim states since the beginning of the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Muslims and Muslim countries, in general, may have different views. But, there is one issue that they will never differ upon, which is their support for the independence of Palestine. There could be differences sometimes between Muslim countries, but when the question of Palestine is put on the table, everybody agrees on this issue. The solidarity within Muslim countries on the question of Palestine is tangible, and of course, we always look to enhance this support.

7. How would you evaluate the status of Azerbaijan, particularly in the Islamic world?

Azerbaijan is a rising star in the Muslim world. In a short period of time, the country has managed to gain respect and appreciation within the Muslim world, due to its success in terms of the rapid development of the country as well as its principled policies and pragmatic approach in tackling a multitude of issues. Azerbaijan has managed to move forward steadily while asserting the stability and the security of the country during very difficult era.

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be solved on the basis of international law

8. What can you say about Palestinian perceptions of and the Palestinian position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict? Do you think there is or should be solidarity among Muslim countries regarding this conflict?

The Palestinian perspective on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is that the four UN resolutions, which basically represent international law, should be implemented. The borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan should be maintained within their internationally recognized outline. I think Azerbaijan is successfully pursuing a peace process through the OSCE Minsk Group, which I think is the best approach to resolve the conflict peacefully on the basis of international law. I think the existence of the solidarity on that issue is important among Muslim countries. It is important in the context of the Muslim world as well as the international community to have unified conviction to resolve differences and conflicts peacefully and in accordance with international law by adhering to its spirit and letter collectively not selectively, which is essential prerequisite to safeguarding and nurturing human civilization.

9. What kind of role can Azerbaijan play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Since the very beginning of its independence, Azerbaijan has provided unwavering support to Palestine in all international fora and organizations, as well as hosting multiple of conferences in Baku on the question of Palestine and in support of the establishment of the independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. In addition, Azerbaijan has provided financial aid Azerbaijan at various junctures. It has been playing a very important role in supporting Palestine. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has its own relations with Israel. This could help bring Israel's to attention the importance of resolving the Palestinian issue. Therefore, Baku's relations with Israel could potentially have positive influence on Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Donal Trump's decision on Jerusalem will boost solidarity of the OIC countries

10. Recently, the U.S. President Donald Trump made a statement that the U.S. recognized Jerusalem as a capital of Israel. This caused a political/diplomatic disarrays and a negative reflection in the world, notably from the Muslim states. In your opinion, why Donald Trump made such a critical step? Whether it is associated with the U.S's internal dynamics or foreign policy confusion?

I think it has to do with both, first, to garner and maintain support from the core of his grassroots base - the Evangelicals, who many of them would happily describe themselves as Christian Zionists, - not to be confused with the majority of Christian denominations which don't subscribe to this way of thinking and oppose it. Second, a staggering lack of appreciation of the well-defined and recognized historical, cultural and political factors that influence and guide international issues.

11. Following D.Trump took the office, his unpredictable steps in the U.S. foreign policy had been criticized even by its closer allies. These steps, are believed, weakened the U.S. position in the Middle East, while strengthened the position of its rival. Thus, in your opinion, how it will affect the U.S.'s reputation and Middle East policy?

I think Trump's declaration has dealt the U.S.'s reputation; as that was a major blow for them in the Middle East and the wider world, and weakened their position, as they

I think Trump's declaration has dealt the U.S.'s reputation; as that was a major blow for them in the Middle East and the wider world, and weakened their position

would like to present themselves as a serious super power guided by fairness and the rule of international law and institutions. Whereas, they now abundantly understood and transparently palpable to all that they do not practice what they preach, when they violate international law in such flagrant and impulsive fashion against the will of the rest of the international community. Regrettably in my opinion, it doesn't bode well for the US, the Middle East and the rest of humanity and the world.

12. After this decision, the Muslim states reacted in a negative way to that. In response to the decision of D.Trump, the OIC member states have gathered in Istanbul, where they adopted a resolution condemning the decision. Do you think whether Trump's decision consolidated the solidarity among the Muslim states?

I think we saw a rare and a spectacular collective indignation and condemnation from all member states of the OIC against Trump's declaration, due to the reasons I mentioned above, and added to it the perceived insult by all members of the organization, as Trump has shown total disrespect to the cultural and spiritual feelings of 1.8 billion Muslims. I hope this will enhance a concerted sense of purpose to cooperate in all fields for progress and development between all OIC states, and to continue the work and cooperation with the rest of the world to serve all humanity by building bridges and establishing universal sense of justice, peace, fairness to all, as well as respect of international law.

Concluding remarks (by CI Team)

Azerbaijan supports the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of two-state principles with recognition of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. In solidarity with Palestine, Azerbaijan had attended at the extraordinary summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Istanbul on December 13, 2017. In support of Palestine and its capital the holy city of Al-Quds (East Jerusalem), Azerbaijan had hosted many conferences in the past and had contributed \$5 million for the development of the holy city's infrastructure. Palestine has always stood next to Azerbaijan in supporting Baku's stance for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its territorial integrity.

Islam and the Post-Cold War West: Necessity of an International Solidarity in the Remaking of a New World Order

Anar Naghiyev*

One of the objectives of Islamic studies is to research the influence and role of Islam in global politics. Measuring the extent of Islamic influence in foreign policy implementation is as important as identifying religious identities and how those identities are manifested; for instance in acts of terrorism. Islam has been a culture for millions of people for centuries, and Koran does not promote violence or aggressiveness. Similar to other religions, it is unique in essence and inclusive in character. Thus Islam should not be associated with terror, anger, or hatred. Nor should Islamophobia be allowed to become mainstream, a frequent, at times common, phenomenon in the West. The global fight against terrorism should uphold the safety of ordinary Muslims; accordingly, Islamophobia should be prioritized as a global threat. In light of these concerns, this article critically examines the way Islam is dealt with in international politics in the post-Cold War era.

Keywords: Cold War, Islam, Solidarity, World Order, Islamophobia, Muslim



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Introduction

In the post-Cold War era, religion and culture have become key fault lines in international politics, or the new world order as it often called. Dozens of conflicts, human catastrophes and interventions around the world have been explained or politically justified by the perpetrators as part of a tacit cultural war among

Huntington's blueprint of the world order is in fact just one of many theoretical frameworks of the struggle for global dominance through cultural, ideological and other differences. The most common of these depicts Islam as the nemesis of the US in world politics and as an impediment to the world peace.

civilizations, implicitly confirming Samuel Huntington's controversial "clash of civilizations" thesis. Huntington presents the post-Cold War period as an era of civilizations fighting over their cultural differences. In this regard, the borders of the Islamic civilization are considered to be the most troublesome, harbingers of potential conflicts between the Islamic world and the Western and Orthodox civilizations¹. Huntington's blueprint of the world order is in fact just one of many theoretical frameworks of the struggle for global dominance through cultural, ideological and other differences. The most common of these depicts Islam as the nemesis of the US in world politics and as an impediment to the world peace. Against this representation of cultures and civilizations, this paper

suggests that contemporary debates on Islam's role and place in formation of the so-called new world order could offer different outlooks, and that Islam's depiction as the post-Cold War nemesis of the US for power and dominance in the international system.

The arch enemy: a requirement for America's global dominance

The liberal world view of the early 1990s anticipated that the world was on the edge of establishing more liberal governments, and that a more peaceful international system was on the horizon. By contrast, realist perspectives continued to define cooperation and peaceful coexistence as periodically challenged by anarchy and conflict. Proving the latter perspective correct, unfortunately, "new wars"², unresolved armed conflicts, and international terror have resulted in the deaths of millions of civilians, regime failures, the proliferation of proxy wars, and greater violence. The

1 S.P.Huntington. The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order. 1996.

2 "New wars" offer to differentiate traditional wars from the post-cold war period armed conflicts. The differences range from the parties of the modern wars to their character, economy, tactics, methods, etc.

year 2016 was one of the most violent since the end of the Cold War: the Uppsala Conflict Database Program identified 49 armed conflicts in 2016, causing more than 102,000 fatalities. The post-cold war period's internationalized conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan had the highest number of casualty levels globally³. It was a requirement of the superpower's (US) character to drag itself into three post-Cold War armed conflicts: as a leading Western ally to counter international terror (Afghanistan); fighting against dictators (Iraq); fighting against radical religious groups (ISIS).

This level of military involvement also entailed the declaration of dominance in the global power system. The collapse of the USSR changed the balance of the global power system, and the US emerged as the only superpower. At the same time, other states have been challenging the new US-led status quo⁴. The rising economy and global interests of China are accompanied by Russia's challenges to the Western world order, while India could become an ally of the two former nations.

Nevertheless, Islam is emerging as an even more serious challenge to the US-led world order⁵; its geography span and the political will of the Muslim countries are key aspects of this rising influence. In a world of shifting geopolitical power centers, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Islam's role is also growing, positioning it as the archenemy of the United States.

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As part of the positioning of Islam as the nemesis of the US, media outlets and political groups focused on terrorism as a specific tool of Islam: "acts of terrorism and suicide operations have now entered into the Western vocabulary of Muslim actions in the context of war"⁶. The impact of these actions is twofold; on one hand they undermine the true concept of Islam by fuelling Islamophobic attitudes. On the other, they directly play into the hands of militant groups, like ISIS or al Qaida, which use very similar tactics to attract US attention and enlarge their own battlefields in order to gain political and economic dividends. The

3 PRIO. Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2016. Conflict Trends. 02/2017.

4 Interests of rising regional powers like China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia will demand acquiring more involvement in decision making on regional affairs.

5 This does not refer only to local populations in the Islamic world, but to all Muslims living across the world.

6 G.Fuller. 2010.P. 320.

al Qaida ‘7-step plan’, the first stage of which was to ‘provoke the US into declaring war on the Islamic world, thereby resulting in the ‘awakening’ of Muslims’ by 2003, was a prime example⁷. In terms of misrepresenting Islam as a threat, for example, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) report identified political Islam as one of the threats to international security, comparing it to fascism and communism, and underlining ‘political Islam’ as a party to conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq⁸. In this regard, Western scholarship, unfortunately, has tended to treat ‘political Islamist’ groups as representative of Muslim peoples, Muslim governments, and Islam itself.

However, this explanation of the post-Cold War world order does not necessarily endorse to Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis. We rather agree that the “hostility of the West towards Islam does not stem from the clash of civilizations, but from the need of the West to have an indispensable enemy in order to affirm and define its own identity. This explains why, since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Western strategists have continuously discussed the question of what, after communism, will be the new enemy of the West?”⁹

Islamophobia: a zero sum game

The UK-based Runnymede Trust’s 1997 report ‘Islamophobia: a challenge for us all’ spoke of how Islamophobia, ‘the shorthand way of referring to the dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike all or most Muslims - was necessitated by a new phenomenon that needed naming’¹⁰. The foundation has annually assessed the situation and social conditions of British Muslims since 1991, including the complexities after 9/11. However, in reality, the main targets of Islamophobia are Muslim people living in the West. Therefore, this issue should be addressed throughout the West.

‘Enlarging the landscape’ of Islam is a result of the ‘forced

7 A. Hosken. *Empire of Fear*. Inside the Islamic State. 2016. P. 16

8 PRIO. *Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2016*. Conflict Trends. 02/2017.

9 W. Shadid & P.S. van Koningsveld. *The Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions. Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: The Position of Islam in the European Union*. Leuven, Peeters, 2002. P180

10 C. Allen. *The ‘first’ decade of Islamophobia: 10 years of the Runnymede Trust report “Islamophobia: a challenge for us all”*. 2007. P 6.

processes'. The movement of Muslim immigrants from the East to the West results from a diverse set of push factors including unemployment, political instability/conflict, human rights issues, economic conditions, etc, not dissimilar to other waves of migration. But the mass migration of Muslims to Europe has also been caused by wars and armed conflicts. The US military intervention in Iraq, civil war in Syria, and the international military campaign against ISIS in the Middle East have created a huge number of new migrants (refugees) to Europe – the safest region in the neighborhood. Europe's appeal also derives from its political and economic stability. The fact that Western countries have undertaken 'a global mission' of protecting universal values, and are the leaders in the international war against terrorism has rebranded Europe as a protector, and makes it even more attractive for refugees.

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Nevertheless, similar to any other minority groups, Muslim communities compose an integrative part of the host nations, and must be treated equally. The changing attitude towards immigrants endangers the situation in any country, as seen in terror attacks committed by Muslims in Europe. Fuller notes that major attacks (Dutch writer killing, Holland, 2004; London underground attacks, 2005; France riots, 2007) were committed by European Muslims¹¹, citizens of European nations. Fuller questions whether there is something "different" about Islam that puts Muslim immigrants into a special category¹². Based on this phrasing and way of thinking, Muslim immigrants are vulnerable; there are sometimes deliberate associations with violence and terror. Muslims usually come from war-torn regions - wars in which the West is involved, and it is "easier" to develop a negative stereotype, as if they carry all the burdens and problems of conflict with them, and may endanger the recipient societies. This perception contributes to negative stereotyping, and potentially hostile attitudes towards Muslims.

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According to a 2008 Gallup survey conducted in Muslim majority countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Mali,

11 G. Fuller. 2010. P 215-216

12 G. Fuller. 2010. P 216

Mauritania, one in four believed that Muslims living in US, France, Britain, and China were not treated fairly¹³. Two years later, another survey looked at treatment of members of different religions treated Muslims in the US. The 2010 report found that ‘about half of Americans from major religious groups believed that the most Americans were prejudiced towards Muslim Americans (especially 66% of Jewish Americans and 60% of Muslim Americans said so)’ and 48% of surveyed ‘American

Islamophobia features on national political agendas, most notoriously with President Trump’s 2017 policy on banning Muslims from certain countries from travelling to the US, and establishes negative and fearful image of Muslims, sowing the seeds of hatred and fear.

Muslims personally had experienced racial and religious discrimination’ in 2009¹⁴.

In his book ‘World without Islam’, Fuller seeks to show the unacceptable presentation of Islam in some Western societies. Islamophobia features on national political agendas, most notoriously with President Trump’s 2017 policy on banning Muslims from certain countries from travelling to the US, and establishes negative and fearful image of Muslims, sowing the seeds of hatred and fear.

In such societies, the fear, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes results in bias, discrimination, marginalization, and the exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life¹⁵. Tariq Ramadan, a leading European Muslim, warns against the ‘easy pitfall of Islamizing problems that is, identifying problems of Muslim community as somehow linked to Islam’¹⁶.

Islamophobia, like any other type of discrimination, will not bring victory to any of the sides. It constitutes a human rights violation, and can never be beneficial to any society or community; it breaches the very basic rights by enabling discrimination based on race, belief, and ethnic identity. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s Plan of Action for 2025 stipulates that ‘the rise of Islamophobia has subjected Muslims to racial profiling and discrimination, negative stereotyping and stigmatization. As a result, Muslims, both indigenous and immigrants have developed feelings of

Islamophobia, like any other type of discrimination, will not bring victory to any of the sides.

13 GALLUP. Islamophobia: understanding anti-Muslim sentiment in the west. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>

14 GALLUP. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>

15 GALLUP. Islamophobia: understanding anti-Muslim sentiment in the west. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>

16 G. Fuller. 2010. P. 217

insecurity in their daily lives and face denial of their basic human rights'¹⁷.

Islamophobia seriously damages social integration processes. Common systems of values and identities may fail, threatening the integrity of nation-states. It goes beyond Islam, and Muslims, affecting the interests and lives of non-Muslims too. Pressure on identities may lead to politicization of immigrants for 'stricter policies to ensure their safety', which might endanger the stability within the society. On the other hand, Islamophobia also becomes an easy tool in serving the interests of terrorists too. Islamophobic attitudes represent a clash of values, such as between liberal and Islamic values. Like other zero-sum game models, Islamophobia does not (cannot) guarantee victory to any party. Islamophobia endangers the true concept of Islam and its values. It also undermines basic liberal values.

Hence, Islamophobia is a complex issue, and should be addressed through cooperation on local (intra-state), bilateral (interstate), and global levels. Organizations like the Islamic Organization for Cooperation and the UN Alliance of Civilizations have been raising concerns about Islamophobia, but international pressure to prevent Islamophobia need to be coordinated; the problem needs to be internationalized.

In looking at the role of Islam in the new world order, one may conclude that attempts to reduce Islam to a political radical ideology, and endeavors to reframe a billion and a half Muslim as terrorists, serves the political and military actions in Middle East and the new proxy wars, where superpowers can demonstrate their global dominance. This reframing is driven by the need for an enemy against whom other parties can unite.

Nevertheless, combating Islamophobia is not the job of one or two states. It requires coordinated actions, both locally and internationally. It requires Islamic solidarity, which should not be limited to Muslim nations. The idea behind Islamic solidarity should be to preserve and promote real Islamic values- most importantly, peace and equality. Islamic solidarity will improve integration

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17 OIC/SUM-13/2016/POA-Final. The OIC - 2025 PROGRAMME OF ACTION. Article 17.P 6.

and cooperation. Moreover, a multi-party approach is required, bringing together Muslims and non-Muslims to combat these challenges. Western Muslims need to ensure they integrate into the local societies, including participation in political, social and cultural processes. Concomitantly, we need to ensure that European nations continue their initiatives to promote local Muslim groups through encouraging their political integration. In general, the role of Western nations in combating Islamophobia cannot be underestimated. International cooperation should be mobilized to fight this negative phenomenon.

Conclusion

This paper first of all examined the remaking of the post-Cold War world order and the role of Islam. The end of the Cold War ensured a shift in global power politics by changing the structure of the international system. With the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the United States found itself in a unique leading position within a community of rising nations, such as China, Russia, and India. Yet, the US has chosen to depict Islam as a threat to global order as a way in which to bolster its own foreign policy priorities, with terrible consequences. This has served the goals of radical religious groups and helped them to mobilize. Secondly, the paper examined how this process has nurtured Islamophobia, enabling it to become a mainstream attitude. There are millions of Muslims around the world who do not promote violence or aggressiveness; as a creed Islam should not be associated with terror, anger, and hatred. Islamophobic attitudes must not become a mainstream attitude.

The paper suggests that the global fight against terrorism should take responsibility for the well being of ordinary Muslims. Islamophobia should be treated as a global threat and accorded international significance. Moreover, international cooperation is needed, going beyond Islamic solidarity and involving both Muslim and Western nations. Ultimately, the concept of Islamic solidarity is not a relational system composed exclusively of Muslim nations, but rather an act of international solidarity to protect and preserve Islamic as well as universal values as a foundation for better cooperation and further development.

Challenges to Islamic Solidarity: The Case of Turkish HNGOs

Pınar Akpınar*

This study investigates the role of Islamic solidarity in the conceptions, motivations, and practices of Turkish HNGOs. While Islamic solidarity plays an important role in the conceptions, motivations and practices of these HNGOs, it is, at times, limited by their strong sense of affiliation with Turkey and Turkish patriotism. In this sense, Islamic solidarity can be downplayed when there is a stronger sense of national affiliation. Furthermore, the sustainability of these HNGOs, and therefore the extent to which they are able to extend Islamic solidarity, is dependent upon the convergence of their ideas and interests with Turkey's current government. In a similar vein, it remains under question whether these HNGOs would feel the same level of patriotism under a different government. As such, the support they enjoy from the government and the affiliation they feel with Turkey feed into one another. Moreover, Islamic solidarity offered by Turkish HNGOs could be challenged by their overreliance on the precarious space provided for them by the current Turkish government.

Keywords: Islamic solidarity, Turkish humanitarian non-governmental organizations, patriotism, humanitarianism, aid



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Introduction

The idea of Islamic solidarity is as old as Islam itself, which instructs its followers to care for fellow Muslims and construct a strong Islamic community, or *Umma*, based on Qur'anic texts and the teachings of Prophet Mohammed, or the *Sunna*.¹ Solidarity, in this sense, refers to 'the group liability of joint debtors,'² and is regarded necessary for group cohesion and the continuation of order. While the concept was originally used to explain solidarity within small communal groups such as villages or tribes where daily, face-to-face interactions were more common, technological advances and globalization has expanded the applicability of the concept to encompass larger groups that may be geographically scattered. As such, 'solidarity may reign in small communities, combative political movements or in entire societies, even the whole humanity.'³ In a sense, the evolution of the concept corresponds with that of group identity, which can now exceed the geographical boundaries of a person's original homeland.

One of the most common tools of solidarity is humanitarian diplomacy, which entails 'raising awareness, negotiating, and mobilizing appropriate humanitarian aid in emergencies,' by state or non-state actors.⁴ Until recently, the global scene of humanitarian diplomacy was dominated mainly by Western actors. Recent years have witnessed the rise of peripheral countries as donors, which *inter alia* enabled them to become more visible and influential in the global theatre of humanitarianism. Several countries from the Islamic world have also made the shift from recipients of aid to donors, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia or United Arab Emirates.⁵ Their new donor status corresponds with their domestic economic development and desire to open up to new geographies or become more influential in their existing areas of influence. These countries have become active in the field of

1 Mayke, K. (2008) 'Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad: Islamic Solidarity in the Age of Neo-liberalism,' *Africa Today*, 54(3), p.4.

2 Arto Laitinen and Anne Birgitta Pessi (2015) 'Solidarity: Theory and Practice. An Introduction,' in Arto Laitinen and Anne Birgitta Pessi (eds.), *Solidarity: Theory and Practice*, London: Lexington Books, p.1.

3 Laitinen and Birgitta Pessi, 'Solidarity,' p.1.

4 Regnier, P. (2011) 'The Emerging Concept of Humanitarian Diplomacy: Identification of a Community of Practice and Prospects for International Recognition,' *International Review of the Red Cross*, 93(884), p.1213.

5 Development Initiatives, Arab Donors and Humanitarian Aid, July 28, 2011, <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Arab-donors-humanitarian-aid.pdf>

humanitarian diplomacy via both state and non-state agents.

As a consequence, humanitarian non-governmental organizations (HNGOs), alongside states, from the Islamic world have become increasingly visible as agents of transnational Islamic solidarity. However, scholarly work on Islamic HNGOs is still scarce, and the literature has so far been dominated by work on Western HNGOs.⁶ As also underlined by Kaag, one of the reasons for this may be ‘that the concepts of NGOs and ‘civil society’ are part of the neoliberal project’ which relies largely on Western conceptualizations of liberal democracy and development.⁷ From this limited perspective, peripheral countries are at best the targets of humanitarianism. As such, there is need for alternative discussions and more work on non-Western agents in the field of humanitarian diplomacy.

According to May, solidarity is a combination of ‘conscious group identification; bonds of sentiment; interest in the group’s well-being; shared values and beliefs; and readiness to show moral support.’⁸ In this view, people’s identification with a group and their enthusiasm to act for the group’s well-being are the main components of solidarity. As such, solidarity is, in a way, a social construct, built on how people identify themselves with a group, which may vary significantly based on their needs, interests, and values. Since identity is a socially, culturally, and historically constructed concept, people often identify with more than one group based on their age, gender, ethnicity, race or religion.⁹ In a similar vein, the value accorded to each of these groups may differ based on one’s perceptions and priorities, and the strength of each association.

6 For a few exceptions see, Aras, B. and Akpınar, P. (2015) ‘The Role of Humanitarian NGOs in Turkey’s Peacebuilding,’ *International Peacekeeping*, 22(3), pp.230-247; Tabak, H. (2015) ‘Broadening the Nongovernmental Humanitarian Mission: The IHH and Mediation,’ *Insight Turkey*, 17(3), pp.193-215; Çelik, N. and İşeri, E. (2016) ‘Islamically oriented humanitarian NGOs in Turkey: AKP foreign policy parallelism,’ *Turkish Studies*, 17(3), pp. 429-448; Mayke (2008) ‘Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad,’ pp.3-18; Kaag (2007) ‘Aid, Umma and Politics: Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad,’ in Otayek, R. and Soares, B. (eds.), *Muslim Politics in Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Petersen, M. J. (2014) *For Humanity or For the Umma? Aid and Islam in Transnational Muslim NGOs*, London: Hurst Publishers; Petersen, M. J. (2012) ‘Islamizing Aid: Transnational Muslim NGOs After 9.11,’ *Voluntas*, 23(1), pp.126–155; De Cordier, B. (2009) ‘Faith-based aid, globalisation and the humanitarian frontline: an analysis of Western-based Muslim aid organisations,’ *Disasters*, 33(4), pp.608-628.

7 Kaag, ‘Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad,’ p.4.

8 May, L. (1996) *The Socially Responsive Self: Social Theory and Professional Ethics*, Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, p.44.

9 Wendt, A. (1992) ‘Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics,’ *International Organization*, 46(2), pp.397-398.

Relying on primary data derived through field research conducted with four transnational Turkish HNGOs and secondary data collected from the websites of the HNGOs, reports, scholarly work, newspapers and the social media, this study investigates the extent to which Islamic solidarity plays a role in the conceptions and motivations of Turkish transnational humanitarian non-governmental organizations (HNGOs). The research focuses on four transnational Turkish HNGOs including IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Doctors Worldwide, Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Foundation and Deniz Feneri Foundation. All four of these HNGOs are fully independent, and are responsible for the largest international operations among independent, Turkish HNGOs with religious motivations.¹⁰ The study argues that while Islamic solidarity plays an important role in the conceptions and motivations of these HNGOs, this idea is at times limited by their strong group affinity with Turkey and Turkish patriotism. In order to elaborate upon this hypothesis, the paper first examines the emergence of Turkey's transnational HNGOs and the role that Islamic solidarity plays in their conceptions, motivations and activities. It then moves on to discuss the challenges to Islamic solidarity of these HNGOs.

The emergence of Turkey's transnational HNGOs

The emergence of transnational Turkish HNGOs dates back to the 1980s,¹¹ as in other Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Sudan.¹² The Afghan resistance played a particularly important role in the emergence of transnational HNGOs from the Islamic world.¹³ In addition to the Afghan resistance, other conflicts such as the Chechen wars, the Bosnian and Kosovar crises, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have also been catalysts in the emergence of Turkish HNGOs. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of various conflicts in post-Soviet countries were also significant bringing aid into

In addition to the Afghan resistance, other conflicts such as the Chechen wars, the Bosnian and Kosovar crises, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have also been catalysts in the emergence of Turkish HNGOs.

10 TIKA (n.d.) *Turkish Development Assistance Report 2014*, p.54.

11 Özkan, M. (2012) 'Transnational Islam, Immigrant NGOs and Poverty Alleviation: The Case of the IGMG,' *Journal of International Development*, 24(4), p.469.

12 Kaag, 'Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad,' p.10.

13 *Ibid.*, p.4.

these areas.¹⁴ Many of these countries were home to significant Muslim or Turkic populations and were former Ottoman lands, which contributed to Turkey's sense of affiliation.

With respect to domestic triggers, while the 1980 military coup put pressure on civil society organizations, the post-coup period witnessed the acceleration in terms of civilian mobilization.¹⁵ The Turkish society's proactive response to the massive 1999 earthquake in Turkey also played a significant role in the emergence of several new HNGOs. A number of HNGOs were established as a response to the earthquake.¹⁶ As also underlined by Özerdem and Jacoby, the earthquake significantly expanded the maneuvering space for civilian actors.¹⁷ In this view, the earthquake was indeed perceived as a challenge to the state's top-down approach towards disaster management. Traditionally, the Turkish state has followed a top-down approach to disaster management, which overlooks the empowerment of the local and fails to encourage local agencies to resolve existing problems.

During the earthquake, the relief activities of HNGOs or other NGOs in general were perceived as a threat to state authority and an indication of its inability to cope with the consequences of the earthquake. Furthermore, the government of Bülent Ecevit feared that increasing civil society activity could 'allow other political organizations – particularly the broadly Islamist Fazilet Party – to secure electoral gains.'¹⁸ The fact that the earthquake happened only two years after the so-called 'post-modern military coup' of 1997 against the government of Necmettin Erbakan - with its Islamic roots - helped cultivate these fears. However, despite certain restrictions upon NGOs, the state eventually had to permit more NGO involvement, though still on a limited scale, due to its own inability to cope with the worsening situation caused by the earthquake. This also triggered a change in public perceptions of the state. The earthquake, *inter alia*, gave rise to a strong sense of agency among Turkish people and created an

14 Aras and Akpınar, 'The Role of Humanitarian NGOs in Turkey's Peacebuilding,' pp.230-247.

15 İcduygu, A. (2011) 'Interacting Actors: The EU and Civil Society in Turkey,' *South European Society and Politics*, 16(3), pp.382-383; Toprak, B. (1995) 'Civil Society in Turkey,' in Norton, A. R. (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Leiden: EJ Brill.

16 Bianet (2002) 27 *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşunun Deprem Çağrısı*. August 15, Available at: <http://bianet.org/kadin/cevre--3/12468-27-sivil-toplum-kurulusunun-deprem-cagrisi> (Accessed: 2 November 2017)

17 Özerdem, A. and Jacoby, T. (2006) *Disaster Management and Civil Society: Earthquake Relief in Japan, Turkey and India*, London; New York: I.B. Tauris, p.59.

18 Ibid., p.66.

environment conducive to the emergence of several new NGOs.

The year 1999 marked another significant milestone for the expansion of NGO activity, due to the beginning of Turkey's EU candidacy process.¹⁹ In 2002, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power with promises to improve Turkey's democratic credentials and expand civic space. The following years witnessed an upsurge in the number of NGOs operating in several fields, including the humanitarian sector. The increasing level of prosperity in Turkey as a result of its growing economy also resulted in a rise in charitable activities. Globalization also played an important role, expanding people's perception of *umma* and Islamic solidarity. Factors such as increasing access to the Internet, social media, and international travel led to a growing awareness among Turkish people regarding problems in distant geographies. While in the past, people used to look to their immediate neighborhoods or cities, today, they reach out to the needy in distant geographies with one click, and are even able to make donations online.²⁰

While Turkish transnational HNGOs started to emerge in 1980s, their number has increased significantly in recent years in line

While Turkish transnational HNGOs started to emerge in 1980s, their number has increased significantly in recent years in line with Turkey's foreign policy activism and rise as a donor country.

with Turkey's foreign policy activism and rise as a donor country. The AK Party government's vision entailed a multi-dimensional and multi-track foreign policy aiming to be active in multiple geographies in various fields. This was only possible with the expansion of the space for non-state actors such as businesses or NGOs. Turkish humanitarian NGOs now operate in a number of regions, stretching from Turkey's immediate neighborhood to

Africa and East Asia. They pursue a range of activities including emergency assistance and medical relief, and mid-to-short term development projects such as building infrastructure and investing in social and human capital.²¹ In addition to relief, Turkish HNGOs also pursue advocacy work and, recently, there have been mediation initiatives by the IHH in a few cases.²²

19 Kadioğlu, A. (2005) 'Civil Society, Islam and Democracy in Turkey: A Study of Three Islamic NGOs,' *The Muslim World*, 95(1), pp. 23-43.

20 Akpınar, P. (2017) 'Turkey and India as Global Development and Humanitarian Actors,' Conference Report, Istanbul Policy Center, October, p.11.

21 Aras and Akpınar, 'The Role of Humanitarian NGOs in Turkey's Peacebuilding,' pp.230-247.

22 Akpınar, P. (2016) 'The limits of mediation in the Arab Spring: the case of Syria,' *Third World Quarterly*, 37(12), p.2290; Tabak, H (2015) 'Broadening the Nongovernmental Humanitarian Mission: The IHH and Mediation,' *Insight Turkey*, 17(3), pp.193-215.

Although Turkey's rise as a donor country had begun before the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis has played a particularly important role in this process. The crisis erupted unexpectedly on Turkey's doorstep. Turkey was faced with a great humanitarian catastrophe, and has so far absorbed more than 3.3 million²³ refugees and spent more than 12.1 billion USD. It is now hosting the largest number of refugees in the world and was named as the 'most generous' donor in 2016 by the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report.²⁴ The need for burden-sharing in the Syrian crisis has also shaped the state's position towards Turkish HNGO involvement. According to 2015 statistics from Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Turkey spent about 5.1 billion USD on aid in 2015, of which about 475 million USD was contributed by HNGOs.²⁵

Islamic solidarity and Turkish HNGOs

The idea of Islamic solidarity is important for Turkish HNGOs in their work. For instance, although they do not discriminate among the recipients during the actual distribution of the aid, they do tend to lean towards communities with Muslim, Turkish or Ottoman affiliations during the planning stage. This is not to say that they do not ever deliver aid to other communities. However, the majority of Turkish aid targets communities that have relation to Turkey. As an example, in 2013, Palestine, Tunisia, Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan were the top recipient countries of Turkish aid.²⁶ As such, the idea of *umma* and a self-imposed responsibility to reach out to fellow Muslims are significant motivating factors for Turkish HNGOs. When interviewed, a number of Turkish NGOs underlined Islamic solidarity as an important motive. Many HNGOs also refer to Turkey as the heir of the Islamic caliphate, according to which it has a responsibility to protect and, when necessary, to speak out for the *umma*. For instance, according to a representative of IHH, the organization extends aid 'worthily representing the Ottoman

Many HNGOs also refer to Turkey as the heir of the Islamic caliphate, according to which it has a responsibility to protect and, when necessary, to speak out for the umma.

23 UNCHR (2017) *Turkey Statistics*, Last update: 30 June. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/tr/unhcr-turkiye-istatistikleri> (Accessed 18 August 2017)

24 AFAD (2017) *The Most Generous Country in the World: Turkey*, June 21. Available at: <https://www.afad.gov.tr/en/19320/The-Most-Generous-Country-in-the-World-Turkey> (Accessed 24 October 2017).

25 TİKA (n.d.) *Turkish Development Assistance Report 2015*.

26 TİKA (n.d.) *Turkish Development Assistance Report 2013*, p.20.

Empire and Turkey.²⁷

The responsibility to stand up for fellow Muslims is manifested in advocacy work, which is seen as complementary to aid. One of the most popular examples of advocacy by Turkish HNGOs is that of IHH during the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident, when the flotilla tried to violate the embargo on Gaza.²⁸ Another recent example is the advocacy activities pursued for the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. For instance, several Turkish HNGOs used social media to advocate for the rights of Rohingya Muslims, and collected donations to deliver to the Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh during the crisis.²⁹ In their rhetoric, these HNGO often emphasize the importance of supporting the ‘oppressed’ and the ‘most disadvantaged’ communities. These two criteria are often used when referring to Muslim communities. According to the HNGOs, this is ‘natural’ given that Muslims are often the most oppressed and disadvantaged communities. Advocacy, in this regard, is seen as an important instrument of Islamic solidarity. Referring to their advocacy work a representative of IHH explains:

Islamic identity is also an important tool for Turkish HNGOs to differentiate themselves from their Western counterparts, who often face anti-Western rhetoric as a result of colonial histories.

‘When the Prophet Mohammed advised his followers, ‘Help the oppressed and the oppressor,’ his followers asked in surprise,

‘We already help the oppressed but how can we help the oppressor?’ he answered, ‘By stopping his cruelty.’ This is why we promote human rights alongside delivering humanitarian aid. The manmade disasters can be much worse than the natural ones.’³⁰

Islamic identity is also an important tool for Turkish HNGOs to differentiate themselves from their Western counterparts, who often face anti-Western rhetoric as a result of colonial histories. As a representative of IHH outlines, Turkey’s Islamic identity plays a positive role in opening up

27 Interviewee II (2016), IHH, Personal interview, Istanbul, 30 May.

28 Booth, R. (2010) ‘Israeli attack on Gaza flotilla sparks international outrage,’ *The Guardian*, May 31.

29 Deniz Feneri Derneği (2017) ‘#Arakan’da çocuk olmak acıyı küçük yaşta tatmak demektir. Açlığın, yokluğun ve acının yaşandığı bir ülkede kardeşine umut olmak ister misin?’ 30 October, 16:51, Tweet; İHH Bağcılar Kadın (2017) ‘Dünya #arakan a sessiz kalsa da! Yüreği ile emeği ile sessiz kalmayan hanım gönüllülerimize ve destek veren herkese yürekten teşekkür ederiz,’ 28 October, 23:09, Tweet.

30 IHH representative (2013) Comments made at the meeting on the Role of NGOs in Turkey’s Peacebuilding, Istanbul Policy Centre, Istanbul, 3 December.

channels with African countries.³¹ In a similar vein, this was the reason Turkey was invited to take part in the mediation initiatives between the Filipino government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).³² Islamic solidarity also plays an important role in fundraising, given that charitable activities rise significantly in Turkey during religious holidays such as *Ramadan* or *Eid-al-Adha*. These are important months for pious Muslims to fulfill the religious obligation for charity; Islam requires the donation of a certain portion of annual income to people in need in the forms of ‘*zakat* ‘obligatory almsgiving’ and *sadaqa* ‘voluntary almsgiving’.³³ Some religious humanitarian activities of Turkish HNGOs include the distribution of food and meat parcels during religious holidays, distribution of copies of the Qur’an, refurbishing and opening mosques, Qur’an courses and orphanages, and providing free circumcision surgeries. As underlined by the HNGOs, these activities generate the majority of the funding since there is high demand from the donors for such deeds. For instance, helping orphans is regarded a good deed according to Islam. As such, it is often a central charitable activity among religiously sensitive circles.

Contributing to the development of poor and disadvantaged Islamic communities is another important tool of Islamic solidarity. In this view, lack of development brings poverty, which is seen as the root of all evil, and is a barrier to peace and prosperity in the Islamic world. Thus development aid with a main focus on building infrastructure is a significant part of the activities of the majority of Turkish HNGOs. This is also in line with Turkey’s domestic policy of development, which relies heavily on the construction sector. In this respect it should also be noted that Turkey’s main international markets for construction sector largely correspond with the recipient countries of its humanitarian aid. Furthermore, a closer look also reveals that the regions and countries where the NGOs operate are also the primary recipients of Turkey’s development aid. This may be due to the fact that the state and the HNGOs open up the way for one another, or motivate one another to reach out to certain areas. For instance, there is always pressure from Turkish civil society to support the Palestinian

Contributing to the development of poor and disadvantaged Islamic communities is another important tool of Islamic solidarity.

