

# New or Traditional?

## „Clans“, Regional Groupings, and State in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan\*

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This article presents only a fraction of the preliminary results of my field research in Azerbaijan, which is yet to be completed. The conclusions are therefore not final and may require further verification.

### I. Short Introduction

Modern political science, both in the West and in Russia, has made it almost a norm to view the post-colonial development of the former Soviet republics through the prism of the revival of a traditional lifestyle. This approach implies that in these countries, particularly in Central Asia and the Caucasus, traditions that were previously suppressed and banished from social life are now coming back. The traditional clan-based structure that existed among some peoples of these regions during the pre-soviet period is believed to be among them.

The emergence of such a „norm“ is determined by two main factors. On the one hand, research undertaken by some Western and Russian experts into traditions that disappeared without trace during Soviet times can be interpreted as an attempt to find something familiar and recognizable in the newly emerged states and societies. On the other hand, the researchers – although they may or may not be aware of it – have been influenced by the classical paradigm of perceiving the Orient, which was common in Western academic literature during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which originated during the age of European colonialism. According to this paradigm, the Orient is a world regulated by traditions. It is in this respect that the Orient is placed in opposition to the Occident, the universe of modernism. This way of perceiving and studying the East by Western science was brilliantly described by an American scholar, the late Edward Said, in his work „Orientalism“.<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that for some Western experts the „traditional“ character of the societies they study is so important. It's a kind of social inertia, which is characteristic of the humanities in particular. This inertia in thinking has also had its effect in the study of post-soviet Azerbaijan. Social and political journalism and academic works covering Azerbaijani society and state in the post-soviet period often feature the words „clan“, „clannishness“, „tribe“ etc., that is, elements of terminology that are used to describe traditional society. However, field work carried out by this author has demonstrated that the reality is different from the „norm“ that pervades Western and Russian political science. New informal networks and structures have emerged in the Azerbaijani society and state, which, despite sharing superficial similarities with traditional institutions such as clans and regional fellowships, are essentially quite different.

### II. Terminology

Local and foreign researchers still use concepts such as „clan“, „clannishness“ and „tribe“ for want of a better term, but at the same time are conscious of the fact that these terms fail to reflect the real situation adequately. To speak about „tribe“ in the context of post-Soviet Azerbaijan, in my view, does not make any sense at all. But this is not the end of the matter.

For one unfamiliar with the realities of Azerbaijan the words „clan“ and „clannishness“ – as used, for example, by Arif Yusunov – may imply that the phenomena denoted by these words have „deep historical roots“. Although Yusunov does concede that the term „goes somewhat beyond conventional understanding of the word *clan*“<sup>2</sup> he still fails to draw the natural conclusion that the core of the matter is exactly the contrary. What is called *clannishness* is essentially a new phenomenon in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, although it is disguised in the garb of tradition. Therefore, it will be incorrect to say that „with [Heydār] Əliyev's arrival [1993] *clannishness* in the society experienced a renaissance“.<sup>3</sup> What has sunk into oblivion cannot be reborn in principle! Something „reborn“ is something new, even if it does retain some genetic link with the past.

This phenomenon has no direct relation to the classical notion of clannishness, which is known to be present in many nations worldwide, principally because in this case one cannot see a reverse flow of resources from the centre to the appropriate region or to clan members on the local level. In Azerbaijan the phenomenon shares only one common feature with clannishness – the creation of informal networks and institutions on the basis of a common regional identity, and this is exactly what misleads the observer. Boundaries between regional groupings and regional fellowships [*zemlyachestvo*, a community of people born in the same area] coincide with those of medieval khanates on the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan and Armenia. But this is where all similarities end.

This phenomenon should not be termed „regional fellowship“, for it is functionally different. That is why I suggest using the term „regional grouping“,<sup>4</sup> which is in essence a strategy to capture resources.<sup>5</sup> In the environment of a command state<sup>6</sup> it is a strategy to gain power. The regional grouping is essentially a new political and economic instrument that evolved after the disintegration of the USSR, and this is indirectly confirmed by A. Yunusov

himself: „...until the summer of 1993 clannishness in post-Soviet Azerbaijan did not play a dominant role, although it actually was in place“.<sup>7</sup>

