

Instructions for authors, permissions and subscription information:

E-mail: bilgi@uidergisi.com

Web: www.uidergisi.com



***Post-Soviet Political Transformation in
Azerbaijan: Political Elite, Civil Society and the
Trials of Democratization***

Ayça Ergun

Assistant Professor, Middle East Technical University,
Department of Sociology

To cite this article: Ergun, Ayça, “Post-Soviet Political Transformation in Azerbaijan: Political Elite, Civil Society and the Trials of Democratization”, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Volume 7, No 26 (Summer 2010), p. 67-85.

Copyright © International Relations Council of Turkey (UİK-IRCT). All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, transmitted, or disseminated, in any form, or by any means, without prior written permission from UİK, to whom all requests to reproduce copyright material should be directed, in writing. References for academic and media coverages are beyond this rule.

Statements and opinions expressed in *Uluslararası İlişkiler* are the responsibility of the authors alone unless otherwise stated and do not imply the endorsement by the other authors, the Editors and the Editorial Board as well as the International Relations Council of Turkey.

Post-Soviet Political Transformation in Azerbaijan: Political Elite, Civil Society and The Trials of Democratization

Ayça ERGUN*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyze the process of post-Soviet transformation in Azerbaijan while focusing on the process of democratization, peculiarities of the leadership and political elite, success and failure in electoral politics, and development of civil society. I argue that the politics of the post-independence period was shaped by the conflicting co-existence of patterns of continuity and change which determined the path of political transformation in Azerbaijan.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Political Transformation, Democratization, Political Elite, Civil Society

Azerbaycan'da Sovyet Sonrası Dönemde Siyasal Dönüşüm: Siyasal Seçkinler, Sivil Toplum ve Demokratikleşme Denemeleri

ÖZET

Bu makalenin amacı Azerbaycan'da Sovyet sonrası siyasal dönüşüm sürecini demokratikleşme, liderlerin ve siyasal seçkinlerin özellikleri, seçim politikalarında başarı ve başarısızlıklar ve sivil toplum gelişimine odaklanarak incelemektir. Bağımsızlık sonrası dönemde siyasal dönüşüm sürecinin geleceği devamlılık ve değişim unsurlarının çatışan birlikteliği tarafından belirlenmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Azerbaycan, Siyasal Dönüşüm, Demokratikleşme, Siyasal Seçkinler, Sivil Toplum

* Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara. E-mail: ayer@metu.edu.tr

Introduction

In the post-independence period, Azerbaijan has endured numerous problems characteristic of many post-Soviet Eurasian states in its path towards democratization.¹ Early independence period was marked by the inter-ethnic conflict in the Nagorno-Karabagh region, trials of state and nation-building, attempts at democratization and the need to secure domestic stability. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of Azerbaijan (CPAz) elite had been discredited and lost its legitimacy due to its leaders' reluctance to solve the Karabagh problem and to build a coalition with the then emerging counter-elite represented by the People's Front of Azerbaijan (PFA). The PFA was a typical mass movement aiming at declaring independence and building up a formation of a democratic nation-state. Stimulated first by autonomy and, then by independence demands of the Nagorno-Karabagh Armenians, the PFA emerged as the only leadership alternative to the existing ruling elite for a population furious with the inefficient rule of both the center, Moscow and the local administration of the CPAz. The People's Front was an organization uniting those who were willing to fight against the Soviet rule and propagate for the idea of independence. The PFA had quite a loose structure. It involved, ad-hoc, spontaneous decision-making mechanisms, and provided a roof for different and, in some cases, contradictory voices. It was made up of numerous leading figures whose co-habitation would not be possible in the later years of independence. The Front's success in organizing mass meetings at the Baku's main square (later named as the Freedom Square), and in consolidating popular support led to their coming to power under the presidency of Ebulfez Elchibey, the leader of the PFA. Although Elchibey was the first democratically elected president of Azerbaijan, his government could not ensure success in the progress of state affairs. He and other administrative cadres came to power through electoral as well as popular legitimacy; yet inefficiency in the state affairs discredited Elchibey's rule in a relatively short period of time. Moreover, the dormant structures of the Communist Party background, made up of a cadre of Soviet elites and existing bureaucracy, felt uneasy with the changes associated with the idea of independence. These changes were marked by a new regime type and democratic governance, represented by a new elite i.e. the leading cadres of the PFA; the idea of nation-building with strong emphasis on Turkism, rupture with the Soviet rule and serious distancing from Moscow. Consequently the old guard did not hesitate to show its disloyalty to the new government.

Instability and chaos within the country, the continuing war with Armenia and the loss of territory, increasing power and legitimacy of the warlords, disappointment of

¹ For the analysis of the post-Soviet period in Azerbaijan, see Audrey L. Altstadt, "Azerbaijan and Aliyev A Long History and An Uncertain Future", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 58 (5), 2003, pp. 3-13; Leila Alieva, "Azerbaijan's Frustrating Elections", *Journal of Democracy*, 17 (2), 2006, pp. 147-161, Ayça Ergun, "Democratization from Below: The Role of Civil Society in Azerbaijan", Ayşe Ayata, Ayça Ergun and Işıl Çelimli (eds.), *Black Sea Politics: Political Culture and Civil Society in an Unstable Region*, London, IB Tauris, 2005, pp.103-120; Aytan Gahramanova, "Internal and External Factors in the Democratization of Azerbaijan", *Democratization*, 16 (4), 2009, pp. 777-803; Alec Rasizade, "Azerbaijan After Heydar Aliev", *Nationalities Papers*, 32 (1), 2004, pp. 137-164; Anar M. Valiyev "Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan A Failed Revolution", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 53 (3), (2006), pp.17-35.

