

Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan

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From a European perspective, the resumption of the conflict in Karabakh in the autumn of 2020 could be easily interpreted: it was the umpteenth expression of a conflict between the Christian West (embodied by Armenia here in a defensive position) and an authoritarian and expansive Muslim world (here Azerbaijan and Turkey). This is the tone adopted, for example, by the militant report of the French celebrity philosopher Michel Onfray.^[1] The latter intends to alert public opinion to the fate of the Armenians of Karabakh (which may be legitimate), but its plea is entirely organised around the questionable theme of the conflict of civilisations. Taking up the arguments of the CCAF (the Armenian lobby of France),^[2] he almost makes the defence of Armenian Karabakh a duty for any Westerner attached to European values (humanism and reason) and opposed to barbarism. The same argument in reverse is also that of Erdogan, who does not hesitate to insist on the religious aspect of the conflict (i.e. the revenge of an Islamic world besieged by an Islamophobic West).^[3]

However, this approach is not used in Azerbaijan (except among minorities attached to a certain Islamist discourse), where the Huntingtonian paradigm of the conflict of civilisations is a source of irritation and, when it is brought up, Azerbaijani officials believe that they are not being listened to or taken into account. On the contrary, official statements seek to put forward the supposed modernity of a secular and “multicultural”^[4] Azerbaijan, protecting its minorities, in conflict with a sectarian, mono-ethnic and mono-religious Armenia^[5]. (I will use the term *minority* here to refer to ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. Many

international institutions are struggling to give a clear and unanimous definition of the notion of *national minority*.^[6] For to define the concept would be to promote a specific definition of the nation. In that regard, Azerbaijani authorities would use the terms *ethnic groups/minorities* and *national minorities* indifferently (respectively *etnik qruplar* and *milli azlıqlar*), probably in order not to have to decide in the debate and avoid any polemic.)

It is true that in Azerbaijan different linguistic and religious communities coexist rather peacefully in a secular institutional context, and the state intends to promote a multicultural model such as that which exists in certain Western European countries. Nevertheless, one should recall that Azerbaijan's post-independence narrative is largely based on the ethnic split with Armenians, and that ethnic tensions are not unknown to the Turkic Caucasian country, with repeated arrests of activists from ethnic minorities^[7]. Therefore, the importance given by the state to the issue of multiculturalism is quite surprising and worthy of discussion.

It is appropriate to agree on a definition of multiculturalism at the outset. Based on the reflections of experts in the field, notably Bhikhu Parekh, Will Kymlicka or Charles Taylor (as we shall see, three references for Azerbaijani multiculturalism), we can identify multiculturalism as referring to an active policy of promoting minority cultures, possibly producing group-differentiated rights (e.g. restriction to the use of English language in Quebec) for a particular community. The goal is not only cultural but also economic and political as it should guarantee fair access to resources to any citizen, regardless of his or her ethnicity^[8]. This policy should be made in the name of political liberalism, understood as a framework granting each person the right to follow his or her own conception of the good^[9]. The above-mentioned writers insist on the need to give a strong meaning to multiculturalism that should be distinguished from

mere tolerance, which would refer to leaving minority communities free from state interference (in the sense that minority communities are just treated as the other communities). For Parekh or Kymlicka, the state must show respect for minorities by offering them the means to express their cultural difference, in order to make it impossible to impose a single conception of the good, and thus to leave individuals free to choose and pursue the conception they want.^[10]

In fact, there are no such ambitious multicultural policies in Azerbaijan (which does not define itself as a liberal country^[11]) and *multiculturalism* is above all a reference to the cultural diversity of the country, and a general discourse about tolerance. The problem for this discourse is that it is at odds with the other components of Azerbaijani identity, which are tripartite according to the principles defined by Ali bey Huseynzadeh in 1905 in the newspaper *Hayat*, and which can be found reflected in the colours of the flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Turkify (blue), Modernise/Westernise (red) and Islamise (green). Tolerance and multiculturalism are the *modern* and *Western* features of the country, these being the values displayed by the developed countries of the West. The difficulty for the authorities here is to harmonise the multicultural discourse with the Turkic element, which ensures national cohesion (the Islamic element being partly set aside in order to reduce the weight of possible foreign influences, even if it is not ignored by the authorities – far from it).^[12] The Turkic character of Azerbaijani identity is particularly dear to the population, and the government must handle its expression with dexterity: it insists on the solidarity that links the country to Turkey, and even to other Turkic-speaking countries, while not excluding the non-Turkic minorities from the national domain.