A regional grouping has its base in its „own“ regional fellowship and uses informal structures among the latter, etc. Certainly, the boundaries between the two social groups are quite transparent and mobile; this is exemplified by the fact that members of the regional grouping are recruited from the milieu of the regional fellowship. Besides, the broad strata of the regional fellowship and their leaders, out of their own mental inertia, identify themselves with „their own“ regional grouping. This identification is actively encouraged by the leaders of the regional groupings, who continuously suggest to „their“ regional fellowship that their interests are identical and not in contradiction. This strategy has been quite successful in Azerbaijan: members of the regional fellowship who live in severe destitution blindly support the representatives of „their“ regional grouping whose fortunes are worth millions of dollars and who won't spare a cent to support their regional fellows.<sup>8</sup>

The difference between regional fellowship and regional grouping is as great as that between a professional masons' guild and political freemasonry, even though formal similarities between the former two are quite numerous. Like the freemasonry of the modern era, regional groupings in Azerbaijan have borrowed from the regional fellowships only external attributes (such as belonging to the same territory, the sense of solidarity, mutual aide within a community, etc.), while changing the content entirely.

### III. The Characteristics of Regional Groupings

Over the last 12 years Azerbaijan has seen the emergence of two regional groupings. The first and the most numerous is the one comprised of Azerbaijanis originating from Armenia. In Azerbaijan proper they are half-contemptuously called the *Yeraz*.<sup>9</sup> This nickname is an abbreviation derived from „Yerevan Azerbaijanis“ and was given them by the late Academician Ziya Bunyatov; however, the self-reference term for the group is „ermenistanliler“ – the „Armenistanis“. In the local scientific literature they are referred to as „Azerbaijanis originating from Western Azerbaijan“.<sup>10</sup> The grouping has its base among those Azerbaijanis who either were themselves born on the territory of present-day Armenia or whose ancestors were. According to various unofficial estimates, their numbers make up between 2 and 3 million people<sup>11</sup> and they include both the refugees/re-settlers of the three migration waves (1918–1920, 1948–1952 and 1988–1990) and their descendants.

Numerically smaller, but more influential is the grouping that is made up of individuals native to the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic within Azerbaijan. The population of Nakhichevan is approximately 361,500 people.<sup>12</sup> The financial basis and the human resources framework of this

regional grouping were put in place as early as the 1970s, when H. Äliyev held the post of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. At that time, however, the dominance of the „Nakhichevanis“ in the country's leadership was not so noticeable.<sup>13</sup> During the late 1990s, having turned from a regional community into a regional grouping and maintaining their dominant position within the state structure as a result of Äliyev's staff policy, the „Nakhichevanis“ laid their hands on all key sectors of Azerbaijan's economy.

Along with the above two groupings there is also a Kurdish grouping that shows weak regional identity. It consists mainly of Kurds originating from Armenia, Nakhichevan, the Kelbajar region of Azerbaijan and Nagornyi Karabakh.<sup>14</sup>

I do not subscribe to the view of Zurab Todua that along with the aforementioned regional groupings there were and are another three („clans“ as he terms them): the Baku, the Gäncä, and the Karabakh.<sup>15</sup> In terms of their degree of social organization and solidarity these groupings cannot be compared with the groupings that are made up of those originating from Armenia and Nakhichevan. As Z. Todua correctly observed, they, like the representatives of other regions of Azerbaijan, failed „to get transformed from regular regional communities into organized clan groupings“.<sup>16</sup>

Amongst other reasons, the defeat of the Baku, Gäncä and Karabakh regional fellowships in the power struggle in Azerbaijan in 1991–1995 was due to their inability to move to a new, higher level of social organization. Their confrontation with the groupings of those originating from Armenia and Nakhichevan is like a confrontation between fighters of different weight categories, where the combat outcome is predetermined by the mere disparity of power and capability. In my view, the huge financial capacity of the „Nakhichevan“ and „Armenistan“ regional groupings certainly does play an important role, but is not the key factor in this confrontation. The most significant factor for this opposition is the fact that the regional groupings of those originating from Nakhichevan and Armenia are a phenomenon that is qualitatively different from a regional fellowship, in that they have reached a higher level of social development and organization.

