

# Azerbaijani Elite Opinion on the Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (1991 and 2002)

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## Abstract

This study is about the views of the leading members of the Azerbaijani elite on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It covers the period from 1991 to the end of 2001 through the lenses of the Azerbaijani elite. The discussion presented in this article is based on twenty-nine in-depth personal interviews conducted with the influential members of the Azerbaijani political elite in Baku in December 2001. The focus is on issues like Azerbaijan's national policy for the settlement of the conflict, the stance of the Heydar Aliyev government on Nagorno-Karabakh, the refugees and the surfacing ideas about renewed warfare. The emphasis on a military option and the tendency for not accepting any preconditions during the peace process appear to be intensifying. This contributes to the protraction of the current status quo in the region, which is inadmissible for the international community.

## Keywords

Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, Armenia, South Caucasus, Ethnic war, Refugees

## Introduction

This study is about the Azerbaijani elite and their views about the circumstances of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during the immediate post-Soviet period. The period examined in this study covers Ebulföz Elçibey's (between 1992 and 1993) and Heydar Aliyev's presidency (between 1993

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and 2003).<sup>1</sup> Although there appeared to be a consensus about the roots and nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there were different views about how to settle the problem. These differences arose mainly from the still surviving cleavage between the government and opposition parties. However, the government-opposition confrontation was not clear-cut and decisive in shaping the political discourse on Nagorno-Karabakh. Public pressure and the pressure of the key regional actors gave rise to diverse ideas not only among the members of the opposition, but also among the government. Even the members of government were divided on the issue of whether there was a national policy on Nagorno-Karabakh or not. The discussions about Nagorno-Karabakh indicated that there is not only an interrupted state-building process in Azerbaijan, but also a mass involvement regarding national leadership.

The source of this article is the personal interviews conducted with the high-ranking members of the Azerbaijani political elite. A total of twenty-nine in-depth, tape-recorded, interviews, each lasting for an average of an hour or more were used as the source material in this article. The research was carried out in Baku in December 2001 (see the Appendix for an outline of who were interviewed by the author).<sup>2</sup> The interviewees were selected in accordance with their involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, either as academics (experts in international relations or political science), politicians or journalists, all of whom were influential in public affairs. The names of highly knowledgeable people about the Nagorno-Karabakh issue were provided by some of the people who were interviewed.

This article attempts to analyse the effect of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on domestic power struggles in Azerbaijan. In this context, those who were interviewed were asked to discuss why a political solution to the conflict could not be achieved. It is important to note that, the historical facts and related elements that are reproduced by the elites may not correspond to reality, as perceived by others. The period covered in this study (1991-2002) can be defined as the first round of negotiations which did not lead to a political settlement. During early 2001, peace talks gained a significant momentum. Heydar Aliyev and Robert Kocharian came very close to signing a peace agreement, which was soon frozen without any progress. By mid-2002 it was understood that the momentum lost in 2001 was vital (Matveeva 2002: 452, Kurkchiyan 2005: 163-164).<sup>3</sup> İlham Aliyev's government, which came to power in 2003, have taken an even tougher position on Nagorno-Karabakh; they reject any concessions and compromise. As Rüstamov writes, as a result of increasing oil revenues and the growth of

Azerbaijan's economy, military investments have increased considerably. Thus, Baku hardened its Nagorno-Karabakh policy (2008: 277). According to the interviews conducted in 2009, İlham Aliyev's Nagorno-Karabakh policy was evaluated highly by the respondents. In this context, it is hoped that studying the 'no war no peace' situation during Heydar Aliyev's presidency through elite views may provide some background information about the circumstances of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

The discourse of the Azerbaijani political elite on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict shed light on the interplay of nationalism and domestic power relations and struggles, particularly in the context of nation-and state-building. I follow Smith who argues that the nation is built on shared memories of joy, suffering and collective sacrifices (2004: 74).<sup>5</sup> Thus, battles, either defeats or victories, become important for mobilizing and unifying *ethnies* and nations. Memories of forced mass migration of the Azerbaijanis throughout history and the bloody clashes between the two communities (suffering), as well as the high number of refugees and internally displaced persons<sup>6</sup> who migrated from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh war (sacrifices), are important themes for the Azerbaijanis in their definition of nationhood and state-formation. In other words, the 'cultivation of shared memories' is vital for nation-defining activity since memory is crucial for identity; without memories there is no identity and no nation (Smith 2004: 74-75). Shared memories of a collective past mobilize and unite the members of a nation (Smith 2004: 77). Collectively remembering the perceived Armenian betrayals and aggressions against the Azerbaijanis appears to be part of the very act of remembering together. The way the past is remembered is crucial for re-defining identity, which appears to be the case in Azerbaijan. In Smith's view wars play a role in fostering and also undermining ethnic cohesion (2004: 159). In other words, historic consciousness of ethnic community is very often a product of warfare or the recurrent threat of war.

Smith writes that wars have direct and indirect consequences on ethnicity. The direct consequences of war are mobilization, propaganda and cohesion (2004: 171). Smith's discussion about mobilization and cohesion is important for the argument developed in this paper. Prolonged or total warfare causes the rapid increase in participants in the war effort. The more 'savage and extended the war, the greater the mobilization and consumption of the population' (Smith 2004: 171). The other effect of war is ethnic cohesion as mentioned above. In the short term, wars, unless immediately lost, create ethnic solidarity. In the medium term, prolonged

and/or total wars tend to strain cohesion and generally shatter unity even in homogeneous societies. However, in the longer term, 'protracted or intermittent wars' may reinforce the community's sense of ethnic individuality and history (Smith 2004: 172).

