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From Paradox to Policy: the Construction of Islam in Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Discourse

CEERES Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Surrounded by neighbours with close ties between religion and state, Muslim-majority Azerbaijan distinguishes itself in the region through its strong commitment to state secularism. However, despite Azerbaijan's strong commitment to secularism and its active securitization and crackdown on Islamic movements, the country incorporates Islamic discourse in its foreign policy. This study explores this apparent contradiction by examining how Islam is discursively constructed within Azerbaijan's foreign policy between 2011 and 2020, and how these constructions contribute to shaping the country's foreign policy identity. Existing research on the role of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy has mostly taken a realist approach, viewing secularism and religion as existing within a binary framework. In contrast, this research adopts a post-secular perspective, viewing religious and secular discourses as interacting in dialogue rather than existing in opposition. By applying Lene Hansen's poststructuralist theory of foreign policy and its associated method of poststructuralist discourse analysis, this thesis then examines how Islam is represented in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse and how these representations engage in a post-secular dialogue with secularist discourse to shape key aspects of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. This approach reveals that Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse constructs Islam as a force of solidarity and as an element of national heritage. These representations feature in a post-secular identity where Islam complements secular portrayals of Azerbaijan as a nation committed to both solidarity and heritage, endowing Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity with both religious and secular meaning. Embodying both these aspects allows Azerbaijan to claim an identity characterized by duality. By differentiating itself from Others that lack this duality, Azerbaijan constructs itself as exceptional and morally virtuous.

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1. Introduction

“Azerbaijan is an integral part of the Islamic world. Islam is our religion and Islamic and national values are dear to us [...] At the same time, Azerbaijan has been very close to the Western world at all times. The first democratic republic in the Muslim East was created in Azerbaijan in 1918. The first theatre in the Muslim East was created in Azerbaijan, and the first opera was also staged here.”

- Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan¹

With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, countless new freedoms emerged for many of the 289 million former Soviet citizens.² Among these newly gained liberties was the freedom to explore and practice religion, a domain that had been heavily restricted, if not outright suppressed, under Soviet rule. Out of the ashes of socialism emerged various religious movements – some which had been operating from the shadows for decades, others which were newly introduced from abroad. This emergence of religion in post-Soviet states presented a new challenge for many of these newly independent countries: how to define the relationship between religion and state?

While all 15 post-Soviet states decided to be constitutionally secular, they have varied in how they relate to their dominant religions within this framework.³ In the South Caucasus, both Georgia and Armenia are constitutionally secular, yet their constitutions recognize the special status of the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church, respectively.⁴ Similarly, although Russia does not formally acknowledge any religion as having an exceptional societal role, scholars and analysts have observed close ties between the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church, with the Church playing a significant role in both domestic and foreign policy.⁵

Surrounded by neighbours with notoriously close ties between religion and state, the Republic of Azerbaijan stands out as an exception in its region. Azerbaijan has been revered

¹ Appendix A: A2.

² Carl Haub, "Population Change in the Former Soviet Republics." *Population Bulletin* 49, no. 4 (1994): 2.

³ Robia Charles, "Secular Regimes and State Engagement with Religion in post-Soviet Eurasia," (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2013) 4.

⁴ Narek Mkrtychyan, "Gramsci in Armenia: State-Church Relations in the Post-Soviet Armenia," *Transformation* 32, no. 3 (2015): 167; Tornike Metreveli, "An Undisclosed Story of Roses: Church, State, and Nation in Contemporary Georgia," *Nationalities Papers* 44, no. 5 (2016): 701.

⁵ George Soroka, "International Relations by Proxy? The Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church," *Religions* 13, no. 208 (2022): 2-3.

for its commitment to state secularism.⁶ While recent figures indicate that 96% of Azerbaijan's population identifies as Muslim, of which 65% identifies as Shiite and 35% as Sunni,⁷ the country's political leadership consistently emphasizes its dedication to religious freedom and secularism.⁸ Multiple scholars have even pointed to secularism as a pillar of Azerbaijani national identity.⁹ Additionally, due to its proximity to Iran and concerns over religious fundamentalism, Azerbaijan is known to securitize and closely monitor Islamic organizations.¹⁰ Moreover, Ilham Aliyev's presidency has seen a crackdown on political Islamic movements, with various religious being prosecuted and detained.¹¹ Whereas its neighbours have thus embraced their dominant religion, Azerbaijan seems to regard its as a burden rather than a blessing, embracing secularism instead.

However, when on an international stage, Azerbaijan often presents a more Islamic face to the world. Despite its commitment to secularism, and despite the role of secularism in Azerbaijan's national identity, Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse often refers to the state's Islamic culture and portrays it as part of the 'Muslim world' or 'Islamic civilization'.¹² Furthermore, as part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Azerbaijan actively uses its Muslim-majority society as a factor in its foreign policy. This selective inclusion of Islam in its foreign policy discourse is puzzling since it defies the expectation of Azerbaijan consistently portraying itself as a secular state. The empirical research puzzle at the core of this thesis therefore lies in this seemingly contradictory behaviour of Azerbaijan: despite its strong commitment to secularism, which is a key component of its national identity, and its active securitization and crackdown on Islamic movements within its borders, Azerbaijan continues to selectively employ Islamic discourse in its foreign policy.

To address this research puzzle, this thesis aims to understand how Islam is used in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse and what role Islam takes within Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. This thesis' research question is therefore: *How is Islam discursively*

⁶ Svante Cornell, *The Politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 11.

⁷ Office of International Religious Freedom, "2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Azerbaijan," in *2023 Report on International Religious Freedom* (Washington, June 2024), 3.

⁸ Ayça Ergun, and Zana Çitak, "Secularism and National Identity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan," *Journal of Church and State* 62, no. 3 (2020): 466.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Audrey Altstadt, *Frustrated Democracy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*, (Columbia University Press, 2017), 206.

¹¹ Murad Ismayilov, "Islamic radicalism that never was: Islamic discourse as an extension of the elite's quest for legitimation. Azerbaijan in focus," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 10, no.2 (2019): 186-187.

¹² Hema Kotecha, *Islamic and Ethnic Identities in Azerbaijan: Emerging Trends and Tensions*, (Baku: OSCE Office in Baku, 2006), 8-9.

constructed in Azerbaijan's official foreign policy discourse between 2011 and 2020, and how do these discursive representations of Islam feature in the construction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity? While this question focuses on the *how* rather than the *why*, understanding the role that these Islamic representations play in shaping Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity provides valuable insights into the underlying purpose of incorporating Islamic discourse, thus contributing to solving the research puzzle.

To answer the research question, this thesis employs a post-secular approach, examining how Islamic and secular discourses interact and shape Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. Post-secularism allows for the analysis of these discourses as mutually influential, rather than opposing forces, highlighting how they can address similar themes using different language.¹³ Building on this, the thesis utilizes Lene Hansen's poststructuralist theory of foreign policy (PTFP), which provides a framework for understanding how a state constructs its identity through discourse.¹⁴ By applying the associated method of poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA), the thesis identifies and analyses representations of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse and explores how these representations engage with secular discourses. This approach reveals elements of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity which are shaped by both Islamic and secular discourses, and are reinforced through differentiation from constructed Others.

Understanding how Azerbaijan constructs Islam in its foreign policy discourse and identity is relevant in several ways. Most directly, by examining the specific factor of Islam within Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity this thesis will contribute to a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. In an era of geopolitical volatility, and given Azerbaijan's strategic geographical location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, such a nuanced and in-depth understanding of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity is crucial for accurately contextualizing and understanding its geopolitical strategies and actions. Moreover, through investigating how a secular state uses religious foreign policy discourse, this thesis can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of religion in the foreign policy discourse of secular states.

Finally, this thesis underscores the importance of continually questioning how religions are represented in foreign policy discourse by the states that ultimately have the power to

¹³ Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere." *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 15.

¹⁴ Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis of the Bosnian War* (Routledge, 2006), 7.

restrict them or make them flourish. In the context of the internal securitization of Islamic movements, by laying bare the way in which Azerbaijan talks about itself as Islamic on an international stage, this research also lays bare the discrepancies between Azerbaijan's words and its deeds within its borders.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. After this introductory chapter, chapter 2 presents the literature review and theoretical framework. It discusses relevant literature on the role of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, identifies the research gap, and provides a theoretical discussion on how to study religion in International Relations. This chapter also introduces poststructuralist theory of foreign policy, concluding with the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis. Chapter 3 offers a case overview, providing historical context on Islam in Azerbaijan and justifying the focus on Azerbaijan as the case study. Chapter 4 details the methodology, outlining the research design, data and methods, and addressing the limitations and ethical considerations of the study.

The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part, chapter 5.1, explores how Islam is discursively constructed in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse as a force of solidarity and examines how this representation contributes to the broader foreign policy identity of Azerbaijan as solidary. The second part, chapter 5.2, examines how Islam is constructed as an element of national heritage and its role in shaping Azerbaijan's identity as a state connected to its heritage.

Finally, chapter 6 provides the conclusion, synthesizing the findings, connecting the two identified constructions of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse and identity, and discussing the post-secular nature of Azerbaijan's foreign policy.

2. Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

This thesis explores the representation of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse and its influence on shaping the country's foreign policy identity. To set the stage, this chapter will first review existing literature on the role of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, identifying a gap that this thesis seeks to address. Next, this chapter will present a theoretical discussion about the study of religion within International Relations (IR), highlighting an additional theoretical gap. Following this, the chapter will introduce poststructuralist theory of foreign policy (PTFP), which forms the basis of the theoretical framework. Finally, it will conclude by outlining and justifying the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis.

2.1 Religion and Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

Looking at the body of literature on Azerbaijan's foreign policy, one is quick to notice that materialist approaches to understanding the country's foreign policy are dominant. Most of the literature focuses on the roles of energy politics and security, logistics and connectivity, or military power in Azerbaijan's foreign policy practice.¹⁵ Additionally, literature tends to focus on dissecting the state's multi-vector foreign policy by investigating the nature of its relations with both Western states, the global south, and autocratic states.¹⁶ Whereas ideological factors are sometimes taken into account in the analysis of the latter, identity-based approaches and specifically investigations into the role and use of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy remain absent.

However, the lack of consideration of religion in literature focusing on Azerbaijan's foreign policy does not mean that religion has been neglected as a substantial factor in Azerbaijan's international relations. Discussions of religion in the context of Azerbaijan's international relations feature prominently in literature which takes a more domestic focus on Azerbaijani politics and religious policy. In what follows, this literature review will therefore

¹⁵ Eske Van Gils, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Strategies and the European Union: Successful Resistance and Pursued Influence," *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 5 (2018): 738; Daniela Traub, Ronen A. Cohen & Chen Kertcher, "Azerbaijan's dual foreign policy strategy toward Israel: a realist alliance and a neoliberal knowledge based economy cooperation, 2011–2022," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1-2.

¹⁶ Sabina Strîmbovski, "Azerbaijan's Balanced Foreign Policy Trapped in a Volatile Geopolitical Context," *Europolicy* 9, no. 2 (2015): 121; Farhad Mammadov, "Azerbaijan's foreign policy – A new paradigm of careful pragmatism," in *The South Caucasus, Between integration and fragmentation*, ed. Fuad Chiragov et al. (European Policy Center, 2015), 29.

outline the main arguments made about the relation between religion and Azerbaijan's foreign policy in this literature.

One of the most comprehensive works when it comes to investigating the dynamics between politics and religion in Azerbaijan is the chapter "Allah-u Akbar: Islam in Azerbaijan – Piety, Politics, and the Future" in American historian and Sovietologist Audrey Altstadt's 2017 book *Frustrated Democracy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*. In this chapter, Altstadt recognizes that Azerbaijan's religious policy does not take shape in a vacuum, but is largely impacted by foreign policy and security considerations.¹⁷ She argues that international Islamic movements and Islamic fundamentalism, specifically promoted by neighbouring Iran, constitute a material as well as ideological security threat to the state and regime of Azerbaijan.¹⁸ In addition to specifically highlighting the role of Iran as posing threat to Azerbaijani security through politicized Islam, she also emphasizes the disruptive effects of Islamic insurgencies in Chechnya and the Syrian civil war as cases which were able to mobilize fundamentalist sentiments amongst Azerbaijani Salafi Muslims.¹⁹ According to Altstadt, international factors can thus fuel fundamentalist attitudes and politically inspired Islamic movements in Azerbaijan, which not only threaten the security of the state, but also the stability of the Aliyev regime.²⁰

In turn, she argues, this forces Azerbaijan to maintain a deeply secular and anti-fundamentalist material foreign policy to maintain domestic and regional stability.²¹ By arguing this, Altstadt thus effectively comments on how Islam can be considered an explanatory factor for Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Yet more importantly, Altstadt shows how Islam in the context of Azerbaijan's foreign policy is inherently related to matters of security and stability, and how issues of religion reveal the interconnectedness between Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policies.

The argument that religion, and Islam specifically, constitutes in the first place a security problem in Azerbaijan's foreign policy is shared throughout a vast body of literature. Writing primarily on the role of Islam in Azerbaijan's national identity, Turkish sociologist Ayca Ergun and IR scholar Zana Citak in their 2019 article *Secularism and National Identity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan* similarly mention that fundamentalist ideas coming from

¹⁷ Audrey Altstadt, *Frustrated Democracy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*, (Columbia University Press, 2017), 186.

¹⁸ Ibid., 181.

¹⁹ Ibid., 207.

²⁰ Ibid., 215.

²¹ Ibid.

international Islamic movements have led Azerbaijan to securitize Islam both in its domestic and foreign policy.²² In arguing this, Ergun and Citak thus also locate Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy as a security issue linked to foreign interference. Likewise, Swedish political scientist and leading scholar on Azerbaijan Svante Cornell in his 2006 publication *The Politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan* argues that "Iran has particularly supported radical Shi'a groups, and used this as leverage against secular and pro-western Azerbaijan, affecting its freedom of movement in foreign policy. The Arab Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, and the Russian North Caucasus, primarily Dagestan, have been equally important in fostering radical Salafi Sunni groups in Azerbaijan."²³ In making this point, Cornell thus also shares the view that Islam, security, and international relations are deeply intertwined in Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policy.

Delving deeper into the specifics of how Iranian religious influence in Azerbaijan takes shape, Swiss scholar of religion and politics Ansgar Jödicke in his 2017 article "Shia groups and Iranian religious influence in Azerbaijan: the impact of trans-boundary religious ties on national religious policy" adopts the securitizing arguments outlined above, and agrees that Islam, particularly in the context of Iran, has been an important factor of concern in Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policy.²⁴ Moreover, Jödicke goes on to argue that it is exactly this threat-perception of Islam that has informed Azerbaijan's domestic self-identification as highly secular.²⁵ While bringing in the factor of self-identification, Jödicke's analysis is still based on purely materialist reasoning, focusing on material foreign threats as informing a rational choice to present a secular identity.

