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RELATIONS**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EP	European Parliament
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EaP	Eastern Partnership
NGO	non-governmental organization
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
WVS	World Values Survey
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
BENELUX	Belgium-Netherlands-Luxembourg
USA	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
BSEC	Black Sea Energy
EEAS	European External Action Service
AA	Association Agreement
TACIS	Technical Assistance for Commonwealth of Independent States
WTO	World Trade Organization
EVS	European Values Study

ICSR	International Center for Social Research
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Center
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
NIS New	Independent States
MCTRA	Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan
CoE	Council of Europe
CS	Civil Society
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
TEAS	The European Azerbaijan Society

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Область исследований и области: Общественные Науки, Политология

Ключевые слова: ЕС, расширение; Азербайджан; двусторонние отношения; культура; Мировое Оценочное Исследование

РЕЗЮМЕ

Азербайджан является крупнейшей и богатой страной на Южном Кавказе. Он имеет огромные природные ресурсы в виде нефти и газа и является транзитным узлом для экспорта в Европу. Однако его геополитическая ситуация уязвима, поскольку она окружена тремя влиятельными региональными субъектами: Россией, Турцией и Ираном. В исследовании описывается влияние социокультурных факторов на партнерство между ЕС и Азербайджаном. Партнерство между ЕС и Азербайджаном действительно улучшилось и под влиянием ряда политических и экономических соглашений с момента его начала. Одним из приоритетов внешней политики Азербайджана является сотрудничество с Европейским союзом. Стратегическое расположение Азербайджана на перекрестке Европы и Азии объясняет большой интерес государств-членов Европейского Союза к развитию политических и экономических отношений с Азербайджаном.

Цель исследования - описать развитие партнерства между Европейским Союзом и Азербайджаном с учетом влияния социокультурных факторов на отношения между ЕС и Азербайджаном и выполнить вторичный анализ данных, чтобы выявить ключевые области интеграции и также будущие перспективы сотрудничества ЕС и Азербайджана.

Задачи исследования:

- Изучить стратегию расширения ЕС в ЕС и позицию Азербайджана в рамках группы
- Прояснить заинтересованность ЕС в Азербайджане и ключевые компоненты партнерства
- Проанализировать социально-культурные факторы, влияющие на развитие партнерства между ЕС и Азербайджаном

- сравнить специфические социально-культурные перемены ЕС и Азербайджана с целью определения ключевых областей реформ для дальнейшего развития партнерства между ЕС и Азербайджаном.

Объект исследования: Международные отношения ЕС и Азербайджана.

Тема исследования - Партнерство Азербайджана с Европейским Союзом: Влияние социокультурных факторов на отношения.

Исследование разделено на три главы. В первой главе описываются причины и понимание глобализации и региональной интеграции, которые открыли путь для новой модели региональной интеграции - Европейского союза, а также идею о том, как ЕС начал расширение. Эта часть в основном посвящена теоретическому анализу расширения и установлению партнерства между ЕС и Азербайджаном. Вторая глава содержит вторичный анализ данных социальных и культурных ценностей, которые в современной мировой политике играют решающую роль. В третьей главе объясняются результаты исследований и анализируются ограничения различных факторов в дальнейшем развитии партнерства между ЕС и Азербайджаном. Многочисленные соглашения о сотрудничестве, заключенные и текущие экономические, социально-культурные, экологические, институциональные проекты ЕС с Азербайджаном являются замечательными усилиями двух сторон. Хотя это требует комплексных и постоянных усилий в области развития в таких областях, как демократия, государственное управление и дела, экономика и т. Д. От правительства Азербайджана, иногда страна не в состоянии осуществить все эти реформы сразу. Однако с точки зрения культуры и спорта страна проводит непрерывные мероприятия и проекты для активизации процесса интеграции. В этой главе появилось понимание, что демократия и права человека, фундаментальные ценности важны для реформирования для формирования будущих более тесных отношений между ЕС и Азербайджаном.

Принимая во внимание, что усилия ЕС по оказанию Азербайджану помощи в создании надлежащего управления по-прежнему не имеют других изменений, реформирование демократического управления, поддержка организаций гражданского общества, развитие прав человека являются основными ключевыми областями, которые будут разработаны в дальнейшем ЕС - Азербайджанские отношения.

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Research area and field: Social science, Political science

Key words: The EU, enlargement; Azerbaijan; bilateral relations; culture; World Value Survey

SUMMARY

Azerbaijan is the largest and wealthiest country in the South Caucasus. It has vast natural resources in the form of oil and gas and is a transit hub for exports to Europe. However, its geopolitical situation is vulnerable as it is surrounded by three powerful regional actors: Russia, Turkey and Iran. The study describes the influence of socio-cultural factors on the EU-Azerbaijan partnership. EU-Azerbaijan partnership indeed has been improved and influenced by several political, economic agreements since it started. One of the foreign policy priorities of Azerbaijan is cooperation with the European Union. Strategic location of Azerbaijan at the crossroads of Europe and Asia explains strong interest of the European Union member-states in developing political and economic relations with Azerbaijan.

The aim of the research is to describe the development of the partnership between the European Union and Azerbaijan, considering the influence of socio-cultural factors on the EU-Azerbaijan relationship and accomplish the secondary data analysis in order to figure out the key integration areas as well as future perspectives of the EU and Azerbaijan cooperation.

Research tasks:

- To investigate the Eastern enlargement strategy of the EU and the position of Azerbaijan within the group
- To clarify the EU's interest in Azerbaijan and key components of partnership
- To analyze socio-cultural factors, influencing the development of the EU-Azerbaijan partnership
- To compare the EU and Azerbaijan specific socio-cultural variables in order to identify the key reform areas for further development of partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan.

Research object: International relations of EU and Azerbaijan.

Research subject is Partnership of Azerbaijan with the European Union: Influence of socio-cultural factors on relations.

The research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter describes the causes and understanding of the globalization and regional integration which paved the way for the new regional integration model – the European Union – as well as the idea of how the EU started the enlargement. This part is primarily dedicated to theoretical analysis of enlargement and establishment of partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan. The second chapter contains the secondary data analysis of social and cultural values which in modern world politics play the crucial role. The third chapter explains the results of the research and overviews the constraints of different factors in the further development of the EU-Azerbaijan partnership. Multiple cooperation agreements, concluded and ongoing economic, socio-cultural, environmental, institutional projects of the EU with Azerbaijan are remarkable endeavors by two sides. Although it requires comprehensive and persistent development efforts in the areas, such as democracy, public administration and affairs, economy etc. from the government of Azerbaijan sometimes country is not able to implement all these reforms at once. However, in terms of culture and sports, the country is carrying out continuous events and projects to intensify integration process. In this chapter emerged understanding shows that democracy and human rights, fundamental values are important to be reformed for shaping future closer relationship between the EU and Azerbaijan.

Taking into account that the EU's efforts to assist Azerbaijan in the area of building good governance still lacks behind other changes, reformation of democratic governance, support for civil society organizations, development of human rights are the main key areas to be developed in the further EU – Azerbaijan relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Azerbaijan existed as an independent country from 1918–1920, becoming the first democratic republic in the Muslim world, prior to absorption into the Soviet Union, which followed a Red Army Invasion in April 1920. In the late 1980s Armenia's territorial claims and Soviet leadership's inability and unwillingness to resolve the conflict, dissident political activity began and calls for Azerbaijani independence became vocal. In September 1989, Azerbaijan proclaimed its sovereignty, and declared full independence on 18 October 1991. New constitution was adopted in November 1995 (*TEAS*). Formal relations with the European Union started from 1996 by signing the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). This agreement marked the beginning of a mainly positive relationship between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union, with both sides benefitting from the relationship (European Commission External Relations: Azerbaijan, November 2008). Since then till nowadays Azerbaijan and the EU has been implementing various projects and activities under appropriate agreements to fasten the integration process. Although both sides are very willing to diversify the relations and integration between each other the EU and Azerbaijan has their own approaches on specific spheres of featured integration. Such deteriorations have undesirable impact in different spheres of relations and leads to decline or prevents the respective institutions of country to develop in line with European standards.

The study of the EU policy towards the Eastern European states is of theoretical interest, related to the study of the specifics of the formation and evolution of international associations. It also presents practical necessity, due to the need for comprehensive knowledge of the economic and political processes take place in the region. In a broad historiography on this subject, a number of directions should be singled out. The first of them is connected with consideration of the conceptual foundations of the common foreign policy of the European Union in relation to the Eastern European states. Among the studies conducted in this area, it is worth to mention the works of Russian researchers A. Tikhomirova (2013), T. Yurieva (2014), considering the EU policy towards Eastern countries of Europe as a natural extension of the internal logic of European integration. K. Gebhard (2007) notes the significant impact on the development of the EU policy towards the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe of the experience of implementing the policy of EU enlargement. A number of researchers, for example R. Bengtson (2008) analyze the European policy in this region as a pursuit of the security policy. A significant amount of work is devoted to the study of the specifics of the formation of the eastern direction of the EU policy.

Energy cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan constitutes the fundamental part of this relationship. A. Bayramov (2017) and D. Nolan (2017) has analyzed the democracy and development issues and comparison in Southern Caucasus. K. Ismayilov (2015) and K. Zasztowt (2015) in their research approached the crisis between the EU-Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan-Russia and the consequences of it in terms of energy projects and regional security. However, in modern politics social-cultural cooperation occupies large area. Therefore, this study has been launched to figure out how modern world cultural values and society aspect cover the international relations. Theoretical background of this study contains almost all bilateral agreements and projects in political, economic and socio-cultural area.

Scientific originality of the final project. The study describes the existing documents on EU and Azerbaijan partnership such as bilateral agreements and other essential documents which generates the foundation for theoretical part. However, the research in a large sense covers the socio-cultural phenomenon that has crucial impact on integration process.

Practical significance of final project. This study may be useful for those who wants to analyze or absorb relevant information about the effect of socio-cultural factors in international relations. Explanation of various social and cultural factors will be helpful to anyone who is interested to compare findings in the EU-Azerbaijan partnership.

The aim of the research is to describe the development of the partnership between the European Union and Azerbaijan, considering the influence of socio-cultural factors on the EU-Azerbaijan relationship and compare the secondary data analysis in order to figure out key integration areas as well as future perspectives of the EU and Azerbaijan cooperation.

Research tasks:

- To investigate the Eastern enlargement strategy of the EU and the position of Azerbaijan within the group
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- To compare the EU and Azerbaijan specific socio-cultural variables in order to identify key reform areas for further development of partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan

Research object: International relations

Research subject is Partnership of Azerbaijan with the European Union: Influence of socio-cultural factors on relations

Therefore, to provide thorough interpretation of the topic the following *research question* have been raised:

1. Why is integration important for Azerbaijan towards the European Union but not to another entity?
2. How well does socio-cultural cooperation influence this relationship?
3. What are the key points that will benefit the future development of partnership?

Structure of the final project. Every chapter will be analyzed from different spectrum and outcomes of given information are focused to cover research questions. First chapter describes the development of the EU Eastern Enlargement Strategy and establishment of partnership with Azerbaijan. The second chapter, is the crucial part, as social and cultural factors in recent years play a very important role in international relations of the EU as well as forming relationship with Azerbaijan. Socio-cultural factors are approached much more in this research regarding the developing and enlarged projects by both sides. Finally, the last chapter combines the results and identify how socio-cultural relations will impact future cooperation. Research finishes with conclusion and followed by list of references.

1. Theoretical analysis of the EU's Eastern enlargement strategy and international relations with respect Eastern neighbors

EU-Azerbaijan partnership indeed has been improved and influenced by several political, economic agreements since it started. One of the foreign policy priorities of Azerbaijan is cooperation with the European Union. Multiple cooperation agreements, concluded and ongoing economic, socio-cultural, environmental, institutional projects of the EU with Azerbaijan are remarkable endeavors by two sides. The European Union is nowadays the most powerful integration entity in the world, and it is currently enlarging through accession of new member states. Therefore, partnership agreements with its neighborhood countries, other regional associations, overseas are crucial for the EU from the point of growing economy, stable politics and safe borders, integration of cultures and societies. In this respect, it is better to go through the EU's enlargement strategies in order understand how the EU started partnership with Azerbaijan.

