ETHNO-SYMBOLISM AND GOVERNMENT

DISCOURSE IN AZERBAIJAN

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To Shelly, with love.
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Abstract:

Symbolism utilized by the government of Azerbaijan encodes values, attitudes, and myths that are an inheritance from the past. Understanding of the codes and symbolism utilized can potentially provide insight into contemporary decision-making by Azerbaijan. Governmental discourses of national identity are interrogated for historical and contemporary meaning. Six symbolic resources are explored using methods of discourse analysis through a lens of ethno-symbolism. The official seal of Azerbaijan, the national flag, the national anthem, the official seal of the Baku 2015 European Games, a Soviet-era tourist map, and the romance novel *Ali and Nino* are analyzed for the historical and contemporary identity claims that are encoded within. In particular, the representations of national identity that are contained, as well as the claims, relationships, and allegiances that are being communicated are explored to illuminate the complex interactions of history, territory, ethnicity, and culture that constitute national identity. A cultural history is constructed from an analysis of the chosen symbols that serves to inform both historic and contemporary Azerbaijani identity. Despite intense transformational forces, Azerbaijani national identity draws on values, attitudes, and myths that have been a continuous feature of the ethno-territorial identity of the Azerbaijani Turks.

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INTRODUCTION

"Dede Korkut came and told stories and declaimed; he composed and strung together this tale of the Oghuz.

  Where now are the valiant princes of whom I have told,
  Those who said 'The world is mine'?
  Doom has taken them, earth has hidden them.
  Who inherits this transient world,
  The world to which men come, from which they go,
  The world whose latter end is death?"
          -The Book of Dede Korkut[1]

The current world order is being challenged by disparate and competing pressures.[2] On one hand, the globalizing pressures of supra-national organizations like the UN have had a powerful influence on global politics, and the idea of state sovereignty is often viewed as subordinate to the needs of the global (or regional, as in the EU) community. On the other hand, factionalizing forces of nationalism, tribalism, and religious extremism are growing and represent their own globalizing trend. Moreover, the status of the US as a global hegemon is being increasingly challenged as Russia has aggressively sought to assert itself as the prime hegemonic influence in its own sphere of influence.

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[1] Lewis, G. 1974. Translation. *The Book of Dede Korkut.* Penguin Books. London. 188-189
[2] Kissinger, H. 2015. *World Order.* Penguin Books. NY. 1-10.

Frontiers and borderlands afford opportunities to view some of these contests at their fronts, and to view subtle movements and shifts that may be harbingers of broader change. Azerbaijan constitutes just such a borderland, and may be a bellwether that provides an opportunity to see shifts in great power politics occur at a micro-level in the political discourse of the Azerbaijani government.

Azerbaijan is a small country located in the South Caucasus. Situated between the Caspian and Black seas, the Caucasus lie at what has historically been the intersection of empires and ideologies. As borderland between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as between Islam and Christianity, the region represents layers of borders. The Arab name for the region was *djabal al-alsun*, meaning "mountain of languages." This is a reflection of the fact that the region boasts the "greatest density of distinct languages anywhere on earth."[1] Within the region, Azerbaijan has a history that is tied to that regional identity of borderland, but is also unique in many ways. Variously contained within and ruled by the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian empires, Azerbaijan declared independence in 1918. The short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was brought under Soviet rule in 1920. Since independence in 1991, competing visions of national and supra-national identity have persisted.[2]

The ancient history of Azerbaijan is as complex as it is contested.[3] A political entity known as Atropatene existed on what is now Iranian Azerbaijan from the 4th to the 2nd centuries B.C. One possible explanation for the toponym Azerbaijan is that it derives from this earlier state.[4] This explanation, though contested, situates the association with name and territory as ancient. Another ancient state that is important to the history of Azerbaijan is Caucasian Albania

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[1] De Waal, Thomas. 2010. *The Caucasus: an Introduction.* NY: Oxford University Press.Pg 7.
[2] Tokluoglu, C. 2005. Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism, and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 28:4. 722-758.
[3] Cornell, Svante. 2011. *Azerbaijan since Independence*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. 3
[4] Altstadt, A. 1992. *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*. Hoover Institution Press. Stanford. 2

(no relation to present day Albania), variously referred to as Aghvan or Arran.[5] Albania occupied

a territory roughly analogous to the modern state of Azerbaijan. From the 4th century B.C. until

the 9th century A.D., the Caucasian state existed either as an autonomous political entity, or as a

vassal state of the Persian Empire. Azerbaijani scholars have argued for the ethnographic history

of the Azerbaijani Turks having its genesis in the Albanians.[6] Drawing on the history of

Atropatene and Albania they argue for a continuous ethno-territorial presence from antiquity.

Albania was eventually subsumed by the Shirvanshah state, also referred to as Arran or

as Shirvan. The Shirvanshah state incorporated successive waves of Turkic migrations, who

intermarried with the native Caucasians.[7] Interactions between the native Caucasian peoples and

Turks had occurred for centuries but after the 11th century arrival of the Seljuk Turks, the people

were largely Turkic.[8] The original ruling dynasty of the Shirvanshah state was of Arabic origin,

but by the 11th century a Turco-Persian dynasty, the Kesranids, had taken power.[9] This period

represents the earliest approximation of today's Azerbaijani Turks. The population was largely of

Turkic origin, but also Caucasian in their history and culture. Additionally, the Persian influence

was (and remains) a significant component of the ethno-territorial identity of the Azerbaijani

Turks.[10]

By the end of the 16th century, Safavid Iran (an Azerbaijani dynasty) had consolidated

control over Azerbaijan.[11] The region also was frontier and occasional battleground between the

Persian and Ottoman empires and periodically came under the control of the Ottomans.[12] Local

power throughout Azerbaijan was primarily exercised through Khanates, loosely confederated

[5] Altstadt 1992, 3

[6] Ibid

[7] Swietochowski, T. 1995. *Russia and Azerbaijan: a Borderland in Transition.* Columbia University Press. NY. 2

[8] Altstadt 1992, 6

[9] Altstadt 1992, 4

[10] Cornell 2011, 6

[11] Altstadt 1992, 5

[12] Altstadt 1992, 7-8

provinces ruled by local aristocracies. By the eighteenth century, Iranian central control had

become minimal and power primarily rested with the Khans.[13] The 18th century also saw the

arrival of a new great power in the region, Russia. Russian invasion and defeat of the Persian

forces resulted in the treaty of Turkmenchai in 1828, which artificially divided Azerbaijan in

two.[14] The Aras River became the new border between the Russian and Persian Empires. To this

day Azerbaijan is divided along these lines. Northern Azerbaijan ultimately became the modern

state of Azerbaijan, whereas Southern Azerbaijan remains a province of Iran.

Russian colonial rule lasted until WWI and had a profound impact on Azerbaijan. The

khanates became administered through Russian military rule, which was often brutal.[15] By the

late 19th century, significant industrialization began to take place and Baku became the "oil center

of the empire and one of the top oil-producing areas of the world."[16] The local Turkic population,

generally referred to as "Tatar" or simply as "Muslim" in early Russian records,[17] largely became

an oilfield workforce to fuel the growing Russian Empire. World War I brought an era of

confusion and change to Azerbaijan. Some Azerbaijanis enlisted in the Russian army to defend

their homeland from invasion, while many hoped for liberation from the Russians by their ethnic

cousins, the Ottoman Turks.[18]

Ultimately, in the aftermath of the war, Azerbaijan declared independence in 1918, the

result of which was the two year "tragi-comedy" of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. The

first true democracy in the Islamic world, universal suffrage and religious freedom were

constitutionally guaranteed.[19] Discussions of what constituted the national identity of Azerbaijan

were common in public discourse as the nation sought to assert itself as a political entity separate

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[13] Bolukbasi, S. 2011. *Azerbaijan: a Political History.* I.B. Tauris. NY. 7
[14] Ibid
[15] Altstadt 1992, 15-17
[16] Altstadt 1992, 21
[17] Altstadt 1992, 36
[18] This is a major component of *Ali and Nino.* It is also discussed in Swietochowski (1995), 56-61
[19] Altstadt 1992, 89

from both the Russians and the Ottomans. Despite heroic efforts and intense resistance, the

fledgling republic was soon overwhelmed by the forces of the newly-formed Soviet Union.

Independent Azerbaijan ceased to exist on 27 April, 1920 and soon became the Azerbaijan Soviet

Socialist Republic (SSR).[20] The profound implications of collectivization and of seventy years of

Soviet rule constitutes a significant chapter in the long history of the Azerbaijani Turks.

The resistance movement in Azerbaijan "smoldered until 1924 and underground

organizations held on throughout the remainder of the decade."[21] By the thirties, collectivization

had consolidated Soviet power. Stalin's purges resulted in Azerbaijan's own "Great Terror" [22]

under the leadership of Mir Jafir Baghirov, the First Secretary of the Communist Party in

Azerbaijan from 1933 to 1953. Swietochowski describes this period of mass terror as "…an

unlimited, pervasive exercise in social psychology, under which no one could feel safe."[23]

Political, intellectual, and cultural elites, dissidents, nationalists, and religious figures were

"purged" from the Soviet system. Altstadt, writing in 1992, argues that the implications of this

period "reached beyond the lives of the destroyed individuals to affect later generations in ways

that the present generation is only beginning to grasp."[24] After the death of Baghirov, who was

removed from office and executed shortly after Stalin's death, a period of recovery and

rehabilitation occurred. Political and cultural figures were rehabilitated, although this reassertion

of historical identity was mediated through an understanding of the consequences of nationalist

rhetoric under the Soviet system.[25]

As the Soviet system began to fracture and dissolve in the late eighties, the Azerbaijanis

were initially cautious and conservative in their rhetoric and actions. By 1990 a full-fledged

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[20] Altstadt 1992, 108
[21] Swietochowski 1995, 103
[22] Altstadt describes the "Great Terror" in Azerbaijan as the period from 1920-1941, whereas Swietochowski begins with the purges of the thirties.
[23] Swietochowski 1995, 125
[24] Altstadt 1992, 150
[25] Swietochowski 1995, 175

nationalist movement had gained traction, fueled in large part by the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.[26] Azerbaijan and Armenia had been in open warfare over control of the region since 1988, something that was both a result and cause of nationalist sentiment. Inter-ethnic violence between Turks and Armenians in Baku became a pretense for the Soviet military to move on Baku and crush the nationalist opposition movement on 20 January, 1990. The result was (conservatively) over 100 killed and over 700 wounded in what came to be known as "Black January."[27] The following year, on August 19, 1991, the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan declared its intention to secede from the Soviet Union and to restore the country's independence.[28] A referendum on 29 December of that year saw 95 percent of the electorate vote in favor of independence and the Republic of Azerbaijan was (re)born.[29]

Different versions of national identity abounded in the first years of the new republic (and since). Two of the more influential of these were a progressive movement that sought to maintain and promote Russian language and education, and a populist Turkic nationalism.[30] Ultimately, a unique Azerbaijani nationalism promoted by Heydar Aliyev was overwhelmingly endorsed.[31] While competing visions still persist, the "Azerbaijanism" of the Aliyev regime represents a continuity with previous understandings of the ethno-territorial identity of the Azerbaijani Turks. Symbolism utilized by the government communicates this identity as a continuation of past identities, and situates the modern national identity of Azerbaijan as an evolution of long-held, perhaps even ancient understandings of the unique Azerbaijani experience.

An important component of this identity is Azerbaijan's position as a borderland between Asia and Europe. As a cultural ecotone, unique cultural forms are found here. An early twentieth

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[26] Altstadt 1992, 200-219
[27] Cornell 2011, 55
[28] Cornell 2011, 58-59
[29] Ibid
[30] Tokluoglu 2005
[31] Tokluoglu, C. 2012. Perceptions of State and Leadership in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Middle Eastern Studies. 48:3.* 324

century novel, *Ali and Nino*, unofficially viewed as the national novel of Azerbaijan,[32] discusses this unique geographical situation as an important facet of national identity. Cornell describes this borderland status as the "main determinant" of the contemporary nation's foreign relations.[33] Discussions of regionality in relation to Azerbaijan can be illustrative of the complex and fluid nature of belonging that exists within the country. In general, Azerbaijan is discussed within the framework of the South Caucasus, which consists of the nations of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. This often is not identified as a region however, due to vast differences within and between those countries.[34] The CIA World Factbook classifies Azerbaijan as part of the Middle East, while the US State Department has it listed as part of "Europe and Eurasia,"[35] which includes Russia, Turkey, and the Caucasus in addition to Europe. The nation is also variously discussed as part of the *Umma*, which is the collective body of Muslim believers around the world, as part of a pan-Turkic nation, a pan-Islamic nation, as part of Europe, and as part of the former Soviet Union. Tokluoglu suggests that these competing narratives of regional belonging in Azerbaijan are an important facet of the national identity.[36]

As quintessential borderland, issues of identity within the nation are complex and often involve mutual belonging to seemingly competing identities. Azerbaijani national identity is distilled from various factors such as ethnicity, religion, and shared history. Competing versions of that history have informed modern political debate within the country,[37] although general patterns, understandings, and attitudes have emerged. In Azerbaijan, those patterns are complex and have been fluid at times, but continuity of certain themes, myths, and narratives persists. It

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[32] Reiss, Tom. 2005. *The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life*. NY: Random House. xiv
[33] Cornell 2011, 298
[34] De Waal, T. 2010. *The Caucasus: an Introduction.* Oxford University Press. 5
[35] US State Department website. http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/index.htm accessed 3/23/2016
[36] Tokluoglu 2005
[37] Tokluoglu 2005, 724

may also be true, however, that such fluidity is cosmetic and that the underlying sense of identity behind those varying representations has been much more stable.

There have been deliberate efforts towards the definition of Azerbaijani identity since the nation's independence in 1991. Competing visions of national and supra-national identity have drawn upon symbology from ethnic, religious, and political histories. While national identity can be understood on many different levels, within this study I interrogate representations of national identity by the government of Azerbaijan as expressed in various symbols of national identity. Using discourse analysis within a framework of ethno-symbolism, and drawing upon extensive historical research, the meanings and representations will be compared to the historical record. These will then be analyzed for their historicity and for an understanding of what facets of identity are being communicated. This will be done in order to "…reconstitute the notion of collective cultural identity itself in historical, subjective and symbolic terms."[38]

Within this study, I explore symbolic discourses of national identity expressed by the government of Azerbaijan. Using discourse analysis within a framework of ethno-symbolism, six symbolic discourses of national identity are interrogated for historical ties to diverse traditions, as well as an understanding of what is being communicated and to whom. These symbols of national identity include a pre-Soviet representation of Azerbaijani national identity within a romance novel, *Ali and Nino*, and a Soviet-era tourist map produced by the Azerbaijan SSR. These constitute symbolic discourse from before the period of the modern Republic of Azerbaijan. Three constitutionally recognized symbols of national identity, the national flag, the national anthem, and the state seal are analyzed to represent the early independence period. Finally, a contemporary discourse, the logo of the "Baku 2015" European Games, along with its published description, is analyzed as a contemporary symbol of Azerbaijani national identity. These

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[38]Smith, Anthony. *National Identity.* London: Penguin, 1991.Pg 25.

discourses represent intentional efforts by the government in reproducing certain myths, values, and traditions and the historical basis of those discourses is explored.

My research goal is to understand what informs understandings of national identity in Azerbaijan. Like many states from the former Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has experienced both mass and elite driven forms of nationalism and national identity definition. Intense efforts to manipulate and redefine the Azerbaijani national identity throughout the twentieth century have coexisted alongside historic traditions and potentially ancient identities. I find that government discourses have adopted symbolism that supports and reinforces long held understandings of collective identity associated with the Azerbaijani Turks.

There are three main research questions that I address: What is being communicated through the chosen symbolic resources? Which traditions and beliefs are being drawn from to constitute those identity claims? What is the historical basis for those claims? I find that the chosen symbols of national identity in Azerbaijan draw upon long-held understandings of a unique Azerbaijani identity, and represent a continuity between historic and contemporary identities. While the modern period has been influential, efforts to define the national identity apart from these understandings have largely been unsuccessful in terms of broad acceptance. National identity in Azerbaijan represents a continuation of values, myths, attitudes, and symbols from previous eras. By isolating and interrogating symbolism utilizing a framework of ethno-symbolism, that continuity is illustrated.

As borderland and potential bellwether, this understanding of national identity in Azerbaijan contributes to a deeper understanding of global trends and pressures as they are negotiated along their frontiers. The pressures of ethnic and religious nationalism compete with forces of progressivism within the nation. The country has great geopolitical significance, not only due to its vast deposits of oil and natural gas, but also because it represents a non-Russian and non-Iranian export route for Central Asian oil and natural gas to supply European needs. The

Aliyev regime has skillfully balanced its relationship with the West and with Russia,[39] but it remains to be seen how Russian expansionism might affect these relationships, and the resultant energy resources. As a front in the contest of influence between the US and a resurgent Russia, subtle shifts in the rhetoric, representations, and symbolism of the government may signal broader trends. This must begin with an understanding of a "baseline" of identity representation within government symbolism. This study constitutes that baseline.

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[39] Cornell 2011, 396

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"What I am is what I am, are you what you are, or what?"

-Edie Brickell

Our current world order is one that is organized around the political entity of states. Those states are, in many cases, based on and roughly analogous to the similar but separate concept of nations. This order might seem intuitive and obvious, but is a relatively recent condition in history. The origins of nations, and their presumed ethnic bases, has been the subject of much scholarly dispute. Some view the nation as an entirely invented concept and as a creation of modernity used to justify the state. The ethno-symbolism approach offers a framework for understanding both the constructed aspects of modern nations, as well as their historical and, in some cases, ethnic antecedents. By viewing nations as products of symbolic interactions, communicated through generations, a distinct analytic framework emerges. An ethno-symbolic study seeks to understand, through symbolic communications, the ways that ethnic histories inform modern national identities.

In this study, I adopt an ethno-symbolic framework to analyze government discourses of national identity in Azerbaijan as symbolic interactions between past and present. The modern Azerbaijani state has experienced intense transformational forces

that are evident within discourses of national identity. There is also a remarkable continuity with past identities. This continuity with the past is expressed alongside symbols of transformation. It is the interactions between the two aspects of the Azerbaijani identity that are being projected through government discourses.

In the following literature review, I look briefly at competing theoretical approaches in order to provide context and depth to the study. I then trace the theoretical evolution of ethno-symbolism through key scholarship, as well as provide examples of ethno-symbolism applied to different cases, including Azerbaijan. I will also discuss a gap in the literature addressing this aspect of identity formation in Azerbaijan.

Primordialism

Primordialism refers to a general theoretical view that nationality is inherent; that it is a given quality. Nations are formed from ethnicity, thus they are an extension of it. Multi-ethnic and multi-lingual states are not nations, or at least nationalism based on primordial ties is more *real* and has a very real appeal and effect that does not come from simple civil belonging. An umbrella term for a loose group of approaches, primordialism rests on an understanding of nationality as a primordial quality. Different bases provide for that primordial attachment, however.

For example, van den Berghe sees nationality as an extension of evolutionary biology. He argues that humans, like all social creatures, have evolved to "discriminate according to degree of biological relationship to ourselves."[1] He further argues that orders of social organization (like nations) are designed to enforce and maintain distance, both spatially and socially, between different groups.[2] This sociobiological approach to nationalism holds that "there is indeed an objective, external basis to the existence of such groups"[3] and that said basis is in the given

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[1] Pierre van den Berghe. 1970. *Race and Ethnicity: Essays in Comparative Sociology.* NY: Basic Books. 57
[2] Van den Berghe 1970, 43
[3] Van den Berghe 1970, 274

realities of biology: race, ethnicity, and other differences. In van den Berghe's view, nationalism functions primarily as an extended kin selection mechanism, driven by an evolved affinity for those most closely related to us.[4]

Focusing on culture rather than biology, Geertz argues that the givenness of primordial attachments is perhaps less relevant than the assumption or perception of their givenness. Viewing nationalism as a "social assertion of self,"[5] Geertz states that the "assumed givens-of social existence…are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness" on social organization.[6] These assumed givens include such things as blood ties, through racial and ethnic similarity, language, religious community, and various social practices and norms. It is important to identify that Geertz's argument is based not on the historicity of the assumptions of kinship, but on the broad acceptance of them. He see these assumptions of primordial ties as being a "scope of reference"[7] for nations and posits that these assumed primordial attachments are still a common and even "preferred" basis for the demarcation of national boundaries.[8] While Geertz's understanding of these "assumed givens" certainly seems to be subjective rather than truly inherent, he views that subjective, cultural affinity towards those qualities as inherent and primordial. Nations are ethnic communities, based on (assumed) primordial ties.

