Islam, State, and Society in Independent Azerbaijan

Between Historical Legacy and Post-Soviet Reality - with special reference to Baku and its environs

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Introduction

0.1 Formulation of the problem, aims of the research, and theoretical perspectives

The dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 and the appearance of new independent states in its place resulted in dramatic changes in geopolitics. Because of its strategic importance, Azerbaijan emerged as one of the new spheres of interest in the world community. Moreover, the historical legacy of Azerbaijan as a part of the Great Silk Road as well as a meeting point of western and eastern cultures makes it a very attractive object of research. Finally, the essentially moderate Islamic framework in Azerbaijan and its unique character as the only country throughout the post-Soviet space in which a major part of the population belong to Shi'a Islam distinguish it from other Muslim republics of the former USSR.

Islam was brought to Azerbaijan in the middle of the seventh century CE in the wake of Arab conquests in the region. A slow process of Islamisation took place in the territories of Azerbaijan between the seventh and tenth centuries. Until the beginning of the sixteenth century, the local population was predominantly Sunni. With the rise of the Ṣafawid Empire under Shāh Isma'īl I in the early sixteenth century, a majority of the population in Azerbaijan was converted to Shi'ism.

After the incorporation of the Azerbaijani principalities (khanates) into the Russian Empire as a result of the two Russian-Persian wars of 1804-1813 and 1826-1828, the religious life of the local people underwent significant changes. Local Muslim religious institutions and officials were integrated into the system of the tsarist state. At the same time, Russian authorities succeeded in using the Shi'a/Sunni split among the indigenous population to their own interest and advantage. Since as early as the beginning of the oil boom in Baku in the 1860s, one of the main concerns of Azerbaijani intellectuals has been the necessity of carrying out reforms within the Azerbaijani society, with special emphasis on language, education and religion. In the scholarly literature such activities towards reforms and new thinking among the Muslim population of the Russian Empire have been referred to under the common name of *jadidism*. In 1918, as a result of the demise of the Russian Empire, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) was established as the first officially proclaimed secular state in the entire Muslim world. With the occupation of the ADR by the Red Army in 1920, Azerbaijan became a part of the atheistic Soviet state. A Soviet policy of *divide et impera* and anti-religious campaigning resulted in the persecution and execution of religious thinkers and activists in Azerbaijan.

During the Soviet period, Islam lost its emotional religious appeal for the majority of Azerbaijanis and became, for the most part, channelled into traditional rituals and ceremonies that lacked most of their religious significance. The historical legacy of Islam left a huge imprint on the development of the new national and religious identities of the Azerbaijani people in the late 1980s-early 1990s. At that time, Islam was perceived by most Azerbaijanis as a part of their traditional culture, while their worldview was based on the secular traditions of their pre-Soviet and Soviet pasts. A

process of (re)-creation of a new religious identity among the Azerbaijanis, in the aftermath of the rise of the national movement in Azerbaijan, a result of the Qarabağ conflict in the late 1980s, marked a beginning stage of religious revival in the country. That stage was reflected mainly in the growth of general public interest in Islam as a complex of cultural and moral values. The events of January 1990 in Baku, when as a result of a special military operation by Soviet troops about 130 Azerbaijani citizens were killed, catalysed religious revival in the country. At a certain point the religious revival even developed a political connotation, when Allahşükür Paşazadə, the head of the official Muslim religious establishment in Azerbaijan known as the Administration of the Caucasus Muslims (*Qafqaz Müsəlmanları İdarəsi,* QMİ), blamed Mikhail Gorbachev for "sanctioning the bloody massacre" in Baku. The last hopes of many Azerbaijanis for socio-political reforms led by the government of Gorbachev in the USSR were trampled in the blood of innocent victims, the *şəhid*s, of the "Black January" events. Thus, the Communist ideals of the Soviet state collapsed at once for the people of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijanis suddenly faced an ideological vacuum, which was to be filled with any suitable ideology but Communism. The attitude of the local state authorities towards religion also underwent significant changes in the aftermath of the Black January 1990 events.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991, Azerbaijan, as a newly independent state, faced political, social and economic challenges, and Islam started to play an important role for Azerbaijan, both externally and internally. As a country with a predominantly Muslim population, Azerbaijan established friendly diplomatic relations with the countries of the Muslim world and was the first among the former Muslim republics of the USSR to become a full member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). With the adoption of the law "On the Freedom of Religion" under president Əbülfəz Elçibəy (1992-1993) in August 1992, numerous foreign Muslim religious organisations, mainly from Turkey and Iran, established their representatives in Azerbaijan, while various Muslim religious missionaries gained access to the Azerbaijani public and very soon expanded their activities all over the country.