The Nagorno-Karabakh war between Azerbaijan and Armenia is a prolonged and a total war. The conflict claimed over 25,000 lives during the fighting, most of which took place between 1990 and 1994. Below I discuss the Azerbaijani discourse on renewed warfare, and the themes through which the mobilization of the population was explained. All interviewees claimed that the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan created national solidarity and a strong sense of Azerbaijani identity, which is attached to a particular terrain, i.e., to Nagorno-Karabakh. In other words, it is through 'territorialisation of memory' (Smith 2004: 75) that Nagorno-Karabakh became bound to a homeland. On this basis it was argued that Azerbaijan, sooner or later, will recover its lost lands. According to Hacızade, there are three issues where almost all political parties act in unity and harmony in Azerbaijan (1998). The first is the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The second is the development of a social policy that gives priority to the economic and social problems of the refugees and internally displaced persons (*kaçkıns*, as defined by the Azerbaijanis). The third is the maintenance of national independence. However, there was considerable gap between the government and opposition about how to settle the conflict. In this context, the present paper attempts to explore the points of diversion among the Azerbaijani elite with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh. The government, major opposition parties and some civil society groups addressed different issues as central for understanding the domestic component of the conflict.

There appeared to be a complex interplay between internal and external factors. The internal factors included issues such as the cleavage between the government and opposition, internal stability, problems stemming from the *kaçkıns*, the ideas about renewed warfare, and the status of the Azerbaijani army. The external factors involve regional and international threats, conflicts or alliances. These will be included to the extent to which they fall into the scope of this study. Although the government and opposition disagree about how to resolve the conflict, cohesion in Azerbaijani society seems to grow as the conflict remains unresolved. Moreover, the emphasis on renewed warfare and the tendency for not accepting any pre-conditions during the peace process appears to be intensifying. These contribute to the protraction of the current status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh,

which is inadmissible for the international community. Within this context, this paper aims to provide the key domestic issues and power relations that have contributed to the absence of a political settlement during the 1990s. Since a significant number of the interviewees are still influential in shaping the Azerbaijani point of view against the Armenian standpoint, the elite view covered in this study may have some implications for the coming years.

The following section provides a brief summary of the recent history of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. This will be followed by a discussion about Heydar Aliyev government's national policy on Nagorno-Karabakh. Lastly, the fourth section covers the surfacing ideas about war. The main themes of discussion include the obstacles to a political solution to the conflict, the return of the *kaçkıns* to their former places of residence, the views about regional powers and international peace keeping organizations, and the option of using military force to secure Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

### **Post-Soviet history of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict<sup>7</sup>**

Under the influence of the era of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh campaigned first for unification with Armenia and then for total independence. The Armenians' demand provoked protests from the Azerbaijanis, which eventually led to bloody clashes between the two communities. As a consequence, about 200,000 Azerbaijani refugees were expelled from Armenia who flooded to Baku and other cities. The Armenians refer to the anti-Armenian riots and the killings of the Armenians which occurred in 1988 in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait, whereas Azerbaijanis refer to the forced migration of Azerbaijanis from the region as the cause of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The 1988 events gave rise to a new phase in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.<sup>8</sup> *Azerbaijani Halk Cephesi* (Azerbaijan Popular Front) (APF), led by Ebulfez Elçibey, was formed during this period.<sup>9</sup> The movement which was led by Ebulfez Elçibey mobilized the population against the Communist Party leadership in Azerbaijan in 1989. Numerous strikes and demonstrations were organized by the People's Front. In response, the Russian troops entered Baku to restore order in January 1990. Many civilians were killed, martial law was declared, Popular Front leaders were arrested, and elections were postponed. This period which is known as *Black January* is accepted as a turning point in the political history of Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence from Azerbaijan in September 1991. In January 1992, it declared itself an independent Republic. These developments gave rise to a full-scale war between Azerbaijan and Armenia.<sup>10</sup> In June 1992,

Ebulfez Elçibey was elected as the president of Azerbaijan, replacing Ayaz Mutalibov. Ebulfez Elçibey stated that he would protect Azerbaijan's statehood and territorial integrity; he promised victory in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, the APF saw Turkey as their principal partner since they believed that, as a member of the NATO, Turkey would help Azerbaijan in her conflict with Armenia and counterbalance the influence of the Armenian diaspora on Western policy makers.<sup>11</sup> Ebulfez Elçibey's failure to win the war resulted in his fall in June 1993 and his power was transferred to Heydar Aliyev. As Kamrava notes, Heydar Aliyev consolidated his power through 'skilful maneuvers' in the areas of foreign policy, economics and domestic politics (2001: 223). He negotiated a cease-fire with Armenia in May 1994. Later, he made Azerbaijan a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) again, out of which Ebulfez Elçibey had pulled Azerbaijan. He pursued a policy less antagonistic toward Russia and Iran, while being more distant toward Turkey. He also established close commercial ties with the US and Europe. At the domestic level, Heydar Aliyev has 'made himself central to the continued operations of the state' (Kamrava 2001: 223-228, 231).<sup>12</sup>

As a consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, Azerbaijan lost not only the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, but also its seven *rayons* (districts) surrounding the territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azerbaijanis demand the return of all occupied territories, including Nagorno-Karabakh, which they see as their own land. The Azerbaijani's argue that it was the Armenians who have occupied their territories. The Azerbaijanis base their claims on the sanctity of their borders and on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Thus, they view the conflict as between Azerbaijan and Armenia, not between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. In other words, Azerbaijan does not recognize the Nagorno-Karabakh leadership as a party of the conflict and it prefers direct negotiations only with Armenia, whereas Armenia claims that the conflict should be resolved between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, in turn, argue that they cannot negotiate their sovereignty, which they achieved on the principle of self-determination. Another consequence of the war was the clashes between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the two republics during 1988 and 1989, which led to forced or voluntary migration of both communities from Azerbaijan and Armenia. This has resulted in one million refugees and internally displaced persons living in Azerbaijan (*kaçkıns*). This development had important consequences for Azerbaijan's internal stability. According to Yunusov, one of the interviewees, the lack of a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the internal refugee

population are the most serious challenges not only to Azerbaijan's security, but also to its political and economic development (2003: 143-144). As Yunusov notes, the internally displaced persons, including the refugees, have been living in tents for more than ten years and they are in the way of becoming the major opponents of the government (2003: 144). Public opinion polls and reactions of the youth organizations also show that there is an increasing radicalization in the political views of the youth since 2001. The cause of this radicalization is the emergence of a new generation of Azerbaijani youth who never lived together with the Armenians or made war with them. This generation was brought up with the idea that Azerbaijan's lost territories should be recovered (Yunusov 2003: 144).

