

MERIA

OBSERVATIONS FROM AZERBAIJAN

By Cameron S. Brown*

This article examines several major political and cultural issues with which the citizens of Azerbaijan are currently grappling. It considers the role of the Nogorno-Karabakh conflict and its aftermath, irredentist claims made by some on Azerbaijani portions of Iran, the place of women in society, and the role of oil. Present in all these topics, however, is the common theme of how Turkish, Russian, Shi'a Muslim, and Western influences--as well as Azerbaijanis own history--are presently shaping the formation of the country's identity.

Azerbaijan is an intriguing country, with 90 percent of its 8 million inhabitants possessing a Turkic, Russified, secular, Shi'a Muslim identity; an identity shaped by their own history and by a long sojourn in the Soviet Union. Although Azerbaijan has long prospered from its oil wealth, the country has suffered numerous setbacks over the past decade due to its long and desperate war in Nogorno-Karabakh.

On a recent visit, all these aspects were clearly visible and continuing to shape Azerbaijan. What is less obvious—and yet very important in the Middle East context—is how Azerbaijan's situation is affecting its neighbors and near-neighbors.

THE PRIMACY OF THE KARABAKH ISSUE

Inevitably, the foremost political issue on the minds of most Azerbaijanis is the future of the Armenian-occupied Nogorno-Karabakh area and how so much of the country seems ready to go to war in order to reconquer these lost lands should political negotiations fail. Left over from the end of the Soviet era, the problem is pivotal in shaping the national consciousness and policies of Azerbaijan today.

Azerbaijanis (or Azeris) are a Shi'a Muslim group of Turkish ethnic origin

and language, closely related to the inhabitants of modern-day Turkey. Within their Soviet republic was the autonomous Nogorno-Karabakh Oblast (or simply Karabakh). This province, which had long possessed an Armenian ethnic majority (in 1920, Christian Armenians were estimated to constitute 94 percent of the population), was first attached to the Baku province by Russia in 1846, though it eventually gained autonomy within Azerbaijan in 1923.(1) When the USSR divided the Caucasus region into separate republics in 1936, Karabakh remained part of Azerbaijan.(2)

In 1987, a few years before the breakup of the Soviet Union, the neighboring Armenian republic tried to bring Karabakh under its control, a move that sparked off over two years of strikes across Azerbaijan and Armenia.(3) The tension burst open several times as clashes broke out in several locations, followed by mutual mass emigrations of Azerbaijanis and Armenians, most notably on February 27-9, 1988 and January 13-4, 1990.(4)

In an attempt to end the controversy, Moscow decided in January 1989 to take direct control over the disputed region. As the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1990-1991, the conflict turned into an all-out war, with Armenian forces (both from

Karabakh and the Armenian Republic) taking Karabakh and a large portion of surrounding Azerbaijani land. As a result, by the time the last ceasefire was signed in 1994, 20 percent of Azerbaijan was occupied by Armenia and an estimated 750,000 Azeris had become refugees, in addition to the thousands of Armenian refugees.(5)

Part of the Armenians' success came from the better training and equipment that they received from their many years of service in the Soviet army, an institution where relatively few Azerbaijanis made their careers. No less critical, however, was the \$1 billion of military aid given to Armenia by Russia during the war, and at a few critical moments, the support of the 366th regiment of the former Red Army.(6)

Azerbaijan continues to be gripped by this issue of regaining Karabakh. The high costs and domestic political effect of so many refugees keeps the problem alive as well. All foreign policy issues are assessed in light of their effect on the Karabakh question. Alliances are measured in this context, too. The general strategic outlook in Azerbaijan is that Armenia is its main adversary, with both Russia and Iran supporting that country. Only Turkey is seen as clearly backing Azerbaijan, though the United States is generally seen as supportive of its territorial claims.

But while the U.S. administration of President Bill Clinton was fairly sympathetic, for the first few years of the conflict the U.S. Congress was decisively pro-Armenian. As the war raged on, Congress even went so far as to impose sanctions on Azerbaijan in Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (1992), which banned direct aid to the Azeri government and restricted American governmental assistance to Azerbaijan.