Faced with this apparent paradox of a *rainbow nation* that wants to be an ethnic nation at the same time, it seems

appropriate to discuss how this speech about multiculturalism is integrated to the national narrative and to question *Azerbaijani multiculturalism* as a state policy. The latter appears to be a form of tolerance that the Azerbaijani state seems to promote (albeit a fragile one in view of the arrests of activists), as the official discourse does not distinguish between multiculturalism and tolerance (*multikulturalizm/tolerantlıq*) – at odds with what is said by the aforementioned writers. I will show that *multiculturalism* is a discourse first and foremost. Thus, it can produce effects in the real world; its function being here to offer a certain representation of the self, both abroad (as a kind of marketing product) and perhaps also and above all within the country itself, as a way to promote a certain orientation of the national identity, paradoxically inclining towards assimilation.

A look at the ideology of Azerbaijani identity

Let us emphasize the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional nature of Azerbaijan. Although it has been significantly weakened since independence with the departure of the bulk of the Armenian and Russian communities^[13], it still retains the status of a “small empire”^[14], with its centre and its ethnic-religious margins. Numerous linguistic communities of various families (Altaic, Caucasian, Indo-Iranian, Slavic), various religious communities (Muslim, Christian, Jewish and even Bahais) cohabit there, and if the Sunni/Shiite divide runs through it, it is not directly felt.

During the Soviet period, a policy was pursued of nation-building around a well-localised Azerbaijani identity^[15] – among other things in order to break down possible transnational solidarities, (the USSR having practised a policy of *indigenisation*^[16] of the institutional life of the SSRs and having promoted Azerbaijani as an official language alongside Russian), but during the period of independence and

the First Karabakh War (1988-1994), debates arose on the definition of national identity. I will not dwell here on the details and nuances of these debates^[17] and the many opinions involved, but they were mainly based on a schism between the supporters of a primarily ethnic and Turkic identity, opposed to the supporters of *Azerbaijani*, of a territorially defined identity. The quarrels also concern the place that should be given to the Russian-Soviet heritage, and to a lesser extent to the Iranian heritage. The notions of nation (*millət*), nationality (*milliyət*) and people (*xalq*), inherited from the Soviet era, are also questioned: is *Azerbaijani* a nation in itself, or are the Turks a nation in their own right?^[18] In any case, it is possible to identify a period of flowering of the *Turkicist* ideology under the aegis of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan and the Elçibey presidency (1992-1993),^[19] which precedes its decline and leads to a refocusing on an Azerbaijani Caucasian identity under the Aliyev presidency.

Elçibey's presidency came at the height of the pan-Turkish, or even pan-Azerbaijani, discourse, with calls for the union of the Republic of Azerbaijan with Azerbaijan of Iran. Once in power, he began a closer relationship with Turkey, and in December 1992, he chose *Turkish* as the official language and began a policy of de-Russification, generating discontent among the Russian-speaking part of the population. The Turkic character of Azerbaijani identity was thus proclaimed loud and clear,^[20] even if the government was keen to give guarantees to minorities concerning the protection of their cultural heritage.^[21]

The arrival in power of Heydar Aliyev was the occasion for a more balanced policy refocused on a territorial-based identity: one speaks of an *Azerbaijani* resulting from a historical process, and of the meeting of an Oghuz Turkic culture with an Iranian-Caucasian population. This *Azerbaijani* is presented as much as a historical reality as

a necessary call for union in the face of the Armenian threat^[22], as well as in the face of the other separatist threats^[23]. Aliyev tried to calm relations with Russia and Iran, which had become difficult (due in particular to the irredentism of the Popular Front toward the territories of Iran) and changed the official language to *Azerbaijani*, in order to distinguish it from Turkish, to calm ethno-nationalist^[24] ardour and to insist on national specificities.