This is explained largely by the fact that the period when the representatives of these „second rank“ regional fellowships ruled was too brief. The „Karabakh man“ Äbdürrahman Văzirov, former First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee of Azerbaijan, led the country from 1989 to 1990. His successor from Baku, Ayaz Mütəllibov, stayed in power only for a little while: between 1990 and 1992. First he was elected First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee of Azerbaijan and then became the country's first president. And finally, there was the „Gäncä man“, Surät Hüseyinov, who was the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan from 1993 to 1994. Further attempts by these regional fellowships to shape themselves as regional groupings

were harshly suppressed by the Armenistani and Nakhichevani regional groupings, both in the economy and in politics<sup>17</sup>. This state of affairs was confirmed, for example, by a representative of the Borçalı regional fellowship that comprises Azerbaijanis native to the Borçalı region (Knevo-Kartli) in Georgia.<sup>18</sup>

The majority of regional fellowships have an amorphous structure and organization. As regional fellowships, the "Armenistanis", the "Nakhichevanis" and the "Borçalıs" are better structured, for they are influenced by their respective regional groupings. The "Borçalıs" occupy an intermediate position between fellowship and regional grouping. Some "Borçalı" leaders have been making so far fruitless efforts to transform into a regional grouping and seize a number of key positions in government – principally in the law enforcement agencies.<sup>19</sup> These attempts encounter resistance from the „Armenistanis“ and „Nakhichevanis“, who are not willing to see yet another competitor in „their“ field of Azerbaijani statehood.

The above regional groupings have formed the basis for the structuring of the new state in Azerbaijan. In a simplified way, the structuring principle is three-tiered: the core of statehood is constituted by the Kurdish grouping; according to local observers, up to 80 percent of high positions in the state are occupied by individuals of Kurdish origin.<sup>20</sup> They are followed by the „Nakhichevanis“. This pyramid of power is propped up by Azerbaijanis originating from Armenia (the „Armenistanis“).<sup>21</sup>

#### IV. Group Boundaries

Both regional groupings, despite continuous internal conflicts, act in concert and unite as soon as there is an „external“ threat to their interests, such as that posed by the above regional communities. This has prompted some observers to classify them as one regional grouping („clan“).<sup>22</sup> While this point of view has certain merits, it is not entirely correct.

Certainly, among the „Nakhichevanis“ and the „Armenistanis“ there exists a certain „shared area“, i.e. a multi-tier unity. This, however, should not be treated as an absolute. Azerbaijanis originating from Armenia settled not only in Baku and the Apsheron Peninsula, but also in other regions of Azerbaijan, including Nakhichevan. The *Yeraz* born in Nakhichevan are considered to be both „Nakhichevani“ and „Armenistani“, and are treated by both groupings as „their own people“. They are a kind of double-headed eagle, and among their number include the former president H. Äliyev and the former chairman of the Parliament and current Chairman of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, Räsul Quliyev, who now lives in the USA as an immigrant.<sup>23</sup> This type of *Nakher* person (an abbreviation derived from the words „Nakhichevani“ and „Yeraz“, a rather rude nickname phonetically associated with the most common Russian swear word<sup>24</sup>) functions as a kind of bridge („Brücken-

bauer“) between the two groupings, softening constantly emerging conflicts.

For example, the representatives of the „Nakhichevan“ grouping openly declare that „there are very few *native, genuine* Nakhichevanis in their grouping“. <sup>25</sup> The „Armenistanis“, unhappy with the „Nakhichevanis“ dominant position in the government administration, are trying to oust the latter from state structures and terminate this „unnatural“, as they see it, symbiosis.<sup>26</sup> To my knowledge, three such attempts have been made so far. One such occasion was during the 1998 presidential elections when some influential „Armenistanis“, led by the late Säfiyar Musayev, Professor of the Baku State University, supported the chairman of the opposition National Independence Party, Etibar Mämmädov („Armenistani“).<sup>27</sup> At that time Mämmädov was the principal rival to the incumbent president H. Äliyev („Nakhichevani“). Then in 1999, when H. Äliyev’s power was weakened by his illness;<sup>28</sup> and at the present moment, when such integrating figures as H. Äliyev and R. Quliyev are no longer heading both groupings.

One should not exclude the possibility that in the medium term the „Armenistanis“, due to their demographic preponderance and other associated advantages, may gain the upper hand over the „Nakhichevanis“ and the „Kurdish“ groupings in the state system. The only question is whether this will happen by peaceful means.