Modernism

A challenge to the assumptions of the primordial nature of nationalism came in the form of a collection of critiques broadly referred to as modernism. The common feature of this scholarship is the belief in the modernity of nations; that nations do not spring from some primordial reality (or assumption of reality), nor are they an evolution of it, but rather they are an

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[4] Ozkirimli, Umut. 2010. *Theories of Nationalism: a Critical Introduction.* 2nd ed. NY: St. Martin's Press. 54

[5] Geertz, Clifford. 1996. "Primordial Ties." In *Ethnicity*, edited by J. Hutchinson, & A.D. Smith. New York: Oxford University Press. 41

[6] Geertz 1996, 42

[7] Ibid.

[8] Geertz 1996, 44

invention of modernity. For the modernists, processes inherent to the modern world, such as "capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state"[9] are responsible for the creation, communication, and diffusion of nationalism. A complementary concept is the idea of *instrumentalism.* In this view, discourses of nationalism are inventions of the elites, used as instruments to influence and manipulate populations.

For Nairn, nationalism is understood through processes of historical development. The modern era has seen the diffusion of capitalist modes of production, with an increase in industrialization and urbanization. A result of this has been uneven development and disparate access to the benefits of such systems, not only among classes within a country, but also between countries. The elites of those countries which had not yet realized the benefits of modernization sought to mobilize their populations towards progress. According to Nairn, this "meant the conscious formation of a militant, inter-class community rendered strongly (if mythically) aware of its own separate identity."[10] The subsequent unification around a national identity could be used to motivate subject peoples toward the goals of the elites.

This "conscious formation of…separate identity" is viewed as occurring in several ways and through differing mechanisms. According to Hobsbawm, the invention, consumption, and performance of tradition is a primary mechanism of identity formation. Elites desiring to unite a subordinate population around a common set of values and ideals may do so via "invented traditions." By "invented traditions", Hobsbawm is referring to "a set of practices…which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."[11] The connection to a people's past may be fictitious or at least manipulated to fit the desired ideal. Suitable histories are created and then communicated through

[9] Ozkirimli 2010, 72

[10] Nairn, T. 1981 [1977]. *The break-up of britain: crises and neo-nationalism (2nd ed.).* London: Verso. 339

[11] Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1

various traditions that communicate the ideal type of the national character. The consumption and performance of invented traditions serves to "establish continuity with a suitable historic past."

One example of an invented tradition comes from Restad,[12] who discusses the Christmas tree in the United States as an invented tradition. Prior to the Civil War, the practice of displaying decorated trees in the home to celebrate Christmas was relatively uncommon in the U.S. and generally associated with German immigrants. Perhaps attempting to unify a fracturing nation, a marketing campaign sought to promote the practice of displaying Christmas trees as something of a new "American" tradition. It was slow to be accepted; in 1900 only one in five homes in the United States is estimated to have had a tree at Christmas. Nevertheless, today, the invented tradition of the Christmas tree in the U.S. is largely taken for granted as historically American. These sorts of traditions, as well as other symbols of national identities, are "used" according to Nogue and Vicente, "to tighten the national ties by which the population can identify itself as a 'people' or as a community."[13]

By the invention of traditions supposedly rooted in antiquity, the elites, whom Hobsbawm sees as the "locus of the nation,"[14] can claim their nationalist policies as a continuity of that national past. By consuming and/or performing those traditions, the public is implicitly accepting that continuity with the past. He further argues that the invention of traditions occurs when rapid societal change takes place, which explains the rapid growth of nations and nationalism in the last 200 years.[15] He states: "…nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round."[16] This last statement succinctly

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[12] Restad, Penne. 1995. "Christmas in 19th Century America. *History Today.* 45:12. Web: http://www.historytoday.com/penne-restad/christmas-19th-century-america. Accessed 17Jan2016.

[13] Nogue, J., and J. Vicente. 2004."Landscape and National Identity in Catalonia." *Political Geography.* 23. 117

[14] Hobsbawm, Eric. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Program, Myth, Reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.23

[15] Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 5

[16]Hobsbawm 1990, 10.

describes the common thread throughout the modernist scholarship, that nations are created by nationalist ideologies and movements. This is accomplished via different mechanisms and processes depending on the scholar in question.

Anderson, for example, points to the advent of mass publishing combined with increased literacy as the prime conduit for the diffusion of the nationalist gospel. The demise of Latin and the increase in mass publishing in the vulgar languages, combined with increasing literacy, provided a new platform for the elites to influence and mobilize the population. This process of "print capitalism…made it possible, more than anything else, for rapidly growing numbers of people to think of themselves in profoundly new ways."[17] This new "imagined community"- that of the *nation* - co-opted and to a limited extent replaced previous ethic and religious identities.

For Gellner, on the other hand, education is one of the major mechanisms. He argues that "nationalism is primarily a political principle" that "became a sociological necessity only in the modern world."[18] In agrarian societies that were prevalent in the pre-modern, pre-industrialized world, a social structure based on societal roles was fairly clear and self-enforcing. Farmers, merchants, clergy and rulers all had fairly clear roles and tended to occupy a clearly defined stratum within society. In modern industrialized societies this structure became less clear. The "enforcement of the social order" by a privileged few came through a system of education that was limited to the elite. [19] Only those who had been educated in the necessary complexities had the skills to fill executive and upper managerial roles, and these also became fully vested in the high culture of the elite that was reproduced through the educational system. As public education became more available, the resultant normative high culture became a locus for nationalist

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[17] Ozkirimli 2010, 110. This is Özkirimli's description of Anderson's theory.
[18] Ozkirimli 2010, 100
[19] Gellner, Ernest. 2006[1983]. *Nations and Nationalism.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 86

sentiments. The maintenance of this system was reproduced through the public education system in the form of nationalist ideologies.

While different mechanisms are identified, the substantial body of influential scholarship referred to as modernist tends to view the concept of nation as a fairly recent construct. Nations are viewed as products of some form of interaction between the elite and the masses, and nationalism is generally (but not exclusively) viewed as an *instrument* used by those in power to influence, direct, subvert, or control a subordinate population.[20] This *instrumentalist* approach tends to view most (if not all) expressions of national identity as products of intent and manipulation. Kemoklidze et al. argue that these constructivist approaches to understanding national identity "have done much to undermine the appeal of primordialism at least in Western academic circles, but equally have not succeeded in finding an explanation for conflicts which in no way serve the purposes for which, under these accounts, nations were constructed."[21]

Ethno-Symbolism

The paradigm of ethno-symbolism lies between "the polar extremes of the primordialist-instrumentalist debate."[22] Recognizing both historic and modern forces, an ethno-symbolic account looks at the historic and geographic context of nations to understand the evolution of collective identities into modern nations. A focus on symbolism as a communication of that identity between generations allows an understanding of the nation as a historic and cultural community that is dynamic while also having deep ties to the past. I will trace the evolution of the approach through three influential scholars, while also introducing case studies and applications throughout.

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[20] For example, see: Brass, Paul. 1979. Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia. *Political Identity in South Asia.* Eds. D. Taylor and M. Yapp. London: Curzon Press, pgs.35-68

[21] Kemoklidze, Nino, Cerwyn Moore, Jeremy Smith, and Galina Yemelianova. "Many Faces of the Caucasus." *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 9 (2012): 1611-1624. Pg. 1618

[22] Smith, Anthony D. 2009. *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: a Cultural Approach.* NY: Routledge.15

John Armstrong

A seminal critique of modernism came from John Armstrong. In *Nations before Nationalism,* Armstrong discusses an evolution of collective consciousness that has resulted in various forms of nationalism. He argues that modern nationalisms are an evolution of ethnic identities that predate the modern 'invention' of the nation-state. Collective consciousness(es) and perceptions of group identity at various scales have surely existed for millennia, long before the invention of the modern state. At times, that collective consciousness has closely approximated characteristics of the nation. It is certainly true, in Armstrong's view, that state-building pressures have reinforced, encouraged, or manipulated that consciousness. Nations are not primordial. Neither are they a recent invention, however.

To analyze what he refers to as the "slow emergence of nations in the pre-modern period,"[23] Armstrong suggests a different way of looking at ethnic and national identities. Previous scholars have sought to understand modern nations by identifying the nationalist ideologies that led to their formation or by an understanding of the mechanisms and processes by which they were produced. Armstrong argues that nationalist ideologies that became prevalent in the modern era are a current manifestation of group attitudes that have been persistent through history. Since national identities are an evolution of ethnic (and other) identities, he charts the evolution of those ethnic identities through history. To understand the modern phenomenon of nationalism, it is necessary to situate the ideology within *la longue duree* of history and to identify the evolution of religious, tribal, ethnic and other identities that is the material from which nations and nationalist ideologies are formed.

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[23] Armstrong, John A. 1982. *Nations before Nationalism.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.7

Armstrong begins with what Smith refers to as the "transactional account" of Barth,[24] viewing ethnic identities (as well as other collective identities) as being formed at their boundaries. It is the interactions between *us* and *them* at those boundaries that define ethnic ties, primarily as an exclusionary function. The 'core' of ethnic identities is less important to Armstrong. It is the interactions between different groups, between members within a group, and between generations that defines group boundaries, the primary characteristic of which he describes as "attitudinal."[25] Collective identities become based on perceptions of difference much more than on essential characteristics. Thus, he views ethnicity as "a bundle of shifting interactions rather than a nuclear component of social organization"[26] and it becomes the interactions among ethnic identities, along with other group identities, such as class and religious that are most influential to national identities. [27]

These historical interactions becomes distilled into a *mythomoteur*, a constitutive political myth that defines the origins and nature of a national community. This definition is often in reference to an antagonistic out-group. One early dichotomy that he discusses is that of sedentary vs. nomadic societies. A people's role as defenders of a homeland, within a sedentary society, or as champions of a frontier, within societies from a more nomadic background, become instilled and ingrained into the collective memory. This is reproduced and communicated through various symbols in a *myth-symbol complex*.[28] Various civic and religious rituals, for example, are often part of a larger narrative of identity. By participating in rituals and practices, participants are consuming and implicitly accepting that narrative and situating themselves inside of it. By their

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[24] Smith, Anthony D. 2015. Nations before Nationalism? Myth and Symbolism in John Armstrong's Perspective. *Nations and Nationalism.* 21: 1. 165

[25] Armstrong 1982, 7

[26] Armstrong 1982, 6

[27] Ibid.

[28] The earliest reference I could find to this term was in Smith, Anthony D. 1984. "Ethnic Persistence and National Transformation." *The British Journal of Sociology.* 35:3. 460, but he used this term to describe Armstrong's ideas. This term is found in much of the literature associated with Armstrong's basic premise of a *mythomoteur* reproduced and communicated through symbolism.

performance, participants reproduce that narrative and communicate it to successive generations. It is a mutually constitutive process in that participants both consume and reproduce the myth through their performance. Smith describes this process as both "cognitive" and "expressive."[29] This idea of a constitutive political myth, formed over the *longue duree* of history and communicated through various symbols, lies at the core of ethno-symbolism.

Anthony D. Smith

Whereas Armstrong focused on the formation of group identities as an exclusionary mechanism occurring largely at the borders, Smith instead focuses on the cultural *content* of group identity. He argues that through consideration of cultural elements, "it becomes possible to enter to some degree into the 'inner world' of the members of ethnic communities and nations", allowing the researcher to develop a "fuller and more balanced" understanding.[30] Those cultural elements may include myths and memories, values, as well as rituals and traditions. This focus on a nation's cultural resources, communicated in and through symbolism, came to be termed ethno-symbolism. Smith describes this conceptual approach as an analysis of "communities, ideologies and sense of identity in terms of their constituent symbolic resources."[31] By studying the cultural content of nations, and by understanding the linkages between ethnic histories and modern national identities, the ethno-symbolic analysis seeks to "provide a cultural history of the nation as a type of historical cultural community."[32] In doing so, modern national identities are revealed as much more complex and multi-faceted than the modernist paradigm would allow.

He also argues that once formed, *ethnies* (ethnic communities) tend to be extremely durable as entities[33] and, as a further evolution of ethnic communities, *nations* exhibit additional qualities to those demonstrated by *ethnies.* Smith defines nation as "a named human population

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[29] Smith, Anthony D. 1991. *National Identity.* London: Penguin. 73
[30] Smith 1991, 25-6
[31] Smith 2009, 15
[32] Smith 2009, 39
[33] Smith, A.D. 1986. *The Ethnic Origin of Nations.* Oxford: Blackwell. 16.

sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and legal rights and duties for all members."[34] Nations constitute deeper levels of political and social organization as they encompass distinct economies and social expectations of "rights and duties." While it is important, in Smith's view, to have clear understanding of the terms and concepts that are being discussed, it is also important not to be too rigid with the concepts. He describes this definition as "an ideal type…which concrete examples imitate in varying degrees."[35] Nations are "historical communities, embedded in specific historical and geo-cultural contexts."[36] It is the "historical and geo-cultural contexts" that are communicated and consumed through the nation's symbolic resources, such as myths of ancestry and sacred homelands.

The "constituent symbolic resources" of an *ethnie* are the material from which national identities are formed, and constitute a collective inheritance, from which the nation can find identity and contextualize its role. It is the symbolic resources of the nation that inform and reinforce national identities, and reproduce that identity, with its various myths and values, across generations. Through these symbolic resources, the nation is communicated as both an ideal and an identity.[37] It is through the cultural resources of the *ethnie*, communicated through symbols, that a nation may be identified and contextualized, both by members of the nation and by outsiders. Analogous to Armstrong's "symbolic border guards" that identify members of in-groups and out-groups,[38] these symbolic communications may be tangible cultural artifacts such as architecture or art, or may be intangible, such as language.

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[34] Smith 1991, 14
[35] Smith 1991, 43
[36] Smith 2009, 13-14
[37] Smith 1991, 18
[38] Armstrong 1982, 8

Smith identifies five major symbolic resources that are of interest to the ethno-symbolist.[39] While not necessarily exhaustive, these resources provide a framework for understanding discourses and symbols of national identity. The first of these are *myths of ancestry.* Essentially an account of a people's ethno-genesis, narratives of collective origin serve to define the group and can be highly influential as they can also serve to inform purpose. This purpose can apply both to entire communities and, by extension, individuals within the community. For example, as God placed Adam in the garden and instructed him to "rule the earth and subdue it", generations of believers have found purpose in proper husbandry by some interpretations, and conquest by others. Myths of origin of particular ethnic communities can have similar power to inform a people's purpose. For example, the origin myth of Turkic peoples as descendants of the Oghuz, and the inheritance of their stories such as *The book of Dede Korkut*, that depict the Oghuz as nomadic warriors tasked with the seemingly constant defense of their honor and way of life, can contribute to an understanding of a collective purpose of maintaining that culture. For the Azerbaijani Turks, myths of descent from Atropatene and from Caucasian Albania have contributed to a belief in the nativity of the Azerbaijani people to the land of Azerbaijan.[40] The people's purpose can then become maintenance of both cultural and territorial integrity, which is prime material for the development of strong nationalism. Smith argues that myths of common ancestry are crucial elements to the formation of *ethnies* (and, by extension, their evolution into nations).[41]

Narratives of origin and ancestry, and their symbolic communications, are common foci for an ethno-symbolic analysis. For example, Ichijo looks to origins of both the Scottish and

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[39] Smith 2009, The list and discussion of the following five symbolic resources occurs on pp. 90-103

[40] These origin myths and their effects are discussed in chapter 1 of: Alstadt, Audrey. 1992.*The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule.* Stanford: Hoover Institute Press.

[41] Smith 1991, 22

Japanese peoples to understand their various forms of nationalisms.[42] Hanks looks at competing

claims to common origin myths by Uzbek and Tajik nationalist accounts and illustrates the utility

of myths of ancestry in nationalist discourses.[43] As nationalist ideologies seek to promote the

unity of the nation based often on qualities of common origins, the ways that those narratives are

communicated through symbolic interactions is a focus of an ethno-symbolic study.

A second symbolic resource discussed by Smith is the *myth of election.* This is comprised

of a people's belief in their divinely ordained position and purpose. The Jewish ideal of "a holy

nation and a kingdom of priests" that was formed by God is itself a symbol that has undoubtedly

contributed to a remarkable cultural continuity.[44] Armenian election myths[45] combined with

Azerbaijan's cultural inheritance of Oghuz descent have undoubtedly contributed to the historic

antagonism that has existed between the two peoples. This also reflects Armstrong's

nomadic/sedentary dichotomy where lifestyle differences associated with nomadic and sedentary

societies evolved to take on religious dimensions. Symbolic communications over generations

instill ideas of purpose and roles, which may be based on lifestyles and conflicts from a distant

past. It is that distant past that is being reappropriated as a symbolic communication, as an

exemplar to the present and a roadmap to the future. Myths of election are not always from

antiquity, however. Anderson, for example, discusses "the notion of the USA as somehow

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[42] Ichijo, Atsuko. 2002."The scope of theories of Nationalism: Comments on th Scottish and Japanese Experiences." *Geopolitics*. 7:2. 53-74.

[43] Hanks, Reuel R. 2015. "Identity Theft? Ethnosymbolism, Autochthonism, and Aryanism in Uzbek and Tajik National Narratives." in *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions.* Ed. Mariya Y. Omelicheva. London: Lexington Books.

[44] Smith 2009, 93.

[45] For a discussion of the role of election myths in the historical formation of Armenian national identity, see: Redgate, A. 2007. "Myth and Reality: Armenian Identity in the Middle Ages." *National Identities*. 9:4. 281-306. Armstrong's account that collective identities may be formed in antagonism to outside influences suggests that characteristics of Armenian national identity may in fact be important to understanding the Azerbaijani case.

special, as chosen by God, as having a unique destiny"[46] as an important symbol that has informed American national identity. Myths of election expressed in the symbolism of the Orange Order in Ireland are identified as a powerful reinforcement of identity, belonging, and purpose by Forker[47]. Narratives of election and divine favor can be potent themes in nationalist discourses.

Myths of descent and myths of election are both aspects of the *mythometeur* that is communicated through various symbolic interactions and often speak to the antiquity of the (particular) nation, which Özkirimli suggests as one of the key themes of nationalism.[48] The nationalists often assert that their nation has existed from antiquity, at least in some form, which presumably provides legitimacy and context to its current existence. The power to claim and define a people's past as a way to contextualize its present is a primary goal of nationalist discourses. To what extent that history informs the present, and the symbolic interactions that communicate that continuity in terms of identity, is the focus of the ethno-symbolist. It is this "*reappropriation* of and *continuity* with the past" that Hanks argues as key themes in the establishment of unique national identities.[49]

The continuity between historical memory and present reality is communicated through Smith's third symbolic resource, the theme of *sacred homelands*. This is essentially a belief that a particular nation, by divine or natural right, belong with a certain territory. A people's history has occurred within the *patria*, the fatherland, which may become a context for their very identity. The idea of the nation is heavily intertwined with territory, and most concepts of nation involve occupation of or at least association with a certain space. While a nation may be dispossessed of its sacred homeland, as in certain diaspora communities, a connection to a particular territory is

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[46]Anderson, John. 2012. "Dreaming of Christian Nations in the USA and Russia: the Importance of History." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*. 10:3. 205

[47] Forker, Martin. 2013. "The Role of Symbolism, Ritual, and Metaphor in the Orange Order." *Journal of Irish Studies* 28. 68-77.