The period of Heydər Əliyev's presidency (1993-2003) was distinguished by the reorientation of Azerbaijani foreign policy towards the West, as a result of which Islam was driven back from the Azerbaijani political scene. In parallel, the growing role of "political Islam" in the republic in the mid-1990s was limited by a number of legislative, political and administrative measures under Heydər Əliyev that bore witness to the desire of the state to take the religious situation in the country under its full control. Creation of the Azerbaijan State Committee for the Work with Religious Associations (*Azərbaycan Dini Qurumlarla İş üzrə Dövlət Komitəsi,* ADDK) in 2001 marked the desire of the authorities, previously lacking, to formulate their policy with regard to religion. ADDK turned out to be not a simple committee aimed at formal control of religious associations in Azerbaijan but, in fact, a kind of ministry of religions on the model of a similar structure in neighbouring Turkey, the Turkey Religious Affairs Presidency (*T.C. Başbakanlık, Türkiye Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı,* DİB). The ADDK was particularly active in intervening in almost all those spheres previously viewed exclusively as implicit fields of interest of the above-mentioned

QMİ. At the same time, the role of Islam in the public life of Azerbaijan was stabilised. Superficially, numerous social structures related to religion, such as Muslim religious associations, unofficial religious groups and public associations (NGOs) with religious orientation, became an integral part of post-Soviet Azerbaijani realities. Yet inwardly there were deeper meanings than a simple religious pluralism in such a diversity of religious structures in Azerbaijan.

These introductory remarks raise several questions central to scholarly inquiry:

- What were the reasons behind the unique characteristics of Islam in Azerbaijan?
- What historical events conditioned the development of an Islamic framework peculiar to Azerbaijan?
- What distinguished the process of religious revival in late-Soviet and independent Azerbaijan?
- What was the role of Islam, if any, against the background of the Qarabağ war in the late 1980s-early 1990s?
- What role did Islam play in the official ideology of independent Azerbaijan in general and what significance did it have for the Azerbaijani leadership in particular?
- How did the state construct its relations with Islam, what legislative steps did it take to control religion, and what bodies did it use to regulate religious structures in the country?
- What was the role of Islam as an ideology for political parties in Azerbaijan and what specificities did political Islam have in the country?
- What Muslim religious structures and networks have been formed in Azerbaijani society since independence, what are their distinguishing features, and which of them served and continue to serve as factors of socio-political mobilisation of the local population?

Only a relative handful of studies have examined the issues presented in the above questions[7]. Some of these studies refer to a general overview of the questions raised, while others attempt to deal specifically with separate subjects. However, to my knowledge, this present work is the first attempt to study systematically all the aforementioned questions in one volume of monographic research, written in the English language, and by so doing to contribute to the knowledge base.

The main focus of investigation of this work can be identified as the way in which interaction between Islam, state and society took place in Azerbaijan in the unique historical-cultural and socio-political contexts. Due to the conceptual framework of this work, I have intentionally refrained from detailed study of two important subjects related to religion in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, namely gender questions and "popular" Islam[8].

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[7] See below Subchapter 0.2, "State of the art".

[8] The subject of interrelation between gender and Islam in Azerbaijan has been already relatively well researched by a number of scholars (see for instance Dragadze (1994), Tohidi (1997, 1998), Heyat (2002) and Gureeva (2003)). As for the study of "popular" Islam in Azerbaijan, see especially parts of M. Saroyan's work (Saroyan 2000) and the works of Pfluger-Schindlbeck (1997, 1998, 2000, 2005).

The present study is aimed at demonstrating one general assumption and proving several theses. The general assumption of this study is that peculiarities of the role Islam played historically in Azerbaijan conditioned specific features of the so-called "Islamic revival" in the country in the post-Soviet period. For a student studying the role of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijani society, it is necessary to become acquainted with the specifics of its historical legacy in the region. Special emphasis in this regard should be put on the differentiation of the Azerbaijani people as Shi'is or Sunnis, dating back to the sixteenth century, the colonisation of Azerbaijani khanates by tsarist Russia in the early nineteenth century, secularisation trends among Azerbaijani intellectuals in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, and, finally, the "Sovietisation" of the Azerbaijanis in the course of seventy-one years of Communist rule. All the aforementioned events in the history of Azerbaijan determined the principle dynamics of the Islamic revival in the country in the post-Soviet period. This latter process took place in Azerbaijan, similarly as in other former Soviet Muslim republics, as a reaction to the ideological vacuum that appeared in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Empire[9].