1.1. The Eastern enlargement strategy and establishment of relations with Azerbaijan

At present, regional integration associations have become an integral and important element of the international system. Regional integration is a permanent cooperation consisting of three or more states in order to gain benefits between civil society and non-governmental organizations in both official and informal level. There are certain measures which are used to identify any geographical area as a "region". First of all, establishment of region is affected by internal and external factors. Internal factors include common religion, history, culture and traditions, whereas, security and economic partnership constitute the external factors. The states involved in any region are trying to integrate with the assistance of international organizations are influenced by the above-mentioned factors. For example, it was inevitable for Western European countries which were under communist threat, to set up regional military organization named NATO. Thus, Western European states found the solution in mutual cooperation in order to prevent the spread of communist ideas caused by poor social and economic situation (*Mahmudov 2009*). Regional integration is also considered as one type of globalization process. Globalization itself is the process of international integration as a product of exchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture which worldwide exchange of national and cultural resources occurs in. The term globalization has been given several definitions as it is used to describe the economic, political and socio-cultural transformation of the world in the last fifty years, precisely after World War II, which was accelerated by the scientific revolution in order to cut down national and geopolitical boundaries to expand transnational movement of goods, services and capital (*Fathima*

2015). Globalization has numerous explanations and it is still being contested by theorists of international relations, in other words world politics. J. Baylis, S. Smith and P. Owens (2013) below have explained the globalization according to the main international relation theories:

- For *realists*, globalization does not change the most significant feature of world politics, as it may affect social, economic and cultural lives, however it does not exceed the international political system of states.
- For *liberals*, the globalization is the end product of the long running transformation of world politics, as they consider states no longer central actors of world politics and interested in the revolution in technology and communications represented by globalization.
- For *Marxists*, it is nothing particularly new and is really only the latest stage in the development of international capitalism. For them, it further deepens the existing divides between the core and the periphery rather than make the world more alike.
- For *constructivists*, globalization tends to be presented as an external force acting on states. Instead they think that it offers people real chances to create cross-national social movements assisted by modern technological forms of communication.
- For *poststructuralists*, globalization does not exist in the world and it is a discourse.
- *Postcolonial theorists'* thoughts are similar to much Marxists meaning that the globalization highlights the significant degree of continuity of colonial forms of power in the globalized world (Baylis, Smith, & Owens 2013).

Following the expression of globalization by various world politics theories of regional integration process can be understood that region countries which are associated in unions, organizations and in other alliances mostly join forces to integrate economy, simplification of movement of goods, services and human capitals etc. Of course, regional security is also taken into account whilst creating integrated region. Indeed, most of the regional integration models in the world such as the EU, NATO, ASEAN, OSCE and others can be samples of unions where nation-states bind their institutional forces in order to struggle with security challenges, protect boundaries of allies, and prevent conflicts which might be danger in future cooperation. Explanation of the theories above in terms of globalization and integration procedures reflects that the unification of Europe refers to liberal and constructivist ideas. It was organized by six Western European states, namely France, Italy, West Germany, and BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg) as a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), in 1951 with the conclusion of Paris treaty. It is apparent that foundation of the EU lies upon economic purposes and further supplemented with liberal-democratic values.

One of the difficulties that emerges during the determination of region is identification of its boundaries. According to what criteria are those boundaries decided or are they limited? Such questions create a discussion environment around the topic. For example, although the EU borders were established with the participation of six governments, at the moment it enlarges till Turkey (*Margaret, Karns 2004*). In the system of international relations, regional international organizations for various purposes covering all regions have been set up. These include NATO, the OSCE, the EU, the USA, ASEAN, NAFTA and others. Among them, the European Union holds a special place. In addition to successful internal integration, the EU pursues a common foreign policy that allows it to utilize a significant influence on the international arena. The Treaty on the European Union, signed on 7 February 1992 in Maastricht and updated in Amsterdam (October 1997) and Nice (December 2000), fixed specific goals that the Member States have set themselves at a new stage of the movement towards an integrated Europe. Thus, the development strategy of the European Union after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty was developed taking into account three main factors. First, after the transition to a single common market was completed, the EU reached a level where the next practical task was the transition to the establishment of an economic and monetary union. Secondly, the end of the Cold War and the changes that took place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have opened up new opportunities for Space-Expansion of European integration. Thirdly, the course for enlargement coexists with the desire for further consolidation of the EU, which is led by the state of the world economy, the aggravation of the global problems facing humanity, and the tasks of strengthening the world order, military conflicts in hot regions, and universal security insurance. As a result, the European Union has moved from a unification of states to a qualitatively different stage of integration, pursuing a common policy on common rules (*Кудряшова 2010*).

The idea of enlargement of the EU was first proposed together with completion and deepening of the Community by French president Georges Pompidou, in his press conference in 1969, July 10. His ideas are commonly known as Pompidou's Triptique. More precisely, the Triptique called for the completion of the Common Market by January 1, 1970, particularly financing of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) through the resources of the Community, the deepening of the Community, especially in the field of economic and monetary policy and enlargement to include Great Britain and other countries, with the condition that the Community would adopt a common position before negotiations. The Hague Summit Declaration mentioned the establishment of the Common Market as "the way for a united Europe" capable of assuming its responsibilities in the world (*Federiga and Angelescu 2012*). The EU has been a historic success and it has brought the longest period of peace and incomparable levels of prosperity to its peoples.

What began as a club of 6 is now home to 28 countries with a population of almost 500 million people. Integrating new members was part of the plan from the beginning. The founding ancestors were confident enough of their idea to leave the door open for other European countries to associate. Assisting those countries that have the capability to become members has been the EU's response to changes in the European political landscape in the past fifty years, improving economic growth and solidarity, and strengthening democratic forces in countries outstripping from dictatorship (*European Commission, Directorate General for Enlargement 2007*). Since the United Kingdom joined (1975) European Communities, the predecessor of the EU, both pro- and anti-European notions have had majority support at different times, with some dramatic fluctuations between two camps. Opposition to Britain's membership of the European bloc has never reached the levels at which it peaked in the beginning of the Thatcher premiership. It was Labor Party which was committed to stay out of European Communities in the early 1980s. In particular, the EU expansion in 2000s arose more Eurosceptic view of UK. For example, under laws allowing free movement of labor inside the union borders Polish citizens, that got membership (2004) of the EU, has been flowing into British market. Even though Brits were strongly in favor of Poland joining the EU, when it came to the immigration point some showed to be much less keen on Poles coming to Britain to take jobs. Immigration was becoming the first among the most important issues facing the country (*Mortimore, Roger 2016*). As a result, under pressure from many of Conservative Party members and the rise of UK Independence Party in 2015 Prime Minister David Cameron announced negotiations on EU membership. When the results were announced in 2016 June 24, poll indicated that the majority (51.9%) voted in favor of leaving the EU (*Brexit, 2016*). The exit of the UK which will be carried out by Article 50 of the EU establishment treaties accordingly. The negotiations on Brexit will last two years from the day of referendum results announced and until 2019 March two side will decide on the future of relations. The extension of negotiations also is in focus as the rights which the EU and UK citizens benefit from, trade customs, movement of goods and services and other factors have to be re-decided.

EU enlargement had a historical significance for the states beyond geographic Europe. It showed that the EU have a potential to incorporate countries farther to the Eastern neighbors, which need to prove their commitment to the shared values. This indicates the borders of what was called Europe to be rather conventional, as it was dependent on the capacity of its neighbors to reform and join the process of enlargement. It gave hopes that even states currently on the geographic periphery of Europe may one day be part of the process of enhanced relationship and depending on the performance in the areas of reforms have prospects of accession (*Aliyeva 2006*).

An important role in the overall foreign policy of the alliance is played by the "Eastern vector" - the policy towards neighboring countries of Eastern Europe: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and The Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. This is due to the geographical affiliation of these states to Europe, the perspectives for cooperation, the opportunity to qualify for membership in the EU, the importance of the region for Russia due to the existing close economic, social and cultural ties. The policy towards the eastern neighbors was an integral part of the EU's foreign policy, embracing Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result, a number of bilateral agreements have emerged, which have received the general name of partnership and cooperation agreements (PCAs). In 1994, such agreements were concluded with Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, and in 1996 - with Georgia and Armenia.

In the years 2004-2007, there was a large-scale expansion of the EU, as a result of which it included 12 states of Central and Eastern Europe. The European Union has received not only new members, but also new neighbors. Its borders, moving to the east, created the need to intensify relations with the CIS countries. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) has become a response to the evolving challenges. Carried out with respect to its closest neighbors from the East and the South, it was aimed at creating a security and prosperity zone along the borders of the European Union. The strategic importance of its implementation is confirmed in the Lisbon Treaty of 2007. Among the main tasks of the ENP are the following: achieving rapprochement with the EU through the adoption of EU values and norms; Development of cooperation in various fields; Ensuring respect for the principles of democracy and human rights. One of the key directions of the ENP was cooperation in the energy sector, which implied a gradual convergence of the energy laws of Eastern European countries with EU norms and the integration of energy markets, as announced in November 2006 during the Brussels conference "Towards an External Energy Policy of the EU" (*Towards an EU External Energy Policy 2006*). Formation and approval of mechanisms for the practical implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy were implemented in the period 2004-2007, with the active participation of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Presidents of the EU Council of States, primarily Germany. The European Union, as the central link of the European Neighborhood Policy, develops relations with each partner in accordance with an individual action plan and strategy that analyzes the situation in the state and substantiates the necessary reforms. The procedure for financing various types of projects is arranged by indicative programs. Monitoring of the state of relations between the EU and a specific partner is carried out jointly by the two sides, but the final decision on transferring relations with a country to a new level, allocating funds and granting preferences is taken by EU bodies. The partners' commitment to "common values, principally in the field of the rule of law, good

governance, respect for rights of Persons "is crucial condition for productive cooperation (*ENP Strategy paper 2004*).

The main incentive for the country to participate in the ENP was the prospect of access to the EU internal market by creating a free trade zone. The condition for such access was the implementation of economic reforms and the approximation of national legislation with the legislation of the European Union. Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all industries of the EU member states were interested in opening the EU market for goods of the post-Soviet Eastern European countries.

An important result of the implementation of the ENP was the formation of the Black Sea Synergy in 2007, the first regional dimension of the Neighborhood Policy, which included practically all future "Eastern" partners of the European Union. The EU's interest in this region is related to its geographic location: between Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, it was at the intersection of energy and traffic flows, as well as flows of illegal migration and organized crime. Since 2007, when Bulgaria and Romania became part of the EU, the EU has become an integral part of the region with future security and prosperity (*Ferrero-Waldner 2008*).

The Black Sea Synergy was conceived as a "flexible format" with a view to ensuring greater co-ordination among partners in more than 13 areas: energy, transport, trade, democracy and respect for human rights, security, conflict resolution, environmental protection, creation of special institutions and structures. States were encouraged to intensify cooperation within existing formats and the programs initiated by the European Union. The Black Sea Synergy provided the participation of individual countries in those projects that were of interest to them. Funds for the implementation of activities were planned to be distributed on the basis of co-financing. To solve specific problems, it was envisaged to use the resources of national, regional and cross-border ENP programs and the European Regional Development Fund (*EC Doc. COM 2007*).

However, Romania has sought to politicize cooperation in the region, focusing on security issues. In addition, Romania advocated the establishment of close EU relations with the key organization in the region - the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). At the initiative of Romania in 2006 a new format of cooperation was launched - the Black Sea Forum, which can be considered as one of the organizational pillars of the Black Sea Synergy. Russia and Turkey opposed this approach, preferring direct, equal cooperation between the BSEC and the EU (*Panagiota, 2012*). In 2008, during the Ukrainian presidency in the BSEC, the first meeting of the foreign ministers of the EU member states and the Black Sea region states was held in Kiev. The participants recognized the important role of the EU in strengthening cooperation in the Black Sea

region and Black Sea Synergy as an important tool for achieving this goal. In the final statement, the participating countries expressed their support for the European Commission receiving observer status in the BSEC in 2007 and establishing cooperation in various fields (*EEAS 2014*). Russia did not join the final statement, because "at the meeting in Kiev it was not possible to agree on a balanced document providing the establishment of equal relations between the organization of the Black Sea Economic and the EU (*Ministry of Foreign affairs of Russia 2014*).

An integral part of the European Neighborhood Policy, its new evolutionary step, was the Eastern Partnership program. The official start of the program was given at the Prague Summit in 2009. The emergence of the Eastern Partnership is due to a number of reasons, in particular: the promotion of post-Soviet countries in the sphere of economic liberalization and democratization, and the formation of an effective security system and prevention of military operations in the region (*EC Doc. COM 188/3 final 2009*). The Eastern Partnership (EaP) Initiative was officially proposed for the first time on May 26, 2008 by the Polish and Swedish ministers of foreign affairs Radosław Sikorski and Carl Bildt at the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) in Brussels. The Polish-Swedish initiative was concentrated on Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and aimed at enhancing the European Union's bilateral relations with these countries in a way that would move beyond the existing European Neighborhood Policy and on creating a regular formula for multilateral co-operation with the region. The partner countries expressed their interest and warmly welcomed the new initiative. Azerbaijani foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov also in his part showed a will to work with the EU on specific programs at the bilateral level within EaP (*Marcin 2009*).