Let us keep in mind the context of the time; until Aliyev took power, the Azerbaijani state was not yet fully constituted (notably because of the disorder caused by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict), and armed autonomist movements emerged, claiming an ethnic dimension: Sadval in the north, which intended to obtain autonomy for the Lezgis and the Talysh national party which, under the leadership of Colonel Hummatov, proclaimed the Talysh-Mughan Autonomous Republic in 1993 (which lasted no more than two months). It was therefore a question of the government proposing a more open conception of national identity, which could be addressed to all the populations present on the territory, and which would constitute a return to the conception promoted by the USSR. It should be remembered, however, that the Turkish heritage was not rejected, as shown by Heydar Aliyev's famous reference to Turkish-Azerbaijani solidarity (*one nation, two states*) expressed before the Turkish parliament in 1995.

Generally speaking, a refocusing on a territorial and civic conception of the nation was taking place. Any mention of ethnicity was removed from official documents; moreover, the 1995 constitution specifies the equal rights of all Azerbaijanis regardless of their race, nationality, religion or language (Article 25), while Articles 44 and 45 state the principle of respect for everyone's nationality, and the right to use and be educated in one's native language. This refocusing will be coupled from Ilham Aliyev's presidency onwards with the deployment of a new conceptual device,

centered around the idea of multiculturalism; an idea that is however lacking in content, as we will see below.

Multiculturalism as a state ideology

In 2005, the position of State Counsellor for National Minorities and Religious Organisations was created (its current name is State Counsellor for Multicultural and Religious Affairs). It participated in the creation of the International Centre for Multiculturalism in 2016, whose objective is to promote a so-called *Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism* on an international scale, and to facilitate relations between the central state and representatives of religious or ethnic communities. The Centre supports the publication of books on the country's minority cultures and on Azerbaijan's supposed specificity in terms of cultural diversity^[25], and organises conferences and ecumenical meetings between representatives of the various ethnic or religious communities (all of whom are more or less directly co-opted by the government). It also published a manual for teaching *Azerbaijani multiculturalism* during courses or seminars given locally (ADA University) or in a number of universities around the world (La Sapienza in Rome, the University of Sao Paulo, Charles University in Prague, etc.). This conceptual display is coupled with an ecumenical religious discourse, intended to construct the idea of a moderate national Islam, unaffected by the theological fractures between Sunnism and Shiism (and open to dialogue with the other monotheisms present in the country), under the aegis of the Caucasus Muslims' Board.

All of this is in response to the problem of nation-building inherited from the era of independence since it is a question of proposing an integrating model, inspired by the West, which can take up what is presented as the challenge of the 21st century,^[26] namely the cohabitation of different communities within the nation-state. Azerbaijani authorities want to celebrate this happy cohabitation while raising it to the

level of a state ideology in order to propose an alternative model to identity-based claims that could be used to cover up possible disputes. Multiculturalism thus becomes “the right ideological goal”^[27], in the words of Akif Alizadeh, the former President of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, who proposed to define it in security terms (respect for minority cultures in order to avoid any untimely claims), but also in democratic terms (multiculturalism as a necessary step on the road to democracy), and finally to present it as Azerbaijan’s contribution to efforts to respond to the challenge of identity (which is posed at the global level).

The problem here being that this *Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism* is somehow hard to describe. It is never properly defined, but can be seen as referring to the following: *multiculturalism* is here a reference to the cultural diversity of the country, allegedly allowed by the country’s long term tradition of tolerance, a tradition that should be supported and reinforced.^[28] In the massive documentation produced by state agencies on Azerbaijani multiculturalism, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether multiculturalism is a goal or a state of affairs that needs to be preserved. Multiculturalism is both a historical fact^[29] and an “ideological goal.”^[30] It is also a model of governance that aims to set an example where European multicultural models have largely failed (as reported prominently in Azerbaijani multicultural literature).^[31] It is true that the first conceptual references to the Azerbaijani multicultural discourse are the aforementioned multiculturalist writers (Bikhu, Kymlicka, Taylor), that all preach for the implementation of an ambitious multicultural policy: they are all quoted in the related literature, and Irina Kunina, who taught *Azerbaijani multiculturalism* in several universities told me that Kymlicka and his *hard model of multiculturalism* (which legitimates group-oriented rights; to be distinguished from a *soft model*, referring to mere tolerance) was here the

most important reference.^[32] Nevertheless the kind of policy they advocate is not followed by Azerbaijan which limits itself to tolerant legislation, meaning that the state is officially not forbidding any expression of minority culture (for example one has the right to use his mother tongue and to publish a book in it).