Belonging to the „Armenistani“ grouping is determined not only by the fact of birth in a certain district [*rayon*] of Armenia. To enter the grouping it is enough to have male line relatives born in the appropriate area (up to the fourth generation, i.e. great grandfathers).<sup>29</sup> Sometimes it is sufficient to have just one genetic line linking one to Armenia in order to be included into the ranks of „Armenistanis“. <sup>30</sup>

Individuals of non-Armenistani origin may also be included into the grouping as clients, if, for example, they are married to Armenistani women. There is certainly no rigid boundaries in Azerbaijani society (inter-regional marriages face no obstacles). Depending on the political situation, many individuals who do not have direct regional affiliation can accentuate their (sometimes fictitious) Armenistani, Nakhichevani or other roots and join the appropriate grouping that dominates at the given moment.<sup>31</sup> But the core of the grouping remains „Armenistani“.

Inside their grouping the „Armenistanis“ fall into segments that coincide with the boundaries of the former districts of concentrated settlement of Azerbaijanis on Armenian territory. Genealogical information on people originating from these areas, which is continuously updated, is „stored“ in oral form by the so-called *aghsaqqals* [white beards], informal leaders of the Armenistani regional fellowship. They are the most important local institution in Azerbaijan.

Each of these custodians of genealogical information looks after his own district [*rayon*], which may no longer exist in

reality, but be represented by people originating from it and their descendants living in different parts of Azerbaijan. Before staff appointments are made, information on the applicant to a certain position in the government administration is checked with the relevant *aghsaqqal*, who is also jokingly referred to as an informal „human resource department“ [*otdel kadrov*]. At the early stages of resettlement to Azerbaijan the Armenistanis already had their own „division of labor“ at the new place of residence: for example, representatives of one district „monopolized“ journalism, others dominated in the legal sphere, etc. Nowadays this division of labor is almost completely indistinguishable.<sup>32</sup>

Within the „Armenistani“ grouping there is also a certain hierarchy, which is related to territory. The dominant position is held by people from the Sisian district of Armenia, the native land of H. Äliyev’s parents; they are followed by those from the neighbouring Masis district (Armenia). The hierarchy of Azerbaijanis originating from other areas of Armenia is more or less defined in terms of their distance from these former two districts.<sup>33</sup>

The „Nakhichevanis“ also fall into segments that coincide with the boundaries of the six administrative districts of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic. The most powerful segment of the Nakhichevan grouping is represented by people from Şarur district, where economic development is the most advanced in Nakhichevan. Unlike the „Armenistanis“, the „Nakhichevanis“ hierarchy is both territory- and family-related: the dominant position is held by those individuals who are connected to the family of the former president H. Äliyev through kinship or in-law ties.<sup>34</sup>

The most isolated grouping in the Azerbaijani state system is the „Kurds“, holding, as mentioned earlier, the majority of the key positions in government administration. Some observers link this disproportionately high representation relative to the total number of the country’s Kurdish population to three important factors. First, according to a number of sources, H. Äliyev, and his father-in-law Äziz Äliyev (the former First Secretary of the Dagestan Oblast Committee of the CPSU), were of Kurdish origin.<sup>35</sup> Second, the presence of „Kurds“ in the hierarchy of power in Azerbaijan is explained by the Russian and Soviet legacies: neither Russia nor the USSR were interested in the strengthening of Turkic identity in Azerbaijan and its drift towards Turkey, and, in order to hold the Turkic identity „at bay“, both regimes supported a „Kurdish“ substratum as a counterbalance in the top organs of government authority.<sup>36</sup> In the the environment of the contemporary Azerbaijani state, the „Kurds“ represent a convenient lever of manipulation for the „Armenistani“ and „Nakhichevani“ leaders, for statesmen of Kurdish origin do not have a powerful social base from which they can draw support. Apparently, their role in the state system is the same as the role of „Tajiks“ from Samarqand and Bukhara in the state system of Uzbekistan.

## V. Structure of Groupings

There are at least two structural differences between the „Armenistani“ and „Nakhichevani“ regional groupings, which provide yet another reason not to merge them into a single community.

First of all, the „Armenistanis“ have a two-level structure: the first core level is comprised of *aghsaqqals* who mobilize the mass of „their own people“; and the second level – the so-called „top managers“, who are promoted by the *aghsaqqals* and the masses to positions in the government administration from local to national level. In other words, officially only the top managers are seen on the surface of public life, while the *aghsaqqals* remain in the shadow, their activity being somewhat hidden and not advertised. This once again confirms the thesis that informal networks are a kind of „social invisible“, since it is very difficult for the researcher to identify their boundaries.<sup>37</sup>

The „Nakhichevan“ grouping, on the contrary, has a one-level structure: all leaders are exposed and usually occupy high positions in the government.