There are four major unresolved issues about the war since the cease-fire in May 1994. The first is the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Baku offers maximum autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, which they reject. The second is the status of the strategic Lachin corridor, which is the only land connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. The third is the return of the refugees and displaced persons to their former homes. The final issue is the economic blockades in both countries, including the closed Armenian borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey and the US blockade on Azerbaijan, banning direct American governmental aid to Azerbaijan.

I now turn to the elite opinion on conflict resolution and discuss how the Nagorno-Karabakh problem was conceived by the leading members of the Azerbaijani society in 1990s. For the most part, there were sharp contrasts as well as commonalities in the discourses of the government and opposition parties on issues like national identity, national culture, ethnicity and so forth. However, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue appeared to play down all the deep-rooted traditional conflicts and cleavages. Yet there were several areas of controversies between, as well as within, the government, major opposition parties and some civil society groups regarding the local dimension of the conflict.

### **Azerbaijan's national policy on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**

Brown argues that there is not, nor has there been, any significant variation in the official, intellectual or popular Azerbaijani attitude toward the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. This is because the conflict began in late 1987; thus, it is recent (2004: 580). This paper argues that there were diverse ideas about Nagorno-Karabakh among the Azerbaijani elite. The cleavage between the government and opposition did not appear as decisive. However, as revealed in the arguments of the interviewees, the public view appeared to be less flexible than that of the government. According to an

opinion poll, forty nine per cent of the Azerbaijanis in Baku stated that they were opposed to concessions on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, while forty per cent stated that any compromises should be limited (Cornell 2001: 120). The public surveys conducted at the end of the 2000s in Azerbaijan point to an increasing tendency to reject any compromise. According to the surveys conducted in 2006, 2008 and 2009, 59.4, 62.3 and 70.8 per cent of the respondents, respectively, said they do not accept a compromise.<sup>13</sup> In this context, (15),<sup>14</sup> who was the former most senior adviser of Heydar Aliyev, said that Heydar Aliyev tried to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh problem ‘gently’; to show the West that the Azerbaijanis were making concessions to the Armenians. However, Heydar Aliyev later saw that ‘Because of these concessions, he can loose his power/government and anarchy will start in Azerbaijan.’ There was not only public reaction against the concessions made by Heydar Aliyev, as claimed by the respondents. The peace plan offered in 1999 was rejected by many of the Azerbaijani elite and three of Heydar Aliyev’s top and most experienced advisers resigned in reaction to the concessions he made. Those who resigned were Vafa Gülüzade, Tofik Zülfügarov, and Eldar Namazov.

Although the Azerbaijani attitude toward the occupied lands did not vary, there were several conflicting views about how to reach a lasting political settlement. Some of the interviewees, including the members of the government and opposition, as well as the academics, argued that there was a national policy on Nagorno-Karabakh. Others, mostly from the opposition camp, criticized Heydar Aliyev’s policies who claimed that their policies were different from his. The opposition also strongly reacted to Heydar Aliyev’s alleged concessions. As Cornell claims, they accused him with acting under the pressure of Washington (2001: 120). Moreover, the opposition members argued that there was no unity in Azerbaijan and that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was never seriously analysed nationwide. All of the political parties were forced to play their own cards; they had to do this to increase their popularity. Thus, they needed to develop their own program on Nagorno-Karabakh [interview with (16), who was an assistant deputy minister of Foreign Affairs]. (6), who was a political scientist, worded the situation as follows:

The problem is that the relations between the government and opposition are very tense. This is one of the most difficult issues to solve....What can we do about this? Nothing...No one gives an ear to us; I mean, to the scientists.

The Nagorno-Karabakh problem was manipulated for the purpose of gaining power; different political groups have used the conflict for their own purposes. As argued by a respondent, three or five years ago the struggle for power was based on Nagorno-Karabakh. In the past, nobody



really wanted to win Nagorno-Karabakh back; what they really wanted was to come to power. However, Heydar Aliyev explained the people that to use the Nagorno-Karabakh subject for political aims was not ethical. Now the political parties do not openly use the Nagorno-Karabakh problem for their power struggle as they used to do in the past [interview with (11), academician]. In this context the idea of making concessions to the Armenians appeared to be more significant than the traditional cleavage between the government and opposition. As (8), a journalist, worded:

Everybody thinks similarly; whether a leftist, a nationalist, an ex-communist, everybody says Karabakh is Azerbaijan's historical land and it certainly should be recovered. Everybody thinks that Armenians can live there as Azerbaijan citizens, they can benefit from Azerbaijan's laws, but Karabakh should be Azerbaijan's land. There is one different approach which belongs to Azerbaijan's administration, to Heydar Aliyev's administration. The 'Karabakh autonomous republican model' was proposed to Armenians by them (the Azerbaijan government). But the opposition parties in Azerbaijan are against this. In their view, it's not right to give autonomy to Armenians; only cultural autonomy can be given to Armenians so they can protect their language, etc. This is the only difference; the government's inclination to give autonomy and the opposition's objection to it.

Not only the opposition camp, but even some of Heydar Aliyev's most senior advisors were against these concessions, as mentioned above. With reference to the issue of giving autonomy to the Armenians, (15) said that Heydar Aliyev made a very big mistake when he declared that he would give the Armenians the highest status of autonomy on condition that the problem be solved through negotiation. In (15)'s words:

First, he did this all by himself; he didn't ask me, the ministers, or the people. We won't give autonomy to Armenians. How come?...If Armenians must have autonomy there, then we must also have autonomy in Zangezur; both are the same size. Only this kind of a solution will be fair. If we give autonomy to Armenians there, then, let's call Lachin a corridor, and let's also give that to the Armenians! Then, this will mean Azerbaijan's total defeat; giving Azerbaijan's most strategic paths to Armenians...After five-ten years, when the situation changes, they will also occupy Nakhichevan...The Armenians should never have autonomy in Nagorno-Karabakh. Our biggest concession to them will be to recognize their citizenship and minority rights, nothing else. This is how a fair solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem can be achieved...We should request the peaceful withdrawal of this aggressor state from our territories by order of a UN resolution.