This work sets out to prove the following theses:

- Peculiarities of Azerbaijani history conditioned development of an essentially moderate Islamic framework in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.
- The concatenation of religion and nationalism did not emerge in Azerbaijan at all. As a result, Islam played only a cultural role in the formation of a new Azerbaijani identity.
- Events of the Black January 1990 in Baku catalysed Islamic revival in the country.
- Over the course of the ten years after independence, authorities in Azerbaijan lacked any clearly defined religious policy. Nevertheless, they succeeded in regulating Islam with the help of legislative steps and through official state and non-state structures related to religion.
- The creation of the ADDK by Heydər Əliyev's government in 2001 marked the wish of the Azerbaijani leadership to finally formulate its policy, previously lacking, with regard to religion.
- The role of political Islam in the period between 1991 and 2003 was insignificant.
- The model of so-called "organised Islam" is of assistance in measuring religious structures in Azerbaijani society of the post-Soviet period.

A study of the interrelations between religion, state and society in post-Soviet conditions challenges the researcher in a number of ways. Such a study should be based on an interdisciplinary approach that would implement theoretical frameworks from various scientific disciplines such as general history, social history, the sociology of religion, religious studies, and political science. Moreover, such a study should consider the peculiarities of transitional societies. For my part, when studying Islam in independent Azerbaijan, I shall apply selectively theoretical

[9] Cf. especially Mukhametshin 2003; Muratova 2004; Khalid 2007.

perspectives from all the aforementioned disciplines. In particular, however, I shall use the tools of historical analysis.

It is worth noting also that the term "Islam", because of its vagueness, can lead to misinterpretation of the religious life of Muslims in modern societies. That is why, when using the term *Islam* in this work, I mean two things: first, Islam as an ideology, by which I mean a set of beliefs and practices and a complex of moral and ethical values; second, Islam as a social actor, as presented by Muslim structures and institutions run by or for ordinary people, the Muslims. Moreover, in our case "Islam" is located in "concrete discourses and practices that identify themselves as Muslim"[10]. Finally, considering the fact that the subject of Islam in Azerbaijan has not, until recently, received much attention on the part of scholars and that few works have been written on this topic, it should be noted that at the current stage it is too early to speak about general theoretical frameworks for the subject. That is why in this work I did not follow any particular theory, trying instead to find out my own way when studying Islam in Azerbaijan.

0.2 State of the art

Broadly speaking, Islam in Azerbaijan as a subject of academic research can be classified into the history of Islam up through the Soviet period and the role of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijani society. In the beginning, I shall review works of Russian and Azerbaijani scholars. Then I shall refer to the studies of western scholars.

Among the classical treatments of Islam's history in Azerbaijan, the studies of Vladimir Bartol'd can be mentioned[11]. The period of early Islamisation has been extensively researched in the works of Ziya Bünyadov[12] and Nailə Vəlixanlı[13]. Sara Aşurbəyli referred indirectly to aspects of religion in her works on the dynasty of the Shirvanshāhs[14] and medieval Baku[15]. Oqtay Efendiyev, writing on the state of the Ṣafawids[16], discussed religious reforms by Shāh Isma'īl I. Works of Məşədixanım Ne'mət[17], published in the early 1990s, have been the most important source for the study of Muslim epigraphy in Azerbaijan in general and in Baku and the Abşeron peninsula in particular. Furthermore, her book *Pirs in Azerbaijan* (*Azərbaycanda pirlər*), published in 1992[18], dealt with most important Muslim sacred sites in the country. Separate attention should be paid to the work of *akhūnd* Soltan Əlizadə titled *Azerbaijani Dervishes and Rövzakhans* (*Azərbaycan dərvişləri və rövzəxanları*), published in 1995. This book studies the almost unexplored phenomenon of dervishes and their

[10] Saroyan 2000, p. 31.
[11] Bartol'd 1924.
[12] Buniyatov 1965, 1987.
[13] Vəlixanlı 1993.
[14] Ashurbeili 1983.
[15] Ashurbeili 1992.
[16] Ėfendiev 1981.
[17] Neimat 1991.
[18] Ne'mət 1992.