Second, the „Armenistanis“, despite all efforts by the state represented by H. Äliyev and his entourage, have achieved a high degree of autonomy from state, i.e. a significant part of the grouping exists outside the government administration, while the „Nakhichevan“ grouping does not exist beyond the government administration.

The „Armenistanis“ and „Nakhichevanis“ have created several political organizations, which are a kind of extension to the regional groupings. The most influential of those are the government party „Yeni Azerbaijan“ (New Azerbaijan), its leadership, which mainly consists of H. Äliyev’s relatives and in-laws,<sup>38</sup> and two non-governmental organizations: „Aghridag“, which is translated as „Ararat“, and „Älincä“, named in honour of a famous Babek fortress in Nakhichevan.

## VI. Soviet Legacy, State and Regional Groupings

The Soviet Union, even during its existence, was poorly represented in the Caucasus. During the transition period, the weak Soviet legacy in Azerbaijan, as well as the conflict with Armenia over Nagorny Karabakh, have led to the weakening of state institutions generally. As a result, the Azerbaijani state has blended so solidly with the two regional groupings that their elimination from the state sphere could potentially trigger the collapse of the entire state. Here is one typical example. Since 1994 the whole of the public health sector has been controlled by the „Armenistanis“ headed by the Health Minister Äli İnsanov. According to various estimates, up to 90 percent of executive positions in this sector (from the ministry to the district hospital) are occupied by the „Armenistanis“.<sup>39</sup> An attempt to replace the minister under the existing system by a non-Armenistani minister would inevitably cause

sabotage in the entire public health sector hierarchy. The change of a minister without major social conflict is possible only if the entire state system is transformed.

## VI. System-building Factors („Glues“)

The main system-building element for both groupings is the nature of the command state, which is characterized by a high level of clientelism, for all political and economic controls are concentrated in the government administration. In the present environment of a command state it is economically advantageous to be „Armenistani“ and „Nakhichevani“! It was once common to fake birth place records in Azerbaijani identification documents: representatives of other regions had themselves registered as „Nakhichevani“. <sup>40</sup> The price to pay for this kind of forgery used to reach \$1,000. <sup>41</sup>

With the disappearance of the command state the „Armenistani“ and „Nakhichevani“ groupings would also vanish. This, by the way, is their weak point, compared to the classical regional communities. And this once again proves that these regional groupings are a qualitatively new phenomenon in the history of Azerbaijan. Regional groupings represent a particular form of social organization that can thrive only in the environment of a command state.

Besides, the situation in the host society of Azerbaijan played a specific role in the evolution of these groupings. The „Armenistani“ and „Nakhichevani“ (except people from Ordubad district) are mainly people with an outright agrarian mentality, which is manifest not only in the first, but also in subsequent generations. <sup>42</sup> And their settlement in Baku and the Apsheron Peninsula led to rejection on the part of the indigenous urban population; this can be seen from the nickname „Yeraz“, so popular with the opponents of the „Armenistani“. The conflict between the agrarian and urban mentalities was one of the system-building factors for the „Armenistani“. The latter were actually rejected by Azerbaijani society because of their mentality. To exemplify this, here is a quotation from an article titled *Dukhovnoye prostranstvo* [Spiritual Space] authored by one Āli Baqirov, Medical Doctor (sic!):

„Thanks“ to the *Perestroishchiks* [engineers of Perestroika], we have been flooded by a huge influx of people from Western Azerbaijan – Armenia, who were born and brought up in that environment. Their ancestors have lived there for centuries. And, naturally, **they have their own notion of honor and dignity, moral and ethical code, behavior stereotypes...** While those who left us were primarily urban dwellers [the Baku Armenians – B. S.] – skilled specialists, part of the elite, **those who arrived were farmers, cattle-breeders – rural people**, bringing in their lifestyle and spiritual baggage.“ [Bold type is mine – B. S.] <sup>43</sup>

The „Armenistani“ never existed in Armenia as a united regional grouping. In the Armenian environment they were the suppressed Azerbaijani minority. Having found themselves in the qualitatively different surroundings of

Azerbaijan, the „Armenistani“ deployed like a tight spring and evolved a tough and consolidated system. The above mentioned structure, hierarchy and community only emerged in Azerbaijan during the post-Soviet period! In other words – and this is paradoxical – the Azerbaijanis from Armenia have preserved and consolidated in what appears to be their native Azerbaijani environment the mentality of a ethnoreligious minority. Even today they function as a ethnoreligious minority. The „Armenistani“ leaders regularly initiate various ritual events and use these events to strengthen the community’s identity. A typical example is the creation of special sections in cemeteries and even special cemeteries to bury „their own“ separately from other Azerbaijanis. Affiliation with a regional grouping is also confirmed in financial terms. The grouping has a „black pool“ (*obshchak* [colloquial Russian for „shared cash pool“]) and its resources are used to address its various political and economic objectives.

