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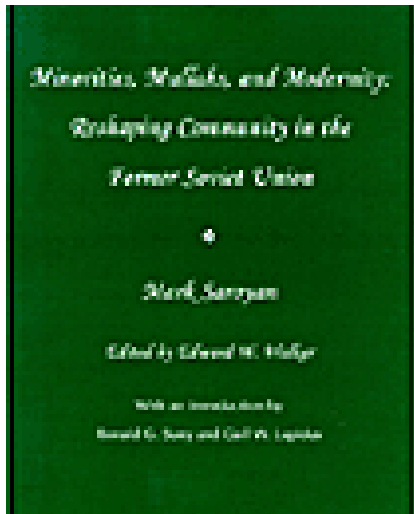Research Series, uciaspubs/research/95

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Minorities, Mullahs and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union

Mark Saroyan

Edited by Edward W. Walker

Description:
With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus and Central Asia suddenly became significant actors on the world stage. Yet outside knowledge of this vast region has been limited and superficial. This collection of essays and lectures by the late Mark Saroyan (1960-1995, UCB Ph.D. 1990) is a major contribution to understanding the interaction among the region's religious traditions, cultures, and politics. Saroyan's command of five regional languages and extensive fieldwork both before and after the Soviet collapse yielded numerous original insights into the identity politics of the region. The volume will be of great interest to political scientists, anthropologists, historians, and students of religion — as well as to specialists on Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Late Soviet Union

Mark Saroyan

Edward W. Walker, Editor

With an introduction by
Gail W. Lapidus and Ronald G. Suny

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Preface

Mark Saroyan was one of the first associated graduate students of what was then called the Berkeley-Stanford Program in Soviet International Behavior (now the Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies). Mark arrived at Berkeley in 1986 and graduated with a Ph.D. in political science in December 1990, at which point he took up a position as an assistant professor of political science at Harvard.

Tragically, Mark was diagnosed with a fatal illness shortly before his arrival at Harvard. As Mark's illness worsened, it became increasingly difficult for him to meet his teaching obligations, so in 1993 he returned to Berkeley, where, at the urging of his former dissertation adviser, Gail Lapidus, he began to collect his published and unpublished papers, and to complete various works-in-progress, including a co-authored paper with a Berkeley graduate student, Maranatha Ivanova. His hope was that he would be able to publish the collection as a book. But Mark's health deteriorated rapidly, and he was unable to complete the project before his death on 21 July 1994 at the age of 34.

Mark's death was a terrible loss for his family, friends, and colleagues; it was also a great misfortune for his profession. Mark was a brilliant scholar. Unlike many of his contemporaries in political science, he had both the ability and the desire to study not only "politics," but also culture, and the interaction between them. Mark traveled extensively throughout the former Soviet Union at a time when most of his colleagues would visit the USSR only rarely, usually confining their visits to Moscow. He was a talented linguist who was fluent in Russian, Armenian, Azeri, and Turkish. As the papers in this volume attest, he used his prodigious linguistics abilities and powers of empathy to great effect in his study of Islam in the former Soviet Union; Soviet nationality policy; and politics, society, and culture in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Although I had heard of Mark and had admired his scholarship, I met him for the first time in 1993 after his return to Berkeley. He struck me as a truly decent human being who cared deeply about the peoples and cultures he was studying and who at the same time refused to accept conventional wisdoms about his objects of study. I

was therefore honored to be asked to pick up where he had left off prior to his death and put together a collection of his works for publication. This volume is the result of those efforts, and it is dedicated to his memory.

This was, I confess, a difficult book to edit, and I apologize to Mark for any injustice I have done to his ideas. His unpublished papers were clearly not intended for immediate publication, and there was a considerable degree of duplication in them, which I have attempted to minimize. Also, his paper with Maranatha Ivanova was still in progress at the time of his death, and I thank her for her considerable efforts to complete the paper in accordance with Mark's instructions.

Many people made this volume possible. Thanks go first and foremost to Mark's family for giving us permission to proceed with the volume; to Ron Suny and Gail Lapidus for their excellent introduction; to Timothy Colton and Susan Pharr for establishing a Mark Saroyan Fund at Harvard that helped make the volume possible; to Bojana Ristich for her careful and professional copyediting; to Stephen Pitcher for the excellent layout and design of the volume; to Nayereh Tohidi for checking the Azeri spellings; and to International and Area Studies at Berkeley for agreeing to publish the volume.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of the following individuals to Mark Saroyan Funds at Berkeley and Harvard: Michele Albanese • Robert Bates • Peter Berkowitz • Mark Bousian • Liliana Botcheva • Houchang Chehabi • Timothy Colton • Thomas Cushman • Jorge Dominguez • Gordon Furth • John Gershman • Albert Grote • Michael Hagen • Henry Hale • Elaine Hawthorne • Joel Hellman • Arthur Hoff • Stanley Hoffmann • Robert and Yasuko Ikeda • Iain Johnston • Fu Jun • Robert Keohane • Ruth Lewis • Roderick MacFarquhar • Judith Mehrmann • Mary E. Merschen • Andrew Moravcsik • David Nalle • Jean Oi • Mark Peterson • Susan Pharr • Daniel Posner • Paul Quinlan • Louise Richardson • Peter Rutland • Carolyn Sheaff • Kenneth Shepsle • James Tracy • Ronald and Dorothy Tyler • Janet Vaillant • Celeste Wallander • Robert Weiner • Perdita Welch • Deborah Yashar.

Edward W. Walker
June 1997

INTRODUCTION

Gail W. Lapidus and Ronald G. Suny

Some deaths come when they are expected, in the course of things; others arrive far too early. The loss that we feel reflects how much we cared for the person who has left us, but the tragedy is compounded when the leaving is abrupt and untimely. There ought to have been much more time for Mark Saroyan: he had much yet to give, both as a uniquely talented scholar and as a human being. But what he left is much more than the sense of great unrealized possibilities. It is also the recognition of rare achievement by one so young and a deep sorrow that we will never know what he might have achieved.

Mark began his study of Soviet politics at Berkeley at a time when a narrow focus on elite politics dominated the field. Scholarly research and training were Russia-centered, and the non-Russian regions—especially the Caucasus and Central Asia—were assumed to be either carbon copies of what went on in Russia, or a source of underground opposition to the regime. Mark not only recognized the limitations of this approach, but also grasped that politics could not be understood in isolation from a broader cultural context.

These views did not always endear Mark to the more rigid political science faculty and fellow students, who could not understand why he spent so much time studying esoteric languages or taking courses in anthropology. But Mark followed his own instincts, and they led him in extraordinarily productive directions. He had an exceptional gift for languages—not only Russian and Armenian, French and German, but also Azeri, Turkish, and Uzbek. Indeed he was even a talented translator of Persian poetry.

To these linguistic gifts were joined both great empathy for other cultures and pride in his Armenian background. A gifted observer of his environment, he took to anthropology early in his aca-

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demic career. Wherever he traveled—whether in Berkeley or Baku, Tehran or Cambridge—he immersed himself in the local culture and absorbed its discourse. His knowledge and understanding of Central Asia won the admiration and respect of Soviet and Western scholars alike, and he eagerly shared that knowledge with colleagues and students. A gifted teacher, Mark inspired hundreds of students, for whom he made the subject come alive.

It was especially gratifying and something of a vindication that upon receiving his doctorate from Berkeley, Mark was offered the most prestigious academic position available at the time—an assistant professorship at Harvard. Perhaps Cambridge was not the most congenial environment for him, intellectually or personally. Though forthright in his criticism of its shortcomings, Mark also made serious efforts to remedy them. He created new courses, worked closely with students, and had an important impact on a number of them.

Mark Saroyan also made important contributions to the policy community. He was a frequent visitor to Washington, D.C. and participated in conferences in the United States, Western Europe, Turkey, and Iran. While members of his family felt that he might one day become secretary of state, he may more accurately be imagined as the secretary's most persistent critic. Precisely because he was provocative and prepared to challenge received wisdom, he compelled many in the policy arena to reexamine their assumptions.

After he became ill, Mark's decision to return to Berkeley was a homecoming, however bittersweet. In his last months, Mark sought to work on a collection of his writings. This volume of his essays and articles (some published and some unpublished) is therefore a tribute to Mark's accomplishments and a very special gift—his legacy—to future generations.

Mark's contribution to Sovietology was innovative in several ways. First, his major concern—clerical elites and Soviet Islam—was an unusual one. Political science and religious studies seldom cross the chasm that separates them, and nowhere was the distance between the analysis of politics and the study of religion greater than in Sovietology. Those who studied religion in the USSR almost uniformly presented it as an essential opposition to Soviet communism, reproducing with inverted normative signs the dichotomy set up by the Soviets themselves—an atheistic, modernizing, transformative regime challenging traditional, static leftovers from an earlier era.

Saroyan began by de-essentializing religion, placing it back into history and a sociopolitical context in which it was constantly changing. Thus his work was from the outset revisionist, challenging those scholars—notably Alexandre Bennigsen and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, who portrayed Soviet Islam as a relatively static, resistant force separate from, and hostile to, its Soviet surroundings.

Mark treated the Soviet Islamic elite not simply as agents of the Soviet state or objects acted upon by cynical political operatives, not as "mere mouthpieces for the regime," as they were often characterized, but as actors complexly implicated in the Soviet experience, having appropriated certain Soviet values and symbolic systems. "In expressing those values through its own ideological constructs," he writes, the Soviet Muslim elite "reasserts its own social legitimacy" ("The Reinterpretation," p. 63 below). Modernizing Soviet Islam was reconstructing its own social identity "by using Islamic theological concepts to articulate dominant, secular values," marrying the traditional to the modern in a process that has its analog in non-Soviet Islamic countries. Against the dominant Western expectations of the 1970s and 1980s, Saroyan asserted that Soviet Islam was not a centrifugal threat to the Soviet state, and against the dominant Soviet view of Islam, he insisted that it was not simply a vestigial phenomenon, destined to die out soon. He returned politics to the study of religion and religion to the study of social history.

Saroyan also disaggregated Soviet Islam, distinguishing between communities and religious boards. Whereas Central Asian Muslims were less hierarchical, though dominated in many ways by Uzbeks, the North Caucasians were divided between powerful and influential Sufi groups and an official hierarchy that promoted a dogmatic Muslim identity. Transcaucasian Islam was largely an Azerbaijani affair, and this Shi'i Islam was even more comfortable with an institutionalized establishment. He also historicized the development of Soviet Islam when he discussed the changes that took place in the Gorbachev period. Instead of a unified Islamic challenge to Soviet rule, Muslims used the new freedom to ethnicize their religious institutions. Religious boards and medresas came under local leaderships in each republic, and the instruction in the schools was nationalized along republic lines. Rather than a return to some primordial ethnicity, this process was shaped by the ethnocultural borders created in the decades of Soviet power. Most striking was

Mark's finding, based on extensive interviews and travel in the last years of the Soviet Union, that even as the Soviet state was collapsing, the Muslim clergy remained "an unusually loyal opposition" and "did not reject the Soviet Union or the Soviet political system wholesale," in contrast to other political movements of the late 1980s and early 1990s ("The Restructuring of Soviet Islam," p. 101 below). Mark's reinterpretation of Soviet Islam has an even deeper subversive effect than simply revision of Western historiography or of Soviet marginalization of Islam. He shows how both Soviet sociologists and Western historians worked within the larger tradition of social science laid down by Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Beginning with a narrative of progression from the traditional (or feudal) to the modern (capitalist or socialist), scholars constructed religion as the nonmodern "other," an anachronism that would be eradicated by industrialization, secular education, rationalism, or socialism. Saroyan was suspicious of this master narrative, so pervasive in social science that it is able to resist frequent criticism. Mark's retelling of the development of Soviet Islam (actually of multiple experiences of Muslims) challenges other polarities as well: the state/society paradigm so familiar to students of Russia and the Soviet Union, and its cousin, the totalitarian model, in which the state is all and society nothing. He rejects the view, expressed most vividly by Enders Wimbush, that for a Soviet Muslim the only choice was between the Qur'an and Lenin. Rather than attempting to mediate tradition and modernity by seeing in what ways they are interrelated (and thereby preserving the two categories), Saroyan moves to an investigation of the meanings that Muslims attach to their religious forms and practices. In his most anthropological piece (written with Maranatha Ivanova), he shows how popular and official religion interpenetrated. In another essay, by turning toward an analysis of the indigenous discourses and practices of Soviet Muslim institutions, he moves beyond reifying Islam or settling on the conventional meanings imposed on this religion. As he puts it, "the totalizing constructions of Soviet Islam offered in Soviet and Western texts need to be replaced instead with the 'texts' of Muslim socio-religious life as the basis for analysis and interpretation" ("Rethinking Islam," p. 30 below). Instead of unmediated facts existing in an objective vacuum, Saroyan looks at the "organized system of meaning" to find out what should count as relevant facts and what they might mean. Muslims,

then, are not just a given category, but people who constitute their identities over time, giving meaning to their experiences and their lives.

Employing Hayden White and Michel Foucault, Saroyan works toward a new understanding of power in the Soviet Union, one that is not simply state-centered but "dispersed and constituted at different levels within a given social order" (*ibid.*, p. 33 below). His investigation of Islamic religious institutions is thus more than an analysis of religion and its relationship to the state or religion in society, but an exploration of how power is constituted in institutions and social practices outside the state. He is interested in power not only in its repressive functions, but also in its constitutive functions. As he writes, "the Muslim clergy can be seen as engaged in a creative process of constructing new forms of identity and religious organization in order to situate and establish itself and its community in a complex set of constantly changing power relations. The repressive means by which the Muslim clergy constitutes itself and its image of the Muslim community are much more relevant to its aspirations for hegemony in Muslim society than to its relations with state authorities" (*ibid.*, pp. 26–27 below).

Muslim clerics in the Soviet Union could not and did not openly challenge the Soviet regime. Rather, they expressed their own view of Islam and the Muslim community, a view that differed from the official Soviet version. While the Soviets saw Islam as separate from and alien to Soviet socialism, clerics preached about the similarities of socialist and Muslim values. Whereas clerics might agree with Soviet officials that Muslims had fallen into superstitious practices, their solution was a return to more authentic Islam. Clerics established their own authority in the community through the practice of *ijtihad*, the theological interpretation of sacred texts. Through interpretation authenticity was reestablished and adaptation to contemporary conditions was effected. In any case, it was the clerics who showed the way back to the "true Islam." While they sought a form of coexistence with the Soviet system, they assiduously maintained the distinctiveness of Muslim culture and avoided full synthesis with the hegemonic Soviet culture.

While his dissertation and much of his writing focused on the Muslim clerics and Soviet Islam in its all-Union, comparative dimension, Mark also invested much of his intellectual capital in exploring

the culture and politics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Here again his approach was to consider the various discursive universes in which politics developed, thus bringing culture and politics into communion with each other. Even when he looked at literature, as in his short piece on Mushegh Galshoyan's novel and Gevorg Emin's poem, Saroyan delved into the political-cultural meanings of the characters' words and actions. Within late Soviet Armenian literature, as he reveals, the ethnic and national dimensions were everywhere, fiercely contesting the more schematic Soviet identities by subverting and adapting them. In two major pieces, Mark looked at the Karabakh conflict, rejecting conventional views that this was simply a religious or an ethnic conflict, and exposing the complex politics that informed the two sides. Like a number of his scholarly contemporaries, he connected the conflict back to the structure of Soviet nationality institutions, the ethnonational republics and lesser autonomies, and the nonlinear evolution of nationality policy, from *korenizatsiia* through Stalinist Russification to the gentler forms of indirect rule that were the immediate precedents of the Gorbachev retreat from repression.

Mark traces the linkage of territory with nation and culture, the nativization of toponyms, the reverse reading of history so that current occupants of the "homeland" become not only the titular owners of the republic but of the past of that territory as well. Though many would see the coming conflict as inevitable and natural, Mark linked it intimately to the particular formation of ethnic identity in Transcaucasia, to the establishment of national republics, and to the privileging of the titular nationality. Yet both for Azeris, with their links to Iranian Azeris to the south, and for Armenians, with their support for repatriation of foreign Armenians and ties to the Armenian diaspora, "nation" came to mean more than the "nation-state" within the USSR. The Karabakh conflict proved an abrupt turning point between territorial "nation-state" nationalism and a broader nationalism that embraced all people of the nation wherever they may live. Thus already in 1988 Saroyan saw that Gorbachev's attempt to find political solutions to deeply imbedded institutional problems was doomed. Ethnic politics had moved beyond the structure of the national-republic system that made up the Soviet Union.

Despite his sympathy for the peoples of the region, Mark could write about Transcaucasia without displays of favoritism or chau-

vinism. An ethnic Armenian, American-born, he adopted Azerbaijan as one of his principal sites for research. Fluent in Armenian, Azeri, and Russian, he demonstrated a multifaceted appreciation for the intricacies of Azerbaijani politics and an extraordinary sensitivity to their cultural aspirations. His writings displayed both sympathy and regret for the eventual turn of Azerbaijani politics, away from an ethnic assertion of identity toward a deadly chauvinism, away from democratic impulses toward violence, repression, and dictatorship. While he was alive, the trajectories of Azerbaijan and Armenia were almost exact opposites, with Armenia moving toward democratic politics. But Mark was never sanguine about the present and the apparent in politics. He always looked for the discursive and cultural, for the structural and dynamic factors that made politics so unpredictable. He therefore would probably not have been surprised, but certainly would have expressed dismay, at the faltering of Armenian democracy. He saw politics as an open-ended game, not fatally determined, and even in his final years he remained an optimist—not a naive one, but with full awareness of the potential in humans for both great evil and extraordinary good.

RETHINKING ISLAM IN THE SOVIET UNION

One did not need to be a Sovietologist to recognize the depth and scope of the transformations that had taken place in the Soviet Union by the end of the 1980s. Mikhail Gorbachevs program of radical socioeconomic and political reform touched virtually all spheres of Soviet life and resulted in a climate of near-permanent crisis in a country that once boasted of its social and political stability. Despite a protracted civil war between the Caucasian republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, assertive independence movements in the Baltic republics, and a seemingly unending list of strikes, social movements, demonstrations, and periodic violence throughout the country, something was missing from the USSRs increasingly unstable political scene: the emergence of an Islamic opposition to Moscows rule.

In the 1970s and 1980s, expectations of instability among the USSRs Muslim populations were fueled by journalistic reports and scholarly studies which, having discovered the large and diverse Muslim communities of the Soviet Union, outlined the features of a Muslim "arc of instability" across the USSRs southern tier.1 The Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the war against the Muslim insurgency there, coupled with a demographic boom among the Soviet Unions Muslim populations, served only to highlight what was viewed as the intrinsic incompatibility of the Soviet state and the Muslim community. In this context, the absence of a massive, militant Muslim insurgency in a Soviet Union of glasnost and perestroika appeared a striking anomaly.2

Despite the few voices raised against the conventions of Western thinking about Islam in the Soviet Union, there has been little in the way of a rigorous assessment of this growing field of knowl-

edge.3 By contrast, a thoughtful subliterature that explores the theoretical methods and substance of the ever-more extensive discourse on Islam has developed in tandem with the expansion of Muslim studies outside the Soviet field.4 Given the need for a reexamination of the assumptions and methodologies that have shaped study of the Soviet Unions Muslim communities, my purpose here is not to examine Soviet Islam itself but to engage in a critical analysis of Western and Soviet representations of Soviet Islam as they are organized in a scholarly discourse. The fundamental question of this essay is thus not *what* we know about Islam in the Soviet Union, but *how* we know about it.

Students of the Soviet Union have frequently viewed access to information as a problem equal to if not greater than that of theoretical approach. But contemporary policies emanating from Moscow have resulted in a virtual explosion of information about the formerly "blank pages" of Soviet history and politics, thus mitigating the problem of access. In the context of this new wave of data, the excitement over the information itself has frequently resulted in a lack of attention to the manner by which information is received and processed for use in scholarship and analysis. The need to reevaluate the ways in which scholars use theories and paradigms to select, receive, and organize data is especially acute.

The problems of information and conceptual approach are closely intertwined, but for reasons of clarity I discuss them separately. In the first instance, a review of the empirical sources for the Western specialist literature on Soviet Islam reveals the intertextuality of this scholarly writing. In other words, the Western literature has developed more in relation to studies of Islam produced in the Soviet Union than it has to the sociopolitical and religious processes that characterize contemporary Soviet Islam. But there is more than simply a textual kinship between Western and Soviet thinking about Soviet Islam. The conceptual foundations of both Western and Soviet thinking about Islam in the Soviet Union are in fact informed by the same kinds of theoretical assumptions about the nature of religion and social change. I therefore suggest a critique of the way in which the dominant paradigms inform the conventional interpretations of Soviet Islam and the ways in which they are produced and reproduced irrespective of the socio-religious world they seek to explain. Based on this critique of the texts and of the para-

digms that inform contemporary scholarship, the third part of this essay presents a preliminary outline of an alternative way of interpreting Soviet Islam independent of the conceptual framework produced by Soviet scholarship.

READING BETWEEN THE TEXTS: STUDIES OF SOVIET ISLAM

Western scholarship on Islam in the Soviet Union originated with the work of historians concerned with the fate of Muslim peoples in the Russian Empire. Although more recently some political scientists have contributed to the formation of this specialized field of knowledge, the production of a scholarly literature on Soviet Islam is dominated mostly by historians who are at times openly hostile to the conceptual methods of the social sciences.5 Despite the atheoretical, perhaps even anti-theoretical intentions of many observers, historical and other scholarship on Soviet Islam has nonetheless been produced within a framework of conceptual assumptions and has therefore resulted in theoretical outcomes.

The Western literature on Soviet Islam, however, would not exist without specialized studies of Islam produced in the Soviet Union itself. Building on its own traditions of nineteenth-century Russian Orientalism, Soviet scholarly publishing in both central Russia and the republics has been indispensable in the formation of a Western discourse on Soviet Islam. But Soviet scholarship and media sources are not simply a vast source of empirical data for Western scholars. They also provide Western scholars with concepts and a theoretical framework. From the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, then, on many levels Soviet scholarship has effected an intellectual colonization of Western thinking on Soviet Islam.

Whether they are simply re-presenting the evolution of Soviet views of Islam or engaging in secondary research on Soviet Islam itself, virtually all Western students of Soviet Islam depend on the specialized literature produced in the Soviet Union. The significance of these Soviet sources for Western interpretations is widely recognized by Western specialists. "Soviet sources, because of their abundance, can provide a more or less coherent picture of Islam in the Soviet Union," write Alexandre Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush. "But it is ob-

vious," they continue, "that this picture is incomplete, biased and falsified."6 The nature of that biased and falsified character of Soviet writing on Islam, however, is nowhere clearly specified in the Western specialist literature. Partially as a result of this problem, Western scholarly disputes over both conceptual and empirical issues often revolve around the use and interpretation of Soviet scholarship and press coverage of Soviet Islam.7

Western scholars of Soviet Islam employ two interpretive strategies in their use of Soviet texts for empirical data. These can be referred to as direct and indirect extrapolation. The first strategy assumes that Soviet polemical discourse on Soviet Islam can be interpreted as reflecting directly or by implication a "real" situation in Soviet society. In the second, "facts" taken from Soviet sources are reworked into a discourse whose character or intentions has little to do with the context of the original texts in which these "facts" first appeared.

Despite doubts expressed by various authors about the reliability of Soviet data and interpretations, a strategy of direct extrapolation in which Soviet data, organizing concepts, and interpretations are reproduced in Western specialist literature is in fact widespread. At times entire articles published by Western specialists are constructed around a single Soviet source or a very limited number of publications.8 Even in those studies that move beyond a mere paraphrasing of Soviet texts, Western scholars often extract concepts produced in the Soviet literature and employ them to "describe" the Soviet Muslim community. An example of this is the categorization of Muslims based on a continuum of religious thought and practice. In their effort to distinguish among practitioners of Islam between "believers" and "nonbelievers," Soviet sociologists have developed as many as seven different schemes of categorizing Muslims, ranging from "firm believers" to "hesitant believers" to "committed atheists." These categories have been adopted wholesale into the descriptive Western analysis of Islam. And when disputes arise over the political significance of Islamic beliefs, these same categories are invariably invoked to substantiate one case against another.9

Apart from culling data from Soviet sources and reproducing Soviet sociological characterizations of Muslims, Western specialists also depend on Soviet sources more broadly in their interpretive strategies. Not only the content of the Soviet literature but the politi-

cal conditions of its production and transmission influence Western thinking. In substantiating his thesis of "two Islams," Bennigsen draws conclusions not just from the content of Soviet texts, but also from the fact of a flurry of Soviet publishing on Islam.

> That Islam has another, unofficial, and more important face in the Soviet Union is suggested by the vociferous anti-religious campaigns directed against Muslim believers, campaigns that would hardly be necessary were Islam as weak as its official face suggests, and by the increasing number of serious monographs on Islam. From these two sources we learn much of what we know about the real situation of Muslims in the USSR: from the first, because of what is attacked, and from the second, because of what is investigated.10

Bennigsens second proposition that the issues investigated in the Soviet literature form the foundations for the Western production of a discourse on Soviet Islam confirms the lines of argument presented here. His first proposition is likewise problematic.11 It assumes that Soviet polemics directed at Muslims, their beliefs, or practices can be interpreted as reflective of the actual state of affairs in Soviet Muslim society. Following from this assumption, for example, the intensification of a government ideological campaign against pilgrimages to local shrines is interpreted to mean that there is in fact an upsurge of pilgrimages. This practice of directly extrapolating social processes from ideologically inspired declarations can be an extremely misleading interpretive method, since there is no rigorous way to evaluate exactly what kinds of social processes are actually reflected in Soviet polemics and political campaigns.

Similarly, in their characterizations of Soviet Islam, Western specialists often directly annex interpretations proposed in Soviet texts. In a manner indicative of a pervasive practice, Bennigsen and Broxup note that "according to Soviet sources . . . Sufi organizations are mass organizations numbering hundreds of thousands of adepts" and that "Soviet sources present Sufi brotherhoods as 'dangerous, fanatical, anti-Soviet, anti-Russian reactionary forces."12 Though in principle Bennigsen and others question the reliability of Soviet interpretations, in practice these authors own analysis follows closely from what they read in the Soviet literature. In line with Soviet views, Bennigsens extensive publications also portray Sufi or-

ders as carriers of a popular anti-Soviet, anti-Russian Muslim fanaticism.13 In effect, the authors transform textual manifestations of Soviet ideological anxiety about the religious activities of Soviet Muslims into real, active political threats to the hegemony of the Communist Party and the stability of the Soviet state.

Indirect elaboration from Soviet texts is another method employed in Western scholarship. Through indirect elaboration, Western writers use information or ideas produced in Soviet texts and transform them into new ideas or information not intended by the original source. An article on pilgrimages in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan is indicative of the transformations that Soviet data can undergo in Western work. Employing Soviet press accounts that simply identify and describe pilgrimages to holy sites in the two republics, with the stroke of a pen an American author transforms the descriptions of these pilgrimages into organized "Muslim social movements" that become the articles conceptual leitmotif.14

In a similar fashion, Bennigsen and Wimbush employ Soviet sources to argue that the Naqshbandi Sufi orders are widespread in Azerbaijan. After criticizing Soviet specialists for not linking ritual practices around the republics shrines to the Naqshbandi, they point to two proofs of operative Sufi organizations presumably not openly acknowledged or understood by the Soviets. One proof is that Soviet authors often refer to the presence of

> charlatans, self-appointed mullahs, parasites, crooks, vagabond fanatics [that have] invaded the holy places [of Azerbaijan], especially since the fall of Khrushchev. These expressions, as we have seen, generally refer to Sufi adepts.

Their other piece of evidence is the fact that there are references to "obscurantist charlatans [who] are systematically engaged in the transformation of historical monuments into places of pilgrimage." Drawing what they represent as clear conclusions from such references, the authors add: "It is obvious that such a transformation could not be the work of individual 'charlatans who would be unlikely to defy Soviet power single-handed."15

Bennigsen and Wimbushs indirect elaboration from Soviet sources is problematic on a number of counts. First, the authors uncritically assume that denunciation of pilgrims as "parasites," etc., in fact signals that these terms refer to Sufi organizations. Rather than

studying the actual practices around the shrines in question, they draw the specious conclusion from Soviet polemics that such pilgrimages must in fact be organized "systematically" and operate on a mass scale. In an instructive manner that reveals their methodology, moreover, they generalize from Soviet scholarship on the North Caucasus, where Sufi practices are in fact widespread, to argue that Sufi orders permeate the Soviet Muslim community more generally. Particularly in the case of Azerbaijan, pilgrimages to shrines and even unofficial religious networks rarely entail any connection with Sufi associations.16

Not only are the "factual" products of Soviet research assimilated into Western discourse, but Soviet interpretive schemes have also played an important role in the formation of the conceptual outlook of Western scholarship. The idea of "parallel Islam" became a hallmark of Bennigsens scholarship on Soviet Islam and served as a fundamental organizational concept for the work of Bennigsen and his associates since the late 1970s. Indeed it is one of the discursive objects around which the contemporary Western literature on Soviet Islam has come to revolve. The notion "parallel Islam" is connected with the conceptual practice of distinguishing two forms of Islam, "official" and "unofficial," whereby "unofficial," popular Muslim ritual practices are viewed as separate, "parallel," and even hostile to the "official" Soviet Muslim hierarchy that staffs the clerical administrations and mosques.

Although the notion of two Islams—that is, an "official" Islam and an "unofficial Islam"—has an earlier origin, it was only in 1980 that the concept became identified and codified as "parallel Islam."17 A genealogy of the concept of "parallel Islam" reveals that it originated not with Bennigsen in the West but with his counterpart in the Soviet Union, the dean of Soviet Islamic studies, Lusitsian Klimovich. One of the founding texts that informs Bennigsen and Quelquejays conception of parallel Islam is an article published in 1966 by Klimovich. In the piece, Klimovich writes:

> In Sunni and Shii denominations [of Islam] there are . . . two tendencies. One is the mosque [tendency], now headed in our country by the muftis, the sheikh-ul-Islam and the other functionaries of the four official Muslim Religious Boards. The second is the extra-mosque, communitarian, sufi-dervish, or in other words

murid [tendency] headed by ishans, pirs, sheikhs and ustazs, whose followers live mostly outside the cities in the kishlaks, auls and villages.18

In their first major study of Soviet Islam, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, written before the Klimovich piece was published, Bennigsen and Quelquejay do not as yet emphasize this dichotomous official/nonofficial scheme. Nonetheless, their limited discussion of the significance of "unofficial" Islam reproduces analysis presented in the Soviet press accounts from which they admittedly derive their views.19

It was on the basis of this opposition that Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, and later Bennigsen and Wimbush, consolidated their views of two Islams that have come to permeate Western thinking about Soviet Islam. Following the conceptual framework provided by Klimovich, the authors developed a position that conflates Sufi orders with extra-mosque religious practices and unregistered religious figures into the broad category of an "unofficial" Muslim world separated from an "official" Muslim world composed of mosques and registered clerics. Having obtained a prominent position in Western analysis of Soviet Islam, the concept of two Islams has more recently attracted renewed attention in its intellectual homeland, the Soviet Union.

GLASNOST AND SOVIET ISLAM: A HALL OF MIRRORS

Considering the importance of Soviet Islamicist literature in the development of Western thinking about Soviet Islam, it would naturally be interesting to examine the current direction of Soviet scholarship in light of changes in Soviet policies brought about by the Gorbachev leadership after 1985. But, at least within the Soviet academic and journalistic community, the campaign for more public discussion of the problems faced by Soviet society has brought thus far relatively little reevaluation of traditional assumptions about the nature of Islam within Soviet borders.20 Thus when new interpretations of the Soviet Unions "Islamic question" are offered, they are often accorded a great deal of attention.

One such milestone in changing Soviet views of domestic Islam was a two-part essay on "Islam and Politics," published in 1987 in the weekly paper *Literaturnaia gazeta* and authored by one of the papers influential international affairs correspondents, Igor Beliaev. Written in a daring and frequently sensationalist tone, Beliaevs article caught the attention of both Soviet and Western readers and has, in fact, become a frequent point of reference for both Soviet and Western analysts of Islam and Muslims in the USSR.

One of the remarkable things about Beliaevs article, at least for some Western observers, was the positive attitude taken toward a number of Western analysts of Soviet Islam who had usually been vilified in the Soviet press.21 Most prominent among the analysts "rehabilitated" by Beliaev is Alexandre Bennigsen, who, both literally and figuratively, can be considered as representing the dominant paradigm of Western thought on Soviet Islam. After a discussion of Bennigsens views of the threat to the Soviet state of an operative "Islamic infrastructure" and the organization of underground Sufi brotherhoods, Beliaev asks: "How serious are Bennigsens arguments? I think it is time to turn serious attention to them."22

In addition to Bennigsens, Beliaev draws on a range of Western work on Islam in order to remake a research agenda for Soviet specialists of Islam. But it is evident from Beliaevs text that he has not read, perhaps not even seen, the sources to which he refers. Nevertheless, Beliaev manipulates his well-selected library of American, West German, French, and British sources in order to enhance his own views of the important issues concerning Islam in the Soviet Union. In this sense, Beliaev draws on these Western texts as talismans, the cultural authority of which he deploys to legitimate his construction of a new agenda for Soviet Muslim studies.

For example, Beliaev refers to the view that Muslim Central Asia could become a Poland within Soviet borders. He was paraphrasing a passage from the two pages devoted to Soviet Muslims toward the end of a 350-page book by Wilhelm Dietl, a West German journalist with little if any experience in the USSR.23 Similarly, Beliaev asserts that in an edited volume entitled *Shiism and Social Protest* published in the United States, "emphasis is placed on Soviet Shii Muslims." In fact, only one essay of the eleven that comprise the book examines Shii Muslims in the USSR.24

As interesting as Beliaevs manipulation of Western talismans, however, is the genealogy of the texts to which he refers. It is ironic that Beliaevs Western texts represent and are at times based almost entirely on research produced by Soviet authors and published in the Soviet Union. In arguing for a new agenda for the study of Islam in his country, Beliaev thus refers to the products of Western scholarship that depend in a very immediate way on the images about Soviet Islam generated by Beliaev and his specialist colleagues!

THINKING SOVIET ISLAM: READING THE THEORIES

So far my discussion has examined the intertextual references that link Soviet and Western literature on Soviet Islam. In fact, the relation between Soviet and Western discourse on Soviet Islam goes far beyond the surface of these texts. Soviet and Western scholarship share a broader set of assumptions and approaches in their understanding of religion and its place in social change. This is not to deny any distinctiveness to either Soviet or Western studies. Ideological particularities aside, the Soviet literature on Islam is produced by scholars trained in sociology or philosophy, whereas most Western specialists on Soviet Islam are historians and to a lesser extent political scientists. Apart from these purely disciplinary distinctions, Soviet and Western scholars often draw very different conclusions about the character and significance of religious expression in the contemporary Soviet Union.

But even the conflict of interpretations that characterizes current Soviet and Western discussions of Soviet Islam is rooted in a series of largely unexamined assumptions of a social-theoretical order. Thus, despite the controversies concerning Soviet Islam that mark current Western and Soviet discussions of the problem, there are a number of common theoretical notions that unite them. Indeed, it is in the context of these deep structures of significance, which will be worked out in the following pages, that the diverse Soviet and Western studies read often more like a single discourse than two antagonistic, mutually exclusive discourses.

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION ON RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

At the foundation of Soviet and Western thinking on Islam lies a nineteenth-century tradition of social thought on the implications of social change for religion. In this view, the emergence of a "modern" industrial society portends the end of religion, often referred to by Soviet writers as religious ideology, as a dominant ideological and institutional force in society. In recent decades, the term secularization, which has come to signify the process by which modern ideologies and institutions replace religion (in both its spiritual and institutional aspects), has been rejected or redefined, but the essential assumptions of this view have been maintained.

The assumption of contemporary modernization theories that the phenomenon of modernity is essentially secular finds its origins in the writings of the founders of modern social science, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. These three theorists base their interpretations of religion and social change on the common assumptions of a dichotomized conceptual framework. This twofold scheme of a religious, traditional society and a secular, modern society, though formulated in different ways by the different authors, reflects a view of social change sometimes referred to as the theory of "the great divide."25 This type of dichotomous formulation is expressed as feudalism and capitalism in Marx, mechanical and organic division of labor in Durkheim, and traditional and legal-rational (or modern) in Weber.

Marx never wrote systematically on religion, but his writings on problems of ideology and consciousness, along with work on the development of capitalism, have served as the basis for a "Marxist" theory of religion and social change. For Marx, religion can be understood only in relation to the material conditions in which it exists. He held that with the development of the capitalist mode of production, workers would move from the "illusory" (i.e., religious) interpretation of their conditions and regain a sense of reason. In this way, workers would recognize that their "real" happiness would be achieved not through religious or other "illusions" but through a rationally motivated revolutionary transformation of the very social structure generated by the capitalist mode of production.26 The political structure of capitalism only provides for the freedom from the

hegemonic domination of religious ideology, but progress toward socialist revolution would eliminate exploitation, which for Marx served as the material basis of all religious "illusions."27 Thus, Marxs view that capitalism brings the inevitable decline of religion is joined with a theoretically based prediction that the evolutionary path from feudalism to capitalism to socialism would completely eliminate religion as a sphere of human intellectual production.

Like Marx, Durkheim saw modernizing, revolutionary changes in the rise of modern capitalism. The development of the social division of labor, the dimension of capitalist development that Durkheim identified as the focus of his work, generates a new form of solidarity referred to as "organic" in the Durkheimian scheme. In his analysis of traditional societies, Durkheim relies on an idealist interpretation of social cohesion by positing that solidarity is maintained through a commonly held set of religious beliefs. In his conception of contemporary society, however, his analysis resembles the materialist interpretation offered by Marx. It is not some set of beliefs or ideas but the material social conditions generated by the division of labor that establishes a basis for social solidarity.28

As in Marxs theory, the traditional social role played by religion is replaced in capitalism by the primacy of a more "rational" economic calculation: "In the face of the economic, the administrative, military and religious functions become steadily less important."29 Durkheim regarded the inevitable decline of religion as part of the process of the emergence of a complex, "organic" social division of labor in society. What is important for Durkheim is the persistent necessity of moral regulation, which in modern society takes on a clearly nonreligious, secular character.30

For Max Weber, one of the founders of the sociology of religion, the rise of modern capitalism also portended an inevitable process of secularization, captured in his use of Schillers phrase to describe this trend as the "disenchantment of the world."31 Although Weber generally sought to eschew evolutionary approaches to social change, his description of the fate of religion in modern social change belies a strongly evolutionary character. In Weber as in Marx and Durkheim, religious beliefs as a traditional form of legitimate domination give way to the predominance of economic calculation and rationality in modern capitalism.

For Weber, secularism also appears as an inexorable consequence of modern capitalist development, but the character of Webers argument differs from that of Marx and Durkheim, for whom secularization occurred as an apparently naturally (unilinear) determined consequence of the social changes attending capitalist development. Instead, Webers argument on capitalism and secularization is characterized by what Hayden White has termed an "ironic" mode.32 A prominent point in Webers thought is the notion that secularization develops from essentially religious origins. Thus, a process of secularization follows out of an essential fundamentalization of religion expressed in Protestant Christianity. In other words, it is out of the fundamentalist return to religion, characteristic of the Protestantism as interpreted by Weber, that the secular nature of modern society ironically emerges.33

To a much greater extent than Marx, and to some extent Durkheim, Weber emphasizes not only the intellectual secularization engendered by the modern rational spirit, but also the institutional foundations of secularization. Thus, it is the modern bureaucracy, born of the needs of a capitalist market economy, that disestablishes religious considerations in face of an ascendent rational, economic calculation:

> Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is "dehumanized," the more it completely succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred and all purely personal irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation.34

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION APPLIED: SOVIET AND WESTERN LITERATURE ON SOVIET ISLAM

Soviet and Western studies of Islam in the USSR often come to different conclusions about the "Muslim question" in Soviet politics, but beneath these disagreement lies a common set of assumptions about religion in contemporary society that have been derived from the classical tradition. The theoretical assumptions of the Soviet literature are more salient than those of Western studies. This is partly explained by the fact that most Soviet scholarship on Islam is produced by sociologists who often deal with explicitly theoretical issues,

while many Western specialists of Soviet Islam are historians who, at times, are self-consciously atheoretical in their intentions.35

What distinguishes Soviet and Western scholarship on Islam in the Soviet Union is their respective conception of religion and modernization. Briefly stated, the Soviet literature follows from the assumption that modernization has indeed taken place in the USSR; hence what remains of Islam are only its "vestiges." In contrast, the Western specialist literature focuses on the fact of an existing Islam and thus draws the conclusion that the Muslim societies in the USSR have not in fact been modernized.36

Unlike Marx and Engels, from whose works they actively draw, Soviet specialists on Islam identify the origins of secularization in the countrys Muslim lands not with the establishment of capitalism but with its disestablishment by the revolution of 1917: "The beginning of the process of secularization in the regions of the traditional spread of Islam was set by the Great October Socialist Revolution."37 Though the emergence of capitalism had contributed to secularizing forces in the European states, Soviet scholars often note, in Russia's Muslim areas capitalism was so weak and tenuous even at the beginning of this century that secularization had not taken hold either.38

But socialist construction, like capitalism in Western Europe, was the form that modernization took in the Soviet Union. Socialism as a developmental alternative to capitalism has been particularly stressed in Soviet studies of modernization of the lesser-developed Central Asian republics. In this sense, it is possible to describe Soviet-style socialism as a functional equivalent to capitalism, especially in cases where capitalist development is unsuccessful in overcoming obstacles to its full emergence.39 For Soviet writers, socialism has been the same inevitable secularizing force as was capitalism for writers of the classical tradition. As described in a collective work produced by leading Soviet specialists: "The process of secularization, which has an objective character, is conditioned by the profound socio-economic, political and cultural transformations that occurred during the years of Soviet power."40

It is the grand processes of socialist economic development that are highlighted as the basis for an end to traditional religious forms of ideology and the emergence of a rational, scientific (modern) outlook among Soviet citizens. In this argument, secularization began in

earnest not with the revolution and establishment of Soviet power but with the campaigns for industrialization and collectivization implemented from the end of the 1920s. Mobilization and integration of the Muslim populations into the state system of production, urbanization and social mobility, the implementation of land and water reforms that not only disestablished religious elites but also brought qualitative changes to economic and social relations—all established the material social basis for the decline of religion.41 Much like the emergent complex division of labor described by Durkheim, these changes, Soviet authors assume, lead naturally to new, secular socialist mentalities. Convinced of their theory that level of religiosity can be directly correlated with level of social and economic development, Soviet authors often point out that religious beliefs tend to be stronger and more tenacious in less urbanized, less developed—that is, less "modern"—areas.42

But it is not merely changes in the economic and social structures of the country that have promoted secularization. Following from Lenins voluntarist position that communism can be "taught" to the people,43 Soviet authors also emphasize changes in the social superstructure that have promoted the spread of secularizing tendencies, including the educational system, scientific-technical progress, and of course, anti-religious agitation and propaganda carried out by Communist Party organizations.44

But Soviet authors have been confronted with a theoretical as well as a practical dilemma. Despite their arguments that socialism has definitively established the hegemony of secular ideas in Soviet society and that the process of secularization is continually moving forward,45 they have become increasingly cognizant of continuing practices and beliefs associated with the Muslim faith. If secularization is an inevitable result of modernization, and if modernization has been fundamentally achieved in the USSR, then any continuing manifestations of Islam, whether in beliefs or practice, must be, in the Soviet conceptual framework, qualified as the remnants of the previous era. Since the material basis for the reproduction of Islam has essentially been eliminated, what Soviet authors see, conceptually at least, is the objectively baseless maintenance not of Islam as a totality but only of its vestiges. In this context, Soviet specialists at times argue that it is not Islam that they study but only vestiges of Islam.46

In explaining the persistence of Islam in Soviet society, numerous authors maintain, bolstering their position with relevant passages from Marx and Engels, that consciousness changes at a much slower pace than social formations. In this view, then, the transformation of consciousness from religious to secular principles has "lagged" behind changes in the structure of society and the economy. Within the Soviet literature many arguments revolved around the character and persistence of this "lag," but the concept of a "lag," structured by Soviet theory of religion and socialist "modernization," remains an essential foundation assumed by the various participants in the debate.

Similarly, Soviet Islamicists have produced a fairly extensive literature on the nature of these vestiges and the character of the forces that contribute to their reproduction. They have identified the spheres of social life where vestiges are stronger or weaker, and distinguish between the objective, material conditions and the historical and cultural (i.e., superstructural) factors that contribute to the maintenance, even "rejuvenation," of religious vestiges. But a fundamental assumption of all these discussions is the superstructural reproduction, at times revival, of only vestiges of an objectively bygone era.

In contrast to the Soviet image of successful modernization and the remnants of Islam, mainstream Western writing on Soviet Islam represents an inversion of Soviet views. Soviet modes of interpretation are evolutionary and comedic, in that history appears to have a clear, unilinear path from religion to secularism, even if this trajectory is encumbered by the persistence of vestiges along the way.[47] The thrust of Western discourse on Soviet Islam, in contrast, posits that, despite all efforts, modernization has not taken place in the Soviet Union, at least for Soviet Muslims.[48] Thus, in this vein mainstream Western discourse asserts that if Islam has apparently remained intact, then Soviet socialist construction has failed. Emphasizing the "resilience" of Islam to socialist construction, Bennigsen writes that:

> Islam has in no way been contaminated either by Marxism or secularism. . . . Islam in the USSR is the same unadulterated, pure religion that it had been before 1917.[49]

In the Western view of Islam and socialist modernization, it is not the social or economic aspects of modernization that are denied; rather, emphasis is placed on the failure of the psychological dimension of modernization. Thus, Carrère-dEncausse argues that traditional society has not been erased by socialist construction but reinforced:

> In the USSR today there is a Moslem society which is united by the bonds of history, culture and tradition. . . . The Homo Islamicus has in effect behind him more than a half-century of cultural revolution intended to create a Homo Sovieticus. . . . [But] he demonstrates that the human prototype which socialist society was to shape does not exist. . . . Above all, he demonstrates that while it is relatively easy . . . to change the structures of society, it is extremely difficult to alter minds.50

Indeed, the failure of psychosocial modernization in spite of economic and political modernization is a view that pervades Western scholarship of Soviet Islam.51 For Michael Rywkin, the failure of Muslims to integrate into the larger Soviet society is explained by an amorphous and monolithic "Muslim community spirit."52 In like manner, Bennigsen writes of an "inborn sense of *umma* [community]" among Soviet Muslims as if it were a genetic and not a social category.53 In arguing that the Islamic "vestiges" represent the persistence of a deeply religious, traditional society, Western specialists have created a portrait of traditional society protecting itself from Soviet attempts at modernization.

Whether viewed as a totalizing social order or the vestiges of such an order, Soviet and Western specialists agree in their representation of Islam as the force of tradition pitted against the forces of Soviet modernity. For the Western scholars, "tradition" is portrayed as a kind of transhistorical essence that inheres in the society that they describe. In contrast, Soviet scholarship suggests that the inexorable forces of history are successfully transforming society, leaving Islam, as it were, as an expendable encumbrance. Despite the difference in their conclusions, both Soviet and Western scholarship rely on the tradition/modernity dichotomy to construct their arguments.

THE TOTALITARIAN PARADIGM AND SOVIET ISLAM

The notion that "Islam remains the alien body that it was a century ago in Tsarist Russia," as Bennigsen puts it,54 follows from a view of the Soviet Union, and Soviet society in particular, which is based on the totalitarian model. The view that various forms of community assumed to be unaffected by the totalitarian state are in fact "islands, islands of separateness in the totalitarian sea" directly informs Western scholarship on Soviet Islam.55 Thus, the same argument is constructed in terms either of the failure of psychological or cultural modernization or, in this case, the resistance of social groupings to the "penetration" of "alien" forms of sociocultural ideas and organization. The idea that the Soviet Muslim community forms an "island of separateness" in the Soviet Union follows from a view which posits an a priori relation of mutual exclusivity between contemporary Soviet ideology and institutions and "traditional" Muslim ideology and institutions. Just as the totalitarian theorists assumed that both religion and totalitarianism make a total claim on the individual, so do analysts of Soviet Muslims assume that there is an unreconcilable antagonism between Islam and the Soviet state.56

The totalitarian paradigm is organized around a sharp conceptual distinction between state and society, and indeed implies the absolute and total opposition of these two categories.57 In discussions of Islam in the Soviet Union, then, "things Soviet" refer to the party-state, whereas "things Muslim" are described as aspects of society. As with ideal-type analysis in general, the categories of state/society organize a conceptual framework to which empirical data are then assimilated. The intrinsic tendency toward such reification of concepts was recognized by Max Weber, himself a proponent—indeed the modern founder—of ideal-type analysis, who warned against the "danger that the ideal-type and reality will be confused with one another."58

Conceptual distinctions nevertheless tend to be transformed into empirical distinctions that dominate representations of actual social processes in both totalitarian and the more specialized study of Soviet Islam. In fact, a whole series of absolute dichotomies such as state/society constitute the conceptual foundations and organizational principles of the totalitarian paradigm.59 Consequently, stud-

ies that are conducted within this paradigm, including those on Soviet Islam, reflect and reproduce these dichotomies.

For the totalitarian theorists, resistance is activity designed to overthrow the totalitarian regime. Thus resistance is qualified as the absolute antithesis to domination and thus precludes within-system resistance or a loyal opposition. Totalitarian domination is considered to be violent and restrictive, whereas resistance in the texts of the totalitarian writers appears to be inherently free and democratic. Totalitarian domination represents the negation of human values, and thus resistance to totalitarianism is constructed definitionally—but not necessarily empirically—as affirming human values.60

The role of these conceptual dichotomies is revealed not only in the concept "totalitarian" itself, but also in secondary metaphors that shape thinking about social and political processes. For example, the concept of "islands of separateness" is presented to the reader as an image of land in a totalitarian sea. But the mutual exclusivity of the concept goes beyond the transparent metaphorical dichotomy of land and water. One of the means through which the state maintains its power and authority, according to totalitarian theory, is by the use of terror. Hence the state is an unabashedly violent state. By contrast, in the universities, assuredly one of the "islands of separateness" that by definition falls into the realm identified as "society," the reader discovers the opposite of the states violence—peace. Describing students in the university setting, two founders of the totalitarian paradigm present the reader with an image of two separate, indeed opposite, worlds:

> As they enter the island where the quiet of study and inquiry reigns, they become separated from the loud battle cries of the totalitarian regime.61

The island of separateness represents not just land as opposed to the totalitarian sea, but also represents the "inside" features of peace, truth, harmony, rationality, resistance, and liberation in contrast to the states war ("battle cries"), falsehood, conflict, irrationality (the charismatic quality of the totalitarian regime), conformity, and domination. Within such an "island of separateness" as constructed by the totalitarian authors, any divergent interests in conflict are at worst definitionally precluded or at best conceptually undervalued.

One can construct a similar list of paired opposites upon which the study of Soviet Muslims is conventionally based. At times, the dichotomies are quite openly expressed, as with the notion of official and unofficial or parallel Islam. And as Enders Wimbush comments, the only choice open to Soviet Muslims is between the Quran and Lenins works—that is, between Islam or communism.62 The paired opposites that inform Western writing on Islam in the Soviet Union include:

state (pro-state)	society (anti-state)
Soviet	Muslim
modern	traditional
artifice	authenticity
nationality	pan-Turkism/pan-Islam
"official Islam"	"parallel Islam"
illegitimacy	legitimate social authority
false ideology	true religion

MUSLIM INSTITUTIONS AND THE SOVIET STATE

The impact of these paired opposites on the conceptualization and practical empirical analysis of Soviet Islam is especially evident in the study of Muslim institutions in the Soviet Union, particularly the officially recognized Muslim Religious Boards. Bennigsen and Wimbushs rhetorical question, "On whose side, therefore, does official Islam stand?" thus more aptly reflects the authors conceptual approach than it does the actual choices open to Soviet Muslims. In a conceptual framework that insists that Islam must be classified either on the side of the state or that of society, conventional Western discourse has opted to identify the institutions of "official Islam" with the Soviet state.

During the Second World War, Muslim Religious Boards were founded, though in some regions similar administrations had been established in the Tsarist period. Organized as four regionally based, independent administrations, these institutions served as regulators of Soviet Muslim religious life. Their functions included the training and appointment of clerics, the operation of mosques, the holding of

conferences and seminars, and the publication of religious books, periodicals, and calendars. Western understanding of these key institutions is limited, in part due to the lack of attention to them by Soviet scholars, but more fundamentally due to the neglect by Western scholars of Soviet institutions other than the Communist Party.63

In considering the activity of the Soviet Unions Muslim administrations, Western specialists speak with one voice. Conventional analysis works from an a priori assumption that the state is monolithic and conflates the Muslim Religious Boards with the Soviet state. From this perspective, while the Muslim administrations operate independently of the state in a formal manner, in reality their activity reflects and promotes the interests of the Soviet state. In this sense, the Muslim Boards could be included in what Louis Althusser has termed "ideological state apparatuses"—that is, nonstate organizations that serve to reproduce the hegemony of the state not through directly repressive means but through the production and transmission of state-oriented ideology.64

Writing on the organization of the Muslim Boards during World War II, one author asserts that

> the Soviets decided to create a group of Soviet religious intelligentsia[s] that would be the paid workers of the Soviet government and would work as a supportive organ of the communist party.65

In a similar vein, Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay describe the Muslim administrations as "a central Muslim organization which would be loyal and submissive, and through which the Soviet government could exercise complete control over its Muslim subjects."66 Indeed, virtually all Western commentaries on these religious administrations agree that their role is limited to the two realms of domestic control and foreign policy propaganda.