poetry, mainly among the Shi'a population of the Abşeron peninsula[19]. Several recent studies by Azerbaijani scholars have researched the Muslim clericy and religious institutions in Azerbaijan during the last three centuries. Among such studies, the book of Rəsul Hüseynli (publ. 2002)[20] and the monograph of Vəfa Quliyeva (publ. 2003)[21] can be mentioned. Activities of the religious party *İttihad-i İslam* in Azerbaijan in 1918-1920 were studied in detail by Altay Göyüşov in his book published in 1997[22]. Among the works that studied Islam in Azerbaijan in the Soviet period, the vast majority belong to Soviet Azerbaijani scholarship. For instance, the most detailed picture of Islam in Soviet Azerbaijan in the period between the 1920s and the 1960s was presented in a book by Məqsüd Səttarov, under the rather misleading title *Formation of the Atheistic Worldview of the People of Azerbaijan in the Period of the Construction of Socialism* (*Sosializm quruculuğu dövründə Azərbaycan xalqında ateizm dünyagörüşünün formalaşması)*[23], published in 1964. The main feature of the studies on religion written from socio-ethnographic perspectives by Soviet Azerbaijani scholars was that their authors approached Islam in Azerbaijan as only a complex of "remnants" of religious beliefs and traditions, nothing more. For instance, another book by Məqsüd Səttarov, published in 1967, was titled *Remnants of Islamic Religion* (*İslam dini qalıqları*). Moreover, in 1968, A. Quliyev and A. Bəxtiyarov published a study called *Ancient Religious Traditions in Azerbaijan and their Remnants in Daily Life* (*Azərbaycanda qədim dini ayinlər və onların məişətdə qalıqları*)[24]. Finally, a dissertation by E. Balayev with the title *Remnants of the Cult of 'Saints' in Azerbaijan* (*Azərbaycanda 'müqəddəslərə' pərəstiş qalıqları)*, which appeared in 1969, approached the subject from the same angle[25]. At the same time, it should be noted that the two latter works, despite their socialistic bias, have been until recently among the most important sources on "folk" Islam in Azerbaijan. Last but not least, Abdulla Əhədov contributed to the study of folk Islam, publishing in 1986 a book called *On the Essence of the Cult of 'Saints' and its Modern Remnants* (*'Müqəddəslərə' pərəstişin mahiyyəti və müasir qalıqları haqqında*)[26]. Another book by Əhədov, called *Religion and Religious Organisations in Azerbaijan* (*Azərbaycanda din və dini tə'sisatlar*)[27], appeared in the wake of *perestroika* in 1991. Despite the fact that it still consisted of Communist rhetoric, the book itself nevertheless provided detailed insight into the history of Muslim institutions both in tsarist Russia and in the Soviet Union.

Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan as a subject of scholarly research has been a relatively unexplored area among both Azerbaijani and Russian scholars. Rafiq Əliyev, in his several articles in the mid-1990s on Islam in Azerbaijan, emphasised

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[19] Əlizadə 1995.
[20] Hüseynli 2002.
[21] Kulieva 1999, 2003.
[22] Göyüşov 1997.
[23] Səttarov 1964.
[24] Quliyev and Bəxtiyarov 1968.
[25] Balayev 1969; two years later, Balayev published the revised version of his dissertation in the form of a book with a slightly different title: *The Cult of "Saints" – the Harmful Remnant of the Past* (*"Müqəddəslərə" pərəstiş – keçmişin zərərli qalığıdır*) (Balayev 1971).
[26] Əhədov 1986.
[27] Əhədov 1991.

the importance of a complex approach to the problem that would consist of "consideration both of the inner logic of Islam's functioning as a cultural-ideological and social-political complex, on the one hand, and of complicated processes taking place in political and socio-cultural life of the country since *perestroika*, on the other"[28]. Papers and articles of Hikmət Hacızadə dealing with religious liberties[29] also can be credited to Azerbaijani scholarship studying Islam in Azerbaijan. However, it was not until 2001 that the subject of Islam in modern Azerbaijan was covered minutely, in the works of Əli Abasov[30]. It was time for a monographic research on Islam in Azerbaijan, which appeared in 2004 in the form of the book by Arif Yunusov, a first of its kind[31]. The article of Altay Göyuşov on Azerbaijani intellectuals of the pre-Soviet period, published in 2007, opened a new perspective in research on reform movements among Muslim intellectuals of the Russian Empire during the end of the nineteenth/beginning of the twentieth centuries[32].