The main debate was the discussion about whether there was a national policy on Nagorno-Karabakh or not. Some interviewees argued that although there was a national policy, there was no common program or agreement about how to settle the war [interview with (14), Musavat]. To explain this point further, it is important to note the views of Tofik Zülfügarov, who was not only a former minister, but also one of the four persons (Tofik Zülfügarov, Eldar Namazov, Nazım İmamov and Sadık Bağirov) who prepared a (national) charter (Karabakh *Hartiya*) for the resolution of the conflict. As Tofik Zülfügarov said, the members of the government and opposition signed the principles in this charter together. In Tofik Zülfügarov's words, 'They (those who signed the charter) said this is our policy. I mean, we now have a common policy/approach on some basic principles. But nothing is clear about who will claim these principles.' These principles were formulated in reaction to the common principles accepted in Armenia, which the Azerbaijanis would never recognize. The charter developed by this group was also based on three principles. The first was to restore Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and regain their occupied territories. The second was to ensure the return of the *kaçkıms* to their former homes and establish sovereignty. The third condition was that of the situation remained unresolved, another course of action would be followed. This charter was supported by 600 organizations, including all of the leaders of the opposition parties, public bodies, NGOs, cooks' organizations, painters, members of the media, journalists, intellectuals, writers, and some members of the national assembly (interview with Tofik Zülfügarov). An informative letter about the charter was sent to Heydar Aliyev; however, he did not reply. As Tofik Zülfügarov continued, 'Two weeks later, the government said this was already their president's policy, he already supported these principles.' Nevertheless, Tofik Zülfügarov said that they now had common principles and it was not possible for anyone to retreat.

There were others who were also critical about Heydar Aliyev's policy. One such person was (25), one of the leading figures of the Azerbaijan National Independence Party, who claimed that:

These principles were accepted by everyone and we wanted the government to declare that they wouldn't deviate from these principles and that they would carry out the negotiations in accordance with these principles. However, the state didn't accept these officially; this is an obstacle to the development of a national programme on Karabakh.

Some of the interviewees, mostly from the opposition, claimed that a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was intentionally frozen by Heydar Aliyev himself. As an experienced politician, Heydar Aliyev knew that no

government could stay in power for long without freezing the Nagorno-Karabakh problem [interview with (22), journalist]. However, the interview data suggests that, there was another side to the preservation of the status quo. Some claimed that Heydar Aliyev signed a cease-fire, not only to protect his power, but also to control the developments in the country. For example, it was argued that ‘This is why Heydar Aliyev prolongs the problem. I mean, to provide internal stability in the country’ [interview with (20), PFFPA]. Even those who were critical about Heydar Aliyev’s policies on Nagorno-Karabakh evaluated his presidency positively since they believed that he did provide internal stability. They pointed out that it was Heydar Aliyev’s charisma and experience which ended the frequent change of governments, the risk of a civil war and political crises [interviews with (7), academician; (18), journalist; (22), journalist]. As (7) worded:

We found the leader who could secure stability and implement reforms, and we brought him to power: Heydar Aliyev. Aliyev was an authoritarian leader. At that time, he was the only person who could do this; there were no other alternatives because he was the only leader who came from the past and we brought him to power. But now, the situation has changed. Today there is stability in Azerbaijan and there is also an unresolved problem (the Karabakh conflict).

Despite the general consensus about Heydar Aliyev’s providing stability to Azerbaijan, the fact remains that the *kaçkıns* have been an ongoing source of instability. As Yunusov has pointed out, according to the official Azerbaijan data, by the end of 2001, there were 219,000 refugees from Armenia, as well as some Meskhetian (Ahıska) Turks who escaped from Uzbekistan in 1989. There were also 575,000 internally displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh. These numbers add to about ten per cent of the population (2005: 86).<sup>15</sup> The *kaçkıns* were regarded as outsiders in their own homeland. With regard to the return of the *kaçkıns*, some claimed that the *kaçkıns* would not return if normal living conditions were provided for them here in Azerbaijan [interview with (14), Musavat]. Others argued to the contrary and said that the *kaçkıns* did want to go back to their homes [interview with (8), journalist]. Yet others claimed that the *kaçkıns* would return since they had relatively better living conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh [interview with (22), journalist]. As these views suggest, there was no agreement about the return of the *kaçkıns* to their former homes. The members of the opposition, or those who sided with the opposition appeared to support the return of the *kaçkıns*. They claimed that the *kaçkıns* did want to return. For example, (29) from the PFFPA said, ‘They have nothing here...They were never integrated here, they don’t have homes here, they will certainly return.’ The members of the government,

on the other hand, mostly argued that it was difficult for the *kaçkıns* to return since most of them preferred to stay in Azerbaijan. It was also claimed that the *kaçkıns* were relatively integrated into the Azerbaijani society. Partly confirming this claim, (24) from the PFPA argued that most of the *kaçkıns* left their villages and went to Russia or Baku to work. Thus, those who remain in refugee camps were only the women, children and the elderly, who do not threaten Azerbaijan's internal stability and 'create problems.' However, contrary to the claims made by the members of the government, what (19), who was one of the former Foreign Affairs ministers, said is noteworthy:

Three or four years ago, the UN offered us to improve the conditions of the *kaçkıns* and to integrate them into the society. We absolutely rejected it and said such a policy, by no means, was acceptable because, tactically, after being integrated into the society, they would never go back to their homes.

Another argument provided a clearer perspective about the situation of the *kaçkıns*:

As an Azeri Turk, I know that the *kaçkıns* are in great difficulty and they want to go back to their land. But as a scientist, I also know that this is not possible...As a military expert, I know that war has its own laws. When the war just started in 1988, I was invited to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and asked how this war could come to an end. I told them that it would continue for another seven, eight years at the least...But if you ask me the same question now, I will say this war will continue for twenty or twenty-five more years. At that time, it was the Soviet period and this problem was the Soviet state's internal problem. Now, there are two different states, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Also the situation in the Caucasus has completely changed. Russia has its own interests here. Iran has its own interests, too. Turkey is another country. There is also the US, besides Georgia and Armenia. Different countries have their own interests in this region. The oil companies have their own interests, too [interview with (2), academician].

