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### Who Gains from the “No War No Peace” Situation? A Critical Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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## **Who Gains from the “No War No Peace” Situation? A Critical Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict**

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*Since the outbreak of the conflict in the second half of the 1980s, Nagorno-Karabakh has been represented from two perspectives of ethnic incompatibility, which justifies ethnic cleansing by matching the state borders with ethnic ones, and the Great Game narrative, which examines the conflict as part of the global power struggle in the Eurasian continent by disregarding societies and undemocratic regimes in the region. However, time has revealed that these perspectives neither appreciate the internal conditions of the conflict nor offer a way out of the current impasse. By criticising the ‘commonsense’ and ‘realness’ of these representations, this study argues that analysing who gains from the current status quo will offer solutions for a sustainable peace in the region. As long as undemocratic regimes of Azerbaijan and Armenia are satisfied with the status quo and outside powers maximise their interests, the ‘no war no peace’ situation will not be challenged. A way out is only possible by including the people, who are actually on the losing side, in the decision-making and peace-making process.*

### INTRODUCTION

The disintegration of the Soviet Union resulted in the collapse of the bipolar world order and the dominant Cold War discourse in the field of International Relations. After World War II, the International Relations as a “science against crises” was separated from the social and human reality and instead of analysing complex possibilities, the conflicts were studied in an

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extremely positivist and deterministic way to give precise predictions about them.<sup>1</sup> Although scholars were playing with scenarios and game theories about the possible outcomes of the bipolar struggle, there was little debate in the field about social and economic transformations in the 1980s, which ended the Cold War. Ken Booth's question is striking in this context: "If academic international relations theory could not adequately describe, explain or predict such a turning point in history, should it not be discarded as another of the failed projects buried by the Wall?"<sup>2</sup> Against this criticism, many scholars argued in the realist camp that social and political changes in the last two decades did not discredit realism and that the end of the Cold War is "merely a single data point."<sup>3</sup> According to the realist thinking, if the bipolar balance of power ended and one of the global powers disappeared from the map, the logical outcome of this situation would be a competition and power struggle between global and regional actors to fill the power vacuum.

In this chaotic environment, new independent states emerged in the post-Soviet space together with disastrous wars. In December 1991, when the disintegration of the Soviet Union was officially declared, there were 164 ethno-territorial conflicts within its territory. Only two of twenty-four neighbouring pairs of former Soviet republics did not have a boundary conflict: Lithuania/Latvia and Belarus/Russia.<sup>4</sup> The Caucasus, linguistically and culturally the most diverse region of the Soviet Union, harboured almost one-third of these ethnic conflicts, and four of them incited wars in Chechnya, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Two ways of thinking dominated the studies that analysed the region during the last decades. First, the causes of these conflicts are explained in the 'ancient-hatred' paradigm as deep-rooted historical enmities between religious and ethnic groups that caused violence and wars. According to this logic, the end of the authoritarian rule of the Soviet Union, which controlled these groups in the last seven decades, allowed the long-suppressed animosities to resurface.<sup>5</sup> By representing post-Soviet conflicts in primordial ways as an outcome of substantial and fixed ethnic identities, the followers of this approach adopted the vocabulary of "ethnopolitical entrepreneurs," whose objective was to mobilise members of their group along the ethnic lines.<sup>6</sup> Second, 'self explanatory' geopolitical concepts – Heartland and Rimland – were taken from dusty shelves and started to be used to analyse these conflicts as products of permanent geopolitical clashes. According to this thinking, the power struggle among global and regional actors dominates the Caucasus, a region that is in the middle of 75 percent of the world's energy resources located in the Middle East and the former Soviet Union and enmeshed with ethnic revivalism and religious fundamentalism. Conflicts in the region have been illustrated as a part of the Great Game<sup>7</sup> for world domination played on the "Grand Chess Board,"<sup>8</sup> namely Eurasia, and the conflicting parties have been regarded as pawns of regional and global powers.

This article adopts a critical approach that rejects both one-dimensional ‘ancient hatred’ paradigm and grand geopolitical schemes.<sup>9</sup> By rejecting the essentialisation of ethnicity as the commonsense explanation of ethnicised conflicts, it aims to unmask patronage networks, clan interests, black market profiteering and warlordism that played an important role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. According to Gearóid Ó Tuathail, critical geopolitics focuses on the “representational practices of national security intellectuals” that “generate particular ‘scripts’ in international politics concerning places, peoples and issues. Such ‘scripts’ then become part of the means by which hegemony is exercised in the international system.”<sup>10</sup> In line with this argument, this study also criticises the Great Game narrative and its representations as ‘real’ that excludes any critical approach to its rationale as ideological, fictional or nonsense. Although it is convenient for academics to explain complicated ethnic conflicts in the above-mentioned narrative as the consequence of the “eternal geographic realities,” by doing so they depoliticised “certain political processes by representing them as inevitable and eternal processes of nature.”<sup>11</sup> By questioning these dominant representations and “privileged constructions” of the Caucasus region and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in particular, this article seeks to “denaturalize” and reveal the “constructedness” of the commonsense understandings about the conflict.<sup>12</sup>

There are three crucial factors in understanding and analysing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: societies struggling with historical tragedies and culturally produced insecurities, social transformations with and against the authoritarian regimes, and economies under blockades that generate illegal profit networks in the context of the Soviet legacy. Although external actors play an important role in the region, none of them has a hegemonic status. Competition among them provides plenty of room to maneuver for the ruling elites of the Caucasian states to defend their self-interests. Rather than being pawns in the global energy game as the ‘Great Gamers’ would have us believe, these elites play external actors against each other to maximise their profits. In domestic politics, ruling elites of Azerbaijan and Armenia have had to construct new meanings of nation and national identity as the collapse of Soviet social-political culture created a dislocation of the discourse. Both sides used the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the nation-state building process to demarcate the physical boundaries as well as the social ones between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Simultaneously ruling elites exploit the conflict to legitimise their rule in the eyes of their citizens and to promulgate their undemocratic regimes by constructing the representations of danger and insecurities. As “identifying danger and providing security” is under the monopoly of the state, which is dominated by ruling elites, they destroy any opposition movement or any competing representation by depicting it as a threat to ‘national security’.<sup>13</sup>

This article argues that neither the conflicting parties nor the regional and global actors feel compelled to challenge the status quo and find a

peaceful solution for the conflict. In the past decade, all these players have developed methods and strategies to benefit from the deadlock. The question of 'who gains from the current status quo' is the focal point of this article. Analysing this question contributes to our understanding why the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not yet been resolved and why negotiations behind closed doors between state leaders is not the sole panacea for a peaceful solution. The priority of the political leaders in the region is a continuation of their rule instead of the creation of a democratic environment and development of civil society. It is not likely that they will risk their status for a solution that requires compromise from both sides. Additionally, there are enough powerful groups on all sides that are strong enough to maintain the status quo. For the outside actors, changing the status quo would abandon their existing geopolitical and economic plans, and the current 'no war no peace' situation presents them with opportunities to intervene and impose their strategies on the region. As the current stalemate does not threaten the international security given the fact that fighting stopped in 1994, the international community is not worried about the future of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. However, the cost of the status quo is very high for both of the societies living under blockades and authoritarian regimes with over one million refugees and internally displaced persons. They are clearly on the losing side, and as long as they will not be able to influence the decision-making process in a free and democratic environment, it will be impossible to challenge the status quo for a peaceful solution in Nagorno-Karabakh.

### IS IT ALL ABOUT THE GREAT GAME?

After World War II, US policy makers such as George Kennan, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski based their policies on the containment of the Soviet Union, hegemonic stability and domino theory. Nicholas Spykman and Halford Mackinder were the forefathers of the containment policy against the central power in Eurasia. They identified permanent geopolitical oppositions – landpower vs. seapower, Heartland vs. Rimland – as determining factors in international relations. Spykman deterministically stated that "geography does not argue. It simply is."<sup>14</sup> Although the Cold War order and rationale collapsed with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, academic interest in Mackinder's and Spykman's geopolitical concepts resurfaced and were referred to in most of the texts written by scholars and journalists working on the post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>15</sup> This region, located in the pivot of the Heartland, they argue, became a major source of conflict between great powers with its vast resources of oil and gas, which attracted the Western energy companies who employed Kissinger and Brzezinski and other Cold War warriors as their advisors to

realise their billion dollar projects. Most of the studies about the region published in the 1990s analysed the conflicts and problems through the prism of energy projects by reducing them to an outcome of the competition over oil and gas pipelines. While Mackinder's nightmare was the increasing networks of railways that would allow landpower in the centre of Eurasia to trump seapower, Britain and US, in the post-Soviet period this was replaced by the mania about pipeline projects, which connect the region to the West. The oil and gas pipelines were represented as "umbilical cords" for the industrialised countries in the West. The logical outcome of this analogy is that if the projects are not realised, the West will be cut off from its lifelines.<sup>16</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Adviser of the US and Cold War strategist who became a consultant of the BP/Amoco during the Clinton era,<sup>17</sup> described Azerbaijan as "the vitally important 'cork' controlling access to the 'bottle' that contains the riches of the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia."<sup>18</sup> These agenda-based realist approaches are interested in problem solving to maximise interests and securities of states.<sup>19</sup> In this way, they legitimise social and political power relationships and become part of the problems instead of solving them.