Several studies that appeared in Azerbaijan in the course of the 1990s and early 2000s dealt with specific subjects related to Islam in the country. For instance, in 1999, V. İbayev published a book on the role of the leading Muslim religious structure in Azerbaijan, the QMİ, as a mediator in the process of negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia around the Qarabağ issue[33]. A work published in 2000 by a group of authors headed by Ə. Şəhrili was devoted exclusively to the head of the QMİ, Allahşükür Paşazadə[34]. The above-mentioned works dealt, as a rule, with questions relating to the general history of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan and ignored such areas important for the study of religion as sociology, ethnography, cultural studies and psychology. Against this background, the research on religiosity carried out by Tahir Faradov is worth mentioning. He conducted sociological polls among the Azerbaijani population in the period between late 1999 and early 2000 and published the results in the form of articles in 2001 and 2002[35]. Studies of political Islam in Azerbaijan include examples of research by Anar Vəliyev on the politicisation of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijani society[36] and Rufat Sattarov on Islam as a political factor in post-Soviet Azerbaijan[37]. Finally, studies by Altay Göyuşov and Elçin Əsgərov on Islamic education in Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan, written in the framework of the project "Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States" and based mainly on primary sources (archive work, field-work), can be noted as very important contributions to the knowledge base on Islam in Azerbaijan[38].

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[28] Aliev 1996, p. 81
[29] Gadzhi-zade 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2003.
[30] Abasov 2001; see also Abasov 2006.
[31] Yunusov 2004.
[32] Göyüşov 2007.
[33] İbayev 1999.
[34] Şəhrili et al. 2000.
[35] Faradov 2001.
[36] Valiyev 2005a, 2005b, 2006.
[37] Sattarov 2004.
[38] Geyushov and Asqärov 2009.

Among Russian scholars, a work by Dmitrii Trofimov on Islamic structures in Azerbaijan in the early 1990s[39] and articles by Andrei Polonskii[40] and Aleksei Malashenko[41] on Islam in Azerbaijan contributed to the academic study of the subject.

In contrast to both Azerbaijani and Russian scholars, their western colleagues dealing with Islam in Azerbaijan did not limit themselves in regard to either theoretical perspectives or research methodologies. The academic works of Vladimir Minorsky cover different aspects of the history of Islam and Muslim dynasties in the territory of Azerbaijan in the medieval and early periods[42]. Especially noteworthy among his works are those dealing with the religious views of Shāh Ismaʻīl I[43]. Aspects of Islam in Azerbaijan as reflected in the "modernist discourse" of Azerbaijani *literati* of the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries have been researched in detail by Eva-Maria Auch[44] and Volker Adam[45] on the basis of archival materials and the contemporary press. Audrey Altstadt contributed to the study of Islam in Azerbaijan by her article on *mollas* in pre-revolutionary Baku[46]. Moreover, her book *The Azerbaijani Turks* contained, among other things, insight into the role of Muslim institutions in tsarist Azerbaijan[47]. Tadeusz Swietochowski, in his numerous articles and two books, paid attention to the role of Islam as a factor influencing the development of a national identity among the Azerbaijanis in the course of the twentieth century[48]. Volker Adam, mentioned above, researched the question of criticism of *Muḥarram* celebrations in both tsarist and Soviet Azerbaijan[49]. The book of Jörg Baberowski *The Enemy is Everywhere: Stalinism in the Caucasus (Der Feind ist Überall: Stalinismus im Kaukasus*) dealt in part with the role of Islam in Azerbaijani society in the period of Stalin's rule[50]. Yaacov Ro'i in his book *Islam in the USSR* touched on aspects of religious policy on the part of the Soviet authorities in Azerbaijan, with special reference to the Spiritual Administration of the Transcaucasus Muslims[51]. Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay presented a detailed picture of interrelations between Islam and identity among Soviet Azerbaijanis in her article published in 1984. Mark Saroyan investigated the role of the official Muslim religious establishment in Azerbaijan in the late 1980s in sanctioning "popular" Muslim practices and by so doing questioned a previously widespread assumption that Islam in the USSR had existed in sharply distinctive forms of "official" and "popular"[52].