A real multicultural policy would also provide significant means for the promotion of minorities' cultures, and would include economic or political elements as noted above (for example: limited self-government rights for minorities^[33]). This model is thus far from being effectively followed by the Azerbaijani authorities. It is true that linguistic minorities have the formal right to use their language freely, to teach it, and even to obtain a number of official documents in their own language (twice a week, the *Azerbaijan international radio* broadcasts news in Talysh, Lezgi, and Kurdish, but also Persian and Arabic – which are not considered languages of Azerbaijan). There are, for instance, reportedly about 100 schools teaching the Lezgi language. However, some of my interlocutors suggested that the number of schools actually teaching these languages is quite low, due to the lack of teachers and teaching materials. Therefore, the implementation of this constitutional framework remains weak. Azerbaijani remains the main language of instruction as well as of administration.

While there are concrete achievements – newspapers in minority languages^[34], publishing of dictionaries, opening of ethnographic museums – most of them are not funded by the state but by private initiatives. For instance, the museum of the mountain Jews of Quba is entirely financed by the community, while the Talysh cultural museum has received only modest state support. Moreover, none of the minority groups enjoys specific group-oriented rights. One should talk more about tolerance than multiculturalism in its proper meaning; though even tolerance could be better implemented (recalling

the number of arrests of activists from minorities, or of activists in general). On the other hand, freedom of religion is guaranteed by the secular state, but its interventionist conception of secularism^[35] effectively places the religious space outside the liberal framework. In fact, multiculturalism as a state policy finally seems to have mainly discursive achievements. Far from considering this fact as an admission of inadequacy, I would like to analyse the purpose of these discourses and the effects they can produce.

Multiculturalism as discourse

Multiculturalism as a policy is therefore essentially discursive, that is, it consists of a series of narratives, normative as well as descriptive discourses, whose purpose is to describe and prescribe a nation that is as tolerant and proud of its cultural diversity (multiculturalism here referring to cultural diversity + tolerance; far from the *hard* version of multiculturalism advocated by multiculturalist writers). This set of discourses seems to me to have an effectiveness of its own which is expressed in two directions, inwards and outwards.

It is primarily a question of the image that one wants to project abroad. Here, multiculturalism can be seen as part of a general effort to promote Azerbaijan to other countries. The Azerbaijani authorities have been conducting a campaign for more than 10 years to make their country known and to sell it to tourists, investors and foreign diplomats. It is in this sense that we must understand the *Azerbaijani multiculturalism courses* mentioned above. If we refer to the textbook published by the International Centre for Multiculturalism, we can see that it essentially contains doxographies of multiculturalist thinkers (Bhikhu Parekh, Brian Barry, Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka) as well as historical and literary presentations that attest to the multicultural character of Azerbaijan, rightly presented as a crossroads of civilisations and a melting pot of cultures. Multiculturalism and non-

discrimination, which are contemporary notions, are anachronistically presented as essential principles of a centuries-old Azerbaijani identity. In fact, it is the age-old existence of different cultures that is emphasised, as is the humanistic character of the poetic and philosophical works of national artists and thinkers. As a result, most of the multicultural texts edited by the Centre consist of a list of examples that works as an alleged proof of the tolerant character of Azerbaijani culture.^[36]

The discourse here is in line with what was done under the USSR, where the writers of the Azerbaijani Communist Party, such as Mirza Ibrahimov, multiplied the praise of a supposed Azerbaijani humanism, which promoted equality between peoples and even sometimes heralded the classless society made possible by the 1917 revolution.^[37] This humanistic and tolerant character is still highlighted in many marketing communications aimed at international tourists, as well as at conferences and exhibitions held all over the world. One example is the photo exhibition *Azerbaijan – Land of Tolerance* organised by the Heydar Aliyev Fund in Paris in 2013, which perfectly illustrates the marketing role of the *multicultural* theme. The photos were taken by Reza Deghati, the Franco-Iranian photographer of Azerbaijani origin, and show expressions of Azerbaijani tolerance: for example, Jewish rabbis and Muslim clerics breaking the Ramadan fast together, or a mosque next to a synagogue in the Jewish quarter of the city of Guba. This strategy is part of a global diplomatic and publicity effort.