Israel is another potential strategic ally contemplated by Azerbaijan, especially attractive to the leadership due to Israel's military, technological, and economic prowess, its pro-Western outlook and close relations with Turkey, its influence

in the U.S. Congress, and Israel's own problems vis-à-vis Iranian-Russian collaboration. Still, while Azerbaijan has welcomed Israeli assistance on several fronts and allowed for an Israeli embassy to open in Baku, Azerbaijan has refrained from opening a counterpart in Israel, despite Foreign Minister Vilayat Guliyev's pledge to do so by 2002. Generally, those who strongly believe in a pan-Turkic or pro-Western strategic alignment see strengthening relations with Israel as an imperative, while the government worries about the Arab reaction. As one newspaper columnist in Baku wrote, "Everybody knows well that Israel is... one of the few countries, with which Azerbaijan has only positive experiences.... It is high time for Azerbaijan to dare have its own path."(7)

Azerbaijan must take into account a balance of forces that does not promise easy victory in any future war over Karabakh. At the same time, with little promise that the issue will be resolved through negotiations in the near future, the will to go to war and justification for sacrifices on behalf of this issue is very much present in Azerbaijani political life.

IRREDENTISM ACROSS THE ARAZ RIVER

Another foreign policy issue which has long resounded in Azerbaijan, though for the time being has been left largely to the arena of rhetorical declarations, is the question of the large Azerbaijani minority in northwestern Iran, where an estimated 75 percent of all Azeris live. The political potential of this issue can be seen by the fact that many Azerbaijanis refer to this area as "Southern Azerbaijan." The fact that this minority group also comprises, according to wildly varying estimates, 20-40 percent of all Iranians makes this a potentially destabilizing issue for that country as well.(8)

Drawing on their experience with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a number of scholars and laymen alike believe that Iran's considerable ethnic heterogeneity make that state destined for

disintegration. With Iran's Azeri-inhabited provinces border the Azerbaijani Republic, should that Iran break apart, the two areas could then easily merge into a "united Azerbaijan." In particular, the former president of Azerbaijan and long-time pro-Turk nationalist, Abulfaz Elchibey, was a strident proponent of this idea until his death in 2000.(9)

The origin of this issue actually begins with the Treaties of Gulustan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828) signed after Russian victories against Iran. As a result of these treaties, the northern section of Azerbaijan became part of the Russian empire, and the southern section of Azerbaijan (divided physically by the Araz River) remained with Iran.

While families and friends remained in contact, and despite expressions of Azeri solidarity with their co-ethnics on the Iranian side of the border, the issue of political unification was largely off the table as most Azerbaijanis deemed it to be outside the realm of possibility. This is not to suggest that the desire for unification was absent during this period. On the contrary, Azerbaijani leaders like Nasib bay Ussubekov, one of the prominent activists of the Musavat party that led Azerbaijan to its short-lived independence in 1918, even expressed reservations about declaring a state in the Russian-held Azerbaijan without incorporating the Iranian portion as well.(10)

Numerous writers throughout the twentieth century, most notably among them the head of the Soviet Azerbaijan's Writers' Union, Mirza Ibrahimov, set many of their works in Iranian Azerbaijan and referred constantly to the Araz River (which physically separates the two Azerbaijanis).(11) In 1980, for example, Kamran Mehdi wrote in a poem: "True, the Araz divides a nation / But the earth underneath is one!"(12) In fact, during the time of the Soviet Union, many Azerbaijani museums and maps would mention the names of Azerbaijani cities in the Soviet Union and Iran

without distinction--as if they were both part of the same Azerbaijan.(13)

Starting in the period immediately preceding Azerbaijani independence in the 1990s and lasting until today, Azerbaijanis have taken an increased interest in their southern brethren. There have been numerous articles published in the last decade comparing the habits of the two Azerbaijanis, as well as differences in language.(14) Many of the same nationalist political parties that were especially active on the Karabakh issue even went so far as to call in 1989 for the "restoration of ethnic unity of Azerbaijanis living on both sides of the border."(15)

Unfortunately for the Azeris, this claim has two major problems. Firstly, by suggesting that Iran's borders are not sacred, Azerbaijan delegitimizes its own claim to Karabakh. This is because the Azeri claim to Karabakh is not that the area in question had an Azeri ethnic majority (indeed, in that region they were a one-third minority), but rather that Armenia's Karabakh irredentism infringes on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, a territory whose sanctity is recognized by virtually all international bodies and especially the UN.

Since state borders are sacred, Azerbaijan claims, Karabakh cannot become independent nor can it be annexed to Armenia. Thus, when certain Azerbaijanis claim that ethnic demographics in Iran should determine borders, they are demonstrating that their claim on Karabakh is not based on a deep-rooted acceptance of the notion of international legitimacy and the inviolability of a country's borders. Rather, it demonstrates that Azerbaijani nationalists will utilize whatever rationale is useful in order to justify their attempts to create the largest Azeri homeland possible.