As have been discussed, there were conflicting claims about whether there was a national policy on Nagorno-Karabakh or not and about the status of the *kaçkıns*. It is difficult to measure the weight of these views. With regard to the first issue there appears to be more consensus since the opposition believed that they had some power over the government to prevent it from acting on its own. Although this was not worded openly, it was believed that the government was forced to consider the sensitivities of the public as well as the opposition. Moreover, those who were critical of Heydar Aliyev's policies agreed that some kind of consensus about the

common principles was established. However, the belief that there will be progress in the peaceful settlement still appeared to be weak. In other words, most believed that a no peace no war situation will continue. In this context, the resumption of armed conflict appeared as the central theme as will be discussed in the following section. With regard to the second issue the opposition accused the government for hindering the *kaçkıns*' resettlement elsewhere and their integration into Azerbaijani society. They thought that the government was using the refugees not only against external powers to back their claims about Nagorno-Karabakh, but also to mobilize the population against the Armenians. While some of the government members acknowledged that the *kaçkıns* lived under very difficult conditions, others claimed that many of them started to find permanent homes and a job, and did not want to go back to their homes. However, some interviewees claimed that the journalists, opposition party members or people from international organizations were not allowed to visit the refugee camps. As claimed by some of the opposition members, those who did visit the refugee camps and informed the public or the outsiders were arrested. I personally visited two camps during my field trip in Baku in 1998 and talked to some refugees, which confirmed the claims that the *kaçkıns* lived lives of hardship. It can be concluded that what was said about the situation of the *kaçkıns* shifted depending on the context. This was partly because some of the respondents thought that it is politically advantageous to keep the *kaçkıns* displaced. Moreover, the outsiders were not provided with proper information about the internally displaced and the refugees. Since this was a sensitive topic for the Azerbaijanis, not only the officials and members of the government, but also members of the opposition provided conflicting information about the *kaçkıns*.

I now discuss the surfacing ideas about renewed warfare in connection to the views discussed in this section.

### **Military option to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**

It was claimed that the government announced in 2001 that they would make concessions on Nagorno-Karabakh. This caused the opposition to become more reactive, and the idea of settling the problem by going to war began to spread in political circles. The idea of going to war was multi-dimensional. Apart from the tension between the government and opposition, which was referred to in several instances in the previous section, there were two other major dimensions. The first of these was the government's ambivalent ideas about exercising a military option. This had three aspects. First, the government wanted to satisfy the societal demand about not to make any concessions and to retake Nagorno-Karabakh. As an example to the first aspect, (4) from the *Karabağ Azatlık Təşkilatı* (Or-

ganization for the Liberation of Karabakh), criticized the government by arguing as follows:

Aliyev is hesitant about entering or not entering in a war...Now, the struggle between those who are for a war and who are against it, continues. In our view, this is wrong. Because if the Armenians don't want to withdraw from our territories, we are forced to fight. I mean, the world shouldn't know us as people who want a war...Besides, the passivity, inactivity of international organizations, the Minsk Group, the UN and OSCE, is also pushing us into action.

Second, the government was sensitive about not being defined as an 'aggressor' state in international circles; thus, they distanced themselves from the advocates of war. With regard to the second aspect, (16), who was an assistant deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, commented on the above mentioned charter which was prepared in line with the Lisbon principles, and said:

They (those who prepared the charter) also added that if these principles can't be applied by peaceful means, then we should fight...I also used these principles in Lisbon, in the OSCE meeting...But the problem is, when Armenia is rejecting the application of these principles, how can you apply these?...There is another problem. If you are fighting, this means you don't accept these principles. After you fight and recover the lost territories, are you going to give autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh? Or are you going to send the Armenians away from Nagorno-Karabakh? It's easy to talk at the populist level.

Third, the government believed that this was a war against Russia, which they knew they could not win. In other words, a central reason for the lack of progress in the negotiations was Azerbaijan's fear of the intentions of Russia, who was the leading negotiator. As an example to the last aspect, (16) gave many examples from the years 1992 and 1993 and said that each time they signed a document agreeing toward a political solution about some of the problems, the Armenians occupied some more land. In (16)'s words:

Then again, I had to end the negotiations...I have been part of this process since the very first day...Unfortunately, today, America, France and Russia are closing their eyes to the Armenian aggressions against Azerbaijan...If you can't work out the geopolitical factors, you can't resolve the problem. But, on the other hand, resolving the problem doesn't mean eliminating other geopolitical factors. Which one should we start with? ...We are still working...After September 11, many things began to change.

In congruence with this view, (15) also believed that if a war begins in Nagorno-Karabakh:

The Russians will use this war and then occupy some more land, then overthrow the government and bring someone like Mutalibov to power. Hence, we will not benefit from entering in a war now... We should enter a war only when we are 150 per cent sure that we can win it. Or we should be 150 per cent sure that we won't (once again) withdraw from those territories.<sup>16</sup>

The second of the dimensions about the idea of a war was the government's unexpressed option to resort to war. Although the members of the government followed Heydar Aliyev's stance on Nagorno-Karabakh, the option of using force was not altogether eliminated from the minds of the members of the government, as the interview data suggests. It was claimed that not only the opposition, but some of the state officials and the leaders of some political groups now openly talked about the possibility of renewed fighting:

Today, in Azerbaijan public opinion, in the political circles, and even in state bureaus, it is believed that this problem can only be settled by military measures, by war... Why? Here there is occupation, invasion of our land. And the West knows this very well. They also know that this happened with Russia's help. They just don't express this openly... the Azerbaijan public thinks that diplomacy, negotiations and agreements don't help at all and that our land can only be taken back through military measures, by war [interview with (3), academician].

These two dimensions, ambivalence and the unexpressed option for taking military measures, were related to the psychology of the nation. The commonly shared feeling among the people was that war was the only possible solution to the conflict. As (17), a journalist, explained, the Nagorno-Karabakh problem created two different and very dangerous psychological states of mind; namely extreme pacifism and radical militancy. He said that the Nagorno-Karabakh problem made the people populist; 'Although they didn't fight in a war, they felt like warriors. I would call this a pseudo/quasi-combatant psychology.' Rasizade defines Azerbaijan's interest in renewed fighting as a 'national obsession', where the officials and opposition leaders compete with one another to prove their 'patriotic credentials' (2004: 155). In this context, (17) made an interesting comment and said, 'If our newspaper wrote that a solution should only be achieved through peaceful means, everyone would turn their backs on our newspaper.'