A similarly materialist argument can be found in American scholar of security studies Gallia Lindenstrauss' paper "Israel-Azerbaijan: Despite the Constraints, a Special Relationship." In this analysis of Israel-Azerbaijan relations, Lindenstrauss stresses how the good bilateral relationship between the two states underlines the secular character of Azerbaijan's foreign policy.²⁶ She explains these good bilateral relations in reference to common strategic and material interests shared by both states, specifically their shared concern

²² Ergun and Citak, "Secularism and National Identity," 478.

²³ Cornell, *The politicization*, 9.

²⁴ Ansgar Jödicke, "Shia Groups and Iranian Religious Influence in Azerbaijan: The Impact of Trans-boundary Religious Ties on National Religious Policy," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 58, no. 5 (2017): 538.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 543.

²⁶ Gallia Lindenstrauss, "Israel-Azerbaijan: Despite the Constraints, a Special Relationship," *Strategic Assessment* 17, no. 4 (2015): 76.

about Islamic fundamentalism.²⁷ However, she also notes how Azerbaijan is careful to not take its relations with Israel too far in order to appease other Muslim-majority states.²⁸ In this way, Lindenstrauss not only conceptualizes religion as a security concern for Azerbaijan, but also as a factor that impacts geopolitical alliances and thus bilateral relations between states. The argument that religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy can serve to maintain or create alliances is also made by Azerbaijani IR scholar Javid Valiyev in his paper "Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan in 25 Years of Independence: Priorities, Principles and Achievements." Here, Valiyev argues how Azerbaijan has been able to effectively leverage its membership in the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in order to ensure the organization and its member states' support for its claims on Nagorno Karabakh.²⁹ In this way, he thus shows that religion can be used in Azerbaijan's foreign policy as a tool to create alliances and garner support.

When illustrating how religion affects Azerbaijan's bilateral relations, Lindenstrauss touches on another fundamental topic when it comes to religion as a factor in Azerbaijan's foreign policy: Baku's relationship with Türkiye. Whereas this relationship has been primarily considered a stable bond based on ethnic kinship,³⁰ Lindenstrauss posits that the more Islamist agenda of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has negatively impacted these relations.³¹ She argues that "Aliyev's regime also views with alarm some of the Islamization processes promoted by [Türkiye's] Justice and Development Party, which run counter to the secular heritage instilled by Atatürk, and regards also them as a threat to Azerbaijan's secular character."³² In arguing this, Lindenstrauss thus extends the influence of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy to shaping its bilateral relations, and more importantly, recognizes that religion and secularism play a role in shaping the relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. A similar argument is made by Jödicke, who likewise argues that Erdogan's religious policy has negatively affected Türkiye's relationship with Azerbaijan.³³ In addition, Altstadt offers a more in-depth analysis of the historical bases of the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance, and argues that a shared secular-Kemalist tradition has always been a cornerstone of this cooperation.³⁴ She posits that through strict political secularism, both Türkiye and

²⁷ Ibid., 73.

²⁸ Ibid., 76.

²⁹ Anar Valiyev, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy: What Role for the West in the South Caucasus?" in *Eastern Voices: Europe's East Faces an Unsettled West*, edited by Daniel Hamilton and Stefan Meister (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 32.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Lindenstrauss, "Israel-Azerbaijan," 72.

³² Ibid.

³³ Jödicke, "Shia Groups," 538.

³⁴ Altstadt, *Frustrated Democracy*, 189.

Azerbaijan have been able to provide regime security and limit the influence of political or insurgent Islamic movements.³⁵ Altstadt's argument therefore shows how secularism has served as a key factor in Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards Türkiye, and helps explain why Erdogan's more Islamist focus has negatively affected the relations between Ankara and Baku.

The literature discussed above shows three distinct ways in which scholars have linked religion to Azerbaijan's foreign policy: as a matter impacting Azerbaijan's security and regime stability; as a tool to shape alliances and garner support; and as a factor of influence on bilateral relations, specifically with Türkiye. However, as sporadically indicated before, all these arguments are based on materialist analyses that largely stem from realist and liberalist approaches towards Azerbaijan's foreign policy. While these approaches have led to interesting insights on religion as a causal factor to Azerbaijan's material foreign policy, they have disregarded how religion has been reflected in Azerbaijan's foreign policy through values, identities, and narratives; in short, through discourse.

One author who has consistently taken into account the discursive dimension of religion in Azerbaijan's politics is Azerbaijani sociologist Murad Ismayilov. In his 2018 article "The Changing Landscape of Political Islam in Azerbaijan: its Contextual Underpinnings and Future Prospects," Ismayilov discusses how Azerbaijani politics under Ilham Aliyev has dealt with political Islam, both internally and internationally. As part of this analysis, he specifically focusses on how Islam has been presented in government discourse, identifying five discursive lines the Azerbaijani government has taken towards Islam: a securitizing narrative of Islam as extremism; a narrative contrasting instability in the 'Islamic' Middle East with stability in secular Azerbaijan; a narrative of Islam as backwardness; a narrative of domestic political Islam as the work of foreign actors; and a narrative of multiculturalism and secularism as alternative social ideologies.³⁶ According to Ismayilov, the use of these five discursive lines functions to position the regime both domestically and internationally as the only leadership that can potently contain Islam and keep Azerbaijan stable and developed, thereby working to legitimate the authoritarian rule of the Aliyev family.³⁷ Building on this analysis, in his 2019 article "Islamic radicalism that never was: Islamic discourse as an extension of the elite's quest for legitimation, Azerbaijan in focus" Ismayilov connects these five discursive lines to the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Murad Ismayilov, "The Changing Landscape of (Political) Islam in Azerbaijan: Its Contextual Underpinnings and Future Prospects," *Central Asian Affairs* 5 (2018): 344.

³⁷ Ibid.

regime's aim of wanting to be perceived as a Western, democratic, developed state whose leadership is legitimized by the absence of Islamic extremism.³⁸ In this way, Ismayilov convincingly connects Azerbaijan's discursive representations of Islam to its leadership's foreign policy objective of gaining international legitimacy.

While Ismayilov's work presents interesting arguments which manage to account for the role of discourse surrounding Islam in Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policy, it also has its flaws. Most notably, Ismayilov completely neglects to account for the methodology of identifying Azerbaijan's five discourses towards Islam. These discourses form the basis on which further arguments on its function in domestic and foreign policy are based, yet a structured and methodologically sound discourse analysis through which these five discursive lines are identified is missing. Similarly, Ismayilov fails to reference the data he reviewed in order to recognize these discursive lines, nor does he present a coherent theoretical and methodological framework through which he analysed this data. These flaws lead to the five discourses being given as such, without further investigation into the intricacies of the construction of these discourses. Moreover, while Ismayilov notes the regime's use of these five discursive lines in gaining international legitimacy, he fails to specifically address the issue of how representations of religion impact Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. This critique is closely tied to the final flaw in Ismayilov's argument, which is that his analysis continues to regard religion and secularism as explanatory elements for policy objectives. In doing this, Ismayilov thus disregards the question how (i.e. through what discourses) specific religious narratives and identities are constituted.³⁹ However, despite its flaws, one cannot simply disregard the value of the conclusions of Ismayilov's papers. This thesis will therefore refer back to Ismayilov when reflecting on its findings in the conclusion.

As Ismayilov's work on the representations of Islam in Azerbaijan's discourse is methodologically flawed, neglects the issue of foreign policy identity, and reduces religion and secularism to explanatory variables, a gap in the literature on the role of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy remains. This gap is that the literature has not yet analysed Azerbaijan's discursive representations of Islam in specifically its foreign policy discourse, and has not yet investigated how such representations relate to Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. Through its research questions, thesis will aim to bridge this gap of accounting for the discursive

³⁸ Ismayilov, "Islamic Radicalism," 184.

³⁹ Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 249.

constructions of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse and its implications for Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity.

2.2 Theories of Religion in International Relations

Having reviewed the literature on the role of religion in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, this chapter will now move to a theoretical discussion about the study of religion within IR. The first part of this theoretical discussion will evolve around the question of how to study religion in the seemingly secular context of IR. It will then move on to discuss literature theorizing role of religion within IR theories.

Religion was neglected as a relevant factor in the study of International Relations (IR) for most of the 20th century.⁴⁰ However, the end of the cold war, the terror attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent 'war on terror', and the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia marked a turning point for IR, with many scholars realizing the effect that religious groups, institutions, and ideas had on topics relevant to International Relations.⁴¹ These events coincided with the outbreak of a wider debate on secularism in the social sciences from the 1980's onwards. Historically, religion had been considered an insignificant factor in the social sciences, due to an unquestioned belief that modern societies were becoming increasingly secular, and that the role of religion would fade away.⁴² However, from the late 1980's onwards several scholars started questioning the validity of secularization theory.⁴³ Both theoretical arguments questioning the legitimacy and stability of the concept of secularism, as well as more empirical arguments of the prominence of religiously-inspired groups increasingly destabilized the idea of secularization theory.⁴⁴ In its stead, a new consensus arose that the social sciences had turned towards what has been called post-secularism. Post-secularism can generally be described as "a renewed interest in religion as a social, political and cultural force, acknowledging the need for political and social engagement with religious as well as non-faith based groups and voices."⁴⁵ The term post-

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Haynes, *Handbook on Religion and International Relations*, (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021), 7.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*, (Norton, 2011), 74.

⁴³ Jonathan Fox, *An Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice*, (Routledge, 2018), 20-21; José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 26-27.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; Peter Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, (The Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999), 2-3.

⁴⁵ Silke Horstkotte and James Hodkinson, "(Post)secular: Imagining faith in contemporary cultures," Warwick School of Modern Languages and Cultures, last modified June 5, 2017, <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/german/conferences/postsecular/>

secularism was first coined by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas.⁴⁶ Accepting that ‘classic’ secularization theory was mistaken and grounded in an ideological project, his 2006 article “Religion in the Public Sphere” argues that post-secular societies should allow for religious reasoning to be valid in public discourse.⁴⁷ Habermas thus invites religion back into modern society, laying the groundwork for post-secular societies. Post-secularist thought about religion, secularism, and society has since proven to be an effective answer to the criticisms of ‘classic’ secularization theory, and has been widely accepted in contemporary social science.⁴⁸ The study of religion and secularism as social phenomena in the social sciences has thus regained its relevance and urgency, particularly given the considerable ground to be covered after decades of neglect.

In this context, religion also became a topic of interest in International Relations toward the end of the 20th century, gaining further significance after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001. In the aftermath of these attacks, IR literature predominantly focused on studying religious groups and ideas – especially Islamic - and in the context of national security, terrorism, and violent non-state actors.⁴⁹ However, as Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos note in their book *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, this increased interest in studying religion in the context of security – particularly in the case of political Islam - tends to be ‘policymaking-oriented.’⁵⁰ They argue that in being so, it neglects to critically engage with theory and elaborate on new ways to interpret and analyse religion in IR.⁵¹ Their book is considered a seminal work in the study of religion in IR, as it is the first to apply the new sociological perspectives on religion to IR. They conclude that religion has been understudied as a productive and complex social phenomenon in International politics, and that more attention needs to be paid to how engagement with religion in IR can lead to “creative theoretical and political endeavours.”⁵² In arguing this, the authors thus break with the normative post-9/11 tendency to look at religion as a factor in global security and

⁴⁶ Habermas, “Religion in,” 15.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Harvard University Press, 2007), 534-535; Mariano Barbato, and Friedrich Kratochwil, “Towards a Post-Secular Political Order?” *European Political Science Review* 1, no. 3 (2009): 318.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion, Politics, and International Relations*, (Routledge, 2011), 12; Peter Mandaville and Jon Hoffman, “Thinking about Religion and Religious Soft Power in International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis,” in *The Geopolitics of Religious Soft Power: How States Use Religion in Foreign Policy*, ed. Peter Mandaville (Oxford University Press, 2023), 10; Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito, *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 23.

⁵⁰ Hatzopoulos and Petito, *Religion in*, 3

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

conflict, taking a more nuanced perspective on how religion impacts the theory and practice of international relations.⁵³

The observant reader might notice considerable overlap between Hatzopoulos and Petito's approach towards religion in IR, and Habermas' idea of post-secularism. Indeed, while Hatzopoulos and Petito published their book before Habermas coined the term post-secularism, they seem to share a similar approach towards integrating religion with politics. Yet the first authors to explicitly integrate the idea of post-secularism in IR are philosopher Mariano Barbato and political scientist Friedrich Kratochwil. In their article "Towards a post-secular political order?" they argue that through the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, the Westphalian state system was built on the idea that issues of religion are a state's internal affair.⁵⁴ This therefore encoded secularism into the fabric of international relations.⁵⁵ However, the authors argue, globalization has given rise to an "international public space," where lines between the domestic and the international have faded and both secular and religious logics need to engage in common discourse.⁵⁶ Barbato and Kratochwil thus argue that rational-secularist logics of IR will need to find a way to account for religious discourse. In arguing this, they appeal to Habermas' idea of a post-secular society and apply it to IR. Looking at IR as post-secular thus also entails legitimizing the study of both secular and non-secular logics when studying IR.

While not specifically referring to post-secularism and Habermas' idea of an international public space, political scientist Erin Wilson similarly argues for ending the normative approach that favours secular narratives over religious narratives when studying and practicing politics.⁵⁷ However, in her 2012 book *After Secularism*, she introduces her argument by noting how normative secularist bias maintains in the study of politics, despite the increasingly critical scholarship on religion and secularism in IR.⁵⁸ She notes that this is the case because the concept of religion is still narrowly defined through the lens of secularism, portraying religion as the irrational and personal 'other' to the rational and universal secular.⁵⁹ In order to circumvent this bias, she argues for letting go of binary thinking about politics and

⁵³ Ibid., 2-4

⁵⁴ Barbato and Kratochwil, "Towards a," 318

⁵⁵ Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics*, 55, no. 1 (2002): 79.

⁵⁶ Barbato and Kratochwil, "Towards a," 318; Argument also shared in Jeffrey Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power*, (Ashgate, 2012); and Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, (Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁵⁷ Erin Wilson, *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

states as either secular or religious, rather looking at how religious and political ideas, symbols, and narratives are in constant dialogue.⁶⁰ She convincingly substantiates her case by showing how such dialogues work in the politics of Western states, which have institutionalized and championed secularism to such an extent that it seems almost impossible to consider religion as a relevant force in politics.⁶¹ In this way, Wilson convincingly argues not to take the binary opposition between religion and secularist politics for granted.

A similar argument is voiced by political scientist Elizabeth Hurd in her influential book *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. In this book, Hurd questions the binary way in which IR has always taken the secularist division between religion and politics for granted.⁶² She argues that due to the fact that this division is at the foundation of the international state system, IR has failed to see that the boundaries between religion and politics are never fixed, but rather are defined by social and political circumstances.⁶³ Simply put, what is considered politics today could be considered religion in ten years – and the other way around. She consequently argues that by clinging on to the idea of states and the international system as statically secular, IR has lost its ability to account for the role of religion in international politics.⁶⁴ She therefore calls on scholars to reevaluate the separation between religion and politics when looking at secular states.

