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# “Good governance and effectiveness of public institutions in Post-Soviet Eurasia”

GCRF COMPASS Early Career Researcher Training School  
ADA University, Baku,  
17-21 February 2020

## Working proceedings

GCRF COMPASS: Comprehensive Capacity-Building in the Eastern Neighbourhood and Central Asia:  
research integration, impact governance & sustainable communities (GCRF UKRI ES/P010849/1)



UK Research  
and Innovation



# ‘Good governance and effectiveness of public institutions in Post-Soviet Eurasia’

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## Working Proceedings

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## Preface

From 17 to 21 February 2020, the GCRF COMPASS Early Career Researchers (ECR) Training School (TS) was held at the ADA University, Baku. The TS brought together 15 Early Career Researchers and practitioners, focusing on the theme of 'Good governance and effectiveness of public institutions in post-Soviet Eurasia'. All participants were asked to submit a 5,000-word paper prior to the TS, and to revise this paper based on the feedback they received after their presentations. This Working Proceedings bundles these revised papers. The papers are work in progress; some will be or already have been submitted for publication to academic outlets in an extended form.

The TS aimed to have an interdisciplinary approach, which is also reflected in these Working Proceedings. The contributions cover the following areas: education, government and institutions, legal issues and international relations and governance. A number of authors touched on issues of institutions in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. While **Rustamjon Ernazarov's** analysis of the development of the Uzbek Parliament shed light on the notion of good governance, **Mirzokhid Karshiev's** piece unpacked the role of public councils in connecting citizens and the government, and evaluated how the reforms of the past few years have contributed to their workings. **Dr Surayyo Usmanova**, on the other hand, examined the role of 'mahallas' in governance structures of Uzbekistan, arguing that this institution can provide the level of local organisation needed for good governance, and that Uzbekistan's local governance design can serve as a blueprint for similar practices elsewhere.

**Gunel Madadli's** detailed account discussed the establishment and development of the Azerbaijani ASAN service, an initiative to try to overcome issues of corruption and ineffectiveness in public service provision and what lessons can be learnt for good governance is a significant contribution. **Dr Elena Pilgun** introduced the mechanisms of good governance in relation to the crisis discourse, and the role of the media in this context. By examining the cases of migration and Brexit, she showed how the public opinion can be influenced. While these papers generally focused on the issues of governance, a few papers also considered gender. **Dr Orkhan Nadirov and Farid Adilov** examined the link between women in parliament and the provision of more women-friendly legislation, finding that national income and ideology are key factors in facilitating such laws. And, **Aygun Dadashova** conducted an in-depth research into gender representation in Azerbaijani school textbooks, concluding that traditional gender roles still dominate and that changes to the textbooks are highly desirable.

In addition to this, the papers on international relations touched on the nature of politics in the relations between Ukraine and Russia as a backdrop to nuclear safety and energy in the region. **Sabrina Gaffarova** analysed bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Azerbaijan and concludes that while relations are strengthening over time, there are certain hindrances to be overcome, most importantly in the area of economic cooperation. Similarly, **Shahana Bilalova** brought together assessed the concept of good governance especially with regards to cross border environmental issues especially in the area of transnational water management is key for understanding cooperation in the wider Eurasian region. **Daryna Sterina** in her paper drew

attention to the issue of nuclear safety in times of conflict, arguing that the situation of nuclear energy in Ukraine should be a matter of concern for the whole international community.

The papers are solely the work of the authors, and presented in an alphabetical order.

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The [GCRF COMPASS project](#) (ES/P010849/1, 2017-21) is an ambitious UK government capacity-building funding initiative, aiming to connect UK research with regional global scholarship, to address the challenges of growth and sustainability in the developing countries. Notably, the COMPASS project led by the University of Kent, together with the University of Cambridge as its partner, seeks to establish '**the hubs of excellence**' at the top-level HEIs in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, to enable them to become the centres of knowledge sharing and transfer for **research integration, impact governance, and sustainable communities**.

# SHAHANA BILALOVA<sup>1</sup> – Transboundary water governance: The case of the Kura River

## Introduction

Transboundary water bodies - water being in the territory of two or more countries - make up over 70% of the world population's water supplies and 60% of agricultural water demand around the globe.<sup>2</sup> With an increasing stress on water resources and management challenges, the concept of water governance has become prominent in academic literature.<sup>3</sup> According to one of the most widely used definitions, water governance is “the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society”.<sup>4</sup>

This study engaged with water governance in the context of the the case of the Kura River, which has been chosen as a case study here due to its importance to the South Caucasus region and its vulnerability towards changes. The absence of successful transboundary water governance mechanisms in the region is another factor that requires in-depth study. In this regard, this paper aims to provide an overview of the transboundary water governance of the Kura River by looking at the key actors, institutional and legislative frameworks, cooperation and other dynamics involved. Furthermore, key transboundary challenges are identified through the analysis of existing information and theoretical frameworks.

## Context: the Kura River

The Kura River is one of the major freshwater resources in the South Caucasus region and it carries special importance in terms of a wide range of ecosystem services it provides. The river has a length of 1,515 km and starts from the Allahuekber Mountains (3,068 km altitude) in Turkey. It flows through the territories of three countries, namely Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan and flows into the Caspian Sea on the territory of Azerbaijan. The main portion of the Kura River lays within the territory of Azerbaijan (819 km) followed by Georgia (522 km) and Turkey (174 km) (see also Figure 1).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Earle and Neal (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Green et al. (2013); Greitens (2016); Nava (2018); Morris and De Loe (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Rogers and Hall (2003), p 7.

<sup>5</sup> Mammadov (2012).

Figure 1: Location of the Kura River



Source: author, using QGIS software

The Kura River is mainly fed by snow, glacier, precipitation and groundwater and is very responsive towards the climatic changes occurring in the region. The main tributaries of the river are Iori (Gibirri), Alazani (Ganikh), Debed (Debeda), Agstay (Aghstafachay), Potskhovi (Posof), Ktsia-Khrami and Aras (Araks) river being the biggest tributary with 1,072 km length.<sup>6</sup> In all three countries, the water diverted from the Kura River is used for irrigation, energy generation as well as consumption purposes (i.e. to lesser extent for domestic consumption and drinking) (see table 1).

Table 1: Riparian countries along the Kura River.

Country	Position	River length crossing	Major use
Turkey	Upstream	174 km	Water diversion for irrigation Energy generation
Georgia	Midstream	522 km	Water diversion for irrigation, industrial and domestic (least) usage; Energy generation
Azerbaijan	Downstream	819 km	Water diversion for irrigation and drinking purposes; Energy generation

Source: author, based on Campana et al, 2018; UNECE, 2011; Hansen, 2013.

The reservoirs built and planned to be constructed on the river serve to meet the aforementioned purposes (see also table 2). The operating reservoirs in Azerbaijan are multifunctional (i.e. irrigation, energy generation, drinking water supply), whereas in Georgia they have distinct purposes so while two reservoirs (i.e. Jandari and Kumisi) are

<sup>6</sup> UNECE (2011).

solely utilised for melioration, only the Zahesi reservoir contributes to power generation.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, in the case of Turkey both reservoirs are deployed as hydroelectric reservoirs.<sup>8</sup>

Table 2: Reservoirs on the Kura River.

	Reservoir	Utilization Purpose	Construction Year	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Volume (km <sup>3</sup> )	
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Mingachevir	Multifunctional	1953	605	15.73	
	Shamkir	Multifunctional	1983	116	2.68	
	Yenikend	Multifunctional	2000	23.2	1.58	
	Varvara	Multifunctional	1952	22.5	0.06	
<b>Georgia</b>	Zahesi	Power		2	<i>Total</i> 12	<i>Industrial</i> 3
	Jandari	Melioration		12.5	52	23
	Kumisi	Melioration		5.4	11	4
<b>Turkey</b>	Kayabeyi/Akinji	Power		N/A	N/A	
	Koroghlu/Kotanli	Power		N/A	N/A	

Source: author, based on the official website of MENR; Tvalchrelidze et al., 2011; Ardahan Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanism, 2018, as cited in Bilalova, 2019.

### Legislative and Institutional Arrangements

In all three countries, there are set legislative frameworks regulating surface water bodies, generally all water-related issues (Table 3). However, there are certain hurdles in all three cases requiring further amendments and changes. Starting with the Georgian legislation: even though it addresses water management and protection, including setting principles for water policy, it has many shortcomings in terms of the regulation of water management. Shortcomings concern especially pollution prevention, water ownership, absence of basin management principles, as well as lack of regulation for water abstraction and discharge in sectors that are not covered by the Environmental Impact Assessment.<sup>9</sup> The Water Law of 1997 as key legislation in the sphere is not comprehensive by leaving out some aspects such as groundwater management and has an unworkable characteristic. Therefore, coupled with all the previously mentioned shortcomings, Georgia is developing a new draft law aiming at encompassing all the water-related issues.<sup>10</sup> A similar story also unfolds in the case of Azerbaijan as despite

<sup>7</sup> Official website of MENR; Tvalchrelidze et al. (2011).

<sup>8</sup> Ardahan Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanism (2018).

<sup>9</sup> MEPA (2018).

<sup>10</sup> Idem.

the legislative framework in place, it lacks many aspects including basin management principles and adjustment of legislation with integrated water resource management concepts.

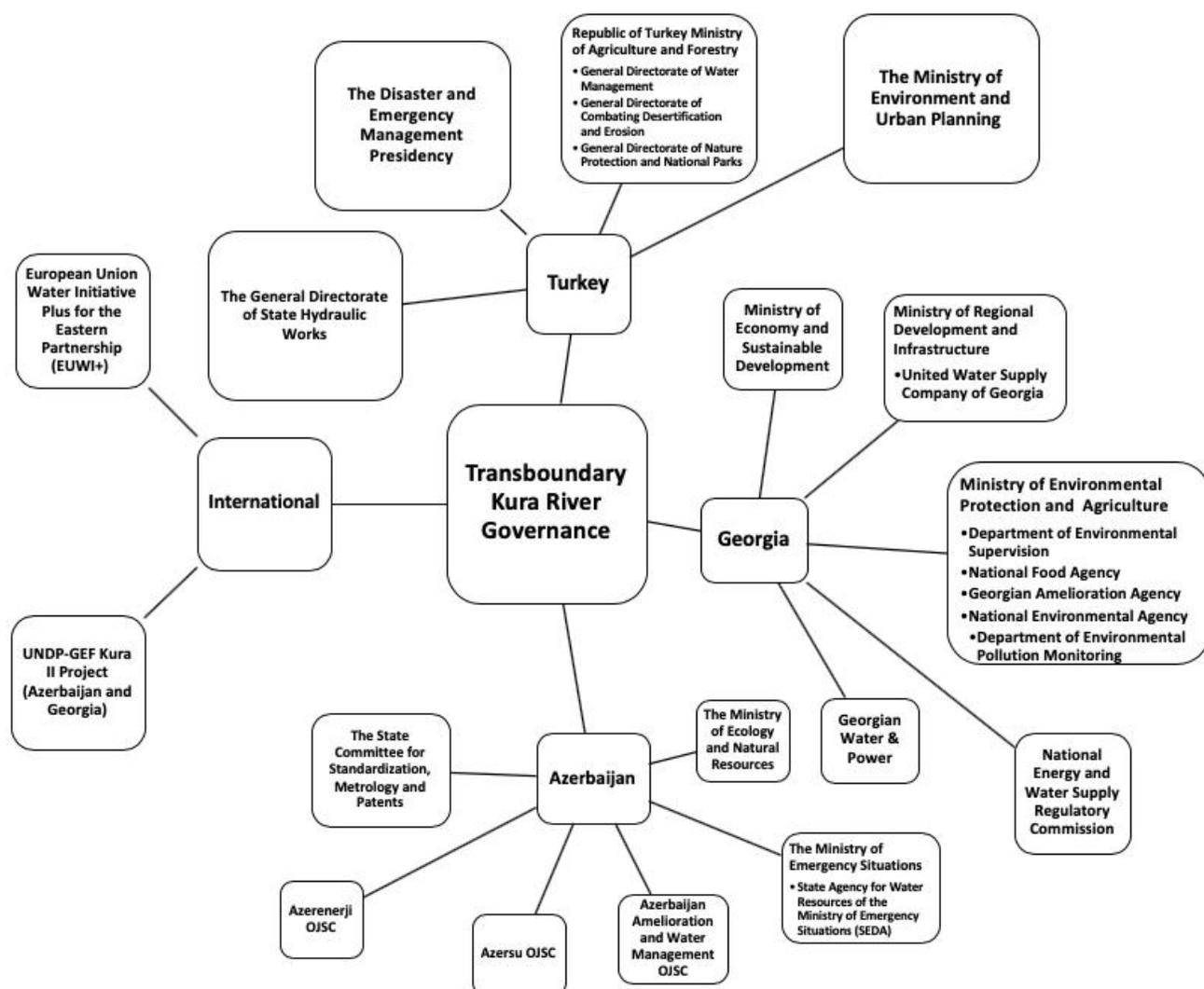
Table 3: Legislative framework that addresses surface water bodies in a direct or indirect way.

<b>Turkey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act No. 1380 on Fisheries Law (1971)</li> <li>• Costitution (1982)</li> <li>• Act No. 831 on Waters (1926)</li> <li>• Act No. 2872 on Environment (1983)</li> <li>• Act No. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities (2004)</li> <li>• Act No. 1053, Domestic and Industrial Water Supply Law</li> <li>• Act No. 3416 Amending Act No. 2872 on Environment (1988)</li> <li>• Act No. 5393 on Municipalities (2005)</li> <li>• Village Act No. 442 (1924)</li> <li>• Act No. 6200 on the Organization and Duties of the General Directorate of the State Hydraulic Works (1953)</li> <li>• Act No. 7478, Village Domestic Water Supply (1960)</li> <li>• By-law 25687 on the Control of Water Pollution (2004, amended in 2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Georgia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water Code (1997)</li> </ul>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water Code (1997)</li> <li>• Law on Amelioration and Irrigation (1998)</li> <li>• Law on Hydrometeorological Activities (1998)</li> <li>• Law about Earth Entrails (1998)</li> <li>• Law on Water Supply and Wastewater (1999)</li> <li>• Law on Environmental Protection (1999)</li> <li>• Law on Environmental Safety (1999)</li> <li>• Law on Water Management of Municipalities (2001)</li> <li>• Law on Safety of Hydraulic Structures (2002)</li> </ul>

Source: author's own compilation based on MEPA (2018); Kibaroglu and Baskan (2011).

As there was no prior stakeholder mapping, the illustration depicted in Figure 2 is formulated based on the screening of official documents available. In this regard, the map below only indicates the institutions directly working with rivers and pertaining water issues in relevant countries, while indirect actors have been eliminated from this illustration taking into account complexities involved.

Figure 2: Major entities concerned with Kura River



Source: author.

## Turkey

In Turkey, four major entities are concerned with water resources, more specifically river management within the country. One of the key actors is the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, having three major sub-units directly linked to the river-related issues which are General Directorates of Water Management, Combatting Desertification and Erosion, and Nature Protection and National Parks. The General Directorate of Water Management has the broadest responsibilities including carrying out institutional arrangements, developing and implementing plans and strategies concerning protection and management of river basins, water allocation, water quality, as well as ensuring the ecological integrity of water bodies and water efficiency at the river basin level. Along with all these responsibilities they also work with the Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI in Turkish) and the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning to facilitate the use of treated wastewater for agricultural purposes. The Combatting Desertification and

Erosion unit undertakes development of basin rehabilitation projects as well as development and implementation of projects against natural disasters in the upper basin area. Lastly, the unit for Nature Protection and National Parks focuses on protection and management of biodiversity and provisioning of sustainability of ecosystem services.

The DSI meanwhile is mainly working with other entities listed in Figure 2 and is responsible for ensuring water supply for the settlements, carrying out studies to detect deterioration of the level of groundwater, benefitting from sustainable hydroelectricity capacity to the fullest extent possible, as well as the establishment of proper water infrastructure along the river to prevent flood casualties. Finally, while the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning addresses the issue of wastewater management including discharge, the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency deals with all-natural disaster-related matters in the basin area.

All in all, by looking at the National Basin Management Strategy of Turkey for 2014-2023, it is clear that even though some entities are taking a lead in certain issues, they work in close coordination with other related stakeholders, which allows them to address the issue in a more integrated manner.

## **Georgia**

The key player in general water management in Georgia is the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) under the umbrella of which several agencies operate. Within the ambit of water management, MEPA is responsible for the development of legislation, carrying out ecological expertise for permits as well as setting norms for water abstraction and discharge. The Department of Environmental Supervision operating under the mandate of MEPA controls the implementation of technical regulations and permits concerning surface water bodies. MEPA, as mentioned previously, has some agencies including the National Environmental Agency, National Food Agency, and Georgian Amelioration Agency. The National Environmental Agency undertaking the creation of a monitoring system for controlling water quality also monitors pollution activities through its Environmental Pollution Monitoring Department. Meanwhile, two other umbrella agencies of the National Food Agency and the Georgian Amelioration Agency are dealing with drinking water quality and management of water irrigation and drainage, respectively.

Along with MEPA, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development solely concerns the extraction of groundwater and construction of hydropower plants. Meanwhile, the water supply in Georgia is coordinated with three entities, the Georgian Water and Power Company (i.e. for Tbilisi, Mtskheta, and Rustavi), the United Water Supply Company of Georgia under the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (i.e. all cities except the ones mentioned previously as well as the Autonomous Republic of Adjara), and the Adjara water companies as well as the National

Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission (i.e. setting rules and conditions for drinking water licensing).

## **Azerbaijan**

The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources is the key player in the water management of Azerbaijan as it is in charge of monitoring the ecological and hydrological status of water bodies as well as protection of their ambient status. The other governmental entity, the State Agency for Water Resources of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, aims at improving water resource management along with regular monitoring of water bodies, protection and technical control of reservoirs as well as other hydraulic infrastructures. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Emergency Situations deals with natural disasters including floods and other water-related hazards. Finally, another state agency, the State Committee for Standardisation, Metrology, and Patents can also be included in the main stakeholders as they are in charge of setting water standards.

Along with governmental entities, there are also non-governmental bodies closely linked to water management in Azerbaijan. They are Azersu OJSC, Azerenerji OJSC, and Azerbaijan Amelioration and Water Economy OJSC. Azerenerji OJSC is in control of hydropower generation, while Azersu OJSC supplies potable water within the scope of country-wide management of water supply and sewerage systems. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan Amelioration and Water Economy OJSC is responsible for irrigation and amelioration systems and is in charge of irrigation water supply, management of irrigation systems, and organisational control over water use.

## **Region**

Generally, the structure of the institutional arrangements in all three states is predominantly state-centric involving a top-down technocratic approach with a bureaucratic management style. This water governance paradigm is a typical approach in developing countries, mainly distinguished by the domination of particular decision-makers comprised of policymakers, technical experts and bureaucrats, and with limited international cooperation.<sup>11</sup> These hurdles undermine the social-learning process and inclusiveness which is the key to resilient governance.

Another similarity attributable to these institutions is the existence of a certain level of coordination and cooperation across different levels of governance. In this regard, there is one major coordinating agency in all three countries and a degree of information and knowledge exchange takes place across the agencies. However, this coordination is mostly limited to the national level with limited transboundary involvement.

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<sup>11</sup> Williams (2018).

Furthermore, the monocentric nature of governance (based on unitary state-based agencies) as opposed to a polycentric one is also the case for the Kura river and undermines its sustainable use. According to Ostrom, polycentric systems involve multiple governance units on different levels with the capacity to govern, as well as sharing of information flows and knowledge across the units.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the actor network at the transboundary level is limited due to its monocentric characteristics.

### ***International agencies***

There are currently two major projects running: the UNDP-GEF Kura II Project, implemented in Azerbaijan and Georgia; and the European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership (EUWI+). These projects play a major role in contributing towards the cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan while creating a transboundary level platform for cross-national exchange of interests and concerns.

The UNDP-GEF Kura II project is a continuation of the UNDP/GEF Kura Aras Project and works closely with the governmental bodies of Georgia and Azerbaijan. It aims at implementing a Strategic Action Plan and strengthening of national Integrated Water Resource Management Plans in both countries. In this regard, the project has five key thematic areas: support for institutional governance protocols; professional development and capacity building for water managers across sectors; stress reduction measures in critical areas; stakeholder education and empowerment; and enhanced science for governance.<sup>13</sup>

EUWI+ encompasses the period between 2016-2020 by aiming at improving water resource management, especially transboundary rivers, and helps Eastern Partnership countries (i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) to align their legislation with that of the EU. The project has four main themes, namely: legislation, policy development, and institutional strengthening; improving laboratory and monitoring systems; building and implementing a river basin management plan; and public awareness.<sup>14</sup>

### **Key Transboundary Water Issues**

The key transboundary water issues the Kura River faces range from water quantity to upstream hydrological construction, and water quality. These problems do not only pose a threat towards the well-being of the river ecosystem, but to a certain extent also affect the livelihood of people, which might potentially lead to conflicts and disagreements between riparian states.

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<sup>12</sup> Ostrom (2010).

<sup>13</sup> Official Website of UNDP-GEF Kura II (S.D.).

<sup>14</sup> Official Website of EUWI+ (S.D.).

## ***Water Quantity***

Considering the fact that Azerbaijan is the country with the least amount of water especially compared to Turkey and Georgia and that its location is downstream, water quantity is a particular concern for Azerbaijan. The Kura River in the part of Azerbaijan flows mainly through an arid climatic zone characterised by low precipitation rate and a high evaporation rate. As a result, areas along this part of the river experience regular droughts in certain periods of the season, especially at the end of spring and summer. This process further intensifies with the ongoing land cover change, the expansion of arid areas as well as climate change.