Several explanations were provided for why the status quo was not improved or changed in any way. First, Heydar Aliyev was held responsible for the continuation of the 'no war no peace' situation. It was argued that in May 1994, a cease-fire was signed followed by the oil agreements signed

in September. If there had not been cease-fire, these oil agreements would not have been signed either. Although Heydar Aliyev had promised that he would solve the conflict after the signing of the oil agreements, he did not keep his promise. This showed that both Heydar Aliyev and Robert Kocaryan wanted to maintain their own power [interview with (13), Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and a member of the Organization for the Liberation of Karabakh]. Second, it was claimed that Heydar Aliyev had deliberately delayed the formation of a national army to prevent any military coups against him. The third explanation was the radical and uncompromising stand of the political powers in Azerbaijan. In this context, it was claimed that the Azerbaijanis were about to recover their lost ground during Ebulfez Elçibey's rule, but when the Russian's initiated first the Lezgian problem and later the Talish problem, the Azerbaijanis once again lost their territories [interview with (22), journalist]. Lastly, the international organizations were held responsible for the present situation. Almost all of the leading members of the Azerbaijani society who were interviewed said that it was almost impossible to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the UN. They displayed a similar distrust toward the international actors of the negotiation process. The interviewees also believed that, although the UN has four resolutions acknowledging that Azerbaijan's land is under occupation and that the Armenians should withdraw, the member states of the Minsk Group were not neutral. Thus, because of all of the above-mentioned explanations the conditions remained the same and the conflict continued.

Having discussed the various aspects of the war theme, one fact clearly stands out: the members of the government only considered renewed warfare as a last measure. They wanted the return of the region through negotiation. The members of the opposition, on the other hand, favoured and advocated a military solution. As Rasizade (2004: 155) also wrote in 2004, although the Azerbaijan army was not ready or capable of launching a new offensive, there was a growing uproar among the opposition leaders for a re-conquest war. For example, (27) from the PFPa said that, as the PFPa, they were in the front ranks among those who wanted to fight. This was what their leader (Ebulfez Elçibey) advised them to do. The Musavat Party also favoured war. For example, (28) from the Musavat said that the problem has not been solved although the years have passed. Today, they were faced with a 'strange proposal.' That is, to give their lands away for peace. As (28) continued, 'Azerbaijan doesn't need such a peace. In this case, we, as the Musavat Party, propose to use military pressure and to save our land through military power.'

Rasizade also asserts that the Azerbaijani officials, members of the parliament and the media play the war card as Azerbaijan's negotiating strategy.



They do this for two reasons. The first is to speed up the peace process. The second is to demonstrate that the president is resisting the domestic pressure for war (2004: 155). These views were supported by some of the interviewees. Threats of military revenge were seen as an attempt to show the world that Azerbaijan was about to free itself from the pressure of the West. It also meant that Azerbaijan was now trying to familiarize the West with the idea that it was not only ready for a war, but also wanted to go to war [interview with (7), academician].

It is again difficult to measure the weight of the above claims. However, the advocacy of military solutions remain strong. As Tchilingirian claims, the Nagorno-Karabakh leadership believes that Azerbaijan will eventually resolve the conflict militarily (1999: 451). As a consequence of this perceived or real threat, combat readiness has become a top priority in Nagorno-Karabakh, i.e., a safeguard against renewed fighting (Tchilingirian 1999: 451). Walker too, notes that Armenia rightly worries about Azerbaijan's forty six per cent increase of military spending between 1992 and 1995, following the oil revenues flow into the country (2000: 189). In line with these claims the leading members of the Azerbaijani society also believed that Armenia is concerned about the growing military strength of Azerbaijan, as well as its growing flow of oil revenues and improving economy. Walker wrote in 2000 that the region's oil and gas reserves have increased incentives not only for peace settlements, but also for renewed fighting in South Caucasus (2000: 186). The evaluations in this paper also suggest that the war rhetoric itself contributed to the incentive for a peaceful settlement. The agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue high-level meetings according to the joint declaration signed by the presidents of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in October 2008 appears to confirm this view.

According to the surveys conducted in 2006, 2008 and 2009, 38.4, 31.6 and 35.8 per cent of the respondents, respectively, believed that there will be progress in the peaceful settlement of the conflict. With regard to renewed fighting, 12.7, 16.5, and 11.5 per cent, respectively, believed that the military operations will recommence. The decrease in 2009 is due to the Russian military intervention in Georgia in the summer of 2008. Those who thought that a no war no peace situation will continue were 46.7, 48.8 and 51.7 per cent, respectively.<sup>17</sup> These figures, although they reflect the opinions of the late 2000s, support the views of the elite presented in this study. About one third of the respondents believe in a peaceful settlement, whereas half of the respondents believe that the current status quo will be preserved. The low percentages of those who think that military operations will recommence suggest that the rhetoric about liberating Nagorno-Karabakh may not go as deep in society as public debate

suggests. However, the elite opinion to resort to war, although some did not favour it, appeared to be strong. Thus, it is possible to agree that war is excluded as a tool to settle the conflict, but it is considered as the last option under exceptional circumstances. The military doctrine overwhelmingly approved by the Azerbaijani parliament in June 2010 reaffirms Azerbaijan's right to use military force to liberate the occupied territories. This, too, supports the general tendency discussed in this paper to re-establish the territorial integrity of the country if peaceful talks do not come to an end.