The aim of this discourse about tolerance is obviously economic, offering the attraction of wealth through the image of a country where life is good and tolerance is the rule, and which could offer the world a model of efficient governance (even though this model is not clearly defined). It is also political, since it is a question of attracting the sympathy of the populations, and especially the political decision-

makers, of foreign powers (Western in particular^[38]), notably in the context of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, since the Armenians have powerful connections in the major capitals (Moscow, Washington, and Paris). The propaganda directed towards the outside world is also aimed at a perhaps less expected actor: the Azerbaijani communities living abroad (United States, Europe, Russia), which are at the heart of a work of diasporic construction undertaken by the state at the beginning of the 2000s, intended among other things to compete with the organisation of Armenian diasporic communities. The aim is to win the loyalty of people who may never have known independent Azerbaijan or who have left it, or of Iranian emigrants from the Azerbaijani regions who are being won over to the national cause.

The effort to produce a narrative is not only aimed at an audience outside the country. This fabric of discourse is also an important element of the national narrative, the cornerstone of the nation-building process implemented since the presidency of Heydar Aliyev. The aim is to promote a peaceful social climate, through tolerance and respect for others, by referring to a glorious past of intercultural practices and cohabitation. The school curricula therefore emphasise the religious plurality that has existed throughout the country's history, while a series of events and performances showcase the country's cultural richness and diversity. This is the case, for example, with the permanent exhibition *Under One Sun*, financed by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, which was installed in 2019 on the Baku waterfront (the famous *bulvar*) and which underlines the cultural diversity of the country by offering photos of Azerbaijanis from 17 different ethnic groups.

In the end, a normative self-image is disseminated: to be a good Azerbaijani is to be tolerant and proud of the country's cultural wealth. This therefore contributes to the construction of an integrating national identity while

constituting a form of bulwark against minority protests, which in any case are not numerous and which, when they exist, are directly associated (rightly or wrongly) with terrorism^[39]. The effectiveness of this identity construction was clearly visible during the 2020 war. Via social networks, a discourse, conveyed by the public and not by the state, called for international solidarity in favor of the multicultural Azerbaijan, opposed to the mono-ethnic Armenia whose nationals of Karabakh had refused the tolerant cohabitation allegedly proposed by Azerbaijan^[40]. During the war, Aliyev claimed that since Azerbaijan is respectful of cultural diversity, Armenians would have been granted cultural autonomy in Karabakh^[41]. *Multiculturalism* was therefore also working paradoxically as an ideological weapon within an ethnic conflict, aimed at depreciating the opponent.

Conclusion

There is no real multicultural policy in Azerbaijan. Of course, the device set up is still young and future achievements may still be pending. However, for the time being, it is reduced to a discourse that recognizes the cultural diversity of the country and promotes a tolerant attitude, which is intended to create a climate of social peace. Azerbaijan is depicted as a tolerance-ruled country, even if the tolerant framework (that formally exists) could be improved: ultimately, the state defines the perimeter of tolerance: a claim that goes beyond this framework will be dismissed as separatism or terrorism.^[42]

Azerbaijani multiculturalism as a state policy is above all a discursive reality, a fabric of statements and representations intended to produce a particular self-image, that of a people characterised by tolerance and cultural diversity. The biggest challenge remains religious, and the policy of constructing a moderate national Islam that is insensitive to theological splits, seems to be working quite well so far. The purpose is

to create a peaceful atmosphere and a relatively tolerant framework in order to prevent criticism from minorities and to label potential critics as separatists. The reasoning could be described as follows: Azerbaijan is a tolerant country in which the state is the guarantor of minority cultures; therefore, if you don't accept the fair and tolerant rules, you are the problem, you are intolerant.