Climate change is one of the major stressors in the area affecting water quantity in the Kura River basin. Past trends of 1960-2005 presented by the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) in 2011 demonstrate that Azerbaijan experienced a decrease in rainfall levels by 9.9% for the last 10 years and an annual average temperature increase of 0.5-0.6 °C in which the highest temperature increase was detected in the Kura-Aras river basin. The same study also identifies increasing temperature trends of 0.1-0.5 °C for the eastern part of Georgia over the same time period (1936-2005). Similar trends unfold in the case of Turkey as the study by Hadi and Tombul (2018) detected an increasing trend for annual and seasonal temperature between 1901-2014 in Eastern Anatolia which is in the Kura River Basin. All in all, changes of temperature, precipitation and their patterns reflect themselves in the hydrological variability over a long-time period which further contributes to stress on water availability. Meanwhile, these trends further pave the way to devastating hazards such as floods, mudslides, drought as well as landslides.

## ***Upstream Hydrological Constructions***

The impact of hydrological construction, especially dams and reservoirs in rivers, has already been reflected in numerous previous studies.<sup>15</sup> Construction of dams and reservoirs has an immense negative effect on rivers including alterations in their low and peak flow, flow timing, changes in downstream flow, water quality, river continuity interruption leading to changes in sediment transport, blockage in fish migratory routes, habitat homogenisation, changes in surface water and groundwater exchange.<sup>16</sup>

Concerning the plans for future hydrological constructions in the Kura River, a few more hydroelectric stations are in the planning phase to be constructed on the Turkish part such as Said (5.3 MW), Chayirli (3 MW), Gurturk (44.5 MW) and Beshikkaya (140 MW).<sup>17</sup> These constructions coupled with dams and reservoirs that are already in place, as well as climate change consequences, will certainly impact the river water reaching

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<sup>15</sup> Tukur and Mubi (2002); Jeong et al. (2014); Huang et al. (2011).

<sup>16</sup> Schmutz and Moog (2018); Mailhot et al. (2018); Graf (2016); FitzHugh and Vogel (2011).

<sup>17</sup> Ardahan Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanism (2018).

Azerbaijan. Despite the fact that previously no water conflicts occurred in the region, these kinds of constructions along with the absence of regulatory frameworks for water allocation across the transboundary river will definitely have an impact on future relations.

### **Water Quality**

Water quality in the Kura River is a serious issue. The major pollutants of the river can be categorised into three broad groups of industrial, agricultural and municipal pollution. Mining, metallurgy, and chemical industries are key pollutants, whereas agriculture-based pollutants (e.g. fertilisers, pesticides) and municipal wastewater also contribute to water quality deterioration in the Kura River.<sup>18</sup>

The situation is further challenged by the absence of legally binding transboundary treaties for the discharge of substances. Thus far, there has been no regional cooperation attempt to control the water quality of the Kura River involving all three countries. This issue is especially important for a downstream country like Azerbaijan, as the water of the Kura River serves to meet irrigation and household consumption demands of the country, for which the water quality should meet certain standards. In case of water quality deterioration in the river, certain treatment procedures need to be carried out which incur extra costs and resources for the downstream country.

### **Transboundary Cooperation**

As natural resources involve social, economic and environmental interests of the transboundary states, it is inevitable that cooperation will take place differently in different areas. Cooperation on a transboundary level offers certain benefits both to a river and its surrounding ecosystem as well as the parties involved. Four types of cooperative benefits can be mentioned, they are as follows: better management of ecosystems (i.e. providing benefits to a river), efficient and cooperative management and development of rivers (i.e. yielding benefits from a river), lessening of tensions (i.e. leading to cost reduction for parties), and catalysing a greater level of cooperation (i.e. benefitting participating parties).<sup>19</sup> The level of cooperation is mainly defined by the hydrological and investment opportunities coupled with benefit-sharing mechanisms between riparian countries.<sup>20</sup>

There are several frameworks developed to explain the level of cooperation at a transboundary scale. Based on the framework presented by Sadoff and Grey (2009), the level of cooperation is categorised into four groups: unilateral action, coordination, collaboration and joint action. An absence at any level of cooperation, even knowledge and information sharing concerning development and management of rivers, is defined as *unilateral cooperation*. This form of cooperation can also lead to tensions between

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<sup>18</sup> Bakrakzade et al. (2017); Hansen (2003); Campana et al. (2008).

<sup>19</sup> Sadoff and Grey (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Idem.

parties as they undermine each other's interests and national plans due to misinformation. Once the information exchange is secured, the cooperation moves to the second form, *coordination*. At this level, the parties avoid conflicting actions thanks to the information exchange which further allows a more intensive cooperation form, *collaboration*. Once transboundary cooperation has reached *collaboration*, states develop their national plans in a way in which neither country secures gains and avoids harms to the other riparian state. Finally, *joint action* takes place once the riparian states take respective steps (i.e. development and management of a transboundary river) as partners. This form of cooperation is mostly attributed to the parties with strong cooperation, capacity and institutions. All in all, the cooperation continuum is not a clear-cut rule as it is very dynamic, non-directive and iterative, thus there can be different levels at different time scale between two riparian states.

Concerning the Kura River, there is no joint working group or commission which includes all three riparian countries coming together and developing a common framework. Instead, countries cooperate on a bilateral level and there is an asymmetry in terms of the cooperation level between different parties (see table 4). The transboundary river cooperation between Turkey with Georgia mainly relies on the legislative framework developed in 1997, while in the case of Azerbaijan, the bilateral legislative norms date back to Soviet times (Table 4).

Table 4: Regional cooperation on the Kura River in chronological order.

<b>Agreement/Treaty</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Parties</b>	<b>Relevant Aspects</b>
Treaty on the Beneficial Uses of Boundary Waters	1927	Turkey-USSR	Equal share in use of all transboundary waters and establishment of a Joint Boundary Water Commission.
Agreement on environmental protection	1997	Georgia-Azerbaijan	Development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation related pilot projects and basis for the all joint projects
Agreement on environmental protection	1997	Georgia-Turkey	Protection of surface water bodies and information exchange

*Source: Author's own compilation*

The established bilateral norms between Georgia and Azerbaijan are also outdated, however, ongoing regional projects (i.e. UNDP-GEF Kura II and EUWI+) involving Georgia and Azerbaijan, play a significant role in establishing more intensive cooperation between the two riparian states.

Framing the cooperation level among the three riparian states of the Kura River according to the framework developed by Sadoff and Gray that was described above, it can be stated that there is a certain level of information exchange among all three parties even though it is not very intensive, which would qualify the cooperation as being at the

coordination level (the second stage). Meanwhile, taking into account the aforementioned regional projects implemented to attain integrated river basin management, cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan moves towards the collaboration form (the third stage) beyond a simple exchange of information.

## Conclusion

Transboundary water governance involves various complexities thus requiring multi-stakeholder engagement and cooperation across the units. In the case of the Kura River, the transboundary water governance seems to be weak, considering the weak cooperation and an absence of legally binding legislative frameworks at a regional level. Along with its state-centric bureaucratic institutional arrangement, governance is very monocentric lacking interaction along with the multi-level units as well as actor networks. The legislative framework is also another aspect undermining successful water governance as in all three countries despite the legislation in place, many aspects are not addressed or are outdated, and there is no well-established enforcement mechanism.

Despite the fact that a certain level of bilateral cooperation is currently in place thanks to the ongoing international projects, no long-term cooperation is in place, which impedes the sustainability of regional cooperation. There are also certain problematic issues such as water quantity, hydrological constructions as well as water quality, which may pose a greater challenge in the future, especially with the existing threat of climate change in the region.

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# **AYGUN DADASHOVA<sup>1</sup> – Gender roles in Azerbaijani-medium secondary school literature textbooks**

## **Introduction**

Education is an essential human right and a powerful component in the sustainable development of societies and countries. Providing education to students, regardless of their gender, can help reduce social boundaries and poverty because education is strongly correlated with all development goals. As Chimombo (2005) argued, “Education is the route to economic prosperity, the key to scientific and technological advancement, the means to combat unemployment, the foundation of social equity, and the spread of political socialization and cultural vitality”.<sup>2</sup>

However, gender discrimination is an obstacle to girls’ education. Although the world’s labour force consists of women, they are still discriminated against and stereotypes persist, such as the idea of women as mothers who raise children, take care of their families, do housework, and carry out other domestic responsibilities. Coming from Astara, a rural region of Azerbaijan which borders Iran, far from Azerbaijan’s capital city, I have personally witnessed the abuse of women’s rights in my society. In my community, parents treated boys and girls differently. In my experience, there was always a sense of favouritism toward boys, and girls were never expected to be educated or to take on leadership roles.

People in rural areas of Azerbaijan are typically very conservative and often use certain interpretations of religion as a tool to oppress women. Many girls in my village desired to study, but their parents forbade it. Girls’ rights to education are still ignored, either by their parents or by society. In rural parts of Azerbaijan, in some cases, girls are not allowed to go school and are sometimes forced to get married early. Furthermore, women are represented in stereotyped gender roles. These roles are present in educational and learning materials as well. As in other male-dominated countries, women’s education and employment are not supported by society, especially in underdeveloped rural regions.

The aim of this study is to analyse gender roles in Azerbaijani-medium secondary school literature textbooks used in grades 5 to 9 (age 10-15), and to find out how gender sensitive and gender responsive these literature textbooks are. The data collection method is quantitative content analysis, involving reviewing literature textbooks. The quantitative analysis considers five categories: the gender and number of authors of textbooks, the gender and number of authors of texts included in the textbooks, the gender and number of the characters and figures in images, and the

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<sup>2</sup> Chimombo, 2005.

occupational roles in the texts and gender traits most commonly observed. The results indicate that Azerbaijani-medium literature textbooks do not promote equal gender roles. Men and women are not equally represented in text, visuals, and in occupational roles. The research recommends conducting research on all textbooks used at school level, analysing their portrayal of gender and publishing/using new gender-sensitive textbooks.

This paper will first describe the context of the paper. It will then provide an overview of existing literature on the topic, before discussing the methodology and findings of the research. The paper will finish with a discussion and conclusion section.

### **Context of the Research**

Textbooks have an important role in influencing schoolchildren's personalities and their perceptions of society. That is why the content of school textbooks, and the information these textbooks transmit to the youngest citizens of any country is influential.<sup>3</sup> Secondary school textbooks play a significant role in the process of internalising the norms and ideologies of a society. The presentation of men and women in these textbooks helps to form the attitudes of the students and their beliefs about gender roles in society. If, in presenting gender roles, textbooks transmit prejudiced and discriminatory language, they will gradually shape a student's understanding of gender roles. Literature textbooks incorporate the biased gender roles seen in Azerbaijani society. Both the learning materials and the biased environment may affect girls' behaviour, as their roles in society are limited. As Chapman (2002) states, educators should be mindful about the biased information that they are transmitting to their students via "socialization messages, inequitable division of special education services, sexist texts and materials, and unbalanced time and types of attention spent on boys and girls in the classroom".<sup>4</sup> Little research has been conducted on the gender roles in textbooks, particularly secondary school textbooks. In the Azerbaijani context, since the application of the new national curriculum, no intensive and systematic research has been carried out to identify how gender roles are presented in secondary school textbooks.

The aim of this research is to analyse gender roles in secondary school literature textbooks. I chose specifically literature textbooks because the nation's culture, traditions, and attitudes are most clearly demonstrated in history and literature textbooks. In this research I will analyse textbooks used in grades 5 to 9, and will identify how gender sensitive and responsive secondary school literature textbooks are in Azerbaijan. I will also determine how we can develop gender sensitive textbooks that improve girls' educational experiences and outcomes.

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<sup>3</sup> Evans & Davies, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Chapman (2002).

## Gender Equality in Azerbaijan and the education system

Gender equality is a core element of social justice and inclusivity based on the values and practices of Human Rights. Regardless of differences among people, including gender differences, everyone should be treated equally. Gender equality means accepting and valuing equally the differences between women and men and ensuring equal visibility, empowerment, and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. However, the reality of the school environment does not always reflect the aims of gender equality presented in laws and curricula. Educational materials may still reinforce traditional notions of gender roles in society, such as boys excel at mathematics and sciences, but are less successful in languages.<sup>5</sup>

Also in Azerbaijan, women face many difficulties, although they constitute 51.2% of the whole population. The Constitution of Azerbaijan and other laws and regulations state that men and women have equal rights. However, when it comes to reality, due to the “lack of special legal, economic and social protection mechanisms”, women’s rights in Azerbaijani society are abused and they are not protected.

Education is one of the priorities of social development and it is the target of gender mainstreaming policy. The aim of Azerbaijan’s national curriculum is to develop a dual learning environment for all students which includes common development, interests, improves self-esteem, is outcome oriented and student-oriented, and ensures integration.<sup>6</sup>

Despite activities initiated with application of gender mainstreaming policy, there are still many issues related to the quality of education, which have negative impact on education. At all levels of education, especially at primary and secondary levels, the quality of education has declined. Girls’ dropout rate has increased due to an increase in poverty levels.<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that the Azerbaijani government has ratified international laws and amended national laws, there are still gaps in the implementation of these laws and regulations because, in order to express their concerns, women’s groups need support from international institutions to be heard by the government.<sup>8</sup> Some women have a low level of education, and they are not able to express their problems to any authoritative agencies. That is why women either continue to live with the problems or they involve family members in finding a solution. However, in most cases, the family members’ solutions are not successful. Azerbaijani society is patriarchal, male dominated, and in that sense, women are second-rate human beings who should only be recognised in relation to men.

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<sup>5</sup> Syrjäläinen & Kujala 2010, 35; Council of Europe, 1998: 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> General Education Concept (National Curriculum) in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> State Committee on Women's Problems of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Aliyeva, 2011.

There is thus a need to develop gender education and gender research, to broaden awareness of the impact of gender issues, to improve the quality of education, and to eliminate the impact of gender discrimination to girl's competencies and qualifications. In addition, gender-biased educational materials have a negative impact on the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy. In particular, literature textbooks used in Azerbaijani-medium secondary schools contain a lot of biased information, as will be shown in the analysis further on in this paper.

A study was carried out in 2001 by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan to investigate the reasons for girls dropping out of education and to provide advice on how to solve these issues with the support of the Ministry of Education and a "UNICEF Project Plan of Action". According to the report the reasons that caused girls' dropout, poor participation, and low-quality performance are mainly divided into four categories:

- 1) Financial difficulties: these can have negative consequences for both genders, but they have a greater impact on girls than they do on boys. Although public schools are free of charge, students from low income families have difficulties affording other expenses such as clothes and stationary. Sometimes the children become involved in child labour or stay at home helping their parents with housework.
- 2) It is believed that girls are easily exposed to "physical and cultural dangers". Parents worry about rape and harassment of their daughters by their male peers or teachers. Although there are no accurate statistics of such incidents, it happens. In order to protect their daughters, and, most importantly, family honour, parents decide not to allow their daughters to go to school.
- 3) A false common assumption is that boys are more intelligent than girls. This assumption is common in most parts of the world but is particularly widespread in Eastern and Asian cultures, leading parents to think that it is better to support boys' education rather than that of girls.
- 4) Early marriage is also one of the reasons for dropout. Families either hold the belief that girls should marry young because of religion or because of cultural mentality.<sup>9</sup> According to an amendment to Article 10 of the Family Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan made in 2011, the legal marriage age for both boys and girls has increased from 17 to 18. Despite the change in the law, people in rural areas knowingly or unknowingly break the law and get married young with a religious marriage certificate.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Azerbaijani constitution, school is obligatory until grade 9. Attending grades 10 and 11 is optional. After finishing grade 9, students take an examination. Because it is not compulsory to continue, many parents can easily make their daughters leave school at this stage. In Azerbaijan, the school environment is not

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<sup>9</sup> UNICEF, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> The State Committee of Family and Children, 2011.

sensitive to gender. Although everyone has the right to get an education, the school administration, teachers' attitudes and textbooks are neither gender sensitive nor gender neutral.

### **The role of textbooks: Textbooks as a hidden curriculum**

Textbooks play a major role in the development of individuals and of the whole society. All over the world, school textbooks supply students with beneficial information about how cultural knowledge is approved, delivered to students, and assessed in schools. In the majority of countries, textbooks are developed based on "state-approved syllabi and curricula". In this context, they reflect the knowledge and values determined by a given society, especially its political class. They are also essential and suitable for passing values on to the next generation.<sup>11</sup> Printed textbooks are still the main sources of knowledge and information in rural parts of the countries. In the Azerbaijani context, centralised exams are arranged based on the content of the textbooks provided to schools. That is why textbooks are an essential aid to frame the knowledge in a given discipline. In the development of knowledge in various subjects, the evaluation and determination of "the content, visuals and exercises of the textbooks from a gender perspective" is a key step.<sup>12</sup>

Textbooks play an important role in the students' development. According to textbook analysis conducted in other countries, school textbooks and teaching materials have a great impact in forming people's notions of being a man or a woman. Even though textbooks have constantly been reviewed over the years, they still present men and women as having different stereotypical gender roles. The way gender is presented is problematic in two ways. First, text books portray very tough, brutal roles such as fighters and warriors for men, and thus create stereotypes. Second, women are presented as being at a disadvantage in most cases. They are presented in dependent, subordinate positions and are predominantly portrayed undertaking domestic activities.<sup>13</sup>

Gender bias in textbooks impacts students in a hidden way. Students spend most of their time with textbooks. Teachers prepare their lessons using textbooks.<sup>14</sup> Exam questions are prepared based on textbooks. That is why the role of textbooks and their impact are unavoidable." That is why textbooks with a gender bias cause fundamental hidden barriers to gender equity in education. Therefore, gender bias in textbooks has an impact on lowering girls' accomplishments in schools, especially in schools in underdeveloped countries.

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<sup>11</sup> Lässig, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Srivastava, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Bursuc, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Sadker and Zittleman (2007) as quoted in Blumberg, 2008, p 6.

The theory of the hidden curriculum is one of the mostly commonly used theories in textbook analysis. The concept of “hidden curriculum” appeared in education at the beginning of the 20th century. A hidden curriculum contains “both intended and unintended consequences of schooling, both official and unofficial settings of learning, and both academic and non-academic outcomes”.<sup>15</sup> Hidden curricula mostly contain “textbooks, teachers’ use of language, standard learning activities, and the social structure of the classroom, among others”.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the tacit curriculum, pupils are taught to act in a certain way at school and because of this the pupils’ experiences may differ from one another. The stereotypical notions of the gender specific roles are further reinforced, and this creates a continuum in society. Literature textbooks might have an influential impact given hidden curriculum, as it is applicable in any educational setting and it will either directly or indirectly affect students’ attitudes and behaviours.

Therefore, textbook development should be one of the priorities in the education policy of any government.

## Methodology

The aim of this study is to examine gender roles in Azerbaijani secondary school literature textbooks used from grades 5 to 9. Based on previous research analysing gender roles, the specific research questions investigate how gender roles are described in literature textbooks, and are as follows:

1. What is the ratio of male characters to female characters in texts and images? Is there a ratio difference in the texts?
2. What roles and traits are assigned to the characters in public and domestic settings?
3. To what extent are men/women depicted in domestic roles?
4. What is the visual representation of men and women?
5. How gender sensitive and responsive are secondary school literature textbooks in Azerbaijan?
6. How can we develop a gender sensitive curriculum and textbooks that improve girls’ educational experiences and outcomes in Azerbaijan?

Although many countries and international organisations are tackling gender stereotypes and accomplishing equal representation of men and women in textbooks, men and women are still treated differently and unequally in many school textbooks. The hypothesis of this study is that gender portrayal and gender roles in Literature textbooks published in Azerbaijan do not encourage gender equality.

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<sup>15</sup> Novosel, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Idem.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches for collecting and interpreting the data were used. In the first stage, quantitative content analysis was used to calculate the relative frequency of pictures, illustrations, and linguistic features representing males and females. The relative frequency of the occurrences was calculated. Content analysis was used to analyse the items in context. It helped to interpret the quantitative results. The analysis focuses on the authentic pictures and illustrations. The selection of visual materials was based on whether they are gender-marked or gender-unmarked which is a matter of subjectivity. However, pictures which displayed characters with unidentified gender were considered as gender-unmarked and were not taken into consideration.

In the second stage, qualitative thematic analysis was conducted and gender roles were divided by themes.

### ***Selection of Data***

For this research, five literature books were analysed. These books were analysed based on two main criteria: the people who were involved in the improvement and production process; and the authentic content. The texts vary based on their literary genres and have a wide range of themes and topics such as family, education, patriotism, heroism, honesty, goodness, nature, and country. The diversity of themes and topics was useful in investigating gender roles in literature textbooks in a more authentic way.

In textbooks, the tasks focus on the following skills: reading comprehension, narrating, and writing essays based on given topics. Each topic was supported by written texts and illustrations. Only the texts and illustrations which have gender roles were analysed since the research focuses on gender roles in textbooks. Information about writing and poetry genres and texts about gender-neutral topics were not analysed, as they are very general and this kind of gender-neutral information cannot contribute to this study. Texts were analysed with quantitative content analysis in three categories: gender visibility, occupational and domestic roles, and gender attributes.

A limitation of the study is that the findings are not suitable for generalisation since this investigation concerns only one school subject and only the compulsory part of general secondary education. Due to time constraints, it was possible to analyse only the literature textbooks used at the compulsory level of secondary school education (from grades 5 to 9). High school literature textbooks (from 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grades) are not analysed. Therefore, it is unclear whether this series is exceptional or representative in terms of the portrayals of gender roles in the secondary school textbooks used in Azerbaijan.

## Findings

### *Gender and Number of Authors*

In the first stage, the quantitative results are presented based on two criteria: first, the number of staff involved in textbook development, including production staff and authors of texts, and second, the number of characters in texts, images, and the number of male and female characters in domestic and occupational roles. Each textbook was analysed considering the gender of the authors of the texts, the number of males and females both in texts and images, and the occupational and domestic roles and personality attributes associated with males and females.