[48] Ozkirimli 2010, 51

[49] Hanks 2015, 113

one of the defining characteristics of a nation to Smith. It is in this association with territory that the inherent spatiality of nationalism becomes evident. Williams and Smith discuss the concepts of nationalism and nation in terms of both physical and social space:

> "Whatever else it may be, nationalism is always a struggle for control of land; whatever else the nation may be, it is nothing if not a mode of constructing and interpreting social space."[50]

The interactions between space and place, history and the present become uniquely crystallized in this idea of a sacred homeland. Smith describes this as the "territorialisation of memories,"[51] which consists of the presence of tombs of national heroes, sites of battles, places of worship, and other such things of collective ownership, but also things of a more personal nature, perhaps the site of a first kiss or a childhood memory. For example, Kaufman points to Armenian development on what the Azerbaijanis claimed as the site of a historic battle as a potent symbolic device for the mobilization of Azerbaijani nationalism.[52] The landscape can also play a powerful role in this process. In their study of the role of landscape in Catalan national identity, Nogue and Vicente argue that the national landscape may "imbue the territory with identity,"[53] and may "represent and identify the values and essence of the nation in the collective imagination."[54] For example, the mountains of Nagorno-Karabakh have been the inspiration of poetry, art, and music, and are heavily tied to identity issues for both Armenians and Azerbaijanis from the region. Both peoples have a long history in the region, but one that is tied to separate identities – the Armenians as mountain settlers and the Azerbaijanis as nomadic herders. As argued by

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[50] Williams, Colin and Smith, Anthony D. 1982. The National Construction of Social Space. *Progress in Human Geography.* 7:4. 502.

[51] Smith 2009, 94

[52] Kaufman, Stuart. 2001. *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.* 66.

[53] Nogue, J., and J. Vicente. 2004. "Landscape and National Identity in Catalonia." *Political Geography* 23. 117

[54] ibid

Armstrong, these differences from antiquity evolve to take on religious and political significance. The contested histories associated with Nagorno-Karabakh in combination with the landscape become "centres of meaning, symbols that express…thoughts, ideas and emotions."[55] An ethno-symbolic approach seeks to identify the ways that those different meanings are communicated through symbolism and the extent that they inform contemporary identity.

While the sacred homeland may itself be a symbol, the way that it is communicated as such through various symbolic interactions becomes a key to understanding its differential meanings, as well as its power in informing national identities. Those symbols become a way of defining not only space, but identity. In addition to the spatial and territorial aspects of the nation itself, Forker argues that symbolism itself is inherently spatial. For example, Forker and McCormick analyze the use of murals, and their constituent themes, as indicative of the presence of certain values and claims to belonging, as well as of competing claims to nationalism. [56] Elsewhere, Forker discusses rituals such as parades as "symbolic spaces where negotiations of identity take place"[57] He states: "Symbols…define territorial space."[58] Landscape symbols contribute to mental maps[59]and can be viewed as a form of "metaculture,"[60] and as a language.[61] The landscape becomes both a context for all of the symbolic resources of the nation and a medium through which they are symbolized.

Another important symbolic resource of the nation is the *golden age,* a time in the recent or distant past that represents an ideal type of the national culture. It is a time when the *ethnie*

[55] ibid

[56] Forker, Martin, and Jonathon McCormick. 2009."Walls of History: the Use of Mythometeurs in Northern Ireland Murals." *Irish Studies Review*. 17:4. 423-465.

[57] Forker 2013, 73

[58] Forker 2013, 69

[59]Mendoza, C., and R. Morein-Alegret. 2012. "Exploring Methods and Techniques for the Analysis of Senses of Place and Migration." *Progress in Human Geography*. 37:6. 770.

[60] Leve, Lauren. "Identity". 2011. *Current Anthropology*. 52:4. 514

[61] Sorlin, S. 1999. "The Articulation of Territory: Landscape and the Constitution of Regional and National Identity." *Norwegian Journal of Geography* 53. 108

arose, coalesced, and claimed (at least for a time) their sacred territory. The golden age is a

period, often embellished and fictionalized, that typifies what the nation should be and provides a

model for current concepts of national identity to emulate. As a "moral exemplar" and a "vivid

recreation of the glorious past" the golden age is a time of heroes and sages that nationalist

ideologies may draw upon to promote their vision of what the nation should become[62]. In this

sense, nationalists are looking to the past as a blueprint for the future. According to Özkirimli, the

restoration of the golden age becomes a primary goal for nationalist ideologies.[63] Viewed as a

symbolic resource, the values, myths, and memories associated with the golden age are a rich

repository of information for an ethno-symbolic approach.

Nostalgia for the golden age is a crucial theme to nationalism. Armstrong refers to

nostalgia as a "critical indicator of attachment to a way of life." [64] As collective historic memory

provides a romanticized version of the past, elements of past (and perhaps future) glory become

mythologized and promoted as the ideal type. Patterns of belief and values are claimed and

promoted as authentic, due to their association with the golden age. He further argues that

expressions of nostalgia "constitute a strong symbolic device for transmitting attitudes derived

from such patterns."[65] Expressions of nostalgia for the golden age are a "central element of

identity" to Hanks.[66] Anderson, for example, views the promotion of a golden age in the USA

based on a romanticized vision of America's Christian heritage as a primary component of certain

visions of American national identity that must be "reclaimed" or "rebuilt".[67]

The golden age may also have been a time that national heroes typified another symbolic

resource, that of *destiny through sacrifice.* A nation's history may include episodes of conflict

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[62] Smith 1991, 66

[63] Van den Berghe 1970, 174

[64] Armstrong 1982, 51

[65] Ibid.

[66] Hanks 2015, 113.

[67] Anderson 2012, 205-6

and warfare, struggle and sacrifice, consisting of heroes who typified *our* national values and villains who typified the antithesis. The golden age was achieved through sacrifice, and it is the national destiny to return to the same greatness. Collective historical memories of the victories and defeats of both valiant warriors and noble leaders provide powerful models of the national character and identity. Smith describes the idea of a national community that both requires and glorifies the continual striving and sacrifice of its members as "perhaps the most potent of the cultural resources of the nation."[68] As individuals understand themselves as part of a community that exists because of the struggle and sacrifice of its members, they may be more willing to participate in that struggle. Hutchinson discusses one concept of the nation as "a moral community knit by sacrifice" that is spoken of in a common language of sacrifice, belonging, and identity.[69] The promotion and protection of that "moral community" drives powerful nationalisms, and much of this occurs through symbolic communications. National anthems, parades, and ceremonies can be symbols that often promote this ideal in the national conscience.

In addition to the substantial contribution to an understanding of the ways that ethnic histories inform modern nationalisms through symbolism, Smith develops a detailed typology of nations and nation formation. He charts the paths and mechanisms by which ethnic groups may distill into distinct *ethnies* or ethnic communities, and further into nations. These terms have been a source of confusion as their meanings have been contested. As such, Smith provides distinct definitions that provide mechanisms and characteristics that separate the different communities as levels of both organization and self-awareness.[70] This addresses some previous difficulties in the field, due to what Suny describes as the "available universe of meanings" surrounding the

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[68] Smith 2009, 97

[69] Hutchinson, John. 2005. *Nations as Zones of Conflict.* London: Sage. 48

[70] The following typology, while discussed throughout Smith's work, is laid out in detail in *National Identities* (*Smith,*91), which is where the following conversation is drawn from, unless otherwise noted.

"cluster of ideas and understandings"[71] of the concept of nation. Geertz refers to this as

"conceptual haze."[72]

 As analytic categories, it becomes necessary to have clearly understood definitions and/or

parameters. Smith argues that nations are extensions of previous ethnic communities, therefore

the difference between those ethnic communities and nation must be understood. First is the

concept of an ethnic community. This is separated from a simple ethnic category through self-

identification. While an ethnic category may be imposed from outside, an ethnic community

identifies as such. This happens in and through the following attributes[73]:

1. A collective proper name
2. A myth of common ancestry
3. Shared historical memories
4. Differentiating elements of common culture
5. Association with a specific homeland
6. A sense of solidarity (at least for some)

Of these, he argues that a myth of common ancestry is the most important to the formation of

ethnic communities[74]. It is important to note here that lines of physical descent are not necessarily

what is important. Instead, it is the "sense of continuity, shared memory and collective destiny"[75]

that is embodied in symbolic resources and perceived as common that constitutes an *ethnie.* As an

example of this he points to the Greeks, who have undergone drastic cultural and political

changes throughout history, yet have maintained a sense of Greek identity. In discussing *ethnies*

in terms of subjective perceptions of belonging, it is clear that Smith does not view belonging to

an ethnic (or national) community as primordial. Neither is it entirely situational however, as

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[71] Suny, Ronald. 2001."Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations." *The Journal of Modern History. 73:4.* 870

[72] Geertz, C. 1993[1973]. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* 2. London: Fontana. 40

[73] Smith 1991, 21

[74] Smith 1991, 22

[75] Smith 1991, 29

attitudes of collective identity have been remarkably persistent. Mirroring Armstrong, he argues that it is the persistence of the attitudes, values, and perceptions across generations that demonstrates the nature of ethnic and national ties. It is through the communication of those qualities embodied in symbolic interactions that we may determine how they inform modern identities.

Many of these symbolic resources become co-opted as communications of nationalism, which Smith defines as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'."[76] He lists four central propositions of nationalist ideologies:[77]

1. The world is divided into nations, each with its own peculiar character, history and destiny.
2. The nation is the source of all political and social power, and loyalty to the nation has priority over all other allegiances.
3. Human beings must identify with a nation if they want to be free and realize themselves.
4. Nations must be free and secure if peace and justice are to prevail in the world.

These propositions drive nationalist ideologies, and their efforts at identity promotion. These efforts "form an interrelated language or discourse that has its expressive ceremonials and symbols."[78] These symbols encompass material aspects of national culture, such as flags or coins, as well as immaterial aspects, such as customs and styles. The communication of myths, memories, and values embedded within such symbols becomes a link between past and present, between historical memory and present reality.

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[76] Smith 1991, 73
[77] Smith 1991, 74
[78] Smith 1991, 77

Smith charts two basic types of nationalisms based on their organizations and political

goals. These two basic categories are territorial nationalism and ethnic nationalism.[79]

Additionally, he provides four basic paths of historical nation-formation. These are Western,

immigrant, ethnic, and colonial.[80] Tokluoglu finds elements of both the Western and ethnic

models in Azerbaijan.[81] In the Western model, states are built around ethnic cores. Those within

the state eventually begin to conceive of themselves as a nation. In the ethnic model nationhood,

and the self-realization that it entails, pre-exists the state and is based entirely on the existing

community of the *ethnie.* In understanding Azerbaijani nationalism as both a territorial and ethnic

expression, and in viewing the modern Azerbaijani nation as a product of both modern

constructions and a rich ethno-history, Tokluoglu presents Azerbaijani national identity as

complex and conflicted.[82] Those conflicting identities are communicated and negotiated through

symbolism.

John Hutchinson

While Armstrong's focus was largely on the boundaries *of* an ethnic community,

Hutchinson increases the scale to the boundaries *within* communities, where the culture wars are

fought and victors claim the right to define ideals and types of the community. He views nations

as "products of powerful and usually protracted experiences"[83] that are distilled from their

historical experiences. Nations are current manifestations of their conflicts, of their victories and

defeats, and of their internal quests for identity and meaning. His is an approach that "treats

nations not as unitary, homogenous wholes, but as zones of conflict, reflecting centuries of

conflicts, memories of which are carried into the modern era by a host of institutions."[84]

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[79] Smith 1991, 82.

[80] Smith 1986, 241-242.

[81] Tokluoglu, Ceylan. 2005 "Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s." *Ethnic and Racial Studies. 28:4.* 723

[82] Tokluoglu 2005 throughout.

[83] Hutchinson 2005, 2

[84] Ozkirimli 2000, 165

Following Smith, Hutchinson traces the formation of nations back to their ethnic roots and through the processes by which peoples become distilled into distinct ethnic communities. In viewing nations as "zones of conflict" it becomes possible to take into account the mosaic of special interests, political pressures, and cultural forces that coalesce as nations. Hutchinson focuses on what he views as neglected or underexplored aspects of nation-formation. These include "internal cultural conflicts, the shifting salience of national identities in the modern world, and compatibility of national with global, regional and religious identities."[85] This approach enables an appreciation of connections at different scales. Modern nations exist as a balance between global and local forces, as well as every scale in between. It is this tension that can be expressed in nationalist ideologies through symbolic discourses as nationalists seek to define, through historical resources, the nation as it should be. Smith argues that most nationalisms are driven by conflict.[86] In Hutchinson's approach, the conflicts between different versions and sources of that national identity and character are themselves potent symbols of national identity.

Özkirimli describes Hutchinson's approach as "a 'futuristic ethnosymbolism'…that acknowledges the role of plurality and conflict in the formation of nations more than its classical predecessor."[87] By adopting this framework, symbolic discourses become representative not only of historical ideals, but also of the competing versions of those ideals. Inherent within an ethno-symbolic approach is a focus on the role that historic memories serve in the formation of national identities and the symbolic interactions that communicate those memories. Hutchinson's approach allows the researcher to search for contested meanings within those discourses and to envision those contests and conflicts as constitutive of the nation.

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[85] Hutchinson 2005, 15
[86] Smith 2009, 34
[87] Ozkirimli 2000, 166.

Ethno-symbolism does not represent a complete departure from the modernist paradigm. Described by Özkirimli as a "compromise or kind of midway" between the modernist and primordialist approaches, due weight is accorded to the transformational forces of modernity. Modern national identities may be constructed, but from very real ethnic pasts. Continuity with that past is communicated through various symbolic interactions of myths, memories, and values. Origins, sacred homelands, and the sacrifices associated with them are *leitmotifs* in the historic discourse of nationalism.

Many of the mechanisms that have been identified by the modernist theorists have certainly played a role in this. Invented traditions, public education, and mass printing are certainly potent conduits of these symbols interactions. They are "vehicles to *reinforce* established symbols and myths, that are themselves derived from culture.[88] These do not create identities where they did not exist, however. Whereas most of the scholars that fall under the modernist umbrella view national identities rather simply as products of the elite to be consumed by the public, the ethno-symbolism approach tends to reverse this causality. Hutchinson discusses several examples of what he terms "nationalism from below"[89] where successful nationalist ideologies originated from the masses despite official rejection and without support from elites. Kaufman situates the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a result of mass-led nationalist mobilizations by both the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis[90] that occurred despite elite efforts to mitigate these nationalist expressions. The process may also be mutually reinforcing as Kaufman elsewhere describes, where the elites both reproduce and manipulate existing ethnic identities.[91]

In the ethno-symbolic account, nations are historical communities. They are products of symbolic communications between generations, informed by values, myths, and symbols from

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[88] Hanks 2015, 113

[89] Hutchinson 2005, 124 – 130. Hutchinson discusses a number of cases that he argues as examples of "nationalisms form below". These include English, Irish, and German cases.

[90] Kaufman 2001, 66

[91] Kaufman 2001, 203

previous generations. As such, the symbolic discourses that communicate those historic memories are rich repertoires of data about ethnic and national identities, past and present identities, and the continuity between them all. Scholars of diverse disciplinary backgrounds have found utility in the approach to understand those identities as historical, cultural, social, and spatial phenomena.

Azerbaijan

The ethno-symbolism approach has been applied towards an understanding of Azerbaijani national identity. Altstadt, in a seminal history of Azerbaijan,[92] does not directly address theories of identity formation. She does, however, discuss the contemporary Azerbaijani identity very much in terms of historic and ethnic linkages. Much of her focus is on exposing symbols of that identity such as national heroes,[93] political and cultural symbols,[94] and language.[95] For example, the literary and musical tradition of dastans, prose and poetry which is often recited to music, is discussed as "perhaps the oldest cultural and historical traditions"[96] of Azerbaijan. This "cultural and historical tradition" is "an integral part of identity, historical memory and the historical record itself."[97] Additionally, Altstadt argues that the similarity of the language between early Azerbaijani poetry (15th century) and the modern Azerbaijani language is representative of the continuity of cultural identity of the Azerbaijani Turks. She states: "[t]he similarity…affirms the historical continuity and richness of the language."[98]

Kaufman discusses the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in terms of ethno-symbolism and symbolic politics. He argues that the mass-led nationalist movements that resulted in open warfare between the two nations are the result of "fundamental clash between an Armenian myth-

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[92] Altstadt 1992.
[93] Altstadt 1992, 169
[94] Altstadt 1992, 209, 207
[95] Altstadt 1992, 221
[96] Altstadt 1992, 13
[97] Paksoy, H.B. 1989. *Alpamysh: Central Asian Identity under Russian Rule.* Association for the Advancement of Central Asian Research. Hartford, Conn. 1-2. As quoted in Altstadt 1992, 13
[98] Altstadt 1992, 12

symbol complex…and an Azerbaijani one."[99] To the Azerbaijanis, Karabakh itself became a

symbol of historical sovereignty of the Azerbaijani people and, according to Swietochowski, a

symbol of national consciousness and revival.[100] Ethnic conflict itself is a symbol of historical

identity to the Azerbaijanis according to van der Leeuw, as it has been a persistent and recurring

feature of Azerbaijan "from its earliest documented days onwards." [101]

Tokluoglu explores those and other symbols through conversation with various political

elites in 1998.[102] Specifically adopting an ethno-symbolism approach, she seeks to mine current

political debates for their connections between past, present, and future identities. In her analysis,

Tokluoglu examines the sources of national identity that were drawn upon by these elites. The

emerging trend was of a rich ethno-history that informed modern identities, but also of conflicts

and complexities within those identities. The need to understand "the link between emerging

identities and the former ones" in Azerbaijan is presented as under-studied.[103] She also describes

the Azerbaijani national identity as in flux, and currently under formation.[104]

This study is situated within that under-studied gap: the need to understand the

connections between past and present in the modern Azerbaijani national identity. Utilizing an

ethno-symbolic approach and methods of discourse analysis, this study identifies the material that

is currently being drawn upon by the Azerbaijani government in symbolic communications of

national identity. Specifically, six symbols of national identity that represent an official

government representation of Azerbaijani identity are analyzed as a symbolic discourse. I argue

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[99] Kaufman 49

[100] Swietochowski, T. 1995. *Russia and Azerbaijan: a Borderland in Transition.* Columbia University Press. NY. 194

[101] Van der Leeuw, C. 2000. *Azerbaijan: a Quest for Identity.* St. Martin's Press. NY. 40

[102] Tokluoglu 2005.

[103] Tokluoglu 2005, 724

[104] Tokluoglu, Ceylan. 2012. Perceptions of State and Leadership in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Middle Eastern Studies. 48:3.* 337

that, despite numerous conflicting identities within the nation of Azerbaijan, symbols of

Azerbaijani national identity draw upon distinct territorial and cultural natural resources that

represent continuity with an ethnic past. I also argue that the symbols chosen by the government

are (and have continued to be) informed by existing popular understandings of Azerbaijani

identity more so than elite notions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I utilize discourse analysis within a framework of ethno-symbolism. In addition to being viewed as a conceptual framework (or theory) for understanding nationalism and national identities, ethno-symbolism constitutes a distinct methodology. Discourse analysis, while a distinctly different tool, provides a method for interrogating meanings communicated in texts, images, and practices. While there is overlap in the methodologies, in concert they provide a powerful synergistic toolset for understanding discourses of nationalism and symbolic linkages between historical and contemporary identities. As a unified approach, these methods become highly complementary. An ethno-symbolic framework provides a typology of symbolic resources from which to begin a discourse analysis and also becomes a means of organizing and understanding the results of the analysis. Here I will discuss each method individually and then outline how I have used them together as a synthetic approach.

Ethno-Symbolism

I have discussed ethno-symbolism as a conceptual framework for understanding nationalisms and national identities, and for understanding their historical development. There is also inherent within the approach a distinct methodology. Armstrong pioneered a *longue duree* approach to understanding the historical development of *ethnies* as communicated through a myth-symbol complex. Building upon Armstrong, Smith developed and codified what he termed a "research strategy and programme"[1] for understanding the content, communication, and appeal of nationalism. He describes it as such:

> "For ethno-symbolists, that means analyzing communities, ideologies and sense of identity in terms of their constituent symbolic resources, that is, the traditions, memories, values, myths and symbols that compose the accumulated heritage of cultural units of populations."[2]

For Smith, it is the cultural content of nations, the "constituent symbolic resources," that communicate and reproduce national identities between generations, and that demonstrate the continuity between contemporary national identities and earlier, ethnic identities. Additionally, it is the cultural content that provides material from which nationalist ideologies are formed and thrive. In order to understand contemporary identities, it is then necessary to situate them in an historic and cultural context. This means:

> "grounding our understanding of modern nationalism on an historical base involving considerable time-spans, to see how far its themes and forms were pre-figured in earlier periods and how far a connection with earlier ethnic ties and sentiments can be established."[3]

The ethno-symbolic method constitutes an attempt to understand the historical evolution of the cultural community of the nation and to understand how that history informs the present.