Numerous analysts labor under the impression that the Muslim Boards have been deployed as an instrument of the state to counterbalance the presumably more threatening "parallel" manifestations of Islam.67 In the case of Muslim institutions, then, Western discourse again imposes a dual conception based on the mutually exclusive categories of state and society. The legally sanctioned Muslim Religious Boards are, in Western thinking at least, assimilated to the state, while Sufi organizations along with other "nonoffi-

cial" Muslim practices defined as a "parallel Islam" are identified with a resistant, unassimilable "society."

Attention has also been devoted to the role of the Muslim Religious Boards as propaganda tools in the realization of Soviet foreign policy aims. Arguing that the Boards were created only to serve Soviet foreign policy interests, Baymirza Hayit claims that they serve as "more of a mouthpiece" for Soviet foreign policy than for Soviet Muslims.68 Echoing this perspective, Bennigsen, too, has emphasized foreign policy concerns as an important function of the administrations.69

The view of the Muslim religious administrations as appendages of the Soviet state apparatus is based on a conceptual prejudice. This prejudice is symptomatically expressed by Timur Kocaoglu, who claims that

> these [Muslim] administrative bodies exist in name only, since they have no powers whatsoever to safeguard the interests of Islam, i.e., to defend Islam against anti-Islamic attacks in public life.70

As a result of this orientation, the domestic role of Soviet Muslim institutions has rarely been systematically explored by scholars. Instead, arguments have been proposed that rely more heavily on the conceptual stereotypes than on empirical research. One of the aims of this essay is to suggest the potential value of an in-depth study of the status and activity of these religious institutions, which play a much more complex social and religious role than is usually attributed to them. But accomplishing this task calls for a double reorientation in the study of Soviet Islam: what is needed is not just new subjects for research, but also a new theoretical approach to complement such a shift.

REPRESENTING ISLAM: FORM AND FUNCTION
IN DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

The tradition/modernity paradigm, upon which conventional study of Islam is founded, has been extensively debated and criticized, at least in the West.71 With specific regard to the place of religion in this dichotomous scheme, historians and social theorists have criticized the notion of a "great divide" that artificially opposes an authentically religious pre-industrial feudal society and an inherently secularized modern social order.72 Similarly, recent theoretical work on secularization also rejects the dichotomies of tradition and modernity and the corresponding categories of "religious" and "secular."73

The theoretical reconstructions of modernization theory, however, often affirm the very assumptions they seek to undermine. Thus, whether they suggest the "modernity" of traditions or the traditionalization of modern life, reconstructions of the paradigm suggest a view of tradition and modernity that nonetheless retains the operative value of these categories. In such reconstructions, the idea of mediation, whereby tradition and modernity are synthesized in social practice, seems to dissolve the dichotomy. In fact, mediation only serves to reify social life into a "mix" of these conceptually separate categories.74

In bypassing the question of tradition and modernity, the approach suggested here begins from a critique of the literatures confusion of form and function. Both Soviet and Western observers have uncovered what they consider to be indicators of traditional forms, whether in organization, mentalities, or practices, and they assume that these reflect similarly traditional functions. The assumption that form defines function, in effect, leads Western and Soviet discourse on Soviet Islam to confuse function with form.75 For example, Western and Soviet observers agree that Sufi practices that are represented as a so-called "parallel Islam" and which predate Soviet rule should be qualified as traditional, conservative, and hence opposed to the modernizing power of Soviet rule since their traditional organizational forms are seen to reflect a wholly traditional outlook and function. While such an argument may appear sound, what is missing from this account is analysis of the discursive practices of the

given Muslim movements. Without due attention to the meanings that Muslims attach to these practices, the assumption that these meanings have not changed or do not change—that is, that they remain "traditional"—analytically precludes exploration of the practices and their contemporary meaning.76

These comments suggest that Western thinking should move from a discussion of Soviet Islam in the dichotomy of tradition/modernity to one that explores the forms and functions of Islam in Soviet society. By forms, I mean the organization of Muslim practices, including the structures of the clerical administrations and the rites of Islam: the daily and Friday prayers, sermons, the observance of religious holidays, and other ritual conduct. While commentary on these "forms" has constituted the bulk of Soviet "concrete sociological investigations" and Western studies of Soviet Islam, what is crucial is the socio-religious functions of these practices. By exploring the function of form—that is, the culturally constructed meanings given to Islamic practices and the resulting meanings that they convey—the analyst is better situated to evaluate the actual role that Islam plays in contemporary Soviet society.

This mode of analysis entails a rejection of monolithic constructions of Islam that originate in ideological or polemical texts outside of the Muslim community and its institutions. In its place I propose an exploration of the actual practices of Muslims and their religious institutions and the diverse meanings that Muslims themselves invest in these practices. Totalizing terms like "Islam," because of their vagueness, often lead to interpretations that may be easy to make but nonetheless fail to capture the actual nuances of social and religious life. In this sense, Islam as a social phenomenon cannot be reduced to the prescriptions of the Quran or the written traditions of the prophet Muhammad.77 Rather, "Islam" must be located in concrete discourses and practices that identify themselves as Muslim. For this reason, the totalizing constructions of Soviet Islam offered in Soviet and Western texts need to be replaced instead with the "texts" of Muslim socio-religious life as the basis for analysis and interpretation.

What I am thus suggesting is a shift from the conventional object of sociological and political analysis—ideological and polemical texts produced by officials of the party and state apparatus—to the indigenous discourses and practices of Soviet Muslim institutions

themselves. One of the advantages of this approach is that it allows a point of access to Soviet Islam which is unmediated by ideologically infused Soviet representations of Muslims and their religion.

Social practice is an aspect of comparative political analysis that should require no introduction. But what is "discourse," and why should it be studied? Simply put, discourse is speaking and writing which through the concepts it generates establishes a mode of thinking about things. I reject the notion that facts simply exist in a discrete and apparently objective fashion. Rather, such "facts" must be considered in connection with the organized system of meanings in which they are produced. This organized system of meaning is what I refer to as a "discourse." As Hayden White points out,

> Discourse is intended to constitute the ground whereon to decide *what shall count as a fact* in the matters under consideration and to determine *what mode of comprehension* is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted.78

In this way, discourse is both a field of thoughts and a way of understanding those thoughts. It follows, then, that in questioning the social identity and position of Soviet Muslims, it is useful to examine the way in which Muslims define themselves and situate themselves in Soviet society. Although it is important to distinguish between discourse and social consciousness, I nonetheless agree with Hayden Whites proposition that discourse can provide one with insights into the actual formation of consciousness. White argues that

> A discourse is itself a kind of model of the processes of consciousness by which a given area of experience, originally apprehended as simply a field of phenomena demanding understanding, is assimilated by analogy to those areas of experience felt to be *already* understood as to their *essential* natures.79

Stated thus, discourse can provide a point of access to the way Muslims think about themselves and constitute themselves as Muslims. While to a certain extent this has been the occupation of previous studies of Soviet Islam, these other studies have largely ignored the indigenous discourse of Soviet Muslims and their institutions and instead have concentrated on analysis of academic or political discourses *about*—but not *by*—Soviet Muslims. By contrast, research that explores the local formation of a Muslim discourse in terms of

the distinct forms and functions that it exhibits in social process can avoid an a priori assignation of meaning to religious practice and examine the changing variety of meanings that Soviet Muslims themselves invest in their institutions and practices.

In combination with attention to the patterns of social and religious practice, my emphasis on discourse follows from an implicit assumption about its role in any social formation. Discourse is not some kind of superstructural phenomenon that "floats" above the society in which it is produced. Rather, language and discourse more generally actively inform the social construction of reality and thus partake in the organization of human relations while at the same time reflecting the character of the conditions in which it is produced.80 Emphasizing the important role of discourse in producing and reproducing social relations, Foucault has written that "relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse."81

DOMINANT CONCEPTIONS OF POWER AND SOVIET ISLAM

At the base of discussions constructed around the corresponding oppositions of Soviet state and Muslim society, official and parallel Islam, is a distinct view of power. Common to both totalitarian theory and its practical applications in the study of Soviet Islam is a descending conception of power, in which power is considered to be vested wholly in the organs of state and imposed downward on a passive society. Formed in terms of a conceptual dichotomy between state and society, Althussers analysis of "ideological state apparatuses" belies a similar understanding of power in its state-reductionist orientations.82

The conception of power presented here rejects the restricted choice offered by the state/society dichotomy. Rather, I assume that power is dispersed and constituted at different levels within a given social order. In this sense, Foucaults critique of conceptions of bourgeois domination is applicable to totalitarian conceptions of the state. In outlining his method for analyzing power, Foucault writes:

The important thing is not to attempt some kind of deduction of power starting from its centre and aimed at the discovery of the extent to which it permeates into the base. . . . One must rather conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics.83

In this sense, the analysis of power need not be a priori assimilated to and identified with the imprecise constructions of "state" or "society." Following the proposition that power is in fact dispersed and not concentrated in the organs of state, power can be analyzed at its points of constitution, as Foucault puts it, "outside, below and alongside the State."84 Working from this position that allows for a "bottom-up" mode of analysis, the constitution of power can be located and assessed in a specific set of institutions and social practices outside the state. The aim of research thus shifts to explore the ways in which what Foucault calls technologies of power are constituted and deployed—in effect concretized—in specifiable institutional settings.85

The line of theoretical questioning that I am proposing, then, moves from the restricted one of "on whose side the Muslim Boards stand" to the open one of how power is constituted in Soviet Muslim religious institutions. Here I should underline my use of the term constitution. Unlike much of Foucaultian-oriented research, which emphasizes power as a repressive force, I would highlight powers constitutive dimension in contrast to its repressive function. While I do not reject the connection of power with domination, analysis of the activities of Muslim institutions shows them to be bodies in which power has been constituted in a struggle against both society and the state. Thus, the Muslim clergy can be seen as engaged in a creative process of constructing new forms of identity and religious organization in order to situate and establish itself and its community in a complex set of constantly changing power relations. The repressive means by which the Muslim clergy constitutes itself and its image of the Muslim community are much more relevant to its aspirations for hegemony in Muslim society than to its relations with state authorities.

Methodologically, the novelty of this approach lies in moving away from a mediated analysis of ideological formulations and po-

lemics produced in Soviet scholarly and political discourse. In its place, I propose a sociologically oriented examination of actual institutions and the discursive practices which operate in, around, and through them. The analysis of the forms and functions of these institutionally based discourses and practices, together with an evaluation of the ways in which power is constituted, will allow social and political research to move away from the conceptual constraints imposed by the dyadic mode of thinking inherent in both the tradition/modernity and state/society approach and into the realm of comparative political studies.

NOTES

1. See, for example, former Moscow bureau chief Philip Taubman in the *New York Times*, 6 March 1988.

2. In a posthumously published essay, Alexandre Benningsen qualified the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in the Caucasus as the harbinger of an impending crisis throughout the Soviet Muslim lands: "Islam soviétique: Le détonateur caucasien," *Arabies,* no. 19–20 (July–August 1988).

3. See Martha Brill Olcott, "Soviet Muslims and World Revolution," *World Politics* 34, 4 (July 1982): 487–504; and more recently, Muriel Atkin, *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1989).

4. This subfield is most immediately concerned with the symbolic relations between Europe and the Islamic Middle East. See, for example, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Thierry Hentsch, *LOrient imaginaire* (Paris: Minuit, 1988); Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987).

5. Hans Bräker in his introduction to Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), and Bennigsens letter published in *Problems of Communism* 34 (May–June 1985): 87–91.

6. A. Benningsen and E. Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 162. Appendix B of the book (pp. 157–64) provides a concise outline of Benningsen and Wimbushs approach to the use of Soviet sources.

7. See, for example, the lengthy exchange of letters between Martha Olcott, Muriel Atkin, and Alexandre Bennigsen, in which the problem of Soviet sources and their (mis)use is of central importance: *Problems of Communism* 34 (May–June 1985): 87–91.

8. See, for example, Marie Broxup, "Islam and Atheism in the North Caucasus," *Religion in Communist Lands* 9, 1–2 (Spring 1981): 40–49, and her "Recent Developments in Soviet Islam," *Religion in Communist Lands* 11, 1 (Spring 1983): 31–35; Jon Soper, "Unofficial Islam: A Muslim Minority in the USSR," *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, 4 (Winter 1979): 226–31; David Nissman, "Iran and Soviet Islam: The Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan SSRs," *Central Asian Survey* 2, 4 (December 1983): 45–60.

9. For example, Olcott, "Soviet Muslims and World Revolution."

10. A. Bennigsen, "Muslim Conservative Opposition to the Soviet Regime: The Sufi Brotherhoods in the North Caucasus," in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices,* ed. Jeremy R. Azrael (New York: Praeger, 1978), p. 336.

11. It is also pervasive. Consider Benningsens statement in Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (New York: St. Martins, 1983), p. 77: "For the last ten years, anti-religious agitprop in Central Asia and the North Caucasus has been directed against Sufi Islam, a fact which testifies to its power and hold on the population." See also Rois comments that "The fact that the republican party press has spelt out its anxieties so plainly clearly demonstrates a serious problem. . . . Surely . . . the fact that the Soviets dwelt on the role of the mosques and the Muslim clergy as sources of trouble in Iran is evidence that Moscow has earmarked them as potential sources of danger to itself and has no intention of letting either the official mosque and Establishment Muslim functionaries or the less easily controllable unofficial clergy . . . incite believers against the regime" (Yaacov Roi, "The Impact of the Islamic Fundamentalist Revival . . . ," in *The USSR and the Muslim World,* ed. Yaacov Roi [London: Allen and Unwin, 1984], p. 168).

12. Bennigsen and Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State,* p. 74.

13. This is the view elaborated in Bennigsen and C. Lemercier-Quelquejay, "LIslam parallèle en Union Soviétique," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 21, 1 (January–March 1980): 49–63, and their "Muslim Religious Conservatism and Dissent in the USSR," *Religion in Communist Lands* 6, 3 (Autumn 1978): 153–61. See also Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars.*

14. Nissman in fact uses a very limited number of sources, mostly from republican newspapers, in constructing his idea of "Muslim social movements" in these areas; Nissman, "Iran and Soviet Islam."

15. Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars,* pp. 126–27.

16. Moreover, the potential for misinterpretation inherent in facile elaboration from more complex Soviet commentaries is exemplified by Bennigsen and Wimbushs reference to the shrine of Kanzasar among the holy sites, where they argue that Sufi orders are active. Identified by the authors as a "monu-

ment of the thirteenth century," Kanzasar is in fact the former seat of the Albanian Christian Church which has been transformed into an important shrine for the Christian Armenians of the Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Province. For a description of the monastery and its use by Armenian pilgrims, see Abdulla Ähädov, *"Mügäddäslärä" pärästishin mahiyyäti vä müasir galïglarï haggïnda* (Baku, 1986), p. 34, as well as his "Ganzasar monastery," *Elm vä häïat,* no. 8 (1985): 17–19.

17. For an example of a pre-1980s use of the notion of two Islams, see any of Bennigsens and Lemercier-Quelquejays articles from the late 1970s, including: "Muslim Conservative Opposition," in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices,* ed. Azrael; "'Official Islam in the Soviet Union," *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, 3 (Autumn 1979): 148–59; "Muslim Religious Conservatism and Dissent in the USSR."

18. L. Klimovich, "Borba ortodoksov i modernistov v Islame," *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma,* vyp. 2 (1966): 65–87. This passage is quoted in Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "LIslam parallèle en Union Soviétique," p. 54. It is noteworthy that their translation of this passage consistently reworks the terms "mosque" and "extra-mosque" by amending respectively to each "official" and "nonofficial," thus implying a relation to the state not necessarily intended by Klimovich. The same mistranslation is reproduced in Bennigsens "Muslim Conservative Opposition," in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices,* ed. Azrael, pp. 336–37.

19. See A. Bennigsen and C. Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London: Pall Mall, 1967), especially pp. 180–81.

20. In a recent exception to this trend, Stanislav Prozorov of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg condemned the persistence of Soviet "Islamophobia" as a hindrance to an enhanced understanding of Islam. On his comments, see Paul Goble, "Islamic 'Explosion Possible in Central Asia," *Report on the USSR* 2, 7 (16 February 1990).

21. Ann Bohr, "Islam in the Soviet Union: Fertile Ground for Foreign Interference?" *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin* 87/88 (2 February 1988). In fact, Beliaev is hardly alone in his use of Western sources to back up his views. Despite a long history of attacks, inventoried by Michael Rywkin in his article "Alexandre Bennigsen in the Eyes of the Soviet Press," in *Passé turco-tatar, présent soviétique: Études offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), Nugman Ashirov cites Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay in support of his argument that Soviet Muslim society is more secular than religious. See Ashirovs *Evoliutsiia islama v SSSR* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), p. 7.

22. *Literaturnaia gazeta,* no. 21 (1987).

23. For the English translation, see Wilhelm Dietl, *Holy War* (New York: Macmillan, 1984).

24. Entitled "Soviet Attitudes Towards Shiism and Social Protest," the chapter by Muriel Atkin presents a summary review of the changing Soviet evaluations of Shiism within both Soviet and non-Soviet Muslim societies, though

the emphasis is placed on Iran and Afghanistan, not the USSR. Atkins intention is not to comment on what Beliaev presents as the threat of Islam to the USSR but simply to familiarize a Western audience with what the Soviets themselves considered the fundamental issues in studying Islam; *Shiism and Social Protest,* ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986).

25. See Nicholas Abercrombie et al., eds., *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), pp. 65–70.

26. Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegels Theory of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 131–32.

27. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Early Writings* (New York: Vintage, 1975).

28. Durkheim also introduces the idea that institutional mechanisms, such as the state and corporations or occupational guilds / groups, aid in consolidating social solidarity; *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1964).

29. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

30. Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 221. In a similar fashion, Steven Lukess claim that Durkheims position on religion was more complex and changed in later years lacks textual support. Lukess notion follows mostly from his confusing of "religion" and Durkheims argument as to the functional permanence of collective representations; Steven Lukes, *Émile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 474–76.

31. For a critique of Weber and the Weberian tradition on secularization with reference to Islam, see also Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: RKP, 1974), pp. 151–70.

32. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

33. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribners Sons, 1958).

34. Weber, *Economy and Society,* vol. 2, p. 975.

35. Hans Bräker, for instance, attacks theoretical political science as more obscuring than enlightening about Soviet Islam and Soviet Muslims in his introduction to Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire,* p. vii.

36. In contrast to the specialist literature, traditional generalist work on the USSR assumed that secularization is a natural part of Soviet modernization. See, for example, Alex Inkeles, *Social Change in Soviet Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).

37. *Islam v SSSR* (Moscow: Mysl, 1983), p. 7.

38. T. S. Saidbaev, *Islam i obshchestvo,* 2d ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1984).

39. This has been noted in Soviet as well as Western literature on Soviet social and economic development. Trotsky noted that "Russia took the road of proletarian revolution, not because her economy was the first to become ripe for a socialist change, but because she could not develop further on a capitalist basis" (*The Revolution Betrayed* [New York: Pathfinder, 1972], p. 5). Trotskys seminal insight was developed more broadly in the later work of Alexander Gerschenkron and Kenneth Jowitt.

40. *Islam v SSSR,* p. 3.

41. For a description of these changes in greater detail, see *Islam v SSSR;* V. A. Saprykin, "Sotsialisticheskii gorod i razvitie ateizma," in *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma,* no. 22 (1978); N. Bairamsakhatov, *Novyi byt i Islam* (Moscow, 1979).

42. See, for example, M. V. Vagabov, *Islam i voprosy ateisticheskogo vospitaniia,* 2d ed. (Moscow: Vysshaia Shkola, 1982), pp. 109–18; and *Islam v SSSR,* pp. 9ff. Soviet sociology of religion also relied on a type of quantitative analysis reminiscent of Western studies of indicators of modernity (e.g., Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974]) in describing the "transition" from religious to secular world views.

43. V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues," *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress, 1971), vol. 3, pp. 470–83.

44. Most Soviet authors emphasize the importance of the material as opposed to the superstructural changes in conditioning secularization. Nevertheless, at times the voluntarist tendency becomes dominant, as with one Azerbaijani author who disproportionately emphasizes the theoretical contributions of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the Azerbaijani Communist leader Narimanov in secularizing the Azerbaijani population. See Ä. J. Gurbanov, "Azärbayjanda sekulyarizasiya," in *Islam tarikhdä vä müasir dövrdä* (Baku: Azärbaïjan Dövlät Universitetinin Näshri, 1981).

45. Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia,* p. 8.

46. Private discussion with Räbiyyät Aslanova, an Azerbaijani scholar of Shii Islam.

47. For an insightful use of the term comedic to describe modes of interpretation, see White, *Metahistory.*

48. In his introduction to a volume on religion and modernization in the USSR, Dennis Dunn notes the persistence of religion but asserts that no one has claimed that the continued vitality of religion is due to the failure of the Soviet modernization drive. In fact, the failure to modernize is claimed by Bennigsen and his associates with regard to Soviet Muslims. Cf. *Religion and Modernization in the Soviet Union,* ed. Dennis J. Dunn (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1977), p. 2.

49. A. Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and the World of Islam," *Problems of Communism* 29 (March–April 1980): 39. The essential continuity of the pre-socialist and socialist periods is also asserted by Hans Bräker in his foreword to Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire,* p. ix.

50. Hélène Carrère-dEncausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (New York, N.Y.: Newsweek Books, 1979), pp. 248 and 263–64.

51. This tendency permeates not just the specialized discourse but also more general discussion. Thus, John Armstrong employs the notion of a "cultural impenetrability of [Soviet] Islamic populations" in his "Toward a Framework for Considering Nationalism in East Europe," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 2, 2 (Spring 1988): 280–305.

52. Michael Rywkin, *Moscows Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 1982), p. 115.

53. A. Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism in Soviet Islam," in *Religion and Modernization,* ed. Dunn, p. 258. In his assumption of a transhistorical "Moslem unity," Bennigsen also refers to the "Moslem *millet*" of Tsarist Russia, thus drawing a false analogy between a specific Ottoman institution, the millet system (along with all its sociohistorical implications), and the social structure of the Muslim regions under Tsarist Russian dominion; A. Bennigsen and C. Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Les musulmans oubliés: LIslam en U.R.S.S. aujourdhui* (Paris: Maspero, 1981), pp. 29 and 35, as well as in other works by the same authors.

54. Bennigsen and Broxup, *The Islamic Threat,* p. 54.

55. Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy,* 2d ed. (New York: Praeger, 1961), p. 279.

56. *Ibid.,* p. 302. On the total commitment demanded by each side and the antagonisms that result, see Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union,* p. 139.

57. See, for example, the articles included in *Totalitarianism,* ed. Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); and *Change in Communist Systems,* ed. Chalmers Johnson (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1970).

58. Weber similarly commented on the "almost irresistible temptation to do violence to reality in order to prove the real validity of the construct" (Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* [Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949], pp. 101–3).

59. In one of the classic texts of totalitarian theory, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy,* one can uncover a number of these dichotomous conceptual constructs around which the paradigm is articulated. Some of these parallel dichotomies include: state/society; totalitarianism/democracy; control/freedom; conformity/resistance; violence/peace; order/disorder; fact/value; bad/good; false/true. These conceptual dichotomies do not simply stand as abstract "ideal types" that help to identify objects of study. They actively organize a social and political analysis characterized by these mutually exclusive, absolutized categories.

60. Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy,* pp. 279–89.

61. *Ibid.,* p. 328.

62. S. E. Wimbush, "Soviet Muslims in the 1980s," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs,* pp. 152–53.

63. Arguing from what can be best described as structural-functionalist positions, recent work by leading Soviet researchers rejected approaches that consider the activity of Muslim organizations as important. See Talib Saidbaev, *Literaturnaia gazeta,* no. 24 (10 June 1987): 14 and his *Islam i obshchestvo,* as well as Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia islama.*

64. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

65. Shams Ud-Din, "Russian Policy Towards Islam and Muslims: An Overview," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5, 2 (July 1984): 326.

66. Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Official Islam in the Soviet Union."

67. *Ibid.,* pp. 153, 157.

68. Baymirza Hayit, "Western Turkestan: The Russian Dilemma," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 6, 1 (January 1985).

69. Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and the World of Islam." For writing informed by similar arguments, see also *Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective,* ed. S. E. Wimbush (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

70. Timur Kocaoglu, "Islam in the Soviet Union: Atheistic Propaganda and 'Unofficial Religious Activities," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5, 1 (January 1984): 147.

71. See, for example, Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," in *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

72. Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Social Theory* (London: Heinemann; New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983); Abercrombie et al., eds., *The Dominant Ideology Thesis.*

73. David Martin, *Theory of Secularization* [Editors note: Possibly *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978).]

74. For a useful critique of mediation, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 95–107.

75. My use of the form/function distinction is informed by Abner Cohens discussion of symbolic form and symbolic function in his *Two-Dimensional Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 3–4, 26–30.

76. For a useful exploration of form and function in Soviet Buryat religious identity and ritual, see Caroline Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

77. In both Western and Soviet generalist studies of Islam and Muslim movements, "Islam" is often reduced to Quranic citations or theological discourse extracted from its social and historical contexts. For an important exception to this trend, see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the*

Hidden Imam (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1984), in which the author explores how Shii Muslim doctrines relation to temporal political authority has been constructed and reconstructed in varying historical and political situations.

78. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 3.

79. *Ibid.,* p. 5.

80. This view has been influenced by Althussers discussion of the social role of "ideological state apparatuses." See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in his *Lenin and Philosophy.*

81. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–77* (Sussex: Harvester, 1980), p. 93.

82. A corollary to this view is its inversion: that power is organized in society and challenges the state from below. Given the dichotomization of the totalitarian conceptual framework, power must be located either in the "state" or in "society."

83. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge,* p. 99.

84. *Ibid.,* p. 60.

85. For a discussion of Foucaults understanding of power with regard to institutions, see Foucaults afterword to Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* 2d ed. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1983), as well as Dreyfus and Rabinows own evaluation of this problem, pp. 184ff.

THE ISLAMIC CLERGY AND COMMUNITY IN THE SOVIET UNION

When we think about the Islamic world, the Soviet Union does not commonly come to mind. But with nearly 50 million adherents of the Muslim faith, the Soviet Union had one of the world's largest Muslim populations. Moreover, the Soviet Union was distinctive in more than simply numbers. Though relegated to the geopolitical and religious periphery of the Islamic world, Soviet Muslims were heirs to once flourishing centers of Islamic civilization: one need only recall the original founders of Islamic religious science such as al-Bukhari and at-Termezi—both of whom lived on what was the territory of Soviet Central Asia—or view the grandeur of the great Muslim cities of Bukhara, Khorezm, and, of course, Samarkand, which was founded as the capital of Tamerlane's medieval empire.

Most Soviet Muslims lived in the five republics that comprise Central Asia, but the Soviet Muslim lands stretched from the Central Asian steppes and oases to the Middle Volga region in the heart of Russia through the northern Caucasus and into Azerbaijan. The geographic size of the Soviet Islamic world was complemented by a diversity of populations. Turkic speakers such as Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis, and Tatars predominated numerically, but the USSR was also home to the Iranian-speaking Tajiks and a myriad of smaller nationalities speaking a range of Turkic, Iranian, and Ibero-Caucasian languages. Religiously, the Muslims of Central Asia and the Middle Volga are overwhelmingly followers of the Hanafi school (*mazhab*) of Sunni Islam, while the north Caucasians are primarily Shafi'i Sunnis. The majority of Azerbaijanis in the southern Caucasus are Jafari Shi'is, and other pockets of Shi'is can be found in the north Caucasus and in Central Asia (for example, Ismaili Shi'is in Tajikistan).

Despite the geographic, cultural, and religious diversity of the Soviet Muslim population, the religious institutions of the organized Muslim community in the USSR developed a remarkable degree of

standardization and uniformity in Soviet rule. In large part, this resulted from decades of anti-religious policies and restrictions imposed by the Soviet government on organized religious activities of any kind, including Islam. Beginning in the mid-1920s, the Soviet government implemented a radical program separating religion from the state and carried out an often violent campaign against religious institutions and religious belief more generally.1 Mosques and religious schools were closed down, religious endowments (*waqf*) were nationalized, and Muslim religious officialdom was dispersed through relocation, exile, imprisonment, and assassination. Mosques continued to function and clerics continued to preach well into the 1930s, but they did so in vastly reduced numbers and under conditions of often extreme and persistent persecution. Indeed, by the 1930s the organized Muslim community had been effectively closed down.

It was not until World War II, when Moscow sought to tap religious sentiments as a source of support against the Nazi invasion, that a new era in relations between organized religion and the state began. Many mosques reopened, religious training for clerics was reestablished on a limited scale, and the Muslim clergy was allowed to reorganize itself. In the following decades, while anti-religious propaganda waxed and waned at the whim of Soviet leaders, the clerically led Islamic religious institutions that reemerged during the war survived as vital centers for the Islamic faith in the Soviet Union—despite a widespread wave of mosque closings and other increased restrictions imposed on them during the Khrushchev years. As a result, in the post–World War II period the religious organizations under the Muslim clergy's control became the sole effective arbiters of Islam.

In this paper we shall analyze the activity of these surviving religious associations, known as Muslim Religious Boards (*dukhovnoe upravlenie*). Until the Gorbachev era, these boards were the only manifestation of an organized Islamic religious movement in the Soviet Union.2 In both structure and beliefs, I argue, the clerically led Muslim Boards reflected a politico-religious orientation that was both fundamentalist and accommodationist. The boards were fundamentalist in their dedication to a "return" to the scriptural foundations of Islam, from which, they argued, the Soviet Muslim community had strayed. At the same time, however, they promoted

a conception of a "purified" Islam which was consonant not only with modern social and economic development, but also encouraged loyal citizenship and political participation in the Soviet Union.

STRUCTURE OF THE SOVIET MUSLIM COMMUNITY

As in most Muslim societies, the basic organizational unit of the Muslim religious community in the Soviet Union was the mosque. After the elimination of religious endowments and religious schools, the mosque stood as one of the few remaining religious institutions in the post-World War II Soviet Union. Like other religious associations in the country, mosques were allowed to operate legally by registering with their local governments. To form a religious association, a minimum of twenty people (*dvatsatka*) of the same faith was required to petition the local government for registration of their religious community. Upon registration, the local government would generally provide the given religious community with a building (in the case of Islam, a mosque), but otherwise the mosque-based religious association financed itself almost entirely through the voluntary donations of its parishioners and supporters.

In principle as well as in practice, organized Islam was virtually confined to the activity of the mosques.3 Soviet legislation on the operation of these religious communities defined more restrictions than rights for them. The most significant restrictions provided that religious associations, including the mosques, confine themselves to the conduct of religious rites. Thus mosques were legally prohibited from engaging in "nonreligious" activities such as social services (including health care and housing), education (including the establishment of schools or libraries), or any kind of economic or commercial enterprise. However, some of these restrictions were not regularly enforced by the Soviet government. For instance, larger mosques often possessed sizable libraries of religious publications, and in Uzbekistan religious education survived at two religious academies in Bukhara and Tashkent, where clerics were trained for religious careers.

Mosques formed the foundation of the Soviet Muslim community, but they did not operate as independent religious associations.

Each registered mosque was affiliated with one of four independent, regionally organized Muslim Religious Boards and was subject to the administrative jurisdiction of these boards. The largest of these organizations was the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, which regulated the religious life of Muslim communities in the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kirgizia, as well as Kazakhstan.* The administrative headquarters of the Central Asian board was in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. The Muslim Religious Board for the Transcaucasus, centered in Baku, supervised the Muslim communities of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia and served as the nominal religious center for Shi'i minorities outside the board's territorial jurisdiction. The North Caucasian Muslim Religious Board worked out of Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan, and coordinated the mosques of the autonomous ethnic territories of the North Caucasus, including Dagestan, Checheno-Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and North Ossetia, as well as parts of southern Russia. The geographically most extensive administration was the Muslim Religious Board for the European USSR and Siberia. Its center was in Ufa, and it administered the religious life of Muslims living in the Middle Volga (Tatarstan and Bashkiria), as well as communities scattered throughout the rest of the Russian republic and the European parts of the country.

The Muslim Boards, like the mosques they oversaw, administered themselves. They were registered with the state as religious associations, and though they had been subject to a variety of external political pressures, they nonetheless operated formally as private organizations. Hierarchically structured organizations led by self-certified Muslim religious leaders, they defined their main task as organizing and regulating the religious life of the Muslim community. Their existence therefore challenged a common stereotype about Islam, according to which Islam has no church and no clergy. Moreover, unlike establishments in "Muslim" countries where "official" religious hierarchies operate under the direct auspices of the state (e.g., Egypt), the Soviet Union's "official" Muslim establishment was nominally independent and self-financing. The activities

Editor's note: It was standard Soviet practice not to treat Kazakhstan as part of "Central Asia."

of the Muslim Boards were funded through voluntary contributions (*sadaqa*), and the salaries of local mosque officials were determined by contract with a given mosque's executive board.

Each of the boards was administered by an executive council and was headed by a religious official. The executive councils were formally elected by periodic congresses of clerics and lay representatives of the religious communities under a particular board's jurisdiction. In a practice that paralleled the operation of the Communist Party, the leaders of the Muslim Boards typically presented a preselected slate of candidates to the executive councils which in turn were "approved" by the congresses.

The executive council of a Muslim Board selected its own chairman. These leaders were elected to positions of administrative rank but also bore titles of religious distinction. The Central Asian, European, and North Caucasian boards were led by a *mufti,* a person learned in the Islamic religious sciences. Given the Shi'i majority composition of its constituency, the Transcaucasian board was headed by a Shi'i religious figure known as the *sheikh-ul-Islam.* In this respect, the leadership of the Muslim Boards combined features of both "traditional" Muslim religious institutions and modern, impersonal bureaucracies.

Like other religious organizations in the postwar Soviet Union, the Muslim Boards operated under the harsh restrictions of Soviet religious legislation and political pressures. This meant that the Muslim Boards were generally restricted to meeting the purely "religious" needs of the population. Nevertheless, the internal organization and administration of the boards was generally left to Muslim religious leaders themselves.4 For example, each Muslim Board was run according to an internally adopted set of bylaws that defined its rights and responsibilities with regard to the Muslim communities under its administration. Each Muslim Board reserved the right to define the principles of the Islamic faith and decide questions of religious dogma by *fetwa* (an explanation based on religious science) if necessary. The boards also issued guidelines on the proper forms of religious conduct, from the Friday prayers to observance of various calendar rites and holidays.

The fetwa provides another example of the Muslim Boards' synthesis of traditional Muslim practices and modern bureaucratic innovations. Customarily, a fetwa is the prerogative of a mufti, who

in the Soviet case also headed the Muslim Board. In the Soviet Union, however, the larger administrations had fetwa departments which were involved in researching and preparing the issuance of a fetwa. Prior to the announcement of a fetwa, the mufti discussed the research of the fetwa department with the board's executive council. Then the fetwa was issued on behalf of the Muslim Religious Board as a whole and not simply an individual mufti.

Apart from their general supervision of religious dogma and practice, the Muslim Boards regulated the administrative operation of the mosque-based religious communities under their jurisdiction. In this role, the Muslim Boards acted in a fashion that resembled the Communist Party apparatus—centralized and highly bureaucratized. Mosques and local religious officials were not only registered by government agencies, they were certified by an appropriate Muslim Religious Board as well. The boards organized religious training for the clerics at all levels and provided an official certification that authorized an individual to perform religious services. Only the Muslim Boards retained the right to appoint clerics to positions of religious responsibility in the mosques, and likewise only the boards could transfer officials from one mosque to another. Finally, the Muslim Boards had the right to revoke the certification of clerics under their supervision for violations of religious or administrative codes of a given Muslim Board.

THE CLERGY'S IMAGE OF ISLAM AND COMMUNITY

One of the main concerns reflected in clerical arguments about the nature of Islam and the Soviet Muslim community after World War II was a "return" to Islam in its purest forms.5 The Soviet Muslim clergy sought to mobilize the religious institutions that they led in order to revitalize the religious life of the community around the textual origins of Islam—the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions.

The clergy's argument about the need to return to the fundamentals of Islam was based, of course, on the assumption that the community had strayed from those fundamentals. Orthodoxy is constituted only in relation to heterodoxy, as Pierre Bourdieu has argued, and the clergy's depiction of a Muslim community having

strayed from Islam provided the necessary contrast.6 Given what the clergy portrayed as the religiously ignorant—indeed degenerate—state of the Muslim community, this position in turn created a need for religious leadership, which could best be provided, the argument went, by the educated Muslim clergy. In this way, clerical arguments about the need to return to an authentic Islam were closely linked with the legitimation of the activity of the Muslim Boards and the network of clerics and mosques under their jurisdiction. By asserting that the Muslim community had fallen into superstitious and heretical ways, the clergy simultaneously fixed a place for itself and its institutions in Muslim society.

The Muslim clergy's arguments about Islam and the Muslim community reflected a struggle for leadership within Soviet Muslim society. Ironically, the clergy's claim to leadership within the community was based on the theological condemnation of that very same community. But clerical discourse was directed not only internally toward Muslim society. It also aimed externally at the Soviet polity and society more generally. Over its decades-long development, Soviet political discourse painted Islam, like all religions, as a social ideology which served only to hamper human progress. As a vestige of a presocialist era, Islam and religious beliefs generally were doomed in the construction of a progressive Soviet social order.

The Muslim clergy's image of Islam, however, directly challenged and subverted this hegemonic argument. The Muslim community, the clerics insisted, both retained its Islamic distinctiveness and actively contributed to the progress of Soviet society. In fact, the clerics pointed out, an "authentic" Islam prescribed many of the same social and economic values as Soviet socialism. In contrast to Soviet secular propaganda's portrayal of Islam as a brake on social development, the Muslim clerics pointed to the benefits that Islam brought to society in general and Soviet society specifically. These were the clergy's two main arguments about the nature of Islam and the Muslim community and about their relation to Soviet society, and the clergy drew on its own religious traditions to make such arguments.

The main discursive instrument employed in the quest to recenter the Muslim community around an authentic Islam was *ijtihad*, or theological interpretation of sacred texts. Soviet clerics sought to legitimate their reliance on this practice by citing figures as diverse as Abu Hanifa (767–800 CE*), one of the early Arab founders

*A.D.

of Islamic religious science, and Shihabeddin Marjani (1818–1899 CE), a Tatar cleric and philosopher in whose work ijtihad was an integral part of religious thought. In a reflection of broadly accepted clerical views on the nature of ijtihad, one Soviet cleric pointed out that successive generations of Muslims approached the sacred scriptures with equal respect, but each new generation interpreted the essence of these texts in a new way and thus discovered new ideas that had previously gone unnoticed.7

By means of ijtihad, the Muslim clergy effected a double move. On the one hand, clerical thinkers emphasized the scriptural foundations of the Islamic faith and idealized the historical traditions of what they considered an authentic Islam. At the same time, their reliance on ijtihad opened the possibility for interpretation and reinterpretation of these texts for the construction of new religious principles to meet contemporary social, religious, and other concerns. The Soviet Muslim clergy's reconstruction of Islam through ijtihad thus reflected a synthesis of both "traditional" and "modern" elements.

The clergy's reconstructed image of Islam was legitimated by means of ijtihad, but the emphasis on the authenticity of the scriptural origins of Islam and the centrality of the historical legacy of Islamic thought at the same time implied a devaluing of existing Islam—that is, the range of beliefs and practices that characterized the lived religious experiences of people that identified themselves as Muslims. Indeed one of the main thrusts of clerical arguments about the character of the Soviet Muslim community was that it had fallen into deeply un-Islamic ways. The clerics condemned what they considered to be *jahiliyya,* which can be understood as a general ignorance of Islam, including a lack of familiarity with the fundamental principles of the faith as expressed in the Qur'an or the traditions of the prophet Muhammad. More specifically, the clerics decried the widespread existence of *bida,* or heretical innovations in religious belief and practice. Such innovations included, for example, "superstitious" beliefs, saint worship, pilgrimages to local shrines, and the use of amulets for healing or other purposes.

A lead editorial in the magazine of the Central Asian Muslim Board, illustratively entitled "Along the True Path of the Qur'an," provided a concise statement of these views:

In defending the principles ordained by the Holy Qur'an, we [clerics] actively fight against all negative occurrences which happen in the everyday lives of Muslims and draw them away from all kinds of superstitions and bidayat which do not correspond to instructions provided by our shariat. By doing so, we strengthen the conscience of our faithful."8

Ironically the Muslim clergy's depiction of the contemporary Muslim community underscored the community's un-Islamic ways. But it is important to emphasize that one of the main tasks of the Muslim clergy was not simply defining the content of an "authentic" Islam based in history and scripture or condemning the range of un-Islamic practices observed by contemporary Muslims. Rather, in its contrast of an idealized religious authenticity and a degenerate religious reality, the clergy fixed *itself* as the force that could provide the leadership to bring the Muslim community back to the "true" Islam.

If Muslim leaders made somewhat abstract claims about their leadership role in bringing Islam to the Muslim community (and thus bringing the community back to Islam), these claims were concretized in the institutional mechanisms at their disposal. In this way, the religious discourse of the Soviet Muslim clergy and the organizational structures of the religious institutions they dominated were intimately linked. The most important of these mechanisms, all of which operated under the supervision of the Muslim Religious Boards, included the mosque, the religious center where prayers were recited and sermons delivered; the *imam,* or local religious specialist who led the mosque-based community and provided a range of religious services; the sermon (*khutba* in Sunni tradition, *moiza* in Shi'i tradition), by which a cleric provided a general but authoritative representation of Islam; the fetwa, the formalized decision issued by a cleric trained in religious science (mentioned above); and the *medresa,* the religious school which in the Soviet context provided only training and education for aspiring clerics.

The centrality of these religious institutions was frequently emphasized, as was their function as vital instruments for re-Islamicizing the Muslim community. A clerical statement, for example, represented the mosque as a site where Muslims could gain greater awareness and understanding of themselves as Muslims. In this process, clerics emphasized the interconnected function of

mosque, sermon, and cleric as a means for bringing Islam back to the community and the community of believers back to an "authentic" Islam:

> In our mosques, sermons are recited, fetwas are announced and elucidated, and the profound humane principles of the personal behavior of Muslim society, the family, and daily life are persistently propagated. Therefore, the role of mosques is immensely important in the course of solving our common important task—implanting in new generations of Muslims a consciousness and profound value of our sacred religion.9

Clerical appeals for "strengthening" the role of the mosque in the life of the community therefore followed from the understanding of the mosque as an instrument for the reconstruction of an authentic Islam under the "competent" guidance of the clergy.

DISTINCTION AND INTEGRATION IN CLERICAL DISCOURSE

In their image of a reconstructed, reinvigorated Islam, postwar Soviet Muslim clerics sought to restore the authority of "tradition" among contemporary Soviet Muslims. But this reinvention of an Islamic tradition operated not only internally in the Muslim community. Muslim clerics also constructed arguments that sought to recontextualize the Muslim community in relation to political, social, and economic developments in the Soviet Union as a whole. Postwar clerical discourse therefore attempted not only to rewrite the "text" of Islam, but also to recast the context in which Islam existed. Along with its struggle to mobilize the Muslim community around its own religious institutions and instill its own sense of the Islamic faith, the Muslim clergy argued that Islam and the Muslim community played a vital role in Soviet society. Thus clerics reworked the Soviet state's discursive constitution of a "new Soviet man" who lived successfully without religion into a formulation of a "new Soviet Muslim citizen."

Clerical arguments about the nature of Islam's relation to Soviet society were made in conscious recognition of prevailing notions of the inherent incompatibility of Islam and Soviet power. As noted, the

mutually exclusive character of Islam (or any religion) and Soviet-led social progress was a common theme of Soviet anti-religious propaganda and academic polemics. In this sense, clerical arguments about the place of Islam in Soviet society were a counterdiscourse, a reply to the powerful challenge of external images of Islam produced in nonreligious scholarship and polemics.

The formulation of a counterdiscourse, however, did not entail a total rejection of the arguments to which it responded. Rather, the clerical image of Islam subverted the state's hegemonic position by incorporating many features of that position which would seemingly negate it. Thus numerous political, social, and economic values espoused by representatives of the Soviet state were appropriated by the Muslim clergy as traditional elements of the Islamic faith. In fact, Soviet clerics sometimes effected a reversal by asserting the essentially religious underpinnings of Soviet values. As a cleric at an Azerbaijani mosque declared:

> I am glad and full of admiration for the genius of the prophet, who foresaw the social principles of socialism. I am also glad that many socialist practices are the present-day realization of the dreams of the prophet Muhammad.10

The clergy's appropriation of elements of the state's discourse served in part to reproduce that discourse. In this connection, many observers simplistically assumed that Muslim clerics were nothing more than docile functionaries of Soviet power. But in reinterpreting state values as traditional components of Islamic thought, thereby underscoring the vitality of Islam, the clerics also revised and rejected the state's arguments concerning the religion's backwardness and obsolescence. Thus the "loyal" position of Soviet Muslim clerics was not simply a surrender to their political context; it was a subversion and reconstruction of that context.

Clerical arguments positing the existence of a "Soviet Muslim citizen" relied on a combination of two distinct strategies: a strategy of integration based on a symbolic representation of Muslims as active participants in the construction of Soviet power and integral members of Soviet society; and a strategy of distinction, in which the clerics emphasized the Muslim distinctiveness of the community of believers that they led.11 In this way, clerical arguments posited the

existence of a self-conscious Muslim community, and they viewed the integration of that community into broader constructions of Soviet society not just as a nameless collection of individuals but as emphatically Muslim citizens.

An archetype of the Soviet Muslim citizen presented by the clergy was Rizaetdin Fahretdinov, a Tatar cleric and religious philosopher who was a leader of the Soviet Muslim community in the interwar period. His case was deployed to claim that adherence to the Islamic faith posed no obstacle to the social participation of devout Muslims and that Muslim piety and Soviet citizenship were in fact mutually reinforcing. In a statement that compares his religious devotion and secular activities, the following was argued:

> Religion in no way hampered Rizaetdin Fahretdinov from actively participating in the social and political life of our country. With a feeling of great emotion he used to speak of many things which he dared only dream of before the Great October Revolution, like general educational facilities, the emancipation of our women, the flourishing of our science, culture, and art in all spheres which have nowadays become a reality.12

In the context of a dominant political discourse that portrayed Muslims as backwards and threatening to the maintenance of Soviet power, the clergy's representation of the Soviet Muslim community aimed to transform Muslims from passive victims or opponents of Soviet policy into active agents in the social and political structures in which they lived. In emphasizing a continued, even renewed, devotion to the Islamic faith in tandem with participation in Soviet society, the Soviet Muslim clergy thus established a claim for benefits from that society—as integrated but distinctly Muslim citizens. As one account put the case:

> For more than 65 years Muslims of our country have been living in socialist society and they have real cause to be proud of making their contribution to the progress and prosperity of their native land while not deviating from the prescription of their holy religion of Islam.13

In contrast to arguments that Islam was an obsolete vestige of the past, the clergy thus subverted these notions by claiming that "with-

out religion a person cannot be moral, since only fear of God keeps people from doing amoral, sinful deeds."14

The clerical strategies of integration and distinction, moreover, were inseparable from the broader fundamentalist ideal of reorienting the community around the origins of the faith and recentering the Muslim community around religious institutions controlled by the clergy. Thus in a denunciation of ignorant superstitions and practices, the former mufti of Central Asia argued that the return to the fundamentals of Islam was the foundation for the positive, active contribution of the Muslim community to Soviet society:

> These superstitions cannot contribute to the progress that characterizes the contemporary era. It is only the return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah that created indispensable conditions for the active participation of Muslims in the building of a new life.15

Unlike some Islamic ideological tendencies outside the Soviet Union, where secular and religious ideas are combined in constructions of "Islamic Marxism" or "Islamic socialism," Soviet Muslim clerics maintained the distinctiveness of each system of ideas.16 They thus argued for a commonality of interests of two separate discursive traditions: one Islamic and the other Soviet/Marxist. In this way, Soviet clerics appealed for a mutually advantageous coexistence— but not a synthesis—of Islam and Soviet power.

NOTES

1. For useful surveys and periodizations of Soviet policy toward Islam, see Nugman Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia islama v SSSR* (Moscow: Politizdat, l973), and T. S. Saidbaev, *Islam i obshchestvo,* 2d ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1984).

2. Some observers see the widespread persistence of informal religious practices as a "movement," but in fact there is no significant organizational coherence to these activities. See Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

3. For a survey of Soviet legal codes on religious organization, see G. J. Mürshüdlü, *Dini ayinlär haggïnda sovet ganunverijiliyi* (Baku, 1983)

4. For accounts of the boards' internal structures, see Ziyauddin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan, *Islam and Muslims in the Land of the Soviets* (Moscow: Progress, 1980), and Abdulla Vakhabov, *Muslims in the USSR* (Moscow: Novosti, 1980).

5. There are variations in the expression of purificationist tendencies among Soviet Muslim clerics. For example, a discourse of "return" to Islam is much less salient among North Caucasian and Transcaucasian Muslims. The account presented here attempts to focus only on the most general common attributes of contemporary clerical images of Islam. On the distinctive trends in the Transcaucasus, for example, see R. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri," *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriyasï* 4 (l979).

6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

7. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 (1984): 11.

8. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1983): 1–2.

9. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 2 (1985).

10. Quoted in A. Akhmedov, *Sotsial'naia doktrina islama* (Moscow: Politizdat, l982), p. 27.

11. I should emphasize that "Soviet Muslim citizen" is my own descriptive device and not that of the Soviet Muslim clergy.

12. *Muslims of the Soviet East 1* (1984): 12.

13. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 2 (1983).

14. From a sermon quoted in Nugman Ashirov, *Nravstvennye poucheniia sovremennogo islama* (Moscow: Znanie, 1977), pp. 12–13.

15. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1977): 8.

16. This view is shared by some Soviet specialists of Islam. See M. A. Abdullaev and M. V. Vagabov, *Aktual'nye problemy kritiki i preodoleniia islama* (Makhachkala, 1975).

THE REINTERPRETATION AND ADAPTATION
OF SOVIET ISLAM

A fundamental problem in Western scholarship on Islam has been the reification of religion. Many scholars do not view religion as a social manifestation of the sacred but as a fixed system of beliefs and practices. Such reification is not a problem confined to the study of Soviet Islam. In the growing scholarship on Islam in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, many studies work from the assumption that Islam is a transhistorical phenomenon. As a result, there is a tendency to focus on the interrelationship of a static Islam and the advent of modernity.1 In effect, Islam is seen as a force independent of the changed (or changing) social, economic, and political circumstances of the contemporary world. Thus socioeconomic change and political development become the central concerns of analysis, and religious innovation, even when it is empirically recognized, is theoretically misunderstood and thus undervalued as a subject worthy of scholarly attention.

Most Western scholars of Soviet Islam work within these paradigmatic assumptions. Alexandre Bennigsen, the dean of scholarship on Soviet Islam, writes of an "inborn sense of *Umma*" among Muslims as if it were a genetic rather than a social quality.2 This is not a singular, poorly expressed phrase; rather, it reflects a common approach to Muslims and Muslim society. Implicitly or explicitly, this perspective assumes the immutability of social identities. In the Soviet context, this type of reification rests on the assumption that after more than a half century of massive socioeconomic and political transformation, the self-conception of Soviet Muslims has undergone little significant change (assuming to begin with that Muslims in the Tsarist empire had a sense of common identity in the umma). Even if one chooses to argue, as in fact Soviet scholars do, that sectors of the "Muslim" population of the USSR are relatively less integrated into Soviet society, one cannot assume that partial or even differentiated integration has not had some impact on popular attitudes.3

This approach to the study of Islam in the Soviet Union has proved to be more of an obstacle than an insight. The implicit assertion that religion is a metaphysical system independent of society and politics is a tenuous one. Religion is a symbolic system that is generated in social relations and can be seen as a symbolically organized or constructed phenomenon.4 This does not deny, however, that religious ideas can provide meaning to social action. The form and substance of Islam, therefore, is interpreted and reinterpreted through social relations yet also provides concepts with which to understand these social relations. The absence of this dialectical perspective and the resultant reification of religion have resulted in serious analytical weaknesses in the study of religious change in the USSR. A fundamental dimension of this weakness is evident in the scholarly undervaluation of the role of Muslim elites in this change.

MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SOVIET STATE

The post-Stalin USSR is home to four independent Muslim religious administrations: the Muslim Religious Board for the European USSR and Siberia (centered in Ufa, Bashkir ASSR); the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan (Tashkent, Uzbekistan); the Muslim Religious Board for the North Caucasus (until recently in Buinaksk; now in Makhachkala, Dagestan); and the Muslim Religious Board for Transcaucasia (Baku, Azerbaijan). These institutions are the locus of Islamic innovation in the USSR, and a conceptual exposition of their orientations and activities is crucial for analyzing the place of Islam in contemporary Soviet society. Each administration has a number of specialized departments and supervises the religious and administrative activities of the mosques and clerics under its jurisdiction. In addition, the Muslim Board of Tashkent operates two *medresas,* or Muslim seminaries, and publishes a quarterly journal, *Muslims of the Soviet East.*5 The leaders of these administrations, the staffs of their various departments, and the clergy form the Soviet Muslim elite.