As shown in Table 1, 43 people were involved in the writing team of literature textbooks used in grades 5 to 9. 23 of them are men and 20 of them are women. It is important to provide the criteria of number of textbook production staff and authors in order to show the contrast. The authors of textbooks differ from authors of texts in the textbooks. Literature textbooks consist of different texts in various genres written by different authors. Although textbook authors are mainly women, the original texts compiled in textbooks are mostly written by men, meaning that female textbook writers did not consider gender equality when considering which texts to include in textbooks.

Table 1. Total personnel involved in Literature textbooks production (5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Editors</b>	<b>Proof Readers</b>	<b>Designers</b>	<b>Picture Artists</b>	<b>Total</b>
						43
Female	11	4	3	2	0	20
Male	6	8	2	2	5	23

Source: author

Altogether, there are 198 texts in the books used from grades 5 to 9. For this study, only 161 of them were analysed because the rest of the texts are gender neutral and about topics such as nature, the motherland (Azerbaijan), moral values, and the expression of moral values through the roles of animals or plants. Only six of the authors of incorporated texts (4%) are women. 28 of the texts (17%) were written by unknown authors, and 127 (79%) of the authors are male.

Table 2. Number of authors of original texts used in textbooks

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	6	4
Male	127	79

Source: author

### **Gender and Number of Characters in Texts**

Characters were analysed based on the number of texts and visuals they appeared in the textbook. There are 479 characters in the texts for students in grades 5 to 9, 365 of them are male and 114 are female. In the Azerbaijani language, the third person singular is “O” and refers to 3 genders: “O” translates into English as “she”, “he”, and “it”. Since pronouns are not classified based on gender, we can differentiate genders according to their names and their images in texts.

Table 3. Gender Ratio in textbooks

Grade	Male		Female		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
Fifth	83	79	22	21	105
Sixth	67	71	28	29	95
Seventh	64	74	22	26	86
Eighth	75	84	14	16	89
Ninth	76	73	28	27	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>479</b>

Source: author

Table 3 shows the number of males and females as both raw numbers and percentages per textbook. Indeed, in all five textbooks, female characters are presented less frequently than male characters. The biggest difference in proportions can be seen in the eighth grade literature textbook (84% male versus 16% female), but in almost all textbooks, female characters represent only around a quarter of all characters.

### **Images in textbooks**

Images in textbooks represent photos of writers and poets, but there are also photos without any visible gender. The images of characters are divided into five categories based on the number of males and females in the pictures: male, female, mostly male, mostly female, and equal. Some visuals of male characters have swords or guns, reflecting male dominance. Visuals of female characters are either pictures of female poets and writers, or mothers holding a baby doing household chores.

Table 4 indicates the proportion of males and females in the images. Men appear in images more often than women. 82% of characters in visuals are male and an additional 8% of visuals have mostly male characters in them; but only 4% of the characters in visuals are female. Similarly, only 4% of images contain mostly women.

Images with equal numbers of males and females are the least frequently represented (2%). In these cases, men are pictured mostly in authoritative or governmental roles.

Table 4 Overall Male images in textbooks

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Mostly male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Mostly Female</b>	<b>Equal</b>
Number of observations	134	13	7	6	4
Percentage	82%	8%	4%	4%	2%

Source: author

### **Gender Roles**

For the analysis of gender role representation in the textbooks, family roles and other household duties as shown in the textbooks were taken into consideration. In the 161 texts in the literature textbooks used from grades 5 to 9, very few female characters were represented in occupational roles indicating that there is a lack of good role models for female students. Table 5 below shows the total number of domestic and occupational roles of males and females. There are 114 female characters in the text, of which only 14 are represented in occupational roles. The rest of the characters are represented in domestic roles. Female domestic roles include: mother, wife, daughter, sister, fiancée, aunt, mother-in-law, grandmother, granddaughter, sweetheart, and lover. Women are represented in occupational roles such as student, teacher, school director, train guard, farmer, poet, interpreter, and soldier. Women were not represented in any occupational roles in the books used in grades 7 to 9. They are only represented in domestic roles in these books.

Table 5. Total number of Occupational and Domestic Roles of Males and Females

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupational Roles</b>	<b>Domestic Roles</b>	<b>Total</b>
Males	272 (75%)	93 (25%)	365
Females	14 (12%)	100 (88%)	114

Source: author

Some texts included in the literature books were written between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. At that time, women were rarely represented in public settings. That is why in these texts, males dominate, and they are seen in high ranking positions of that time, such as shah, sultan and khan (king). Men are also often represented in military positions, such as soldiers, officers, heroes, and knights. Only 14 female characters in total had occupational roles, whilst 100 female characters are represented in domestic roles. However, the allocation is vice versa for males; males are mostly

represented in occupational roles and only 93 male characters are represented in domestic roles.

Table 6. Occupational and Domestic Roles of Males and Females in texts

	<b>Domestic Roles</b>	<b>Occupational Roles</b>
Female	Mother, wife, daughter, sister, fiancée, aunt, mother in law, grandma, granddaughter, sweetheart	Student, teacher, school director, train guard, farmer, poet, interpreter, soldier
Male	Father, grandpa, son, uncle, grandson	shah, khan, governor, mayor, officer, policeman, student, workman, teacher, scientist, gangster, soldier, national hero, historical hero

Source: author

### *The most commonly used gender traits for males and females*

Gender attributes refer to the way women and men are depicted in the textbooks. The images of how a man or a woman in a certain society should look or behave are highly dependent on the culture.

Comparing the attributes ascribed to men and those ascribed to women, there were only two that were commonly associated with each gender. Women are presented as: beautiful, kind (the first similarity with men), loving, faithful, motherly, compassionate, generous, loyal, educated (the second similarity with men), and dependent. The findings reveal that women are seen as caring, emotional, and maternal in contrast to men, who are portrayed as active, goal-oriented, and hardworking. The analysis of the attributes associated with men and women in Azerbaijani literature textbooks may similarly reveal attitudes towards males and females formed historically, passed down from generation to generation.

Table 7: The most commonly used gender traits for males and females

<b>Female Traits</b>	<b>Male Traits</b>
Young, old, dedicative, hesitant, shy, care giving, dedicative mother, self-sacrificing, teacher, mannish woman, courageous, beautiful, kind, merciful mother, knowledgeable, brave woman	Strong, smart, incapable, capable, respectful, hardworking, fair, authoritative, thankful, leader, overconfident, angry, brutal, brave, hero, militant/ warlike, good, bad, trickster, supporter, arrogant, intellectual, bread winner, income provider, dominant, careless, wise, honest, ungrateful, cruel, oppressor, tyrannous, son, irresponsible, lazy, charitable, confident, self-sacrificing, sneaky

Source: author

## Conclusion and recommendations for MOE, textbook writers and for teachers

Although Azerbaijan is undergoing changes and developments in all domains including issues relating to gender, this study revealed that society's old stereotypes are still alive and reinforced through education. The present research examined only a few aspects to determine the representation of men and women in the textbooks. The results indicate that girls and women are less visible than boys and men in texts and images. In addition, textbook writers portrayed women in limited occupational roles, whilst men are represented in a variety of jobs. Males are dominant in the occupational roles and this may hold girls back from social and professional improvement. Therefore, based on the conducted research, here are some recommendations for developing textbooks in the future:

1. Other secondary school textbooks should also be analysed to determine whether they are gender sensitive or not.
2. Gender stereotypes in school textbooks and classroom practices in policy documents should be eliminated. The most challenging part will be to change the attitudes of educators and textbook writers. Writers of educational materials should analyse textbooks for and aim to reduce the dominance of males as much as possible.
3. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education consider arranging small teams of international academics – including at least one member with expertise in gender and education – to evaluate the textbook authors' compliance with the adopted demands of textbook policy.
4. Gender experts should be involved in training textbook writers in aspects of gender equity related to textbook publication. This should help to create a positive attitude for gender reform.
5. After ensuring a reduction in gender bias in textbooks, school teachers should be trained on how to use gender biased textbooks by using gender sensitive teaching methods.
6. Finally, guidelines should be published that will help instructors implement gender sensitive teaching methods in their lessons.

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# **RUSTAMJON ERNAZAROV<sup>1</sup> – Development challenges facing the Parliament in Uzbekistan and its role in delivering good governance**

## **Introduction**

The formation of legal statehood is a complex and long process which is associated with the elimination of many problems. Issues related to state institutions operating on the principles of parliamentarism play an important role among the problems related to the establishment of legal statehood in Uzbekistan. At the beginning of the 21st century, it became clear that a democracy cannot exist without a well functioning parliament.

The history of the parliamentary institution in Uzbekistan goes back to the years of independence (1991). It is known from the history of every state that gained independence that particular attention needs to be paid to the formation of its parliament to ensure that citizens' rights are prioritised and that the political will of the people is realised. This is one of the most important foundations of a democratic legal state. It is difficult to imagine the independence of a country and the representation of the citizenry without a parliament. Like the most developed democracies in the world, the legislative power in Uzbekistan is exercised by the Supreme Representative Body - the Parliament. Reforms are being implemented step by step aimed at improving its activities, strengthening its status as a supreme representative, legislative and regulatory body.

This paper will first identify the different periods that can be distinguished for the Uzbek parliament. It will then move on to assess key changes, including the Parliament's relation to citizens and the use of new forms of communication. Lastly, the paper will look at the most recent challenges, including Parliamentary effectiveness and the representation of citizens' concerns.

## **The constitution of the Uzbek Parliament over time**

The almost 30-year history of the Uzbek parliament can be divided into the following three periods: 1991 to 1994; 1995 to 2004; and 2005 until now.

### **1991 - 1994**

The Supreme Soviet's last term in office, which may be called a transition parliament, adopted the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which was the legal basis for

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the creation of a completely new state governing body and a fair democratic society based on a socially oriented market economy. In this period, the Parliament adopted a number of laws aimed at strengthening the sovereignty of the young state, including: “On the foundations of the national independence of Uzbekistan”, “On elections of the President of Uzbekistan”, “On the National Emblem of Uzbekistan”, “On the National Anthem of Uzbekistan”, “On the official language of Uzbekistan”, “On election of Deputies of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan” and other legislative acts.

### ***1995 - 2004***

The Supreme Soviet was replaced by a unicameral Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Oliy Majlis in 1995. In this period, elections to the Oliy Majlis were held on the basis of a multiparty system, and political parties and committees began to work in the Parliament. At this stage, lawmaking became the primary area of activities of the deputies. In this period the Oliy Majlis adopted 240 laws, 778 resolutions, introduced 1573 amendments and additions to the current legislation, and ratified more than 130 international treaties and agreements.<sup>2</sup> The supreme legislative body of the country aimed to adopt laws that promote the strengthening of state sovereignty, civil peace and developing social stability and deepening democratic, socio-economic reforms in society.

### ***2005 - until now***

In 2005 a bicameral professional parliament was established in Uzbekistan. The Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan acted on the basis of the Programme of legislative activities for 2005-2009, developed on the basis of the priority areas and specific targets of reformation and modernisation of the country. The construction of a bicameral parliament has elevated the legislative power in the Republic of Uzbekistan to a new level of development. The law making process became considerably more complicated despite an improvement of the adopted laws. Political parties started playing a bigger role in adoption of legislative acts. Pre-reviewing draft legislation by the party factions and hearing factions’ opinion during discussion of drafts of legislative acts became regularly practiced during the Plenary Sessions of the Legislative Chamber.

Parliamentary control has also been one of the main activities of the Oliy Majlis. Committees and commissions of the Oliy Majlis annually review issues in order to monitor the implementation of laws and conventions and national programmes. This level of control covered the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, all other regions of the country, as well as the city of Tashkent.

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<sup>2</sup> Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan (S.D.).

## The changing role of Parliament over time

An analysis of the oversight activities of the Parliament revealed a number of regularities. Firstly, the principle of improvement of earlier adopted laws has increased from year to year taking into account the new stage of development of the country and the practice of law enforcement. Secondly, lawmaking has become more comprehensive and sought to regulate relations in some areas. Thirdly, the number of legal acts prepared and submitted for consideration by the joint efforts of several committees and commissions has increased.

The parliament was relatively active in the early years of independence. However, we can say that the deputies were limited to only meetings and lectures during the 25 years of the Parliament's activity. Mainly, they met with voters, particularly during the pre-election processes and did not communicate with ordinary people. Parliamentary lawmaking activity was also relatively low.

Parliamentary activity has become more active in recent years and plays an important role in the life of the state and society. Many important tasks have been set to the Parliament after the coming to power of the current President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in 2016.

When President Mirziyoyev came to power, he began to critically evaluate the activities of the parliament and pursue a policy aimed at increasing the role of parliament in the development of the country. At the suggestion of the President, activities of the parliament are actively introduced on social networks on a daily basis. For the past three years, the President's annual Address to the members of the national parliament has covered the most important and current political, socio-economic issues and democratic development of the society. At the first Address to the Oliy Majlis, President Mirziyoyev focused on how to improve the efficiency of the parliament's activities and its role in the society. The president emphasised that parliament should become a school of democracy, the initiator and the principal executive of the reforms.<sup>3</sup> But the deputies or senators could not make a significant contribution to the benefit of people to address existing problems regarding health, ecology, utilities, education and other areas.

In recent years, the President and the Cabinet of Ministers have been the main initiators of the lawmaking process. So, it is important to improve the quality of lawmaking activities of parliament aimed at enhancing the powers of parliament to address the most important issues of domestic and foreign policy, to oversee the activities of the executive branch, to strengthen the influence of laws on the social, political, economic and judicial reforms.

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<sup>3</sup> Official website of the President of Uzbekistan (2017).

Effectiveness of lawmaking activities of the deputies was justly criticised by the President. Taking into account the criticism of the President, the number of lawmakers' legislative initiatives increased in number over the last five years. For example, 37 law projects were submitted for consideration by deputies in 2010-2014, and this number increased by 2.5 times and reached 88 over the last five years. However, the proportion of such laws is still low compared to the total number of laws submitted to the Legislative Chamber, making up no more than 16 or 17 percent of the total.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, deputies should take more initiative to analyse current problems of the people and the state.

### **The parliament's relationship with citizens**

A commission to promote independence of the judicial branch was established under the Oliy Majlis in 2018. This commission summarises appeals from people, issues raised during meetings and dialogue with the public and analyses the real situation through a parliamentary inquiry. 28 parliamentary inquiries were sent to government officials in the last five years, which was seven times more than in 2010-2014. 856 deputy inquiries were sent on various issues in 2015-2019. Also, the Senate sent 26 parliamentary inquiries and over 700 senators' inquiries in the last five years.<sup>5</sup> However, only a few of these were initiated by citizens, and voters' interests were not adequately protected.

Foremost, the result has been that the Uzbek deputies began to interact with their voters in new ways. Previously, members of the Legislative Chamber met with their constituents two or three times a year, but today such events are held regularly. For instance, from January to May 2018 deputies studied in detail the works and real conditions of people in 70 districts and cities of the republic. Deputies have visited more than 28,000 homes and have had direct talks with over 112,000 citizens, including over 10,000 entrepreneurs.<sup>6</sup> Meetings of the Councils of people's deputies were held on the results of the work in the regions and districts. Reports of governors, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and heads of tax services were heard at the meetings and decisions were taken to address the identified deficiencies.

Also, in 2019, deputies visited more than 8,000 homes, more than 3,000 social sectors and nearly 2,000 manufacturing facilities and met with 150,000 citizens face to face.<sup>7</sup> Procedure has been established for deputies to visit to their constituencies during the last week of each month in order to address social problems.

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<sup>4</sup> Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2020a).

<sup>5</sup> Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2020b).

<sup>6</sup> Uzbekistan national news agency (2018).

<sup>7</sup> Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2020a).

Exercise of parliamentary control by deputies has also changed qualitatively. At the suggestion of the President a mechanism was introduced for the submission of government members' reports within the framework of the "Government hour"<sup>8</sup> at the Legislative Chamber's meetings in 2018, which is effectively used. In particular, the information on the activities of the Ministers of Housing and Communal Services, Health Care and Employment and Labour Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan was heard within the framework of the "Government Hour". 14 "Government Hours" have been held with the participation of heads of 17 ministries and state committees in the last two years.<sup>9</sup> However, it should be noted that until today the parliament has not been able to exercise its control functions fully. In recent years, more than 10 parliamentary inquiries have been sent to various ministries and this number is not enough. In addition, the practice of considering candidates for the Cabinet of Ministers at the meetings of Legislative Chamber has been established.

Also, in 2019 the Senate conducted 131 control and analytical activities to gather information from the heads of central and local government agencies and to study law enforcement practices in the regions. However, the effectiveness of these activities is low and many of them are organised as a formality.

Initiated by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Institute for Legislative Problems and Parliamentary Studies was established under the Oliy Majlis. The Institute prepared proposals and recommendations on 25 draft laws, 5 decisions of the Council of Chambers of Oliy Majlis, 9 drafts of decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, based on the analysis of international best practices.<sup>10</sup> The Institute now contributes to the effective functioning of the Parliament.

It should be noted that new collegiate bodies were established under the Oliy Majlis to assist judicial reform, and support of youth, women and family institutes. For instance, there is the Commission under the Oliy Majlis to promote independence of judicial power in the directions of its activities; the Commission on Family and Women Issues directly in the Legislative Chamber; and the Commission on youth affairs.

Based on an initiative of the President, official profiles of all deputies were set up on social networks to increase the effectiveness of deputies' work with the people and to inform the public about their daily activities. As a result, now Uzbekistan's parliamentary activity on social networks is significantly higher than the world average.

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<sup>8</sup> As a rule, the Legislative Chamber hears the answers of the members of the government to the questions of the deputies of the Legislative Chamber once a month. The Cabinet of Ministers receive questions 10 days in advance and determine who will answer the exact question. The schedule of the "Government Hour" is determined by the Council of the Legislative Chamber in agreement with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

This was also mentioned in the international review of the UN E-parliament World Report.<sup>11</sup>

One of the main social networks used by Deputies is Facebook. They publish more than 200 information and analytical materials on current issues of public interest in various electronic media and network resources every day. This is proof of systematic work on forming public opinion and providing reliable social and political information to the population. Today, the “virtual deputy reception” service is accessible to all citizens on Facebook as well as on the official website of the Legislative Chamber. This helped to ensure the quality and efficiency of the deputies’ contacts with their voters, and significantly increase the transparency and accountability of their activities. A special mobile application has been developed to facilitate the organisation of electronic applications to deputies of the Legislative Chamber.

It should be noted that on the initiative of the President in 2018 the country launched the official website “meningfikrim.uz”, the most popular platform for public discussion in Uzbekistan today. Over the past two years, the portal has received 3,228 applications from citizens, initiated 24,138 comments, 9 initiatives are in the voting process, 82 initiatives are at the examination stage and 6 initiatives at the support process.<sup>12</sup> But, only 11 of these initiatives were adopted by the Legislative Chamber. Taking into account comments and criticism of the population, 16 law projects were rejected and returned to the initiative agency; whereas not a single law project was returned between 2010 and 2014.<sup>13</sup>

### **Current challenges and changes**

Over the past five years, the activities of the Legislative Chamber have significantly increased. 540 laws, an increase of two times from 2010–2014 were considered. If there were only 11 new laws passed in 2015, in 2019 this number increased threefold to 35.<sup>14</sup>

Procedures have been introduced in the parliamentary control system for responsible leaders to explain to parliament and local councils what issues underlie disputes among citizens. Since 2019, all ministries and committees, as well as regional governors, have reported to the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In the process, several provincial governors and ministers were warned to perform their duties diligently. However, the Senate’s activity is not satisfactory. Since the creation of the bicameral parliament, nine laws have been rejected by the Senate. This

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Mening fikrim (S.D.).

<sup>13</sup> Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2020a).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

represents only 1.5% of all laws passed from 2005 to the present day.<sup>15</sup> This indicator is several times lower than in many developed countries.

Furthermore, there should be a genuine competition between the ruling party and the opposition parties in the Parliament. However, we must admit that today there is not enough competition between the parties in the parliament. Also, some officials have caused discussions and in some cases, severe discontent with their actions in the community. In these situations, the deputies become the ordinary audience, which is unacceptable. People should see deputies as their representatives who can stand up against officials who violate the law. They should see MPs as their advocate and their representative, and who can address peoples' grievances.

First steps are being taken in this regard. Young deputies like Rasul Kuserbaev, Shukhrat Polvonov and Alisher Khamraev are actively representing the people and voters with their activities. For example, the decision to turn on lamps in the daytime was changed at the initiative of these deputies. However, the number of such deputies remains quite low.

Elections to the Parliament and Local Councils under the slogan "New Uzbekistan – new elections" on the basis of the new Election Code which is fully compliant with international requirements and standards became a big political exam for Uzbekistan in 2019. The parliamentary elections were held on the principles of openness, transparency and honesty, as well as through intense struggle. They were followed by more than 70,000 domestic observers and 10 international organisations, with 825 observers from about 50 foreign countries and 1,155 representatives of international and domestic media.<sup>16</sup> These numbers are much higher than in previous elections.

Many meetings of representatives of parties and candidates with voters were organised. Numerous television debates, with an open discussions of election programmes, were held with the participation of deputy candidates. Most importantly, political competition between the parties has increased the desire to serve the people and the state. Political parties have made numerous promises in their election campaigns to address the pressing issues in our society. It will take some time to evaluate their implementation. "New Uzbekistan - New Elections - New Parliament" is being put on the agenda as a top priority by the President. Deputies and parties determine the implementation of tasks in the pre-election programmes in the form of plans and roadmaps, and continuous monitoring of their implementation is performed.

## Conclusion

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<sup>15</sup> Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2020b).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Today's parliament of Uzbekistan is well on its way to development. We can see many positive changes and parliamentary system reforms. The effectiveness of parliamentary activities has increased several fold and deputies are taking steps to serve the interests of citizens. Deputies became more active with their comments on social media and this practice increased their access to discussions in various matters with the citizenry. However, it should be noted that the parliamentary reforms are mainly initiated by the President and there is an insufficient number of deputies in the Parliament who can act independently for the benefit of the people. Recent elections may determine the future of Uzbekistan, as they led to the election of more deputies. If a third of the current lawmakers were to serve the interests of the people and the state, we would see a very different Uzbekistan in five years' time.