Another legacy of Cold War thinking is to draw parallels between international relations and games. Cold War strategists often represented US foreign policy by analogies and metaphors of games such as billiards, poker, chess and dominos. Diplomatic crises, wars and peace negotiations were simplified as an attack or a turn in a game to "depoliticize global affairs and naturalize the violence of the state."<sup>20</sup> In the context of the Caucasus, this approach was embodied in the much promoted and extensively used new Great Game to portray the power struggle over oil and gas resources of the region in addition to ethnic and religious problems.<sup>21</sup> According to this reasoning, today's Great Game between regional actors – mainly Turkey and Iran – and global powers – the US, the European Union, China and Russia – is different in degree but not in kind from the imperial struggle between Russian and British Empire over the control of Central Asia in the nineteenth century. As the first Great Game ended with the Russian control of Central Asia and the Caucasus in the early 1920s, the new one started with the collapse of the Soviet rule, which led to a 'power vacuum' in the region. As an outcome of the "Newtonian science of international relations" and the positivist epistemology of security studies, the studies about the region frequently used idioms of physics, the emergence of a power vacuum and balances among the regional actors, to strengthen their arguments.<sup>22</sup> By doing so, to borrow their vocabulary, they missed the tectonic shifts in the social world.

The most significant deficiency of the Great Game narrative is that the social and human reality is missing in their analyses. They claim to produce simple explanations for the conflicts in the region by downplaying the role and influence of societies over which the game is played. The studies of the

Great Game have not addressed the challenging nation-building process, social and economic transformation, lack of democracy and transparent economy, ethnic diversity and other internal sources of instability. Rather, their intellectual concern is for “order and stability,” which is a legacy of Americanised discipline of international relations during the Cold War.<sup>23</sup> Brzezinski’s comments are striking from this perspective. He completely disregards the influence of societies in his analysis, for according to him, the future of the Caucasus region “highly depends upon interaction among external players – major nations – which have special interests in the Caucasus. Specifically, I’m referring to Russia, Turkey, Iran, Europe and last but not least, the United States. How these countries interact in relationship to this region will be of enormous importance to the survival of these nations as independent states and to the well-being of the entire region.”<sup>24</sup>

Rudyard Kipling, the original architect of the Great Game narrative in the nineteenth century, sardonically argued that the Great Game will end when everyone is dead, not before.<sup>25</sup> Many scholars in line with Kipling’s statement claim that the Great Game is continuing in the twenty-first century in Central Asia and the Caucasus with different actors. They ignore societies that live under authoritarian regimes and do not have a say in their future as well as people in these societies who are on the losing side of ‘the game’. One of the main objectives of this article is to open a ‘dialogic’ space by rejecting the Great Game narrative, which legitimises the vicious circle of violence until everyone dies. Understanding this reality is crucial to reach a mutually acceptable and sustainable peace for the conflicts in the region, and it is only possible by obtaining the support of societies.

### NAGORNO-KARABAKH: AN ‘ETHNICISED’ CONFLICT

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the first full-blown and most complicated post-Soviet conflict, and in fact, it started three years before the disintegration of the Soviet Union when the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence from Azerbaijan to join Armenia.<sup>26</sup> The demonstrations to unite Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia started in 1987, when a petition, signed by over 75,000 Armenians, was submitted to Mikhail Gorbachev. These events inspired the Armenian members of the Nagorno-Karabakh Parliament to vote to unify the region with Armenia on 20 February 1988. This decision sparked violent attacks against minority populations in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and a large number of refugees left both countries. After the approval of the referendum for the creation of an independent state in December 1991, full-scale war started between the two sides. Within three years, Armenian forces occupied the entire territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding Azerbaijani districts to establish a buffer zone and a leverage to be used during the peace negotiations. The Bishkek

ceasefire agreement, signed in 1994, confirmed the Armenian military victory on the battlefield. Three years of full-scale fighting resulted in the reduction of social complexity by ethnically cleansing a significant number of Azeri and Armenian minorities in both of the countries. Today 14.5 percent of the Azerbaijani territory is still under Armenian occupation, and approximately 870,000 Azerbaijanis and 300,000 Armenians were forced to leave their homes since the beginning of the conflict in 1988.<sup>27</sup>

Ethnicity itself is an important factor in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; however, it is not appropriate to label it a primordial ethnic conflict. Simple arguments of ethnic incompatibility, ancient hatreds, and historical injustices are often used as driving forces for post-colonial and post-socialist conflicts in Cyprus, Kashmir, and Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, they are not able to explain how these societies had peacefully coexisted for decades in the same space and how the fellow citizens became suddenly objects of hatred and violence. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, political actors instrumentalised ethnicity as a useful tool to realise their political ambitions. Therefore, they not only politicised ethnicity, but also transformed it from “one of many crosscutting identities” to “the predominant political identity.”<sup>28</sup> ‘Ethnicised conflict’ is a better term to define the situation, where the breakdown of the seventy-year-old Soviet statehood with its well-established institutions and political system creates an opportunity for competing national elites, who mobilised societies by using threats and fears for obtaining power. Therefore, it is deceptive to put ancient hatred and ethnic incompatibility at the root that led to ethnic clashes then violence, followed by full-scale war and ethnic cleansing. On the contrary, as Ignatieff claimed, the state collapse, which created an unpredictable environment and “Hobbesian fear,” is followed by nationalist paranoia that “creates communities of fear, groups held together by the conviction that their security depends on sticking together,” and the outcome is total warfare: “People become ‘nationalistic’ when they are afraid; when the only answer to the question ‘Who will protect me now?’ becomes ‘my own people.’”<sup>29</sup>

There had been tensions and concerns especially among the Karabakh Armenians since 1923, when Soviet leadership created the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the territory of Azerbaijan. During the Soviet period, Karabakh Armenians made a number of unsuccessful political attempts to change the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1963, Khrushchev rejected a petition signed by 2,500 Karabakh Armenians about transferring the region into Armenia. Although around thirty border changes were allowed by Stalin and Khrushchev, the most significant of which consisted of transferring Crimea from Russia to Ukraine, all of them were a result of Communist Party intrigues and were in a top-down fashion rather than the outcome of nationalist demands. When bottom-up irredentist demands became a threat to the stability of the system, the Soviet state used its monopoly of violence brutally by repressing or deporting national groups.



Nevertheless, the ethnoterritorial Soviet federalism – with its institutions and codifications, local and federal parliaments, education in national languages, flags, and constitutions under the strict control of the central authorities in Moscow – accommodated the conflicting and competing interests between different nationalities. While “nations were to be seen but not heard,” nationality and national institutions were not empty forms or legal fictions; instead, they were the building blocks of the supposedly internationalist Soviet system.<sup>30</sup> However, during the second half of the 1980s, the first signals came about the weakening of this comprehensive structure and the end of the discourse of ‘friendship of the people’.

In the second half of the 1980s, Soviet economy moved from stagflation to deterioration as an outcome of reforms initiated by Gorbachev’s policy of perestroika. The living standards diminished significantly, and Soviet citizens, who were accustomed to the shortage of consumer and luxury goods, faced the short supply of food and other basic needs. The economic collapse engendered strikes and mass protestations against the central authorities. The same conditions were seen through ethnic lenses by minority populations in autonomous regions where a different ethnicity controlled centrally planned economy and distribution of limited resources in the centre of the republic. Therefore, minorities considered increasing disruptions in the distribution of resources, delays or failures of the investment projects in the 1980s, as a national discrimination. Disagreements between the central and regional authorities, which were neither new nor about ethnicity, were immediately branded as a national hostility within the emerging nationalist discourse of the political elites.<sup>31</sup> In addition to the above-mentioned factors that played an important role in most of the conflicts in the Soviet Union, the noteworthy difference in the standard of living between Armenia and Azerbaijan intensified the relations between Karabakh Armenians and Baku. Albeit the socioeconomic level of Nagorno-Karabakh was higher than the average of Azerbaijan, the living conditions in next-door Armenia were far better than Azerbaijan. Karabakh Armenians blamed the central authorities in Baku of deliberately neglecting the region. They believed that the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with wealthier Armenia would change their economic conditions significantly.<sup>32</sup>

The events during late 1987 and early 1988 in Nagorno-Karabakh revealed how the comprehensive Soviet statehood became dysfunctional and ceased to accommodate simple economic and legal problems in a multiethnic territory. In October 1987, an incident happened between the two communities about a simple socio-economic issue, a nomination of an Azeri Sovkhoz director to a predominantly Armenian village in Azerbaijan. When the Armenian villagers refused this decision, Azerbaijani security forces suppressed them by using force. When the news reached Yerevan, where ecological protests were held about the environmental problems, demonstrations turned into a nationalist atmosphere about Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>33</sup>

When the tensions were rising, two important developments aroused the hopes of Armenians to unify the region with Armenia. Heidar Aliyev, an ethnic Azerbaijani, the rising star of the Brezhnev era and the first Muslim member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in its history, was removed by Gorbachev from the ruling institution of the Soviet Union in October 1987. One month after Aliyev's disposal, senior economic advisor to Gorbachev, Abel Aghabegyan of Armenian descent signalled that Moscow would be more sympathetic to the Armenian demands on Nagorno-Karabakh.