To his credit, the current Azerbaijani president, the ever-pragmatic Heydar Aliyev, seems to grasp how much Azerbaijani claims to part of Iran can undermine Azerbaijan's claims vis-à-vis

the Karabakh issue. As such, Aliyev has fully embraced the concept of sanctity of territorial integrity as the basis for his foreign policy in general. As he said in an address to the UN:

[Armenian attempts to change borders through the use of violence] is concealed by [an] arbitrary interpretation of the right of people for self-determination as the right of any ethnic community to proclaim by themselves the independence and to adjoin another state. Such an interpretation of the right for self-determination enters into sharp contradiction with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Any attempts to make this right absolute [will] generate severe conflicts, as we witnessed both in our region and in other parts of our planet.(16)

The second problem for Azerbaijani ethnic nationalists is that it is not at all clear that their Azeri brethren in northwestern Iran are interested in such an idea. While not happy about their inability to learn Azeri in Iranian schools, publish newspapers in Azeri, and the lack of other minority group rights, by and large the Azeri minority does very well in Iran.(17)

In private conversation, Azeri students from northwestern Iran scoffed at the idea of being part of the local Azerbaijani independence movement. In contrast, they cited the leading role many Azeris play in the Iranian economy and politics. The most important figure in Iran, the Supreme Leader 'Ali Khamene'i, is Azeri, as are several government ministers. Historically, a prominent Azeri role in Iranian leadership has been a constant; the most important period being the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722), which had its capital in Tabriz and in essence was run by Iranians of Turkish origin.(18)

NO TO ISLAMIST RADICALISM

Azerbaijan is a very secular Muslim country. Far fewer women were in Islamic dress in Azerbaijan, for example, than in nominally secularist Istanbul. Some of this attitude has come from below. There is a famous story in Azerbaijan of the schoolgirl who refused to wear a headscarf in the 1920s and was killed by her family in the name of family honor. At her funeral, dozens of young girls threw off their headscarves and declared that they would follow her example.

In general, the level of observance is significantly lower than in most other Muslim countries. In the Russian style, drinking alcohol in large quantities is very popular, elements of Islamic dress are notably absent for both genders, and the muzzein's call to prayer is never heard. Few pray and fewer make the pilgrimage to Mecca. At the same time, though, it appeared that many Azerbaijanis were aware of Muslim dietary laws--even if they themselves did not generally observe them.

There are two external factors, of course, shaping Azerbaijani attitudes. First, almost 160 years of Russian rule--and especially the nearly half of that period spent under Communist Soviet rule--struck hard at the power base of the Islamic establishment. Ideas such as the value of secular education and equality for women (among others) have significantly altered the country's social fabric. Second, such an Islamic revival might smack of something Iranian, a country for which Azerbaijanis have no admiration, due mainly to the situation of the Azeris there and Iran's pro-Armenian policy.

EASTERN EUROPE MEETS THE MIDDLE EAST

Almost everywhere one looks in Azerbaijan, there are billboards and signs on city walls with various sayings from the country's president, such that one feels Aliyev's presence throughout the country. It is clear that the ruling elite is

the product of the Soviet system, as clearly emphasized by the cult of personality created by the president. Aliyev himself was a veteran member of the Soviet KGB whose career in that organization started when he was posted as an agent to Turkey in the early 1940s, and he eventually rose to become a high-ranking Soviet official. Clearly since taking power in Baku in 1993, he has applied the lessons he learned during those years.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union itself is now dead and buried. There is a strong sense of Azerbaijani nationalism—shown by the attitudes toward the Karabakh and Iranian Azeri issues—which is completely established. Azerbaijan is so coherent a nation-state that it is hard to believe such a country did not exist a dozen years ago.

At the same time, though, Azerbaijan is very much subject to the influences of globalization and they have not adopted any coherent campaign or explicit ideology that calls for resisting them. Having escaped the Soviet prison house of nations, Azerbaijanis are eager to embrace the world in general and the West in particular.

For Azeris, Islam may be more of a cultural than a theological artifact. Islam is respected but not seen as binding. A fitting symbol for this cultural mix was found in a mini-bus. One common poster displayed above the dashboard is a big, colorful picture of Ali, founder of Shi'a Islam, in a red robe standing by a lion in a desert setting. The Ali poster is often set off by a pop music poster, with Brittany Spears, the American singer, being the popular choice at present. The country's television and radio stations echo this fascination with Western culture.