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# **SABRINA GAFFAROVA<sup>1</sup> – Bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Azerbaijan in the period of independence: Hindrances to cooperation?**

## **Introduction**

Tajikistan and Azerbaijan are linked by historical relations of friendship and cooperation. The history of Azerbaijani-Tajik relations is rooted in centuries old connections. Evidence of this is the fact that the classics of Tajik-Persian literature such as Abuabduullo Rudaki, Abulkasim Firdousi, Saadi Sherozi, Hafiz, Umar Khayyam, Abdurahmon Dzhami and many others love and revere the great Azerbaijani poets Nizami Ganjavi, Shirvani, Muhammad Fizuli and Imodeddin Nasimi, who made an invaluable contribution to the treasury of world literature. More recently prominent Azerbaijani political figures, such as Mirza Davud Huseynov was leader of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic between 1930 and 1933; and Ali Ahmedov Ali Alievich was the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs of the Tajik SSR between 1944 and 1946.

Diplomatic relations between the independent Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan were established on 29 May 1992, however Azerbaijan and Tajikistan already had strong economic, cultural and historical ties before the two states gained independence. This trend not only continued, but has also increased in many respects.

It is no accident that Azerbaijan was among the first countries to recognise the independence of Tajikistan and establish diplomatic relations with it. Bilateral and multilateral relations between Tajikistan and Azerbaijan are developing in the spirit of mutual respect and partnership. There is great potential between the two republics to increase cooperation in many areas. However, there appears to exist some negative factors that hinder mutually beneficial relations.

This paper will therefore focus on the question: Are there any hindrances having a negative effect on bilateral cooperation between the two countries? By reviewing the political, economic and cultural spheres of cooperation, it appears that the most important issue is the economic sphere, specifically, the problem of transportation of Tajik goods into Azerbaijan passing through Turkmenistan. Since February 2018, Turkmenistan has banned the transit of trucks bound for Tajikistan through its territory. Transit is considered to be the most important issue in foreign trade of both countries, because it has a negative impact on the progress of trade turnover between Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. A more detailed discussion on this hindrance will be provided further

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on in this paper. Moreover, two other noticeable hindrances in the sphere of culture will be considered as well.

## Methodology

The analysis in this paper was made mainly on the basis of a review of speeches made by the heads of state, mass media, annual statistical approaches, and official websites of both countries. This data was then analysed and complemented with an interview conducted with Professor Munira Shahidi, a professor of political science and cultural studies at the Tajik National University.

## Politics

The two countries are linked by partnerships at a high international level, in particular within the framework of such large organisations as the UN, OSCE and CIS. Today, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan are successfully cooperating in bilateral and multilateral formats. The positions of the two countries coincide on other issues of regional and international nature as well. An important step in the development of relations between the two countries was the opening up of diplomatic missions of Azerbaijan in Dushanbe and Tajikistan in Baku. The existing legal framework and the effective activities of intergovernmental cooperation create favourable conditions for further cooperation and for expanding economic and trade relations between the two countries.

The most fundamental document is considered to be the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan signed by the heads of the two states, during the official visit of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to Azerbaijan in 2007. President Ilham Aliyev and President Emomali Rahmon held a one-on-one meeting. In the framework of this meeting several agreements were signed and some of them are listed below:

- An agreement on cooperation in the field of statistics, a framework agreement on a programme of multilateral cooperation between the companies Det.Al Metal DMCC and TALCO management;
- An agreement between the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan.
- Intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in the fields of science, engineering and technology, communications and informatisation, education, on the elimination of double taxation, on the suppression of cases of tax evasion and income tax and about free trade.

On 15 March 2007 President Ilham Aliyev paid an official visit to Tajikistan. Intergovernmental agreements were signed on visa-free entry; on the promotion and mutual protection of investments; on cooperation and mutual assistance in the trade

and economic sphere; in the field of international automobile traffic; in the field of culture and art; on standardisation, metrology, certification and accreditation; as well as in the field of railway transport and air traffic.

## Economics

The Governments of both countries pay special attention to strengthening the economic sphere of cooperation. Within the framework of the last official visit of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon to Azerbaijan on 10 August 2018, several agreements were signed between the two Republics in the sphere of economics and trade. Some of them are as follows:

- A Memorandum of Cooperation between the State Committee on Investment and State Property Management of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Export Promotion Fund (AZPROMO);
- A Memorandum of Understanding between the State Unitary Enterprise of Tajik Aluminum Company (TALCO) and Azerbaijan Industrial Corporation;
- A Memorandum of Understanding on the delivery of fuel between the State Unitary Enterprise TALCO and the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan SOCAR;
- An Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan;

As shown in Table 1, trade turnover of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Republic of Tajikistan between January-March 2017 amounted to 226.38 thousands of US dollars, including exports of 226.38 thousand USD; imports were not carried out, and the foreign trade balance was positive: 226.38 thousand US dollars. In this period, Tajikistan's share in the trade turnover of the Republic of Azerbaijan was 0.01% in export.

*Table 1. Trade turnover between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan, in thousand USD*

Year	Trade turnover	Exports from Azerbaijan to Tajikistan	Imports into Azerbaijan from Tajikistan
2014	2.824	2.636	188.0
2015	6.443	6.443	-
2016	12.320	12.082	238.5
2017	2.045	1.998	47.4
2018	6.587	6.533	53.4

Source: State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2020).

However, transit is considered to be the main hindrance that is still under discussion between Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, even in 2018. This problem can have a negative impact on further development of economic cooperation between the two countries. Since 2018 there has been a problem of cargo transportation to Tajikistan from Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran and other countries through the territory of Turkmenistan. The issue has lasted more than ten months and no solution was found during the Tajik-Turkmen negotiations on 1 November 2018. According to Tajikistan's first deputy transport minister who participated in the talks, the Tajik delegation had raised the issue of truck transit through Turkmenistan, but the Turkmen side had not given a clear answer. A similar situation occurred later in 2018, when the freight wagons in transit to Tajikistan got stuck on the Turkmen borders. Only two weeks after the ban the Turkmen side allowed the passage of 150 railway cars. According to the Centre for Strategic Studies of Tajikistan, "Turkmenistan connects the ban on the transit of Tajik goods with security". The last negotiations between the Turkmen and Tajik sides were held in January 2020, but the results were not satisfactory.

Some experts attribute the observed cooling between the parties to the failure by the Tajik side to agree on a project to build the Turkmenistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan railway. Parviz Mullojonov, a political analyst, indeed said in an interview with Radio Liberty that closing the border to transit of Tajik cargo is related more to the economic aspects, namely, the railway, which is very important for Ashgabat. As one expert noted, "Turkmenistan had high hopes for the construction of a railway to Afghanistan. They built part of the road with a length of 88km, but Tajikistan was not in a hurry with the construction of its part, as relations with Uzbekistan have improved. Perhaps this is the reason".

The transit problem is mostly related to bilateral relations of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, but it is an obvious hindrance to foreign trade of the Republic of Tajikistan in general, which includes many countries in the Middle East and the Caucasus, especially Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, alternative ways to enter the Middle East bypassing Turkmenistan were found: through Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan and further to Iran and Turkey; however, there is no data available yet on the realisation of this project.

## Culture

There is also a clear cultural dimension to cooperation between the two countries. In October 2007, the Days of Tajik Culture were held in Azerbaijan, in the cities of Baku and Ganja. In turn, on 9-12 November 2008, the Days of Azerbaijani Culture were held in Tajikistan. Other examples of cultural cooperation include:

- In 2013, 13 different concerts of Azerbaijani artists were held, dedicated to the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, in the cities of Dushanbe, Khujand and Kurgan-Tube, and Khorog (GBO). The

Mugham Quartet “Karabakh” of the Azerbaijan Republic took part in the fifth International Festival of Music, Art and Tourism called “Roof of the World”, which was held in Khorog (GBAO) from 5 to 7 July 2013.

- In 2012, with the financial support of the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Tajikistan, a collection of Hamsa works in Tajik was published in connection with the 870<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi.
- An active cooperation has been established between the twin cities of Khujand (Tajikistan) and Ganja (Azerbaijan).
- The first television show named “bridge of friendship and cooperation” between Baku and Dushanbe, dedicated to the commonality of cultures, took place on 28 April 2012 on the Ijtimai Television (Baku) and Jahonnamo (Dushanbe) TV channels.

Tajikistan and Azerbaijan have a lot in common and they have many opportunities to strengthen cultural relations, but there is one main hindrance. As appears from the data mentioned above, communication between the states is mostly implemented by state officers and other people in official positions. The lack of intercultural communication between the two nations, especially artists, scholars, professors and students is reported as a major hindrance to development of bilateral cultural relations between the two Republics. Another hindrance to development of bilateral cooperation is the long lapse of time between the cultural events arranged by both states, as the last joint event was held in 2013 (namely the “Roof of the World” festival).

## Conclusion

Looking through the data, the following points can be considered, based on the analysis above. First, ever since their independence in 1991 and after the establishment of diplomatic relations on 29 May 1992, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan signed over fifty official documents on cooperation (including agreements, memoranda, etc.); four official visits and five working visits were paid by both sides.

Second, answering the main question of the research (Are there any hindrances having a negative effect on bilateral cooperation of the two countries?), there seem to exist three main negative factors that hinder bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. The first obstacle is the transit issue. For trade to move between Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, freight will need to pass through Turkmenistan. However, Turkmen roads remain closed not only for Tajik trucking companies, but also for other companies carrying cargo to Tajikistan. Undoubtedly, this negatively affects the trade turnover between two states. Second, according to the above-mentioned points, there is a lack of intercultural communication between the two post-Soviet countries that may weaken the bonds of friendship between Tajik and Azerbaijani people. Intercultural communication means the extent to which the people of two states

communicate with each other in the spirit of art, evocation, artistry, etc. The third and last point which forms a hindrance to cooperation is the long intervals between joint events being arranged in the two countries.

To conclude, the more problems are resolved, the more intercultural communication is provided, and the more joint events are arranged to see closer cooperation between the two countries.

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# MIRZOKHID KARSHIEV<sup>1</sup> – Public administration reforms in Uzbekistan: Listening to citizens and public consultative councils

## Introduction

Following a sudden power transition in September-December 2016, after the death of Islam Karimov, a long-time President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, former Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev emerged as the new leader of the country. Although reiterating his commitment to the legacy of Islam Karimov, Mirziyoyev soon started a new stream of reforms, which were assembled under the umbrella of his pre-election motto: “The state should serve its citizens, not vice versa”.

The reforms earned widespread attention on Uzbekistan, which was considered a stable authoritarian regime by its critics,<sup>2</sup> and many observers cautiously applauded the reforms towards democratisation, good governance and removing bad practices that limited economic as well as social freedoms. In 2019 “The Economist”, a liberal British newspaper, awarded it “The country of the Year” title, referring to its elimination of forced labour and in general, a move towards more democratisation at times when democracy is seemingly in retreat.<sup>3</sup>

These post-Karimov era changes have received mixed reactions in academic circles. While for some, the reform programme holds the promise of reshaping the domestic political landscape and changing the fundamental relationship between the citizen and state,<sup>4</sup> for others, this is an authoritarian modernisation route, oriented towards the achievement of rapid economic growth.<sup>5</sup>

This paper tries to shed a different light onto the (changing) state-society relations in Uzbekistan, using a theoretical framework offered by Joel Migdal (2001) and looking into both the “image” and “practices” of state.

Using the example of the public councils (*Jamoatchilik kengashlari*) and President’s reception houses (*Prezident qabulxonalari*) in Uzbekistan that have been initiated since 2016, I will look into the cases of reforms, aimed at greater public participation and oversight over state administration, and improving the responsiveness of public bodies to citizen demands. I will analyse if/how new structures based on a new

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<sup>2</sup> Murtazashvili (2012).

<sup>3</sup> The Economist (2019).

<sup>4</sup> See Bowyer (2018); Sever (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Anceschi (2018).

ideology of administrative change and the old culture converged in the transition processes; and how these influence the day-to-day lives of street-level bureaucrats.<sup>6</sup>

### State-society relations

Departing from earlier definitions of state that highlight the role of human community, or the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory,<sup>7</sup> for Migdal<sup>8</sup> the state is a *field* of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) the image of a coherent, controlling organisation in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory, and (2) actual practices of its multiple parts. The concept of field, adopted from Bourdieu (1993), highlights relationships in a multidimensional space, one in which the symbolic element is as important as the material.

For Bourdieu, fields denote arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation and exchange of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate, exchange, and monopolise different kinds of power resources (capitals).<sup>9</sup>

Migdal argues that the state is constructed and reconstructed, invented and reinvented, like any other group or organisation, through its interaction as a whole and of its parts with others. It is not a fixed entity; its goals, means, organisation, operative rules and partners change as it allies with and opposes others inside and outside its territory. As he put it, the state continually morphs.<sup>10</sup>

Norbert Elias<sup>11</sup> famously argued that rather than seeing society as it is, one must view it “as it becomes, has become in the past, is becoming in the present, and may become in the future”, a position Migdal, in general, shares. He argues that the search for the moment of original sin - the event or condition or crossroads that one can read back to from the present to see how the current state of affairs came to be - overdetermines the present state of affairs and forces history into the holding pen of its hypotheses.<sup>12</sup>

In this regard, the state-in-society approach points researchers to the *process* of interaction of groupings with one another and with those whose actual behaviour they are vying to control or influence.<sup>13</sup> The image posits an entity having two sorts of boundaries: (1) territorial boundaries between the state and other states, and (2) social

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<sup>6</sup> Lipsky (1980).

<sup>7</sup> Weber (1918).

<sup>8</sup> Migdal (2001), p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Swartz (2016).

<sup>10</sup> Migdal (2001), p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> In: Goudsblum & Mennell (1998), p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> Migdal (2001), p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Migdal (2001), p. 23.

boundaries between the state – its (public) actors and agencies- and those subject to its rules (private).<sup>14</sup>

Practices may serve to recognise, reinforce and validate not only the territorial element of state control, but also the social separation between the state and other social formations (the public-private divide) in numerous ways.<sup>15</sup>

Edward Shils, a renowned sociologist, also reviewed the state-society relations through the centre-periphery lens. According to him, three primary components of the centre are values and beliefs, institutions, and elites, and these can be combined in a seamless weave. His understanding of society rests upon the dynamism and activism of the centre; the periphery remains a passive recipient. An understanding of how societies persist and change must start with organisations that exercise social control, that subordinate individual inclinations to the behaviour these organisations prescribe. The central political and social drama of recent history has been between the idea of the state and often implicit agendas of other social formations (which may very well include parts of the state itself) for how society should be organised. Social control is the currency for which social organisations compete. Increasing levels of social control are reflected in a scale of three indicators, namely: compliance, participation, and legitimacy.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the available literature refers to Uzbekistan, as well as other Central Asian states, as authoritarian, and the state having an enormous clout over the society.<sup>17</sup> Analysis on the nature of authoritarianism in the Central Asian region and in Uzbekistan has rarely gone beyond attempts of regime typologisation as opposed to seeking to theorise the underpinnings of political power and its legitimation. Some of these studies claim that authoritarianism adversely affects the pace of democratic developments in Central Asia,<sup>18</sup> while others, referring to social and political peculiarities of the region, see authoritarianism as the most rational and realistic model for maintaining political stability in Central Asia.<sup>19</sup>

More researchers have been interested in the so-called “image of an authoritarian state” in Central Asia, which resulted in excellent books on state legitimation strategies through creating structures and discourses that justify exercises of power such as a drive for modernisation, improvements in public service delivery etc.<sup>20</sup> Writing about the state-building exercises, Laura Adams labels Uzbekistan “a spectacular state”, providing an account of how Uzbekistan’s cultural and political elites engaged in a

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<sup>14</sup> Migdal (2001), p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 44-47.

<sup>17</sup> Collins (2006); Melvin (2004); Schatz (2002); Reeves et al. (2014).

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Schatz (2002); Fumagalli (2007).

<sup>19</sup> Kubicek (1998); Gleason (2001).

<sup>20</sup> Matveeva (2009); du Boulay and Isaacs (2019).

highly directed, largely successful programme of nation building through tightly controlled mass spectacles and celebrations.<sup>21</sup>

### **Bureaucracy and public administration**

Given the limited access for researchers, the academic literature on bureaucracy in Central Asia, especially the analysis of the everyday working of local bureaucracies in order to understand the state, is very scarce. From a theoretical standpoint, we are not sure to what extent the western notions of bureaucracy<sup>22</sup> and patterns of decision-making in administrative organisations with its emphasis on bounded rationality and “satisficing”<sup>23</sup> may be applied in analysing the bureaucracy in a different context. However, I’m inclined to agree with Lipsky’s argument that “the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish and the devices they invent to cope with the uncertainties and work pressures, effectively *become* public policies they carry out”.<sup>24</sup> While bureaucracies are sometimes portrayed as consummate producers of knowledge, generating data on the minutiae of their subjects and enabling state surveillance,<sup>25</sup> some recent works have concentrated on how that knowledge is produced or embodied.<sup>26</sup>

The state in Uzbekistan has been described as highly centralised, with local governments totally subordinated to the central government.<sup>27</sup> According to Markowitz, however, neopatrimonialism within the state infrastructure halts political and economic reform, undermines the rule of law, and diminishes social welfare provision to the public.<sup>28</sup> His field study of local elites in Uzbekistan has shown they have powerful influence over politics at the subnational level, and the central government’s ability to control the behaviour of local elites is quite limited.<sup>29</sup>

A small number of endeavours to understand and explain public sector reforms in Central Asia focused on the choices of the authoritarian political leaders.<sup>30</sup> Several authors, who studied administrative reforms in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, concluded that policy choice rather than cultural values played a determining role in administrative change.<sup>31</sup> Another research concluded that intra-elite bargaining plays a crucial role in shaping institutional and regime change.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Adams (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Merton, Gray, Hockey and Selvin (1952).

<sup>23</sup> Simon (1997).

<sup>24</sup> Lipsky (2010).

<sup>25</sup> Foucault (1977); Scott (1998).

<sup>26</sup> Hoag and Hull (2017).

<sup>27</sup> Urinboyev (2018).

<sup>28</sup> Markowitz (2012).

<sup>29</sup> Markowitz (2008).

<sup>30</sup> Knox (2019); Markovitz (2012); Bhuiyan & Amagoh (2011).

<sup>31</sup> Perlman and Gleason (2007); Blackmon (2005).

<sup>32</sup> Luong (2002).

A different approach to understand the state and bureaucracy in Uzbekistan and Central Asia has been taken by a group of authors who explore how the state is experienced and produced in everyday encounters, or in other words, how “politics” is *performed*.<sup>33</sup> Still, most of the chapters in their work focus on how performance is seen and experienced, rather than acted.

In the absence of access to the workings of bureaucracy, most scholars turned their gaze into society’s informal norms, everyday micro-level power relations as well as stories of ordinary citizens vs. “the state” or what De Certeau would call “the practices of everyday life”.<sup>34</sup>

### Everyday life and informality

There has been a plethora of ethnographic research of everyday life in Uzbekistan.<sup>35</sup> Rustamjon Urinboyev focused on society’s informal norms, everyday micro-level power relations, and non-monetary considerations as an additional lens for understanding local level corruption.<sup>36</sup> He found that during the pre-Mirziyoyev era, in the light of deteriorating economic conditions “the state was absent” in everyday life and daily conversations in rural Ferghana. For Rasanayagam,<sup>37</sup> who studied rural communities in Andijan and Samarkand, the state itself has become informalised and personalised. Zanca analysed village culture and the lives of village residents by focusing his observations and interview questions on people’s daily lives and struggles in newly independent Uzbekistan.<sup>38</sup>

The concept of informality has become a dominant lens for understanding Central Asian political developments. Examination of ‘clans’, ‘regional patronage networks’, and ‘the relations between clans and regimes’, development of neopatrimonialism, clientelistic networks and political mobilisation have been at the centre of focus.<sup>39</sup> Bazin,<sup>40</sup> who researched state authoritarianism and labour migration in Uzbekistan, concluded that political coercion and the inculcation of a nationalist ideology on the one hand and the economic degradation of living standards on the other resulted in the reinforcement of family ties and repression of individuality in spite of huge labour migration and introduction of a slightly freer market. According to Ismailbekova,<sup>41</sup> who conducted research on patronage networks in Kyrgyzstan, kinship and patronage

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<sup>33</sup> Reeves, Rasanayagam & Beyer (2014).

<sup>34</sup> de Certeau (1984).

<sup>35</sup> Sahadeo & Zanca (2011).

<sup>36</sup> Urinboyev (2013).

<sup>37</sup> Rasanayagam (2011).

<sup>38</sup> Zanca (2011).

<sup>39</sup> Collins (2006); Tunçer-Kılavuz (2009); Radnitz (2010); Canfield & Rasuly-Paleczek (2011), McGlinchey (2011); Isaacs (2014).

<sup>40</sup> Bazin (2008).

<sup>41</sup> Ismailbekova (2017).

develop apace with democracy, although patronage relations may stymie individual political opinion and action.

Furthermore, post-Soviet Studies literature emphasises the Soviet legacy in describing informal governance practices,<sup>42</sup> while some scholars have also highlighted the impact and sustainability of pre-soviet and traditional practices/institutions such as “mahalla”<sup>43</sup> and legal pluralism.<sup>44</sup>

### **Citizen participation**

Another field of study and practice, promoting participatory mechanisms, has been development studies. Critical of “normal” development practices as Eurocentrism, positivism and top-downism and the tendency to equate development with the modernity of Western societies, the participatory development theory emphasises changing power dynamics within a society, valorising the voices of local citizens.<sup>45</sup>

A cluster of principles that have come to be known as *New Public Management* (NPM) has come to dominate the public administration reform agenda in the West since the 1980s. The NPM principles include decentralisation of budget responsibility to local governments, privatisation of state assets and services, outsourcing, competition among state agencies for government funding, and the reconfiguration of the citizen as a “consumer of public services”.<sup>46</sup> In western countries, implementation of the NPM resulted in fundamental reconceptualisation of the relationship between the citizens and government, with non-state actors increasingly involved in the policy process.