In line with the emergence of a post-secularist approach towards studying IR, and in line with the realization that the field is inherently built on secular assumptions, IR scholars have recognized the need to accommodate for religion as a factor in IR theory. This enquiry has not been without substantial methodological debate. The key debate when it comes to accounting for religion in IR theory is whether the current dominant theories of IR can be adjusted to account for religion, or whether the field should look at more unconventional methods and theories. In essence, this debate boils down to a more fundamental point of whether positivist approaches are suitable to account for the role of religion in IR.

One of the first texts to methodologically and theoretically contemplate how to study religion in post-secular IR is American IR scholar Scott Thomas' 2000 article "Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the

⁶⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Elizabeth Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, (Princeton University Press, 2008), 1-2.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Transformation of International Society.” A seminal work in post-secular thinking about IR theory, Thomas’ article argues that studying religion in this field requires a post-modern, context-based approach rather than relying on conventional IR theories, which are marred by Eurocentric and secular biases.⁶⁵ In line with post-secular arguments presented above, he critiques these traditional theories for being rooted in positivist, Enlightenment-based rationales of modernity, rendering them unfit for grasping the complexity and plurality of religion in contemporary IR.⁶⁶ He therefore urges scholars to abandon these explanations and adopt a more explanatory, anthropological perspective primarily focusing on discourse to account for religion in IR.⁶⁷ Thomas’ argument about the inclusion of scholarship outside of IR in order to account for religion in IR is widely adopted, for example by Fox and Sandler in their 2004 book *Bringing Religion into International Relations*, where they advocate a similarly sociological perspective.⁶⁸

In his 2005 book *The global resurgence of religion and the transformation of international relations: the struggle for the soul of the Twenty-first Century*, Thomas further builds on his previously stated critique of positivist approaches towards studying how religion affects IR, arguing that the aim of investigating religious acts in IR should not be to find predictive theories or generalizing conclusions, but rather to thoroughly understand narratives of religious identities.⁶⁹ He concludes that research into religion in IR should focus on the question “what narratives” instead of “what theories.”⁷⁰ Agreeing with Thomas’ reasoning, and given the alignment of his approach with Habermassian post-secularism, this approach will be reflected in the aim and research question of this thesis.

Contrary to Thomas, Sandal and Fox in their 2013 book *Religion in International Relations Theory: Interactions and Possibilities* explicitly argue in favour of seeking for ways in which existing IR theories can account for religion.⁷¹ They posit that one cannot simply disregard the centuries-old body of literature that the field of IR is built on in order to account for one more factor.⁷² However, they do admit that religion is a factor that contemporary IR

⁶⁵ Scott Thomas, “Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Society,” *Millennium* 29, no.3 (2000), 816.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 825.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion Into International Relations*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7.

⁶⁹ Thomas, *The Global*, 248.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁷¹ Nukhet Sandal and Jonathan Fox, *Religion in International Relations Theory: Interactions and Possibilities*, (Routledge, 2013), 4-6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 4

theory cannot accommodate without further consideration.⁷³ For this reason, Sandal and Fox attempt to incorporate religion in IR's five main schools of thought: Classical Realism, Neorealism, Neoliberalism, Constructivism, and the English School.⁷⁴ Operationalizing religion into seven concrete roles through which religion can affect IR, the authors assess how each of the five schools can theorize these seven roles.⁷⁵ The result is a comprehensive overview showing how each of the five schools is able to account for specific roles religion can play in IR.

While Sandal and Fox's study is widely praised for its comprehensive and structured approach towards integrating religion into IR theory, and has received particular credit for its practical operationalization of religion, the authors fail to convincingly address the methodological concerns voiced by Thomas.⁷⁶ When trying to accommodate for religion in the five main theories of IR, they fail to address the fundamental secular assumptions these theories are built on. Additionally, by separating religion into seven roles it can play in IR, the authors oversimplify the complex dynamics of domestic and international influence of religion.⁷⁷ While providing interesting insights into how contemporary theories theorize the relationship between religion and IR, the authors thus maintain an explicitly positivist and causal approach towards the relationship between religion and IR. In addition, by focusing on what they consider the five main contemporary theories of IR, they neglect to comment on how religion can be incorporated into more critical and postmodern theories of IR. It is exactly these non-positivist theories that according to Thomas should be key to understanding the complexity of religion in IR.⁷⁸

Someone who does fundamentally address Thomas' arguments, though not in direct reference to him, is American historian Daniel Nexon. In his chapter "Religion and International Relations: No Leap of Faith Required" Nexon denies that studying religion in the context of IR requires a post-secular paradigm shift.⁷⁹ Instead, he argues that the conventional ideas of IR are sufficient to explain current developments in IR, and that religion should be considered context rather than an explanatory variable.⁸⁰ By extent, Nexon thus argues against

⁷³ Ibid., 5-6.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Astha Chadha, "Review of Religion in International Relations theory," *International Journal of Religion* 3, no. 1 (2022): 9.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Thomas, "Taking Religious," 825; Thomas, *The Global*, 248-249.

⁷⁹ Daniel Nexon, "Religion and International Relations: No Leap of Faith Required," in *Religion and International Relations Theory*, ed. Jack Snyder (Columbia University Press, 2011), 177-178.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

the use of new or critical IR theories to study religion, instead arguing that a cause-based positivist approach should continue to take centre stage.⁸¹ Nexon's disagreement with more post-secularist scholars can thus in essence be boiled down to a wider epistemological disagreement of whether the field of IR should be studied by means of positivist science. For proponents of this positivist approach like Nexon, current theories of IR can already sufficiently explain the relationship between religion and international politics. However, for the more post-secularist opponents of a positivist approach towards IR, religion is a unique factor that should primarily be understood in its appropriate contexts in order to better understand how it engages with IR.

A 'middle way' between these two epistemological strands is proposed by British political scientist Jeffrey Haynes in his 2014 book *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion*. In his book, Haynes argues that while it is necessary for IR to account for religion, religion should not take up a central position in studying IR, but instead be considered when the context deems it necessary.⁸² Haynes goes on to recognize that realism and liberalism are unable to sufficiently account for religion since both are primarily state-centric and do not consider cultural or ideological factors in their analyses.⁸³ He additionally argues that constructivism is useful for understanding the outcomes of religious contexts on IR, yet lacks any guidance or specific focus on how to incorporate religion.⁸⁴ Most promising of all conventional IR theories is according to him the English School, which argues that international politics takes place in a norm-governed 'International Society' of states.⁸⁵ According to Haynes, religion can be regarded as playing a role in challenging or maintaining the nature of an international society, as well as its norms and rules.⁸⁶ Haynes argues that religion can therefore also account for multiculturalism in such international society of states.⁸⁷ In making these arguments, Haynes both agrees with Thomas that positivist approaches towards IR, in the form of Realism and Liberalism, obstruct in-depth studies of religion in IR, yet also agrees with Sandal and Fox that conventional IR theories can be used to account for religion.

However, a critique of Haynes' optimism about the English School's capacity to account for religion in IR can be seen in American IR scholar Michael Barnett's chapter "Another Great

⁸¹ Ibid., 197-199.

⁸² Jeffrey Haynes, *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion*, (Routledge, 2014), 14-15

⁸³ Ibid., 96

⁸⁴ Ibid., 104

⁸⁵ Ibid., 97-99

⁸⁶ Ibid., 98-99

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Awakening: International Relations Theory and Religion.” In this chapter, Barnett demonstrates how the English School is based on Emanuel Kant’s enlightenment conception of a strictly secular global society of states, and how the theory has a tradition of secularizing the idea of an international society.⁸⁸ Moreover, Barnett argues, studying religion in IR through the English School again puts the focus on religion as a ‘variable’ in shaping the international society, rather than taking the approach described by Thomas and trying to understand religious narratives and identities.⁸⁹

Based on this criticism by Barnett and the research agenda forwarded by Thomas, one is left to question if constructivism might be the most suitable approach for the study of these religious narratives and identities in IR. Indeed various authors have referred to this theory as one possible way in which to incorporate religion into a more interpretivist yet established theory of International Relations. Haynes, Hurd, Wilson, and Sandal and Fox have all referred to constructivism as one of the most obvious theories to incorporate religion due to its natural inclination to study culture and narratives of identity.⁹⁰ Yet more than praising the theoretical aptness of constructivism, these references should rather be seen as a recognition of the importance of identity and discourse in studying religion in the context of IR. As Barnett convincingly argues in the same chapter referred to above, constructivism tends to incorporate religion into wider cultural narratives and identities, failing to investigate it as a separate entity.⁹¹ Moreover, both Thomas and Hurd have criticized constructivism for making the same secular assumptions about the nature of IR and the interests of states that other major theories make.⁹² In general, constructivism takes identity and IR as constituting a causal relationship, with a state’s identity causing specific international behaviour.⁹³ However, as convincingly argued by Thomas and Barnett, religion in IR should not be researched through causal methodologies, but instead through deconstruction of narratives and identities to see how each affects the other.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Michael Barnett, “Another Great Awakening: International Relations Theory and Religion,” in *Religion and International Relations Theory*, ed. Jack Snyder (Columbia University Press, 2011), 121-122

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Haynes, *An Introduction to*, 103-105; Sandal and Fox, *Religion in*, 6; Wilson, *After Secularism*, 6; Hurd, *The Politics*, 2-3.

⁹¹ Barnett, “Another Great,” 122-123.

⁹² Hurd, *The Politics*, 38–39; Thomas, “Taking Religious,” 816.

⁹³ Hansen, *Security as*, 7-8.

⁹⁴ Thomas, “Taking Religious,” 816; Barnett, “Another Great,” 122.

The debate drawn out above shows how various theories of IR fall short to convincingly account for religion and religious identities in IR. However, the standing literature on the topic of religion in IR theory has not yet considered looking at religious identity of states through poststructuralist theory of foreign policy (PTFP). This theory would address all the methodological issues drawn out by Thomas and Barnett, and could convincingly answer to the demands and criticisms forwarded by a post-secularist view on IR. As PTFP allows for the evaluation of foreign policy discourse as both informed by and constitutive of identity, it does not assume a causal relationship between religious identity and foreign policy, but rather allows for deconstruction of how religion is discursively constructed and therefore is featured in foreign policy identity.⁹⁵ Building on the consensus that matters of identity are key to incorporating religion in IR theory, a poststructuralist approach would focus specifically on understanding religious identity while providing a framework that answers to all concerns of post-secularism. By adopting PTFP to analyse Islamic foreign policy discourse, this thesis will thus address a theoretical gap currently present in the literature on religion in IR. The following section will further discuss the theory of poststructuralist foreign policy analysis as conceived by Lene Hansen.

2.3 Poststructuralist Theory of Foreign Policy

PTFP is part of a larger body of critical IR theory that challenges the ontology, epistemology, and universality of more conventional theories of IR such as realism, idealism, and constructivism.⁹⁶ This critical body of literature criticizes modernity and its focus on rationalist positivist approaches to the social sciences, using similar arguments to the post-secularist critiques evaluated in this thesis' literature review. The goal of PTFP specifically is to apply the ontological and epistemological principles of poststructuralism to the field of IR, in order to examine how the actors and the topics of international relations are shaped and defined by the language and discourse of international politics.⁹⁷ In the spirit of poststructuralism, PTFP thus regards the discourse through which international politics is enacted and through which ideas, actions, and identities are represented as the main object of study. Apart from questioning the actors and subjects of IR, the theory also investigates how

⁹⁵ Hansen, *Security As*, 1-2.

⁹⁶ James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, *International/intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington Books, 1989), xvi-xvii.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

dominant narratives justify specific actions and marginalize alternative perspectives and identities.⁹⁸

While all poststructuralist theory of IR shares the assumptions and goals stated above, the objects of study within this theory and the additional theoretical nuances that come with each of these different objects of study is as broad as poststructuralist theory itself. For the sake of brevity and clarity, this chapter will keep to discussing PTFP as developed by Lene Hansen.

In PTFP, the issue of identity is of specific importance. According to Lene Hansen, “the relationship between identity and foreign policy is at the centre of poststructuralism’s research agenda.”⁹⁹ Hansen argues that foreign policies are based on representations of the issues they aim to address, and subsequently face the challenge of giving meaning to these issues.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in this process, foreign policies have to engage in the construction of the identities of both Others, such as foreign states or institutions, and the Self.¹⁰¹ In essence, poststructuralists argue, foreign policy is thus based on various representations of identities, and identities themselves are solely constructed through discourse.¹⁰² In order to grasp identity in foreign policy, PTFP thus purely focusses on analysing its language of discursive representations.

According to poststructuralism, the meaning of identities and representations in foreign policy are not fixed or stable in any way, but are rather established through contrast with other identities and representations.¹⁰³ In line with the Self/Other nexus, representations of identities in foreign policy of a domestic Self can thus only be meaningful in so far as it differs from representations of identities of a ‘foreign’ Other.¹⁰⁴ Apart from giving meaning to the identity of the Self, its differentiation from an Other can additionally construct the Self as inferior or superior from this Other.¹⁰⁵

Hansen sets out a specific theoretical model of how this identification through difference works. She understands identity “in relational terms and as being constructed along two dimensions.”¹⁰⁶ Understanding identity in relational terms means that identities gain

⁹⁸ Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In*, (Lynne Rienr Publishers, 1999), xii.

⁹⁹ Hansen, *Security as*, 1

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 17

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

meaning through what Hansen calls a “process of linking,” taking and interpreting an identity by linking it to ‘positive signs,’ being a collection of attributes or signs that help give meaning to the initial identity.¹⁰⁷ A classic example from Hansen is how the identity of a ‘Woman’ is understood by linking this identity to positive signs such as ‘emotional’ or ‘motherly’.¹⁰⁸ Next, understanding identity as being constructed along two dimensions means that identity always exists in relation to contrasting signs. The initial identity therefore gains meaning through a “process of differentiation,” which is a negative process of juxtaposing the initial identity and its positive signs to a series of contrasting signs.¹⁰⁹ Going back to the example of ‘Woman,’ this identity gains meaning in contrast to the identity of ‘Man,’ and its positive signs of ‘emotional’ and ‘motherly’ in turn gain meaning in contrast to the positive signs attached to ‘Man’ such as ‘rational’ and ‘intellectual.’