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[1] Smith, A.D. 2009. *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: a Cultural Approach.* Routledge. Oxford. 109
[2] Smith 2009, 15-16
[3] Smith, A.D. 1986. *The Ethnic Origin of Nations.* Oxford: Blackwell. 13

Additionally it seeks to gauge the strength and appeal of nationalist ideologies by identifying the "diverse symbols, memories, traditions, myths, and values that resonate among various populations."[4]

A key component of the method lies in understanding the *symbolic resource.* This term is used loosely in two ways. First is the symbol itself. For illustration purposes I will discuss the Azerbaijani flag. As a symbol of national identity, it is a resource for communicating the exemplars and origins of that identity. The flag contains symbolism representing an Islamic foundation and a Turkish ethnic heritage, and these are contrasted with symbolism representing values of modernity and progress. It is then a *symbolic resource* of national identity; a *symbol* that is a *resource* for representation and/or production of national identities. Smith also uses the term to refer to historic and ethnic material that is drawn upon within symbols. For example, myths of origin as descendants of the Oghuz as well as myths of election as Islamic defenders of a way of life in the struggle against evil are resources of the nation that are drawn upon within the symbolism of the flag. Thus the term can refer both to the symbols themselves (the flag, in this case) and to the resources from which they draw (the origin myths that the flag draws from and speaks to). In analyzing a symbolic resource, an ethno-symbolist seeks to identify the symbolic resources that are drawn from to constitute the symbolism.

Smith outlines a typology of symbolic resources which nationalist ideologies draw from.[5] While there are many potential symbolic resources of a nation's past, Smith lists the main resources as: myths of ancestry, myths of elections, sacred homelands, golden ages, and destiny through sacrifice.[6] The various myths of a people's past, and the associated (but often contested) values associated with those myths, are reproduced through rituals, social practices, and other

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[4] Smith 2009, 106
[5] Smith 2009, 90-103
[6] Ibid.

forms of symbolism. This symbolism informs modern identities to varying degrees. Smith argues that this "ethno-history" helps both groups and individuals to contextualize their role in the world.[7] By interrogating these symbols for their claims to various myths and values, and looking to a nation's history as a source of these claims, an ethno-symbolic analysis seeks to determine the extent that modern identities are informed by historical ones. Thus the focus is on the continuity between historic and contemporary identities, as well as the symbolism through which that continuity is communicated.

The development of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is examined by Kaufman in terms of the myths and symbols that informed both sides[8]. By interrogating public discourse and interpreting symbols and narratives in terms of their symbolic resources of historical identity, Kaufman illustrates the conflict as a "fundamental clash between an Armenian myth-symbol complex focused on fears of genocide and an Azerbaijani one emphasizing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani republic."[9] He examines each of the myth-symbol complexes in terms of its historical development, but also (and perhaps more importantly) in terms of the symbols that communicate them. A slightly modified form of this approach comes from Hutchinson[10], who analyses myths and symbols in terms of the conflicts that produced them. For example, English and German nationalisms are discussed in terms of popular movements vs. elite manipulations.[11] Additionally, conflicts between civic and cultural bases for nationalisms[12] as well as different cultural influences within the nation[13] are explored in terms of the myths, values, and symbols that are drawn upon and the symbolic interactions that communicate them.

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[7] Smith 2009, 160
[8] Kaufman, Stuart. 2001 *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.* 48-83
[9] Kaufman 2001, 49
[10] Hutchinson, John. 2005. *Nations as Zones of Conflict.* London: Sage.
[11] Hutchinson 2005, 124-127
[12] Hutchinson 2005, 39 for example
[13] Hutchinson 2005, throughout

Discourse Analysis

Symbols of national identity are representations of particular views about the nation's character and role, and about the validity of certain identities within the nation. As representations, the ways that those views are communicated and understood are contingent upon and situated within particular social, historical, and geographic contexts. Hall describes representation as "the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things."[14] The ways that their meanings are understood depend upon a variety of factors. Culture implies a "set of codes which govern…relationships of translation."[15] For example, societal and familial roles, social class, and religious traditions all influence the ways that we interpret the symbols around us. These contingencies or "relationships of translation" inform meaning. Understanding representations through the cultural "codes" that they are communicated in is crucial to understanding their meaning(s). These codes include the values, myths, and narratives that are the concern of the ethno-symbolist.

Discourse is a form of representation. Hall describes discourse as a "system of representation."[16]Aitken and Valentine define discourse as "sets of connected ideas, meanings and practices through which we talk about or represent the world."[17] A group of statements, images, or texts are understood to be a unified argument communicating meaning. This meaning is contingent upon the cultural codes which implicitly govern their translation. Discourse, very simply, is a conversation. It is a conversation that may occur in very simple language, but often has variegated meaning. Paltridge posits that discourse takes place "in particular social and cultural settings and is used and understood in different ways in different social and cultural settings."[18] Identifying and understanding the contingent meanings of the conversation is the

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[14] Hall, S. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.* London: Sage. 15

[15] Hall 1997, 21

[16] Hall 1997, 44

[17] Aitken, S. and Valentine, G. eds., 2006. *Approaches to human geography*. Sage. 339.

[18] Paltridge, B. 2006. *Discourse Analysis.* MPG Books: Bodmin, UK. 23.

focus of discourse analysis. As described by Rose,[19] discourse analysis pays attention to the ways that particular groups of people view and understand images and texts. Hall argues that both meaning and practice are represented within discourse.[20] Discourse analysis seeks then to identify and understand "different ways of seeing" as well as "the social institutions and practices through which images are made and displayed."[21]

Discourse analysis is widely used within geography, but its mechanics are often "under-elaborated."[22] The method has been referred to as a "craft skill"[23] which carries the implication that it is not something that can be taught (or perhaps 'elaborated') as much as something that is to be learned through experience. Discourse analysis has also been referred to as a "black box"[24] suggesting that findings are pulled from nowhere. Much of the methodology originates with Foucalt, but Rose describes his methodological statements as "rather vague" and argues that elaborating his method is "not easy."[25] His approach, however, produced "startling accounts of how subjects and objects were and are discursively produced."[26] The productive aspects of discourse, in addition to the role of discourse as representation, was a focus of much of Foucalt's work.[27] In order to minimize the "black box" approach to discourse analysis, I will attempt to describe my analytical approach as thoroughly as possible.

Steacy et. al argue that the advent of discourse analysis within geography has informed an understanding of the ways that reality is "constituted by literal and performative social-spatial

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[19] Rose, G. 2001. *Visual Methodologies: an Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials.* Sage. 141
[20] Hall 1997, 44
[21] Rose 2001, 135
[22] C. Steacy, B. Williams, C. Pettersen, H. Kurtz. 2016. Placing the "Analyst" in Discourse Analysis: Iteration, Emergence and Dialogicality as a Situated Process. *The Professional Geographer.* 68:1. 166
[23] Potter, J. 1996. *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. Sage. 140
[24] Steacy et al. 2016, 167
[25] Rose 2001, 139
[26] Ibid
[27] For example, see Foucalt, M. 1995 [1977]. *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison*. 2nd ed. Random House: NY. Foucalt elaborates the role of disciplinary practice as a form of discourse in producing certain social expectations and behaviors. The productive role of discourse, particularly in Foucalt's work, is elaborated in Rose 2001.

texts."[28] In order to contribute to the 'elaboration' of discourse analysis technique, they present three characteristics that emphasize the "intensely processual" quality of the method.[29] First, the process must be *iterative*, as repeated engagements with the discursive formation at various levels is necessary. They also describe the process as *emergent* rather than inductive. The iterative nature of the process causes insights to emerge from different contextualizations and situational understandings. Additionally, it is a *dialogic* process, as the analyst seeks to engage the discourse in a dialectic fashion.

I view each symbolic resource within this study as a form of discourse. Identity claims are encoded within the images, texts, and spatiality of the discourse. My analysis involves an appreciation of scale, which I utilize in a number of ways. Understanding each discourse as a communication of symbolic resources that is communicated spatially, I contextualize each discourse in terms of where and how it is communicated. The Baku 2015 European Games logo was prominently displayed in public locations in Baku where they could easily be viewed by visitors. Additionally, this logo was disseminated through the internet and on television broadcasts and other media associated with the games, much of which had a primarily European audience. This suggests that this discourse was in many ways a representation of Azerbaijan to be consumed by outsiders. The symbolism of the logo, combined with the inherent suggestion of Azerbaijan as a member of the European community by hosting and participating in the games, may be a strategic communication of the country's identity, role, and relationships. Of course the same discourse may communicate entirely different meanings to members of the refugee (IDP) communities from Nagorno-Karabakh. Nogue and Vicente argue for the utility of a "geographic perspective…for understanding nationalisms, because their ideologies are structured according to

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[28] Steacy et al 2016, 167

[29] The following paragraph is a summation of their processual approach to discourse analysis in Steacy et al, 2016.

context, milieu, and place."[30] Analyses of each discursive formation and the symbolic resources that they communicate must appreciate local, provincial, national, regional, and even global scales of significance and meaning. Thus the concept of scale refers to both the distribution and location of the symbol and to differential and contested meanings at different scales.

I also utilize the concept of scale in terms of the discourse itself. When analyzing a Soviet-era tourist map, I first look at the document in its entirety. An appreciation of the overall layout of the document, as well as its general appearance and *feel* provides the first scale of analysis. From that first wide-angle lens approach, I then transition to individual components of the document. Intertextuality becomes a major component of the analysis at all scales. Rose defines intertextuality as "the way that meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts."[31] Taken together, the various images and texts with their differential meanings and symbolism, become a discursive formation, which Rose describes as "the way meanings are connected together in a particular discourse."[32] I view each of the chosen symbols as a discursive formation, connecting symbolic resources of the nation's history with modern identity claims. Themes of both transformation and continuity are communicated as symbolic interactions between past and present, and as exemplars and guides towards the future.

A potential weakness of this method is the very subjective nature of the analysis. The potential lack of rigor and repeatability that this suggests is encapsulated in discussions of the method as a "black box." Rose suggests the possibility of the analyst making "rather tenuous" connections and findings.[33] This subjectivity, mediated through a process that is iterative, emergent, and dialogic is very much a strength of the method, however. Steacy et. al speak to

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[30] Nogue, J., and J. Vicente. 2004. "Landscape and National Identity in Catalonia." *Political Geography* 23. 116
[31] Rose 2001, 136.
[32] Rose 2001, 137
[33] Rose 2007, 169

this: "Discourse analysis is a far messier endeavor than the words might suggest, and we find that this untidiness is one of the greatest assets it provides."[34] As the analyst engages with the discourse using the processual approach discussed, new insights emerge and knowledge transitions into increasing levels of understanding.

A Unified Approach

Following the methodology of previous ethno-symbolic scholarship, I interrogate symbols of Azerbaijani national identity for historical and contemporary meaning, and for the symbolic national resources that are drawn upon as constitutive of that identity. Six symbols of national identity are chosen for analysis. Each of the chosen symbols are interrogated using discourse analysis within the framework of ethno-symbolism. The processual approach to discourse analysis that I have outlined is utilized to analyze each symbol for competing claims and differential meanings. These claims and meanings are understood to be contingent upon historical, social, and spatial context, and are understood as symbolic interactions between historical and contemporary identities. The continuity between those identities exists largely through the symbolic resources of myths and values. The ways that those resources are understood must be contextualized within different scales, however.

An additional aspect of this study is the relationship between elites and the masses in the formation and communication of national identities in Azerbaijan. Following ethno-symbolic scholarship, I reject the modernist notion that national identities exist solely as creations or inventions of the elite. Efforts at identity creation by elites have certainly been influential, however. In this study, I utilize modernist insights into the mechanisms by which elites draw upon symbolic resources of the nation and communicate those symbolic resources to a mass audience. In order to focus on this aspect of identity formation, I analyze official government

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[34] Steacy at al 2016, 169

symbolism of national identity within the modern state of Azerbaijan. Focusing specifically on government discourses allows me to identify the specific symbolic resources that are drawn upon by the government, and isolate particular ways that those myths, values, and symbols are reproduced and consumed. I argue that those symbolic resources that are accepted by the national population are the ones that become coopted by the government as official versions.

Six state-recognized symbols of national identity are analyzed. I view each of these symbols as a discursive formation. Intertextuality is an important component of the analysis, as each symbol but one consists of texts and images. Three of the symbols are specifically visual symbols, consisting of a flag or logos. In each of these cases, the symbol is also accompanied by an official account describing the symbolism within each discourse. An additional symbol utilized is a Soviet-era tourist map, which is a document consisting of both images and text describing the images and situating them in terms of their historical significance. A romance novel, characters from which are ubiquitous in Azerbaijani art and culture, and the national anthem are the final symbolic resources analyzed.

These symbols are as follows:

1. National seal of Azerbaijan
2. The Azerbaijani flag
3. The national anthem

    The preceding three symbols are the legally recognized national symbols of Azerbaijan. They can be found at the official website of the President of Azerbaijan, along with an accompanying description.
    http://en.president.az/

4. The seal of the Baku 2015 European Games.
    http://www.baku2015.com

5. A Soviet-era tourist map of Azerbaijan, produced by the Azerbaijan SSR in 1966.
6. The romance novel *Ali and Nino,* written by the mysterious "Kurban Said" (a pseudonym) in 1934. While not an official government discourse, the novel is unofficially viewed as the national novel of Azerbaijan. It has been institutionalized within the culture as an important

reflection of Azerbaijani national identity through sculpture, painting, and most recently through a film version produced by the daughter of the President of Azerbaijan.

An important component of discourse analysis is in understanding how a discursive formation works to persuade. This is one area where the synthetic approach that I have outlined demonstrates its utility. An understanding of a nation's symbolic resources, its symbolic interactions between past and present, provides the discourse analyst with a framework for understanding those communications that occur within and through a discursive formation. Using discourse analysis provides the ethno-symbolist a method of identifying those symbolic resources through intertextuality within a discursive formation. The methods are mutually reinforcing and synergistic as each method has the potential of identifying and filling in gaps left by the other.

Following Hutchinson, I pay particular attention to the conflicts and competitions associated with each symbolic resource. Rose posits that the complexities and contradictions that are inherent within many discourses can become an emphasis of discourse analysis.[35] In this sense, the synthetic method that I utilize provides a unique and powerful toolset for understanding symbolism as a link between past and present. An example of this synthetic method comes from Forker and McCormick, who analyze murals in Northern Ireland through an ethno-symbolic framework.[36] While they never explicitly mention discourse analysis, their analysis of the murals includes an in-depth analysis of intertextuality within the murals,[37] takes into account differential meanings of the inherent symbolism,[38] and illustrates dichotomous themes within the murals.[39]

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[35] Rose 2001, 155

[36] Forker, Martin, and Jonathon McCormick. 2009. "Walls of History: the Use of Mythometeurs in Northern Ireland Murals." *Irish Studies Review* 17:4

[37] Forker and McCormick 2009, 445-446 and throughout

[38] Forker and McCormick 2009, 450

[39] Ibid.

Their work also highlights the inherent spatiality of symbolism and the need to understand symbols of national identity within a spatial context.[40]

Engaging in a form of dialogue with each of the symbolic resources, I mine for meanings from a number of sources. I utilize many secondary sources, primarily scholarly articles and histories of Azerbaijan and the surrounding peoples and areas. I draw from a diversity of disciplinary sources in this regard, as I am utilizing historical, geographical, sociological, area studies, anthropological, and political science scholarship. Additionally, I utilize translations of popular literature and poetry, period travelogue, and ancient literature. Contemporary news sources are also utilized. It is necessary to point out that I do not speak Russian or Azerbaijani, thus I rely on translations from the original sources in many cases. There is the potential for missed subtleties and potential meanings overlooked from lost nuance that can be associated with working from a translation. To mitigate this, working from a variety of sources has provided a number of different perspectives that has minimized any attenuation of meaning from the original languages.

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[40] Forker and McCormick 2009, 424

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

"A nation is known, recognized and distinguished among the world nations by certain
characteristic features. The highest and the greatest of these features is culture."[1]

-Heydar Aliyev

From New Nation to New Man

The contemporary state of Azerbaijan was formed from the collapse of the USSR. The state

declared independence following a referendum on 29 December, 1991. The (re)birth of the state

in the post-Soviet context provides a useful starting point for identifying 'contemporary' national

identity in Azerbaijan. This cultural and political rebirth was the product of processes that had

been ongoing for decades and was built from cultural material that had been the product of many

centuries of ethno-territorial identity formation.

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[1] Heydar Aliyev Foundation website. http://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/content/blog/73/Culture
accessed 3/5/2016

In order to interrogate claims to national identity, I identify two distinct periods of government discourse, pre- and post- 1991. First, context is provided through government discourse from before the contemporary state. In particular, I examine a romance novel set in the brief period of the pre-Soviet Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. That is followed with an analysis of a Soviet-era tourist map of Azerbaijan that was published by the Azerbaijan SSR in 1966. Afterwards, I present the results of my analysis of material from the post-Soviet and contemporary periods in the following chapter. This chronological approach helps illustrate Azerbaijani national identity as a product of symbolic interactions between generations, and of both historic and modern origins.

Ali and Nino

Azerbaijan provides a valuable case for the study of national identity. The nation possesses a core of identity based on antiquity, while also experiencing transformational change and modern efforts to define and redefine the Azerbaijani identity. Competing identities, contradictory and yet somehow complementary, emerge as a unique Azerbaijani identity that is more than and distinct from the sum of its constituent parts. It is an identity that is drawn from antiquity and possesses certain rigidities, while also being somewhat fluid and complex. [1]

Throughout the literature, a particular work was mentioned by several scholars to shed light on this complex fluidity. *Ali and Nino* is a romance novel that is set in a tumultuous time in Azerbaijan's history, including the end of World War 1 and the period from 1918 to 1920, when Azerbaijan won and subsequently lost its independence and fell under Bolshevik rule. To introduce a discussion of regional identity in the South Caucasus, De Waal draws from discussions within the novel. Cornell describes the novel as "The best literary introduction to the Caucasus and Azerbaijan*"[2]* and also states that it "…captures the essence of the Caucasus in a

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[1] Tokluoglu, Ceyhan. 2005. Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism, and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s*. Ethnic and Racial Studies*.28:4. 736

[2] Cornell, Svante.2011. *Azerbaijan since Independence*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. Pg. 430

way unsurpassed by subsequent works, and holds relevance to this day."[3] In personal interviews conducted in preparation for travels to the country, the novel has been suggested to this author as an accurate and concise insight into Azerbaijani identity. It has also been described as "more useful than any tourist guide."[4] It is viewed by many Azerbaijanis as the unofficial national novel of Azerbaijan.[5]

As the first symbolic resource of national identity that I analyze, *Ali and Nino* is also the most tenuous example of government discourse. Published in 1934, it predates the modern government by many decades. A film version of the novel was recently produced, and released in January of 2016 in the US. The film involves several well-known actors and currently has a rating of 8.4/10 on the IMDB website.[6] The film was produced by Leyla Aliyeva, the daughter of Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan. She is also the Vice-President of the Heydar Aliyev foundation, an organization whose goals include the "social, economic and cultural development" of Azerbaijan, "the promotion of cultural heritage", and the "promotion of Azerbaijan's image worldwide."[7] The organization is headed by the First Lady of Azerbaijan, Mehriban Aliyeva. It is reasonable to view the production of the film as a product of these goals and as an implicit government endorsement. Due to this association, it is reasonable to view the expressions of national identity within the novel as a government discourse. The film is a representation of Azerbaijan's historic cultural identity addressed to an English language audience. Moreover, the novel provides valuable context into historic understandings of national identity during the formation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. While it is fiction, the overwhelming view is that it accurately portrays the culture, mindset, and identity of Azerbaijan.