Most of the scholarly discussion of these administrations is limited to descriptive accounts of their activities. Analytically, what is significant for Western scholars about these administrations is that

like their prerevolutionary predecessors, they were created exogenously and instituted in the communities that they now serve. The creation and "imposition" of organizational coherence for the Islamic religion by the Soviet regime is an undeniable occurrence. Because of the heteronomous establishment of these Soviet Muslim administrations, however, a priori assumptions are too often employed in place of an analysis of the religious boards' role and their relations with the Soviet regime. An example of this approach is the following comment:

> These administrative bodies exist in name only, since they have no powers whatsoever to safeguard the interests of Islam, i.e., to defend Islam against anti-Islamic attacks in public life.6

The same author also claims that the Muslim Religious Boards are noteworthy only in the services they provide for the conduct of Soviet foreign policy and that in this respect the Tashkent administration is the sole significant actor.7 While these comments are explicit and perhaps extreme in their form, the dominant, conventional wisdom about the role of the Muslim elite in Soviet Islam is steeped in similar notions.8

The assumptions of this perspective are perhaps commonsensical: the Soviet regime establishes the Muslim administrations for its own ends, in part as a concession to the Muslim population; these administrations, now empowered with an autonomous organizational apparatus, bargain with the regime and obtain extensions of their power and authority (e.g., the opening of new mosques or the softening of antireligious propaganda) in return for obedient domestic behavior and especially for promotion of the Soviet system and Soviet foreign policy among Muslim states of the Third World.9 As institutional structures created and established by Soviet authorities, the Muslim Religious Boards must revise their orientations and activities (ostensibly at least) to accord with the regime's values and goals in order to justify to the regime their continued (or even expanded) operation. This approach is particularly evident in the claim that the Soviet regime is willing to promote the official Muslim elite in opposition to the purportedly more threatening nonofficial forms of Islamic association.10 Nevertheless, the entente established between the state and its Muslim population is hardly cordial. Relations between the religious boards and the regime, according to the conventional wisdom, are

based on cost-benefit calculations between essentially antagonistic partners and are thus inherently unstable and uncertain.11

Such assertions are not entirely wrong. They are, however, incomplete and overly simplistic. The operation of Muslim organizations cannot be put in simple terms of accommodation or antagonism toward the state. These organizations are neither mere organs of state power nor incipient vehicles of antistate action. The creation of these institutions reflects the regime's accommodation to socioreligious forces that exist in Soviet society, but this accommodation must be understood in the context of the completion of a decisive and fundamental transformation of social and political relations in the USSR. The Soviet regime initiated a reconciliation with the Muslim clergy only after it had successfully undermined their political relevance.12 Moreover, the institutional character of the religious boards shapes the terms by which the religious elites articulate and express their identity.'

The simplistic view of the Muslim Religious Boards as obedient instruments of the Soviet state leads to the assumption that these administrations are rigidly formalistic in both conception and practice and that they are unconnected and irrelevant to the constituencies which they ostensibly serve.13 In fact, Western scholars place too much emphasis on the foreign propaganda role of the Soviet Muslim elites, while they consider their domestic activities to be inconsequential. In relegating the role of the Muslim elites to domestic insignificance, many scholars fail to evaluate and analyze their role in redefining the form and content of Islam in Soviet society.

RELIGIOUS "MODERNIZATION," MUSLIM ELITES, AND THE SOVIET REGIME

One of the fundamental features of change in Islam during the Soviet period is the reinterpretation and adaptation of religious thought and practice. Based in the religious boards, the Muslim cleri-

*A comparative study of the historically innovative Muslim Religious Boards with preexisting religious institutions—e.g., the Russian Orthodox Church or the Armenian Apostolic Church—could provide the basis for better elaboration of this point.

cal elite is the initiator of these religious innovations. The reinterpretation of Islam has been promulgated in Soviet Muslim publications and conferences, in religious-educational establishments, and most immediately through the countrywide network of mosques and organized parishes. In effect, all the institutional channels available to the Muslim elite have been mobilized to promote not only the principle of religious reinterpretation, but also its theological and practical applications. Western studies of this religious innovation are invariably based on Soviet scholarship. Therefore, it is useful to review the assumptions of the Soviet understanding of this process before a discussion of Western perspectives.

The campaign for the reinterpretation of Islam in the context of Soviet society has received wide attention in Soviet studies of Islam.14 In Soviet literature this process is most commonly referred to as Islamic modernization (*modernizatsiia*) or Islamic renewal (*obnovlenie*). A perusal of Soviet literature on Islamic modernization reveals abundant information and—although variations and distinct differences in perspective exist—a fairly coherent argument about the character and intent of this modernization. Generally, the Soviet argument goes like this: based on the material transformation of society, a spiritual-ideological transformation has also been achieved. That is, not only has a new socioeconomic "base" been created, but also a "superstructure" has been established that generally (though not completely) corresponds to this novel socialist base. Therefore, in the conditions of a Soviet socialist society the country's traditionally Muslim populations have assimilated materialist conceptions of history and the complex set of Soviet values founded in this new society (collectivism, equality, democracy, and the like). The Muslim elite, in this argument, has been obliged to adapt to the conditions of a new society and a new popular consciousness in order to maintain its now objectively baseless but nonetheless residual status. A minority of scholars also argues that Islamic modernization is intended not only to prevent the further deterioration of the social and spiritual position of the Muslim elite but aims to "regain lost ground" as well.15

Comparisons of religious modernization in the USSR and in the developing world highlight the specificity of Islamic modernization in the USSR. In the developed and developing capitalist countries, religious renovation is undertaken to promote the interest of the

dominant class. In contrast, religious modernization in the Soviet Union serves only to prevent, or at least to slow down, the objective elimination of Islamic "vestiges" that have remained in socialist society.16 The Muslim elite, by way of reinterpretation, strives to reanimate the vestigial elements of Islam to maintain its objectively baseless social status. In the conditions of mass atheism based on a new social order, Muslim elites must prove their "usefulness" to the population and must adapt their conception of religious identity and practices in order not to alienate their already tenuous support remaining in the population at large.17

The general outlines of the Soviet argument about Islamic modernization are logical, but the argument does not correspond to the actual state of affairs. While one could argue with ease that Soviet scholars fail adequately to substantiate their case about the transformation of popular consciousness in the USSR, there are more significant theoretical problems. The Soviet approach is overly mechanistic and one-dimensional in assuming a direct and unilateral determination of social consciousness by social structure.18

The Western approach to Islamic modernization is distinct yet related to its Soviet counterpart. Western scholars most frequently discuss this issue only in descriptive terms by eclectically appropriating information from Soviet sources and in the process stripping any facts from the conceptual framework in which they were originally presented. In effect, one is provided with a repetitious summary of previously published factual information (albeit in Russian or other languages of the USSR); sometimes one comes across the insertion of parts of arguments appropriated from the same sources. One scholar, for example, after paraphrasing virtually a single Soviet monographic source, concludes that the whole process of religious modernization is "strange" in that it occurs in a presumably atheistic state.19 Yet another Western scholar simultaneously provides limited evidence of religious change and then denounces it as "insignificant."20 This same author continues: "Under the Soviet regime [Muslim religious customs and ritual] have neither been modified nor simplified, though some fell into disuse through neglect."21 This view ignores a great deal of contrary information in both Soviet and Western literature (see below). More generally, however, it reflects serious theoretical inadequacies. As noted, the assumption that Islam exists autonomously from social relations almost inevitably

leads to the descriptive particularization that dominates Western study of Soviet Islam. By concentrating on the details of the reinterpretation of religious thought and practices, Western scholars forget that these details are part of a larger social process of religious change.

While different in content, the conceptual understanding of the origins of Islamic renovation implicit in the conventional Western arguments is striking in its structural similarity to conventional Soviet interpretations. Both arguments approach Muslim reform in a unidirectional manner, ascribing the determination of religious reconstitution to either the regime (the Western variant) or popular consciousness (the Soviet variant). Both of these perspectives, moreover, emphasize the pragmatic, essentially opportunistic character of religious innovations. Yet it is crucial for an understanding of religious change to recognize that the motivations of the Soviet Muslim elites are based not just in political expediency, but also in their own conception of religious identity.22

A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Change in Soviet Islam has been characterized as "religious modernization" in both Soviet and Western literature. Use of the term "modernization" is, however, misleading since it assumes that there is some transition from "traditional" to "modern" forms of religion. I will use the term religious reconstruction since it gives the sense that religion is reinterpreted and recast in new (not necessarily modern) forms and with new content in response to changed or changing sociopolitical conditions. Religious reconstruction does not involve the simple replacement of old forms of religious expression with "modern" ones; nor does it imply the reaffirmation or replication of traditional forms of religion. The reconstruction of religion is a novel articulation of the forms and substance of religion.23

An important dimension of religious reconstruction is the reformulation of the role of religious organization in social life.24 In Soviet Islam, the practical initiator of religious reconstruction is the Muslim clerical elite. In part, changes in the composition of the So-

viet Muslim elite account for religious innovation in Soviet Islam.25 However, while the reconstruction is led by the Muslim elite, the process is founded in the new social and political conditions of the contemporary USSR. In this way, religious institutions in the post-war USSR to a certain extent serve as transmitters of regime values. Located in the Muslim Religious Boards, the Muslim clergy articulates notions of social progress, collectivism, equality of peoples and the sexes, and so forth. These notions form the foundation of the Soviet regime's value system and establish guidelines for the direction of social and political behavior.

This does not mean, however, that Soviet Muslim organizations are mere mouthpieces for the regime. Soviet Muslim elites have appropriated official Soviet values and expressed them in terms of their own symbolic system—Islam. This entails not simply Muslim mediation of regime values and behavioral norms. Rather, the Muslim elite has assimilated itself into the dominant sociopolitical system through the appropriation of the hegemonic goals and values of that system; and in expressing those values through its own ideological constructs, it reasserts its own social legitimacy. The appropriation of regime values and their recasting in terms of Islamic theology is, in short, a fundamental component of the reconstruction of Islam.

Islamic reconstruction, however, does not simply reflect the existence of a hegemonic Soviet ideology and political order. Nor does it merely constitute a new Islam in opposition to the Soviet regime. Reconstructed Islam also reflects the sociopolitical conditions in which it occurs. At the same time, it constitutes a new social identity by using Islamic theological concepts to articulate dominant, secular values in what Bryan S. Turner calls a "curious blend of the new and traditional."26 This recasting of Islam synthesizes a new Muslim identity in which Islam and Soviet socialism are reconciled and a novel form of Soviet identity is expressed and legitimated in the reconstructed categories of Islamic doctrine.

As a result, the "renewal" of Soviet Islam is not fundamentally or necessarily a centrifugal force in Soviet society. The reassertion of Islamic identity is not automatically a threat to the regime.27 Indeed it is important not to confuse *symbolic form* and *symbolic function*.28 Symbolic form refers to the specific mode through which meanings are conveyed (e.g., ritual or ceremony). Symbolic function refers to the specific meaning that is conveyed (e.g., solidarity or equality).

Many scholars of Soviet Islam conflate these two concepts.* They recognize the maintenance of the traditional symbolic *forms* of Islam and assume that the same *functions* are being accomplished. But through the process of religious reconstruction, old symbolic forms of Islam have been redefined and infused with new meanings. Thus in Soviet society universally recognizable Muslim symbolic forms perform new, different symbolic functions.

In effect, the Soviet Muslim elite's reconstruction of Islam can be viewed in what Steven Lukes has called a "symbolic strategy"—that is, a ritual complex that serves to defend a group's power with respect to other groups.29 Applied to the respective positions of the Soviet political elite and the Muslim elite, Lukes' distinction between the uses of the "mobilization of bias" for dominant and subordinate groups is especially pertinent. He emphasizes that the symbolic strategy of a subordinate group can be either fundamentally destablilizing or "subordinate and oppositional but not threatening to the social and political order."30 Treating the Muslim elite's reconstruction of Islamic identity as a particular symbolic strategy can reorient the study of Islam and religious change in the USSR. The issue is no longer the extent to which the Muslim elite or an Islamic "revival" poses a threat to the Soviet regime. Rather, the fundamental question becomes whether Islamic reconstruction is an integrative or subversive process.

My thesis is that the Muslim religious establishment promotes integration into the Soviet social order based on reconstructed concepts of specifically Islamic religious categories. The articulation of a new Soviet-Muslim symbolic system reformulates what the regime intends to be integrative *secular* values; nevertheless, reconstructed Islam at once posits a Muslim subgroup solidarity and promotes the integration of the subgroup into the larger social group—the Soviet social order. The Muslim elite strives to establish both a new Soviet and a new Muslim identity—identities which are defined as mutually compatible and not contradictory to the integration promoted through purely Soviet values. In short, the notion that one can be

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*This is the case for observers of Soviet Islam in both the West and the USSR. Western scholars tend to reify Islam and believe that traditional forms of Muslim identity embody similar contents. Similarly, Soviet scholars see, for example, the continuation of Islamic ritual activity as "vestigial" forms of Islam that carry the same content (perform the same function) as they always have.

both a "good" Muslim and a "good" Soviet citizen is put forth.31 'The Muslim elite's reformulation of the Islamic symbolic universe, therefore, not only reflects the transformed political and social conditions of the USSR, but it also partakes in that transformation in its attempts to establish a positive identity for Soviet Muslims congruent with the Soviet sociopolitical order.32 Religion is not something that either maintains itself unchanged or is swept away by the forces of political and social development. Religion continues to exist, but its form and substance are reconstructed in light of the changing sociopolitical circumstances in which it operates.

ISLAMIC RECONSTRUCTION: RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE AND RITUAL

The Muslim clerical elite has introduced innovations in Islamic ethical-moral norms and theology.33 In Islamic theological terms, reconstruction has been promoted through the doctrinal concept of *ijtihad.* Ijtihad involves direct consultation and interpretation of the Qur'an and other religious scriptures that form the foundation of the Islamic religion. As a Soviet religious leader has written, successive generations approach the scriptures of Islam with equal respect, but each new generation interprets the essence of these scriptures in a new way and finds new ideas that had previously gone unnoticed.34

One of the major themes among the reform-conscious Soviet Muslim elites is the reconciliation of Islamic and Soviet identities. Thus the elites place emphasis on sociopolitical integration, not subversion. Muslim values are recast in Soviet terms, and Soviet values are recast in Muslim terms. An illustration of the former is how the concept of *jihad* has been redefined from struggle for the faith against nonbelievers into struggle for social transformation and equality congruent with Soviet aims.35 Similarly, Soviet values are explained and legitimated in religious categories. Soviet Muslim leaders note that Allah prepared Marx, Engels, and Lenin for service on earth and that the October Revolution has put into practice many Qur'anic values, including equality of nations and sexes, freedom of religion, security of honorable work, and ownership of land by those who till it.36 For Soviet Muslim elites, the fact that the leaders of the USSR, as admitted atheists, actively fulfill Islamic religious prescriptions ap-

parently poses no contradiction in their reconstructed views of Islam and the secular state.

In doctrine and social thought, the Muslim elite's reconstitution of Islam takes essentially two forms: historical and scriptural. That is, new definitions of Islam are established through both historical and scriptural references. Historically, Muslim elites refer to a selected set of Islamic theologians and leaders whose ideas and actions are recast—fairly or unfairly—in terms that reinforce contemporary interpretations of Islam.37 They emphasize the works or activities of historical Muslim figures, especially the numerous nineteenth-century Muslim reformers of Tsarist Russia, who promoted the ideas of social progress, national and sexual equality, and other currently dominant social and political values. In this way, the Muslim elites construct a historical Islam that is "progressive" in terms of the contemporary value system. The Tatar religious leader Rizaetdin Fahretdinov (1859–1936), for example, is lauded for his progressive ideas and his ability to combine religious conviction and social responsibility. In effect, Fahretdinov is established as a role model for the Soviet Muslim believer-citizen:

> Religion in no way hampered Rizaetdin Fahretdinov from participating actively in the social and political life of our country. With a feeling of great emotion he used to speak of quite a large number of things of which he dared only dream before the Great October Revolution, like the general educational facilities, the emancipation of our women, the flourishing in all spheres of our science, culture and art, which have nowadays become a reality.38

The Muslim elites also refer to seminal religious scriptures in their efforts to recast Islam as "progressive." Aside from the activities and interpretations of historical theologians, the essence of the Islamic religious doctrine is portrayed in terms that are congruent with contemporary values. Thus in his sermon at Tashkent's main mosque, the head of the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan cites the Qur'an in promoting the notion of labor discipline and productivity and apparently condemning second-economic activity:

> Only those persons receive their blessings who endeavor to master a trade or profession . . . since Allah regards a craftsman as akin to himself, while he condemns all loafers, idlers, and good-for-nothing persons. . . . In no religious dogma does there exist any justification for idleness or accumulation of wealth by easy and doubtful ways or by either theft or beggary.39

The reconstruction of Muslim religious thought therefore operates on two levels. The Soviet Muslim elite is engaged in the reconstruction of a historical Islam and socio-religious doctrine to produce an Islamic identity that is conducive to integration in the dominant social order, yet through this integration in terms of the Islamic religion (and not merely by promoting Soviet values as Soviet values *but as Muslim values*), the Muslim elite asserts the authority and legitimacy of Islam as well.40

The Islamic ritual complex has also undergone adaptation and reinterpretation in the reconstruction promoted by the Muslim elites. Religious rituals continue to play an important role in the life not only of the believing Muslim population, but among the secularized sectors of the population as well. It is often noted that Islamic funeral rites and circumcision are virtually universally observed in traditionally Muslim areas and that other religious rituals and festivals such as the annual fasting during the month of Ramazan and the birth of Muhammad (*mavliud an-nabi*) continue to be widely observed.

Muslim elites have not only physically adapted and changed a number of important rituals by simplifying and shortening them, but they have also engaged in the redefinition of the role and purpose of ritual. For example, observance of the annual fasting during Ramazan has in many instances been shortened, and only nominal fasting during various points during the period is prescribed.41 This and many other changes were ostensibly instituted so as not to interfere with the fulfillment of state-defined economic targets, especially since Ramazan often coincides with the harvest season. Beyond this type of change, religious ceremonies have been reinterpreted to accord with "modern" social values. The ritual washing of feet before prayer is extolled for its hygienic value, and the performance of the prayer (*namaz*) is praised for its contribution to physical health.42 Thus while many Islamic rituals maintained in the USSR appear similar to rituals found in pre-Soviet (or even foreign) Muslim society,

the Muslim elites have infused these rituals with new symbolic meanings. Symbolic forms have remained the same, but their symbolic function has changed.

The promotion of religious ritual as a component of the identities of the various offically recognized "nationalities" in the Soviet Union is one of the most fundamental innovations in the reconstruction of Islamic ritual. The mixing of religious and national elements is a significant element in the maintenance of Islam in the Soviet context.43 Muslim religious elites actively pursue this theme in the redefinition of Islam. For example, they assert that the performance of religious rites expresses not only religious solidarity, but national affiliation and ethnic identity as well.44 For the secularized strata of the population, the connection between religious rituals and national identity is especially important to maintain the continued popularity of these rites. As a result of the mixing of religious and national identities, Soviet scholars point out, many nonreligious people observe religious rituals.45

The assertion that religion is an essential component of national identity is important with respect to the argument that Muslim elites have adapted Islam in the face of changed popular attitudes. The view that Islam is the primary and most comprehensive expression of the population's identity is a common feature of the conventional literature on Soviet Islam.46 In contrast, one of the central features of Soviet development is the physical and ideological construction of explicitly distinct and hierarchically organized nations and nationalities in the USSR.47 The religious establishment's attempts to present ritual and even religion more broadly in terms of national and not just religious identity in effect recognize the new status of nationality, in the Soviet Union. Moreover, this new status can be placed in light not only of the regime's construction of nationality, but also of the evolution of the social consciousness of the Soviet "Muslim" population. The Muslim religious elite's efforts to "nationalize" Islamic ritual, therefore, not only reflect the new Soviet social and political order, but also respond to changes in popular world views.

THE SOVIET MUSLIM ELITE: AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMATION

The Muslim elite's promotion of a reconstructed Islam is neither a conflict-free nor a homogeneous process. An essential element in the elite's rearticulation of Islam is the redefinition of the role of the Muslim leadership in social and religious life. Historically, Islam was a system of communally defined traditions and beliefs; one of its fundamental characteristics was the absence of a hierarchically organized administration or "church." The domain of the Soviet Muslim elite, however, is in fact a hierarchical administrative apparatus.

The Muslim elite in fact asserts its legitimacy and authority through Islam by defining Islam, yet it must also overcome elements that provide competing understandings of religious ideology and practice. Thus the Muslim elite attempts to establish its own legitimacy and authority through the reconstruction of Islam. In the Muslim elite's terms, religious reconstruction is the reestablishment of a true, purified Islam in the best *jadid* tradition.48 The elite defends an Islam that it considers authentic; nonetheless, its behavior also reflects a keen awareness of political circumstances. The less control the elite has over the definition of "Islam," the less social authority and legitmacy it will be able to obtain or maintain among the Soviet authorities as well as the Muslim community.

The Muslim elite strives to establish its socio-religious authority through its own "symbolic strategy" and institutional control over ritual activity. The basic instrument through which it can express its authority is the complex of Muslim institutions: the Muslim press, Muslim educational establishments, and the network of mosques and religious functionaries under its jurisdiction. Through these institutions, the elite strives to promote its own definitive forms of Islamic identity. Traditionally, anyone familiar with ritual discourse could legitimately officiate during religious activities. The Muslim elite, by contrast, is attempting to displace traditional loci of religious expression and place religion clearly within the realm of the mosque and the official religious bureaucracy—that is, under the administrative and ideological control of the Muslim Religious Boards.*

*Here again I should emphasize the importance of considering both material and ideal interests. The Muslim elites promote their own definitions of doctrine and ritual and the significance of the mosque and clergy not just out of power considerations or because only official clerics and registered mosques are legally sanctioned. The Muslim leadership conceives of the extension of reconstructed Islam as a struggle against religious ignorance (*jahiliyya*).

Administrative and religious pronouncements (*fetwa*), sermons, and other statements reproduced in the Soviet literature on Islam or in the journal of the Tashkent Muslim Religious Board, *Muslims of the Soviet East,* attest to the direction of the Muslim administrative elite's efforts to promote its own authority and undermine any alternative authority. The establishment of the Muslim elite's authority proceeds (as noted) through its promotion of a true, authentic Islam purged of historical impurities. In this way, the late mufti of Tashkent has been praised for his seminal efforts and achievements in "uniting all Muslims [and] eradicating all [things] alien to Islam in [his] struggle against heresy, prejudices and superstitions."49 Fundamental to the reconstruction of Islam, therefore, is not only the identification of what Islam *is,* but also what it *is not.* The Muslim administration thus not only opposes various manifestations of "non-Islamic behavior,"50 but it also calls for strict adherence to its instructions on the performance of religious ritual and the articulation of religious precepts.51

The Muslim elite through the Muslim Religious Boards' multiple institutional channels seeks not just to define Islam, but also to define itself as the sole legitimate interpreter of the faith. In defining its administrative network as the sole locus of religious authority, the Muslim elite attempts to consolidate its authority. The importance given to the institutional structures of Islam is especially evident. The religious boards emphasize and promote the mosque as the center of religious life, and some denounce the performance of religious services in the home or pilgrimages to traditional holy sites.52 Connected with this, Muslim elites speak of the "mission and rightful place" of the cleric in society and his tasks in "rooting out" various kinds of heresies and superstitions that are not considered part of Islam but are nonetheless widespread among the population.53

The reconstruction of Islam, then, is not just a matter of theological debate among isolated Muslim elites. It is a strategy to reconcile Islam with changed sociopolitical circumstances. The Soviet Muslim elite, in an essential part of this strategy, seeks to establish its own socio-religious authority. Reinterpretations of Muslim identity are expressed through an organizational apparatus whose role itself has been redefined.

STRATEGIES OF RECONSTRUCTION:
HOMOGENIZATION VS. REGIONALIZATION

While I have thus far concentrated on the general character of religious reconstruction, this does not mean that it is a unitary process throughout the USSR. It is important to distinguish between the forms of Islamic bureaucratic administration and the particular social role these administrations play. The institutional structures of the Muslim Religious Boards are fairly standardized throughout the country. From all available accounts, the model of the regional administration with its numerous departments and the local mosque with executive and other committees appears to be universal.54 Other purely administrative features differ because of specific regional or geographic circumstances. Thus since the Muslim community in Azerbaijan is predominantly Shi'ite, the Transcaucasian Muslim Religious Board combines two positions of religious leadership—a Shi'ite *sheikh ul-Islam* and a Sunni *mufti.* Also, the Tashkent administration has "branch" offices headed by a religious functionary (*qazi*) in each of the Central Asian republics since this administration's jurisdiction extends over five sizable territorial units.55

Notwithstanding these fairly standardized, consistent institutional features, the administrations operate under vastly different circumstances in different regions of the USSR. These include each region's contemporary and historical level of socioeconomic development, cultural legacy, the particular local forms of religious expression, and the nature and characteristics of the regional administration's constituency. Contrast, for example, the conservative seminarian tradition of the Central Asian administration to the modernist heritage of the Ufa administration; compare the fairly urbanized, nationally homogeneous constituency of the Baku religious establishment with the rural, multinational, and strongly Sufi-oriented populations under the North Caucasian jurisdiction.

Interestingly, the Muslim elites themselves realize the significance of regional variations and the potential of these differences for religious life:

[The religious boards] conduct useful work in disseminating among their flocks the teachings of the Qur'an and the sunnah in

conformity with the dogmas of the shariat *which have their own spiritual weight in respective places.*56

Moreover, the Muslim elites realize that the reworking of religious ritual, while facilitating acceptance in one area, may complicate matters in other areas due to specific regional differences. "The fundamentals of Islam," they note, "are not always as simple as they appear to be."57 Soviet scholars of Islam remark on these variations as well. Ashirov points out that quite simply in a large country like the USSR, differences in the interpretation of the Qur'an are bound to exist and that, in addition, the process of Islamic modernization itself is an uneven development dependent on local socioeconomic and historical circumstances.58 Similarly, R. Aslanova describes how the modernization of Shi'ite Islam proceeds significantly more slowly than Sunni Islam.59 The observation that the mixing of national and religious identities and the "liberation" of national identity from religious influences are uneven processes highlights the potential for variation in the forms and substance of religious change in different parts of the USSR.60

Even with the limited information on religious development under the four Muslim Religious Boards, many differences are evident in religious orientations and practices, especially with respect to the status of women in religious life.61 It is analytically useful to identify two distinct trends in the development of Islamic reconstruction led by the regional Muslim elites: homogenization and regionalization. While these trends are in practice not necessarily mutually exclusive, there is a fundamental tension between them. Each of these trends can be analyzed in the context of each regional Muslim Religious Board's efforts to establish and consolidate its own socio-religious authority within its respective jurisdiction.

The process of homogenization began with the imposition of standardized institutional structures on the various Islamic traditions in the USSR.62 Indeed while the movement toward uniform interpretation of religious ritual and ideology is conditioned by the cultural environments of particular Muslim elites, the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, essentially in the hands of the Uzbek Muslim elite, is nevertheless the driving force for the homogenization of Islam in the USSR.63

In its promotion of a unitary definition of Islam, the Uzbek Muslim elite has at its disposal a number of institutional mechanisms through which it can assert its power and authority. Although they overlap, one can distinguish three channels: the educational establishments, the religious instructions (fetwa), and the press. The most important and evident is Uzbek control of the only two Muslim educational facilities in the country: the medresas of Bukhara and Tashkent. Aside from the restricted alternative of theological education abroad, the two Uzbek seminaries are the only training grounds for aspiring clerics, who come from throughout the country to attend these institutions.* The curriculum of these institutions is strictly controlled and is itself an important means through which the Uzbek elite promotes its own understanding of ijtihad. This is achieved through the study of theological texts that conform (or are interpreted to conform) to a particular definition of Islam in its spiritual and practical forms.

Two other items stand out. One is that along with instruction in English, Russian, and Arabic, Uzbek language and literature are subjects of study at the medresas. From descriptions of life at the seminaries (and for that matter, interadministration affairs), it is not clear which is the language (or languages) of instruction or communication. It appears, however, that just as Russian has a "special" role as the language of inter-nationality communication and "friendship" among Soviet peoples, Uzbek—the "language of science and culture"64—may play a similar role in the USSR's Muslim administrations. More significant than language is the content of the education at these seminaries. In this respect, the inclusion of the fetwa promulgated by the Tashkent administration into the curriculum is important. Aspiring religious functionaries from throughout the USSR are instructed in the authoritative religious prescriptions of the Central Asian religious board. These pronouncements on the definition of correct religious life, Islamic ritual, and the role and status of Islam in contemporary society are meant to be assimilated by the people who will direct religious institutions in their respective regions.65

*After completion of studies at the Uzbek medresas, a select number of Soviet clerics are sent for supplemental religious education outside the USSR to the univesrities of al-Azhar (Egypt), Qarawyin (Morocco), al-baydha (Libya), and Damascus (Syria). It is interesting to note that at least al-Azha and Qarawyin promote the theological importance of ijtihad.

The role of the Tashkent religious board's fetwa outside of the medresas is a separate channel of institutional authority. Soviet Muslim leaders stress the importance of the fetwa in establishing officially sanctioned religious authority and in implementing elite instructions on religious practices and beliefs.66 Yet it is not clear what the relation of the Tashkent mufti's fetwa is to those of other administrations. It is instructive to note the Tashkent administration's assistance in the religious life of the North Caucasus and particularly the use of the Tashkent fetwa in strengthening the position of the North Caucasian religious board.67

Related to the use of the fetwa is the convening of theological and other conferences in Tashkent, for both the Central Asian administration specifically (at which in any case representatives from other administrations often attend) and the broader audience of all Soviet Muslim elites. Aslanova notes that these conferences, while not always successful in establishing the Tashkent administration's definitive authority, nonetheless are intended to unify and modernize Soviet Islam along specific lines.68 Apart from these conferences, foreign religious delegations invariably spend most of their time in Uzbekistan with Uzbek religious leaders, and Soviet religious delegations that travel abroad are composed almost always of Uzbek elites.69

Finally, the Uzbek Muslim elite has a virtual monopoly on the publication of religious materials in the country. This does not refer solely to the publication of the Tashkent administration's quarterly journal (which in any case is of dubious accessibility). The Tashkent Muslim Religious Board publishes editions of the Qur'an and also the works of authoritative Muslim theologians (including of course the writings and fetwa of the Tashkent mufti). The significance of these publications is not slighted by the Central Asian administration. One of its representatives noted the following on the publication of the works of an (approved) Islamic theologian:

> The edition of *Sahih* of al-Bukhari marks the final victory of Islam over superstition and obscurantism. . . . This book will satisfy all the spiritual needs of Muslims. We are now well armed to defend ourselves against the temptations of false theologians and false prophets. This edition is a divine gift which will help our advance along the right path.70

Thus the Uzbek elites champion such publications as important steps in the reconstruction of a true Islam and in the struggle against nonconformist heretical ideas and practices. Significantly, it is the Uzbek elite that decides which interpreters of the faith are to be published, as well as how these works are to be understood.

In contrast to the homogenizing trend, one can identify a move toward local differentiation of Islamic identity in what I have referred to as regionalization. The conflict between these two trends can be illustrated by a quotation attributed to the mufti of the North Caucasian Muslim Religious Board:

> I think that [Tashkent mufti] Zia ud-din Babakhanov's fetwa do not correspond to Islam. . . . Close ties between the two muftiats were only established [at the Tashkent Muslim Congress in 1970].71

The regionalization of Islam involves an attempt by regional religious elites to formulate an effective strategy in response to the local cultural traditions of their respective regions. Considering the markedly different circumstances in which the regional Muslim elites operate, the reworking of locally oriented strategies necessarily implies a differentiation of Islamic identity and practice. As a trend in Islamic reconstruction, regionalization can be demonstrated through a comparison of the North Caucasian and Transcaucasian religious boards.

The North Caucasus is highly heterogeneous in its ethnic composition and linguistic variety.* Historically the primary expression of religiosity in the region is Sufism. The "mosque tendency," characterized by its seminarian tradition and orthodox clergy, is relatively weak. Originating from the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya Sufi lineages, the widespread network of Sufi orders links the North Caucasus's disparate ethnic, linguistic, clan, and village communities. Sufism is especially important in the region since most mosques in the area were destroyed during the deportation of Chechens and Ingushes in World War II.72 In these circumstances, the North Cau-

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*The jurisdiction of the North Caucasian Muslim Religious Board includes the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), the Dagestan ASSR, the Karbadin-Balkar ASSR, the North Ossetian ASSR, the Adygei Autonomous Region (AR), and the Karachai-Cherkess AR. In the USSR, these administrative divisions are ethnically based territorial units. Dagestan alone has over thirty nationalities and seven major literary languages.

casian religious board most clearly fits the description of an official Muslim elite isolated from the masses. The Makhachkala board's accommodation to the strong Sufi orders would entail the contamination of its ideological and organizational integrity. For the Makhachkala elite to promote its own authority in the region, it must distinguish itself from the too viable alternative authority to its own definition of Islam—the Sufi movements.73

The North Caucasian religious board's definition of Islamic identity and practice is thus orthodox and exclusionary. The practical result of this identification with a pristine Islam is minimal or even no accommodation to local traditions. The North Caucasian board emphasizes mosque worship and the religious authority and primacy of the official cleric. Pilgrimages to local shrines (the *mazar*, or saint's tomb) are discouraged, and the believing population is encouraged to participate in religious rituals performed by official clerics in the state-registered mosques.74 The board is cautious not to overtly attack the popular Sufi orders, yet a number of its policies reflect its anti-Sufi orientation. Its discouraging of pilgrimages to the mazar—traditional meeting places of Sufis—is a case in point. The North Caucasian clergy has issued a fetwa prohibiting women from leading religious associations. This can be understood as a measure aimed against the numerous Sufi orders that are led by women and whose membership is entirely female.75

In response to the cultural particularities of its jurisdiction, the North Caucasian elite has formulated a strategy which is congruent with the conservative, orthodox interpretation of Islam promoted by the Central Asian Muslim clergy. Numerous North Caucasian clerics are trained in the orthodox seminaries of Central Asia, and the Tashkent-based religious board provides logistical and moral support to the Makhachkala administration.76 In short, the North Caucasian administration has adopted the dogmatic variant of Islamic identity articulated by the Tashkent Muslim establishment.

In contrast to the North Caucasian administration, the Transcaucasian Muslim elite operates under vastly different conditions. Aside from its jurisdiction over Muslims in Armenia and Georgia (where in any case most Muslims are ethnic Azerbaijanis), the Baku religious board is staffed by Azerbaijanis and serves an Azerbaijani community. The Baku administration can thus be characterized as an Azerbaijani national institution. In Azerbaijan the

overlapping of religious and national customs and identities is more common and likely since "Muslim" is coterminous with "Azerbaijani."* The Baku administration is also heir to a religious administration established during the Tsarist period and thus may have some historical legitimacy for the population.77 Probably more important, however, is that Azerbaijan's Muslim community is predominantly Shi'ite. In contrast to Sunni Islam, formal religious hierarchy is not foreign to the historical development of Shi'ite Islam. Thus the operation of official institutions regulating religious life can be seen as part of Azerbaijan's Shi'ite heritage.78

The Muslim Religious Board in Baku thus operates in a culturally much more intelligible environment than the board of the North Caucasus. Since in this sense it enjoys a greater degree of legitimacy in popular eyes, it can more easily accommodate particular popular traditions by appropriating them as its own legitimate religious traditions. For example, while visitations to saints' tombs or other holy sites have been criticized as heretical by the Tashkent and North Caucasian establishments, the Baku Muslim elite has encouraged such visitations by organizing pilgrimages under its auspices to holy sites in Azerbaijan.79 In general, the intensity of Islamic reconstruction is much less pronounced in the Azerbaijani administration.80 The Baku elite's appropriation of popular Azerbaijani traditions serves its quest to consolidate its socio-religious authority and legitimacy, whereas the Makhachkala administration must oppose and distinguish itself from widespread popular customs in order to assert its authority.

In general, then, regional differences in the extent of homogenization reflect differences in the strategy adopted for consolidating the regional Muslim elite's authority through the religious boards. Taking into account the historical and sociocultural variations and regional particularities of Islam in the USSR, the boards have to adopt different strategies of religious reconstruction to both maintain their organizational and ideological integrity and defend and extend their socioreligious authority. While the strategies of Islamic reconstruction take different forms in response to different circumstances, this process is moderated by the centripetal, homogenizing

*In contrast, a "Muslim" in the North Caucasus can be a Chechen, Ingush, Avar, etc.

tendency promoted by the Uzbek Muslim elite in the Central Asian Muslim Religious Board.

CONCLUSION

Conventional Western studies of Islam in the USSR consistently maintain the fundamental incompatibility of Islam and communism. They assert that Islam and Soviet socialism are mutually exclusive phenomena—if not practically, at least ideologically.81 Accordingly, observers conclude that either Soviet Islam has become isolated from society through its cooperation with the regime, or that Islam by its mere existence poses a threat to the Soviet state. Interestingly, conventional Soviet and Western studies of Islam tend toward a similar argument that Soviet Islam represents past tradition and a customary way of life; its continued existence in the USSR is explained either as an "objectively baseless" collection of feudal-type remnants or the proud persistence of an entire society and culture despite Soviet efforts to destroy it.

Here I have examined the problem of Islam in the USSR in another way. Rather than assume that Islam is simply a vestigial phenomenon, I have argued that Islam is actively reproduced in Soviet society and institutionally maintained through the Muslim Religious Boards. Islam is not simply an unchanged tradition; rather, through the intervention of the Muslim clerical elites, it represents a novel social identity—a reconstructed Islam.

The reconstruction of Islam not only reflects transformations in the material and ideological conditions of society and in popular self-identification, but it also constitutes a novel understanding of society and social consciousness. This reformulation of religious identity is not a peculiarly Soviet development, but represents a common response to the confrontation of Muslim society with European modernity. Although religious change in Islam is a universal process, in the USSR the specific forms of Islamic reconstruction reflect the conditions of Soviet society and particular cultural and historical legacy of the country's diverse Islamic heritage. Soviet Muslim elites posit new definitions not only of Islam, but also of So-

viet socialism, in which the two are apparently reconciled. Through religious reconstruction, the Soviet Muslim clergy seek to integrate themselves and their communities into the hegemonic Soviet order while simultaneously asserting and reasserting their own socio-religious legitimacy.

This process, however, is not conflict-free. The Muslim elites face not only obstacles from the regime, which is aware of the role religious innovation plays in the revitalization of Islam, but also from the population, where the Muslim elites must overcome popular alternatives to their reconstructed forms of religious identity. Finally, religious reconstruction is not a unitary process rather it assumes different forms in response to divergent cultural environments of the several traditionally Muslim regions in the USSR. In short, official Islam in the Soviet Union is not a stagnant, isolated bureaucracy but a dynamic social force responsive to regional variation and local circumstances.

I have emphasized the integrative qualities of Islamic reconstruction while only briefly noting the points of tension and conflict. Similarly, I have concentrated on elite motivations and behavior more in terms of their ideal interests than in their material, pragmatic concerns. This approach is perhaps partially in response to the contrary, dominant trend in the Western study of Soviet Islam. Yet I should qualify my argument further. To date, the religious boards have fairly effectively demarcated a path to integrate their constituencies on two levels—the Muslim and the Soviet. Yet it remains to be seen to what extent the Muslim elite's reconstructed Islam will successfully establish an integrative and complementary identity or become an alternative, subversive source of identity. As I have argued, religious reconstruction is not something that "begins" with traditional religion and "ends" with the establishment of modern religion. Islamic reconstruction is an ongoing response to social change—hence its development is contingent on both sociopolitical conditions and effective clerical strategies. Like the New Soviet Man, the New Soviet Muslim is still being built.

NOTES

1. Some of the recent literature includes John L. Esposito, ed., *Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980); Daniel Pipes, *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); James P. Piscatori, ed., *Islam in the Political Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). (The article by Fouad Ajami, in all fairness, does not fit well into the Piscatori volume's overall perspective.)

2. AIexandre Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism in Soviet Islam," in *Religion and Modernization in the Soviet Union*, ed. Dennis J. Dunn (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), p. 258. In his assumption of a transhistorical "Moslem unity," Bennigsen also refers to the "Moslem *millet*" of Tsarist Russia, thus drawing a false analogy between a specific Ottoman institution, the millet system (along with all its sociohistorical implications), and the social structure of the Muslim regions under Tsarist Russian dominion (Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Les Musulmans oubliés: L'Islam en U.R.S.S. aujourd'hui* [Paris: Maspero, 1981], pp. 29, 35, as well as in other works by the same authors).

3. For a clear example of this, see M. V. Vagabov, *Islam i voprosy ateisticheskogo vospitaniia* [Islam and problems of atheist education], 2d ed. (Moscow: Vysshaia Shkola, 1982), pp. 109–18.

4. For an exposition of this argument, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967). Mary Douglas and Peter Berger, who often disagree on other issues, also view religion as a cultural system that is socially constructed. For an overview of their contributions to the sociology of religion, see the relevant chapters of *Cultural Analysis* (London: RKP, 1984).

5. For a concise overview of the administrations' operations, see Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam in the Soviet Union," *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, 3 (Autumn 1979).

6. Timur Kocaoglu, "Islam in the Soviet Union: Atheistic Propaganda and 'Unofficial' Religious Activities," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5, 1 (January 1984): 147.

7. *Ibid.*

8. See in particular: Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Muslim Religious Conservatism and Dissent in the USSR," *Religion in Communist Lands* 6, 3 (Autumn 1978): 154; Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and the World of Islam," *Problems of Communism,* March–April 1980: 42–43; Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism" p. 253; James Critchlow, "Islam and Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia," in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. Pedro Ramet (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press Policy Studies, 1984); and David Nissman,

"Iran and Soviet Islam: The Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan SSRs," *Central Asian Survey* 2, 4 (December 1983): 58.

9. This view is expressed quite bluntly in Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims," p. 46.

10. Clandestine Sufi orders are among such associations whose activities are not officially condoned and evaluated as more threatening (Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam," pp. 153, 157).

11. Marie Broxup, "Recent Developments in Soviet Islam," *Religion in Communist Lands* 11, 1 (Spring 1983).

12. The significance of such transformation and its divesting of traditional social institutions of their political implications is underscored by Ken Jowitt in his conception of the role of family and village in collectivized Leninist systems. See *The Leninist Response to National Dependency* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies 1978), pp. 63–73. As noted below, Soviet authors explain the development of pro-state orientations among the Muslim clergy in terms of the successful construction of socialism and the destruction of the institutional and social basis of anti-Soviet and antistate activity (A. Akhmedov, *Sotsial'naia doktrina islama* [Moscow: Politizdat, 1982], p. 120).

13. See references in note 8, especially Nissman.

14. All major Soviet studies of Islam in the USSR discuss religious modernization. For some of the best examples, see Nugman Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia islama v SSSR* [The evolution of Islam in the USSR] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973); T. S. Saidbaev, *Islam i obshchestvo* [Islam and society], 2d ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1984); and *Islam v SSSR* [Islam in the USSR] (Moscow: Mysl', 1983), esp. ch. 8.

15. Vagabov, p. 122.

16. G. Khälilov, "Azärbaïjanda shäriät galyglarynyn müasir väziïätinä dair" [On the contemporary situation of shariat vestiges in Azerbaijan], *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 3 (1971): 83.

17. This account was based primarily on *Islam v SSSR,* pp. 105–6; Vagabov, pp. 103–26; Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia,* chs. 1 and 4; and Khälilov.

18. This approach is especially apparent in Vagabov's discussion of the reasons for the maintenance of religious vestiges. According to him, residual Islam is directly explainable in its scope and depth with reference to variations in the material conditions of the traditionally Muslim regions of the USSR (see pp. 109–18). An exception to the crudely materialist theory of Soviet Islam is Saidbaev.

19. Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, "Islam in the Soviet Union: Attempts at Modernization," *Religion in Communist Lands* 2, 4–5 (July–October 1974): 19.

20. Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism," p. 251.

21. *Ibid.,* p. 259.

22. Islamic reconstruction thus reflects not simply the *material* but also the *ideal* interests of the Soviet Muslim elite. See Ken Jowitt's elaboration of Weber's distinction between ideal and material interests in "Scientific Socialist Regimes in Africa: Political Differentiation, Avoidance and Unawareness," in *Socialism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Assessment,* ed. Carl G. Rosberg and Thomas M. Callaghy (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1979), pp. 148–49.

23. In this sense, I agree with Michael Taussig that novel religious concepts are not simply vestiges of traditional superstitions. He overstates his case, however, by qualifying these reconstructions as "precise formulations" and "systematic critiques" of the social order. Moreover, he tries too hard to emphasize that these religious innovations represent articulate rejections of the incipient capitalist mode of production, whereas clearly in the case of Soviet Islam, the underlying motive of reconstruction is accommodation, not opposition. See his "The Genesis of Capitalism amongst a South American Peasantry: Devil's Labor and the Baptism of Money," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19 (April 1977), especially the conclusion.

24. Madzhidov, "Modernistskie tendentsii v islame v usloviiakh sotsializma" [Modernist tendencies in Islam in the conditions of socialism], *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma* 31 (1983): 223–24.

25. *Ibid.,* p. 225.

26. Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: RKP, 1974), p. 148. My use of the constitution/reflection dialectic follows from the discussion of culture and cultural production in Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 11–20ff.

27. Many Western observers view Islam as centrifugal precisely because they define Islamic and Soviet identities to be incongruous and view these identities in reified terms. It thus follows that a reassertion of Islam is *logically* anti-Soviet in nature. For a concise exposition of this perspective, see Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).

28. This distinction is put forth by Abner Cohen in *Two-Dimensional Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 3–4, 26–30.

29. Steven Lukes, "Political Ritual and Social Integration," *Sociology* 9, 2: 302.

30. *Ibid.,* p. 305.

31. For examples of the Muslim elite's positions along this line, see *Islam v SSSR,* pp. 108–14; and Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia,* esp. ch. 2.

32. Similarly, Turner (pp. 137–50) points out that Islamic reform establishes a religious identity that is congruent with sociopolitical change in modern societies.

33. For an overview in English, see Carrère-d'Encausse.

34. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 (1984): 11. The Soviet Muslim elite's reassertion of the religious authority of these seminal writings is a feature common to the

scripturalist or reformist movement in other Muslim societies. The recourse to religious scriptures and Islamic law, moreover, reflects Islam's rational quality and compatibility with the modern age. See Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 65ff., and Turner, pp. 146–47.

35. Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, pp. 11–17. For an analysis of the variant uses of jihad in different sociopolitical contexts, see Hannah R. Rahman, "The Concept of Jihad in Egypt: A Study of *Majallat al-Azhar* (1936–1982)," in *Islam, Nationalism and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan*, ed. G. R. Warburg and U. M. Kupferschmidt (New York: Praeger, 1983).

36. Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, pp. 39–42.

37. In order to justify the doctrine of ijtihad, or rather to establish it as a fundamental direction in Islam, the Muslim elites cite historical Muslim leaders such as Abu Hanifa (767–800) and Shihabeddin Marjani (1818–99) to portray the legitimacy of this doctrine. For examples, see Ashirov, *Evoliulsiia*, as well as relevant articles from the journal *Muslims of the Soviet East*.

38. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1984): 12. (Here and below, I have edited the prose in all selections from the English-language edition of this journal.)

39. *Ibid.* 4 (1983): 3.

40. Muslims can thus participate in revolutionary transformations and maintain their Muslim identity. This perspective permeates pronouncements of official Soviet clerics: "During the past 60 years, the previously backward peoples of the Soviet East have indeed attained historic success in economic and cultural construction and have shown the entire world that *Muslims, too, can attain the heights of progress*" (*Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 [1977]: 1, as quoted in Akhmedov, pp. 124–25; emphasis added).

41. Khälilov, pp. 85–86.

42. These and other examples abound in Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, ch.5.

43. This issue is discussed extensively in Nugman Ashirov, *Islam i natsii* [Islam and nations] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1975). For a shorter but valuable statement, see A. M. Shükürov and S. Ä. Mähärrämov, "Dini vä milli aïry-sechkilik galyglarynyn älagäsinä dair" [On the connection of the vestiges of religious and national prejudice], *Azärbaïjan SSR Elmlär Akademiïasy, Khäbärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 2 (1980).

44. Islam v SSSR, pp. 30, 39; Shükürov and Mähärrämov, pp. 125–26ff.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

46. For example, with reference to the Uigurs, one author posits a contradiction between religious and national identity and notes a "more powerful attachment to a supra-national grouping, that of the community of Muslims" (Jon Soper, "Unofficial Islam: A Muslim Minority in the USSR," *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, 4 [Winter 1979]: 229). The uncritical and ahistorical assumption of a fixed, all-encompassing Islamic identity is common not only in the

conventional literature on Islam in the USSR, but also in studies of Soviet nationality policy.

47. In some respects, this accords with Gregory Massel's notion of "tactical nation-states" in Soviet developmental strategy. See *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). For a shorter exposition of this perspective, see his "Modernization and National Policy in Soviet Central Asia: Problems and Prospects," in *The Dynamics of Soviet Politics,* ed. Paul Cocks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

48. Jadid refers to the Islamic reform movement in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Tsarist Russia that originated in Muslim efforts for educational reform (hence *usul-i jadid,* or "new method" schools). For useful short biographies of the major reformers, see Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 191–211. Most studies of this movement are inadequate, but among the better examples are Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, *Réforme et révolution chez les Musulmans de I'Empire russe, Bukhara 1867–1924* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966), Cahiers de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, No. 141; and Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960). Purification of historically "corrupted" religion and the reassertion of an "authentic" Islam in opposition to popular expressions of religion are common elements in movements for Islamic reconstruction throughout the Muslim world. In part, it is this "corruption" of Islam that serves as rationale for the reconstruction (in religious language, purification) of religion. See Geertz, pp. 56–89; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam,* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 193–234; and Turner, pp. 144–50.

49. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1984): 17.

50. *Ibid.* 1 (1983): 1–2.

51. *Ibid.* 3 (1983): 7–8.

52. *Ibid.* 3 (1983): 7–8, and 4 (1983): 8.

53. *Ibid.* 3 (1982): 17.

54. See, for example, A. Vakhabov, *Muslims in the USSR* (Moscow: Novosti, 1980), pp. 23–33.

55. Vakhabov, pp. 25–26. In this respect, it is not clear if the Transcaucasian administration similarly has representative offices for the Muslim minorities of Georgia and Armenia under its jurisdiction.

56. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 2 (1982): 7; emphasis added.

57. *Ibid.* 2 (1983): 10.

58. Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, introduction.

59. R. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri" [The character of modernism in Shi'ism], *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 4 (1979): 41.

60. Islam v SSSR, p. 49.

61. For many instances of these differences, see Saidbaev.

62. The role of official, "orthodox" religious institutions in the homogenization of Islamic worship is a theme of M. Demidov's study of Islam in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Turkmenistan, *Sufizm v Turkmenii: Evoliutsiia i perezhitki* [Sufism in Turkmenistan: Evolution and vestiges] (Ashkhabad: Ylym, 1978).

63. Others have also noted the "hegemonic" or "imperialist" position of the Uzbeks (Bennigsen and Broxup, pp. 139–40).

64. Apparently the Uzbek language is so described in the journal of the Tashkent administration. The reference comes from Vagabov, p. 126, and Madzhidov, p. 236.

65. This is not a simple achievement. Many Soviet authors point out regional variations in religious expression and note the conflicts that arise from these variations. For example, the Leningrad mosque's newly appointed religious leader, who was educated in Central Asia, was removed from his position by his flock after he prohibited the sale of tickets to a music concert and exhorted his parishioners not to watch television. Also, while the birth of Muhammad is widely celebrated in private homes by clerics in Tatarstan, the Central Asian religious board has restricted the observance of this ritual to mosques (Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, pp. 10–22).

66. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 (1984) 7–8.

67. *Ibid.* 2 (1983): 6.

68. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri," p. 42.

69. Bennigsen and Broxup, pp. 104–7.

70. As cited in Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam," p. 155.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

72. For discussion of North Caucasus Islam, see A. Avksent'ev, *Islam na severnom Kavkaze* [Islam in the North Caucasus], 2d ed. (Stavropol', 1984); *Kharakter religioznosti i problemy ateisticheskogo vospitaniia* [The character of religiosity and problems of atheistic education] (Groznyi, 1979); M. Z. Magomedov, "Iz istorii resheniia natsional'nogo i religioznogo voprosov na severnom Kavkaze" [From the history of the revolution of the national and religious questions in the North Caucasus], *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma* 14 (1973). On this last point, see especially Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Islam parallèlle en Union Soviétique," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 21, 1 (January–March 1980): 53–55; Marie Broxup, "Islam and Atheism in the North Caucasus," *Religion in Communist Lands* 9, 1–2 (Spring 1981): 40–41.

73. Avksent'ev stresses that the reconstructionist (modernist) tendency in the North Caucasus is evident solely in the official clergy of the religious board and that this tendency is weakly reflected in the practicing religious communities. In this region, he stresses, "tradition prevails over modernism" (pp. 251–52).

74. This was underlined in a recent meeting with parishioners in Buinaksk: "Proper accomplishment of namazes in a mosque is valued by Allah much more than namazes performed in homes" (*Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 [1983]: 8).