Meanwhile of eastern enlargement in 2004, the EU stand out against double fear. One of them was the security challenge which brought the EU closer to unstable areas. The second anxiety was about the enlargement paradox that arose when it included ten former communist countries in the integration process and created dividing lines of leaving others out. The catalyst for the launch of the new EU program for Eastern European countries was the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict in December 2008 - January 2009, which resulted in a temporary halt in the flow of gas to the European Union. The situation strengthened the course of official Brussels on the security of the energy sector and the development of a unified foreign energy policy. The crisis revealed the interdependence of the EU and Russia in the energy sector and at the same time the EU's desire to strengthen its positions in the region. The program was intended for six post-Soviet states: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The attention of the European Union to this region was due to its transit position between Asia and Europe, which allowed it to be used for the development of transport corridors, including for transportation of energy. However, it should be

noted that Sweden and Poland, who initiated the launch of the Eastern Partnership, in their proposal stressed the possibility of including Russia in the future list of members (*EU Neighborhood Info Centre 2008*).

The Eastern Partnership envisages carrying out by the participating countries political and socio-economic reforms aimed at approaching European standards. The main innovation of the program is to stimulate the development of direct ties between the participating countries, united, despite differences in the goals and priorities of foreign policy, the common past, as well as the problems associated with the need to transform the political and social system and modernize the economy (*EC Doc. COM 823 final 2009*). In accordance with the program, the implementation of reforms in the member states, provided close cooperation with the EU, should be carried out within the framework of four "thematic platforms". The first of these, democracy, reflects the EU's traditional support for the development of democratic institutions and civil society. Within the framework of the second platform - economic integration - the intensification of economic cooperation among Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine with the aim of creating in the future an "economic community of neighboring countries of the EU" is expected. The third thematic platform - energy security - envisages cooperation with a number of EU energy structures with a view of building an interconnected and diversified energy market between the EU and the six states listed. The program also includes the fourth platform - the development of cultural cooperation, contacts between citizens, considering them as an important condition for rapprochement of the member countries and the EU (*Schäffer 2010*). The implementation of activities in this direction was planned with the help of existing EU programs in the field of education, language learning, support of the development of the information society and the media.

The countries that joined the EU, Poland and Lithuania, as well as Estonia, proclaimed their mission to help post-Soviet countries to rid themselves of the "socialist legacy," to carry out reforms, democratization and distance from Russia. The closest targets for such an impact were Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova.

The geopolitical picture of the South Caucasus is defined by those processes that take place in the post-Soviet space. A special role in this process is played by the emerging model of European integration of Azerbaijan, adjusted for the influence of the leading countries competing in this region (the United States and Russia). With the development of the current international situation and against the backdrop of Ukrainian events, new circumstances are emerging, related to the growing influence of the EU in the region. However, in Azerbaijan, European integration is hampered by the position of the West over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its hesitant actions in relation to the territories occupied by Armenia. At the same time, the EU pays special attention

to the Caspian region, in the economic development of which international companies and organizations are actively involved. It is not by chance that the international community trusted the international community in the Georgian-Abkhazian settlement, and the OSCE in the Nagorno-Karabakh, within the framework of which the influence of the European industrialized powers is more tangible. In terms of security and stabilization of South Caucasus, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains main obstacle for the entire region, affecting not only Azerbaijan and Armenia but also Georgia, Russia, Turkey, Iran and energy routes across the Caspian Sea. The EU's focus on Nagorno-Karabakh started in 1992. Since 2003, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia has been working to foster dialogue between the EU and the countries of the region to support the EU in developing a comprehensive policy towards the countries of the region. The EU contributes direct financial support through TACIS and ENPI for the refugee problem and food security. At the same time, Azerbaijan has been waiting for more than a decade for the EU to make a clear declaration that it recognizes that Armenia is violating the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan (*Franke, Gawrich, Melnykovska, and Schweickert R. 2010*). The two sides have adopted different strategies in their attempts to resolve the conflict. The Armenians have focused on normalizing the status quo and establishing a de facto state in the hope that history will eventually ratify their victory and that Nagorno-Karabakh will follow the path of Kosovo to international legitimacy. However, the Azerbaijani side has tried to isolate the unrecognized republic and lobby for international statements of support for its own territorial integrity, while also building up its armed forces in an implicit threat that it reserves the right to use military force to re-conquer its historical territory. The Minsk Group still formally exists and today consists of around a dozen countries, but has no formal mandate and plays at best a supporting role (*Remaking the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Process 2010*).

The European Union is nowadays the most powerful integration entity in the world, and it is currently enlarging through accession of new member states. Therefore, partnership agreements with its neighborhood countries, other regional associations, overseas are crucial for the EU from the point of growing economy, stable politics and safe borders, integration of cultures and societies. Since its creation, the EU has reached the fastest growing speed in modern globalized world and flow of foreign investments outside of union and vice-versa increasing every year. In this context, as a newly developed country and natural resource rich Azerbaijan also is in center of cooperation considering the EU's energy and raw material needs. This statement does not mean this partnership indicating unilateral will from the part of the EU but also abovementioned priorities of the union have generated great interest and eagerness in third countries such as Azerbaijan to integrate and benefit from the world's largest economy. This is one of the reasons

why the European Union is important for Azerbaijan but not any other economic integration, entity or oversea association.

First contractual relations between Azerbaijan and the EU were established in 1996 by signing PCA, which was enforced in 1999. This was the fundamental for the further development of relations and basis of ENP Action Plan adopted in 2006, November for five years' period. In order to monitor the developments in the country, Commission adopted the ENP Action Plan in 2008. Through institutional cooperation, more precisely the EU – Azerbaijan Cooperation Council, the EU – Azerbaijan Cooperation Committee and two subcommittees – concerning trade, economic and related legal issues; energy, transport and environment – enabled both parts to move forward and follow the implementation of the AP profoundly. AP or Association agenda for partner country sets out the partner country's agenda for political and economic reforms, with short and medium-term priorities of three to five years. This joint instrument reflects the country's needs and capacities, as well as interests of both sides. Political dialogues and goals of this plan include strengthening the stability and effectiveness of institutions supporting democracy and rule of law, strengthening democratic institutions ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, reforms in judicial system and civil service and fight against corruption. The action plans build on existing legal agreements with the EU – partnership & cooperation agreements (PCAs) or Association Agreements (AAs). Implementation is monitored through committees set up by these agreements. Once a year, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission publish ENP progress reports assessing the improvements made towards the objectives of the Action Plans and the Association Agendas (*EEAS 2016*).

Baku's recent invitation to participate in the association with the EU was met with cool and even undisguised skepticism by the leading political elites of Azerbaijan. Unlike other former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, the Azerbaijani economy depends little on foreign borrowing, and the country's main export commodities, oil and gas, enter the European market in accordance with general practice applied in the energy trade, i.e. without special and additional integration agreements. Moreover, Azerbaijan is not a member of the WTO, which excludes its full-fledged European integration and cooperation with the EU within the framework of the association agreement. Azerbaijan mainly needs the EU for a full-fledged European integration, in order to oust Russia from the region. The Russian Federation has now been pushed out by European players from the economically important Batumi region and it is now under British control. Before Europe, there is another important task: weakening Russia, preventing excessive strengthening of Turkey in the South Caucasus region (*Trend: Information Agency 2014*). During the first 15 years of transition from a planned economy to market economy

Azerbaijan has implemented certain reform initiatives to acquire economic transformations. Although Azerbaijan's development potential seemed reasonable at dawn of the 20th century because of its oil and gas resources, following events including two World Wars and its absorption into Soviet sphere were less favorable. In the beginning of 2000s Azerbaijan was one of the seven lowest income countries of Europe and Central Asia. Since independence the country has experienced many of the same challenges as other CIS transition economies (*Kaynak, Nasirova 2005*). During his recent visit to Baku, in 2017 March, Simon McDonald - Head of the Diplomatic Service at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, - and Ilham Aliyev, President of the republic of Azerbaijan, discussed economic and political relationship between the UK and Azerbaijan. During the meeting, McDonald especially put emphasis on Brexit case of UK stressing that withdrawal of Britain from the EU will not affect and spoil the British policy as well as relations in the South Caucasus. Stressing that after the withdrawal from the EU, the UK theoretically may have the opportunity to review its relations with partner countries, however he also added that no major changes are expected in this part of the world (*Nazarli 2017*). Considering the common customs and other trade regulations, Brexit reveals that UK will form new trade relations with third countries. Britain also will need to decide what trade measures, import tariffs, industrial and agricultural policies etc. it will set out. However, if UK government agree on customs union with the EU, in that case there will not be any significant changes with South Caucasus as well as with Azerbaijan in terms of import and export rules, tariffs, and other trade regulations.

The development of these relations has a positive impact on the implementation of thorough reforms in the public and private sectors, as well as the creation of a modern market economy and attracting foreign investment. It should be noted that the countries of Western Europe for Azerbaijan act as the main export market. In addition, Azerbaijan favors from beneficial cooperation with Western European countries in the process of establishing its better civil society. Eight-teen important international events have been held at the European stage in Azerbaijan until 2015. The bilateral documents signed at the Vilnius summit of the Eastern Partnership countries and the EU, as well as the subsequent period and the work carried out to implement them, are the main component of Azerbaijan's cooperation with the EU. In particular, the opportunities created because of signing agreements on the simplification of the visa regime for Azerbaijani citizens working in the fields of science, education and research as well as the readmission agreement, have expanded. In general, Azerbaijani government continues to adhere to the multi-vector policy and tries to observe the principle of equidistance from the main centers of power.

1.2. Influence of socio-cultural phenomenon on international relations

In modern international relations, sociocultural flows are understood as a factor of influencing the world perception of people, their needs, professional skills, the development of culture and science, the formation of a way of life, improving communication and transport, solving environmental problems, limiting crime, etc. Formerly isolated societies and individuals are now in imminent contact, in networks of a single social space. The national state is necessary not only to ensure domestic policy and geopolitics, political fundamental rights, but also to politically formulate and regulate the process of globalization. Globalization is a process of growing interdependence of different countries, which involves a free flow of resources, including people and capital.

From mutual gifts of ancient rulers to modern exhibitions, culture was used as a way for leaders and countries to show who they are, to assert their power and build strong relationships. But in foreign policy, so often dominant realpolitik thinking, culture and cultural exchange are often seen as desirable, but not essential. The generally accepted view is that although cultural diplomacy can help establish and maintain working relations between countries, it strictly obeys more stringent legislation and treaties, bilateral negotiations, multilateral structures and military capabilities. While culture plays a role in diplomacy, there is still a sharp contrast between the amount of attention, money and inches of columns devoted to this area, compared to more formal diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy claims that today, more than before, culture plays a vital role in international relations. This is due to the broader, connecting and human values that culture has: culture is both how we come to understand others, and an aspect of life with an innate value that we enjoy and search for. Cultural exchange gives us an opportunity to assess common ground, and where there are differences, understand the motives and humanity that lie at their base. Since the identity policy has an increasing impact on domestic and international exchanges, these attributes make culture a critical forum for negotiations and a means of exchange in the search for common solutions (*Briggs, Jones, Bound, Holden 2013*). Cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in building relations between states in contemporary international relations, since it can serve as an effective tool for supporting national foreign policy goals or constructive channels during periods of political difficulties. It is argued that culture keeps the doors open in difficult times, as there are a number of cases where cultural diplomacy provides a safe and constructive forum for building relationships or relaxing relationships when they are tense. Taking into account the necessity of culture factor in international relations, many countries nowadays aim to advance and extend their cultural institutions abroad as part of their diplomatic missions (*Mark 2009*).