This theory of how discourse constructs representations of identity is based on the poststructuralist understanding that the meaning of signs and their positive and negative signs is instable. Hansen stresses that identities and signs therefore do not have an essence, nor a ‘beginning’ for that matter.¹¹⁰ Rather, she argues, meanings of identities come into being through repetition of discourse, which consolidates a certain representation of an identity and its positive and negative signs.¹¹¹

In line with poststructuralism’s refusal to distinguish between theory and practice, identity and foreign policy are seen as mutually reinforcing in PTFP.¹¹² Making foreign policy is only possible through understandings of identities, yet the same policy also reinforces these understandings of identities.¹¹³ Because of this, PTFP cannot investigate causality between identity and policy.¹¹⁴ Rather, the goal of poststructuralism is thus to trace and deconstruct identities in foreign policy discourse.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Poststructuralist Theory of Foreign Policy and Post-Secularism

The aim of this thesis is to understand the representations of Islamic identity in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse. The literature review above identified two gaps in

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 18-19.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 15-16

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

current literature surrounding the study of Islamic discourse in Azerbaijan's foreign policy. The first one is the lack of focus on the construction of Islam and Islamic identity in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse, the second one is the lack of poststructuralist approaches towards studying religion in IR. Since PTFP is already part of this second gap, it speaks for itself that the approach is necessary to address this gap. But most importantly, poststructuralism is the only theory able to address the research puzzle at the fundament of this thesis. 'Conventional' IR theories such as constructivism or ontological security theory regard identity as an essential and given category which can subsequently explain policies.¹¹⁵ As a secular state with a Muslim majority, these approaches would therefore take Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity to be either secular or Islamic, and explain its foreign policy based on one of these identities. Yet this would not account for the ambiguous and selective discursive reference to Islamic identity that can be seen in practice. Poststructuralism, on the other hand, "asserts the impossibility of a pre-given, self-determining essence,"¹¹⁶ enabling an investigation into shifting foreign policy identities which are located on the fault lines of religion and secularism, and established in constant difference to a constructed Other. In this way, PTFP can address the second gap in the literature and answer the research questions of this thesis by providing a detailed deconstruction of representations of Islamic identity in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse. As this theory is thus able to address this thesis' research puzzle, research questions, and gaps in the literature, Hansen's theory of PTFP will be adopted as this thesis' theoretical framework.

Alongside this theory, this thesis will incorporate the Habermasian concept of post-secularism to conceptualize religious discourse within a secular IR context. Using post-secularism to analyse the production of Islamic discourse by a secular state will allow me to regard the coexistence of Islamic and secular discourses not as contradictory, but as a dialogue where each discourse enhances the other.¹¹⁷ Moreover, applying the concept of post-secularism acknowledges the relevance and significance of religiously inspired discourse within secular contexts, challenging the notion that religion is merely a relic of the past.¹¹⁸ Like Hansen's theory of PTFP, post-secularism rejects the binary between religion and secularism, making it a useful tool for addressing the research questions and the research puzzle underlying this thesis.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁶ Asli Calkivik, "Poststructuralism and Postmodernism in International Relations," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: International Studies* ed. Nukhet Sandal (Oxford University Press, 2017), 5.

¹¹⁷ Habermas, "Religion in," 11.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

3. Case Overview & Historical Context

This thesis examines the case study of Azerbaijan. To contextualize and justify the analysis of this case study, this chapter will provide a historical background of Islam-state relations in Azerbaijan. It adopts a chronological approach, discussing Islam's role in all the various forms of Azerbaijani statehood since 1918 with a specific focus on the relationship between state policies and leaderships' ideas of national identity. Based on this historical context, this chapter will conclude by justifying the choice to study Azerbaijan as the case study for this thesis.

3.1 Historical context: Politics and Islam in Azerbaijan

Islam stood at the cradle of the Azerbaijani national awakening in the middle of the 19th century that ultimately led to the establishment of the first independent state of Azerbaijan.¹¹⁹ Central to this national awakening was the Turkic intellectual *Jadid* movement.¹²⁰ In the latter half of the 19th century, this Islamic-reformist movement spread rapidly across the Ottoman Empire and among Turkic-speaking intellectuals in the Russian Empire.¹²¹ Advocating for Islamic modernization through reforms in education, media, and politics, the *Jadid* movement flourished in Baku and ideologically inspired the Azerbaijani nationalist M^usavat Party, founded in 1910.¹²² This party became the most prominent movement demanding Azerbaijani statehood under the slogan 'Turkism, Modernization, and Islam.'¹²³ The party stood at the foundation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), the first independent Azerbaijani state which existed from 1918 to 1920.¹²⁴ The ADR was constitutionally secular and was the first democratic republic in a Muslim-majority society.¹²⁵ The interplay between the ADR's legacy of secularism and Azerbaijan's Islamic heritage remains a fundamental aspect in Azerbaijani national identity to this day.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: an introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2010), 51-52.

¹²⁰ Altstadt., "Allah-u Akbar," 182.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² De Waal, *The Caucasus*, 51-52.

¹²³ Sophie Zviadadze. "Religion in the South Caucasus: Tradition, Ambiguity, and Transformation", *Journal of Religion in Europe* 14, no. 3(2021): 213-214.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 183.

¹²⁶ Zviadadze, "Religion in," 214-215.

The short-lived ADR came under Bolshevik control following the Red Army's invasion in 1920, and soon became part of the newly formed USSR. Despite Soviet governance, the nationality policies of the 1920's and 1930's – marked by the institutionalization, authorization, and politicization of national culture – effectively consolidated and popularized the notion of a distinct Azerbaijani nation.¹²⁷ However, there was no place for Islam in Azerbaijan under the USSR, with the initial decades of Bolshevism characterized by a severe crackdown on religion.¹²⁸ A more pragmatic approach towards religion emerged with the onset of the Second World War.¹²⁹ The wartime and postwar era saw the official 'recognition' of religion, which meant the regulation and institutionalization of religious movements.¹³⁰ For Islam, *Muftiates* were created which defined a state-controlled interpretation of Islam, commonly referred to as 'official Islam'.¹³¹ In the Caucasus, the Baku-based Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Transcaucasia was established in 1944 to carry out this supervision.¹³²

While the Soviet authorities attempted to control Islam in Azerbaijan through this institution, the practical role of official Islam in Azerbaijan under the USSR proved merely ceremonial.¹³³ Observing Islam in Azerbaijan during this era is better understood as the practice of 'folk Islam', a blend of traditional Islamic beliefs, pre-Islamic customs, and local traditions.¹³⁴ Despite being forbidden and securitized by the Soviet regime, folk Islam gained widespread popularity throughout Azerbaijan.¹³⁵ In an era marked by corruption and feigned harmony, Islam offered a model for morality and a distinct ethnic identity, mirroring the roles religion assumed in many Soviet republics.¹³⁶ Consequently, Islam became an unofficial pillar of Azerbaijani national identity in the last two decades of the USSR.¹³⁷ Nonetheless, scholars agree that the idea of an Islamic-Azerbaijani national identity did not play a significant role in Azerbaijan's process of regaining independence.¹³⁸

¹²⁷ Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus*, (Oxford University Press, 2008), 190-191.

¹²⁸ Alexandre Bennigsen & Chantal-Lemercier Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam in the Soviet Union," *Religion State and Society* 7, no.3 (1979): 149-150.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 183.

¹³² Ergun and Citak, "Secularism and," 475.

¹³³ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 184.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*; Ergun and Citak, "Secularism and," 476.

¹³⁵ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 184.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 184-186.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Upon regaining independence from the USSR in October 1991, renewed popular interest in Islam emerged in the newly formed Republic of Azerbaijan.¹³⁹ With religion no longer outlawed, many Azerbaijanis saw embracing Islam as a means to distance themselves from their Soviet past, while political elites turned to Islam to fill the ideological void left after communism.¹⁴⁰ Azerbaijan joined the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1991. Neighboring Iran strategically exploited this popularity of Islam, supporting Azerbaijan's first president, Ayaz Mutalibov. Amidst the socio-political turmoil from the ongoing First Karabakh War, Iran sent state-sponsored mullahs into Azerbaijan and funded Shi'ite mosques to expand its influence.¹⁴¹ However, this Iranian influence faced opposition with the ousting of Mutalibov by Abulfaz Elchibey in June 1992. As a pan-Turkic nationalist who admired the Turkish Kemalist tradition of secularism, Elchibey was wary of Iranian religious influence and actively sought to curb foreign religious interference.¹⁴² Elchibey's presidency thus emphasized promoting ethnic nationalism over religious identity, and this focus on ethnic Azerbaijani identity was further reinforced by the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh war.¹⁴³

Within a year, Azerbaijan's political landscape shifted again with the ousting of Elchibey by Heydar Aliyev in June 1993. While cautious about not agitating Iran as much as his predecessor, Aliyev also recognized the need to limit Iran's religious influence while pushing a secularist agenda.¹⁴⁴ This agenda was codified in the first constitution of independent Azerbaijan, adopted in November 1995, which like the ADR established Azerbaijan as a secular state. The same year, Aliyev's regime banned the Iranian-funded Islamic Party of Azerbaijan (IPA). Despite Aliyev's secularist policy, Azerbaijan continued to face ongoing foreign religious influence during its first decade of independence, with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states funding Sunni mosques, and Türkiye promoting the modernist-Islamic Fetullah Gülen movement.¹⁴⁵

Despite the presence of foreign religious influence, Islam in Azerbaijan continued to serve more as a marker of cultural identity than a devout practice.¹⁴⁶ As Heydar Aliyev solidified autocratic rule and tightened his control over the state's security apparatus throughout

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Zviadadze, "Religion in," 214-215.

¹⁴¹ Dobrośława Wiktor-Mach, *Religious Revival and Secularism in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*, (De Gruyter, 2017), 182-183.

¹⁴² Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 187.

¹⁴³ Ergun and Citak, "Secularism and," 468-469.

¹⁴⁴ Wiktor-Mach, *Religious Revival*, 199-200.

¹⁴⁵ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 190.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 196; Wiktor-Mach, *Religious Revival*, 200.

the '90's, he gained greater influence over Islamic activities and foreign religious influences. Retaining the Soviet-era Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Transcaucasia, renamed as the Caucasus Muslim Board (CMB) in the 1995 constitution, Aliyev maintained administrative control over Islamic institutions, continuing the ability to define 'official Islam' in Azerbaijan.¹⁴⁷ In 2001, he additionally established the State Committee on Work with Religious Associations (SCWRA), which, while overseeing all religious groups instead of only Islamic ones, ambiguously shares overlapping responsibilities with the CMB. Both the SCWRA and CMB establish state-supervision over religious associations, holding the authority to close religious entities and dismiss spiritual leaders. These regulatory and secularizing policies reflect Aliyev's aim to foster a primarily civic Azerbaijani national identity, while referring to Islam as a cultural marker of national identity rather than as a pious religious practice.¹⁴⁸

While Aliyev acknowledged the cultural value of Islam, 'unofficial' or foreign Islamic practices became increasingly securitized in Azerbaijan at the turn of the millennium.¹⁴⁹ In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, global concerns over Islamic radicalism surged. As a Muslim-majority state located close to the Middle East, the cradle of several terrorist and extremist groups, Azerbaijan was particularly wary of Islamic extremism.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, in 2002 riots erupted in Nardaran, one of Azerbaijan's most religious villages located 10 kilometres from Baku, over deficient public services and a proposed local hijab ban. Aliyev's government blamed foreign Islamic forces for inciting the unrest, and saw the protests as a portrayal of the disruptive nature of foreign 'unofficial' Islam.¹⁵¹ The confluence of these local and global events lead to the increased securitization of pious Muslims and 'unofficial' versions of Islam.¹⁵²

In October 2003, Heydar Aliyev transferred power to his son, Ilham Aliyev, who continued his father's secularist policies while intensifying pressure on 'unofficial' and foreign forms of Islam, and regularly arresting spiritual leaders.¹⁵³ Since 2004, Ilham Aliyev has used the SCWRA to suppress Islamist political opposition, frequently closing mosques deemed radical or political.¹⁵⁴ In May 2009, his administration amended the Law on Freedom of

¹⁴⁷ Wiktor-Mach, *Religious Revival*, 198-199.

¹⁴⁸ Zviadadze, "Religion in," 213-214. Galib Bashirov, "Islamic Discourses in Azerbaijan: The Securitization of Non-Traditional Religious Movements," *Central Asian Survey* 37, no.1 (2018): 34.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 215; Wiktor-Mach, *Religious Revival*, 205-206.

¹⁵¹ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 202-203.

¹⁵² Wiktor-Mach, *Religious Revival*, 209-210.

¹⁵³ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 206.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 197-198.

Religion, tightening state control over religious literature and education.¹⁵⁵ By December 2010, a new school uniform law effectively banned the hijab in primary and secondary education, sparking large protests in 2011 which lead to the arrests of various prominent political-Islamic figures.¹⁵⁶ Renewed protests in Nardaran in November 2015 were similarly met with severe government crackdowns, with Aliyev's government claiming that militant Shi'ite villagers were planning a coup with foreign support.¹⁵⁷ Through this repression of 'unofficial' and political Islam, Ilham Aliyev's regime has increased its control over Islam even further, securitizing any 'unofficial' Islamic practice in the process.¹⁵⁸

As under his father's presidency, the increased securitization of 'unofficial Islam' under Ilham Aliyev can be placed in a continued global context of fear for Islamic extremism. Additionally, the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the rise of jihadist groups in the Middle East, and Turkish President Erdogan's accusation that the Gülen movement orchestrated the 2016 coup attempt in Türkiye reinforced Azerbaijani perceptions of unofficial and foreign forms of Islam as threats to state stability.¹⁵⁹

Despite the increased securitization of Islam and pursuit of secularizing policies under Aliyev, Islamic observance in Azerbaijan has risen during his presidency. According to De Cordier, 96.7% of Azerbaijanis reported a strong belief in God in 2012, up from 87.1% in 2004, and 36% considered religion a very important part of daily life, compared to 28.7% in 2007.¹⁶⁰ Still, Aliyev's conception of Azerbaijani national identity maintained the civic focus that his father introduced, emphasizing that tolerance and multiculturalism as part of Azerbaijani national identity.¹⁶¹ This approach further underscores secularism's role in Azerbaijani society. Nevertheless, in line with his father, Ilham Aliyev has continued to stress the exceptional role of Islam in Azerbaijan's culture and history, and has continued to define an 'official' and 'Azerbaijani Islam' as the spiritual basis on which the nation is built.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*, (Washington D.C., 2009), <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2009/127299.htm>

¹⁵⁶ Altstadt, "Allah-u Akbar," 215-216.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 204-205

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 190, 210-211.

¹⁶⁰ Bruno De Cordier, "Islamic Social Activism, Globalization and Social Change: A Case Study of Hajji İlgar İbragimoğlu and the Cüma Ehli in Baku, Azerbaijan," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2014): 136.

¹⁶¹ Ergun and Citak, "Secularism and," 470.

¹⁶² Ibid., 470-471.

3.2 Justification of the case

Given this historical background, Azerbaijan emerges as an intriguing case for examining religious identity within its official foreign policy discourse. Azerbaijan is a case study of the ambiguity between a secular state and a society with a religiously inspired cultural heritage. As the first secular state with a Muslim-majority society, yet also a state whose national awakening was largely religiously inspired and which has a long history of Islamic cultural heritage, Azerbaijan is a case in which both secularism and Islam can take up a prominent position within discourses of national identity. Moreover, its Soviet past and its contemporary secular state, in which ‘unofficial’ Islam is commonly securitized, make the use of Islamic discourse in official foreign policy discourse counterintuitive, further reinforcing this ambiguous Islam-state relation. While other post-Soviet states in Central Asia share similar complexities, Azerbaijan’s brief period of independent statehood from 1918 to 1920 endows it with a distinct historical legacy of both secularism and Islamically inspired nationalism. Moreover, Azerbaijan’s strong institutional secularism makes it an exceptional case within the South Caucasus.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Zviadadze, “Religion in,” 213-214.

4. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of this thesis. It will start by discussing the approach to doing science that comes with adopting a critical research methodology. It then introduces the research design, guided by Lene Hansen's template for poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA) within the field of IR. Following this, the chapter details the process of data selection and gathering, and explain the methods used to in the data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this thesis and the ethical considerations involved in studying Islam in Azerbaijan.

4.1 Critical research methodology & positionality

The theoretical chapter of this thesis has shown that poststructuralist theory, as a 'practical theory,'¹⁶⁴ rejects a clear distinction between theory and practice, emphasizing the continuous practice of theory.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, adopting PTFP requires a poststructuralist, and therefore a critical, methodological framework. This critical methodology involves a distinct approach to scientific inquiry and its own set of considerations. Specifically, it does not adhere to traditional notions of induction or deduction, as it integrates theory and observation through the practice of theory.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, discussing whether this study takes a deductive or inductive approach is irrelevant in the research design.

Furthermore, critical research views academic research as a form of 'knowledge production,' shaping what is investigated, its relevance, and how specific phenomena are discussed based on dominant power discourses.¹⁶⁷ From this perspective, the primary aim of critical, especially poststructuralist, methodology is not to produce knowledge within existing power structures, but to question these structures and deconstruct how discourse produces knowledge.¹⁶⁸ In this thesis, the goal is therefore not to 'produce' knowledge about Islam in Azerbaijan but to critically deconstruct how Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse creates or sustains representations of Islam.

¹⁶⁴ Hansen, *Security as*, 15-16.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Jason Glynos and David Howarth, "The Retroductive Cycle: The research process in poststructuralist discourse analysis," in *Discourse, Culture and Organization: Inquiries into Relational Structures of Power*, ed. Thomas Marttila, (Palgrave, 2018), 2

¹⁶⁷ Hansen, *Security as*, ii.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 1-2.

Resulting from critical approaches' rejection of attaining objective knowledge through scientific research, the author's subjectivity becomes central in the research process.¹⁶⁹ Critical approaches deny the notion that researchers are independent from the world they study, asserting instead that researchers continuously interpret their work through their subjective perspectives.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, researchers themselves are subject to knowledge-producing discourses, which can be reflected in their work. Given this thesis' focus on dissecting discursive constructions of Islam, my personal interpretation of this discourse is central to the analysis. To remain accountable for my analyses, adopting a critical approach towards research requires constant reflection on my positionality as a researcher.

As a Dutch atheist, raised in a predominantly secular society yet having received some level of Catholic education, I am an outsider to both Islam and Azerbaijan. My secular upbringing has inclined me to take a dichotomous perspective on religion and secularism and exposed me to discourses of secular modernity. However, my university education and study of post-secularism have helped me recognize and move beyond this dichotomy. Furthermore, growing up in a liberal-democratic state, I am inclined to judge more negatively on the practices and discourses produced by authoritarian regimes like Azerbaijan's. While living in Baku for five months between May and October 2023 provided some familiarity with Azerbaijani society and culture, I cannot consider myself an 'insider' to Azerbaijani society. Regarding Islam, while I consider myself open-minded and critical towards securitizing or xenophobic narratives, I acknowledge that exposure to a media- and political landscape which regularly features xenophobic and securitizing discourses of Islam may influence the language and imagery I associate with Islam.

4.2 Research Design

In her effort to operationalize PTFP, Lene Hansen provides a coherent research design that comes with adopting her theory. Since her theory, as discussed in this thesis' theoretical framework chapter, is inherently tied to her proposed methodology, this thesis adopts both her methodology and research design. Hansen's theory is operationalized into a research design template, shown in Figure 1, which will be applied here to conduct a study of discursive representations of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse between 2011 and 2020.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 8-9.

The first aspect of Hansen's research design is the "Number of Selves," which determines how many entities or cases the study will examine.¹⁷¹ This thesis is a single-Self study, as the analysis will focus solely

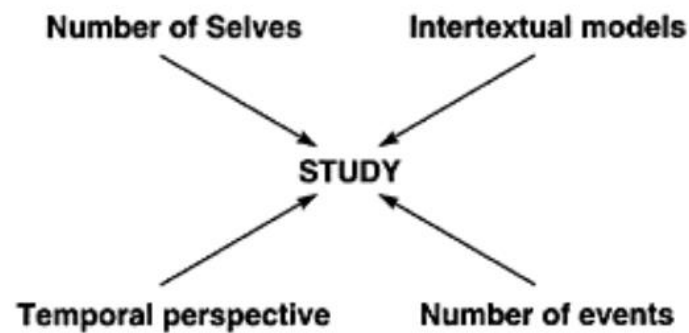


Figure 1: Research design for discourse analysis (Hansen 2006, 67)

on Azerbaijan's representation of itself. Yet, this single Self will be studied through analysing multiple discourses in which this Self is represented as related to Islam.

Another aspect of Hansen's research design is the selected "Intertextual Model," which defines the scope of what constitutes foreign policy discourse.¹⁷² Hansen develops four different intertextual models, ranging from a strict focus on official discourse to a focus on marginal political discourse such as that produced by NGOs or academics.¹⁷³ This thesis adopts Hansen's intertextual model that defines foreign policy discourse as strictly official discourse. This means that only official texts stemming from state institutions will be included.¹⁷⁴ This focus has been chosen as it aligns with this thesis' aim to deconstruct how Azerbaijan's official state apparatus uses Islamic discourse to construct a Self on the international stage. Non-official discourse is therefore irrelevant for this study.

The next aspect of Hansen's research design is defining the "Temporal Perspective," or timeframe of the study.¹⁷⁵ This thesis will focus on official foreign policy discourse published between January 1st 2011 and September 27th 2020, as this timeframe has seen a stable political leadership under Ilham Aliyev as well as a relatively stable foreign policy, characterized by Azerbaijan's priority to garner international support for its claim on Nagorno-Karabakh. The analysis ends in September 2020 with the onset of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war, which marked a shift in foreign policy priorities. The year 2011 has been selected as a starting date primarily for reasons of feasibility, as the search function on the websites of the President of Azerbaijan and of Azerbaijan's MFA only gives results of documents published from 2011 onwards. Moreover, given the large amount of documents analysed, focusing on the timeframe 2011-2020 allowed for more detailed analysis and a more feasible study. Finally, it has been

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁷² Ibid., 69.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 74.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 69.

suggested by Bedford that from the start of the 2010's onwards Azerbaijan has been referring more frequently to Islam within its state narrative.¹⁷⁶ It would therefore be justified to look into the discourse produced in specifically this decade.

The final aspect of Hansen's research design is the "Number of Events," which refers to the specific foreign policy events or developments that the research will focus on.¹⁷⁷ Hansen defines "events" broadly, including both significant historical occurrences, such as wars or diplomatic crises, and the emergence or evolution of particular discourses.¹⁷⁸ Researchers can choose to examine a single event or trace a discourse across multiple events over a specific timeframe.¹⁷⁹ When focusing on multiple events, these events can be connected by a common theme, which Hansen calls "related by discourse," or by occurring within the same timeframe, which she calls "related by time."¹⁸⁰ However, Hansen stresses that the focus of the research does not have to be on these events themselves, but can be on how the discourse surrounding various unrelated events reflects the construction of a Self and Other.¹⁸¹ This thesis adopts this approach, analysing how official Azerbaijani discourse across different events from 2011 to 2020 reflects representations of Islam, thereby constructing identities of the Self and Other. For this reason, the thesis examines multiple events that are related by time.

The terminology Hansen uses to indicate each aspect of her research design aligns with her theoretical approach but can complicate clear communication in this thesis. Therefore, this thesis will use more conventional scientific terms: "case study" for "Number of Selves," "data" for "Intertextual Model," and "timeframe" for "Temporal Perspective." "Number of Events" will remain unchanged. These adjustments improve the clarity and comprehensiveness of the thesis while maintaining alignment with Hansen's definitions. The meaning of these more conventional terms should still be taken to align with Hansen's definitions, but their use enhances the clarity and comprehensibility of this thesis.

4.3 Data & Methods

As outlined in the research design, this thesis focuses on official foreign policy discourse as its data. Data selection therefore adheres to Hansen's definition of official foreign

¹⁷⁶ Sofie Bedford, Ceyhun Mahmudlu & Shamkhal Abilov, "Protecting Nation, State and Government: 'Traditional Islam' in Azerbaijan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 73, no. 4 (2021): 695.

¹⁷⁷ Hansen, *Security as*, 71.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

policy discourse, which includes texts produced by an authoritative official of the state and meant for a foreign policy purpose.¹⁸² Specifically, Hansen categorizes official speeches, interviews, policy texts, and articles by political leaders or officials authorized to determine and execute foreign policy as part of this discourse.¹⁸³ To further narrow down the selection of relevant texts, Hansen adds three criteria: texts should have “clear articulation of identities and policies; they are widely read and attended to; and they have the formal authority to define a political position.”¹⁸⁴

Based on Hansen’s definition and criteria, this thesis considers the following resources as producing Azerbaijan’s official foreign policy discourse:

- The official Twitter (currently called X) account of Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)¹⁸⁵
- Publications and correspondence on the President of Azerbaijan’s website, including speeches and addresses in foreign policy contexts (e.g., international meetings, conferences, events)¹⁸⁶
- Publications and correspondence on the MFA website, including speeches and addresses in foreign policy contexts¹⁸⁷
- Official policy documents published by Azerbaijan’s MFA
- Speeches and statements made by the President of Azerbaijan and by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at UN institutions
- Speeches and statements made by Azerbaijani officials at OIC Assemblies

All these sources explicitly fit Hansen’s definition of official foreign policy discourse, except Twitter.¹⁸⁸ However, given Twitter’s prominence over the past fifteen years as a platform for distributing official foreign policy statements, a strong case can be made for including it. Especially regarding Hansen’s three criteria for selecting relevant texts, tweets posted by

¹⁸² Ibid., 57.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 76.

¹⁸⁵ Official username: @AzerbaijanMFA

¹⁸⁶ Official web-site of President of Azerbaijan Republic, last accessed June 20, 2024, <https://president.az/en>

¹⁸⁷ Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, last accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en>

¹⁸⁸ Hansen, *Security As*, 57.

Azerbaijan's official MFA conform to all three, often serving as clear, widely-read expressions of foreign policy discourse.

The next step in the data selection process is selecting texts relevant to this thesis' focus on Islamic discourse from the sources mentioned. Relevant texts are those that reference and describe Islam. To select these texts, I used the search function on the websites of the President and the MFA, looking for publications containing the words 'Islam,' 'Muslim,' 'Religion,' 'Shia,' or 'Sunni, along with their derivatives. Given that all texts produced by the MFA have an inherent foreign policy value, I selected all texts that contained any of these words on the website of the MFA. These texts included all addresses and correspondence about the ministry's activity at the OIC. For texts from the President's website, I manually selected those produced in a foreign policy context, based on the following criteria:

- Addressed primarily to a foreign audience
- Produced at an international event
- Addressed to diplomatic corps
- Clearly referencing Azerbaijan's foreign policy

During the data gathering process, it was found that Azerbaijan did not publish foreign policy concepts between 2011 and 2020, so no official policy documents were part of the data. After gathering relevant texts from the President and MFA, including all statements made at the OIC, I manually selected Azerbaijan's ten addresses to the UN General Assembly between 2011 and 2020, including that of 2020 as it was held before the start of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war. These speeches were included regardless of whether they explicitly mentioned Islam, given their gravity and significance at a foreign policy level. Other relevant UN speeches by the President or MFA were already selected during earlier data collection.

Finally, I reviewed all relevant tweets posted between January 13th, 2012 (the date of the first tweet on the MFA account), and September 27th, 2020. I uploaded these tweets into an Excel sheet, eliminating those sent after September 26th, 2020, which left 8,460 tweets. Filtering these based on the keywords used earlier reduced the number to 75 relevant tweets, which were included in the analysis.

It's important to acknowledge that using keywords for the data selection might overlook more subtle references to Islam. However, given practical and feasibility constraints, this method provides an efficient way to select and analyse a manageable number of texts. While

selecting only texts that explicitly mention Islam might appear to cherry-pick affirmative data, this approach is justified because the thesis aims to examine how Islam is constructed in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse, rather than the prevalence of these constructions.

The selected documents were compiled into a single PDF file, organized chronologically, to form the dataset for analysis. For practical reasons, tweets were maintained in their Excel format and analysed alongside the PDF documents. The final dataset contains 75 Tweets and 95 documents, with 59 produced by the President, 26 by the MFA, and 11 in the context of the UN. This dataset can be found in the appendix.

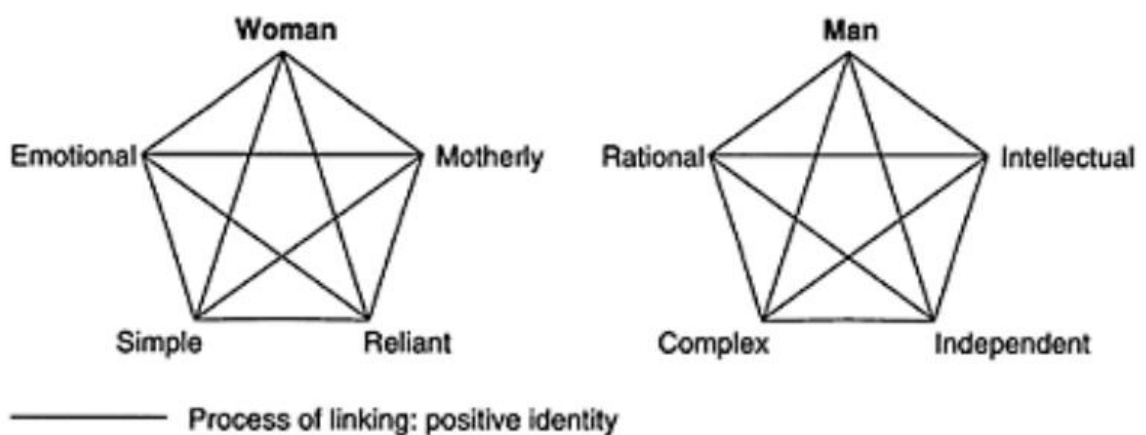


Figure 2: Process of linking (Hansen 2006, 17)

This thesis will use the qualitative method of poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA) to analyse the selected data and formulate an answer to the research question. The goal of this method is to analyse the language used to construct Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse and understand how this language signals an understanding of a Self in relation to an Other. To practically carry out this method in the context of PTFP, this thesis will again draw inspiration from Hansen. She develops two schemes, which visualize the formation of an identity through processes of linking (Figure 2) and the relationship between a Self and an Other through processes of differentiation (Figure 3).¹⁸⁹ Through the method of PDA, Hansen traces the processes of linking and differentiation within given discourse, and identifies the 'discursive strategies' that are associated with an identity.¹⁹⁰ In the example she uses of 'woman', this identity is shaped through 'discursive strategies' of portraying 'woman' as emotional, motherly, simple, and reliant.¹⁹¹ In this way, she thus gains an understanding of

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

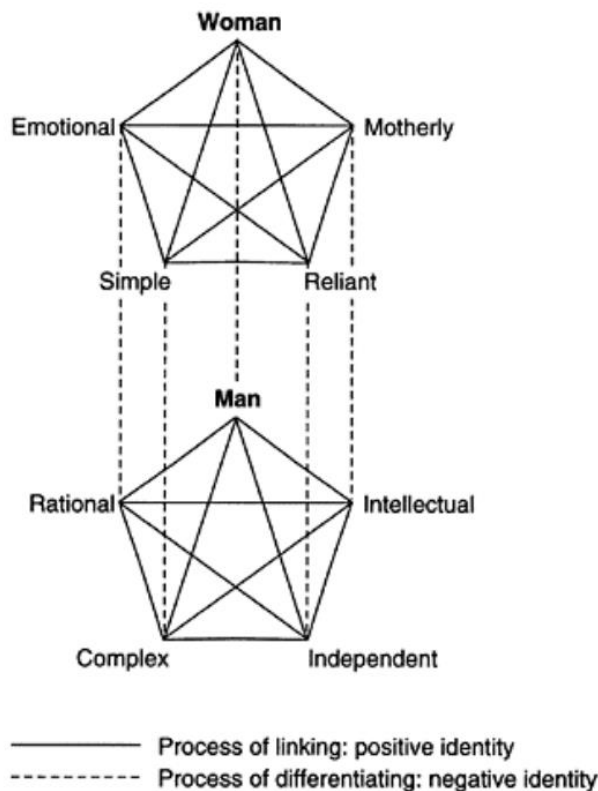


Figure 3: Linking and differentiation (Hansen 2006, 18)

how an identity is constructed within a certain discourse. She then differentiates this identity and all its linked discursive strategies against the Other of 'man' and all its linked discursive strategies in Figure 3.¹⁹² In this way, she shows how both identities reinforce each other.¹⁹³ Using this schematic approach Hansen effectively operationalizes PTFP, with the application of PDA at the basis of these schemes.