31 Interviewee II (2016), IHH, Personal interview, Istanbul, 30 May.

32 Interviewee I (2015), IHH, Personal interview, The Philippines, 28 May.

33 Kaag ‘Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad,’ p.5.

cause and Palestine was the largest recipient of assistance by spending volume of Turkish aid in 2013.³⁴

Challenges to Islamic solidarity

As argued earlier in the text, solidarity is a concept that refers to the effort people put in for the welfare of a group with which they identify. More often than not, people identify themselves with more than one group. Similarly, how they rank these groups may differ based on their perceptions and priorities, and how strongly they associate themselves with a given group. As such, group identity, and thus solidarity, is a highly subjective concept based upon the needs, interests, and values of a given subject. In the case of Turkish HNGOs, the existence of Islamic solidarity in their conceptions, motivations and practices is clearly identifiable. However, there are also certain challenges in regard to their understanding and practice of Islamic solidarity.

One of these challenges is that their understanding of Islamic solidarity can be limited by their strong sense of Turkish patriotism. As such, ‘Turkishness’ as a group identity at times

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overshadows their ‘Muslimness,’ and thus may pose a challenge to Islamic solidarity. For instance, for many of the HNGOs, ‘representing’ and ‘promoting’ Turkey abroad is of critical significance, underpinning the importance of ‘carrying the Turkish flag abroad’ and building positive associations with Turks and Turkey.

For instance, referring to the cataract operations they conduct abroad, a representative of the IHH emphasizes, ‘it’s terrific that the first thing the patients see when they open their eyes is the Turkish flag near you.’³⁵ In a similar vein, a representative of Deniz Feneri commented that when they bring disadvantaged children to Turkey as part of the ‘1001 Wishes of 1001 Children Project,’ those children return home ‘imprinting the Turkish flag onto their hearts.’³⁶ Likewise, a representative of Doctors Worldwide said, ‘We build a bridge of brotherhood in the name

34 TIKA (n.d.), Turkish Development Assistance Report 2014, p.20.

35 IHH representative (2013) Comments made at the meeting on the Role of NGOs in Turkey’s Peacebuilding, Istanbul Policy Center, Istanbul, 3 December.

36 Deniz Feneri Association representative, Comments made at the meeting on the Role of NGOs in Turkey’s Peacebuilding, Istanbul Policy Center, Istanbul, 3 December.

involvement.⁴³ This is even more evident when one compares Turkey with other emerging powers such as India or China, whose international aid is channeled primarily through government bodies at the bilateral level, and HNGO operations are limited. In a similar vein, although several HNGOs from Gulf countries operate abroad, they are established either by their respective states or state elites.⁴⁴ Interestingly, the activities of many Western HNGOs are heavily dependent on government grants and funds. As such, the independence and ‘non-governmental’ characteristics of these HNGOs are highly contentious. By contrast, most Turkish HNGOs rely on private funds and operate independently from the state.

However, despite the fact that Turkish HNGOs enjoy a certain level of independence from the state, this study argues that the Turkish state’s *laissez faire* policy is largely due to the broad convergence of ideas and interests between the government and majority of the HNGOs. In this view, the extent to which states welcome the involvement of HNGOs corresponds with their perceived foreign policy interests. With a few exceptions, the majority of Turkish HNGOs operating abroad have similar ideational backgrounds, built upon an understanding of Islamic solidarity and a strong sense of duty to promote Turkey abroad. In this regard, their motivations, choice of target areas and activities tend to correspond with the position of the Turkish government. Consequently, their activities, in a way, feed into the interests of the latter.⁴⁵ As such, there is a general convergence of ideas and interests between the Turkish government and the majority of Turkish HNGOs.

There is also an overlap in their advocacy work. The Turkish government often claims to advocate for the rights of the oppressed as part of its humanitarian diplomacy efforts. Clear examples of this include Turkey’s advocacy for Somalia, Palestine, and Bosnia, which overlap with the work of Turkish HNGOs. As such, the activities of Turkish NGOs abroad, in a way, complement the government’s aim to present itself as

With a few exceptions, the majority of Turkish HNGOs operating abroad have similar ideational backgrounds, built upon an understanding of Islamic solidarity and a strong sense of duty to promote Turkey abroad.

43 Davutoğlu, A. (2013) ‘Turkey’s Humanitarian Diplomacy: Objectives, Challenges and Prospects,’ *Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 41(6), pp.865–870; Akpınar, P. (2013) ‘Turkey’s Peacebuilding in Somalia: The Limits of Humanitarian Diplomacy,’ *Turkish Studies*, 14(4), pp.735–757.

44 Kaag ‘Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad,’ p.10.

45 Aras and Akpınar ‘The Role of Humanitarian NGOs in Turkey’s Peacebuilding,’ p.242.

a responsible actor on the international platform. Accordingly, one could argue that the level of freedom these HNGOs enjoy is significantly dependent on the convergence of their ideas and interests with those of the Turkish government. For instance, in contrast to the freedom provided for the Turkish HNGOs, recently there have been allegations of a government crackdown on foreign HNGOs operating in Turkey.⁴⁶

Conclusion

This study has examined the role of Islamic solidarity in the perceptions and motivations of Turkish HNGOs. Islamic solidarity played an important role in the emergence of these HNGOs, which took place largely in response to the ongoing suffering in the Muslim world, such as in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Palestine. The Islamic obligation to extend aid to fellow Muslims and the idea of *umma* that extends beyond one's immediate homeland is one of their main motivations. The idea of Islamic solidarity is also instrumental in collecting donations, since majority of the donors are pious Muslim. Furthermore, many of their activities - such as distributing food during religious holidays, distributing copies of the Qur'an, refurbishing and opening mosques, Qur'an courses and orphanages, and providing free circumcision surgeries - serve the well-being of fellow Muslims, and thus constitute acts of Islamic solidarity.

However, the study also proposes that while the sense of Islamic solidarity plays an important role in the perceptions and motivations of Turkish HNGOs, this is sometimes limited by their strong sense of affiliation with Turkey and Turkish patriotism. As such, the affiliation they feel with Turkey may eclipse their sense of belonging to *umma*. In this regard, the idea of Islamic solidarity can be downplayed in favor of national affiliation. Furthermore, the sustainability of their work, and therefore the extent to which they are able to extend solidarity to the Islamic world, is dependent upon the convergence of their ideas and interests with those of Turkey's current government. In a similar vein, it remains under question mark whether these HNGOs would feel the

⁴⁶ Ruby Mellen and Colum Lynch (2017), 'Inside Turkey's NGO Purge,' *Foreign Policy*, August 3.

same level of patriotism under a different government with different ideas and interests. As such, one could argue that the government support they currently enjoy and the affiliation they feel with Turkey feed into one another. Moreover, the level of solidarity they are able to extend to the Islamic is vulnerable to their reliance on the precarious space provided for them by the current Turkish government.

Reexamining the Concept of Responsibility to Protect in Light of the Mass Atrocities in Myanmar

Dr. Najiba Mustafayeva*

Despite significant achievements in the international human rights regime, millions of civilians still fall victim to unimaginable atrocities that continue to shock the conscience of humanity and threaten international peace and security. Mass murders of national, ethnic, and religious groups have continued with depressing frequency – most recently in Myanmar, where violence broke out again in late August 2017, after security forces launched an operation against Rohingya Muslims. There were more than 1,000 fatalities, and 800,000 civilians were forced to seek refuge in neighboring Bangladesh. The international community has failed to prevent gross and systematic atrocities, and the vow of “never again” risks becoming an empty promise. The question remains: when, if ever, it is appropriate for the international community to take coercive actions against a sovereign state for the purpose of protecting people at risk in that state? The challenge is the legal reconciliation of the two main jus cogens principles of international law – state sovereignty, and the need to protect the fundamental human rights of populations at risk from their own governments. The answer lies within the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and this article examines R2P through an analysis of the role of state responsibility as it relates to national sovereignty in the light of mass atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

Keywords: Rohingya, Muslims, Myanmar, Responsibility to Protect, UN



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Introduction

After the crimes of World War II, the international community vowed “never again”. World leaders agreed to complement the 1945 UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual. In the Preamble of the UN Charter, the original member countries reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and committed to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained¹.

Prior to the atrocities of World War II, which gradually transformed public thinking, it was practically unthinkable for international law to interfere with relations between states and their citizens. In this direction, milestones include the establishment of a number of institutional entities and mechanisms in the area of human rights and human security. They have included, among others, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Council. Furthermore, apart from the International Bill of Human Rights, which consists of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two 1966 International Covenants. The UN created an extensive network of special conventions, bodies and procedures to monitor adherence to the treaty obligations of member states. They are important milestones in the transition from a culture of violence to a more enlightened culture of peace. Moreover, what has gradually emerged is a parallel transition from a culture of sovereign impunity to a culture of national and international accountability².

A significant achievement in this realm was the establishment of the Nuremberg and Tokyo international tribunals after World War II, dealing with the core international crimes. Following the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, the first international criminal tribunals were established in the 1990s, to respond to atrocities committed during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the mass killings in Rwanda. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and its sister court for Rwanda (ICTR) were both created by the UN Security Council. Since

1 The United Nations (1945) Charter of the United Nations, Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/preamble/index.html> (Accessed: 23.10.2017)

2 The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) Report “The Responsibility to Protect”, Available at: <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf> (Accessed: 21.10.2017)

then, special courts have also been set up to prosecute domestic and international crimes. Examples of such mixed tribunals can be found in Bosnia Herzegovina, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Cambodia and Lebanon³.

In 2002 the International Criminal Court (ICC) began functioning following the ratification of the Rome Statute by 60 states. The ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression. The Statute “shall apply equally to all persons without any distinction based on official capacity”⁴.

Despite these significant achievements in the international human rights regime, millions of civilians still fall victim to unimaginable atrocities that shock the conscience of humanity and threaten international peace and security. Mass murders of national, ethnic, and religious groups have continued with depressing frequency — most recently in Myanmar, where violence broke out again in late August 2017, after security forces launched an operation against Rohingya Muslims. There were more than 1,000 fatalities, and 800,000 civilians were forced to seek refuge in neighboring Bangladesh⁵.

The international community has failed to prevent gross and systematic atrocities, and the vow of “never again” risks becoming an empty promise. The question remains: when, if ever, it is appropriate for the international community to take coercive actions against a sovereign state for the purpose of protecting people at risk in that state⁶?

Particularly in the wake of the horrifying events of 11 September 2001, which put the international response to terrorism under the spotlight, the issue

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The international community has failed to prevent gross and systematic atrocities, and the vow of “never again” risks becoming an empty promise.

3 Мустафаева, Н (2016) “Международное уголовное правосудие: становление, современное положение и перспективы развития”, Стратегический анализ, №3-4 (17-18), с. 193-217.

4 The International Criminal Court (1998) The Rome Statute, Available at: https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/ca9ae17-5752-4f84-be94-0a655eb30e16/0/rome_statute_english.pdf (Accessed: 22.10.2017)

5 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2017) Pledging conference for the Rohingya refugee crisis, Available at: http://interactive.unocha.org/emergency/2017_rohingya/ (Accessed: 29.10.2017)

6 The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) Report “The Responsibility to Protect”, Available at: <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf> (Accessed: 21.10.2017)

of intervention for human protection purposes has been one of the most controversial and difficult of all international relations questions. With the end of the Cold War, it gained unprecedented attention. Numerous calls for intervention have been made over the last decade – some of answered and others

The challenge is the legal reconciliation of the two main jus cogens principles of international law – state sovereignty, and the need to protect the fundamental human rights of populations at risk from their own governments.

ignored. But there continues to be disagreement over whether is a right of intervention, and if so, how it should be exercised, when, and under whose authority⁷.

The challenge is the legal reconciliation of the two main *ius cogens* principles of international law – state sovereignty, and the need to protect the fundamental human rights of populations at risk from their own governments. The answer lies within the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

This article examines the concept of the R2P by considering the role of state responsibility as it relates to national sovereignty in light of mass atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. The paper also evaluates international responses to extreme situations in which there is a compelling need to protect innocent people. The key question is securing the necessary political commitment to halt brutal and systematic violations of human rights.

The article is divided into three sections. The first provides a comprehensive overview of the R2P concept, explaining the conditions for international intervention, and who holds the ultimate authority to decide whether, when, where and how any such intervention should proceed. The second section sheds light on the recent outbreak of violence in Myanmar, demonstrating the applicability of the R2P concept. The third section deals with the UN Charter framework, and highlights the importance of the shared responsibility through mobilizing political will to help the targeted population in Myanmar.

A new approach: the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

External military intervention for human protection purposes (“humanitarian intervention”) has been controversial both when it has happened –as in Somalia and Balkans – and when it

⁷ Ibid.

has not, as in Rwanda. For some, the new activism marks a long overdue internationalization of the human conscience, while for others it has been an alarming breach of state sovereignty of states and territorial inviolability⁸.

At the UN General Assembly in 1999, and again in 2000, Secretary-General Kofi Annan made compelling pleas to the international community to try to reach a new consensus on how to approach these issues, to “forge unity” around the basic questions of principle and process involved. He posed the central question: “...if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica –to gross and systematic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity?”⁹

In response to this challenge, the Government of Canada, together with a group of major foundations, announced the establishment of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) at the September 2000 General Assembly. The ICISS released a report titled “The Responsibility to Protect”¹⁰, which proposed a radical reformulation of the meaning of state sovereignty. Thus, the report argued that sovereignty entailed not only rights, but also a responsibility to protect its people from major human rights violations.

As Christopher C. Joyner argues, the rationale for conceiving sovereignty in terms of responsibility is increasingly being justified by the escalating influence that human rights norms exert as they are accepted as genuine components of human security. In this regard, the equation of sovereignty as governmental responsibility is increasingly being codified in international human rights mechanisms and recognized in national practice of states. Since 1948, international human rights documents have established legal benchmarks for state conduct, and set up the global regime that mandates national and international

8 Ibid.

9 Annan, K (2000) “We the peoples’: the role of the United Nations in 21st century”, Available at: www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/.../We_The_Peoples.pdf (Accessed: 27.10.2017)

10 The ICISS suggested the phrase “responsibility to protect” (R2P) as a way to avoid “the right to intervene” or “humanitarian intervene” doctrine, but keep a degree of duty to act to resolve humanitarian crises.

protection for and promotion of individual human rights¹¹.

In fact, the past seven decades have seen growing discrepancies between the lawful conduct of sovereign states as defined in the UN Charter, and the reality of state behavior on the pretext of sovereign rights. It seems evident that the founding members

In fact, the past seven decades have seen growing discrepancies between the lawful conduct of sovereign states as defined in the UN Charter, and the reality of state behavior on the pretext of sovereign rights.

of the United Nations never intended for the Charter to allow governments to exercise unchecked power over their populations. Rather, the Charter and United Nations practice both indicate that sovereignty entails a dual responsibility: on the one hand, it implies the duty to respect the sovereignty of other states and to refrain from interfering in their internal affairs; on the other hand, sovereignty invokes the concomitant duty of the government to respect the fundamental rights of all people within the state, and to take action to protect them. Thus, by construing sovereignty as a principle of state responsibility, relations between states can proceed with less conflict and greater cooperation. At the same time, however, basic human rights within states can be guaranteed under international legal standards¹².

The R2P concept was endorsed as a global political commitment by all UN member states at the 2005 World Summit. According

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to the World Summit Outcome Document (paragraphs 138 and 139), all sovereign states have the responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity¹³. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing

11 Christopher C. Joyner (2015) "The Responsibility to Protect: Humanitarian Concern and the Lawfulness of Armed Intervention", *The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World*, edited by Brian Frederking & Paul F. Diehl, p. 141.

12 *Ibid*, pp. 141-142.

13 Genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity are defined in international law and codified in the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court. Ethnic cleansing is not a crime defined under international law, but has been defined by the UN as "a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas". It may be covered by the subject matter jurisdiction of the *ad hoc* tribunals, particularly persecution as a crime against humanity. The concept of "ethnic cleansing" is one of group behavior and organized crime (See: Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)).

an early warning capability¹⁴.

Moreover, “the international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”. In this context, world community “prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the world states intended to commit themselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping states build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts breakout”¹⁵.

The conflict has resulted in the securitization of almost everything related to Armenia in Azerbaijan and vice versa. Thus, anything that is seen as posing an advantage to Azerbaijan is perceived as to the detriment of Armenia, and vice versa, leading to zero-sum bilateral relations.

Consequently, the Security Council in its resolution № 1674 (2006) reaffirmed the provisions of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document regarding the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity¹⁶.

The concept of R2P comprises three pillars. Pillar I – *The protection responsibilities of the state* – identifies the state as the primary bearer of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Pillar II – *International assistance and capacity-building* – stresses the role of the international community in providing cooperation and assistance to allow states to develop local capacities that will enable them to discharge that responsibility. Pillar III – *Timely and decisive response* – applies

14 The United Nations (2005) “2005 World Summit Outcome” Document, Available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/A-RES-60-1-E.pdf (Accessed: 27.10.2017)

15 Ibid.

16 The United Nations (2006) Resolution 1674 (2006), Available at: <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/security-council-resolution-1674-2006-on-protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict> (Accessed: 28.10.2017)

to exceptional circumstances and when measures provided for in the first and second pillars have manifestly failed, allows for the international community to resort to collective action, in accordance with the norms and procedures established in the UN Charter.

As might be expected, the most difficult to implement both conceptually and politically is Pillar III. These difficulties stem from the governing rules of the UN Security Council: for some states with veto power, the only real issue is ensuring that coercive interventions are effective (US, United Kingdom and France); but for others, questions about legality, process and the possible misuse of precedent loom much larger (Russia and China)¹⁷. Most recently, the Arab Spring presented a new challenge to the UNSC, as seen in the voting on Libya¹⁸ and Syria in the R2P framework.

In fact, the history of humanitarian military intervention features many examples of powerful states or coalitions invoking the humanitarian doctrine to justify their pursuit of their own geopolitical interests. Thus, the doctrine of so-called “humanitarian intervention” has frequently given rise to serious abuses, and was reserved for the most powerful states¹⁹. There are growing concerns that the concept of the R2P might be also misused for purposes other than protecting civilians, such as regime change. This perception may make it even more difficult to attain the protection objectives pursued by the international community²⁰.

As a result of disagreements among permanent member states of the UN Security Council, which use their veto rights to block the resolutions linked with the R2P capabilities, the United Nations is limited to condemning (*post factum*) the ongoing atrocities, or

17 Мустафаева, Н (2017) “Апокалипсис международного права в пост биполярном мире: от хаоса к ренессансу”, The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Available at: <http://rus-siancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/columns/global-governance/apokalipsis-mezhdunarodnogo-prava-v-postbipolyarnom-mire-ot-khaosa-k-renessansu/> (Accessed: 28.10.2017)

18 Libya was the first case where the United Nations Security Council authorized a military intervention citing the R2P.

19 Christopher C. Joyner (2015) “The Responsibility to Protect: Humanitarian Concern and the Lawfulness of Armed Intervention”, The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World, edited by Brian Frederking & Paul F. Diehl, p.137.

20 See: the United Nations (2011) “Responsibility while protecting: elements for the development and promotion of a concept”, Annex to the letter dated 9 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, Available at: <http://undocs.org/A/66/551> (Accessed: 18.10.2017)

at best, to establish a fact-finding group/mission, the results of which an alleged offender state may simply ignore.

Consequently, we are faced with the failure of the “never again” promise, most recently in the Myanmar, described by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as “a humanitarian catastrophe with implications for peace and security that could continue to expand beyond Myanmar’s borders”²¹.

Violence against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar: a failure of “never again”?

The Rohingya Muslims, an ancient community in the majority Buddhist Myanmar, are often described as “the world’s most persecuted minority”. They are not considered one of the country’s 135 official ethnic groups and have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless. Almost all of the Rohingya in Myanmar live in the western coastal state of Rakhine, and are not allowed to leave without government permission. Rakhine is one of the poorest states in Myanmar, with ghetto-type camps and lacking basic infrastructure and services.

According to the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation, “Rohingyas have been living in Arakan (the area now known as Rakhine) from time immemorial”²².

During more than a century of British rule (1824-1948), there were significant levels of labor migration to what is now known as Myanmar from today’s India and Bangladesh. Because the British administered Myanmar as a province of India, this migration was considered internal, according to Human Rights Watch. The migration of laborers was viewed negatively by the majority of the native population²³.

21 The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (2017) Ongoing “clearance operations” by the security forces in Myanmar (Burma) constitute a systematic policy of ethnic cleansing directed at the Rohingya population in northern Rakhine State, Available at: http://www.globalr2p.org/regions/myanmar_burma (Accessed: 28.10.2017)

22 Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (2006) “Facts about the Rohingya muslims of Arakan”, Available at: <http://www.rohingya.org/portal/index.php/learn-about-rohingya.html> (Accessed: 24.10.2017)

23 Aljazeera (2017) “Myanmar: Who are the Rohingya?”, Available at: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIoOeN58q1IwIVVM0bCh1JCw4-EAAYASAAEgLaJ_D_BwE (Accessed: 24.10.2017)

Human Rights Watch's 2006 report argues that after independence, the government viewed the migration that took place during British rule as "illegal, and it is on this basis that they refuse citizenship to the majority of Rohingya"²⁴.

Since the 1970s, a series of crackdowns on the Rohingya Muslims have forced hundreds of thousands to flee to neighboring Bangladesh, as well as Malaysia, Thailand and other Southeast Asian states. During such crackdowns, refugees have often reported torture, rape, fire-raising and murder committed by the Myanmar security forces.

The recent wave of atrocities started in October 2016 after the killings of border police and security crackdowns in Rakhine villages. The Myanmar government blamed members of an armed Rohingya group. During the crackdown, government troops were accused of multiple human rights abuses, including killing, rape, and arson attacks. The Myanmar government has denied these allegations.

The United Nations accused the government of Myanmar of carrying out ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims. In March 2017 the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution to set up an independent, international fact-finding mission to investigate the alleged crimes with a view to ensuring full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims²⁵. In this resolution, the Council pointed to a February 2017 report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which found that crimes against the ethnic Rohingya community in northern Rakhinestate "seem to have been widespread as well as systematic, indicating the very likely commission of crimes against humanity".

The United Nations accused the government of Myanmar of carrying out ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims.

It should be specifically noted that the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, had initially urged the Council to establish a full Commission of Inquiry²⁶, the body's

24 Human Rights Watch (2006) Report on "Burma/Bangladesh: Burmese refugees in Bangladesh: still no durable solution", Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/index.htm> (Accessed: 15.10.2017)

25 The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) "Human Rights Council decides to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Myanmar to establish facts on violations, especially in Rakhine State", Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21443&LangID=E> (Accessed: 21.10.2017)

26 The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) "Statement by Ms. Yanghee Lee Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar at the 34th session of the Human Rights Council", Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21355&LangID=E> (Accessed: 20.10.2017)

most powerful investigative mechanism, but member states ultimately reached a compromise on a fact-finding mission, to which Myanmar and its neighbors would be more likely to agree. While the resolution passed, Myanmar and several other states “disassociated” themselves from the resolution in whole or in part²⁷. Thus, the Council limited its actions with a pledge to provide a full report next year on the results of their investigation.

The recent violence broke out in late August 2017 in Rakhine state. Myanmar’s military launched a crackdown on the country’s Rohingya Muslims after police posts and an army base were attacked. More than 200 villages have been burned, and refugees say the army is responsible for mass killings, tortures, and rapes. The Myanmar government denies these claims²⁸. More than half a million people have fled horrific violence in Myanmar and crossed the border into neighboring Bangladesh. Almost 60% of them are children²⁹.

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The government of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and State Chancellor Aung San Suu Kyi does not recognize the Rohingya as an ethnic group and have blamed violence in Rakhine state, and subsequent military crackdowns, on those they call “terrorists”. San Suu Kyi has been widely criticized for her failure to condemn indiscriminate force used by state troops, as well as for failing to uphold the rights of the more than one million Rohingya in Myanmar.

Moreover, Myanmar’s government officials, namely State Chancellor Aung San Suu Kyi and Minister of Foreign Affairs Kyaw Tin, have stated that the UN’s decision to establish an independent international inquiry was not “in keeping with what is actually happening on the ground”, and that they “will order Myanmar embassies not to grant any visa to UN fact-finding mission members”³⁰.

27 Time (2017) “The UN has agreed to investigate Myanmar’s Alleged Abuse of Rohingya”, Available at: <http://time.com/4710430/myanmar-rohingya-human-rights-council-probe/> (Accessed: 21.10.2017)

28 In November 2017 Myanmar’s army released a report denying all allegations of rape and killings by security forces.

29 UNICEF (2017) “Covering the Rohingya crisis for UNICEF: Three views”, Available at: <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/three-photographers-filmmakers-covering-rohingya-crisis-unicef/> (Accessed: 29.10.2017)

30 Furthermore, The United Nations special reporter on human rights in Myanmar Yanghee Lee claimed, she was denied access to certain parts of Rakhine state and was only allowed to speak to Rohingya who had been pre-approved by the Myanmar’s government.

Back in September 2016, Aung San Suu Kyi entrusted former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan with finding ways to heal the long-standing divisions in the region. Thus in 2016, the Rakhine Commission was established, mandated to look at the root causes of the conflict in Rakhine state. It does not have a mandate to investigate human rights abuses, nor will it address questions of justice and accountability³¹. Taking advantage of the limited mandate of the commission, the government of Myanmar contends that “the Rakhine Commission, created a year ago, makes a UN-led inquiry unnecessary”. This indicates a blatant attempt to evade responsibility for the alleged recent human rights violations by military and security forces, which can be confirmed via the Fact-Finding Mission’s investigation. It is important to note that the Fact-Finding Mission has a broad mandate, and is empowered to look at all recent allegations of situations where the human rights of people in Myanmar have been undermined by any actor, whether they are part of the military or security forces, or non-state armed groups³².

The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect specifies that the rejection of the UN fact-finding mission is a setback regarding accountability for systematic violations and abuses of human rights. The government’s refusal to end discriminatory state policies regarding the Rohingya has encouraged violations of their fundamental human rights and reinforced the dangerous perception of them as ethnic outsiders. The 1982 Citizenship Law and the Protection of Race and Religion laws were intended to eradicate the Rohingya’s legal right to exist as a distinct ethnic group in Myanmar. The government has not taken any significant steps to repeal discriminatory laws and end anti-Rohingya policies³³.

The 1982 Citizenship Law and the Protection of Race and Religion laws were intended to eradicate the Rohingya’s legal right to exist as a distinct ethnic group in Myanmar.

Furthermore, “fighting insurgents” cannot serve as a legitimate pretext to commit atrocities. Equally important, the government

31 The Commission offered practical recommendations to address the root causes of conflict in Rakhine, including through reforming the 1982 Citizenship Law.

32 Human Rights Watch (2017) “United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar”, Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/02/qa-united-nations-fact-finding-mission-myanmar> (Accessed: 24.10.2017)

33 The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (2017) Ongoing “clearance operations” by the security forces in Myanmar (Burma) constitute a systematic policy of ethnic cleansing directed at the Rohingya population in northern Rakhine State, Available at: http://www.globalr2p.org/regions/myanmar_burma (Accessed: 28.10.2017)

has a responsibility to protect its entire population, irrespective of ethnic or religious identity. The government's unwillingness to do so provides substantial grounds to conclude that it is manifestly failing to uphold its responsibility to protect³⁴.

In such a situation, the United Nations, in keeping with its 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, has a responsibility to protect the targeted minorities. This responsibility includes using appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to protect populations. In the face of the Myanmar government's manifest failure to protect its population from imminent and recurring attacks, there is an international commitment to take timely and decisive action to protect populations under threat.

International response: shared responsibility through mobilizing political will

There is an urgent need for collective action to help the targeted population in Myanmar. At the same time, there is a need to reconcile the principle of shared responsibility with that of nonintervention. In fact, when authorization is needed for human rights protection purposes, the first stop must be in the UN Security Council³⁵.

However, despite the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, which declares that the Security Council is prepared to take action should governments manifestly fail to protect their populations, the Security Council has been largely silent on mass atrocities in Myanmar.

On 2 September 2017 UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres sent a letter to the President of the UN Security Council, urging Council member states to address the situation in Rakhine State and help prevent "a humanitarian catastrophe". In response, on 28 September, the UN Security Council held its first open meeting on Myanmar in eight years, with a briefing from the Secretary General. Despite the magnitude of the crisis,

Similar to the rest of the post-Soviet region, Russia fiercely opposes any other influence in the South Caucasus, even though it fails to openly dominate the region on its own.

34 The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (2010) "Applying the Responsibility to Protect to Burma/Myanmar", Policy brief, Available at: <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/Applying%20the%20Responsibility%20to%20Protect%20to%20Burma%20Myanmar.pdf> (Accessed: 26.10.2017)

35 Christopher C. Joyner (2015) "The Responsibility to Protect: Humanitarian Concern and the Lawfulness of Armed Intervention", *The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World*, edited by Brian Frederking & Paul F. Diehl, p. 147.

the meeting had no outcome³⁶.

Thus, much more needs to be done to unify the international community behind initiatives to engage with and put pressure on the government of Myanmar to fulfill its R2P obligations. First of all, there is an urgent need to adopt a Security Council resolution on the ongoing atrocities in Myanmar, including through imposing an arms embargo and targeted sanctions directed at senior military officers with command responsibility for forces engaged in ongoing mass and brutal human rights violations.

The call for the urgent adoption of “a strongly worded resolution of the UN Security Council on the Myanmar crisis” is contained in the Report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, which was submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 34/22³⁷.

Furthermore, in order to eliminate the practice of bad-faith invocations of the R2P concept by the permanent member states of the UN Security Council, there should be an agreement among the “G5” not to use the veto right in matters where their vital interest are not at stake, or activate the procedure of the “consensus mines one” when the permanent member state implicitly involved in the crisis would be deprived of its veto. However, such reform assumes a revision of the United Nations Charter, which can come across a resistance of the “G5”. Thus, for example, in 2013 France proposed to regulate the use of the veto whereby the five permanent members of the Security Council would voluntarily and collectively undertake not to use the veto where a mass atrocity has been ascertained. Even as a voluntary measure that would not require a revision of the United Nations Charter, this proposal was not accepted.

Global solidarity and immediate action based on international political will are urgently needed in order to confront the violence in Myanmar, as well as support the Rohingya refugees and their

36 Previously, the UN Security Council discussed the situation under “any other business” on 30 August, 13 September and 26 September, with no outcome. On 13 October the UN Security Council held an Arria Formula Meeting with the former head of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine state, Kofi Annan (See: Ongoing “clearance operations” by the security forces in Myanmar (Burma) constitute a systematic policy of ethnic cleansing directed at the Rohingya population in northern Rakhine state, Available at: http://www.globalr2p.org/regions/myanmar_burma)

37 The United Nations (2017) “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar”, Available at: http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/72/382 (Accessed: 31.10.2017)

host countries. In this respect, regional actors also have a crucial role to play. They should put pressure on the government of Myanmar, in keeping with R2P and their Charters, and lead the way for future international efforts. Thus, Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which represents 57 states and acts as the collective voice of the Muslim world, has called upon the Myanmar government to ensure human rights for the Rohingyas (including citizenship), and to work with Indonesia and Malaysia on a roadmap for the resolution of the crisis³⁸.

Global solidarity and immediate action based on international political will are urgently needed in order to confront the violence in Myanmar, as well as support the Rohingya refugees and their host countries.

Regional organizations are well positioned to understand the root causes of conflicts, which can aid their efforts to influence the prevention or resolution of these conflicts. Therefore, the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, can improve the collective security system based on the respect of fundamental human rights.

Consolidating democracy and cultivating respect for human rights is a complex commitment requiring political will and a strong sense of state responsibility. The government of Myanmar must repeal or amend all laws and regulations that systematically discriminate against Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar, including the Protection of Race and Religion laws and the 1982 Citizenship Law. Within the framework of R2P commitment³⁹, the government should take steps towards building a more inclusive society in which the rights of Myanmar's diverse populations are protected.

Within the framework of R2P commitment, the government should take steps towards building a more inclusive society in which the rights of Myanmar's diverse populations are protected.

Furthermore, the Myanmar authorities should permit the UN Human Rights Council-mandated Fact-Finding Mission to enter Rakhine State, and expeditiously implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission led by former

38 VOA News (2017) "World Islamic Body Tells Myanmar to Protect Rights of Rohingya Minority", Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/world-islamic-body-tells-myanmar-to-protect-rights-of-rohingya-minority/3971376.html> (Accessed: 30.10.2017)

39 Myanmar acknowledged its responsibility to protect during a UN General Assembly debate on R2P in 2009.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan⁴⁰.

In the case of further failures to constrain internal violence in Myanmar and unwillingness by the government to remedy the situation, measures of coercive intervention by the international community shall acquire a new urgency.

Conclusion

Genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity: the brutal legacy of the twentieth century speaks bitterly and graphically of the profound failure of both individual states and the international community at large to uphold their most basic and compelling responsibilities, as well as laying bare the collective inadequacies of international institutions. Tragic events led world leaders to question whether the UN and other international institutions should be exclusively focused on the security of states, without regard to the safety of the people within them. Could the international community not find the will and capacity to do better in the new century?⁴¹

The issue of international intervention for human protection purposes is a clear and compelling example of concerted action urgently required to bring international norms and institutions in line with international needs and expectations.

The protection of human security, including human rights and human dignity, must be one of the fundamental objectives of modern international institutions.

The issue of intercession for human protection purposes is itself both a product and a reflection of how much has changed since the UN was established. Human rights have been mainstreamed into international law, and respect for human rights is a central subject and responsibility within international relations⁴².

The concept of human security – including concern for human rights, but ultimately broader than in scope – has also become an important element in international

40 The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (2017) Ongoing “clearance operations” by the security forces in Myanmar (Burma) constitute a systematic policy of ethnic cleansing directed at the Rohingya population in northern Rakhine State, Available at: http://www.globalr2p.org/regions/myanmar_burma (Accessed: 28.10.2017)

41 The United Nations (2009) “Implementing the responsibility to protect”, Report of the Secretary-General, Available at: <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/implementing%20the%20rtop.pdf> (Accessed: 01.11.2017)

42 The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) Report “The Responsibility to Protect”, Available at: <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf> (Accessed: 21.10.2017)

law and international relations, increasingly providing a conceptual framework for international action. There is growing recognition worldwide that the protection of human security, including human rights and human dignity, must be one of the fundamental objectives of modern international institutions⁴³.

In fact, globalization and the revolution in information technology has made global communications instantaneous, and provided unprecedented access to information. The result has been a massively heightened awareness of any crisis, wherever it may be occurring, combined with immediate and often very compelling visual images of the suffering via television and social media⁴⁴. In August 2017, the world was appalled by the mass atrocities in Myanmar perpetrated against the Rohingya Muslims. Humanitarian catastrophes, marked with gross and systematic violations of human rights, occur not only in major capitals but also in distant places around the world. These catastrophes are critically important for an international response, by mobilizing political will for political pressure on the government of Myanmar. If the government of Myanmar fails to uphold its responsibility to protect the population, the international community has also failed, as this paper has argued⁴⁵.

In August 2017, the world was appalled by the mass atrocities in Myanmar perpetrated against the Rohingya Muslims.

The concept of the R2P is a new opportunity for collective action. Initiated following the end of the Cold War, it has the potential to empower the UN Security Council, enabling it to fulfill the role originally envisioned for it by the UN Charter. It also represents a revolutionary transition from a culture of sovereign impunity to a culture of national and international accountability. This transition is not be easy to manage politically, but if achieved, it would add tremendous symbolic value to the credibility of the responsibility to protect based on existing international law within the international community. It would empower the international community to live up to the vow of “never again”.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Moreover, the concept of R2P is multidimensional, as it entails not only a responsibility to react, but also the responsibility to prevent and to rebuild.

Reflections on Faith-Based Solidarity and Social Membership: Beyond Religion? The Case of Lebanese Shiite FBOs

Estella Carpi*

During the July 2006 postwar period in Beirut's southern suburbs (Dahiye), which were destroyed by the Israeli air force in its effort to annihilate the Lebanese Shiite party Hezbollah, the Islamic Shi'a philanthropic sphere has been growing. It has pioneered the postwar reconstruction process and local relief provision, while diversely defining itself in relation to its secular and faith-based counterparts. This paper examines the extent to which religious providers develop solidarity with or antagonism towards provider members of the same community in times of crisis. Indeed, intra-community solidarity among different aid providers tends to be taken for granted. Problematizing this common belief is particularly important for defining the ways in which social solidarity either develops or contracts across faith-based communities during conflict-induced displacement. In this context, aid provision and local accountability remain fundamental litmus papers. Drawing on in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in Dahiye from 2011 to 2013 with Lebanese Shiite faith-based organizations and private initiatives, a secular local organization, and their respective beneficiaries, this paper advances reflections on how social membership and acts of solidarity and charity interact within the Lebanese philanthropic scenario.