However, the multi-ethnic character of post-independence Azerbaijan must be tempered. While non-Azerbaijani nationalities reached a maximum of almost 40% of the population in 1939^[43], the departure of Russians and especially Armenians in the early 1990s (but also of a number of Jews and citizens of other SSRs) brought this rate down to 10%.^[44] Throughout its Soviet history, Azerbaijan assimilated lots of minorities^[45] and today the Azerbaijani language is widely spoken and used throughout the country. The implicit *superiority* of Azerbaijani ethnicity appears clear and minorities tend to assimilate themselves to this dominant model, mostly for pragmatic reasons.^[46]

The multicultural policy followed by Azerbaijan paradoxically goes together with a deeper assimilation of minorities. Multiculturalism is highlighted when necessary, to leave room for Turkic solidarity or even Islamic solidarity when necessary. Overall, we can speak of a rather efficient policy, having enabled to pursue the shaping of the *Azerbaijaniity*, and thus to preserve a certain national coherence for the country.

Even if some people plead for an extension of the field of respect^[47], Azerbaijan is not a bad example in this matter within the Middle East (provided that the conflict with Armenia is ignored).

^[1] Onfray, Michel, *Arménie, un choc des civilisations*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFbrH8HMmvg>

[2]

<https://twitter.com/FranckPapazian/status/1326843421097668608?s=20>

[3]

<https://www.trt.net.tr/francais/turquie/2020/11/10/cavusoglu-la-liberation-des-territoires-occupes-est-une-victoire-importante-pour-l-azerbaïdjan-1525289>; Maïa-Gaveriaux, Laura, "Turquie. Le conflit du Haut-Karabakh nourrit la rancœur contre l'Europe", 2021, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/turquie-le-conflit-du-karabakh-nourrit-la-rancoeur-contre-l-europe,4209/>

[4]

Using the words of the officials:
https://multiculturalism.preslib.az/en_others-hpt5PRUsV3.html/

[5] This is, for example, the meaning of the joint letter of congratulations from the representatives of the ethnic and religious communities of Azerbaijan to President Aliyev after the victory in Karabakh in November 2020. See: <http://multikulturalizm.gov.az/post/1720/azerbaycanda-yasayan-xalqlarin-numayendelerinden.html/>

[6]

<http://www.humanrights.ch/fr/pfi/droits-humains/discrimination/dossier-minorites/definitions/definition-minorite-nationale/>
<https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/244/>

[7]

<https://oc-media.org/talysh-blogger-sentenced-to-7-years-in-azerbaijan/>
<https://aws-www.meydan.tv/az/article/1-talysh-activist-2-talysh-newspaper-editors-arrested-in-azerbaijan/?ref=article-related-artciles/>
<https://avestatalysh.com/2020/11/12/prominent-talysh-activist-killed-in-prison-in-azerbaijan/>

[8] For a treatment of the main theses see Young, Kim, *Justice*

as right actions, Lexington Books, Maryland, 2015.

[9] The difficulty for these authors is usually to reconcile the need to produce group-oriented laws with the need to leave individuals free to decide for themselves what they want to do with their lives. See Young Kim, *Justice as right actions*, 7.

[10] "Multiculturalism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/#ClaMul/>

[11] One might think of the speech given by President Aliyev in November 2019 to mark the 100th anniversary of Baku State University. <https://president.az/articles/34985/>

[12] Goyushov, Altay, "The Azerbaijani Government's Islamic Rhetoric During the Six-Week War in Karabakh", 2021, <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/the-azerbaijani-governments-islamic-rhetoric-during-the-six-week-war-in-karabakh/>

[13] Data offered by the Vishnevsky Institute of Demography: http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39.php ; http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php/

[14] To use the expression attributed to Andrei Sakharov by Thomas de Waal to describe non-Russian SSRs; *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, NY University press, 2003, 133.

[15] Mainly after the Second World War; see: Seyidbəyli, Məryəm, *Azərbaycançılıq ideologiyası: ənənə və müasirlik*, Elm və təhsil, Baku, 2019, 225-273.

[16] *Korenizatsiya*.

[17] For such an approach see Tokluoglu, Ceylan, "Definitions of national identity, nationalism and ethnicity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 28

No. 4 July 2005, 722-758.

[18] Ibid, 745.

[19] Hunter, Shireen, *The Transcaucasus in Transition: Nation-Building and Conflict*, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, 1994, 64-65.

[20]

<https://www.enpolitik.com/gundem/hakki-oznur-dan-ebulfez-elcibey-yazisi-h323660.html/>

[21] A decree was signed in 1992 by Elchibey on the protection of the rights and freedoms of ethnic and national minorities, and on the promotion of their languages and cultures.