the citizens, and the rising dissatisfaction due to economic problems and unemployment resulted in the failure of the People's Front Government. All these problems also paved the way to the reconsolidation of the old ruling elite under the leadership of Heydar Aliyev who had served as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan between 1969 and 1982. His uncontested experience as a statesman provided him with great popular support and an unrivaled legitimacy among a population waiting for a "strong man" to "solve all problems". His second term in office between 1993 and 2003 was remarkable in numerous respects. His talent and experience in state affairs; the presence of an already loyal cadre of former CPAz party officials, a loyal bureaucracy and intelligentsia along with popular support provoked by the high disappointment about the People's Front provided him with full opportunity structures in the country. Although his rule brought stability and security in the country and a cease-fire with Armenians, his record in democratization was far from convincing vis-à-vis the international standards.² In 2003, the transfer of power from Heydar Aliyev to his son, Ilham Aliyev raised questions not only about the further degradation in the democratic transition but also about the risk of an oil rich country becoming a monarchical rule in the age of democracy promotion. Ilham Aliyev inherited his father's discourse as well as his loyal administrative cadres and ensured that his rule would not be challenged by power rivalries. As of 2010, Azerbaijan is an oil-rich country, experiencing booming economic growth due to oil revenues yet one that also experiences serious setbacks in democratization and equal distribution of wealth.

The aim of this article is to analyze the process of post-Soviet transformation in Azerbaijan while focusing on the process of democratization, peculiarities of the leadership and political elite, success and failure in electoral politics, and development of civil society. The post-independence period was dominated by representatives of the old guard who acted with a Soviet mentality, and this led to failures in instituting future democratization in Azerbaijan. Moreover, alternative entities made up of opposition parties and civil society organizations, have not been provided with the opportunity to consolidate patterns of change such as liberalization or fostering democratization since they either remain weak or considerably inefficient. The scope of their activities is determined by the limits set by the ruling elite. As a result of ongoing failures in democratization, shortcomings in electoral politics, and lack of consensus-building among the government and opposition, Azerbaijan represents a case of hybrid democracies where patterns of continuity and change co-exist.

Peculiarities of Post-Soviet Political Transformation in the Southern Caucasus

The independence movements in the Southern Caucasus are one of main factors shaping the post-Soviet politics in the region. Their significance can be seen in two ways. First, their emergence was triggered by inter-ethnic conflicts. The re-definition of national identity, formation of discourses on nationhood, processes of nation and state-building, regulation

² For the evaluation of the parliamentary and presidential elections in Azerbaijan since 1995, see the elections reports prepared by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), <http://www.osce.org/odihr-elections/14352.htm>, accessed on 15 December 2009.

of majority-minority relations were all shaped by the presence of the ethnic conflicts in the region. In these types of conflict situations, both nation and state-building projects remain incomplete in cases where territorial integrity was either violated (as in case of Azerbaijan) or threatened (as in case of Georgia). Second, the independence movements resulted in the emergence of counter-elite alternative to the Communist Party rule in the Soviet Union. The relationship between the ruling elite and the opposition was not an easy one and it dominated the entire process of post-Soviet transformation. After the achievement of independence, nationalist elite constituted the basis of alternative elite groups who later established their own political parties and therefore contributed to the foundation of multi-party system. With the return of the old guard, namely Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia, the independence elite constituted the core opposition. An opposition either in fully organized or partially organized form prevented, to some extent, the consolidation and widening of the arbitrary practices. They also constituted a force which delegitimized the existing governments through constant criticisms. Therefore the politics of post-independence was marked by the interplay of at least two groups, the government and the opposition with no equal power, resources and opportunities.

The entire process of political transformation in the Southern Caucasus was remarkably shaped by the legacies of the past, which should be analyzed in political and socio-cultural terms. The continuity of rule by the old communist party leadership, exemplified by the cases of Azerbaijan and Georgia, resulted in a re-consolidation of the Soviet type of governing, though in a modified form. The old leaders were the “strong men” who were believed to overcome the crises of the transition period through their leadership skills and ability to secure stability in their respective countries. Given their experience and talent in state-affairs and popular legitimacy, both Aliyev and Shevardnadze should have initiated the process of democratic transition quite easily. Yet it seems that their political upbringing prevented them to be open to challenges associated with democratization, i.e. peaceful political turnover by free and fair elections. Moreover, the existing cadres in administrative structures who did not possess experience and knowledge of working with democratic principles proved their loyalty to the ruling elite without questioning the necessity for a new regime type. The notion of *nomenklatura* is of particular importance to understand both the resistance and unpreparedness of the administrative cadres to further the democratization process. Although the *nomenklatura* was not, a monolithic and homogenous entity during both the Soviet period and post- independence, it constituted an important actor in the re-consolidation of the representatives of the Soviet rule. Discipline and loyalty were the key elements for the functioning of the *nomenklatura*. The main source of loyalty and discipline stemmed from the leadership, namely the first secretaries of the local Communist Parties. Thus, the return of the old guard relieved the *nomenklatura* structures that were not entirely accustomed to democratic institutions and their functions. Leaders of the independence movements, on the other hand, both Ebulföz Elçibey and Zviad Gamsakurdia were not perceived as strong enough to deal with the burdens of a new state-building since they lacked the Soviet-type leadership skills including concentration of power, strong control and authority. Their nationalist discourses also provoked the already awakened ethnic consciousness of various ethnic

minorities, something which posed yet another challenge to their rule. The only exception was the leadership of Armenia's Levon Ter Petrossian, who ruled the country from 1991 to 1998 and was unable to secure power as a result of economic and political hardship caused by the Karabagh war. His readiness to make concessions on the Nagorno-Karabagh problem immediately made him illegitimate in the eyes of both the Armenian public and the diaspora and he was subsequently replaced by Robert Kocharian, a leading representative of the Karabagh clan.

Another problem associated with the establishment of democratic state-building was the lack of an elite consensus regarding the path towards democratization. The need for pact formation propagated by the O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead in order to initiate democratic transition was never possible.³ The relationship between the ruling elite and the opposition was defined in conflictual terms where consensus was hardly possible. The origins of the lack of pact formation dates back to the pre-independence period. During this time, the local communist cadres felt reluctant to cooperate with the then emerging counter elite, who were seen as constituting a threat to their rule. They not only tried to de-legitimize the counter elites' attempts but also tried to prevent their consolidation fearing reprisals from the central authorities of Moscow. In the post-independence period, Aliyev and Shevardnadze felt uneasy cooperating with the nationalist opposition and even considered them enemies of their respective governments.