## Conclusion

There were many factors which contributed to the continuation of the status quo, despite the common belief that Heydar Aliyev had deliberately delayed a political settlement to the conflict. First, the Azerbaijanis hoped that their increasing oil revenues would help strengthen their economy and army. Second, they did not trust the intentions of the Armenians and Russians. They argued that Russia has hidden interests in the region and that they have always supported Armenia. Third, there was distrust about the intentions of international peace-keeping organizations and Western intermediaries. Fourth, the opposition parties and public, as well as some of the members of the government in Azerbaijan appeared to be against any concessions on Nagorno-Karabakh. These points provided a common ground against the Armenian claims over Nagorno-Karabakh. However, the nationalist discourse on Nagorno-Karabakh was challenged by alternative ideas. The interview data, which covered the developments until the end of 2001, revealed that there was no national program for a political settlement. The uncompromising attitude of the government and opposition, together with the disagreements within each group about common principles and about the military option, appeared to hinder the endorsement of a national program on Nagorno-Karabakh during the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> Besides, the views of the journalists, academics and some influential NGOs further added to the fractured and diversified standpoints in the domestic political discourse on Nagorno-Karabakh. However, it was the same domestic power relations and struggles that pushed Azerbaijan toward signing an agreement with Armenia to continue peace talks.

These developments cannot be isolated from the broader global context. The inconclusive Minsk process, the changing balance of the competition between the US and Russia for influence in the region, Russia's actions in Georgia and lastly, the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia may be listed among the factors which initiated the peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Yerevan's assumed distancing itself from the Armenian diaspora and Ankara's assumed move to open its borders with Armenia in

return for Armenia's withdrawal from the territories around Nagorno-Karabakh also appears to initiate a new phase in the negotiation process. However, although the changing interests of some third countries like Russia or Turkey and the thawing relations between Armenia and Turkey may cause progress in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, what really matters is the actual relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It can be expected that the recent developments in the region will deeply transform the dynamics of the domestic power struggles and the political discourse of the elites in both countries, which, in turn, will pave *a new path* towards the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

## Appendix

The 2001 interviews were conducted with some influential members of the government (*Yeni Azərbaycan Partisi*) (New Azerbaijan Party) such as Araz Azimov (President's special representative for Nagorno-Karabakh) and major opposition parties, including members of the *Musavat Partisi* (Musavat Party); Ali Kerimli, who was the leader of the *reformist* wing of the *Azərbaycan Halk Cəbhəsi Partisi* (Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan) (PFPA) in 2001 and now the leader of the same party; Mirmahmut Miralioğlu, who was at that time the leader of the *traditional* wing of the PFPA; members of the *Azərbaycan Demokrat Partisi* (Democratic Party of Azerbaijan); Etibar Mammadov, who was the leader of the *Azərbaycan Milli İstiklal Partisi* (Azerbaijan National Independence Party), as well as two (former) senior advisers of Heydar Aliyev; (former) deputies such as Tofik Zülfügarov; Akif Nagi, who was and still (at the time of writing) is the leader of the *Karabağ Azatlık Təşkilatı* (Organization for the Liberation of Karabakh), and former ambassadors to Iran (Nesib Nesibli) and Russia (Hikmet Hacızade), politicians, members of civil society organizations (Arif Yunusov), academicians, and newspaper editors (Kamil Hamzaoğlu, Şahin Caferli, Elçin Alioğlu, Kamran Hasanlı, Gazanfer Hamidoğlu).

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Another research, again about Nagorno-Karabakh, was carried out in Baku in April 2009. The twenty-five in-depth personal interviews conducted in 2009 aimed to analyse the political discourse of some of the leading members of the Azerbaijani elite on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The focus of the study mentioned above was to analyse how Azerbaijanis (re)construct their ideas about Armenian identity and community. See Tokluoğlu (2011).
- <sup>2</sup> The field research of this project was carried out with the collaboration of two researchers, I myself and Oktay Tanrısever. The research data is used separately by the researchers, who are from different disciplines.

- <sup>3</sup> For the negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia which took place between 1994 and 2001, see Matveeva (2002: 452-454), de Waal (2003: 251-268).
- <sup>4</sup> The joint declaration signed by the presidents of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan on 2 October 2008, which calls for a peaceful resolution, seems to end the fragile ceasefire period prevailing since 1994. In other words, the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue high-level meetings signals an important step in the 20-year peace talks.
- <sup>5</sup> Smith's argument about war and ethnicity provided here was used in another paper of the author. Some modifications were made and other arguments of Smith about war and ethnicity were added. See Tokluoglu (2011: 1224-1226).
- <sup>6</sup> From the Azerbaijani point of view, the term refugee refers to those who migrated from Armenia to Azerbaijan (crossing of international borders), whereas the term internally displaced persons refers to those who migrated from Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan since Nagorno-Karabakh is seen as part of Azerbaijan's territories (no crossing of international borders).
- <sup>7</sup> This section is a shorter and a similar version of the one written by the author in Tokluoglu (2011: 1228-1230).
- <sup>8</sup> For the first (1905), second (between 1918 and 1921) and the third (after 1988) phases of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, see Yunusov (2005).
- <sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the causes and consequences of nationalism in Azerbaijan between 1988 and 1991, see Bölükbaşı (2001).
- <sup>10</sup> For information about the clashes between the Azerbaijanis and Armenians and the different phases of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, see Dragadze (1990: 175-178), Saroyan (1990: 18-22), Altstadt (1994: 114-119), Goldenberg (1994: 162-168), Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh* (1994), Cornell (1998: 54-57), Laitin and Suny (1999: 151-154), Tchilingrian (1999: 440-446), Van der Leeuw (2000: chapters 10 and 11), Cornell (2001: 78-99, 102-107), de Waal (2003). For the legal aspect of the conflict and the attitudes of the world community toward the conflict, see Altstadt (1994: 119-125), Dudwick (1996: 428-433), Cornell (1997), Laitin and Suny (1999: 157-168), Walker (2000: 171-181), Cornell (2001: 109-125), Milanova (2003).
- <sup>11</sup> For more information about the APF movement, Ebulfez Elçibey's presidency and his Nagorno-Karabakh policy, see Dragadze (1990: 170-174), Saroyan (1990: 22-26), Altstadt (1992: 223), Goldenberg (1994: 116-128), Hunter (1994: 68-70, 84-87, 99-101), Zinin and Maleshenko (1994: 105-107), Altstadt (1997: 118-119, 122, 124-125, 134-136), Herzig (1999: 11-14, 16-18), Akiner (2000: 92), Van der Leeuw (2000: 160-163, 173-178), Kamrava (2001: 220-222), Altstadt (2003: 4-8), Balayev (2004: 89-91).
- <sup>12</sup> For the early days of Heydar Aliyev's presidency with a focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh war, see Van der Leeuw (2000: 179-187). For the domestic political dynamics in Azerbaijan around clan ties, i.e., the struggle between the two Nakhichevan clans (Heydar Aliyev's versus Ebulfez Elçibey's) on the one hand and the one between Heydar Aliyev's Nakhichevan clan and the Baku clan on the other hand, see Kechichian and Karasik (1995), Herzig (1999: 20-21).