Keywords: Lebanon, Shiite, Muslim, Solidarity, Hezbollah, Israel



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Introduction

During the July 2006 postwar period in Beirut's southern suburbs (Dahiye) – which saw the Pyrrhic victory of the major Lebanese Shiite party Hezbollah over Israel - the Islamic Shi'a philanthropic sphere has grown. It has pioneered the reconstruction process and local relief provision, while diversely defining itself in relation to its secular and faith-based counterparts. This paper examines the extent to which religious providers develop relationships of solidarity, collaboration, or antagonism with provider members of the same community in times of crisis. Indeed, intra-community solidarity among different aid providers tends to be taken for granted. Problematizing this matter is particularly relevant to defining the ways in which social solidarity – defined as what holds society together, on the basis of shared values and responsibilities - in times of conflict-induced displacement either develops or contracts across faith-based communities. In this context, aid provision and local accountability remain fundamental litmus papers. The paper draws on the author's doctoral dissertation,¹ which investigated Northern-led and Southern-led responses to internal displacement during the July 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon. In particular, the author will draw on the in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted between 2011 and 2013 at the Musa as-Sadr Foundation headquarters in Tyre; al-Mabarrat Association² founded by as-Saiyyd Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah; its sub-branch al-Hadi; and, finally, Jihad al-Binaa, one of Hezbollah's biggest NGOs. Similarly, in-depth interviews and participant observation have been conducted during the same timeframe with Lebanese beneficiaries who have been affected by war and displacement.

I will use the term 'faith-based' to refer to NGOs that explicitly rely on a specific confession in setting out their foundational

1 Carpi, E. (2015) *Adhocratic Humanitarianisms and Ageing Emergencies in Lebanon. From the July 2006 War in Beirut's Southern Suburbs to the Syrian Refugee Influx in the Akkar Villages*. PhD Dissertation. Sydney, University of Sydney.

2 Fadlallah founded al-Mabarrat Association in 1978 to provide a library, education services, services for orphans, a hospital mosque, and a dispensary. Not all these facilities were funded by Iran as often believed (Harb, M. (2010) *Le Hezbollah à Beirut (1985-2005): de la Banlieue à la Ville*. Paris, France: IFPO-Karthala, p. 45); they had been set up with the purpose of enabling people to engage in social activities and actions, on the conceptual basis of employing *al-multazimun* ('committed people'). Fadlallah, known for having issued quite modernistic *fatwas* at al-Hassaneiyyn Mosque in the Beirut suburb of Haret Hreik, also used to hold a phone line where anonymous people could call and ask for consultancy about daily Muslim practices (Harb, *Le Hezbollah à Beirut*, p. 46), pointing to his local accountability.

principles and project implementation, while noting that faith is only one facet of a broader religious identity that contributes to a social order and fits within a specific culture – and that has also been diversely defined as ‘religious welfare’.³ Nandy instead differentiates between religion as ‘ideology’, a (sub)national identifier of populations protecting socio-economic or political interests, and religion as ‘faith, a way of life, a tradition that is definitely non-monolithic and operationally plural’.⁴ Indeed, states prefer to deal with religions as faiths rather than as ideologies.

Agents of continual care versus ‘passers-by’ in relief provision?

Using the classification system proposed by Clarke and Jennings,⁵ Dahiye’s FBOs are considered as socio-political in the international arena⁶ because of the predominantly Shiite population among their beneficiaries, and therefore reflecting the interests of a particular community. Nonetheless, the FBOs I interviewed promote a political and cultural agenda according to which tolerance and inclusivity towards non-Shiites is a local value. For instance, by founding NGOs, political parties are often willing to provide services to non-politically affiliated individuals with the purpose of gaining new adepts, by relying on a politics of scarcity, that is, reward or denial of benefits to citizens neglected by the state.⁷

By founding NGOs, political parties are often willing to provide services to non-politically affiliated individuals with the purpose of gaining new adepts

The charity model in Shi’a Islam has evolved over the last decades,⁸ although this has often been overlooked: religious actors, unlike the secular, tend to be viewed homogenously and distinctly from other civil society actors working in the same

3 Jawad, R. (2009) ‘Religion and Social Welfare in the Lebanon: treating the Causes or Symptoms of Poverty?’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 38, pp. 141-156.

4 Nandy, A. (2002) *Time Warps: The Insistent Politics of Silent and Evasive Pasts*. London: Hurst and Company, pp. 61-62.

5 Clarke, G. and Jennings, M. (2008) *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations. Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

6 Ajami, F. (1986) *The Vanished Imam. Musa al-Sadr and the Shi’a of Lebanon*. New York: Cornell University Press.

7 Cammett, M.C. (2011) ‘Partisan Activism and Access to Welfare in Lebanon’, *St. Comp. Int. Dev.*, 46, pp. 70-97.

8 Jawad, ‘Religion and Social Welfare in the Lebanon’.

communities in which they are embedded.⁹ However, field visits conducted from 2011 to 2013¹⁰ have suggested that local FBOs in Lebanon represent themselves as acting on the basis of cultural and moral principles, which vary to a considerable measure; yet they all intend to reduce dependence on external aid and financial support. Likewise, beneficiary residents affirmed they did not prefer local community provided services in all cases. Moreover, they did not prefer local FBOs *because* their actions are compatible with Muslim values, unlike secular NGOs.¹¹ This raises important questions regarding the effectiveness - and the taken-for-granted definition - of intra-community solidarity purposes. Furthermore, the beneficiaries interviewed in Dahiye expressed mistrust of and disaffection towards local religious international aid providers as much as secular ones. In this regard, it is crucial to further explore the process that has seen the assimilation of the religious factor into local politics, eliminating the potential for solidarity within a community-based management of society.

Claiming diversity within the Shi'a (humanitarian?) sphere in Lebanon

In the humanitarian discourse, the role of secular and international aid providers during emergency crises is often foregrounded at the expenses of religious providers. This is largely due to the religious character of their philanthropic goals - and thus their alleged unsuitability for 'neutral' aid provision -

In the case of Lebanon, local faith-based organizations (FBOs) have successfully addressed people's needs in times of war.

and their traditional endeavor towards social and divine justice. Even so, religious and cultural communities whose members care and provide for one another are said to be more likely to survive than those where this does not happen. In the case of Lebanon, local faith-based organizations (FBOs) have successfully addressed people's needs in times of war. Even though a glance at the history of aid provision has shown how people's disaffection is

9 McDuire-Ra, D. and Rees, J. A. (2010) 'Religious Actors, Civil Society and the Development Agenda: the Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion', p. 21.

10 Carpi, *Adhocratic Humanitarianisms and Ageing Emergencies in Lebanon*.

11 This has also been observed by some social workers working for FBOs in Akkar, as a way of 'protecting the village from western ideologies', as also the director of Waqf Taiba, Saudi NGO, affirmed. Interview by the author in Halba, Akkar. 14 December 2012.

likely to be directed towards secular as well as religious actors,¹² local FBOs' fine-grained knowledge of local living conditions, and of context-specific political and social tendencies, remains undeniable.

I will first articulate the relationships among different Shiite FBOs in an attempt to illuminate their differently nuanced politics of aid. Secondly, I will show how the continuous nature of their intervention in crisis-stricken contexts and their everyday contribution to preserving a sense of normalcy in chronically unstable settings have positively defined local FBOs *vis-à-vis* international humanitarian agencies. Indeed, the latter have been depicted in Lebanese media¹³ as '*aber sabil*, an opportunistic 'passer-by' in war and post-war scenarios providing standardized aid packages to war victims to boost their own moral standing.

Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, Imam Musa as-Sadr, and Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, leading the Lebanese political party Hezbollah, are known as the main Islamic Shi'a spiritual forces and charity providers in Lebanon. The fact that the relationships between the three have often been understood as conflicted reflects the nuanced character of the ideologies of their respective service provision. In spite of the divergences between the two key Shiite figures,¹⁴ Fadlallah and Sadr, they both represent the 'emerging breed of Shiite revivalists in Lebanon'¹⁵. The former was a good connection to Iran-led Shiite transnationalism, and the latter historically provided a Lebanese component of Shiite political Islam. All of Hezbollah's FBOs, which have been able to weave a strong network of assistance and solidarity along with local citizens across Lebanese history, are instead Iran-born, mainly based in Beirut's southern suburbs.¹⁶

Social progress based on the struggle against 'western imperialism' has long since been the cornerstone of both Hezbollah's and Fadlallah's thinking, pointing

Social progress based on the struggle against 'western imperialism' has long since been the cornerstone of both Hezbollah's and Fadlallah's thinking

12 Carpi, *Adhocratic Humanitarianisms and Ageing Emergencies in Lebanon*.

13 From the *Al-Akhbar* newspaper archive, September 14, 2006.

14 Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*.

15 Gleis, L. J. and Berti, B. (2012) *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*. Baltimore (MD): JHU Press.

16 *Al-Jarih* for the war wounded; *ash-Shahid* for the families of the war victims; *al-Imdad* for local development and social welfare; *al-Qard al-Hasan* for provision of microcredit to local families; *al-Ha'iyah as-Sahhiya al-Islamiyya* for health assistance and protection.

to what officially binds these figures in the public sphere.¹⁷ Notwithstanding, Geneva-based humanitarian aid providers working in the Hezbollah-led areas of Lebanon have largely been acting as a donor and a technocrat during the latest crises.¹⁸

By employing the Arabic term *insaniyya* – translatable both as ‘humanism’ and ‘humanitarianism’ (respectively the *focus on* human beings and *providing care because* the beneficiaries are human beings) – humanitarian aid provision to local war-affected people and longstanding regional refugees is being reshaped through the Shi‘a cosmology of martyrdom and the struggle against injustice, which is primarily symbolized by the battle at Kerbala in Iraq (680 AD). For the Islamic Shi‘a, Kerbala is in fact a historically recurrent event, which reminds people of the eternal importance of the revolutionary spirit against oppression. This principle also constitutes the bedrock of the Shi‘a social mobilization in Lebanon (*ta‘b‘iya*).¹⁹

Charity becomes correlated with a long-term project of social justice, as well as with an empathic response to immediate needs, driven by continual benevolent action. Ideals of justice, more specifically, call for the transformation of structures that foster social injustice and indignity. Likewise, public activism and social engagement are the ways in which religious people strive on a daily basis to continue to live the Ashura ceremony – the commemoration of the Imam Hussein’s martyrdom.²⁰

Likewise, public activism and social engagement are the ways in which religious people strive on a daily basis to continue to live the Ashura ceremony

Going beyond the Hezbollah-monopolized narrative of the Islamic Resistance against Israeli aggressions,²¹ FBOs’ humanitarian practices, which increasingly integrate the local social *ethos*, need to be implemented in response to any injustice, including poverty and lack of education. In this framework, volunteering and human employment contribute

17 Such political orientations, in fact, caused an attempt of assassination of the Shi‘a cleric on March 8, 1985 in Bi‘r al-‘Abed (Dahiye), conducted by the C.I.A in the framework of the American ‘preemption’ counter-terror program. The exploded car bomb caused 80 casualties and 200 wounded.

18 Carpi, *Adhocratic Humanitarianisms and Ageing Emergencies in Lebanon*.

19 Saad, A. (1996) *An Analysis of the Factors conducive to the Group Cohesion and Political Mobilization of the Lebanese Shiites*. MA Thesis, Beirut, Lebanon: American University of Beirut.

20 Deeb, L. (2009) ‘Emulating and/or embodying the ideal. The gendering of temporal frameworks and Islamic role models in Shi‘a Lebanon’, *American Ethnologist*, 36 (2), p. 247.

21 Carpi, E. (2013) ‘Islamic Resistance in the Southern Suburbs of Beirut’, *OpenDemocracy*, 17 January. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/estella-carpi/islamic-resistance-in-southern-suburbs-of-beirut> (Accessed: 19 December 2017).

to the development of the whole Lebanese Shi'a community. Against the backdrop of local disaffection with and suspicion of external interventions, the religious - and more broadly the symbolic - significance of human assistance has enabled aid provision to be more trusted locally. Indeed, such local providers have long been the main providers of assistance to the victims of cyclic displacement in southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs. The continuity of their support has helped them preserve local accountability while shifting their services from charity to the chronically poor to short-term relief to the war-stricken.

Conversely, according to field interviews with local beneficiaries,²² when international humanitarian organizations intervened in the 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel, their emergency-driven logic has not managed to show moral solidarity and human empathy with the war-stricken. On the one hand, international humanitarian NGOs traditionally tend to view beneficiaries as *victims* of human-made crises, therefore as morally deserving individuals, and at times, rights-bearers who need to be protected. On the other, Shiite charity services have been able to make local people feel like full political agents and resilient. Although the dominant political narrative of the Lebanese Shi'a majority areas has historically been laden with antipathy towards the central state,²³ local inhabitants have been rhetorically addressed as 'citizens' rather than victims *objects* of charity. Social mindfulness and independence are officially promoted as the key qualities for becoming a complete individual,²⁴ pointing to the proactive function of human life in Lebanese Shiite ethics and philanthropy.

Shiite charity services have been able to make local people feel like full political agents and resilient.

Despite of shared claims of local success, the Lebanese FBOs that participated in relief provision during times of emergency also lay claim to domestic diversity. For instance, the charity organizations started by Fadlallah contended²⁵ that their ideology of action is closer to the secular and international conception of humanitarianism than that of their Shi'a counterparts. Their primary goal is indeed to alleviate a human suffering. Nonetheless, in their capacity as local providers, all of the FBOs interviewed

²² Carpi, *Adhocratic Humanitarianisms and Ageing Emergencies in Lebanon*.

²³ Harb, *Le Hezbollah à Beirut*.

²⁴ Interview with Faruq Rizq, al-Mabarrat headquarter, al-Ghobeiry, Beirut, 18 October 2012.

²⁵ Al-Ghobeiry, October 2011.

stated they all pursue a specific project, which implies the idea of a civilian – rather than merely Islamic – Resistance.²⁶

In this regard, the fundraising campaigns and advertising material of Fadlallah's organizations state: 'Our organization was destroyed by Israel. We will continue more committed to doing good'. In the case of the Fadlallah-started al-Mabarrat Association, 'doing good' explicitly means to guide individuals.²⁷ The moral value of guidance – *irshad* - accompanies local forms of humanitarian services.

Providing and benefiting from social services within the Lebanese Shi'a community is in fact part of their struggle against Israel, which is not approached as 'a war to kill, but a war for the right to exist'.²⁸

Providing a more nuanced understanding of community care, Maliha as-Sadr, at the helm of Early Child Intervention Lebanon (ECIL), emphasized in an interview²⁹ how the aim of *insaniyye* – which, as outlined above, I problematically translate here as 'humanitarianism' - is triggering social empowerment by supporting greater equality in Lebanese society. Overall, according to all of the Shi'a FBOs I interviewed, charity organizations *cannot* and *should not* dismantle themselves. On the contrary, although the lines between relief work and development are increasingly blurred, the official aim of international humanitarian agencies remains withdrawal from the territory of intervention as soon as domestic sustainability is achieved. In a nutshell, social efficiency and mutual care in community settings deal positively with recurrent exposure to war. In the same vein, the manager of the Research and Development Department at the Imam as-Sadr Foundation, described international humanitarian action in Lebanon as generally outcome-oriented rather than process-focused. In this regard, he affirmed: 'NGOs which aim to engender change within society should focus on the process of their action and the encounter with their beneficiaries, rather than assessing material results'.³⁰

26 Carpi, 'Islamic Resistance in the Southern Suburbs of Beirut'.

27 See the official website: <http://www.mabarrat.org.lb/>.

28 Abild, E. (2007) Hezbollah. A Contextual Study Focusing on Human Freedom. BA Thesis in Development Studies, University of Oslo.

29 Ouzai, Beirut's southern suburbs, 4 December 2012.

30 Interview with the author. Tyre, 8 October 2012.

Development efforts and relief provision in this context are a successful way of coping with chronic uncertainty. Hope-driven policies – in this case even steeped in religious beliefs - do not merely result in providing people with the dream of a better life while using religion as a mere tool to secure quietism in everyday practices. Hope-driven policies rather allow communities to have a politically and religiously proactive link with the future, where hope, notwithstanding the prevailing geopolitical context, *de facto* evolves from an intimate emotion into conscious and realistic proposition.

Towards a multifaceted Shiite humanitarianism: Beyond well-bounded community solidarities

In this framework, how does the diversified ideological identification of Dahiye's residents with their providers, and the diverse 'Shiite way' of managing charity associationism, reinforce the idea of a differentiation between Fadlallah and Hezbollah - nowadays intended as two different spiritual and political forces in the Beirut southern suburbs? Raising this question is not intended to further politicize the interpretative lens that captures aid provision within the Shiite humanitarian sphere, but rather to examine possibilities and challenges for solidarity between intra-community providers, which tends to be taken for granted. Likewise, my intent is not to foster intra-sectarian divisions, but rather to draw upon the Lebanese Shiite case to rethink social membership and solidarity in areas affected by conflict and displacement. I will here limit my inquiry to inter-organizational solidarity, therefore opening up a further avenue of research on forms and expressions of solidarity among beneficiaries of the different FBOs.

Among Shiite organizations, both Fadlallah - considered *marja'iyya*³¹ - and Hezbollah have acquired increasing legitimacy from the 1980s onwards, although the two sides were initially at loggerheads.³² Charity is in fact

Among Shiite organizations, both Fadlallah - considered marja'iyya - and Hezbollah have acquired increasing legitimacy from the 1980s onwards

31 A *marja'iyya* is a religious Shiite institution: Hezbollah independently follows the Khomeini doctrine under the *Wilayat al-Faqih*, which represents the fusion between the religious and the political, and leads the Shi'a community till the end of all eras, when the 12th hidden *Mahdi* – *sahib az-zaman*, 'Patron of Time' – will come back to liberate the Shi'a from oppression once for all.

32 Vandalistic acts against Fadlallah's properties, in fact, occurred in the southern suburbs of Beirut, prior to the Shiite cleric's good relationship with the Party of God. The latter was accused of having committed such a wrongdoing. Fadlallah was considered an ideologue and the spiritual guide of Hezbollah in his latest years in fact, after dissolving past frictions (Harb, *Le Hezbollah à Beirut*, p. 44).

correlated with justice in Dahiye, as the former is the response to immediate needs driven by benevolent action, and justice more specifically calls for the transformation of structures that incubate injustice and lack of dignity. For the Shiites, Kerbala is a historically recurrent event:³³ ‘In every era there is an oppressor and an oppressed. And this history always repeats itself, throughout all eras. People should always have the spirit of revolution against oppression’.

As such, Shi’a humanitarianism has not merely been a political strategy to turn public compassion into political consent.³⁴ Rather, it has come to form a constitutive part of social assistance.

Shi’a humanitarianism has not merely been a political strategy to turn public compassion into political consent

The uncertainty and open nature of the timeline along which the Shiite religious community has developed its own conceptions of life are inherent to the existential approach to Shi’a humanitarianism, both in wartime and in peacetime.³⁵

Similarly, volunteerism and employment are seen as contributions to the development of the whole Shi’a community. Working for a welfare organization means bringing Zeinab,³⁶ a holy figure in Shiite theology, into the present.³⁷ Thus, the common ethical judgment easily identifiable in academic literature³⁸ on Islamic organizations completely overlooks the fact that these NGOs do not merely *use* Islamic values and charity for political interests; they simply *are* Islamic. In fact,

33 Deeb, ‘Emulating and/or embodying the ideal’, p. 257.

34 Roy, A. (2008) ‘Civic Governmentality: the Politics of Inclusion in Beirut and Mumbai’, *Antipode*, Berkeley, CA: University of California, pp. 7-10.

35 Anthropologist Lara Deeb pointed out how Iranian *mahdism* implies a greater eschatological logic than in Lebanon. The Last Day belief is less mentioned by Lebanese Shi’a and, as a consequence, less representative of local mentality, given that, in the case of Lebanon, such a theology is not a hegemonic state plan, but rather a political party’s strategy or culture. Just one among others. Deeb, ‘Emulating and/or embodying the ideal’.

36 It is worth getting deeper into Zeinab here as a source for inspiration: women activists, however, cannot equate her. The way Lebanese Shi’a women look at this figure is therefore induced by social circumstances, which are different from Iran. This leads to a theoretical betrayal of the Weberian conviction that religion is a key factor in influencing reality. Furthermore, the preaching of Imam Mohammed Fadlallah – called *marji at-taqlid* – widely contributed to the empowerment of women in terms of religious roles: he used to say that women can attain the highest level of jurisprudential training and interpret religious tenets, despite the absence of such a norm in Shi’a jurisprudence (Deeb, ‘Emulating and/or embodying the ideal’, p. 251). Even so, the normative moral womanhood was majorly represented by Fatima, the model of calm, maternalism and patience, in opposition to the westernized women in Iran in 1971, as specified by ‘Ali Shari’ati. In that frame, women were called to actively participate in political life only during moments of crisis, and this implied a more changing gender role for women in daily life, with respect to the more static figure of Hussein, who epitomizes the inspirational model for Shi’a manhood.

37 Deeb, ‘Emulating and/or embodying the ideal’, p. 250.

38 Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*.

interests in humanitarian intervention are perceived less by local inhabitants when talking about local providers that have long since been in Dahiye providing aid, to assist cyclic events causing internal displacement of people.

In fact, the Shiite organizations in Dahiye tend to guarantee their action both in wartime and in peacetime, boasting an increased technical self-confidence, even though they recognize how much more developed longstanding Christian services are for historical reasons.³⁹ Nonetheless, the local perception of local FBOs was empirically ambivalent. On the one side, they were seen as rarely addressing chronic poverty and local injustice, like the internationals: ‘They often end up feeding the accountability of the political party that supports them, has founded them or promoted them’, as a local Dahiye dweller contended.⁴⁰ On the other, while international NGOs tend to view beneficiaries as victims and therefore as morally deserving individuals and rights bearers, Fadlallah and Hezbollah’s services have been able to make people feel like political actors.⁴¹

A degree of open-mindedness in the desire to make their projects sustainable is a further difference highlighted by Fadlallah-founded al-Mabarrat with respect to Hezbollah’s NGOs. Al-Mabarrat expresses its availability to work with foreign NGOs and universities: Hezbollah criticizes such openness, deeming it mere commodification.⁴² For example, the Deputy Mayor of one of Hezbollah’s municipalities,⁴³ said that in the July war, international donors rarely grasped what the local priorities were:

‘Their main focus has been providing psychological assistance... That was not really the issue. We had apartments totally destroyed, damaged buildings, women

39 Interview with Faruq Rizq, al-Mabarrat headquarter, al-Ghobeiry, Beirut, 18 October 2012.

40 Interview with Mohammed, shop owner, Haret Hreik, 2 February 2012.

41 This also occurs as the provider-recipient relationship is widely based on a social contract or reciprocity in Dahiye. The politicization of services, therefore, merely expresses the already existing moral and social relationships between the two parts. In particular, during Lebanon’s civil war Fadlallah used to speak up for the necessity of creating a ‘human state’ - *dawlat al-insan* - that would provide the resources for people to help themselves and one another. He was known for considering public funds as ownership of the people and for capturing this ethics when he said that he was not looking for ‘followers’ but ‘partners’. It is this specific political logic that allowed the Hezbollah party to foster its politics of inclusion. Silverstein, K. (2007) *Hezbollah’s Strength derives from the Strong Social Fabric that they have woven over the years*. Available at: <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.iranian/2007-03/msg01663.html> (Accessed: 16 October 2017).

42 Interview with al-Hadi Association (al-Mabarrat’s branch), Tariq al-Matar, Beirut, 29 October 2012.

43 Haret Hreik, 18 January 2012.

needing specific help. So, the problem with cooperating with international providers is that they don't fund and work for the things we really need. The reality is never changed by humanitarian services; but if you want to give something, help with infrastructure and more money for housing and furniture. From outside little money came with this purpose'.

Al-Mabarrat's workers, by contrast, argued that they did not feel marginalized in the international market, viewing themselves as members of the same sector; the Mabarrat staff said they felt more like cooperators in the international aid structure.

Nevertheless, local discontent is sometimes identifiable within the structure of the local FBOs themselves, despite the promising premise. The manager of the Research and Development Department,⁴⁴ for example, questioned the path undertaken by all NGOs in Lebanon; in his opinion, 'it is much easier to assess the material results of a project. The change promoted by an NGO comes from the process, more than from the material results of a project'.⁴⁵ Therein, the local collaboration with the internationals is sometimes unable to grasp the local processes that have been ignited with specific purposes. The continuation of such collaborations, to his mind, is due to *Realpolitik*: Lebanese NGOs need international visibility, and would die out without such partnerships. As international providers primarily show up in times of emergency,⁴⁶ crises are actually key to local NGOs' survival.

Another difference between the two views on humanitarianism espoused by Hezbollah and the Fadlallah-founded services lies in their approach to the 'outside'.

Another difference between the two views on humanitarianism espoused by Hezbollah and the Fadlallah-founded services lies in their approach to the 'outside'. The latter promote their community-crossing vision in Dahiye, arguing for services to be provided for any Lebanese community. Nevertheless, they tend to recognize that few people from Lebanese communities other than Shi'a eventually access their services, owing

to the demographical changes since the time of the NGO's foundation. For instance, the Imam as-Sadr Foundation, which

44 Interview with Mohammed Bassam, Tyre, 8 October 2012.

45 Imam as-Sadr Foundation, Tyre, 8 October 2012.

46 It is interesting to notice in fact that some local development projects fail for cultural reasons, according to the manager of the Research and Development Department (i.e. Lebanese Shiite women trained for entering the hoteling market and unlikely to follow up with the acquired skills). Or, again, foreign models are sometimes not ideal for targeting the local nuances of human vulnerability.

can be associated with Fadlallah's approach - despite their sporadic rivalry - was created in the 1960s, prior to the civil war, and 'used to address anyone in the South, where Christian Maronites, Christian Orthodox and Armenians were far more numerous'.⁴⁷

Hezbollah-led municipalities,⁴⁸ by contrast, did not conceal⁴⁹ the *de facto* selective character of their services in peacetime –primarily targeting Lebanese Shiites - except for during the July war, when the party became a compensation provider for any community inhabiting Dahiye. Since then, the political party has placed particular emphasis on maintaining this post-confessional profile. In its various communications, it has highlighted the endemic nature of the reconstruction, and the fact that people's return to their own homes represents their own victory, regardless of which community they belong to.⁵⁰ This rhetoric has also adopted by secular local providers close to the party.⁵¹ Similarly to other political parties in Lebanon, this points to Hezbollah's desire to promote post-confessional discourses and practices.

Secular versus Islamic Shiite pattern of care in Dahiye's local provision

A social ethics product of an (allegedly) identical cultural and religious background does not seem to homogenize the politics of care across secular and faith-based segments of service provision within the Dahiye context. In this framework, different to Fadlallah's approach to aid provision, the leader of the Lebanese secular NGO Amel Association talked of the necessity of cultivating responsibility in Lebanon by charging

47 Interview with Mohammed Bassam, Tyre, 8 October 2012. In this respect, it is interesting to notice that communal tensions were more perceived by the interviewed among aid providers than among aid recipients.

48 Dahiye is an originally Christian majority area and Lebanese citizens need to vote in the district where their family resides. This explains the reason why the Mayors of the Municipality tend to be Christian. In Dahiye, Shiite Lebanese Hezbollah members therefore tend to be Deputy Mayors, though upholding the largest *de facto* power within their municipality.

49 Interviews with the municipalities of Haret Hreik and al-Ghobeiry, November 2011.

50 The return has often been criticized as too hastened by scholars and scientists, as the living conditions could not be restored in a short time. Sulfur levels, for instance, were much higher in the air than before the reconstruction process (Makkouk el-Jam, F. (2008) *Assessment of Airborne Particulate Matter Elevation in Haret Hreik (Beirut) after the Israeli Bombardment of July 2006*. MA Thesis. Beirut: American University of Beirut, p. 72).

51 Interview with Amel Association conducted in Wata al-Mossaitbeh, Beirut, 11 October 2011.

the beneficiaries for the required services when possible, to avoid sponsoring aprioristic charity. It is in this sense that he argues that ‘Amel acts to be the feet, not the head, of our own society’. Hence, the concept of guiding individuals and their approach to moral life that was present in Fadlallah-founded associations gets lost here. In this regard, Amel’s approach is comparable to that of international organizations, which generally promote themselves as a catalyzing force for existing civic dynamism, often denying the NGO political influence on society, by delegating politics to society itself. From this perspective, NGOs should only accelerate and support people’s actions and translate public ideas and intentions into real changes. In this regard, Amel’s leader⁵² argued that his NGO’s work merely entails promoting a ‘culture of rights’ - *thaqafat al-huquq* - which, in current Lebanese society, is still highly community-oriented and community-grounded.

Reconciling the secular and the Shiite perspectives, Zahir Jalul⁵³ spoke about a culture of humankind – *thaqafat al-insan* - that is still absent in Lebanon. This needs to be connected to humanitarian acts historically recognized and ‘baptized’ by the martyrs’ blood⁵⁴ and the individual commitment in the Resistance. The local secular perspective on humanitarianism in the July war is also at odds with the proliferation of informal and generally small organizations that were set up by local residents - usually Dahiye’s businessmen, the newly emerged Shiite middle class. They regularly distribute clothes, furniture, and money to the vulnerable ‘for the Islamic value of doing charity, as it’s written in the Holy Koran’, as a local businessman, Hasan,⁵⁵ affirmed in Haret Hreik.⁵⁶ ‘Of course there are people that became homeless in the July war, but orphans are always around in Dahiye. You always have a reason to help, till the time these people will be able to empower themselves’ (he uses the Arabic expression: *yaksab ajar al-ma’ida*, meaning until the time one is able to ‘earn his own living’). This phenomenon gave rise to

52 Interview with Amal director and founder Kamel Mohanna conducted at the Amel Association headquarter: Mossaiytbe, Beirut, 24 October 2011.

53 Leader of the Education Committee of Borj al-Barajneh. Municipality Bulletin 2013.

54 It is also interesting to notice that the term *martius* in ancient Greek means ‘witness’, where therefore a sense of agency is totally maintained despite the suffering and the humiliation that war can cause.

55 I here mention only personal names for which explicit consent has been provided.

56 19 October 2011.

a sort of private proliferation of services, in the form of organic cultural expressions of religious obligations. After the July war - which empowered some and rendered the area more conservative and poorer in the view of others - this phenomenon saw mixed economies of *laissez-faire* inhabit the public space in an aiding-purchasing-selling chain;⁵⁷ and subsidies have become only for the very poor, without seeking to ensure long term sustainability.

The fact that the Lebanese state ceded welfare to the local religious domain encouraged the colonization of the public by the private.⁵⁸ Charity and local entrepreneurship are peacefully reconciled within Amel's action and philosophy, as conveyers of local conceptions of secular humanitarianism. However, through Hasan's universe I regard the local Shiite conception of charity as a way of spiritually 'cleansing' his privilege of being enfranchised, as an established large-scale seller and politically plugged into the local network of the Hezbollah party and provider.

The fact that the Lebanese state ceded welfare to the local religious domain encouraged the colonization of the public by the private

Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate the complex interrelation between service provision, and community belonging and social solidarity, especially during times of crisis, when community services compete to increase their funding and their international accountability. As one of my interlocutors affirmed, 'in the absence of an efficient welfare state, religious providers are more than welcome in meeting people's needs'.⁵⁹ From this perspective, it is mostly thanks to such providers that Dahiye, after 2006, increasingly became a separate space, self-sufficient, where the fears of erasure, displacement and marginalization, symptoms of a 'damaged identity',⁶⁰ disappear. Collective self-confidence in the suburbs has been emerging over the last two decades despite increasing disaffection with local providers due to the strong nexus between access to local services and political constituencies. In this vein, non-state faith-based actors in Dahiye have provided social services to strengthen the social

57 In Haret Hreik, for example, I met wholesalers that used to donate part of the items they used to purchase to the local needy, rather than selling them on the retail market.

58 Makdissi, S. (1997) 'Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidère', *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (3), pp. 664-705.

59 Interview with a secular aid worker. Beirut, October 11, 2011.

60 Khalaf, S. (2006) *Heart of Beirut: Reclaiming the Bourj*. London: Saqi Books, p. 120.

safety net that the Lebanese state has been unable to provide at a universal level.⁶¹

Yet, beyond the FBOs' different ideological nuances within the same confessional sphere, as I have illustrated, the ways in which such local FBOs impede or enhance one another's accountability and local legitimacy requires further qualitative research. In the current neoliberal humanitarian era, the intellectual effort to unpack these diverse ideologies and models of care - despite the 'sameness' of their community 'belonging' - may lead us to reevaluate the factors underlying both social solidarity and antagonism, which tend to be deterministically associated with religious beliefs in the Lebanese context. By illuminating the nuanced character of aid provision in secular, Shiite, collective, and self-started models of care in Dahiye, I argue that, while I have previously shown⁶² that the July 2006 war exemplifies how extra-community – and therefore post-confessional – solidarity was tangible and can even grown in times of crisis, social solidarity should not necessarily and exclusively be perceived and approached as stemming from (unrealistically well-bounded and distinctively defined) religious and cultural communities.

Note: The people who are explicitly mentioned in this article previously provided their written consent (2011-2013 fieldwork research conducted under the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee's approval no. 2012/2146).

61 And this is a shared opinion among faith-based and secular aid providers who had worked in the July war. Confessional provision of services is in fact seen as an unavoidable reflection of Lebanese confessional society. Interview with Marie-Hélène Kassardjian from UNDP, Beirut Downtown, 24 November 2011.

62 Carpi, *Adhocratic Humanitarianisms and Ageing Emergencies in Lebanon*.

Turkey-Azerbaijan relations after 15 July: Expectations, Solidarity and Cooperation

Hüsrev Tabak* and Özgür Tüfekçi**

The 15 July failed coup in Turkey changed the country's foreign policy priorities. Since then, the country has redefined its relations with a number of countries based on how they responded to the coup attempt, and whether they cooperated with Ankara in apprehending the penetrators, the FETÖ. Given that 2017 marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and that the two countries have had steady and mutually supportive policies throughout this time, this paper examines whether the post-15 July environment has led to changes in the relationship. Specifically, the paper analyzes Azerbaijan's response to the 'fight on FETÖ', and the development of relations following the coup attempt. Our assessment of the post-15 July political developments suggests that bilateral relations have affirmed the path dependency of the two countries. The attempted coup and its consequences have not had any kind of negative impact on relations; on the contrary, the support Azerbaijan showed to Turkey in the 'fight on FETÖ' has deepened mutual trust, thereby further strengthening the path dependent solidarity and cooperation.

Keywords: Turkey, Azerbaijan, military coup, solidarity, ally, partnership



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Introduction

Azerbaijan recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations with Turkey. For the majority of this time, the two countries have enjoyed a steady and supportive relationship, with some exceptions, such as Turkey's attempt at a rapprochement with Armenia in 2008. This concluded with the signing of two protocols in 2009 aiming to establish diplomatic relations and reopen the Turkey-Armenia border. Azerbaijan felt betrayed by this initiative, given the implications for Turkey's support on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, which was not included in the protocols. However, Turkey soon regained Baku's trust, persuaded by Azerbaijan's calls to refrain from harming its national cause and facilitating Armenia's illegal occupation of Azerbaijan territories in Nagorno-Karabakh – also noting that Yerevan was already far from being ready to reach a possible compromise on the 1915 events. This single example, taken from a close relationship spanning two and a half decades, clearly represents Azerbaijan's influence over and importance for Turkey. The relationship works both ways: Azerbaijan joined Turkey's fight against FETÖ (Fetullah Terrorist Organization) as early as April 2014, demonstrating the significance of the bilateral relationship for Baku. Nevertheless, and as expected, this path dependency in bilateral relations continued after the 15 July coup attempt; the heads of two countries came together several times and launched several new projects as well as finalizing many others, including the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Railway route in late October 2017. This paper, at this juncture, further examines the current state of affairs regarding the path dependent bilateral expectations, solidarity, and cooperation, with a specific focus on the ways in which Turkey's response to the coup-attempt and its perpetrators has influenced its foreign policy.

Fight against FETÖ, 15 July, and Turkey-Azerbaijan relations

Azerbaijan was the first external location in which the Gülen movement opened its institutions, of course with the support and guarantees that Turkey provided to the Azerbaijani authorities. For years, the movement was considered as means to build cultural and transnational ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Despite

local concerns about the movement's activities in Azerbaijan, Turkey's formal and informal backing made the movement a trusted organization which was given several incentives that resulted in the establishment of Gülenist universities and several education institutions throughout the country. With exactly the same motivation, as soon as Turkey declared the Gülen movement as an existential threat, Azerbaijan took action. Following Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Azerbaijan in early April 2014¹, official Baku arrested several 'home-grown' Gülenists. Upon the orders of President İlham Aliyev, eight Turkish citizens who were senior members of the movement were deported. They included the CEO of the Çağ Öğretim İşletmeleri (the company that owned the Gülen movement's schools and university in Azerbaijan), the rector of Qafqaz University, and a top businessman affiliated with the movement.² As the first international destination of the movement, Azerbaijan also became the first country to support Turkey in its war against the Gülen movement (also known as FETÖ) beyond national borders.