Another significant peculiarity of the Southern Caucasus is the dominance of regionalism and patron-client relationship. The dominance of patron-client relationships in the region is by no means a product of the post-Soviet period.⁴ The Soviet authorities turned a blind eye to the presence and dominance of clientelism in the region and the strong representation of regional identities at the administrative level. The importance of such clientelism is evident when considering the long lasting dominance of Nakhchivan and *Yeraz* (the term which refers to the Azerbaijanis living in Armenia) clans in Azerbaijan and the Karabagh clan in Armenia.⁵ Clientelism operates in a cyclical process: those who have the political and economic power give their share to their regional allies, and in turn, these protégés pay tribute to the leader by supporting the political power and ensuring its continuity. Since association with family, clan and tribe is a common and dominant cultural pattern in the region, one can easily find its influence in current politics. The allocation and sharing of resources, both political and economic, remain in the hands of the dominant clan. In this case, one can hardly talk about the implementation of democratic principles.

³ See G. O'Donnell, P.C. Schmitter, L. Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

⁴ For the discussion of clientelism and regionalism in the South Caucasus, see Altstadt, "Azerbaijan and Aliyev A Long History and An Uncertain Future"; Razmik Panossian "The irony of Nagorno-Karabakh: formal institutions versus informal politics", *Regional & Federal Studies*, 11 (3), 2001, pp. 143-164; Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Revenge of the Past: Socialism and Ethnic Conflict in Transcaucasia", *New Left Review*, 184, 1990, pp. 5-37.

⁵ See Panossian "The irony of Nagorno-Karabakh: formal institutions versus informal politics"

Finally, the idea of independence propagated by the nationalist elites was associated with a string of unfulfilled promises in the early years of post-Soviet era. The establishment of an independent democratic nation-state was said to entail better lives for citizens, freedom, prosperity and development. These expectations were far from met and the burdens and immediate problems of transition period caused severe disappointment among the population of these war-torn societies. Inefficiency and inexperience of the independence movement elite in government along with decreasing standards of living and an increasing sense of insecurity about the future actually have made the representatives of the Soviet period the only legitimate leaders tasked with saving the country. However, the continuation of the old Soviet-type of authoritarian practices such as restrictions in freedom of speech and association, the dominance of one party rule and unfair and tainted elections also created mistrust among the population. In addition, widespread anti-democratic practices in electoral processes also resulted in an increasing political apathy and disbelief in the functioning of a multi-party system that had previously promised further democratization. Although Colored Revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) were inspiring for Azerbaijan and Armenia, attempts to consolidate democratization remained incomplete.

To conclude, the countries of the Southern Caucasus share several common characteristics in their process of political transformation. All of them have problems related to democratization process (Azerbaijan and Armenia) and democratic consolidation (Georgia). Their post-independence periods were shaped by incomplete nation-building process (particularly in Azerbaijan and Georgia) mainly due to inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts. State-building remains fragile since the territorial integrity and inviolability of borders are not secured. Government-opposition relations are defined in conflictual terms where there seems to be no room for consensus and/or negotiation. The multi-party system has not been consolidated because of anti-democratic practices in electoral politics and a lack of arenas of opportunity for political parties to operate. The fairness and freeness of elections remain largely under question because of the anti-democratic practices. The opposition increasingly loses its credibility and, more importantly, its core supporters. Civil societies are in the making and given the lack of mass membership and grassroots structures, these groups only consist of a handful group of NGO activists who are professionalized in civil societal activity yet incapable of effectuating state-society relationship.⁶ One can hardly talk about their representativeness, although they do constitute a platform to express discontent. Finally, an already existing practice of corruption and bribery is continuously strengthened in the post-Soviet period because of economic hardship, unemployment and low salaries.⁷ Corruption becomes more widespread because of the aforementioned and ever-present clientelism found throughout the Southern Caucasus.

⁶ See Ayça Ergun "Democratization from Below: The Role of Civil Society in Azerbaijan".

⁷ For an analysis of corruption in post-Soviet countries, see Christoph H. Stefes, *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, New York, Palgrave, 2006

Among other post-Soviet regions, the Southern Caucasus has its own peculiarities which can hardly be comparable with Central Asia. The notion of regime change, or at least the possibility of change, has been introduced by the formation of nationalist independence movements. There are potentials for a democratic transition particularly at the society level, yet the limits and boundaries of liberalization and democratization are largely dependent on the ruling elite, one whose choices do not necessarily meet the international standards for democratization.

Trials of Democratization in the Post-Soviet Transformation of Azerbaijan

In order to highlight Azerbaijan's major achievements and shortcomings in its road to democratization one should focus on the choices and strategies of the political elite, leadership, development of multi-party system and electoral politics. The independence movement in Azerbaijan emerged as a reaction to the secessionist demands of the Nagorno-Karabagh Armenians. The inter-ethnic conflict resulted in the rise of the nationalist sentiments and questioning of the legitimacy of the Soviet regime. The PFA led mainly by the Azerbaijani intelligentsia emerged as an organization representing the demands of the masses to express their discontent. Between 1989 and 1991, the PFA turned out to be the only political structure that constituted an alternative to the CPAz. On 31 August 1991 Azerbaijan declared its independence; the first secretary of the CPAz, Ayaz Muttalibov became the president. Muttalibov was rather reluctant to give a new path to Azerbaijan. Moreover, his rule was not only threatened by the growing popularity of the PFA but also the ongoing war with Armenians. After the loss of Xocali and Susha and massacres committed to the Azerbaijanis by Armenians, he fled to Moscow, leaving the political power to the PFA. Ebulfez Elchibey was elected president with 59 per cent of the votes. His election was considered by and large as free and fair.⁸ The period between 1992 and 1993 was marked by the rule of the independence movement elite. They were predominantly nationalist-minded intelligentsia with either no or little experience in state affairs and administration. They were in a way forced to become the political elite since there were no other alternative credible groups for the government. Although Elchibey was the leader of the Front, his presidency was contested by some influential members from the PFA. Due to his naïve and friendly approach to his cadre, one can hardly speak about a strong leadership, let alone a cult of personality created around him. Interrelationship within the PFA was defined on the basis loyalty to the idea of nationhood and, democracy rather than clientelistic ties. Therefore his administration lacked the support of existing personalistic networks of the Soviet period.