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[3] Cornell 2011, 430

[4] Reiss, Tom. 2005. *The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life*. NY: Random House. xi

[5] Reiss 2005, xiv. I have also heard this sentiment during personal interviews

[6] Internet Movie DataBase website. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4072326/ accessed 3/5/2016

[7] http://www.heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/content/index/48/Goals_of_Foundation_ accessed 3/5/2016

Published in 1934, the true authorship of the novel is hotly contested.[8] The author is listed as Kurban Said, which widely accepted as a pseudonym. While there are several claimants as to authorship, one commonly held view is that Lev Nussimbaum**,** a Russian Jew who grew up in Baku, is the author.[9] Nussimbaum also wrote under another pseudonym, Essad Bey, and passed himself as a Turk. It is possible that in some ways, the story of Azerbaijan as a borderland between empires and identities is also the story of Nussinbaum himself. The son of a Baku oil magnate father and of a Jewish Russian revolutionary mother, he claims he was born on a train "in the middle of the Russian steppes between Europe and Asia."[10] The mystique surrounding authorship adds an interesting dimension to understanding how the author experienced Azerbaijan and was able to relate those experiences through eyes that were potentially not his own.

Ali and Nino, in addition to being a wonderful novel, offers powerful insight into the various conflicting and complementary facets of national identity in Azerbaijan. Set during the brief period of pre-Soviet Azerbaijani independence, it offers very candid discussion of what it is to be Azerbaijani and what separates Azerbaijani identity from its constituent parts, such as regional, ethnic, religious, and political identities. Ultimately the picture that evolves is of a nuanced complexity that on an initial reading offers many contradictions. Upon closer examination the complementary nature of the seeming contradictions becomes more evident. Dichotomies abound. Antiquity and modernity, conservatism and progress, rigidity and fluidity; these are some of the complementary facets of the unique Azerbaijani identity, an identity forged in modernity from strands of antiquity.

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[8] Reiss 2005 consists of an argument for Nussinbaum as the author, but also includes the various other claimants and contradictory arguments.

[9] Reiss 2005. Reiss offers a fascinating exploration of the history of *Ali and Nino*, the various claims to authorship, and an endorsement for Nussenbaum.

[10] Reiss 2005, 4

The novel opens with a discussion of Baku's "extraordinary geographical position"[11] as a borderland between 'reactionary' Asia and 'progressive' Europe. Informed by his teacher that it was his generation's responsibility to determine which course Baku, and thus Azerbaijan would take, the protagonist Ali quickly decides that he would prefer to remain a reactionary Asiatic. He then proceeds to tell the love of his life, the young Georgian girl Nino, of his decision. Her response quickly interrupts and confuses our young hero's process of identity formation: "Ali Khan, you are stupid. Thank God we are in Europe. If we were in Asia they would have made me wear the veil ages ago, and you couldn't see me."[12] Defeated by her beauty and wit, Ali admits: "I gave in. Baku's undecided geographical situation allowed me to go on looking into the most beautiful eyes in the world."[13]

This sets the stage for what is, at the same time, a beautiful romance novel and in-depth discussion of the contradictory components of the Transcaucasian Muslim (Azerbaijani) identity. This tension between "Asiatic" traditionalism and European progressivism is a leitmotif throughout the novel. In the novel, European, Persian, Turkic, and religious identities are all explored as critical components of the ethno-territorial identity of the Azerbaijani Turks, but each is found lacking when considered alone. It is this tension between the different components of identity, and Ali's eventual understanding that his Azerbaijani identity is unique from, and yet very much influenced by each of these components, that informs the novel. This tension typifies what Hutchinson describes as the "internal cultural conflicts, the shifting salience of national identities in the modern world, and compatibility of national with global, regional and religious identities"[14] that are important components of national identity. It is this same dynamic that also informs contemporary national identity in Azerbaijan.

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[11] Said, Kurban. Translated by Jenia Graman. 1970. *Ali and Nino*. Random House. NY. 13
[12] Said 1970, 15
[13] Said 1970, 15
[14] Hutchinson 2005, 15

Altstadt identifies that "[t]he city of Baku, because of its multinational population, reflected the Caucasian spectrum of political life and struggle."[15]The cosmopolitanism of Baku could in some ways be viewed as a microcosm of the region. What Grant refers to as "the plasticity and porosity of political, religious, and social boundaries"[16] is a description of what emerges in the novel of a unique Caucasian identity, which is a complex web of rigidity and fluidity, produced and constructed from historical and cultural realities that are unique to the region. Grant discusses "alternative approaches to sovereignty and community for which the Caucasus region has long been known."[17] He refers to "lively social pluralisms"[18] and "local flexibilities in religious life"[19] that are indeed a common feature of the region. He argues that sovereignty, which is commonly conveyed by borders, is often articulated within the South Caucasus by practices and expressions of identity and belonging. De Waal posits that the Caucasus indeed has its own unique regional identity but that no definition of that identity is satisfactory because of the diverse constituent components of that identity.[20]

This regional Trans-Caucasian identity is presented as an important component of the Azerbaijani national identity within the novel. At times, regionality seems to be a given. In an impassioned argument for the independence of Trans-Caucasia from Russia, one of the characters claims that "we, the people of Caucasia, can now keep the peace without them (the Russians)."[21] There is an assumption of a unified region, one with diversity and division, but unified nonetheless. Another example of a more deliberate regionality comes during a conversation between Ali, his soon to be father-in-law, and a family friend, who states:

[15] Altstadt, A. 1992. *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*. Hoover Institution Press. Stanford.79

[16] Grant, Bruce. 2011. Shrines and Sovereigns: Life, Death, and Religion in Rural Azerbaijan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History.* 53:4. 654

[17]Grant 2011, 655

[18] Ibid

[19] Ibid

[20] De Waal, T. 2010. *The Caucasus: an Introduction.* Oxford University Press. NY. 10

[21] Said 1970, 81

"Here we are, representatives of the three greatest Caucasian people: a Georgian, a Mohammedan, an Armenian. Born under the same sky, by the same earth, different, and yet the same, like God's Trinity. European, and yet Asiatic, receiving from East and West, and giving to both."[22]

This presented Ali with another layer of confusion as he pondered: "there really were decent Armenians. This was quite a disturbing thought."[23]

Of course, as our hero learned in his school lesson, issues of regionality and geographical belonging can extend further than one's immediate neighbors. As a borderland between 'reactionary Asia' and 'progressive Europe', there are distinct issues of identity and belonging that are unique to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan as part of a broader Muslim world or a broader Turkic world are certainly some of the very real 'imagined communities' of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan as a Shia community, as a result of a long history of Persian influence is also a relevant dimension. Throughout the novel, Ali explores these different aspects of his (and thus Azerbaijan's) identity.

Azerbaijan as part of a broader Turkic world is something that is addressed within the novel. Certainly, Ali views himself as a cousin of the Turks. Many of Ali's friends had gone to fight in the war, but this illustrates the complexity of the Great War for the Azerbaijanis. Most had enlisted in the Russian Army to defend the homeland from invasion. Many were conflicted about this, though. Ali asks: "Should we in Mohammed's name defend the Czar's Cross against the Khalif's half-moon?"[24] This is something that causes great confusion, as his friend and spiritual adviser Seyd considers the Turks (Sunnis) as "worse than unbelievers."[25] Ultimately, Seyd responds to Ali's questions with "all the despair of a dying millennium…in his eyes" with

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[22] Said 1970, 80
[23] Said 1970, 82
[24] Said 1970, 87
[25] Said 1970, 86

an uncertain: "What shall we do, Ali Khan? I do not know."[26] Thus the conflicted nature of the Turkic aspect of Azerbaijani identity is illustrated.

This has relevance to this day. Tokluoglu discusses the ideology of pan-Turkism as a relatively small but influential aspect of political opposition in Azerbaijan.[27] One politician that he interviews describes Azerbaijan as "historically part of the great Turkish nation."[28] Indeed, this was very influential following independence after the fall of the Soviet Union. The brief Presidency of Abilfaz Elchibey was characterized by a view of Azerbaijan as a part of a greater Turkish nation. His short-lived rule, as well as the influence of pan-Turkism, was replaced in the summer of 1993 by Heydar Aliyev and a view of Azerbaijani nationalism that was more akin to what is presented in *Ali and Nino*.[29] Nevertheless, pan-Turkism still exists as an identity within a significant minority of Azerbaijani society.

Ali's interactions with Seyd also illustrate another important aspect of Azerbaijani identity, that of religion. Ali respects Seyd greatly. This is illustrated by the following passage:

> "He would not give away an inch of the true faith, even though by doing so he could make Persia great and mighty again. Better to go under than find the will-o'-the-wisp of the earthly splendor by passing through the morass of sin. And so he was silent and did not know what to do. And so I love him, the lonely guard on the threshold of our true Faith."[30]

In his introduction to the first English edition of the novel, Wain posits:

> "Ali Khan loves Seyd Mustafa because of his inflexibility. But he himself does not covet this inflexibility. On the contrary, he sees himself as a modern Muslim, able to make concessions and adapt his faith to changing circumstances, provided only that its essence remain undiluted."[31]

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[26] Ibid

[27] Tokluoglu, C. 2005. Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism, and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 28:4.

[28] Tokluoglu 2005, 730.

[29] Bolukbasi, S. 2011. *Azerbaijan: a Political History.* I.B. Tauris. London. 200-201

[30] Said 1970, 8

[31] Ibid

The role of Islam within Azerbaijani society is ubiquitous and palpable, but is also mediated through a social system and culture that values secular civil society and cultural pluralism. This is true in today's Azerbaijan,[32] as well as in Ali's world. While Ali very much considers himself a devout follower of the true faith, he also would not be rude to his soon to be in-laws by denying them the opportunity to bond during a days-long drinking fest. His faith is important to his identity, both to his self-identity and to his social identity. In no way does it define his social relations, though. His marriage to Nino, a Georgian Christian, illustrates this point. On the marriage certificate Seyd, who performs the ceremony, lists her religion as "Christian", which is an explicit endorsement of the religious pluralism within the marriage and, perhaps, of the nation. Today, a significant Jewish population, as well as the presence of different variants of Christianity (albeit a small minority), are a contemporary manifestation of the religious pluralism that has existed for millennia in this region. Zoroastrianism and Hinduism also have a substantial historical presence in Azerbaijan.[33]

The Persian cultural heritage is also an important component of Azerbaijani identity. At one point, Ali and Nino spend time in Tehran. The sleepy traditionalism of Persian society initially appeals to Ali, but he quickly grows bored. Their relationship begins to suffer, as well. Nino is willing to fill the role of an Asiatic wife and to "serve" her husband, but the gender segregation that polite Persian society requires is problematic for both of them. Deeply in love, the days spent separated are more than the young couple can bear. Homesick for the progressivism of Baku (and each other's company), they are both thrilled when able to return. Ali views the Persian influence as important, but also as a relic. He speaks of "many years ago, when

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[32] The role of Islam in Azerbaijani society has been well-explored. An excellent introduction to Islam during the Soviet period comes from Grant (2011). For a discussion of the contemporary period, see: Valiyev. A. 2005. Azerbaijan: Islam in a Post-Soviet Republic. *Middle East Review of International Affairs.* 9:4. 1

[33] Foltz, R. 2004. *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble.* One World Publications: Oxford.

our country Azerbeidshan still belonged to Persia"[34], which encapsulates the relationship as ancient and important, but waning.

The European aspect of Azerbaijani identity is also presented. The fledgling republic needs diplomats, and Ali, due to his aristocratic credentials, knowledge of English, and European wife, is tasked with hosting foreign representatives. While he appreciates certain aspects of this assignment and comes to recognize the strong influence of European progressivism on his own identity (and thus, on the identity of Azerbaijan), he is not satisfied to be entirely European, either. He longs for the carpeted walls and flat roofs of a true Asian house, and refuses a post in Paris, much to Nino's disappointment.

The identity dilemma is settled, however, when the Russians invade the new republic. Ali now knows who he is, and what his new nation is. He is Azerbaijani and Baku is his homeland. It is the "complex interconnections of identity and place, of belonging and territorial space"[35] that constitute both his personal identity as well as the national identity. Complex and conflicted but unique, he is a son of the soil. Ali compare the "dark eyes" of Nino to the "native earth" of Baku and declares: "I will defend the dark eyes of my homeland."[36] It is the "…poor, sun-glazed soil of Azerbeidshan"[37] that is his home, his love, and his identity. Thus ends the brief period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and begins the Soviet rule:

> Ali Khan Shirvanshir fell at quarter past five on the bridge of Gandsha behind his machine-gun. His body fell into the dry river bed. I went down. He was pierced by eight bullets. In his pocket I found this book. God willing, I will take it to his wife. We buried him in the early morning, shortly before the Russians started the last attack. The life of our Republic has come to an end, as has the life of Ali Khan Shirvanshir."[38]

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[34] Said 1970, 24
[35] Young, Craig, and Duncan Light. 2001. Place, National Identity, and Post-Socialist transformations: an Introduction. *Political Geography*. 20. 942
[36] Said 1970, 70
[37] Said 1970, 213
[38] Said 1970, 237
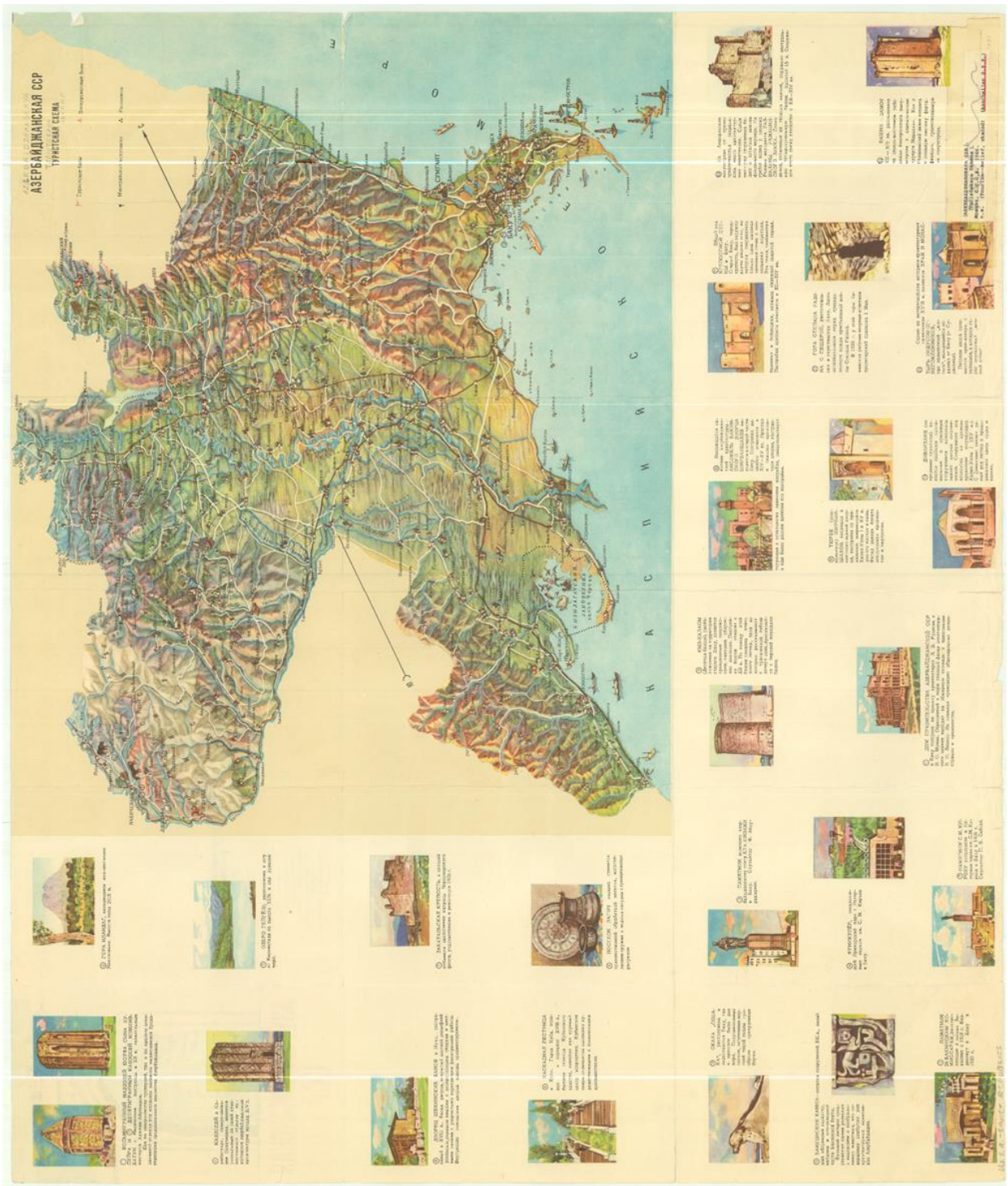
Soviet Tourist Map

Figure 1

The 11th Red Army arrived in Baku on 28 April, 1920. The 'voluntary' unification of

Azerbaijan with the Soviet Union resulted in the 'independent Soviet Republic' of Azerbaijan.

The Battle of Gandje, in which the fictitious Ali lost his life, resulted in crushing defeat of the

Azerbaijani forces. Pockets of resistance continued, but Soviet power was consolidated before the

end of the year.[39] Stalin's purges were especially harsh in Azerbaijan and the resultant "Great

Terror" left an indelible mark on the national psyche. Nationalism was a dangerous and typically

fatal concept during this period. The reforms of Khrushchev, the so called "Khrushchev thaw"

allowed certain nationalist cultural expressions to once again enter public discourse. This was

particularly strong in Azerbaijan. The First Party Secretary of Azerbaijan during the beginning of

the Khrushchev era, Imam Mustafayev, encouraged expressions of Azerbaijani culture and

oversaw an era of "rehabilitation" of Azerbaijani cultural figures.[40] Ultimately, he was removed

for being too liberal with this policy. His replacement in 1959, Veli Akhundov, was much less

overt in this regard, but oversaw an increase in the "turkification" of the Azerbaijani party

apparatus, nonetheless.[41]

To analyze claims to national identity during the Soviet period, I draw on the symbolic

resource of a Soviet-era tourist map published by the Azerbaijan SSR in 1966. The map was part

of a group of documents that had been discarded by National Geographic and was rescued by an

intern. The map came to be in the possession of my advisor, who eventually passed it along to

me. The map document communicates specific claims to Azerbaijani national identity, and these

claims must be understood within the Soviet context. The symbolism, history, and identities that

are drawn from and argued for within the map document communicate a particular understanding

of an ethno-territorial identity that has persisted for a millennium, at least. While the document

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[39] Altstadt 1992, 111-113.
[40] This era is the subject of: Hasanli, J. 2015. *Khrushchev's Thaw and National Identity in Soviet Azerbaijan: 1954-1959. Lexington Books.* London.
[41] Altstadt 1992, 167

was published after the "thaw" of Khrushchev and the cultural nationalism of Mustafayev, the nationalist cat was out of the proverbial bag at this point. The national consciousness of the Azerbaijani Turks was awake and in the open.

An important consideration is that the map is published in Russian. I neither read nor speak Russian, thus I had to rely on a translation. In order to accomplish this, I utilized "Google Translate", which is an "app" on my Android smartphone. I am able to take a digital photo of the text within the app, and it will produce a translation. There are limitations to this method as the translation is literal and thus somewhat disjointed. There is also the potential for missed nuance that may exist in the language that is not communicated through the translation. Ultimately, the potential for missed nuance is overwhelmed by a wealth of visual and textual evidence that makes a fairly clear argument drawing upon very distinct claims to historical and contemporary identity.

Certain peculiarities to the layout of this map may hold significant meaning. A map is often a rhetorical argument, communicated visually. Aspects of map layout are often intentional parts of that argument, chosen to suggest hierarchy and importance of certain elements, or to emphasize or minimize certain aspects of geography within the map. Given the nature of political discourse in the Soviet Union, it is very likely that every aspect of the document was intentional, encoding particular views and values. Even if certain aspects of the cartographic design were not intentional, there is still a certain view that is portrayed in the document.

The first and foremost of these design features of the document is the map itself. The upper-right hand corner of the document consists of a somewhat stylized map of Azerbaijan (figure 1). For those familiar with the shape and appearance of the country, the map is odd. There is significant distortion to the shape of the country and north arrow is pointed oddly to the right at an approximately 30° angle. This was puzzling, at first. The reason for this odd distortion becomes clear, however, when compared with a map of the Soviet Union. Due to the enormous geographical area and particularly the east-west distribution of the area, a map that is projected to

include the entire Soviet Union while maintaining relative accuracy for the shape of the entire country must necessarily allow significant distortion for the peripheral areas. Additionally, the proximity to the North Pole causes this to include significant distortion to maintain directionality, as well.