In the local context, however, the movement's activities had long been viewed with suspicion. Some had always seen the movement as a threat to Azerbaijan due to its 'secret agenda'; Azerbaijan's Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshükür Pashazade, for instance, criticized the movement for not truly complying with religious principles, introducing *bidaat* and imposing Turkish Sunni Islam, while secular groups fiercely criticized the Gülen movement for "brainwashing youth" and using "financial, political and social capital to acquire more power and influence and then to 'Islamize' legislation and civil society"³. These critical voices, however, remained marginal; the Gülen movement and the Turkish government were allies and at the level of society, people did not know about the (ideological) differences between the Gülen movement and the Turkish government. However, starting with Erdoğan's visit in April 2014 (perhaps even earlier, given the open war between the movement and the government in Turkey that broke out in early January 2014) media and official

1 See the coverage at the official website of Turkey's ministry of foreign affairs, www.mfa.gov.tr/basbakan-erdogan-azerbaycan_da.tr.mfa (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

2 World Bulletin (2014) 'Azerbaijan deports 8 affiliates of Fethullah Gulen', 23 April 2014. Available at www.worldbulletin.net/hizmet-movement/134491/azerbaijan-deports-8-affiliates-of-fethullah-gulen (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

3 Aliyev, F. (2012) 'The Gulen Movement in Azerbaijan', 27 December. Available at www.hudson.org/research/9864-the-gulen-movement-in-azerbaijan (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

circles began to refer to the Gülen movement as an organization that could represent a similar threat to Azerbaijan, mainly via its schools and by infiltrating key government bodies and positions.⁴ Thus, by early 2014, several news articles warned of a similar ‘parallel state’ in Azerbaijan (similar to Turkey). It was suggested that Gülenists had infiltrated into state bodies in Azerbaijan, and that the movement had members and control in high-level bureaucracy and even Parliament.⁵ Lists of the alleged Gülenist infiltrates were published. In the meantime, the Gülen movement’s university (Qafqaz University), several colleges and examination prep schools (Araz courses) were handed over to SOCAR.⁶ Only a month after Erdoğan’s visit, in June, SOCAR announced the closure of those institutions due to the financial burden they entailed.⁷

Following the 15 July coup attempt, Azerbaijan’s support for Turkey and its fight against FETÖ continued. Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev officially denounced the attempt on 16 July, before the government had fully gained control over it.⁸ Aliyev’s official statement was followed by a phone call by the Foreign Minister Elmar Memmedyarov to his counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, expressing, on behalf of his country, unconditional support to the democratically elected government of Turkey.⁹ Several other ministers, members of parliament, political party leaders and political figures in

Azerbaijan president Ilham Aliyev officially denounced the attempt on 16 July, before the government had fully gained control over it.

4 Virtual Azerbaijan (2014) ‘Bakı nurçuların “İşiq evləri”ilə doludur’, 30 November. Available at virtualaz.org/bugun/14130 (Accessed: 16 September 2017).

5 Haber7 (2014), ‘Fethullah Gülen’e mektup: Deşifre olduk!’, 5 March. Available at www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/1134033-fethullah-gulene-mektup-desifre-olduk (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

6 Radikal (2014) ‘Gülen Cemaati Azerbaycan’da okullarını devretti’, 6 March. Available at www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/gulen-cemaati-azerbaycanda-okullarini-devretti-1179812/ (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

7 Oxu (2014), ‘Azərbaycanda bütün “Araz” kursları bağlandı’, 18 June. Available at oxu.az/society/29329 (Accessed: 16 September 2017); Daily Sabah (2014), ‘Gülen-Affiliated schools in Azerbaijan face closure’, 19 June. Available at www.dailysabah.com/education/2014/06/19/gulenaaffiliated-schools-in-azerbaijan-face-closure (Accessed: 15 September 2017); Hürriyet (2014), ‘Azərbaycan, Gülen ilə bağlı okulları kapattı’, 19 June. Available at www.hurriyet.com.tr/azerbaycan-gulen-ile-baglantili-okullari-kapatti-26638932 (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

8 Star (2016) ‘Azərbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev’dən darbe təşəbbüsünə sert kinama’, 16 July. Available at www.star.com.tr/dunya/azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-aliyevden-darbe-tesebbusune-sert-kinama-haber-1125924/ (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

9 Milli (2016) ‘Elmar Məmmədیارov Çavuşoğluna zəngətdi’, 16 July. Available at <https://news.milli.az/politics/452394.htm> (Accessed: 25 September 2017). Also see the following public announcement of the ministry on the same day MFA Azerbaijan 2016, ‘TürkiyədəbaşvermişhadisələrəiləbağlıX arıcıışlarNazirliyinibəyanatı’, 16 July. Available at www.mfa.gov.az/news/909/4219 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

Azerbaijan declared their support on the same day.¹⁰

Following the coup attempt, Azerbaijan took several steps as part of fight against FETÖ. Several statements were made from the President's Office and the government, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regarding Azerbaijan's commitment to joining the fight against FETÖ. It was admitted that the Gülen movement constituted a security threat to Azerbaijan, and several investigations were initiated, particularly regarding 'infiltrations' of strategic state institutions.¹¹ The minister of internal affairs Ramil Usubov stated that in Turkey's steps, Azerbaijan is determined to put an end to the activities of FETÖ in Azerbaijan.¹² Azerbaijan's religious authority, by the same token, ratified the final declaration of the Eurasian Islamic Council's 9th meeting in Istanbul which stated that:

FETÖ cannot be regarded as a religious community. FETÖ is a terrorist group that uses power to serve its own interests and exploits religion

...delegates have agreed that FETÖ cannot be regarded as a religious community. FETÖ is a terrorist group that uses power to serve its own interests and exploits religion that uses shady religious sources to produce knowledge, that destroys the unity of Islam, that violates the rights of the individual and the state, that abuses forms of worship like donations and alms, that tries to destroy tawhid... in the name of dialogue between religions and is hiding behind a cloak of religion.¹³

Within the scope of FETÖ investigations in Azerbaijan, Qafqaz University was shut down and its facilities were handed over to

10 For further declarations of supports from several other political figures within Azerbaijan see the compilation prepared by the Voice of America at the following link VOA(2016)'Azərbaycanda Türkiyədə dövlət çevrilişi cəhdipislonir', 16 July. Available at https://www.amerikaninsesi.org/a/turkey_destek/3420925.html (Accessed: 25 September 2017); IHA (2016) 'Paşayeva: 15 Temmuz'da Azərbaycan da uyumadı', 3 September. Available at www.ihha.com.tr/haber-pasayeva-15-temmuzda-azerbaycan-da-uyumadi-584743/ (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

11 Trend News Agency (2016), "Novruz Məmmədov: Azərbaycanadakı FETÖ tərəfdarlarının hamısı üzə çıxarılacaq," 20 August. Available at az.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2651126.html (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

12 APA (2016) 'Ramil Usubov: 'FETÖ-nün Azərbaycanda təşkilatlanmasına qarşı bundan sonra da lazımi addımlar atılacaq', 31 August. Available at apa.az/xeber-az/hadise/ramil-usubov-feto-nun-azerbaycandaki-teskilatlanmasina-qarsi-bundan-sonra-da-lazimi-addimlar-atilacaq.html (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

13 Anadolu Agency (2016) '9. Avrasya İslam Şurası bildirisinden: FETÖ dini cemaat olarak nitelenemez', 14 October. Available at aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/9-avrasya-islam-surasi-bildirisinden-feto-dini-cemaat-olarak-nitelenemez/664849 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

On 1 November 2016, a rally named “15 July – The Voice of the People” was organized in Baku, and Azerbaijan’s support to the Turkish people was publicly expressed

another university.¹⁴ Zaman Azerbaijan was also closed down.¹⁵ The television license of ANS was revoked due to an interview it conducted with Fethullah Gülen.¹⁶ On 1 November 2016, a rally named “15 July – The Voice of the People” was organized in Baku, and Azerbaijan’s support to the Turkish people was publicly expressed.¹⁷ A photo exhibition organized by TİKA, TRT, and Anadolu Agency in Baku on “15 July – Rise of National Will” on 22 September 2016 was attended by high level officials from the Presidential Office, ministers, MPs and NGO representatives. Participants spoke out in fierce condemnation of FETÖ and the coup attempt.¹⁸

Throughout 2017, FETÖ has remained a primary concern in Turkey-Azerbaijan relations. Public opinion has been cautious about FETÖ ‘infiltrations’ in strategic public institutions, and several people have been taken into custody as part of the investigations. On several occasions, Azerbaijan has expressed its support to Turkey in its fight against FETÖ, and the 15 July ‘martyrs’ have been commemorated. An Azerbaijani filmmaker directed a documentary on the subject, featuring the Azeris who took part in the resistance against the coup plotters on 15 July 2016.¹⁹ On the anniversary, a prayer service was held in Heydar Mosque in Baku, dedicated to those killed during the military coup attempt. In the Friday sermons in Azerbaijan on 14 July, the coup attempt was condemned and the martyrs were memorialized²⁰. President Aliyev also issued a message commemorating the anniversary, expressing condolences for those killed by the

14 Yenişafak (2016) ‘Azerbaycan’dan FETÖ hamlesi’, 17 August. Available at www.yenisafak.com/dunya/azerbaycandan-feto-hamlesi-2512757 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

15 Yenişafak (2016) ‘Azerbaycan FETÖ okulunu kapattı’, 21 Temmuz. Available at www.yenisafak.com/gundem/azerbaycan-feto-okulunu-kapatti-2497287 (Accessed: 25 September 2017); Eurasianet (2016) ‘Azerbaijan: University, Paper Closed as Anti-Gülen Cleanup Continues’, 20 July. Available at www.eurasianet.org/node/79781 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

16 Avazturk (2016) ‘Azerbaycan’da FETÖ operasyonu’, 17 August. Available at www.avazturk.com/haber-azerbaycan-da-feto-operasyonu-16333.html (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

17 See https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10154662192838703&id=564243702 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

18 TİKA (2016) ‘Azerbaycan’da 15 Temmuz TİKA’nın Destegiyle “İhanetten Zafere” Fotoğraf Sergisi ile Anlatıldı’, 22 September. Available at www.tika.gov.tr/tr/haber/azerbaycan_da_15_temmuz_tika_nin_destegiyle_ihanetten_zafere_fotograf_sergisi_ile_anlatildi-24879 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

19 Anadolu Agency (2017) ‘Azerbaycanlı yönetmenden 15 Temmuz belgeseli’, 01 August. Available at aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/azerbaycanli-yonetmenden-15-temmuz-belgeseli/873633 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

20 Azernews (2017) ‘Azerbaijan was always with Turkey in its difficult days – envoy’, 15 July. Available at <https://www.azernews.az/nation/116259.html> (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

coup plotters, and stating Azerbaijan's solidarity with Turkey²¹. Turkey's diplomatic mission in Baku organized a commemoration which was attended by the President, several ministers, MPs, and high level bureaucrats.²²

Comments by Turkey's Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Erkan Özoral, confirmed that Azerbaijan's endeavors to combat FETÖ are well received by Turkey;

“Azerbaijan started its fight against FETÖ before 15 July. Azerbaijan was closely following the FETÖ reality in parallel with the developments in Turkey. It took the necessary precautions before the 15 July process. FETÖ's schools were shut down; some steps were taken against its media bodies. Following 15 July, these steps were further intensified. More solid steps were taken for getting rid of FETÖ institutions... We have seen support in Azerbaijan on this issue [FETÖ] and have no doubt that this support will continue hereafter”.²³

Gratitude was also expressed by Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım in his meeting with President Ilham Aliyev in Germany at the Munich Security Conference, during which he stated that “Azerbaijan's attitude towards fight against FETÖ is praiseworthy”.²⁴ Appreciation from the Turkish side has been expressed on many other occasions. Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, in a meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart, stated that Turkey is happy with the measures taken by Azerbaijan against FETÖ.²⁵ In a working group meeting with his Azeri counterpart, Turkish Deputy Minister of National Education Orhan Erdem expressed that Turkey appreciates Azerbaijan's decisive policies towards FETÖ and the closure of the schools throughout the

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21 IHA (2017) ‘Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev’den 15 Temmuz mesajı’, 14 July. Available at www.ihha.com.tr/haber-azerbaycan-cumhurbaşkanı-aliyevden-15-temmuz-mesaji-657923/ (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

22 Anadolu Agency (2017) ‘15 Temmuz 136 ülkede anıldı’, 18 July. Available at aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/15-temmuz-136-ulkede-anildi/863986 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

23 Anadolu Agency (2017) ‘Türkiye'nin Bakü Büyükelçisi Özoral: FETÖ'nün Azerbaycan'da beli kırıldı’, 25 January. Available at aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turkiyenin-baku-buyukelcisi-ozoral-fetonun-azerbaycanda-beli-kirildi/734424 (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

24 A Haber (2017) ‘Başbakan Yıldırım: Azerbaycan'ın FETÖ tutumu takdireşayan’, 18 February. Available at <https://www.ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2017/02/18/basbakan-yildirim-azerbaycanin-feto-tutumu-takdire-sayan> (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

25 See the official statement by the ministry at MFA Turkey (2016) ‘Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu'nun Azerbaycan ziyareti’, 3 December. Available at www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu_nun-azerbaycan-ziyareti.tr.mfa (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

country.²⁶ Finally, in the conference entitled ‘Islamic solidarity in the example of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations’, organized in Istanbul by Turkey’s religious authority Diyanet in appreciation of Azerbaijan’s celebration of 2017 as a year of Islamic solidarity in Azerbaijan, Diyanet’s president Professor Dr. Ali Erbaş stated:

“I would like to thankfully remember Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshükür Pashazade and Mubariz Gurbanlı, who stood with our people and state through personally visiting Turkey [after the coup attempt], for the support they provided [to Turkey] against 15 July FETO putsch; [and] would like to gratefully mention the Qur’an recitations and prayers made in Azerbaijan mosques for our [15 July] martyrs²⁷.”

Spheres of further cooperation – a review of post-15 July bilateral relations

Post-15 July bilateral relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan have remained on track, backed by a close alliance going back 25 years. Yet, Azerbaijan’s anticipated support for Turkey’s fight against FETÖ has strengthened the foundations of the relationship,

Two recent surveys suggested that Azerbaijan has been Turkey’s closest friend.

which has been particularly important for Turkey, that has for some time been marginalized, especially by the West. In fact, the results of the annual Turkish foreign policy public opinion survey conducted by Kadir Has University confirm this. Two recent surveys suggested

that Azerbaijan has been Turkey’s closest friend, according to 59.3 percent of respondents in 2016 and 71.3 in 2017.²⁸ This result also confirms that Azerbaijan’s support for Turkey has also met the expectations of the general public.

Turkey’s historical approach to Azerbaijan reveals another

26 MEB (2017) ‘Erdem, Türkiye ve Azerbaycan ortak çalışma grubu toplantısına katıldı’, 04 April. Available at www.meb.gov.tr/erdem-turkiye-ve-azerbaycan-ortak-calisma-grubu-toplantisina-katildi/haber/14004/tr# (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

27 Diyanet (2017) ‘Diyanet İşleri Başkanı Erbaş, ‘Türkiye-Azerbaycan Örneğinde İslam Dayanışması’ adlı uluslararası konferansın açılışına katıldı’ 25 September. Available at <https://www.diyamet.gov.tr/de-DE/institutionellen/Detail/10388/diyamet-isleri-baskani-erbas-turkiye-azerbaycan-orneginde-islam-dayanismasi-adli-uluslararasi-konferansin-acilisina-katildi> (Accessed: 25 September 2017).

28 The reports are accessible at the following links Kadirhas TDP Survey (2017) ‘Khas Türk Dış Politikası Kamuoyu Algıları Araştırması 2017 Yılı Sonuçları Açıklandı’, 20 July. Available at www.khas.edu.tr/news/1588; Kadirhas TDP Survey (2016) ‘Kadir Has Üniversitesi Dış Politika Kamuoyu Algıları Araştırması Sonuçları Açıklandı’, 18 May. Available at www.khas.edu.tr/news/1367 (Accessed: 25 September 2017). The surveys also suggested that the U.S. is increasingly considered Turkey’s arch enemy.

example of meeting of the expectations of Azeri people. It has been 25 years since the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey on 14 January 1992; on the very same day, the Consulate General of Turkey in Baku was upgraded to an embassy, becoming the first embassy in Azerbaijan. Since then, more than 200 bilateral agreements have been signed, strengthening the legal framework that has ensured the continuous development of bilateral ties. This also reflects the rising number of high-level official visits and the realization of socio-economic, scientific, and cultural ties.²⁹

Aliyev's letter to Erdogan on the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries reflects the appreciation of such ties:

“The brotherly Turkey is the first country, with which Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations in its independent history... Ties between our countries and nations have deep historical roots. ‘One nation, two states’ principle has covered all spheres of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations that have no analogues in the world... Based on friendship and brotherhood, our relations have today reached the level of strategic partnership thanks to our joint efforts. Azerbaijani-Turkish partnership contributes to welfare of our peoples, prosperity of our countries and establishment of peace and stability in the region³⁰.”

‘One nation, two states’ principle has covered all spheres of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations that have no analogues in the world...

President Aliyev's statements are not simply diplomatic courtesy; they are borne out in day-to-day bilateral relations. Relations have progressively intensified since they were first established, and the 15 July coup attempt has not caused any damage. On the contrary,

29 Baghirov, F. (2017) ‘25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey’, Daily Sabah, January 17. Available at <https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2017/01/17/25th-anniversary-of-diplomatic-relations-between-azerbaijan-and-turkey> (Accessed: 25 September 2017); Bulut, A. T. (2017) ‘Measuring political agenda setting and representation in Turkey: Introducing a new approach and data set’, *Party Politics*, 23(6), 717-730; Tufekci, O. (2016) “Türkiye'nin Rusya ve Kafkasya Politikası 2015”, in Duran, B., Inat, K. (eds.) *Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı 2015*, Ankara, Seta Yayınları, pp. 317-340; Tufekci, O. (2017) “Türkiye'nin Rusya ve Kafkasya Politikası 2016”, in Duran, B., Inat, K. (eds.) *Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı 2016*, Ankara, Seta Yayınları, pp. 375-396.

30 Avim (2017) ‘Ilham Aliyev: One Nation, Two States Principle Covers All Spheres of Azerbaijan-Turkey Relations’, 16 Ocak. Available at <http://avim.org.tr/en/Bulten/ilham-aliyev-one-nation-two-states-principle-covers-all-spheres-of-azerbaijan-turkey-relations> (Accessed: 03 November 2017).

due to the solidarity declared in Azerbaijan by the authorities and the public, they have deepened and strengthened. In particular, the recent the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSC) meetings, the recently commissioned Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway, and the TANAP project, which will be operational in 2018, are clear manifestations of the solidarity between Azerbaijan and Turkey in the post-15 July context. We shall now turn to these practical manifestations of cooperation and solidarity in greater detail.

The High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSC) was established in 2010 at the Presidential level in order to strengthen

The High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSC) was established in 2010 at the Presidential level in order to strengthen bilateral relations.

bilateral relations. The HLSC has convened six times to date, and the most recent session was held on 31 October 2017 in Baku. Through the HLSC both parties have thus far signed 36 agreements. The volume of trade between Turkey and Azerbaijan was approximately 500 million dollars during the early 2000s, and has increased steadily during the following years and the volume has decreased since 2013.

However, it is expected that the loss will be regained and that trade will remain on an upward trend as of 2017. Accordingly, special attention should be given to energy and transportation investments; not only are these billion dollars investments, they are also strategically and geopolitically crucial projects.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline is the clearest manifestation of mutual commitment to solidarity. The foundations for the \$4 billion project were laid in late 1990s, and since then it has functioned as a ‘chain’, connecting Azerbaijan and Turkey via Georgia. The BTC pipeline carries oil from the Azeri-Chirag-Deepwater Gunashli (ACG) field and condensate from Shah Deniz across Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and links the Sangachal terminal on the shores of the Caspian Sea with the Ceyhan marine terminal on the Turkish Mediterranean coast. The construction began in 2002 and ended in 2005. Together with the costs of filling the pipeline with oil, 3.6 billion dollars were spent on BTC oil pipeline. The total daily capacity of BTC was one million barrels per day from March 2006 to March 2009.³¹ Since March 2009 it has been expanded to 1.2 million barrels per day. From 15 July 2016, the BTC gained further significance, as Kazakhstan has resumed the transportation of oil via the BTC

³¹ Aras, B. and Akpınar, P. (2011) ‘The Relations between Turkey and the Caucasus’, *Perceptions*, 16(3), p. 57.

pipeline. In 2017 alone, according to the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 90,000 tons of Kazakh oil were exported through Azerbaijan via the BTC.³²

Along with the BTC, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline, which aims to supply Turkey with natural gas from the Shah Deniz field in the southern Caspian Sea region of Azerbaijan, was realized under the Turkey-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Agreement signed on 12 March 2001. BOTAŞ and SOCAR signed a 15-year Natural Gas Purchase-Sale Agreement for the transportation of 6.6 billion m³ of Azerbaijan natural gas to Turkey annually. Another 15-year agreement was signed in 2011 that by 2018 will enable Turkey to import gas from the second phase of the Shah Deniz.³³ The pipeline was perceived as a parallel to the BTC oil pipeline, and similar to BTC, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline has also brought Turkey and Azerbaijan closer together. Increasing gas transportation through the pipeline conveyed a symbolic message after 15 July 2016. Accordingly, during January-October 2017, the pipeline carried 5973,7 million cubic meters of gas, a 3,4% increase in comparison with the same period in 2016.³⁴

In 2012, intergovernmental agreements were signed for the transportation of Azerbaijani gas to Europe through Turkey via the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP).

Cooperation on gas transportation extends beyond Azerbaijan's ability to meet Turkey's increasing gas demand. In 2012, intergovernmental agreements were signed for the transportation of Azerbaijani gas to Europe through Turkey via the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP).³⁵ The TANAP Project plans for the construction of a 1,850 km long pipeline with a capacity of 32 billion m³ per year, running from the Georgian border to the Greece. The pipeline is expected to start transporting gas to Turkey in 2018.³⁶ The coup attempt and the following troubles

32 Kosolapova, E. (2017) 'Kazakhstan resumes oil transportation via BTC pipeline', 11 May. Available at <https://en.trend.az/business/energy/2752453.html> (Accessed: 02 November 2017).

33 Rzayeva, G. (2014) 'Natural Gas in the Turkish Domestic Energy Market: Policies and Challenges', (Oxford: Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, NG 82), p. 6; also see Suleymanov, E., Bulut, C. and Rahmanov, F. (2017) 'Economic and Political Analysis of Azerbaijan-Turkey Energy Relations' SSRN, June 22. Available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3060066> (Accessed: 03 November 2017).

34 Report News Agency (2017) 'Gas transportation via Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline up 3.4%', 17 November. Available at <https://report.az/en/energy/gas-transportation-via-baku-tbilisi-erzurum-pipeline-up-3-4/> (Accessed: 20 November 2017).

35 Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (2017) 'Natural Gas Pipelines and Projects,' Available at <http://www.enerji.gov.tr/en-US/Pages/Natural-Gas-Pipelines-and-Projects> (Accessed: 11 November 2017).

36 Gül Yesevi, Ç. and Yavuz Tiftikçigil, B. (2015) 'Turkey-Azerbaijan Energy Relations: A Political and Economic Analysis', *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, 5(1), pp. 27-44.

The coup attempt and the following troubles Turkey faced have not changed anything regarding the TANAP project.

Turkey faced have not changed anything regarding the TANAP project. As of today, almost 80% of the project has been completed, and it will be fully completed by the end of 2018. As President Aliyev stated at the presidential session at the 22nd World Petroleum Congress in Istanbul, these two flagship energy initiatives have “contributed to not only regional but also the global energy map”, strengthening both Azerbaijan and Turkey’s hands in global energy politics.³⁷

Another strategic project serving the path dependent solidarity of Turkey-Azerbaijan is the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which was initiated in 2005. Construction began in 2007, and the first train departed from Baku on 30 October 2017.³⁸ The aim is to integrate the BTK route with China’s One Belt One Road initiative, transporting across the Eurasian landmass within just 15 days and forming a strategic transit corridor with the capacity to transport up to 17 million tons of cargo and over 3 million passengers annually by 2030. Through this project, not only will the capacity for transport of goods between Turkey and Azerbaijan increase, but bilateral ties will also deepen. This was clearly articulated during the opening ceremony of the railway in Kars by President Erdoğan and President Aliyev; both presidents unequivocally declared the ‘one nation, two states’³⁹ expression, projecting a common fate fortified by a strategic partnership.⁴⁰ Following the opening of the BTK railway, bilateral agreements were signed between Turkey and Azerbaijan during the last HLSC on 31 October 2017, primarily in the field of culture, aimed at addressing the damage caused by FETÖ, which has particularly affected the education systems of both countries.⁴¹

37 Zengin, D. (2017) ‘Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline is 77 pct complete’, Anadolu Agency, 10 July. Available at <http://aa.com.tr/en/economy/trans-anatolian-natural-gas-pipeline-is-77-pct-complete/858285> (Accessed: 11 November 2017).

38 For further information please see: Jardine, B. (2017) ‘Full Steam Ahead: Long-Awaited Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Opens’, Eurasianet, 30 October. Available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/85776> (Accessed: 11 November 2017); Daily Sabah (2017) ‘First train of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway to hit tracks today’, 29 October <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/2017/10/30/first-train-of-baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-to-hit-tracks-today> (Accessed: 11 November 2017).

39 This is such a common rhetoric by both leaders, see for instance Sputnik (2016) ‘Erdoğan ile Aliyev’den *tek millet, iki devlet* vurgusu’, 24 April. Available at <https://tr.sputniknews.com/asya/201604251022368004-turkiye-azerbaycan-erdogan-aliyev/> (Accessed: 11 November 2017).

40 Akşam (2017) ‘Azerbaycan ile dayanışmamız birilerini rahatsız ediyor’, 31 October. Available at www.aksam.com.tr/siyaset/azerbaycan-ile-dayanismamiz-birilerini-rahatsiz-ediyor/haber-674717 (Accessed: 11 November 2017).

41 Azernews (2017) ‘Azerbaijan, Turkey sign agreements’, 31 October. Available at <https://www.azernews.az/nation/121421.html> (Accessed: 11 November 2017).

In the post-15 July context, in addition to the depth and breadth of bilateral relations, both countries have maintained successful cooperation in order to protect their national interests at the international level, via organizations such as the United Nations, European Security and Cooperation Organization, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking Countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Similarly, they have benefited from cooperation with other Turkic states under the aegis of the Turkic Council, TURKSOY (Joint Administration of Turkic Culture and Art), TURKPA (the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Speaking Countries), Turkish Business Council, International Turkic Academy, and The Turkic Cultural Heritage Fund.⁴² There have been several meetings which have brought together representatives from Turkey, Azerbaijan, and other Turkic states after the coup attempt. The first meeting of the ministers of communications and high technologies of the Turkic Council states was held in Baku on 28-29 November 2016, followed by a second meeting in Istanbul on 9 November 2017. The 34th Meeting of the Permanent Council of Culture Ministers of TURKSOY was held in Sheki, Azerbaijan 1 December 2016, and the Fourth Meeting of Official Foreign Policy Research Centers of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) was held in Baku on 10 November 2017. In the post-15 July environment, such interstate bodies and meetings have become even more important for Turkey; together with Azerbaijan, Turkey has been able to expand its fight against FETÖ throughout the Turkic world.

During the opening ceremony of the railway in Kars by President Erdoğan and President Aliyev; both presidents unequivocally declared the 'one nation, two states' expression, projecting a common fate fortified by a strategic partnership.

Conclusion

The 15 July failed coup in Turkey has changed the country's foreign policy priorities. Since then, Ankara has redefined its relations with a number of countries based on how they responded to the coup attempt, and whether they cooperated with Ankara in apprehending the penetrators, the FETÖ. Given that 2017 marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations

42 See Tufekci, O. (2017) *The Foreign Policy of Modern Turkey: Power and the Ideology of Eurasianism*, London: I.B. Tauris; Tufekci, O. (2017) "Turkish Eurasianism: Roots and Discourses", in Tufekci, O., Tabak, H. and Akilli, E. (eds.) *Eurasian Politics and Society: Issues and Challenges*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 1-35.

between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and that the two countries have had steady and mutually supportive policies throughout this time, this paper has examined whether the post-15 July environment led to changes in the relationship. Specifically, the paper has analyzed Azerbaijan's response to the 'fight on FETÖ', and the development of relations following the coup attempt.

Our observation of the post-15 July political developments suggests that the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan in the post-15 July context confirmed their path dependency. Thus, following the coup attempt, there have been no negatively changes to bilateral relations. On the contrary, Azerbaijan's support for Turkey in its fight against FETÖ has deepened mutual confidence and trust, thereby further strengthening the path dependent solidarity and cooperation.

Accordingly, Azerbaijan followed Turkey's lead in declaring the Gülen movement as a national security threat in April 2014. This support continued after the coup attempt, and with the backing of the public, the Azerbaijani government joined Turkey's fight against FETÖ with confidence and dedication throughout. Baku lent its diplomatic support at the presidential level to the democratically elected government in Ankara even before the putsch had been fully quashed. Azerbaijan's public institutions - including the Islamic authority - denounced the Gülen movement. The various commemorations and public services for the martyrs of on the first anniversary of the plot have all reassured Turkey that Azerbaijan remains a reliable strategic partner in a path dependent manner.

Although religion and kinship have facilitated mutual trust, reliance and expectations⁴³, Azerbaijan's support for Turkey on FETÖ cannot be explained simply with a reference to religious or kin solidarity. The cooperation is built on strategic and existential foundations, and is built on almost always meeting mutual expectations. The ongoing development of bilateral ties and the perception of Azerbaijan as Turkey's 'only friend' among the majority of the Turkish public confirm this. In the post-15 July context, the two countries have continued to cooperative and have taken clear steps to further the solidarity, as clearly demonstrated by the achievements in the HLSC meetings, the BTK railway, and the TANAP project.

43 Tabak, Hüsrev (2017) "Manifestations of Islam in Turkey's Foreign Policy", in Tabak, Hüsrev, Tüfekçi, Özgür and Chiriatti, Alessia (eds) *Domestic and Regional Uncertainties in the New Turkey*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 85-104.

Response to Regional Challenges: Why Strategic Partnership of Azerbaijan and Pakistan is Important?

Fuad Shahbazov*

This article examines the degree of awareness at the grassroots level in Azerbaijan and Pakistan regarding the growing bilateral strategic cooperation. During the last several years, relations between Baku and Islamabad have expanded rapidly to the level of a strategic partnership encompassing various fields such as military, humanitarian issues, diplomatic, and cultural issues. Building strategic partnerships with countries in the region and beyond has always been a guiding principle of Azerbaijan's foreign policy strategy. The common religious background of both countries also plays a significant role in strengthening bilateral ties. Pakistan's explicit support of Azerbaijan in the international diplomatic arena, in particular in regard to the resolution process of the most complex and dangerous conflict in the South Caucasus – the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is among those significant factors. The article traces the key moments in Azerbaijani – Pakistan relations, and outlines the achievements, prospects, and potential for strengthening economic and security ties.

Keywords: Azerbaijan – Pakistan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Kashmir conflict, Military Partnership, South Caucasus



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Introduction

Pakistan and Azerbaijan share common historic, cultural, and religious values. The relationship between the two countries has encompassed economic, defence, political and diplomatic cooperation since Azerbaijan regained independence from the USSR. However, despite a historically cordial political and strategic relationship between the two countries, economic relations remain underdeveloped. Economic cooperation began in 1995 with the signing of an Agreement under the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) on Trade and Economic Cooperation¹. Although more than twenty years have passed since this Agreement, the volume of trade between the two countries was only \$18.735 million in 2014-2015². The two countries can substantially increase the volume of bilateral trade by offering expertise to each other in various sectors, per their respective economic strengths. On the strategic front, certain strategic complementarities have been identified. Common diplomatic targets, exchange of industrial and natural resources, as well as strong religious ties can play an essential role in bringing both societies and countries together, and in strengthening bilateral cooperation.

Successful bilateral cooperation depends on successful leadership and clear-headed domestic policies.

Successful bilateral cooperation depends on successful leadership and clear-headed domestic policies. In the case of modern Pakistan, “Islamic elements” seem to dominate the public sphere, while Azerbaijan – a predominantly Muslim country with a clearly secular institutional system – has avoided adopting an Islamist political agenda. Although the functionaries of the Pakistani state remained largely secular until the 1980s, the state helped to create a Pakistani identity as the citadel of Islam, which, in turn, enabled Islamists greater freedom of organization and movement than in other countries³. Islamabad’s reliance on Islamist ideology as a political tool has led to the proliferation of Islamic political groups of all kinds inside the country.

1 World Integrated Trade Solutions (1995), ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA). Available at: <http://wits.worldbank.org/GPTAD/PDF/archive/ECO.pdf> (Accessed: 25.10.2017)

2 Dr. Kamal-Makili Aliyev, Khurram Abbas (2016) ‘Pakistan – Azerbaijan Economic and Defence Cooperation,’ IPRI Journal XVI, No. 1. Available at: <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/art3w16.pdf> (Accessed: 25.10.2017)

3 Hussain Haqqani (2013), Available at: <https://www.hudson.org/research/9952-islamism-and-the-pakistani-state> (Accessed: 25.10.2017)

Despite obvious differences in ruling methods and ideologies, the leaders of both countries have always been committed to increasing bilateral cooperation, in particular in the economic and defence fields. In this respect, the long-running Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir conflicts have been key factors in bringing Baku and Islamabad closer together, in order to increase capacity to take adequate measures against regional threats.

Despite obvious differences in ruling methods and ideologies, the leaders of both countries have always been committed to increasing bilateral cooperation, in particular in the economic and defence fields.

The strong defence cooperation, as well as historical ties, common religious, and cultural values therefore allow Pakistan and Azerbaijan to mutually benefit from this strategic alliance. In international relations, cultural and religious values may shape bilateral state preferences in a cooperative direction, as both dimensions have special role in deepening the understanding between communities.

The article traces the key moments in Azerbaijani – Pakistani relations, and outlines achievements, prospects, and potential for strengthening economic and security ties between the two countries. The article is divided into two chapters. The first chapter focuses on the military cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, seeking to illuminate the significance of military cooperation with Pakistan in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy agenda. The second section examines economic cooperation between Baku and Islamabad and evaluates the prospects for deepening cooperation in this field in the future.

Building up Strong Azerbaijan – Pakistan Military Cooperation

Following the dissolution of the Soviets Union, Pakistan was among the first countries to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan, expressing its full diplomatic support for the country despite having no direct borders with it. Azerbaijan – Pakistan bilateral relations are unique, despite the obvious geographical distance. It should not come as a surprise that Pakistan is the only country that does not recognize the state of Armenia, due to its ongoing occupation of the Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

This approach goes back to the beginning of the 1990s, when the local Turkish diaspora in Pakistan managed to influence the country’s foreign policy discourse in favor of Baku amid the rising tensions in the South Caucasus region, right after the

collapse of the USSR. Moreover, pressure from the secular and military elite of Pakistan (*including General Parviz Musharraf, who was closely engaged with Turkey*) in the mid-1990s, has also manifested itself in the form of overt acts of intimidation and hostility towards Yerevan. This raised concerns in Armenia, which was angered by Baku's increased assertiveness and insisted that substantive talks could not start unless Baku decreases its so-called "offensive" on the front-line.

Pakistan National Armed Forces has always been the driving force of national policy, or even the most powerful institution in the country, with the capacity to reshape the country's domestic and foreign policies. Furthermore, Pakistan's armed forces oversee the world's fastest-growing nuclear arsenal, amid great concerns about its security given an active domestic insurgency and strategic competition with its nuclear neighbor. In addition, Pakistan has

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built up an effective military industry, and now is eager to be one of the main weapons exporters in South Asia. The unresolved conflict with India has effectively accelerated the growth of the country's military.

Azerbaijan is less experienced in the defence industry sector. It has launched domestic arms production in the mid-2000s, in order to increase the capability of its Armed Forces. Starting out as a former Soviet country with an outdated industry, Azerbaijan has significantly developed and diversified its military industry since the end of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1994. During these turbulent years, Azerbaijan has done a lot to acquire international experience in industrial modernization. At the beginning of the 2000s, official Baku adopted a new military policy to strengthen its military/defence industry.

Oil and gas contracts brought billions of dollars and further foreign investments to Azerbaijan, and the country's military budget correspondingly increased between 2004 and 2012⁴. As part of this policy, in 2005, the Azerbaijani government established the Ministry of Defence Industry, tasked with modernizing the Soviet-era weaponry (mostly BMP, BRDM), and overseeing arms manufacturing⁵.

4 Military Budget (2012) 'Azerbaijani Military Budget,' Available at: <http://militarybudget.org/azerbaijan/> (Accessed: 26.10.2017)

5 Shahbazov F. (2017) 'Azerbaijan: From a Country with Soviet-Era Industry to a Weapons Exporter' Available at: <http://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/29394> (Accessed: 26.10.2017)

Although, Azerbaijan's defence industry maintains strategic relations with a range of countries including Russia, Turkey, Israel, Belarus, and China, Baku has been seeking ways to expand military cooperation with Pakistan in particular over the last several years. Given Pakistan's status as a nuclear power, combined with its dynamic military muscle, military cooperation represents another fundamental building block of the bilateral relationship. The two countries signed a defence agreement in May 2003, which allows Azerbaijani military staff, in particular special forces units, to take part in annual military drills along with Pakistani armed forces⁶. As part of the agreement, Azerbaijani naval personnel participated in the Pakistani-led multinational exercise called AMAN-2013, the biggest ever Pakistani-led navy exercise.

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The exercise involved around 24 warships, 25 aircraft and special operation forces from 13 countries, which participated in the exercise to boost their naval forces' operational capabilities⁷. Obviously, the military cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan goes beyond participation in joint military exercises and takes the form of an ongoing dialogue at the highest level. As part of this policy, Baku and Islamabad signed a military cooperation agreement in 2014 during the fifth meeting of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Working Group on Military Cooperation in Islamabad⁸. Pakistan has also trained around 100 military units in Azerbaijan over the past decade⁹. The launching of the Pakistan-Azerbaijan Business Forum, with a special focus on defence equipment, is another example of defence cooperation¹⁰.