With the optimism of these developments, Karabakh Armenian leadership adopted a new strategy called as "*politique du pire*" in French, which means "a politics of seeking the worst outcome in the short run so as to bolster their legitimacy or to improve their prospects in the longer run."<sup>34</sup> In February 1988, the local parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh decided to unify the region with Armenia. According to Koehler, a taboo was broken by this decision as the "powerless institution of a local Soviet had, like a zombie, come to life and dared to place a nationalist demand."<sup>35</sup> It was an unprecedented move in Soviet history and revealed how the political elites can use an institution, which was originally designed "national in form but socialist in content,"<sup>36</sup> effectively to legitimise the national objectives by bypassing federal and union centres, Baku and Moscow respectively. Just one week after the unification decision of the local parliament, riots broke out in Sumgait – an Azerbaijani industrial town near Baku founded mainly by Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia at the end of the 1940s and housed a new wave of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia – where twenty-six Armenians were killed. Most analyses about the violence in Sumgait reflect it as a primordial ethnic hatred and revenge. However, severe housing shortages, in a city where the population increased four times in the last thirty years, played an important role in the killings of Armenians to confiscate their properties. For Tishkov, "stereotypes about 'the fancy homes occupied by outsiders on our land'" were a critical feature of the violence in the Soviet Union and individual interests in seizing properties were successfully disguised under the label of inter-ethnic rivalries.<sup>37</sup> The situation was exacerbated by entrenched distrust in state media outlets, rumours, and "information failures" where people "become suspicious of the intentions of the others, and may begin to fear the worst."<sup>38</sup> In anticipation of further reprisal, 22,000 Armenians from Azerbaijan and 55,000 Azerbaijanis left their homes until December 1988 and became refugees.<sup>39</sup> For the first time in the seventy years' rule, the Soviet state lost its monopoly over violence that undermined its authority and legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens.

The decision of unification of the Nagorno-Karabakh local parliament, increasing violence against ethnic minorities and thousands of refugees, resulted in what is called in discourse theory 'dislocation'. According to Torfing, 'dislocation' refers to "a destabilization of a discourse that results

from the emergence of events which cannot be domesticated, symbolized or integrated within the discourse in question.”<sup>40</sup> Dislocation of the Soviet discourse created opportunities for elites-in-waiting to ethnicise the conflict in order to obtain the support of the masses against the communist party cadres. These elites employed totalitarian language of ethnic nationalism to hegemonise the politics by reducing a complex multiethnic social space into a simple antagonism between friends and enemies. Furthermore, they transformed politics from an interest-based to identity-based structure founded on claims of exclusion of intolerance. Differences and similarities were simplified by articulating ‘the other’ as the enemy, which, as they argued, prevented the nation from realising its identity. Since compromising on identities is almost non-negotiable, peaceful settlement became more difficult and the chances of escalation to violence increased significantly. The Soviet discourse became unsustainable for incumbent communist leaders and the nomenklatura, who were deprived of the resources of the centre and were not able to sustain the patronage ties due to the severe economic crises. They were further weakened by the growing social frustration caused by increasing violence. As communism and Soviet identity lost their meanings, national identity became the ‘master signifier’ and a ‘nodal point’ for an emerging discourse. However, this process took different paths in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In Armenia, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the environmental groups turned into nationalist organisations. The most influential one, the Karabakh Committee, was established by unknown intellectuals with strong nationalistic feelings under the leadership of Levon Ter-Petrosyan. The nationalistic discourse of the Karabakh Committee established a historical link between the massacres of Armenians in 1915 in the Ottoman Empire and violence in Sumgait by equalising Azerbaijanis and Turks. Once again, according to this rationale, the Armenian nation was under the threat of physical extinction by Turks. Therefore, a constructed Turkish threat and pan-Turanism played the role of constitutive outside for the Armenian identity that “prevents it from being what it is.”<sup>41</sup> According to Torfing, “when structural dislocation goes deep down to the very bottom of the social,” people support the nationalist project with its basic premises about order and security to fill the gap of dislocation. This is exactly what happened in Armenia in the first half of the 1990s. Nationalist intellectuals built a “discourse coalition” with the Communist party elites and the political actors from the Diaspora around the hegemonic nationalist project, namely the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.<sup>42</sup> In fact, in 1990, the umbrella organisation of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) formed the first non-communist government in a Soviet republic. Nevertheless, after ceasefire agreement and the end of the conflict in 1994, alternative political projects emerged and the discourse coalition collapsed resulting in crucial changes in the Armenian political structure.

Contrary to the Armenian communist leaders' alliance with the elites-in-waiting on the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, communist elites of Azerbaijan sought to solve the conflict through cooperation with Moscow. By disregarding the nationalist reactions in Azerbaijan, the incumbent elites anticipated obtaining the support of Moscow against the nationalist coalition in Armenia. Nevertheless, the escalation of the crisis brought about the formation of the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF) in the spring of 1989. Unlike ANM, established by political organisations with a clear-cut agenda and objectives, APF united writers, journalists and intellectuals, who had different political orientations and interests. While some aimed to increase the autonomy of Azerbaijan within the Soviet Union, others demanded full independence and unification with Iranian Azerbaijan.<sup>43</sup> In January 1990, the central authorities lost control over domestic politics. APF started to dominate the local authorities throughout the country, people in Nakhichevan attacked military posts along the Iranian border demanding a free access to Iranian Azerbaijan, and the last straw was the massacres in Sumgait. To prevent the loss of power of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Moscow decided to intervene by sending Soviet armed forces to Baku on 20 January 1990, killing more than 130 civilians, closing APF, and imprisoning its leaders. Four days after this crackdown, Ayaz Mutalibov was installed as the First Secretary of the Communist Party, and after independence, he became the first President of Azerbaijan. Brutal Soviet intervention had an influence on Azerbaijani politics similar to how Sumgait events affected Armenia. As a response, many Azerbaijani people burnt their Communist Party membership cards, which were acquired after a long and difficult process and a necessity for a prominent career in the Soviet system. Therefore, more than a simple protest event, burning those membership cards was "a radical turning point – a rejection of the entire system."<sup>44</sup> Azerbaijani society considered the events of 20 January and suppression of national demands as Moscow's support to Armenia since similar types of nationalist demonstrations and organisations were allowed in Yerevan since 1987.

The dislocation of the Soviet discourse in the second half of the 1980s caused the constitution of new identities and meanings in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Elites-in-waiting, organised as literary unions or environmental groups, used national identity as a 'nodal point' to reorganise the state-society relations and challenge the authority of the communist parties. National identity was employed to rearticulate the other 'floating signifiers', such as democracy, peaceful solution for Nagorno-Karabakh, compromise and freedom, and their meanings are fixed around it. However, nationalism and national identity as 'nodal points' are 'empty signifiers' without any precise content: "No matter how many essential predicates of the nation are listed, there is something missing."<sup>45</sup> Hence, elites on both sides exploited the disagreement over Nagorno-Karabakh effectively for "the homogenization and substantialization of the nation" by reflecting each other as a constitutive

outside that is responsible for blocking the full realisation of the national identity.<sup>46</sup> Although nationalist discourse became entrenched over the course of time, alternative interpretations emerged – especially after 1994 when fighting stopped – and prevented national discourse from achieving a complete closure. The next section analyses the power struggle among various political groups by rearticulating the meaning of a peaceful solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to challenge the omnipresent national discourse and incumbent leaders' successful resistance against these alternative constructs to maintain their hegemony for perpetuating the status quo.

### STATUS QUO INSTEAD OF COMPROMISE

Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement in 1994, Armenian and Azerbaijani sides have intentionally delayed the resolution of the conflict. The ruling elites of Azerbaijan and Armenia are satisfied with the 'no war no peace' situation, as it is very difficult for them to sell hard decisions, particularly compromises, back at home. The status quo is perceived as an opportunity for ruling elites on both sides. The Armenian side claims that sovereignty is non-negotiable and that nothing less is acceptable. During the last decade, the *de facto* state of Nagorno-Karabakh has had an organised political leadership, effectively controlled its territory, and succeeded in providing basic services to its population. Armenia anticipates that all other players including Azerbaijan will be accustomed to the status quo, and it insists on a package deal with the rationale "nothing is agreed at all unless everything is agreed."<sup>47</sup> The package deal proposes to return the occupied territories except the Lachin corridor to Azerbaijan in exchange for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. Since the proclamation of independence of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1991, Armenia has not officially recognised the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and has repeated that it has no territorial claims to Azerbaijan. Although the role of Armenian armed forces during the war and Armenia's involvement in the economy, politics and defence of Nagorno-Karabakh after the war are undeniable, Armenia portrays itself as a third party to strengthen its international position.<sup>48</sup>

Azerbaijan exhibits no haste to settle the conflict. It is unwilling to abandon its key advantage: blocking the international recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan also retains the option of using military force to restore its territorial integrity in the absence of a settlement. As all the peace proposals in the last decade have rejected the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku insists on its sovereignty over the region. Azerbaijan's tactic is to force Yerevan to accept *de jure* Azerbaijani sovereignty while Baku is ready to give maximum autonomy to Karabakh Armenians. Meanwhile, Azerbaijani ruling elites keep the fighting spirit alive in the country with nationalistic pledges. Baku's strategy, based on the increasing

profits from energy investments, is to “wait and strengthen”.<sup>49</sup> Hope for revenge is still powerful in the Azerbaijani society, especially among internally displaced persons and refugees. For Baku, a round was lost, not the war.