This suggests that the map was simply 'clipped' from a larger map of the Soviet Union, or at least drawn from such a representation. Indeed, a quick search of the internet for various Soviet-era maps suggested that this is a common feature of such maps. Perhaps a cartographic projection individualized for each member "Republic" would suggest nationalism and, perhaps, autonomy. Thus, the very appearance of the map speaks to Soviet dominance, and to a Moscow center to the Azerbaijani Universe. The Azerbaijan SSR, like any member republic, was a part of the greater Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and this was the central reality for Azerbaijan. When this map was published in 1966, Azerbaijan had been within the Soviet system for over 45 years and whatever else Azerbaijan had been in the past, it was now the Azerbaijan SSR.

Other noteworthy aspects of the map include the oil wells around the Apsheron peninsula, ships leaving Baku, the rail network, and agriculture, all of which are exaggerated and drawn in almost cartoon-like fashion. The cartographer responsible for this artwork was very clearly drawing attention to the utility that was provided to the Soviet Union by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani oil was a critical factor during WWII and was highly valuable to the Soviet Union. The fact that the tanker ship is drawn *leaving* Baku would seem to suggest Azerbaijan's role as a provider of resources, and thus, of value to the Soviet Union. The extensive agriculture that is drawn in the valley between the Greater and Lesser Caucasus appears to communicate a similar argument. The rail networks represent connectivity between Azerbaijan (and its many resources) and the remainder of the Soviet Union. Utility, connectivity, and Soviet-focused (dominated?) are key themes communicated within this cartographic representation of Azerbaijan.

In addition to the map itself, there are numerous images and descriptions of various tourist destinations around Azerbaijan. The document is a tourist map, presumably for a Russian audience, and is intended to identify places that a tourist might wish to visit. It is in these images and text, with an eye towards intertextuality and subtlety, that certain claims to Azerbaijani identity apart from the Soviet system begin to be understood. The first of these requires an understanding of visual hierarchy in map design. To readers of languages that are written left to right and top to bottom (such as English and Russian), the top left of a document holds a natural place of prominence. Our eyes are naturally drawn to this area of a document as a natural starting point. For this reason, cartographers will often place the title and other important information in the upper left corner of a map document. Alternatively, other information may be placed there in order to draw the reader's eye and assign importance to that information. In this document, certain information is placed in the upper left corner that likely is intentional and holds important meaning to an understanding of Azerbaijani national identity both at the time and today.

A series of three structures is displayed in this section of the document (see figure 2 on following page). Each is a mausoleum for a political figure in Azerbaijani history of the 12th through the 14th century. The discussion accompanying the images describes the tombs as examples of "outstanding medieval architecture of Azerbaijan." The primacy of their position on the map document combined with the vague accompanying description suggests meaning that must be uncovered. Two of the tombs are in Nakhichevan, an exclave of Azerbaijan. Its status

under the Soviet Union was as an Autonomous

Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) with close ties

to Azerbaijan. Altstadt argues that this was

understood in Azerbaijan as a recognition of the

ASSR as an "autonomous but indivisible part of

the Azerbaijan SSR".[42] This status was part of an

overall negotiation that also included the status of

the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast

(NKAO) as an Azerbaijani administered region,

although only nominally so. It is noteworthy that

Nakhichevan is included in this tourist map as part

of Azerbaijan, as Moscow recognized it as a

separate republic. The two tourist sites that are

Figure 2. Medieval Mausoleums

given a place of prime importance in the document happen to be

in Nakhichevan, as well.

Also of significance is the period that the monuments represent, the 12th through the 14th

centuries. Cornell describes the medieval history of Azerbaijan as a "bewildering tale of

innumerable short-lived principalities, competing empires, and sequences of settlers, conquests,

and migrations."[43] This period is no exception, although for most of this period Azerbaijan was

self-ruled. This was the period of the Shirvanshah state in Azerbaijan, which was variously

referred to as Arran and as Shirvan. The Shirvanshah state existed in various forms periodically

from the 9th to the early 16th century, although the earliest dynasty was Arab.[44] The Kesranid

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[42] Altstadt 1992, 127

[43] Cornell 2011, 4

[44] Altstadt 1992, 4. The Arab Mazyadid dynasty lasted from the 9th to the beginning of the 11th century. The Shirvanshahs state was incorporated into Safavid Iran in the early 16th century. The Safavid dynasty in Iran was itself of Azerbaijani origin.

dynasty, a local clan with a Persian name that ruled the state from the 11th century incorporated

successive waves of Turkic migrations. This represents an era in which the ethno-territorial

identity of the Azerbaijani Turks very much begins to take its current form. By the 12th century

the people were largely Turkic,[45] yet retained significant cultural influence from their Persian

neighbors. This period represents the early history and perhaps the ethno-genesis of the

Azerbaijani Turks.[46]

      This was also an era of great cultural and religious diversity. The Mongol invasion of the

13th century brought with it a form of Christianity that had been heavily influenced by Nestorian

missionaries, a particularly Syrian variant of Christianity.[47] Islamization by previous Arab

conquests had also penetrated into the religious pluralism of the region including, most notably,

Zoroastrianism. Islam had become the dominant religious tradition by this time, but existed

alongside other historic and geographic traditions and influences. Cornell describes a "syncretism

that had evolved among Zoroastrianism, Christian, and shamanistic practices"[48] that easily

incorporated Shia mysticism.

      The tombs also have religious significance that is unique to the Soviet period. Two of the

monuments include Islamic scripture. While religions are typically understood as belief systems

and as practices, they also represent cultural and personal identities. During the Soviet period,

religious practice was highly restricted. While religious worship and education were virtually

non-existent for much of the Soviet period, expressions of religious identity still persisted. Grant

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[45] Altstadt 1992, 5

[46] This statement would be contested. Arguments for "ethno-genesis" range from the Caucasian Albanians in the 4th century BC to as recent as the 20th century. Altstadt (1992) provides a detailed discussion.

[47] While the Mongols themselves are not typically associated with Christianity, there was a significant Christian presence, particularly among Mongol women. This was primarily the result of Nestorian missionary efforts along the Silk Road. See: Gillman, I., Klimkeit, H.J. 1999. *Christians in Asia before 1500.* University of Michigan Press. Ann Arbor. 208. For a discussion of Christianity among Mongol women, see: Montgomery, R. 2002. *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity: Toward an Understanding of the Diffusion of Religion.* Praeger. Westport, Conn. 86.

[48] Cornell 2011, 5

identifies that after the fall of the Soviet Union, 95% of Azerbaijanis identified themselves as Muslim, although no more than 5% were believed to be active in their faith.[49] This suggests that despite the restrictions on religious practice during the Soviet period, religious identities persisted. Grant further argues that "religious consciousness thrived in a variety of settings across the Soviet period."[50] One of these "settings" was shrines. Pilgrimages to these and other shrines was a common expression of religious identity and belonging. This was also periodically curtailed, but became more common after the "thaw" of Khrushchev.[51] The inclusion of these shrines would likely be understood as a subtle expression of religious identity to an Azerbaijani audience, meaning that would probably be lost to a Russian audience.

Other elements of the document speak to ancient, pre-Islamic religious traditions. Figure 3 displays an ancient Hindu fire-worship temple. This is the Ateshga fire temple, located near Baku. The present structure was built in the 18th century by Hindu devotees, but some accounts link the site to ancient Zoroastrianism.[52] Azerbaijan is viewed by some scholars as the birthplace of Zoroastrianism,[53] and the Apsheron peninsula has certainly been a place of significance for Zoroastrianism and other fire-worship cults. Figure 4 depicts ancient ruins which likely had

Figure 3. Ateshga Fire Temple

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[49] Grant 2011, 656
[50] Ibid.
[51] Grant 2011, 667
[52] Elliot, M. 2010. *Azerbaijan with Excursions to Georgia.* 4th ed. Trailblazer Publications: Surrey, UK.154-5.
[53] For a brief discussion of the possible origins of Zoroaster and the associated religious tradition, see: Foltz, R. 2004. *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble.* One World Publications: Oxford. 19-41. Also, see: Cornell, S. 2011. *Azerbaijan since Independence.* M.E. Sharpe: Armonk, NY. Pg.4.

religious significance that include carvings of an animal-like being, perhaps a Cherubim.[54] Christianity was introduced to this area very early, with a significant presence by the 4th century,[55] and this carving could be a relic of that association, or could potentially represent some other religious tradition

Figure 4. 13th century carvings

There are also several other sites from the medieval period included in the document. Many of these are remnants of the Shirvanshah state and of local identity and autonomy. All of the structures in the bottom right of the document are ancient, and from the period of the Shirvanshahs, which lasted with periodic interruption until the early 16th century. These include palaces, defensive structures, and a building that may have facilitated executions. This speaks to local rule, law, and defense, and most of all, local identity. There is also a statue of Nizami Ganjavi (figure 5), a famed poet of medieval Azerbaijan. Active in the 12th century, his works include the play *Leili and Mejnun,* a story of unrequited love which is claimed to be the inspiration for Eric Clapton's iconic song "Layla".[56] Inclusion of this monument in the document is a product of the Khrushchev-era

Figure 5. Nizami Ganjavi statue

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[54] An angelic being in the Judeo-Christian tradition, often depicted with the body of a lion, the face of a human, and the wings of an eagle. Similar to the Egyptian Sphinx.
[55] Altstadt 1992, 6
[56] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layla

reforms. The First Secretary of the Communist Party in Azerbaijan, Imam Mustafayev, suggested *Leili and Mejnun* for inclusion in a program demonstrating Azerbaijani culture in Moscow. [57] This monument symbolizes Azerbaijani identity and history from the same Shirvanshah period as the previous architecture.

Some scholars have suggested Azerbaijan as an invention of modernity, a "recent, artificial creation."[58] This map makes a different argument. The document claims a continuous ethno-territorial identity of a people that have diverse origins, but who have incorporated Turkic and Persian elements into a cultural pluralistic, pre-existing Caucasian society. Some Azerbaijani scholars have made rather tenuous claims to continuity with the Caucasian Albanian state, potentially dating the Azerbaijani people to a pre-Christian time[59]. There are no such claims in this document. Neither a recent invention, nor a pre-Christian relic, the Azerbaijanis are a product of both antiquity and modernity. While earlier traditions have influenced the peoples of the Transcaucasus, the Azerbaijanis have their origins in the Shirvanshah state, when Turks, Persians, and Caucasians melded into a people, a nation referred to today as Azerbaijan.

Synthesis

Azerbaijani national identity is a product of both antiquity and modernity. The overall view presented through the previous symbols is of a unique ethno-territorial identity of the Azerbaijani Turks that is informed by a particular geographic and historical context. It is a unique synthesis of Turkic, Persian, and European influence that incorporates ancient Caucasian cultural and societal forms. The tension between different facets of this identity that informs *Ali and Nino* is also demonstrated in the Soviet tourist map, albeit more subtly. The diverse traditions of

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[57] Hasanli 2015, 292
[58] Altstadt 1992, 2
[59] Ibid

architecture that are identified within the map, ranging from early Zoroastrianism to medieval

Shirvanshah palaces and Muslim shrines, communicates this diversity and tension.

The period of the second Shirvanshah dynasty in the 11th century is also highlighted as an

important era for the Azerbaijani people. As a time when the Caucasian people of Azerbaijan

began to incorporate large-scale Turkic migrations yet retained significant Persian cultural

influence, this period possibly represents the ethno-genesis of the Azerbaijani Turks. The

symbolic resources of *sacred homeland, myths of ancestry, the golden age* and *destiny through*

sacrifice are powerful themes that inform the symbolism of the previous two resources. The

tension between traditionalism and progressivism in the novel is also a noteworthy aspect of this

symbolic resource.

Independence and Beyond

Constitutionally Recognized Symbols

The fracturing of the Soviet system, the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the

violent Soviet response to a nationalist movement known as "Black January" ultimately resulted

in the formation of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. While the Republic declared

independence from the Soviet Union on 30 August, 1991, the government was still a relic of the

Soviet system. Different visions of the new state included continued communism under

Mutalibov[60] and Turkic nationalism under Elcibey. [61] Presidential elections placed Heydar Aliyev,

and his vision of a unique Azerbaijani nationalism, in the Presidency on 24 June, 1993. As is

characteristic of post-Soviet states, Azerbaijan quickly sought to define and establish its national

identity through (among other things) symbols.

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[60] Bolukbasi, S. 2014, *Azerbaijan: a Political History.* I.B. Tauris. NY.166
[61] Bolukbasi 2014, 200.

I explore the claims to Azerbaijani national identity through these symbols in the period of independence through the three constitutionally-recognized symbols of national identity: the national flag, the national anthem, and the state seal. These symbols are listed on the website of the President of Azerbaijan along with an accompanying description.[62] Intertextuality between the symbol and the accompanying description, as well as between the different elements of the symbols is considered. I also analyze a more contemporary symbol of national identity, the logo of the "Baku 2015" European Games along with its published description, which is listed on the Baku 2015 website.

National Flag

Figure 6. National flag

The national flag of Azerbaijan was established by the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic on 9 November, 1918. It replaced the original flag of the newly formed Republic, which was essentially a version of the Ottoman flag; red with a white crescent moon and five-pointed star. This early flag reflected the hegemonic role of the Ottomans, as well as the "friendship"[63] and ethnic affiliation between the new Azerbaijani state and the Ottoman Empire. Within a few months, this flag was deemed unsatisfactory. Many were uncomfortable with the Turkism that this flag represented.[64] Ethnic affiliation with the Turks was viewed as an important component of Azerbaijani identity, but only one component of many. The declaration of independence

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[62] The website of the President of Azerbaijan. http://en.president.az/azerbaijan/symbols accessed 3/11/16.

[63] Swietochowski, T. 1995. *Russia and Azerbaijan: a Borderland in Transition.* Columbia University Press. NY .69

[64] Swietochowski 1995, 71

guaranteed full rights for all citizens regardless of "nationality."[65] The new national flag

contained symbolism of the unique Azerbaijani experience, including ethnic and religious

symbolism as well as representing modernity and progress. When the Soviets came to power in

1920, the flag was rejected.

In 1990, with the Soviet Union crumbling around them, the Supreme Soviet of

Azerbaijan considered the (re)adoption of the tri-color as the national flag. On 5 February 1991,

the flag was once again displayed as the national standard of Azerbaijan. This represents a

continuation of the values and aspirations of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic of 1918-1920, a

modern, liberal state that also is informed by traditionalism and national culture. The tension

between modernity and traditionalism that the flag symbolizes is a major theme in the national

identity of Azerbaijan. As a deliberate symbol of national and cultural identity the flag becomes a

significant symbolic resource for analysis, and is a distinct claim to continuity with the past.

Matjunin describes a state flag as a "concentrated iconographic symbol" which

communicates a community's beliefs, myths, and values.[66] Flags are symbols of national and

cultural identity and can carry intense meaning according to Huntington:

> "In the post-Cold War world flags count and so do other symbols of cultural
> identity…because culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful
> to most people. People are discovering new but often old identities and marching
> under new but often old flags which leads to wars with new but often old
> enemies."[67]

The flag is a government discourse, an intentional representation of national identity by

the government of Azerbaijan. The published description of and justification for the individual

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[65] Altstadt, A. 1992. *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*. Hoover Institution Press. Stanford. 69

[66] Matjunin, S. 2000. The New State Flags as the Iconographic Symbols of the Post-Soviet Space. *GeoJournal. 52.* 311

[67] Huntington, S. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* Simon and Schuster. NY. 20

elements[68] provides intertextuality to the discursive formation to assist in the analysis. The green stripe at the bottom of the flag represents a foundation of Islam. The red stripe in the middle represents values of democracy and modernization. The blue stripe on the top represents a Turkic heritage. Initially I believed that this was probably a mistake, perhaps an error in translation. Intuitively, the blue seemed to be a better representation of the values of modernity and progress. Perhaps this understanding was informed from my own cultural milieu however, as the affiliation of the color blue with the UN was the first thing that came to mind. Moreover, the red stripe in the middle seemed to me to be a clear reference to the Ottoman flag. In the center of the flag, situated over the red stripe, is a crescent moon and an eight-pointed star. This symbol in conjunction with the red stripe seemed quite clearly to be an analogue to the Ottoman flag.

The official account is accurate, however. It seems that blue is heavily represented in Turkic symbolism. Blue has a sacred dimension in some Turkish folklore,[69] and figures strongly in the pre-Ottoman kingdom of the Seljuk Turks. The people of Gaguazia, an ethnic community in Moldova and the Ukraine, also utilized blue on a "national" flag to symbolize their Turkic ethnic affiliation.[70] It is noteworthy that both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also utilize the color blue in their flags. Thus blue becomes a symbol, not of the Turkish state, nor even of the Ottoman Empire, but of ancient ethnic affiliation of the Turkic peoples. The myth of ancestry of the Azerbaijanis as descendants of the Oghuz, encapsulated in the epic poem *The Book of Dede Korkut*, is a powerful component of the modern national identity and informs the symbolism of the flag.

The symbolism of the crescent moon and star also may communicate similar meaning, although the origin of this symbol is uncertain. The star and crescent has been used as a symbol of the Ottoman Empire, but also of the broader Islamic world. The early Ottoman flag had a five-

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[68] http://en.president.az/azerbaijan/symbols

[69] Agirel, S. 2009. Colour Symbolism in Turkish and Azeri Folk Literature. *Folklore.* 120:1. 96

[70] Matjunin 2000, 313

pointed star, as does the star in most subsequent uses of this symbol. The star on the Azerbaijani flag has eight points. The significance of the eight points is unclear, however. The logo of the Heydar Aliyev foundation also utilizes an eight-point star, which is claimed to symbolize the "union of Azerbaijani people".[71] A website that *appears* to be an official publication of the Azerbaijani government lists two different meanings.[72] One is that it represents the eight letters of the word Azerbaijan when written in Arabic script. There is also a claim that the number eight is representative of the Turkic peoples. A reasonable interpretation of this element is that the crescent moon and eight-pointed star situates Azerbaijan as part of both the Turkic world and the Islamic world, although uniquely Azerbaijani. It is a localized expression of broader regional identities.

The bottom stripe in green represents a foundation of Islam. The wording of the official account on the Presidential website offers important insight into meaning: "…the green color shows belonging to Islamic civilization." This would suggest the government's view of Islam as primarily a cultural and 'civilizational' identity. Religiosity in Azerbaijan has certainly grown since the fall of the Soviet Union,[73] but this may be "rather superficial."[74] Islam is still more of a cultural identity than a truly religious one for much of the population. The CIA World Factbook lists Azerbaijan as 96.9% Muslim (primarily Shia), but notes: "Religious affiliation is still nominal in Azerbaijan; percentages for actual practicing adherents are much lower."[75] Nevertheless, Islam is still an important component of the Azerbaijani experience and identity.

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[71] Heydar Aliyev Foundation website. http://www.heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/content/index/49/Logo_of_Foundation accessed 3/12/2016

[72] http://www.azerbaijans.com/content_427_en.html accessed 3/12/2016

[73] Cornell, Svante.2011. *Azerbaijan since Independence*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. 269

[74] Valiyev. A. 2005. Azerbaijan: Islam in a Post-Soviet Republic. *Middle East Review of International Affairs.* 9:4.2

[75] CIA World Factbook online. Entry for Azerbaijan. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html accessed 3/12/2016

These symbols of ancient ethnic affiliation and religious tradition are contrasted with the center stripe in red, representing values of democracy, modernity, and progress. Red is often a symbol of maturity in Azerbaijani and Turkish folklore and literature.[76] In *The Book of Dede Korkut*, red is the color of the bride's veil[77] and dress.[78] There is also an association between the color red and rebirth in Persian folklore.[79] Red as a symbol of democracy, modernity, and progress could herald the rebirth of the mature Azerbaijani nation. The nation of the Azerbaijani Turks, distilled from historical interactions and influences of the Shirvanshah state, forged under the Soviet hammer, was now taking its place among the nations.