His period can be characterized as an initial attempt of a new state and nation-building which aimed at the creation of a democratic republic where national identity was defined on the basis of Turkism and/or Turkish origins of the national identity. The regime

⁸ Audrey L. Altstadt, "Azerbaijan's Struggle Toward Democracy", in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 127

defined itself in opposition to and ruptures with the Soviet past. Anything associated with the Soviet rule had been discredited. The name of national identity had changed from Azerbaijani to Turk. The formation of a multi-party system had been encouraged. In terms of foreign policy orientation, the Front government was characterized as pro-Turkey, pro-West, anti-Iran and anti-Russia.⁹ Yet the Front was quite unsuccessful in meeting the harder challenges of state and nation-building and did not have enough time to consolidate and strengthen its rule. The ongoing war with Armenians resulted in fear and insecurity. The unprofessional state cadres paved the way to inefficiency. Democratization was not an immediate need for the population who was severely disappointed with the problems of transition period and achievements in democracy-building were undermined. Stability, security and more importantly livelihood became the main concern. Thus, loyalty to the ideas and ideals was challenged by the pre-existing loyalties i.e. the need for a strong man, re-consolidation of clientelistic networks and strong regional identities and affiliations which were yet to be replaced with the notions of citizenship and/or national identities. An alternative leader was there. Heydar Aliyev who was then the Chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan presented a paramount example of the strong man who yielded more than enough popular support and prestige. There was no question about his leadership skills; his staff composed of his loyal cadres and protégés were already present. The invitation of Aliyev to Baku by President Elchibey offered a perfect opportunity for the return of the new, albeit old alternative.

When Aliyev took over the rule after Elchibey's leaving the capital to his home town Keleki, and secured the legitimacy of his rule through a referendum which showed no trust to Elchibey. His term in the office between 1993 and 2003 had four major achievements: a cease-fire between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 1994; signing of agreement of Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan main export pipeline, suppression of ethno-national upheavals and elimination of any alternative power rivalries. Particularly in the early years of his rule, re-consolidation of one-man rule was both legitimate and legitimated by the old cadres. Propaganda mechanism through state-sponsored media functioned quite well with the visual and very frequent presence of the president 'taking care of country's problems' which continuously discredited Elchibey's government and his staff. Aliyev's rule was then marked by stability and security, strengthening of consolidation of state-building, new institution-building and introduction of some patterns of liberalization particularly in the fields of freedom of association and expression. Although the implementation of free and fair elections had serious problems in 1995 and 2000 parliamentary elections and 1998 and 2003 presidential elections,¹⁰ opposition could still find channels for the expression of their criticism and discontent. Although Colored Revolutions of Georgia and Ukraine along with illness of Heydar Aliyev in 2002-2003, raised hopes among

⁹ Shireen T. Hunter, "Azerbaijan: Searching for New Neighbors" in I. Bremmer, R. Taras. (eds.), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 450; Tadeusz Swietochowski, "Azerbaijan: Perspectives from the Crossroads", *Central Asian Survey*, 18(4), 1999, pp. 419-434.

¹⁰ See the elections reports prepared by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), <http://www.osce.org/odihr-elections/14352.htm>, accessed on 15 December 2009.

opposition about the possibility of peaceful regime change and potential victory in 2003 presidential elections, lack of apparent international support and demonstrated intent for unification by the opposition resulted in the election of Ilham Aliyev as president. The failure of electoral politics therefore confirms the assumption that the “democratization starts with free and fair elections”¹¹ and the implementation of regular elections by itself does not guarantee democratic regime change.

The integrity of the Azerbaijani ruling elite resists challenge and it usually shows a monolithic image with no internal criticism and disputes. Moreover, reflections of clan-based regional identities can be easily found in Azerbaijani politics. The dominance of clans and regionalism inherited from the Soviet rule was reproduced and strengthened in the post-Soviet period particularly in the formation of in the administrative cadres. This is done by providing cadres with power and authority along with privileges that they could enjoy attachments to the clientele. Loyalty to one-group overrides any other alternative formations. This pattern both prevents the implementation of democratic principles and poses challenges to the formation of a consolidated nationhood.

After President Aliyev’s death, his son Ilham Aliyev replaced him and was supported by old clientele, regional networks, existing state cadres and a functioning system. He successfully managed to unify his image of a promising young leader, familiar to the Western culture with the rule of old *nomenklatura*. He was supported and protected by already existing networks of power and promoted as the only person who could replace Heydar Aliyev. The debates over the establishment of a new type of monarchical rule has dominated both Western and local media only for a couple of months.