This thesis will conduct its analysis in a similar fashion, yet substantially alter Hansen's schemes to allow it to reflect post-secularist debate between religious and secular discourse. The schemes used

in the analysis are shown in Figure 4 and 5, found on the following two pages. Figure 4 illustrates the post-secular dialogue through which a signifier of Azerbaijan's Self is constructed. The term "Signifier of the Self" is used instead of "identity" because this scheme represents only one aspect—one signifier—of a broader identity, which is composed of multiple signifiers.¹⁹⁴ Constituting this post-secular dialogue are two triangular sections of the scheme, reflecting Hansen's process of linking. The upper section demonstrates how various discursive strategies construct, and are constructed by, a specific discursive representation of Islam. This section addresses the first research question: how Islam is discursively constructed in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse. The lower section illustrates the linking process that constructs a secular discursive representation centred around a theme similar to that of the Islamic discourse. By placing these two discursive representations in a post-secular dialogue, the analysis answers the second part of the research question: how discursive representations of Islam feature in Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity.

¹⁹² Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 182.

Figure 5 traces how both the Islamic discourse and the secular discourse construct their respective Others, and how these Others relate to the signifier of the Self. If these constructed Others are reconcilable into a general signifier of the Other, against which the signifier of the Self can be contrasted, this general Other is positioned in the middle. This approach provides a post-secular adaptation of Hansen's scheme of differentiation, showing how Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity is shaped not only through the construction of the Self but also through its differentiation from a constructed Other. In this way, this scheme helps to better answer how representations of Islam features in Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity by adding the factor of differentiation.

In these schemes, the primary focus is on Self. The Self will therefore also be discussed most elaborately in the analysis. Analysis of the differentiation from the Other will mainly serve to show how the Self constructs an Other to reinforce the discursive construction of the Self, and to make claims about its exceptionality and moral superiority.¹⁹⁵

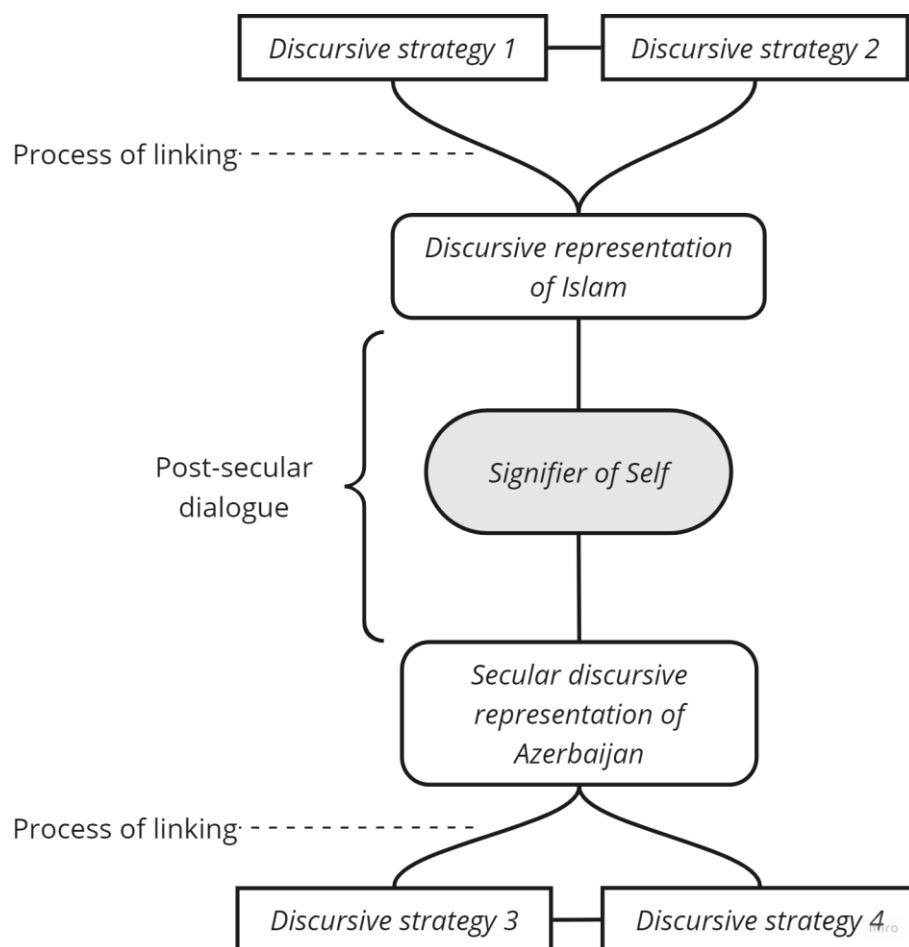


Figure 4: Discursive formation of the post-secular Self

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 44.

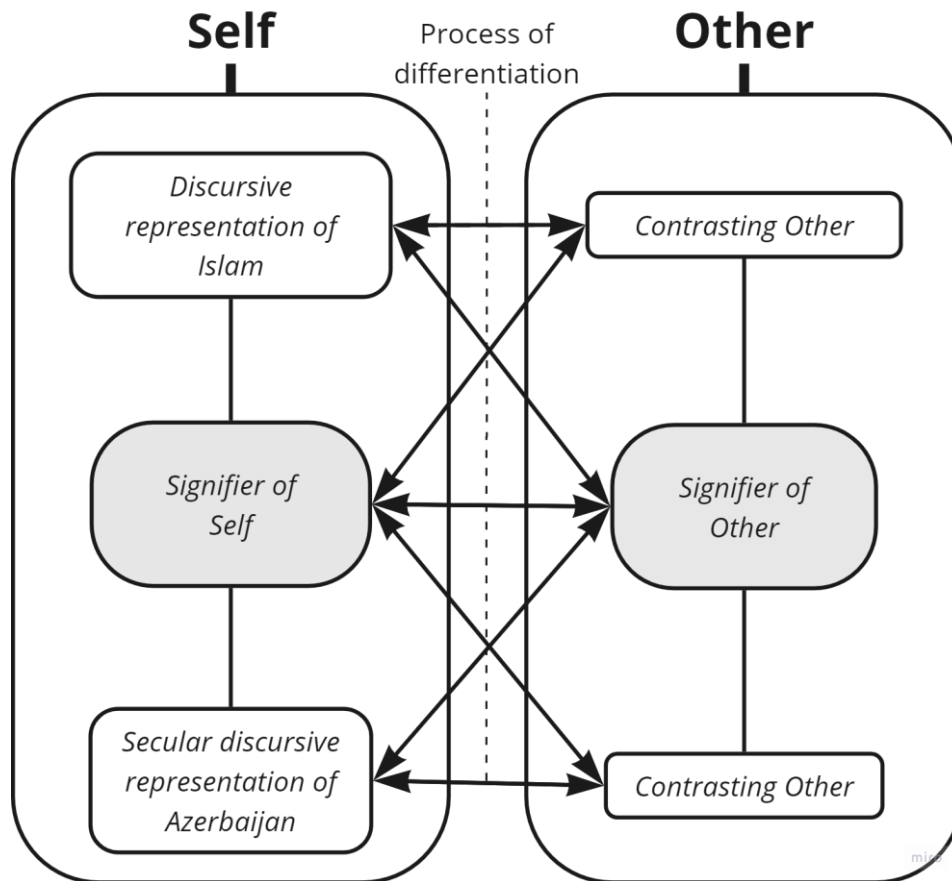


Figure 5: Construction of Self and Other

The analysis follows a systematic approach to fill in the schemes. First, all selected texts are thoroughly read, with passages reflecting Islamic discourse highlighted. Using PDA, the discursive strategies employed to construct a representation of Islam are identified and linked to this representation, forming the upper part of the scheme in Figure 4.

Next, the analysis shifts to identifying secular discourses produced in the context of Islamic discourse, which construct a similar representation related to Azerbaijan. This involves analysing how Islamic representations engage in a post-secular dialogue with secular discursive strategies. PDA is then used to link these strategies to a secular discursive representation of Azerbaijan, completing the bottom part of Figure 4. This step naturally leads to examining how this dialogue constructs a unified post-secular signifier of the Self, resulting in a fully filled-out version of Figure 4 showing the discursive formation of the Self.

Finally, the analysis uses PDA to trace how both Islamic and secular discourses that constitute the Self differentiate from constructed Others. It is then determined whether these Others can be reconciled into a general signifier of the Other, against which the Self is contrasted, or if they remain in the final scheme as two separate Others. This process culminates

in filling out Figure 5, which illustrates the differentiation between the Self and the Other, allowing for analysis of whether the Other endows the Self with certain qualities.

4.4 Limitations & Ethical considerations

This thesis of course has its limitations. The first limitation is that some of the gathered data are or contain official English translations from originally Azerbaijani texts. As I do not speak Azerbaijani, and as official foreign policy discourse targets an international audience and should therefore be published in English, I only selected data which was officially published in English. However, some of this data is or contains translations from Azerbaijani texts. Analysing these translations instead of the original Azerbaijani texts can result in a loss of nuance, which can be particularly problematic when conducting discourse analysis.¹⁹⁶ However, given the official nature and purpose of these documents and tweets, it can be assumed that any are accurate and well-considered. Moreover, the official publication of these translations by Azerbaijan's state institutions still justifies their use in this thesis's analysis.

A next limitation of this thesis is that a disproportionate amount of data is related to Azerbaijan's activities in the OIC. Various selected documents, particularly those from the MFA, are produced in the context of OIC conferences or developments. This could skew findings, potentially overemphasizing the role of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy or misrepresenting Azerbaijan's actual attitudes towards Islam. However, this thesis does not aim to assess the importance of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse but rather to analyse how Islam, as a key historical and cultural element, is constructed in this discourse. Consequently, the conclusions are not representative of Azerbaijan's overall foreign policy discourse, nor do they aim to reveal the country's genuine attitudes toward Islam. The emphasis on Azerbaijan's external projection of Islam validates the prominence of OIC-related discourse, as it reflects the country's chosen method of constructing its narrative.

A final limitation of this thesis is its limited exploration of Islamic discourse within the broader context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. While this conflict undoubtedly shapes Azerbaijan's foreign policy, a comprehensive analysis of how it influences the construction of Islam in the country's foreign policy discourse is beyond the scope of this research. Although one instance where the construction of Islam is linked to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is addressed in the analysis, a thorough examination of the conflict's complex historical

¹⁹⁶ Anthony Pym, "Limits and Frustrations of Discourse Analysis in Translation Theory," *Revista de Filología de la Universidad de La Laguna* 10, no.1 (1992): 29-30.

background and the debated role of religion would require a level of detail and depth not feasible within the constraints of this MA thesis.

Finally, studying Islam in Azerbaijan entails important ethical considerations, particularly given the legacy of Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, which critiques how Western scholarship has historically exoticized and misrepresented 'Eastern' – and especially Islamic – societies.¹⁹⁷ As a Western European scholar, it is essential to recognize the potential for perpetuating such biases. However, as this research solely aims to analyse how the Azerbaijani state constructs Islam in its official foreign policy discourse, it will refrain from defining or describing Islam as a lived experience in Azerbaijan. Careful adherence to the outlined methodology will further ensure the analysis remains academically rigorous and avoids Orientalizing tendencies. Moreover, the study of official foreign policy discourse, intended for international interpretation, justifies the perspective of a non-Azerbaijani scholar, as it aligns with the data's intended audience.

¹⁹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (Vintage Books, 1979), 27.

5. Analysis

This chapter will analyse how Azerbaijan discursively constructs Islam in its foreign policy discourse, and how Islamic discourse features as part of Azerbaijan's representation of the Self. It will do so by discussing two main discourses: one of solidarity and one of heritage. For each of these discourses, it will demonstrate that they are shaped through a dialogue between Islamic and secular discursive strategies. It will also be demonstrated how both discourses differentiate themselves from a constructed Other. The analysis draws on specific examples from the analysed foreign policy discourse, and each argument will be presented schematically.

The analysis of each discourse follows the structure outlined in the methodology. First, the occurrence of the discourse in the data is described. Next, the discursive strategies used to construct a representation of Islam are examined. This is followed by an exploration of how this representation engages in a post-secular dialogue with secular discursive strategies, reinforcing an overarching discourse of the Self informed by both Islamic and secular elements. The discursive formation of the Self as through this post-secular dialogue is then presented in a unified scheme. Finally, the analysis traces how this Self differentiates itself from a constructed Other, culminating in a schematic representation of how a certain discursive construction of Islam features in Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity.

It has to be noted that all recognized discourses are tightly wound together, and that often similar discursive strategies are taken to signify multiple discourses. This is not uncommon in PDA, as poststructuralism recognizes that the same discursive strategies can represent multiple overarching discourses at the same time.¹⁹⁸ Throughout the analysis, I will thus highlight these links to create a more coherent image of how Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity takes shape.