One of the main barriers to reaching a peaceful solution in deep-rooted conflicts such as Palestine, Bosnia and Nagorno-Karabakh is that the involved parties do not want to compromise. The conflicting sides have constructed a narrative of the conflict by identifying the ‘other side’ as a ‘threat’ to its identity. Both sides of the conflict instrumentalised history as it played an important role in strengthening the collective identity. Furthermore, history is manipulated to justify the claim of ‘we were on this territory first’ to exclude ‘the other’ from the constructed mythical space of homeland. The outcome of this narrative is that the state will feel compelled to resist and combat the ‘threatening other’ to protect the physical borders but, more important than this, the boundaries of the nation-state identity. The constant emphasis on threats and separation of ‘self’ from ‘the other’, ‘enemies’ from ‘friends, and ‘inside’ from ‘outside’ become an indispensable part of state identity and its existence. As David Campbell puts it, “Ironically, then, the inability of the state to project security to succeed is the guarantor of the state’s continued success as an impelling identity.”<sup>50</sup> The state builds its legitimacy on engaging ‘the other’ for the security of its citizens, who, as the state suggests, would otherwise be annihilated. Therefore, state leaders pursue policies about Nagorno-Karabakh to entrench the differences rather than to bridge them and stabilise the mental boundaries to legitimise their authority. They brand any alternative policy for a peaceful solution as a menace to the security of the nation.

### Armenia: An Ethnocratic Regime

Ethnicity and ethnic loyalty are at the centre of politics in Armenia. As Suny argues, there are historical similarities between the foundation of Israel and the establishment of Soviet Armenia: a part of the ancient homeland was Armenianised under the guidance of Russia with the migration of Armenians from Diaspora and forced deportation of Azerbaijanis out of the country.<sup>51</sup> As a result of the policy of nationalisation, it became the most homogenous Soviet Republic in which Armenians comprised 93 percent of the population. Nevertheless, the policy of Armenianisation continued after independence until Yerevan got rid of all its Azerbaijani population in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Parallel to Oren Yiftachel’s classification for Israel and other ethnocratic regimes, the regime in Armenia can be termed as an “ethnocracy” as it advocates for “the expansion, ethnicization and control of contested territory [Nagorno-Karabakh] and state by a dominant ethnic nation [Armenians].”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the ethnic cleansing was ‘right’ and ‘necessary’ for the Armenian regime, as Azerbaijanis – perceived as Turks in the

Armenian discourse – were collectively guilty because of the historical tragedies and the loss of the ancient homeland.

Although nationalism is a modern phenomenon, ethnocracies utilise religious myths to sanctify the contested territory and to essentialise physical and social boundaries. In line with this argument, Armenian national discourse employed religious narratives like “the first Christian nation, and a chosen people” to justify the claims on territories that once belonged to ancient Armenia as a matter of divine truth.<sup>53</sup> The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was articulated within the national discourse as a recurring expulsion of Armenians from their historic lands. The establishment of a historical link between the tragic events of 1915 and the loss of what they consider ‘the ancient Armenian homeland’ to Turkey with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict fortified the sense of fear and insecurity among people.<sup>54</sup> The Armenian society was made to believe in the narrative of what the ruling elite deemed a “second genocide,” and once again, the nation’s future was under threat by Turks (in this case Azerbaijanis, who share the same ethnic origin): “The risk of genocide would constantly hang over us, like Damocles’ sword, over the heads of Nagorno-Karabakh’s Armenians. The Armenian people have already been victims of genocide, they will not tolerate a second.”<sup>55</sup> The national discourse, considering the existence of Turkey and Azerbaijan as a constant threat to the Armenian identity, had not been challenged thoroughly in the first half of the 1990s. Political leaders who revealed their willingness to compromise during the war years were either deposed or assassinated by militant nationalists. For example, Valery Grigoriyan, the Karabakh-Armenian leader who went to Baku with a group of nomenklatura leaders for negotiations to end the conflict under the Azerbaijan’s sovereignty in 1991, was murdered in Stepanekert by radical Armenians.<sup>56</sup>

When the war ended in 1994 with the complete victory of Armenia, daily life was paralysed by refugee flows and energy crises. Isolations and war conditions devastated urban and industrial infrastructure. Between 1991 and 1994, the economy decreased 61 percent and it reached the level in 2004 that it had in 1990.<sup>57</sup> In this gloomy picture, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the leader of the Karabakh movement and then the first president of Armenia, realised that normalisation of relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan is the only way for Armenia to become a prosperous and healthy country.<sup>58</sup> As his senior advisor Gerard Libaridian underlined, “Ter-Petrossian could not see how Armenian or any other diplomacy could change the position of any other countries on territorial integrity and occupied territories.”<sup>59</sup> In 1997, he accepted the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) proposal for a phased settlement, which proposed solutions for the occupied territories, blockades and refugees but postponed the question of Nagorno-Karabakh status and the Lachin corridor. On 26 September 1997, in an important press conference, Ter-Petrosyan expressed his support for a peace agreement by claiming that a settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh and

the opening of borders with Turkey were vital for Armenia's prosperity, and he stated, "As long as Nagorno-Karabakh remains unresolved, Armenia cannot return to normality and live like any other European country."<sup>60</sup>

This turning point in Armenian politics resulted in a crumbling of the "historical block," defined by Laclau and Mouffe as "a political space relatively unified through nodal points and tendentially relational identities."<sup>61</sup> Ter-Petrosyan did not contend for a simple foreign policy change. Instead, he attempted to transform the meaning of Turkey in the national discourse from a constitutive outside to a vital neighbour for the prosperity of Armenia. However, Ter-Petrosyan and his supporters became victims of nationalism that they initiated with the formation of the Karabakh Committee at the end of the 1980s. Powerful leaders in the ruling elite resisted Ter-Petrosyan's call to change Armenia's policy towards Turkey and Azerbaijan, by depicting it 'selling the country to Turks'. They united to protect the status quo by successfully manipulating the security of the nation to their advantage. Robert Kocharian – the former leader of Karabakh Armenians who was appointed the prime minister by Ter-Petrosyan to consider the Nagorno-Karabakh question in the full context of Armenia's troubles – announced that he would not "give Karabakh to anybody. . . . No decision adopted in Armenia will be implemented without Karabakh's consent, irrespective who is in power in Yerevan."<sup>62</sup> His opponents accused Ter-Petrosyan of national betrayal because of his conciliatory approach and forced him to resign in February 1998. Kocharian was elected president in March 1998, and the government immediately announced that it would pursue 'Hay Tad' (Armenian Cause) in its foreign policy to support Armenia's right to return to the territories in current Turkey where Armenians lived before 1915. Prioritisation of "anti-Turkism" and the recognition of "genocide" as foreign policy objectives of Armenia were further backed by the legalisation of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF and known also as Dashnaksutiun). ARF, a chauvinist party that publicly made territorial claims about eastern Turkey and was banned during the Ter-Petrosyan rule, had been the strategic partner of governments during Kocharian's rule.

Ethnocratic policies have starved Armenia of the opportunities for regional integration and trade with its neighbours. The country is completely isolated by economic blockades with 85 percent of the borders closed by Turkey and Azerbaijan. According to the World Bank, with the opening of borders, Armenia's exports would double in the short term, and its gross domestic product (GDP) would increase by an estimated 30 percent.<sup>63</sup> The legal uncertainty in which corruption permeates every aspect of daily life renders exploitation the only alternative for people to survive. This dynamic is both an outcome and supporter of the status quo. After the end of the war, well-known warlords established criminal networks and mafia organisations to benefit from the black-market trade across borders, created by economic isolations. The prospect of economic development as a result



of peaceful solution is not seen as an incentive for groups who are benefiting from the current stalemate. Rather, they consider peace and normalisation of relations detrimental to their economic and political interests.<sup>64</sup> The former defence minister of Nagorno-Karabakh, Samvel Babayan, who had been the “de facto overlord and master” of Nagorno-Karabakh, became the most notorious example of the corrupt and illegal networks. During the war against Azerbaijan, Babayan and his followers looted the occupied territories and ironically sold the goods to Azeris in Iran. After the ceasefire agreement, with the help of economic isolation and his military power, Babayan established a monopoly over the cigarette and gasoline trade. In March 2000, he was arrested and sentenced to fourteen years for the attempted assassination of Arkady Ghukasyan, the president of Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>65</sup>

Armenian politics has been hijacked by the Karabakh debate and the native Karabakh politicians who control Armenia to a much greater extent than the other way around. Over the last decade, Armenia’s top political figures have been Karabakh Armenians: former Prime Minister and former President Robert Kocharian and former Defense Minister, former Prime Minister and current President Serzh Sarkisian. Their policy is based on Armenia’s military superiority in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenian forces located in the highland areas control the militarily strategic positions in the enclave that decreased the risk of war significantly. The price paid for this maximalist policy of keeping Nagorno-Karabakh and seven other Azerbaijani districts occupied is the marginalisation of Armenia from the development of regional rail, road and energy networks. Kocharian sought to balance Armenia’s “self-imposed isolation” by establishing strategic ties with Russia, Iran, and the United States. According to the prominent Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya*, “Armenia is the only country that receives weapons from Russia, money from America and cooperates with Iran.”<sup>66</sup> Although this strategy does not present a way out from the secluded situation of Armenian society, it keeps the supporters of the status quo in power and provides them with opportunities in an isolated economy, as long as they dismiss any argument for normalisation that would jeopardise their authority, as a danger to national security.