Uzbekistan, as many other post-Soviet countries, has been showing a greater interest, at least nominally, to improved state-citizen interactions and citizen feedback systems for the past ten years. There are several traits of thinking on why and how citizen participation has become fashionable recently.

One of the most interesting developments immediately after the appointment of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as interim president in September 2016 has been the opening of a virtual reception, where any citizen could write down their grievances, problems in relation to the actions of different government bodies, and proposals. The applications have been treated with high urgency and they would not be considered as solved until an applicant agreed. Consequently, over 1 million applications were received in only three months, providing a feedback mechanism to the government as well as demonstrating the critical level of distance between the state and the society. Given the popularity of the virtual reception, President ordered an establishment of brick-

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<sup>42</sup> Polese (2008); Srubar (1991), Dadabayev (2017); Ledeneva (1998).

<sup>43</sup> Urinboyev (2014).

<sup>44</sup> Sartori (2016).

<sup>45</sup> Mohan (2014).

<sup>46</sup> Owen & Bindman (2019), p. 102.

and-mortar offices in all districts and cities, vertically integrated to the specific unit in the President's administration, headed by one of his close aides.

However, as more than three years have passed, it's still unclear to what degree the relations between the state bureaucrats and the citizens have changed in fundamental ways.

### **Conclusion: Public administration reforms and the role of public councils**

The literature on participatory authoritarianism has various findings. The study of participatory innovations in China finds that by allowing limited and controlled political participation, transparency and accountability to develop, the reform improves the responsiveness of the political system. Another research on Russia argues the Public Chamber is a "substitute institution, intended to serve some of the positive functions of real democratic institutions, such as providing the regime with societal feedback- but without holding authorities fully accountable before the public and without putting rulers' hold on power at risk in the way that true democratic institutions would"<sup>47</sup>.

In Uzbekistan, in April 2018, the Law "On public oversight" has come into effect<sup>48</sup> followed by a resolution of the President of Uzbekistan, establishing public councils in all state entities,<sup>49</sup> including in law enforcement bodies, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as regional and Tashkent city khokimiyats (local executive bodies). The initiative closely resembles similar efforts in Kazakhstan<sup>50</sup>, which adopted the law on Public Councils in 2015 and started nationwide establishment in 2016 as well as that of Russia, which started off with Putin's speech in 2005 and the establishment of the Public Chamber<sup>51</sup>.

The preliminary overview of the activity of public council throughout Uzbekistan shows that results seem to fluctuate. The public consultative council at the Tashkent city khokimiyat, which was established even before the Presidential resolution in May 2018, has seen its whole team to resign in summer 2019 and new members, including its chairman to be appointed only in November that year. Another former chairman of the public council at the Ministry of ICT once lamented that after the change of the ministry's leadership, he wasn't able to meet with them for over half a year.

One of the most-quoted problems hindering activities of the public consultative bodies was poor regulation and regulatory gaps in implementing the public oversight

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<sup>47</sup> Petrov, Lipman and Hale (2010)

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.lex.uz/docs/3679099>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.lex.uz/docs/3808835>

<sup>50</sup> [kisi.kz/uploads/33/files/4IKv9NEx.pdf](https://kisi.kz/uploads/33/files/4IKv9NEx.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Noskova (2016).

mechanisms in practice. The Presidential resolution<sup>52</sup> from October 2019 calls for amending the law on “Public oversight”, and another initiative, voiced out in January 2020, envisions establishment of a National Public Chamber.<sup>53</sup> While many of the ministers and regional administrations boast that they have public councils, many of them have been rather inactive.

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.lex.uz/docs/4538246>

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# **GUNEL MADADLI<sup>1</sup> – The factors behind effective performance of public service delivery by the ASAN Service**

## **Introduction**

After declaring its independence, Azerbaijan started to build a new system for its public sector. However, this initiative was not successful for a long time because of the continued existence of the remnants of the former system which lacked efficiency. The best way to measure the performance of the public sector is to look at the efficiency of public service delivery.<sup>2</sup> Different states in the world established their public service delivery model by borrowing techniques from the private sector while putting the citizens at the centre of the service process. This citizen-centric or citizen-oriented model was also one of the key characteristics of the model that was established in Azerbaijan after independence. In 2012 Azerbaijan adopted new measures to reform the public sector entirely by building a One-Stop-Shop (OSS) model.<sup>3</sup> The model focuses on the optimisation, simplification of Public Service Delivery and alignment of public services with citizens' needs and expectations.<sup>4</sup>

However, the founding OSS model did not go unchallenged, due to the lack of the required level of transparency, accessibility, efficiency and accountability. The existing problems in the public sector such as unnecessary bureaucracy, lengthy procedures, subjectivity and incompetence, as well as red tape, excessively delayed consideration of applications, and petty corruption could not be overcome. Even though the law on combatting corruption was adopted, and both active and passive bribery were considered as criminal offenses; and the new strategy on transparency was launched, the implementation of the legislation was not fully accomplished.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, there was mistrust between civil servants and citizens, caused by a lack of public confidence in governmental entities. Public services were provided by various government agencies instead of one unified body. Hence, the management, standardisation, coordination and digitisation of public services were stumbling blocks until the establishment of the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAPSSI) which is the responsible body of management<sup>6</sup> of ASAN (Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network) centers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Huseynli, E. (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Karimov, G. and J. Alizada (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2012a).

<sup>7</sup> ASAN literally means "easy" in Azerbaijani. As an acronym "ASAN" stands for "Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network".

After the long history of corrupt and ineffective public delivery services in Azerbaijan, the ASAN Service was able to gain the public trust and support by constructing an open relationship with citizens. Today the ASAN Service has 16 centres in Baku and the regions.<sup>8</sup> This paper will focus on how this institution became very successful in a short period of time and how it prolongs its continuous achievements. In the following sections, the reasons behind the success of the ASAN Service will be examined by analysing the challenges it faced. The data was collected through online sources as well as interviews with civil servants of SAPSSI.<sup>9</sup> The research presented here focuses on three main problems: corruption, bureaucratic hurdles and the lack of skilled personnel.

### **Solutions to Corruption: Monitoring and values**

For many years, the most serious problem in Azerbaijan's public service was corruption, which affected the whole system and caused mistrust between citizens and the civil service. When ASAN was founded the main target was to build a strict monitoring and assessment system which keeps every action of the institution under control. The concept of the ASAN Service can be defined through two main characteristics: first, it is an institution that brings public services provided by different relevant ministries and agencies under one umbrella of one state entity; second, it is a mechanism that sends applications to relevant ministries for processing, thereby facilitating the process.<sup>10</sup> In order to achieve these features, there were certain objectives to be accomplished. One of the main objectives in building the ASAN Service was to provide services for citizens with less expenses and taking less time.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the institution targeted to achieve an environment where citizens were treated ethically and with a high level of professionalism. Additionally, the Service aimed at a technological revolution in the public sector by transitioning into electronic services.<sup>12</sup>

The responsibility of strict monitoring of ASAN activities is carried out by the SAPSSI in order to conduct regular assessment of quality and transparency of the services provided.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, a separate department of SAPSSI was established to supervise the activities of ASAN Service through surveillance cameras recording the service process in the centres; through on-site presence of the department's representative; and via oral, paper-based and online surveys among citizens.<sup>14</sup> There is also a hotline

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<sup>8</sup> ASAN Service official website (S.D.).

<sup>9</sup> I only conducted three interviews with the representatives of SAPSSI because of the limited time. I interviewed Ali Hasanov, the head adviser in Monitoring and Assessment Department, Kamil Bakhishaliyev, sector manager in Human Recourses and Training Department and Orkhan Demirli, Head of in Human Recourses and Training Department.

<sup>10</sup> Huseynli, E. (2016).

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2012b).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2012a).

<sup>14</sup> Huseynli (2016).

for concerns, comments, complaints and suggestions of customers and to answer their questions. ASAN also regularly seeks feedback from clients.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the department collects and analyses statistical data on provided services, citizen flow and applications, and at the same time assesses the performance of service-rendering officers, prepares periodic reports, and investigates citizens' complaints and violations of service-related rules and regulations by service-providing civil servants. When needed, the department takes necessary measures in that regard.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to monitoring employees, the key was to establish connections with the civil servants. First, ASAN adopted a very transparent and fair hiring system with the cooperation of the State Service Commission through tests and interview stages.<sup>17</sup> Second, after recruitment, all newly hired personnel participate in mandatory training to learn the objectives and principles of the ASAN Service and their responsibilities towards society. As a result, a loyal staff who values the principles of ASAN more than gaining extra benefits for their service was created. The bond between the public servants and the institution prevents the personnel to take advantages of the system. The ASAN Service also brought the concept of volunteerism into public service which played an essential role in the elimination of corruption. ASAN volunteers are hired for a two months programme with optional extension for another two months. They participate in social responsibility projects and provided with help whenever needed. More importantly, they preserve and pass the values of the ASAN Service on to others. The volunteers are potential civil servants since they acquire the necessary professional and social skills to work in public service, for example in ASAN.

Another significant strategy developed to prevent corruption was to institute an ethical environment which is managed by strong principles without concessions. According to a representative of the Monitoring and Assessment Department of SAPSSI, violation of law is punished with extreme measures with no excuses. However, the department has not faced corruption cases since the establishment of the ASAN Service. Thus, the ASAN Service has redefined the perception of public services in the eyes of the citizens by demonstrating a strong will regarding illegal activities.

### **Dealing with Unjustified Bureaucratic Hurdles**

All these accomplishments were reached through difficult and complicated processes, due to challenging cooperation with relevant ministries and other government agencies. Every public service faces bureaucratic hurdles while providing services. In Azerbaijan it was even more complicated due to the lack of one unified institution and it required several public agencies and additional documents to deliver services like issuance or renewal of identity and passports or driving licenses. For instance, the

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<sup>15</sup> Bayramova (2014).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Public Service (2001).

renewal of driving licenses and the issuing and renewal of ID cards and passports was done by the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the issuing of archive information by the National Archives; the registration of legal entities and individuals by the Ministry of Taxes; the issuing of notes by the Land Registry regarding the registration of births, deaths, marriages and divorces and other changes in civil status; and the determination of occupational pensions and much more.<sup>18</sup> Even though each agency has their own representative in the ASAN Service, the right conditions to provide those services are managed by ASAN.<sup>19</sup>

The first step in solving this problem was to establish a one-window system or as mentioned before, the OSS model. This model helped the citizens to obtain all required documents from relevant agencies in one building. With the cooperation of the relevant ministries and agencies, the services were given in two ways: through the ASAN service, and via the relevant Ministry itself. The choice was up to the citizen to decide where they would like to get their services delivered. Considering the Services provided by ASAN required less time and bureaucratic procedures, citizens preferred ASAN, therefore, some services are now completely allocated to ASAN as the only provider.

By understanding the advantages of technology in reducing paperwork and saving energy and time, the ASAN Service transferred its activities to an electronic system. For instance, one of the most demanded services is issuance or renewal of identity cards, which used to require a lot of documents. Thanks to the electronic system, in the current situation, information in the system can be handled without demanding multiple official papers.<sup>20</sup> While the bureaucratic procedures are shortened, the time spent in servicing one citizen is also decreased dramatically, saving time, energy and the resources of both citizens and civil servants.

Another technological advancement in the public sector is the official website of the ASAN service, where citizens can get all the necessary information without coming to the centers. Hence, when they apply for any services, they will have all the knowledge they need to know about the documents, procedures, applicable fees and timetables. The website also contains detailed information about the locations of all service centres, maps, transport guide, contact details and contact persons. One of the useful functions of the website is to provide effective assistance to citizens through an online queue service, which helps citizens to get into an online queue for any service and at any centre throughout the week.<sup>21</sup> Since the waiting line is quite long at ASAN centres because of the high number of applications, citizens sometimes have to wait for hours to get the services they need. With the online queue, citizens do not have to wait in line at the centres. By getting an appointment through an online queue, they avoid

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<sup>18</sup> Bayramova, J. (2014).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> ASAN Service official website (S.D.).

<sup>21</sup> Huseynli (2016).

losing time and arrive at the centre at a pre-arranged time. Furthermore, there is a hotline and a chat room on the website where citizens can call and ask questions related to the services without going to the centres.

The ASAN Service also launched an application to reach more people with their services with less effort. The application provides the same information as the website and additionally it shows the queue statistics, reflecting the real-time queue situation at the centres as regards the number of persons having received services and the number of persons waiting in queues for any service. This application helps citizens to be aware of the situation in every ASAN Service centre, instead of waiting for hours to receive the service.

### **Training Adequate Personnel**

One of the significant problems of the public sector in Azerbaijan was the lack of competent staff due to an ineffective human resource management system. The ASAN Service initiated a new path to establish adequate professional capacity. Considering the non-existence of Human Resource Departments in Azerbaijan's public sector, the ASAN Service adopted the experiences of the private sector as well as the public systems of other countries. By applying merit-based recruitment, the ASAN Service was able to recruit high-skilled people in order to provide quality services. Since the jobs in ASAN are categorised as civil service jobs, the recruitment exams were carried out with the Civil Service Commission (now State Examination Committee). The first stage of the exam was executed by the Commission, however, in the second stage, namely the interview, the State Agency was also included to provide a more transparent and objective selection process. Following the hiring process, mandatory trainings are held for the new recruits to inform them about the ethical guidelines and principles of the Agency. The trainings for improvement of professional skills are provided throughout the years categorised as mandatory, targeted and voluntary. ASAN also benefited from the experience of public agencies of other countries by attending training abroad and bringing experts to share their knowledge. Another innovation in personnel development in the ASAN policy is performance appraisal, which is conducted annually to measure the efficiency of the staff. The assessment affects the income of the civil servants as well, so that those who are highly graded due to their efficient performance are rewarded, and those who fail to pass the evaluation process get a decrease in their paycheck.

Unfortunately, low quality activities of the public service damaged public confidence in the civil service. ASAN needed to regain that confidence in order to be efficient in service provision. First, ASAN created an open environment in the centers to illustrate transparency, accountability and objectivity. Then, several social organisations were established to build a new relationship between citizens and civil servants. There are some projects which are still continuing, such as ASAN Mektub, ASAN Kadr, and the

ASAN Volunteer School. These aim at strengthening the communication between citizens and the civil servants.

Another step to restore public confidence was the introduction of uniforms for the civil servants of the ASAN Service. It is argued that society subconsciously respects and trusts uniforms. When ASAN provides the same services with the relevant ministries and agencies, those civil servants wear ASAN uniforms. It gives the message of change and innovation in service provision. With the new image, there is a new service delivery system, which ensures trust and respect. Furthermore, the uniform impacts the attitudes of the civil servants by emphasising their responsibility and importance of their work and being part of something bigger than themselves. It expresses the significance of teamwork and increases the value of the institution in the eyes of the employees.

Additionally, ASAN was able to achieve a dramatic decrease in discrimination in the workplace by providing opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender, age, race, disability etc. in every position. Even though there is no age limit for working at ASAN, young people are more eager to apply to positions because of the active work environment, requiring high-level communication skills and more familiarity with electronic systems. Moreover, all ASAN centres are equipped and designed for people who are visually impaired, or who have limited physical capabilities or require wheelchair access. In short, the State Agency understands that it can only provide effective civil services by focusing on the needs and expectations of citizens.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, currently, the ASAN Service is a successful OSS model and many countries look to Azerbaijan's ASAN as an example for effective public service delivery. Its aim to provide government services to the public in a convenient and transparent way has resulted in satisfied customers and strong public confidence in the civil service. It is not easy to break the stereotypes of civil service, especially in a former Soviet country where bureaucracy is accepted to be a complicated and inefficient institution. However, ASAN established a new image of civil service agencies by eliminating issues such as excessive red tape, abuse of authority and refusals to consider applications, by focusing mainly on the needs of the citizens.

Even though there is a huge breakthrough in the public sector, there are still many issues to be handled and improved. When conducting interviews, all ASAN representatives emphasised that SAPSSI and ASAN can do better and therefore they continue to work on new projects locally and abroad to develop new ways of providing services to citizens. ASAN is sharing their practices with other countries, in particular as regards its HR policy, training capacity, PR strategy, construction and design of

centres, and application of advanced technologies.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the Head of Human Resources and Trainings emphasised that these previously mentioned issues need to be improved.

Although the queue system is developed in ASAN, there are still many obstacles to overcome in order to reduce the time citizens spend waiting in the queue. Another matter is transferring to a digital system completely, since there are still some services carried out on paper. More importantly, every representative interviewed mentioned the rising demands of citizens. They expect better and more quality services from ASAN and increasing customer expectations in turn challenges the Agency to offer improved services. Continuous evolution is the key in quality service which should be the goal of every public service agency.

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<sup>22</sup> South-south World (2016).

# ORKHAN NADIROV<sup>1</sup> & FARID ADILOV<sup>2</sup> – How does the number of women in Parliament impact the laws affecting women? <sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

The number of women in parliament around the world has increased in recent years.<sup>4</sup> If the number of women in parliament increases, it will improve gender equality in representative bodies,<sup>5</sup> and change the political culture,<sup>6</sup> and impact the conditions of women in society as a whole. There has been growing interest in analysing how female representation in national parliaments affects women-friendly policies, the nature of this relationship has been questioned in modern scholarship. It has been noted that high-income countries are more gender-egalitarian and thus have better family legislation.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, leftist ideology and left parties are more likely to favour more redistributive social policies, and therefore they often obtain more support.<sup>8</sup>

The analysis in this research adds to a body of research examining how women-friendly policies are affected when there are more women in parliament. It specifically looks at the relationship between female legislators and gender-sensitive laws, such as laws against domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment, as well as laws concerning divorce and abortion. Specifically, it is hypothesised that there is a positive relationship between women MPs and the existence of women-friendly policies in high-income countries with a left-wing cabinet, and there is a negative relationship between women in parliament and women-friendly policies in low-income countries with a right-wing cabinet.

Following from the above, the rest of the paper is organised as follows: the first section introduces the model and the hypotheses. Subsequently, the methodology and the data used in the study are put forward. The final part of the paper gives concluding remarks, and the limitations of the study are presented along with suggestions for future research.

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<sup>3</sup> This paper is a shorter version of a manuscript submitted for publication to an international journal.

<sup>4</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Barnes and Burchard, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Lovenduski and Norris, 2003; Liu and Banaszak, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Dollar and Gatti, 1999; Balamoune-Lutz and McGillivray's, 2009; Claudia and Barbara, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Norris, 1985; Rule, 1987; Beckwith, 1992; Hicks and Misra, 1993; Mutpfay, 1997; Caul, 1999, 2001; Reynolds, 1999; O'Regan, 2000; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006; Waylen, 2008; Bauer and Burnet, 2013; Asiedu et al., 2016; Kittilson, 2008; Lambert, 2008.

## Methodology and data

To study the relationship between women in parliament and the existence of women-friendly policies requires a model that can examine the newly developed explanation in a cross-country design. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method is employed to estimate multiple regression models.<sup>9</sup> Dummy variables capture the average income of a country, high or low (*LowHighDummy*), and the ideological stance of a country (*LeftRightDummy*). A third variable (*WomenInParliament*) measures the representation of females in the national legislature. The coefficient on the three-way interaction term, *LowHighDummy*  $\times$  *LeftRightDummy*  $\times$  *WomenInParliament<sub>i</sub>* is the most important for the current study. This coefficient will be used to test the hypotheses. Letting *i* index countries, the model is as shown below:

$$\begin{aligned} WomenFriendlyPolicies_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 WomenInParliament_i + \beta_2 LowHighDummy + \\ & + \beta_3 LeftRightDummy + \beta_4 LowHighDummy \times LeftRightDummy + \\ & \beta_5 LowHighDummy \times WomenInParliament_i + \beta_6 LeftRightDummy \times WomenInParliament_i + \\ & + \beta_7 LowHighDummy \times LeftRightDummy \times WomenInParliament_i + Controls_i \end{aligned}$$

This section introduces the data from 27 countries for 2014 that was used in empirical tests. The countries in the tests are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and United Kingdom. The data is from publicly available sources, including the World Inequality Database, the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), the OECD, Transparency International, the World Bank, the Database for Institutional Comparisons in Europe (DICE), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The dependent variables used in all regression models are laws covering domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, divorce, and abortion.

These variables are based on a 5-point scale corresponding to legislation dealing with law: legislation enacted (0), legislation enacted but there are extensive testified challenges with implementation (0.25), legislation is poor (0.5), legislation is extremely poor (0.75), and there is no existing law (1), respectively. The divorce variable is coded 0, 0.5, and 1, corresponding to legislation that safeguards the same rights to women and men (0), legislation that limits some women's capacity (0.5), or countries that do not give rights to women to seek divorce absolutely (1), respectively. The abortion variable applies measures of 0, 0.5, and 1, where abortion is legal (0), legal only under certain situations (0.5), or not legal (1), respectively. The independent variable measuring women's political representation corresponds to the proportion of females in the national legislature (percentage of women in parliament).

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<sup>9</sup> See Nadirov et al. (2017) for more details.

A median split is used to divide the countries into low- and high income, and right- and left-wing groups. Classification of countries as low and high-income countries is based on annual average national income, adjusted for living expenses Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) from the World Inequality Database. A dummy variable *LowHighDummy* is coded “1” if the average income in the country is below the median value for all countries and “0” otherwise.

CHES is used to measure the overriding ideology of each country’s government. Left-wing parties are in favour of more of an active role of the government in the economy. Right-wing parties are in favour of a reduced government role, and more privatisation, lower taxes, less regulation, and a leaner welfare state. The countries are split on the median value for all countries, based on average values of all political parties for each country in 2014. The dummy variable *LeftRightDummy* is coded “1” if the ideological stance on economic issues of countries is left-wing and “0” if the ideological stance on economic issues of countries is right-wing. Following previous studies in this area, the control variables are measures of corruption, female representation in the labour force, the importance of religion, unemployment, average female education, average population age, gender inequality, democracy, and economic freedom.