75. Saidbaev, p. 240.

76. Under the rubric "Theologians Exchange Experience," a recent article in *Muslims of the Soviet East* (4 [1983]) provides numerous examples of such assistance.

77. A religious administration was first established in Baku in 1872 and operated until February 1917 (G. Mustafaïev, "Charizm vä Islam [Azärbaïjan, XX äsrin ävvälläri]" [Tsarism and Islam in early twentieth-century Azerbaijan], *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 4 (1973): 18–19.

78. The creation of official religious institutions under the Safavid dynasty can be understood as a character-defining event for the later development of Shi'ite Islam, especially for Azerbaijani Islam. Under the Savafids, the official clergy was in close alliance but subordinate to the state. This clergy-state coalition began to disintegrate under the Qajar dynasty, but northern Azerbaijan (today's Soviet Azerbaijan) was already annexed to the Russian empire in the early stages of Qajar rule. See Hamid Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran, 1785–1906* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 5–40. For a review of the institutional development of Shi'ite Islam with particular reference to Azerbaijan, see R. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä räsmi vä geïri-räsmi ruhaniliïin fäaliïätinin kharakteri" [The character and activity of the official and nonofficial clergy in Shi'ism], in *Islam tarikhdä vä müasir dövrdä (Elmi äsärlärin tematik mäjmuäsi)* (Baku: Azärbaïjan Dövlät Universitetinin Näshri, 1981).

79. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri," p. 44. In fact, Aslanova ("Shiälikdä räsmi vä geïri-räsmi," p. 54) includes an official "holy site" along with Azerbaijan's officially registered ten Shi'ite, two Sunni, and five mixed mosques.

80. The point is confirmed in Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri." Precise information on the training of the Azerbaijani clergy is not available, but the fact that the sheikh ul-Islam of the Transcaucasian religious board was educated in Mashad suggests a more localized, non-Central Asian orientation toward Islamic reconstruction.

81. Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (New York: Newsweek Books, 1979), pp. 263–64.

THE RESTRUCTURING OF SOVIET ISLAM IN THE GORBACHEV ERA: INTERETHNIC FRAGMENTATION AND THEMATIC CONTINUITY

A central tenet of Western study of the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s was that the country's Muslim population posed a serious threat to social and political stability.1 The arguments presented were at once complex and simple. Historical animosities between Russian colonizers and the Muslim colonized were solidified, in this mainstream perspective, by an inevitable conflict between Russian communism and religion. Along more contemporary lines, the Soviet Union was clearly facing an imminent economic and political crisis, and a perceived demographic boom among Soviet Muslims appeared to portend increasing demands in conditions of increasing scarcity. With the rise of Muslim fundamentalism in some countries, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Islamic revolution in Iran, Western fear of Islam and Muslims in general served to exacerbate predictions of an Islamic-based instability in the Soviet Union.

It has become banal—albeit not inaccurate—to note that the Soviet Union is in crisis. The state is rapidly disintegrating and the country is wracked by deep economic crisis, the aftermath of a failed coup, republics that have effectively established their independence, and the persistence of several interethnic civil wars. Given all this, it may be fair to ask: Where is the Islamic threat to the Soviet state so commonly talked about in recent years?

One of the assumptions of mainstream Western study of Soviet Islam was a natural division between Islam and the Soviet state. This view, combined with presumptions about the natural unity of all Muslims, led to the argument that Soviet authorities would strive to inhibit the presumed unity of Islam. This policy, the argument went, was made most manifest in the establishment of the Muslim Religious Boards (*dukhovnoe upravlenie*). Given the collapse of the Soviet state, the assumptions of this argument would have led us to expect

a weakening of Soviet policies of divide and rule and the imminent reversion of Islam to its "natural" state of religious solidarity and unity. In fact, there was virtually no impulse toward unity among Muslims in the Soviet Union. Rather, the tendency was toward increasing fragmentation along ethnic, sectarian, and institutional lines. The discrepancies between the conventional perspective and my view revolve around two basic problems, the first theoretical and the second methodological. Let me begin with the theoretical.

Depending on taste and inclination, observers of politics, from the social scientist to the journalist, regularly focus on a wide range of subjects such as institutions, social forces, history, and personalities. In the study of Islam, however (and especially Islam in the Soviet Union), political analysis frequently moves into the realm of the metaphysical. Islam is considered monolithic and unchanging and disconnected from social forces, history, institutions, and personalities; it is thus transformed into a concretized thing—a thinking and acting subject. Only in this perspective can "Islam" be seen as a non-human kind of powerful force, a threat to stability that must either be tamed (the moderate view) or eliminated (the extreme view) lest it overwhelm everything that is non-Islam.

I have conducted research among Muslims throughout the Soviet Union—from Tbilisi to Irkutsk, from Baku to Bukhara. I have spoken with many people and seen many things, but I have yet to find Islam. I have never interviewed Islam. That is because Islam does not exist. Muslims, however, do exist. Like other humans, Muslims live in specifiable socioeconomic, political, historical, and cultural contexts. And they have interests and attitudes based in part on these contexts and their understanding of Islam. In their "natural" state, then, Muslims are as diverse as the contexts in which they live and the Islams that they imagine.

My opposition to an analysis that assumes a fixed and monolithic Islam implies a certain kind of methodological approach. This paper is not about some abstraction we call Islam. Rather, it is about changes within Soviet Muslim religious institutions—particularly the Muslim Religious Boards and the networks of religious organizations that operate under their auspices. Islam has no interests, but Muslim clerics do. Islam has no opinions, but the editors of Islamic magazines do. By focusing on the activity of these real people working in real institutions, I hope to highlight both the transformations

taking place among Soviet Muslims and my critique of what may be described as a metaphysics of Islam.

One of the most striking consequences of the restructuring (perestroika) of the Soviet Union is the internally generated restructuring of the country's Islamic institutions. This administrative restructuring has proceeded largely according to ethnic and sectarian differences within the Muslim community. My focus on the Muslim Religious Boards and their affiliated organizations is justifiable on a number of grounds. Since World War II they have had an institutional monopoly on Islamic thought and practice. Moreover, even though in the Gorbachev era they were increasingly confronting challenges from newly organized, independent Muslim movements and organizations, they remained powerful actors in the Muslim community. Indeed their financial and human resources, not to mention their organizational strength and coherence, remained unrivaled. The CPSU's time may have passed, but the Muslim Religious Boards were vital participants in the politics of Islam throughout Gorbachev's tenure.

Change in relations between Islam and the state began, ironically, with the 1988 celebrations of 1,000 years of Christianity in Russia. Thereafter a general relaxation of institutional and political restrictions on religious activity became evident, and Soviet traditions of antireligious polemics gave way to more positive evaluations of the role of religion in Soviet society. In effect, journalists and politicians increasingly adopted traditional clerical arguments about the beneficial role of religion in society, thus transforming the clergy's sometime oppositional discourse into a tenet of mainstream political thought.

Both institutionally and ideologically, such changes in predominant attitudes toward religion had a profound impact on the scope and nature of Muslim religious life throughout the country. The general trend toward liberalization had both quantitative and qualitative consequences for Soviet Islam. Many of the changes represented an expansion—sometimes dramatic—of institutions and practices that characterized religious life during the period of *zastoi* (stagnation) under Brezhnev. In other cases, the activity of the Muslim Religious Boards underwent an important restructuring with profound implications for the future of the Muslim community.

Among the quantitative changes, perhaps the most visible was the campaign, initiated after 1988, to open new mosques throughout

the country. Various bureaucratic and political obstacles that had traditionally impeded the operation of mosques—and indeed frequently had led to their illegal closure—were cleared away, allowing for a rapid increase in the building of new houses of worship and the restoration to religious communities of older mosques.2

The sudden expansion in the number of mosques created a personnel crisis in the Muslim community. More mosques meant a greater need for religious officials, especially parish imams. To meet these needs, two paths were followed by the leadership of the Muslim Boards. In numerous cases, unregistered clerics who performed religious services on an informal (and nonlegal) basis were certified by the boards and incorporated into the official structure of the organized Muslim community. For the long-term needs of the community, however, new centers for religious education were set up throughout the country. In the postwar Soviet Union, only two religious schools operated for the training of clerics: the Mir-Arab *medresa* in Bukhara (a middle school in Soviet educational terms) and the al-Bukhari Islamic Institute in Tashkent (an establishment with the status of higher education). Under Gorbachev, Islamic middle and higher schools were opened in Ufa (Bashkiria), Baku (Azerbaijan), and Makhachkala (the capital of Dagestan). In Central Asia, schools were opened in Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), and Tashauz (Turkmenistan). The educational program of these establishments varied from two to five years, and like their older counterparts, they were not designed to provide religious education for the general population. Rather, they provided solely for the education and training of young men who planned to enter religious service as mosque-based officials or administrators in one of the Muslim Religious Boards.

During the period of stagnation, the Muslim Religious Boards had a limited but regular program of publications. These included the printing of annual Muslim calendars and various religious books, including editions of the Qur'an and authoritative collections of prophetic traditions. The Central Asian Muslim Board also published a quarterly journal, *Muslims of the Soviet East,* which was circulated only among clerics and readers abroad.

In the Gorbachev era these publishing activities were expanded. In addition to more book titles with higher press runs, the Muslim Board for Central Asia, for example, initiated publication of

Muslims of the Soviet East in Uzbek in both the Arabic and the more widely accessible modified Cyrillic script. Once difficult to obtain, the journal's press run grew to 50,000 and was distributed via the official state press distributor in towns and cities throughout Uzbekistan and other parts of Central Asia.

Even more significant was the creation of a mass-circulation Muslim press. In 1990 *Islam Nuri* (Light of Islam), a biweekly newspaper edited by the Central Asian Muslim Board, became the first Muslim newspaper to be published in the Soviet Union since the 1920s. In 1991 another biweekly newspaper, *Islam*, joined the ranks of the Soviet Muslim press as the organ of the Muslim Religious Board for Transcaucasia.

Apart from an extension of the traditional activities of the Muslim Religious Boards, a number of innovations had significant implications not just for the boards' activities, but also for the Muslim community as a whole. Among the most far-reaching was the reestablishment of *waqf,* or religious endowments, which had been nationalized by the Soviet government in the 1920s. Religious endowments were set up both under the direct supervision of the Muslim Boards and in association with mosques that operated under board supervision.

In Central Asia and parts of Azerbaijan, the waqf typically consisted of plots of land used for farming and livestock herding. The Transcaucasian and Central Asian Muslim Boards came to control at least one hundred hectares of land each. In Uzbekistan it became regular practice in the Gorbachev era to allocate two or three hectares of land in connection with the assignment of land for the construction of new mosques. The agricultural and livestock-breeding undertakings of the majority of waqf were supplemented by other, less essential but potentially profitable activities. For example, in 1991 the Transcaucasian Muslim Board opened a well-stocked carpet and folkcrafts shop in the heart of Baku's old city.

The reestablishment of the religious endowments was of immense significance in that it provided the clergy—for the first time in decades—with an independent source of financing. As a consequence of their expansion and strengthening, clerically led religious institutions were even better positioned to mobilize the community around their notions of Islam. At the same time, the establishment of waqf lessened the clergy's financial dependence on the voluntary

contributions of the faithful to fund the range of religious activities it supervised.

The most important of the institutional changes in Muslim religious organizations were revealed in two trends: first, fragmentation along ethnic and sectarian lines within the Muslim community, and second—and more surprising—an essential continuity in the clergy's image of Islam in Soviet society.

Within the postwar Soviet Muslim community before Gorbachev, which had been conditioned by both externally imposed political restrictions and an internally generated clerical vision of a pristine Islam, one of the most salient tendencies was a trend toward unification. As a result of the concentration of religious training in only two establishments and the regulation of all religious life by the Muslim Boards, the culturally and religiously diverse Soviet Muslim community before 1985 had been growing increasingly standardized. The tendency during perestroika, in contrast, was toward localization and fragmentation. Greater local autonomy of religion led to an increasingly fragmented community where separation and conflict ran increasingly along both ethnic and sectarian lines.

Unlike most Soviet institutions, the jurisdiction of the Muslim Boards had traditionally extended across republic borders. For example, the most populous jurisdiction was that of Central Asia, which included Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizia, and Kazakhstan. In the Gorbachev era, however, the geographic range of the Muslim Boards was increasingly defined by the borders of the Union republics. In January 1990 an assembly of Muslim clerics and others in Alm-Ata declared the formation of a Muslim Religious Board for Kazakhstan.3 Ratbek Nisanbayev, who at the time was serving as the Central Asian board's appointed representative in Kazakhstan, was elected to the position of mufti and chair of the new board.

At the time of the split, the new Kazakh mufti did not attempt to hide the ethnic dimension of the formation of a Muslim Board for Kazakhstan. He emphasized the need for greater local autonomy in administrative and religious affairs and spoke of the importance of more effective religious training for Kazakh clerics—in Kazakhstan itself and, of course, in the Kazakh language.

The extent of conflict over the formation of the Kazakh board remains unclear. In my interviews with Uzbek officials who run the

Central Asian board (based in Tashkent), it was simply pointed out that the Central Asian board had not recognized the new board and mufti, and they emphasized that the central government had not recognized the board either. Moreover, they pointed out that in the Uzbek-populated southern parts of Kazakhstan, local mosques remained loyal to Tashkent and refused to recognize the authority of the new board in Alma-Ata.

Changes in the North Caucasus were even more striking and confusing. Traditionally a single Muslim Board operated out of Makhachkala in Dagestan to serve the panoply of autonomous republics and even more numerous ethnic groups (Dagestan alone has half a dozen major nationalities). Recently, however, the very existence of the Muslim Board for the North Caucasus had been called into question.4 A conference of religious leaders from the region declared the dissolution of the North Caucasian board. In its place they proposed the formation of "religious centers" for each of the ethnic autonomous regions in the area.

The North Caucasian experience, though distinct due to the apparent dissolution of the Muslim Board, exhibited some parallels with the Central Asia/Kazakhstan case. First, the changes reflected an authority crisis in religious leadership. While one part of the clergy asserted itself, another fraction acted to annul or simply ignore the decisions of fellow clerics. As in the case of Tashkent's attitude toward Kazakhstan, religious authorities in the "center"—in this case, Makhachkala—adamantly refused to recognize the decision to dissolve the North Caucasian board. Of course conflicts such as these seem typical and are to be expected. What is more suggestive is a second parallel. As with Kazakhstan, the formation of new religious centers in the North Caucasus was based on the existence of national-territorial states set up by the Bolsheviks in the 1920s. As a result, the acts of defiance served to affirm the territorial status quo. The process of restructuring the Muslim Boards, while appealing to ethnic distinctions among Soviet Muslims, was in fact based on ethnic differences that had been enshrined in part in the most fundamental political institutions of Soviet rule—the national state. In calling for the formation of new religious administrations, the North Caucasian "reformers" declared the creation of religious bodies not simply for each nationality, but for each autonomous national state.

In this regard, the ethnicization of Islam in the Soviet Union should not be viewed wholly as the return of some traditional, pre-existing ethnicity. Rather, while ethnic prejudices and historical ethnic conflicts definitely played a role in the changes, the "ethnicity" to which Muslims appealed was in many respects a modern sense of identity forged during decades of Soviet rule.

In this context of emergent ethnically infused jurisdictional conflicts, the profile of Soviet mosques was also undergoing a transformation. Traditionally, Soviet mosques served the general Muslim population. A consequence of the limited number of mosques in the past had been the mixing of different nationalities and sectarian orientations within the same religious community. In Dagestan, for example, a town's only operating mosque would generally serve the Muslim population of various nationalities. In such circumstances, sermons during Friday communal prayers would frequently be delivered in two or more languages. Likewise, in predominantly Sunni Central Asia Shi'i believers would participate in religious services designed for the area's Sunni population.

The proliferation of mosques in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly after 1988, allowed for greater differentiation along both ethnic and sectarian lines. With the expansion of mosques, everyone appeared to be obtaining his "own" mosque. In Sunni Uzbekistan, for example, Shi'i Muslims were allowed to worship in a newly opened mosque in Bu-khara. Likewise, in the North Caucasus, both new and long-established mosques were increasingly affiliated with one or another ethnic group. In Azerbaijan, new mosques were organized explicitly to meet the needs of non-Azerbaijani groups in the republic's northern rural districts, such as the Ingilois (Georgian Muslims) and Avars.

Although this process in part had its own internal dynamics, nonreligious conflicts among various Muslim nationalities deepened it. Massacres among Uzbeks and Kirgiz in Kirgizia's Osh region or the ongoing conflicts between Chechens and Ingush in the North Caucasus were just two examples that found their reflection in the ethnic pattern of organization and practice in Soviet mosques.

Just as far-reaching in its implications for the Soviet Muslim community was the emergence of new facilities for the training of clergy under the different Muslim Boards. As noted, before the period of restructuring, Soviet Muslim clerics were trained at one of only two es-

tablishments in Uzbekistan, one in Bukhara and one in Tashkent. Since the end of the 1980s new medresas were set up not only in central Asia, but elsewhere as well (Makhachkala, Ufa, Kazan, and Baku).

The inaugauration of these new educational establishments reflected not just a need for more trained clergy to serve in local mosques, but also followed from the interests of local Muslim Religious Boards to instruct their future clerics in local forms of Islam. In the Transcaucasus, where the majority of Muslims are Shi'i, the new medresa in Baku was the first postrevolutionary educational establishment solely devoted to instruction in the fundamentals of Shi'i Islam. Shi'i Islam was incorporated into the curriculum of the Uzbek medresas only in 1970, and it is not clear to what extent the formal teaching of Shi'i traditions was conducted there. In speaking of plans for the new medresa, sheikh-ul-Islam Pashazadä complained that Azerbaijanis had to go to Tashkent and Bukhara to receive religious training, but clearly the issue of religious orientation played a role in the decision to establish a forum for local education. Of the members of the three non-Central Asian Muslim Boards, only mufti Talgat Tajuddin of the European board (mainly Tatar and Bashkir) indicated any interest in maintaining relations with educational establishments in Uzbekistan.

The establishment of new medresas not only allowed for the development of differentiation based on denominational distinctions, but also further divided Soviet Muslims by nationality. In Central Asia, for example, the inauguration of new training centers for the clergy in the various republics meant that Turkmen Muslims studied in Turkmen medresas and Tajiks studied in Tajik medresas. Moreoever, the Tajik medresa, along with religious subjects, also provided instruction in Tajik history and culture, which clearly implied a novel nationalizing of the curriculum. Thus without the bonds of a common institutional experience and educational process, Muslim clerics increasingly had contact only with members of their own nationality and preached a more localized form of Islam.

Accompanying this fragmentation within the Soviet Islamic community were growing contacts between Soviet and non-Soviet Muslims. The Muslim Religious Boards had traditionally cultivated ties with foreign Muslims, and the volume of these contacts increased significantly in the Gorbachev era. Soviet Muslim leaders, especially those from Central Asia, regularly participated in the activities of international Muslim organizations. In addition, each year

the Central Asian board sent students for supplemental training to the major theological schools of the Middle East, including (among others) Karaouyin in Morocco and al-Alzhar in Egypt. Other features of the expanded relations were novel, however, such as the infusion of financial resources from abroad and other donations in kind (especially Qur'ans and other religious publications).

In part, the expansion of Soviet/non-Soviet ties affirmed Muslim solidarity across political boundaries. However, it also reflected and consolidated the process of internal fragmentation of Islam in the Soviet Union.

In the past, the Central Asian Muslim Board had been the most active participant in the development of foreign ties for a number of reasons. Historically Central Asia was viewed by the rest of the Islamic world as more significant, and in the Soviet period Central Asia had the largest concentration of Muslims in the Soviet Union. In any case, it is fair to say that the other Muslim Boards generally played second fiddle to the Central Asian, especially Uzbek, religious leadership.

With the advent of perestroika, however, possibilities for foreign contacts multiplied, and Muslim leaderships took advantage of these new opportunities to initiate or expand their relations with Muslim countries and foreign Muslim religious organizations. Reflecting the availability of more choices, a pattern of Soviet/non-Soviet relations emerged based on a varying combination of geography, sectarian and ethnic distinctions, and the direction of local (republican) foreign policy initiatives.

Azerbaijan is a convenient example. Under the leadership of the chair of the Baku-based Muslim Board (himself a successful holdover from the period of stagnation), the predominantly Azerbaijani board cultivated religious ties with its two neighbors, Turkey and Iran. While ties with Muslims in other countries were not rejected, the main emphasis of the Azerbaijani board was on these two states. This involved the conventional exchanges of delegations and students, but also the importation of publications and religious expertise. Aspiring Azerbaijani clerics were sent to Qom and Tabriz in Iran for religious education. At the same time, the Iranians helped in the practical organization of the new Baku medresa.

It should be noted that the development of ties with Turkey and Iran was consonant with secular Azerbaijani foreign policy that fo-

cused on increased economic and political ties with these countries. Apart from geographic contiguity and politics, religious and ethnic affinities also played a role in the direction of Azerbaijani interests. The Turks speak a language distinct from but related to Azerbaijani, and cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey run deep. In the case of relations with Iran, sectarian affinities appeared to take precedence over ethnic distinctions. While Azerbaijani intellectuals commonly criticized the anti-Azerbaijani policies advocated by Persian chauvinists in Iran, for many Azerbaijani religious leaders the Shi'i religious establishment provided an important resource that could not be ignored. In another identifiable trend, Shi'i Azerbaijan was the only Soviet Muslim area in the perestroika period that emphasized relations with Iran. Central Asia's religious leadership showed little interest in Iran. Even the predominantly Sunni Tajiks, who speak a language related to Persian, were more involved in purely secular cultural exchanges with Iran.

As noted, the Central Asians also engaged in relations with foreign Muslim states, among which the main contact seemed to be Saudi Arabia. Indeed unlike the Shi'i Azerbaijanis, who were relatively ignored by the Saudis, the Central Asians have benefited from Saudi largesse. The Saudis funneled large amounts of capital into Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan, for the restoration of important mosques and the development of facilities at the Tashkent-based Muslim Board. One newly built mosque was even named after the Saudi king, Fahd, in recognition of his financial patronage. In addition, the Saudis made a one-time donation of one million copies of the Qur'an, and through the Islamic World League they purchased a state-of-the-art German printing press to facilitate the Tashkent board's publishing program. The Saudis also donated a million disposable syringes for distribution by the Muslim Board.

Indeed Soviet Muslims—whether Shi'is in the Caucasus or Sunnis in Central Asia—proved quite capable of capitalizing on the legacy of religious restrictions imposed on them to gain the sympathy of foreign Muslims. In the case of financially well-off Muslim states, this meant an unprecedented level of foreign investment in Soviet Muslim religious institutions. (The only precedent in the religious realm is probably large donations made by foreign Armenians to benefit the Armenian Apostolic Church.)

Nevertheless, the influence of foreign Muslim powers like Iran and Saudi Arabia on Soviet Muslims was minimal. The Soviet Muslim leaders had a rich religious tradition to build on, and having fought to maintain their identity with the Soviet Communist Party, they were not about to import Islam from foreign sources. Moreover, like the growing diversity of the Muslim organizations and leaderships described above, the civil leaderships in Muslim republics were also increasingly diverse in regard to their attitudes and policies toward domestic Islam. In Azerbaijan, for example, both the government ("reformed" Communist nationalists) and the opposition (non-Communist nationalists) were unified in their anticlerical if not antireligious attitudes. As a result, religion has had little role in the process of state-building. In Uzbekistan, in contrast, the republic government (also "reformed" Communist nationalists) promoted the incorporation of Islamic religious law into the rewriting of the republic's constitution. In the Uzbek law on land there were clauses on the operation of waqf that would be unheard of in neighboring Turkmenistan. In Tajikistan several major Islamic holy days were declared public holidays, but in Kirgizia the parliament voted to replace the Western calendar not with the Islamic calendar but with a pre-Islamic animal calendar (related to the Chinese calendric system).

Despite the general "nationalization" of the Soviet Islamic community, what was most surprising was the essential continuity with the traditions of pre-perestroika Islamic argument. Indeed the image of Islam and the Muslim community produced by the clergy was largely a reprise of postwar themes. The Muslim community, clerics still argued, had fallen into un-Islamic ways and needed clerical leadership in order to return to the fundamentals of the faith. Not only were there now new oppportunities for religious and secular development, but also Muslims would in fact be active participants in the construction of a renewed social and political order.5

Armed with the language of glasnost, clerics continued to promote their notions of distinction and integration with regard to the Muslim community. If in the past they had praised Soviet power for the realization of Islamic ideals, they now praised the innovations of glasnost and perestroika for allowing a restitution of religious rights and self-esteem to the pious population.6 Glasnost, they pointed out, should assure freedom of religious conviction for all Soviet citizens.

As the *qazi* of Turkmenistan stated, "Perestroika has put an end to the view that believers are narrow-minded, even backwards, and that they are the carriers of a different ideology alien to the officially accepted dogmas."7

While the essential content of Muslim religious discourse remained largely unchanged in the period of reform, there were changes in the tone and form of clerical arguments. For example, Muslim clerics exhibited a greater willingness to place blame for the Muslim community's religious ignorance on the political restrictions imposed during the past seven decades of Soviet power.8 At the same time, clerics appropriated the language of perestroika and glasnost to criticize themselves—for failures ranging from a lack of religious vigilance to corruption within the ranks of the clergy.9

The rapidly changing political environment not only afforded the traditional centers of Muslim religious life new opportunities, but also created conditions for new forms of Muslim religious association. In the past, the Muslim Religious Boards could rely in part on the coercive power of the Soviet state to prevent the emergence of independent Muslim religious centers. In the perestroika era, however, liberalization allowed for the emergence of several new Muslim religious movements. Thus as the Muslim Religious Boards confronted a new set of religious and political challenges, they also increasingly faced a challenge from below—from Muslim religious movements that operated independently from the boards.

In contrast to the Muslim Boards, however, whose well-developed institutional reach extended across entire republics and regions, new Muslim religious movements emerged in relatively few places and were generally highly localized. The largest and most active of these movements emerged in the North Caucasus and parts of Central Asia. The most important included the Islamic Democratic Party in Dagestan, the Turkestan Islamic Party centered in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley, and the Islamic Renaissance Party in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.10

The Turkestan Islamic Party is typical of these independent opposition movements.11 Mistakenly identified in the West as a Wahhabi movement, Muslims in the Fergana town of Namangan began their movement with the takeover of a mosque that had been used as a storage facility for wine.12 After making renovations to the building, the Namangan Muslims chose an imam and mosque coun-

cil and opened the mosque for regular worship. In this way, the mosque became the first in the postwar Soviet Union to operate outside the jurisdiction of a Muslim Religious Board. In the ensuing months, local activists began the construction of a medresa alongside the mosque. Unlike the schools affiliated with Muslim Boards, the Namangan medresa was intended to provide religious education for young people in general and not just training for clerics.

What was most significant about the Fergana Valley movement and other independent religious movements that emerged in the late perestroika era was the nature of their oppositional challenge. The chief opponent of these new Muslim movements was not primarily the Soviet state but the Muslim Religious Boards that dominated the religious life of the Muslim community. A particular target was the leadership of the Muslim Boards, which was condemned as self-serving and corrupt. Interestingly, one of the opposition's main critiques of the Muslim Boards was not that they had been agents of state power but that they were parasitic organizations that exploited the good will of the Muslim community. In this view, financial corruption in the Muslim Boards had impeded the role of the clergy as religious leaders of the Muslim community. Thus it fell to the new Muslim movements to take over community leadership where the Muslim Boards had failed.

That the Muslim opposition's challenge to the Muslim Boards concerned mainly the official clergy's institutional authority was highlighted by the fact that in many respects the opposition shared the stated religious values and ideals espoused by the boards. Like the board clergy, many activists in the independent movement condemned the community's fall into degenerate ways and criticized saint worship, local pilgrimages, and the use of amulets. Likewise, they advocated a recentering of Islam around the Qur'an and prophetic traditions, and they wanted their own religious leadership to effect such a reorientation within the Muslim community.

Along with the development of tensions along sectarian and ethnic lines, then, a struggle emerged for religious and political authority. In this contest, the advantages of the Muslim Boards were enormous. With several decades of institutional development behind them, they had huge organizational, human, and financial resources at their disposal. The new Muslim movements, while increasingly popular within the community, nonetheless had signifi-

cantly fewer developed resources and remained relatively localized in the scope of their activities. Moreover, the board-affiliated clergy's campaign to reform itself severely undercut the power of oppositional critiques concerning the boards' reputed internal corruption and faulty religious leadership.

The emergence of a critical bent in the Soviet Muslim clergy, whether directed internally at developments within the Muslim community or externally against the injustices practiced against Islam during the period of Soviet rule, must be understood in context. In Gorbachev's Soviet Union some political activists publicly equated communism with fascism, current and former leaders of the Communist Party regularly condemned party policies in the harshest terms, and depictions of the Soviet Union as an empire held together by violence and coercion became part of mainstream journalistic practice. In this sense, the Muslim clergy appeared not as a radical but as a deeply conservative social force. The clergy did engage in sometimes harsh criticisms of past Soviet policies and practices with regard to religion and religious institutions, but Muslim religious leaders did not reject the Soviet Union or the Soviet political system wholesale. Given the political context briefly described above, the tenor of clerical criticisms continued to reflect the Muslim clergy's position as an unusually loyal opposition.

NOTES

1. Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

2. It should be noted that nearly ninety mosques were reported to have been opened in the period of stagnation between 1977 and 1987 ("Novoe myshlenie i svoboda sovesti," *Literaturnaia gazeta,* 18 May 1988, p. 10).

3. For an account of the Kazakh mufti, see Paul Goble, "The New Mufti of Alma-Ata," *Report on the USSR,* 22 June 1990.

4. *Kommunist* (Baku), 10 March 1990.

5. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1989): 2.

6. For a mainstream clerical perspective, see Abdulgani Abdulla, "Musul'mane v usloviiakh glasnosti, perestroiki i novogo myshleniia," in *Na puti k svobode sovesti* (Moscow: Progress, 1989).

7. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 2–3 (1989): 10.

8. See, for example, the Central Asian mufti's critical comments as described in Paul Goble, "The Mufti on Television," *Report on the USSR,* 4 May 1990.

9. Self-criticism was a common theme at the fourth congress of the Central Asian Muslim Religious Board held in 1989 (*Muslims of the Soviet East* 2–3 [1989]).

10. For a useful survey of the Islamic Renaissance Party, see Bess Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," *Report on the USSR,* 10 May 1991.

11. This account of the positions of what I am calling a Muslim opposition is based in part on the Soviet press, in addition to interviews conducted in Central Asia in 1990 and the Caucasus in 1991.

12. For a view of the Namangan movement as Wahhabi, see James Critchlow, "Islam in the Fergana Valley: The Wahhabi 'Threat,'" *Report on the USSR,* 8 December 1989.

AMBIVALENCE, AUTHORITY, AND THE PROBLEM OF POPULAR ISLAM[1]

> "Whenever one sees a dome, one thinks it's the shrine of an *imam*."
>
> —Azerbaijani folk saying[2]

Conventional studies of Islam in the former Soviet Union often assumed a sharp distinction between "official" and "popular" Islam. The Islam of the mosque and the USSR's officially sanctioned clerical institutions was portrayed as an instrument of state policy, while the popular Islam of the shrine, as well as of the Sufi orders, was treated as a haven for an antistate, anti-Soviet opposition. In some cases, the argument went so far as to portray popular religious practices as the foundation of an oppositional counterculture.[3] In fact, actual practices in shrine and mosque were far more ambivalent. Understood in terms of the *forms* of institutions and practices, the official/popular dichotomy did capture some significant differences. But understood in terms of *function* and *meaning* for those who engaged in them, religious practices regularly violated these categorical boundaries.

The tendency to divide Soviet Islam into official and popular was tied to an interpretation of Soviet Islam through the familiar lens of tradition/modernity. An authentic, religious, preindustrial feudal society (popular) was opposed to an artificial, secular, modern, industrialized state (official). Observers then "discovered" what appeared to be traditional forms (e.g., the shrine) and concluded that similarly traditional functions and meanings necessarily follow. And popular practices, many of which predated Soviet rule, were interpreted as indicators of a traditional mentality that was inherently antimodern, conservative, and a potential challenge to the authority of the Soviet state.

Evidence of form is therefore taken, mistakenly, as evidence of function. The presumed disjuncture between scripturalist representations of Islam mediated by a stratum of religious intellectuals, the *ulama*, and the nonscripturalist, nonclerical forms of socio-religious

practice produced within the Muslim community at large suggested a clear division between official/popular, orthodox/heterodox kinds of Islam.

Despite increasing criticism, the separation of Islam into the orthodox faith organized around the ulama and mosque and the popular or folk religion of the saints and shrines has remained quite durable in the literature. Even as some have tried to rectify an imbalanced focus on the official by emphasizing popular dimensions of religion, they tended to reproduce the misleading dichotomy.4 Growing attention to popular, heterodox, folk practices implicitly accepted the mutual exclusivity of official and popular categories.

Other attempts to rethink categorization schema were also problematic. Numerous authors, for example, offered the notion of "normative" Islam to replace the less precise term "orthodox." However, "normative Islam" was again used to refer to the clerically produced prescriptive representation of Islam.5 Indeed, some scholars went so far as to argue that the Muslim clergy produced not religious orthodoxy or a system of correct beliefs, but an "orthopraxy," a set of prescriptions for correct religious practice.6

In actual practice, however, the mosque often functioned as a shrine, while the officially sanctioned clergy often appropriated shrine pilgrimages for their own ends. Thus the meaning of Islam was itself transformed by the interplay of the official and the popular.

The blurring of "official" and "popular" in practice challenges not only traditional understandings of Soviet Islam, but also the "orientalist" approach to Islamic studies more generally. The orientalist tradition held that Islam was largely defined by its founding sacred texts, which reified the religion into an unchanging, ahistorical "essence." Revisionists, in contrast, tend to stress the ways in which these historical and textual traditions have been transformed through religious practice. Islam, then, is not just a discourse rooted in the Qur'an and the *sunna* (the corpus of prophetic traditions), but is also constituted by the lived experiences and religious practices of those who identify themselves as Muslim. Instead of an analysis of the descriptive accounts of the discursive production of an "Islam," it is therefore necessary to explore the ways in

which "Islam" was received and reproduced in social and religious practice.7

FORMAL ASPECTS OF SHRINE PRACTICE

Most shrines in Azerbaijan are known as *pir*. This word, of Persian origin, can mean both "saint" or an old, hence implicitly wise, person. In the latter case, an appropriate English equivalent is "elder." This usage refers to the fact that many shrines are reputed to be the gravesites of respected elders or other religious figures. In contemporary Azerbaijan, no verbal distinction is made between the pir as a living or dead person and the pir as a sacred place, whether a crypt or another kind of holy site. Indeed pir in Azerbaijani can refer not just to gravesites, but also to shrines that are distinctive natural features, such as hills or rocky formations, waterfalls, natural springs, and trees. Sometimes, such natural shrines are referred to as *ojakh* (literally, "hearth"), but the more common use of the term pir for these sites suggests that the term has obtained a more common meaning of "spirit" as well as "saint." The use of the term "shrine" in this paper —a sacred, venerated site—is therefore a convenient, albeit imprecise, translation of the Azerbaijani pir. Several formal aspects of shrine practice stand out as particularly distinct from mosque practice. These formal distinctions follow the dichotomy of mosque and shrine with oppositions of closed/open, urban/rural, male/female, and public/private.

Äli ayaghï (Äli's Foot), located in Buzovna, a suburb of Baku on the Apsheron Peninsula, is a typical shrine. One defining feature that contrasts it with mosques is the relatively free access of the individual pilgrim to the shrine. A small, square, two-roomed structure with a dome, Äli ayaghï is located on a rocky cliff overlooking the beach along the Caspian Sea. Its main attraction is an indentation in the rock, reputed to be the footprint of Ali. Others claim that the footprint is of Ali's horse. Pilgrims to the shrine generally take little interest in its precise genealogy since for them what is significant is that the shrine is "a place of the *imams*" (in Azerbaijani, *imamlarïn yeri*). Each of the rooms has an entrance, but no door. Unlike Buzovna's mosque, which is always closed and locked at night and

often during the weekdays as well, the shrine at Äli ayaghï is accessible at any time. At the mosque, access is essentially at the discretion of the clergy, but the shrine is available at the discretion of the pilgrim.8

Another formal difference is that while typically mosques are considered to be urban, shrines are considered rural. Among the hundreds of shrines that have been described by the specialized literature in Azerbaijan, relatively few are located within urbanized areas. Many are located just outside towns, but even more can be found in villages or in remote locations. Shrines may be located on the crest of a hill, promontory, or other natural feature, and they are often found in cemeteries. In some cases, a cemetery has developed around one or more important shrines. An Azerbaijani specialist of shrine veneration has claimed, probably without much exaggeration, that in a number of the republic's regions it is difficult to find a village without a shrine of some sort.9

In contrast to the mosque, where religious rites are both oriented toward and dominated by males, shrines serve as havens for female Muslims. All surveys of shrine pilgrimage in Azerbaijan agree that women constitute the vast majority of pilgrims to shrines, and my own fieldwork in the shrines of the Apsheron Peninsula confirms these observations.10 In neighboring Dagestan, as well as the country's other Muslim regions, pilgrims are also more likely to be women than men.11 Unlike the mosques, in which women remain segregated from men, there is usually not a separate women's space at shrines, and women pray unfettered in any part of the shrine. As a sphere of religious practice, shrines may be considered a predominantly female realm, but the spatial organization within a given shrine is not gender-specific.

Women are not only more active in visiting shrines, but they also frequently serve in positions of religious authority as the *pir sahibi*, or shrine guardian. For example, the pir sahibi at the Äli ayaghï shrine in Buzovna is a woman. Shrines are accessible to both men and women, but at times women appear to have greater prestige, especially those with female guardians. On numerous occasions when entire families come to perform a ritual sacrifice of animals at the shrine of Äli ayaghï, the men and boys remain outside the shrine to slaughter a lamb or chicken while only the women enter the shrine itself to pray and make devotional offerings.

In addition to being typically open, rural, and female-dominated, shrines tend to be private, whereas the mosque is considered public. The degree to which a shrine is private varies considerably, depending on the size of the community it serves. Some shrines may be classified as regional shrines since they attract pilgrims from nearby towns or districts. Most shrines, however, are highly localized and serve only the population of a single village. In some cases, the "modern," Soviet-organized state and collective farms have their own shrines. The most specific shrines are those patronized only by certain families. In Rustov, a village in the Guba district, a cluster of four shrines serves only a few local families.

The large numbers of village-specific shrines, along with the existence of an unknown number of family shrines, reflects the individualized character of pilgrimages and devotional acts at the shrines. Shrine practice is, in effect, a private matter. There are no formalized rituals, nor are there fixed times for visitation at the shrines. In principle, Shi'i Muslims consider Thursdays to be the "best" day to make a pilgrimage, but my fieldwork suggests that Sundays, a day most people have off work, is the most popular day of the week to visit a shrine. What for some scholars appears to be an inherent contradiction between the modern work schedule and the requirements of a tradition-based Islam is in fact superseded in the flexibility of social practice.

THE RELIGIOUS USES OF SHRINES

With the notable exception of the clerically supervised collective pilgrimage to Qöy Imam, shrine pilgrimage in contemporary Azerbaijan is a highly individualized, private activity. Unlike the religious practices that are organized and regulated under clerical guidance, which are marked by their collective, public form, shrine pilgrimages are regularly performed privately by individuals—alone or in small groups of friends or relatives—with very specific intentions. An ethnographic account of shrine pilgrimages and an analysis of the socio-religious functions they fulfill for the pilgrims can help to elaborate this point.

One of the central religious functions of the shrine is the provision of intercession between the deity and the individual. Intercession is considered one of the essential features of unorthodox or popular Islam. In orthodox Islam, a Muslim presumably has a direct, unmediated relation with God since all Muslims have equal standing before the deity as revealed in the Qur'an. In Islam as it is practiced in Azerbaijan, however, a pir, whether a living person or a spirit embodied in a shrine, possesses a higher socio-religious status.

 A distinction can be made between general or universal and specialized shrines. Universal shrines perform an "all-purpose" function, while specialized shrines provide for specific needs, such as the curing of illnesses. Shrines that attract large numbers of pilgrims are typically considered to be universal. This reflects the fact that the classification of the shrines is based in part not simply on the peculiarities of the shrine itself, but also on the range of religious functions that it serves for pilgrims. Shrines that have a larger following and consequently attract pilgrims with more diverse needs tend to be considered universal. Different lists of Azerbaijan's universal shrines have been suggested by various observers, but these sources generally agree on the overall number of the largest shrines, ranging from approximately ten to twenty.12

The "specialized" shrines are much more numerous. Their total number is usually estimated to be from two to four hundred, though the actual figure is quite possibly much higher. Individually, however, they are frequented by fewer pilgrims due to their more limited function. The Aghdash shrine in the village of Novkhanï on the Apsheron Peninsula has a reputation for restoring the fertility of barren women. And the Närärjan shrine in the village of the same name located in the Khachmaz district is believed to provide cures for rheumatism, fevers, and toothaches.

The specialized and universal functions of the shrines are not mutually exclusive. One of the characteristics of the shrines is the many layers of meaning invested in them by the pilgrims who seek intercession.13 Among many women, for example, the shrine of Pir Seyid in Nardaran has the reputation of a "children s shrine" (*ushag piri*) where women take their children to be healed of various health problems. At the same time, Pir Seyid has also been classified as a universal shrine since it is arguably the most popular shrine of the

greater Baku region and attracts large numbers of people with quite diverse interests.14

The distinction between universal and specialized shrines is noteworthy, but it should not obscure the fact that from the perspective of Azerbaijani Muslims, all shrine pilgrimage is in fact specialized activity. The visitation to a local shrine is usually accomplished with a specific intention or request. In Azerbaijani, this intention is referred to as *niyyät.* Whether or not the shrines can be distinguished as all-purpose or special-purpose types, pilgrims generally have a specific purpose, a niyyät, for making the pilgrimage.15 Many Azerbaijani Muslims explain that one never visits a shrine without niyyät, or a specific request, in mind.16

Several examples of Soviet survey researchcarried out at shrines in the North Caucasus confirm the notion that pilgrims always have a definite purpose for a local pilgrimage. Although the way in which these surveys were administered may be doubted and the results are not reported in a very clear manner, they are nonetheless useful as indications of the meanings attributed to shrine practice. In a month-long survey at Shalbuz Dagh, a shrine along the Azerbaijani-Dagestani border, Kaflan Khanbayev encountered 170 pilgrims. When he asked about their reasons for visiting the shrine, he obtained the following responses:

Reason	Women	Men	Total
Illness	72	24	96
Sterility	37	- -	37
Family problems	20	4	24
Other specific requests	6	7	13*

Another sociological study of 351 pilgrims in Chechen-Ingushetia provides a similar sense that pilgrims partake in devotional activities at the shrines with specific intentions in mind. The content of the first and last categories used in the survey, "To fulfill a

*The survey was conducted between 18 July and 12 August 1985. Of the 170 pilgrims, 135 were women and 35 were men (Khanbaev, p. 132).

prior vow" and "Other reasons," are not entirely clear, but the break-down of remaining reasons is nonetheless indicative of trends in shrine worship. In answer to the question, "Why did you come to the shrine?," the researchers obtained the following responses:

1. To fulfill a previously made vow	23.4%
2. For emotional comfort	11.7
3. Cure for disease	6.5
4. Prayer for health of children	10.0
5. Prayer for welfare of family	10.0
6. According to tradition, for holiday	4.8
7. Other reasons	33.6*

As partially reflected in these data, the intercession of a shrine is sought especially during periods of heightened personal anxiety, such as illness or family problems. *Ziyarät* (pilgrimage—see below) is also performed as part of a rite of passage, which, due to its transitional nature, is marked by fears of an unsuccessful outcome. Such transitions may include the more socially recognized rites of passage observed at birth, circumcision (coming of age), marriage, and death. Or they may be of a more individual nature, such as a house-warming or sending a son off to military service.

Pilgrims visit shrines with niyyät, but what does one do to obtain the spiritual assistance of the shrine? This is the essence of shrine practice. The answer is that pilgrims bring not only their niyyät, but also *näzir*. The näzir is commonly a gift to the shrine, or perhaps more precisely an offering to the saint or sacred spirit that inhabits the shrine. The näzir establishes a relation of reciprocity between the pilgrim and the shrine: in return for the näzir the saint of the shrine returns the gift of spiritual assistance to the pilgrim. In the event of vows previously made, the pilgrim's gift returns the favor already granted.17

Näzir take many different forms and vary depending on the specific features of the shrine. For example, the shrine of Pir Seyid in

*S. A. Sangariev, "Nekotorye voprosy ateisticheskogo i internatsional'nogo vospitaniia," *Sotsiologiia, ateizm, religiia,* v. 2, pt. 1 (Groznyi: Checheno-Ingushskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1976), p. 6.

Nardaran is composed of two crypts adjoining a vault that is situated partially underground. The crypts are separated from the vault by a metal grate, and pilgrims toss their näzir of paper money, coins, or other objects into the crypt (the bars prevent others from taking the cash offerings). Apart from cash, the most common näzir, which are often simply left at the shrine by pilgrims, include silk and other cloth (especially scarves), sugar cubes (known as *gänt*), tea, and other foodstuffs such as halvah.

The category of näzir includes not only the offering of a physical gift, but also the performance of a devotional act. The most widespread of such acts is the tying of ribbons or strips of cloth at or near the shrine. At the entrance to the Pir Seyid shrine in Nardaran, a cyclone fence is regularly covered with multicolored strips of cloth. Pilgrims likewise make use of virtually all the available spaces on some nearby tombs to tie their devotional cloth strips. The lighting of candles is also a widespread devotional act at shrines, and the many blackened spots from candles affixed to interior walls, entrances, and other parts of a shrine are a common reminder of this practice.

On more important occasions, such as a religious holiday, the circumcision of a son, or the building of a new home, pilgrims bring chickens or sheep to slaughter at the shrine, and they then take them home to prepare. Given the family orientation of this kind of practice, entire families make an outing to the shrine to participate in the ritual. At shrines where ritual sacrifice has become especially popular, elaborate facilities are sometimes set up to make the slaughter of animals more convenient.

Candle lighting or ribbon tying are performed at virtually all shrines in Azerbaijan, but at certain shrines one can find numerous instances of shrine-specific devotional acts. At some shrines, known as "rock shrines" (*dash piri*) in the specialist literature, pilgrims bring rocks which they pile up at the shrine. At others, such as Baba Dagh in the Guba district, pilgrims take rocks away from the shrine to use as talismans at home.18 Apart from the water shrines at natural springs, creeks, or waterfalls, some shrines (for example, Äli ayaghï in Buzovna) have wells from which pilgrims drink to receive *shäfa*, or healing, as a part of other devotions. There are, in effect, as many kinds of näzir as there are pilgrims and shrines.

Due to the almost inherently specialized and individualized character of believers' requests, which usually provide the purpose

of the visit to the shrine and näzir, the function of the practice has a central significance in constituting the forms of Azerbaijani Islam. Emphasizing the centrality of function over form shows that distinctions between "official" and "popular" erode at the level of meaning and the significance of practice.

In the next section, I will look at the mosque as often used qua shrine and how the clergy appropriates lucrative shrine pilgrimages. Noting the similarities on the level of function between shrine and mosque qua shrine shows that the characterization of official Islam as an instrument of the state and popular Islam as an expression of opposition in society is problematic and misleading. I make the case that clerical authority, as well as religious practice, is ambiguous. In contrast to conventional views that assume the clergy is absent from the shrines, the Azerbaijani clergy appropriates shrine practice into its own image of legitimate Islamic practice. In the case of the mosques, through an analysis of ritual, religious practices simultaneously affirm and subvert the authority of the clergy, demonstrating how the extension of the formal categories of official and popular do not necessarily allow us to infer functional differences from formal.

Contrary to the assumption that the relative absence of clerical leadership at the shrines is evidence of popular practice as a haven for nascent antistate/anti-Soviet opposition, official clerical authority is reinforced through the appropriation and legitimation of certain shrine practices. This appropriation shows that in many ways official practices clearly violate the observer-imposed conceptual boundaries between official and popular. This conceptual border war is by no means one-sided, however. The official is penetrated by the popular during the ambivalent moments when ordinary Muslims appropriate the mosque and reinvest it with the functions of the shrine for their niyyät and näzir rituals.

THE "OFFICIAL" APPROPRIATION OF "POPULAR" PRACTICE

The Muslim Boards for Central Asia and the North Caucasus have repeatedly expressed their opposition to shrine practices. The Boards' antishrine position has been made repeatedly, beginning in

the 1950s and continuing into the 1980s, in the form of *fetwas*, or religious edicts, as well as other more informal condemnations of superstitions and shrine-related practices.19 The clerical establishment of Transcaucasia, however, has issued no such condemnations of saint worship and shrine pilgrimage. Rather, in establishing its relation to the veneration of shrines, the Transcaucasian clerical establishment not only rejects condemnation of shrine worship, but it also actively embraces such worship. The "orthodox" clergy of Transcaucasia thus pursues a strategy of appropriating the popular veneration of shrines and institutionalizing it into its own conception of legitimate Islam in order to legitimate its authority in the Muslim community.

In contrast to commonly held Sunni traditions, particularly reformist tendencies within Sunnism that have rejected the veneration of shrines as heretical and non-Islamic superstition, the Shi'i clergy has developed a historical tradition of shrine worship. The Azerbaijani clergy, strongly influenced by the religious conventions of the Shi'i hierarchy of Iran, is a participant in this larger Shi'i tradition. Shi'i tradition accepts the significance of the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to the holy Islamic cities of Mecca and Medina. In addition, Shi'i clerics have rendered the tombs of the Shi'i imams as important sites of religious worship and pilgrimage. Distinct from the hajj, this type of pilgrimage is known as ziyarät in Iranian and Azerbaijani usage.20

The Shi'i veneration of the imams' shrines has been traced back as early as the tenth to twelfth centuries. After the proclamation of Shi'ism as the official religion of the Safavi dynasty in Iran, the significance of pilgrimage to the shrines was revived and reinforced as a means to buttress the social and political position of the Shi'i state. During Safavi rule, numerous shrines were rebuilt and enlarged, including the tomb of Imam Hussein at Kerbala (Iraq) and tombs of other imams and their relatives located at Najaf (Iraq) and Mashhad and Qom (Iran). As in the case of Mecca, by which the pilgrim obtains the honorific title *hajji*, pilgrims to the shrines at Kerbala and Mashhad often receive equivalent honorific titles of *karbelayi* and *mashhadi*. Promoted under Safavi auspices, pilgrimages to the shrines became institutionalized. More generally at this time, visitation to any reputed grave of an imam, known colloquially as an *imamzadä* (literally, a descendent of the imam), was encouraged by the Shi'i clerical authorities.21 The shrines of Qöy Imam near Kirovabad, Imamzadä in the district of Bärdä, and Bibi Heybat just

south of Baku are among the most prominent sites in the Azerbaijani republic considered to be imamzadä.

The Transcaucasian Muslim Religious Board's position toward shrine veneration is expressed not only in the particularity of its religious discourse, but also in the forms of religious practice that it authorizes and organizes at a practical level. The reputed mausoleum of a medieval Shi'i religious figure, located several miles outside the city of Kirovabad in the western part of Azerbaijan, is one example of this practical incorporation of shrine veneration.22 Known popularly as Qöy Imam, or "Blue Imam," a reference to the shrine's blue dome, it was recognized as a legitimate site of religious pilgrimage by the *sheikh-ul-Islam* of Transcaucasia, Akhundzadä, in the pre-Soviet period. After the reestablishment of the Transcaucasian Muslim Religious Board during World War II, the site was granted legal status as a shrine under the Board's supervision. As such, it was the only Muslim religious site in the Soviet Union that was registered solely as a shrine and recognized by a Muslim Religious Board. Each year, the Baku Muslim Board sponsored a pilgrimage to the shrine, thereby transforming what is commonly considered popular practice into a component of official, clerically legitimated religious practice.

Another example of the clergy's appropriation of shrine worship is Pir Seyid, a nineteenth-century mausoleum located in the town cemetery of Nardaran, a suburb of Baku on the Apsheron Peninsula. One of the more popular shrines of Azerbaijan, the shrine was legalized as a mosque in the 1950s through the efforts of the leader of the Transcaucasian Muslim Board, sheikh-ul-Islam Suleymanzad. In the case of Pir Seyid, then, Azerbaijani clerics affiliated with the Muslim Board have incorporated the shrine into their own institutionalized network of religious institutions. In this way, Pir Seyid functions as both an official mosque and a site of popular religious pilgrimage.

The extent of offerings made at shrines such as Qöy Imam, administered under the authority of the Muslim Religious Board in Baku, is evidence of an additional major function that appropriation of the shrine performs for the clergy. For the years 1975, 1977, and 1979, the annual income reported by the clerical officials supervising the shrine amounted to 22,615, 20,516, and 19,756 rubles respectively. Enormous amounts of cloth, often tied to *aläm* (decorated poles) during Muharram rituals, are also collected at the shrine. In addition to more

than 1,500 scarves and handkerchiefs collected each year, miscellaneous lengths of cloth amounted to 1,416, 949, and 1,230 meters during each of the three years noted.23 Thus, the financial function for which the pilgrimage is sanctified helps account for the transformation of forms of official worship. As well as appropriating the aspects of shrine practice in order to extend the authority of the official clergy, the Baku Board receives substantial income from the Kirovabad shrine. As one of the most famous shrines in Azerbaijan, Qöy Imam may be able to generate unusually large offerings, especially since the Azerbaijani clergy organizes annual pilgrimages to the shrine and as an imamzadä it is an important site for the rites of mourning during Muharram. Qöy Imam thereby serves as a site for the reproduction and extension of clerical authority into the realm of the popular.