To what extent the rule of Ilham Aliyev was different from his father’s is debatable. It should be noted that the son Aliyev inherited a very well functioning system of governance and power ministries remained unchanged. In terms of government-opposition relations, Ilham Aliyev’s rule presents a modified form of his father’s way of dealing with the opposition. Unlike Heydar Aliyev’s period however, opposition was prevented from the channels where they could express and spread their views including freedom of association and expression. Lively atmosphere of debates and discussions of the years of 1998-2003, in the visual and printed media on matters related to political transformation almost disappeared. Moreover, loyalty to the president has been defined and interpreted in different ways. Ilham Aliyev does not entirely possess the cult of personality as his father did. One can therefore witness a re-definition of loyalty. Since Heydar Aliyev is no longer alive, he is no more a direct source in defining loyalty. Yet he successfully managed to secure and in a way strengthen the existing functioning of the system. Loyalty is now defined on the basis of material gains and pragmatism rather than emotional and personal attachment to the president. There is no challenge to Ilham Aliyev’s rule, neither within nor outside the government. The constitutional amendments of March 2009, four months after the 2008 presidential elections, open the way to a

¹¹ Karen Dawisha, “Democratization and Political Participation: Research Concepts and Methodologies” Dawisha, and Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*.

life-long presidency for incumbent presidents. Moreover, the oil revenues resulted in an economic boom in the country. This led to the increase of salaries of the state officials, opening up of new work places and construction of new buildings, renovation of the old ones particularly in the capital, railways, sports complexes and touristic enterprises in the country side. Although the equal distribution of wealth is yet to be secured, İlham Aliyev's regime at least provided new professionals with new job opportunities.

As for the opposition, Azerbaijani opposition leaders predominantly consist of those who were part of the People's Front Government. Old Frontists with their political parties became the main opposition to the Aliyev's regime. The period between 1993 and 1998 can be characterized as the construction and institutionalization of the opposition politics through establishment and/or strengthening of political parties. In other words it was also a learning process for the independence movement elite of how to be in opposition. Although numerous attempts were initiated to unify the opposition parties, they consistently suffered to present a coherent entity uniting all forces. Power rivalries within the opposition mainly originated from the issue of who the unifying leader would be. Not only were the anti-democratic practices exercised during election periods but also absence of a credible alternative resulted in the cyclical failures of opposition in all elections. They are still unable to present a meaningful and functioning bloc which decreases their chances to win seats in the upcoming 2010 Parliamentary elections.

Multi-party system in Azerbaijan was formed along the dividing lines between government and opposition. The sources of its formation date back to the PFA. Most of the current opposition leaders were part of the Front, namely İsa Gamber of Musavat Party, Ali Kerimli of the Azerbaijan People's Front Party, Etibar Memmedov of the Azerbaijan National Independence Party. There are also former members of Heydar Aliyev's administration who later joined in the ranks of the opposition. Lale Shevket was a former aide of the President Heydar Aliyev; Eldar Namazov, the former state secretary formed a Public Forum in the Name of Azerbaijan. A new recent bloc of young political activities who do not desire to be in the ranks of opposition was formed under the name of Republican Alternative (REAL). They all have an audience of their own. Most of them either lack regional and/or local branches or are not strong enough in the periphery. A comparative review of their party programmes reveals very small differences among the political parties. They can only be distinguished by their respective leaders. Common to all opposition parties is the criticism of the Aliyev's governments. Major themes of criticism are the anti-democratic practices exercised by the government, oppression over opposition, clientelism and regionalism, corruption and bribery. For the ruling elite, on the other hand, Azerbaijani opposition is associated with the chaotic and unstable years of independence. They are considered as destructive, lacking mass support and real power basis.

When we look at the peculiarities of electoral politics in Azerbaijan, one can witness the rise of political activism in the pre-election periods as well as the tension between government and opposition. There is a constant tendency among the opposition political parties to unite under the umbrella organizations or form the

electoral blocs. The aim of such unification is to unite the forces against the regime, collaborate in order to achieve realization of free and fair elections. These periods were also marked by a series of demonstrations, rallies and mass meetings. However, opposition often failed to achieve such unification until 2005 Parliamentary elections due to leadership debates, lack of agreement on single candidate for the presidency or a common list of candidates for parliamentary elections. Each electoral defeat resulted in disappointment, decline in the oppositional activities and dispersion. The whole process repeats itself as a vicious cycle. Unlike the opposition, government followed a path of solid unification either around the national leader, Heydar Aliyev, or his son. Internal debates are rarely reflected in the public opinion and no criticism against the regime is expressed. Right to complain and criticize is only awarded to the president himself by the ruling elite.

What is also remarkable in each election is the degree of the involvement and interest by international actors. One can witness the internationalization of democratization process which is widely propagated by the opposition. Opposition attempted to make local struggles internationalized by encountering Western observers, representatives of international organizations particularly OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe, foreign countries particularly the USA and trying to make them more involved in the processes. They have intensified their visits to foreign countries, given interviews to international media in order to represent opposition's views in the international platform, to create a public opinion, to attract attention of the ongoing processes in Azerbaijan and demand international support. However this has proved to be an uneasy relationship since the opposition is often disappointed with the Western reaction in the post-election periods.

Political Elite and Leadership

The years between 1993 and 1998 can be characterized as a period marked by a power struggle between the government and the opposition. Both groups defined themselves in relation to and in opposition to each other. This dynamic was defined by the presence of opposing camps disagreeing on all issues related to the political transformation. In the eyes of the government elite, the opposition can be best characterized as destructive and far from being constructive towards all actions initiated by the government. The opposition considered the government illegitimate, corrupt and unaccountable and characterized it as a mere continuity of the Soviet leadership and even a monarchical rule after the Ilham Aliyev's replacement of his father.

The ruling elite that dominated the period between 1993 and 1998 consisted of the loyal cadres and *protégés* of Heydar Aliyev. These cadres showed a particular effort and support upon his return to active politics. The old, existing clientelism, the presence of regional networks and the reminiscence of his successful years in Azerbaijan and in the Soviet administration facilitated his return not only as a national leader but also as a "savior" during "hard times of his country". Heydar Aliyev was an extremely important high-ranking Soviet political figure, having been the first secretary of the Commu-

nist Party of Azerbaijan (1969-1982) who later served as a member of the Politburo (1982-87) until Mikhail Gorbachev dismissed him from the office. He spent two years (1991-1993) at Nakhchivan, in a less active but more influential position in Azerbaijani politics at the time. The enduring power of the Nakhchivan clientele strengthened by the loyalty ties and dominance of regionalism and clientelism provided him with strong support and re-consolidated his already existing prestige. The cult of personality easily gained popularity and strengthened his term in office since he had the characteristics required to be a “good” statesman, i.e. a charismatic and strong leader who had an “imense and unchallenged experience in state affairs”.