## Results

The econometric assumptions for the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method for the estimation of the multiple regression models are from Wooldridge.<sup>10</sup> Table 3.1 shows the significant results from the empirical tests.<sup>11</sup> As depicted in the methodology section, the hypotheses will be tested through the interaction term *LowHighDummy x LeftRightDummy x WomenInParliament<sub>i</sub>*.

One of the most important empirical findings is in Column 3, when policies on rape are the dependent variable. In this model, the interaction term *LowHighDummy x LeftRightDummy x WomenInParliament* is significant ( $\beta = -8.511$ ,  $p = 0.048$ ). The negative coefficient on the interaction term means that, in low income and right-wing countries, an increase in women’s participation in parliament increases women-friendly policies on rape. Interestingly, this evidence does not support the formulated hypothesis. The reverse of the prediction holds.

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<sup>10</sup> Wooldridge 2002, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Full results are not presented for brevity, but are available from the authors.

Table 3.1 Empirical Results<sup>12</sup>

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent Variable:	Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment	Rape
	2.717	0.750	-0.253
<i>WomenInParliament</i>	(0.054)	(0.310)	(0.807)
	<b>1.210*</b>	0.496	0.0345
<i>LowHighDummy</i>	<b>(0.041)</b>	(0.087)	(0.929)
	1.003	-0.625	-0.271
<i>LeftRightDummy</i>	(0.071)	(0.199)	(0.688)
<i>LowHighDummy x LeftRightDummy</i>	-0.987	0.044	1.756
<i>LeftRightDummy</i>	(0.149)	(0.946)	(0.076)
<i>LowHighDummy x LeftRightDummy</i>	-2.961	<b>-2.359*</b>	1.019
<i>WomenInParliament</i>	(0.107)	<b>(0.047)</b>	(0.518)
<i>LeftRightDummy x WomenInParliament</i>	-2.394	1.324	0.437
<i>WomenInParliament</i>	(0.104)	(0.300)	(0.807)
<i>LowHighDummy x LeftRightDummy x WomenInParliament</i>			
<i>LeftRightDummy x WomenInParliament</i>	1.985	2.138	<b>-8.511*</b>
<i>WomenInParliament</i>	(0.426)	(0.449)	<b>(0.048)</b>
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.758	0.762	0.694

Equations are estimated with a constant (not shown). The coefficients on the controls have been suppressed to save space.

Number of observations in all models, n=27.

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001; p-values are in parentheses.

(1) H3; *LowHighDummy* = 1: lower than average income; *LeftRightDummy* = 1: left-wing government

(2) H4; *LowHighDummy* = 1: lower than average income; *LeftRightDummy* = 0: right-wing government

(3) H4; *LowHighDummy* = 1: lower than average income; *LeftRightDummy* = 0: right-wing government

<sup>12</sup> Only the main significant results are presented here.

## Conclusion

In this study, the effect of women MPs on women-friendly policies, in particular gender-sensitive laws, has been investigated. Our results suggest that left and right-wing ideologies are not important for high-income countries, as we predicted. The main factor stems from the country's average income. Therefore, it seems that more developed states are more likely to support policies in favour of women.

Based on our results, it is hard to disentangle the effect of a country's income level from the country's ideology on women-friendly policies. However, the analytical distinction between the concepts of a country's income level and ideology can be partly contextualised. The findings show that less developed states with leftist ideology are more likely to support policies in favour of women. This supports the idea of the power of the left parties. As Matland and Studlar note, left parties may 'feel a need to be sensitive to groups traditionally excluded from the circles of power' and this may incorporate women.<sup>13</sup> Our current findings are similar to the studies of Norris (1985), Rule (1987), Beckwith (1992), Hicks and Misra (1993), Reynolds (1999), Caul (1999), Caul, (2001), Lambert (2008), and Kittilson (2008) who argue that leftist governments provide better opportunities for adopting women's policies.

There are several contributions made to the existing literature from this research. First, by examining the effect of women's participation in parliament on women-friendly policies, it suggests a new explanation based on a government's ideology and a country's income level. Second, previous studies mainly focused on female-friendly policies on social security and social spending, health, education, and employment issues. However, we also analysed the connection between women MPs and gender-sensitive laws such as domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, divorce, and abortion.

Although this study makes several contributions, it also has limitations. The hypotheses hold good only in one model, meaning that the results are not robust. We believe that it is because of the database used in the current analysis. Unfortunately, due to limited data, we were unable to study information for more than a single year. The current analysis covers only 2014, and future research may include panel data analysis to add other years and more countries. This could lead to more discernible, comparative, and robust analysis.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Bruce Dehning for his supervision in our paper. We would like also to thank the participants, particularly to Lala Jumayeva, for giving valuable comments, in the 2nd GCRF COMPASS Training School for Early Career Researchers, 17-21 February 2020, ADA University, Baku, Azerbaijan.

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<sup>13</sup> Matland and Studlar (1996), p. 729.

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# ELENA PILGUN<sup>1</sup> – The role of the crisis discourse in strengthening good governance in the ‘post truth’ era

## Introduction: crisis and post-truth

Global crises have always been accompanied by information flows. These flows, be they official claims, centralised mass media or social networks, tweets, comments, build psychological traps in society. Often, informative messages appear that can confuse, shock, appeal to emotions, etc. The increasingly frequent usage of such communicative techniques has created a kind of parallel system, a system of lies, understatements, and post-truths. As Perianova put it: “Lies, half-truths, alternative facts, fake news, hybrid truth, indeed the entire post-truth family, are winning the competition with facts and reality, which are often regarded as an endangered species”.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past few years, the resonance in society created by crisis situations has become increasingly widespread. Each crisis has tremendous consequences for the economic and political systems of countries and international relations and is inevitably accompanied by a high-profile media campaign. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis, Brexit, and the Persian Gulf crisis in 2020, etc. are among them. The information messages about such crises cannot be seen through the prism of post-truth, when the main emphasis is not on the truth, reality, reliability and quality of the transmitted information, but on gaining the trust of the audience. Chugrov notes that post-truth is “not a lie, not fake, or a myth, but some kind of special quasi-real environment” that arises

“if people ignore the facts and the truth no longer plays a significant role, giving way to populist rhetoric, be it a discussion of climate change, migration issues or military spending. At the same time, the truth is generated not by facts, but by people’s experience and emotions”.<sup>3</sup>

The main principle of post-truth is to believe in what you want to believe. In this case all crisis situations, be they economic, political or ecological, become a good environment for post-truth production, a chance to appeal to the society’s feelings and emotions. All messages about crises, and all speech can create a special communicative field that can potentially be used as a source of post-truth. This is the case when the content is related to a particular sphere of public life, and when they describe the conflict of social interests caused by human activities or environmental influences, and endanger the comfortable existence and sustainable development of

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<sup>2</sup> Perianova (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Churgov (2017).

society. This includes all speeches directly aimed at the description, analysis and management of crisis situations – in other words, at crisis discourse.

### **Crisis discourse and good governance**

In the era of post-truth, crisis discourse becomes a strategic tool for the management of socio-political issues by governments. It can help them to play with the degree of knowledge within society about the crises themselves and to influence society's attitudes towards what is happening. Crises themselves narrow down the access to the government, they jeopardise public order and have consequences on the political, economic or administrative levels of exercising power. Thus, the description of crisis situations is aimed at getting a pragmatic result: to calm down the uproar in society and to make people trust and support the government. So, the goal of crisis discourse is not only to inform on a crisis but also to influence society and find support, to build a strong backdrop for the further exercise of power. Otherwise, a crisis can serve as a reason for change of power, regime or at even the acting political figure.

The role of crisis discourse is very important for strengthening good governance in the era of post-truth. The concept of "Good Governance" presupposes sustainable development of the country in all the spheres of life based on the principles of rule of law, equality and inclusiveness of all members of society in the process, participation of citizens in decision-making, responsiveness of administrative solutions, and consensus-oriented mechanisms of decision-making. However it is not possible to achieve "Good Governance" in reality without communication, which presupposes the knowledge of crisis discourse strategies, techniques of public speaking, argumentation and negotiation, especially in the face of new crises and particularly in the age of populism, fake news and post-truth.

### **Types of crisis communication**

Crisis messages come from many different sources that vary in the characteristics of communication in a "certain social field that reflects the life experience and knowledge" of communicants.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, on the basis of the research material, we have the opportunity to classify crisis reports depending on the source of information:

- Political communication: crisis-oriented messages directly created by politicians in political communication (public speeches, official statements and interviews of political leaders, etc.).
- Mass media crisis messages: texts, created by journalists and distributed by means of the press, television, radio and the Internet, aimed at describing the situation.

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<sup>4</sup> Issers (1999).

- Crisis messages of governance/ management communication: these texts are produced to solve the problems of organisations. Examples of such texts are reports, statistical analyses, official documents, etc. describing the impact of crisis situations on production, population, and others.
- Crisis messages of professional communication: messages, created by special services in the course of crisis management communication: firefighters, doctors, rescuers, etc.
- Messages about crises of scientific orientation: messages related to the solution of problems of a technological, environmental, social and other nature.
- Messages created by “ordinary citizens”: non-professional economists, politicians or journalists - ordinary inhabitants, who occasionally participate in crisis communication. Such messages include all sorts of letters of complaint and treatment addressed to state institutions, letters to media, opinion polls on crises, etc.
- Messages of family communication: messages that arise in the process of direct communication between people, and for the resolution of psychological or interpersonal problems.

Although according to Ticher “crisis discourse retains all the features of modern political discourse”,<sup>5</sup> from our point of view, it does not borrow all the functions of political discourse, due to its intersection with media discourse. Considering the variety of functions of crisis discourse, we can conclude that one of the tasks of crisis discourse is to impose an ideology on mass consciousness through information about the crisis. Thus, crisis discourse actually serves all social spheres and combines media and political discourses.

Furthermore, the sources, reasons and purposes of the occurrence of messages differ. For example, the purpose of an inaugural speech as a genre of political discourse is to thank the citizens of the country for their mandate. The source of the message is the president or leading political figure. The intention of such a speech is to assure and convince the society of legitimacy to govern, and of its reliability. To give another example, in the situation of a military coup-d'état the purpose of reporting the crisis is to inform the society first of all about the crisis. The source of the message is the author of the article / news, a journalist (which is not the direct channel of information as would be for example military personnel); information is no longer supplied first-hand, but in a processed form through the media. The intention of such a message depends on the goals of a particular publication or author. The crisis becomes the main communicative reason.

Managerial values such as effectiveness and efficiency, laying at the basis of good governance, are achieved rather well by means of texts about crises. To be effective and efficient the government first of all should organise and defend its communicative

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<sup>5</sup> Ticher (2009).

space, not letting external harmful information interjections and fake news spread in society. In the background of a crisis that could break out somewhere, the application of communicative techniques and good argumentation can put the government in better light and lead to the stabilisation of the political situation in a country or, vice versa, show the opponent in the worst possible perspective.

Taking into consideration the number of existing means of communication, and the quantity and quality of information flows, one can come to the conclusion that such values of good governance, for instance transparency and accountability, do not work in crisis situations, as information about crises tend to be not fully transparent to the rest of society.

## Methodology

The aim of this study is to identify communicative “triggers” used by authors or speakers to influence the consciousness of recipients and trigger mechanisms that lead to the creation of an ideologised picture of the world in society and establish the models of crisis discourse ideologisation. Therefore, the subject of the study is language techniques for the implementation of communicative tactics, strategies and models of ideological impact on the mass consciousness in various crises. The object of this research is crisis discourse, as represented in articles on crises in English, French and Russian.

To this end, texts of high-quality British press in English; French, Belgian and Luxembourgish press texts in French; as well as Russian and American press were selected as the predominant study material, using the LexisNexis database using key word search. In total, 7,539 articles in English (including American English), French and Russian were collected for the overall research. To elaborate the results on the strategy of neutralising negative manifestations in society, 500 comments were selected that were juxtaposed with 10 articles in English on the migration crisis. The data presented in this paper draws on a larger study of all mentioned articles.

The pragmatic approach of crisis discourse and its orientation on the recipient of information determines the selection of language techniques of ideological influence on the mass consciousness. It means that or the newspaper itself has a political orientation supporting the government; or vice versa, neglecting the ideas of the government or a particular article, presented via the scope of political attitudes of the author that anyway will influence the reader. It's not possible to avoid subjectivity, and any message has an intention aimed at getting an effect or response. The study of linguistic techniques and communicative tactics, in its turn, requires a linguistic-stylistic and sociolinguistic analysis of texts about crisis situations, identifying their characteristics, and considering key concepts that reflect the sociocultural values of a particular group. In our case, the selected research material represents four linguacultures and allows us to study their features. These linguacultural groups are

represented by Great Britain, the French speaking European countries, Russia, and the USA. The United States were taken for comparison as one of the global players, the language of which forms a linguaculture on its own although it is still English.

To identify the specific effects of crisis discourse, it is necessary to determine the research methodology. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, it seems possible to analyse the linguistic features of the language of crisis discourse using news articles, identify the main mechanisms of interaction between government, people and the media, and classify the sociocultural aspects of crisis discourse represented by concepts and set the models. All the methods are universal and may be applicable in free order for such studies. To get the results of this study, the following methods were used:

1. Sociolinguistic analysis of texts makes it possible to characterise the conceptual spheres of crisis discourse and the vocabulary that represents them, selected by the method of continuous sampling from texts on crisis situations. This method allows drawing conclusions about how communication takes place in a crisis, and what the distinctive features of each type of crisis are, determining the linguistic and sociocultural aspects of crisis discourse in English, French and Russian.
2. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) identifies the main strategies, tactics and techniques of crisis discourse.
3. Linguo-stylistic analysis is used to describe the main linguistic techniques and communicative tactics of the ideologisation of mass consciousness.
4. Semantic analysis analyses the frequency of lexical units in texts about each type of crisis. This method allows tracing the features of the use of lexical tools that convey temporality.
5. Sentiment analysis determines the overall positivity, negativity or neutrality of texts, which makes it possible to establish the presence of appraisal in articles, positive or negative tonality of texts. This method aims to identify the main assessments in the text that affect topics, categories, names of people and organisations and establish the author's attitude to them.

All the articles were processed with free online software for semantic and sentiment analysis. For the CDA, sociolinguistic and linguo-stylistic analysis, the articles were sorted according to the key words and handled manually.

### **Key findings: Models of Crisis Discourse Ideologisation**

The CDA and linguo-stylistic analyses of newspaper articles showed that English, French and Russian media actively use two types of strategies: that of neutralising negative manifestations in the society<sup>6</sup>; and the strategy of ideologising of mass consciousness.<sup>7</sup> The *neutralisation strategy* is implemented using tactics of defense and justification, discrediting, comparing the positive and negative sides of the crisis,

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<sup>6</sup> Pilgun (2016).

<sup>7</sup> Pilgun (2017).

describing the conditions, calling for sympathy, demonstrating examples of personal crises, criticism, expressing the author's assessment, and promoting tolerance. Tactics are implemented using the following techniques: using statistics, a proper name in combination with negatives, negative pronouns, positive and negative evaluative expressions, etc. The *ideologisation strategy* includes using the tactics of legalisation, concealment, unification, fragmentation, orientation, disorientation, links to the authority of the source, forecast, mythologisation, stereotyping, symbolisation, tactics of changing reality, references to traditions, tactics of managing impressions, etc.

Based on the material analysed in this study, we can distinguish five general models of crisis discourse that are used:

- Model 1 – pure neutralisation (N). The model assumes that only neutralisation strategies are used in the article crisis about crisis.
- Model 2 – pure ideologisation (I). The article uses only ideologisation strategies and does not assume the presence of linguistic techniques that implement the neutralisation strategy.
- Model 3 – neutralisation + ideologisation (N + I). A neutralisation strategy is used, followed by an ideologisation strategy.
- Model 4 – ideologisation + neutralisation (I + N). This model determines the sequence of strategies as first the ideologisation of mass consciousness, and then the neutralisation of negative manifestations.
- Model 5 – the simultaneous use of neutralisation and ideologisation strategies, equally (N || I).

The sequence of using strategies allows creating many pictures of the world, choosing and imposing exactly the one that corresponds to the best option for the development of a crisis scenario. For example, we can consider this text on the refugee crisis in Germany:

*Salah Mustafa does not have a vote in Germany's general election on Sunday. But if Angela Merkel wins as widely expected, he may be one of those who helped her to victory. Mr. Mustafa is a Syrian refugee, but he doesn't fit the popular stereotype. He is not religious. He speaks fluent German, despite not knowing a word of the language when he arrived three years ago. He works and pays taxes. He pays his share of the rent at the small flat where he lives with two German flat mates.<sup>8</sup>*

In this passage of text, the model N || I is used. The article is aimed at supporting the migrant, describes the conditions of his life and characterises him as a completely positive person, who has no difference with Germans. The strategy of neutralisation of negative manifestations (in this case xenophobia) is implemented through tactics of living conditions description, characteristics of a migrant that does not correspond to stereotypes. The ideologisation strategy is used in parallel, since the article simultaneously describes the actions of Angela Merkel and the fact that, due to them,

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<sup>8</sup> Connolly (2018).

migrants do not pose any danger to the society. The expression, “as widely expected”, is a tactic of prediction promises Merkel’s victory in the elections.

The analysis of the research material showed that the models of crisis discourse ideologisation appear in the articles of any type of crises. However, there are trends towards the domination of certain models in each of the crises shown in table 1.

Table 1. – Prevailing models of crisis discourse ideologisation on different types of crises

Type of Crisis	Prevailing models
Social	I, I+N
Economical	I, I+N, N+I
Humanitarian	N, N+I, I    N
Natural	N+I, N+I, I    N
Man-made	I    N, I
Psychological	N, I, N+I, I+N, I    N

Source: author’s, based on analysis of 7,539 articles

Thus, the ideologisation of mass consciousness strategies dominates the neutralisation strategy in reporting social, man-made and psychological crises. In the reports on economic, humanitarian, and natural crises, the usage of neutralisation strategies prevails. An interesting fact is that in the texts about natural, economic and humanitarian crises there is a transition from “factual information” about crises to the usage of this crisis for “political purposes”.<sup>9</sup> Basically, such transition is implemented by the tactics of referring to an authoritative person or opinion, such as a comment or quote from a specialist in combination with the response of the representatives of the authorities.

Thus, depending on the goals of the authors, all five models are used to report on any type of crisis and influence the opinions. A good example of ideologisation of crisis discourse is the information war, because in the conditions of the information war, crisis situations are actively exploited for political speculations. Information war becomes noticeable in media articles describing any crisis situations in society that may be involved in the implementation of political goals. In most cases, such articles reflect confrontation and viciousness.

### Key findings: Sentiment Analysis of Crisis Messages: the case of Brexit

<sup>9</sup> McCombs, M. E. and D.L. Shaw (1972).

To prove that the models can be traced in the texts about crises, an author's assessment was conducted. The concept of "author's assessment" can be used when the author of the article is a direct person who lays down both their own assessment and the assessment proposed by the publication, authorities, political institutions, public associations, etc. The main method to identify the presence of the author's assessment in the discourse of crisis situations is automatic sentiment analysis. To this end, articles on Brexit, representing social crisis, were selected. Even the most neutral, such as newspapers that position themselves as independent and expressing an allegedly impartial view of crisis events, the models of crisis discourse ideologisation can be found. The method of sentiment analysis determines the general tonality of texts: their positivity, negativity or neutrality. This method is also used to identify the main assessments in the text that affect topics, categories, names of people and organisations and establish the author's attitude to them, determine the tonality with which information is presented. The main tool for sentiment analysis was the 'Semantria' automatic sentiment analysis programme, which allows for isolating substructures and elements that carry the author's emotional load in texts. Semantria is intended to identify primarily emotionally coloured vocabulary and expressions in texts, and emotional assessments laid down by the author, possibly even unconsciously, with respect to objects, events, processes, etc., which are discussed in the text.

In a sentiment analysis of Brexit texts in English, French and Russian, thematic categories, quotes and evaluative phrases and their tonality were identified. The general tone of the Brexit texts according to the results of the study is distributed as follows:

1. The UK. Two newspapers ("The Independent" and "The Guardian") were taken for comparison. Both newspapers position themselves as independent, prestigious, high-quality press, but differ in political affiliation: "The Independent" can be considered liberal, whereas "The Guardian" is center-left. Sentiment analysis proved that the content of both newspapers showed equally negative attitudes towards Brexit: for the Independent this was  $-0.66$  and for The Guardian  $-0.78$ .
2. France. An analysis of the texts of the newspaper "Le Monde" revealed the predominance of neutrality to the social crisis, although the newspaper is liberal-left-centered. Neutrality is  $0.03$ .
3. United States of America. CNN tends to be positive in their reporting about Brexit. Positive tonality is  $+0.89$  when reporting on Brexit news.
4. Russia. The TASS news agency has an independent opinion and remains neutral, which demonstrates a neutral tonality of texts, almost equal to zero:  $-0.03$ .

The most interesting categories identified during the automated analysis of the set of texts on the social crisis on the example of Brexit reports are the French language categories representing the view of continental French speaking Europe. French Brexit texts cover many areas of public life. It is logical that the most important areas - politics, law, and economics – are the main ones used to describe the Brexit process. However, articles on Brexit in French also cover areas such as marriage, science, the Internet, labour, etc. The United Kingdom classifies Brexit as domestic politics, business, and finance, which again is quite logical, as the main issues facing the agenda for leaving the EU are the country's economic and financial capabilities. The American and Russian press raises questions regarding international relations. Both the American and Russian sides equally convey the interest of these countries in improving, or “resetting” international relations with Great Britain after Brexit.