Moreover, several official visits of Pakistani military delegations to Azerbaijan have been arranged to boost and diversify military

6 Shahbazov F. (2017) 'Azerbaijan's Growing Military Cooperation with Pakistan,' *The Diplomat*. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/azerbijans-growing-military-cooperation-with-pakistan/> (Accessed: 24.10.2017)

7 Naval-Technology (2013) 'Pakistan Navy concludes AMAN-2013 multinational exercise,' Available at: <http://www.naval-technology.com/news/newspakistan-navy-concludes-aman-2013-multinational-exercise> (Accessed: 25.10.2017)

8 The Nation (2014) 'Azerbaijan, Pakistan sign military cooperation agreement' Available at: <http://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2014/azerbaijan-pakistan-sign-military-cooperation-agreement> (Accessed: 25.10.2017)

9 Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (2010) 'Interview with H.E Ambassador Mr. Abdul Hamid' Available at: http://biweekly.ada.edu.az/vol_3_no_4/Azerbaijan_and_Pakistan_An_interview_with_Ambassador_Abdul_Hamid.htm Accessed (27.10.2017)

10 Muhammad Asif Noor (2015) 'Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations – reaching a new momentum, new spring' Available at: <https://www.azernews.az/analysis/80123.html> (Accessed: 27.10.2017)

cooperation. The most recent visit by the Chief of Air Staff of the Pakistan Air Force Marshal Sohail Aman is among these, aimed at contributing to further cooperation between Baku and Islamabad¹¹. During the same visit, the Pakistani Ambassador to Azerbaijan Saeed Khan Mohmand stated during a press conference that “Azerbaijan has purchased 10 Super Mushshak trainer aircrafts from Pakistan. Pakistan will continue deepening our cooperation in defence and organization of military training.”¹²

The bilateral military cooperation between Baku and Islamabad entered a new phase when the Defence Ministry of Azerbaijan

The bilateral military cooperation between Baku and Islamabad entered a new phase when the Defence Ministry of Azerbaijan expressed its interest in purchasing JF-17 Thunder (also known as the FC-1 Xiaolong), a multi-functional aircraft that was jointly developed by Pakistan and China.

expressed its interest in purchasing JF-17 Thunder (also known as the FC-1 Xiaolong), a multi-functional aircraft that was jointly developed by Pakistan and China. The JF-17 aircraft was produced as an affordable and modern replacement to French-made Mirage III and F-7 interceptors. Pakistan had long been trying to find countries to buy the JF-17 in order to reduce the per-unit cost paid by the Pakistan Air Force. Thirteen countries have so far expressed interest in purchasing the JF-17 aircraft, including Azerbaijan, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Algeria, and Sudan¹³. Although numerous high-level meetings and negotiations have been held regarding the purchase of the newly-produced aircraft, no formal agreement has been signed yet.

Throughout these years, Azerbaijani authorities have frequently expressed their willingness to prevent the growing violence in the South Caucasus region, and have urged international actors as well as Armenia to support the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Notwithstanding the fact that the arms race in the South Caucasus has gained pace – notably following the April War in 2016, which dragged both societies into a frenzy of pro-war sentiment. The “conflict factor” should be flagged in this case, as both countries suffer from territorial

11 Today.az (2017) ‘Pakistan, Azerbaijan to eye military-technical cooperation,’ Available at: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/164978.html> (Accessed: 27.10.2017)

12 Xinhuanet (2017) ‘Azerbaijan – Pakistan to deepen military cooperation’ Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/09/c_136510002.htm (Accessed: 27.10.2017)

13 Global Security (2015) ‘JF-17 Thunder - Foreign Sales,’ Available at: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/pakistan/jf-17-sales.htm> (Accessed: 27.10.2017)

conflicts, in Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir respectively. These conflicts have been the key determinants in the development of the domestic military industries in Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

“The UN and OIC resolutions, which clearly recognize Armenia as an aggressor, must be an obvious evidence to all Muslim countries. It is worthy to note that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia do not still recognize the independence of Armenia because of the illegal occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh, while Turkey has not established any relations with this country. We consider all this as an example of brotherly relationship and solidarity of Muslim countries”, wrote President Ilham Aliyev in an article¹⁴.

As mentioned previously, while Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoy cordial relations in the military/defence sphere, this partnership has not been extended beyond the military equipment/arms exports and joint military exercise. Both countries are dealing with unresolved territorial conflicts and thus fully support one another’s territorial integrity. In addition, both countries face complicated security challenges, given their locations in fragile regions. Nonetheless, more needs to be done to overcome certain obstacles and to bring the bilateral military cooperation into a new phase, such as exchange of strategic information, jointly developed weaponry or military vehicles, and so on.

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Towards a Diverse Economic Cooperation

The South Asian region is one of the most essential regions for international economic cooperation, as well as international politics, given that it is home to 25% of the world’s population. In this regard, Pakistan’s diversified economy has the potential to become one of the world’s biggest economies. Accordingly, Islamabad, seeks to boost sustainable regional development via integration into new markets. Hence, Pakistan set itself a target of becoming Azerbaijan’s main partner in various fields, in particular agriculture. Pakistan has a semi-industrialized economy, but the agricultural sector remains dominant with export of cotton, rice, sugarcane, wheat and etc.

¹⁴ Aliyev, I (2017) ‘The strengthening of Islamic solidarity is a challenge of time,’ OIC Journal; Available at: <http://en.president.az/articles/23584> Accessed: 27.10.2017

Moreover, Pakistan's strategic location in the middle of South Asia, low labor costs, and the government's open investment policy has made this country quite attractive for foreign investors, namely China. Pakistan's recent policy of regional integration through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) aims at increasing the importance of Pakistan as a transit hub, regional transit corridor projects, and its overall economic prospects. The CPEC is the flagship project under the Belt and Road Initiative, and is seen as a "game changer" in regional geopolitical discourse since it was formally unveiled in April 2015. It has become the leading bilateral initiative between China and Pakistan and has a budget of over US\$ 46 billion¹⁵. Most Pakistani policymakers laud the potential of the CPEC to substantially boost Pakistan's economy.

As demonstrated, Pakistan's economic strategy is based on the view that building strong economic partnerships with regional countries and beyond by encouraging them to participate in the CPEC project will help to ensure prosperity in South Asia.

Simultaneously, Azerbaijan also supports an economic partnership with Pakistan, in particular via transit corridor projects.

Therefore, Pakistan has invited Azerbaijan to join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) due to its strategic location as a transit hub between Asia and Europe¹⁶. Simultaneously, Azerbaijan also supports an economic partnership with Pakistan, in particular via transit corridor projects. Geographically, Azerbaijan is

the most suitable transit zone and shortest route to Europe for Pakistani goods. As yet, no substantial agreement or negotiations has been reached between the two countries regarding Pakistan's involvement in the transit route. However, on 24 October of this year, the Ambassador of Pakistan to Azerbaijan stated that "Islamabad holds negotiations with Azerbaijan over the participation in the upcoming North – South transit corridor". According to him, Azerbaijan is eager to link the transit corridor with Pakistan's Qwadar seaport.¹⁷

In fact, the first Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement

15 Shahbazov F (2017), 'China – Pakistan Economic Corridor: An Opportunity for Central Asia?,' Central Asia – Caucasus Institute. Available at: <http://cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13450-china-%E2%80%93-pakistan-economic-corridor-an-opportunity-for-central-asia?.html> (Accessed: 31.10.2017)

16 The News (2017), 'Pakistan invites Azerbaijan to join CPEC' Available at: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/220314-Pakistan-invites-Azerbaijan-to-join-CPEC> (Accessed 31.10.2017)

17 Kommersant (2017), 'Пакистан ведет переговоры с Азербайджаном о подключении к коридору «Север-Юг»' Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3447125> (Accessed: 31.10.2017)

between Pakistan and Azerbaijan was signed in October 1995. However, this agreement expired soon after, and no substantial trade agreement has been signed between Baku and Islamabad since then. Therefore, the volume of bilateral trade has not reached a significant level. Notwithstanding these impediments, the volume of trade between Pakistan and Azerbaijan increased from \$10.323 million in 2011-12 to an unprecedented \$37.45 million in 2013-14. Pakistan's exports to Azerbaijan increased from \$29.97 million in 2012-13 to \$37.43 million in 2013-14, while imports marginally decreased from \$0.06 million to \$0.018 million during the same period. This period, however, experienced an increase in Pakistan's exports to Azerbaijan, mainly due to the export of rice (\$23.405 million) and synthetic fabric (\$3.126 million)¹⁸.

The most recent talks regarding the economic partnership between Azerbaijan and Pakistan were held in July 2017. A Pakistani delegation led by the country's Commerce Secretary Mohammad Younus Dagha met with the Deputy Minister of Economic Development of Azerbaijan and representatives of the Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) in Baku to discuss the possibilities for diversifying economic cooperation. The parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which envisages the expansion of cooperation between businesses in the two countries, exchange of information on market research and investment projects, establishment of joint ventures, and participation in fairs and business events. The next meeting of the working group on Azerbaijan-Pakistan trade cooperation will be held in Pakistan¹⁹.

It is necessary to underline that Azerbaijan – Pakistan partnership is not limited to defence and economic cooperation, given that it is strictly based on common ideas of Muslim solidarity on a wide range of issues, rooted in mutual trust and commitment to regional development through encouraging local institutions, state agencies, and NGOs. Accordingly, Azerbaijani

It is necessary to underline that Azerbaijan – Pakistan partnership is not limited to defence and economic cooperation, given that it is strictly based on common ideas of Muslim solidarity on a wide of range issues, rooted mutual trust and commitment to regional development through encouraging local institutions, state agencies, and NGOs.

18 Dr Kamal Makili-Aliyev and Khurram Abbas (2016), 'Pakistan-Azerbaijan Economic and Defence Cooperation' IPRI Journal XVI, No.1 (Winter 2016): 42-58 Available at: <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/art3w16.pdf> (Accessed: 02.11.2017)

19 Azernews (2017), 'Azerbaijan, Pakistan strive to expand economic cooperation' Available at: <https://www.azernews.az/business/116813.html> (Accessed: 02.11.2017)

foundations, namely Heydar Aliyev Foundation, have initiated a series of healthcare, education, development and humanitarian projects in Pakistan since 2005. In 2008, Heydar Aliyev Foundation sponsored the opening of a secondary school for local girls in Muzaffarabad city (Rara territory)²⁰.

It is evident that Pakistan is thinking seriously about deepening bilateral relations with Azerbaijan in other fields, as it is economically and strategically important for official Islamabad to enhance regional development. In this regard, Azerbaijan seems a willing and reliable partner.

Conclusion

Azerbaijan considers the alliance with Pakistan as a chief deterrent against Armenian aggression. In this regard, there is enormous scope for economic, cultural, and defence cooperation, notwithstanding certain challenges and difficulties due to the lack of direct communication between relevant state institutions. Moreover, the lack of common agreements on tax and custom issues are also impediments to increasing trade turnover. However, Pakistan has made significant inroads into Azerbaijan's defence market, through offering various domestically produced weapons. In fact, the strong military ties have become a valuable guide for improving cooperation between various state institutions in Baku and Islamabad. Moreover, the growing regional challenges in the South Asia and South Caucasus can boost bilateral cooperation in other fields.

Taking into account the unique political solidarity, military cooperation, and economic partnership, Baku and Islamabad need to enhance bilateral relations even further. The countries can establish a unique format, which would allow yearly annual military drills, or establishing direct communication between intelligence services in order to exchange necessary information. The successful economic strategy and investment policy can have a positive influence on other fields of bilateral cooperation.

20 Heydar Aliyev Foundation (2008), 'A Secondary school built by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation for girls in Pakistan's Muzaffarabad City was opened' Available at: <http://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/gallery/view/1/692/A-Secondary-school-built-by-the-Heydar-Aliyev-Foundation-for-girls-in-Rara-Territory-of-Pakistan%E2%80%99s-Muzaffarabad-City-was-opened> (Accessed: 03.11.2017)

Azerbaijan – Iran Cultural Relations: Dynamics and Potentials

Masiagha Mohammadi*

The article surveys the historical and current state of cultural relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the neighboring Islamic Republic of Iran, and discusses the main directions and potential opportunities of further cultural cooperation. The centuries-old cultural affinity and coexistence have been key to the expansion of bilateral relations; the common cultural heritage led to a long-standing relationship between the two countries - even during the Soviet era. After Azerbaijan regained its independence, Azerbaijan-Iran cultural relations have begun to further expand and deepen. During the early years of Azerbaijan's independence, Iran favored the religious dimension of cultural relations, which later caused some problems in the relationship. But over time, the signing of numerous documents on cultural cooperation between the two countries, and the establishment of an appropriate legal base enabled the relationship to cover various spheres in this direction. From 2003, cinema, music, theater and literature have played an important role in cultural relations between the two countries; in addition, significant steps have been taken to boost ties in science and education. In this regard, Iranian culture days in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani cultural days in Iran are being used as a successful format for mutually expanding cultural ties. The declaration of 2017 as the Year of Islamic Solidarity in Azerbaijan has had a positive impact on Azerbaijani-Iranian cultural relations, and revealed the potential for greater cooperation. At this juncture, the paper outlines specific proposals for the realization of this potential and further expansion of cultural relations.

Keywords: Iran, Azerbaijan, cultural relations, religion, Islam



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Introduction

Cultural ties between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Islamic Republic of Iran are deeply significant, rooted in long-standing historical ties and humanitarian linkages. Centuries of political, public, religious, scientific and literary connections between the two countries have led to the formation of a common cultural heritage. This common heritage serves as a reliable foundation for cooperation not only in the cultural sphere, but also across various sectors.

When talking about the inevitability of the expansion of interstate relations, leaders of both countries refer primarily to cultural linkages.

For instance, during his official visit to Azerbaijan in November 2015, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the following during his speech: “Peoples of Iran and Azerbaijan are one spirit in two bodies, who have common culture, beliefs, religion, faith

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and history. Hence, there is a foundation necessary to develop relations between two nations, and we should leverage this **strong foundation** for the benefit of two nations”¹

In his official visit to Tehran in March of this year, Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, highlighted achievements made within the framework of the bilateral relationship: “Friendship and fraternity between Iran and Azerbaijan grow successfully and quickly. Our ties are based on ancient history, culture and common religion. Based on this **strong foundation**, we managed to build great cooperation”²

It is worth noting that the “strong foundation” (common cultural heritage) cited by both presidents shaped the relationship even during the Soviet period, when Azerbaijan had no opportunity to pursue an independent foreign policy.

1 President.ir, (2014) روابط دو ملت ایران و آذربایجان شایسته تحرک بیشتری است (President.ir, (2014) *The relations between the two nations of Iran and Azerbaijan deserve more mobility*). Available at <http://www.president.ir/fa/8241> (Accessed: 15 November 2017).

2 President.az, (2017). *Azərbaycan və İran prezidentlərinin mətbuat üçün bəyanatları*, (*Press statements of Azerbaijani and Iranian presidents*), Available at <http://www.president.az/articles/23031> (Accessed: 15 November 2017).

Some facts about cultural relations during the Soviet period

Scientific and cultural representatives of Azerbaijan played pivotal role in Soviet-Iranian cultural relations. Throughout between 1940s and 1960s particularly remarkable developments were noticed from this perspective. Azerbaijani intellectuals and representatives of science, literature and the arts were actively involved in the “Iran Society for Cultural relations with USSR”, established in 1943.

Scientific and cultural representatives of Azerbaijan played pivotal role in Soviet-Iranian cultural relations.

In May 1945, a delegation headed by Said Nafisi and Malek o-Sho'ara Bahar, both well-known representatives of Iranian culture, visited Baku to learn more about Azerbaijan's scientific and cultural achievements.³

Azerbaijani-Iranian cultural and scientific-literary ties gained renewed impetus in the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. During that period, tours by Rashid Behbudov, a well-known Azerbaijani singer were particularly successful; Iranian audience welcomed Azerbaijani music, and Behbudov included several Iranian songs into his repertoire.

Furthermore, renowned Azerbaijani Orientalist scholar Rustam Aliyev made several scientific trips to Iran. In Tehran, he published scholarly texts on major works of Iranian literature – “Shahnameh” (“Book of King”) of Ferdowsi and “Bustan” of Saadi; these publications were critically acclaimed by the scientific-literary community of Iran. The friendship between Rustam Aliyev and the famous poet Mahammad Huseyn Shahriyar helped to establish literary ties between Shahriyar and Azerbaijani poets (Mammad Rahim, Suleyman Rustam, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, etc.), as well as the wider popularization of Shahriyar in Azerbaijan.

It is also worth noting the opening of the Iranian Consulate General in Baku in 1968, further evidence of Azerbaijan's status in Soviet-Iranian relationships.

Thus, despite the “Iron Curtain”, Azerbaijan's cultural and scientific ties with Iran remained strong, continuing to grow despite the various obstacles in their path. Following its declaration of independence, Azerbaijan started to expand and deepen these

³ Vəkilov, C.M. (1991) *Azərbaycan Respublikası və İran: 40-cı illər (mədəni əlaqələr)*. Bakı, 1991, s.62-63 (Vəkilov, J. M. (1991) *The Republic of Azerbaijan and Iran: the 1940s (cultural relations)*. Bakı, 1991, pp.62-63)

“Many Azerbaijanis live in Iran. They are citizens of Iran, however, Azerbaijanis are citizens of independent Azerbaijan. The more our ties are developed, the more they are like to benefit our countries. These ties are established by people without us. Neither government, nor a state is involved in this process. People establish these ties themselves as there are centuries of ties between two nations”

ties. This, first of all, was a process close to the hearts and souls of people living on both sides of the river of Araz. Heydar Aliyev, national leader of the Azerbaijani people, referred to that process: “Many Azerbaijanis live in Iran. They are citizens of Iran, however, Azerbaijanis are citizens of independent Azerbaijan. The more our ties are developed, the more they are like to benefit our countries. These ties are established by people without us. Neither government, nor a state is involved in this process. People establish these ties themselves as there are centuries of ties between two nations”.⁴

Given the strong wishes to expand humanitarian and cultural ties on the part both populations, Armenian aggression and the social-economic troubles faced by Azerbaijan during the early years of independence did not impede this process, as illustrated by a series of developments during 1991-1993.

Cultural relations in the early years of Azerbaijani independence

In March 1991, a group of Iranian politicians and businessmen, representatives of Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, as well as representatives of scientific and religious organizations visited Baku. They also attended Nowruz ceremonies.

In March and December 1991, an Azerbaijani book fair was held in Tehran, and an Iranian Book Fair in Baku. Some three thousand books were shown at the exhibitions. In May of the same year, book publishers of Azerbaijan attended the third and fourth book fairs in Tehran, resulting in an agreement on exchanges of book fairs, publication and trade of books. The agreement envisaged opening book stores in Baku, Nakhchivan, Tehran and Tabriz cities.

At the international festival of puppetry in September 1993, Azerbaijan was represented by the Abdulla Shaiq puppet theatre.⁵

4 Pakayin, M. (2014) *Heydər Əliyev və İranla daimi dostluğa əsaslanan baxış*. Bakı, 2014, s.86 (Pakaein, M. (2014) *Heydar Aliyev and his vision based on persistent friendship with Iran*. Baku, 2014, p.86).

5 Qasimov, M. və Abdullayev, M. (1999) *Beynəlxalq münasibətlər tarixi (XX əsr. II hissə)*. Bakı, 1999, s.103-104 (Gasimov, M. and Abdullayev, M. *The history of international relations (XX century, II volume)*. Baku, 1999, pp.103-104).

This period also witnessed the rapid growth of scientific relations. In 1991, Azerbaijani scholars attended congresses to mark the anniversaries of Nizami Ganjavi and Khaju Kermani in Iran. In April 1993, an international symposium dedicated to Shahriyar was held in Baku with the participation of Iranian scholars.

Following June 1993, when Heydar Aliyev came to power in Azerbaijan for the second time, relationships in several spheres were consolidated with the establishment of a legal framework. Documents signed during the official visit of Akbar Hashimi Rafsanjani, then president of Iran, were of particular importance. Among the 14 documents signed during the visit, the following agreements were related to cultural and scientific spheres:

Agreement on scientific cooperation between the Ministry of Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Agreement on cooperation in science, culture, economy between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan (on Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic); Joint Protocol of Understanding on cultural, scientific and education spheres between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Islamic Republic of Iran; Memorandum on Cooperation in the fields of science, education and research between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of High Education and Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁶

The development of this normative-legal framework made cultural relations, as well as cooperation in areas such as science and education more systematic.

In 1993, Iranian Cultural Center was opened in Baku. Soon after, with the support of this Center, two new publications - "Nizami Ganjavi" magazine and "Shahriyar" newspaper - were launched in Baku, aimed at contributing to the development of bilateral cultural and scientific-literary ties. In addition, the Cultural Center organizes various events together with Azerbaijan's scientific and cultural organizations, education facilities, and other institutions involved in research and education of Persian language and literature. The Center also enabled professionals from the science, literature and arts sectors of Azerbaijan to participate in relevant events organized in Iran.

⁶ Ibid, p.106

At the same time, the bookstore of the Iranian “Al-Huda” international publishing house was opened in the center of Baku. This publishing house was also involved in the translation, publication and sale of religious literature, which saw high demand among Azerbaijani readers.

Religious dimension in cultural relations

In the 1990s, it was the religious dimension which dominated cultural ties with Iran, for which this functioned as a soft power

In the 1990s, it was the religious dimension which dominated cultural ties with Iran, for which this functioned as a soft power tool in regard to the Azerbaijani public, so recently liberated from the atheist Soviet regime.

tool in regard to the Azerbaijani public, then recently liberated from the atheist Soviet regime. The Culture and Islamic Relations Organization (*Sazman-e Farhang va Ertebatat-e Eslami*) played a significant role in cultural relations with Azerbaijan during that period. In 1995, this organization sent 30 clerics to Azerbaijan to promote religious beliefs.⁷ Iran has built institutions dealing with religious education in Azerbaijan, while also offering opportunities for Azerbaijani youth to study religious schools and universities of Iran.

Azerbaijani government demonstrated an empathic and tolerant approach to its Muslim population, who were discovering religious knowledge and Islamic values following the collapse of the communist regime. This tolerance was also extended to the Iranian clerics who were involved in this process. This position was clearly reflected in the statement of Heydar Aliyev in the meeting with delegation headed by Yahya Mohammadzadeh, governor of Eastern Azerbaijani Ostan of the Islamic Republic of Iran: “When I was in Nakhichevan, I invited clerics from Iran to visit Nakhichevan. At that time, we did not have enough religious professionals. Azerbaijan is a secular country and the religion is separated from state here. However, we did a lot in recent years to support the religion to reach the necessary status in the country”.⁸

7 إليه كولای، جمهوری اسلامی ایران و ژئوپلیتیک قفقاز جنوبی. – فصلنامه ژئوپلیتیک. سال ششم، شماره اول، بهار 96 ص. 96-98 (Koolae, E. (2010) ‘Islamic Republic of Iran and South Caucasus geopolitics’, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, Year 6, Number 1, Spring 2010, p.96)

8 Lib.aliyev-heritage.org, (1999) *Azərbaycan Respublikasının Prezidenti Heydər Əliyevin İran İslam Respublikasının Şərqi Azərbaycan əyalətinin ostandarı Yəhya Məhəmmədzadənin başçılıq etdiyi nümayəndə heyətini qəbul edərkən söhbətindən - Prezident sarayı*, 2 avqust 1999-cu il (*From the conversation of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev while receiving a delegation led by the governor of the East Azerbaijan province of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Yahya Mohammedzadeh - Presidential palace*, August 2, 1999), Available at <http://lib.aliyev-heritage.org/az/6209921.html> (Accessed on 11 November 2017).

This position clearly reflected the desire of Azerbaijani state to raise awareness and religious beliefs of population while also openly demonstrating the “red line” of secularism enshrined in the Constitution. The fact that this subtle and sensitive point has not been considered by certain groups during in certain periods did not just affect cultural relations; it also had a negative impact on the bilateral relationship as a whole. Along with the speeches on cultural expansion of the West in Azerbaijan, the aforementioned groups also voiced their views on imposition of the so-called restrictions on religious people in the country.

In February 2016, on the eve of his official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev, referred to these allegations in an interview to Radio-Television Broadcasting Company of Iran: “Historically, Azerbaijan has never been home to any religious and national discrimination, and representatives of different ethnicities, confessions, religious movements coexisted under peaceful conditions with mutual understanding. The Constitution and legislation provide full guarantee for freedom of worship and religious belief, and no obstacles are created for free activity of religious people in their daily life. In the Soviet period, the 17 mosques operated in Azerbaijan. During early years of independence, number of mosques saw significant increase. At present, there are more than two thousand mosques in Baku and other residential areas. The biggest mosque of the country – Heydar Mosque was built at the expense of public budget to serve the religious people”.⁹

Following this statement, President of Azerbaijan announced 2017 as the Year of Islamic Solidarity. The Islamic Solidarity Games hosted by Baku during this year clearly demonstrated Azerbaijan’s clear position on this matter. It is noteworthy that Iranian athletes actively participated in the Islamic Solidarity Games, and various cultural programs were organized by Iranian Cultural Center alongside the Games in Baku.¹⁰

It is noteworthy that Iranian athletes actively participated in the Islamic Solidarity Games, and various cultural programs were organized by Iranian Cultural Center alongside the Games in Baku.

9 President.az, (2016) İlham Əliyev İran İslam Respublikasının Radio-Televiziya Şirkətinə müsahibə verib (Interview of İlham Aliyev to the Radio-TV Broadcasting Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran). Available at <http://www.president.az/articles/17843> (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

10 Baku.icro.ir, (2017) Mədəniyyət Mərkəzinin sədri İRNA ilə müsahibəsində demişdir: İslam həmrəylik oyunları qədim İran mədəniyyətini tanımaq üçün gözəl fürsətdir (In an interview with İRNA, the chairman of the Cultural Center said: Islamic solidarity games are a great opportunity to introduce ancient Iranian culture) Available at <http://baku.icro.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=225&pageid=30159&newsview=677536> (Accessed on 8 November 2017).

New stage in cultural relations

The Agreement on “Principles of friendship and cooperation relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Islamic Republic of Iran” signed during the visit of Heydar Aliyev to Iran in May 2002 had significant implications for the Azerbaijani-Iranian cultural relations.

The Agreement on “Principles of friendship and cooperation relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Islamic Republic of Iran” signed during the visit of Heydar Aliyev to Iran in May 2002 had significant implications for the Azerbaijani-Iranian cultural relations. The following documents were signed during this visit: “Memorandum on cooperation in the field of education and research between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Ministry of Science, Researches and Technologies of the Islamic Republic of Iran”, “Memorandum on cultural cooperation between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran”. The legal framework of cultural cooperation between Azerbaijan and Iran created plenty of opportunities to find and introduce new forms and methods of cultural rapprochement between two countries.¹¹

This visit heralded a new stage in cultural relations across different sectors, as shown in research on this topic.¹²

The Isfahan cultural days in Azerbaijan in 2007 were key in presenting the nature of the new cultural relationship. As part of the cultural days, fine art exhibition, music programs and cinema week related to Isfahan were organized in Baku.

During this period, cinema, music, theatre and literature played an important role in shaping cultural relations. In addition, significant steps were also taken towards the expansion of cooperation in the fields of science and education.

There is a great interest in well-known Iranian movies. Iranian film weeks held regularly in Baku were popular with Azerbaijani audience. Many movies produced by Iran have been dubbed and shown in Azerbaijani cinemas and on television channels.

Azerbaijani arts professionals attended the traditional Fajr

11 Manafova, M. (2008) *Azərbaycanın Şərqi Asiya ölkələri ilə mədəni əlaqələri*. (Kitab) Bakı, s.10 (Manafova, M (2008) *The cultural relations of Azerbaijan with Eastern Asia countries*. (Book) Bakı, p.10)

12 Məmmədzadə, G (2004) *İran-Azərbaycan mədəni əlaqələrinin inkişafı*. (Kitab) Bakı; Bakıxanov, T. (2006) *Azərbaycan və İran musiqiçilərinin qarşılıqlı əlaqələri*. (Kitab) Bakı, 2006 (Mammadzadeh, G. (2004) *Development of Iran-Azerbaijan cultural relations*. (Book) Bakı; Bakikhanov, T. (2006) *Relations of Azerbaijani and Iranian musicians*. (Book) Bakı)

festival organized in Iran. For instance, Tofig Bakikhanov, Azerbaijani composer attended this festival several times. Parts of the “Voices from the Orient”, which the composer wrote on the basis of Iranian folk music, were played during the XX Fajr International Film Festival in 2005. Tofig Bakikhanov’s Sonata № 6, on a subject related to Iran, has been included in the curricula of both Azerbaijani and Iran music schools.¹³

In addition, “Toplan”, a children’s play by Azerbaijani writer Saida Hagverdiyeva, was staged in the puppet theatre “Mika” in Tabriz. In recent years, significant work has been done to promote Azerbaijani writers in Iran, and classic and modern Iranian literature in Azerbaijan. For example, poems by the famous modern Iranian poet Sohrab Sepehri were translated by author of this piece and published with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan.¹⁴

Iranian universities and scientific centers expanded cooperation with their Azerbaijani counterparts, such as the National Academy of Sciences, Baku State University, Khazar University, etc. During the visit by the rector of Tehran University, a Memorandum of Understanding on inter-university cooperation, exchange of professors and students, joint conferences and seminars was signed between Baku State University and Tehran University.¹⁵

In general, cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Iran have developed significantly in recent years. Visits to Baku by Abuzar Ibrahimy Turkman, chairman of Iranian Organization for Culture and Islamic Relations to Baku in 2014 and 2016, and his meetings with Azerbaijani officials, played a key role in this. Iran’s Organization for Culture and Islamic Relations and State Committee for Work with Religious Institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a protocol on religious cooperation. According to the

In general, cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Iran have developed significantly in recent years.

13 Ələsgərova, K. (2016) *Tofig Bakixanovun İran mövzusunda 6 sayılı sonatası* (Alasgerova, K. (2016) *Tofig Bakikhanov’s Iranian sonata #6*), Available at <http://konservatoriya.az/?p=1581> (Accessed 1 November 2017)

14 Sepehri, S. (2010) *Suyun ayaq səsi (şeyrlər və poema)*. Fars dilindən tərcümə edilən və ön sözlün müəllifi Məsiəğa Məhəmmədi. Bakı (Sepehri, S. (2010) *The footsteps of water (poems)*. Translator from Persian and author of foreword is Masiagha Mahammadi. Baku)

15 bsu.edu.az, (2014) *BDU Tehran Universiteti ilə Analşma Memorandumu imzalayıb* (BSU has signed Memorandum of Understanding with Tehran University) Available at http://bsu.edu.az/az/news/bdu_tehran_universiteti_il_analma_memorandumu_imzalayb (Accessed 1 January 2017)

Iranian official Abuzar Ibrahimi Turkman, this protocol would enable “further development of religious cooperation based on principles of mutual respect”.¹⁶

At present, one of the successful formats for expanding cultural ties is the organization of Azerbaijani culture days in Iran and vice versa. The last such event took place in July 2017, when Azerbaijani culture days were held in Iran. During his visit to Iran, Abulfas Garayev, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan said that: “Culture days help people to know each other while also allowing for building contacts between them ... Today we need to increase cultural ties between Iran and Azerbaijan to the level that will be helpful for future generations”.¹⁷ The minister added that in 2018, events similar to Iranian culture days could be held not only in Baku, but also in Ganja, Gabala and other cities.

Positive impact of the “Year of Islamic Solidarity”

The “Year of Islamic Solidarity” had a positive impact on the development of Azerbaijani-Iranian cultural relations and revealed great cooperation potential in this direction.

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The declaration of 2017 as a Year of Islamic Solidarity in Azerbaijan by President Aliyev was welcomed in Iran¹⁸ as well as in other Muslim countries, and many Iranian officials appreciated this initiative. Indeed, at the beginning of the same year, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Ibrahim Rahimpour referred to it as a “wise decision” in a meeting with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov on official visit to Baku.¹⁹ On 7 August, Speaker

16 Scwra.gov.az, (2014) *Azərbaycan ilə İran arasında dini sahədə əməkdaşlıq haqqında protokol hazırlanır*, Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dini Qurumlarla İş üzrə Dövlət Komitəsi (Azerbaijan and Iran are preparing a protocol on cooperation in the religious sphere, State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan). Available at <http://scwra.gov.az/vnews/439> (Accessed on 12 November 2017).

17 Mct.gov.az, (2017) *İranda Azərbaycan mədəniyyəti günləri başlayıb* (Days of Azerbaijani culture started in Iran). Available at <http://mct.gov.az/az/region-xeberleri/randa-azərbaycan-medeniyyeti-gunleri-baslayib> (Accessed on 12 November 2017).

18 Irna.ir, (2017) *سال ۷۱۰۲ میلادی سال همبستگی اسلامی در جمهوری آذربایجان اعلام شد* (Irna.ir, (2017) *The 2017 declared as Year of Islamic Solidarity in Azerbaijan Republic*). Available at <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/82382048> (Accessed 10 October 2017)

19 Rəhimpur, İ. (2017) *2017-ci ilin Azərbaycanda “İslam Həmrəyliyi İli” elan edilməsi müdrik qərardır* (Rahimpour, I. (2017) *Declaring 2017 as the Year of Islamic Solidarity in Azerbaijan is a wise decision*). Available at https://azertag.com/xeber/Ibrahim_Rehimpur_2017_ci_ilin_Azərbaycanda_Islam_Hemreylilyi_Ili_elan_edilmesi_mudrik_qerardir-1030042 (Accessed 10 October 2017).

of the Parliament of Iran Ali Larijani described this declaration it as an “important venture”.²⁰ During a meeting in Tehran with Chairman of the Caucasus Muslim Department SheikhuIslam Haji Allahshukur Pashazade, and his accompanying delegation, the Speaker also declared that the shared cultural experiences of the two countries create opportunities for joint activities and initiatives in ensuring the unity of Muslims.²¹

A variety of different events were organized by state bodies and public organizations as part of “Islamic Solidarity Year”, both nationally and internationally. By mid-September, more than 150 domestic and international events had been organized just by the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan.²² Representatives of Iran also participated in many of these events. For instance, an international conference was held in Baku on “Islamic Solidarity: Harmony of Religious and Cultural Diversity”, organized by the Caucasus Muslim Department, State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku International Multiculturalism Center, International Turkish Culture and Heritage Foundation. The chairman of the Iranian Cultural Center and the representative of the Supreme Leader of Iran attended this high-level event.²³

In this regard, the most interesting example of bilateral cooperation between was a conference entitled “Islamic Solidarity in the context of Iran-Azerbaijan friendship” held in Tehran on 6 August. The conference was co-organized by the Caucasus Muslim Department, State

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20 Laricani, Ə. (2017) *Prezident İlham Əliyevin 2017-ci ili Azərbaycanda “İslam Həmrəyliyi İli” elan etməsi mühüm addımdır* (Larijani, A. (2017) President Ilham Aliyev’s declaration of 2017 as the Year of Islamic Solidarity in Azerbaijan is an important step). Available at https://azertag.az/xeber/Ali_Laricani_Prezident_Ilham_Aliyevin_2017_ci_ili_Azərbaycanda_Islam_Hemreyliyi_Ili_elan_etmesi_muhum_addimidir-1083814 (Accessed 10 October 2017).

21 Farsnews.com, (2017) همگرایی جهان اسلام در اوضاع کنونی امری ضروری است (Farsnews.com, (2017) *The convergence of the Islamic world in the current situation is essential*). Available at <http://www.farsnews.com/13960516001504> (Accessed 10 October 2017)

22 Apa.az, (2017) *Bakıda İslam həmrəyliyi mövzusunda konfrans keçirilib (Baku hosts conference on Islamic solidarity)*. Available at <https://apa.az/xeber-az/dini-xeberler/bakida-islam-hemreyliyi-ile-bagli-konfrans-kecirilib-796.html> (Accessed 10 October 2017)

23 Az.baku.icro.ir, (2017) *Mədəniyyət Mərkəzinin sədri Beynəlxalq İslam Həmrəyliyi konfransında iştirak etmişdir (The chairman of the Cultural Center attended the International Islamic Solidarity conference)*. Available at <http://az.baku.icro.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=225&pageid=11715&newsview=675830> (Accessed 10 October 2017)

Committee on Religious Associations, Iran's Culture and Islamic Relations Organization and The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought.²⁴ During the speeches, it was stated that Islamic solidarity could help to establish peace and security not only in the Muslim world, but across the globe, via joint efforts by Azerbaijan and Iran. It is no coincidence that in a meeting between the Azerbaijani delegation and the chairman of the Iranian Cultural and Islamic Guidance Organization during the conference, the unity of Muslims was highlighted as a necessary issue. The meeting underscored the importance of the Azerbaijani-Iranian cooperation in strengthening the Islamic solidarity.²⁵

Another successful example was a photo exhibition entitled "Azerbaijan - Pearl of Islamic Culture", organized by the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Iran at the ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran in October/November. The exhibition was opened by Azerbaijani Ambassador to Iran Bunyad Huseynov and the President of ECO Cultural Institute Mohammad Mehdi Mazaheri. Mazaheri mentioned the importance of such events in building understanding and rapprochement between nations.²⁶ Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian Foreign Minister, also attended the exhibition, where 80 photographs reflecting Islamic culture in Azerbaijan were presented, and emphasized the need for increased solidarity within the Islamic world.²⁷

Conclusion

Cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Iran have a rich history, rooted in centuries-old tradition. Their endurance even during the Soviet period stands testament to the special significance of these ties.