### Azerbaijan: A Search for National Identity

Contrary to the well-established Armenian nationalism, even the basic building blocks of national identity were contested in Azerbaijan. In the post-Soviet period, the different definitions of nation such as Azerbaijanis, Azeris and Azerbaijani Turks reflected different political visions among elites. When the Soviet Azerbaijan was established, the people of the republic were called Turks.<sup>67</sup> During the Stalin era in 1937, this was changed to Azerbaijani, which included Kurds, Talishs and other ethnic groups, to underline the geographic characteristic of nationhood. However, especially after 1988, nationalist intellectual and later the leader of APF Elchibey questioned the

term ‘Azerbaijani’. To invigorate the unity with the Azeris in northern Iran and to emphasise ethnic ties with Turkey, the terms ‘Azeris’ and ‘Azeri Turks’ were widely used especially by APF. Disagreements about how to define the nation revealed an identity crisis that was not a simple problem of classification among intellectuals but also a prevalent dilemma among people.

Compared to assertive Armenian national identity, regional and kinship loyalties had been articulated more often and Soviet identity more internalised by the people in Azerbaijan, as Moscow was intolerant towards nationalist and religious awakening in the Soviet Muslim republics. The Armenian Church was the key link between the religious and national identity. It promoted the sacredness and uniqueness of Armenian language and alphabet, whose 1600th anniversary was celebrated in 1962 where Church played a leading role.<sup>68</sup> Conversely, in Azerbaijan, the religious activities were repressed – the number of mosques was around 2000 in 1930s and decreased to 18 in 1980s. Contrary to the iconographic role of the alphabet in Armenian nationalism, the alphabet in Azerbaijan was changed three times in the last eight decades. In 1928 Latin replaced the Arabic alphabet to decrease ties between Azerbaijan and the Muslim world, followed by Soviet enforcement of Cyrillic alphabet in 1939 to distance Azerbaijan from Turkey, and after the independence, the alphabet was changed back to Latin.<sup>69</sup> The frail Azerbaijani identity became self-evident for people when the hostilities started in Nagorno-Karabakh. When the Karabakh Armenians destroyed the 300-year-old symbolic forest called Topkhana, near the Azerbaijani town Shusha in Nagorno-Karabakh, the largest demonstrations in the history of Soviet Azerbaijan took place in November 1988.<sup>70</sup> Obviously, the issue was not only about trees or environment. The construction of Nagorno-Karabakh as an indivisible part of the Azerbaijani homeland solidified the national identity and filled out “*the empty place of the nation* in the symbolic structure of society.”<sup>71</sup> Topkhana events signified the collapse of Soviet discourse and a revival of national identity:

Always before we had accepted the systematic effort to neutralize national identity in the Soviet Union, which fostered the notion of generalization, not individualism – the masses, not the personal. We had grown up believing that we were one nation – the Soviet nation, and one people – primarily Soviet. To be Azerbaijani was to be weaker, somehow inferior, to being Soviet. The truth is we didn’t even know who we were. . . . But after Topkhana, we realized there was no such thing as a Soviet people. Our best interests had been abused and subjugated. No one but our own people could understand that Topkhana symbolized more than trees; it was our own identity-our own being.<sup>72</sup>

To control the nationalist awakening and compete against the rise of APF, the communist leaders of Azerbaijan undertook the “process of subjectivation” and

branded themselves national leaders. The process of subjectivation is defined, by Torfing, as becoming somebody “to fill the empty space of the lack through identification.” Azerbaijani ruling elites identified themselves with the emerging nationalist project that “offer[s] a ‘solution’ to the ‘crisis’ of the structure,” as it was almost impossible for them to maintain the communist discourse against the increasing social discontent as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem.<sup>73</sup> In 1989, articles that highlighted the economic discrimination of Azerbaijan against Armenia in the Soviet system started to appear in the Azerbaijani official media outlets. According to an article in the daily newspaper *Kommunist* written by Saleh Memmedov, a professor at the Baku branch of Leningrad Financial and Economy Institute, while Azerbaijan sent 420 million rubles worth of goods in a year to Armenia, in return it only received 117 million rubles worth of goods from Armenia.<sup>74</sup> Another criticism published by the Communist Party’s monthly journal for youth, *Ganclik*, was Azerbaijan’s natural gas and oil deliveries to Armenia. Although Azerbaijan’s population was more than double that of Armenia, it sent half its natural gas production to Armenia. Natural gas consumption in Armenia, which does not have any significant energy resources, was 2,000 cubic metres per capita, which was five times more than Azerbaijani natural gas consumption per capita.<sup>75</sup> These articles in official newspapers and journals signalled a policy change among the Azerbaijani communist leadership to maintain its hold on power against the rising nationalist opposition movement. Economic issues of unbalanced trade and heavily subsidised oil and gas exports to neighbouring Armenia that had not attracted attention of Azerbaijani society before the eruption of the Nagorno-Karabakh were reinterpreted in nationalist terms. In September 1989, Baku started an economic blockade against Armenia by stopping all the fuel transfers and cutting other supply lines, which came from Azerbaijani territory.

Power struggle between APF and the Communist Party resulted in the mobilisation of the society along national lines. Although both of these parties agreed on defending the territorial integrity, they did not have a clear strategy about how to form a national army to realise this objective. The biggest obstacle for the establishment of a national army was the Soviet policy of assigning Azeri conscripts in construction battalions, where they carried out non-combat duties. In addition, many Azerbaijanis believed that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a worthless war against Russia, which was using Armenia as a proxy to subjugate Azerbaijan.<sup>76</sup> Six months after the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet’s decision of establishing a national army in 1992, the number of Azerbaijani conscripts reached only 150.<sup>77</sup> In the end, nationalisation and radicalisation of politics pushed Azerbaijan into a war that did not have any means and capacities to fight and win against an organised Armenia. Furthermore, it undermined the authority of the state and intensified the struggle between elites rather than uniting the political forces.

The first round of this infighting ended with the removal of President Mutalibov after the Khojali massacre, in which 485 people were massacred in 1992 by Armenian troops to intimidate Azerbaijan by “a deliberate act of mass killing.”<sup>78</sup> This event initiated a political crisis in Baku as the APF accused Mutalibov of intentionally delaying the establishment of a national army, therefore holding him responsible for not preventing the massacre. APF depicted him as a ‘collaborator’, and its leader Elchibey came to power with 60 percent support of the voters in the 1992 elections, which were the only free elections in Azerbaijan even to this day.

Elchibey started his presidency with attempts to make military progress in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, as he came to power against the communist ruling elite, he had to establish his own network in a chaotic environment where the Armenian armed forces were advancing on the front. Therefore, he sought the support of warlords who were interested in gaining power in Baku rather than fighting against the Armenian army. Elchibey was inept in handling the crisis, and his short political career ended like Mutalibov with a coup after heavy losses in the front in 1993. When powerful ex-communist Aliyev returned from his hometown Nakhichevan to Baku and became the president of the Republic in 1993, there were not any demonstrations to protest the downfall of Elchibey, who obtained the overwhelming support of his people just a year ago, as Azerbaijanis lost their confidence in APF’s talent to manage the war and crises. Since independence in 1991 until the death of Aliyev in 2003, ex-communist and reborn nationalist leaders – except the eleven-month-long APF government – had ruled Azerbaijan. Whereas in Armenia, the discourse coalition agreed on the basic parameters of nation, state and regime, in Azerbaijan, due to the heavy losses in Nagorno-Karabakh and the entrenched communist party cadres, the struggle between the old and new elite ended with the latter’s eradication from power.