¹⁹⁸ Hansen, *Security As*, 17-18.

5.1 Solidarity

This first section of the analysis will show how Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse constructs Islam as a force of solidarity. It will demonstrate how this discursive representation of Islam as solidarity is engaged in a post-secular dialogue within Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse with a discursive representation of Azerbaijan as committed to multicultural solidarity. Through this dialogue, these Islamic and secular discourses of solidarity create one overarching post-secularist signifier of the Self as solidary. This section ends by showing how this solidary Self differentiates itself from discourses of Islamophobia and of xenophobia, constructing a discriminatory Other which reinforces the identity of the Self as solidary, while endowing this identity with a sense of moral virtue.

5.1.1 Occurrence

The first discourse through which Islam is represented in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse between 2011 and 2020 is by linking Islam to a discourse of solidarity. When referring to Islam in foreign policy discourse, this reference is regularly made in the context of Azerbaijan's commitment to 'Islamic Solidarity'. These discourses are produced by both the President as well as by the Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), although the President tends to use this discourse more frequently. Reference to Islamic Solidarity structurally features in foreign policy discourse produced in the context of the OIC, specifically in the annual addresses of Azerbaijan's Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Foreign Ministerial Council of the OIC, and in addresses of the President at summits or meetings of the OIC. However, references to Islamic Solidarity also feature structurally in Azerbaijan's ten addresses to the United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) between 2011 and 2020, being referenced in the addresses of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2020. As one of the most prominent and most analysed events in international diplomacy, the feature of Islamic Solidarity in these addresses demonstrates the gravity of this discourse within Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Further consistent reference to Islamic Solidarity by the President in international addresses, interviews, and meetings with the Diplomatic Corps highlights its ongoing importance in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, even during years when it wasn't mentioned at the UN GA. Finally, reference to Islamic Solidarity features regularly in the tweets of Azerbaijan's MFA, for

example through the use of the hashtags #unity and #solidarity when tweeting about Islamic holidays.¹⁹⁹

5.1.2 Discursive strategies

Azerbaijan's discourse of Islamic Solidarity is signified through three discursive strategies in its foreign policy discourse: advocating for global Islamic Solidarity; linking foreign support for Azerbaijan's policy to Islamic Solidarity; and referencing major international Islamic events organized in Azerbaijan. These three together create an overarching discourse of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity as informed by commitment to Islamic Solidarity.

The first discursive strategy through which Azerbaijan represents Islam as solidarity in its foreign policy discourse is advocating for global Islamic solidarity. Throughout the analysed foreign policy discourse, Azerbaijan repeatedly advocates for solidarity with Muslims worldwide. This happens both by calling on Muslim-majority states to form a solidary 'civilization', as well as when addressing non-Muslim states by calling on them to be solidary with Muslims worldwide. When making such calls, Azerbaijan presents itself as a committed advocate for this solidarity. The way in which Azerbaijan calls on Islamic Solidarity from fellow Muslim-majority states is best demonstrated in a quote from an address by Aliyev at a yearly Iftar celebration in 2016, whose guests included ambassadors of Muslim-majority countries to Azerbaijan.

"Azerbaijan is an integral part of the Muslim world. Azerbaijan enjoys great authority and respect in the Muslim world. [...] We want unity. We can't be strong without unity. Azerbaijan, in turn, is doing a lot to strengthen Muslim solidarity, and we are doing it in a consistent manner."²⁰⁰

This statement starts by positioning Azerbaijan as part of the "Muslim world," a discursive strategy that is present throughout all Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse. By talking about being part of a Muslim world, Aliyev presents Azerbaijan as part of a body of Muslim-majority states which is taken to represent a coherent, separately-existing entity. He therefore uses a civilizationalist idea of Islam as being the basis of a unified body of states. Aliyev then goes on to state Azerbaijan's desire to foster unity amongst this civilization, linking

¹⁹⁹ Appendix D: D70, D29.

²⁰⁰ Appendix A: A29.

unity to strength. He thus calls for Islamic solidarity amongst Muslim-majority states in order to increase the strength of the ‘Muslim world’. By additionally referencing to Azerbaijan itself as both an “integral part of the Muslim world,” and as a state already very committed to strengthening global Islamic solidarity, Aliyev presents Azerbaijan as a frontrunner in promoting Islamic solidarity. This commitment to promoting Islamic solidarity is even more explicitly reflected in Aliyev in 2014 calling the maintenance of relations with Muslim countries a “foreign policy priority,”²⁰¹ as “All of us should strive to strengthen Islamic solidarity and further reinforce the unity among Muslim countries.”²⁰² Here, Aliyev links Azerbaijan’s foreign policy priority to strengthening Islamic solidarity, further reinforcing the discourse of Azerbaijan as advocating commitment to Islamic solidarity.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan uses fraternal language in its foreign policy discourse when talking about fellow Muslim-majority states. This can be seen in discourse such as “brotherly Pakistan,”²⁰³ “the brotherly people of Palestine,”²⁰⁴ “brotherly OIC members,”²⁰⁵ and “our brothers and sisters of Muslim Rohingya Community.”²⁰⁶ Not only does the use of this fraternal language construct Azerbaijan as committed to family-like solidarity with other Muslim-majority states, but specifically in the case of Rohingya Muslims and Palestinians this discourse is used when calling on the international community to support these people. However, this language is only used when calling on Muslim-majority states to support Palestinians or Rohingya Muslims, for example in the context of the OIC. When Azerbaijan calls on solidarity with Palestine or Rohingya Muslims in contexts such as the UN GA, it chooses not to refer to them as ‘brotherly’. Still, this is not to say that Azerbaijan does not call on non-Muslim states to be solidary with Muslims. The fact that Azerbaijan uses the prominent stage of the UN GA to call for solidarity with fellow Muslim-majority populations signals that it extends its call for solidarity with Islam also to non-Muslim states. By doing this, Azerbaijan once again presents itself as highly committed to advocating Islamic solidarity.

When calling on states – both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim – to be solidary with Muslims, it is not uncommon in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse to link this call to a global context of growing Islamophobia. For example, in a 2017 address to the Summit on Science and Technology, Aliyev stated: “Azerbaijan is making a great contribution to the cause

²⁰¹ Appendix A: A18.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Appendix A: A10; Appendix D: D66.

²⁰⁴ Appendix B: B3.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

of Islamic solidarity. We are vehemently fighting against Islamophobia, which seems to be raising its head in various regions around the world.”²⁰⁷ In this statement, Aliyev equals combating Islamophobia to contributing to Islamic solidarity. Similarly, in a 2013 address to the ambassadors of Muslim countries Aliyev stated: “We are legitimately worried and outraged by the strengthening trend of Islamophobia in some countries. We must speak with one voice against these trends and join our efforts.”²⁰⁸ In both quotations, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse presents Islamophobia as a threat to the wellbeing of Muslims worldwide and portrays Azerbaijan as protecting this wellbeing by fostering Islamic solidarity. In doing this, Azerbaijan thus uses what it sees as a growing trend of Islamophobia as a pretext to call for increased Islamic solidarity. Through this, Azerbaijan again reinforces a discourse of it being committed to and calling for Islamic solidarity.

The second discursive strategy through which Azerbaijan represents Islam as solidarity in its foreign policy discourse is by linking support from Muslim-majority states for Azerbaijan’s (foreign) policies to an act of Islamic solidarity. This discourse is most prominent when Azerbaijan mentions how certain Muslim-majority states have supported Azerbaijani policies pertaining to Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan’s conflict with Armenia. This is best demonstrated in two quotes, the first from a 2013 address by Aliyev to the Baku Conference of Ministers of Labor of the OIC. The second quote is from a 2017 article by Aliyev for the OIC Journal, titled “The strengthening of Islamic solidarity is a challenge of time.”

“I want to express my gratitude to all the Muslim countries that have supported our fair cause. The vast majority of Muslim countries stands by us in the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, actively supports us and supports justice. [...] I want to express my appreciation to all the fraternal countries again for supporting us.”²⁰⁹

“Currently five Muslim states have officially recognized Khojaly genocide. We consider all this as an example of brotherly relationship and real support.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Appendix A: A38.

²⁰⁸ Appendix A: A16.

²⁰⁹ Appendix A: A14.

²¹⁰ Appendix A: A35.

Both quotations show how support of Muslim-majority states for Azerbaijan's policies regarding Nagorno-Karabakh and the war with Armenia is taken as an instance of 'brotherhood', a discursive strategy seen before as signifying solidarity and familiarity amongst Muslim-majority states. Moreover, Aliyev chooses to group states supporting Baku's policies together based on their religious constitution, discursively constructing a link between being a Muslim-majority state and supporting Azerbaijan's policies. By doing this, Aliyev constructs foreign support for Azerbaijan as being linked to Islam, and in this way links Islam to solidarity with Azerbaijan.

This reinforces a discourse of Islam as solidarity, and Azerbaijan as part of this network of Islamic solidarity. Furthermore, the choice to group states who support Azerbaijan's policies together based on a shared religious majority again reflects a civilizationalist representation of Islam, implying that it is 'normal' for states who share a dominant religion to support each other's policies.

The third discursive strategy through which Azerbaijan represents Islam as solidarity in its foreign policy discourse is by connecting high-level events held in Azerbaijan to Islamic solidarity. This is best demonstrated in the following quote from an address by Aliyev to diplomats from Muslim-majority states in 2019:

"As you know, we attach great importance to strengthening Islamic solidarity, and practical steps are being taken in this direction. The numerous events held in Azerbaijan contribute to the strengthening of Islamic solidarity."²¹¹

In this quote, Aliyev refers to Azerbaijan hosting "numerous events" as a practical step towards strengthening Islamic solidarity, therefore fostering a discourse of representing Azerbaijan as solidary with Islam through hosting events. Conceiving of solidarity as organizing events additionally connotes that Aliyev regards the facilitation of meetings and discussions as being solidary, rather than only the expression or provision of support to people or states in need.

Most prominently, the discourse of Islamic solidarity in the context of hosting events is reflected in Azerbaijan's continuous reference to its hosting of the Islamic Solidarity Games in 2017. Throughout all the discourse analysed from 2011 onwards, Azerbaijan's foreign policy

²¹¹ Appendix A: A53.

discourse structurally mentions that this event will be held or was held in Baku in 2017 and links this to its dedication to fostering Islamic solidarity. This is best reflected in the following quote from Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov at the preparatory meeting of the Foreign Ministerial Council of the OIC in 2016:

“My country is well known for its dedication to strengthening Islamic solidarity and promoting Islamic values. We are honored to host Islamic Solidarity Games next year in Baku and hope that they will help to reinforce the bonds of unity, amity and fraternity between Muslims.”²¹²

While it is unsurprising that an event named ‘the Islamic Solidarity Games’ gets linked to a broader narrative of Islamic solidarity, this quote specifically shows that the organization of this event gets presented as fitting within a legacy of Azerbaijan promoting Islamic Solidarity. Moreover, the quote shows how Azerbaijan uses its hosting of this event as a pretext for both calling for Islamic solidarity, and referring to its own dedication to fostering Islamic solidarity. Therefore, reference to events serves as a discursive strategy that constructs Azerbaijan as dedicated to Islamic solidarity.

Taken together, these three discursive strategies – advocating for Islamic Solidarity, linking foreign support to Islamic solidarity, and referencing events – construct one coherent foreign policy discourse of Islam as a basis for solidarity, therefore constructing a discursive representation of Islam as solidarity. This argument is schematically represented in Figure 6.

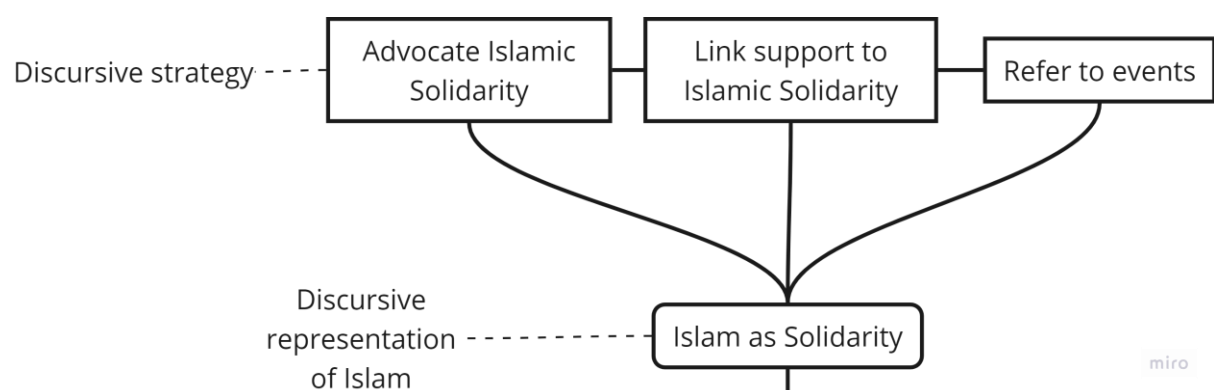


Figure 6: Discursive construction of Islam as solidarity

²¹² Appendix B: B12.

5.1.3 Dialogue: Islamic solidarity and multicultural solidarity

Throughout the analysed foreign policy discourse, Azerbaijan's discourse of Islamic solidarity is typically presented alongside a non-Islamic discursive representation of Azerbaijan as committed to intercultural solidarity, referred to here as multiculturalism. This discursive representation of Azerbaijan as multicultural is placed in dialogue with discourses of Islamic solidarity using two dominant discursive strategies: constructing Azerbaijan as having an internal and external policy of promoting multiculturalism; and constructing Azerbaijan as solidary with both 'European civilization' and 'Islamic civilization'. The religious discourse of Islamic solidarity and 'secular' discourse of multicultural solidarity engage in a post-secular dialogue, mutually reinforcing one common signifier of the Azerbaijani Self as solidary. This dialogue between discursive representations of Islamic solidarity and multiculturalism is best illustrated by two quotations, the first from Aliyev's 2017 address to the UN GA, and the second from his address at the opening of the 4th World Forum in Baku in 2017:

"Azerbaijan is one of the world's recognized centers of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a state policy in Azerbaijan. Representatives of all ethnic groups and religions live in Azerbaijan in peace and harmony. 2016 was declared the year of multiculturalism and 2017 the year of Islamic Solidarity in Azerbaijan."²¹³

"Our policy of multiculturalism is fully supported by our people. 2016 was announced the Year of Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. This year is announced the Year of Islamic Solidarity. The combination of these two very important elements of Azerbaijan's day to day life, first of all, demonstrates the status of our society, our state policy and also leads to greater understanding in the region."²¹⁴

These quotations show the first discursive strategy of constructing multiculturalism as Azerbaijan's "state policy," and illustrate how multiculturalism is discursively constructed through reference to both Islamic solidarity, as well as to 'secular' multiculturalism. Referencing both 2016 as "the year of multiculturalism" and 2017 as "the year of Islamic Solidarity," Aliyev stresses how it is the interaction between these two elements that constitutes Azerbaijan as "one of the world's centers of multiculturalism," signifying an overarching

²¹³ Appendix C: C8.