For on-going decision-making and also for developing tactics and strategy, the leaders of regional groupings meet during ritual events (weddings, burials, birthdays), which neither attract too much attention, nor make people around apprehensive. However, special gatherings of leaders in their dachas and restaurants are not infrequent either. <sup>44</sup>

## VIII. Stability, Conflict Potential, and Social Efficiency

The command state that emerged in Azerbaijan in the post-Soviet period, with its structure based on the two regional groupings, and within those groupings on family-kinship and in-law connections, has a rather high degree of stability. To overcome protest and conflict processes in society, such a state primarily uses its law enforcement agencies, as well as informal armed units of the regional groupings, for purposes of oppression. According to data provided by Z. Todua, in a situation of crisis the latter may number up to 2,000 well-armed individuals. <sup>45</sup> Besides, as some local newspapers and observers report, the armed units of the regional groupings may take in members of various kinds of sports schools, karate classes and martial arts federations. <sup>46</sup> These can also be joined by some people from the security services of private firms and corporations controlled by the ruling family of the Āliyevs. Local observers believe that the latter were also engaged in breaking up demonstrations on the 15th–16th of October 2003 following the presidential elections. <sup>47</sup> The other no less important economic factor that supports the stability of state are Azerbaijani „guest-workers“, who mainly work in Russia and generate an annual inflow of up to two billion US dollars into Azerbaijan’s economy.

The relatively high level of stability, however, is not in contradiction with the fact that the state has an extremely low level of social efficiency. To illustrate this statement I will refer to two facts only. Since 1993, when this type of state began to evolve, almost all the economic potential of the country has been concentrated in the capital city:

according to official data, up to 90 percent of the state budget is spent in Baku, 75–80 percent of operating enterprises are concentrated in the capital, and the major part of GDP is produced in Baku.<sup>48</sup> The distribution of resources among „our own“ has led to the emergence of 165 so-called „natural monopolies“ in the economic sector,<sup>49</sup> not to mention numerous informal monopolies. All other regions have turned into pitiable appendages of the capital, with predictable social consequences. Up to one quarter of the total population of Azerbaijan has left the country (2 of 8 million) in search of jobs.

### IX. Conclusions

1. Between the classical regional fellowship and a regional grouping (which, as has already been mentioned, is essentially a new social phenomenon) there is a substantial difference that is being ignored. The fact is that a regional grouping, defined as a strategy to gain access to and to exploit resources, emerges and exists mainly in the domain of state, while the state – as a command state – is characterized by a high level of clientelism.
2. Another no less important aspect, in my view, is the inseparability of regional grouping(s) and the state. The regional groupings and the state so deeply infiltrate one another that it is hard to tell where the regional grouping ends and the state begins. This is an integrated phenomenon. It would be incorrect to say that regional groupings in Azerbaijan determine the structure of the state. It is rather the other way round: it is the command state that structures regional groupings. In other words, a regional grouping emerges when certain segments of a regional fellowship come into contact with the domains of the state that have control over resources. This interaction alienates a certain section of the fellowship and turns it into a regional grouping.
3. It is doubtful whether, in the short and medium term, Azerbaijan will face the risk of social instability. Instability could occur only under two sets of circumstances: either during the transfer of power from one leader to another, as occurred in 2003, or during the transformation of the command state into a democratic one.

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- Bakı Həbər (in Azeri), Baku
- Xural (in Azeri), Baku
- Yeni Müsavat (in Azeri), Baku
- Ekho (in Russian), Baku
- Monitor (in Russian), Baku
- Novoye Vremya (in Russian), Baku
- Zerkalo (in Russian), Baku

\* Note on transliteration: Azerbaijan in the Latin script, reintroduced in December 1991, is rendered as 'ä' and 'ğ' as 'gh'.