These sorts of appropriation are evidence of the ambivalence of practice which problematizes the official/popular dichotomy, particularly on the level of function. The same holds true when ordinary believers appropriate the mosque of the official realm and invest it with an ambivalent status by using it as a shrine.

MOSQUE QUA SHRINE: THE PENETRATION OF THE "OFFICIAL" BY THE "PO PULAR"

Mosques are frequently considered to be sites where only official religious rites under clerical supervision are permitted. In practice, however, mosques frequently serve as havens for various kinds of unofficial religious activity. Mosques commonly attract people who are involved in the buying and selling of imported Qur'ans, privately reproduced religious texts, and religious paraphernalia neither produced nor directly sanctioned by the Muslim Religious Boards.

As of 1987, seventeen mosques were registered with the government in Azerbaijan and operated under the jurisdiction of the Muslim Religious Board for Transcaucasia.* Many of Azerbaijan's

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*This figure does not include the mosques under the administration's jurisdiction which are located outside the Azerbaijani republic. These are three mosques in Georgia (Tbilisi, Sukhumi, and Batumi) and Armenia's one mosque in Yerevan. A list of Azerbaijan's registered mosques was confirmed during an interview with the head of the State Committee for Religious Affairs under the Azerbqaijan SSR's Council of Ministers.

largest cities have at least one working mosque. Baku has two (Äzhdärbay and Täzäpir), and Sumgayït (Jorat), Kirovabad, and Nakhchïvan each have one. Perhaps more significant is the fact that most of Azerbaijan's mosques are located in or within close proximity of urban centers.

Clerical aspirations to authority made in principle are accomplished in practice through the rites of the mosque. Rituals are an important vehicle for the legitimation of authority relations between a leadership and its constituency. At the same time, rituals provide an opportunity for subaltern groups to express various forms of resistance.24 In the case of the Soviet Muslim community, both consent and resistance are expressed in the ritual conduct of the mosques. The ambivalence is evident in the way that the official is, in part, transformed by the penetration of the popular. That is, what counts as "Islam" changes as a transfusion of popular practices is injected into the corpus of official Islam. This is particularly so in the case of the individually specific niyyät and näzir that can transform the mosque into a site of shrine practice.

Whether the mosque functions in its usual capacity or as an ersatz shrine depends on the perspective and intention of the believers. For example, mosques are designed for the performance of quintuple daily prayers (in Arabic, *salat*; in Azerbaijani usage, *namaz*) and the congregational Friday prayers (in Azerbaijani, *jümä namazï*), and it is for these rites that the mosques are most systematically used. As one of the five pillars of the Muslim faith, it is through these theologically prescribed practices (*ibadat*) that the believer achieves spiritual communion with God. Despite the clergy's position recommending performance of the namaz, daily prayers are not held on a regular basis in many of Azerbaijan's mosques. In theory, few clerics would deny the significance of the quintuple daily prayer, but in practice they rarely denounce people for failure to perform these prayers. Moreover, many mosques remain closed during the weekdays, thus precluding any regular observance of the daily prayers by local communities.

The official/popular dichotomy in Islam implies that the official cleric performs only those general, theologically condoned rites associated with formalistic mosque practice. For the more immediate satisfaction of social, medical, and other needs, the Muslim must turn to what Ernst Gellner has described as the alternative or substitute religion of the saints and shrines. But the ritual role played by

the Shi'i cleric during the observance of the Friday prayers in Azerbaijan displays the clerical capacity to perform both the general, theological functions associated with the clergy and the specific, practical functions associated with the shrines.

At Shi'i prayers in Azerbaijan, the delivery of the sermon (*moizä*) is generally followed by *salavat* (literally, prayer). During the salavat, worshipers at the mosque request blessings from the presiding imam. The function of the postsermon salavat in many respects parallels the private practice of pilgrimage performed at the shrine. The worshiper offers the imam a gift (in this case, the näzir is usually cash), and the imam reciprocates by his offering of a blessing tailored to the devotee's request. As the imam concludes his sermon, men walk up to the *minbar*, hand the imam some money—a three- or five-ruble note, for instance—and quietly request a special prayer or blessing. It is only men who partake in the salavat since women remain sequestered behind the mosque partitions. Typically, one asks a blessing for an ill relative or friend. The imam then responds with a formulaic prayer relevant to the request, such as "In the name of god, the beneficent, the merciful, let us pray for Ähmäd that he regain his good health."

Through this practice, the superior religious authority of the cleric is publicly recognized and reproduced in the act of seeking his intercession with God. Through his individualized delivery of a salavat in return for näzir, the mosque imam in effect plays the same intermediary role for the worshiper that the shrines play. What differs, however, is that the salavat of an imam is performed in a public manner in the mosque and institutionalized within this setting as a component of the clerically supervised prayer. The distinction between the socio-religious function of the official cleric and the saint of a shrine, canonized into the oppositions of official/popular, orthodox/heterodox, universal/particular, public/private, and unmediated/mediated, becomes blurred in the ritualized conduct of both cleric and common believer.

The observance that mosque rites are rigid and formalistic follows from a confusion of the specific rites of the routine mosque prayers with the more general category of mosque practices. Apart from the formal conduct of prayers already described, mosques also serve as an important realm for a variety of religious practices, including private prayer (theologically distinguished as *du'a*, in con-

trast to the obligatory quintuple prayers, salat or namaz). These private prayers, performed informally at the mosque, reflect many of the same forms and functions as the rites observed at the shrines. In this regard, there is considerable overlap in both the forms and meanings of "separate" mosque and shrine practice.

Most commonly, the practitioners of these informal rites are women. During the Friday prayers or at other times when the mosques are open to the public, women enter the mosque to tie silk scarves or other strips of cloth around an *aläm* (see below), which despite its widespread association with the rites of Muharram is usually kept year round in a conveniently accessible location (for women) in the mosque.* Others purchase candles from the mosque custodian and light them in special niches set aside for candle lighting, usually located in an anteroom or auxiliary entrance to the mosque.

Other kinds of näzir are also practiced, especially during periods of special religious significance. Some practices require assistance or guidance, which in the mosque is provided not by a pir sahibi but by an available cleric. During Muharram commemorations, for example, women and sometimes men approach a mosque official with an offering (generally cash) for the right to walk under the minbar at the front of the mosque. Passing under the minbar, like other devotions performed at mosques and shrines, is considered a means to obtain a blessing. In this case, the minbar, a symbol of the clergy's higher religious status and authority to deliver a sermon, serves as a spiritual intermediary between god and the devotee.

Even mosques that are not legally operating under clerical supervision can serve as sites for the performance of informal religious practices. Again, buildings that would formally be considered mosques in fact function as shrines. Apart from its registered mosque-shrine, the small town of Nardaran in Baku's suburbs has as many as six or seven "closed" mosques, including the large Friday mosque. There is no regular supervision of these mosques by the clerics or with the Muslim Religious Board, and no regular religious rites are held there. The mosques likewise lack local residents who would act as "shrine" guardians. But all the town's mosques are left

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*The tying of strips of cloth to trees and other objects is a common religious practice in many parts of Asia, from Christian Armenia to the Hindu-Muslim Indian subcontinent to southern Siberia, where shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism predominate.

unlocked, and some of the smaller buildings, now in disrepair, even lack doors. As a result, they provide a convenient site for regular visitation by local Muslims. In Nardaran's mosques, for example, there is ample physical evidence of pilgrimages to the mosques, where pilgrims light candles at the *mihrab* and minbar, tie ribbons to the doors and windows, or perform other kinds of näzir to accompany their prayers and requests. In the minds of the believers and in the practices they observe, there is thus little to distinguish the socio-religious use of the mosques from the shrines.

Sunni Muslims sometimes use the mosque for *zikr* (literally, memory), though the rite is also performed in the home. In many Muslim societies, the zikr is associated with mystical rites of Sufi orders.25 In the Sunni-populated areas of northern Azerbaijan, zikrs have often lost their Sufi connotations and consist mainly of the collective chanting of a series of religious formulas. The phrases of the zikr are often quite repetitive, which for its practitioners is presumed to facilitate mystical oneness with the deity. Since many of Azerbaijan's Sunni Muslims are not ethnic Azerbaijanis but belong to a number of distinct ethnic groups, zikrs are sometimes recited in combinations of Arabic, Azerbaijani, and other North Caucasian languages such as Lezgiu or Avar. Components of the zikr may also be quite simple, such as the repeated recitation of short invocations or one of the names of God, "Allah."

Much like the mosque prayers, the zikrs can perform the collective function of solidifying a general attachment to the Muslim community and God. But in their Transcaucasian form, zikrs are also typically performed as a kind of collective näzir. Groups of relatives and friends gather for a wide array of specific, private purposes, from the blessing of a new house to prayer for a son who is leaving for military service.

A zikr is also chanted as a kind of requiem service to commemorate a death in the family or of any person whom the Muslim respected in life and desires to honor at death. One informant in Azerbaijan, a Sunni Dargin woman originally from a village in Dagestan, related to me a story about her mother, who engaged a local cleric to conduct a zikr upon the death of Viacheslav Molotov, the Soviet minister of foreign affairs under Stalin. This story provides an indication of the variety of uses to which religious practices such as the zikr are put. Moreover, the fact that an informal religious rite can

be used to commemorate the death of a Soviet political leader destabilizes a common assumption that popular Islam is inherently a challenge to the authority of the state.

Täzä-pir is an excellent example of the mosque as shrine. While it functions mainly as a mosque, during the day and evening of *tasu'a* and *ashura*, Täzä-pir is in fact transformed into a major shrine for thousands of Muslims.* In a festival-like atmosphere, the mosque and its courtyard fill with pilgrims, preachers, beggars, and simple observers. Throughout the mosque compound, Muslim Board officials set up sites for devotions similar to those observed at the shrines. Most prominent among these sites are the dozens of devotion stands where aläm are displayed.

The aläm consists of a pole topped by an open hand, which is variously interpreted as representing the hand of Ali or the five members of the holy family of the prophet (Muhammad, Ali, Muhammad's daughter and Ali's wife Fatima, and their two sons, Huseyn and Hasan). The aläm are attached to blue-painted metal boxes for the collection of cash donations. The boxes are clearly marked with the stenciled letters *näzir chutes* (offering box). Under the supervision of mosque officials or volunteers, pilgrims place their donation into the metal box and tie silk scarves or other large strips of cloth to the aläm. As at the shrine, the tying of cloth to the aläm symbolizes the pilgrim's offering to God. One mosque volunteer described the cloth-covered aläm as "the flag of Islam" (*Islamïn bayraghï*), thus identifying a specific Shi'i practice with the more general attachment to Islam.

Thus the penetration of one conceptual realm by the other occurs in a bidirectional manner. The official appropriates the popular, and the popular invests elements of the official with new meaning. No clear-cut implications of stability or instability can be inferred. Clerical and pilgrim usage of shrine and mosque challenge the extension of the dichotomy beyond the level of form and into the level of function. Thus one cannot simply conclude that the popular is purely a haven of resistance, while the official is purely a source of repression. The question that emerges from the challenge to move beyond the dichotomy of official/popular regards the political and

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*In an interview, a source with the Azerbaijani government estimated the number of visitors to Täzä-pir alone in 1987 at 10,000.

analytical implications of identifying human institutional arrangements and practices as ambivalent.

RECONSIDERING THE IMPLICATIONS OF AMBIVALENCE

There is a need to reconsider overgeneralized and dichotomized classifications of religious practice. Especially with regard to the local constitution of clerical authority, the Azerbaijani clergy's extension of its institutional authority over the shrines and the ritual transformation of official mosques into shrines call into question the conceptual utility of distinguishing axiomatically between clerical and nonclerical spheres of religious practice.

By focusing on the distinct nature of the forms of official and popular religious activities, in contrast to the functions and meanings that they assume for Muslim practitioners, I have attempted to show the ways in which the penetration of popular religious practice within the mosque serves to both confirm and subvert clerical hegemony in the Muslim community. In this sense, the ritualized resistance to clerical authority expressed in the Muharram chanting at Täzä-pir simultaneously challenges and reproduces the leading religious role of the clergy.

The moments in which the forms of seemingly distinct and separate institutions and practices are appropriated and reinvested with new functional significance are moments of ambivalence in which the very identity of human arrangements is subject to transformation. What is most significant, both analytically and politically, is that this transformation cannot be characterized as a simple choice between the stability or instability of the status quo. Rather, these contestations of meaning and function, which engage both the officially authorized cleric and the ordinary Islamic pilgrim, are the very dynamic by which Soviet Islam itself was continuously formulated and reformulated, constituted and reconstituted, created and transformed.

NOTES

1. This paper was being written by the author with help from Maranatha Ivanova, a Ph.D. candidate in political science at UC Berkeley at the time of the author's death. It was completed by Ms. Ivanova.

2. "Poslovtsy shirvanskikh tatar," in *Sbornik materialov dlia opisaniia mestnostei i plemen kavkaza,* v. 24 (Tiflis, 1898), p. 3.

3. Christian Coulon, *Les Musulmans et le pouvoir en Afrique noire* (Paris: Karthala, 1983); Fazlur Rahman likewise describes Sufism as an expression of protest against clerical religion (*Islam,* 2d ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], pp. 150–51.)

4. See, for example, the concise critique proposed by Dale F. Eickelman, "Changing Interpretations of Islamic Movements," in *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse,* ed. William R. Roff (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), p. 18, and more thoroughly in Dale F. Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976).

5. Jacques Waardenberg, "Official and Popular Islam," *Social Compass* 25, 3/4 (1978). The term is also employed by Ira Lapidus in his *History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

6. John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

7. This method is advocated, for example, in Coulon, pp. 7–9.

8. This physical description of shrines in Azerbaijan shares many comparable features to those in Morocco described by Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 49–50.

9. The author, M. A. Balayev, names the following districts: Astara, Lerik, Massallï, Länkäran, Shamakhï, Guba, and Nakhchïvan ASSR; "Azärbayjanda 'mügäddäslärä' pärästish galïglarï"; Ph.D. dissertation, Azerbaijan SSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy, Baku, 1969.

10. See, for example, Z. Zülalova, "Gadïnlar arasïnda dindarlïghïn täzahürläri vä elmi ateist tärbiyäsi mäsäläläri"; Ph.D. dissertation, Azerbaijan SSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy, Baku, 1974, pp. 53–57.

11. Kaflan Khanbaev, "Kritika islamskoi kontseptsii svobody voli"; Ph.D. dissertation, Dagestan State University, Makhachkala, 1986, p. 132. According to a Tajik scholar, in Tajikistan 70 percent of pilgrims are women (R. M. Madzhidov, *Osobennosti formirovaniia ateisticheskogo mirovozreniia zhenshchin (na materialakh Tadzhikskoi SSR)* (Dushanbe, 1977), p. 43.

12. For a useful study of the shrines, see Abdulla Ähädov, *"Mügäddäslärä" pärästishin mahiyyäti vä müasir galïglarï haggïnda* (Baku: Azärbaïjan SSR "Bilik" Jämiyyäti, 1986), and Balayev.

13. I. I. Meshchaninov, *Piry Azerbaidzhana* (Leningrad, 1931).

14. Balayev.

15. Compare this to the more general concept of niyyät, considered as a mandatory psychic preparation before performance of the mosque prayer. In some schools of Shi'i theology, niyyät, or purity of intention, is considered a fundamental precondition to the pious performance of any ritual (Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985], p. 178).

16. From interviews conducted among pilgrims on the Apsheron Peninsula during fall 1987.

17. In his pioneering work on gift exchange, Marcel Mauss considers reciprocity to be one of the fundamental features of the gift (*The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* [New York: Norton, 1990]).

18. On the range of rock-oriented religious practices, see H. A. Guliev and A. S. Bäkhtiyarov, *Azärbayjanda gädim dini ayinlär vä onlarïn maïshätdä galïglarï* (Baku, 1968).

19. On the early fetwas, see T. Izimbetov, *Islam i sovremennost'* (Nukus, 1963), p. 98. One of the more recent fetwas, entitled "On ethics in visiting *mazars* (holy places)," was drafted in 1983 (*MSE* 2 [1983]: 17).

20. The *ziyara*, or shrine pilgrimage, is a common feature of Islamic practice most usually associated with the veneration of Sufis. See, for example, Esposito, p. 110.

21. Momen, pp. 181–82.

22. The mausoleum is reputed to be the grave of the third son of Abujäfär Mähämmäd ibn Zeïnalabdin, the fifteenth imam recognized in Shi'i tradition. For a discussion of the shrine's history (and pseudo-history), see Ähädov.

23. The provider of these details, formerly head of the state committee for religious affairs under the Azerbaijani SSR Council of Ministers, also notes that during 1968–71, the shrine at Qöy Imam collected over 30,000 rubles a year in cash alone (Ähädov, p. 25).

24. Stephen Lukes, "Political Ritual and Social Integration," *Sociology* 9, 2 (May 1975).

25. For a Soviet study of the zikr and its connection to Sufism in Dagestan, see Mustafinov, *Zikrizm i ee sotsial'naia sushchnost'*. For a Western description of the zikr based on similar Soviet sources, see Alexandre Bennigsen and S. E. Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 77–83.

MAJORITY-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE SOVIET REPUBLICS

As a child, I was fascinated by my world globe. The shapes and colors of the different countries represented an unfathomable realm of faraway places and cultures. Following the longitudes on the revolving sphere with my finger, it was impossible not to wonder about the unusually large and invariably pink patch on one side of the globe. This patch, of course, was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a place that we more commonly referred to with the less cumbersome name—Russia.

To a great extent, the geographic representation of the Soviet Union as a single, pink-colored country reflected our traditional understanding of the Soviet political system. In this view, the Soviet Union was a unitary, monolithic, and homogeneous state where conformity was forcibly ensured by an omnipotent Communist Party. And, given common assumptions about the nature of this state, the name Russia appeared an adequate description.

Clearly, contemporary events in the Soviet Union have rendered the facile (and incorrect) appellation "Russia" obsolete as a descriptive device for the vast and variegated country we more properly call the Soviet Union. Now, it seems, the rise of political movements among the non-Russian populations of the Soviet Union—populations that constitute one half of the total Soviet population—require us, if not yet to redraw the map entirely, at least to give it more than one color.

But the rise of powerful and very determined political movements among the non-Russian populations of the Soviet Union has led us into another quandary of oversimplification. In place of Russia, we now often see a brightly colored and ever-moving kaleidoscope of different nations and ethnic groups voicing competing claims for greater ethnic rights in a reforming Soviet polity. As a result, we tend to conflate all sorts of national activism into a single type, assuming that every national movement must necessarily be

defined around opposition to Russian hegemony and the maintenance of Soviet power. In effect, we have moved from the oversimplification of thinking about the Soviet Union as Russia to the equally simplistic image of the Soviet Union as a plethora of nationalities clamoring for liberation from the yoke of Soviet Russian rule.

In this light, my comments are directed at examining the variety of ethnic political movements in today's Soviet Union. In particular, I want to focus on what I consider a fundamental conflict between the political movements of national majorities in the republics and the ethnic activism of minority communities that operate within or across current republic borders. Given the widespread assumption that the only difference among Soviet nationalisms is the name of the given ethnic group acting nationalistically, the need for a more nuanced understanding of the origins and political trajectories of national activism is especially acute. In both the academy and the journalistic community, talk of "the republics" has become commonplace. But too frequently categories such as "nationalities" and "nationalism" are mixed in with this talk, as if each republic were comprehensible in terms of its titular nationality and that all nationalisms could be treated as undifferentiated, amorphous masses in the fourteen non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union.

Western analysis of contemporary Soviet politics has tended to understand the Soviet Union's nationality problem as consisting chiefly of Moscow's relations with the national republics. This trend frequently followed from a definition of the nationality question that predominated (and predominates) in Moscow policy circles. Given the fundamental assumptions of Moscow's policy on questions of nationality, one of the central government's solutions to the rise of nationalism in the country was reflected in the slogan: "a strong center and strong republics." Moscow policy-makers, however, soon realized their poor choice of language, and not long after its initial announcement they quickly moved to transform the slogan (if not the policy) to the politically more acceptable formulation "a strong union and strong republics." Reflected in both slogans was Moscow's hope that it would be able to maintain the power of the central government while devolving greater power and authority to the republics.

Unfortunately for both Western analysis of Soviet politics and Moscow-based policy-making, there is more to nationality politics in

the Soviet Union than just Moscow and its problematic relations with the republics. While it is true that this is an important aspect of contemporary political conflicts in the country, what it leaves out is that national movements are based not only on the republics as distinct units of political action, but also frequently operate at the subrepublic level—both within and across the union republics. In this regard, Moscow's attempts to solve the country's nationality problem by redefining relations between the center and the republics bypasses some of the fundamental nationality-based conflicts in the country. As Western observers of Soviet politics, there is probably little we can do to remedy the fact that local nationalisms have already transcended Moscow's attempts to neutralize them. But we are in a position to gain a better understanding of contemporary Soviet politics by revising the way we look at the politics of nationalism in the USSR.

One of the basic sources of nationality-based political conflict in the Soviet Union today is that the demographic ethnic map and the political ethnic map do not match. Conflicts that are based on this lack of correspondence derive from the nature of the Soviet political system itself, in which the organization of state administration is closely linked with both territory and nationality. In effect, Soviet state formation fostered the development of separate forms of ethnic state administration to provide political representation for a range of distinct national communities. Referred to as national-statehood in Soviet political discourse, Soviet policies sponsored the development of a hierarchy of state administrative divisions that were defined in ethnic terms. The collection of union republics, autonomous republics, autonomous regions, and autonomous districts that composed the Soviet Union were not simply units of political administration but were distinct ethnoterritorial state formations.

The Soviet institution of territorially based national-statehood was further consolidated by promulgation of the policy of *korenizatsiia,* or nativization, a program of affirmative action in state, party, and economic administration. Viewed as an antidote to Russian political hegemony under Tsarism, nativization fostered the development of local national elites to run the affairs of the newly forming national administrations. But while the policy of nativization, implemented in the institutional context of the national state, afforded a privileged status to the so-called titular nationality

of each ethnoterritorial administration, the policy at the same time disenfranchised the nontitular populations of the given territory. Thus, in an attempt to solve the problem of Russian/non-Russian relations in the periphery, Soviet policies fostered new forms of ethnic discrimination in relations between the various non-Russian national communities resident in the republics.

Given this form of state administration, it is not surprising that nationality conflicts operate not only between the national republics and the central political leadership, but also within the multi-ethnic societies of each national republic. When speaking of national movements in the Soviet Union, therefore, we must be careful to distinguish those national movements that are based on a particular national republic and those movements that cross ethnic-administrative borders. Thus, our increased attention to the national movements of Uzbeks, Latvians, and Georgians in their own republics must be complemented by a realization that there is also the distinct question of Tajiks in Uzbekistan, Armenians in Azerbaijan, and Ukrainians in the Pacific coast region. Of course, we also should not leave out the equally important problem in national relations of the Russian populations resident in the non-Russian republics from the Baltics to Central Asia.

The variety of subrepublican national movements and their political trajectories frequently operate in competition with and in opposition to national movements based on the national republic itself. Moreover, the differences between republic-based and subrepublic national movements are exacerbated by current Moscow policies that seek to devolve more power and autonomy to the national republics. Thus, while the center is ostensibly attempting to provide greater sovereignty to the national republics the local conception of sovereignty in those republics, often differs markedly from Moscow's.

While Moscow may view the republic as a form of government that guarantees rights to all the citizens resident within it, the local understanding of sovereignty frequently revolves not around the republic itself but rather the titular nation of the given national formation. The difference lies in the distinction between the notion of the republic as representative of the totality of its resident citizens and the more limited notion of the republic as a political form to represent only the members of a particular nation. In the law on sover-

eignty passed in Azerbaijan in October 1989, for example, reference is made to the Soviet Union not as a federation of union republics but as a federation of nations. In this way, the Azerbaijanis consider their republic and their nation to be interchangeable, effectively excluding resident non-Azerbaijanis from political representation.

The republic has, in effect, ceased to exist as a terminal political community and no longer possesses intrinsic political value. Instead, the republic exists solely as an instrument by which the given nation that dominates it seeks to extract political, economic, and social benefits from the system. It is important to emphasize, moreover, that the transferral of political loyalty from the republic to the nation is not an innovation of the Gorbachev period. Rather, this mode of ethnopolitical identification has deep roots in post-Stalin developments, particularly in the realm of culture.1

The marked tendency to identify politically with one's national community is complicated in the Caucasus in particular—but, to an increasing degree, in the rest of the Soviet Union as well—by the development of national movements that operate within or across republican borders. Thus, at the same time republic administrations are being reclaimed in the name of the republic's titular nationality, nontitular nationalities living in the republics are also increasing their claims on the republic for rights and protection. Failing that, such subrepublic national movements are seeking solutions from outright separation from the republic (the Armenians of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region [NKAO] or the Abkhaz in Georgia) to the organization of ethnic-political autonomy within the republic (the Germans of Kazakhstan and the RSFSR or the Poles of Lithuania).

Among conflicts that have opposed nationalities of the same republic against each other, the earliest and most persistent has been the Armenian movement centered around the NKAO in Azerbaijan. Both Western and Soviet media have portrayed the struggle for control of the NKAO as a conflict between two republics—Armenia and Azerbaijan. While it is true that the conflict has evolved into a dispute of interrepublic dimensions, the movement was originated and has been continued by the Karabakh Armenians themselves in relation to the Azerbaijani political leadership in Baku. That is, the most fundamental component of this conflict is the struggle of the Armenians of the NKAO *from within the Azerbaijani republic* to separate

their province from Azerbaijan and form a union with the neighboring Armenian republic. In its origins and decades-long development, the Karabakh movement claimed civic, economic, and cultural rights for the Armenians living in Azerbaijan, and only following the failure to secure these rights within the context of the Azerbaijani republic was union with Armenia considered to be indispensable. Thus, Karabakh Armenians emphasize that theirs is a movement for national self-determination and not a case of "foreign" intervention of the Armenian republic in Azerbaijani affairs. Thought of in this light, the deadlock in the "Armenian-Azerbaijani" dispute is not so much between Armenia and Azerbaijan as it is between the NKAO Armenians and the ethnic Azerbaijani political leadership of the Azerbaijani republic.

Subrepublic and transrepublic national movements have emerged as important political players not only in their own right, but they have also in some cases contributed to the formation of related (and more frequently, opposed) national movements. Thus, the intense political conflict over the NKAO and its reverberations in Moscow raised the issue of the rights of national minorities (of so-called nontitular nationalities) to an all-Union level. The rise of *perestroika*-inspired independent political activism among Azerbaijanis, for example, is inseparable from the Karabakh Armenian movement. Not only did the local Armenian movement catalyze the early formation of an Azerbaijani national movement, but the Karabakh question has continued to plague Azerbaijani politics as a pivotal issue.2

Like in Azerbaijan, the emergence of national activism among minority populations in Georgia has played an important role in catalyzing the formation of the majoritarian national movement. Thus, in its early stages the Georgian national movement emerged as a response to the political struggle of the republic's Abkhaz minority for political separation from Georgia. Since that time, not only the Abkhaz movement but also the rise of political activism among the substantial minority populations of Ossets, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis has served to remind us of Georgia's status as "tiny empire" and has informed the current political process in the republic. In Armenia proper, the Karabakh movement catalyzed from beyond the republic's borders the formation of oppositional political movements. Today, those same Armenian political activists that acted in

solidarity with the NKAO have risen to power in the republic's parliament and government.

All these national movements have their specific origins and trajectories, but one factor that unites them is the quest for national sovereignty. Given conditions in which the institutions of political rule are defined in ethnic terms, however, it appears inevitable that conflicts will arise between majoritarian movements that seek the renationalization of their respective republics and minority movements that have emerged at the same time with more vocal claims for their own national rights. In this light, the Soviet Union's new nationalisms do not simply reflect primordial ethnic sentiments that have been "unleashed" by Gorbachev, but they follow from the nature of Soviet ethnic political institutions, which themselves have fostered a whole series of structural political contradictions between ethnic communities.

The political effect of claiming one's rights while denying those of others is readily apparent in Transcaucasia. For example, the Armenians of the NKAO have argued for more economic, political, and cultural autonomy from Azerbaijan. In seeking to implement their own version of the Gorbachevian programs of self-financing and self-management, the Karabakh Armenians propose: "We are going to sell our products to our Armenian co-nationals in Armenia; we do not have to sell anything to Baku." Azerbaijani political leaders in Baku reject the Armenian claims and argue that as an inalienable part of the Azerbaijani republic the NKAO must submit to the republic's authority and coordinate its economy with the rest of Azerbaijan. At the same time, the Azerbaijanis draw from a like conception of rights to argue for greater political and economic autonomy of Azerbaijan in the all-Union context. Like the NKAO Armenians, the Azerbaijanis demand the autonomous right to market the resources and products of their republic to whomever they wish.3

Likewise, NKAO Armenians have condemned Azerbaijani violations of their national rights and called for the intervention of central authorities to secure their physical and cultural survival in Azerbaijan. But the majority Azerbaijanis consider any such intervention a violation of their own national sovereignty. The contradictions between the two positions appear virtually irreconcilable. Importantly, the question of minority and majority populations transcends that of the future de-

velopment of Soviet politics, because irrespective of whether there exists an independent Azerbaijan (or Georgia, for that matter) or an Azerbaijan within the Soviet Union, a similar set of nationality conflicts will continue to plague the region.

Anyone who has traveled to the Caucasus knows that the people are extremely hospitable. In the past two years, however, traditional Caucasian hospitality has undergone a specific transformation that I would refer to as the ideology of hospitality. In the context of this ideology, Azerbaijanis point out that they have been hospitable to the Armenians. Since the inception of the Karabakh movement, a whole series of polemical and historical arguments have been deployed by the Azerbaijanis to prove that the Karabakh Armenians are relatively recent immigrants to the region. The point is to prove to the Armenians that they are guests in the NKAO and the rest of Azerbaijan and that they should be grateful to the Azerbaijanis for their hospitality. And of course nobody appreciates guests that complain. In Azerbaijan, hospitality has reared its head in the most perverse of times. Thus, during the large-scale movement of Russians and Russian-speakers out of Azerbaijan in the wake of the final round of anti-Armenian pogroms in January 1990, the Azerbaijani press was literally filled with pronouncements lauding Azerbaijani hospitality in an effort to reduce the continued exit of Russians and other non-Azerbaijanis from the republic.

Similarly, the ideology of hospitality informs current Georgian discourse on ethnic relations. In discussing the Abkhaz question, Georgians argue that the Abkhaz are not indigenous to the Abkhaz autonomous republic and only in the past few centuries immigrated to Georgia. Georgians, whose reputation for hospitality probably surpasses that of the rest of the Caucasus, are quick to assume their hospitable role but insist that their Abkhaz guests must act accordingly—as docile, denationalized guests. In political terms, then, the ideology of hospitality serves to disenfranchise minority populations of any sense of right. Rather minority national communities are guests whose privileges (and not rights) are granted at the pleasure of the dominant, but always hospitable, nationality. In this context, political, cultural, economic, and other benefits accorded to minority populations are not viewed as the inalienable rights of citizenship; rather, they are revocable privileges which are enjoyed at the whim of another nation.

It is interesting to note that this ideology of hospitality is in a certain sense not a recent innovation, since although its terms are new, it nonetheless reproduces the conventional Soviet conception of the relation of ethnicity to political administration. Based on the formation of national-statehood, Soviet ethnographic and political classifications draw a sharp distinction between "native" (*korennoi*) and "non-native" (*nekorennoi*) populations of a given ethnoterritorial unit. In this scheme, Armenians who have lived for several generations in the city of Baku are considered to be "non-natives" in Azerbaijan, whereas Azerbaijanis who were born and raised in Iran and who in the past decade came to Baku as refugees from the Khomeini revolution are considered to be "natives" of the Azerbaijani republic. In a political system where indigenousness is an ethnic administrative category and not a reflection of actual origins or the historical length of residence, the conditions for the rise of an ideology of hospitality as well as other more deleterious forms of ethnic discrimination are set.

These are precisely the terms that have come to inform majoritarian attitudes in the national republics vis-à-vis minority, "non-native" communities. Azerbaijanis argue that since the NKAO is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan, if local Armenians insist on acting like Armenians, they should simply pick up and go to Armenia. Such an attitude implies a solution of the intrarepublican national question by means of forced or voluntary population transfer between republics. In the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, with the exception of the NKAO, such a "solution" has already been accomplished with undeniably tragic consequences. It is a far more problematic situation for the Abkhaz in Georgia, who are without the option of moving to an Abkhazia beyond Georgia's borders.

It is true that the rise of movements to renationalize the national republics contains positive dimensions that have contributed to revitalizing the life of the titular nationalities in the republics. At the same time, however, such movements have tended not only to disenfranchise nontitular national groups in the republics but in numerous cases to threaten the physical security of those groups.

To conclude, I would like to underscore that given the rise of nationalisms in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there has been much discussion about the distinctions between ethnic and civic movements. Ethnic movements are considered narrowly na-

tional and parochial, while the civic-oriented movements are seen as reflecting a kind of universalizing citizenship of the Western European type. More often than not, the national movements of majorities and minorities in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are condemned as narrowly nationalistic and dangerously chauvinistic. But while this may be a fair interpretation, Western Europe is mistakenly raised in contrast as a comparative model of the success of universal citizenship. The suggested distinction between ethnic and civic is a false one, since citizenship, wherever it has emerged—including the nation-states of Western Europe—has always had an ethnic component. In conditions of increasingly strident, nationality-based political conflicts and periodic bouts of intercommunal violence, the challenge to national movements in the Soviet Union is not to emulate a false model of West European success. Rather, national activists must forge innovative models of state formation and nation-building that move beyond the historically formed institutional framework of Soviet rule. In order to reduce the level of interethnic collective violence, the various national movements need to establish a political system that upholds the rights of all, irrespective of ethnic distinctions. Only such an achievement would secure the final dismantling of one of the foundations of the Stalinist political order.

NOTES

1. See Mark Saroyan, "Beyond the Nation-State: Culture and Ethnic Politics in Soviet Transcaucasia," *Soviet Union/Union Soviétique* 15, 2–3 (1988).

2. For an elaboration of what I call the "Karabakh syndrome" in Azerbaijani politics, see my "The Contradictions of Political Reform in Azerbaijan," *Problems of Communism* (forthcoming 1990). [Editor's note: Issued as "The 'Karabakh Syndrome' and Azerbaijani Politics," *Problems of Communism,* September–October 1990.]

3. For example, while there is very little oil left in the republic, Azerbaijanis argue that they should be able to sell their petroleum products in foreign markets at world prices instead of selling them for soft currency (often at a loss) to the union.

BEYOND THE NATION-STATE: CULTURE AND ETHNIC POLITICS IN SOVIET TRANSCAUCASIA

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic activism has emerged as one of the most difficult challenges for the USSR in the Gorbachev era. From the Baltic republics to the Caucasus and Central Asia, the scope and intensity of ethnic activism, along with the diversity of the issues raised, came as something of a surprise both for Soviet leaders in Moscow and observers of Soviet politics in the West. Western analysts of the Soviet ethnic politics have traditionally focused on the changing nuances of meaning articulated in party ideological tracts and nationalities policy, but reliance on official political discourse has willy-nilly been considerably discredited as a barometer of the diverse social and political interests emerging in the USSR's multinational society. In the not too distant past, the legitimate issues of ethnic politics were largely defined by this official discourse that tended to concentrate its attention on relations between the center and the republics and between the dominant Russian population and the rest of the country's ethnic communities. Now, it is ethnic activism itself, as diverse as the ethnic communities in which it is based, that has increasingly come to define the issues on the USSR's ethnic political agenda.

The overt articulation of ethnic political interests in political rhetoric was constrained by a formulaic obeisance to the ideological tenets of a "new historical community, the Soviet people" and the "friendship of peoples," but other fields provided more open and flexible forums for the elaboration of ethnic interests. One of these

realms was that of culture, the products of literary, artistic, and other intellectual endeavors. Indeed, some of the major trends in ethnic culture of the post-Stalin period prefigured the contours of ethnic politics in the Gorbachev era. The themes of yesterday's ethnic culture have often emerged as the issues of today's ethnic activism. Thus, the obsolete notion that culture in the USSR is a passive victim of state policy needs to be replaced with a view of culture as an active participant in the definition of social interests and the formation of political agendas.

The emergence of public protests and conflict over Karabakh, a predominantly Armenian enclave in the Azerbaijani republic, not only rattled political stability in the Caucasian republics, it also raised the issue of the rights of ethnic minorities outside their home republics to the all-Union level. But the Karabakh conflict and the tragic violence that it continues to produce are best understood in this broader context of the increasingly vocal assertion of political and cultural rights for ethnic populations without administrative autonomy. This article examines the cultural origins of this dimension of ethnic activism among the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. It reviews the ways in which Stalinist policies shaped the construction and reconstruction of ethnic identity and the changes that representations of ethnic identity underwent in the post-Stalin period. In this process of nation-building, culture, especially national literatures and historiographies, has served to legitimate the changing conceptions of ethnic identity. But the production of culture does not proceed independently of politics and institutions. Institutions do not unilaterally determine the forms and contents of culture, but the novel forms of political organization brought by Soviet rule in the Caucasian republics established a new context for both cultural activity and ethnic politics in the USSR.

STALIN ANSWERS THE NATIONAL QUESTION: NATIONAL-STATE CONSTRUCTION

One of the crucial issues facing the young Soviet government was the development of new forms of political organization for the country's multi-ethnic population. Early Soviet policies concerned with state formation were decisively influenced by Joseph Stalin's

1913 article "Marxism and the National Question." The core of this article is Stalin's definition of a nation: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."1

Stalin's definition of a nation has elicited much debate and criticism, but one of the points least discussed is his inclusion of territory as an attribute of the nation.2 The salience of the territorial dimension to Stalin's understanding of nationality is reflected in the text of the article itself, which reads like an extended polemic against Austro-Marxist theories of the national question that identify national rights with the ethnic community, or nation, irrespective of location. It is against the Austro-Marxist conception of the nation and the related program for extra-territorial cultural-national autonomy that Stalin established his counter-program for the self-determination of territorially based nations.

It was only after the 1917 revolutions that the Bolshevik leadership embraced the notion of federalism—an idea that had previously been vehemently denounced in Lenin's writings on the national question. One of the fundamental innovations of federal state formation under Soviet rule was based in the Stalinist linkage of ethnicity, territory, and political administration and enshrined in the idea of national statehood *(natsional'naia gosudarstvennost')*. The concept of national statehood was made an institutional reality by the creation of a federation of political divisions that were in fact ethno-territorial units and organized into an administrative hierarchy extending from the highest form of national statehood, the national republic, to the lowest, the national district *(natsional'nyi okrug).* In this way, the building blocks for the new Soviet federal system were not simply geographic administrative divisions but a collection of national-territorial states.

The political practices that grew out of the idea of national-statehood contributed to the development of national identification within the bounds of the territorial state as a means to "modernize" Soviet society along the lines of an essentially West European model—despite the sometimes assimilationist views of Bolshevik leaders.3 Nation-building in the republics was engineered in order to coincide with the ethno-territorial organization of Soviet state formation. Traditional social identities that had been con-

structed around social categories such as class, clan, tribe, and local patterns of urban and rural residence gave way, under Soviet policies, to a newer, overarching identity based on ethnicity. Thus, ethnic consolidation, not assimilation nor the attenuation of ethnic identity, has become one of the hallmarks of Soviet power. The Soviet state further institutionalized ethnic identity in 1932, when it inaugurated an internal passport system that included an officially recognized ethnic affiliation for each Soviet citizen. Through the passport system the state established itself as a regulatory agency for ethnicity, since it both endowed its citizens with an ethnic marker and reserved the rights to maintain or change their formal ethnicity.4

Azerbaijan provides an example of the regulatory function of the state in formal ethnic identity. In 1937, the majoritarian population of the Azerbaijani republic, formerly known as "Türk," was reidentified with a new ethnonym, "Azerbaijani" (in the Azerbaijani language, "azärbaïjanly"). The ethno-genesis of the Azerbaijani nation can thus be traced, in a formal, bureaucratic manner at least, to the late 1930s. Hardly unique in the history of the Soviet or other states, the Azerbaijani case demonstrates the logic of Stalinist national-state construction, whereby the formation of a Soviet republic named Azerbaijan required the existence of an Azerbaijani nation to inhabit it.5

More than just name changes, the formation of national-territorial administrations served to promote and reinforce ethnic cohesion in a number of ways. Most basically, the creation of a state apparatus endowed with the features of a modern nation-state, including national flags, seals, and anthems in the language of the titular nationality of each republic, provided a sense of political and sociocultural security for each titular national community. For Georgians and Azerbaijanis, whose territories were dominated under Tsarism by a combination of Russian political administration and Armenian, Russian, and, to some extent, European economic elites, Soviet power provided the symbolic attributes of national self-determination. For the Armenians, the existence of one's own national state provided an important sense of psychological and physical security for a population at least one quarter of which was comprised of refugees from the widespread massacres in Turkey.6

The federal system of national republics established not just the symbolic trappings of modern nation-states, but also the institutional basis for the formation of indigenous ethnic leaderships. The policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativization), adopted at the Soviet Communist Party's Tenth Congress in 1921, promoted personnel from each republic's titular nationality into a program of training and recruitment for service in the republic's political, economic, and cultural administration. Although after 1934 the pace of nativization faltered, the net result was the creation of an ethnic administrative elite that remains durable to this day. Despite the political ups and downs of centralizing and decentralizing tendencies in the Soviet federal system during various periods of its history, the day-to-day management of politics, economics, and culture has remained essentially in the hands of Armenians in Armenia and of Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan. Particularly in the cultural sphere, overrepresentation of the titular nationality in terms of its proportion of the republic's population is not uncommon, even in the post-Stalin period.7

CULTURE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ETHNIC HABITUS

The transformation of cultural institutions and practices played an important part in the Bolshevik vision of how to construct a socialist state. Lenin himself argued that one of the essential foundations of the new social and political order was the learning of socialism, and so the production of a new culture was aimed at instructing the people in socialism.8 Especially in the wake of the cultural revolution of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the production and distribution of culture was organized in and through a series of organizations, from the state publishing houses and the ministries of culture and education to the creative unions of artists, writers, architects, and other cultural producers.

In the national republics, the formation of this network of cultural administrations and the forms of cultural production they promoted reflected the encouragement of nation-building within the context of Stalinist national-state formation. Cultural institutions in the national republics organized the creation, not simply of a national culture in general, but of one that would contribute to the identity-formation and ethnic cohesion of the politically designated

titular nationality of each republic. In the realm of culture, the interconnection between the institutional form of the national republic and the program of nativization and nation-building became most apparent. The formation of cultural organizations and the organization of cultural practice reflected a politically inspired operational code of "one republic—one culture" that fit securely within the institutionalization of the Stalinist troika: one nation—one territory—one republic. In this sense, the status of "titular nationality" in a national-state administrative territory provided more than merely a nominal prestige; in fact, such status entitled the given ethnic community to cultural hegemony within its own territory.

The conscientious promotion of an ethnic culture during the period of national-state construction did not simply reflect existing forms of cultural and ethnic identity; rather it actively constituted a distinct sociocultural space and identity for the titular community of each republic. While the culturally mediated "nationalization" of the republics often referred back to ethnic traditions, the process of national-cultural construction developed not simply from the amorphous activization of "tradition" by the cultural intelligentsia but reflected the "modern" institutional innovations of Soviet national-state formation. Cultural producers organized in the various creative unions often engaged in the invention and reinvention of traditions that would reinforce the position of the titular nation on the territory of each national republic. The hegemony of the titular nationality was reproduced in all spheres of cultural practice, from the publishing of books, periodicals, and newspapers to the activities of theater and folkloric song and dance ensembles.9 For example, the formation of the Azerbaijani Writers' Union brought together writers mainly of Azerbaijani nationality to organize and regulate the production of a Soviet Azerbaijani literature—not simply literature in Soviet Azerbaijan.

During the Stalinist period of national-cultural construction, the formation of an ethnic environment centered around the production of cultural representations of ethnic identity in which the linkage of nation and territory was decisive. Thus, ethnic cultural practices promoted, as a rule, a conception of national identity that was inseparable from the given territory of the national republic.10 In the Armenian republic, for example, a toponymic transformation during the Soviet period replaced a majority of the previously wide-

spread Turkic or Muslim place names with Armenian toponyms that more appropriately identify the given territory as Armenian.11

Historiography was produced backwards from the current connection between nationality and territory, and, as a result, the officially canonized history of the titular nationality and that of the republic became virtually interchangeable. Azerbaijani historians produced histories of "Azerbaijan" in the medieval period based not on the historical facts of a prior national state but on the assumption that the genealogy of the present-day Azerbaijani republic could be traced in terms of putative ethnic-territorial continuity. Similarly, the history of the early medieval Christian kingdoms of Caucasian Albania that developed on the territory of the present-day republic was assimilated by Azerbaijani historians into the history of the Azerbaijani nation, despite the absence of linguistic and cultural similarities between the Caucasian Albanians and the contemporary Azerbaijanis. In this way, cultural practices substantiated claims to ethnic continuity based on the modern form of the territorial national state.

In literature, the production of historical novels, including works idealizing the relatively recent experiences of revolution and collectivization, contributed to the historical reconstruction of national identity and often glorified ethnic heritage and continuity largely within the context of the national homeland—that is, the national republic. In Armenia, the writing of historical novels often served to assimilate pre-Armenian history into the history of the Armenian nation.12

ETHNIC HEGEMONY AND MINORITY CULTURE IN THE NATIONAL REPUBLICS

The hegemony of the titular nationality was reflected not only in the cultural practices of the dominant nationality, but also in the cultural institutions and practices of ethnic minorities—that is, the nondominant national communities of each republic. Ethnic cultural institutions for the so-called "nonindigenous" national communities are weak, unlike in their home republics.13 While there are national-language schools, newspapers, and dramatic and literary associations forming the nucleus of a cultural life for nontitular ethnic

communities, these cultural institutions are few and operate with limited resources. Moreover, they lack the infrastructural support of the entire network of cultural organizations in the home republic. In practice, the privileges granted to the titular nationality led to the deprivation of other nationalities resident in the republic.

The consolidation of the titular national community's hegemony resulted in the historiographic and present-day compartmentalization of other ethnic groups in everything from the writing of history to the preservation of historical and cultural monuments.14 The Azerbaijanis, once a majority of the population of present-day Armenia, remain to this day a people without history, at least in Armenia. Similarly in Azerbaijan, the legacy of Baku's flourishing Armenian cultural past is not a topic for local research agendas. In a recent Azerbaijani study of nineteenth-century architecture in Baku, Armenian architects are assimilated into the broader category of Russian and European architects, and Baku's numerous monuments of Armenian architecture are literally written out of the city's history.15

Nontitular nationalities were eliminated not only from the past but from the present as well. Thus, if one walks through the overwhelmingly Armenian-populated districts of Havlabar in Tbilisi or Ermänikänd in Baku (literally, "Armenian village"), street markers, storefront signs, and other basic features of the urban landscape are uniformly in the titular nationality's language (Georgian or Azerbaijani) as well as Russian. The numerous Azerbaijani villages of Armenia and Georgia likewise display a "typically" Armenian or Georgian character. Moreover, they lack the cultural features such as bookstores full of literature in the national language or monuments to heroes of ethnic history that one could find in profusion in similar regions of the home republic. In effect, the cultural construction of social space remains remarkably loyal to the logic of the national state. Assimilated into the dominant ethnic environment, very little distinguishes these "distinct" ethnic areas from the surrounding landscape except for the ethno-cultural identity of the inhabitants.

Apart from the institutional limitations on the cultural activity of nontitular national communities, the extent of which is only now emerging in the Soviet media, the compartmentalization of ethnic culture is evident in the dominant themes of these groups' cultural practices. Whereas in the home republic ethnicity is an important

theme of cultural production, and national culture and history are conventional subjects of glorification and idealization, outside the home republic there is a virtual absence of self-conscious, explicitly ethnic themes. In the minority national schools outside the home republic, instruction, though conducted in the minority language, does not include national history and culture. The genre of the historical novel, which has served as an indispensable vehicle for the reconstruction of ethnic history in the home republics, is absent from the works of Armenian writers active in Azerbaijan and Georgia. In this sense, cultural practices among these minorities reflect an operational code that largely precludes the construction of minority national culture outside the home republic.16

CHANGING ETHNIC REPRESENTATIONS: FROM NATION-STATE TO NATION

So far it has been argued that the formation of ethnic identity in the Transcaucasus was structured by the establishment of national republics and a process of cultural construction that favored a national consciousness based on the identification of the nation and with a specific territory and state administration (the home republic). During the Stalinist period of Soviet history, two notable exceptions to this trend occurred in the immediate post-World War II period in both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Prior to and during the formation of a pro-Soviet Azerbaijani state in Northern Iran during 1945–46, ethnic culture in Soviet Azerbaijan was mobilized to assert the existence and ethnic rights of the Azerbaijani nation outside the home republic—namely, in the short-lived Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan. Cultural references to Iranian Azerbaijan multiplied, implicitly arguing that the Azerbaijani nation was significantly larger than simply the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan.17 In Armenia, widespread media coverage was given to the lot of Armenians in the foreign diaspora in connection with the campaign to encourage repatriation to the Armenian republic, particularly from the Middle East, that began in the immediate postwar period. Whereas in the Stalinist period reference to the

national rights of the Armenian diaspora would have been considered nationalist deviation, now public culture in Armenia focused on Armenian national communities outside of the republic's borders.18 These departures, by which cultural discourse included Azerbaijanis and Armenians living outside their home republics as parts of their respective nations, came to an end by 1949, when cultural practices once again refocused on the national republic as the sole haven of ethnic existence.

It was not until after Stalin's death in 1953 that significant changes in the thematic patterns of cultural production in Armenia and Azerbaijan began to emerge in a consistent manner. If representations of ethnicity under Stalin were generally restricted to the Soviet nation-republic, in the post-Stalin period these representations were reconstructed in a more inclusive conception of ethnic experience unfettered by contemporary political borders. This meant that cultural practice came to constitute nationhood, not just within the realm of the officially designated Soviet nation-homelands, but more broadly, in the experience of the given national communities, irrespective of geographic location. Whereas ethnic cultural practices had been compartmentalized through the state-sponsored program of nation-building organized around the identity of state, territory, and ethnicity, the culturally mediated process of nation-building now moved to incorporate national existence beyond the borders of the national republic.19

THE DECOMPARTMENTALIZATION OF ETHNICITY IN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

The cultural reconstruction of a single Armenian nation that extends beyond the borders of the Soviet Armenian republic has been most visible in the formation of an official discourse about Western Armenia, the geographic name given to the once Armenian-populated provinces of the Eastern Ottoman Empire.20 In this way, Armenian nationhood was culturally decompartmentalized from emphasis on the Armenian republic to incorporate the once large Armenian populations of Western Armenia into the broader category of the Armenian nation.

The reintegration of Western Armenians into Soviet discourse about the Armenian nation developed along a number of lines, but one of the more important themes of this discourse concerns the genocide of Western Armenians that took place in the Ottoman state during the First World War. The genocide is one of the most significant events of modern Armenian history, but Soviet Armenian writing on this subject developed only in the early 1960s. The authoritative benchmark for this new, inclusive historiography was the publication of Jon Kirakosyan's *The First World War and the Western Armenians,* published in 1965 and revised for second publication in 1967. The mid-1960s witnessed the production of a number of other works on the genocide, yet it was only during the late 1970s and 1980s that a number of Armenian scholars under the sponsorship of Kirakosyan began to turn out an entire series of publicistic articles and studies examining the genocide and countering Turkish governmental and academic denials of the massacres. Apart from the genocide, an increasing number of studies were produced on the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social, economic, and political history of Western Armenia.21

Western Armenian themes also developed in literary studies, where, as in historiography, they emerged only in the late 1950s and early 1960s.22 This scholarship has produced not just general critical histories of Western Armenian literature, but also works on individual writers and movements within the broader phenomenon. Along with the academic study of literature, more and more attention has been given to the publication and distribution of Western Armenian poets and prose writers, and major Western Armenian literary figures were well represented in the multi-volume series, the Library of Armenian Classics, that began publication in the 1970s.