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[39] Trofimov 1995.
[40] Polonskii 1999.
[41] Malashenko 2000.
[42] Minorsky 1960a, 1960b, 1963, 1964.
[43] Minorsky 1939-1942.
[44] Aukh 2001; Auch 2004.
[45] Adam 2000; Adam 2002.
[46] Altstadt (-Mirhadi) 1986.
[47] Altstadt 1992.
[48] Swietochowski 1983, 1985, 1995a.
[49] Adam 2001.
[50] Baberowski 2003.
[51] Ro'i 2000.
[52] Saroyan 2000.

Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan has been a relatively unexplored area in the West. The leading expert in this field has been a German scholar, Raoul Motika, who has been publishing extensively on various aspects of Islam in Azerbaijan since at least 2000. Among the studies of particular interest carried out by Motika on the subject, those dealing with Islamic networks[53], the activities of foreign Muslim missionaries[54] and the legal regulation of religion in Azerbaijan can be especially mentioned[55]. Islam in Azerbaijan received partial coverage in numerous reports by Elisabeth Fuller carried out for the Research Institute of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in the course of the 1990s and 2000s[56]. A French scholar, Bayram Balcı, published several articles that shed light on the question of Shi'a/Sunni diversity and its socio-political implications in post-Soviet Azerbaijani society[57]. Against this background, Polish scholar Jerzy Rohoziński conducted research on the mobilising potential of Islam among the traditional Shi'a population of the Abşeron peninsula[58]. In 2006, Svante Cornell published research concerning the politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan[59]. In 2006, OSCE published a discussion paper by Hema Kotecha entitled "Islamic and Ethnic Identities in Azerbaijan: Emerging Trends and Tensions"[60]. In 2008, a book by Christina Hunner-Kreisel called *Educating a "True" Muslim: Islamic Education in Institutions of Azerbaijan (Erziehung zum "Wahren" Muslim. Islamische Bildung in den Institutionen Aserbaidschans)* appeared[61]. In 2008, the International Crisis Group published an analytical paper "Azerbaijan: Independent Islam and the State"[62]. Sociological and ethnographic questions of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan found their reflection in the works of Tamara Dragadze[63], Nayereh Tohidi[64], and Feride Heyat[65], for example in the studies devoted to the role of women in Azerbaijani society. Finally, the research of Ingrid Pfluger-Schindlbeck on kinship, gender and life cycle rituals[66] among the rural Azerbaijani population contributed to the state of the art with regard to the ethnography of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

To have a comparative perspective for this work, it was also necessary to refer to studies of Islam in other post-Soviet societies. There exists much interesting research on the question of the Islamic revival in these regions. However, of special interest to my work were studies by the following authors: Alexei Malashenko on Islam in Russia[67], Hillary Pilkington and Galina Yemelianova on the public and private faces

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[53] Motika 2000.
[54] Motika 2001.
[55] Motika 2005.
[56] See for instance Fuller 2002.
[57] Balcı 2004.
[58] Rohoziński 2005.
[59] Cornell 2006.
[60] Kotecha 2006.
[61] Hunner-Kreisel 2008.
[62] ICG 2008.
[63] Dragadze 1994.
[64] Tohidi 1997, 1998.
[65] Heyat 2002.
[66] Pfluger-Schindlbeck 1997, 1998, 2000, 2005.
[67] Malashenko 1998, 2001.

of Islam in post-Soviet Russia[68], Aidar Khabutdinov on the formation and evolution of national ideas among the Tatars[69], Rafik Mukhametshin on Islam among the Tatars[70], Aislu Yunusova on Islam in Bashkortostan[71], Adeeb Khalid on Islam and politics in Central Asia[72] and especially his case study on Islam in Uzbekistan[73], Bakhtiyor Babajanov on debates about Islam in post-Soviet Uzbekistan[74], Erik McGlynchey on Islamic leaders in Uzbekistan, Alma Sultangaliyeva on Islam in Kazakhstan[75], Irina Kostyukova on Islam in Kyrgyzstan[76], Bayram Balcı on educational networks of Fethullah Gülen in Central Asia[77], Aleksandr Bogomolov and his colleagues on Islamic identity in the Ukraine[78], and Elmira Muratova on Islam as a political factor in the Crimea[79].