Intercultural relations and societal integration maintain significant role in external relations of the EU with respect to third countries. In terms of multiculturalism policy, the EU focus on cultural diversity and integration. As the EU is multicultural itself the appropriate rights and laws must be issued and applied for managing multicultural issues in economic and social life of the countries (*Greblikaite, Sroka, Daugeliene, Kurowska-Pysz 2016*). The term of multiculturalism commonly used in broad and narrow concept. In the broad sense multiculturalism is approached synonymously with the perception of cultural diversity. At the very most, multiculturalism considered as an ethnic, racial, religious, cultural diversity and certain values constituting those varieties. Today, ethnic, racial religious and cultural diversity coexist in majority of world countries and these varieties play objective role in the development of the historical process. Therefore, nowadays many of the world states are multicultural in the broad sense. However, in the limited sense multiculturalism phenomena indicates the specific and concrete policies pursued by the governments toward ethnic, racial, religious and cultural diversities existing in society. The majority of multiculturalist scholars generally include into this phenomenon those ethnic and religious minorities as refugees (e.g. Latin Americans in the US Muslims in Western Europe) and national minorities (e.g. Catalans, Basque ethnics, and indigenous people in North America etc.). Inglehart (2000) in his research of “Modernization, cultural change and the persistence of traditional values” stresses that the modernization in twentieth century was widely seen as a unique Western process which non-Western societies could follow only if they abandoned their traditional cultures and assimilated technologically and morally “superior” Western ways. His thesis was that the economic development has systematic and, to some extent, predictable cultural and political consequences. Researches and theories on socioeconomic development entail to the emergence of two schools of thoughts. One school emphasizes the convergence of values as a result of “modernization”, precisely the overwhelming economic and political forces that drive cultural heritage. However, other group of theorists claim the independence of traditional values despite of economic and political changes (*Inglehart, Baker 2000*). The level of agreement on basic political values by members of different ethnic groups in multiethnic societies may be critical to the functioning of democratic institutions and to the process of democratization in transition countries (*Silver, Dowley 2000*). Ronald Inglehart, who was one of the co-founder of the World Values Survey (WVS), at the same time playing a pioneer role in extending European Values Study (EVS), emphasizing the modernization matter argues that the more societies develop economically in globalized world the more secular-rational capacity surplus that of traditional ones.

World Values Surveys has been designed to test the hypothesis that economic and technological changes are transforming the basic values and motivations of the publics of

industrialized societies. The WVS explores values and beliefs, cultural stability and the impact of values on social and political development in different societies around the globe. WVS was first conducted in 1981 and largely limited to developed societies, however, interest in this project enlarged so widely that surveys were carried out in more than twenty countries located on all six inhabited continents. Regarding to the European origin of the project, the early waves of the WVS were Eurocentric in focus, with little representation in Africa and South-East Asia. With the decentralization of the surveys' structure scientists from the countries around the world have been taken part in the design, execution and analysis of the data, and in publication of research results. The first wave of the WVS which was started in 1981 was pursued by researchers until 2014 (sixth wave) and followed by next waves with the increased number of participating societies. The continuous researches were found to analyze cultural conditions for democracy, impact of economic and technological development on basic values relating to politics, economic life, religion, family norms etc. (WVS, www.worldvaluessurveys.org). Socioeconomic development, emancipative value change and democratization have been debated whether they are consistently global or culture-specific that defines an inherently Western model and even whether they are desirable or not. However, it can hardly be denied that if socioeconomic development, emancipative value change and democratization occur, they tend to go together (Welzel, Inglehart & Klingemann 2003). As a result of socio-cultural investigations in various world societies that was conducted by WVS researchers since 1981 so far entailed to create Cultural map of world societies by Inglehart and Welzel. They designed Cultural Map according to leading societal attributes such as traditional and secular-rational, and survival-self-expression values which over years have depicted that people's beliefs play a key role in economic development, flourishing of democratic institutions, gender equality and the effective government dimensions. Therefore, Inglehart and Welzel have placed societies with similar religion, traditional and cultural values in the same clusters in Cultural Map which show their democratic development, religiosity, freedom of self-expression, post-modernization character.

Since the end of 1990s international and regional cross-cultural and social survey institutions has been conducting cultural and public opinion surveys with the help of hundreds of scholars from different countries. These institutions emerged after the spread and expansion of democracy since the 1970s which have been studying public behavior, democratic elections and their assessment. The enlargement of democracy in developing societies was encouraged financially by international organizations and agencies of developed countries which support the transition process. If to consider that comparisons, similarities and differences shape the social and political sciences comparative researches and surveys are indispensable part of these scientific

branches then. The comparative survey research method was firstly launched in European and Anglo-Saxon countries. For example, the Eurobarometer, The European Election Study, Eurasia barometer etc. which involve scholars from different countries cover civil society actors, democratic election behavior in certain societies (*Lagos & Chu 2013*). As an international social survey organization Eurasia Barometer aims to monitor political, social and economic transformations in European and post-Soviet Eurasia countries. It has research centers in certain regions and countries of matter including Azerbaijan. This is network of research institutions and individual researches operating in more than 25 countries and over 50 social survey and political scientists are involved in researches. Eurasia Barometer together with other regional barometers form the Global Barometer Survey (GBS).

The next chapter of research is devoted to the secondary data analysis which encompasses a more comprehensive approach to cultural characteristics, constraints, similarities of EU and Azerbaijan societies in order to figure out the key reform areas for the future cooperation.

2. Analysis of the current situation and the key factors of socio-cultural integration between Azerbaijan and the EU

According to the provided theoretical information it is clear that the European Union is maintaining close links with Azerbaijan through a variety of instruments, including the Eastern Partnership, the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the European Neighborhood Policy, various EU assistance programs and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly etc. Growing economic and socio-cultural relations, political dialogues between these partners explain the importance of Azerbaijan and increasing interest of the EU in this strategically located and energy-rich country. The EU's primary focus in economic sphere with Azerbaijan is not a common market, but rather the convergence of Azerbaijani energy policy with the principles of the EU's internal electricity and gas market. The EU depends on Azerbaijani oil and gas resources as well as its transit corridor. In this respect, the Azerbaijani Ambassador to Belgium Fuad Isgandarov's statements are noteworthy to mention. He emphasized the importance of relations as strategically oriented, future-oriented and equal considering the new agreement that was presented to the Commission during the Riga summit (*EURACTIV 2017*). Although majority of dialogues and meetings between Azerbaijan and the EU involve energy transportation, connectivity and economic interests, partners also execute a lot of important socio-cultural affairs. This chapter is concerned to analyze the significance of culture and society factors in the EU-Azerbaijan partnership and figure out contributors, similarities and constraints of given phenomenon that influence the relations between the EU and Azerbaijan.

2.1. Methodology of analysis

This study is aimed to analyze the development of the partnership between the European Union and Azerbaijan, considering the influence of socio-cultural factors on this relationship.

Systematic data analysis was used to describe the fundamentals the EU enlargement strategy and establishment of the relations between the EU and Azerbaijan.

Secondary data analysis has been used to define the main social and cultural values, such as democracy, religion, freedom of expression etc. and explain how they affect the partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan.

Comparative method of analysis also has been applied to illustrate the contributors, similarities or constraints of values that influence the EU-Azerbaijan partnership and future cooperation of these parties.

As the study in a large sense focuses and highlights the necessity of cultural aspect, the first step was the analysis and definition of Azerbaijani and the European cultural-traditional values in accordance with WVS cultural maps. Analysis of WVS data is initiated by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel. The WVS has over the years demonstrated that people's beliefs play a key role in economic development, the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions, the rise of gender equality, and the extent to which societies have effective government. WVS, known as a global network of social scientists, seeks to carry out the most reliable, vibrant and high-quality researches in each country. It was launched in 1981 and nationally representative surveys conducted almost in 100 countries so far, which constitute almost 90 percent of the world's population. Thousands of scholars from different field of social sciences have used these data to analyze such topics as economic development, democratization, religion, gender equality, social capital etc. The face-to-face interview with respondents at their place of residence adopted as a main method of data collection in the WVS surveys. In conjunction with WVS the research was provided with the Eurasia barometer data analysis.

Eurasia barometer surveys are conducted in Azerbaijan with the assistance of the International Center for Social Research (ICSR) which is legally registered in October 2000 by Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan. The majority of researchers involved in ICSR are alumni of different international exchange programs such as Fulbright Program, The Edmund S Muskie, etc. Many of them members of the US-educated Azerbaijan Alumni Association (AAA), UK-Azeri Alumni Network (AUKAA). Dr. Tair Faradov, team leader and principal investigator of ICSR in Azerbaijan, has been appointed as a Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Democracy and Civil Society Studies as well as Department of Peace and Conflict Studies. Eurasia Barometer research centers use face-to-face interview method for surveys and research samples are national representative of certain countries accounted between 1500 and 3500 respondents. As a part of qualitative research methods, in-depth, biographical interviews and focus group discussions are used during surveys of Eurasia Barometer. The themes covered in Eurasia Barometer surveys mainly are related with politics, democracy, political institutions, and regime (*Eurasia Barometer*).

In 2003, The Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) was set up by Eurasia Partnership Foundation in order to strengthen the social science research and public policy analysis in South Caucasus (*CRRC*). Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan have been registered in this regional research centers which provide comparative analysis and training, research between sectors, governments population of region countries.

2.2. Analysis of socio-cultural values that influence the EU-Azerbaijan partnership

When the PCA was signed (1999) between the European Union and Azerbaijan in its General provisions (Title I. General principles, Article 2) social factors such as respect for democracy, principles of international law and human rights as defined in particular in the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, as well as the principles of market economy, including those enunciated in the documents of the CSCE Bonn Conference, constitute essential elements of partnership and respective agreement. Moving forward with cultural fundamentals of cooperation the Article 76 of PCA between the EU and Azerbaijan states as:

“The Parties undertake to promote, encourage and facilitate cultural cooperation.

Where appropriate, the Community's cultural cooperation programs or those of one or more Member States may be the subject of cooperation and further activities of mutual interests may be developed.

The cooperation may include:

-exchange of information and experience in the sphere of protection and maintenance of monuments and historic places (architectural legacy),

-cultural exchange between institutions, artists and other people working in the area of art (EU-Azerbaijan PCA 1999)”.

Above-mentioned principles, withdrawn from respective partnership agreement, maintain significant role as fundamentals of relations between the EU and Azerbaijan. These at the same time are main boosting legal basis of ongoing integration.

In a fast-changing, inter-connected world, cultural relations offer a unique opportunity for improving relations with EU partner countries. Culture is a valuable resource to tackle many of the challenges Europe and the world are currently facing – such as the integration of refugees and migrants, countering violent radicalization and the protection of cultural heritage (*European Commission - Fact Sheet 2016*). Cultural diversity is an integral part of the values of the European Union. The EU is strongly committed to promoting a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental rights. As a key global actor and partner of the United Nations (UN), the EU cooperates with UNESCO to preserve the world's cultural heritage (*Policy recommendations 2016*). The intercultural diplomatic relations

and programs which are carried out by the EU and Azerbaijan valuable to analyze and evaluate how well it affects the current relations.

Inglehart and Welzel, who were the designers of the WVS cultural map of 1996 has shown Azerbaijan in Ex-Communist cluster with all post-Soviet countries. Obviously, it is understandable that Newly Independent Countries of South Caucasus including Azerbaijan in 1996 still were under influence of autocratic environment, whereas the EU countries were resided in different clusters according to their religious beliefs and economic development.