Different versions of Azerbaijani national identity are represented by each of these symbols. Government and elite-driven efforts at promotion of a Pan-Turkic ideology following the dissolution of the Soviet Union were rejected by many. This contributed to the ouster of Abulfaz Elchibey in June of 1993, which ultimately resulted in the presidency of Heydar Aliyev.[80] Both in the 1918 and 1991 periods of independence, Turkism was an influential ideology within Azerbaijani society. In both periods, a national identity emerged that recognized the Turkic ethnic heritage of the Azerbaijani people, but only as one constituent component of that identity. Tokluoglu describes Turkism today as a dominant theme within the political opposition[81]. This is in contrast to the government's ideology of Azerbaijanism, which "emphasizes a pluralistic identity inclusive of various ethnic groups of Azerbaijan."[82]

There have also been efforts at the promotion of Islamism, although the clergy tended to support Aliyev's Azerbaijani nationalism over political Islamism.[83] How the nation will interpret

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[76] Agirel 2009, 95

[77] Lewis, G. 1974. Translation. *The book of Dede Korkut.* Penguin Books. London. 70

[78] Lewis 1974, 83

[79] Agirel 2009, 96

[80] Bolukbasu 2014, 200.

[81] Tokluoglu, C. 2005. Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism, and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 28:4.737

[82] Ibid

[83] Valiyev 2005, 5

and negotiate the growing role of religion in society remains to be seen. The promotion of Islamism have been opposed by the government, and Cornell describes Azerbaijan as "the most progressive and secular-minded…of the Muslim world."[84] There has also been a pro-Russian movement sponsored by certain members of the Intelligentsia seeking to promote Russian language and education aimed at promoting values of modernity and progress, although this appears to be a holdover from the Soviet heritage. Despite these efforts, each of these limited views of Azerbaijani national identity, Turkism, Islamism, and European progressivism, has enjoyed very limited support, and Azerbaijani national identity has largely maintained its historically enigmatic and even at times contradictory nature.

National Anthem

Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!
You are the country of heroes!
We will die so that you might be alive!
We will shed our blood to defend you!
Long live your three-colored banner!
Thousands of people sacrificed their lives
You're become the field of battles.
Every soldier fighting for you
Has become a hero.
We pray for your prosperity
We make sacrifice our lives to you
Our sincere love to you
Comes from the bottom of our hearts.
To defend your honor
To hoist your banner
All the young people are ready.
Glorious motherland
Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan![85]

Figure 7. National Anthem

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[84] Cornell 2011, 268
[85] http://en.president.az/azerbaijan/symbols accessed 3/12/2016

What Smith describes as "perhaps the most potent of the cultural resources of the nation"[86] is the symbolic resource of *destiny through sacrifice*. This is the "ideal of a national destiny that required ceaseless striving and sacrifice on behalf of the community."[87] The national anthem, the words of which were written by the poet Ahmed Javad in 1919, clearly and passionately communicates this theme. The government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic announced a competition to choose a national anthem for the fledgling republic on 30 January, 1920. The Soviet invasion three months later halted this aspiration. In May of 1992, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Azerbaijani government adopted the current anthem, a product of that earlier competition, as the State Hymn of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Born from the pre-Soviet Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the anthem represents the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan from that period of sacrifice and destiny.

Of importance is the reference to the "three-colored banner." The recent adoption of the new national flag held significance to the poet. The flag, as a "concentrated iconographic symbol,"[88] represented his hopes and dreams for his nation. It was the destiny of "every soldier," "heroes," and "all the young people" to sacrifice their lives, shed their blood, and defend the motherland. The anthem symbolizes the continuity between the sacrifices of those who have gone before and those who have yet to sacrifice. It is a powerful statement of purpose and belonging, and draws on imagery of battle and honor.

The reference to the motherland draws on the theme of a *sacred homeland*. The territory of Azerbaijan had borne the people, their history, and their culture. The land was not only their history, it was also their heritage. The homeland is the clearest and most tangible linkage between past and present. The peoples of the modern state, the pre-Soviet state, the Shirvanshah dynasty, even the early Caucasian peoples, all had resided in these mountains, farmed these fields, fished

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[86] Smith, Anthony D. 2009. *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: a Cultural Approach.* NY: Routledge. 97
[87] Ibid
[88] Matjunin 2000, 313

these waters. This connection to the territory holds a sacred dimension and provides a spatial and historical context to both the individual and the nation. Kaufman discusses this understanding of territorial integrity and national sovereignty as a powerful myth in the national consciousness of Azerbaijan.[89]

The national anthem also demonstrates what Smith describes as the "fusion of cognitive and expressive aspects" of symbolism.[90] The national anthem, and its inherent symbolism, is both consumed and performed. As individuals understand themselves as part of a community that exists because of the struggle and sacrifice of its members, they become situated within both the community and the struggle. Hutchinson discusses the nation as "a moral community knit by sacrifice" that is spoken of in a common language of sacrifice, belonging, and identity.[91] National anthems, parades, and ceremonies are symbolic interactions that promote this ideal in the national conscience. The national anthem becomes part of that common language that binds the nation.

State Seal

Figure 8. State seal

The State Seal of Azerbaijan contains symbolism that is analogous to the national flag, but also has unique components, as well. The circular device is described as an "oriental

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[89] Kaufman, Stuart. 2001. *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.* 49
[90] Smith, Anthony D. 1991. *National Identity.* London: Penguin. 73
[91] Hutchinson, John. 2005. *Nations as Zones of Conflict.* London: Sage. 48

escutcheon." This phrasing recalls the discussions in *Ali and Nino* of "Asiatic" traditionalism as a major component of the Azerbaijani identity. As a borderland between East and West, Azerbaijan is a cultural ecotone, incorporating elements of each. As an "Asiatic" or "oriental" land, the nation recognizes and embraces continuity with its historic culture. The colors within the escutcheon are drawn from the flag, and represent values of Turkic heritage, progress, and Islam. There is also the eight-sided star of Azerbaijan, representative of either Azerbaijan itself, or of the nation's Turkic heritage (or both).

The unique elements of the seal include the flame in the center. The flame will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, but is a powerful symbol of continuity between past and present in Azerbaijan. From early Zoroastrianism to the modern petroleum industry, the flame represents Azerbaijan in a way that speaks to history, connectedness, and purpose. Like the previous two symbols, the State Seal was a product of the pre-Soviet Azerbaijan Democratic Republic that was readopted by the modern, post-Soviet state. Unlike the previous symbols however, the State Seal was modified from its pre-Soviet form. The flame of the previous logo was replaced, and given a simpler, more modern look. The modernization of the oil industry soon followed. The oil industry in the early independence years, as well as the nation's economy as a whole, was plagued by the inefficiencies of the Soviet legacy.[92] By 1994 the "deal of the century" put Azerbaijan on track to become a major supplier of energy to Europe.[93] The modernization of the flame in the seal foreshadowed and symbolized the modernization of the industry that it represents.

Below the escutcheon is "an arch composed of oak branches and ears."[94] Presumably "ears" is a poor translation that would be more appropriately rendered as "stalks", being that the image appears to be of stalks of wheat. The wheat represents the agricultural tradition of

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[92] Cornell 2011, 199
[93] Cornell 2011, 219
[94] http://en.president.az/azerbaijan/symbols accessed 3/12/2016

Azerbaijan which was, and remains, a major industry in Azerbaijan. The Soviet-era tourist map prominently displayed agricultural production in the Kura-Araks lowland, the area between the greater Caucasus and the Karabakh upland. Saffron, tobacco, wheat, and fruits were significant crops prior to the Russian conquest in the 19th century, which saw an increase in cotton production at the expense of food crops.[95] Today, 57.6% of the land of Azerbaijan is utilized for agricultural production.[96] This is a symbol of continuity between historic traditions and contemporary land uses.

The oak leaves that constitute the remainder of the "arch" are given no further discussion. Oak trees have variously symbolized strength and longevity in many cultures. Strong and unbending, the oak is associated with righteousness in the Hebrew scriptures.[97] Old oak trees bear scars of generations upon generations of storms. The shape of the mature tree represents the battles that the tree has fought, won, and even lost, as broken branches often heal leaving odd angles to branches, as well as knots and scars. In much the same way, Azerbaijan is a continuation of its ancient ethno-territorial identity, with evidence of its storms and scars leaving their mark on the mature nation.

There is also symbolism associated with the oak that is unique to the Turkic world.[98] Trees can symbolize ties between peoples and generations. The longevity of the oak means that the same tree is experienced by and interacts with many generations of people. In the same way, the symbolic interactions between generations in Azerbaijan inform its present identity. There is an oak tree in Turkey known as the Dede Korkut Monument Tree. This association between the

[95] Altstadt 1992, 24

[96] CIA World Factbook. Entry on Azerbaijan. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html accessed 3/12/2016

[97] Isaiah 61:3

[98] Efe, R. Soykan, A. Curebal, I. Sonmez, S. 2011. Dede Korkut Monument Oak. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences.* 19. 630

oak tree and *The Book of Dede Korkut* potentially places even more significance to the oak in the Azerbaijani context.

Baku 2015

Figure 9. Baku 2015 European Games Logo

"…the new logo brings together five core elements that have shaped the host country's ancient and contemporary culture and aspirations, including flame, water, the mythical Simurg bird, carpet and pomegranate."[99]

The European Games was founded by the European Olympic Committee in order to "bring Europe into line with other continents which already have regional competitions, such as the Asian Games and Pan-American Games."[100] As a continental event, the games afford the fragile European community the opportunity to strengthen and define its identity. Perhaps more importantly, it provides a forum for member States to assert their individual identities to a broader European audience. While Europe as an entity seems to be relatively clearly defined, borderlands and frontiers afford an opportunity to view Europe as a perceptual region whose boundaries are

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[99] Inside the Games. Website. http://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1012007/baku-to-host-first-european-games-in-2015 accessed 2/26/2016. This press release contains the official published description of the logo, as well as of each individual element.
[100] Inside the Games. Website

still contested. Claims to regional belonging, particularly in those borderlands, potentially provide insight into the identities and aspirations of frontier nations. Azerbaijan, as quintessential borderland, very much exists on the fringes of European society. This is true both geographically, as well as culturally.

Baku, the capitol of Azerbaijan, was chosen as the site of the 1st annual European games in 2015, situating Azerbaijan as part of the European community, even if only nominally. This claim to regional belonging certainly carries geopolitical significance. As a part of the former Soviet Union and as a neighbor to Russia, Azerbaijan's role in the games was undoubtedly noticed in Moscow. While certain claims associated with Azerbaijan's hosting of the games are explicit (such as being a part of Europe), other claims are much more subtle, and encoded within symbolism. As such, their logo associated with the event carries a certain amount of significance, as well. I find that distinct claims to national identity communicated within the symbolism of the logo hold important meaning to understanding Azerbaijani identity and aspirations. There are distinct identity claims encoded within the symbolism that, while seemingly contradictory, are very much informed by historical identities and that the logo represents a symbolic interaction between past and present. The Azerbaijani government has published a description of the logo, which identifies each element and discusses how each element is a representation of Azerbaijan. An analysis directed at intertextuality present between the logo and the associated published description finds that subtly encoded claims are present, taking into account the Azerbaijani context.

I will discuss each element of the logo individually, and then offer an explanation of the overall discursive formation. The discussion of each element will be prefaced with the accompanying descriptive text from the "Baku 2015" website. Intertextuality is considered in terms of the individual element and its accompanying text, but also in terms of the intertextuality present among and between the elements of the logo as an entire discursive formation.

"Azerbaijan is known as the 'Land of Fire'. Baku's modern LED-covered Flame Towers, which display the movement of a fire visible city-wide, and Yanar Dag, a natural gas fire which blazes at dusk, attract tourists from around the world, with visitor figures up three times in the past decade. The element represents Baku's burning ambition to host Europe's first ever European Games."[101]

Perhaps no symbol truly represents continuity between past and present in Azerbaijan more so than the flame. The "eternal fire" of Baku was an object of Zoroastrian worship and according to Marvin was an "object of devotion on the part of the natives, even before the worship of fire became the religion of the Persians."[102] Naturally occurring petroleum gas seepages ignited by lightning and other natural means have been an object of religious devotion for Zoroastrianism and other religious traditions. From ancient fire worship cult practices to the modern petroleum industry, the flame represents both ancient and contemporary identities, as well as continuity between them. This may also be a statement on the nation's role within the European community and the value that Azerbaijan sees itself as possessing as both an energy provider and potential transit point.

The early origins of Zoroastrianism are contested and as mysterious as the prophet Zoroaster himself. Many scholars view Azerbaijan as the birthplace of the prophet and as the place where Zoroastrianism began although this has been contested, with some scholars preferring Central Asian origins.[103] Regardless of the historicity of the origins, Valiyev argues that Zoroastrianism "has had a huge impact on the formation of the identity of the Azerbaijani nation."[104] In a nineteenth century travelogue/history, Marvin describes fire-worship in Baku, as

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[101] Inside the games website
[102] Marvin, C. 1891. *The Region of the Eternal Fire: an Account of a Journey to the Petroleum Region of the Caspian in 1883.* W.H. Allen and Co.: London. 161. Reprinted by Forgotten Books. 2015.
[103] For a brief discussion of the possible origins of Zoroaster and the associated religious tradition, see: Foltz, R. 2004. *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble.* One World Publications: Oxford. 19-41. Also, see: Cornell, S. 2011. *Azerbaijan since Independence.* M.E. Sharpe: Armonk, NY. Pg.4.
[104] Valiyev 2005, 1

"older than history" and his discussion assumes an association between Zoroaster and the Apsheron peninsula. [105] Indeed Zoroastrianism, as well as other fire-worship cults (such as the Parsee) have been associated with this region, largely associated with greater Persia, for millennia.[106] Marvin describes Indian fire-worship temples in Baku, as well as an associated myth of eternal flames since the time of Noah's flood.[107]

Evidence of historical fire worship still exists in Azerbaijan. A popular tourist site is the Ateshgah fire temple located in Suraxani, a short distance from Baku. The present structure was built in the 18th century by Hindu devotees, but some accounts link the site to ancient Zoroastrianism.[108] There is also a monument to victims of "Black January" and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at "Martyr's Alley" in Baku that involves an "eternal flame." It is significant that this monument was built over the location of a former monument, a statue of Sergey Kirov, who was instrumental in bringing communist power to Azerbaijan. The statue was torn down and the "Martyrs Alley" monument put in its place. [109]

Alstadt cites Azerbaijani histories discussing Azerbaijan as a place where "'from antiquity'…Caucasian-, Iranian-, and Turkish-speaking tribes mingled".[110] She also describes Azerbaijani scholarship that draws not only on Turkic origins, but also very much on pre-Turkic Persian cultural influence and even on early Caucasian societies[111] as important components to contemporary Azerbaijani national identity.[112] While the historicity of some of this association is contested (particularly the association with the Caucasian States), De Waal argues that this is irrelevant as the association is very real in the minds of those whose identities are defined by it.[113]

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[105] Marvin 1891, 161.
[106] Foltz, R. 2004. *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble.* One World Publications: Oxford. 18
[107] Marvin 1891, 160
[108] Elliot, M. 2010. *Azerbaijan with Excursions to Georgia.* 4th ed. Trailblazer Publications: Surrey, UK.154-5.
[109] Elliot 2010, 102.
[110] Altstadt 1992, 5
[111] In particular, the Caucasian "States" of Atropatene and Caucasian Albania
[112] Altstadt 1992, 2-5
[113] De Waal, T. 2010. *The Caucasus: an Introduction.* Oxford University Press: Oxford. 19, 106-107.

The historical understanding of the spiritual significance of fire, and its association with place, is a significant factor in Azerbaijani national identity.

Flame has more contemporary meaning, as well. Azerbaijan today is a significant source of both oil and natural gas. This has had great significance to the ancient and modern history of the nation. Altstadt states that there have been oil exports from the Apsheron Peninsula at least as far back as the tenth century[114] and also references a local geography from the fifteenth century stating that "200 mule loads of oil were exported daily from the pits near Baku."[115] According to Cornell, the area had been noted for its oil resources by Arab travelers as early as the ninth century,[116] something also mentioned by Marco Polo.[117] Today, Azerbaijan's petroleum industry is the major share of its economy and the major component of its geopolitical significance. The petroleum industry, represented by the flame, constitutes a contemporary manifestation of Azerbaijan's historical identity.

Azerbaijan's major oil field, the ACG, is estimated to contain about 5% of the world's proven reserves.[118] The discovery of the Shah Deniz natural gas and condensate field brought Azerbaijani gas onto the world stage, as well. While Azerbaijan has historically been known as a source of natural gas, the Shah Deniz find in 1999 unexpectedly elevated Azerbaijan to a major supplier of natural gas.[119] Currently, Azerbaijan is a major supplier of oil to European markets, much of which is exported through the BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) pipeline. An additional gas pipeline, the TANAP (Trans-Anatolian Pipeline) is currently under construction to link the Shah Deniz field to Europe. This is significant as it represents a non-Russian and non-Iranian controlled energy supply for European markets. The possibility of a trans-Caspian pipeline to

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[114]Altstadt 1992, 21

[115]Altstadt 1992, 10. Altstadt's reference is from *Islam Ansiklopedsi* (Istanbul:Maarif, 1940-1960), pp.966-67, entry for Baku

[116] Cornell 2011, 9

[117] Marvin 1891, 179.

[118] Cornell 2011, 211

[119] Ibid

provide an export route for Turkmen and Kazakh oil and gas would further challenge Russian control of the region's energy resources. The Aliyev regime has utilized "oil diplomacy"[120] to skillfully balance its relationship with the West and with Russia, but it remains to be seen how current Russian expansionism might affect these relationships, and the resultant energy resources.

As noted in the official account of the symbol, the logo speaks both to "ancient and contemporary culture and aspirations." The symbolism of the flame truly speaks both to the influence of antiquity, as well as to contemporary aspirations in Azerbaijan. The influence of Zoroastrianism, as well as a history of religious plurality, is represented by the flame. An ancient territorial identity associated with fire is certainly a component of Azerbaijani national identity. The role of oil and natural gas in defining Azerbaijan's role and identity in the contemporary world is significant. In the historical religious tradition, the flames of the Apsheron peninsula also represented connectivity, as Indo-Iranian peoples traveled here for worship. Today, the flame still represents connectivity, as it symbolizes the major connection between Azerbaijan and Europe. Thus the symbolism of flame speaks to not only ancient culture and contemporary aspirations, but also to continuity between them, as well as to connectivity.

Simurgh

A benevolent, mythical flying creature, the Simurgh is considered to represent the union between the Earth and the Sky, serving as mediator and messenger between the two. The element symbolises the connection that Azerbaijani people have with the natural environment, along with their warmth and hospitality that will welcome athletes, fans and officials in 2015.[121]

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[120] Ibid
[121] Inside the Games website

The Simurg[122] bird is an ancient Zoroastrian mythic symbol. Often viewed as an interaction between heaven and earth, or between the physical and spiritual worlds, the bird speaks not only to a pre-Islamic identity, but also to Azerbaijan's position as a borderland, or as sort of a cultural ecotone or space of transition. An account of the Simurg in the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), an ancient Persian epic, describes a difficult birth in which the Simurg, as the possessor of all knowledge, instructs the hero in how to perform a Caesarean section. As a guide in difficult transitions, there are also accounts of the Simurg accompanying heroes between worlds and between life and death. Moreover, being in the shadows of the Simurg's wings is meant to suggest fortune and grace.[123]

Versions of the Simurg myth exist across the Persian, Turkic, and Arabic worlds. While the Simurg figures heavily in Persian and Kurdish folklore, there is a version of the myth unique to Azerbaijan.[124] In this version, the son of the Azerbaijani king has a magical apple tree that produces fruit every night. A northern giant attempts to invade the land to take possession of the wealth-producing commodity but the Simurg intervenes, protecting the Azerbaijani prince's treasure. It is an obscure version of the myth that is unique to Azerbaijan, but the symbolism of Russian aggression seems unmistakable. The inclusion of this element in the symbol seems to carry similar meaning. Azerbaijan's connectedness, its role as a bridge between worlds, may be its prime defense against a modern northern giant.

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[122] Variously spelled Simurg, Simurgh, or Simorgh. I have adopted the spelling utilized in the source.

[123] Encyclopedia Iranica online. Entry on Simorg. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/simorg accessed 2/27/2016.