24 Scwra.gov.az, (2017) *Tehranda "Islam h mr yliyi İran-Azərbaycan dostluğu timsalında" adlı konfrans keçirilib (Tehran hosted a conference titled "Islamic Solidarity in the context of Iranian-Azerbaijani Friendship")*. Available at <http://scwra.gov.az/vnews/3683/> (Accessed 10 October 2017)

25 Irna, (2017) *وحدت مسلمانان امری ضروریست/تاکید بر همکاری تهران - باکو برای همبستگی اسلامی* (Irna, (2017) *Unity of Muslims is essential / Emphasizing the cooperation of Tehran - Baku for Islamic solidarity*). Available at <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/82623732> (Accessed 10 October 2017)

26 Mehrnews.com, (2017) *«یوم‌السنای گتسبیمه» عرضوم اب ناچ‌ایبردا یرومج سکع هاگش‌یامن زاغ* (Mehrnews.com, (2017) *The opening of the photo exhibition of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "Islamic Solidarity"*). Available at <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4125888/> (Accessed 10 October 2017)

27 Azertag.az, (2017) *Mohammad Cavad Zərif Azərbaycan səfirliyinin təşkil etdiyi fotosərgiyə baxıb (Mohammad Javad Zarif viewed the photo exhibition organized by the Embassy of Azerbaijan)*. Available at https://azertag.az/xeber/Mehemmed_Cavad_Zerif_Azərbaycan_səfirliyinin_təşkil_etdiyi_fotosərgiyə_baxıb-1110017 (Accessed 10 October 2017)

The current level of cultural ties between two countries is noteworthy; nonetheless, there remains significant potential for further cooperation.

In order to further expand cultural ties, the following steps could be considered:

- Opening an Azerbaijan Culture Center in Tehran, considering that there is an Iranian Culture Center in Baku;
- Use of modern techniques and methods of cultural diplomacy in relations;
- Deepening relations in the media sector, and preventing the media from spreading materials that do not serve the development of relations;
- Making scientific relations more systematic and targeted;
- Expanding cooperation in international cultural organizations, including joint initiatives to protect common cultural heritage;
- Increasing cooperation in the fields of film, music and literature;
- Promoting direct relations and cooperation among non-governmental organizations and cultural institutions.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Context of Muslim-Christian Relations

Galina M. Yemelianova*

The Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict over the Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, which broke out in 1987, has been one of the most enduring ethno-territorial conflicts in the former Soviet space. In 1988, the conflict escalated into a fully-fledged war, involving Armenians and Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In 1994, international mediation de-escalated the war into a fragile status quo. Since then, it has been largely neglected by Western policy-makers, media, and the wider international public. Meanwhile, the conflict remains a key threat to stability stretching from the Caspian to the Black Sea. Historically, its myriad causes included the geopolitical rivalry in the Caucasus between the Christian Orthodox Russian Empire, Muslim Persia and the Ottoman Empire; the development of Armenian and Azerbaijani nationalist movements; the initial temporary rapprochement between Bolshevik atheistic Russia and Atatürk's secularist Turkey; Stalin's nationality policy; the break-up of the USSR; and the resurgence of Armenian and Azerbaijani ethno-religious nationalism. The article provides a historical account of the role of religion in the geopolitics of the Caucasus with particular focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It argues that throughout history, the religious factor has played an indirect role in first fomenting and later perpetuating the conflict.

Keywords: Nagorno-Karabakh, Islam, Christianity, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia.



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Introduction

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a key component in the arc of instability stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea, which has adversely affected the lives of millions of people, as well as the security of major oil and gas supplies to Europe.

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The conflict erupted in 1987 during Gorbachev's liberalization and the political de-centralization of the USSR. At the core of the conflict was the status of Azerbaijan's autonomous *oblast'* (province) of Nagorno-Karabakh, home to an Armenian-majority population. It was triggered initially by the demands of the nationalist Armenian elite of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous *Oblast'* (NKAO), who wanted to unite the territory with Armenia. Subsequently, the NKAO's Armenian leaders established the self-proclaimed "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" (NKR), which has not been internationally recognized. This act mobilized the Armenian and Azerbaijani national publics, and the conflict transcended Nagorno-Karabakh and engulfed the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the large Armenian diaspora. The conflict soon transformed into the bloody war of 1988-94, during which over thirty thousand people lost their lives, over 740,000 people became refugees or were internally displaced, and Armenian troops occupied over 13 per cent of Azerbaijan's sovereign territory¹.

Since the 1994 ceasefire, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, along with other post-Soviet conflicts – namely Transnistria in Moldova; Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia; Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts* in Ukraine – has been termed a 'frozen conflict'. However, unlike the other aforementioned conflicts, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been largely ignored by Western policy-makers and media, presumably due to the absence of an overt Russian involvement². Meanwhile, during the last two decades, the nature and politics of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict changed significantly. The major domestic changes

1 Rezvani, B. (2013) *Ethno-territorial conflict and coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydan*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, p.183.

2 This observation is based on the analysis of over 4,000 pieces of news from leading British media outlets and over 30 interviews with British and French diplomats and other policy-makers conducted within the research project 'The Western framing of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: a factor in its resolving, or perpetuation?' January-December 2014, University of Birmingham, UK.

have included Azerbaijan's lengthy period of political stability under late President Heydar Aliyev (in office, 1993-2003) and incumbent President Ilham Aliyev (in office, 2003-present) along with its energy-driven economic prosperity, a stark contrast to economically stagnant Armenia. Other geopolitical factors stem from the growing assertiveness of Russia in its 'near abroad', of Turkey in the Turkic-speaking world, and of Iran in the Middle East. Globally, this era has witnessed the growing rift between the West, on the one side, and Russia, Iran and Turkey, on the other, the rise of Islamism and *jihadism*. As a consequence, the religious-civilizational dimension of international politics as it pertains to the West, Russia, and the major countries of the Muslim world has been amplified

The particular endurance of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is due to the multiple historical, geopolitical, ethno-national and religious factors at play. The article examines its historical evolution through the prism of Christian-Muslim relations. It argues that throughout history, the religious factor has played an indirect role in first fomenting and later perpetuating the conflict.

Islam and Orthodox Christianity in the formation of Russia

Although it is common practice to equate Russia with Orthodox Christianity and to juxtapose it with Islam, Russia's historical relationship with Islam is complex. Long before the rulers of the first Rus polity, Kievan Rus³, officially adopted Christianity in 988, pagan proto-Russians – unlike their counterparts in Western Europe – were involved in commercial and cultural exchanges with the more economically, politically and culturally advanced Muslim peoples from the confessionally pluralistic and Turkic-dominated Judaist Khazar Khaganate (7th-10th centuries) and Muslim Volga Bulgaria (7th-13th centuries). Between 1240 and 1480, Rus was directly incorporated within an equally poly-confessional state formation – the Genghizid Golden Horde, the Mongol-Turkic rulers of which adhered to Sunni Islam of Hanafi *madhhab* (juridical school) from the mid-14th century. In the late 15th century, the Golden Horde was superseded by the Tatar-dominated Genghizid Kazan Khanate (1402-1552), the official

³ Kievan Rus was a proto-Russian (eastern Slavic) state with the centre in Kiev which existed between the late 9th and mid-13th centuries in the western part of present day Russia and Ukraine. It was ruled by the Varangian (Viking) dynasty of Ruriks (859-1598).

religion of which was also Sunni Islam of Hanafi *madhhab*.

The Islamised Mongol-Turkic domination over Rus and wider Eurasia gave rise to considerable institutional and cultural similarities between proto-Russian and Muslim Eurasian polities. It also channelled state formation in Russia, as well as in other parts of Eurasia, along the lines of loose poly-ethnic and poly-confessional empires with vaguely determined frontiers compared to the formation of the national sovereign states of France, England, Spain and other polities in post-Westphalian Europe (1648), which had clearly defined borders. It also accounted for considerable inter-ethnic and inter-confessional tolerance and the relative political insignificance of religion, ethnicity and language compared to the dichotomy between nomads and non-nomads. This was quite different from the centrality of religion in contemporary Europe, which witnessed Crusades, the Catholic inquisition and protracted Catholic-Protestant internecine warfare. It is indicative that the economic and political aggrandisement of the Russian Orthodox Church occurred while proto-Russia was part of the Genghizid Empire⁴. It is also worth noting that Orthodox Muscovites' "Asian-ness" was reflected in contemporary Western perceptions of them as being similar to Muslim Tatars⁵.

In the second half of the 16th century, the balance of Eurasian power shifted in favour of Russia, when her Orthodox Christian rulers - tsars - advanced into the territorial domain of the Muslim Genghizid Turkic Khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan, Siberia and Nogay. An important underpinning of Russia's eastward expansionism was the Orthodox Christian sacralisation of the Russian state and its rulers, and the portrayal of Moscow as the Third Rome in the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453⁶. Since then and until the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church was an integral part of Russian statehood. It participated in the ideological framing and civilizational 'justification' of Russian territorial expansion into the Muslim Caucasus, as well as Central Asia. At the same time, Russia's ideological Byzantinization did

4 Yemelianova, G.M. (2017) 'How "Muslim" are Central Asian Muslims? A historical and comparative enquiry', *Central Asian Affairs*, 4, p.250.

5 Schimmelpennick, D. (2010) *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian mind from Peter the Great to the emigration*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2010, p.4.

6 Curanovic, A. (2012) *The religious factor in Russia's foreign policy*. London: Routledge, p.17.

not stop her rulers from instrumentalizing, when it was needed, Russia's structural and cultural affinities with Muslim Asia.

Russia's Expansion in the Caucasus: The Factor of Christianity

Russia's advance towards the Caucasus began in the early 18th century⁷. The advance was driven by her ambition to join the club of the major European, rather than Asian, powers as had been the case with earlier territorial expansion. This shift represented the increased conditioning of Russia's Eastern policy by the European civilizational frame, intertwined with Christianity. Russia's discursive Europeanization was initiated by Peter the Great (1682-1725)⁸, who, along with numerous other pro-Western innovations, in 1721 created the Holy Synod. As the supreme state department in charge of the Orthodox Church, the Holy Synod became directly involved in formulating Russian foreign policy and the promotion of Russia as protector of Orthodox and other Eastern Christians in Eurasia and the Middle East. In 1722, Peter the Great organised the Persian campaign with the aim to create Russia's stronghold in Derbent of present-day Dagestan and Baku.

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Russia's inroads into the Caucasus clashed with the regional ambitions of Shi'a Muslim Persia and the Sunni Ottoman Empire and thus contributed to a series of Russo-Persian and Russo-Ottoman wars throughout the 18th and 19th centuries⁹. Russia's self-promotion as the champion of Eastern Christians was a factor in her relations with Orthodox Christian Georgia, which had been intermittently dominated by its powerful Muslim neighbours, Persia and the Ottoman Empire, and accounted for Russia's relatively peaceful annexation of Georgia in 1801. In 1811 the autocephalous status of the Georgian Orthodox Church was abolished, and until 1917 it was headed by *exarchs* (metropolitan bishops), appointed by the Russian Holy Synod, rather than independent Catholicos-Patriarchs. The Georgian

7 Prior to this, Russian rulers persistently strengthened Russia's influence in the region through their alliances with some Kabarda and Daghestani rulers and the promotion of the Cossack settlements.

8 Peter the Great was a representative of the new Romanov dynasty (1613-1917).

9 Yemelianova, G.M. (2002) *Russia and Islam: a historical survey*. London: Palgrave, pp.52-5.

princes and nobles received Russian titles of princes and noblemen and Tiflis (Tbilisi) was transformed into the bastion of Russian expansionist policy in the Caucasus¹⁰.

The most significant manifestation of Christianity-enshrined Russian expansionism in the Caucasus was St. Petersburg's policy of creating a Christian buffer zone along her borders with

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Muslim Ottoman Turkey and Persia, thereby separating Caucasian Muslims from their co-religionists across the border. In the context of this policy, which was implemented in the period between the late 18th century and the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, a large number of Christian Armenians from the frontier areas in Iran and Ottoman Turkey were resettled in the South Caucasus. The legal grounds for this policy were the 1813 Gulustan and 1828 Turkmenchay treaties between Russia and Iran, and the 1829 Adrianople treaty between Russia and Ottoman Turkey. According to the Russo-Iranian treaties, historical Azerbaijan, which was within the political borders of Iran, was divided into the northern part, which was transferred to Russian control, and the southern part, which remained in Iran.

In accordance with the Treaty of Adrianople, Ottoman Turkey recognised Russia's suzerainty over the north-western part of present-day Armenia. Of special relevance to this discussion is the establishment in 1822 of Russian suzerainty over the Muslim khanates of Karabakh, Shirvan, Baki (Baku), Ganja, Quba, Erivan, Nakhchevan, Shaki and Shamakhi¹¹. In 1828 Russia granted a six-year tax exemption to Armenian migrants from Persia, who settled on the territory to the north of the Araz River¹².

The Russian policy led to significant changes in the demographics of the South Caucasus, and Karabakh in particular. Thus, according to official Russian statistics, by 1911 over 40,000 Armenians from Persia and over 84,000 Armenians from the Ottoman Empire were resettled in Russia's

10 On several occasions, however, for geopolitical reasons, St. Petersburg, played down its international Orthodox Christian credentials and sided with Iran or Ottoman Turkey. For example, in 1833 and 1839 it supported Istanbul against the Egyptian Mamluks (Curanovic, *The religious factor*;41).

11 Sattarov, R. 'Islamic revival and Islamic activism in post-Soviet Azerbaijan', in Yemelianova, G.M. (ed.) *Radical Islam in the former Soviet Union*. London: Routledge, p.149.

12 Imranli-Lowe, K. (2015) 'Reconstruction of the "Armenian homeland" notion', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51(4), p.549.

newly established Armenian *oblast* (from 1828 to 1840), the Elizavetpol (Ganja) *guberniia* (province) and the Borchaly, Akhaltsikh and Akhalkalaki *uezds* (districts) of the Tiflis *guberniia*. The next major influx of Christian Armenian migrants to the South Caucasus took place during the First World War, especially during 1914-1916. During that period, between 350,000 and 500,000 Armenians settled in the region and as a result, its indigenous Armenians were considerably outnumbered by Armenian migrants. It is worth noting that this major increase of the Caucasus' Christian Armenian population occurred alongside the persistent decline of its Muslim population, due to a significant exodus of the region's Shi'a Muslims to Iran and of Sunni Muslims to the Ottoman Empire. As a result, according to official Russian sources, the Armenian population of Karabakh increased from 21 per cent in 1810 to 42 per cent in 1916, while the Muslim population decreased from 79 per cent to 56 per cent¹³.

It is worth noting that this major increase of the Caucasus' Christian Armenian population occurred alongside the persistent decline of its Muslim population, due to a significant exodus of the region's Shi'a Muslims to Iran and of Sunni Muslims to the Ottoman Empire.

St. Petersburg's measures towards the strengthening of the Armenian presence in the region were accompanied by a series of political and administrative reforms which paved the way for the subsequent creation in Karabakh of the separate Armenian-dominated administrative unit of Nagorno-Karabakh. This idea was initially proposed by the Armenian delegates at the conferences on *zemstvo* ('local government') reforms in Transcaucas in 1905-16. In July 1917 it was included into the Russian Interior Ministry's project on the administrative delimitation of the South Caucasus¹⁴. Other factors which contributed to the rise of ethno-religious tensions in the region included the political, economic and social rivalry between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and their increased national awareness, which emerged in the context of the under-representation of Azerbaijanis in local government and the Baku oil industry boom. Also relevant was a series of outbreaks of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional violence in 1905-1907 and 1918-1920¹⁵.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp.550-1.

¹⁴ Imranli-Lowe, K. (2015) 'The Provisional Government and the Armenian homeland project', *Revolutionary Russia*, 27(22), pp.136,138.

¹⁵ Smith, J. (2013) *Red nations: the nationalities experience in and after the USSR*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.8-9, 40-1.

The Implications of Sovietization and Atheization

Following the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh was preserved. However, the end of Tsarist rule – which had been fused with Orthodox Christianity – and the Bolsheviks’ ideological atheism and internationalism drastically reduced the role of religion in Moscow’s policy in the Caucasus. Furthermore, the Lenin government, which was confronted with civil war, Western intervention and international isolation, opted for the policy of rapprochement with Kemalist Turkey, the secularist successor to the Muslim Ottoman Empire. The friendly relations between the two countries were affirmed by the Moscow Treaty of 16 March 1921 and the Kars treaty of 13 October 1921. These treaties legitimized the new borders of the Turkish republic and the Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. The Treaty of Kars confirmed that Nakhchevan remains ‘an autonomous territory under the protectorate of Azerbaijan on the condition that Azerbaijan would not yield its protectorate to

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any third party’, while Kars, Kagyzman, Ardahan, Olty, Artvin and parts of Batum and Surmali regions were to be transferred to Turkey¹⁶. The same logic lay behind the decision of the Bolshevik Caucasian Bureau on 5 July 1921 to retain the Armenian-dominated Nagorno-Karabakh within Sovietized Azerbaijan.¹⁷

During the Soviet period the combination of the Communist Party’s totalitarian control, Stalin’s nationality policy, and comprehensive Sovietization ensured political stability, relative societal cohesion and inter-ethnic peace in the region. Moreover, the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh ensured the cultural rights of its Armenian population to such an extent that a number of Armenian villages in the surrounding areas petitioned to be included within the autonomous region.¹⁸ Religion was removed from the public sphere and dissolved within Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian and other national cultures of the

16 Hasanli, J.(2016) ‘Russian-Turkish conference in Moscow and South Caucasus’, in Areshev, A., Asker A., et al (eds.) Turkish-Russian academics: a historical study on the Caucasus. Ankara:AVIM, p.165

17 Imranli-Lowe, K. (2015) ‘The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict through the prism of the British media and *The New York Times*, 1988-1994’, *Caucasus Survey*, 3(2), p.154.

18 Smith, *Red nations*, p.76.

USSR. At the same time, all those national cultures became de-politicized and subordinate to the supra-national Soviet culture, while the closed nature of the Soviet state and society insulated the Armenians and Azerbaijanis of Nagorno-Karabakh from the religious and nationalist impulses emanating from their ethnic brethren and co-religionists abroad.

Armenian Ethno-Religious Nationalism and the Role of the Diaspora

In the late 1980s, Gorbachev's political, economic and religious liberalisation and decentralisation unleashed the suppressed national and religious sentiments of Karabakh Armenians. The ideological framing of their cultural, political and economic aspirations came largely from outside Karabakh, notably Yerevan and Moscow, as well as the Armenian diaspora in the U.S., France, Lebanon and other parts of the world¹⁹. It is symptomatic that compared to the largely territory-focused ex-Soviet Armenian ideologists, their counterparts from the external diaspora tended to construe the local and national grievances of Karabakh Armenians against Baku as an element of the broader Armenian-Turkish animosity, related to the mass killing of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. They also played a pivotal role in the promotion of a reductionist Christian-Muslim paradigm in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict²⁰. The diaspora's intellectual and ideological input was accompanied by its substantial financial support for Karabakh's Armenians to increase the birth rate, with the aim of changing the demographics of the occupied Azerbaijani territories. Various Armenian centers and foundations in the diaspora established scholarship programs for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia to study in the U.S. and Western Europe²¹.

19 Particularly influential in the formulation of the political programme of Karabakh Armenians were Yerevan-based writer Zoriy Balayan, the Moscow-based Abel Aganbegyan, who was Gorbachev's economic advisor, and historian Sergey Mikoyan. (Cheterian, V.(2011) *War and peace in the Caucasus: Russia's troubled frontier*. London: Hurst & Company, p. 93).

20 Chorbajian, L., Donabedian, P. and Mutafian, C. (eds.) (1994) *The Caucasian knot: the history and geo-politics of Nagorno-Karabakh*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books, p.9.

21 O'Beachain, D.(2015) *Armenians on Karabakh and Armenians in Karabakh: politics and perceptions*, an international conference entitled 'The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: current discourses and future perspectives, London, King's College London, 17 February.

Post-Soviet Russia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Russia and Armenia

From the outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1987, Russia's position towards the conflict parties has been ambiguous. In the early stage of the conflict, i.e. 1987-1989, Moscow followed the Soviet internationalist approach and adhered to the principle of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, denouncing the pro-independence claims of Karabakh Armenians. However, in the 1990s Moscow

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became increasingly supportive of Yerevan, by providing it with substantial economic and military assistance, as well as moral support²². In doing so, it re-introduced elements of the Christian solidarity theme which had been employed by Tsarist Russia. Thus, Russia recognized the 1915 events as a 'genocide'²³ – the issue which has been central to Armenian identity worldwide. In 1995, the

special relationship between Russia and Armenia received a boost following Armenia's agreement to host a 4,000-person Russian military base. In 2010 the base's lease was increased from 25 to 49 years, i.e. until 2044²⁴. In 2014-2015 the Russo-Armenian military alliance was complemented when Armenia joined the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). At the societal level, the Russo-Armenian entente has been strengthened by the millions of Armenians living and working in Russia, as well as by the rising discourse regarding the common Christian heritage, which has reflected the increased role of religion in official nation-building narratives in both countries²⁵. Of particular significance has been the increased political assertiveness of the Russian Orthodox Church under Patriarch Kirill (in office 2009-present) and the Armenian Apostolic Church under Catholicos Karekin II (in office 1999-present), and their ecumenical solidarity in the face of rising political Islam, including *jihadism*.

22 Markedonov, S. (2012) *De-facto obrazovaniia postsovetskogo prostranstva: dvadtsat' let gosudarstvennogo stroitel'stva*. Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, p.129.

23 The 'genocide' of 1915-23 was recognized by 23 countries, including Russia, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Canada and 43 U.S. states. It is not, however, recognized by Turkey and Azerbaijan. Both perceive the events of 1915-23 as inter-communal warfare which lacked official authorization from the Ottoman government. In April 2014, on the eve of the 99th anniversary of the Armenian 'genocide', the former Prime Minister and current President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan described these events as 'inhumane' and offered condolences to the grandchildren of those who lost their lives. He called for a dialogue between Turkey and Armenia and proposed to set up a historical commission to probe events surrounding the mass killings of Armenians.

24 Aleksandrov, A. (2013) 'Bol'shaya krepost' Zakavkazia'. *Krasnaya Zvezda*. 3 December 2013.

25 Yemelianova, G.M. (2016) The shifting geopolitics of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict', *Diplomatiya Alemi*, 43, p.150.

Russia and Azerbaijan

As with Armenia, throughout the conflict, Russia's relations with Azerbaijan have fluctuated. After a short period of close engagement in the early years of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the relationship cooled due to Azerbaijan's assertive de-Sovietization, its rapprochement with linguistically and ethnically close Turkey, and its oil-related increased engagement with Western Europe. Under the presidency of Abulfaz Elchibey (in office 1992-3) Azerbaijan underwent an alphabetic (i.e. Cyrillic to Latin script), educational and cultural re-orientation from Russia to Turkey. However, since the ascendance in 1993 of pragmatic president Heydar Aliyev, who in 2003 was succeeded by president Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan has pursued a multi-vector foreign policy, complementing its strong links with Turkey by advancing its relations with the U.S., the E.U., and Israel, as well as re-connecting with Russia on cultural, societal, economic and increasingly political levels. Thus, on the one hand, in contrast to Yerevan, Baku refused to allow Russia to retain military bases on its territory, and in 1997 formed together with Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, the pro-Europe Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM). Then in 1998, Baku withdrew from the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), which it had joined back in 1993. In 2002 it spearheaded the implicitly anti-Russian regional energy project 'Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan'.

On the other side, Russia and Azerbaijan maintained their visa-free regime to facilitate business and labor movement. Russia's cultural presence was ensured by the availability of Russian-language secondary and university education²⁶. With the arrival in 2000 of assertive president Vladimir Putin, Russo-Azerbaijani relations have acquired new impetus, expanding to encompass the energy and defence spheres. Moscow, despite previous reservations about the division of the Caspian Sea's reserves, has begun to seek a stronger position in the Caspian Sea energy market which, since the signing in 1994 of the 'Contract of the Century', has been dominated by Western gas and oil companies. There has been a steady rise in business and financial links between the two countries. Most significantly,

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²⁶ Thus, since then the Russian language-based teaching has been in operation at the Baku branch of Moscow State University, Baku State University, Baku Slavic University and some other institutions of higher education.

since 2006 Russia has become one of the main suppliers of heavy weapons to Azerbaijan, along with Israel.

It is worth noting that Moscow has rationalized its growing re-engagement with Azerbaijan through an appeal to Eurasianism, including Russia's Christian-Muslim cultural identity; their two hundred years of common history, including the Soviet identities of their older citizens; the 140,000-plus ethnic Russians living in Azerbaijan and of over 620,000 Azerbaijanis in Russia; as well as the prestigious Soviet credentials of Azerbaijan's charismatic figures – late President Heydar Aliyev and Grand Muftii Pasha-zadeh Gadji Allahshukur (in office, 1980-present) of the Caucasus²⁷. The Kremlin has also emphasized Russia's unique in-depth understanding of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict due to her historical involvement in its creation and her subsequent central role in the conflict resolution process.

Nagorno-Karabakh and other Regional Powers

The Role of Turkey

Turkey has been Azerbaijan's main ally throughout the conflict, although it has refrained from direct involvement or military assistance due to its NATO membership and complex relationship with Russia. A special bond between Turkey and Azerbaijan was enshrined in the principle of 'one people-two states', which was endorsed by Suleyman Demirel (in office, 1993-2000) and Heydar Aliyev, the charismatic former presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan. Following the capture of Azerbaijan's Kelbajar region by Armenian forces in April 1993, Turkey closed its border with Armenia. In the 2000s and the early 2010s, Turkey attempted a nuanced approach to Nagorno-Karabakh by separating it from the 'genocide' question²⁸. In October 2009 in Zurich, with U.S. mediation, Turkey and Armenia signed two protocols on establishing diplomatic relations and the opening of Turkish-

Following the capture of Azerbaijan's Kelbajar region by Armenian forces in April 1993, Turkey closed its border with Armenia.

27 *Vserossiiskaiia perepis' naselentia 2010 goda*, Available at: http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm (Accessed: 27 September 2017). It is estimated that the actual number of Azerbaijanis in Russia is much higher than the official figures.

28 The normalization process became known as 'football diplomacy' after the visit of Turkey's President Abdullah Gul to Yerevan at the invitation of the Armenian President to attend the football World Cup qualifier match between Armenia and Turkey in September 2008.

Armenian borders. However, the implementation of the Zurich Protocols stalled due to considerable public and political opposition by all concerned. The Armenian government was accused by many Armenians inside the country and especially in the Diaspora of selling out to the ‘eternal enemy’, while the Turkish government faced dissatisfaction from Baku due to the non-inclusion of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue into the Protocols. The Protocols were de facto annulled in February 2015 when they were recalled from the Armenian parliament by President Serzh Sargsyan (in office, 2008-present).

Given the constitutionally enshrined secularism of both Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as their historical adherence to different strands of Islam (Sunni and Shi‘a), the role of religious solidarity in the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance over Nagorno-Karabakh has been superseded by ethno-linguistic and cultural affinities. It should be noted that the pro-Islamic tendencies of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has dominated Turkish politics since 2002, have been conducive to strengthening the religious dimension of Turkey’s position on Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as Turkish-Azerbaijani relations more broadly.

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The Role of Iran

Like Turkey, Iran has been concerned about Nagorno-Karabakh, which it regards as part of historical Persia. Other important factors in Iran’s position towards the conflict have included the common Shi‘a Islamic affiliation of most Iranians and Azerbaijanis, the long common border, and the nearly twenty million Azerbaijanis living in Iran. Since the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, Iran has supported the Shi‘a Islamic revival among post-Soviet Azerbaijanis, while downplaying their Turkic nationalism. At the same time, Iran has been wary of the secularized ethno-nationalism of the Azerbaijani leadership, its alleged sponsorship of pan-Azerbaijanism leading to its potential territorial claims on the Azerbaijani-populated territory of Iran, and Azerbaijanis’ claims to Iranians ruling dynasties. For this reason, Iran, in defiance of the principle of religious solidarity, has chosen to back Christian Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh

conflict. In February 1992 Iran became the first Muslim country, besides the republics of Central Asia, to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and to sign a number of agreements on economic cooperation. Throughout the conflict, the open Armenian- Iranian border has provided Armenia with its only land outlet to the outside world.

Azerbaijan reacted to Iran's pro-Armenian stance towards Nagorno-Karabakh and Shi'a proselytism by launching an information war, including a ban on Iranian television in Azerbaijan, regular deportations of Iranian 'spies' from Azerbaijani territory, its uncompromising position on the legal status of the Caspian Sea, and military collaboration with Iran's arch-enemy, Israel. It is worth noting that since the ascendance of pragmatic president Hassan Rouhani in 2013, Azerbaijani-Iranian relations have shown signs of improvement. For example, Baku and Tehran have expressed interest in establishing economic and financial links, including mutual economic investments, development of the North-South transport and energy corridor, and linking the Azerbaijani and Iranian railway systems²⁹. A facilitating factor has been Russia's advancing energy cooperation with both Azerbaijan and Iran, as well as her central role in the Astana-based inter-Syrian reconciliation process, which involves Iran and Turkey.

In its early stage the conflict was widely regarded as an internal Soviet matter with Moscow as its only arbitrator. However, the demise of the USSR in 1991 paved the way for the internationalization of the conflict's mediation within the framework of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and International Mediators

In its early stage the conflict was widely regarded as an internal Soviet matter with Moscow as its only arbitrator. However, the demise of the USSR in 1991 paved the way for the internationalization of the conflict's mediation within the framework of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE (formerly the Conference on Security and Cooperation, CSCE). The medium for international mediation has been the OSCE Minsk Group, which was established in 1992. Its goal was the convening of a peace conference in Minsk

29 Ismailzade, F. (2016) 'A breakthrough in Iran-Azerbaijan relations?' *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 19 February. Available at: <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13330-a-breakthrough-in-iran-azerbaijan-relations?.html> (Accessed 22 November 2017).

with the participation of all parties involved in the conflict. Since 1997 the co-chairs of the Minsk Group have been Russia, France and the U.S. Since the 1994 ceasefire the OSCE Minsk Group has shaped the format of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. To the Group's credit, this period has witnessed the initial de-escalation of the conflict and the securing of the post-1994 territorial status quo, as well as some shifts in the negotiation process from absolutist demands towards smaller, practical step-by-step measures. However, more than two decades on, the Minsk Group has failed to achieve any tangible progress in resolving the conflict. Among the reasons for the Group's ineffectiveness have been the insufficient seniority of its co-chairs (ambassadorial rather than ministerial), the increasingly divergent foreign policy trajectories of the U.S., France and Russia, and their asymmetric engagement with the Armenian and Azerbaijani diasporas.

Russia, which has large and comparable Armenian and Azerbaijani diasporas - and consequently comparable Armenian and Azerbaijani lobbies in the Russian political and business establishment - has possessed relatively equal political leverage in dealing with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the self-proclaimed "NKR".

Russia, which has large and comparable Armenian and Azerbaijani diasporas – and consequently comparable Armenian and Azerbaijani lobbies in the Russian political and business establishment – has possessed relatively equal political leverage in dealing with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the self-proclaimed “NKR”. Nevertheless, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Russia favored Armenia and evoked the historical Russian-Armenian Christian brotherhood to substantiate her policy. However, over the past seven years, it has also strengthened its engagement with Azerbaijan by emphasizing their common historical and cultural experiences. This change of approach has been part of the wider Russia assertiveness in the Caucasus and other parts of the ‘near abroad’. A contributing factor has been the growing disillusionment of Baku with the position of the West on Nagorno-Karabakh, which it considers as biased towards Christian Armenia, as well as with the West's concerns over the state of human rights in Azerbaijan. In early April 2016, during an outburst of violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Moscow asserted its special role as the conflict manager through direct engagement with Baku and Yerevan outside the Minsk Group's format³⁰.

30 For a detailed discussion of the violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan in April 2016 and the role of Russia and other international mediators see: Broers, L.(2016) *Nagorny Karabakh conflict defaulting to war.Research Paper*. Russia and Eurasia Programme, London: Chatham House.

By contrast, the U.S. and France have large intellectually and economically powerful Armenian diasporas, of which there are no Azerbaijani equivalents. Academics and journalists from these diasporas have been involved in informing U.S. and French policy-makers and the wider public on the causes and nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the possible settlement options. They have played a significant role in detaching the conflict's from its regional context in favor of its portrayal as part of the 'historical hatred' between Christian Armenians and Muslim Turks, culminating in the Armenian 'genocide' of 1915-23³¹. A potent example of the political influence of the Armenian diaspora in the U.S. was the infamous section 907a of the Congress's Freedom Support Act of 1992, which prohibited all U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan due to its blockade of Armenia,

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other Muslim states have been consistent in their support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and denounced Armenia's actions towards Azerbaijan as 'aggression' and 'occupation'

while ignoring Armenia's blockade of Nakhchivan³². During the 2010s, West's deployment of the Christian-Muslim paradigm in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has acquired new momentum in the context of the advancing political and academic discourse on religiously-defined civilizational confrontation. This discourse, fuelled by the rise of ISIS on the one side, and Christian nationalism in the U.S.³³, on the other, has been appropriated by ideologists and media on both sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Outside the format of international mediation, the civilizational dimension has been evident in the position of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)³⁴; Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other Muslim states have been consistent in their support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and denounced Armenia's actions towards Azerbaijan as 'aggression' and 'occupation'³⁵.

31 See, for example, agenda, proceedings and participants' national and institutional affiliation for the 6th All-Armenia Forum 'Armenia-diaspora: mutual trust, unity and responsibility', Yerevan, 18-20 September 2017. Available at: http://www.mindiaspora.am/ru/HS_6_hamajoxov (Accessed 3 November 2017).

32 Cornell, S.F. (2001) *Small Nations and great powers: A study of ethno-political conflict in the Caucasus*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon, pp.368-9.

33 This assessment is based on the author's ethnographic observation and interviews with Armenian and Azerbaijani policy-makers, NGO activists, journalists, academics and members of public, conducted in Yerevan, Baku and Moscow in September-November 2014.

34 Since 2005 Russia has had observer status in the OIC.

35 *Pakistan mission to UN*. Press release no 75/2008. Available at: <http://www.pakun.org/press-releases/2008/03142008-01.php> (Accessed 22 November 2017).

Conclusion

The origins of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict go back to the 19th century imperial Russian policy towards the creation of a Christian buffer zone along its southern borders with Muslim Persia and Ottoman Turkey. This policy led to the mass resettlement of Christian Armenians from Persia and Turkey on the territory of present-day Armenia, Karabakh and parts of Georgia. In the 1900s, St. Petersburg's administrative delimitation of the Caucasus resulted in the creation of a separate Armenian-dominated administrative unit of Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijani-majority Karabakh, a unit which was preserved after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. The ensuing Soviet totalitarianism and supra-national citizenship ensured political and societal stability, and drastically diminished the role of religion in the region. However, the disintegration in 1991 of the USSR and Soviet identity created fertile ground for the rise of ethno-religious nationalism in the region. An aggravating factor has been the involvement of the intellectually and economically influential Armenian diaspora in the Armenian secessionist mobilization. This group has tied the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with the alleged religious and national historical animosity between Armenians and Turks. Between 1988 and 1994, the conflict escalated into a bloody war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

In 1994, as a result of international mediation, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was de-escalated but not resolved, remaining in an unsustainable status quo. Since the ceasefire, the nature and politics of the conflict have undergone considerable changes. It could be argued that at the regional level the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Soviet secular supra-national citizenship has been conducive to the rise of ethno-religious nationalism in both Russia and among the conflict's direct protagonists, thereby contributing to the notable resurgence of pre-Soviet patterns of regional politics, conditioned by religion. Globally, this trend has been echoed by the emergence of civilizational cleavages based on religion, prompted by the rise of radical Islamism embodied by ISIS, the advance of Christian-linked nationalism in the U.S. and some parts of Western Europe, as well as the OIC-led Islamic solidarity. Among the potential implications of these regional and global political and cultural shifts might be the strengthening of the religious factor in the Nagorno-Karabakh ethno-territorial conflict.

Central Asia and Azerbaijan: Does Islamic Solidarity Matter?

Narmina Mamishova*

This article looks at whether the foreign policies of post-Soviet Central Asian republics encompass the idea of Islamic solidarity. Specifically, it analyzes their relations with Muslim-majority Azerbaijan, which is concerned with gaining political and diplomatic support in the international arena in order to secure the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and accordingly, the restoration of its territorial integrity. The findings of the article evidence that the official agendas of the countries concerned towards Muslim nations and Azerbaijan particularly are rather opportunistic and do not follow any definite path. Instead, the article explains the actual origins of interstate solidarity which is scarcely determined by a religious factor.

Keywords: Islamic solidarity, Central Asia, Nagorno-Karabakh, foreign policy



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Introduction

One of the central priorities of Azerbaijan's foreign policy has been securing the resolution of the longstanding conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh based on the principle of territorial integrity. In this regard, Azerbaijan has focused on consolidating ties with the states and organizations which are potentially willing and able to support it in achieving this goal. In particular, since independence, official Baku has promoted a policy of good relations with Muslim countries, as well as used its Muslim identity as a way to strengthen these interactions. President

President Ilham Aliyev's declaration of 2017 as the Year of Islamic Solidarity and the recent Islamic Solidarity Games proved once again that Azerbaijan intends to reinforce its ties with the Islamic world, seeking to gain political and diplomatic support to end the occupation of twenty percent of its territories by neighboring Armenia.

Ilham Aliyev's declaration of 2017 as the Year of Islamic Solidarity and the recent Islamic Solidarity Games proved once again that Azerbaijan intends to reinforce its ties with the Islamic world, seeking to gain political and diplomatic support to end the occupation of twenty percent of its territories by neighboring Armenia.

However, Azerbaijan is concerned that some Muslim countries do not support it on the highest political level on certain critical issues, most notably, the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Essentially, despite the similar historical paths, common ethno-cultural and religious experiences as well as geographical proximity, this is the case with the Central Asian post-Soviet republics.