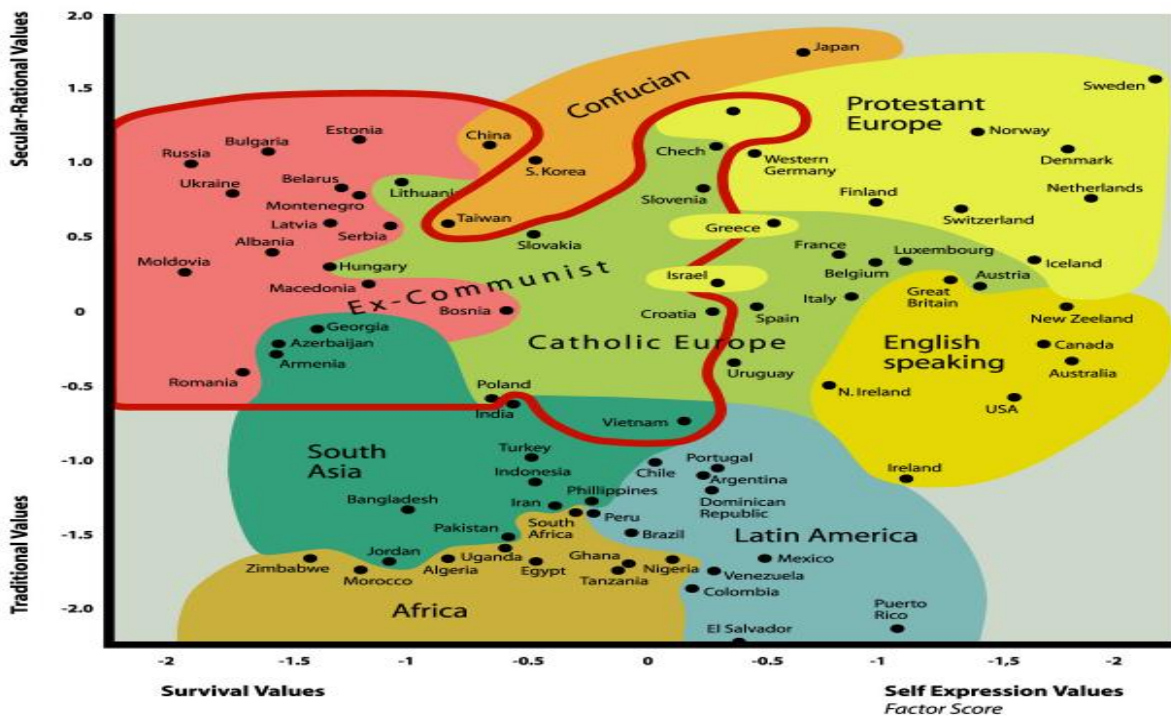


Figure 1. Cultural map - WVS wave 4 (1996). **Source:** World Values Survey

While monitoring the figure above someone might get confused why Turkey and Azerbaijan are not included into the same cluster taking into account their historical ties, religion, and close links between society and culture. The reason o why Azerbaijan together with South Caucasian neighbors are involved in different cluster and scores more on secular values is because the country had been almost 70 years under the Soviet control where religion was strongly prohibited. However, on the other hand Turkey in given period was striving to become the EU member and from economic and individual values point of view it was considerably ahead of Azerbaijan. If to consider Inglehart’s argument that global industrialization and economic development of a country reduces the impact of religion, traditions and cultural values and contributes to individualistic attitudes in the society, then the question is why those Confucian countries such as Japan, South Korea stand in the same position in Cultural Map throughout years even though they have reached

the fastest development in economic areas. Thus, it poses the question whether traditions and cultural values of societies are independent of economic development or maybe the changes of traditional and secular values as well as survival and self-expression values could be applied only to Western societies due to the above-mentioned reasons.

The WVS includes a lot of specific values, but analyzing the data, R. Inglehart has found that many basic values are closely correlated and can be depicted in two main dimensions of cross cultural variation: From traditional to secular-rational values and from survival to self-expression values. These are very essential in terms of analyzing cross-cultural communication and development of Azerbaijani society as well as integration in line with the EU standards. WVS cooperates together with plenty of statistic organizations and representatives in various regions of world to conduct the surveys profoundly.

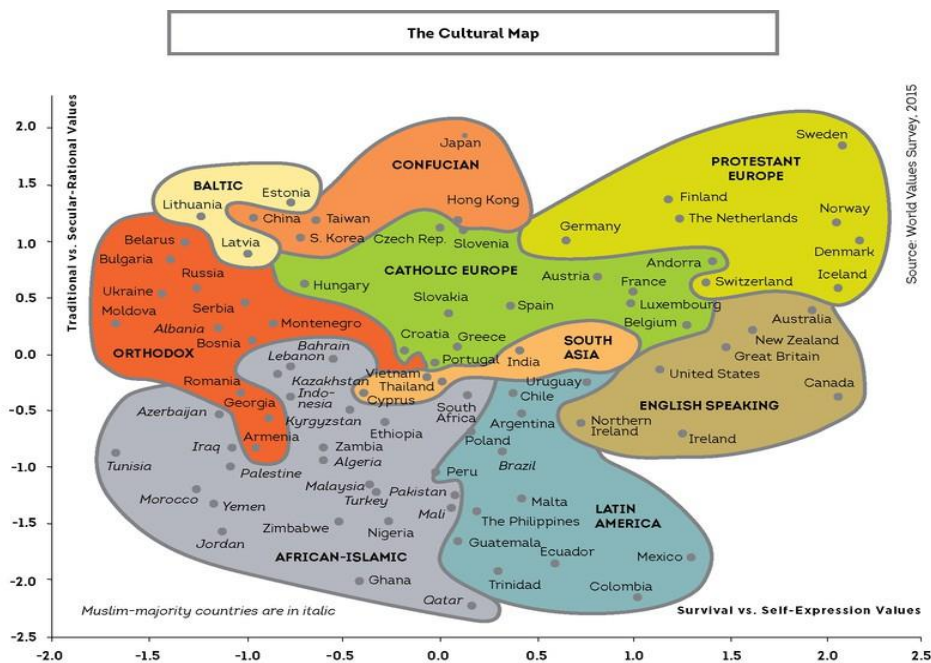


Figure 2. The Cultural Map. **Source:** World Value Survey 2015

The figure 2 above describes the global cultural map of 2015 and how scores of societies are located on these two dimensions. Moving upward on this map reflects the shift from Traditional values to Secular-rational values and moving rightward reflects the shift from Survival values to Self-expression values. The given map shows that Azerbaijan scores below zero (-0.5) in traditional vs secular-rational values which underline the importance of religion, family ties and values, rejection of divorce, abortion suicide etc. If to compare the country with the most developed countries of the European Union such as Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France etc. we will see that maintaining

higher scores these societies embrace secular-rational values more. They place less focus on religion, traditional family values and authority seeing relatively acceptable situations such as divorce, abortion, suicide and others. This cultural map also reveals the main public values which defines the economic and democratic development of the countries. Following the second element of the map, survival vs self-expression values, Azerbaijan stands below zero (-1) again comparing with the above-mentioned and the most developed and democratic countries of the EU. Although Azerbaijan's indicators in respective values fall behind of those countries' several EU member states including Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and others are in the same line. Survival values are characteristic for eastern-world countries and self-expression values for western-world countries. In a liberal post-industrial economy, an increasing share of the population has grown up taking survival and freedom of thought for granted, resulting in that self-expression is highly valued. It also shows the differences in economic development of the countries.

According the cultural map Azerbaijan has been included into the African-Islamic cluster together with Turkey, Iraq, post-Soviet countries (such as Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan), and other African countries. On one hand, particularly from religious and in certain proportion secular-values point of view the inclusion of Azerbaijan into that cluster can be acceptable. On the other hand, there is a huge gap and difference in terms of democracy, life style of population and secular values between Azerbaijan and those of African and some Islamic Asian countries.

However, it is valuable to compare and discuss Turkey's efforts towards the EU integration alongside with Azerbaijan. As from historical and geographical, religious, cultural, and ethnic point of view Turkey and Azerbaijan have very close ties and even the citizens of these countries often introduce themselves as "two states-one nation" in international political arenas. On the other hand, these two neighbor states maintain relatively different positions and strategies with respect the EU integration regarding political, economic, and social issues. Turkey and the EU partnership roots back to 1970s and Turkey has deeper communication relations with the EU. Turkey is also included into European Customs Union and currently negotiates Accession talks with the EU, whereas Azerbaijan as a New Independent State (NIS) is involved in PCA with the EU since 1999. Both countries are part of the EU's Neighborhood policy and integrate according to certain strategies toward the union. Taking into account Turkey's long-term accession struggles and obstacles, Azerbaijan government has chosen specific way with regards to the EU integration and apparently perceiving the need for reformations in key structural areas. Geographic identity of these brother countries, location on crossroads of Europe and Asia, ethnic affiliation (Turkic nationality primarily), predomination of Islam etc. demonstrate large-scale similarities which are apparent in socio-cultural life of the country.

The privileged position of the army in Turkish society is the key to the stability of the state. But the EU opposed this all-powerful military presence in politics and used it as evidence that Turkish democracy is far behind European standards. One of the main obstacles to Turkey's full accession to the EU is the unresolved Kurdish problem. The European Parliament issued many sanctions condemning Turkey for bloodshed. In a number of cases, the EU appealed to the Turkish government to ease the tense situation in the southeast and enter into a dialogue with Kurdish militants in order to reach a peace agreement guaranteeing respect for the basic rights of the Kurds. The coincidence in military area is the unstable political situation of Azerbaijan as suspended war situation and ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh envisage open blockages of Turkey-EU and Azerbaijan-EU integration. Because one of the main principals of the EU is that the stable and peaceful environment in region countries in neighborhood and inside among union members. However, the Kurdish dispute is not the only fragment that affects the EU-Turkey partnership. In this respect, Turkey's historical conflict with Greece and Cyprus at the EU's Mediterranean neighborhood, Syria problem, etc. make undesirable situation for regional security and impact Association talks between the EU and Turkey.

Turkey and Azerbaijan are often represented as countries of contradictions; one that is geographically situated both in Europe and in Asia, where a predominantly Islamic society coexists with a trusty secular westernizing state. Turkish and Azerbaijani society is represented as “torn”¹³ between Westernizers and those seeking closer relations with the Islamic and Turkic countries. Turkey's representation of the EU as a Christian club produces the conception that if the EU refrains to grant membership to Turkey, it would be discrimination for cultural and religious reasons. Some of statements made by Turkish government ministers and members of government in 1990s expose the notion that the EU only belongs to Christian countries and therefore inclusion of Islamic states in neighborhood seems far not reachable (*Rumelili 2007*). However, these ideas were marked down by the leaders of new government, AKP (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi). Current president of Turkey stresses the Islamic and secular democratic nature of the country does not undervalue integration of the country into the Christian union, rather will be evaluated as a demonstration of integration westernizing Islamic country and exemplar model for others. Moreover, with the current and past processes of integration and assimilation of immigrants into Europe, we see that the Islamic community has grown up to vet high quantities.

“The issue of Azerbaijan's accession to the European Union, of course, depends on Europe, the European Union”. – said the president of the republic of Azerbaijan in his interview to the “Rai International” in 2008. The president also stated that the EU is a family, and that this family has its own laws and rules: "This family has the right to invite anyone here, if we say today, we want

to integrate even faster, this will not cause major changes. The work we have done in Turkey has served to strengthen the country, to the strong political system, the free economy, the market economy, the establishment of social justice and all the principles that are on the agenda of the European Union (APA 2008). This exposes that Azerbaijan, which rejected negotiations on an Association Agreement in 2014, is now willing to draft a new agreement but this first requires a negotiating mandate from the EU side. To do so the EU has to balance business versus value dealing with Azerbaijan and will highlight protection of human rights to be a primary part of any presupposed agreement.

Table 1. Important in life: Religion. Source: WVS wave 6 2010-2014

	TOTAL	Country Code			
		Azerbaijan	Germany	Poland	Turkey
Very important	38.6%	35.9%	13.1%	45.9%	68.3%
Rather important	28.0%	33.3%	25.0%	34.1%	24.7%
Not very important	20.6%	20.5%	36.2%	15.2%	4.0%
Not at all important	12.9%	10.2%	25.7%	4.8%	3.0%
(N)	(5,603)	(1,002)	(2,040)	(961)	(1,600)

Selected samples: Azerbaijan 2011-2012, Germany 2013, Poland 2012, Turkey 2011

Selected samples of the EU countries such as most developed western European state Germany and fast developing country Poland, and Turkey applied to make comparative view with Azerbaijan with respect religious faith of their citizens. Indicators of selected countries from two EU countries (Christian) and two partner countries (Islamic) of the EU with different religions performing interesting picture.

Societies fall into a “mainstream Islamic” cluster in the lower left-hand quadrant of the WVS map (see figure 1) tend to emphasize traditional and survival values, regardless of this Turkey sets more emphasis on secular-rational and self-expression values than most other members of this group. However, communist regime made intense efforts to eradicate traditional values and convert them with the communist ideology in Azerbaijan (as an ex-communist Islamic) and its society is much more likely to focus Secular-rational values than the public of Turkey (Inglehart 2005). Post-communist Poland has embedded Catholic doctrine on abortion and homosexuality in the law, with much criticism from the EU (Collins and Owen 2012). Likely Germany, Poland also stepping right-upward quadrant since joining the EU integration and follow secular-rational values, however, religiosity in cultural life is embraced much more than that of

Germany. Such a screen of multicultural and distinguished social peculiarities of the EU ease relations with Azerbaijan in cultural area concerning its multi-ethnic, predominantly Islamic state status and secular-rational environment which are indeed asserted by indicators above on table 1.