[22] Əliyev, Qoşqar Heydər Əliyev və milli mentalitet fəlsəfəsi, Qismet, Baku, 2003, 134-135.

[23] Babayev, Hacı Xanəli, *Azərbaycançılıq, elmi-dini maarifçilik, mənəvi özünüdərk nümunəsi*, Baku, 2004, 64.

[24] Turkicness being considered too romantic and not realistic enough; see Seyidbəyli, 59.

[25] Works published mainly in Azerbaijani, Russian, and to a lesser extent in English; for an overview of these publications:

https://multiculturalism.preslib.az/en_ebooks.html

[26] Əlizadə, Akif, “Dəqiq ideoloji hədəf”: <http://www.science.gov.az/news/open/3455>, 2016.

[27] Ibid.

[28] For a synthesis of the official multiculturalist speech: https://multiculturalism.preslib.az/en_others-hpt5PRUsV3.html/

[29] Speech given by Ilham Aliyev for the 70 years anniversary of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences; <https://president.az/articles/16703>

[30] Akif Əlizadə, “Dəqiq ideoloji hədəf”: <http://www.science.gov.az/news/open/3455>, 2016.

[31] Which does not omit to recall David Cameron’s statement on the failure of multicultural policies; <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-12371994/>

[32] Interview with Irina Kunina at the office of the Baku International Multiculturalism Center, the 3th of February 2021.

[33] “Multiculturalism”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/#ClMul/>

[34] For example, the newspaper *Samur* is published in the Lezgi language by the writer and poet Sadagat Karimova; Also, the newspaper *Alam*, published in the Talysh language. However, Hilal Mammedov, editor-in-chief of *Tolyshi Sado* (*The Talysh Voice*), a Talysh-language newspaper, was arrested in 2013, accused of treason in favor of Iran.

[35] Svante E. Cornell, Halil Karaveli and Boris Ajeganov, 73-89.

[36] Examples can be easily found here : https://multiculturalism.preslib.az/en_others-hpt5PRUsV3.html/

[37] Mirza Ibrahimov, *Anthologie de la Prose Azerbaïdjanaise*, Editions du Progrès, Moscou, 1982, 5-10.

[38] We can recall that Azerbaijan became party to the Council of Europe *Framework Convention on national minorities* in 2000, which provides for the protection and promotion of the rights

of ethnic minorities;
<https://reliefweb.int/report/azerbaijan/azerbaijan-accedes-three-council-europe-conventions/>

[39] One thinks of the arrest of several Azerbaijani Kurds, accused of being PKK agents.

[40] Many commentaries and publications pointed to the small number of mosques and synagogues in Armenia, while emphasizing the larger number of churches and synagogues on Azerbaijani territory, but also the presence of Armenians in Azerbaijan (mostly people who married an Azerbaijani).

[41]
<https://www.reuters.com/article/armenia-azerbaijan-karabakh-peacekeepers-idUSKBN2771H/>

[42]
<https://web.archive.org/web/20080705033011/http://www.anspress.com/nid51166.html/> ; Cheterian, Vicken, "Is the Political Status of Nagorno-Karabakh that important?", 2021, <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/is-the-political-status-of-nagorno-karabakh-that-important/>

[43] Data offered by the Vishnevsky Institute of Demography, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39.php?reg=5/

[44] [https://minorityrights.org/country/azerbaijan/#:~:text=Azerbaijan%20has%20a%20large%20number,Udins%20\(0.04%20per%20cent\)%20and/](https://minorityrights.org/country/azerbaijan/#:~:text=Azerbaijan%20has%20a%20large%20number,Udins%20(0.04%20per%20cent)%20and/)

[45] Valery Tishkov, the Russian specialist of minorities asserts that Azerbaijan was, together with Armenia and Uzbekistan, the biggest assimilator of the former SSRs. Quoted in De Wall, *Black garden*, 133.

[46] Quoted in Kotecha, Homa, "Islamic and ethnic identity in

Azerbaijan: emerging trends and tendencies", OSCE paper, 2006, 42; <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/49997ae42c.pdf/>

^[47] Huseynli, Ilkin, "Morality and the Azerbaijani attitude toward Armenians", 2020; <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/morality-and-the-azerbaijani-attitude-toward-armenians/>,