- <sup>13</sup> *Azerbaijan in 2008 - Sociological Monitoring: Comparative Analysis of Findings of Sociological Survey Held in Republic by Totals of 2006, 2007 and 2008* (2009: 30).
- <sup>14</sup> To preserve the anonymity of the respondents, the interviewees are referred to by numbers in the text.
- <sup>15</sup> The World Bank estimated that the number of refugees is 250,000 and the internally displaced persons 650,000. This constitutes about twelve per cent of the population (Kamrava 2001: 219). For more information about the number of displaced Azerbaijanis and Armenians, see Hunter (1994: 67-68), Cornell (1998: 57), Walker (2000: 170-171). According to the official Armenian data, the total number of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, including a small number from Abhasia and Chechnya, and the internally displaced persons was 310,000, which is about eight per cent of the Armenian population (Yunusov 2005: 87).
- <sup>16</sup> As Rüstemov notes, the idea that the Russian Federation follows a foreign policy favouring Armenia is still widely shared by the Azerbaijani public (2008: 278).
- <sup>17</sup> *Azerbaijan in 2008 - Sociological Monitoring: Comparative Analysis of Findings of Sociological Survey Held in Republic by Totals of 2006, 2007 and 2008* (2009: 29).
- <sup>18</sup> On 23 May 2007, President İlham Aliyev endorsed the 'National Security Concept of Azerbaijan' (following the one endorsed in Armenia in April 2007). The Concept defines Azerbaijan's security environment, its national interests, and the threats against it. It also highlights the main directions of Azerbaijan's security policy. Among the national interests of Azerbaijan are cited the protection of independence and territorial integrity, as well as ensuring inviolability of the internationally-recognized borders of Azerbaijan. Among the threats against Azerbaijan are cited the actions against independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and the constitutional structure of the Republic of Azerbaijan (*National Security Concept of Azerbaijan Endorsed* 2007). The Concept refers to some of the problems resulting from the geographic location of Azerbaijan. Among these, it specifies the 'military attack of neighbouring Armenia', which resulted in the occupation of some parts of Azerbaijan's territory and the creation of approximately one million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons [*Azerbaycan Respublikasının Milli Tehlikesizlik Konsepsiyası* (National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan) (2007), *National Security Concept of Azerbaijan Endorsed* (2007)]. Rüstemov notes that there is a hot debate in Azerbaijan about the recently accepted National Security Document (2008: 270-274). While the officials argue that real threats toward Azerbaijan were openly worded in the document, others, mostly from the opposition, argue that the document does not make a clear distinction between Azerbaijan's enmity and amity patterns. Nevertheless, the 'National Security Concept of Azerbaijan' is now an officially accepted national program. It covers the common principles which the opposition, together with some non-opposition actors like the NGOs and individual intellectuals, pressured the government to accept officially since late 1990s.

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# Dağlık Karabağ Sorununun Çözümü (1991 ve 2002) Azerbaycan Elit Görüşü

Ceylan Tokluoğlu\*

## Öz

Bu çalışma, Azerbaycan'ın önde gelen seçkinlerinin Dağlık Karabağ sorununun çözümü hakkındaki görüşlerini içermektedir. 1991 yılından 2001 yılının sonuna kadar olan dönem Azerbaycan'daki seçkinlerin gözleriyle incelenmektedir. Burada sunulan tartışma, Aralık 2001 yılında Bakü'de, Azerbaycan'da sözü geçen siyasi seçkinlerle gerçekleştirilen yirmi dokuz derinlemesine mülakat üzerine temellendirilmiştir. Dağlık Karabağ sorununun çözümü konusunda Azerbaycan'ın geliştirdiği ulusal politika, Haydar Aliyev hükümetinin Dağlık Karabağ konusundaki duruşu, kaçkınlar ve kaybedilen toprakları savaarak geri almak fikri bu yazının ana temalarını oluşturmaktadır. Askeri çözüm alternatifi üzerindeki vurgu ve barış sürecinde herhangi bir önkoşul kabul etmeme eğilimi giderek güçleniyor izlenimi vermektedir. Bu yaklaşım, uluslararası toplum tarafından kabul görmeyen bölgedeki mevcut durumun devamına katkıda bulunmaktadır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Dağlık Karabağ, Azerbaycan, Ermenistan, Güney Kafkasya, Etnik çatışma, Kaçkınlar

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## Взгляды азербайджанской элиты на урегулирование нагорно-карабахского конфликта (1991 и 2002 гг.)

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### Аннотация

Эта работа содержит взгляды ведущей элиты Азербайджана по урегулированию нагорно-карабахского конфликта. Период с 1991 года по конец 2001 года рассматривается глазами правящей элиты Азербайджана. Представленное обсуждение основано на двадцати девяти подробных интервью, проведенных с представителями политической элиты Азербайджана в декабре 2001 года в Баку. Основными темами данной статьи являются национальная политика, разработанная Азербайджаном в целях разрешения нагорно-карабахского конфликта; позиция правительства Гейдара Алиева по Нагорному Карабаху; беглецы и идея возврата потерянных территорий путем военной борьбы. Упор на альтернативу военного решения конфликта создает впечатление усиления тенденции неприятия каких-либо предварительных условий мирного процесса. Такой подход вносит свой определенный вклад в сохранение нынешней ситуации в регионе, не одобряемой международным сообществом.

### Ключевые слова

Нагорный Карабах, Азербайджан, Армения, Южный Кавказ, этнический конфликт, беглецы

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