Notably, there were only 39 countries worldwide which voted in favor of the 2008 UN General Assembly Resolution 62/243 on "The Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan" reaffirming the "continued respect and support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Azerbaijan "within its internationally recognized borders", demanding the "immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan"¹. Among them, 31 Muslim-majority states (out of 49 countries in which Muslims make up a majority of the population) expressed their solidarity with Azerbaijan's territorial claims to Nagorno-Karabakh² (including Azerbaijan itself).

1 United Nations (2008) *General Assembly adopts Resolution reaffirming territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, demanding withdrawal of all Armenian forces*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2008/ga10693.doc.htm> (Accessed: 25 August 2017).

2 Original to this article: *Muslim-majority states' voting record of the 2008 UN General Assembly Resolution 62/243 on "The Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan"*.

	Vote status	Countries	Number
Muslim-majority states' voting record of the 2008 UN General Assembly Resolution 62/243 on «The Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan»	In favor	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan , Yemen	31
	Against	-	0
	Abstain	Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Kazakhstan	5
	Absent	Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iran, Kyrgyzstan , Lebanon, Mali, Mauritania, Syria, Tajikistan , Tunisia, Turkmenistan	13
Total – 49			

The breakdown of voting clearly demonstrates the lack of unanimity on the matter among the Muslim-majority post-Soviet republics. With Kazakhstan abstaining, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan “absent”, it was only Uzbekistan which expressed solidarity with Azerbaijan on such a crucial issue on this key international platform. The question is: why aren't Muslim-majority post-Soviet states supporting Azerbaijan on this critical matter of national interest? This article will examine the extent to which interstate solidarity determined by a religious dimension guides the above countries' foreign policy agendas, looking in particular at their foreign policies towards Azerbaijan.

Background: Islamic solidarity in the foreign policies of the Central Asian republics

It is generally believed that Muslim-majority countries refer to Islam in order to bolster their prestige in the Muslim world, and to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations based on the idea of pan-Islamism as the feeling of solidarity between all

“true believers”³. The concept of Islamic solidarity is understood as an appeal to shared religious identity, compelling states to demonstrate in various forms their commitment to mutual support and consolidation⁴. In this regard, the establishment back in 1969 and subsequent development of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations – is viewed as a manifestation of collective Muslim solidarity in the contemporary world⁵.

Relevance of Islamic solidarity – both in terms of political coordination and as wider awareness of a shared Muslim civilization – in the foreign policy agendas of Central Asian states since the collapse of the Soviet Union is ambiguous.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought Muslim-majority Azerbaijan to the Organization in 1991 along with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, joining the 51 member states. At the same time, the fear of Islamization remains on the agenda in Central Asia⁶. To this end, the relevance of Islamic solidarity – both in terms of political coordination and as wider awareness of a shared Muslim civilization – in the foreign policy agendas of Central Asian states since the collapse of the Soviet Union is ambiguous.

On the one hand, as far as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is concerned, the five states supported a range of the OIC’s documents (including a set of resolutions) and statements advocating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the OIC has been unwavering in its stance, inter alia, by rejecting the so-called presidential and parliamentary elections in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh; commemorating and strongly condemning the criminal act of the 1992 Khojaly massacre against a civilian Azerbaijani population as a crime against humanity; and calling for the “immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal of Armenian forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan”.

Insofar as the commitment to Islamic consolidation in the individual policies of the five countries is concerned, for instance,

3 Stoddard, L. (2002). *The New World of Islam*. Ross & Perry, Inc., p. 112.

4 Menashri, D. (2013) *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*. Routledge, p. 227.

5 Ihsanoglu, E. (2010). *The Islamic World in the New Century: The Organisation of the Islamic Conference*. Hurst Publishers, p. 13.

6 Garibov, A. & Ibrahimov, R. (2013). *Iran and the Central Asia: A contentious partner for the region*. In *Geopolitical Competition in the Central Asia: The Dynamics of Relations with Azerbaijan*. SAM, p. 44.

Kazakhstan has provided financial and humanitarian aid to Syria suffering from the colossal humanitarian crisis and the civil war⁷. Funds from Kazakhstan were allocated through the OIC to the governments of Jordan and Lebanon to provide assistance to Syrians residing in refugee camps. Moreover, the recent Inaugural Session of the General Assembly of the newly-established Islamic Organization for Food Security of the OIC – headquartered in the Kazakh capital Astana – demonstrated Kazakhstan’s commitment to expanding international development aid efforts among the Muslim countries. Finally, Kazakhstan has providing ongoing support for politically unstable Muslim-majority Afghanistan, delivering foodstuffs and allocating millions of dollars for Afghan students to study at Kazakh universities⁸.

Turkmenistan, especially under President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, has also played a small but somewhat important role in Afghanistan’s development and reconstruction. Ashgabat has conveyed humanitarian aid to Kabul and forgiven a huge portion of Afghanistan’s debt for Turkmen electrical power. Moreover, Turkmenistan continues to supply Afghanistan with energy at a decent discount, as well as is contributing to the reconstruction of a portion of a railway connecting two countries. At the same time, as far as the Syrian crisis is concerned, the position of official Turkmenistan is complicated by the alleged involvement of Syrian Turkmen-minority insurgents in fighting against the Syrian government⁹. Uzbekistan’s foreign policy doctrine has undergone substantial changes under Shavkat Mirziyoyev as the country’s recently elected president. Tashkent is openly focused on the neighboring Central Asian republics, aiming to improve regional political and economic cooperation. It has emphasized the need for mutually beneficial ties with other Central Asian states, including Afghanistan, across a number of areas.

Uzbekistan’s foreign policy doctrine has undergone substantial changes under Shavkat Mirziyoyev as the country’s recently elected president. Tashkent is openly focused on the neighboring Central Asian republics, aiming to improve regional political and economic cooperation.

Nevertheless, in terms of regional security, the prevention of

7 Sputnik International (2017) *Kazakhstan Delivers 500 Tonnes of Humanitarian Aid Cargo to Syria*. Available at: <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201701061049328032-kazakhstan-syria-humanitarian-aid/> (Accessed: 27 August 2017).

8 Trend News Agency (2015) *Kazakhstan, Afghanistan to intensify economic co-op*. Available at: <https://en.trend.az/casia/kazakhstan/2458905.html> (Accessed: 2 September 2017).

9 NewsDeeply (2016) *Displaced Turkmen Villagers Brace for a Cold Winter*. Available at: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2016/01/22/displaced-turkmen-villagers-brace-for-a-cold-winter> (Accessed: 2 September 2017).

religious extremism is being viewed as one of the priorities for increased cooperation in the region¹⁰. The violence that erupted between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 – leaving hundreds dead and injured as well as tens of thousands seeking shelter¹¹ – cast a long shadow over any pledges of regional interstate solidarity. The same applies to the border tensions between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where historical territorial claims occasionally escalate¹².

Notably, none of the five Central Asian countries supported Kosovo (with around 96 per cent of Muslim population) when it unilaterally seceded from Serbia in 2008. While it remains a sensitive and divisive political issue which split the international community, 115 countries have recognized Kosovo's independence as of 2017. Surprisingly, the number includes 36 of the 57 member states of

Equally, as the latest crisis unfolded in Myanmar, with tens of thousands of the country's beleaguered Rohingya Muslims fleeing appalling violence, some Central Asian countries confined themselves to condemning the crisis, while others remained largely silent.

the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. By contrast, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan opposed Kosovo's unilateral proclamation of independence on the basis of the principle of territorial integrity, while Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan opted for making no official statements on Kosovo's independence.

Equally, as the latest crisis unfolded in Myanmar, with tens of thousands of the country's beleaguered Rohingya Muslims fleeing appalling violence, some Central Asian countries confined themselves to condemning the crisis, while others remained largely silent¹³. This seems to reflect concerns among post-Soviet secular governments

about limiting the threats entailed by manifestations of Islamic radicalism. By contrast, the government of Azerbaijan committed to send humanitarian aid to Bangladesh, where the Rohingya Muslim refugees are fleeing persecution¹⁴.

10 Zakirov, I. & Nevskaya, Y. (2017) *Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Doctrine*. The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst. Available at: <https://cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13470-uzbekistans-new-foreign-policy-doctrine.html> (Accessed: 2 September 2017).

11 The Guardian (2011) *Kyrgyzstan: the scars of ethnic conflict run deep*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/10/kyrgyzstan-ethnic-conflict-osh-uzbekistan> (Accessed: 2 September 2017).

12 Crisis Group (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*. Report №33 / Europe & Central Asia. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/tajikistan/central-asia-border-disputes-and-conflict-potential> (Accessed: 2 September 2017).

13 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (2017) *In Central Asia, Sympathy And Solidarity For Rohingya*. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/rohingya-central-asia-social-media-sympathy/28722498.html> (Accessed: 7 September 2017).

14 Azerbaijan State News Agency (2017) *Azerbaijan sends humanitarian aid to Rohingya Muslims*. Available at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijan_sends_humanitarian_aid_to_Rohingya_Muslims-1091927 (Accessed: 7 September 2017).

Finally, while all five of the Central Asian republics voted in favor of the 2012 UN General Assembly Resolution 66/225 on “Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources”, which reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Golan Heights over their natural resources, and recognized the right of the Palestinian people to claim restitution¹⁵, they all retain good relations with Israel, enjoying long-established diplomatic relations and fairly active interstate cooperation, including in the military sector.

Therefore, it appears that the significance of Islamic solidarity varies from one foreign policy decision to another in all five country-cases. The religious factor is scarcely referenced when formulating foreign policy agendas.

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Incentives for Central Asia-Azerbaijan interactions

Central Asia is located in Azerbaijan’s immediate neighborhood, with the nations sharing a common religion, language, history and culture. The geographical proximity of Azerbaijan to the region as well as their shared roots and background mean that Azerbaijan and the Central Asian states are bound together by a range of mutual interests and concerns¹⁶. Despite this, the shared religious affiliation has hardly influenced relations between Azerbaijan and the five post-Soviet Central Asian nations. Moreover, Kazakhstan, for instance, with Muslims making up to 70% of the population¹⁷ and the region’s most successful economy, positions itself as a secular state (likewise Azerbaijan), which to a certain extent plays the “connecting” role in the relations between themselves.

At the same time, as far as Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan discourse is concerned, the leadership of Kazakhstan has provided

15 United Nations (2011) *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2011*. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=%20A/RES/66/225 (Accessed: 7 September 2017).

16 Garibov, A. & Ibrahimov, R. (2013). *Iran and the Central Asia: A contentious partner for the region*. In *Geopolitical Competition in the Central Asia: The Dynamics of Relations with Azerbaijan*. SAM, p. 53.

17 The World Factbook (2017) *Kazakhstan*. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html> (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

Kazakh elites have primarily supported Azerbaijan's entirely valid position as far as the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijan is concerned. Most recently, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev refused to visit Armenia, which was planning to host a top-level meeting of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union

ongoing support for peace efforts in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In doing so, the Kazakh elites have primarily supported Azerbaijan's entirely valid position as far as the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijan is concerned. Most recently, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev refused to visit Armenia, which was planning to host a top-level meeting of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)¹⁸. This has been considered as an apparent expression of support for Azerbaijan, as well as Astana's unwillingness to endorse Armenia in light of the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that preceded the meeting. Notably, Armenia's conflict with Azerbaijan—which is not a member of the EEU but does have close relations with Kazakhstan – has been a thorn in the union's side since its foundation. Additionally, the common position of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan with regard to the legal status of the Caspian Sea¹⁹ also reinforces their credible political relations..

Importantly, the prospects for economic cooperation between the two states are promising. The transport infrastructure, including maritime, is dynamically developing in both countries. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan along with Georgia recently agreed to establish the “Trans-Caspian International Transport Route” Association, with its office in Astana²⁰. In a long run the route is expected to link China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and then, via

Most importantly, the fact that Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are considered to be the central regional energy players is to the mutual political understanding, due to the shared successes and challenges.

Turkey and Ukraine, with Europe. In this regard, both countries have got the opportunity to become not only transit nodes for goods being transported between China to Europe, but also production sites, and participate in a single production process within the Eurasian space.

Most importantly, the fact that Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are considered to be the central regional energy players is to the mutual political understanding, due to the shared successes and challenges. Both are struggling to

18 Putz, C. (2016) *The Eurasian Economic Union's Armenia Problem*. The Diplomat. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/the-urasian-economic-unions-armenia-problem/> (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

19 Johnson, R. (2007) *Oil, Islam, and Conflict: Central Asia Since 1945*. Reaktion Books, p. 205.

20 Trend News Agency (2017) *Trans-Caspian route prospective for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan*. Available at: <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/business/2738252.html> (Accessed: 15 September 2017).

effectively utilize their significant oil and gas reserves in order to pursue independent domestic and foreign policies (unlike the majority of former Soviet republics that do not possess such a “lux” as a Turkish would say). The so-called “co-leaders” of foreign investment in the oil and gas sector, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan managed to attract billions of dollars in the early years of the post-independence era²¹. At the same time, being the biggest crude oil producers in the Caspian region heavily relying on oil exports to generate budget revenues, the countries are bound to be vulnerable to the decline of crude prices²².

Most importantly, the fact that Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are considered to be the central regional energy players is to the mutual political understanding, due to the shared successes and challenges.

Unlike Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan’s relations with the other Central Asian states are not so enthusiastic. Once again, one may hardly “thank” or “blame” the shared religious affiliation for that. For instance, in the case of Turkmenistan, according to the CIA World Factbook, Muslims constitute around 89% of the population, while the largest minority refers to the followers of the Eastern Orthodox Church²³. Similar to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan’s energy wealth is one of the main factors shaping its relations with Azerbaijan. In this regard, Turkmenistan has repeatedly expressed (at least on paper) interest in developing the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline project pipeline,²⁴ intended to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to the European market, circumventing both Russia and Iran.

However, there is no observable progress on an agreement between Baku and Ashgabat regarding the final status and delineation of the Caspian Sea. More importantly, Turkmenistan has chosen to adopt a balanced/neutral position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The recent official visit to Armenia by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, his “warm reception” and the signing of several Turkmen-Armenian agreements, reflect the balanced approach

21 Oil & Gas Journal (1997) *How Oil, Gas Investment Prospects Compare For Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan*. Available at: <http://www.ogj.com/articles/print/volume-95/issue-30/in-this-issue/general-interest/how-oil-gas-investment-prospects-compare-for-azerbaijan-kazakhstan.html> (Accessed: 20 September 2017).

22 Badykov, N. (2015) *A new era for Caspian oil and gas*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-era-caspian-oil-and-gas> (Accessed: 20 September 2017).

23 The World Factbook (2017) *Turkmenistan*. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html> (Accessed: 20 September 2017).

24 Michel, C. (2015) *What Azerbaijan and Central Asia Have in Common*. The Diplomat. Available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/what-azerbaijan-and-central-asia-have-in-common/> (Accessed: 20 September 2017).

undertaken by Ashgabat towards both Azerbaijan and Armenia. None of this is indicative of the so-called Islamic solidarity in bilateral relations of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

Uzbekistan, with the largest Muslim population in the region, is similar to Azerbaijan in regard to its constitutional self-determination as a secular state, albeit with a much higher level of religiosity among its population. Moreover, while both have witnessed a vast increase in Islamic activity since the early 1990s, there remains a certain ideological vacuum in Uzbekistan, whereas the Azerbaijani elites have managed to fill this vacuum with their own brand of tolerant national identity. This is largely explained by the fact that Azeri nationalism, which has its roots in the late nineteenth century, preceded the Soviet takeover²⁵. To this end, it is unlikely that bilateral relations of Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan are somehow influenced by the shared Islamic tradition. Instead, they are built upon mutual political support and the prospects of cross-regional transportation projects, including the long-standing initiative to implement the Transport Corridor Europe, Caucasus and Asia (TRACECA) program as a way to spur intermodal transport initiatives²⁶.

Tashkent openly supported Azerbaijan's position in the long-standing conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan and recognized Armenia as the aggressor

As mentioned previously, Uzbekistan was the only Central Asian post-Soviet state to vote in favor of the UN General Assembly Resolution reaffirming the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and demanding withdrawal of all Armenian forces. Tashkent openly supported Azerbaijan's position in the long-standing conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan and recognized Armenia as the aggressor²⁷. In this regard, it is noteworthy that despite originally having joined the Russia-sponsored CSTO in 1994, Uzbekistan suspended its membership in 1994. According to the CSTO Charter, its members are obligated to assist each other militarily in case

25 Karagiannis, E. (2010) *Political Islam in the former Soviet Union: Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan compared*. Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict. Pathways toward terrorism and genocide, Volume 3, Issue 1, pp. 46-61. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2010.514937> (Accessed: 22 September 2017).

26 Valiyev, A. (2015) *Can Azerbaijan Revive the Silk Road?* PONARS Eurasia. Available at: <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/can-azerbaijan-revive-silk-road> (Accessed: 22 September 2017).

27 Valiyev, A. (2013) *Azerbaijan in Central Asia – future and perspectives*. The Uzbek Times, Issue 1, pp. 18-21. Available at: <https://ru.scribd.com/document/276714793/UZTIMES-Magazine> (Accessed: 22 September 2017).

of aggression by a third party. Despite the fact that Azerbaijan did not intend to trespass upon Armenian territory, Yerevan still sought to use the alliance as a tool to counterweight Azerbaijan's growing military strength. Uzbekistan's position on the issue was subsequently being reiterated within the framework of the GU(U)AM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, of which it was a member for several years before suspending its membership in 2002. Currently, the potential for expanding bilateral relations is considered to be promising, with the recently elected Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev openly supporting "Azerbaijan's fair stance on the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict"²⁸.

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan did not intend to trespass upon Armenian territory, Yerevan still sought to use the alliance as a tool to counterweight Azerbaijan's growing military strength.

Finally, as far as Azerbaijan's relations with the Muslim-majority Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are concerned, their dependence on Russia for remittances, general power configuration, as well as the absence of any movement towards rapprochement with the West are limiting factors. Therefore, they may be described as merely traditionally friendly, without truly strong mutual support on the political level or prospects for multilateral cooperation.

Conclusion

Despite the widely-held belief that Muslim countries around the world feel obliged to present a united Islamic front on a regional and global level based on shared historic and cultural ties, it seems that religion cannot overcome profound political differences or conflicts of interest on certain issues. Likewise, the significance of Islamic solidarity in the foreign policies of Muslim-majority Central Asian states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – remains ambiguous, which positions them as somewhat opportunistic actors in the international political arena. The notion of the interstate Islamic solidarity is intermittently invoked in formulating the foreign policies of the five countries. Their respective positions towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the ongoing occupation of the internationally recognized territories of Muslim-majority Azerbaijan by neighboring Armenia are no exception. Russia's

²⁸ Azerbaijan State News Agency (2017) *President Mirziyoyev: Uzbekistan supports Azerbaijan's fair stance on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict*. Available at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/President_Mirziyoyev_Uzbekistan_supports_Azerbaijan_039s_fair_stance_on_Nagorno_Karabakh_conflict-1104674 (Accessed: 22 September 2017).

geopolitical influence over Central Asia has limited their discretion in terms of foreign policy decision-making, including towards their brotherly Muslim nations.

This essentially answers the question of why Muslim-majority Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan supported Palestine, but not Kosovo. The answer seems to lie in Russia's position on the issues concerned. Back in 2011, Russia welcomed the efforts of Palestine to attain statehood and confirmed Russian support for the Palestinians in their state-building agenda. By contrast, Russia strongly opposed Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence; Moscow supported the Belgrade's view that Kosovo is an indivisible part of Serbia. It appears that the official positions of the five Central Asian republics on the hottest political issues engaging Muslim-majority states ultimately reflect the official path undertaken by Russia, which still views these states as within its sphere of traditional geostrategic influence. In essence, despite the increasing China's role throughout Central Asia, Russia remains the most significant external power in the region, particularly via multilateral Russia-led formats such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Customs Union. In this regard, the Central Asian countries' geopolitical loyalty to Moscow is the decisive factor. The same logic applies to their policies towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

To this end, it seems that political decisions on the most sensitive political issues (even inside the Muslim world) are rarely governed by considerations of shared religious, cultural and historic roots, as opposed to cold political realities and basic common sense.

Overcoming the Curse of ‘Landlockedness’: Strategic Importance of BTK in Connecting Central Asia to the World

Javid Alisgandarli*

This article is an analysis of the opportunities presented by the new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project to landlocked Central Asia and Azerbaijan. The creation of efficient transportation corridors is important for landlocked states in terms of obtaining secure and cost effective access to major export and import markets, and in order to overcome the trade bottlenecks created by geography. In this regard, the importance of the “New Silk Road” project is comprehensively assessed, with particular focus on the opportunities presented by the newly launched Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway route. It is argued that these projects constitute major breakthroughs for Central Asia and Azerbaijan, not only helping them to overcome the economic development limitations entailed by lack of maritime access, but also providing easy access to global markets and significantly increasing their role as transit countries connecting East and West.

Keywords: Silk Road, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars, One-Belt-One-Road, Transit corridors, Central Asia, South Caucasus, Nagorno-Karabakh



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Introduction

One of the major challenges for the Central Asian region has been the establishment of the reliable and effective transportation networks, given the lack of access to the open seas. Creating efficient transportation corridors has been a major issue for Azerbaijan and its Central Asian neighbors Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.¹ Historically, the trade between Central Asia and South Caucasus was conducted via the “Great Silk Road”, once the single most important trade route in the world, running from China to Europe. However, the importance of this route waned as international trade gradually shifted to the open seas. The costs of transporting goods overland were simply too high compared with the newly identified maritime alternative. This article argues that reliable and effective transportation networks for easy access to global market are crucial for the economic development and security of landlocked states. The analysis consists of two parts. The first section identifies the importance of building new transportation routes for landlocked Central Asia and Azerbaijan, thereby fostering cooperation among these states. It is noted that the common goal of these states is to transform the region into a transportation hub, in order to reduce its dependence on any one global player therefore support its independence. The second part examines their potential of these states to participate in the ‘New Silk Road’ Project, and assesses the opportunities presented by the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway in regard to the development of the transportation network in a way that brings in new players.

The problem of being landlocked

High transport costs are certainly one of the main impediments to the reorientation of Central Asian trade. The distance of Central Asian countries from the main economic markets is of course only part of the story. However, distance and domestic infrastructure alone do not explain why Central Asian countries are at a disadvantage in comparison to countries with similar income. Lack of maritime access still has a negative and highly significant impact on trade, given the higher costs per mile of

¹ Azad Garibov (2016), The Trans-Caspian Corridor: Geopolitics of Transportation in Central Eurasia, *Caucasus International* Vol. 6 • No: 1

overland distances versus sea distances. Moreover, landlocked countries are dependent on sovereign transit countries for their trade, which may only compound existing problems. Therefore, in order to achieve sustainable long term economic development, the Central Asian states should focus on becoming “land-linking” countries, providing important transit services to their transit neighbors. In this regard, both landlocked and neighboring transit countries can benefit from actions taken to increase the efficiency of transit transport.²

Therefore, in order to achieve sustainable long term economic development, the Central Asian states should focus on becoming “land-linking” countries, providing important transit services to their transit neighbors.

Efficient transit routes are crucial for landlocked nations. Due to their lack of access to seaports and the prohibitive cost of airfreight, landlocked countries are reliant on the transport of goods by land through one or more neighboring countries. The additional costs incurred, together with problems of distance, make imports more expensive and exports less competitive, placing landlocked countries at a disadvantage in the global economy. Some of the major factors influencing the transit transport systems of landlocked and transit developing countries in the region are described below.

In some cases, transit transport can become more efficient through the development of alternative routes, not only within one transit country but also through different countries. When a transit route passes through the territory of another country, traffic along the route is only possible when the transit country grants the right of transit through its territory, usually under specific conditions. Given that sovereign states have exclusive jurisdiction over transportation within their territories, transit rights, along with any limits, are created when sovereign states voluntarily enter into bilateral, multilateral or international agreements and/or conventions. In most cases, landlocked countries are bound by such agreements in their choice of transit routes.

Landlocked countries may be able to strengthen their bargaining position in the negotiation of transit and trade agreements by demonstrating the value of the transit business provided to its neighbors, taking into account not only the direct costs involved,

² Transit Transport Issues in Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, *CONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC Landlocked Developing Countries Series, No. 1* Retrieved from: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRANETTRADE/Resources/WBI-Training/UN-Landlocked.pdf> Accessed on, November 10, 2017

but also income generated through additional multiplier effects. Transit countries can also benefit from a better understanding of how they can generate revenues through the sale of transit services. In this regard Kazakhstan, has characterized its foreign policy as ‘multi-vectoral’, aiming to foster partnerships in multiple directions and expand its ties with Central Asia and beyond. One central feature of the multi-vector policy is pragmatism. In addition to pragmatism, a central component in the multi-vector policy is the development of good relations with key foreign actors, especially neighbors, and to balance those foreign powers.³ Multi-vector also implies relations in every direction. This balancing game is important for small states to retain autonomy, especially those neighboring a great power, which could dominate the small state in an asymmetrical relationship.⁴

The Development of the New Silk Road Project

The Silk Road project is vitally important for Central Asian states in overcoming their geographical limitations, as it aims to connect China with Western Europe, thus eventually creating links for Central Asian states to both east and west. The project was initially introduced by the US as part of a strategy to develop the Afghan economy, following its devastation by the war.⁵ However, at the moment, this is much more than just an initiative to help Afghanistan but it has grown into a multistate project which aims to facilitate trade between East Asia and Western Europe and contribute to economic activity across the region. In this regard, the new role of the Central Asian states (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan) is highly significant in terms of international relations, as they will become very important players in trans-continental trade.

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The revival of global Silk Road was the idea of Chinese president Xi Jinping. In 2013 he launched China’s “One

3 Sultanov, B., & Muzaparova, L. (2003). Great Power Policies and Interests in Kazakhstan. *Thinking strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, 187-216.

4 Central Asia in a Reconnecting Eurasia: Kazakhstan’s Evolving Foreign Economic and Security Interests https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/150612_Kuchins_CentralAsiaKazakhstan_Web.pdf

5 *U.S. Support for the New Silk Road*, U.S. Department of State, Diplomacy in Action, <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/newsilkroad/>.

Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative, aimed at connecting major Eurasian economies through infrastructure, trade, and investment. The initiative was subsequently developed to include two international trade connections: the land-based “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “Maritime Silk Road.”⁶ China declared its readiness to help partner countries develop the necessary infrastructure for transportation, communication, and telecommunications.⁷ In this regard, China aims to provide foreign aid and facilitate capital for those participating in the construction of the “One Belt and One Road”. During his speech at the opening of the “Belt and Road” forum, Xi pledged to invest 780 billion yuan (US\$113 billion) via its state funds and banks to finance projects in the “Belt and Road Initiative”, and urged countries across the globe to join hands with him in pursuit of globalization.⁸

The Belt and Road Initiative seeks to promote infrastructure connectivity, with trade routes covering around 60 countries across Asia, Europe and Africa. Importantly, it also stands to help address the infrastructure investment gap faced by landlocked developing countries, which encounter unique development challenges due to structural and geographical disadvantages. Underdeveloped infrastructure has greatly undermined the ability of these countries to improve productive capacity, expand trade, attract foreign investment, and improve livelihoods. Protracted infrastructure gaps have jeopardized the efforts of vulnerable countries to achieve long-term sustainable development, leaving them unable to reap the benefits of globalization. Establishing a modern and well-maintained infrastructure network, connecting sub-regions in Asia and between Asia, Europe and Africa, could be a potential “game changer” for these most vulnerable countries in terms of boosting trade, facilitating integration into regional and global value chains, encouraging investment, accelerating structural transformation - and ultimately, contributing to the eradication of poverty.

The Belt and Road Initiative seeks to promote infrastructure connectivity, with trade routes covering around 60 countries across Asia, Europe and Africa.

6 China's One Belt One Road Initiative: What we know thus far, Retrieved from: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/china-one-belt-one-road-initiative-what-we-know-thus-far>

7 Your guide to understanding OBOR, China's new Silk Road Plan, Retrieved from: <https://qz.com/983460/obor-an-extremely-simple-guide-to-understanding-chinas-one-belt-one-road-forum-for-its-new-silk-road/>

8 Xi's US\$113b pledge 'more seed fund than credit pipeline' Retrieved from: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2094311/xis-us113b-pledge-more-seed-fund-credit-pipeline>

Baku-Tbilisi-Kars and its importance for landlocked states

The launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway on October 30 is one of the key milestones of China's One Road One Belt (OBOR) project.⁹ Trains from China to Europe started running in 2012. Since then, some 39 routes connecting 16 Chinese cities with 12 cities in and along the European route have been developed.¹⁰ However, the BTK link is especially important because it is expected to reduce the transport time of goods from China to Europe and vice versa to 15 days, which is less than half what it currently takes by sea. Trains will depart from cities

Trains will depart from cities in China, cross into Kazakhstan at the Khorgos Gateway, before being transported across the Caspian Sea by ferry to Baku and then loaded directly onto the BTK to travel onwards to Europe.

in China, cross into Kazakhstan at the Khorgos Gateway, before being transported across the Caspian Sea by ferry to Baku and then loaded directly onto the BTK to travel onwards to Europe.¹¹

It is worth mentioning the importance of BTK to Azerbaijan, as Baku has invested heavily in its own infrastructure as well that of the neighboring countries involved in the development of the railroad project. As part of the BTK project, Azerbaijan provided Georgia with a 25 year loan of US\$200 million for the construction of Marabda-Kartsakhi Railway (1% annual interest rate). On top of that, an additional US\$575 million dollar loan was allocated to Georgian company Kartsakhi-Marabda (25 years; 5% annual interest rate). Thus Baku has loaned Georgia a total of US\$775 million loan for the construction of the Georgian section of the project.¹² BTK is a strong alternative to the existing goods transportation links to Europe via Russia and Iran. Moreover, it provides an excellent opportunity for the economic development of the region, as this will turn the transit states to a hub for goods transportation.

In addition, it will provide an important railway link for Georgia to Europe. At the moment, the only railway connection between Georgia and Europe is through Abkhazia and Russia, but as a

9 Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Line Officially Launched, Retrieved from: <https://www.rferl.org/a/baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-line-officially-launched-azerbaijan-georgia-turkey/28824764.html>

10 Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway comes online: Retrieved from, <https://www.gtreview.com/news/europe/baku-tbilisi-kars-train-chugs-into-motion/>

11 Ibid,

12 Construction of BTK's Georgian section accelerated, Retrieved from: <https://www.azernews.az/business/100384.html>

result of the conflict with Russia, the line is currently closed. This situation is unlikely to change anytime soon.

Turkey's gains from the project include enhancing its position within Asian-European transit corridors. The project seeks to connect Turkey to Russia via Tbilisi and improve Turkey's access to Central Asia. Another important perspective relates to the special article included in the agreement among three participating countries, which foresees the possibility of Armenia's access to the BTK project under the condition that it ends its military aggression towards Azerbaijan and liberates the occupied territories of Azerbaijan including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent regions.¹³ However, the Armenian government still fails to recognize that in today's world, regional cooperation and economic interdependence are far more important pursuing a zero-sum game. In 1993, Turkey closed its borders with Armenia in response to Armenian aggression towards Azerbaijan.¹⁴ It is argued that although Armenia won the war (1988-1994)¹⁵ and occupied 20% of Azerbaijan's territory, it has lost its sovereignty given its dependence on Russia in terms of security, economic activity and even political decision-making.¹⁶ Despite four UN Security Council passed four resolutions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (822, 853, 874, 884)¹⁷ demanding the immediate release of Azerbaijan's occupied territories and emphasizing the right of IDPs to return, the Armenian government still refuses to liberate the occupied territories Azerbaijan - a clear violation of the international legal principle of territorial integrity. As a result of these unconstructive policies of violating the territorial integrity, conducting military aggression, terrorism and ethnic cleansing in the territories of a neighboring state, Armenia has

Another important perspective relates to the special article included in the agreement among three participating countries, which foresees the possibility of Armenia's access to the BTK project under the condition that it ends its military aggression towards Azerbaijan and liberates the occupied territories of Azerbaijan including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent regions.

13 Klimas, E., & Humbatov, M. (2016). BAKU-TBILISI-KARS RAILROAD. Retrieved from: <http://sam.az/uploads/PDF/BTK%20railroad.pdf>

14 C Cornell, S. E. (1998). Turkey and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: a delicate balance. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34(1), 51-72.

15 Souleimanov, E. (2011). DEALING WITH AZERBAIJAN: THE POLICIES OF TURKEY AND IRAN TOWARD THE KARABAKH WAR (1991-1994). *MERIA Journal*, 15(3).

16 Armenia's Foreign Policy Four Years after the U-Turn, Retrieved from: <http://hetq.am/eng/news/81704/armenias-foreign-policy-four-years-after-the-u-turn.html>

17 *Resolution 822* (1993, April 30); *Resolution 853* (1993, July 29); *Resolution 874* (1993, October 14); *Resolution 884* (1993, November 12). Retrieved from <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/13508.ht>

It is argued that the BTK Railway was the missing link of the middle corridor of the New Silk Road, which runs from China to Europe via Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.

been left out of the major regional economic projects.¹⁸

The BTK railway is important step for China as it plays a unique role for developing multimodal transportation of goods. It is argued that the BTK Railway was the missing link of the middle corridor of the New Silk Road, which runs from China to Europe via Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Therefore, BTK is significant for China's new Silk Road project as it allows the movement of goods and passengers in both directions in a much shorter period, which in turn reduces the transportation costs.¹⁹

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that the Central Asia and South Caucasus made significant progress in fostering economic development and cooperation since independence, despite their disadvantageous geographic locations. It was argued that the land transportation era has long been over, with no chance of revival.²⁰ Lack of access to seas created number of economic problems, as these states had little access to global markets and transportation of goods. This limited their economic independence by creating a sort of dependency on strong regional players who controlled the access to world markets via their ports. The Revived Silk Road Project, in this sense, represents an immense opportunity for Central Asia and Caucasus, as it provides an opportunity to turn the region into a transit hub as well as creating different routes into the global market. Thus, no single player will have absolute control over the transit routes and all parties will benefit equally from the economic activity.

There is no doubt that the BTK railway will be the most beneficial part of the New Silk Road for the region, as all the countries participating in the New Silk Road will be able to use the BTK, which reduces transport time and improves the safety conditions.

There is no doubt that the BTK railway will be the most beneficial part of the New Silk Road for the region, as all the countries participating in the New Silk Road will be able to use the BTK, which reduces transport time and improves the safety conditions. Moreover, considering its geographic position, the BTK has the potential to be expanded.

18 Finkel, E. (2010). In search of lost genocide: historical policy and international politics in post-1989 Eastern Europe. *Global Society*, 24(1), 51-70.

19 Klimas, E., & Humbatov, M. (2016). BAKU-TBILISI-KARS RAILROAD.

20 Azad Garibov (2016), The Trans-Caspian Corridor: Geopolitics of Transportation in Central Eurasia, *Caucasus International* Vol. 6 • No: 1

With additional links, it can connect to the North-South Transport Corridor and Southern Corridor via Iran. The BTK will be the heart of the new links for more than one country, as it is the only connection between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. This line is vitally important, considering the lack of feasible land connections between Central Asia and South Caucasus, and Europe via Turkey.²¹

The development of economic interdependence among the transit countries of the New Silk Road Project clearly indicates that the long term benefits of this cooperation will be even more important than the short-term benefits. However, in order to achieve this, the participating states will need to make necessary adjustments to their customs and tariffs. In the long run this will enhance economic cooperation in the region. In this regard, BTK provides an opportunity to increase the currently low level of interregional trade between Caucasus and Central Asia. This is because oil and gas remains the main export in regard to interregional trade between Central Asia and Caucasus. The heavy reliance on the energy transportation has proven risky for economic stability, clearly demonstrated in the wake of the decline of global oil prices in late 2014. The currencies of Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan have suffered massive depreciations over the last couple of years due to rapidly declining oil prices.²² It is expected that the development of multimodal transportation of goods and increased trade and transportation of goods related to non-energy sectors will significantly improve economic diversification in the Caspian Basin.

21 Klimas, E., & Humberov, M. (2016). BAKU-TBILISI-KARS RAILROAD.

22 Ibid, (2016)

“One Belt One Road” Strategy: the Views from Kazakhstan

Rafis Abazov (PhD)*

Policy makers in Kazakhstan were among the first in Central Asia to support the China-led “Silk Road Economic Belt” (SREB) initiative. However, recently they have begun to re-conceptualize their policies in the region pursuant to the region’s shifting geo-economics and geopolitics. Three fundamental shifts have influenced the emergence of the new Silk Road paradigm in the international relations in the greater Central Asia region. The first is the shift in international trade, investments and economic relations in the Eurasian region, as the decline in global oil prices negatively impacted the economic growth both in Kazakhstan and in neighboring countries. The second is the growth of land-based transportation and communication infrastructure networks, which could potentially open the door for greater regional trade. The third is the formation (albeit in the early stages) of a new regional trade bloc via attempts to unify tariffs, trade regimes, and regulations in order to develop even closer economic relations in the region.