In fact, Azerbaijan is known as the country where civilizations and cultures are connected. It is located at the crossroads of civilizations and even though majority of population are Muslim, there is a harmonized approach both to secularism and to the European style of life. The leading religion in Azerbaijan is Islam and it is entirely free from the state and government which means that the religion cannot intervene with the internal and external policy of the country. The Islamic nature of Azerbaijan is relatively different from other countries of Muslim world. Although the country has Muslim majority of population, religiosity is democratic and, unlikely most Islamic states, Azerbaijan limits political Islam in regime preferences. Indeed, it is mentioned in the main Constitution of the republic of Azerbaijan that the country is secular and is governed by democratic rules. These aspects help to diversify the social and cultural relations between Azerbaijan and the EU also with its member states individually.

Azerbaijan is often accredited for being the first democratic and secular Muslim country in the world. The short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920) was the first Muslim country that granted women the right to vote, and it did so prior to many Western countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States. Its constitution “[guaranteed] to all its citizens within its borders full civil and political rights, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, class, profession, or sex” and “[encouraged] the free development of all nationalities inhabiting its territory”. This progressive state was soon reabsorbed into the Soviet Union and only regained its independence in 1991 (*Human Rights in Azerbaijan 2013*). Due to the Soviet regime and its modernization and religious restrictions Azerbaijan has strongly been considered as secular country. After proclaiming its independence freedom of religion, human rights, cultural diversity and respect to various ethnics and nationals etc. were elucidated in the high Constitution of the country.

Inglehart in his interview to business magazine quotes the statement of Max Weber as: “The life is not just simple economic development, but a combination of history, religion, culture, and so on. And it changes, but the changes are shaped by the point from which you start. If you started out as a Roman Catholic or Muslim country, then that is still visible in your values today” (*BRICS, Revaluation of Values 2015*). This statement poses the idea that during integration process the country can transform its economy, add modern values and reach to post-modernization stage of life but the traditional attributes, religion somehow will enlighten itself.

Culture as a key component of external relations, based on the European Agenda for Culture, has been one of the three strategic objectives for the Commission and the member states since 2007 – alongside cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. In addition to the 28 member states the 16 neighboring countries of the EU, including Azerbaijan, are involved in this initiative.



Figure 3. The EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations. **Source:** European External Action Service (EEAS) (2016)

This figure provided by the EEAS clarifies the main objectives of the EU cultural diplomacy with respect its partners and neighbor countries which stresses the importance of the intercultural dialogue, economic growth and preservation of cultural heritages. Taking into consideration this diplomatic proposal, High Representative Federica Mogherini defines the strategy as:

“Culture is a powerful tool to build bridges between people, notably the youth, and reinforce mutual understanding. It can also be an engine for economic and social development. And as we face common challenges, culture can help all of us, in Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia, stand together to fight radicalization, and build an alliance of civilizations against those trying to divide us. This is, why cultural diplomacy must be more and more at the core of our relationship with today's world” (Strategic Communications, 2016).

European Commission’s strategy of international cultural diplomacy aims to foster cultural cooperation between the EU and its partner countries and promote a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values. Cultural relations of the EU with other countries are already strong and member states have enlarging and long-standing international cultural ties. Cultural exchanges also bring economic benefits. According the UNESCO Institute for Statistics global trade has increased in creative products in the period of 2004-2013 and culture is standing as a hub in the new economy driven

by innovation, creativity and access to knowledge. Whereas in the EU alone, cultural and creative industries account more than 7 million jobs, they constitute nearly 3% of the global GDP and 30 million jobs (*Cultural Times, report by CISAC and UNESCO, 2015*).

The multicultural and multi-confessional state of the Azerbaijan population is an essential aspect for intercultural dialogue and is one of the fundamental priorities of the national cultural policy. Since 16 June 2001, Azerbaijan became the member of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MCTRA) is the main public actor and responsible body of state implementing the programs and policies to promote intercultural dialogue in Azerbaijan both in national and local policy levels. MCTRA persists to organize the project "Cultural Diversity in Azerbaijan", which is designed in 2002 to highlight the country's ethnic and cultural diversity. It involves the cultural associations of the various national minorities, and helps to realize one of its chief strategic objectives - to develop and support intercultural dialogue. The demographic indicators in Azerbaijan faced downfall caused by both the Nagorno-Karabakh War and the fall of the Soviet Union which resulted in a significant number of ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan leaving the country.

Table 2. Ethnic composition of Azerbaijan. **Source:** *www.worldatlas.com*

Rank	Ethnic Group	Share of population
1	Azerbaijani	92%
2	Lezgin	2%
3	Armenian	1%
4	Russian	1%
5	Talyshi	1%
6	Other ethnic groups	2%

The table 2 explains that the great majority of the Azerbaijan population is Azerbaijanis and the country is inhabited by variety of ethnic groups and national minorities. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism implements a concrete program of activities co-related with safeguarding and development of cultural values of national minorities and ethnic groups living in the country, which includes cooperation with cultural communities and centers of ethnic minorities; organization of art performances of amateur collectives in regions where ethnic minorities are concentrated; organization of exhibitions reflecting ethnography, art and traditions of the ethnic minorities; tour trips of the ethnic collectives in the Republic and abroad; stimulating creation and

performance of art compositions, promoting customs and traditions of ethnic groups; and supplying amateur collectives with traditional clothes, musical instruments and means, etc. (*GUAM, Intercultural Dialogue*).

Azerbaijan takes part in a series of multilateral cultural projects. Co-operation with the Council of Europe (CoE) is one of the central elements of multilateral engagement. Cultural cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan had flourishing period during 2001-2005 and was remarkable for Azerbaijan in terms of participation CoE “Stage” Project (Support for Transition in the Arts in Greater Europe). This project aimed at setting up new cultural policies, supporting cultural identity and diversity, creativity and the participation of all groups of societies in the cultural life of the South Caucasus. These are clue ideas which the European Commission and High Representative foresee also in new Strategy for Intercultural diplomacy of the EU. This project produced, by joint team of Azerbaijan and CoE experts, the national Report on Cultural Policy in Azerbaijan in 2002 and held a National Debate on Cultural Policy in Baku (2003). The other project was the “Alexander Dumas Project” launched by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan and supported by the Luxemburg European Institute of Cultural Routes (LEICR). This initiative involved the launch of tours to places visited by Dumas, preservation of monuments, production of souvenirs, booklets and guides to contribute tourism route (*GUAM, Ongoing Activities and Projects*).

As it was mentioned in several places above, the cultural diversity is an integral part of the values of the EU. The EU strongly focuses and commits to development of a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, building up democratic civil society, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental rights. The ICSR is an independent, non-governmental, non-partisan and non-profit organization aimed at promoting research on problems of social-political and social-economical life in Azerbaijan. Its mission is to contribute to the process of democratization and building of civil society, have an impact on the development of democratic institutions, democratic culture and market economy in the country through high-level professional research, consultancy and training/education and related activities. The delegation has conducted a lot of researches on various topics regarding social, economic and cultural matters (*Eurasia Barometer*).

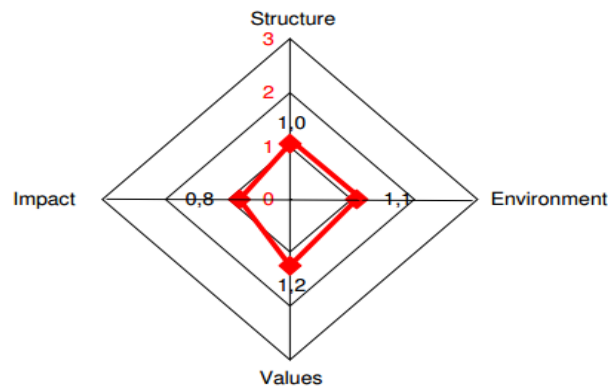


Figure 4. Civil Society Diamond for Azerbaijan. **Source:** CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for Azerbaijan (2007)

The civil society indicator, on figure 4, above speaks a lot about the current situation of civil society (CS) in Azerbaijan. The conducted research in 2007 shows, that CS does not get the required support from the environment which it operates in. This inconsistency and barriers prevent the long-term sustainability of CS in Azerbaijan. These problems are depicted as the consequences and traces of the Soviet regime. The civil society diamond also exposes the lack of development of CS and weak cooperativeness with the government and the private sector. Such social environment causes distrust in public spirit and hinders the promotion of rigorous civil society. Such a social environment is in contradiction with the post-modernist and developed CS values that exist in the EU countries, particularly the self-expression values posed in the world cultural map of Inglehart. The lack of activities to build up democratic values, transparency, and the lowest index of Impact dimension on given figure indicates the weakness of CS in policy-making issues in Azerbaijan. However, another fact is that the information on CS diamond provided was valid for given year and of course, has much changed since then. It is obvious that economic, social and cultural values of countries somehow change and develop through years.

	TOTAL	Country Code				
		Azerbaijan	Estonia	Germany	Sweden	Ukraine
A great deal	6.6	18.6	5.9	5.3	2.5	4.3
Quite a lot	49.5	44.4	64.1	48.9	48.1	40.1
Not very much	30.7	22.5	22.4	37.9	26.5	38.3
None at all	9.1	14.5	4.8	5.9	5.4	17.3
DE,SE:Inapplicable ; RU:Inappropriate response; SG: Refused;HT: Dropped out survey	*	-	-	0.1	0.1	-
No answer	0.3	-	0.2	0.3	0.9	-
Don't know	3.7	-	2.7	1.6	16.5	-
(N)	(7,287)	(1,002)	(1,533)	(2,046)	(1,206)	(1,500)

Figure 5. Confidence: The Civil service. **Source:** World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014

Continuing with these (figure 5) social indicators it turns out that the latest wave of WVS survey explains civil society environment in Azerbaijan in a progressive way. This figure generates a more pleasant view about the social changes in the country and one interesting fact is that respondents who are in favor of with civil services are close by the scores both in Azerbaijan and the chosen EU countries. The given integrated elements of socio-cultural values can be distinguished also as the contributors of the EU-Azerbaijan relations.

Cross-country (%)	Yes	No	DK/RA
Armenia	68	28	4
Azerbaijan	52	36	13
Georgia	76	13	11

Figure 6. FREE SPEAK: People have the right to openly say what they think (%). **Source:** Caucasus Barometer 2013 regional dataset

Freedom of expression in Azerbaijan continues to be constrained. On the other hand, Press Freedom Index compiled in 2013, which measures the freedom of media representatives, bloggers, ranked Azerbaijan as 156th out of 179 countries. This reflects that freedom of expression in Azerbaijan is visibly constrained. The International Partnership Group for Azerbaijan (IPGA), a coalition of international organizations working to promote and protect freedom of expression in Azerbaijan. The IPGA criticized the National Assembly of Azerbaijan for the adoption of series of repressive legislative amendments. These amendments aimed to ban criticism and increase the cost of objection. They were designed to silence all those who continue to express their opinions against repressive climate (*Article 19, 2013*). Azerbaijan is participating in a number of EU institutions under ENP and also Eastern Partnership agreement, in which consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are main objectives. Above mentioned facts notably affect relations and integration procedure of Azerbaijan to the EU, where basic human rights, self-expression values are foreseen. As a result, these aspects of civil society define Azerbaijan's position also in WVS cultural map amongst countries that indicate lower dimensions in self-expression values. Violation of the freedom of speech currently observed with the repression of people, who tries to speak out against ruling government in peaceful demonstrations, also publishing the contradictory opinions. Comparing the Caucasus

countries, figure 6 shows that percentage of free speak in Azerbaijan lags behind Georgia and Armenia. Even though these three countries have retrieved from Soviet regime, the reminders of autocracy is displayed differently in the governance of country. Reforms in the area of freedom of expression, changes regarding internal and external policy in Georgia (especially during Mikhail Saakashvili's governance) having no conflicts with its neighbors in South Caucasus has led considerable development of country. However, the unsolved Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia is the core issue which constraints the development of cooperation among the region countries. This, at the same time is considered as a main obstacle for the implementation of reforms in Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as for the EU to have conflicted territory in its Eastern neighborhood.

The EU and Azerbaijan cooperate closely in the area of justice and carry out projects and work-shops which have been signed after the establishment of bilateral relations. Such projects funded by the EU aimed to support the efficiency of courts, training of judges and judicial self-governance in Azerbaijan and improve the statistical data collection, analysis, and evaluation of users' satisfaction. Twinning projects of the EU help Azerbaijani public institutions, such as national statistics system, civil society organizations, judicial system, etc. to become in line with EU standards in order to facilitate harmonization of economic, political and social life of the country.

For instance, one of the latest visits of the EU representatives, headed by David McAllister, to Azerbaijan focused on negotiation of the new EU-Azerbaijan agreement. The representative of the EU Parliament accentuated the importance of the EU common values such as democracy, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance are necessary elements and have to be followed equally in line with trade and sectorial cooperation (*EU Neighbors East 2017*).