Heidar Aliyev started with a different objective than Elchibey: to institutionalise a semi-authoritarian regime.<sup>79</sup> He signed an armistice with Armenia and ended the war; established more balanced foreign policy towards Russia and Iran while signing oil contracts with multinational energy companies to obtain their financial and political support. Aliyev founded the Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC) for oil exploration in a balanced way to make sure that every giant energy company – such as British Petroleum, Exxon, Unocal, Amoco – got its share without excluding Russian Lukoil and Turkish Petroleum Company. The policy of cooperation with multinational oil companies by providing them profitable investments in Azerbaijan in return for their support of the stability of Aliyev’s rule were given the slogan “hand over oil and natural gas to protect the regime.”<sup>80</sup> Aliyev’s other strategy was to consolidate his rule by establishing patronage networks based on regional and clan relations. To ensure the loyalty to his personal rule, he appointed Azerbaijanis from his hometown Nakhichevan

to key positions in government and bureaucracy. Moreover, his son, Ilham Aliyev, became the vice-president of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) to control the revenues of oil exports, while his brother, Jalal Aliyev, formed a nationwide gas station network, called Azpetrol.<sup>81</sup> When Heidar Aliyev died in December 2003, he left a patrimonial-rentier state to his son based on oil revenues.

Since coming to power after the death of his father, Ilham Aliyev hardened Baku's position. His hard stance is backed by a significant increase in military spending from \$170 million in 2004 to \$673 million in 2006, and he publicly warned Armenia during his New Year address in 2007: "Azerbaijan's military spending is equal to Armenia's whole spending and this will be bigger in the years to come . . . . We are at talks but the enemy should know that Azerbaijan can liberate native lands by any means at any time and we shall liberate it."<sup>82</sup> However, considering the fact that Azerbaijan is ranked 130th out of 163 states on a corruption index ranging from the least to the most corrupt, it is highly probable that an important amount of this military spending will be pocketed by the elite under the guise of national security and confidentiality.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, Aliyev shares the same concerns, as his father did, about forming a powerful national army, which would be a significant threat to his personal rule.<sup>84</sup> With 14.5 percent of Azerbaijani territory under Armenian occupation and with 800,000 refugees and displaced persons, Aliyev believes that it would be political suicide to accept Armenian claims about the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. He considers increasing oil revenues to be a powerful weapon and projects an image of a determined leader who does not rule out war as a last solution. Simply put, Aliyev's strategy can be summarised as 'if you want peace, prepare for war'. However, a thorough analysis reveals that Aliyev's *prima facie* strategy is rhetorical and that he does not have the political will to fight a risky war for the occupied territories.

Using oil revenues to buy weapons to prepare the army for a future war in Karabakh is highly contradictory and not a feasible strategy. The current flow of energy investments owes its existence to the 'no war no peace' situation. The \$3.9 billion Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline passes areas within the artillery range of the Armenian army. Ilham Aliyev is well aware of the fact that in the case of a war, Armenian forces would destroy the pipeline and that Western companies would withdraw their investments from Azerbaijan. Therefore, to demonstrate yet another factor of irony, the *de facto* independent status of Karabakh is secured with increasing energy investments in Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, the current leadership in Baku skillfully manipulates the dejected Azerbaijani society with explicit pledges to get back the occupied territories. In the second half of the 1990s, a process of Armenianisation of Azerbaijan became obvious in the nationalist discourse, which uses victimisation and the term "genocide" to portray the massacres that happened in Khojali.<sup>85</sup> Withdrawal from this position would

undermine Aliyev's rule. At the same time, Aliyev portrays himself as an ally of the United States in the "War on Terror" and as a man of peace to the international community by participating in the peace negotiations and by suppressing radical nationalists who are against any compromise over Nagorno-Karabakh. The future of Aliyev's rule depends on maintaining the balance between satisfying the Azerbaijani society with rhetorical nationalistic promises and not challenging the current 'no war no peace' situation for the security of oil investments.

### Who Gains from the Status Quo?

Under these circumstances, incumbent political leaders in Azerbaijan and Armenia sense that they have little choice when it comes to challenging entrenched policies of their respective countries. Deviation from the official stance is too risky, and both sides are hesitant to compromise, as it would put their political, and even physical, life at risk. The "Karabakh syndrome" mainly determines political discourse in Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>86</sup> Ruling elites use this syndrome as a tool to restrict the democratic rights and to justify their authoritarian rules. The concentration of power exclusively in the presidents and the lack of civil institutions have destructive effects on the future of the societies. Moreover, maintaining the current situation is economically more profitable for elites of conflicting parties who benefit from the political economy of the status quo.

Political elites in Azerbaijan and Armenia pursue a dangerous strategy of governing these states that depends on authoritarian leaders and patronage networks. The rulers are not effectively challenged in revenge-centred nationalistic political cultures, where the past tragedies shape ethnic identities, over a million internally displaced persons and refugees live in miserable conditions, and blockades determine every aspect of daily life. Politics is in a vicious circle and incapable of generating a way out of the current impasse. The opposition groups are in favour of hard line strategies and ready to use any opportunity to condemn any government initiative to compromise as defeatist, whereas the ruling elites' main objective is to secure their hold over the governing apparatus and the economy. The last ten years revealed that the de facto state of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan will be able to survive without a conflict settlement. In the current stalemate, everyone suffers, but it does not hurt everyone equally. It is not as painful for the political leaders as it is for the masses; therefore, the former is not enthusiastic enough about challenging the status quo.<sup>87</sup> The 'neither peace nor war' strategy constitutes the basis for Yerevan's and Baku's policies. Even though both parties have announced ostensibly their determination to use diplomatic channels to find a peaceful solution for the conflict, this is mainly a ploy to alleviate international pressure on them.

This charade satisfies the international community that is looking for any sign of progress even if it does not actually engender any positive value for the resolution of the conflict.

## CONCLUSION

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the international system has been experiencing a fundamental transformation. The bipolar world view and its reasoning collapsed by a post-territorial and post-modern global order, which renders the state-based world views meaningless. As David Newman rightly put it,

The collapse of the bi-polar world which dominated our perceptions of global politics since the end of the Second World War necessitated a rethinking of the dynamics of state formation, the relationship between states at both global and regional levels, as well as the changing nature of war, peace, shatterbelts, rimlands, superpower domination, and a host of other concepts which had been normative for most western thinkers on the topic during this period. Gone are the days when the study of geopolitics could be neatly divided into two neat parallel compartments: the organic state (the Ratzel, Kjellen tradition) and geostrategy (the Mahan, Mackinder and Spykman tradition).<sup>88</sup>

To advance the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, this transformation has to be taken into account. The status quo in the region does not pose a serious threat to current ruling elites in Armenia and Azerbaijan, regional and global actors that have vital interests in the region. In the past decade, all these players have developed methods and strategies to benefit from the deadlock. The priority of the current political leaders in the region is the continuation of their rule instead of the creation of a democratic environment and a development of civil society. It is not likely that they will risk their status for a solution that requires compromise from both sides. Additionally, there are enough powerful groups on all sides that are strong enough to maintain the status quo. However, the cost of the status quo is very high for both of the societies living under blockades and authoritarian regimes. They are clearly on the losing side, and as long as they will not be able to influence the decision-making process in a free and democratic environment, it will be impossible to challenge the status quo for a peaceful solution in Nagorno-Karabakh.

There are academics who claimed “undemocratic leaders, as in Armenia and Azerbaijan, can actually do more in a peace process.”<sup>89</sup> However, this logic does not explain why the same undemocratic regimes that have been in power for the last two decades in both countries have not taken any

steps in the negotiations. Furthermore, it creates a vicious circle in which people do not have a say about their future and ruling elites successfully defend their own interests rather than those of the common people. In this regard, the referendum process in Cyprus in 2004 should be analysed closely as it can illuminate how to bring together two sides in a historical ethnic conflict. Although Greek Cypriots rejected the peace proposal in the referendum and the plan to unite the island failed, the mistakes of the European Union and the last-minute Russian veto of the United Nations' guarantee for the plan played an important role in this failure.<sup>90</sup> However, in an unprecedented way, one side of an ethnic conflict, in this case Turkish Cypriots, supported the unification of the island under a common state. Turkish Cypriots, who have bitter memories about the civil war in the 1960s and 1970s, were made to believe by their leaders that living peacefully with Greek Cypriots is incomprehensible and that the only way to survive is to establish and to protect their independent state. This national dogma was destroyed, however, as a result of the democratic process, and Turkish Cypriots overwhelmingly voted for the plan, which would foreclose their independent state in return for a better life in a supra-national organisation, namely the European Union. Integration into the European Union changed the discourse on the Turkish side of the island, which made the essence of the conflict irrelevant. This process in Cyprus revealed important lessons for academics who study ethnic conflicts. By voting for unification, Cypriot Turks made it clear that they foresee their future and security in a state where they can share power and territory with Greek Cypriots, which is against the basic premises of the nation-state paradigm.

The most significant barrier for peace in Nagorno-Karabakh is the constructed image of 'the other' as a source of threat in the eyes of the people. To overcome the mistrust and to ease the tensions, cultural interactions should be reestablished for dialogue. Under the current conditions, perceptions about each other are dominated by the mass media under the influence of state authorities. Due to the isolations and blockades, Armenians and Azerbaijanis know about each other only in the way that the powerful elites want them to know each other. Another essential factor for a sustainable solution is the participation of broader segments of societies in the peace process. This will initiate a dialogue among different segments of societies on alternatives for peace and, in so doing, set up a sense of ownership over the peace negotiations. Further democratisation is an important step to break the hegemony of the undemocratic leaders, who justify their authoritarian policies by the existence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Entrenchment of civil society organisations with the objective of emphasising similarities instead of differences is an important step for the peaceful coexistence of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, who share the same cultural and political legacy.