The analysis run in Semantria shows that the evaluated phrases and quotes from the British press (The Guardian) indeed correspond to a common understanding of negative, neutral or positive tonality, but that the value of some quotes varies, depending on the goals of the authors, the attitude to the event and the general orientation of the publication. Because of the Guardian's centre-left orientation, quite positive slogans such as “*Taking back control*” are neutral in colour, and sometimes even acquire negative colour, for instance “*Brexit means Brexit*” (–0.98). The phrase “*moral pressure*” acquires a positive tone (+0.51), in a publication that does not support the British exit from the European Union. The phrase “*half-in, half-out deal*” in The Guardian newspaper acquired a neutral assessment, although, following the general logic, we could expect a negative tonality, generally explained by the political orientation of the publication itself. In other cases, the tonality revealed by the programme is consistent with logic.

Thus, the analysis of the tonality of articles on crisis situations shows that, depending on the goals of the author, any crisis situation can be used in absolutely any field to achieve pragmatic goals. Quotes, slogans, evaluative phrases and expressions, depending on the intentional orientation of each publication as a whole, as well as on the author's attitude in particular, can change their tone. This fact proves that the author's attitude and appraisal, laid down in the text about crises, are one of the key factors of influence and manipulation of public opinion.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Based on the above analysis, we can conclude that by means of the given communicative models that are actively used by mass media in the post-truth era, the discourse of crisis situations:

1. Plays the role of social control or regulation (creation of prerequisites for unification of behaviour, thoughts, feelings and desires of a large number of individuals, i.e. public opinion management with the help of language).<sup>10</sup>
2. Fulfills the function of information and orientation, informing the audience about the events and shaping the picture of what is happening in the minds of the society.
3. Crisis discourse forms beliefs, values and motivations for action and evaluation of the situation, and conducts agitation through symbols, reasoning, and emotional pressure.
4. In good governance, crisis plays the role of the trigger of social solidarity, which presupposes integration within the whole society or individual social groups. Or vice versa, it can have the function of social differentiation, which leads to the fragmentation of social groups.
5. One more function is induction, which presupposes escalation of the crisis or putting the population into a “false sense of security”.<sup>11</sup>

The variety of crises that arise in society allows classifying crisis messages by genre: social crisis (including political), economic, humanitarian (including legal), natural, man-made and psychological crises.<sup>12</sup> Crisis communication has a targeted effect on all sectors of society. The types of crisis discourse are ideologised, and the crisis situation acts as a prerequisite and/or decoration for the realisation of political speculation and ambition and is used to form a picture of the world in society. The virtualisation of crisis information relayed by the media makes it possible to form many ideas about the state of affairs and actions of the authorities, therefore any type of crisis is used to ideologise and adjust reality. The functions of crisis discourse (social control, social solidarity, social differentiation, informational-orientational, acting, fatal, value-forming, or value-correcting) contribute to the ideologisation of mass consciousness.

The semantics of crisis discourse are aimed at the ideologisation of mass consciousness. The purpose of reporting the crisis is to inform and identify the guilty and innocent. The pragmatics of crisis discourse is realised through influencing the audience, whose task is to attract, create a positive or negative image of power, etc. The actualisation of the ideological impact on the mass consciousness varies, depending on the type of crisis, and is determined by the quantitative content of language dominants in the message about a particular type of crisis - triggers that trigger the mechanisms of ideologisation of mass consciousness. The higher the proportion of linguistic dominants (concepts, evaluations, lexical components of “friend or foe” oppositions) among the frequently used significant vocabulary, the higher is the degree of crisis ideologisation.

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<sup>10</sup> Zheltuchina (2003).

<sup>11</sup> Stubbs (1983).

<sup>12</sup> Pilgun, E. (2016).

The creation of post-truth presupposes using all five models of crisis discourse ideologisation. The implementation of communicative models allows forming or adjusting the picture of the world of the recipient, neutralise or provoke negative relations in the society, ideologise or counter-ideologise (protect from the influence of other people's ideologies) mass consciousness which can become an important mechanism for good governance.

Crisis discourse is an extremely broad notion, encompassing language systems, speech and text, allowing a number of scientific interpretations. The most important functions from the point of view of good governance in the post-truth era are considered to be information and orientation, social control and influence. Taking into consideration the variety of functions of crisis discourse, one can conclude that its aim is to influence the minds of people and impose decisions. All the models of crises discourse ideologisation can be and should be actively used for the purposes of good governance. The knowledge of the strategies of crisis communication will give authorities the possibility to organise the structure and the forms of presentation of information about crises in such way that the society is aware of it and well informed, but not scared or in a panic. It will enhance the level of trust in authority figures and/or government and resilience of the society and the governmental structure.

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# DARYNA STERINA<sup>1</sup> – A new nuclear threat? Nuclear security in Ukraine<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Energy has become one of the crucial topics of international security in the last decades. It is not only relevant as a life-sustaining resource but as an essential part of industrialised states. In a violent conflict, the deprivation of it could be a question of life and death.

When putting this into the perspective of nuclear energy, the line between life-sustaining and life-depriving is, in fact, very fine. In 1986, the reactor accident in Chernobyl was considered to be the worst nuclear catastrophe to date and responsible for the contamination of the earth and thousands of lives; and millions of people have had to live with consequences for their health. However, Chernobyl is not the only example of a high price civilians had to pay for sufficient energy supply. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear catastrophe in Japan in 2011, in which an earthquake caused a core meltdown in several reactor blocks leading to the release of radiation, was responsible for the displacement of 130,000 people living in the radius of 20 km from the reactor.

Most compelling, these nuclear accidents happened in times of positive peace — meaning in the absence of hostilities or war. Thus, when considering that nuclear facilities may be a threat to human security and environment, it is apparent that an attack or an accidental deterioration of nuclear power plants or reactors is a much more possible scenario in times of violent conflict. Although many examples of either direct or accidental attacks on civil nuclear facilities can be found, recent literature and scholars of peace and conflict studies miss capturing the aspect of nuclear safety in the context of armed conflicts. Especially little attention has been paid to the role of energy politics in the conflict in Ukraine, despite its significance particularly after the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004. Therefore, this paper aims to analyse the crucial role of nuclear power and subsequently, nuclear security in the context of the conflict in Ukraine. Despite continuing disruptions in Ukraine's relations with Russia since its independence in 1991, the recent crisis started with the refusal to sign the European Union (EU) association agreement by former President Viktor Yanukovich on 21 November 2013.<sup>3</sup> This rejection sparked major protests in the capital Kyiv, also known as 'Euromaidan', which was followed by protests throughout the country.<sup>4</sup> Although

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is based on an on-going Master Dissertation research by the author, and was submitted on request of the organisers of the GCRF COMPASS Training School at ADA University, 17-21 February 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Sakwa (2015), p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

most of the demonstrations were motivated by the concern that moving away from the EU would entail a turn in foreign policy towards Russia<sup>5</sup> and away from EU membership, some of the protests in the South-East of the country were of pro-Russian nature.<sup>6</sup> In the following year of 2014, the crisis escalated in a civil war after the declaration of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics by Russia-backed separatists in the East of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Russia.<sup>7</sup>

### **Nuclear security in Ukraine**

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) defines nuclear security as follows: “Nuclear Security denotes the prevention and detection of, and response to, theft, sabotage, unauthorised access, illegal transfer or other malicious acts involving nuclear material, other radioactive substances or their associated facilities.”<sup>8</sup>

With 15 nuclear reactors on its territory, Ukraine is a major country of nuclear electrical energy production supplying almost 50 per cent of its households with nuclear power.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the country’s loss of control over nuclear facilities in Crimea and separatist territories, including their borders, means a significant disruption to the nuclear security situation. Moreover, especially with new forms of Russia’s “asymmetric” or “hybrid warfare”, analysed mostly in Western literature, and Ukraine’s problems with corruption, nuclear facilities could be highly vulnerable to outside and inside threats.

Furthermore, despite the dismissive view of nuclear power after the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986, the electricity shortage after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 changed the view of the population towards nuclear power. In the 1990s, Ukraine was unable to meet the demands of electricity supply without nuclear energy. While nuclear power was associated with authoritarian USSR legacy and the covering up of dangers involved in the generation of nuclear energy as in the 1980s, today it is tied to the building of nationhood and independence from Russian gas, which is another crucial resource for energy generation in Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> The new wave of pro-nuclear power entails some crucial problems for civil society, the environment, and the state itself, which will be elaborated in more detail in the following section.

### **Towards a comprehensive understanding of the connection between energy and the conflict in Ukraine**

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<sup>5</sup> Instead of signing the EU agreement Yanukovych signed a deal with Russia for the extension of a 15-billion Dollar loan and assurance for a decrease in gas price (Deutsche Welle, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Sakwa (2015), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 148; p. 102.

<sup>8</sup> IAEA Safety Glossary (2018), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Kasperski (2015), p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> Kasperski (2019), p. 64.

## ***Framework of analysis***

Understanding the significance of energy politics and nuclear power in Ukraine deserves taking a closer look at the concept of energy security. Klare defines energy security as “[...] assured delivery of adequate supplies of affordable energy to meet a state’s vital requirements, even in times of international crisis or conflict.”<sup>11</sup> This means that a state needs to adapt to possible threats which could disrupt the energy supply by attacks on energy infrastructure by either terrorists or other criminal groups. States that highly depend on resources from other states for its energy generation could be exposed to political pressure from the supplier states.<sup>12</sup>

In times of conflict, energy can either be a direct cause of hostilities or provide bargaining power in order to put pressure on the conflicting parties.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, securing energy supply could be related to conflicts over territory or legitimacy or extortion of resources which may constitute a violation of sovereignty.<sup>14</sup> As a means in conflict, energy could be used to achieve other demands that are not directly connected. In such cases, extraction of resources for energy purposes could cause environmental or human harm, which in turn could trigger a conflict.<sup>15</sup> Within this understanding, the energy infrastructure is vulnerable to be used as a means in a conflict. Accordingly, it either can be directly or indirectly attacked or be disrupted for a longer or shorter period.<sup>16</sup> For instance, this disruption can occur if an exporting state uses energy as a weapon to exert pressure on the importing state in order to influence the domestic or foreign politics of the state in point. Alternatively, import embargos may also be a possible scenario for disruption of the energy supply.<sup>17</sup> The leverage that energy holds also depends on the nature of the energy infrastructure. If an energy system is regionally and not globally extended, it may be much more vulnerable to disruption in a situation of a conflict rather than one which is not geographically bound.<sup>18</sup> Thus, geography can be important in describing the connection between the energy infrastructure, hegemonic power and political dynamics in a specific region.

## ***The connection between energy security and conflict in Ukraine***

A conflict like the one in Ukraine cannot be reduced to the mere dispute around energy concerns. Nonetheless, energy was always a major conflicting issue between Russia and Ukraine, not concerning exploitation of Ukraine's natural oil or gas resources but

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<sup>11</sup> Klare (2013), p. 536.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 540.

<sup>13</sup> Månsson (2014), p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 107-108.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

instead regarding the import prices of natural gas from Russia.<sup>19</sup> Before the crisis in 2014, disputes over gas prices were central in the worsening of political relations between Ukraine and Russia. After the dissolution of the USSR, some former Soviet Union states received natural gas far under market prices.<sup>20</sup> However, in the 2000s, the partly nationalised Russian company Gazprom decided to realign gas prices for Russia's neighbours with the oil-index price, which along with an increase of the oil price and simultaneously European gas prices was responsible for numerous disputes over gas supply.<sup>21</sup> In the winter of 2009, the conflict with Ukraine reached a peak with the suspension of gas delivery for three weeks. The dispute was solved with the signing of a contract for the next eleven years between Gazprom and the Ukrainian national company Naftogaz that determined a price similar to the one for other European countries.<sup>22</sup> In 2010, the price was renegotiated and lowered in exchange for a 25-years leasing contract for the Russian naval base in Crimea.<sup>23</sup> In 2014, after the annexation of Crimea, gas prices for Ukraine were increased by more than 80%, being the highest price in Europe with 485 Dollars per 1000 cubic meters.<sup>24</sup> In 2015, Ukraine stopped buying natural gas directly from the Russian company Gazprom and instead started purchasing Russian gas from European companies.<sup>25</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse whether Russia intended to use energy strategically to influence domestic politics in Ukraine, something doubted by some scholars.<sup>26</sup> The USA and European states also considered the use of energy as a weapon in reaction to Russia's annexation of Crimea by boycotting the import of Russian gas.<sup>27</sup> However, at the moment, the USA has no capacity to export gas to Ukraine, and the decision not to expand capacity was made primarily by American private companies.<sup>28</sup> Despite the question whether energy is being used as a weapon against Ukraine, energy security undoubtedly remains a significant concern of Ukraine in the crisis with Russia and makes it vulnerable to its European neighbours and the USA.

## **The revival of nuclear sentiments in Ukraine**

### ***Nuclear power as a form of national heritage***

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<sup>19</sup> Van de Graaf and Colgan (2017), p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> Sheppard, Astasheuskaya and Olearchyk (2019).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

The centralised energy supply of the former USSR, which was under the control of the Soviet Ministry of Energy in Moscow left behind a system in which former Soviet states continue to depend on Russia as the successor state of the USSR for their energy supply. Because Ukraine sees Russia as an aggressor who does not accept the territorial integrity of Ukraine—pointing to the annexation of Crimea and the support of the war in the separatist Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts—the dependence on Russian natural gas, oil and fuel is undesirable for Ukraine. In relation to fuel supply for nuclear energy, Ukraine started importing significant parts of its fuel from the USA-Japanese-company, Westinghouse. In 1998, Ukraine made its first attempt towards independence from Russian fuel by signing a contract for cooperation in nuclear energy matters with the USA government. The contract followed an agreement between the Ukrainian national corporation Energoatom and Westinghouse for the transition to US-fuel in Russian VVER-1000 reactors in 2000.<sup>29</sup> However, the first testing period in nuclear reactors in the South Ukraine Nuclear Power Plant failed, and the use of fresh US-fuel was prohibited by the State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate of Ukraine due to nuclear safety concerns in 2012. The use of foreign assemblies for the Russian water reactors of the type VVER-1000 is still believed to be insecure.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, after the annexation of Crimea and Russia's involvement in the conflict in the Donbas region in the East of Ukraine in 2014, the Ukrainian government decided to renew the contract with Westinghouse which is supposed to supply fuel for three nuclear power plants from 2020 onwards.<sup>31</sup>

The change in energy-economic relations mainly reflects the political goal of domestication of energy supply. Independence from Russian energy trade can also be understood as crucial for the building of national identity, a strategy which can be observed in the energy policies of many Central and Eastern European states.<sup>32</sup> That is especially the case in those states which were dominated by Russia since the Russian Empire or which were occupied by the former USSR after the Second World War.<sup>33</sup> In their narrative of identity construction, Russia was the 'negative Other' and at times a threat to national security.<sup>34</sup> Thus, if a crucial part of national identity building is contrasting oneself from Russia, energy economy is more closely connected to politics than other economic fields. In Ukraine, Kasperski found that after the events of 2014, authorities have understood nuclear energy as a crucial means to fostering Ukrainian independence.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the public discourse shifts further away from the negative connection of nuclear energy with the Chernobyl accident towards the understanding of nuclear power as a necessity for being independent from Russia as a supplier of energy.<sup>36</sup> Kasperski made this conclusion after analysing a painting

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<sup>29</sup> Kuznetsov and Khvostova (2015), p. 991.

<sup>30</sup> Kasperski (2015), p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Kuznetsov and Khvostova (2015), p. 989.

<sup>32</sup> Siddi (2019).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Kasperski (2019).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

competition for children initiated by nuclear energy plants. The government's strategy to involve civil society, such as in the children's painting competition, is, in her opinion, a tactic aimed at eliminating environmental concerns that are rooted in the misadministration of the Chernobyl catastrophe by the former USSR.<sup>37</sup>

Despite that, nuclear power is a very familiar energy sector for Ukraine and can even be seen as connected to Ukraine's latest history. Ever since Soviet times, Ukraine has been one of the dominant nuclear nations. Apart from its major military nuclear programmes (especially after the Second World War), the USSR started to expand the peaceful use of nuclear material in the 1950s.<sup>38</sup> The peaceful use of nuclear power included the production of electricity and science education. These aims of unification for the socialist civil society meant creating positive associations with atomic power, away from weapons of mass destruction to the benefits of atomic physics for ordinary people of the socialist republics.<sup>39</sup> Higher education institutions and science academies for nuclear research were created in each of the fourteen USSR republics.<sup>40</sup> Since 1953, from the beginning of Nikita Khrushchev's legacy, the new wave of development had been associated with "Sputnik and nuclear power."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, civil use of nuclear power was associated with the strength of the nation and modernity; and technological development was seen as crucial to foster communism.<sup>42</sup> The scientists in charge of the project were Igor Kurchatov, head of the atomic bomb project and Anatolii Aleksandrov, who was Kurchatov's successor at the Institute of Atomic Energy. Aleksandrov was famous for submarine nuclear propulsion but highly criticised for his reactor constructions after the Chernobyl accident in 1986.<sup>43</sup> Kirill Sinelinkov, president of the Ukrainian nuclear programme, and Aleksandr Leipunskii, director of the breeder reactor programme, must also be mentioned as crucial figures of civic nuclear use. All these physicists have in common that their scientific research began in the military, most significantly in programmes aimed at constructing nuclear weaponry. Interestingly, this also demonstrates how interwoven peaceful nuclear programmes can be with conventional nuclear fission to create weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the opening of institutes and projects all across the USSR, Ukraine can be seen as a centre for the technological development and scientific research of nuclear power. First of all, it had a flowering nuclear physics community and scientific expertise since 1930 and, secondly, it had close proximity to Russia.<sup>44</sup> Most noticeably, despite Moscow's final word in nuclear questions, the Ukrainian Ministry of Energy and Electricity was the leading institution in decisions on the building of reactors and

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Josephson (2005), p. 203.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 203-204.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

nuclear power stations.<sup>45</sup> Despite that, the fuel for the power reactors on Ukrainian territory was generated from Moscow, which—after the dissolution of the USSR and in the context of the recent conflict—now poses a significant problem for Ukraine.<sup>46</sup>

The realisation that a significant lack of energy supply existed in Ukraine came in 1965. The response was to build new reactors in the following ten years in the Odesa region, Western Ukraine and in the area of Kyiv, where the Central Ukrainian Atomic Power Station, mostly known as the Chernobyl nuclear station, was to be built.<sup>47</sup> The licencing and safety control deficits in the process of construction in order to comply with the schedule, along with the decision to use a low-cost version of the water reactor, were all significant factors leading to the catastrophic explosion at the Chernobyl station in 1986. Only in 1989 did the USSR authorities uncover the real causes of the accident. By the time of the explosion in the Chernobyl nuclear station, ten other reactors were operating, and seven others were to be constructed.<sup>48</sup> All nuclear stations were managed from Moscow by the Soviet Ministry of Energy and even after the explosion in Chernobyl the construction of further reactors continued.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, the catastrophe sparked an anti-nuclear movement in the country that was paired with protests against the USSR authorities. However, this resentment against nuclear power was replaced by concerns of a great economic crisis after Ukrainian independence in 1991. The economic crisis of the 1990s in Ukraine was accompanied by a constant shortage of electricity in winters and the disruption of the industries highly dependent on regular energy supply. In order to comply with the population's energy demand, the Ukrainian government continued generating nuclear power.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, this did not foster further environmental movement but rather a turn back to *real politik* and increased use of nuclear power. The population showed acceptance and little protest due to the need for heating and the fear of losing jobs in the nuclear energy sector in times of economic instability.<sup>51</sup>

### ***The vulnerability of nuclear facilities***

In Ukraine, the revival of the idea that nuclear energy could be the new national step towards independence from its neighbour raised significant worry over the security of such facilities and nuclear plants. After the accident at the Chernobyl power plant in 1986, G7 nations expressed their concern about the remaining risks at the Chernobyl plant and assigned the World Bank to conduct a study of the feasibility and cost of closing the remaining high-risk Chernobyl-type reactors which remained operating in six countries of the region.<sup>52</sup> The World Bank came to the conclusion that the highly

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>46</sup> Fedchenko and Anthony (2018), p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> Josephson (2005).

<sup>48</sup> Kasperski (2019), p. 52.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>51</sup> Marples (1998), p. 366.

<sup>52</sup> Dobozi and Wackman (2018).

insecure reactors should be closed by 2000 and that the whole site of the Chernobyl plant had to be covered permanently with a sarcophagus.<sup>53</sup> In 1995, the G7 states and Ukraine signed a Memorandum of Understanding which regulated not only the closure of the power plant but also the financial support for the decommissioning of the site, reformation of the whole nuclear sector and renewal of other nuclear reactors.<sup>54</sup>

Despite this attempt of the international community at nuclear safety in Ukraine, the Memorandum has not been fully implemented. Six of Ukraine's 15 operating reactors were about to reach their functional end in 2020.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, not only are the conditions of the reactors and their age perceived as a threat but also the political environment and current conflict.<sup>56</sup> Due to the difficulties generating natural gas directly from Russia, in addition to the obstacles of the fuel supply from coal mines because of the conflict in the Donbas, the supply of energy from nuclear power increased from 44 per cent in 2013 to 60 per cent in 2018.<sup>57</sup>

Unforeseen attacks on nuclear facilities in the form of cyber-attacks like those of the computer worm Stuxnet, responsible for the interruption of the Iranian nuclear enrichment in 2010, can no longer be ruled out with an increased technologisation of nuclear facilities. In Ukraine, western scholars and authorities classify military measures used by Russia as “asymmetric” or “hybrid warfare”, which includes non-military force measures such as economic coercion, disinformation on media or cyber-attacks.<sup>58</sup> Despite the doubts whether Russian methods of war can be classified as a new form of warfare,<sup>59</sup> the technological development of Nuclear facilities and plans make their system vulnerable to outside threats. For instance, in 2015, the computer system of the Ukrainian power distributor Prykarpattya Oblenergo experienced the cyber virus “Black Energy” which was responsible for a shutdown of 80 000 households in 103 towns and disturbed the work of the other distributors Chernivtsi Oblenergo and Kyiv Oblenergo.<sup>60</sup> This incident raised serious concerns of Ukrainian authorities over possible attacks which at another time may be used to disrupt nuclear power plants. In 2016, the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council passed a resolution to develop a strategy on cybersecurity, and former president Petro Poroshenko passed a decree to create a national cybersecurity centre.<sup>61</sup>

Further, several other direct attacks on nuclear power plants occurred near the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas region. Crimea receives a great share of its power supply from the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and coal plants in Southern

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>58</sup> Chumak (2016), p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> Renz (2018), p. 296.