Implicitly, the fact that the external threat to Azerbaijani nationalism and identity have come from Russia and Iran makes Western culture and ideas seem not only non-threatening but absolutely liberating and protective. Like Turkey, too, Azerbaijanis want to join Western

civilization both because of its developmental status and as a shield against Moscow and Tehran.

While on the surface, Azerbaijanis appear extraordinarily secular and liberal, the deeper one begins to scratch, the clearer it seems that such a conclusion might be a bit hasty. One of the best examples of this complexity is to look at the role of women in Azerbaijan.

On the one hand, women are given equal status on a large range of issues: they gained the right to vote in 1918—two years earlier than in the United States and before many European countries. It was also the first Muslim country to make such a reform. Clothing and educational restrictions do not exist, as women are found on every level of the educational system, including doctoral.

Yet there is a strong element of traditional family structure. Even educated and career women are frequently kept at home after dark by their families while their male counterparts are allowed to go out and entertain themselves as they wish. In provincial cities, women are often not allowed to drive. Remarkably, even in private conversation, young Iranian Azeri students (who were studying in Azerbaijan) did not complain about the Iranian regime's harsh social restrictions, but rather criticized the Persians in Iran, who let their daughters go to parties at night, dye their hair, and wear western dress.

The underlying point is that one should not confuse religious observance with social conservatism, as one can easily have the former without the latter; and as Azerbaijan can demonstrate, the reverse can be true as well.

Maybe the only way to really summarize Azerbaijan is that it is what happens when Eastern Europe meets the Middle East. On the one hand, bargaining for hand-made carpets is straight out of a Middle Eastern bazaar; on the other, their fashion and style is highly reminiscent of Russia and Eastern Europe. While the skyline is dotted with the occasional

minaret and the countries' ruins are almost all covered with Arabic, Persian, or Arabic-lettered Turkish inscriptions, the make of most cars and the style of most modern architecture come right out of the Communist bloc. Although education and literacy (especially for women) is on par with most of Eastern Europe, the social status of women can, on occasion, compete with that of Saudi Arabia. While religion has a relatively minor place for most Azeris, as it does throughout the former USSR, it is Islam and not Orthodox Christianity that is largely disregarded.

Russian language vs. Azerbaijani vs. Turkish

Part of the phenomenon of "Eastern Europe meets the Middle East" is reflected in the country's competing vernacular cultures. As with many countries that achieve independence from colonial powers, Azerbaijan is currently in the midst of a linguistic battle between the native Azerbaijani and the colonial Russian. One fascinating issue is that the two genders relate to this issue quite differently. While men tend to look at the issue of which language to use through nationalistic eyes, preferring their native Azerbaijani over the colonial Russian, many women see Russian as a symbol for the social equality the USSR instilled in Azeri society. As a result, many women today prefer to speak in Russian--both among themselves and to men. It was especially telling when at a cocktail party, as one young man addressed the daughter of a major Azeri nationalist intellectual in Azerbaijani, she turned and asked him in Russian, "Shto?" [what?]

A second linguistic note concerns the difference between Turkce [Turkish] and Azerbayjance [Azerbaijani]. While the two languages are very closely related--and at one point were likely the same language--centuries of cultural separation have led to considerable divergence. This is especially true given Ataturk's massive program to expel Arabic words from the Turkish vocabulary, and exchange them

with "pure" Turkish words--and even create new words if there did not exist suitable equivalents.

The two languages are far more different than many people think. For instance, whereas Turks might say "tesekkur ederim" [thank you] or "Allahaismaldik" [figuratively, "see you later"], Azeris seemed to use "sagol" [(to your) health] for every possible interaction, including not just "thank you" or "goodbye," but also "cheers" and "bon appetite" and just about anything else you can imagine. Sometimes Turkish and Azerbaijani even use different Arabic-based phrases to express the same idea, such as "merhaba" in Turkish or "selam alequm" in Azerbaijani--both basically meaning hello. Sometimes Azeris were still using an Arabic based phrase while Turks have adopted a 'Turkish' one; such as "gun aydin" for "good morning" in Turkish versus "sabah elxer" in Azerbaijani.