The outcome of ethnic conflicts is the formation of mono-ethnic countries in the Caucasus. Armenia has become one of the most mono-ethnic



countries in the post-Soviet space with a 2 percent minority that consists mainly of Yazidis, and even this small minority is the subject of persecution by security forces.<sup>91</sup> In the case of Azerbaijan, the government insists on territorial integrity, which requires from Karabakh Armenians to accept Azerbaijani authority, when, at the same time, the regime violates the basic democratic rights of its own citizens. Nevertheless, the status quo, which is the product of the nationalist ideal of adjusting the state borders by expelling minority populations, is unacceptable because it justifies ethnic cleansing for establishing 'stable' mono-ethnic nation-states. Accepting this rationale as part of the solution will legitimise ethnic cleansing and establish a dangerous precedent in the Caucasus, which is the Babel Tower of languages and ethnic groups. Many victims of post-Soviet conflicts expressed their disappointment that just before the conflict it had been unthinkable for them to envision such violence and war with their next-door friends from other ethnic groups with whom they had lived peacefully for so many years. Contrary to their feelings, almost all the peace proposals put on the table in the last decade favoured partitioning of territories along ethnic lines as the only possible solution. The advancement of post- and trans-territorial forces in the contemporary global order rapidly enables reconciliation between groups and reestablishment of a sustainable multiethnic environment. We, as academics, must imagine other ways in which the nation-state is not the only parameter to establish peaceful coexistence.

## NOTES

1. For a detailed critique of International Relations discipline during and after the Cold War period, see especially C. Heine and B. Teschke, 'Sleeping Beauty and Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25/2 (1996) pp. 399–423.

2. K. Booth, 'Dare Not to Know: International Relations Theory versus the Future', in K. Booth and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press 1995) p. 329.

3. W. Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', *International Security* 19/3 (Winter 1994/1995) p. 92.

4. V. A. Kolosov, O. Glezer, and N. Petrov, *Ethno-Territorial Conflicts and Boundaries in the Former Soviet Union* (Durham: Durham University Press 1992) p. 3.

5. See especially, S. J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2001), and J. Mearsheimer and R. A. Pape, 'The Answer: A Three-Way Partition Plan for Bosnia And How the U.S. Can Enforce It', *The New Republic* (14 June 1993) pp. 22–28.

6. L. E. Dutter, 'Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnic Political Behavior in the Soviet Union', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34/2 (June 1990) pp. 318–321.

7. The term "Great Game" was founded by Captain Arthur Conolly, who was a British Intelligence Officer in India, to define the imperial struggle between the Tsarist Russia and the British Empire during the nineteenth century for hegemony over the Central Asia. See G. Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia: 1810–1895* (London: Frank Cass 1981) p. 15. The term was later made popular by British novelist Rudyard Kipling. The Great Game is generally regarded as continuing from 1813 to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. See R. Kipling, *Kim* (New York: Penguin 1987) and P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International 1994).

8. Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chess Board: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books 1997).
9. For Critical Geopolitics, see J. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Revisioning World Politics* (London: Routledge 1998); S. Dalby, 'Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference and Dissent', *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 9/3 (1991) pp. 261–283; D. Newman, (ed.), *Boundaries, Territory and Postmodernity* (London: Frank Cass 1999); G. Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996).
10. G. Ó Tuathail, 'The Bush Administration and the "End of the Cold War": A Critical Geopolitics of US Foreign Policy in 1989', *Geoforum* 23 (1992) p. 439.
11. Tuathail, (note 9) p. 54.
12. J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, 'Introduction', in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall (eds.), *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1999) pp. 17–21.
13. Ibid., p. 18.
14. N. Spykman, 'Geography and Foreign Policy, II', *American Political Science Review* 32/2 (April 1938) p. 238.
15. Besides the increasing academic interests in Mackinder's and Spykman's geopolitical 'truths' in Europe and the U.S., the geopolitical discourse in post-Soviet Russia experienced an emergence of the Heartland-Rimland debate. See M. Bassin and K. E. Aksenov, 'Mackinder and the Heartland Theory in Post-Soviet Geopolitical Discourse', *Geopolitics* 11/1 (Spring 2006) pp. 99–120.
16. L. Kleveman, *The New Great Game, Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press 2003) pp. 7–8.
17. D. Morgan and D. B. Ottoway, 'Fortune Hunters Lured U.S. into Volatile Region', *The Washington Post* (4 Oct. 1998) p. A01. Other influential policy makers during the Cold War era became paid consultants of energy companies in 1990s; Henry Kissinger worked for Unocal. See A. Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2000) p. 160 and footnote 11 on p. 259.
18. Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers 1997) pp. 129.
19. For Cox, social and political theories are not detached from the circumstances and not objective. They are always "for someone for some purpose." R. Cox, 'Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10/2 (1981) pp. 128–29.
20. G. Ó Tuathail, 'Problematizing Geopolitics: Survey, Statesmanship and Strategy', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 19/3 (1994) pp. 265–66.
21. Newsweek is the one of the first magazines who published an article with the title "The Great Game: Chapter Two" on 3 February 1992. Afterwards, the academic literature on the 'New Great Game' mushroomed. See especially B. Z. Rumer, 'The Gathering Storm in Central Asia', *Orbis* 37/1 (1993) pp. 89–105; H. Peimani, *The Caspian Pipeline Dilemma: Political Games and Economic Losses* (Westport: Praeger 2001); R. Weitz, 'Averting a New Great Game', *The Washington Quarterly* 29/2 (2006) pp. 155–167; M. Edwards, 'The New Great Game and the New Great Gamers: Disciples of Kipling and Mackinder', *Central Asian Survey* 22/1 (2003) pp. 83–102; H. Karasac, 'Actors of the new "Great Game," Caspian Oil Politics', *Journal of Southern Europe and Balkans* 4/1 (2002) pp. 15–27.
22. H. Gusterson, 'Missing the End of the Cold War in International Security', in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall (eds.), *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1999) pp. 320–21, p. 338.
23. S. Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science: International Relations', *Daedalus* 106/3 (Summer 1977) pp. 41–60.
24. Z. Brzezinski, 'The Caucasus and New Geo-political Realities', *Azerbaijan International* 5/2 (1997) pp. 42–46.
25. Kipling (note 7) p. 270.
26. The total area of Nagorno-Karabakh is 4,400 square kilometres (1,699 square miles). Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the population of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast was 192,000, 76 percent Armenian and 23 percent Azeri. Today, the population dropped to 138,000 with an almost complete Armenian majority.
27. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Displacement in the CIS* (Geneva: UNHCR Publication for the CIS Conference 1996).

28. R. Aitken, 'Not "Ethnic Conflict" But Processes of Ethnicization: Towards a Comparative Analysis of Processes of Ethnicization During Conflicts', paper delivered at the conference *Beyond The Nation? Critical Reflections on Nations and Nationalism in Uncertain Times*, Belfast, United Kingdom, 13 Sept. 2007.
29. M. Ignatieff, *The Warriors Honor Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1998) p. 45.
30. R. Brubaker, 'Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account', *Theory and Society* 23/1 (Feb. 1994) pp. 47–58.
31. For a detailed analysis of the importance of the socioeconomic factors at the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, see A. N. Yamskov, 'Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh', *Theory and Society* 20/5 (Oct. 1991) pp. 631–660. For Tishkov, environmental and economic issues are transformed by national elites into ethnonational movements in the Soviet Union during late 1980s; V. Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union* (London: Sage Publications 1997) pp. 68–71.
32. In 1985–1986, the consumer goods produced per person was 87 percent, domestic services per person was 37 percent, mean wage of workers and employees was 6 percent, and mean savings per person was 56 percent higher in Armenia than Azerbaijan. See Yamskov (note 31) p. 640.
33. S. E. Cornell, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict* (Uppsala: Department of East European Studies Uppsala University 1999) p. 13.
34. R. Brubaker, 'Ethnicity Without Groups', *European Journal of Sociology* 43/2 (2002), p. 171.
35. J. Koehler and C. Zurcher, 'The Art of Losing the State: Weak Empire to Weak Nation-State around Nagorno-Karabakh', in J. Koehler and C. Zurcher (eds.), *Potentials of Disorder: Explaining Conflict and Stability in the Caucasus and in the Former Yugoslavia (New Approaches to Conflict Analysis)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003) p. 154.
36. Brubaker (note 30) p. 57.
37. Tishkov (note 31) pp. 81–82.
38. D. A. Lake and D. Rothchild, 'Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict', *International Security* 21/2 (1996) p. 48.
39. A. L. Altstadt, 'Ethnic Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh', in L. Drobizheva, R. Gottemoeller, C. M. Kelleher, and L. Walker (eds.), *Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Soviet World: Case Studies and Analysis* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe 1996) p. 231.
40. J. Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse* (Malden: Blackwell, 1999) p. 301.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
42. According to Hajer, a "discourse coalition is basically a group of actors who share a social construct." See, M. Hajer, 'Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain', in F. Fischer and J. Forester (eds.), *In the Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (Durham: Duke University Press 1993) p. 45.
43. S. Bolukbasi, 'Nation-building in Azerbaijan: The Soviet Legacy and the Impact of the Karabakh Conflict', W. van Schendel and E. J. Zurcher (eds.), *Identity and Politics in Central Asia and The Muslim World* (New York: Tauris 2001) pp. 52–53.
44. A. Panahli, 'The Russian Bear's Voracious Appetite: Azerbaijan 1990 and Chechnya 1995', *Azerbaijan International* 3/1 (Spring 1995) pp. 56–59.
45. Torfing (note 40) p. 193.
46. *Ibid.*
47. M. Kurkchian, 'The Karabagh Conflict: From Soviet Past to Post-Soviet Uncertainty', in E. Herzig and M. Kurkchian (eds.), *The Armenians: Past Present in the Making of National Identity* (New York: Routledge 2005) p. 161.
48. E. Herzig, *The New Caucasus* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs 1999) p. 67.
49. V. Kazimirov, 'Looking for a Way Out of the Karabakh Impasse', *Russia in Global Affairs* 2/4 (2004) pp. 147–8.
50. D. Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1992) pp. 12–13.
51. R. G. Suny, 'Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations', *The Journal of Modern History* 73/4 (Dec. 2001) pp. 885–86.
52. O. Yiftachel and A. Ghanem, 'Understanding 'Ethnocratic' Regimes: The Politics of Seizing Contested Territories', *Political Geography* 23/6 (2004) p. 649.
53. R. Panossian, 'The Past as Nation: Three Dimensions of Armenian Identity', *Geopolitics* 7/2 (Autumn 2002) pp. 127–131.