Not only has scholarship on and publication of Western Armenian literature developed during the post-Stalin period, but the Western Armenian theme has become popular in the literary production of Soviet Armenian writers themselves. Poetry with Western Armenian themes has been produced by leading Armenian literary figures, including Hovhannes Shiraz, Paruyr Sevak, and Gevorg Emin. Strongly nostalgic prose, especially works devoted to the nineteenth-century Armenian revolutionary movement in the Ottoman Empire, has figured among the most popular writing in contemporary Soviet Armenia.23 During the 1960s and 1970s, Armenian

literature developed its own version of village prose, but the genre often reflected ethnic experiences in the rural areas of Western Armenia prior to the genocide during the First World War outside, rather than in, Soviet Armenia itself. By the mid-1980s, Western Armenian themes had become so widespread in Soviet Armenian literature that the former head of the Armenian Writers' Union, Vardges Petrosyan, complained, in his address to the Ninth Congress of Armenia's writers in 1986, that Western Armenian themes had virtually overwhelmed indigenous Soviet Armenian literature.24

Along with Western Armenia, the worldwide Armenian communities that comprise an ethnic diaspora (in Armenian, *spyurk)* have become an increasingly popular theme in Soviet Armenian culture. Similar to the Western Armenian thematic, diasporan themes emerged as a significant trend only in the post-Stalin period, particularly in the wake of Khrushchev's destalinization campaign initiated at the party's Twentieth Congress.25 Especially during the late 1950s and 1960s, a range of historical and political studies of the Armenian communities of the Middle East and elsewhere contributed to the integration of diasporan Armenian experience into the historiography of the Armenian nation as a whole.26 By the time of the publication of the first volume of the *Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia* in 1974, it seemed only natural that the geographic diversity of Armenian national existence be reflected. At the end of each article devoted to a specific country and sometimes even city, the encyclopedia's editors included descriptions of the history and present state of the given locale's Armenian communities.

Along with the discursive inclusion of diasporan Armenians into the category of "history of the Armenian people," diasporan writers and literature have been increasingly incorporated into the distribution of literature in Soviet Armenia. Not only is diasporan Armenian literature now a specific topic of Soviet Armenian literary studies, but also anthologies and separate publications of diasporan literature have become increasingly evident in Soviet Armenia's literary landscape.27 Local Soviet Armenian literary practice has also incorporated diasporan themes, such as the popular travelogues of the poet Silva Kaputikyan, that have served to extend cultural representations of ethnicity from Soviet Armenia to a shared yet distinct Armenian ethnic experience in Lebanon, Argentina, and the United States.

One of the significant trends within the diasporan theme in Soviet Armenian cultural production is the "inner diaspora" theme (in Armenian, *nerkin spyurk*)—that is, the history and culture of Armenian settlements within the current territory of the Soviet Union. This trend includes studies of the formerly large Armenian communities of the Ukraine, Moscow, and Petersburg along with smaller communities in the Crimea and Central Asia.28 While the general diasporan themes developed beginning in the late 1950s, Soviet Armenian writing on the "inner diaspora" emerged much later and much more slowly. Moreover, the production and distribution of knowledge about the inner diaspora has, especially in comparison with the non-Soviet diasporan theme, in the case of history writing often been restricted to the prerevolutionary, pre-Soviet period.29

Official historiography of the inner diaspora often ends in 1917, but the continuing vitality of Armenian cultural practice outside Armenia became a subject of greater attention in the 1970s and 1980s. Studies of Armenian cultural development in Soviet Georgia, especially in the fields of literature and theater, have figured prominently. Armenian culture and literary activity of the Armenian communities in Southern Russia and along the Black Sea coast have more recently been highlighted.30 Some attention has been given to Armenian cultural activity in Soviet Azerbaijan, but recent Armenian publications have tended to focus on the poor state of Armenian cultural monuments in that republic's formerly Armenian Karabakh and Nakhichevan regions.31

In Azerbaijan, the themes of post-Stalin cultural production have likewise been decompartmentalized to allow a more inclusive representation of Azerbaijani ethnic experience. In post-Stalin Azerbaijani culture the representation of an Azerbaijani nation now extends beyond the borders of the republic to incorporate the Azerbaijani populations of northern Iran, known in Baku as Southern Azerbaijan, as well as the Azerbaijanis of Armenia, Georgia, and Dagestan.

Indeed, one of the main trends of Soviet Azerbaijani culture during the post-Stalin period has centered around Southern Azerbaijan, often referred to simply as the South (in Azerbaijani, *Jänub*). In the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the South became an increasingly visible component of Azerbaijani cultural production in Baku. In literature, the abundance of Southern themes has even

given rise to the formation of an entire subgenre of Soviet Azerbaijani literature, dubbed the "literature of longing" (in Azerbaijani, *häsrät ädäbiïïaty)* by its practitioners.32 Prose writers such as Mirzä Ibrahimov, and poets, including Balash Azäroghlu, Süleïman Rüstäm, Äli Tudä, and others, many of whom were born in Iran and later emigrated to Soviet Azerbaijan, have been at the forefront of this cultural movement which has warmly embraced the South as an integral part of the Azerbaijani nation. This developing reintegration of the ethnic experiences of the Southern Azerbaijani populations with those of their northern co-nationals was often exemplified in works with titles such as *We Were Separated from One Root,* suggesting that a single Azerbaijani nation exists in spite of its division between two states.33

Poets have been especially active in the production of a literature of longing that permeates contemporary Azerbaijani literary practice. Remarking that the South has played an important role in Azerbaijani literature's return to its roots and to its identity, the former head of the Azerbaijani Writers' Union, Ismaïyl Shykhly, in his address to the Eighth Congress of Azerbaijan's writers, was moved to claim that: "We can find longing for the South and pain for the South in the works of practically all our poets."34

Indeed, not only has the South become a theme of a domestically produced Soviet Azerbaijani culture, but the 1980s has witnessed an increase in the publication and distribution of Southern Azerbaijani literature in Baku. One large-scale undertaking in this trend is the publication of a four-volume anthology of Southern Azerbaijani literature, of which three volumes have already been published.35

Concomitant with the rise of Southern thematics in literary production, Soviet Azerbaijani historiography has increasingly focused its attention on the history and culture of the South. Reflecting on the need to reconstruct the public discourse on Azerbaijani history, the head of the History Faculty at Azerbaijan State University, I. Mahmudov, recently noted: "We have [previously] tried to look at our people's historical past only within the framework of Soviet Azerbaijan's current borders. As far as I'm concerned, when discussing all issues of our ancient, medieval, and contemporary history, the history of Southern Azerbaijan must not be forgotten."36

The focus of this new, decompartmentalized historiography most often explores the modern history, culture, and politics of the South.37 One of the more important publications in this field is a recent volume that provides a comprehensive history of Southern Azerbaijan after 1828—the first Azerbaijani history that concentrates on the South's distinct development since the division of Azerbaijan between the Persian and Russian empires.38 Thus, at the same time that Azerbaijani historians are endowing the South with its own historical identity, they are also working to reintegrate the South into their representation of a unified historiography for a unified Azerbaijani nation.

But the discursive unification of North and South in contemporary Azerbaijani cultural practice should not overshadow the more general expansion of the idea of a single Azerbaijani culture and nation, as is often the case with political reception and interpretations of this trend in the West.39 Representations of Azerbaijani national existence have simultaneously expanded to include the large Azerbaijani communities of present-day Armenia, Georgia, and Dagestan. The legitimation of this trend was recently argued by an Azerbaijani intellectual, who proposed that: "The arts and culture of the Azerbaijanis living in Georgia, Armenia, Central Asia and Iranian Azerbaijan are without a doubt an inseparable part of the arts and culture of the entire Azerbaijani people."40

Although in Azerbaijani cultural discourse there is not, as yet, a notion similar to the Armenian one of an ethnic diaspora, nevertheless the culture of Azerbaijanis living outside both North and South has gained increasing attention in Baku. Especially prominent in this trend is the inclusion of Azerbaijani history and contemporary cultural activity on the present territory of the neighboring republics of Armenia and Georgia.41 The development of Azerbaijani culture, especially literature, in Dagestan has also been a subject of emerging exploration.42 At times, this trend has come to include references to a Turkic-speaking ethnic group in Iraq, the Turkmens, who are considered in Baku to be the descendants of Azerbaijani emigrants.43 Taken as a whole, these trends focusing on the South and the Azerbaijani communities outside Azerbaijan reflect a corresponding shift in the operative code of cultural practice from the compartmentalized Stalinist notion of "one republic—one culture" to the

post-Stalin principle of "one nation—one culture," irrespective of politico-administrative and geographic considerations.

CULTURAL CONTEXT AND THE LEGITIMATION OF ETHNIC DEMANDS

Conventional political commentary on the origins of the current upsurge of ethnic demands points to the role that Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* has played in legitimating the expression of ethnic claims and demands. Some exaggerate the role of state policy and argue that glasnost has somehow "caused" the expansion and intensification of these demands. While it is undeniably true that current policies have served to legitimate the claims for national and cultural rights "from above," there has also been a legitimation of ethnic demands "from below," especially from within the realm of cultural production.

In Armenia and Azerbaijan, cultural practices have provided a forum for the post-Stalin reconstruction of ethnic identity that embraces the nation as a whole and not just the population of the national republic. The climate of opinion formed in the realm of cultural practice has led to a crisis of political representation, in which demands for the national and cultural rights of co-nationals living beyond the borders of the home republics have figured prominently. In this way, not only has glasnost had an impact on cultural practices under Gorbachev, but the politics of culture has decisively influenced the culture of politics in Armenia and Azerbaijan. By providing a novel framework for the conception of ethnic identity, cultural practices have contributed to the legitimation of an agenda of ethnic rights which include problems of national existence beyond as well as within the borders of the republics.

It is in this context that the Armenian movement for Karabakh emerged. In view of the post-Stalin shift in ethnic identity described in this paper, in which the culturally mediated definition of the nation emphasized ethnic and cultural attributes over political and territorial features, the demand for the legitimate reintegration of the Armenians of Karabakh into the Armenian nation as a whole is a natural one.

The Armenian struggle over Karabakh was expressed most overtly in its territorial designs, but behind the calls for annexation was the larger, indeed, more complex, issue of the rights of nationalities living outside their home republics.44 One of the fundamental thrusts of the Armenian movement for Karabakh has been the restitution of Armenian national-cultural rights in Azerbaijan—from the provision of Armenian-language television and radio broadcasting to the improvement of Armenian educational, publishing, and other cultural facilities in the disputed region. In a word, Armenians demanded that the same national and cultural rights accorded to Armenians in the Armenian republic be provided to the Armenian populations of Azerbaijan.

The Karabakh question is only one of a series of issues focusing on the rights of Armenians to their language, history, and culture—to their national identity—beyond the borders of their republic. In this sense, even the successful annexation of the Karabakh autonomous region to Armenia would leave unsolved the related problem of national-cultural rights for the large Armenian communities of Azerbaijan that are located outside the region.45

Prompted in part by the pan-Armenian euphoria over Karabakh, the Armenian republican media have reflected an upsurge of interest in the Armenian diaspora both within and beyond Soviet borders. During the past year, the multiplication of demands for educational and cultural rights of Armenians outside the republic has produced a pattern of concessions that have either followed or preempted these demands. In addition to the concessions made in Karabakh, Armenian schools in Georgia are being rebuilt and renovated, and the teaching of Armenian history in Georgia's Armenian schools has been improved with the publication of new Armenian-language textbooks and the creation of teacher-retraining programs.46

Similar developments outside the southern Caucasus have received wide attention in Armenia's media. In order to meet the cultural needs of the growing Armenian community in Moscow, an Armenian cultural center was recently opened at the Permanent Representation of the Armenian SSR in the Soviet capital, where, in addition to other activities, special courses in Armenian language are now offered.47 In Rostov, the site of an old Armenian colony, a new association, "Nor Nakhichevan," recently began operation, and

instruction in Armenian language and literature has begun.48 New Armenian cultural organizations have also been organized for the Armenian communities in Leningrad, Tallinn, Riga, Lvov, Kharkov, and Simferopol, among others.49

This pattern of demands for the rights of a people beyond their national republic has also been replicated in the case of the non-Soviet Armenian diaspora. Special consideration to Armenia's relations with the diaspora was given during a plenum of the Armenian Communist Party in September 1988. In line with the renewed attention to the Armenian diaspora, Norayr Adalyan, a secretary of Armenia's Writers' Union and the former editor of the union's weekly newspaper, *Grakan Tert,* has argued that the "half of our people" living in diaspora merit greater consideration from Armenia's political and cultural leaders. He complained that the efforts to expand diaspora-homeland relations through the state Committee for Cultural Relations with Armenians Abroad have been insufficient. He called for Yerevan to publish at least five or six books per year by diasporan writers, and added that local publications should be printed in larger press-runs to meet demands for their distribution in the diaspora.50

A number of organizational changes have also been proposed to expand relations with the diaspora. One of the points of the unofficial Karabakh committee's program was the formation of Armenian representations in foreign countries with large Armenian communities.51 The recent opening of Yerevan offices for the foreign-based Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian Assembly of America, reportedly planned before the earthquake, provides expanded organizational channels for the development of close relations between the Armenian republic and Armenians of the diaspora.52

Demands for the expansion of relations with diasporan Armenians have obtained an economic dimension as well. In his address to the September 1988 plenum of Armenia's Communist Party's Central Committee, First Secretary Suren Arutunian (Harutyunyan) emphasized that *perestroika* allows for the improvement of economic cooperation between Armenia and the diasporan Armenian communities. Echoing this position, one recent article called for the creation of a special government office to foster greater economic collaboration between Armenia and Armenians in the diaspora.53 Such an or-

ganization could more efficiently promote investment by diasporan Armenians who have become especially active in the reconstruction of the earthquake-devastated regions of northern Armenia.

Though very few Armenians remain in present-day Turkey, the cause of Western Armenia has not lost its contemporary political relevance. As a direct result of popular demands voiced during the Karabakh crisis, the republic's leadership officially recognized the genocide of the Western Armenians as a national tragedy and proclaimed 24 April a republican holiday to commemorate the event. More than of just symbolic importance, Western Armenia has the potential to become a practical political cause. Despite the current lack of success in the campaign to annex Karabakh to Armenia, Viktor Hambartsumyan, president of Armenia's Academy of Sciences and a member of the Congress of People's Deputies, spoke to the Supreme Soviet to voice Armenian political and territorial claims to the Western Armenian provinces now in Turkey.

In Azerbaijan, political demands for national rights for Azerbaijanis living outside the republic developed in the context of an inclusive cultural discourse on Azerbaijani nationhood, but there is little doubt that the political catalyst for the recent upsurge of demands is the Armenian movement for Karabakh. In this sense, glasnost has permeated Azerbaijani political life as a result of the pressures of Armenian activism from below and not just at the behest of Moscow.

Often formulated as a set of counter-demands to the Armenian struggle for Karabakh, Azerbaijanis have voiced repeated concern over the fate of their co-nationals and demanded the protection of their culture in the Armenian republic.54 Like the Armenian complaints, Azerbaijanis point to examples of cultural repression in the Armenian republic and call for the provision of full national and cultural rights for the Azerbaijanis of Armenia.55 In response to popular Azerbaijani demands for the elimination of Karabakh's autonomous status, numerous Azerbaijani intellectuals have argued instead for the formation of an autonomous district for Azerbaijanis in Armenia in order to protect their status as a national community.56

Azerbaijanis have also made broader claims for the protection of their nationhood. In reviewing the threat to Azerbaijani national existence outside Soviet Azerbaijan, the director of the Nizami Insti-

tute of Azerbaijani Literature, Ïashar Garaïev, complained that the more than 15 million Azerbaijanis in Iran are deprived of their rights to cultural and social development. Garaïev also points out that the large Azerbaijani communities in Georgia, Armenia, and Dagestan are generally less developed and not accorded the same rights as other local inhabitants. Attacking the inattention to Azerbaijani cultural facilities in these republics, he further complains that the Armenian government has changed Azerbaijani toponyms in Armenia in an effort to deprive Azerbaijanis of their own history.57 Similarly, Anar, the current head of Azerbaijan's Writers' Union, has made appeals to safeguard the Azerbaijani patrimony outside the republic by linking the protection of national monuments to the development of ethnic culture and national self-preservation in Armenia and elsewhere.58

Despite increased attention to the plight of Azerbaijanis living in Armenia and other parts of the Soviet Union (to a large extent a response to the Armenians' Karabakh movement), the formulation of ethnic demands emanating from Baku has increasingly revolved around the Azerbaijanis "on that bank"—that is, the Azerbaijani populations living south of the Araz River that separates the USSR from Iran. Garaïev's comment rings a common note of concern: "Throughout history Azerbaijan has been parceled up many times. Three-fifths of its territory and its population have remained on that bank of the Araz. This is a historical injustice."59

In a recent series of essays on history, culture, and education sponsored by the literary monthly *Azärbaïjan,* the inclusion of "Southern" themes in school and university curricula was a repeated point of concern. A Baku literary critic complained that the teaching of literature in the republic gives the impression that Azerbaijan is a nation of only five million, not twenty million.60 Similar demands for including study of Southern literature, history, and geography have been voiced by other Azerbaijani intellectuals.61 The demands to publish more literature on Southern Azerbaijan, as well as to publish more literature from writers living in Iran, are made in the name of the entire Azerbaijani nation. Thus, the increased attention to Southern issues in Baku often reflects the perceived political responsibility of Soviet Azerbaijanis to act on behalf of their foreign compatriots, whose ethnic cultural activity is stringently restricted by the Iranian government.62

Connected with the issue of Southern Azerbaijan is the important problem of access. Contemporary Soviet Azerbaijani is written with a modified Cyrillic script, but materials published in Southern Azerbaijan are in the traditional Arabic alphabet. As one critic complained: "One people with two alphabets! There isn't a second phenomenon like this in the world. The alphabet divides not only our history but also our geography into two."63 Such demands for expanded instruction in the "old" alphabet have been met by requiring coursework in the Arabic script for all students in the humanities and social sciences at Azerbaijan State University, and Azerbaijan's Bilik (Knowledge) society has introduced a new public program to teach Azerbaijani in the Arabic alphabet. Promoters of the plan note that the allocation of additional resources necessary for the development of textbooks and other reading materials has not yet occurred.64

The desire for expanding relations with Azerbaijanis abroad has also increased. In 1988, the new Vätän (Homeland) society was organized to promote and regulate ties between the republic and Azerbaijanis living outside the USSR. Formed out of the Azerbaijani compatriots' department at the Azerbaijani Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the new organization provides an important institutional channel for the development of relations not only with Southern Azerbaijan, but also with Iranian Azerbaijani emigrants now living in the West, especially Europe and North America.65

Nonetheless, a review of Vätän's activities demonstrates the still limited potential for a rapprochement of Soviet and Iranian Azerbaijan. In this respect, recent complaints voiced in the Azerbaijani press point out that improved access to relatives, friends, and compatriots living in Iran cannot be met without the right of free movement across the Soviet-Iranian border: "I well understand that the claim to change current borders means creating the danger of war. But along with respecting today's borders, isn't it [possible] to broaden economic and cultural ties between North and South Azerbaijan and to guarantee travel back and forth [across borders] on certain days of the week?"66

ETHNIC CULTURE AND THE EMERGENCE OF
CROSS-REPUBLIC CONTACTS

The Homeland Society in Azerbaijan and Armenia's Committee for Cultural Relations with Armenians Abroad each provide organizational channels for the development of contacts between the republic and co-nationals resident outside the USSR. A seemingly more contentious issue is the development of relations between the national republic and nationals living beyond the republic's traditional political jurisdiction. Appeals for the protection of national communities outside the home republic are often linked with proposals to establish cross-republic institutional ties aimed at an improvement of ethnic integration regardless of traditional jurisdictional boundaries. Approximately one-third of the USSR's Armenians live outside the home republic; hence the perceived need for greater extra-territorial cultural protection is particularly acute for the Armenians.67

Since the formation of a special government administration for Karabakh in January 1989, cultural institutions in the region have developed greater organizational connections with like institutions in Armenia, thus providing a model for an emergent pattern of horizontal ties between republic-based nations and extra-republican national communities. Yerevan students have organized volunteer groups to work temporarily in Karabakh, while admission of Karabakh students to Armenia's institutions of higher education, especially teacher-training institutes, has been facilitated. While the prospects of opening a branch of Yerevan State University in Karabakh are dim, numerous newly established cultural organizations there have promoted a series of cooperative agreements with their counterparts in Armenia. Emphasizing the importance that these measures hold for the cultural and ethnic integration of the Armenian nation, activists have argued that the cultural contacts are conceived of as ties between "two sections of the same people." Likewise, Armenian cultural leaders underscore that the further development of ethnic culture must transcend politico-administrative divisions and operate on the principle of "one people—one culture."68

The expansion of Armenia's cross-republic institutional ties has not been limited to Karabakh. The Armenian Writers' Union recently

announced its intention to develop contacts with Armenian writers throughout the Soviet Union, especially the strong literary communities of Tbilisi, Baku, Rostov, and Sukhumi.69 Remarking on the advanced Armenian literary and publishing life of Sukhumi in the pre-Soviet period, one member of a Writers' Union delegation visiting Armenians along the Black Sea coast, Vazgen Kansuzyan, asked rhetorically: "[And] now? Not one Armenian paper, not one page, not one word." In view of the situation, Kansuzyan called not only for better organization of Armenian writers in the region, but also for the expansion of possibilities for publishing the works of local Armenians in Yerevan. In addition, he pointed to the need for Yerevan-based teacher-training courses to improve instruction in the Armenian schools of Abkhazia.70

In the various Soviet cities where Armenian cultural centers have opened to serve the local Armenian communities, cultural activists have appealed for material assistance, as well as moral support, from the home republic. In Tallinn, Armenian requests for a permanent building to house the cultural association were recently met by local authorities, but Tallinn's Armenian activists plan to expand and renovate the premises by securing the aid of the Armenian republic's various creative unions.71 In order to accommodate the sudden increase in cultural relations between the republic and Armenian communities throughout the USSR, the Armenian historian Sergei Vardanyan has pressed for the formation of a new government committee to organize and promote these cultural ties. The model for his proposal is the Committee for Cultural Relations with Armenians Abroad, an organization whose jurisdiction is over only Armenians outside the USSR.72

Azerbaijani measures to establish relations with co-nationals outside their republic have been especially concerned with the large community in Georgia, in part because most of the once large Azerbaijani population of Armenia has now emigrated. During the 1987 visit of the Tbilisi Azerbaijani writers' group Dan Ulduzu to Baku—itself a product of improving ties—members of the Azerbaijan Writers' Union emphasized that the republic's cultural associations had special tasks to fulfill since Azerbaijani culture extended far beyond the current political borders of Azerbaijan. At a meeting with the Dan Ulduzu organization, Anar, head of the Azerbaijan Writers' Union, addressed the directors of publishing

houses and the editors of major Baku periodicals by name, to empha-
size the need for them to facilitate local publication of Azerbaijani lit-
erature from Georgia.73

By 1989, the central committees of Georgia's and Azerbaijan's
Communist parties had developed a program for the extension of
rights to Georgia's Azerbaijani community. According to the agree-
ment, Azerbaijani language education in Georgia is to be expanded
and improved and is to include instruction in the history and culture
of Azerbaijan. An Azerbaijani cultural center, to be established in
Tbilisi, will serve as a base for the exchange of cultural workers from
the Azerbaijani republic and house museums devoted to Azerbaijani
heroes; special retail outlets for Azerbaijani products and other cul-
tural facilities are planned for the Azerbaijani-populated districts of
Georgia.74

Azerbaijan's   promotion   of   extra-republican   cul-
tural-institutional ties has reached Moscow as well. The establish-
ment of an Azerbaijani cultural center in Moscow to serve the
cultural needs of the Azerbaijani "diaspora" has recently been com-
plemented by the introduction of Azerbaijani radio broadcasts to
bring music and news of the home republic to the estimated 50,000
Azerbaijanis resident in the country's capital.75

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND SOVIET POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Ethnic politics in the national republics has increasingly re-
volved around claims for sovereignty and the rights of citizenship in
an effort to substantiate demands for more control over local affairs.
Claims of sovereignty are hardly new in Soviet politics.76 But today
arguments are no longer made for the sovereignty of the national re-
publics; ethnic activists currently conceive of a kind of sovereignty
that inheres not simply in the national republic but in the nation,
without regard to political borders. The decompartmentalization of
ethnic identity developed in the realm of culture throughout the
post-Stalin period has now emerged full-blown in social and politi-
cal activism under Gorbachev.

The explosion of demands for ethnic rights in the national re-
publics has been met with the Kremlin's promise of greater auton-

omy and the decentralization of decision-making in political, economic, social, and cultural affairs. Nonetheless, the emergent principle of a "strong center and strong republics" has done little to meet the challenge of demands in Transcaucasia, which move across republican borders to focus on the rights of national communities living outside their home republics. In the wake of the Karabakh crisis, and especially since the Nineteenth Party Conference held in 1988, the Kremlin leadership has expressed a preparedness to protect the rights of national communities without forms of administrative autonomy, including ethnic groups living outside their designated homelands.77 But this tendency represents more a collection of ad hoc measures in face of acute ethnic political crises than the reflection of a coherent nationality policy.

The problem of ethnic minorities is especially challenging since the provision of greater autonomy to the national republics often contradicts the center's professed concern for the protection of minority civil and cultural rights. Ethnic leaderships in the national republics of Transcaucasia are increasingly responsive to demands for the "restructuring" of ethnic cultural institutions to benefit the titular national communities at the same time that minority national communities are demanding more resources for their own cultural development. In Azerbaijan, for instance, discussions of language policy have concentrated on the extension and reinforcement of Azerbaijan improvement of their own ethnic cultural facilities in the region; the Azerbaijanis have emphasized the need to earmark these national languages.78

Moreover, competition over the allocation of scarce resources in the Caucasus has repeatedly led to conflict between the region's dominant and nondominant ethnic groups. This ethnic competition is one of the reasons for the continuing political crisis over Karabakh; while Armenians are claiming specially allocated government resources for the improvement of their own ethnic cultural facilities in the region, the Azerbaijanis have emphasized the need to earmark these resources for the development and protection of Azerbaijani culture in the Azerbaijani-populated areas of Karabakh.

A similar conflict over the organization and financing of ethnic cultural development has emerged in the case of Georgia's Abkhaz minority. This conflict has resulted not in greater protection of Abkhaz culture but in the activization of anti-minority chauvinism

among the Georgians. In this context, the emergence of more strident ethnic activism among the Georgian republic's large Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities lies ominously on the horizon.

Where national republican leaderships are intent on further "nationalizing" their ethnic space, minority ethnic communities quickly learn the implications of increasingly "strong republics." The massive, violent exchange of ethnic populations that occurred between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the fall of 1988 came after nearly a year of tense political struggle, but it ultimately reflected a kind of common sense imposed by the logic of the nation-state. Especially in the Transcaucasus, the promise of greater autonomy and sovereignty for republics founded on an ethnic principle can thus easily translate into the powerful and even violent domination of titular nations over national communities that are institutionally deprived of the benefits of such newly gained power.

Despite the expressed will to solve the complex challenge of the Soviet Union's new national question, the Gorbachev leadership has in effect proposed political solutions to a fundamentally institutional problem. Thus, while the Kremlin moves to reinforce the rights of the national republics and redefine Soviet federalism, ethnic politics has already transcended the institutional bounds of the national-republic system. The emergence of cross-republican cultural ties has mitigated the severity of ethnic competition, but these developments in the Caucasus, even in the case of Armenia's relation with Karabakh, remain fairly limited.

To borrow a metaphor from Samuel Huntington, ethnic political activism has outpaced the state's capacity for innovative political institutionalization.79 Popular participation in movements for national rights outside the home republic has greatly outflanked the ability of party and state officials to find new forms to manage the national-cultural demands of these communities without administrative-territorial autonomy. Indeed, as long as the system of national states remains one of the organizing principles of Soviet rule, the problem of minority populations resident in someone else's ethno-territorial space will continue to challenge Soviet policy-makers as a living legacy of Stalinist national-state formation.

NOTES

1. J. V. Stalin, *Works,* vol. 2 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), p. 307.

2. For recent Western discussions of Stalin and the national question, see Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), and Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, *Le Grand Défi: Bolchéviks et nations, 1917–1930* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987).

3. On the connection between national-state formation and social modernization, see Gregory J. Massel, *The Surrogate Proletariat* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974).

4. On the workings of the passport system in Soviet ethnic relations, see Victor Zaslavsky, *The Neo-Stalinist State: Class, Ethnicity and Consensus in Soviet Society* (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 1982), pp. 91–129.

5. In addition to the "ethnic" Azerbaijanis, distinct ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan, including the Talysh, Kurds, and others, were also reidentified as Azerbaijani during this period. The prominent Azerbaijani historian Süleïman Äliïarov has recently argued that the full history of ethnonymic changes undergone by the Azerbaijanis should become public knowledge and no longer hidden. See his comments in "Bizim sorghu," *Azärbaïjan,* no. 7 (1988): 176. In fact, the 1937 name-change was only the last move in a lengthy debate that emerged in the late nineteenth century over how to name the Azerbaijanis. For a brief discussion, see E. M. Akhmedov, *Filosofia azerbaidzhanskogo prosveshcheniia* (Baku: Azämäshr, 1983).

6. For estimates on the influx of Armenian refugees into Russian Armenia from Turkish Armenia, see G. E. Avagyan, *Haykakan SSH bnakchutyune* (Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalasarani Hratarakchutyun, 1975), pp. 32–33.

7. Grey Hodnett, *Leadership in the Soviet National Republics: A Quantitative Study of Recruitment Policy* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1978), p. 399.

8. V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues," in his *Selected Works,* vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress, 1971), pp. 470–83.

9. For a recent general discussion of trends in the production and consumption of titular national culture in the republics, see *Sotsial'nokul'turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), esp. pp. 180–295.

10. Here, as elsewhere in this article, I am emphasizing predominant trends in cultural practice. Nevertheless, cases in which ethnic representations move beyond the national republic can be identified in, for example, literary production. For instance, Vahan Totovents' three-volume novel published in the 1930s, *Baku* (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1930–34), and Mämmäd Said Ordubadi's three-volume novel of the same period, *Dumanlv Täbriz* (Baku: Azämäshr, 1930–48).

11.　A useful reference for study of Armenia's toponyms is A. A. Aslanyan and H. Gh. Grgearyan, *Haykakan SSH ashkharhagrakan anunneri hamarot bararan* (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakchutyun, 1981).

12.　For example, see the mythical reconstruction of pre-Armenian history in Sero Khanzadyan's novel *Taguhin havots* (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1978).

13.　Terminological usage serves to reinforce this ideological tendency. Thus, Armenians who for centuries have lived in Baku or Azerbaijanis who have similarly populated the countryside of contemporary Armenia are classified as "non-indigenous" (*nekorennyi*) national communities.

14.　I am grateful to Louisa Schein for suggesting the metaphor of compartmentalization.

15.　Sh. S. Fatullaev, *Gradostroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Azerbaidzhana XIX—nachala XX veka* (Leningrad: Stroiizdat, 1986).

16.　This analysis is based on my reading of contemporary Armenian prose and poetry published in Tbilisi and Baku and the Armenian literary journals *Grakan Adrbejan* (Baku) and *Kamurj* (Tbilisi). The complaints of Armenian writers and other cultural workers in Baku and Tbilisi, collected during my fieldwork in these cities, confirm the limitations placed on the expression of "national" themes outside the home republic.

17.　For more detailed treatments of these cultural trends, which virtually disappeared by the late 1940s, see David B. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan: The Uses of Nationalism for Political Penetration* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987).

18.　On the Armenian repatriation, see Claire Mouradian, "L'Immigration des Arméniens de la Diaspora vers la RSS d'Arménie, 1946–1962," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique,* 20, 1 (January–March 1979).

19.　A similar shift occurred in theoretical ethnography, where the concept of "ethnos" provided a way in which to discuss ethnicity beyond the geographic and temporal restrictions inscribed in the Stalinist definition of nation. See Iu. V. Bromlei, *Ocherki teorii etnosa* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983).

20.　For a detailed study of Soviet Armenian interest in Western Armenia and the diaspora more generally, see Claire Mouradian, "L'Arménie soviétique depuis la mort de Staline," Ph.D. dissertation, EHESS, Paris, 1982.

21.　Kirakosyan, up to his death in the mid-1980s, served as Armenia's minister of foreign affairs and produced a two-volume work, *Yeritturkere gatmutyanggdatastani araj* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1982–83). Articles condemning Turkish historiography of the genocide continue to be published by his colleagues in the monthly journal *Sovetakan Hayastan.*

22.　This is corroborated in the introduction to a recent anthology of Western Armenian poetry: V. A. Kirakosyan, *Arevmtahay banasteghtsutyune 1890–1907 tt.* (Yerevan: HSSH GA Hratarakchutyun, 1985), p. 5.

23. See, for example, Mushegh Galshoyan's *Dsori miron* (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1983); and Khachik Dashdents, *Ranchparneri kanche* (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1984).

24. *Grakan Tert,* 23 May 1986.

25. H. U. Meliksetyan, *Havrenik-Spyurk arnchutyunnere yev hayrenadardsutyune (1920–1980 tt.)* (Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalsarani Hratarakchutyun, 1985), p. 13.

26. These works include, for example, A. G. Abrahamyan, *Hamarot urvagitz hay gaghtavayreri patmutyun,* 2 vols. (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1964); S. Gasparyan, *Spyurkahay gaghtojakhnern aysor* (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1962). For a fairly complete bibliography, see Meliksetyan, p. 97.

27. While conventional representations of Armenian ethnicity in the diaspora were limited to "progressive" Armenian circles, more recent writings have included positive appreciations of community life connected to the traditionally anti-Soviet Armenian Revolutionary Federation (the so-called "dashnaks"). See, for example, Silva Kaputikyan's recently published Argentinian travelogue, "Buenos-Ayres hska kaghakum," *Sovetakan Grakanutyun,* no. 8 (1987), and Maro Margaryan, "Kilikyan hayatyan arzhanavor zharangnere," *Sovetakan Grakanutyun,* no. 12 (1987).

28. For examples of this historiography, see V. A. Mikayelyan, *Ghrimi haykakan gaghuti patmutyun, 1800–1917 tt.* (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakchutyun, 1964); A. A. Grigor'iants, *Armiane v srednei azii (Vtoraia polovina XIX v.-1917 g.)* (Yerevan: Izd-vo AN ArmSSR, 1984). On Moscow, see A. Arsharuni, *Moskvayi usanoghutyune* (Yerevan, 1965), and also his *Moskvayi hay mamule* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1971).

29. This limitation was recently criticized by the Armenian historian Sergei Vardanyan in "Menk partavor enk," *Sovetakan Hayastan,* 9 February 1989, pp. 2 and 3.

30. On the history of Soviet Armenian literature in Georgia, see A. Mkhitaryan, *Vrastani sovetahay grankanutyune* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1966); and A. Mkhitaryan [Mkhitaryan], *Armianskaia literatura v gruzii* (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1980). On the literature of the Hamshen Armenians along the Black Sea coast, see the anthology published in *Sovetakan Grakanutyun,* no. 10 (1987): 69–79, as well as the more general study of Hamshen Armenian culture presented in A. E. Ter-Sarkisiants, "Sovremennyi byt armian abkhazii," in *Kavkazskii etnograficheskii sbornik,* vol. 8 (Moscow: Nauka, 1984).

31. Shahen Mkrtchyan, *Lernayin Gharabaghi patmachartarapetakan hushardsannere* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1985). On the history of Karabakh, see B. Ulubabyan, *Artsakhe patmakan aghbyurnerum yev patmagitakan grakanutyan mej* (Yerevan, 1969); G. A. Hovhannisyan, *Sovetakan ishkhanutyan hastatume Lernayin Gharabaghum* (Yerevan, 1971). Armenian historical monuments of Nakhichevan have been described in Argam Ayvazyan, *Nakhijevani patmachartarapetakan hushardsannere* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1978); *Jugha* (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1984); and *Agulis* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1984).

32. For an examination of this genre see David B. Nissman, "The Origin and Devolopment of the Literature of 'Longing' in Azerbaijan," *Journal of Turkish Studies,* no. 8 (1984).

33. Müzäffär Shükür, *Bir kökdän aïryldyg* (Baku: Ïazychy, 1987).

34. Ismaïyl Shykhly, "Ädäbiïïatymyzyn väziïïäti vä väzifäläri," *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät,* 30 May 1986, pp. 2–4.

35. *Jänubi Azärbaïjan ädäbiïïty antoloqïïasy* (Baku: Elm; vol. 1, 1981; vol. 2, 1983; vol. 3, 1988).

36. Quoted in "Kechmishin Öïränilmäsi: problemelär, väzifälar," *Kommunist*, 2 March 1989, p. 2.

37. For some recent examples of this work, see Jäfär Khandan, *Ughur ïolu: Jänubi azärbaïjanda ädäbiïïat, mätbuat, maarif vä injäsänät* (Baku: Azänäshr, 1987); M. M. Chesmazar, *Azärbaïjan Demokrat Partiïsynyn Ïaranmasy vä fäalliïïäti: Jänubi Azärbaïjan 1945–1946-chy illär* (Baku: Elm, 1986). On premodern history, see Hüsein Äli Dalili, *Azärbaïjan jänub khanlyglary* (Baku: Elm, 1979).

38. *Jänubi Azärbaïjan tarikhinin ocherki, 1828–1917* (Baku: Elm 1985).

39. I have in mind Nissman's works, cited above, as well as S. Enders Wimbush, "Divided Azerbaijan: Nation-Building, Assimilation and Mobilization in Three States," in *Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers,* ed. William McCagg, Jr. and Brian Silver (New York: Pergamon, 1979).

40. Ingilab Kärimov, "Bir daha ïazylmyshlar haggynda," *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät,* 21 June 1985, p. 3.

41. On Azerbaijani culture in Georgia, see A. Hajyïev, *Tiflis ädäbi mühiti* (Baku: Ïazychy, 1980); A. Hajyïev, *Tiflis Azärbaïjan teatry* (Baku: Ishyg, 1984). For Armenia, see Sabir Rzäiev, *Azärbaïjan teatry Ermänistanda* (Baku: Azärbaïjan Teatry Jämiïïäti, 1963); Hidaïät, "Burdan min atli kechdi," *Azärbaïjan,* no. 1 (1988). This trend is also evident in publications outside the Azerbaijani republic. See Adil Mishiïev, *Azärbaïjan Ïazychylary vä Tiflis ädäbi-ijtimai mühiti* (Tbilisi: Ganatleba, 1987).

42. See the anthology of Dagestani Azerbaijani poets recently published in Baku: *Daghystan töhfäläri* (Baku: Ïazychy, 1987), as well as Mövlud Ïarähmädov, *Azärbaïjan-Daghystan ädäbi älagäläri tarikhindän* (Baku: Elm, 1985), which, despite the name, emphasizes Azerbaijani literary production in Dagestan.

43. "Irag Türkmanlary," in *Azärbaïjan Sovet Ensiklopediïasy,* vol. 4, pp. 500–501; and the account by Räsul Rza, *Azärbaïjan,* no. 2 (1961).

44. Useful collections of materials relating to the Karabakh movement include: *Artsakhean daregrutiown* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Asbarez, 1988), and *The Karabakh File* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zoryan Institute, 1988).

45. In Azerbaijan alone, for example, the Armenian population of Baku is still nearly twice as large as that of Karabakh, even after the mass migration of late fall, 1988.

46. *Hayrenih dsayn*, 19 October 1988, p. 4.

47. *Grakan Tert*, 4 November 1988, p. 1, and *Asbarez*, 7 January 1989, p. 7.

48. The city of Rostov developed and eventually incorporated the Armenian-founded colony of Nor Nakhichevan. On the new organization, see T. Liloyan, "Doni hayeri enkerutyune," *Sovetakan Hayastan*, 4 February 1989, p. 3.

49. "Khorhdaktsutyun HKK kentkomum," *Grakan Tert*, 31 March 1989, p. 1. On the "diaspora" Armenian cultural association of Riga, see K. Margaryan, "'Spyurk' latviayi hoghum," *Sovetakan Hayastan*, 7 November 1988, p. 3. For the Tallinn report, see Petros Demirchyan, "Arzhe Khorhel," *Grakan Tert*, 10 March 1989, p. 2.

50. Born in the Crimea, Adalyan has personally experienced the needs of the diaspora, both internal and external, that he expresses in "Grakan entatske yev ardiakanutyune," *Sovetakan Grakanutyun*, no. 8 (1986): 120–21.

51. "Hayots Hamazgayin Sharzhum," *Artsakhean daregrutiown*, p. 1–10.

52. On the AGBU office, see the report in *Asbarez*, 8 March 1989, p. 9.

53. Interestingly, the author of the piece sees homeland-diaspora economic cooperation as a means not just to stem the tide of emigration from Armenia but to encourage new immigration as well as the return of former residents of the republic. H. Hakopyan, "Nor moretsum hayrenik-spyurk kaperin," *Hayreniki Dsayn*, 2 November 1988, pp. 3–4.

54. Such claims, albeit much less strident, were made before the Karabakh crisis. See *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät*, 12 April 1985, p. 8.

55. For a selection of these demands, see Bäkhtiïar Vahabzadä, "Täläblärimiz," *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät*, 25 November 1988, p. 2; Sabir Azäri, "Aghy garadan sechmäii bajarag," *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät*, 2 December 1988, p. 5; Ä. Dashdämirov, "Aghy garadan sechmäk lazymdyr," *Kommunist*, 3 December 1988, p. 3.

56. For example, Bäkhtiïar Vahabzadä, "Birliï äldän vermäïäk, tämkinli olag," *Kommunist*, 25 November 1988, p. 4.

57. Ïashar Garaïev, "Millilik amili," *Azärbaïjan*, no. 8 (1988): 151. Vilaïät Guliïev makes similar charges against Armenia and Georgia, and calls for the collection of Azerbaijani historical toponyms within and outside the "present borders" of the republic. Vilaïät Guliïev, "Bizim sorghu," *Azärbaïjan*, no. 7 (1988): 183.

58. Anar, *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät*, 8 July 1988. An earlier call for the protection of Azerbaijani cultural monuments in Armenia, Georgia, and Dagestan was made by Mäshädikhanym Ne'mätova, "Kitabälär gorunurmu?" *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät*, 11 March 1988.

59. Ïashar Garaïev, "Millilik amili," *Azärbaïjan*, no. 8 (1988): 158.

60. Imamverdi Äbilov, "Bizim sorghu," *Azärbaïjan*, no. 10 (1988).

61. See Vilaïät Guliïev, "Bizim sorghu," *Azärbaïjan,* no. 7 (1988): 185, and Bähriïïä Mämmädova, "Bizim sorghu," *Azärbaïjan,* no. 12 (1988): 171.

62. "Ingilab vä poeziïa," *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät,* 12 July 1985, p. 7.

63. Ïashar Garaïev, "Millilik amili," *Azärbaïjan,* no. 8 (1988): 151.

64. On the university curriculum, see Tofig Hajyïev, "Gashy düzältdiïïmiz ïerdä," *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät,* 2 December 1988, p. 8. On the Bilik society's undertaking, see Z. Ähmädzadä, "Köhnä älifbaïa täza häväs," *Kommunist,* 7 February 1989, p. 4.

65. Azerbaijani media now carry regular reports on the activities and contacts of the new society. See *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät,* 8 July 1988; 21 October 1988; 4 November 1988, p. 7; 25 November 1988, p. 2.

66. Babäk Ädaläti, "Söz vakhtyna chäkär," *Ädäbiïïat vä Injäsänät,* 25 November 1988, p. 1.

67. By contrast, only about 15 percent of the USSR's Azerbaijani population lives outside Azerbaijan. For precise data, see Brian D. Silver, "Population Redistribution and the Ethnic Balance in Transcaucasia," in *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change,* ed. Ronald G. Suny (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1983), p. 375.

68. See the interview with heads of six cultural organizations in Karabakh during their working visit to Yerevan, "Hamategh ashkatenk mshakuyti asparezum," *Sovetakan Hayastan,* 8 March 1989, p. 4.

69. There are also plans to publish anthologies of works of Armenian writers from Georgia, Abkhazia, and other parts of the Caucasus along the lines of the recently published collection *Grakan Gharabagh* of Karabakh Armenian literature (*Asbarez,* 11 January 1989), p. 5.

70. See "Barev, Hamshentsi hayer," *Grakan Tert,* 11 November 1988, p. 2.

71. Petros Demirchyan, "Arzhe khorhel," *Grakan Tert,* 10 March 1989, p. 2.

72. "Menk partavor enk," *Sovetakan Hayastan,* 9 February 1989, pp. 2 and 3.

73. Personal observation of the author in Baku (30 October 1987).

74. See the report in *Kommunist,* 12 May 1989, p. 1.

75. "Moskvada Azärbaïjan evi," *Kommunist,* 8 January 1989, p. 1; "'Araz' ümumittifag efirindä," *Kommunist,* 21 March 1989, p. 3.

76. For examples from the Caucasus, see M. A. Kafarzade, "Azerbaidzhanskaia SSR—suverenaia respublika v sostave SSSR," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Moscow, 1955, and Sh. N. Petrosian, *Istoriia konstitusionnogo razvitiia sovetskoi gosudarstvennosti v Armenii* (Yerevan: Mitk, 1968).

77. The platform on the protection of ethnic minority rights outside their republics, adopted at the Nineteenth Party Conference, continued to form the basis for Gorbachev's policy one year later. See his appeal broadcast on Soviet television, reprinted in the central and republican press on 2 July 1989.

78. These discussions of language use were especially prominent in Azerbaijan's press during the fall, 1988.

79. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven. Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968).

TROUBLE IN THE TRANSCAUCASUS

More than disaster relief was on the minds of Soviet authorities in the wake of the 7 December earthquake that devastated two major cities and innumerable towns and villages in the north of the tiny republic of Armenia. Profiting from the diversion of public attention to the tragedy, the Soviet government unleashed a coordinated attack against the movement for the annexation of Karabakh, an Armenian enclave in the neighboring republic of Azerbaijan. Several members of Armenia's unofficial Karabakh committee were jailed, and a media blitz was launched against the leadership of the movement in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. For the moment, Moscow has set aside the new politics of accommodation in favor of old-style coercion, in an effort to stifle a campaign that over the past year had pushed glasnost to its limits.

When hundreds of thousands of Armenians began gathering in protest rallies in late February 1988, few imagined that their action would produce a civic movement that would force Gorbachev into a quandary. Optimistic about the promise of perestroika, Armenians expected authorities to resolve their demands quickly by allowing them to annex Karabakh. For its part, the Moscow leadership thought that a 400-million-ruble ($560 million) redevelopment program for Karabakh, thrown together last March, and increasing contacts between Armenia and the disputed region would mitigate the crisis if not resolve it. In a Soviet television interview after his tour of the earthquake-ravaged zone, Mikhail Gorbachev complained that the government's financial generosity to the tiny enclave should have been enough to satisfy the Armenians. But a leader of the Karabakh committee responded that Moscow had merely applied an economic solution to a political problem.[1]

After a year, the Armenian-Azerbaijani struggle for Karabakh has produced two powerful, broad-based social movements that have exposed contradictions in the Soviet political system as well as in Gorbachev's vision of reforming it. And neither Western nor So-

viet journalists have been much help in interpreting the conflict: both groups have explained it largely in terms of traditional enmity between Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis, without exploring the two peoples' intertwined histories. The actual historical legacy suggests that the conflict is more than a natural consequence of ethnic and religious differences.

The dispute over Karabakh is somewhat different from the usual Soviet nationality problem, in which primary conflicts occur between the hegemonic Russians and the rest of the country's ethnic populations. Elsewhere Gorbachev has faced unprecedented challenges from the nationalities: riots broke out in the Kazakh capital of Alma-Ata when he replaced a corrupt party chief with a Russian; and Baltic groups have sought to extend economic and political reforms far beyond what even radical reformers in Moscow have advocated. Gorbachev's handling of these conflicts has won enormous respect in the West, if not at home. The Karabakh crisis, by contrast, has pitted two neighboring republics against each other in a series of political battles and recurrent violence; Russian intervention has been required to maintain order. And the crisis has left Gorbachev at an impasse.

Baku, the present capital of Azerbaijan, was an industrial center in Tsarist Russia. Its oil fields produced about half of the world's oil supply before World War I, stimulating an industrial boom in the late nineteenth century and contributing to the formation of an Armenian economic elite, based in the cities of Baku and Tbilisi, capital of neighboring Georgia. This emerging capitalist class formed the nucleus of an Armenian society outside what is now Armenia, complete with political associations, an active press, and cultural establishment, churches, and schools. When smaller numbers of Azer- baijani entrepreneurs began to enter into their own region's development, they met head on with the already powerful and well-established Armenians, who maintained hegemony until the collapse of Tsarism.

In the heart of Baku's commercial district, an Armenian church built in 1863 stands as a historical reminder of Armenian prosperity in Azerbaijan. Early this century, Tsarist authorities scrapped proposals to build a central mosque for Shi'ite Azerbaijanis in the same district because of the church's proximity, and the mosque was even-

tually tucked away in a Muslim neighborhood outside the city center.

While Armenian society was flourishing in urban centers, the territory of what is now Soviet Armenia remained an undeveloped agricultural region, dominated by large Azerbaijani landowners and populated by a mostly Azerbaijani peasantry. Armenians were a majority in only three of the seven districts that formed the present Armenian republic. Even Yerevan, now the capital of Armenia, was a small town with numerous Azerbaijani bazaars and mosques surrounding the city center.

So while Armenians dominated Azerbaijan economically and politically, Azerbaijanis constituted a demographic force in the heart of the traditional Armenian homeland. In this brew of class distinctions reinforced by ethnic and religious differences, tensions flared during periods of instability. The Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 resulted in intercommunal violence and massacres that spread across both territories. In the wake of the 1917 revolution, Armenian irregulars razed dozens of Azerbaijani villages in Armenia, expelling the residents. Anti-Armenian violence also struck Azerbaijan, and in 1919 most of the Armenian population of Shushi, once the cultural center of Karabakh, was forced to leave.

The Russian revolution of 1917 reshaped the constellations of power in the region, known as the Transcaucasus. After Tsarist authority collapsed in February 1917, a Transcaucasian federation attempted to unite Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian political parties. But the efforts soon failed, and in May 1918 three separate, independent republics were set up in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Beleaguered by military confrontations over borders and by their own internal conflicts, the fledgling independent states were ultimately sovietized, and the three Transcaucasian peoples came back into the fold of the new Soviet empire.

Bolshevik leaders decided to build socialism on the basis of a federal system of national republics. "National-state construction" was to remake ethnic relations in the Soviet Union by establishing ethnic administrations in each of the country's non-Russian communities. Following Marxian notions of level of economic development and size of population, each ethnic community was endowed with its own territory. The territories were then organized into fifteen national republics and dozens of less prominent autonomous repub-

lics, provinces, and regions. The Mountainous (*Nagorno*) Karabakh Autonomous Province was one of these regions, created in 1923 for the Armenians who, as a result of the military balance of power before sovietization, had remained within the newly formed Azerbaijani republic.

At the top of this hierarchy, national republics were given all the trappings of modern nation-states: flags, national anthems, and ministries—even ministries of foreign affairs. A panoply of state-sponsored cultural institutions, including schools, research institutes, and literary and artistic unions, promoted the cultural development of the dominant community, the so-called titular nationality, in each republic. In addition, an institutionalized program of affirmative action, known as nativization, trained ethnic cadres for service in the state and party apparatus. This contributed to the formation of ethnic elites composed of the titular nationality in each of the territorial administrations. In a system where ethnic identity is organized by the state and ethnic affiliation is included on each citizen's internal passport, ethnicity can be considered in everything from political recruitment to job promotions.

With this system, the Bolsheviks hoped to ensure more equitable relations between the traditionally dominant Russians and the formerly subject nations of the Tsarist empire. But the same institutions that have, in the Soviet view, solved the national question by granting special privileges to ethnic communities in their own republics have also created new forms of oppression. The political borders of the national republics often do not correspond with ethnic borders, and ethnic communities without their own administrations or resident outside their officially designated "homelands" are often deprived of the privileges and rights they would receive in abundance in the home republic.

So the seemingly irrational intransigence of the Armenian movement's demand to annex Karabakh to Armenia in fact makes political sense. Armenians in the Karabakh autonomous province complain of seventy years of abuse by Azerbaijani authorities in Baku. Resources for economic development have been withheld or diverted elsewhere, they argue, and Armenian cultural and educational facilities in the province have been systematically underfunded and restricted. Armenians in Karabakh rightly recog-

nized that only the Armenian republic's administration would assure their security and development.

But Gorbachev and his colleagues in Moscow face more than just the unintended consequences of Soviet nationality policy. They must now deal with Armenians and Azerbaijanis who have turned the slogans of glasnost and perestroika to their own ends and have acquired immense political power generated by the internal course of their social movements.

When mass public demonstrations broke out in Armenia last spring, many Western observers assumed that rallies of such size and discipline must have been organized by the Communist Party. Instead, by the time of these demonstrations, several years of effort by the Armenian cultural intelligentsia had already mobilized Armenian consciousness. During the Stalin, Khrushchev, and even Brezhnev periods, Armenian intellectuals spearheaded campaigns to incorporate Karabakh into the Armenian republic, but they remained silent as countless letters and petitions sent to Moscow were shelved and forgotten. When Gorbachev came to power, announcing his radical programs of restructuring and openness in a new Soviet Union, Armenians embraced the programs as a means to revive their pursuit of the Karabakh issue. Armenian media references to Karabakh multiplied, and Armenian academics engaged in heated scholarly battles with their Azerbaijani colleagues over the history of the region.