Keywords: Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), “One Belt One Road (OBOR),” Kazakhstan, China, USA, Russia, Security, transportation infrastructure,



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The background of the changing geo-economic and geopolitical dynamics in the Central Asian Region

The statements at the Astana Economic Forum in 2017 (AEF, 2017) and other public platforms suggest that Kazakhstan's policy makers have accepted the changing geopolitical and geoeconomic paradigm in the region. The AEF-2017 reflected the views of major international stakeholders and various groups, who presented the different visions for the development of the Silk Road infrastructure programs and networks, and their impact on the region's economic development. On the one hand, international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (UN ESCAP) presented straightforward and technocratic visions of the development of the Silk Road programs, including potential consequences for economic growth and intra-regional trade.¹ On the other hand, a group of other stakeholders (consisting of individual states, intra-regional organizations, private corporations, and think tanks) argued that the Silk Road initiatives and programs will lead to extremely intertwined and complex changes. These changes would affect not only economic development in the region, but also the geoeconomic and geopolitical balances and influences.²

The recent changes in the regional policy setting, which have affected the policy strategies in Central Asia in general and in Kazakhstan in particular, have included three major shifts. The first is the unprecedented economic growth of the People's Republic of China in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the projection of the new economic power in the region and beyond through the OBOR infrastructure projects. The second factor is the changes in the policy thinking among the two regional super-powers – Astana and Tashkent,³ both of which have finally accepted the fact that greater Central Asia should include Afghanistan. The “new thinking” suggests a deeper involvement and collaboration

1 UN ESCAP (2014) *Bridging Transport, ICT and Energy Infrastructure Gaps for Seamless Regional Connectivity*, Bangkok: UN ESCAP.
Asian Development Bank (2017) *Georgia: Support for Silk Road Forum*. Asian Development Bank.

2 Pethiyagoda, K.(2017) ‘What’s driving China’s New Silk Road, and how should the West respond?’, *Brookings*, 17 May. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/05/17/whats-driving-chinas-new-silk-road-and-how-should-the-west-respond/>

3 President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan passed away in September 2016 and the newly elected president of Uzbekistan has ordered to review some aspects of the country's foreign policy in general and in foreign policy relations with Kazakhstan in particular.

in the stabilization of Afghanistan, collaboration on the security-development nexus would enable the mitigation of security threats to economic growth and political stability in the region. Thirdly, the regional countries have accepted the failures of intra-regional integration, and begun to recognize that future development should take place within the institutional framework for development and greater supra-regional political and economic cooperation, potentially beyond the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), CIS and Customs Union.⁴

In this article, the author assesses the emerging Silk Road paradigm in Kazakhstan's foreign policy perceptions and as it pertains to the reshaping of regional partnerships. He addresses three questions. First, how does Kazakhstan accommodate the different political and economic initiatives introduced by China, the US, and Russia, which represent complementary though sometimes competing concepts for the architecture of a new regional and supra-regional order? Second, how do the policy makers in Kazakhstan view the Beijing-instigated SREB initiative, and how does it affect development in the countries bordering China, especially those along the ancient Great Silk Road (from China to Italy and beyond, crossing Greater Central Asia and Russia)? Third, what is the impact of the recent infrastructure projects and economic initiatives on Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries?

The author draws upon materials and reports presented at the Astana Economic Forum (AEF, 2017)⁵ and G-Global Online forum⁶ in order to reflect the national and regional policy discourse in regard to reshaping Kazakhstan's approach towards the Great Silk Road.

Kazakhstan's Silk Road Policy Choices

The new realities of the regional policy environment have also led to the changes in the foreign policy priorities, moving from political and economic intra-regional integration towards

4 For activities and treaties see Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: <http://www.sectsco.org/EN123/>

5 For more information see the official website of Astana Economic Forum : <http://forum-astana.org/en/program>

6 For more information see the official website of G-Global info-communication platform : <http://group-global.org/en>

Indeed, there have been repeated efforts to revive economic cooperation between the Central Asian countries, not only by the national governments but also by several international players.

participation in supra-regional initiatives initiated by great powers and the international organizations. Indeed, there have been repeated efforts to revive economic cooperation between the Central Asian countries, not only by the national governments but also by several international players. In the end, three major visions for reviving the Great Silk Road have emerged.

Washington's "New Silk Road" (NSR) initiative is one such attempt, introduced in 2011 by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.⁷ The NSR was established with a single political objective: to stabilize Afghanistan, and by extension Central and South Asia, by promoting South–South cooperation, closer cultural and education links, and political dialogue. The anchor of the NSR initiative is support for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline (and possible oil pipeline), as well as connecting Central Asian electric power stations with potential customers in South Asia, especially Pakistan, to deliver the energy resources of Central Asia to South Asia.⁸ In addition, the US government plans to spend between US\$3 and US\$8 billion dollars (2014-2018) on the development of transportation infrastructure in Afghanistan in order to boost the land trade both within the country and between South and Central Asia, utilizing existing motorways in Afghanistan.⁹ Finally, it hopes to expand collaboration to other fields such as education, cultural exchanges, etc.¹⁰ US President Donald Trump announced the new policies in Afghanistan in August 2017 without revealing the details; however, according to some experts, the new policy reflects a continuity of the NSR in many ways.¹¹

7 US Department of State (2011) *New Silk Road Ministerials*. Washington, DC : Office of the Spokesperson. Available at: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/09/173765.htm> (accessed on March 25, 2016).

8 US Department of State (2013) , *New Silk Road and Regional Economic Integration*. : Washington, DC Robert O. Blake, Jr. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2013/206167.htm> (accessed on March 25, 2016).

9 Washington Post (2016) *The U.S. spent billions building roads in Afghanistan. Now many of them are beyond repair*. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/10/30/the-u-s-spent-billions-building-roads-in-afghanistan-now-many-of-them-are-beyond-repair/?utm_term=.bf708d56344b (accessed on August 24, 2017)

10 Eurasian Council on Foreign Affairs (ECFA) (2015), *The New Silk Road: A Path to Regional Security?*

11 Office of the Press Secretary of The White House (2017) *Remarks by President Trump on the strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia*. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/21/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-and-south-asia> (accessed on August 24, 2017).

Beijing announced the “**Silk Road Economic Belt**” (SREB) in 2013, which runs parallel to the “Maritime Silk Road” (MSR) as part of its “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative. The SREB was introduced as a mean for promoting East–West economic cooperation and stability in Central Eurasia by developing tools for building a joint supra-regional market and maintaining stable movement of goods, investments, and services. In fact, from the outset, Beijing highlighted economic issues and the need for economic and financial tools in promoting the SREB initiative. The main anchor for the SREB is the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2014 as a financial tool for implementing the SREB and MSR.¹²

The **Eurasian Economic Union** (EAEU or EEU) was initiated by Kazakhstan with support of some CIS members in 1994, but the agreement not was officially signed by the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia until May 29, 2014. It came into force on January 1, 2015, headquartered in Moscow. In the early stage, the consultations within the EAEU have focused, among other things, on economic cooperation and development of regional trade, which led to the creation of a Customs Union (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia) in 2011, and the Eurasian Economic Space in 2012. Although the EAEU does not mention the revival of the Great Silk Road per se, its anchor for regional development is strengthening intra-regional trade via the unification of custom duties and other regulations between countries in the region, using mutual support to build internationally competitive economies.¹³

Common among all these three “Silk Road” initiatives is support for greater cooperation in Asia (Central Asia–East Asia and Central Asia–South Asia). The focus extends beyond regional security issues (NSR) and regional economic collaboration (SREB and EAEU), encompassing participation in the major international institutional networks and arrangements. In this context, it is interesting to note that experts and policy makers in Central Asia focus less on the regional initiatives and more on achieving greater global competitiveness

It is interesting to note that experts and policy makers in Central Asia focus less on the regional initiatives and more on achieving greater global competitiveness and integration into the global economy and global economic division of labor.

¹² For more information see the official website of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: <https://www.aiib.org/en/index.html>

¹³ For overview of activities between 2010 and 2016 and plans for future see: Sidorov, O. (2016), ‘Evraziiskii Ekonomicheskii Souz imeet...’ *LITER (newspaper)*. P. 10-11.

and integration into the global economy and global economic division of labor.¹⁴

Silk Road Economic Belt initiative and infrastructure challenges

Several experts from Kazakhstan suggested that geoeconomic calculations and cost-effectiveness analysis of Kazakhstan's participation in the SREB indicates that participation in the SREB merely as a transit country might negatively affect country's economy in the long term.¹⁵ Therefore, the Kazakh government decided to take a proactive approach, promoting several global scale initiatives and projects, such as the Astana International Financial Center (AIFC), World Expo 2017 "Nurly Zhol" State program of infrastructure development, Khorog International

Underdevelopment of infrastructure combined with other legal and administrative barriers has created significant economic obstacles for international trade, affecting both imports and exports.

Transit Hub (International dry port), and others, in addition to the traditional trade.¹⁶ The country's policy planners have worked on the assumption that the national economy will benefit from providing a diversified set of services to global players (financial, banking, etc.), given the absence of reliable regional and supra-regional infrastructure, and the lack of direct inexpensive access to global markets for Kazakh export commodities. At the same time, they are eager to be connected to the continental SREB transportation infrastructure. Some international

experts have estimated that the lack of quality infrastructure — or so-called geographical disadvantage—knocks off at least one to two percent of GDP growth from economies in the region. Indeed, the underdevelopment of infrastructure combined with other legal and administrative barriers has created significant economic obstacles for international trade, affecting both imports and exports. For example, in Kazakhstan it costs US\$574 to complete the border compliance for exports. For comparison,

¹⁴ For details, see: Eurasian Council on Foreign Affairs (ECFA) (2015) , *The New Silk Road: A Path to Regional Security?* Available at : http://www.eurasiancouncilforeignaffairs.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ECFA-Occasional-Paper-The-New-Silk-Road-A-Path-to-Regional-Security_rev.pdf (accessed on March 25, 2016) .

¹⁵ The personal interviews and observations of presentations at the Astana Economic Forum and G-Global discussion platform in June 2017 . <http://group-global.org/en>

¹⁶ Ministry for investments and development (2016) *Information on implementation of national "Nurly Zhol" program for infrastructure development*. Kazakhstan: Ministry for investments and development. Available at : <http://www.mid.gov.kz/en/kategori/informaciya-o-realizacii-gosudarstvennoy-programmy-infrastrukturnogo-razvitiya-nurly-zhol>

among the OECD high income countries, the average cost is US\$160; and in Europe and the Central Asian region average the cost is US\$219.¹⁷

Therefore, the governments of Central Asian republics believe that building high quality transportation infrastructure and road networks along the international land-corridor between China and Europe is essential. Such an upgrade would not only connect Central Asian countries with those external markets, but also enable them to benefit from servicing the transportation of goods along this corridor, ultimately contributing to the economic growth. The issue of building new and high quality infrastructure is, however, very complex and entails several important components.

Highways. The experience of many countries around the world, including China, Russia and the US, suggests that the overland movement of certain goods and commodities can be economically efficient if trucks have access to good quality highways. This mode of transportation makes sense for moving goods and some commodities over short and mid-range distances. There is an opportunity to achieve increased economic activity and trade between countries within the ALLDC region if the quality of highways can be addressed. According to UN ESCAP estimates, up to 55 percent of the roads in the ALLDC region are in poor shape: 38 percent are at class III standard and 17 percent are below Class III standards.¹⁸

Railroad Infrastructure. The railroad infrastructure is especially important for moving large volumes of goods and commodities over long distances. Peak usage of the railroads in the Central Asian region and between the region and Russia and Eastern Europe occurred in the 1980s. Between 1991 and 2011 there has been a significant decline in use of railroads for trade within the ALLDC, and very slight progress in terms of moving goods by rail between Central Asia and China, Central Asia and Russia, and onwards to Europe. However, since 2011 Kazakhstan has made significant

The railroad infrastructure is especially important for moving large volumes of goods and commodities over long distances.

17 World Bank's Ease of Doing Business, (2015) *Cost to export: Border compliance (USD): The time and cost for border compliance include obtaining, preparing and submitting documents during port or border handling, customs clearance and inspection procedures.*

18 UN ESCAP (2014), *Bridging Transport, ICT and Energy Infrastructure Gaps for Seamless Regional Connectivity*, Bangkok: UN ESCAP.

investments into rebuilding its railway system,¹⁹ and is actively participating in the China-led efforts to building a transcontinental railway system from Asia to Europe.

The Chinese experience in connecting its East coast with its Western provinces demonstrates the economic feasibility of using railroad networks effectively, a positive indicator for economic growth when the rail system connects China and Mongolia with Eastern and Western Europe via Central Asia and Russia.

Pipelines and Asian Energy Highway. Pipelines and the Asian Energy Highway (AEH) have slowly emerged as a trade and economic reality during the first decades of the 21st century. There are two components in promoting more effective cooperation in the energy sector. One is building gas and oil pipelines connecting Central Asian republics with China and East Asia. The second is building an efficient energy power grid to more effectively connect the different parts of the ALLDC region.

For example, the newly built Central Asia–China Gas Pipeline from Turkmenistan to China delivers 55 billion cubic meters per annum, or 20% of China’s annual natural gas consumption.²⁰ The recently built Kazakhstan–China Crude Oil Pipeline, which connects Kazakhstan with China, delivers 11.7 million tons of oil per annum.²¹ There are long-term plans (until 2030 and even 2050) for additional oil and gas pipelines from Russia to China,

19 ‘BCG Review (Boston Consulting Group for the AEF) (2017) ‘Transportnaya infrastruktura Kazakhstana.’ *BCG Review*, P. 30-31.

20 The Central Asia-PRC Gas Pipeline starts at the Turkmen-Uzbek border city Gedaim, continues through Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan, and runs onwards into China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Horgos city). As of 2016, the gas pipeline has three lines in parallel, each running for 1,830 kilometers. Construction of Line A/B commenced in July 2008. Line A (the gas pipe diameter is 1,067mm) became operational in December 2009, and Line B became operational in October 2010. A delivery capacity of 30 billion cubic meters per annum was reached by the end of 2011. Construction of Line C was started in September 2012. With a designed capacity of 25 billion cubic meters per annum, Line C’s pipe diameter is 1,219mm (152mm larger than Line A/B). The overall welding work on the pipeline was completed at the end of 2013. Upon completion of all supporting facilities of Line C by the end of 2015, the overall delivery capacity of the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline will hit 55 billion cubic meters per annum. This equates to approximately 20% of China’s annual natural gas consumption. Overall, Turkmenistan delivered 125 billion cubic meters of natural gas to China from 2009 to August 2015.

21 Construction of the 963 km Kazakhstan-China pipeline entails two stages. The first step was the implementation of the Atasu-Alashankou project, construction of which was conducted in accordance with the Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on development of comprehensive cooperation in oil and gas fields (Beijing, May 17, 2004). Within the second stage it is planned to gradually increase the capacity of the Kazakhstan-China transport system across all sites from Atyrau to Alashankou up to 20 mt/y, proportional to growing demand for export capacities and the requirements of the domestic market.

which will be major factors in boosting trade turnover between the countries along the Great Silk Road.

An important consequence of infrastructure development between 2005 and 2016 is that trade (especially in energy) between China and Greater Central Asia has significantly increased, at the expense of trade between the European Union (EU) and Greater Central Asia, as energy and commodities trade shifts from the traditional orientation towards Western European markets to the newly opened East Asian markets.

Implications of the Silk Road Initiatives: The case of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's government has for several years been working closely with the World Bank to reform its economic and financial institutions. This includes efforts to address specific areas that according to the World Bank's Global Competitiveness Index would help the country upgrade its institutional and legal frameworks to international standards.

The governments of Kazakhstan as well as other Central Asian republics have embraced the SREB and the EAEU as an opportunity to deal with major challenges. These include three important aspects of development: (a) upgrading their aging highway and railway infrastructure; (b) attracting foreign direct investment (FDI); and (c) boosting trade and economic cooperation in a difficult period, following a sharp decline in energy and other commodity prices on the international market.

In terms of infrastructure development, according to the official newspaper *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, *Kazakhstan's government invested 1.5 trillion tenge (about US\$4.4 billion) between 2011 and 2016 in transportation and communication infrastructure.*²² In addition, China has provided significant financial and technical resources to Kazakhstan for rebuilding, and has in some areas constructed completely new systems. Distances are enormous in Kazakhstan, which is the ninth largest country in the world, and the lack of international-quality highways and railways significantly undermines the country's attractiveness to international investors and increases the cost of doing business.

²² Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper (2016) *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, p. 12.

Officials in Kazakhstan believe that the Chinese infrastructure investments will also help the country become more competitive as a transit country for overland transport of containers between China and the EU. According to *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, the country plans to implement eleven projects jointly with China, at a total cost of 2.5 trillion tenge (US\$7.4 billion) within the next few years in order to increase cargo, especially container transit capacity, several times over.²³

Improving the investment climate and investment volumes is priority for the government of Kazakhstan, as total FDI declined from US\$13.5 billion in 2011 to US\$7.6 billion in 2014.²⁴

Some estimates suggest that Chinese FDI from in Kazakhstan has nearly doubled during the last four to five years.

Over the last decade, China has become a major investor, and several bilateral agreements and MOUs have helped improve the investment climate and investment volumes. Kazakhstan has attracted Chinese investments not only in its road infrastructure, but also energy, communications, manufacturing, tourism, and, most recently, the agricultural sector. Some estimates suggest that Chinese FDI from in Kazakhstan has nearly doubled during the last four to five years.²⁵

International trade is a area of great concern for Astana, as it urgently needs to diversify trade in light of the sharp decline in energy revenues from Western markets. The growing trade with China has helped soften the negative impact of volatility in international commodity markets. According to official estimates, trade between China and Kazakhstan increased from US\$337 million in the mid-1990s to US\$22 billion in 2014. Importantly, since the introduction of the SREB, the two countries have signed trade deals and investment projects valued at US\$70 billion, although several projects have been delayed for various reasons.

Conclusion

The geopolitics of the 20th century divided the Eurasian space into four main regional macro-blocs: East Asia, Europe, core Eurasia (USSR) and South Asia. However, the geo-economic shifts of

23 Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper (2016) *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, p. 12.

24 World bank (2016) *World Bank Development Indicators. The World Bank Group*

25 Kalis N.A. (2014) 'Chinese Investment in Kazakhstan: An Assessment', *International Journal of Scientific Research and Education*, pp. 264-274.

Also: O'Neill (2014) , Daniel, 'Risky Business: The Political Economy of Chinese Investment in Kazakhstan', *Journal of International Studies*.

the 21st century and new SREB initiatives have transformed the “regional blocs” paradigm – including the regional political integration mentality and regional free trade blocs - by offering to bypass regional integration and embrace economic globalization and integration into the global economy.

In order to realize this potential, not only Astana and Beijing but also Moscow (albeit cautiously) have embraced the SREB and NSR initiatives by seeking ways to collaborate that will benefit all major players. This collaboration may contribute to synergies between programs in areas of economic cooperation, improve transnational and regional business integration, and support capacity building in business and management in both the private and public sectors in countries along the Great Silk Road.

In this regard, current trends in economic development, investment, trade and building infrastructure projects, especially in large global hubs such as Dubai, Qatar, Hong Kong and others, suggest an interesting alternative to intra-regional integration or regional blocs. However, this alternative vision is contingent on new roads and communication infrastructures along the Silk Road to connect Kazakhstan and Central Asia with global markets.

Thus, Kazakhstan’s policy planners are betting big and seriously hoping that China —with its strong experience in international trade, business and investments—will continue collaborating with Central Asian partners to connect them to global markets.

This would contribute significantly to Kazakhstan’s economic growth beyond commodity exports, due to the implementation of the Beijing-led program of building an “economic belt of prosperity” in the Silk Road region, and recalibrating trade and economic relations from their traditional orientation towards Western European markets, resulting in greater integration in East Asian markets.

BOOK REVIEW* - "Refuge: Rethinking Refugee Policy in a Changing World"

Alexander Betts & Paul Collier



* The Book Review was prepared by Dr. Özgür Tüfekçi Ph.D, Senior Editor of Caucasus International

The book *Refuge: Rethinking Refugee Policy in a Changing World* is written by Alexander Betts. Betts is the Leopold W. Muller Professor of Forced Migration and International Affairs at the University of Oxford, where he is also director of the Refugee Studies Centre and Paul Collier is professor of economics at St. Antony's College, Oxford. The book opens with an explanation of how one economist and political scientist decided to collaborate on refugees in the Middle East. This initiative emerged after the Jordanian think tank, WANA, invited both academics to come to Jordan and brainstorm with government on the issue. Subsequently, the authors broadened the scope beyond Jordan, aiming to develop a framework of ideas for rethinking a failing refugee system.

In this sense, they put forward broader ideas to carry forward, including the argument that refuge is as much a development issue as a humanitarian issue; the need to restore refugees' autonomy through jobs and education; emphasis on creating sustainable safe havens in the countries that host the majority of the world's refugees; recognition of a role for business alongside government and civil society; and the necessity of reconsidering refugee assistance for a world utterly different to that which the existing system was designed.

The introduction opens with infographics showing the distribution of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in the EU. Observing that "we live in disturbed times", the authors explain how European governments responded to a mass influx of refugees from outside the European region for the first time in the EU's history. The authors discover that European governments resort to unilateral decisions in moments of panic, and their policies are shaped more by the domestic politics of the moment than the search for collective solutions. Thus the book seeks to answer the question "what, in the twenty-first century, should the world do about refugees?" To provide a proper answer to that question, they first address another question: "why is the global refugees system not working today?".

According to the authors, global disorder is starting point of the entire story behind the failing system. Global refugee numbers are at their highest since the early 1990s: 21.3 million people. People seeking refuge are not fleeing poverty; they are fleeing

danger. This happens when a society ceases to provide security for its people. As long as fragile states are exposed to risks which implode into mass violence against civilians, displacement is unavoidable. Many of those displaced remain in their own countries, but many others seek haven beyond national borders. Regarding the Syrian crisis, the people who are in search of refuge have created the first true opportunity to reform the failing system.

The book claims that the dominant approach – creating a ‘humanitarian silo’ - is dysfunctional. The refugee camp is the silo’s default haven – usually remote, arid, and dangerous; almost always with strict prohibitions on socio-economic activity. The authors argue that this approach undermines autonomy and dignity; it erodes human potential by focusing almost exclusively on people’s vulnerabilities rather than rebuilding their capacities.

In this sense, the book’s main contribution is to proposing the creation of “special economic zones (SEZs)” in regional sanctuaries, which would help create jobs for refugees there. According to the authors, this begins with recognizing that refugees have skills, talents, and aspirations. They are not just passive objects of our pity, but actors constrained by crucial circumstances. They do not have to be an inevitable burden, but instead can help themselves and their communities – if we let them. This model has been realized in the King Hussein Bin Talal Development Area (KHBTD) with the establishment of a SEZ into which the Jordanian government has already invested more than 100 million dollars in infrastructure.

Empowering refugees through creation of “special economic zones” (which would help create jobs for refugees) is singlehandedly a robust policy. However, the book does not delve into the other dimensions of well-being, and the book would have benefited significantly from a discussion of education, social services and even moral approaches (not misemploying) to this social economic zones.

To sum up, Betts and Collier deal with the issues around the existing refugee system very well. The book focuses on enabling refugees to achieve long-term autonomy. In doing so, the first part presents the chronology of the Syrian refugee crisis, from its antecedents in the creation of institutions, to its denouement

in the deportation of refugees from Greece. The second part sets out a new approach to global refugee policy, one anchored not in camps, court decisions, and panic, but in the actual needs and the best ways to respond to those needs. The third part looks back, indulging in a fantasy of counterfactual history.

The authors critically examine and illuminate global refugee policy. They discuss the necessity of jobs for creating a system for the world's refugees. The book has the potential to become a seminal work on one of the world's most urgent problems.

OZGUR TUFEKCI, Ph.D.

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CAUCASUS UNDER REVIEW

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS

While the Caucasus is a region of enormous diversity and potential, it is also a region about which relatively little is known. However, during the last decade, numerous publications on the region have expanded both regional and international understanding of this diversity and potential. This overview of recent publications provides an up-to-date reading list for anyone interested in the region. This issue presents recently published books which delve into a range of issues, from the Cold War to new geopolitics; Russian geopolitics to the Sasanian Empire; the Cultural Revolution to new media; from Azerbaijan's foreign policy and the EU's role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to East-West transportation corridor.



The book of **The Cold War: A World History** is written by **Odd Arne Westad**, the S. T. Lee Professor of US-Asia Relations at Harvard University. Professor Westad challenges the idea that the Cold War began after 1945. Rather, he sees its origins in the late 1800s, when industrialization started and European workers became radicalized, and argues that the Cold War made the world what it is today. With his book, Westad aims to get attention away from Russia, Germany, and the US. His ambitious book wrests attention away from the classic arenas of Moscow, Berlin and Washington, and looks instead at Indonesia, Chile, Angola, China and Korea, showing how the Cold War affected the globe and how it was, in turn, shaped by events in seemingly distant lands.

Dimitar Bechev's book *Rival Power: Russia in Southeast Europe* identifies three areas in which Russia wields influence in southeast Europe: military capabilities, energy politics, and soft power. The author gives the reader some historical background, highlighting the close cultural and military links between Russia and the Balkan states in the first part, while part two looks at the different levers Russia uses in the region. This is a thoroughly researched book, well referenced with evidence-backed assertions. The author himself describes the book as an account of Russia's engagement with Southeast Europe since the early 1990s. In this sense, the book addresses two sets of questions. First, what has been driving Moscow's policy in the region? What are the strategic goals and objective that policymakers, both before and after Putin's ascent to power in 1999-2000, have been pursuing? Second, what explains the attitude and responses of local states to Russia? Why have they engaged and carried favor with Moscow?

Another book of *The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas*, is written by **Agnia Grigas**. The book deals not only with the economic and environmental effects of natural gas, but also its geopolitical consequences. The boom in shale gas production in the United States, the growth of global LNG trade, and the buildup of gas transport infrastructure worldwide have transformed the traditional markets, and natural gas appears to be on the verge of becoming a true global commodity. Traditional suppliers like Russia, whose energy-poor neighbors were dependent upon its gas exports and pipelines, are feeling the foundations of the old

order shifting beneath their feet. Grigas examines how this new reality is rewriting the conventional rules of intercontinental gas trade and realigning strategic relations among the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, and beyond.

Mark Bassin (Baltic Sea professor of the history of ideas in the Center for Baltic and East European Studies at Södertörn University in Stockholm) and Mikhail Suslov (Marie Curie post-doctoral researcher at the Uppsala Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University) argue in their book *Eurasia 2.0: Russian Geopolitics in the Age of New Media* that the Soviet Union's phantom presence continues to exert considerable cultural and political force. This collection explores the new possibilities and threats associated with the digitalization of geopolitical knowledge and practice. The authors consider new spatial sensibilities and new identities of global as well as local selves, the emergence of which is facilitated by the Internet. They explore recent reconfigurations of the traditional imperial conundrum of center versus periphery.

The book of *Everyday Energy Politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus Citizens' Needs, Entitlements and Struggles for Access*, is edited by **David Gullette** and **Jeanne Féaux de la Croix**. This collection brings together anthropologists, economists, geographers and political scientists to examine the role of all forms of energy and their products in people's daily lives throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus. The contributors ask how energy is understood as an everyday resource, as a necessity and a source of opportunity, a challenge or even as an indicator of exclusionary practices. They enquire into the role and views of energy sector workers, rural consumers and urban communities, and their experiences of energy companies' and national policies. They further examine the legacy of Soviet and more recent domestic energy policies, the environmental of energy use as well as the political impact of citizens' energy grievances.

The book of *Trapped between War and Peace: The case of Nagorno-Karabakh (Selected papers: 2011-2017)* is jointly edited by **Gulshan Pashayeva**, Deputy Director of the Center, Center for Strategic Studies (SAM) under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and **Fuad Chiragov**, Principal Research Fellow of Foreign Policy Analysis Department. In the book,

26 articles were collected reflecting the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict objectively, were selected which were previously published in peer-reviewed academic journals, prominent magazines, and global think-tanks, and are accompanied by op-eds posted in international electronic media. The aim of this book is to provide an overview about the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Its broad coverage includes legal aspects, mediation efforts, gender and human rights issues among internally displaced persons (IDPs), a comparative analysis of the conflict against minority issues in other parts of the world, the geopolitical positions of global and regional powers, and the current status of the region. The book further highlights regional political, economic, and social developments from the perspectives of prominent authors from diverse backgrounds and a variety of institutions and organizations situated on different continents. Dozens of scholarly publications and op-eds that have been produced in recent years were carefully processed and reviewed by editors.

The book of *The South Caucasus Transport Center: Crossing East-West and North-South Corridors* is a joint result of the collaboration of the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary. **Mahir Humbatov**, Research Fellow at the SAM's Economic Analysis and Global Affairs department and PhD candidate at SOAS University of London is a scientific editor of the book. The book is consisted of different chapters shedding light on Azerbaijan's advantageous geographical position at a crossroads of East-West and North-South corridors which leads the country to effectively using its geographical privilege in its natural resources, commercial relations, investment environment and governance capacities. The newly-published book also examines the trade relations between Europe and China, China's transportation routes from China to Europe and vice versa as well as their financial and security advantages. Moreover, implementation of economic and structural reforms targeting to reinforce competitive capabilities of the transport corridors conducted Azerbaijan with a range of decrees and orders signed by the President Ilham Aliyev is among the stunning topics of the book.

This book of *The South Caucasus – Security, Energy and Europeanization* edited by **Meliha B. Altunışık** and **Oktay F. Tanrisever**, explores developments in the countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – since the EU included the region in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003. It considers issues related to energy, ethnic conflict, steps towards regional integration, and, above all, security – including the involvement of Russia, Iran, Turkey and the United States. It assesses the key importance of energy, argues that the prospects for regional integration are weak, and contends that while the approach of Europe and the United States has been confused and weak, not holding out great hope of EU or NATO membership, Russia’s interest and involvement in the region is strong, and growing.

The Cold War: A World History

By Odd Arne Westad

We tend to think of the Cold War as a bounded conflict: a clash of two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, born out of the ashes of World War II and coming to a dramatic end with the collapse of the Soviet Union. But in this major new work, Bancroft Prize-winning scholar Odd Arne Westad argues that the Cold War must be understood as a global ideological confrontation, with early roots in the Industrial Revolution and ongoing repercussions around the world.

Westad offers a new perspective on a century when great power rivalry and ideological battle transformed every corner of our globe. From Soweto to Hollywood, Hanoi, and Hamburg, young men and women felt they were fighting for the future of the world. The Cold War may have begun on the perimeters of Europe, but it had its deepest reverberations in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, where nearly every community had to choose sides. And these choices continue to define economies and regimes across the world.

Today, many regions are plagued with environmental threats, social divides, and ethnic conflicts that stem from this era. Its ideologies influence China, Russia, and the United States; Iraq and Afghanistan have been destroyed by the faith in purely military solutions that emerged from the Cold War. Stunning in

its breadth and revelatory in its perspective, this book expands our understanding of the Cold War both geographically and chronologically, and offers an engaging new history of how today's world was created.

Rival Power: Russia in Southeast Europe

By Dimitar Bechev

Is Russia threatening to disrupt more than two decades of EU and US efforts to promote stability in post-communist Southeast Europe? Politicians and commentators in the West say, “yes”. With rising global anxiety over Russia's political policies and objectives, Dimitar Bechev provides a crucial in-depth look at this volatile region.

Deftly unpacking the nature and extent of Russian influence in the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey, Bechev argues that both sides are driven by pragmatism and opportunism rather than historical loyalties. Russia is seeking to assert its role in Europe's security architecture, establish alternative routes for its gas exports—including the contested Southern Gas Corridor—and score points against the West. Yet, leaders in these areas are allowing Russia to reinsert itself to serve their own goals. This urgently needed guide analyzes the responses of regional NATO members, particularly regarding the annexation of Crimea and the Putin-Erdogan rift over Syria.

The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas

By Agnia Grigas

We are in the midst of an energy revolution, led by the United States. As the world's greatest producer of natural gas moves aggressively to expand its exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), America stands poised to become an energy superpower—an unanticipated development with far-reaching implications for the international order. Agnia Grigas drills deep into today's gas markets to uncover the forces and trends transforming the geopolitics of gas.

In the near term, Moscow's political influence will erode as the Russian gas giant Gazprom loses share in its traditional markets

while its efforts to pivot eastward to meet China's voracious energy needs will largely depend on Beijing's terms. In this new geopolitics of gas, the United States will enjoy opportunities but also face challenges in leveraging its newfound energy clout to reshape relations with both European states and rising Asian powers.

Eurasia 2.0: Russian Geopolitics in the Age of New Media

Edited by Mikhail Suslov and Mark Bassin

This book discusses the return of geopolitical ideas and doctrines to the post-Soviet space with special focus on the new phenomenon of digital geopolitics, an overarching term that encompasses different political practices, including the dissemination of geopolitical ideas online, use of online tools by political figures and diplomats for legitimation and outreach, and the viral spread of geopolitical memes. Different chapters explore the new possibilities and threats associated with this digitalization of geopolitical knowledge and practice. Our authors consider new spatial sensibilities and new identities of global as well as local selves, the emergence of which is facilitated by the Internet.

They explore recent reconfigurations of the traditional imperial conundrum of center versus periphery. Developing Manuel Castells' argument that social activism in the digital era is organized around cultural values, the essays discuss new geopolitical ideologies which aim to reinforce Russia's spiritual sovereignty as a unique civilization, while at the same time seeking to rebrand Russia as a greater soft power by utilizing the Russian-speaking diaspora or employing traditionalist rhetoric. Great Power imagery, enemy-making, and visual mappings of Russia's future territorial expansion are traditional means for the manipulation of imperial pleasures and geopolitical fears. In the age of new media, however, this is being done with greater subtlety by mobilizing the grassroots, contracting private information channels, and de-politicizing geopolitics. Given the political events of recent years, it is logical that the Ukrainian crisis should provide the thematic backdrop for most of the authors.

Everyday Energy Politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus Citizens' Needs, Entitlements and Struggles for Access

Edited by David Gullette and Jeanne Féaux de la Croix

The perception of Central Asia and its place in the world has come to be shaped by its large oil and gas reserves. Literature on energy in the region has thus largely focused on related geopolitical issues and national policies. However, little is known about citizens' needs within this broader context of commodities that connect the energy networks of China, Russia and the West. This multidisciplinary special issue brings together anthropologists, economists, geographers and political scientists to examine the role of all forms of energy (here: oil, gas, hydropower and solar power) and their products (especially electricity) in people's daily lives throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus. The papers in this issue ask how energy is understood as an everyday resource, as a necessity and a source of opportunity, a challenge or even as an indicator of exclusionary practices. We enquire into the role and views of energy sector workers, rural consumers and urban communities, and their experiences of energy companies' and national policies. We further examine the legacy of Soviet and more recent domestic energy policies, the environmental impact of energy use as well as the political impact of citizens' energy grievances.

Trapped between war and peace: The case of Nagorno-Karabakh [Selected papers, 2011-2017]

Edited by Gulshan Pashayeva and Fuad Chiragov

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is now a relatively old, almost forgotten, ethno-territorial conflict located on the southeastern edge of Europe. Commonly perceived as "frozen" conflict and not a "high priority" issue, it has, as a result, not received the appropriate attention from external powers, global media, or international mediators. Yet it remains the longest-running conflict in the territory of the former Soviet Union. When Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh started to demand the right of self-determination and secession from Azerbaijan. Consequently, this conflict spilled over into open military confrontation between the newly independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thus,

there is a perception that the West has applied a double standard when it comes to the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Large-scale armed clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops in early April 2016 drew the international spotlight back to this conflict. Due to the successful counter-attack of the Azerbaijani armed forces, a few strategic heights were retaken for the first time since 1994. These events also contributed to Russia stepping up mediation efforts to reach an agreement on a ceasefire between the two sides, which came into effect on April 5. Whether or not 2018 will bring any progress in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process is subject to a great deal of doubt at present.

“The South Caucasus–Security, Energy and Europeanization”

Edited by Meliha B. Altunışık, Oktay F. Tanrisever

This book explores developments in the countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – since the EU included the region in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003. It considers issues related to energy, ethnic conflict, steps towards regional integration, and, above all, security – including the involvement of Russia, Iran, Turkey and the United States. It assesses the key importance of energy, argues that the prospects for regional integration are weak, and contends that while the approach of Europe and the United States has been confused and weak, not holding out great hope of EU or NATO membership, Russia’s interest and involvement in the region is strong, and growing.

Moreover, the book highlights the European Union’s region building in the South Caucasus region, and touches upon the identity issues in the Georgia’s foreign policy and policy of “Euro-Atlantic Integration”; foreign policy orientations and priorities of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Other sections of the book focus on the role of the EU and other regional powers on the Ethno-territorial conflicts and the formulation of the security environment, as well as regional cooperation initiatives in the South Caucasus. The book also underscored the importance of pipeline projects and energy cooperation in the South Caucasus region for the EU’s energy security. The final part of the book focused on the roles

of Russia and the U.S. in the the South Caucasus region and the EU's neighbourhood policy.

“The South Caucasus Transport Center: Crossing East-West and North-South Corridors”

Edited by Mahir Humbatov

Countries situated mainly between China and the European Union are currently participating in a race to develop their transport, trade and logistics infrastructure to attract at least one of the threads of Silk Road that will carry goods and people across Eurasia. It is believed that development of the Europe-South Caucasus-Asia transport, trade and logistics infrastructure will reduce the cost of production and services, which are important to raise competitiveness and social well-being. Although the Europe-South Caucasus-Asia transport route is a shortcut way between the two continents, the soft and hard infrastructure along this way is not enough developed to meet the emerging demand for goods and passenger turnover.

However, it is clear that any type of old Silk Road revival initiative will drive many countries to develop their infrastructure as well as superstructure and coordinate this with other participating countries, which as a result will be beneficial for all of them. It is also believed that every single country may benefit and generate revenues from old Silk Road revival process in case of possible collaboration with its neighbouring countries. Azerbaijan enjoys an advantageous geographical position at a crossroads of East-West and North-South corridors, which leads the country to become a regional transport, production, and trade and logistics hub. The country makes huge investments into its own infrastructure as well as supports certain other neighbouring countries. Within this framework, common will based on the reciprocity and mutual benefit can foster enhanced cooperation along with the Great Silk Road and International North-South Transportation Corridor projects.

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