54. While it is impossible to neglect the tragic Armenian sufferings as a result of massacres during World War I, whether to term these events as “genocide” is a highly politicised debate among Armenian, Turkish and other scholars. However, during the last couple of years, many objective academic works were published, especially Guenter Lewy’s seminal book, on the subject. This article uses the unbiased term of ‘the events of 1915’ except when referring to direct quotations and the usage of the term ‘genocide’ by other persons. See for a detailed analysis, G. Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 2005).

55. From Ter-Petrosyan’s speech following the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Lisbon Summit in December 1996, quoted from T. Papazian, ‘From Ter-Petrosyan to Kocharian: Explaining Continuity in Armenian Foreign Policy, 1991–2003’, *Demokratizatsiya* 14/2 (Spring 2006) p. 241. Armenian political leaders repeatedly used this rhetoric to connect the events of 1915 and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in their speeches to illustrate that the only option for a solution is the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh since they believe Armenians and Azerbaijanis cannot live together. It must be stressed that two ethnic groups had not had any violent conflict during the long Soviet rule until 1987. In a similar way to Ter-Petrosyan, Robert Kocharian raised this issue during his official visit to Moscow in January 2003: “It is impossible for Armenians to live in Azerbaijan in principle. This is a matter of some ethnic incompatibility. . . . A people that has lived through a genocide cannot allow its repetition. Such is the reality.” See R. Kocharian, ‘Russia’s Important Role in Regional Processes’, *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn [International Affairs]* 2 (2003) p. 108.

56. E. Melander, ‘The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Revisited: Was the War Inevitable?’ *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3/2 (2001) pp. 70–1.

57. A. Sarian, ‘Economic Challenges Faced by the New Armenian States’, *Demokratizatsiya* 14/2 (Spring 1996) pp. 193–222.

58. When Armenia declared independence in 1991, Turkey was one of the first countries to recognise it. The border crossing between the two countries had been open until Armenia occupied the Azerbaijani district of Khojali and massacred a large number of Azerbaijani civilians in 1993. Diplomatic relations have not been established between the two countries as Turkey sets a precondition of official abandonment of Armenia’s territorial claims about eastern Anatolia.

59. G. J. Libaridian, *The Challenge of Statehood: Armenian Political Thinking Since Independence* (Cambridge: Blue Crane Books 1999) p. 66.

60. E. Walker, *No Peace, No War in the Caucasus: Secessionist Conflict in Chechnya, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh* (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for Science and International Affairs 1998) p. 29.

61. E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso 1985) p. 136.

62. Walker (note 60) p. 31.

63. E. Polyakov, ‘Changing Trade Patterns after Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus’, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 2593 (2001) p. 37.

64. C. King, ‘The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognized States’, *World Politics* 53 (July 2001) pp. 524–528.

65. T. De Waal, *Black Garden, Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York: New York University Press 2002) pp. 241–245.

66. Russian military bases secure Armenian territory against Turkey and Azerbaijan while Iran gives its support to Armenia against Azerbaijan. The U.S. has been reluctant to become involved in an irreconcilable conflict between oil rich Azerbaijan and Diaspora-financed Armenia. M. Malek, ‘The South Caucasus at the Crossroads’, in G. Hauser and F. Kernic (eds.), *European Security in Transition* (Burlington: Ashgate 2006) p. 147.

67. C. Tokluoglu, ‘Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism and Ethnicity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28/4 (July 2005) pp. 735–39.

68. S. F. Jones, ‘Religion and Nationalism in Soviet Georgia and Armenia’, in P. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press 1989) pp. 184–85.

69. Y. Aslan, *Aşkarlık ve Yeniden Kurma Döneminde Azerbaycan’ın Bağımsızlık Mücadelesi* (Ankara: Yağmur Basın Yayın 1992) pp. 54–55.

70. The 17th of November is celebrated in Azerbaijan as ‘National Revival Day’ and it is a public holiday.

71. R. Salecl, *The Spoils of Freedom Psychoanalysis and Feminism After the Fall of Socialism* (New York: Routledge 1994) p. 15.

72. A. Panahli, 'When a Tree isn't a Tree: The Topkhana Demonstrations of 1988', *Azerbaijan International* 2/3 (Autumn 1994) p. 55.
73. Torfing (note 40) p. 150.
74. Aslan (note 69) pp. 74–75.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
76. T. Swietochowski, 'Azerbaijan: Perspectives from the Crossroads', *Central Asian Survey* 18/4 (1999) p. 422.
77. N. Cafersoy, *Elçibey Dönemi Azerbaycan Dış Politikası* (Ankara: Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi Yayınları 2001) p. 62.
78. De Waal (note 65) p. 172.
79. Ottoway defined semi-authoritarian regimes as "political hybrids" that "allow little real competition for power, thus reducing government accountability. However, they leave enough political space for political parties and organizations of civil society to form, for an independent press to function to some extent, and for some political debate to take place." Ottoway analysed regimes in Egypt, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, Senegal and Croatia as different types of semi-authoritarianism. See, M. Ottoway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press 2003) p. 3.
80. The authors translation of "Nefti-qazı ver, hakimiyyəti saxla." See Z. Səfəroğlu, 'Bir Millet İki Seçki', *Yeni Müsavat* (1 Aug. 2007).
81. A. Rasizade, 'Azerbaijan After Heidar Aliev', *Nationalities Papers* 32/1 (March 2004) p. 147.
82. 'Azeri Leader Set Key Priorities For 2007', *BBC Monitoring* (1 Jan. 2007), available from Lexis-Nexis, accessed 29 March 2007.
83. Two other Caucasian countries, Armenia and Georgia, were rated 93rd and 99th respectively. *Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2006*, available at <[http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi)>, accessed 25 April 2007).
84. Koehler and Zurcher (note 35) p. 162.
85. Azerbaijan commemorates 26 February as the anniversary of "Khojali genocide."
86. M. Saroyan, 'The "Karabakh Syndrome" and Azerbaijani Politics', in E. W. Walker (ed.), *Minorities, Mullabs and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997).
87. De Waal (note 65) p. 280.
88. D. Newman, 'Geopolitics Renaissance: Territory, Sovereignty and the World Political Map', in D. Newman (ed.), *Boundaries, Territory and Postmodernity* (London: Frank Cass 1999) p. 2.
89. A. Matveeva, 'Nagorno Karabakh: A Straightforward Territorial Conflict', in P. van Tongeren, H. van de Veen, and J. Verhoeven (eds.), *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2002) p. 462.
90. The underlying cause of the rejection of the referendum in the Greek part of the island was not that they were against the unification of Cyprus; rather, the strategic mistake of the EU to give a green light to the Greek side for EU membership representing the whole of the island regardless of their decision in the referendum. Many Greek Cypriots thought that they would have a more advantageous position against the Turkish side once they become a member of the EU. See T. Bahcheli, 'Saying Yes to EU Accession: Explaining the Turkish Cypriot Referendum Outcome', *Cyprus Review* 16/2 (Fall 2004) pp. 55–65, and V. Coufoudakis, 'Cyprus – The Referendum and Its Aftermath', *Cyprus Review* 16/2 (Fall 2004) pp. 67–82.
91. Armenia: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2004, US Department of State Report, available at <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41668.htm>>, accessed 10 March 2007.