The Azerbaijani opposition, on the other hand consisted of the active participants of the PFA. They were mostly academics, journalists and young nationalist. They were quite successful in mobilizing the masses to pave the way in organizing popular discontent provoked by nationalist sentiments. The establishment of the People’s Front paved the way for the formation of new counter-elite. Although they had been born and brought up during the Soviet period, they were marked by their anti-communist and nationalist orientations. Unlike Aliyev’s inner circle the Front elite showed a strong diversity even in the early years of independence, something that would be reproduced throughout the post-independence period. A remarkable figure of the Front but also of the Azerbaijani opposition after the overthrow of the People’s Front Government was Ebulföz Elçibey. Elçibey, before becoming the leader of the PFA, was a well-known dissident of the Soviet period propagating for the independence of Azerbaijan and someone who voiced nationalist ideas when he was a lecturer at the university and researcher at the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences. He was an intellectual who drew a vision of a “would-be” Azerbaijan and of an ideological framework of the People’s Front as well as a new discourse of nation and state-building of post-Soviet Azerbaijan. In his term in office, he suffered from inexperience in state affairs; from a shortage of new administrative and bureaucratic staff to replace the old cadres, and of a lack of loyalty on part of the Soviet bureaucratic structures. His administration also suffered from the ongoing war in Nagorno-Karabagh and the flow of refugees and internally displaced people; a severe economic crisis, instabilities and challenges caused by the awakened and provoked ethnic minorities, namely Lezgins and Talishs in the country. More importantly perhaps, loyalty to Elçibey and his legitimacy were not strong enough to consolidate his rule compared to the pre-existing loyalties of clientelism and regionalism which were and are still present in Azerbaijani politics. Moreover, his image and style as a president was not quite in accordance with the old Soviet leaders and showed that he was unable to meet the standards of a strong leader image of the Soviet times, a leader who had the full control of the state affairs. His rather timid and naïve attitude made the citizens question his ability and capacity to deal with the problems during the transition period. Yet, despite all these shortcomings, he remained as the only unifying figure for the opposition despite the multiple reservations of the other leading opposition figures vis-à-vis his leadership. His death in 2000 after a terminal illness fostered diversification tendencies within the opposition and, since, Azerbaijani opposition has been unable to unify.

The decreasing power of the opposition and increasing level of anti-democratic practices severely weakened the opposition. Lively and, to some extent competitive atmospheres during election periods between 1995-2003 was replaced by the hopelessness that the opposition would lose its most active adherents. The opposition but also the public is quite disappointed with itself due to continual defeats because of the anti-democratic practices during elections. It was obvious that Ilham Aliyev was relying on the legitimacy and popularity of his father, both among the public and administration. He has not only inherited the presidency from his father, but also the well-functioning inner-movements of a system of governance fostered by strong regional ties and clientelistic networks, all managed by best representatives of the old *nomenklatura* who had long experience in state administration. Ilham Aliyev was the heir and therefore was considered and propagated as the 'best representative and follower of Aliyev's policies' by the representatives of the government. This legitimacy had also been supported by his personal qualifications because of his successful administration in the Azerbaijan State Oil Company (SOCAR), his young age and professional background, and his ability to speak in a number of foreign languages. He was then the best student of the Heydar Aliyev's *école*. Moreover, there was no room for any other alternative other than his candidacy within the ruling New Azerbaijan Party.

When the transfer of power from father to son is examined, it can be argued that the smooth transition was facilitated by a coalition of new professionals and old administrators retained to ensure representativeness and continuity. It should be noted that in this coalition the legitimacy and the necessity of the old guard were not questioned. Moreover, continuity has also been provided by young and devoted adherents to the son. The Azerbaijani opposition, on the other hand, was not able to renew itself through unification or by the emergence of new alternative leadership within the political parties. The fact that they have been in opposition since 1993 made them lose their credibility. Moreover, the governmental propaganda machine targeted the opposition quite frequently, with the state television reminding the people about the opposition's failures when they were in power between 1992 and 1993, describing the instability and chaotic days of their rule. They are not only becoming old but also have not changed their discourse. It is true that they were not provided with equal opportunity structures in the election periods; yet their inability to become united resulted in political apathy among the masses. Although they have been in opposition for more than 15 years, they were never sure about their real support base due to the lack of free and fair elections. As of 2010 they are even faced with losing their core and most active supporters. In fact, the dichotomy between the government and the opposition that has dominated the power struggle between the years 1993 and 2003 is no longer valid since the opposition is experiencing its weakest period since independence. The upcoming parliamentary elections in 2010 would probably result in increasing activism of the opposition like in previous election periods. However, the expected outcome seems to be inevitable unless there would be exceptional circumstances.

Society Side of Democratization-Civil Society in Azerbaijan

Post-Soviet civil societies share a lot of common traits.¹² The formation of civil society in the region is not similar to the Western experience where civil society is defined as "... the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared values".¹³ Although this definition is not applicable to the post-Soviet context, there are an increasing number of civil societal actors in the region whose activities and functions in the post-Soviet transition should be evaluated in order to highlight the societal facet of democratization.