By fall 1987, the Karabakh campaign had moved from scholarly journals to the public arena. Petitioners reportedly collected 400,000 signatures in Armenia supporting annexation of Karabakh.2 Later in the fall, Haidar Äliyev, an Azerbaijani, was removed from his post in the Communist party's ruling Politburo, and Armenians assumed that the last high-level opponent to their demands was now out of the picture. During a November trip to Western Europe, Gorbachev's top economic adviser, Abel Aganbegyan, an Armenian born in Georgia, publicly spoke of the economic rationality of uniting Karabakh with Armenia. News of Aganbegyan's comments reached an eager Armenian population, galvanizing support for the campaign among Armenians in both Karabakh and Armenia. News also spread quickly to Baku, where by early December, intellectuals had turned literary events into sessions denouncing Aganbegyan and the Armenian claims to Karabakh.3

The mass public rallies in Yerevan in late February 1988 were catalyzed by a special session of Karabakh's regional council, which issued a call for the province's transfer to Armenia. In mid-March, the local party organization in Karabakh took a similar position. Within weeks, Armenians were mobilized in a pan-national campaign for Karabakh. Organizing committees for the Karabakh campaign sprang up in factories, collective farms, schools, and institutes. Workers staged general strikes unprecedented in Soviet history, and establishment intellectuals cooperated with party and government officials to seek a "positive solution" to the Karabakh question.

Despite sometimes tragic developments, including anti-Armenian riots and killings in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait, tens of thousands of Armenians realized that they could make party and state organizations work in their interests and that they could organize public protests without fear of retribution from Moscow. They lobbied members of the republic's Supreme Soviet, or parliament, threatening not to vote for them in upcoming elections if they failed to support the popular demands. Once the broad-based social movement had obtained a measure of political power unimaginable in the Brezhnev period, few were willing to give it up.

Moscow's failure to satisfy Armenian demands, combined with this new sense of power and solidarity cemented by weeks of strikes and public protests, reinforced Armenian determination and emboldened the population to continue the struggle for Karabakh. But the organized civic campaign broadened to include problems of the environment, Armenian culture, and other social and cultural issues. The old practice of covert politics and backroom discussions gave way to public politics in the streets of Armenia and Karabakh, transforming them into common ground for hundreds of thousands of Armenians—formerly subjects, now citizens.

The scope and persistence of the Armenian movement for Karabakh also left its mark on the Azerbaijanis. Historically, Azerbaijani nationalism formed in reaction to a dominant Armenian nationalism, and this tendency has been replicated in the Karabakh movement. Azerbaijanis, too, began organizing protest rallies to prove themselves capable of greater political sophistication than they exhibited in the violent Sumgait riots. The themes were similar to the Armenians': historical claim to Karabakh, distortion of the issues and the movement by the news media in Moscow, demands for

protection of their co-nationals in the neighboring Armenian republic. Just as Armenians had drawn on Leninist language and the Soviet constitution to articulate their demands, Azerbaijanis branded Armenian activism with the traditional Soviet epithets of extremism and national chauvinism and accused Armenians of violating Soviet laws and the Leninist principle of friendship of nations.

Azerbaijani activists, too, embraced a broad range of social and cultural issues revolving around their new sense of citizenship and national identity. During the public gatherings in Baku, some Azerbaijanis called for the elimination of Karabakh's autonomous status, but more authoritative voices advocated instead establishing an Azerbaijani autonomous region in Armenia.4 If Armenians could claim their national rights, so could Azerbaijanis.

Gorbachev's response was avoidance. He maintained that the accumulation of problems for the Armenians of Karabakh was a Stalinist legacy that had been left to fester during the period of stagnation, the current catch phrase for the lengthy Brezhnev era. Gorbachev has yet to admit that the Karabakh crisis was in part due to the ethnic political institutions that define Soviet rule. At the party conference last June he skirted direct discussions of the Karabakh crisis and instead spoke vaguely of increasing the autonomy of the republics. He has continued to avoid the issue by pointing to the concessions already made and by holding out the promise of a special party plenum devoted to nationality problems sometime this year.

Gorbachev apparently hoped that time would mitigate the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Instead, tensions have increased. Growing frustrations resulted in isolated incidents of armed strife between Armenians and Azerbaijanis until late last fall, when the conflict escalated to the verge of a civil war. Fearing that an upcoming meeting on Moscow's project for constitutional reforms would authorize Karabakh's transfer away from Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani crowds attacked the Armenian neighborhoods of Kirovabad, a city north of the Karabakh province. Anti-Armenian attacks spread throughout the republic, leading to a mass exodus of tens of thousands of Armenians. Back in Armenia, Armenians replied in kind, attacking Azerbaijani villages and forcing thousands of Azerbaijanis out of the republic. As each side witnessed the violence and massive deportations of their compatriots from the neighboring republic, Gorbachev and the Moscow leadership stood helpless. Armenians

who had carried Gorbachev's portrait during the spring rallies now joined Azerbaijanis in denouncing the central government for its inability to maintain the security of Soviet citizens outside their home republic.

The year-old crisis between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the isolated Armenian mountain district of Karabakh has confused the Soviet leadership. Gorbachev and his colleagues in Moscow have circled round and round the issue, trying to resolve one of the most fundamental political crises in contemporary Soviet politics with ad hoc measures. In yet another initiative in December, prominent Soviet academician Andrei Sakharov went on a peacemaking mission to the Transaucasus with full support from Gorbachev, but he received a lukewarm reception in Armenia and was simply rebuffed in Azerbaijan.

In frustration, the Kremlin leadership has retreated to the Brezhnevist tactics of arrests and intimidation to undercut the movement's strength. This may prove to be a serious miscalculation. Over the past year, thousands of Armenians and Azerbaijanis have learned the politics of protest, and both peoples are prepared to settle in for their own version of citizens' movement, Soviet style.

NOTES

1. "Interview with Levon Ter Petrosyan," *Asbarez* (Glendale, Calif.), 24 December 1988.
2. *Armenian Weekly*, 3 October 1987.
3. *Azarbaijan* (Baku), no. 2 (1988).
4. *Kommunist* (Baku), 25 November, 3 December 1988.

THE "KARABAKH SYNDROME" AND
AZERBAIJANI POLITICS

In future histories of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev, Azerbaijan will hold a place of particular distinction. The Azerbaijani republic will be remembered as one of the first sites where independent political forces mobilized as a popular movement in the spirit of *perestroika*. At the same time, Azerbaijan will be recorded in historical annals as the first republic to experience an acute collapse of the Stalinist system of party rule and Brezhnevist stagnation along with the violent repression of political forces militating for a new, Gorbachev-style Soviet politics.

The process of reform initiated by the Gorbachev coalition in Moscow is frequently perceived as a top-down process begun at the center and extending to the periphery. By contrast, the impulse for political change in Azerbaijan came not from Moscow but from Azerbaijan's own periphery—the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), a largely rural, Armenian-populated province situated on the republic's western border. Using the Gorbachevian language of perestroika, *glasnost,* and democratization, Armenian deputies to the region's provincial council gathered on 20 February 1988, in the administrative center, Stepanakert, to articulate in legal form their decades-old aspirations for union with Armenia. The ensuing contradictions of change in Azerbaijan, marked by tense political struggle and punctuated with bloody intercommunal conflict, reached a climax with a final round of anti-Armenian violence in Baku in mid-January 1990. The massive intervention of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan's capital on 19–20 January 1990 brought to a close the initial period of perestroika in Azerbaijan.

This article examines the origins of political change in contemporary Azerbaijan, the troubles attending the efforts to promote a democratizing politics, and the contradictory imperatives of reform in a republic with a multi-ethnic population and competing visions of perestroika. While much of the experience of the past two years

speaks to the unique historical and demographic conditions in which a new kind of politics emerged, developed, and ultimately failed in the republic, the Azerbaijani case holds important lessons for the reform process in other Soviet republics.

As in Azerbaijan, politics in the Gorbachev era in all the Soviet republics is a complicated process of negotiation, compromise, and recurring conflict involving the local and central apparatuses of the Communist Party, newly forming yet quite powerful independent political associations, and populations that have largely failed to experience the benefits of a democratizing polity and a marketizing economy. Given the multinational composition of the populations in the republics—aggravated by the unequal distribution of political power, cultural prestige, and economic resources—the implications of ethnic differences inform the larger set of complex and troublesome challenges to the success of reform in the respective republics and the Soviet Union as a whole. It is thus the depth of the similarities, and not the equally important differences, that draws attention to Azerbaijan as an example of the ways in which conflicts between the old system and an emergent new politics can result in failed, and potentially violent, outcomes.

INSTITUTIONAL ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY ETHNIC POLITICS

One of the fundamental institutional innovations carried out by the Soviet leadership in the wake of the October Revolution was the linking of ethnicity, territory, and political administration in the process of state-building. Termed "national statehood," the Soviet image of a new form of the state was put into practice through the creation of a hierarchical system of ethno-territorial administrative divisions extending from the national republic down to the national district (*okrug*). The building blocks of the new Soviet federation thus did not simply replicate the geographic divisions existing under Tsarist dominion. Rather, the Soviet federal system fostered new, national-territorial formations that would contribute to the consolidation of ethnic identity by institutionalizing nationality at the level of the state.

The Soviet process of nation-building was planned in order to coincide with the formation of the novel national-state structures.1 Cultural organizations, from state publishing houses and ministries of culture and education to unions of writers, artists, architects, and others, were established to aid in creating new cultures or, at times, renovating ancient cultures. Primacy in Soviet cultural construction was accorded to the "indigenous" national community of the given national-territorial administration, referred to as the "titular nationality" in Western Sovietological discourse.

In Azerbaijan, for instance, the artistic unions engaged chiefly in organizing and regulating the production of a specifically Azerbaijani culture. As a political corollary to the beneficial arrangements provided for the "indigenous" nationality, other national communities living in the republic, irrespective of how long they had lived on the territory of the given republic, were considered "nonindigenous" and essentially excluded from the broader process of republic-based national-cultural development. Iranian-speaking Talysh and Kurds, and Dagestani groups such as Lezgius and Avars, as well as other smaller ethnic communities resident in the Azerbaijani republic, were assimilated into the dominant Azerbaijani nationality. National cultural development for other communities, such as the Armenians, with their stronger sense of ethnic identity forged in national institutions with a longer history, was frequently restricted or simply neglected.

At the level of the national republic, then, traditional social identities of the "indigenous" community, based on clan, region, urban residence, and even class, gave way under Soviet policies to the formation of a modern, overarching ethnic identity developed through new political and cultural institutions inscribed in the national republic. The state's role in consolidating nation-building is especially evident in the case of Azerbaijan, where with the exception of the short-lived independent Republic of Azerbaijan (1918–1920), there was no prior history of independent, specifically Azerbaijani state-building.

Soviet power not only provided the Azerbaijanis with their first long-term and extensive experience in national-state building, but it also gave them their name. In the late nineteenth century, Azerbaijani intellectuals had engaged in lengthy debates over how to name their nation, since they were variously referred to as Cauca-

sian Turks, Muslims, or Tatars in official Tsarist usage, as well as in local Russian and Armenian historical and literary sources.2 Early Soviet terminology identified them as "Turk." Beginning in the late 1930s, however, the indigenous population of Azerbaijan was reidentified as "Azerbaijani" (in Azerbaijani, "*azärbayjanli*").3

A program of "nativization" (*korenizatsiia*) complemented the nation-building process by fostering the creation of a native ethnic leadership through target programs of recruitment and training for service in the national republic's political, economic, and cultural administration. Korenizatsiia as a kind of institutionalized program of "affirmative action" for the "indigenous" nationality has resulted in the formation of national elites in the national republics. Nativization also resulted in the political disenfranchisement of so-called nonindigenous groups. This policy proved to be especially important in legitimating Soviet power among the Azerbaijanis of the republic, who in the prerevolutionary period had been dominated politically by the Tsarist Russian administrative elite and economically by a mix of mainly Armenian and Russian entrepreneurs.4 The establishment of Soviet authority in the region thus served to disenfranchise the Russian and, especially, Armenian elites while it empowered Azerbaijanis in the fields of political administration and economic management. However, these Soviet-sponsored political institutions and practices created conditions for the emergence of ethnic-based conflicts under a more liberalized regime.

KARABAKH AND THE ORIGINS OF
POLITICAL CHANGE IN AZERBAIJAN

Several years into Gorbachev's program of political and economic reform, Azerbaijan was one of many republics that remained aloof from the processes of renewal emerging throughout the Soviet Union.5 Kämrän Baghïrov, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, was quite representative of the attitudes of his party organization. In addresses to republic and all-Union party meetings, he barely paid lip service to perestroika, glasnost, and democratization. In practice, reform touched neither the Azerbaijani

party apparatus and governmental administration nor Azerbaijani society as a whole.

Although independent political forces have usually emerged in urban areas, a coalition for political renewal in Azerbaijan first developed among the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh—a remote rural area along the republic's western border. The fact that the first and most persistent bearers of a glasnost-style political activism in Azerbaijan emerged not among the majority Azerbaijanis but from within the Armenian population of the NKAO would set the process of political change in the republic along a troubled, contradictory path.

The movement for the union of NKAO with the Armenian republic is often cast in terms of a territorial conflict between the two neighboring republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. And the Karabakh movement did indeed develop into an unprecedented inter-republican crisis that by the fall of 1989 had grown into full-scale warfare between the two republics. However, contrary to Azerbaijani critics who have sought to paint the movement solely as a product of foreign Armenian agitation and intervention in Azerbaijani affairs promoted by nationalist Armenian political organizations operating outside the republic and the Soviet Union,6 the movement for Karabakh's union with Armenia was initiated—and has been continued—primarily by the Armenians living in the NKAO itself.7 Given the national-state formation of the Soviet Union as outlined above, Karabakh Armenian arguments for union with the Armenian republic can be seen more as an autochthonous, rational response to contemporary institutional constraints than as the amorphous eruption of latent, primordial ethnic and religious sentiments.8

Indeed, the list of Armenian complaints in the cultural sphere, from underfunding of local Armenian education to the lack of Armenian-language textbooks and television broadcasts, is comprehensible in an institutional context in which the state's subsidization of cultural development favored the Azerbaijanis over other ethnic communities resident in Azerbaijan. In this regard, the dramatic multiplication of demands for more cultural ties between Karabakh and the Armenian republic reflects the historical lack of attention that Azerbaijani republican ministries have accorded specifically Armenian interests in the sphere of cultural production as much as it

does the desire for union with Armenia. In a recent exposé on the extent of cultural disenfranchisement in Karabakh, instructively entitled "Why and How All This Started," an Armenian cinematographer recounted a story of the shelving of a documentary film dedicated to the sixtieth anniversary of the NKAO. The reason, the film-maker notes, was that the film was considered by authorities in Baku to be "too Armenian" in its content, despite the fact that it recounted the history of a region with a majority Armenian population.9 A similar pattern was reflected in the complaints of Armenian writers and journalists in Baku, who argued that Armenian national themes were not considered a legitimate field of local cultural expression in the Azerbaijani capital.10

The leitmotif of cultural disenfranchisement runs throughout the Karabakh Armenian movement, but this should not turn one's attention away from equally important issues of political and economic autonomy. In fact, one of the earliest Armenian *samizdat* texts, originating from Stepanakert in 1962, was much more strident and expansive on economic problems than on cultural issues in the NKAO. The complaints raised in this document range from underinvestment in the NKAO economy to numerous examples of the subordination of local enterprises to the administrative control of organizations and other enterprises located in Baku and in other cities outside the autonomous oblast.11

Almost three decades later, these same issues form the nucleus of contemporary Armenian claims to economic autonomy in the NKAO. Manipulating the Gorbachevian language of *khozraschet* (self-financing and economic self-management), Armenian-dominated enterprises in the NKAO have chosen to develop economic ties with Armenia at the expense of administrative linkages with the Azerbaijani economy. Thus, local enterprises have increasingly sought to produce manufactured goods and other commodities not according to the Azerbaijani state plan but in line with market and planning needs in Armenia.

The virtual independence of economic decision-making emerging in the NKAO has put an ironic twist on economic demands emanating from Baku. While Azerbaijani economists are arguing for greater devolution of economic decision-making to the republic level,12 the refusal of NKAO enterprises to supply Azerbaijani commodity markets and the negotiation by them of contracts with firms

based in the Armenian republic have elicited Azerbaijani condemnation of local economic autonomy in the NKAO as a violation of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and calls for the reassertion of republic control over the production and distribution of goods in Karabakh.

In political affairs, the Karabakh movement threatened the Azerbaijani republic not just with Armenian nationalism, but also with independent political activity by traditional organs of the party and state control apparatus. One of the first ethnic-based splits in the Communist Party apparatus under Gorbachev took place between the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and the once-subordinate Armenian-controlled NKAO oblast party committee (*obkom*). Despite initial hesitation of party organizations in the NKAO, by mid-March of 1988, the NKAO obkom publicly backed the 20 February 1988 request by the NKAO oblast soviet of people's deputies for union with Armenia. Faced with a lack of positive response from Moscow and Baku, NKAO political authorities have increasingly taken the management of local political affairs into their own hands.

KARABAKH AS CATALYST FOR ETHNIC ACTIVISM IN AZERBAIJAN

The NKAO Armenian movement and subsequent development of a political crisis over Karabakh catalyzed Azerbaijani consciousness not only about events in the troubled region, but also about broader issues facing the Azerbaijan SSR. Nonetheless, Azerbaijanis recognize the pivotal role that Armenian militancy has played in informing Azerbaijani national and political self-awareness. In a revealing commentary given to a Turkish newspaper reporter, an Azerbaijani journalist provided a concise reflection on this phenomenon.

> We had a weak sense of solidarity in the past and minded our own business. The developments [in the NKAO, Armenia, and Azerbaijan] have helped to unite us. A national feeling and state of awareness have emerged in the community for the first time. We had not observed this in the past. I can say that Azerbaijan has changed. It is as if the Armenian attitude has awakened the people and moved them to safeguard their rights.13

Even a brief review of the emergence of independent Azerbaijani politics reflects the deep and decisive way that the Armenian movement has informed a range of issues brought up by Azerbaijanis. The reactive, at times even emulative, character of the Azerbaijani movement with regard to the Armenians is clear. At protests in November 1988, for instance, Azerbaijani militants demanded that some form of autonomy be established for Armenia's Azerbaijanis on the model of the NKAO in Azerbaijan. Such demands were subsequently reflected in the arguments of Azerbaijani intellectuals published in the republic press.14

The pattern of reaction to Armenian activism at times led to irony. An Azerbaijani journalist, commenting on the Azerbaijani response to Armenian efforts to extract themselves from Azerbaijani rule, argued that the Azerbaijanis wanted "the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to respect Azerbaijani laws. They are acting as if they were free."15 In this sense, Armenian "freedom" was seen as a direct challenge to Azerbaijani interests in the republic.

Azerbaijanis often attempted to downplay the actual stimulus that motivated the candid expression of their concern by shifting focus from the NKAO to other problems in the republic. The Azerbaijani poet Hidayat, for example, contrasted the poor socioeconomic conditions about which the Armenians of the NKAO were complaining to the situation in Baku, which, he argued, was much more serious than in the autonomous province.16 Similarly, after the massacre of Armenians in the industrial town of Sumgait in February 1988, the idea of "Sumgait" emerged in the Azerbaijani imagination not as a tragedy of anti-Armenian violence but as a manifestation of the city's endemic social, economic, and environmental problems.17 Azerbaijani journalists focused their attention on the destructive effects of industrial pollution in the area and the simultaneous need for the development of the local economy and the expansion of public services.18 In the spring of 1989, Azerbaijani television broadcast a program on Sumgait that was much commented on in the republic press.19 Entitled "Death Zone" (*Ölü zona*), the broadcast ironically ignored the massacre of Armenians and other civilians in Sumgait to focus on the fatal effects of industrial pollution on the city's residents.

THE POLITICS OF PARTY PARALYSIS

Despite the quick pace of events in early 1988, from the beginning of the popular movement in Karabakh and the massacre of Armenian civilians at the end of February to Moscow's announcement of a program of social and economic development for the NKAO on 26 March, Azerbaijani political authorities were slow to respond to pressures at home for a more active stance with regard to the Armenian movement. At meetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan in late April, party activists, led by First Secretary Baghïrov, focused primarily on the serious economic situation facing the republic and called for more party control and for improvement in the provision of social services.

But the ongoing political conflict over the status of the NKAO soon fully discredited Baghïrov as republic party chief. At a May party plenum, the party named Äbdülrähman Väzirov, a former Komsomol official and Soviet ambassador to Pakistan, to replace Baghïrov as party first secretary. Väzirov faced a double challenge. On the one hand, he had to revitalize the party organization in line with the general process of political and economic reform occurring in the rest of the country. On the other hand, he had to restore social order and attempt to rebuild the Azerbaijani population's confidence in a party that seemed to have been incapable of defending Azerbaijani national interests from the threat of Armenian nationalism in the NKAO and in Armenia.

Väzirov's vision of renewal in both the party and society developed along fairly conservative, almost predictable lines in the following months. The outlines of his strategy were reflected in his address to the Nineteenth All-Union CPSU Conference in July. Almost a third of his speech was devoted to articulating Azerbaijani positions on the Karabakh crisis, but he also focused on the political destabilization brought about by the party's paralysis and the accumulation of unresolved social and economic problems in the republic. Remarking on the justified dissatisfaction of the Azerbaijani population, he emphasized the need to "strengthen the leading role of the party" and argued that "the Azerbaijani people ties its hopes and future to the Communist Party." In this regard, one of his proposed solutions to the current crisis was the reinvigoration of the

party apparatus. Reminiscent of Yegor Ligachev's position at the CPSU's twenty-seventh congress, Väzirov stressed the need for cadre renewal through improved recruitment and training and the introduction of cadre exchanges and rotation of duties.20

During the late summer and fall of 1988, Väzirov began to pursue his program for the renewal of the party. In a short two and one-half months, 43 secretaries of district and city party committees, including 22 party first secretaries and 17 chairmen of urban executive committees, were replaced.21 A Central Committee plenum in mid-November adopted a massive reorganization and streamlining of the Azerbaijani party's central apparatus, to take effect from the start of 1989. The number of Central Committee secretaries was cut from 6 to 5, and—mirroring the reduction of departments of the CPSU Central Committee—Väzirov reduced the number of departments of the Azerbaijani Central Committee from 16 to 6. Viktor Polyanichko, formerly a high-ranking Soviet political adviser in Afghanistan, was appointed to the post of second secretary of the Azerbaijani party and named head of its reorganized Organizational Party Work Department. In the course of the restructuring, the party slashed its regular staff by 30 percent—from 194 to 136 functionaries. In addition, as with the CPSU apparatus in Moscow, new Central Committee commissions were established, including an Oversight Commission to monitor the activity of the republic's city and district-level party organizations. The organizational structure of city and district party committees was also streamlined.22

Väzirov sought to renew the party's leadership in the social sphere by initiating a series of new programs. The most pressing problems involved economic development and investment, especially in the poorer rural and mountainous regions. At the Central Committee's August plenum, party leaders called for the creation of new jobs in a number of the republic's districts.23 In October, the party announced programs for the social and economic development of the Nakhchïvan autonomous republic (ASSR), as well as of districts encompassing the plains portion of Karabakh (as opposed to Karabakh's mountainous portion, the NKAO).24 The party also devoted attention to the republic's urban areas. An important new housing program designed to overcome the backlog in the provision of apartments in both urban and rural districts was announced by Väzirov simultaneously with the Central Committee's plenum of

mid-November. One month later, the Azerbaijan Council of Ministers acted on a recommendation from the party's Central Committee in announcing a five-year program of social and economic measures for Sumgait. The development scheme, with a total price tag of 500 million rubles, allocated nearly 300 million rubles for investment in public housing and social services.25

Despite party restructuring and announcements of new social programs, mass rallies erupted in the Azerbaijani capital on 17 November 1988. These stemmed from popular dissatisfaction over a number of issues that the Azerbaijani party and state officials were failing to address, including that of asserting republic control over the NKAO. In particular, Azerbaijanis were angered by the construction of new facilities in the NKAO's Topkhana forest preserve by an aluminum enterprise headquartered in the Armenian republic. The Topkhana construction, authorized by Armenian officials in the NKAO but not by Baku, was in the Azerbaijani view yet another Armenian violation of the Azerbaijan republic's sovereignty.26 A collective letter written by four Azerbaijani intellectuals reflected the public's demands that the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Supreme Soviet assure Azerbaijan's sovereign rights in the NKAO in line with the central government's confirmation of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity expressed on 18 July 1988.27 At the same time, Azerbaijani demonstrations were fueled by fears that an upcoming session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on constitutional reform would lay the groundwork for an eventual transfer of the NKAO to the Armenian republic.

The rallies and demonstrations gained intensity and spread in widening circles after the USSR Supreme Court's 21 November announcement of a death sentence for an Azerbaijani involved in the Sumgait massacre of February 1988. Large meetings were staged in Baku, Kirovabad, Nakhchïvan, Shäki, and Zagatala, and smaller rallies and demonstrations took place in Shamkhor, Äli Bayramlï, Qädäbäy, Minqächevir, and Gutgashen.28 News from the NKAO and Moscow and fears of the persecution of Azerbaijani citizens in Armenia proper led to mass dismissals of Armenians from jobs and bouts of violence against Armenians throughout Azerbaijan. In the city of Kirovabad, home to some 50,000 Armenians, Azerbaijani attacks on Armenian neighborhoods and the expulsion of Armenian residents from their homes developed into battles with government

troops. A similar pattern of anti-Armenian violence and confrontations with troops was repeated in Baku and other Azerbaijani districts having Armenian minority populations. The result was a mass exodus of Armenians from the republic.

REASSERTING PARTY CONTROL

The "agitated days of November," as the mass protests and violence came to be known in the Azerbaijani press, reflected the political quandary facing Azerbaijan. A movement of mass protest developed in reaction to Armenian actions in the NKAO, coupled with the reluctance of Azerbaijani officialdom to address contradictory Armenian and Azerbaijani demands, had led not only to the intensification of interethnic animosity and violence, but also to a widening gulf between the party and an increasingly activist Azerbaijani society. At the same time, however, Azerbaijani militants were as yet unable to organize themselves into a coherent political movement, and the party was able to take advantage of this to suppress the troublesome independent associations and to reassert itself politically.

Moscow's establishment of a "special government administration" for the NKAO on 12 January 1989, which came as a belated measure to forestall the continuation of months of intercommunal violence in the region, helped to defuse tensions temporarily in the autonomous oblast as well as in the rest of Azerbaijan. The installation in the NKAO of a governmental commission under the leadership of the Kremlin's Karabakh troubleshooter, Arkadii Vol'skii, was greeted by the Azerbaijani party as an important measure for bringing greater control to the oblast. Azerbaijani officials emphasized that the establishment of the Vol'skii commission meant that the NKAO was to remain within the Azerbaijan SSR, and they welcomed the subsequent dissolution of recalcitrant, Armenian-dominated local party and government organizations in the NKAO.29 These steps gave the Azerbaijan party a brief respite during which to concentrate on rebuilding itself internally and externally.

On the internal front, the party took its cue from Moscow's condemnation of the involvement of party cadres in the violence and ri-

oting of the November days.30 Three full and two candidate members of the republic party's Bureau, as well as several members of the Central Committee, were retired.31 Similarly, several leading cadres in the republic Komsomol were stripped of their positions in the youth organization's Bureau and Central Committee.<P6.5J243>32 In addition, Väzirov undertook a more broad-ranging purge of the party and security organs during December 1988 and early January 1989. Commenting vaguely on the extent of dismissals from the republic's KGB and Ministry of Internal Affairs, Väzirov noted that 2,532 cadres, including 612 in positions of leadership, were censured by the party, and 222 officials were removed from their posts. A total of 65 people were expelled from the ranks of the party and the Komsomol.33 However, despite the broad criticisms and forced retirements, many party functionaries who had been involved in the unrest apparently remained in their positions.34

Preparations for March elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, a process that in many other republics provided unprecedented opportunities for the exercise of popular power, in Azerbaijan reflected the regime's continued conservatism. Complete election results were never published in the republic press, but party officials boasted of the high proportion of "worker," "peasant," and "women" candidates—in many cases far above the all-Union averages for these categories.35 This, and the reported 98.5 percent public participation in the 26 March balloting,36 evoked a Brezhnevist, not a Gorbachevian, image.

Although incomplete press coverage makes it difficult to judge accurately, there appear to have been certain discrepancies between the number of candidates elected at the pre-electoral meetings and those formally registered as candidates in the NKAO by the electoral commissions.37 A review of local press accounts of discussion meetings and registration of candidates and of election results published in Moscow reveals the overall conservative trends in Azerbaijan's sixty-three electoral districts. Leading Azerbaijani party and government officials were registered as candidates in fifteen districts, and lesser officials ran in five others. With the sole exception of party chief Väzirov, party officials never ran unopposed. Yet in ten of eleven cases, Communist Party officials won their election campaigns against lesser officials or workers from factories or farms.

Six districts had single-candidate elections: these included the candidacy of Väzirov in the Imishli national-territorial electoral district and of Vladimir Chernavin, commander-in-chief of the Soviet navy and a deputy USSR minister of defense, in the Länkäran territorial district. In the Imishli district, Väzirov's candidacy was discussed with those of two other individuals, the first secretary of the Füzuli district party committee and the head of the party organization at a local collective farm. Rather than challenge the republic party chief, the latter two nominees withdrew from the contest and backed Väzirov as the district's sole candidate. During the election campaign following the electoral commissions' official registration of candidates, the press highlighted visits by Väzirov and other party-backed candidates to their respective districts for meetings with voters.38

In a number of cases, three and even four candidates ran for a single seat, but most of these were in the eleven districts where contests were among females and often quite young peasants and workers. In the Yevlakh territorial district, which is probably not atypical, electors ultimately endorsed candidates that they considered to lack the necessary qualifications for deputy, including knowledge of the Russian language.39

TOWARD A POPULAR MOVEMENT

As the republic party moved to reconsolidate power, independent forces were having trouble establishing themselves on the republic political scene. The first concerted effort to establish independent Azerbaijani political associations seems to have emerged during the "agitated November days" of 1988. In an article published on the first page of the republic's literary weekly, Babäk Ädaläti explained that he and other like-minded individuals had come together to form what he variously referred to as a "people's front" or a "people's national front."40 Adaläti's primary concern was the expansion of relations with Southern Azerbaijan—that is, the Azerbaijani population of northern Iran. The popular appeal of this theme, one never addressed by Azerbaijani officialdom, would eventually exacerbate tensions in an already destabilized Azerbaijan.41

This initial attempt at forming a popular front movement was frustrated before it really even got off the ground. Azerbaijani militants active in the protest rallies at the time traced its failure to government repression.42 After the imposition of martial law throughout the republic in late November, authorities arrested numerous Azerbaijanis who had played a central role in speaking to the crowds assembled in Baku's Lenin Square and charged them with anti-Soviet agitation and other violations of the law. At the Academy of Sciences and other cultural institutions, intellectuals who had helped incite the crowds were subjected to criticism and even dismissal.43

The political environment in Azerbaijan was hardly conducive to the formation of independent political associations. Azerbaijani political life was marked by the continued hegemony of an entrenched party elite that was only beginning to be transformed under the party's relatively new leadership. Party officials condemned the independent activists as "semi-literate, ideologically unprincipled, and irresponsible."44 Väzirov referred metaphorically to the proliferation of independent publishing in the republic as a case of "ideological AIDS."45

Official intransigence was only part of the story. Just as important a factor in the failure of a more effective independent Azerbaijani political movement to emerge was what I would call the "Karabakh syndrome." The relentless insistence of the NKAO Armenians on self-determination repeatedly called for Azerbaijani reactions and made it difficult for the Azerbaijani movement to shift the focus of its activity and of popular Azerbaijani attitudes toward more broad-based national emancipation, irrespective of the Karabakh crisis.46

In March 1989, some two dozen intellectuals organized an "initiative group" for an Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF). The group's governing council was composed entirely of middle-level intellectuals, including journalists and scientific researchers at the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences, all of whom were of Azerbaijani nationality. Most of the remaining members of the initiative group had a similar profile, although it included a sprinkling of workers and two Russians—one an engineer and the other an economist. The advisory council of the initiative group included several prominent Azerbaijani writers such as Ismayïl Shïkhlï, Yusif Sämädoghlu, and

Sabir Rüstämkhanli̇, but with these exceptions, writers were at first notably absent from the ranks of the APF's leadership.47

The Azerbaijani Popular Front was not an umbrella group for previously existing organizations but rather was composed mainly of individuals. This is an important distinction, since the APF's formation did not reflect an attempt to build a coalition between organizations that had already worked out their own respective programs and concerns regarding political, economic, cultural, or environmental issues. Rather, as an association attempting to accommodate varying interests and political orientations of diverse individuals, the APF contained within its own internal organizational structure the possibility of sharp political divisions and eventual fragmentation.

A central political aim of the Azerbaijani Popular Front was, predictably, rejection of Armenian claims to self-determination in the NKAO and maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani republic. The APF also envisioned a broad program with respect to political, economic, cultural, and environmental issues in Azerbaijan. In contrast to the popular fronts in the Baltic republics, the APF did not assert near- or long-term claims for the separation of Azerbaijan from the Soviet polity; instead, it focused on enhanced political and economic sovereignty for the Azerbaijani republic within the context of the Soviet federal state.48

The notion of sovereignty, a pivotal concept in the program put forward by the APF, comprised two distinct aims, one with external, the other with internal dimensions. With respect to the federal structure of the Soviet Union, APF activists called for greater devolution of decision-making authority and autonomy to the Azerbaijani republic in its dealings with both the center and the other union republics. Within Azerbaijan itself, the APF program demanded the establishment of sovereign Azerbaijani control over the republic's political, socioeconomic, and cultural life, as well as over the natural resources of the republic. One of the key points of the APF's program was the extension of Azerbaijani sovereignty to the entire territory of the republic, including the NKAO and the Nakhchïvan ASSR.

The APF's vision of sovereignty necessarily called for an end to the violation of the republic's rights by external forces—namely, Moscow and the Armenian republic—as well as by internal forces—that is, the Armenians of the NKAO. In this regard, the APF

activists condemned the activities of the NKAO's special govern-ment commission headed by Arkadii Vol'skii as a case of Moscow's interference in the domestic affairs of the republic. Similarly to the Azerbaijani party leadership and protesters at public rallies, the Azerbaijani Front condemned what it viewed as repeated Armenian violations of Azerbaijani sovereignty, whether the sources of such activities emanated from the Armenian republic or from Armenian militants within the NKAO itself. Thus, the APF's appeal for the re-public's economic sovereignty implied at once greater autonomy for Azerbaijan in its foreign economic relations—whether within or be-yond the USSR's borders—and the reintegration of enterprises in the NKAO back into the Azerbaijani economy.

Despite the APF's relatively moderate program of reform in the republic, it was repeatedly shunned by the republic's political estab-lishment. Official arguments on behalf of democratization of the re-public's political life were often coupled with condemnations of "meeting dictatorship," a reference to the fact that the independent organizations in Azerbaijan often developed out of participation in rallies held in the republic's public squares.49 After the formation of the APF initiative group, Azerbaijani activists applied to the Su-preme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR for legalization. But in confor-mity with the conservative principles of the Väzirov leadership, the Azerbaijani legislature did not even debate the issue.

In April 1989, top Azerbaijani party officials, including Väzirov, had several unpublicized meetings with representatives of the APF to discuss prospects for the organization's legalization. These early attempts at negotiation failed. The party condemned the APF's al-leged aspirations to challenge party hegemony in the republic and for the time being refused to have further contacts with the group.

During August and September, the APF organized increasingly large rallies and strikes. Väzirov condemned these actions, arguing that they would only distract from the solution of the republic's "real" problems and weaken the struggle for Azerbaijani sover-eignty.50 As unrest in the republic grew, the party first secretary eventually began to speak as if he was willing to negotiate with pop-ular forces, but he refused to name as his negotiating partner the Azerbaijani Popular Front.51 The party apparently hoped that the APF would somehow simply disappear from the Azerbaijani politi-cal scene if it were not officially recognized. (The authorities dealt

more harshly with smaller independent associations, such as Birlik [Unity], a group seeking a union of Soviet and Iranian Azerbaijan. Police forcibly dispersed a Birlik rally in early July and arrested leaders of the organization.)52

In the months following the formation of the initiative group, the APF had remained largely an isolated group of intellectuals that failed to win either the active participation of the Baku-based Azerbaijani intellectual elite or effective support from Azerbaijani society at large. This pattern persisted even after the front's official founding congress, held in Baku in mid-July 1989. The prominent Azerbaijani poet Bäkhtiyar Vahabzadä argued that "other republics have popular fronts, why shouldn't we have one?"53 But structural impediments blocking the growth of the popular front in Azerbaijan were stronger than convictions in Azerbaijan supporting such an organization. In general Azerbaijani society proved itself to be essentially conservative and failed to share the APF's dedication to the Gorbachevian ideals of political and economic reform or to lend active support to the movement. Instead, both outside and within the front, popular participation in Azerbaijani politics remained predicated on anti-Armenian sentiments and an intense interest in the Karabakh crisis.

The relatively conservative spirit of Azerbaijani society was compounded by the influx during the fall of 1988 of nearly 200,000 Azerbaijani refugees displaced from the Armenian countryside, plus numerous refugees from the NKAO itself. The refugees, who flooded into Azerbaijan's urban and rural districts, had been traumatized by the combination of psychological terror and periodic violence against them and entered a society already strained by high unemployment, an endemic housing shortage, and a relatively poor distribution of social services, not to mention the political crisis over the NKAO.54 In this setting, the refugees often emerged as the most active elements in Azerbaijani society and also the ones most permeated with anti-Armenianism. APF activists could not expect appeals for political and economic reform to resonate strongly with the Azerbaijani population and faced the unhappy prospect that only an anti-Armenian, NKAO-oriented platform could bring thousands of Azerbaijani supporters into the streets.

In the APF's internal struggle between efforts to expand the agenda seeking the democratization of Azerbaijan and the tempta-

tion to cater to the acutely anti-Armenian orientation of the Azerbaijani populace, the Karabakh syndrome proved the more powerful force. Even Azerbaijan's intellectual mainstream remained aloof and suspicious of the APF and its increasingly radical political strategies, preferring to play a cautious game by shunning the front and focusing on Karabakh as the republic's primary problem. Thus, in late August, several hundred Azerbaijani intellectuals organized, with official consent, a Committee for Aid to Karabakh that could serve as an alternative to the front and channel popular discontent toward the narrow goal of securing Azerbaijani rights over the NKAO.55

By that time, the political struggle between Azerbaijan and the NKAO had intensified. The series of attacks and counterattacks that had become common in and around the NKAO were on the rise. And the Armenians of the NKAO, convinced that the Vol'skii commission was implementing pro-Azerbaijani policies in the region, organized unauthorized elections to a National Council to replace the special government commission.56 Prevented from establishing direct union with Armenia, the National Council fashioned itself as the only legitimate authority in the oblast and issued a proclamation of independence to add an aura of legality to what had long since become a political fact.

Paradoxically, the Azerbaijanis viewed the Vol'skii commission with equal suspicion, but condemned it for facilitating the NKAO's union with Armenia and subverting Azerbaijani sovereignty over the region. The establishment of an independent Armenian National Council in the NKAO only exacerbated Azerbaijani resistance to the Armenian movement and catalyzed Azerbaijani popular opposition to Azerbaijan republic authorities, who appeared more and more incapable of restoring Azerbaijani control over the NKAO.57

In this context, the APF initiated appeals for a series of industrial strikes in the republic in order both to force the government to recognize the APF as a legitimate political force representing Azerbaijani public opinion and to obtain the reestablishment of direct Azerbaijani rule throughout the republic's territory, including the elimination of the Vol'skii commission in the NKAO. Beyond these central concerns, the APF also demanded the nullification of the March elections, the lifting of the curfew imposed in response to

the November 1988 demonstrations, and the release of imprisoned political activists.58

Despite the powerful momentum created by the strike movement, Azerbaijani political authorities continued to shun the front and its program for a resolution of the Karabakh crisis. In response, APF activists intensified their struggle by calling for a railway strike to prevent the transport of supplies to both the NKAO and the Armenian republic. Although it was termed "economic terrorism" in the Armenian press and was more widely viewed as a "blockade," Azerbaijani activists defended the campaign as a case of "economic sanctions" or "reactive economic measures" against violations of Azerbaijan's national-territorial sovereignty.59 APF representatives also viewed the railway strike as an important tactic in forcing party authorities in Azerbaijan to legalize the front and accede to a series of other APF demands. According to APF Executive Board member Äbulfäz Äliyev, the front did not exclude the possibility of organizing a general rebellion.60

THE APF AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF AZERBAIJANI CHAUVINISM

Faced with unabating strikes and rallies at home and with threats from Moscow over its failure to terminate the transportation blockade, the Communist Party of Azerbaijan granted a series of concessions to the APF, including an extraordinary session of the republic's Supreme Soviet in mid-September at which front representatives were permitted to speak. Fulfilling demands of APF activists, the republic legislature voted to abolish the Vol'skii commission and to begin drafting laws on Azerbaijan's political and economic sovereignty.

In spite of the permission granted to the front to participate in the Supreme Soviet session and the incorporation of points from the APF political platform into state policy, the legal and political status of the Azerbaijani Popular Front itself remained uncertain. According to an APF representative, party chief Väzirov at one point in the legislative debate threatened to have front representatives arrested.61 With strikes continuing throughout the republic into Octo-

ber, representatives of the APF and the Communist Party held tense, lengthy negotiations that finally brought legalization of the front. Although the party leadership acceded to the legalization, it remained deeply hostile to the front activists. Whereas the legalization of independent political associations in Armenia and the Baltic republics to a great degree marked a watershed in the party's toleration of organizational rivals, in Azerbaijan talks over the recognition of the front were conducted in an atmosphere of crisis and threats of continued strikes.

THE LAW ON SOVEREIGNTY

Apart from the initiation of public discussions of a draft law on the republic's economic independence, one other achievement that followed in the wake of the legislature's special session was the drafting of a law on sovereignty. This law was promulgated in its final form in late September and published in the press in early October.62 It established the legal basis for rejecting federal laws that contradict republic laws, but the law was in essence a moderate one, since the Azerbaijan SSR was proclaimed a "sovereign socialist state" within the Soviet federation and not a state independent of the Soviet polity.

The Azerbaijani law on sovereignty is noteworthy for the ways in which it applies the concept of sovereignty within the republic, especially considering the extent to which debates over the law revolved around the Karabakh crisis.63 Proclaimed as a law of the Azerbaijan SSR's sovereignty, the law was in fact a proclamation of the Azerbaijani *nation*'s sovereignty over the republic. The law preamble refers to the Soviet Union not as a federation of independent national republics but as a "socialist federation of Soviet nations." The Azerbaijani language was reconfirmed as the state language,64 and the republic's land and natural resources were defined as "national wealth" belonging to "the Azerbaijani people." According to the law, Azerbaijani sovereignty extends throughout the republic, including the NKAO and the Nakhchïvan ASSR. The borders of the republic are not to be changed without approval by a popular referendum—that is, without the approval of the Azerbaijani nation.

In connection with the reassertion of legal authority over the NKAO, the law notes that the republic retains the independent right to resolve all internal problems , and it includes articles by virtue of which the republic government can proclaim martial law in any district of the republic and establish or eliminate autonomous districts within its sovereign jurisdiction. This aspect of the law was in part a response to APF demands that the Karabakh crisis be recognized as an internal Azerbaijani problem that could not be decided in Moscow, Yerevan, or Stepanakert, but only in Baku.65 Thus, the law established the legal framework for a potential "resolution" of the Karabakh crisis by the imposition of martial law under Azerbaijani auspices in the region or the simple abolition of the institutional-administrative basis of Karabakh Armenian claims to self-determination and separation from the Azerbaijani republic.

THE END OF AZERBAIJANI REFORM

Official recognition of the APF's status as a representative of the Azerbaijani people had the perverse effect of exposing the front's relatively weak authority over the popular movement in Azerbaijan. With only tenuous support from the Baku intelligentsia and relatively little control over the popular movement on whose shoulders it had risen to prominence, front activists were unable to keep their part of the bargain with the party and convince strikers to put an end to the economic sanctions against Armenia and the NKAO that they had spearheaded.66

The continuing Azerbaijani railway blockade of the NKAO and Armenia served only to heighten the determination of Armenian nationalists in the NKAO and in Armenia to take control of the oblast. The increasingly intransigent positions of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis led to expanded armed conflict between the two rival populations in the NKAO. During the fall of 1989, raids and counter-raids that had become commonplace in and around the NKAO multiplied and spread to the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Armenian-Nakhchïvan border regions. Although Soviet spokespeople were hesitant to accept inquisitive Western correspondents' charac-

terization of the conflict as "civil war," the southern Caucasus was indeed in a full-scale state of war.67

Faced with increasingly strident violence, Moscow again intervened with irresolute political measures. At the end of November, central authorities decided to abolish the Vol'skii commission, which had proven incapable of resolving the local tensions. By reestablishing Azerbaijani rule over the NKAO, Moscow thus returned the region to a virtual status quo ante. A new, republic-level oversight committee, appointed by the Presidium of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet and staffed primarily by ethnic Azerbaijani officials, was to take over the day-to-day management of the NKAO until local party and state organizations could be resuscitated.68 To compound its mistake, Moscow reassigned authority for security functions in the NKAO to agencies of the Azerbaijan republic, clearly a dangerous step considering the continuing Armenian-Azerbaijani hostilities.

In Azerbaijan, especially among party officials, Moscow's decision was embraced as a step toward restoring Azerbaijani sovereignty in the NKAO, although in practice the oblast remained beyond the control of Azerbaijani authorities. The Armenian response was proclaimed in Yerevan in a matter of days, when in a joint legislative session, the NKAO's National Council and the Armenian Supreme Soviet declared the unification of the two territories under a single Armenian government.69 In the NKAO itself, Armenian authorities refused to deal with the newly organized oversight committee and sought further expansion of political, economic, and cultural relations with the Armenian republic.

With the failure of political solutions to the crisis, war raged on between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the border areas. And the Azerbaijani Popular Front, despite its enhanced position in society, remained excluded from meaningful participation in policy-making in Baku. In this situation, the Popular Front's internal divisions verged on fragmentation. Using the Popular Front's name, Azerbaijani militants attacked party and Ministry of Internal Affairs offices in the southern districts of Jälilabad and Länkäran in December. By the new year, organized groups of Azerbaijani militants with no apparent ties to the Baku-based APF attacked posts along the Soviet-Iranian border in Nakhchïvan to force an opening to Southern Azerbaijan. Protesters reiterated long-standing demands for the expansion of direct relations with the large Azerbaijani population in

Iran, as well as the right of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia to set-
tle on lands in the wide, uncultivated Soviet-Iranian border zone.70
Representatives of the APF sought meetings with the republic au-
thorities and the protesters in a vain attempt to restore order, but un-
rest continued for weeks.

Finally, in mid-January 1990, angry Azerbaijani protesters in
the city of Baku turned on the remnants of the city's Armenian civil-
ian population for a final round of murder, pillage, and deportation.
Hardly active participants in the militant nationalist movements
forged in the NKAO, the Baku Armenians were nonetheless an easily
accessible target for the expression of Azerbaijani frustrations. For
almost a week, groups of Azerbaijanis preyed upon the often elderly,
defenseless Armenian residents of a city that traditionally prided it-
self on internationalism and multi-ethnic tolerance.

In the context of armed war in the NKAO, unrest along the
Azerbaijani-Iranian borders, and the reeruption of anti-Armenian
violence in the capital, the endemic political paralysis of the Com-
munist Party of Azerbaijan was quickly transformed into acute polit-
ical collapse. Party appeals for calm and an end to violence in Baku
that appeared in newspapers and were broadcast by the republic's
mass media fell on deaf ears among a population that had lost all
confidence in the party apparatus. Within the Azerbaijani party it-
self, officials as high as Bureau member Häsän Häsänov publicly
condemned the party's paralysis and political mistakes.71

The mounting political crisis and social chaos eventually
brought Moscow's declaration of martial law, first in the NKAO and
then in Baku, and the massive introduction of Soviet troops in the re-
public. It is probably too early to piece together the chain of rapidly
unfolding events in December and January and the elements of deci-
sion-making that led to the intervention of Soviet troops in
Azerbaijan over 19–20 January 1990.72 Irrespective of any purported
intent, in practice Soviet authorities delayed the introduction of
troops until the remains of Baku's Armenian population had been
killed or expelled. Only then did the central government exercise its
prerogative to restore order in Azerbaijan through the often brutal
repression of Azerbaijani popular forces, apparently discriminating
little between those who were violent and those who were not. First
Secretary Väzirov was ousted on 20 January, and was replaced four

days later by the chairman of the republic's Council of Ministers, Ayaz Niyaz oghlu Mütälibov, a research engineer.73

It is perhaps both fitting and ironic that simultaneously with the destruction of Baku's Armenian community, attempts at reform in Azerbaijan were also dealt a fatal blow. The conservative moves toward political reform under Väzirov, promoted as they were in conditions of unabated crisis over the NKAO, contributed to the total disintegration of the party's social authority and organizational integrity. Moreover, the attempts at democratic coalition-building under the auspices of the APF, radicalized by its long exclusion from politics and the increasing power of Azerbaijani chauvinism, collapsed under the weight of both Soviet tanks and the front's own internal fragmentation and disarray.

The intervention of the Soviet military in Azerbaijan provided the Communist Party of Azerbaijan an opportunity to rebuild itself internally and reestablish itself more firmly in the republic's political life. By the late spring of 1990, the party apparatus, buttressed by the continued presence of the military, allowed the reemergence of independent political associations, including the Azerbaijani Popular Front.74 Nonetheless, party chief Mütälibov, who had himself elected president of the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet, has remained intent on controlling the republic's political process, even if displaying greater concern for the defense of Azerbaijani national interests. Under Mütälibov, harassment of political activists has continued, and the APF newspaper has been shut down on occasion for "slander" against the Azerbaijani president.75 Elections to the republic's Supreme Soviet hastily scheduled for autumn 1990 have already been postponed once; the results will most likely differ only slightly from those of the Communist-dominated elections of March 1988.

Political change in Azerbaijan emerged with its own particular trajectory, but many of these developments reflect the more general conflicts inherent in any process of radical political transformation in a multi-ethnic society. In particular, the contradictory imperatives of the Armenian and Azerbaijani national movements in Azerbaijan reflect a more general set of structural conflicts between minority and majority nationalisms that exist in all the Soviet republics with multi-ethnic populations. As the multinational Soviet federation moves into the 1990s, Azerbaijan stands as a reminder of the danger-

ous potential of ethnic conflict and political change under Gorbachev's perestroika.

NOTES

1. For a fuller elaboration of this issue and others discussed in this section, see my "Beyond the Nation-State: Culture and Ethnic Politics in Soviet Transcaucasia," *Soviet Union/Union Soviétique* (Atlanta) 15, 2–3 (1988): 219–31.

2. On this debate, see E. M. Akhmedov, *Filosofiya azerbaydhanskogo prosveshcheniya* (The philosophy of Azerbaijani education) (Baku: Azerneshr, 1983).

3. On the ethnonymnic change, see Azerbaijani historian Süleyman Äliyarov's comments in "Our Query," *Azärbayjan* (Baku), no. 7, 1988, p. 176.

4. Ronald G. Suny, *The Baku Commune, 1917–1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972).

5. On the lack of glasnost in Azerbaijan, see Elizabeth Fuller, "The Transcaucasian Republics in 1987," Radio Free Europe–Radio Liberty, *Radio Liberty Research* (Munich), RL 8/88, 30 December 1987.

6. For an argument on the Karabakh movement's origins in foreign Armenian nationalist circles, see the article symptomatically titled "Evil Intentions, Foreign Voices," *Kommunist* (Baku), 25 November 1988.

7. For useful collections of documents on the origins and development of the Karabakh movement, see *The Karabakh File* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zoryan Institute, 1988), and *Artsakhean Taregrutiown* (Artsakh annals) (Los Angeles, Calif.: Asbarez, 1988).

8. For a critique of the view that stresses the ethnic and religious origins of the Karabakh crisis, see my "The Armenian Protests: Is It Passion or Politics?" *Deadline* (New York), July–August 1988, pp. 8–11.

9. *Khorhrdayin Hayastan* (Yerevan), 7 February 1990.

10. I interviewed Armenian writers and journalists on this subject in Baku in autumn 1987.

11. Claire Mouradian translates portions of this document in her "The Nagorno-Karabakh Problem or Difficulties with the 'Friendship of Peoples' in the Transcaucasus," *Slovo* (Paris), no. 7, 1985, pp. 53–82.

12. For an Azerbaijani argument for more economic autonomy from Moscow, see *Kommunist,* 1 May 1989.

13. *Milliyet* (Istanbul), 21 November 1988, translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.—hereafter, *FBIS-SOV*), 28 November 1988, p. 65.

14. For examples, see *Ädäbiyyat vä Injäsänät* (Baku), 25 November 1988, and *Kommunist,* 3 December 1988.

15. AFP report translated in *FBIS-SOV,* 25 November 1988, p. 37.

16. *Azärbayjan Qänjläri* (Baku), 5 November 1988.

17. In some cases, prominent Azerbaijani intellectuals accused Armenians themselves of organizing the Sumgait massacre to gain public sympathy. For example, see Ziya Buniyatov, "Why Sumgait [Happened]," *Azärbayjan SSR Elmlär Akademiyasïnïn khäbäläri. Tarikh, fälsäfä, vä hügug seriyasï* (Baku), no. 2, 1989.

18. On environmental pollution, see *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, 10, 17, and 22 September 1988.

19. For example, *Kommunist,* 5 May 1989.

20. *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, 2 July 1988.