In today's world education and sports as well as tourism are assessed as the key contributors to relations between countries and regions. The EU and Azerbaijan also commit on variety of educational and mobility programs which bring society of both sides together. As a consequence, students, scholars and academic staffs share knowledge and cultural values between each other in order to build up tight connection. Of course, such opportunity firstly boosts the development of education systems and convergence of policies in relevant field.

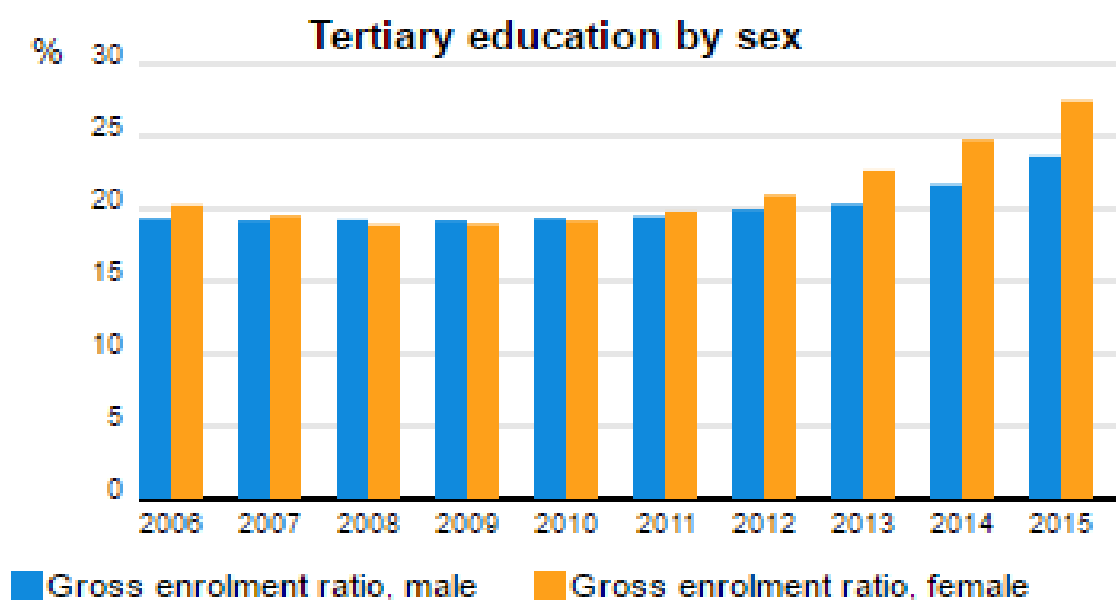


Figure 7. Participation in education in Azerbaijan. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Respectively to figure 7 it becomes clear that participants of tertiary education from both genders in Azerbaijan are almost equal. The proportion of male and female students at universities has changed slightly from 2006 till 2012. From 2013 onwards, female participants of tertiary education have been prevailing their counterparts with noticeable gap. This demonstrates one of the key elements of democratic society index that there is no gender limit in Azerbaijan society. In comparison with most Arabic-Islamic or African countries, which are included into the same cluster, Azerbaijan shows emancipative values, gives same opportunities to both genders of society in favor of education. Indeed Azerbaijan, the country with the religious dominance of Islam, is close to secular-rational character. Following the WVS scholars' opinions about emancipative values, young Muslims with high education, and especially among young Muslim women with high education, closes the gap democratic values between Muslim and Non-Muslim societies. And highlighted cultural dimensions of Azerbaijan make positive progress towards secularism whilst maintaining its actual traditional values.

The EU Erasmus+ program funds the academic mobility of higher education institutions, staff and students from Azerbaijan to study for between 3 and 12 months in one of host institutions in Europe. In 2015-2016, the EU funded approximately 620 students and staff member mobility from Azerbaijan to Europe and 270 European students and staff to Azerbaijan (*EU-Azerbaijan relations 2017*). A new project for schools, EU info sessions for schoolchildren of the 1st-3rd and 10th-11th grades, The Centre of Excellence in EU Studies. of ADA University in 2016. During March-April, the project held info sessions at 27 schools in Baku and 1 school in Ganja. In total 1577 children participated in these sessions. Experts meet with children and inform them about

Europe, European Union, its history, founding countries, goals and many more. Kids from primary schools also become aware of EU countries, their culture, historical monuments and some interesting facts (*EU Delegation Newsletter 2016*).

Another essential step in this path was the engagement of Azerbaijan in Bologna Declaration. After adopting new education system out of 49 universities 23 of them have shifted to Bologna system. Below, in table 3, indicated the number of Azerbaijan student who study abroad. This statistical data carried out by State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan (SSCA) is very important to see how citizens in Azerbaijan have changed the main study destination since 2000s.

Table 3. Number of Azerbaijan citizen educated in foreign higher educational institutions. **Source:** The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Countries	2000/2001	2005/2006	2010/2011	2015/2016
Total	919	1182	1958	3012
In CIS countries	146	328	673	320
USA	-	-	25	57
The EU	21	19	389	1401
Turkey	667	751	756	907
In other countries	85	84	115	327

The numbers show that Turkey considerably prevails over other regions and countries in the educational destination of Azerbaijani citizens. As a close neighbor on one hand, historical connections on another as well as language ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey, contributes to these figures to maintain the same level through years. Although in the beginning of the 2000s the EU countries did not seem very attractive or lack of information about European universities in Azerbaijan were affecting people's opinion. Also, it is valuable to mention that the beginning of the 2000s was the starting period of the EU and Azerbaijan relations. In the beginning period of relationship educational cooperation and mobility initiatives were not priority contents of relations. However, after signing of Bologna Declaration partners launched several educational and mobility programs. And these initiatives started to prove itself in numbers of students who chose the EU countries as their foreign education address. According to the table above the European universities in last 5-6 years are priority options for Azerbaijani citizens.

On 21 and 22 April 2016, a validation workshop for two future EU funded projects were organized among a variety of participants from the Ministry of Education, the EU Delegation and the European Training Foundation. These projects are going to be in the fields of vocational

education and training (VET) and the formation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Both are important for the strengthening of Azerbaijan's economic diversification, the related skills, the transferability of skills and the recognition of skills achieved outside of formal education. Both projects will help advance the quality of education, in particular VET and higher education, and approximation of Azerbaijan's education system to EU standards and best practices (*EU Delegation Newsletter 2016*).

Erasmus+ also funds capacity building for the modernization and development of higher education, including six projects involving Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani institutions have access to get fund from Jean Monnet program in order promote excellence in teaching and research in the EU study areas. Joint master and doctoral degrees from Azerbaijan with excellent background can also get high-level scholarships from Commission (*Education Cooperation 2017*). Overall, the EU-Azerbaijan cooperation in education in a large sense focuses on:

- reforming education system and developing qualification programs
- modernizing the vocational education system
- developing new skills that meet the growing demands of labor market

To bring together Azerbaijani and the EU citizens of individual member states The International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) presented the new EU-funded project. On December 5, 2013, the "Joint Declaration on Partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union (EU) and participating member states" was signed in Brussels and approved by the President of Azerbaijan on 6 March 2014. In 2015, with the approval of the EU of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the International Center for the Development of the Migration Policy (MSİBM) has allocated the implementation of projects originating from the Joint Declaration. The overall objective of the project is to support the implementation of the Mobility Partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan with a specific focus on strengthening the capacity of the government to develop and implement the national migration policy. This project is assessed as an essential attempt in terms of social policy reform and engagement of institutions from both sides (*Mobility Partnership 2013*). Speaking on this project, the Ambassador and head of EU Delegation to Azerbaijan Malena Mard highlighted the close collaboration with Azerbaijan since 2005 and remarkable projects that have been done in the field of migration so far.

Another significant improvement in terms of this program is MOBILAZE project that was started to be implemented in 2016. The project includes 9 institutions from seven EU countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia). The Baku office

of the project started to operate in 2016, March. The main contributing components of this project are:

- support the monitoring policy of Azerbaijani government, capacity building for analytic and forecasting fields and implementation of migration policy
- Labor migration, enhancing the legal migration to and from Azerbaijan, promotion of public awareness about migration between the EU and Azerbaijan
- Trainings and seminars on safety of migration documents
- Assistance in constant reintegration of returned citizens (voluntarily and illegal migrants)

International projects such TAIEX and Twinning are the main initiatives of European Commission in order to support migration service management and development of the staff. Twinning has started to be applied in Azerbaijan since 2006 as a long-term instrument related to EU legislation (Supposed for the period of 2013-2015) (*Twining project 2012*). The main aim of the project is to support the Republic of Azerbaijan in preparing and implementing state policy which poses to reduce and gradually eliminate illegal migration in accordance with the international obligations protecting rights and fundamental freedoms of foreigners and stateless persons. As a result, there are several achievements attained by Azerbaijani side, such as:

- Draft of amendments and addendums to Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Draft of Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on “Rules of placement and detention of foreigners and stateless persons in the detention centers of illegal migrants”
- Draft of future model of interagency mechanism and action plan in order to fight against illegal migration
- Recruitment process in migration bodies
- Informational flyers, brochures, leaflets, videos and slides were prepared for raising awareness of foreigners and stateless persons

Analysis of projects in migration field identifies the changes in essential body of state and convergence of policies. In the nearest future, all these efforts supposed to help both Azerbaijan government and the EU member states’ governments to manage migration and refugee crisis and to solve problems with illegal documentation.

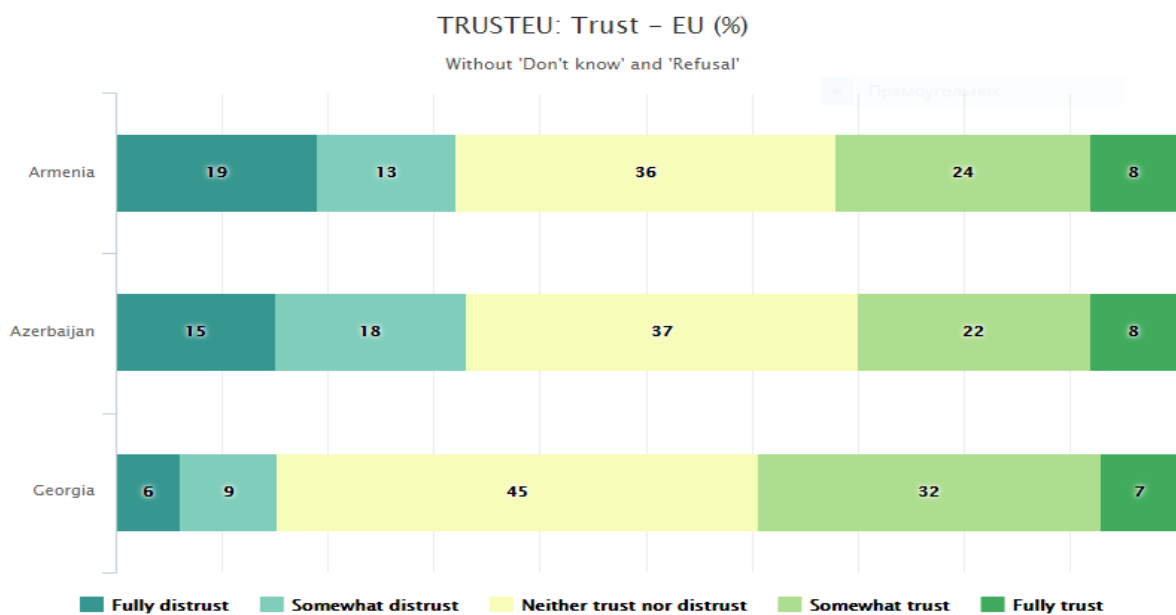


Figure 8. Trust in EU (%). **Source:** Caucasus Barometer 2013 regional dataset

The given figure above demonstrates the trust in the EU among South Caucasus region and portrays the general opinion of region countries regarding the EU according to 2013 statistics. Public attitudes towards the EU integration have been changed in the last decade since the EU started ENP with Caucasus neighbors. However, still a lot of people in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia are not even aware of what the EU common values are neither support the integration of their countries towards the EU. This attitude of population of the region countries is labelled by 45%-37%-36% respectively. Negative attitudes of people towards the EU in Azerbaijan and Armenia prevail to those of Georgian, instead in Georgia, especially after the key reforms in public institutions, supporters of the EU became more in numbers and surpass those of Armenia and Azerbaijan according to the percentages shared on figure 8.