Earlier writings on the post-Soviet transition focused on the nature of nationalist independence movements and on their impact in shaping regime change.¹⁴ Later studies looked at the nature of the regime change under representatives of the old regime and both achievements and shortcomings were highlighted.¹⁵ The analysis of the society's involvement came only when Steven Fish introduced the notion of "movement society"¹⁶ and Graeme Gill highlighted the societal element of democratization.¹⁷ Fish underlines the fact that post-Soviet civil societies are not of a Western type yet there is a sphere of social organizations with its own features largely informed by the peculiarities of post-Soviet transition. Gill points out that the study of the post-Soviet democratization should also highlight the changes initiated at the society level along with the role of elite choices. Recent studies draw attention to the similarities found in the post-Soviet civil societies.¹⁸ What is mainly referred to as a civil society in the post-soviet space is the sphere of social organizations performing activities in their respective fields. They are mainly run by professionals or a professionalized

¹² For a detailed discussion on post-Soviet civil societies, see Marc .M. Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2003; Andreas Umland , *Post-Soviet Civil Society: Democratization in Russia and the Baltic States*, London, Routledge, 2006. For a discussion of civil society in the Southern Caucasus see, Ayça Ergun, "Democratization from Below: The Role of Civil Society in Azerbaijan"; Armine Ishkhanian, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia*, London, Routledge, 2008; Laurence Broers, "After the 'Revolution': Civil Society and the Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in Georgia" *Central Asian Survey*, 24 (3), 2005, pp. 333-350.

¹³ Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society, Towards Democratic Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy*, 5 (3), 1994, p. 5.

¹⁴ See for example, G. Smith (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London:, Longman, 1996; G. Smith et al, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

¹⁵ Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, (eds), *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

¹⁶ See Steven M. Fish , *Democracy From Scratch*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1995.

¹⁷ Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000.

¹⁸ See Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*; Umland, *Post-Soviet Civil Society*.

elite in the civil society business.¹⁹ In other words, civil societal activity is handled by skillful professionals.

Their entry into the civil societal activity has been facilitated by their knowledge in English, something which provided them with access to the international donor organizations.²⁰ Stimulated by their desire “to do something for the well being of citizens” and “to contribute to the increase of representativeness”, they created and formed civil society organizations. Still, they are not true grassroots organizations supported by membership. Rather, civil societal activity has been conducted by the efforts of a group of people.

The formation of civil society in Azerbaijan dates back to early years of independence.²¹ Hacızade also points out that the foundation of civil society in the pre-independence period was stimulated by the establishment of the PFA when local organizations independent from the Communist Party wanted to be united with the People’s Front.²² As of 2010, there are 2483 of registered NGOs in Azerbaijan.²³ Particularly after Heydar Aliyev’s coming to power, opposition-minded activists created a space for themselves where they could express their discontent. These individuals were either excluded from holding official positions or could not subsist due to their low salaries. Their organizations became both a place where they expressed their discontent about the regime and a place to make a living. Due to the lack of membership basis as in other examples of post-Soviet civil societies, one can hardly talk about activism but rather individual and/or small group efforts to contribute to the development of civil society. The size of the organizations led them to work predominantly on a project basis where they conducted research and produced reports to the donor organizations. Depending on the amount provided through funding, they also publish leaflets, booklets and handbooks and organize a seminar whose scope have been and is quite limited. The presence of civil society organizations outside the capital cities is extremely weak. Civil society activity in the periphery or in the regions is either initiated as the extension of the activities located in capital cities or as small seed-money provided by donor organizations in order to make civil society flourish in the regions.

¹⁹ The reason why I refer to civil society activity to as ‘business’, is that organizations themselves constitute a work place of most of the activists.

²⁰ Başak Çalı and Ayça Ergun, “Global Governance and Domestic Politics: Fragmented Visions”, Markus Lederer and Philipp S. Muller (eds.), *Criticizing Global Governance*, Palgrave Macmillan, (2005), pp.161-177; Anna Matveeva “Exporting Civil Society The Post-Communist Experience”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55 (2), (2008), pp. 3-13; Ishkanian, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia*, pp. 130-153; Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway, (eds.), *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Carnegie, 2000

²¹ For a detailed discussion of Azerbaijani civil society see Ergun, “Democratization from Below: The Role of Civil Society in Azerbaijan”

²² Talk by Hikmet Hacızade, in the conference titled “Role of Civil Society in Democratic Development in Azerbaijan and Turkey” organized by the National and International Strategic Studies Center, 27.2.2010, Baku

²³ *Yeni Musavat*, 17.02.2010.

Between 1993 and 2003, the most active organizations can be found in the spheres of human rights protection, democracy promotion, electoral support and women's rights. Journalists' associations and youth organizations also increased in number. Since 2003, civil societal actors are less visible and less active. This can be explained by the increasing repression of these groups by government, by decreasing levels of political activism and a never entirely fulfilled mission of representativeness by the civil societal actors. The representatives of civil society made a career in the civil society business and remained as professionals rather than activists. Moreover, the ordinary citizens do not show a particular concern and interest in voluntary participation due to the fact that the potential gains to be achieved remain unknown. Although project-based work does not diminish the value of civil societal activity, it definitely creates questions regarding representativeness. Besides reporting to international organizations and foreign embassies, civil society's perspective on the situation in their country and conducting activities, their impact on domestic change remains limited. Nevertheless one should also note that the profile of civil society activists in Azerbaijan is also changing. A younger generation has started to establish their own organizations and widely participate in the civil society activities. Collaboration exists among early and recent activists. The main difference can be found in their attitudes towards the Azerbaijani government. Although younger generation provides their critical insights, they also have the tendency to cooperate with the government or at least they do not rule out the possibilities of working with the government officials.

Interaction with international donor organizations, participation in conferences, workshops and trainings abroad and increased experience in "research and reporting" roles render the representatives of local civil society organizations professionalized and leads to the formation of an NGO elite.²⁴ This implies that well-connected organizations whose representatives are known by the international donor community are not only provided with the status of *the* representatives of civil society but also experts on matters related to their country's political, economic and social transformation. The same people are continuously invited to international venues and their consolidated visibility ensures invitation to future conferences and inclusion in other grant schemes.²⁵

The attitude of the ruling elite towards local civil societal actors is dubious. They neither acknowledge the work of civil society organizations nor find their activities legitimate. The social organizations of the Soviet period were either in the form of professional organizations, trade unions or philanthropic organizations that were funded by the Communist Party. They were legal organizations that were not only loyal to the Party but also served for the propagation of the Party's policies and in strengthening the legitimacy of the Soviet rule. This pre-existing notion of civil society has made existing governments suspicious about the current activities of civil society actors not only because they are independent but also because they are critical to the government. However, since the presence of civil society is an integral part of the international discourse on democracy promotion, this has led the ruling