21. Report by R. Y. Zeynalov, *Kommunist,* 15 November 1988.

22. Väzirov report on restructuring of party in *ibid.*

23. The need for more employment opportunities was emphasized throughout 1988 and 1989, including at sessions of the Azerbaijan CP's Commission on National Relations. See, for example, *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, 20 September 1988.

24. On Nakhchïvan, see *Bakinskii Rabochii* (Baku), 22 October and 20 November 1988; on the plains Karabakh development project, to include the districts of Aghdam, Aghjabädi, Jäbrayïl, Mirbäshir, Füzuli, and Gasïm-Ismayïllï, see *ibid.,* 26 October 1988.

25. *Ibid.,* 9 December 1988.

26. *Ibid.,* 18, 19, and 23 November 1988. On the historical meaning of Topkhana for the Azerbaijanis, see *ibid.,* 20 November 1988, and *Kommunist*, 23 and 24 November 1988.

27. The letter is reprinted in *Bakinskii Rabochii,* 30 November 1988.

28. Among the reports of rallies throughout the republic, see *ibid.,* 23 November 1988.

29. *Kommunist*, 14 January 1989, and Väzirov's comments in *ibid.,* 15 January 1989.

30. *Bakinskii Rabochii,* 7 December 1988.

31. *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, 3 January 1989.

32. *Ibid.,* 7 January 1989.

33. *Kommunist*, 15 January 1989. At a press conference held in Moscow, representatives of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs reported the dismissal of

100 leading and rank-and-file functionaries of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Internal Affairs; *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow), 8 February 1989.

34. *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, 3 January 1989.

35. *Kommunist*, 14 and 26 March 1989.

36. *Ibid.,* 5 April 1989.

37. The pre-electoral campaign and candidate registration was reported only for the Shusha district, the only part of the NKAO with an Azerbaijani majority.

38. For an account of Väzirov's visit to Imishli, see *Kommunist*, 5 March 1989. For a similar story run on party second secretary Polyanichko, see *ibid.*, 24 March 1989.

39. *Kommunist*, 9 February 1989.

40. *Ädäbiyyat vä Injäsänät,* 25 November 1988.

41. For more discussion of demands with regard to Southern Azerbaijan, see my "Beyond the Nation-State."

42. Unpublished interviews given to the Azerbaijani service of Radio Liberty.

43. *Bakinskii Rabochii,* 9 December 1988.

44. *Ibid.,* 16 December 1988.

45. *Pravda* (Moscow), 27 April 1989.

46. In this regard, the Armenian national movement in Armenia also originally emerged in response to the Karabakh movement, although the dynamics of relations between the NKAO and Armenia were of an entirely different order.

47. For a full description of members of the initiative group, see *Azärbayjan Khalg Jäbhäsi Täshäbbüs Märkäzinin Bülletini* (Baku), no. 1, 1989, pp. 8–9.

48. For an early statement of APF intentions, see "Programme of the People's Front of Azerbaijan," *Central Asian and Caucausus Chronicle* (London), August 1989, pp. 7–10.

49. *Kommunist*, 18 February 1989.

50. *Ibid.,* 31 August 1989.

51. *Ibid.,* 6 September 1989.

52. Radio Free Europe–Radio Liberty, *Report on the USSR* (Munich), 21 July 1989, p. 50.

53. Unpublished interview with the Azerbaijani service of Radio Liberty.

54. The Azerbaijani press was filled with discussions of the refugee crisis and attempts to resolve it. See, for example, *Kommunist*, 29 April and 15 December 1989.

55. Azerbaijani intellectuals first made an appeal for an aid committee in mid-August and held a founding congress at the end of the same month; *ibid.*, 17 and 31 August 1989.

56. *Khorhrdayin Hayastan,* 20 August 1989.

57. Despite its condemnation of the National Council as "unconstitutional" (see *Bakinskii Rabochii,* 27 August 1989), the Azerbaijani government was unable to take any practical steps to curtail the council's activities.

58. For Moscow accounts of strike demands, see *Pravda,* 10 September 1989, and *Izvestiia* (Moscow), 11 September 1989.

59. *Bakinskii Rabochii,* 5 October 1989.

60. Expressed in an interview published with some delay in *Tercüman* (Istanbul), 23 November 1989, newspaper.

61. *Moscow News,* 1 October 1989.

62. *Kommunist*, 5 October 1989.

63. Elizabeth Fuller, "Moscow Rejects Azerbaijani Law on Sovereignty: A Moral Victory for Armenia?" *Report on the USSR,* 1 December 1989, pp. 16–18.

64. *Kommunist*, 5 October 1989. Along with those of Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan's constitution had, well before the Gorbachev reforms, included a clause that regarded the national language as the state language.

65. *Ibid.,* 4 October 1989.

66. Earlier attempts by the APF to call a temporary moratorium had also failed. See *Pravda,* 24 August 1989. Reports on the continuation of the blockade were published regularly by the Armenian and international press throughout autumn 1989. See, for example, *New York Times,* 3 December 1989.

67. As late as mid-January 1990, USSR Foreign Ministry spokesperson Gennadii Gerasimov was only willing to refer to the Armenian-Azerbaijani battles as "almost a civil war"; *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), 17 January 1990.

68. The precise composition of NKAO representation was left temporarily unresolved; *Kommunist*, 7 January 1990.

69. For the text of the decision, the *Khorhrdayin Hayastan,* 3 December 1989.

70. *Kommunist*, 10 January 1990. On the history of Azerbaijani interests in Southern Azerbaijan/Northern Iran, see my "Beyond the Nation-State," and David B. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan: The Uses of Nationalism for Political Penetration* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987).

71. *Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul), 15 January 1990.

72. In particular, the notion—picked up by Western correspondents—of a conspiracy to dislodge the APF by promoting the front's radicalization and anti-Armenian violence must be considered with caution. See, e.g., *New York Times,* 19 February 1990.

73. See Elizabeth Fuller, "Azerbaijani Central Committee Elects New First Secretary," *Report on the USSR,* 2 February 1990, p. 16. According to this report, the republic Supreme Soviet had earlier in January demanded the removal of Väzirov.

74. *Ibid.,* 25 May 1990, p. 23.

75. On the closing of the APF newspaper *Azadlyg,* see *Kommunist*, 20 July 1990. For other cases of harassment of the APF, see *Bakinskii Rabochii,* 19 May 1990, and *FBIS-SOV,* 20 July 1990, p. 103, and 27 July 1990, p. 88.

THE ARMENIAN PROTESTS: IS IT
PASSION OR POLITICS?

It was in late February when the first reports of massive protests in Soviet Armenia reached Western reporters. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* provided extensive coverage of this complex breaking news story, which centered on Armenian territorial claims to the predominantly Armenian district of Nagorno-Karabakh in the neighboring republic of Soviet Azerbaijan.

In spite of the volume of coverage, however, the American reports, which focused on what was depicted as deep-seated and seemingly immutable hostility between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, failed to explore in depth a range of social, economic, and political factors that were also important elements of the story.

By contrast, *Le Monde*, the Parisian daily noted for its coverage of international news, reported ethnic hostility but, in addition, underlined the changing nature of the political situation in the Transcaucasian region of the USSR, the economic issues dividing the Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and the subtleties of the negotiations that took place between Moscow and the leadership of the southern republics.

The reporting of this story from Moscow was a textbook case of the frustrations that face a reporter bent on getting the facts—even in the Gorbachev era. Yet, at a time when it is widely agreed that the nationalities question is going to be high on the Soviet agenda for years to come, it is none too soon for journalists to reconsider their approach to this complex subject and perhaps, in light of *Le Monde*'s coverage, to contemplate additional ways of understanding this story.

ARMENIA, THE *POST*, AND THE *TIMES*

In the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the events beginning with the first demonstrations in Armenia and culminating with

Moscow's announcement of measures designed to resolve the crisis in late March were presented as expressions of a kind of primordial ethnic sentiment. "The riots have brought to the surface deep-seated bitterness between two rival ethnic groups," Gary Lee, Moscow correspondent for the *Washington Post*, wrote in a story published on 3 March. That hostility, Lee continued, "has existed for decades and been left to smolder by past Kremlin policies of benign neglect toward the Soviet nationalities problem."

In this view, which was apparently widely shared among those reporting the story, ethnic and religious differences themselves seemed to provide a sufficient explanation of the conflict. This assumption was apparent in coverage that repeatedly pointed out the fact that "Armenians and Azerbaijanis are divided by religion and a history of conflict that predates the formation of the Soviet Union," in the words of Philip Taubman, the *New York Times* Moscow bureau chief, on 6 March. David Remnick, a member of the *Washington Post*'s bureau in Moscow, also emphasized such historic tensions, quoting a senior Western diplomat in a report published on 5 March to the effect that the conflicts are a product of ethnic relations "that go back deeper in history" than the Soviet state itself. Instead of describing the character of each national claim and the origins and nature of the conflicts between them, such articles lead to the conclusion, obviously not intended by the writers but sedimented in their texts nevertheless, that ethnic enmity is inherent in ethnic difference itself.

If ethnic conflict is inevitable in this view, it seems that it finds its primordial expression through religion. The fact that Armenians are Christian and Azerbaijanis Shi'ite Muslim, for example, appeared often in *Post* and *Times* accounts as the most fundamental explanation of conflict between the two peoples. "The most important difference between them is religion," Gary Lee wrote in a story published on 3 March that explained the causes of the violent Azerbaijani protests in Sumgait a few days before. Two days earlier, in fact, he had written, "Whether the Sumgait disturbance was instigated by the earlier [territorial] squabbles or not, religious differences seem to be at the root of the outbreaks." Reports appearing in the *Times* took a similar position, emphasizing what reporter Felicity Barringer referred to on 24 February as "Islamic-Christian frictions." An observation by Taubman the same day that "most Armenians are Christian and most Azerbaijanis Muslim" appeared under the sub-

head "What the Protests Are About"—as if the fact of religious difference was adequate to explain the nature of the complex conflict. Undoubtedly intended to provide information helpful in understanding the current territorial disputes, this description appeared, with some variation, in numerous *Times* and *Post* articles published during the first weeks of the Nagorno-Karabakh events. By means of such mantralike repetition, this accurate description of religious diversity was transformed from a statement of fact into an explanation of events. Indeed, little additional analysis of the situation would seem to be necessary once correspondents present as natural and logical the fact that Christians and Muslims do not get along.

Without such further analysis of the specific circumstances of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, it was perhaps inevitable that correspondents, seeking to gauge the significance of the conflict, would be tempted to conflate the Armenian-Azerbaijani events with national conflicts elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Taubman, for one, included the Armenian and Azerbaijani protests in an account of nationalist movements in the USSR that grouped together such dramatically disparate cases as Estonia and Kazakhstan. A day earlier, on 24 February, Taubman had already proposed that "many [nationalities] remain hostile to Moscow and, encouraged by Mr. Gorbachev's calls for increased openness and democracy, have agitated for more autonomy." As subsequent *Times* coverage made clear, however, during the Armenian demonstrations that Taubman was reporting, protesters did not call for more autonomy from Moscow but appealed for Moscow's intervention in local affairs to satisfy claims against Azerbaijan.

In other reports, the religious dimension of the conflict was dramatized by linking it to the threat to Soviet authority posed by the large Muslim populations in Soviet Asia. Despite the fact that it was Armenian claims that sparked the protests, Taubman wrote in a 6 March story that the protests were "most of all a warning about potential instability in predominantly Muslim regions that arc across the southern part of the country." The tendency to interpret Christian Armenian activism as a warning about the political instability of the Muslim population was also in evidence in a 1 March *Post* article by Lee, which reflected on the violent Azerbaijani reactions to the Armenian demonstrations and argued that "the Sumgait clash appeared to illustrate the volatility of religious conflict in officially sec-

ular Soviet society and particularly in the southern Muslim republics located near the Islamic fundamentalist state of Iran."

AN EMPHASIS ON CONTROL

This view of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations complemented certain assumptions about the actions that the Soviet government took in response to the crisis. Depicting national conflicts as primordial and natural, and therefore probably irresolvable short of true independence, the reporters could not but pay scant attention to the concessions offered by the Soviet government that were intended to satisfy the Armenian protesters. For example, the Kremlin's seven-year, 400-million-ruble ($668 million) program of social, economic, and cultural development for Karabakh, an important concession designed to address the officially accepted claims of discrimination, received little attention in the newspapers. Similarly, an important meeting between Gorbachev and Armenian writers Zori Balayan and Silva Kaputikyan, during which the Armenians listed a range of nonterritorial complaints, including a lack of Armenian television broadcasts and textbooks in Azerbaijan, was noted only briefly in the American newspapers.

Instead, reporters focused on Soviet efforts to control the protests. On 3 March, for example, soon after Gorbachev negotiated a moratorium on the Armenian street protests, Gary Lee turned not to the implications of the recent negotiations but to speculations about how the Kremlin was "apparently . . . studying how seriously it needs to crack down to keep nationalities under control." In fact, Lee's conclusion on 30 March that the Kremlin's "primary objective is the maintenance of law and order" was representative of a number of reports. Thus, despite some stories describing diplomatic moves to resolve the crisis, the most salient accounts in these papers during this time featured Moscow's efforts to assert control for its own sake.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO *LE MONDE*

Nearby, at the *Le Monde* office, however, another way of looking at the events held sway. In his second report as the new USSR correspondent for *Le Monde*, published 1 March, Bernard Guetta compared the Armenian demonstrations with a diverse group of other social movements, including Poland's Solidarity, the May 1968 student rebellion in Paris, and the 1975 Portuguese revolution. "How can one explain that in all latitudes and under all regimes, great collective movements find, as if instinctively, the same gestures and the same rhythms?" Guetta asked. To Guetta and his colleagues at *Le Monde*, the cause of the Armenian protests could not be reduced to the national or religious character of the protesters alone. Instead, *Le Monde*'s reports generally portrayed the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis as political in nature.

Although ethnicity remained vital to *Le Monde*'s presentation of the events, the politics by which it was expressed and mediated were of most interest to the paper. In a brief work of Kremlinological analysis on 6 March, Michel Tatu, the paper's former Moscow correspondent and one of France's leading journalists writing on Soviet affairs, discussed recent personnel transfers in Azerbaijan. The story, published the same day that Taubman was warning *Times* readers about the Muslim arc of instability across the country's southern flank, discussed what had actually aggravated the Armenians, including an attempt by an Azerbaijani to represent the Armenian city of Stepanakert in the republic's Supreme Soviet, and a case in which Azerbaijan's most important newspaper ridiculed Armenia with impunity. "Put otherwise," Tatu wrote, "the official organ of the Communist party of Azerbaijan allowed itself to insult the national dignity of Armenians." These events, insulting to Armenian prestige and inimical to Armenian political interests, were among the incidents contributing to the outbreak of Armenian protests in February, Tatu wrote. Similarly, Guetta sought to explain Azerbaijani riots in the city of Sumgait in terms of what, concretely, had irked the Azerbaijanis. "They were protesting, on the one hand, against their denunciation [as oppressors of Armenians] before the world, and on the other hand, against the possibility of seeing their republic deprived of territory that they had controlled since 1923."

A 9 March background piece by Charles Urjewicz, an instructor at the Institut National de Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris, added a historical and sociological dimension to *Le Monde*'s reporting. According to Urjewicz, in nineteenth-century Transcaucasia "cities became cosmopolitan centers dominated by a dynamic and experienced Armenian bourgeoisie. In the eyes of Azerbaijanis and Georgians," Urjewicz continued, the Armenians "became a symbol of foreign capitalism."

As a result of *Le Monde*'s close attention to the internal dynamics of the situation, the paper's correspondents also followed more closely than did the Americans the political maneuvers of the Soviet leadership as it sought to appease Armenian demonstrators. In contrast to the sparse coverage given these efforts by the *Times* and the *Post*, *Le Monde* carried two long articles that prominently featured the Karabakh redevelopment program proposed by authorities in Moscow, one by Agence France-Presse, published on 25 March, and a second by Guetta on 26 March. Noting that Moscow's solution "isn't annexation to Armenia, but isn't nothing either," Guetta underscored the Kremlin's two-track policy toward the Armenians: repress any further street actions and offer better conditions for Karabakh Armenians in the short term, while hinting at a promise of more in the future.

Le Monde's interest in the real politics of the conflict also produced considerable coverage of debates within the central Communist Party leadership over the conflict. Pieces by Guetta and foreign correspondent Sylvie Kauffman closely analyzed the constraints felt by Moscow in its efforts to resolve the crisis. In fact, Guetta, from his very first dispatch from Moscow, focused on the identity of interests that emerged between Gorbachev and the Armenian protesters and speculated on future political maneuvers and compromises each side might make. In his article, headlined "A Search for Compromise Seems to Take Hold in Armenia," Guetta provided a sense of the mutual accommodation that emerged between Gorbachev, the Armenian party leadership, and the protesters. "The whistling that had welcomed the appearance of the [Armenian Communist Party] first secretary ended," Guetta wrote of one demonstration. "Everyone understood that a deal was in the air. Soon men who were in tune with the crowds took to the microphone . . . to make the crowds un-

derstand that all one could hope for had been gained and that one had to let things play themselves out."

POLITICS ABOVE ALL

In some notable instances, American reporters did provide a description of such dynamics. A detailed article by Felicity Barringer and Bill Keller, published in the *Times* of 11 March, and a 21 March piece by Gary Lee in the *Post* paid more attention to what the Armenians and Azerbaijanis themselves were thinking. Reporters from both papers did describe the political and diplomatic solutions proposed by Gorbachev, but far less fully than their counterparts at *Le Monde*. The American reporters basically subscribed to the position that the issue is, as Gary Lee put it in the *Post* of 29 February, one of "controlling restive nationalities" whose religious differences appeared naturally to motivate them to mutual antagonism. Seen from this perspective, no Soviet political solution was likely possible, since primordial national interests must come into inevitable conflict with (as Taubman put it) the equally immutable "ethic of Soviet socialism—central control, a premium on discipline, abhorrence of disorder."

For the correspondents of *Le Monde*, however, the conflict between the Soviet state and the social actors is a dynamic one. Instead of focusing on the unchanging nature of the relationships, the French reporters took Soviet politics seriously on its own terms, emphasizing the fluid nature of the political situation and the give-and-take among the parties. With this in mind, they followed closely the dynamics of the Armenian movement, the Azerbaijani reactions, and the combination of coercive and diplomatic moves by the Gorbachev leadership to manage, if not to resolve, the tensions. In doing so, they sketched the outline of interest-group politics, Soviet style, in contrast to the picture of erupting primordial passions that dominated the American coverage. For the French journalists at *Le Monde* it was politics—ethnically motivated—but politics all the same.

REPRESENTATION AS A REALM OF CONFLICT: TWO EXAMPLES FROM SOVIET ARMENIAN LITERATURE

In April l965 Soviet Armenian political leaders dedicated a newly built memorial complex on a forested hill in Yerevan. Constructed of large gray granite blocks, the monument commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian genocide carried out by the Turkish government during World War I. The dedication of the memorial signalled more than just respect for a tragic page in Armenian history. It announced an official recognition of a growing interest in the status of Western (Turkish) Armenia in the public life of Soviet Armenians.

Prior to the l960s, political and literary discourse virtually excluded historical and contemporary references to Western Armenia in the articulation of a distinct Soviet Armenian identity. By the l980s, however, representations of Armenian ethnicity in all domains of cultural production—from music and the visual arts to historiography and ethnography—made the Western Armenian experience publicly accessible to the republic's population.[1]

The incorporation of Western Armenian themes was not a monolitic process but was marked by conflict over the meanings attached to these themes in contemporary Soviet Armenian culture. This essay takes up the conflictual dimension of the changes in cultural representations of Armenian identity. Through a textual analysis of some recent Armenian literature, I hope to highlight the conflicting implications of national history for the construction of national identity.[2]

I have chosen examples of historical fiction that represent Armenian ethnic identity in the context of Soviet power. These are Mushegh Galshoyan's novella *Dsori Miro* (Miro of the valley) and Gevorg Emin's poem *Sasuntsineri pare* (The dance of the Sasuners). Both authors are "mainstream" Soviet writers. Galshoyan's novella has been published in a run of 20,000, translated into Russian and other languages, and made into a popular film. Emin's poem has

been published twice, most recently in an illustrated production of 50,000 copies—virtually the limit for fiction publications in Armenia.

Dsori Miro begins with the trip by a certain Miro, who is accompanying his son to a military induction office at the beginning of World War II. Against this background Galshoyan sets up a series of exchanges between Miro, his son Harut, and the driver Aro about the meaning of the war. Most of the text relates Miro's personal recollections, evoked by discussions of the war. Later scenes in the novella tell us that Harut has been killed in the war, that Miro remarries and has a second son (also named Harut), and that eventually he sends this son off to an institute in Yerevan.

Miro, the main character, represents an unreconstructed Armenian identity in the sense that he is relatively unintegrated into daily Soviet life. Though popularly considered one of the founders of the village (now kolkhoz) of Karaglukh, he has few friends apart from two "counter-revolutionaries," Elbek and Babek. The rest of his friends, it appears, have been "taken away." He was opposed to collectivization and continues to avoid administrative meetings of the kolkhoz where he lives. He goes to the kolkhoz office for his second visit in seven years only to borrow the kolkhoz cart to take his son to the induction office. Simultaneous with the characterization of Miro as alienated from Soviet life, Galshoyan begins to establish the protagonist's Armenian qualities by informing the reader that he is a native of Gortsvark village, Khut district, Sasun province, of Western Armenia. Perhaps such a village does not really exist, but for the Armenian reader it is enough to know that he is from Sasun, a mountainous province of Western Armenia renowned for its reputation of proud defiance of Ottoman Turkish rule and the tenacity of its population. Having escaped the massacres of the Western Armenian population during World War I and participated in the guerrilla movement of self-defense, Miro is both an Armenian victim and an Armenian hero. Such a character resonates well with a Soviet Armenian audience that shares a common experience of the massacres (except for the aged, nowadays only vicariously) and a popular respect for those who fought in the *fedayi* (guerrilla) movement against Turkish rule.

In contrast to the "Armenian" Miro, Galshoyan constructs a "Soviet" Harut. The reader is told little about Harut, but the impres-

sion is given that he is a "typical" Soviet youth: he goes to school, is a member of the Komsomol, and appears to be comfortable in his identity as a Soviet person. In addition, Galshoyan tells the reader that Harut has tried to explain his Komsomol activities and the intricacies of world politics (which he learned at Komosomol meetings) to his uncomprehending father.

From the outset of the story, Galshoyan sets up the contrasting characters of Miro and Harut. Harut is a contemporary person, but Miro—fixated in his own past—is estranged from the present. Miro constantly drifts from the present to the past and recalls his native village, his father Harut (for whom his son is named), his wife, the massacres—in a word, anything connected with his experience in Western Armenia. As Miro relates his life stories in the form of advice to his son, the exchange between the father and son is developed by Galshoyan to underscore their alienation from each other and to establish two conflicting representations of the war's meaning.

During the trip the three men discuss everything from the weather to Harut's fiancée, yet the underlying theme of their conversation is the war. At unexpected moments, Miro counsels his uncomprehending son with some wise words, the meaning of which remains deep in his memory (but is narrated through the text to the reader). Recalling how the Turkish authorities tried to intimidate his village, Miro instructs his son that strength is in the unity of the people. Recalling his father's murder by Turkish soldiers, his own imprisonment and escape, and his participation in the fedayi resistance, Miro urges his son to be courageous, loyal, and cunning in war. Through such frequent and extended reproductions of Miro's recollections, Galshoyan establishes an intimacy between the reader and Miro. The textual exploration of Miro's tragic, yet often heroic memories establishes the reader's sympathy for Miro, as well as an understanding for his apparently cryptic remarks. Harut's lack of understanding and indifference reinforce the reader's identification with Miro and create distance from Harut. Unaware of his father's motivations and confused by his cryptic advice, Harut either remains silent, offers a perfunctory "yes, dad," or tries to reassure his father that he takes the advice seriously.

It is in these series of exchanges that each man's understanding of the war's meaning is constructed by Galshoyan. Discussing the causes of the war, Harut places the blame on the "fascists." Miro dis-

agrees and explains to his son that the problem is Hitler, a "blood relative of Sultan Hamit and the heir of Enver and Talaat." Later, Miro again likens the Nazis to the Turks. The Turkish "king" had tricked the Armenian people by offering them a false freedom, and in the same way the German "king" signed a false peace with the Soviets. For Miro, the war is not simply against the "fascist threat" (presented as Harut's politically correct conception). Rather he is sending his son to fight against an evil power that he equates with the Turkish authorities who massacred his people and usurped his land.

Miro's advice is not without effect. He continues to relate his understanding of the war to his son, and toward the end of the journey Harut begins to comprehend his father's message. Miro talks to Harut of his experiences as a guerrilla, the dedication of the Armenian fedayi, and the oath made among people in struggle. For the first time Harut is struck by his father's words and strives to understand them. Finally his father's values and advice make sense, and Harut wonders about the sources of his father's insights.

Galshoyan thus shows the reader the possibility of transmitting the lessons of experience from one generation to the next. Having instilled in his son a respect for his Armenian experience, Miro pleads with his son: "Harut, don't fight against the Germans for the big country; rather let your fight be for this Karaglukh village, for your little home."* Miro clarifies his message to his son and says, in referring to the destruction of the Western Armenian population,

> Man's greatest loss is human, and human loss is irrevocable. Loss of the Homeland and the soil is great, but land is immortal and won't accept another master. Land is related by blood to its master, and the land will wait for its master. One day, they'll meet again. The loss of land is not an irrevocable loss. . . . The Soviets will win the war, and they'll open the way to our Homeland.**

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*In contemporary Soviet Armenian discourse, a distinction is often made between the term "our homeland" (Armenia) and "our big homeland" (the Soviet Union). Miro's use of "the big country" is thus a subtextual reference to the Soviet Union.

**The term translated here as "Homeland" is not the literal Armenian word for homeland (*hayrenik*) but *yerkir,* literally meaning "country," but in fact a popular subtextual reference to Western Armenia.

For Miro, the war with the Nazis is not a war of salvation for the Soviet homeland, not even the Soviet Armenian homeland. Rather, it is an opportunity to recover the past, to regain his lost identity through the recapture of his Western Armenian homeland. In Miro's understanding, identity is closely connected with the notion of homeland. Miro also believes that this link with identity and homeland transcends politics. For example, the driver Aro recalls the confusion of "ten parties, ten lines" during the fedayi resistance. Miro responds by praising General Andranik, who in leading the fedayi forces represents strength in ethnic solidarity and the struggle for a national homeland.* When Harut asks his father about Andranik's political affiliation, Miro becomes enraged and claims that "General Andranik was a man . . . the heavenly and earthly master of the [Western Armenian] refugees," as if Andranik and his actions had a purely national significance that cannot be reduced to politics or political loyalties.

Harut becomes confused. In the Komsomol meetings, he thinks, he was told not to spare his life for the Soviet homeland, but now his father was providing a different motivation to fight. Harut is thus confronted by an apparent conflict between the official Soviet meaning of the war and his father's definition based on essentially parochial and ethnic considerations.

World War II is one of the most common metaphors in the Soviet symbolic repertoire. In constructing Miro's particular conception of the war, Galshoyan uses the war as a metaphor for the struggle to both reclaim lost heritage and transmit that heritage to the next generation, represented by Miro's son. The war is not a tragedy for Miro; rather, it is an opportunity to offer his son as a combatant for the recapture of his own personal and collective identity as an Armenian. In addition, the war provides a means to instill in his son the meaning of that identity. In this sense, the meaning of Harut's eventual death has two dimensions for Miro, but the ultimate outcome—the loss of identity—is the same.

*Andranik, a general in the Bulgarian army, was a key leader of Armenian armed forces during the fedayi resistance. Thousands of Western Armenian refugees retreated with his forces and settled in present-day Soviet Armenia. He had quit the Dashnak (nationalist) party when it adopted a social-democratic program in l907.

Galshoyan continues his novella at a later time in a series of postwar vignettes. Miro has not changed and is portrayed as obsessed with the preservation of his identity—manifested in his desire for a male heir. Finally, Miro rapes a young woman and then forces her to marry him. The woman bears a son whom Miro names Harut. Having indulged in a crime of passion, Miro is ostracized by the kolkhoz residents. But his passion was not at all sexual—his was an act of ethnic passion informed by the determination to preserve and pass on his identity.

For Miro, the transmission of the past means more than just having a son and symbolically naming him after his murdered father. Rather, it also involves imbuing the child (and symbolically, the entire new generation) with an appreciation of the intimate connections between homeland and identity. But Miro's determination is in vain. Although Miro was finally able to transmit something to his first son, there is little understanding between Miro and his second son. Galshoyan presents us with a vignette that illustrates the alienation of this second son from his father. Wanting "the best" for his son, Miro had arranged for Harut's admission into a Yerevan institute. One day Harut returns to the kolkhoz and talks of his career in "computers"—a word Miro does not even understand. Harut brings with him a woman whose manner of dress only shocks Miro. When Miro inquires into the possibility of marriage, he learns that the two are already married and plan to live in the city.

His authority rejected, Miro feels betrayed by his son. But his sense of failure is greater. Miro can define the preservation of identity only in terms of an attachment to the land, and his son's refusal of both his authority and the land represents a rejection of the identity he had done everything to preserve. At the end of the novella, the dejected Miro wanders out into his orchards and reassures the land, "Don't worry; it's Dsori Miro. Your master hasn't died."

Gevorg Emin's epic poem is a very different text, but like Galshoyan's novella, it treats issues of Armenian identity, national homeland, and Soviet power in the light of themes of Western Armenian rural experience, massacres and resistance, and a new life in Soviet Armenia.

Emin tells the story of Ashnak, an actual village located in Soviet Armenia and populated by Sasun-born refugees of the genocide.

He paints an idealized picture of rural life in Ashnak—complete with happy homes, fertile fields, and new brides bearing children. He explains, however, that Ashnak hardly compares to the town of Sasun, with its emerald peaks in the clouds, pure waters, and a church on every hill.* Emin's account affirms to the reader that life is good in Soviet Armenia but nonetheless contrasts it to an "other": an idyllic Armenia that existed in the not-so-distant past but now lives on only in the minds of the refugees. But this ideal Armenia symbolized by Sasun was destroyed by the Turks, and its inhabitants were forced to flee. Thus the people of Sasun are disenfranchised from the foundations of their identity—the connection with their homeland and way of life.

Emin quickly returns the reader to Ashnak, where the refugees are trying to reestablish what they had lost in a new land. As portrayed by Emin, a successful recontruction is not possible, however, until the advent of Soviet power in Eastern Armenia:

> Until the blood thickened
> And became a red-colored flag;
> Until the sickle rose from the soil
> And the hammer flew off the anvil
> And the two of them, like brothers
> Rose onto the flag.
> And a new sun broke over the land.

In the context of Soviet power, the villagers of Ashnak were able to remake their past by recreating Sasun. Thus Ashnak represents not an advance to a new way of life but the resurrection of tradition. This reconstruction of traditional identity is described by Emin through the metaphor of dance. The people of Ashnak can dance just as they did in Sasun. Through their dancing, these people invoke their traditional glory and establish the authority of the past for those in the present. Emin underscores the fact that it is only in the new Soviet conditions that Armenians are able to recontruct their identity expressed in both its form (dance) and its content (memory of Sasun, traditional history):

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*As noted, Sasun holds a particularly important place in contemporary Armenian mythology and can be seen as a synecdoche for Western Armenia.

> Sasun danced, and the whole world stood in awe.
> Sasun danced, and the whole world understood
> That this was not merely a dance, but the brave
> History of a land.
> And nothing will conquer that ancient people
> That with such effort and with such will
> Can dance.

Emin uses dance as a means to define ethnic identity by equating dance with ethnic history. He draws an intimate connection between cultural activity (the dance) and the affirmation of one's identity symbolically embodied in the homeland, Sasun. It is thus by their ability to dance that the Ashnak villagers reclaim the tradition of which they had been deprived:

> The spirit of Sasun sparked anew on Mount Aragats.
> . . . and Sasun danced again.

But the cultural form of dance allows for more than the symbolic reconstitution of identity. The dance also serves to ensure ethnic regeneration. Identity is not merely what exists at present (a symbolic Sasun recreated in Ashnak). It is also what will be. This future state is similarly achieved through a recapturing of the past, but in a different way. Like Miro's homeland that can accept no foreign master, Emin's Sasun still cries out for its former owners. Recalling Sasun's longing for its former inhabitants, Emin ends his poem with an appeal:

> Dance, until you raise up all Armenians
> And dance this dance
> On the slope of Ararat . . .

Previously confined to the slopes of Aragats (in Soviet Armenia) and the towns and villages of Soviet Armenia, Emin now calls for a regenerated Armenian nation to dance on the slope of Mt. Ararat—another traditional symbol of Armenian identity now conspicuously located in Turkey (hence "Western Armenia"). The reconstruction of ethnic identity is achieved not just by recreating ethnic history, but also by the symbolic retaking of the historical object itself—Western Armenia.

One of the features common to both Galshoyan's and Emin's texts is a consistent Armenianization of experience. This is most obvious in the case of Galshoyan's hero Miro, who can make sense of the war, Nazism, or anything else only in terms defined as Armenian. In the case of Nazism, for example, he can understand it only as an evil analagous to the Turks and as a threat to his own Armenian identity (and not to the Soviet homeland). In Emin's poem, this Armenianization is even more total: the establishment of Soviet power in Armenia is presented only in terms of the benefits and opportunities it has brought to Armenian national self-assertion.

This Armenianization of Soviet experience (Soviet power, the Great Patriotic War) is significant because it challenges the conventional Western view—as well as the oft-stated Soviet intention—that cultural production in the USSR is a means of propagating official Soviet values such as internationalism and friendship of peoples. But beyond this, the two authors present different conceptions of the relation between Armenian identity and Soviet realities. For Emin, there appears to be no conflict between the categories "Soviet" and "Armenian." The interrelation is beneficial (if not parasitic) from the definitively Armenian point of view, since Soviet power has provided the means for Armenian self-assertion. Galshoyan presents a more complicated vision of Soviet-Armenian relations. Part of Miro's maintenance of his traditional Armenian identity can be attributed to his rejection of things Soviet: he remains far from the kolkhoz administration and other realms of Soviet public life. Likewise, it is his intense devotion to the preservation of his identity that leads him to his antisocial behavior. In spite of this, Galshoyan portrays Miro as a genuine hero with whom the Armenian reader can identify. Galshoyan also clearly points to the incompatibility of Armenian and Soviet understanding—a subject that Emin avoids. Miro's and his son's conceptions of the war are presented as mutually exclusive and incomprehensible, manifested by the lack of understanding between father and son. Similar in their comprehension of reality in Armenian terms, both authors nonetheless provide conflicting representations of the fate of an Armenian identity under Soviet rule.

NOTES

1. In a report to the Armenian Writers' Congress, Vardges Petrosyan complained of current literature's virtual preoccupation with Western Armenian topics and criticized their indifference toward more practical issues of contemporary life in the Armenian republic. The text is published in *Grakan Tert* (Yerevan), 23 May l986. It seems that cultural policy can differ widely from republic to republic. In his report to the congress of the Azerbaijani Writers' Union, Ismayïl Shïkhlï made a case for the greater incorporation of Southern (Iranian) Azerbaijani themes in Soviet Azerbaijani literature (*Ädäbiyyat vä injäsänät* [Baku], 30 May l986).

2. When they study literature, social scientists almost exclusively work with a reflection theory of art. This implies that art "reflects" reality in providing access, albeit limited, to otherwise unobtainable social information. This problem is not directly addressed here, but I have written this essay from the perspective of recent critiques of reflection theory and related theories of cultural representation (this includes principally Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature;* Pierre Macherey, *For a Theory of Literary Production;* and Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse*). While not denying the importance of both reflective and representational dimensions in the sociology of literature, I have largely limited myself to a representational analysis for this essay.

AZERBAIJAN LOOKS "WEST": NEW TRENDS IN FOREIGN RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND TURKEY

Azerbaijan is a peripheral country, yet this fact has been a source of great richness and civilization. One need simply consider the region's legacy of ethnic and religious diversity, political liberalism, and cultural sophistication. But being in the periphery has its disadvantages as well. Azerbaijan has in its modern history been caught in a tug of war between three great empires: the Ottoman Turkish Empire, the Persian Empire (with its various dynasties), and the Tsarist Russian Empire. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, Azerbaijan north of the Araz River had fallen clearly under Russian dominion. Azerbaijan's orientation toward Russia—whether Tsarist or Soviet—has had immense political, socioeconomic, and cultural consequences for the area.

As the Soviet Union as a state was collapsing, Azerbaijani political activists began to reorient domestic politics and the foreign relations of their newly emerging country. This rethinking of Azerbaijani political identity, especially as it relates to the republic's emergent foreign ties, has necessarily involved the three "great powers" that surround the country: Russia, Turkey, and Iran. It is clear, for example, that the vast majority of Azerbaijani political elites have rejected—if not in actual practice at least formally—the Soviet Union as a federal state, the ideology of Soviet socialism, and the institutions and policies of what we used to call the "Soviet system."

But Russia is not the Soviet Union. In the past, analysts tended to confuse "Soviet" and "Russian," and while this confusion has had deleterious conceptual and political consequences that remain to this day, at the present moment the political implications of such a misconception are much more significant. In short, most Azerbaijanis' rejection of "Soviet socialism" should not be interpreted as an outright rejection of Russia—in political relations and economic ties, and even in culture.

Nonetheless, Azerbaijani political elites and perhaps Azerbaijani society as a whole are now engaged in a major historical

reorientation away from Russia, and the two most important refer-
ents in this reorientation are Iran and Turkey. I began with refer-
ences to Azerbaijan's historical relations with Iran and Turkey, but
this does not mean that history determines politics. Indeed, if we
simply use "history" as a model to interpret the present and future
course of Azerbaijani politics, all we will obtain is confusion. Tur-
key: the one-party state imposed in the 1920s and 1930s by Kemal
Ataturk, or the marked trend toward liberal democracy in the past
decade. Iran: the modernizing but authoritarian regime of the Shah,
or the Islamic Revolution under the guidance of Imam Khomeini.
And these are only a few possibilities of what "Iran" and "Turkey"
can mean.

Moreover, many observers combine vague notions of "history"
with other arguments of a cultural determinist sort when they inter-
pret the direction of contemporary Azerbaijani politics. The
ethnolinguistic character of the Azerbaijanis, it is argued, draws
them to Turkey, while their Shi'i Islamic faith draws them to Iran.
These cultural similarities are important in facilitating relations be-
tween these states, but the problem with most analysis is the assump-
tion that even if other factors are recognized, language, culture, and
religion are still viewed as the most fundamental determinants of
politics. This leads analysis to odd extremes. Many American com-
mentators, for example, emphasize the role that Islam plays in the re-
gion but simply ignore the fact that Azerbaijan shares geographic
borders with Iran and Turkey. Islam is thus viewed as all important,
and geographic contiguity is virtually irrelevant.

The "Sovietness" of Azerbaijani politics, which is concretely ex-
pressed in institutions and political culture that have developed
over decades, will remain at minimum for several generations. Yet in
the process of reformulating Azerbaijani political institutions and an
identity to match, Iran and Turkey hold an extremely important
place in thinking about a newly emerging Azerbaijan.

With these considerations in mind, I want to discuss current
trends in the evolution of Azerbaijani political identity. I will begin
with some general comments on the place of Iran and Turkey in the
political imagination of the Azerbaijani political leadership and in-
tellectual classes. Then I will discuss the nuances of contemporary
domestic politics in Azerbaijan by focusing on the country's major
sociopolitical forces: the former Communist Party apparatus, the

popular opposition, and the Muslim clergy. Thereafter, I will speak about the emerging patterns of Azerbaijani foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran and Turkey and the positions taken by these three major political groupings.

Observers commonly assume that Azerbaijani identity is confused: on the one hand, the argument goes, Azerbaijanis, as Shi'i Muslims, identify with Shi'i Iran; and on the other hand, the close relatedness of the Turkish and Azerbaijani languages is the basis for a great interest in Turkey. In fact, however, outside analysts are more confused than Azerbaijanis themselves.

If we assume that the Azerbaijani nation is a thinking and acting subject, then there is a confusion. But if we understand the "Azerbaijani nation" to be a collection of people with varying ideas, identities, and interests about themselves and their place in the world, then there is much less confusion. There is no one Azerbaijani position; rather, there are conflicting positions. Of course, some degree of generalization is fine, but too much generalization is theoretically inaccurate and politically dangerous.

Among Azerbaijani political leaders and intellectuals, Turkey is viewed mostly in a positive light. In the late Soviet period, for example, there was quite a lot of intellectual and political interest in Turkey. And despite the formalistic qualities of the official anti-Ottomanism, anti-bourgeois nationalism, and anti-U.S. imperialism, there was actually quite a lot of sympathy for Turkey, despite its NATO associations. To put this comment in perspective, one need only mention prevailing attitudes toward Armenians and Iranians. Azerbaijanis could combine an official position against the "nationalist falsifications" of Armenian historians over the history of Caucasian Albania with a genuine fear and envy of Armenian historiography. Similarly, many Azerbaijani historians and polemicists experienced no conflict of interests in condemning Kasravi as a Persian chauvinist, be it from an "official Soviet" or "unofficial Azerbaijani" point of view. By contrast, many modernized Azerbaijanis (including Communist Party officials as well as autonomous intellectuals, who themselves were formed by almost two centuries of modernizing Russian rule) saw Turkey as a more culturally intelligible "Turkic" model of rule: modern, independent, and secular, yet profoundly national.

The range of Azerbaijani attitudes toward Iran stands in stark contrast with the prevailing sympathy accorded to Turkey. Espe-

cially in the late Soviet period, Azerbaijani attention increasingly turned toward Southern Azerbaijan, which in the Iranian and Western mind is simply northern Iran. In this region, there were at least double the number of Azerbaijanis than in the Soviet Union as a whole. But unlike in the Soviet Union, where Azerbaijanis had access—restricted and often sanitized—to their identity as Azerbaijanis, in Iran they were deprived of even formal rights to their identity. Unlike in the Soviet Union, they were considered to be "Turkified Persians" à la Kasravi. This meant that unlike in the Soviet Union, there were no Azerbaijani schools or universities and very little in the way of Azerbaijani cultural institutions. Nonetheless, unlike in Turkey, where speaking Kurdish was considered a criminal act against the state, semipublic use of the Azerbaijani language was perfectly acceptable.

Thus, for your average, nationally conscious Azerbaijani, Iran symbolized ethnic oppression and Persian chauvinism. Of course, the situation changed with the Iranian Revolution of 1979, when there was quite a lot of liberalization as far as Azerbaijani cultural activism is concerned. But for Azerbaijan's largely secularized intellectual class, it was difficult unequivocally to embrace the politico-religious notion of *vilayat-e-faghih* in Iran—even if it meant more rights for ethnic minorities.

As for Azerbaijan's Muslim religious leadership, the situation is even more complex. Many Muslim clerics had accepted the Western and Soviet notion of a separation of religion from the state, yet even their potential sympathy for a Shi'i Muslim state was complicated by their identity as Azerbaijanis, who consider themselves to be oppressed by that same state.

These remarks may be confusing, and for the moment they are necessarily incomplete and preliminary. The most important consideration is to keep in mind that in general Azerbaijani attitudes toward Turkey in the past and present have generally been favorable. In contrast, the Azerbaijani image of Iran runs a much broader range of possibilities—from the more simple but prevailing view of Iran under the Shahs as an oppressor state to the more complex relation between vilayat-e-faghih and Azerbaijani nationalism.

These admittedly preliminary considerations feed into an understanding of Azerbaijani domestic politics in the contemporary period. There are fundamental debates about all issues of human life

going on in Azerbaijan, but for lack of space I will concentrate mostly on politics and economics.

There are two major trends in Azerbaijani politics today. In the terms of the debates that are being conducted over the future of the republic, these two trends can be referred to as an "Iranian" vs. a "Turkish" orientation. These terms are widely used in the West as well, but I use them in a very specific manner. The "Turkish" orientation does not necessarily reflect a desire for political union with the Republic of Turkey. In the same manner, an "Iranian" orientation does not necessarily mean sympathy for Iran and the Islamic Revolution. Rather, Iran and Turkey—especially in Azerbaijani discourse on domestic politics—stand as powerful symbols whose content must be specified and cannot simply be assumed.

Another way of thinking of these two orientations in domestic politics would be to refer to the "Turkish" orientation as a generally Westernized, liberal-democratic, and market-oriented ideology. The "Iranian" orientation, however, can best be described as a statist, fundamentally neo-Stalinist ideology. At its most open and tolerant, this position reflects in some ways the reconstructed vision of Soviet socialism promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev. It should be made clear from the outset, then, that what I refer to as an "Iranian" orientation has very little to do with Shi'i Islam or religious identity overall.

In discussing the relative strengths of the Iran vs. Turkey debates in Azerbaijani politics, I want to focus on three groupings, all of which have their political bases in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku. The first is the formerly Communist Party apparatus, led by Azerbaijan's president Ayaz Mütälibov. The party has now changed its name, and despite conflict and dissension within the party, the political machine under Mütälibov's guidance is still one of the most powerful and most extensive political forces in the country. The second grouping is the opposition, by which I mean mainly the moderately popular Azerbaijani Popular Front (with all its internal splits) and the small but influential Social-Democratic Party of Azerbaijan. Last is the Muslim clergy associated with the Muslim Religious Board of Azerbaijan, led by the chairman of the board and sheikh-ul-Islam of Azerbaijan, Allahshukur Pashazada.

The most consistent adherents to a "Turkish" orientation in Azerbaijani politics are the opposition. They are on the whole supportive of a Western-style, democratic, election-based government

and relatively free market relations. The APF's newspaper, for example, has a regular column on how Turkey's parliament works. But Turkey is not simply Turkey; it is the West, it is Europe and North America. For the Westernized, largely secular Azerbaijani intelligentsia that forms the core of the opposition, Turkey is a window to the West, a symbol of progress, democracy, nationalism, independence, and secularism—in short, the ideology and practice of European liberal-democracy—but with a Turkish face in a Muslim society.

While this Western-oriented ideology is shared by the opposition as a whole, some distinctions must be made. There are serious rifts within the Popular Front itself, and despite the commonality of splits in political organizations based mainly on personal conflicts (such as the Birlik/Erk split in Uzbekistan), the split in the APF runs much deeper. One of the more surprising events in Azerbaijani politics last year came during a major summertime assembly of the front, when the two major groupings in the front failed to break into organizations. The split consists of adherents of the more tolerant, liberal-democratic type described above and a much less democratically oriented group led by people such as E'tibar Mammadov, whose vision of a future Azerbaijan is much more informed by Azerbaijani chauvinism and political authoritarianism. In this way, the more radical nationalist wing of the front can be seen as having a more "Iranian" orientation than the rest of the opposition. This may be an exaggeration, but for the radical wing of the front one can simply replace the ideology of neo-Stalinism with that of Azerbaijani chauvinism but maintain the institutional profile of the former Soviet system of rule intact.

In stark contrast to the opposition, the former apparatus of the Communist Party is probably the most consistent supporter of an "Iranian" orientation. Of course, this does not mean that the Mütälibov regime is packed with closet fundamentalists. Rather, if Iran is thought of as a statist regime with extensive government regulation of the domestic economy and foreign economic ties, then an "Iranian" orientation among former Communists makes perfect sense.

The main problem in the case of the former Communist apparatus is that while the combination of their power and identity is based on the Soviet Communist system, they can no longer legitimately refer to Soviet communism as a model for Azerbaijan's future. In this

sense, as a political organization they have ideologically trans- formed themselves into nationalists but in political practice remain indistinguishable from the apparatchiks they ostensibly replace.

The position of the Azerbaijani clergy under Pashazada is prob- ably the most complicated and for me also the most fascinating. Sheikh-ul-Islam Pashazada has distinguished himself in Azerbaijani politics by sheer political savvy and survivability. Barely 30 years old when elected to his position in the late Brezhnev period, he has sur- vived all the transformations of recent Soviet politics. He is probably one of the most skilled politicians in post–World War II Azerbaijani politics. Though an ethnic Talysh, he is defender of Azer- baijani na- tionalism. And though the spiritual leader of Shi'i Azerbaijan Mus- lims north of the Araz River, he was once a supporter of the Communist regime. This is in part based on his keen political sense and his willingness to cooperate with any regime in power in Azerbaijan.

These considerations are important in evaluating his associa- tion with the "Iranian" position in Azerbaijani political debates. Closely aligned with the Mütälibov political machine, in terms of his general political orientation, he is almost indistinguishable from the neo-Stalinist groupings within the former Communist Party. In this sense, one of the greatest threats to his position is the liberal wing of the Azerbaijani Popular Front, which if it came to power may estab- lish the Western notion of separation of church from state (unlike the front's more chauvinist wing, which may view Azerbaijani national- ism and Islam as a single identity).

But Pashazada is not simply an unreconstructed Communist. He is a religious leader. And just as current and previous regimes in Azerbaijan manipulated the Muslim clergy for political ends, Pashazada is able to do the same in reverse. Under the aegis of suc- cessive governments in Azerbaijan's recent history (Äliyev, Baghïrov, Väzirov, and now Mütälibov), he has increasingly gained concessions from the regime based on its fear of Islam and the Mus- lim society in which it operates. The core leadership of the Azerbaijani Communist Party, it must be emphasized, was and re- mains a highly Westernized (read Russianized) and anti-religious group of men. Thus, the more the former Communists fear the Islamicization of Azerbaijani society (which is not as likely as many

observers think), the more concessions Pashazada will be able to obtain as a distinctly Islamic force for political stability in the republic.

It is in the context of these domestic political debates that the direction of Azerbaijani foreign policy is formulated. But unlike in domestic politics, the political and social cleavages in foreign policy-making are much less clear. This relates not simply to local political identity and its relation to Iran and Turkey, but also to other domestic and international factors.

Domestically (and here I stretch the term almost beyond recognition), the Armenians of Karabakh and of Armenia proper are of great concern to the Azerbaijanis. Many Azerbaijani leaders and commentators, in their own minds or simply as a populist means to maintain prestige and power over their constituencies, argue that the West, especially France and the United States but also Russia, is controlled to one extent or the other by an organized Armenian lobby. One could cite many examples of this from Azerbaijani political discourse, but one need only take note that Armenia's new foreign minister is an American-born Armenian.

In international politics, Azerbaijani fears of an Armenian conspiracy obtained the appearance of accuracy. Note that the United States initiated diplomatic relations with Armenia quite quickly, but delayed the process with Azerbaijan. The fact that the new UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, himself a Christian Copt, has an Armenian relative, likewise taints the United Nations as biased in the Azerbaijani imagination. With these considerations in mind, Azerbaijan looked to Iran, Turkey, and other Muslim regional actors not simply because of some kind of genetic Muslim impulse but in part by default, since the republic's leadership felt it could not rely on support from the West.

But U.S. policy has changed, and Secretary of State James Baker is now willing to embrace any dictator in the Caucasus and Central Asia in order to counter American perceptions of an Iranian threat in the region. In this move, the United States sees Turkey as a bridgehead to both Azerbaijan and Central Asia. Symptomatic of their obsession with Islam in general and Iran in particular, U.S. policy-makers apparently have little concern about the growing ties between Iran and Armenia, since quite obviously Iran would have some difficulty exporting its Islamic fundamentalist revolution

(whatever that means in American eyes) to a people known as one of the oldest Christian nations in the Near East.

The power of American foreign policy can help sway Azerbaijan more toward Turkey and the West, but it need not be seen as the sole determinant of Azerbaijani foreign policy. The relative success of the Turkish economy and the structures of its domestic and foreign economic policy, especially since the international liberalization of the 1980s, make it an apt model for Azerbaijan's own development. Moreover, Turkey remains, as I have said, a window on the West, and if we take the Azerbaijani image of Turkey as the West, then all the popular views of the "real" West as overrun by Armenians pose much less of an impediment for relations with the West. This view holds especially for the Azerbaijani opposition and to a large extent among activists in the formerly Communist apparatus.

At the same time, Iran as a model for development and increased ties is more problematic. Until the recent reorientation in Iranian politics, the Islamic government of Iran pursued highly protectionist foreign policies much like those of the former Soviet Union. As a model of government regulation of foreign economic ties, then, Iran's position feeds easily into the "Iranian" orientation of Azerbaijani politicians. At the same time, however, Iran is often viewed by Azerbaijanis as a pariah state that maintains relations only with other weaker states: thus, it is not like Turkey, which has strong associations with the rich and powerful economies of North America and Europe.

As I have noted, Azerbaijani biases against Iran are widespread. In a recent interview with a member of the governing board of the Popular Front, the activist spoke of many things but absolutely refused to utter the word "Iran". But whereas Azerbaijanis find little positive in Persian Iran, they feel compelled to improve relations with the Teheran government in order to develop more extensive contacts with the millions of their co-nationals south of the Araz River. But an odd situation obtains. Azerbaijanis north of the Araz have many more political and cultural ambitions with regard to the South than do Iranian Azerbaijanis toward the North. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that Azerbaijan's increasing ties with Iran are not simply with Iran but perhaps more importantly with Iranian Azerbaijan.

No one can predict the course of future events, just as no one recognized the possibility of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of at least fifteen new and independent states. But given such factors as local Azerbaijani attitudes toward Persian Iran and the increasingly aggressive conduct of American policy in the region, the tendencies with Azerbaijani politics are more and more clearly defined. Azerbaijan is looking West, and the West is Turkey.