0.3 Sources and methodology

The study of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan would not be possible without reference to a wide spectrum of primary and secondary sources. Above, I have discussed the most important among the latter. As for primary sources, these include local newspapers, journals and magazines published in both Azerbaijani and Russian in the course of the 1990s and early 2000s. Such information and analytical services as BBC Monitoring International Reports, RFE/RL Newsline, RFE/RL Report (especially the Caucasus Report), IWPR's Caucasus Reporting Service, and the news mailing list Habarlar-L also have been among the highly useful sources of information for the present work. At the same time, I have had made available to me published works or collections of speeches of some leading political personalities of Azerbaijan in the course of the 1990s. Furthermore, in some cases local *samizdat* religious literature and publicly distributed flyers were of great assistance. When discussing issues of the legal regulation of religion in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, I found especially useful a collection of Azerbaijani normative documents published in Baku by the *Qanun* (Law) publishers. With the expansion of the World Wide Web, much information on Islam in Azerbaijan has become available from a number of Internet sources. These can be classified as follows:

- Sites of news agencies providing both general and specific information on the subject;
- On-line versions of Azerbaijani newspapers, journals, and magazines;

[68] Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003
[69] Khabutdinov 2008.
[70] Möhämmätshin 2001; Mukhametshin 2003.
[71] Yunusova 1999.
[72] Khalid 2007.
[73] Khalid 2003.
[74] Babajanov 2004.
[75] Sultangaliyeva 1998.
[76] Kostyukova 2001.
[77] Balcı 2003.
[78] Bogomolov et al. (eds.) 2006.
[79] Muratova 2004.

- Sites of particular political parties, social organisations, and religious communities;
- Discussion forums and blogs.

At the same time, information that was not retrievable from any of the aforementioned sources was obtained as a result of my fieldwork in Baku in July-September 2003, September-October 2004, August-September 2006, April-May 2007, July-August 2008.

In this work I decided to rely on the following methodological tools: media analysis, discourse analysis, case studies, interviews with local public and religious leaders, and, finally, standard and participant observations. Elective analyses of information in mass media (newspapers, journals, magazines, TV programmes, Internet), both local and international, in the period between 1988 and 2008, composed the core basis of the present study. I also appealed to the case-studies method. It is aimed at exploring "a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases), over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and rich in context"[80]. In this work I have appealed both to a so-called "intrinsic case study", when a particular case itself is of interest, and to a "collective case study", when multiple cases are of interest. While the "intrinsic case study" serves the purpose of illustrating a particular case, the "collective case study" is used to describe and compare multiple cases in order to provide insight into an issue[81]. "Problem-centred" interviews with local public and religious leaders helped to fill in gaps in the data accumulated by me from the mass media analysis. I have also had recourse to standard and participant observation methods in order to retrieve the context of the target group's activities. Last but not least, my personal field experience and practical knowledge, areas referred to by James Scott as "mētis"[82], served me as a guide throughout my research. To sum up, the overall methodology used in writing this work can be termed historical and empirical. It is also an "integrative" and interdisciplinary approach to the study of religion in a political and socio-cultural context[83].

0.4 Structure and content of the work

Above I have outlined the general approach adopted in this work. Let me now give an indication of its contents. This study is composed of six chapters, epilogue, general conclusion, the list of sources used and consulted, and the index. The following six chapters and the epilogue aim both to offer some background information and to address the aforementioned conceptual parameters.

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[80] Creswell and Maietta 2002, p. 162.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Scott 1998, p. 311. According to James Scott, such practical skills are variously called "know-how", "*savoir faire*", "*arts de faire*", "common sense", "experience", or "a knack", while the practice and experience reflected in these skills are almost always local (ibid., p. 317).
[83] Cf. Caldarola 1982.

Chapter 1 reviews main aspects of the history of Islam in Azerbaijan, beginning with the period of Islamisation of the region and ending with the late Soviet period. It is aimed, thus, at presentation of the historical background so important for the study of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. The chronological frameworks of chapters 2-6 embrace both the *perestroika* (1985-1991) and post-Soviet (1991-2003) periods. The epilogue discusses the period between 2003 and 2008.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation presents an historical overview of Islam in Azerbaijan. Central historical facts linked to Islam in medieval, late medieval, and early modern Azerbaijan will be mentioned illustratively. Furthermore, the major socio-political and cultural changes that took place in Azerbaijan beginning in the nineteenth century and up to the Soviet time and their effects on the structure, meaning and functions of Islam in Azerbaijan will be examined.