[124] This version of the myth was found unattributed in a Wikipedia article and, as such, is suspect. I found similar references to the myth of "Malik Mammad and the Three Princes" but was unable to find the Azerbaijani version in print (or otherwise) in English. It was mentioned in the Encyclopedia Iranica entry that unique versions of the Simurg myth exist in the Caucasus. I have no reason to doubt the Wikipedia account, but further research would be needed in Azerbajani (or perhaps Farsi or Russian) to substantiate this and, perhaps, to dig a bit deeper into the story and any possible significance. The article can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simurgh accessed 2/27/2015. This speaks to the difficulty of conducting research in an area with such diverse linguistic traditions and influences.

The Simurg represents identities from antiquity, with influence from Persian traditions

and ancient Caucasian territorial identities. While a national identity that draws on Turkic origins

is important in Azerbaijan, the continuity of identity from earlier traditions is communicated

through this element. Also the theme of transition is evident, as that is the main leitmotif in the

various Simurg myths. Thus both continuity and transition become complementary themes in this

symbolic interaction. The seemingly contradictory nature of these ideas is overshadowed by the

consistency of their appearance throughout the history of the ethno-territorial identity of the

Azerbaijani Turks.

Wave

> At 28 meters below sea level, Baku is the lowest-lying national capital in the world. It is located on the southern shore of the Absheron Peninsula, which projects into the Caspian Sea, also known as the world's largest lake. Here Baku Port is the largest sea port, dating back to 1902. Today the capital of Azerbaijan's unique geographic location continues to drive its economic, social and cultural development. This element symbolises the dynamic growth of the city on an east-west axis along the shores of the Caspian Sea, and the new wave concept for a European Games that will shape the future of sport on the continent. [125]

The next element in the logo is the wave. Also representing the tail of the Simurg in the

logo, the theme of water holds significance to the national identity, in terms of ancient identities

and contemporary aspirations. The nation's position on the Caspian Sea, and particularly Baku's

position on the Apsheron peninsula, has been very formative of both ancient and contemporary

roles. Currently, the Caspian is not only the main source of wealth in Azerbaijan, but also

represents strategic linkages between Central Asia and Europe. These are linkages that have the

potential to challenge growing Russian dominance on the continent.

Water also has significance to the pre-Islamic religious tradition of the region. While

Zoroastrianism has been discussed in terms of "fire-worship," this isn't wholly accurate. Fire was

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[125] Inside the games website

viewed as a sacred element and had an integral role in worship, but was not itself a deity. An additional sacred element was water, and an aspect of Zoroastrian worship was the purity of earth, fire, and water.[126] While the twentieth century history of Baku has certainly not included environmental purity as a main concern (the development of the oil industry has resulted in extreme environmental degradation on the Apsheron peninsula), the symbolism of this element still speaks to the ancient religious tradition.

Water is a powerful force for change and transition in nature. Much of the physical world as it exists today was shaped and sculpted by the movement of water. The Abrahamic religious traditions (and others) speak to the intense physical and spiritual change associated with the great flood. Water as a transitional force has been a constant throughout humanity. Thus this element speaks to both themes of transition and continuity. Additionally, it represents contemporary aspirations. The potential for Azerbaijan to serve as a transit point for Turkmen and Kazakh energy resources surely communicates strategic linkages to a European audience. This theme of connectivity, representing Azerbaijan as a borderland connecting worlds, is a constant. This is spoken of in the official account as "Azerbaijan's unique geographic location [which] continues to drive its economic, social and cultural development."

The previous three elements of the logo (flame, Simurg, and wave) are joined not only graphically, but conceptually as they link ancient identities with contemporary aspirations. They also speak to a pre-Islamic identity. It is tempting to view this pre-Islamic symbolism as a rejection of Islam; this is unlikely, however. Azerbaijan is listed by the CIA as 97% Muslim and this is an important component of the national identity. Moreover, Islam in Azerbaijan is often a cultural identity more so than a religious belief, and that identity very much exists alongside

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[126] Foltz 2004, 28

other, seemingly contradictory identities. I find that the three themes persist: the contradictory yet complementary themes of antiquity and continuity, as well as the theme of connectivity.

Carpet

> Added to UNESCO's 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' in 2010, Azerbaijani carpet weaving is a family tradition transferred orally and through practice among the country's many carpet-making regions. This element of the logo reflects the importance of cultural heritage, diversity and creative expression, principles intrinsic to the Baku 2015 plans. [127]

The next and less obvious element is that of carpet, represented by the green stripe in the upper right of the logo. Recognized by the UN as representative of the "intangible cultural heritage of humanity", Azerbaijan's carpet weaving tradition is woven into the fabric of society. There is a distinct spatiality to the tradition as there are distinct carpet making regions within the nation, representing cultural and even political regions, but the diversity of historic traditions is represented by the symbol. Unlike the other elements of the logo, which draw upon pre-Turkic Caucasian identities, the element of carpet speaks to the specific ethno-territorial identity of the Azerbaijani Turks. The Azerbaijani carpet tradition is distinct from Turkic and Persian traditions, and holds unique significance within Azerbaijan.

In their discussion of geographical aspects of national identity, Williams and Smith discuss folk culture and its spatial dimensions as a "major dimension of national territory."[128] The specifically Azerbaijani traditions of carpet-making are a clear example of spatial association between folk tradition and national territory. Naroditskaya argues that carpet is an affirmation of Azerbaijani national identity.[129] Azerbaijani carpet is typically asymmetrical and, despite Islamic

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[127] Inside the games website

[128] Williams, C., Smith, A.D. 1983. The National Construction of Social Space. *Progress in Human Geography.* 7:4. 504

[129] Naroditskaya, I. 2005. Azerbaijani *Mugham* and Carpet: Cross-Domain Mapping. *Ethnomusicology Forum.* 14:1. 29

restrictions of the depiction of people and animals, often includes such figures.[130] Symbolism

within carpet often contains region-specific meaning.[131] In a popular guidebook, Elliot discusses

the complexities of identifying different carpet-making regions, and the competitions between

them. The simplicity of this element of the logo, a simple green swipe, likely is meant to be

inclusive of the entirety of the tradition, communicated by mention of "diversity" in the official

account. Any additional embellishment might identify a particular region or style. Much of the

tradition is still transmitted orally, which is additional evidence of continuity of ethno-territorial

identity, the "cultural heritage" symbolized within the carpet-making tradition of the nation.

Pomegranate

> Famous in Azerbaijani food and heritage, the pomegranate has long symbolised fertility
> and abundance. This fifth element of the logo represents the ambition of Baku 2015 to
> bring together people from across Europe in a celebration of sport and to create a legacy
> for future generations. [132]

The final element is the overall shape of the logo, which is that of the pomegranate. The

pomegranate has been referred to as the "king of all fruits in the East."[133] Figuring prominently in

the symbolism of the Abrahamic traditions, the fruit is an ancient symbol of life and prosperity. It

is listed as a temple decoration and as an adornment on priestly garments in the Hebrew

scriptures.[134] It has also been suggested as a possible candidate for the fruit of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil in the "Genesis" creation narrative. By eating the fruit in

disobedience to the command of God, Adam and Eve were initiated into an understanding of

good and evil. As religious iconography, the fruit then could be also be representative of an

Edenic, pre-fallen state of mankind, or potentially as a bridge between worlds. As the vehicle for

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[130] Naroditskaya 2005, 45-46.
[131] Naroditskaya 2005, throughout. This is a major theme of the article, that codes within carpet have a similar spatial (and stylistic) variation to *mugham,* the Azerbaijani style of musical poetry.
[132] Inside the games website
[133] AzerNews. http://www.azernews.az/analysis/53125.html. Accessed 12/22/2015
[134] Exodus 28:33-34, 1Kings 7:42, Jeremiah 52:22-23

the "curse," the fruit may embody transition and change, or a border between the past and the present.

While the pomegranate holds significance to all of the Abrahamic religious traditions, this may actually be most associated with the Jewish tradition. Iconography is forbidden within Islam, and pre-Christian Jewish symbolism is much less present in modern Christianity. Azerbaijan has cultivated economic and strategic ties with Israel which is unusual for a Muslim-majority country that has Islam enshrined as part of its national identity. While Azerbaijan is accurately viewed as a Muslim nation in that Islam is viewed as part of the national identity and the vast majority of Azerbaijanis identify as Muslim, most sources have described Islam in Azerbaijan as rather nominal. It seems, in many cases at least, to be primarily a cultural identity and strict adherence to the tenants of Islam is limited to the most devout members of society. Cornell describes the rather warm relationship between Azerbaijan and Israel, and the fair treatment of the many Jews in Azerbaijan.[135]

This symbol is potentially an encoded symbol of geostrategic alliance, and a decidedly westward orientation. Intertextuality provides a clue, here. The official account describes the meaning of this element as "bringing together people from all across Europe." While Israel is certainly not in Europe (of course, neither is Azerbaijan), it is most certainly Western. This interpretation may not be certain, but it does seem reasonable given the evidence. Of course the symbol also speaks to abundance and wealth, as well. Perhaps the oil wealth of the Caspian, connected to Europe, speaks to potential abundance. Once again, connectivity is a recurring theme. Strategic and economic connections with the West may be the conduit for wealth and abundance in Azerbaijan.

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[135] Cornell 2011, 268-269. Cornell describes the "model relationship" between the Azerbaijani government and its Jewish population, as well as with Israel.

My analysis of the Baku 2015 European Games logo uncovers three main themes: continuity, transition, and connectivity. The first two are seemingly contradictory, yet entwined in a complementary fashion when the Azerbaijani historical, cultural, and geostrategic context is understood. The idea of connectivity is an important component of the history and identity of Azerbaijan as the Caucasus have constituted frontier and borderland from antiquity. As a cultural ecotone, Azerbaijan presents unique cultural forms that include elements of Turkic and Persian culture, yet is distinct from both. The influence of Islam is important and yet, distinctly non-Islamic traditions are represented within the symbolism. As the border between Asia and Europe, linkages, both actual and potential, gives Azerbaijan geo-political significance that is communicated and argued for within the symbolism of the logo.

The constitutionally-recognized symbols of national identity communicate similar themes of continuity and connectivity. The unique identity that is symbolized in the flag represents the struggle of Ali in defining his and his country's identity. Important influences, such as Turkic ethnicity, Islamic traditions, and European progressivism are represented in Ali's journey of discovery as well as in the flag. Ultimately, Ali recognizes his country as a *sacred homeland* and through the theme of *destiny through sacrifice,* in much the same way as is symbolized in the national anthem. Despite historic change, including the intense pressures of the Soviet system, Azerbaijan has maintained a continuity of these ideas of its identity through its periods of transition. This unique identity is claimed as a continuation of an ethno-territorial identity dating back to the Shirvanshah state of the 11th century, or perhaps even earlier. Shirvanshah architecture and history is drawn upon to represent Azerbaijan during the Soviet period in the tourist map. Regardless of the historicity of these *myths of ancestry*, they are highly influential to the understanding of Azerbaijani national identity that is communicated through government symbolism.

The national identity that is represented in symbolism of the current government draws upon the same symbolic resources as previous governments: myths of ancestry, sacred homelands, and destiny through sacrifice. Azerbaijani national identity is portrayed as a continuation of previous ethno-territorial identities from no later than the medieval period, if not significantly earlier. Transition is also a recurring theme. Azerbaijan as a borderland, and as a place of transition from east to west, is communicated throughout the symbols. As a connection between worlds and nations, and as an important provider and transit point for petroleum resources, Azerbaijan has a significant role in the world community.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Within this study, I have interrogated symbolism within government discourses of national identity. Six specific symbols of national identity were chosen for analysis. These symbols represent distinct periods in the modern history of Azerbaijan. First, the romance novel *Ali and Nino* represents the period leading up to and including the brief independent state of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920). A Soviet-era tourist map, published in 1966 by the Azerbaijan SSR, represents a government discourse of national identity from the Soviet period. The three constitutionally recognized symbols of national identity of the post-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan represent the early independence period (1991-1993). Finally, the logo of the "Baku 2015" European Games represents contemporary identity claims by the government of Azerbaijan.

The symbolism contained within the discursive resources was interrogated using discourse analysis within a framework of ethno-symbolism. This synthetic method allowed me to utilize the powerful analytical tool of discourse analysis, while providing a framework through which to conduct my analysis, as well as a typology of symbolic resources in which to organize my findings. This method demonstrated great utility in its subjective historical-cultural approach by contextualizing each element of the symbolism in its historical, geographic, and cultural context.

The chosen symbols, as part of an overall *myth-symbol complex*, communicate an

Azerbaijani national identity that is a contemporary evolution and continuation of its previous

ethno-territorial identity. By providing "a cultural history of the nation as a type of historical

cultural community,"[1] this study highlights the continuity between those identities, despite

intense transition and change. Adoption of an ethno-symbolic approach, by contextualizing each

resource as a symbolic interaction between generations, illustrated each symbolic resource as a

linkage between past and present that represents and reproduces values, attitudes, myths, and

symbols.

Within this study, Azerbaijan emerges as borderland and bellwether, as ecotone and as a

contemporary evolution of historic ethno-territorial experiences. Symbolism within government

discourses present several key themes. Continuity, transition, and connectivity are leitmotifs

throughout the various symbols. Powerful symbolic resources of the nation include *myths of*

ancestry and *sacred homelands,* as well as *destiny through sacrifice.* While the Soviet period

inflicted intense transformational pressures, the nation emerged from this period as a palimpsest

with its historic identity still legible despite attempted erasure. Contemporary national identity in

Azerbaijan represents continuity with its pre-modern ethno-territorial identity as well as bearing

the signature of the intense transformational forces of modernity.

Azerbaijani scholars have argued that the modern Azerbaijani nation is an heir to the

ancient state of Caucasian Albania, while others have suggested that Azerbaijan is a more recent

creation.[2] While the direct connection to the Albanian state is dubious, the ethno-territorial

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[1] Smith, Anthony D. 2009. *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: a Cultural Approach.* NY: Routledge.39
[2] Altstadt, A. 1992. The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule. Hoover Institution Press. Stanford. 2-3

identity of the Azerbaijani Turks certainly predates the modern period and incorporates cultural forms and symbols from earlier Caucasian peoples. These include attitudes, values, myths, and other symbols illustrated within government discourse. The period of the Shirvanshahs, starting in the 10th century AD saw successive waves of migration of Turkic peoples incorporated into Caucasian society. Heavily influenced by Persian culture, this period likely represents the ethno-genesis of the Azerbaijani Turks. Persian and later Russian dominance helped distill the people into a self-aware *ethnie* and eventually into a nation.

The social engineering and creation of the "new man" that came with the Soviet Union left an indelible mark on its citizens, and Azerbaijan was no exception. The attempt to erase national identities undertaken by the Soviets had a profound effect on the national psyche, but was unable to overcome historical memory and the desire for national self-determination. Symbols of historical ethnic identity persisted and, as symbolic interactions between generations, helped to perpetuate and reproduce attitudes, values, myths, and identities among the Azerbaijani Turks. As the Azerbaijani nation began to rise from the Soviet collapse, attempts to redefine the nation in various terms fought for public legitimacy.

Each period experienced attempts to redefine Azerbaijani national identity in ways that differ from the historic values and attitudes that have been uncovered within this study. Ultimately, the unique Azerbaijani identity that is communicated through symbolism within government discourse has emerged as a continuity between previous generations. Transition and continuity, seemingly contradictory themes, emerge as complementary and constitutive facets of the Azerbaijani national identity. From the internal dialogue and quest for identity that is narrated by the titular character in *Ali and Nino*, to the diverse and seemingly contradictory elements of the national flag, these complementary themes emerge through the study as persistent characteristics of the Azerbaijani national identity.

The contemporary discourse contained within the "Baku 2015" logo communicates Azerbaijan as a place of *transition* and *connectivity*. Both modernity and tradition are represented and Azerbaijan is represented as a linkage between East and West, both culturally and strategically. The symbolism also communicates this idea as a *continuation* of past values, attitudes, myths, and symbols. The central element of the flame, also utilized within the state seal of both 1918 and 1993, symbolizes this strategic value and connectivity as a continuation of Azerbaijan's identity and role within the world.

Azerbaijan potentially holds outsized influence on global events. The nation has a significant role as a provider of energy resources to Europe, but even more so as a potential transit point for Central Asian energy resources. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have the potential to provide energy directly to European markets through Azerbaijan without Russian (or Iranian) mediation or interference. This has the potential to alter not only the energy markets, but also the geopolitical balance of power as this could decrease Russia's leverage as the major energy supplier to Europe. National identity and popular understandings of national destiny are powerful and persistent models that often constrain and influence national leadership. Understanding a baseline of national identity representation by the government of Azerbaijan can provide a point from which to see subtle shifts in rhetoric and symbolism occur.

Future research on this subject could potentially take two directions. The first of these directions would involve delving further into the histories. One limitation of this study was the need to utilize English language sources. Most of the primary historical documents are in several different languages, including Russian, Persian, Azerbaijani, and Turkish. Archival research could uncover additional linkages and evidences of ethno-territorial identities. This could include an investigation into the various myths and folklore that are found in early Azerbaijan. Those various folkloric traditions represent different geographic diffusions and could provide insight into the diverse and complex influences of the early ethno-territorial identity that has evolved into

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the modern Azerbaijani nation. The goal would be to identify folk traditions in Azerbaijan in terms of their origins, be they Turkic, Persian, Caucasian, or unique to the Azerbaijani Turks. This could additionally contribute to an understanding of the ethno-genesis of the Azerbaijani Turks. It seems reasonable that many of the relevant sources would either exist in Azerbaijani, or could be discovered through Azerbaijani sources. This would require a level of fluency in Azerbaijani that I do not possess, but intend to obtain.

The second potential direction for further research would be to investigate more current discourses of the government. The most recent discourse within this study, the "Baku 2015" logo, was published in June of 2014. Nearly two years have elapsed between the publication of the logo and this study. Significant changes in the relationship between Russia and the US have occurred since that time, primarily in regards to the ongoing Syrian conflict. The role of Turkey in this process has added further complexity. While Baku has maintained its careful balance, a resurgent Russia on its northern border is likely alarming to the Aliyev regime and could necessitate shifts in rhetoric on the part of the Azerbaijani leadership. A study of current discourses, symbols, and signals might uncover ways that this resurgence is understood and negotiated by Azerbaijan, and may provide insight into future trends. Increasing criticism of Azerbaijan's human rights record by the West could further damage the relationship between Azerbaijan and the West, and embolden Russia to attempt to increase its hegemonic influence throughout the South Caucasus. As Azerbaijan and its neighbor Georgia represents the only reasonable linkage between Central Asian energy and Europe that is not under Russian or Iranian control, this seems a reasonable aspiration for Russia.

Recent actions by the government of Azerbaijan have suggested a continuing balancing act between a desire for Western integration, on one hand, and a fear of Russian aggression, on the other. Azerbaijan has served something of a mediation role between Russia and Turkey in

response to recent aggressions,[3] despite Turkish offers of assistance in Nagono-Karabakh. There have also been conflicting messages in terms of human rights and Azerbaijan's willingness to adhere to Western norms of democracy and civil freedoms. This research suggests that Azerbaijan has historically been informed by a particular understanding of national identity and that this understanding has been remarkably persistent. Decision-making in contemporary Azerbaijan will thus be informed by a similar understanding of the nation's identity and role. As the values, attitudes and myths of national identity remain persistent, the decision-making processes, constraints, and pressures associated with that identity will also persist. Ethno-symbolism helps to illuminate these values, attitudes, and myths as a powerful facet of national self-understanding and as strong indicators of future decision-making on the part of the Azerbaijani government.

In conclusion, this research has addressed the under-studied gap on "the link between emerging identities and the former ones"[4] in Azerbaijan. The symbolic interactions that act as linkages between past and present communicate values and attitudes concerning "internal cultural conflicts, the shifting salience of national identities in the modern world, and compatibility of national with global, regional and religious identities."[5] They also communicate those same conflicts and tensions as a continuous feature of Azerbaijani national identity that is an inheritance from pre-modern, ethno-territorial experiences. In addition, this research has established a platform from which to assess current and future decision-making by the government of Azerbaijan.

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[3] Eurasianet website. http://www.eurasianet.org/node/77386 accessed 3?25/2016
[4] Tokluoglu, C. 2005. Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism, and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 28:4.724
[5] Hutchinson, John. 2005. *Nations as Zones of Conflict.* London: Sage. 15

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