Additionally, there are even significant differences in pronunciation; such as "yok" becoming the guttural "yokh." Even more fascinating, while both languages have moved from Arabic script to a Latin based one (Azerbaijan actually began the process before Turkey)(19) --they have differences in their Latin-based alphabets. For instance, in Azerbaijan, there are "X", "Q", and "G"--all of which are not used in Turkish.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OIL

Recently the government of Azerbaijan decided to redesign their 1000 Manat bill, the basic unit of Azerbaijani currency (worth about 20 American cents). While it would be typical to see the picture of one of Azerbaijan's leaders (past or present) or maybe one of its historic sites, the picture on the new currency is actually that of an oil rig and dozens of oil pumps.

Oil has played a major role in the local economy since the late 19th century, as the area quickly became the world leader in oil exports (by 1891, Baku was supplying half of the world's oil).(20)

The oil boom of the early years had a major impact on the development of Baku, bringing in vast wealth and creating several notable wealthy families. Even today, oil is the country's leading export(21) and the vast majority of Westerners in the country work in the oil industry, mostly for British Petroleum (BP).

In Baku, the stench of oil fills the air of the city, and eventually, everything one owns reeks of oil. With such an overwhelming presence in this city, it was unsurprising that one major metro station is called "Neftciler" [oilmen].

CONCLUSIONS

Situated in a region dominated by Russia, Turkey and Iran, Azerbaijan is an intriguing mixture. Though heavily influenced by its former communist past and 160 years of Russian domination, this country still retains a unique identity based on its history, Turkic language and its version of Shi'a Islam--which has become an expression of its cultural and ethnic identity rather than religious conviction. Azerbaijan has given its women freedom from political and religious restrictions well beyond most other Muslim countries, though women are still occasionally limited by seemingly anachronistic social mores. Linguistically as well, Azerbaijan must contend with Russian, Turkish, Arabic, and Western influences.

In terms of foreign policy, the most pressing problem is the war over Karabakh, which has been on hold since a ceasefire was signed in 1994. The war ended with Armenia in control of twenty percent of Azerbaijan's territory and created close to a million refugees. While its oil wealth has given the country a way to partially shoulder the burden of the economic woes caused by the war, the country is still in a difficult financial position. Azerbaijan's claim on Karabakh is also undermined by the irredentist demands of some nationalists to the Azerbaijani portions of northwestern Iran.

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NOTES

1. Dilip Hiro, "The Emergence of Multi-Party Politics in the Southern Caucasus: Azerbaijan," *Perspectives on Central Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 11 (February 1998).

<<http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/regionalrelations/OtherPubs/hiro.htm>>.

Previously, Karabakh--like the rest of the region--had been conquered by numerous groups, including the Armenians, Romans, Parthians, Sassanids, Arabs, Mongols, Ottomans, Persians, and Russians; see Charles van der Leeuw, *Azerbaijan: A Quest for Identity* (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 137-42.

2. Although the Caucasus Republic was dismantled in 1936, the decision to set up the Azerbaijan Republic and to attach the Nakhchivan and Karabakh regions was made on March 4, 1937. See Charles van der Leeuw, *Azerbaijan: A Quest for Identity*, pp. 154-5; and William Sanford, "Central Asia and the Caucasus: Historical Legacies and Future Challenges," *Perspectives on Central Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (April 1997)

<<http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/regionalrelations/OtherPubs/Sanford.htm>>.

3. There had been earlier attempts to transfer the region to Armenia as early as 1905 and 1921. On the 1905 clashes, see Charles van der Leeuw, *Azerbaijan: A Quest for Identity*, pp. 145-9. On the 1921 attempt, see Dilip Hiro, "The Emergence of Multi-Party Politics in the Southern Caucasus: Azerbaijan," *Perspectives on Central Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 11 (February 1998)