After signing of the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU (June 2014), in Georgia people's European aspirations have increased positively. The latest survey prepared by ACT LLC and their regional partners shows that every second Georgian (52%) feels positive about the EU. The same survey results announce that comparing with Georgia supportive attitudes in Armenia and Azerbaijan are considerably lower with 44% and 27% accordingly (*Chkhikvadze 2016*). The EU's improper support in the conflict zone between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh (Occupied territories of Azerbaijan by Armenia), somehow encouraged negative attitudes towards EU and on Azerbaijani side relates this with the double standards of the EU. Although the EU attempts to foster peaceful negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and make more stable neighborhood in Eastern borders in most of the cases it turns out to be useless because these two countries have their own draft proposals and interests. Also, Russian influence and propaganda in

the South Caucasus, being one of the intermediaries in peaceful negotiation process over Nagorno-Karabakh as well as willingness of dominant player in the region contributes negative effect on the EU-Azerbaijan partnership.

Not much long ago, in November 2013, the EU and Azerbaijan signed the Visa Facilitation Agreement and Mobility Partnership, in December 2013 which facilitates the visa issues for certain categories of citizens of Azerbaijan. Visa Facilitation Agreement reduced visa payments, the length of procedures and increased the issue of multiple-entry visas for Azerbaijani citizens (*Migration Affairs 2017*). Among South Caucasus countries Georgia obtained positive assessment of Visa Liberalization Action Plan (VLAP) as the Georgian government had implemented the key reforms in human rights, public institutions in order to enjoy visa free travel to the EU by 2017. As a result, carried out progress in recommended areas led the visa free travel opportunity for Georgian citizens become true and in February 2017 European Parliament granted Georgia visa-free travel to Schengen area, which includes 26 countries. VLAP requires other South Caucasus countries, Azerbaijan and Armenia, to make necessary reforms in human rights affairs and civil society organizations in order to achieve visa-free travel goal.

In her recent interview, the Ambassador of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan, Malena Mard stressed the significance of culture as a bridge between European countries and Azerbaijan and mentioned a huge number of joint projects and contacts which have been executed in culture and art sectors. Among these projects and initiatives protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage assessed essential for the development of economy and encouragement of cultural relations between the EU member states and Azerbaijan (*EU Neighbors East 2017*). In this context, consecutive projects such as European Film Festival in Baku, Euro-Village (in 2016, regarding to the 25th anniversary of EU-Azerbaijan partnership), Culture and Creativity program, summer schools for young people, initiatives for the modernization of museum operation and many more are key lines to exchange practices in the area of culture and art for further development of the EU-Azerbaijan partnership. In particular, lately arrangement of sports events, international competitions which gathering of athletes from European continent as well as participation of Azerbaijani sports representatives in continental competitions and other contests pave new way of relations and brings European countries' attention to this country. Since 2008, Azerbaijan participates in the Eurovision song contest. Despite the fact that the country was new participant in this cultural event which every year brings together all the European countries and their society, it won the first place directly after three years (2011, Eurovision song contest held in Dusseldorf). Another main event was the First European Games in Baku in 2015 which was completely new continental sports event also held in Azerbaijan. This was the notable responsibility taken by

Azerbaijan in order to show that this country indeed afford to be a place where people from various countries, nations, ethnicities can and do comfortably convene in order to exchange their experience, meet new people, get introduced with culture, history, touristic places of European continent etc.

The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS), known as a pan-European organization formed in United Kingdom to raise awareness of Azerbaijan and its economic, political, social and cultural state and to create contacts between Azerbaijan and the EU nations. This organization dedicated to launch meetings with interested parties and decision makers, intensifies fact-finding discussions by politicians and business people, arranges conferences, seminars and publishes reports on development of activities regarding the EU and Azerbaijan in order to bring people of partners together (*TEAS*). With the assistance of this organization representatives of Azerbaijan society as well as embassies of Azerbaijan operating in various EU countries to organize social-cultural activities, country's special days, festivals, etc. Activities in this line is crucial in terms of communication between Azerbaijan society (students, employers, immigrants etc.) who live in the EU countries.

Integration of Azerbaijan into the EU is supported by a variety of social-cultural activities. These include: preservation of cultural-heritage; cultural days; film and music festivals; sport events and song contest; summer schools and youth projects etc. All of them are being organized in order to make multicultural, multi-ethnic as well as multi-religious environment. Socio-cultural relations between the EU and Azerbaijan are aimed to encourage such development.

The provided secondary analysis, regional comparisons in the study provide more or less an overview of the socio-cultural context of the EU-Azerbaijan partnership. The third chapter will illustrate the results and generalization of the socio-cultural analysis, influence by this factor for the development of future partnership as well as contributors and constraints of public environment in Azerbaijan which weaken or strengthen partnership between Azerbaijan and the EU. Further the study will be finalized with conclusions which will shape overall research.

3. Results of the analysis and impacts of socio-cultural relations in further cooperation

After the World War II, development of industrial technologies, rapid changes in the international arena and evolution of world economy entailed integration of countries. Globalization in world economy and political-economic interests of countries located in certain regions led to regional integration and new models of regional integration emerged. What is called now the European Union initiated by six countries of Western Europe and currently has 28 member states (the United Kingdom started exit negotiations with the EU after referendum, carried out in 2017 and majority voted to leave the union which will lead to the EU 27). This entity in modern globalized world can be assessed as a complete integration model for other regional integrations. The EU was established with convergence of economies of founding countries, however in its 60 years of existence the union comprised the countries from four part of European continent and propagated common values to all of its members. Currently the EU continues its Enlargement strategy and involves countries beyond the Europe as well as their economy in order to expand the spread of European values.

However, the Enlargement strategy not always goes smoothly for either the EU or for the Partnership and Accession countries. This is because countries which are found geographically within European borders and in the neighborhood, have experienced different historical past and have been ruled by different regimes. Azerbaijan as a party to the EU Enlargement strategy, located in the Southern Caucasus and was important to be analyzed considering the EU's interest in this oil rich country. Taking into account that Azerbaijan historically has been in the center of wars and interests of global actors as well as its natural resources – most importantly petrol, gas sources – the country has experienced shifting regimes. The multi-ethnic and multicultural environment has also caused those conversions.

3.1. Contributors and constraints of socio-cultural factors on the EU and Azerbaijan relationship

Thus, the World Values Survey (WVS), conducted by Ronald Inglehart and Welzel with the assistance of scholars and researchers in certain countries of the world, Eurobarometer, and other regional survey centers' statistical data study was dedicated to identifying the contributors and constraints of socio-cultural factors on the EU-Azerbaijan partnership.

Analysis of position of Azerbaijan in WVS cultural maps (1996 and 2015) demonstrated that the country has been included into two different clusters, namely among Ex-Communist and African-

Islamic cultural clusters. Indicators of both clusters reflected different understandings of cross-cultural values in Azerbaijan. Converting its position slightly down from the secular-rational values to traditional values proves that the people of Azerbaijan are loyal to their cultural and traditional values at the same time absorbing secular values. This does not necessarily affect negatively the negotiations and partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan. Taking into account that maintaining cultural values, religion and other values from this context are not something new for European countries, that indeed some of them (mostly catholic European countries) are very loyal and keen to hold their traditional values even if they are economically developed states among others within the EU. Instead, the EU's cultural and social initiatives with Azerbaijan reflect the importance of cultural cooperation and aim to converge the EU and Azerbaijan society.

Obviously, comparing with the EU countries, in Azerbaijan the predominant religion is Islam. However, from the analysis above it becomes clear that figures show that the country is secular. If the country was strongly religious and decided political Islamic foreign policy this would probably constraint the EU-Azerbaijan cooperation. It is because certain European values do not harmonize with those of political Islamic countries'.

Statistical analysis of survival and self-expression values indicated to the facts that cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan is mainly affected by obstacles which have been generated from the gap of given values between the partners. Thus, the post-Soviet history of Azerbaijan has left traits in governance of the country, likewise autocracy as well as economic situation, shifting from the socialist regime to market economy which is hindering the absorption of the EU common values. The secondary data analysis of the civil society index, freedom of speech, human right, Trust in EU variables in respective figures identified the social situation and the key reform areas for Azerbaijan in order to define constructive way for approximation of public institutions in line with the EU standards. Restriction of freedom of speech, harassment of media, weakness of private public institutions and relatively less trust in the EU comparing other South Caucasus countries can be assessed as primary controversial elements of EU public environment. Nevertheless, recent years, expansion of the cultural initiatives and projects between the EU and Azerbaijan described in the second chapter have boosted the cooperation in this area. As it is mentioned before arrangement of consecutive cultural, sports and art activities, educational mobility, TWINNING projects and others contribute the EU-Azerbaijan partnership and pave the new way for future cooperation. Also, benefitting from the EU practices in certain areas this might give the signs of new Association Agreement which was left by Azerbaijan in 2014.

3.2. Influence of Brexit on the EU-Azerbaijan relationship

The case of Brexit currently is one of the central problems of the EU in terms of deregulation of policies not only with the United Kingdom but also the third countries will be involved and adjust their relationship regarding both the EU and UK.

Brexit issue will, first of all, lead changes in political and economic relations of the EU member states with the UK and vice versa. After all cultural and social cooperation problems come to the front as supplementary tools of international relations considering the fact that economic and political interests of countries in international and globalizing world are decisive. In this respect, Brexit will have the first political and economic impact on the EU-Azerbaijan relations. The UK and Azerbaijan has been cooperating for more than 25 years already before the EU-Azerbaijan partnership started. Thus, most of the economic projects, investments on oil and non-oil sector, and supportive projects for social and cultural institutions are implemented by British initiatives in Azerbaijan. Such a close partnership reflects the UK's supportive position for Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh dispute during the trilateral negotiations when the EU also participates. It is not by chance that after the Brexit, the UK will re-adjust trade relations with the third countries which means that moving onwards Azerbaijan can benefit more from the foreign investments by the UK or might lose interest of the EU at the same time. Because among the EU countries the UK is much more determined to strengthen cooperation considering long-term bilateral partnership of these countries. However, losing interest of the EU is not desirable for Azerbaijan especially concerning the transit corridor location of the country between the Europe-Asia-Caucasus.

Socio-cultural influence of the Brexit will emerge the curiosity about educational, mobility and cultural exchange. Every year the EU and the third country educational institutions implement exchange of students, academic staff and scholars under several programs (well-known is Erasmus+). State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan accounted more than 1400 students for the period of 2015/2016 who studies in European universities, taking into account that there are students of full-time programs, from exchange and Erasmus+ program who studies in the UK. A very important case will be the status of those students after Brexit if they still are able to get funds from the EU or not.

CONCLUSIONS

1. As a consequence of the globalization, the European Union has become a unique entity and example of complete regional integration. The EU's enlargement did not suspend or change directions as it continues to propagate its common values to Eastern and Southern Neighbors holding Partnership and Association Agreements with the third countries. Eastern Enlargement strategy of the EU requires more effort from Eastern Neighbors in order to stabilize the political environment in the region and countries. Azerbaijan was also analyzed from the Eastern Enlargement spectrum regarding its geographical location and affiliation to European continent.

2. Examination of socio-cultural factors according to the secondary data analysis by World Values Survey (WVS), Eurobarometer, Caucasus Barometer and other statistical sources determined the social and cultural value characteristics of Azerbaijan and the key public reform areas. This helped to generate overview on current status of Azerbaijan regarding the EU integration and formed understanding about the problems which are primary problems preventing the smooth integration of Azerbaijan towards the EU.

3. The third part of the study has revealed the constraints of the cooperation between Azerbaijan and the EU, which are as follows: the lack of trust in civil society institutions, human rights problem, restriction of freedom of speech, currently reducing trust in EU from the side of Azerbaijan regarding internal affairs of the EU. On the contrary, cultural, sport and art activities, educational mobility, TWINNING projects and other initiatives can be given as contributing to bringing the EU community and Azerbaijan society together. In rapidly globalizing world Multiculturalism is evaluated as a main boosting element of new international relations system. Azerbaijan has chosen multiculturalism as its foreign policy objective and multiple ethnicities, national minorities, people from different religious belongings living together in this country show tolerance to each other. Such an aspect of cultural indicators is important in terms of approximation of partners considering that the EU has put the culture in the center of its international relations.

Taking into account that the EU's efforts to assist Azerbaijan in the area of building good governance still lacks behind other changes, reformation of democratic governance, support for civil society organizations, development of human rights are the main key areas to be developed in the further EU – Azerbaijan relationships.

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