- <sup>1</sup> Said 1995.
- <sup>2</sup> Yunusov A. 1997, p. 159.
- <sup>3</sup> Ebd., p. 159.
- <sup>4</sup> Or „regional strategic groups“ (suggestion of J. Koehler).
- <sup>5</sup> Rubin B.R. 1998.
- <sup>6</sup> Elwert G. 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> Yunusov A. 1997, p. 160.
- <sup>8</sup> To the question of who you voted for in the last presidential elections, one woman from Sumqayit (of „Armenistani“ origin) responded that she had voted for İlham Əliyev. When asked to explain the reasons for her choice, she said that the only factor that had influenced her decision was that I. Əliyev was „our own“. Interview with Insider, 26.04.04.
- <sup>9</sup> In Azerbaijan, like in medieval Jewish communities, it is quite common to give nicknames to all and sundry – from local currency to people.
- <sup>10</sup> See: *Istoricheskaya geografiya...* 1998.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with T. Cüvarlı, 16.02.04 and I. Qəmbər, 01.04.04.
- <sup>12</sup> *Azerbaijan in 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. 2001, p. 58.
- <sup>13</sup> Todua Z. 2001, p. 117.
- <sup>14</sup> Yunusov A. 2003.
- <sup>15</sup> Todua Z. 2001, p. 116.
- <sup>16</sup> Ebd., p. 117.
- <sup>17</sup> Gülməmmədov 2004, 12.
- <sup>18</sup> Interview with the Borçalı man, 25.04.04. According to unofficial data, about 400,000 Borçalı people and their descendants live in Baku. See Gülməmmədov 2004, 12.
- <sup>19</sup> Əlibəyli 2004, 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Interview with F. Hüseynli, 17.03.04. S. also V. Guseinov 2004,
- <sup>21</sup> Interview with R. Hüseynov, 06.02.04.
- <sup>22</sup> Yunusov A. 1997, pp. 159-160; Todua Z. 2001, 117.
- <sup>23</sup> Their parents are from Armenia, but both politicians were born in Nakhichevan.
- <sup>24</sup> Interview with E. Hüseynov, 06.02.04.
- <sup>25</sup> Interview with A. Quliyev, 02.03.04.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with Insider, 14.03.04.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview with Insider, 16.03.04; Interview with N. Mustafayev, 05.04.04.
- <sup>28</sup> Todua Z. 2001, p. 123.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview with E. Hüseynov, 6.2.04. S. also Ələkberli 2003, p.
- <sup>30</sup> Monitor, no. 51, 14.03.04, p. 24.
- <sup>31</sup> Interview with I. Qəmbər, 01.04.04. “If someone is needed as a professional, the Armenistani roots can always be found.” From the interview with T. Cüvarlı, 22.03.04.
- <sup>32</sup> Interview with Insider, 17.03.04.
- <sup>33</sup> Interview with E. Hüseynov, 06.02.04.
- <sup>34</sup> Interview with E. Hüseynov, 06.02.04. S. also Shermatova S. 2001, p. 224.
- <sup>35</sup> Aghayev 2003, pp.1-5.
- <sup>36</sup> Interview with T. Cüvarlı, 16.02.04.
- <sup>37</sup> Hübner-Schmid K. 2003, p. 3.
- <sup>38</sup> S. the website of Yeni Azərbaycan Partiyası: <http://www.yap.org.az/files/rehberorganlari.shtml>
- <sup>39</sup> Monitor, no. 2 (29), 2003, p. 11.
- <sup>40</sup> Interview with R. Hüseynov, 06.02.04.
- <sup>41</sup> Interview with A. Quliyev, 02.03.04.
- <sup>42</sup> The majority of young people in the city of Baku are always dressed in formal suits regardless of their occupation or pastime. This is an attempt of the rural population to adapt, at least on the exterior, to urban lifestyle. I observed this phenomenon in many Oriental cities.
- <sup>43</sup> *Novoye Vremya*, no. 55, 27-29.03.04, p. 11. S. also De Waal, 2003, p. 80-81.
- <sup>44</sup> Interview with Insider, 19.03.04. S. also Guseynov V. 2004.
- <sup>45</sup> Todua Z. 2001, p.118.
- <sup>46</sup> Ekho, 26.02.04, p. 3.
- <sup>47</sup> Interview with R. Hüseynov, 06.02.04.
- <sup>48</sup> Ekho, 04.03.04, p. 2. S. also Monitor, no. 48, 14.02.04, p. 14.
- <sup>49</sup> Zerkalo, 20.02.04, p. 4.

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(eds.)

### Potentials of Disorder

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