Chapter 2 will analyse aspects of religious revival as reflected in the political and social life in late Soviet-early independent Azerbaijan. In the beginning, I shall study the role of Islam in Azerbaijani society in the period between 1985 and 1990. I shall argue that the Qarabağ conflict, being the most important factor that boosted the Azerbaijani national movement in the late 1980s, also served as an indirect cause behind a process of religious revival in Azerbaijan. Then I shall show that the Black January 1990 events in Baku further catalysed Islamic revival in Azerbaijan. Next, I shall review the role of Islam in Azerbaijani society in the period of the first two Azerbaijani presidents, Ayaz Mütəllibov and Əbülfəz Elçibəy. I shall present their personal views on religion and then discuss Islam's role in the internal arena and as a factor in the foreign policy of Azerbaijan at that time. Special emphasis will be laid on the influence of Turkish and Iranian factors on the religious situation in the country at that period. Finally, I shall inquire into the role of Islam, if any, against the background of the Qarabağ conflict in the late 1980s-early 1990s.

Chapter 3 will be devoted to discussion of the role Islam played in Azerbaijani society during the ten years' presidency of Heydər Əliyev. As in the case of the first two presidents of Azerbaijan, I shall present the views of Əliyev on religion. Then I shall discuss the role of Islam as a political factor in the internal arena of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, I shall study socio-cultural aspects of the Islamic revival in the country, with special emphasis on the activities of Turkish and Iranian religious missionaries. Finally, I shall analyse the role the Islamic factor played in the foreign policy of Azerbaijan in the period between 1993 and 2003.

Chapter 4 will study state regulation of Islam in Azerbaijan through the examples of legislation and official and semi-official structures related to religion. In the opening section, I shall refer to those Azerbaijani normative acts in which religion is mentioned. I shall in particularly discuss legal regulations of religious associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Then I shall study three major structures in post-Soviet Azerbaijan aimed at regulating religion. First, I shall refer to the Department of Religious Affairs (*Dini İşlər İdarəsi*, Dİİ) at the Cabinet of Ministers of the Azerbaijan Republic. Then I shall examine the Administration of the Caucasus Muslims (QMİ), a semi-official Muslim religious structure inherited from the Soviet period, headed since 1982 by Allahşükür Paşazadə. Finally, I shall elaborate on the State Committee for the Work with Religious Associations (ADDK), a structure

created in 2001 according to a decree of Heydər Əliyev with the aim of regulating religion in Azerbaijan. I shall also refer to the unofficial competition taking place as early as 2001 between the ADDK and QMİ over influence in the religious sphere in Azerbaijani society.

Chapter 5 will examine the place of Islam in the ideology of political parties and organisations in Azerbaijan. First, I shall refer to the role Islam played and continues to play in the ideology of Azerbaijani political parties of secular orientation. In this regard, reference will be made to six leading political parties in the country. Second, I shall discuss Azerbaijani political parties and organisations of religious orientation. Special emphasis will be laid on the leading political party of Islamic orientation in Azerbaijan since the early 1990s, the Azerbaijan Islamic Party (*Azərbaycan İslam Partiyası*, AİP), and on a socio-political organisation, *Tövbə* (Repentance).

Chapter 6 is devoted to discussion of what I refer to as "organised Islam" in post-Soviet Azerbaijani society, through the examples of religious associations, unofficial religious groups and NGOs of religious orientation from Baku and the Abşeron peninsula. First, I shall elaborate on the classification of Islam in Azerbaijani society accepted in the scholarly literature. Second, I shall propose the notion of "organised Islam" in order to assess religious structures in Azerbaijani society of the post-Soviet period. I define "organised Islam" as any form of Islamic ideology that unites believers around a particular religious association (be it a community, centre, or institution), or NGO of religious orientation. This concept will be useful in identifying Muslim religious structures in Baku and the Abşeron peninsula in which I find the "active" form of Islam in Azerbaijan. Third, I shall review Shi'a and Sunni religious communities of Baku and the Abşeron peninsula and discuss several NGOs of religious orientation, classifying them again as Shi'a or Sunni. I shall argue that the above-mentioned entities present what I have referred to previously as "organised Islam"

The epilogue will study Islamic dynamic in Azerbaijan during the first term of presidency of İlham Əliyev (2003-2008).

One final note: taking into consideration the fact that the subject of Islamic revival in Azerbaijan is too voluminous to be studied in the framework of one book, what follows is an attempt to describe and analyse only certain aspects of it. Moreover, bearing in mind that the role of religion in post-Soviet Azerbaijani society has been hitherto a relatively unexplored subject, the author does not pretend to cover it fully. Rather, the present work is an attempt to establish a starting theoretical and source base for future research and in this regard to fill a gap that exists in all three of the fields of Azerbaijani, Turkish and Islamic studies.