²⁴ Çalı and Ergun, "Global Governance and Domestic Politics: Fragmented Visions"

²⁵ Ibid.

elite to encourage the establishment of pro-governmental organizations in cases where they found the other organizations' activities threatening both *vis-à-vis* internal stability and their image abroad. One should also add that the Azerbaijani government improved its capacity in promoting civil society sector through new institution-building. The Council of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations (*Prezidentin Yanında GHTlere Dövlət Desteği Şurası*) was established in the presidential apparatus. Although this has been criticized by some of the NGOs as favoring only pro-governmental organizations, it should be considered as a remarkable achievement of the Azerbaijani government to integrate civil society to institutionalization and state-building. Noting the limited or nonexistent pressure on the part of civil society towards government, it can be argued that the potentials by civil society to contribute to regime change are very limited. Yet the fact that they are well experienced in effectuating civil society work means that their contribution would be very valuable in cases where efforts towards democratization can be in fact be promoted.

Conclusion

The record in democratization of Azerbaijan's ruling elite is far from convincing for further democratic consolidation. Azerbaijan's oil-led economic development may lead to a more prosperous country with equal distribution of resources in the hands of pro-democratic ruling cadres. As of 2010, there is potentially an alternative group, namely the young, Western educated professionals who do not have a so-called Soviet background but they have familiarity and/or acquaintances with features of modern democracies. Their perceptions about the Soviet past were informed by the old generation, and memories about the early years of independence are mainly shaped by the interpretations presented by the ruling elite. In their minds, the existing opposition is associated with a time of instability which led to chaos and insecurity caused by the PFA's rule, and its failures and diversification after each election. This new breed is not necessarily active in politics nor does it engage in party politics. However, this group promises that generational change may lead to alternative voices and interest representation, yet it requires opportunity structures to initiate and/or consolidate patterns of change.

The power struggle between the government and the opposition, a struggle that lasted more than ten years during the post-Soviet period, is no longer a viable because of the rapidly decreasing power of the Azerbaijani opposition. To what extent the opposition would be or could be able to lead democratic transition is yet under question. After almost twenty years of independence, Azerbaijan's government cannot be characterized as a modified form of authoritarianism and semi-authoritarianism. Rather, it is a hybrid regime representing a system that one would have much trouble considering as a catalyst for a democratization paradigm. Nevertheless, the Azerbaijani society with its multi-party system and numerous civil society organizations still offer a promise for a democratic change if this process would also be facilitated by the ruling elite.

Bibliography

- Alieva, Leila, "Azerbaijan's Frustrating Elections", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.17, No 2, 2006, p. 147-161.
- Altstadt, Audrey L. "Azerbaijan's Struggle Toward Democracy", in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Altstadt, Audrey L. "Azerbaijan and Aliyev A Long History and An Uncertain Future", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 58, No 5, 2003, p. 3-13.
- Beissinger, Mark R. *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Broers, Laurence, "After the 'Revolution': Civil Society and the Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in Georgia" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No 3, 2005, p. 333-350.
- Carother, Thomas and Marina Ottaway, (eds.), *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Washington, Carnegie, 2000.
- Çalı, Başak and Ayça Ergun, "Global Governance and Domestic Politics: Fragmented Visions", Markus Lederer and Philipp S. Muller (eds.), *Criticizing Global Governance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p.161-177.
- Dawisha, Karen and Bruce Parrott, (eds), *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Dawisha, Karen, "Democratization and Political Participation: Research Concepts and Methodologies" in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Diamond, Larry, "Rethinking Civil Society, Towards Democratic Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.5, No 3, 1994.
- Ergun, Ayça, "Democratization from Below: The Role of Civil Society in Azerbaijan" , Ayşe Ayata, Ayça Ergun and Işıl Çelimli (eds.), *Black Sea Politics: Political Culture and Civil Society in an Unstable Region*, London, IB Tauris, 2005, p.103-120.
- Fish, Steven M. *Democracy from Scratch*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Gahramanova, Aytan, "Internal and External Factors in the Democratization of Azerbaijan", *Democratization*, Vol. 16, No 4, 2009, p. 777-803.
- Gill, Graeme *The Dynamics of Democratization Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Hacızade, Hikmet, unpublished talk, in the conference titled "Role of Civil Society in Democratic Development in Azerbaijan and Turkey" organized by the National and International Strategic Studies Center, 27 February 2010, Baku-Azerbaijan.
- Howard, Marc M. *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Hunter, Shireen T. "Azerbaijan: Searching for New Neighbors" in I. Bremmer, R. Taras. (eds.), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Ishkanian, Armine, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia*, London, Routledge, 2008.
- Matveeva, Anna, "Exporting Civil Society The Post-Communist Experience", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 55, No 2, 2008, p. 3-13.
- O'Donnell, G., P.C. Schmitter, L. Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, Maryland, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

- Panossian, Razmik "The Irony of Nagorno-Karabakh: Formal Institutions versus Informal Politics", *Regional & Federal Studies*, Vol. 11, No 3, 2001, p. 143-164.
- Rasizade, Alec, "Azerbaijan After Heydar Aliev", *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 32, No 1, 2004, p. 137-164.
- Smith, G. (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London, Longman, 1996.
- Smith, G. et al, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Stefes, Christoph H. *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, New York, Palgrave, 2006.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor "The Revenge of the Past: Socialism and Ethnic Conflict in Transcaucasia", *New Left Review*, No 184, 1990, p. 5-37.
- Swietochowski, Tadeusz, "Azerbaijan: Perspectives from the Crossroads", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.18, No 4, 1999, p. 419-434.
- Umland, Andreas, *Post-Soviet Civil Society: Democratization in Russia and the Baltic States*, London, Routledge, 2006.
- Valiyev, Anar M. "Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan A Failed Revolution", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No 3, 2006, p.17-35.