<sup>60</sup> Chumak (2016), p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

Ukraine. In November 2015, electricity pylons near Kherson were attacked with explosives which nearly caused a full blackout for almost two million people on the peninsula.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the attack created a hazardous situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.<sup>63</sup>

To sum up, energy security played a crucial role in the Ukrainian conflict and forced the country to diversify its energy supply away from gas and coal and towards nuclear power. However, the country's nuclear infrastructure is not prepared to provide significant nuclear security and is consequently vulnerable to outside and inside attacks on nuclear facilities.

## Conclusion

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the takeover of Crimea by Russia are crucial factors in Ukraine accelerating the reconsiderations of its energy security towards a more independent position from Russian gas and fuel. Consequently, Ukraine moved to the most familiar source of energy supply: nuclear power. This decision, however, means putting the environment and civil safety at a higher risk. The examples provided in this paper demonstrate that Ukraine's nuclear infrastructure lacks significant security standards for protecting its nuclear energy plants from attacks on the facilities or against the disruption of its technology. The reactor explosion in the Chernobyl nuclear plant in 1986 already was a catastrophic accident, which occurred as a result of misconstruction and misadministration. Ukrainian nuclear reactors are old, and within the context of violent conflict, the risk of a similar disaster could be much higher and should be taken seriously. Moreover, the increased use of methods of war other than military force has already shown that cyber-attacks on electricity providers are a real threat that could be repeated in a nuclear power plant.

Moreover, resentments against nuclear power after the Chernobyl explosion seemed to be replaced by the presumption that nuclear energy could be the new turn towards a more independent Ukrainian nation.

Finally, this analysis was able to demonstrate that energy is crucial in times of conflict while not having to be a primary cause for a conflict or to be directly employed as a weapon. However, energy supply can have an impact on the security of a state. In the case of Ukraine, the conflict over territorial integrity, nationalism, and culture created a situation in which the conditions for energy supply became difficult or at least harder to bear with the dependence on Russia for fuel and gas. In turn, Ukraine decided to expand its nuclear energy infrastructure, which causes a saver situation for the supply of energy but a much more dangerous situation for civil society and the environment. Therefore, future studies may take a more policy-oriented approach and could t

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<sup>62</sup> Ustohalova and Englert (2017), p. 37.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

suggest a strategy to cope with the problem, for instance, with the potential change to more environmentally friendly energy sources.

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# **SURAYYO USMANOVA<sup>1</sup> – The uniqueness of self-governance institutions in civil society: The case of “mahalla” in Uzbekistan**

## **Introduction**

The realisation of the concept “from strong state to strong civil society” with the creation of a variety of non-governmental organisations continues to be prioritised by the majority of countries. They are presented and organised according to the needs and mentalities of their societies. However, the aim is universal: to represent the human interests. Nevertheless, there are limitations in the result of the effectiveness of NGOs. Moreover, there is a tendency to use the best practices of the states in all spheres in the world community. Uzbekistan’s experience with one peculiar institution, “mahalla”, is of particular interest. A mahalla is a historically unique form of self-governance of the Uzbek people in the framework of their traditional national social system.<sup>2</sup> It is not only the foundation of civil society but also a historical school for democracy. Uzbekistan’s enhancement of the role and importance of these civil society institutions in renewal and modernisation of the country can serve as an example of best practice in the world community. This paper analyses the experience of Uzbekistan from the perspectives of the effectiveness of this institution. Furthermore, some critical assessments and proposals on the further development of this institution as the “quasi self-governing body” in Uzbekistan will be put forward.

## **Literature review and methodology**

Analysing the role of mahallas in constructing civil society in Uzbekistan and particular parts of the world can be done using theoretical approaches on NGOs.<sup>3</sup> It is significant to analyse the role of the NGOs,<sup>4</sup> in particular, the self-governing organisations, in constructing a strong civil society.<sup>5</sup> The mahalla's historical foundation, in theory, took its roots from the middle ages (Farabi and Makhmud Koshgariy, XI-XII centuries); however, this paper is based on the theoretical research on mahallas after the independence of Uzbekistan, i.e. after 1991. International researchers' view on this institution is that it is more complex from the perspective of civil society,<sup>6</sup> while analytical and critical approaches from international organisations show considerable drawbacks of these self-governing institutions.<sup>7</sup> The national scientists in law consider the mahalla as an effective

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<sup>2</sup> Ismailova G., (2014).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Willetts, 2000

<sup>4</sup> Stillman, Grant B. (2007)

<sup>5</sup> Suda M. (2005)

<sup>6</sup> Mackenzie Abramson, D. (1998).

<sup>7</sup> OSCE/ODIHR (2016); USAID (2002)

self-governance institution, which adheres to the principles of fairness in the provision of aid.<sup>8</sup>

To engage the theoretical framework and the role of the NGOs in civil society, various analytical methods such as content analysis and descriptive analyses of theory and legal norms are used in this paper. The content of the contemporary theory on mahallas is analysed and forms an integral part of the research. The content of international and national legal acts have also been analysed along with the critical views relating to the institution of mahallas in Uzbekistan, using the participant observation method. The research will continue to develop in future in terms of data collection and interview methods with both participants and officials of mahallas.

### **The dilemma of the concept of NGOs**

It is known that the theory of disruptive innovation was first coined by Harvard professor Clayton M. Christensen in his research on the disk-drive industry and was later popularised by his book *The Innovator's Dilemma*, published in 1997.<sup>9</sup> Generally, people use this term in the management and technological sphere, but I am going to apply it to my ideas in the social sphere, as I believe it would be relevant to help us understand the workings and the role of mahallas.

First of all, we have to define what 'social' means. Many international observers rely on the approach by United States Supreme Court Judge Potter Stewart: "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it".<sup>10</sup> Most people use the term social sector to mean nonprofit and international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).<sup>11</sup> My definition of the term 'social' is deeply connected with the majority of researchers' point of view: people are the central part of social organisations, which is why when we talk about 'social', it is relevant to remember the phrase "for the people, with the people".

Nowadays the role of nongovernmental organisations has increased in all countries. According to statistics, there are an estimated 10 million non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the legal framework that is vital in maintaining the functioning of NGOs has been extended worldwide since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both international and national laws have developed an increasingly strong legal basis for their functioning. In particular, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg drafted the European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organisations in 1986, which sets a common legal basis for the existence and work of NGOs in Europe. Article 11 of

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<sup>8</sup> Ismailova G. (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Christensen, C., H. Baumann, R. Ruggles, and Th. Sadtler (2006).

<sup>10</sup> Stanford Social Innovation Review available at <http://www.ssir.org>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> <https://techreport.ngo/previous/2017/facts-and-stats-about-ngos-worldwide.html>

the European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to freedom of association, which is also a fundamental norm for NGOs.<sup>13</sup>

NGOs can function at national, regional or global levels. National NGOs do engage in transnational development and humanitarian activities, however, with very few exceptions, they are not participants in international diplomacy in their own right. When they want to exercise political influence at the global level, they can do so through the appropriate international NGO (INGO).

### **The role of NGOs in civil society**

People depend on each other and are always in need of cooperation. Individuals require advisers, and institutions are a favourable way to solve problems of all types. In most post-Soviet states, if it concerns any type of organisational or documental issue people usually try to solve it via local, governmental or (in some countries) non-governmental bodies. Indeed, people who live near each other in the neighbourhood are considered to be connected by invisible ties. Today real communication between people has become a great problem, due to technology. On the one hand, technology may enable us to solve our issues without costing too much time; but on the other hand, we lose real communication with people who live around us. Especially in developed countries, individuals are not interested in their neighbours, because they do not need them. They consider each other as neighbours, but in reality, they are strangers. At present, in my view, it is common for humankind to use the slogan: "I have no time to interfere, help or solve others' issues". Hence, people who live near each other are indeed far apart. To construct relationships among members of society, they try to establish several types of institutions. But these institutions are specialised in different spheres. Various countries have a variety of non-governmental organisations. They are named differently such as unincorporated and voluntary associations, trusts, charities and foundations, companies which are created not just for profit, etc. Most are considered to be part of civil society.

Civil society is a complex and contested term, usually referring to all people, their activities and their relationships that are not part of the process of government. It may also be used to cover all processes other than government and economic activity. The simplest, most common, meaning given to "civil society" is all public activity, by any individuals, organisations or movements, other than government employees acting in a governmental capacity. In the broadest sense, it encompasses all social, economic, cultural and political relations, but the emphasis is usually on the political aspects of these relations. Thus, it can be used for any level from the local to the country as a whole, or even global interactions. It also clearly goes beyond traditional NGOs to all forms of networks and movements. As a result, it serves as a political tool for all those who want to promote innovative, wider and deeper levels of political participation. The point of this debate about terminology is to emphasise that NGOs are not just well-meaning, uncontroversial, non-

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<sup>13</sup> Stillman, Grant B. (2007).

political groups. Furthermore, there is no difference between the role of NGOs in domestic and global politics. At both levels, they are diverse, controversial and of major political significance.<sup>14</sup>

### **Construction of social innovations in the functioning of public institutions**

Global practice shows that the local governmental and non-governmental organisations (like townships in the USA, municipals in Brasilia, or communes in France) cannot sufficiently connect people today.

The world needs more social innovations, for instance, hybrid and unique types of institutions in each country or society. Certainly, they should be organised based on a nation's historical and cultural traditions and indigenous mentality and morality of local people. Decades of research shows that electoral systems influence many areas of politics. That is why it should be obligatory to implement the electoral system while constructing self-governance institutions. It will not be an exception if these institutions become the center to address social and economic protection of the population in the future. With the participation of this type of institution people may solve their problems and issues together and simultaneously can evolve into advisors themselves. The participation in these organisations must not be obligatory, so anyone could choose to join these NGOs, or not. But the organisations should work on behalf of the inhabitants of the respective area. Despite its orders of declarative character, people should obey them voluntarily. It should be a hybrid self-government institution of society, which connects people in the local area. It will be an arena for each member of the local area to announce and realise their ideas for inhabitants and citizens. Economic, political, social, ecological or other aspects of problems, advice or ideas could be settled in these institutions. For instance, if you want to realise a business plan, first of all, you would have the opportunity to attend a hybrid institution's committee on economic matters. The structure and functioning of the hybrid local self-governmental institution may be developed and changed creatively and positively depending on its role and the mentality of a country's citizens.

We can observe the existence of such kind of institutions across the world. For instance, in China, there are special committees in each living area of approximately 100-200 families.<sup>15</sup> These local citizens' governments hold activities depending on self-governmental functioning. Furthermore, in Japan, the closest object to compare with the mahalla is "mura". "Mura" is not only a simple administrative mechanism but also a production mechanism and a part of local society. Moreover, Mura is an independent community, having the function of regulating internal relationships.<sup>16</sup> However, presently, this institution does not play as remarkable a role in the self-governing of Japan, as the mahallas do in Uzbekistan.

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<sup>14</sup> Willetts, P. (S.D.).

<sup>15</sup> See: <http://www.pravo.ru/kons/world/show/KNR/>

<sup>16</sup> Suda M. (2005).

## Mahalla as a unique public institution in Uzbekistan

As a citizen of the Republic of Uzbekistan, I also want to present the main self-government body of Uzbekistan, mahalla, which for many years has worked as a peculiar institution that owns some functions of the above-mentioned organisations. A mahalla is a small communal unit where on average 3,000 citizens live. The term “mahalla” broadly translates from Uzbek as a “neighbourhood” or “local community”. However, insofar as the mahalla forms a part of the traditions of Uzbekistan, it has a rich layering of meanings. Among these, it can be seen as a physical location, a network of social relations, or a state administrative unit.<sup>17</sup> In short, it could be determined as a self-governing institution, a local government organ of people in Uzbekistan, which is distinguished by its history, compactness, and uniqueness. Uzbek mahallas, unlike communes in Europe, exist in all cities, towns and rural settlements of the country, and have diverse social composition and background of citizens living within each mahalla. Today, there is a total of 8,973 mahallas functioning across Uzbekistan.<sup>18</sup>

What about the functions of this unique organisation? It has political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. For instance, mahallas:

- Help the government to identify needy families in its region that can be supported financially through social aid;
- Mahalla committees are also required to work in cooperation with various state bodies in carrying out their functions, including the parliament, all levels of *hokimiat* (municipal governmental bodies), law enforcement bodies, and tax collection bodies;
- Mahallas try to solve family conflicts, seek to prevent divorce, provide advice on right behaviour for women and children, and run educational programmes on AIDS, drugs, women's health, family, and society.

The exact functioning of mahallas as the self-governing institutions was determined in the Law on “Citizens’ Self-Governing Bodies”, which was adopted on 14 April 1999, and was substantially amended on 22 April 2013.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan “On measures to further improve the mahalla institute” of 3 February 2017, marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of the system, and the mahalla institute is being successfully improved to meet the requirements of the time.

Following the Presidential Decree, five areas for further improvement of the mahalla institution were recognised as a priority:

- Strengthening the place and role of citizens' self-government bodies in society, turning them into a local structure that provides real assistance to the people;

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<sup>17</sup> Mackenzie Abramson, D. (1998), p30.

<sup>18</sup> K. Kuliev (2019).

<sup>19</sup> See: [https://www.norma.uz/zakony/ob\\_organah\\_samoupravleniya\\_grajdan\\_\(novaya\\_redakciya\)](https://www.norma.uz/zakony/ob_organah_samoupravleniya_grajdan_(novaya_redakciya))

- Further enhancing the importance and authority of mahallas in creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, kindness, and mercy, the cohesion of the society, preservation, and development of national and universal values;
- Strengthening the interaction of citizens' self-government bodies with state and non-state organisations in the education of young people with spiritually developed and physically healthy individuals;
- Expanding the direct participation of mahallas in ensuring public order and security, early warning of offenses, and strengthening citizens' feelings of respect for the law;
- The introduction of effective mechanisms for protecting rights and legitimate interests, coordinating the activities of citizens' self-government bodies, ensuring a single law enforcement practice in the mahalla system.

The organisation of these reforms serves to make the mahallas the arena to connect people more tightly.

Uzbekistan's experience in enhancing the role and importance of civil society institutions in the renewal and modernisation of the country is very important for the world community. That is why a number of experts come to research and learn about this institution in Uzbekistan. Particularly, Maria Botarell Tranquilli-Leali, mentioned that:

“the work of a unique institution “Mahalla” is of particular interest, which is not only the foundation of a civil society but also a great school for democracy. Besides, the Institute is also an important mechanism for ensuring social inclusion. Currently, our organization conducts work on familiarization of the European public with the experience of Uzbekistan in this direction”.<sup>20</sup>

Another scholar, German political scientist Arthur Faynberg, emphasised that “Mahalla is the tool of society, which promotes education and upbringing of young people with respect for human rights”.<sup>21</sup> Such determinations constitute the uniqueness and model of mahalla, however, it could not have remained as the ideal national NGO proposed to construct a strong civil society in the world.

### **The critical approach to self-governing of mahallas**

Its long history and uniqueness are not enough to sustain the institution of mahalla today. Indeed, some aspects of this organisation do not guarantee efficient functioning or service delivery. In particular, the mahallas in Uzbekistan are financed by the government, which means there is considerable state influence and state support for it. The fact that the chairman, adviser, secretary and the guard of mahalla receive monthly salaries and premiums from the state makes mahallas to a certain degree dependent on the state. Especially the fact that mahalla chairmen and secretaries have been paid a full pension

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<sup>20</sup> See: <https://www.un.int/Uzbekistan/news/Uzbekistan's-experience-and-international-best-practices-sphere-civil-society-development>

<sup>21</sup> Faynberg A. (2005).

until 1 January 2019,<sup>22</sup> as opposed to the half-pension that other working pensioners have received in Uzbekistan<sup>23</sup> as well as the periodic long-hour meetings of the chairmen with local authorities to discuss and implement social programmes, render the function of the mahalla as an independent organ unclear, and not only to foreign experts.<sup>24</sup>

What is more, most mahallas even collect communal service fees, statistics, prepare voters' list and take part in elections, all of which exemplify indirect state influence over mahallas.<sup>25</sup> In fact, according to the OSCE's report on the presidential election in Uzbekistan in December 2016, the District Electoral Commissions in Uzbekistan formed Precinct Electoral Commissions (PEC) considering the propositions made by mahalla councils. Besides that, often the PEC members turned out to be workers of a mahalla.<sup>26</sup>

However, after 2017 considerable reforms can be observed in the functioning of this institution. The State attaches particular importance to effectively harnessing the opportunities provided by mahallas, enhancing the legal culture in society and strengthening respect for the law among citizens. The mahalla is set to become an even more efficient body offering real assistance to the people, a "window of justice" and a place where people can express their views and outline their proposals and problems, which undoubtedly will further strengthen the people's trust in the State.<sup>27</sup> While these reforms persuasively promise to provide financial stability and the necessary technical base to meet the need of the citizens, the "conflict of interest" between the state and mahallas remain untapped. Some excerpts from the Decree "On measures to further streamline the institution of mahalla" do not leave democrats indifferent. For example, the passage from paragraph one states that "it is important to expand mahallas' participation in ensuring public order and security and strengthening the citizens' sense of respect for the law".<sup>28</sup> Experts emphasised that the Decree's aims are good because it consolidates the "mahalla-state" collaboration. However, this promotes mahalla not as an independent organisation but as a state subsidiary. Instead of allowing the citizens to speak openly about the suitability or flaws of the laws like in democratic countries, the decree directs the society to obey the law regardless of its potential flaws and inconveniences.<sup>29</sup> Besides that, paragraphs two, four and six motivate and authorise state officials, including the prime minister and *khokims* (the chief) of the provinces, districts, and cities, to coordinate mahalla affairs while implementing measures of the decree.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>, See: <https://www.gazeta.uz/oz/2018/12/12/pensiya/>

<sup>23</sup> Presidential Decree on support for citizens' self-government institutions from 23.04.1998.

<sup>24</sup> See: [https://www.norma.uz/novoe\\_v\\_zakonodatelstve/kak\\_rabotayut\\_shody\\_grajdan](https://www.norma.uz/novoe_v_zakonodatelstve/kak_rabotayut_shody_grajdan)

<sup>25</sup> USAID (2002), p. 56.

<sup>26</sup> OSCE/ODIHR (2016).

<sup>27</sup> Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations (2017).

<sup>28</sup> See: <http://uza.uz/ru/documents/o-merakh-po-dalneyshemu-sovershenstvovaniyu-instituta-makhal-03-02-2017>

<sup>29</sup> See: <https://cabar.asia/en/why-should-the-state-weaken-control-over-the-institute-of-makhalla/>

<sup>30</sup> See: <http://uza.uz/ru/documents/o-merakh-po-dalneyshemu-sovershenstvovaniyu-instituta-makhal-03-02-2017>

The inhabitants of mahallas, especially in regions of Uzbekistan, indeed believe and trust their daily (often family: divorce, domestic violence, financial character) issues to mahalla *aksakals* (chairmen). In the majority of cases, they help to solve the disputes, which is good and determine the dispute settlement character of this self-governing institute.

However, there is another drawback of this institution. The chairmen of mahallas (*aksakals*) can only be men. Even the translation of this term from the Uzbek language means “white beard”. It is like an unwritten rule and tradition. Sure, there are specialists on issues related to women and girls, but not the chairmen, which shows a lack of leadership of women and a gender imbalance in the functioning of this organisation. It is known that the majority of issues regarding divorces and domestic violence in families touch women. Interestingly, the law regarding the election of the chairmen of the mahallas from 21 September 2018 was named “The Law on the election of the chairmen (*aksakals*) of citizens’ gathering”.<sup>31</sup> However, there is no Article stating that only men or women can be the chairmen of citizens’ gatherings. Moreover, the use of the term “citizen”, rather than “people” or “human” also narrows the participants of the mahallas, by not mentioning the *apatrids* (people without citizenship), who have lived in the territory of these institutes for a long time. In my opinion, mahallas should be the school of democracy in Uzbekistan. The rich experience of rooting close social relationships lead this peculiar institution to be the best practice for self-governing. Hence, various drawbacks should not negatively influence further development of the current organisation in Uzbekistan.

## Conclusion

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ideas of people to build a strong state began to compete with ideas to build a strong civil society. Some experts announced the beginning of the post-state period. Based on these changes lay the idea of non-governance or social government gained traction. That means that as the symbol of power and coercion, the state must interfere less into the life of the community.

In the eastern societies that have social mechanisms based on the concept of collectivism, the traditions and collective approaches were able to reduce the role of the state in local governance considerably. However, the state mechanisms are still powerful at the medium and high governance levels.

In societies that are based on individualism, approaches to the situation have been different. There are more differences than similarities in the present case. We are living in the 21st century as neighbouring societies but consider each other as strangers because we do not have enough contact with each other, particularly within the

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<sup>31</sup> See: <https://www.mahallakengashi.uz/uz/elections/documents/3518/60397/>

neighbourhood. So, it would be useful to share our best practices and promulgation on this issue.

The mahalla in Uzbekistan, an ancient institution of self-governance, maintains its unique role as an effective public. It is important to make this institution sustainable as the school of democracy in Uzbekistan, where people join, share their views and proposals, discuss and find solutions to their concerns. Particular experience of the mahallas can be used to overcome the issues of “neighbouring strangers” in societies that are moving towards building a strong civil society.

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