4. Brenda Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 125-137.

5. CIA World Factbook
<<http://www.cia.gov>>. Many Azerbaijani leaders place the figure at one million refugees. See, for instance, President Heydar Aliyev's comments in: "Major Issues: A Presidential Perspective," Azerbaijan International, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Autumn 1997).
<http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/53_folder/53_articles/53_major_issue.html>
6. Charles van der Leeuw, Azerbaijan: A Quest for Identity, p. 170.
7. E. Mahmudov, "Yasir Arafat: 'I will not let down the Armenians. My name is Arafatyan!'" Zerkalo (Russian) February 7, 2002, translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), FBIS-SOV-2002-0207.
8. The best discussion of the question of how many Azeris live in Iran can be found in the appendix on "The Azerbaijani Population" in Shaffer, Borders and Brethren, pp. 221-5.
9. The former president of Azerbaijan, Abulfaz Elchibey, has been a major proponent of the idea of Iran's dissolution and that it should result in a united Azerbaijan. See for instance, Turan, March 17, 1998, FBIS-SOV-98-077; Turan, July 14, 1999, FBIS-SOV-1999-0714. See also Turan, December 12, 1997, FBIS-SOV-97-346; Turan, November 30, 1998, FBIS-SOV-98-335; and Ebulfez Elchibey, "The Current Socio-Political Situation and the Tasks of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party" Address to the II (V) Congress (Kurultai) of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APFP) January 30-31, 1998.
<<http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/7124/elchibey.html>>
10. Shaffer, Borders and Brethren, p. 37.
11. Shaffer, Borders and Brethren, pp. 72-4. Shaffer mentions a few specific works, such as "İki Sahil" (Two Shores) and "Gulustan" (the name of the 1813 treaty which first divided the region between Russia and Iran). On page 120, Shaffer discusses the writers of the "glasnost" period, when similar themes proliferated in Azerbaijani literature.
12. From a poem quoted by Dr. Alireza Asgharzadeh, The Rise and Fall of South Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1945-46) A Look at Hegemony, Racism, and Center-Periphery Relations in Contemporary Iran (Paper presented in a seminar on Race and Racism, University of Toronto, December 1999).
13. Shaffer, Borders and Brethren, pp. 73-4.
14. See, for instance, the fascinating article by Pirouz Khanlou, "Forgotten Foods: A Comparative Outlook on The Cuisines of Northern and Southern Azerbaijan," Azerbaijan International, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Autumn 2000)
<http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/83_folder/83_articles/83_comparison.html>. On language see, Abulfazl Bahadori, "Alphabet in the Boiling Pot of Politics," Azerbaijan International, Vol. 1, No. 3, (September 1993)
<http://www.azeri.org/Azeri/az_english/13_folder/13_articles/13_alpha_az.html>. Especially interesting is the author's observation that, "At different times in its history, alphabet changes have served to isolate Northern Azerbaijan from Southern Azerbaijan. If the Araz river was the 'natural' border between the two Azerbaijanis and if the barbed wires emphasized physical separation; then alphabet differences created a third boundary--an invisible cultural one."
15. "Program of the People's Front of Azerbaijan" (Azerbaijani), found in Shaffer, p. 132-3. The same quotation is used by Touraj Atabaki in his book, Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran (London: I.B. Taurus, 2000), p. 189.
16. Heydar Aliyev, Address at 49th Session of General Assembly of UNO, September 29, 1994.
<<http://www.president.az/sp18.htm>>
17. Even the head of the National Movement of South Azerbaijan (GAMOH), Dr. Mahmoudali Chehregani explicitly states, "We support the territorial integrity of Iran and do not seek unification with Republic of Azerbaijan or Turkey." Instead GAMOH

envisioning a federalist Iran in a form that respects the rights of its ethnic minorities. In terms of the future of Iran's border with Republic of Azerbaijan, its aspiration is for an arrangement "like that of EU countries." Dr. Mahmoudali Chehregani, "Azerbaijani Turks of Iran: Will They Lead a Revolution Again?" CSIS Caucasus Project Meeting Notes from August 8, 2002 <<http://www.csis.org>>.

Fereydoun Safizadeh has made a similar observation in his piece on North Azerbaijan and his comparison between the two Azerbaijanians. As an Azerbaijani from Iran (who now teaches at Boston University's Department of Anthropology), Safizadeh's background and time spent in visits over the years to South Azerbaijan make his observations especially interesting in this regard. Fereydoun Safizadeh, "On Dilemmas of Identity in the Post-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan," *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 1 (1998). Available online at:

<<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/0301-04.htm>>.

18. Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren*, pp. 19-22.

19. However, the use of Latin letters was interrupted by the Soviet imposition of Cyrillic characters, which lasted until the collapse of the USSR. The use of four alphabets (Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic, and a return--with changes--to a Latin one) in the course of one century has obviously created numerous problems. Abulfazl Bahadori, "Alphabet in the Boiling Pot of Politics," *Azerbaijan International*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (September 1993),

<http://www.azeri.org/Azeri/az_english/13_folder/13_articles/13_alpha_az.html>.

20. Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren*, p. 27.

21. CIA World Factbook <<http://www.cia.gov>>