²¹⁴ Appendix A: A34.

discourse of the Self as multicultural and driven by a more general, global solidarity. These quotes thus also show how Aliyev embeds discourse of Islamic solidarity within a wider discourse of global solidarity signified through multiculturalism.

This dialogue between Islamic solidarity and multiculturalism is further reflected in the context in which Azerbaijan typically refers to the previously mentioned Islamic Solidarity Games of 2017. Typically, this event is presented in combination with the mentioning of Azerbaijan hosting the European Games in 2015, in order to construct a second discursive strategy of Azerbaijan being solidary to both the ‘Islamic world’ and Europe, which is then linked to a discourse of multiculturalism. This is best reflected in the following quote from Aliyev’s 2020 address to the UN GA:

“Furthermore, Azerbaijan hosted the first ever European Games and 4th Islamic Solidarity Games in 2015 and 2017 respectively. These sporting events are our great contribution to the promotion of multiculturalism as well.”²¹⁵

In this quote, Aliyev takes both the European Games of 2015 and Islamic Solidarity Games of 2017 together in making a larger point of Azerbaijan’s contribution to promoting multiculturalism. The previous analysis has shown that reference to the Islamic Solidarity Games in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse is taken to signify its commitment to Islamic solidarity. Likewise, here its reference to the European Games can be regarded as a reference to its solidarity with Europe. This is further substantiated in a 2015 statement of Foreign Minister Mammadyarov at the OIC: “It is common knowledge that sport is a powerful tool to strengthen social ties and networks and to promote peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence and tolerance.”²¹⁶ In this context, Aliyev’s statement can be regarded as a representation of solidarity with two ‘cultures’, which were brought together in Azerbaijan in an act of multiculturalism. This additionally reflects an implied binary view of ‘European culture’ and ‘Islamic culture’, since these are not taken to be naturally connected, but specifically connected through a discourse of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. Such reasoning again reflects the civilizationalist discourse also seen in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse about Islamic solidarity. By mentioning both the Islamic Solidarity games and the European Games, and connecting them under a common discourse of multiculturalism, Aliyev thus enforces a general

²¹⁵ Appendix C: C11.

²¹⁶ Appendix B: B8.

discourse of Azerbaijan's commitment to promoting multicultural solidarity. This argument is further reflected in the following quote from Aliyev's 2017 article in the OIC Journal:

"In 2015, Azerbaijan hosted the First European Games, and this important sporting event was held at the level of Summer Olympic Games. This year Baku will host the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games. It is symbolic that in a short space of time the European Games are followed by the Islamic Solidarity Games, and this shows that Azerbaijan has become the center of dialogue of civilizations and religions, and an economic and cultural bridge."²¹⁷

By speaking of itself as "the center of dialogue of civilizations and religions," this quotation reflects the civilizational reasoning through which Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse represents the hosting of these two events as an act of bridging two civilizations, which it takes to be a token of its commitment to multiculturalism. Therefore, Aliyev here again presents an overarching discourse of Azerbaijan fostering global solidarity by presenting itself as the sum of solidarity with the 'Islamic civilization' and 'Europe'.

This discourse is not only present when speaking about sporting events. In his 2013 address at the opening of the Azerbaijan-USA forum "Vision for the Future" in Baku, Aliyev stated:

"We enjoy great authority in the Muslim world. We have many partners. At the same time, we are a member of the Council of Europe. [...] We are a state serving as a model of good neighborliness, peaceful coexistence and tolerance."²¹⁸

This quote equally presents a discourse which positions Azerbaijan's Islamic solidarity in dialogue with its European solidarity, here signified through membership of the Council of Europe. These two solidarities are then taken together to dialogically construct one image of Azerbaijan as a good, peaceful, and tolerant neighbour, presenting an overarching discourse of multiculturalist solidarity through this dialogue.

The discursive representation of Azerbaijan as multicultural, informed by the discursive strategies constructing Azerbaijan as promoting a policy of multiculturalism and as solidary with both European and Islamic civilization, is schematically represented in Figure 7. Here it

²¹⁷ Appendix A: A35.

²¹⁸ Appendix A: A15.

has to be noted that this figure does not represent all the ways in which Azerbaijan constructs itself as multicultural in its foreign policy discourse, but only the ones which appear in dialogue with discourses of Islamic solidarity.

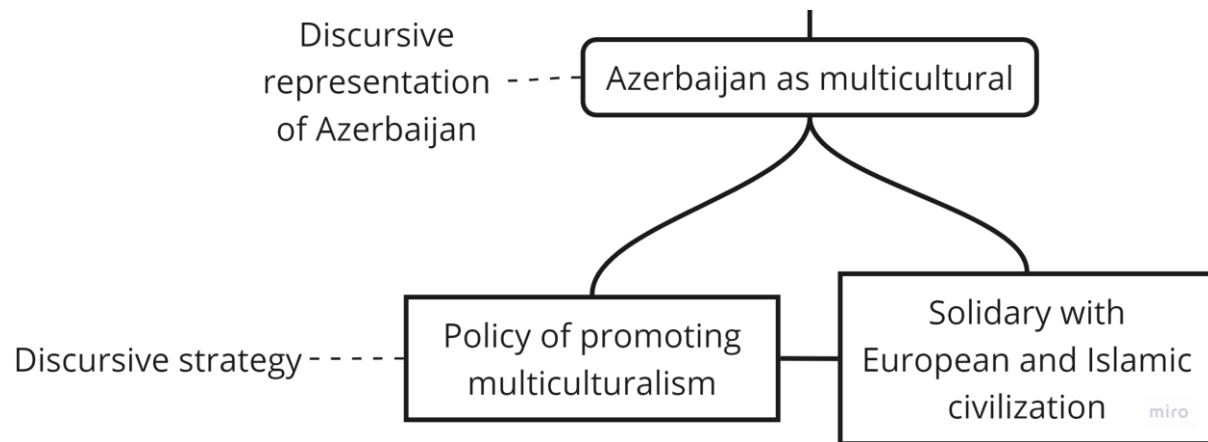


Figure 7: Discursive construction of Azerbaijan as multicultural

5.1.4 The Solidary Self

Through employing both discourses of Islamic solidarity and multiculturalism, Azerbaijan creates one overarching post-secular discourse of the Self as solidary which is endowed with both religious and secular meaning. All examples analysed above show that Islamic discourse of solidarity is not just an independent discourse. Rather, it is a discourse that is actively used in dialogue with secularist discourses of European solidarity and multiculturalism.

Through the combination of these discourses of Islamic solidarity and multiculturalism, a new overarching discourse of the Self as solidary emerges. In line with the civilizationalist discourse recognized in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse, this overarching discourse represents Azerbaijan as solidary towards multiple 'civilizations', and by doing so positions Azerbaijan as a unique place where solidarity and understanding across civilizations can be fostered. The discursive formation of this overarching discourse of the Self is schematically presented in Figure 8.

The overarching discourse of solidarity in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse, formed through both secular and religious elements, reflects a post-secularist nature. This discourse is formed through a dialogue between religious discourse of Islamic solidarity and secularist discourse of multiculturalism and European solidarity, making it impossible to categorize as strictly secular or religious. Instead, it is shaped by both simultaneously,

embodying a post-secularist approach. Thus, when Azerbaijan constructs its identity as one of solidarity in its foreign policy discourse, it employs a post-secularist conception of the Self.

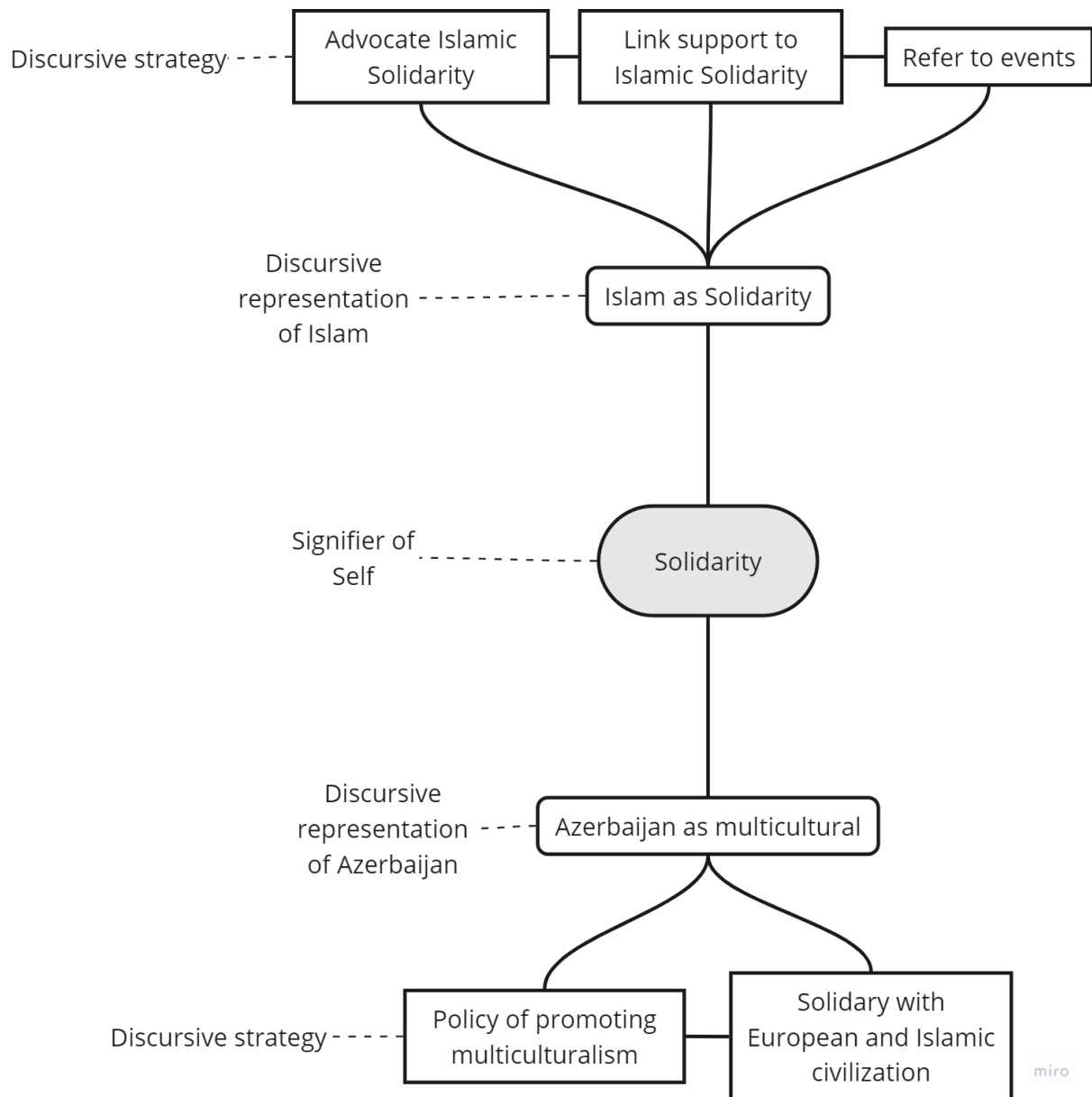


Figure 8: Discursive formation of the solidary Self

5.1.5 Construction of the Other

In accordance with Hansen, an identity of the Self not only gets constructed through discourse defining the Self, but also through discourse differentiating this Self from the Other.²¹⁹ When constructing the Self as solidary with multiple ‘civilizations’ and as enabling closer solidarity between these civilizations, this identity of the Self gets reinforced by

²¹⁹ Hansen, *Security As*, 17-18.

Azerbaijan discursively differentiating itself from a discriminatory imagined Other. This differentiation happens explicitly, both within Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse of Islamic Solidarity and its discourse of multiculturalist solidarity.

As demonstrated earlier in this analysis, Azerbaijan regularly links its call for stronger international Islamic solidarity to a global context of growing Islamophobia. This discursive differentiation of Islamic solidarity versus Islamophobia differentiates Azerbaijan's Islamic solidary Self from an Islamophobic Other. Occasionally this Islamophobic Other is directly referred to as European,²²⁰ yet in most cases unspecified terms such as "countries,"²²¹ "forces,"²²² or "trends"²²³ are used to denote this Other. The way in which Azerbaijan differentiates its Islamic solidary Self from an Islamophobic Other is best demonstrated through a quotation from a 2013 address from Foreign Minister Mammadyarov to the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC:

"The Islamophobia-affected approach towards Muslims is not just unacceptable, it also makes it necessary to reinforce dialogue and solidarity among the Muslim countries to counter Islamophobia."²²⁴

In this quotation, Mammadyarov differentiates Islamophobic approaches taken towards Muslims by unnamed entities from the OIC's, and implicitly Azerbaijan's, approach of advocating solidarity and dialogue. In this way, he constructs an Islamophobic Other from which he differentiates the solidary identity of the Self. Azerbaijan thus represents the Self through the discursive device of Islamic Solidarity, which it further reinforces by differentiating itself from an Other which is Islamophobic.

Similarly, when Azerbaijan speaks of itself as solidary through the discursive device of promoting multiculturalism and belonging to both the Islamic and European civilization, it actively differentiates itself from entities that do not believe in multiculturalism and cross-civilizational dialogue. This is best demonstrated through a quotation from Aliyev's 2016 address to the 5th International Humanitarian Forum:

²²⁰ Appendix A: A29.

²²¹ Appendix A: A25.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.; A35.

²²⁴ Appendix B: B5.

“Some believe that multiculturalism has failed. Others even think that this trend should not be allowed because it is harmful. These are very dangerous thoughts and approaches. [...] I believe that the alternatives to multiculturalism are xenophobia, discrimination, racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. These are extremely dangerous trends. [...] Therefore, all progressive mankind should unite around the ideas and ideals of multiculturalism. [...] We, in turn, by showing our activities and efforts to the world and the atmosphere existing in our country, demonstrate that this is possible.”²²⁵

This quote reflects how Azerbaijan differentiates itself from anti-multiculturalist entities, which it equates to forms of xenophobia and discrimination. It actively constructs these entities as dangerous, while constructing the Self as progressive and tolerant. While both the quote above as well as the general discourse reviewed does not directly reflect who or what is concretely referred to by these anti-multiculturalist entities, the historical context of this discourse being produced between 2011 and 2020 gives reason to relate this to the global rise of xenophobic populism. In turn, this differentiation of the Self to a constructed xenophobic and discriminatory Other reinforces the discourse of Azerbaijan as committed to multiculturalism and tolerance, earlier referred to as global solidarity.

Taken together, these two Others – Islamophobic and xenophobic– present one coherent discriminatory Other to the overarching discourse of the Self as solidary. Both constructions of the Other as Islamophobic and xenophobic legitimize Azerbaijan’s discourse of the Self as solidary by showing the need for such Self against a discriminatory Other. In this way, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse thus constructs the solidary Self as morally superior. The process of differentiation between the solidary Self and the discriminatory Other is visually represented in Figure 9.

²²⁵ Appendix A: A30.

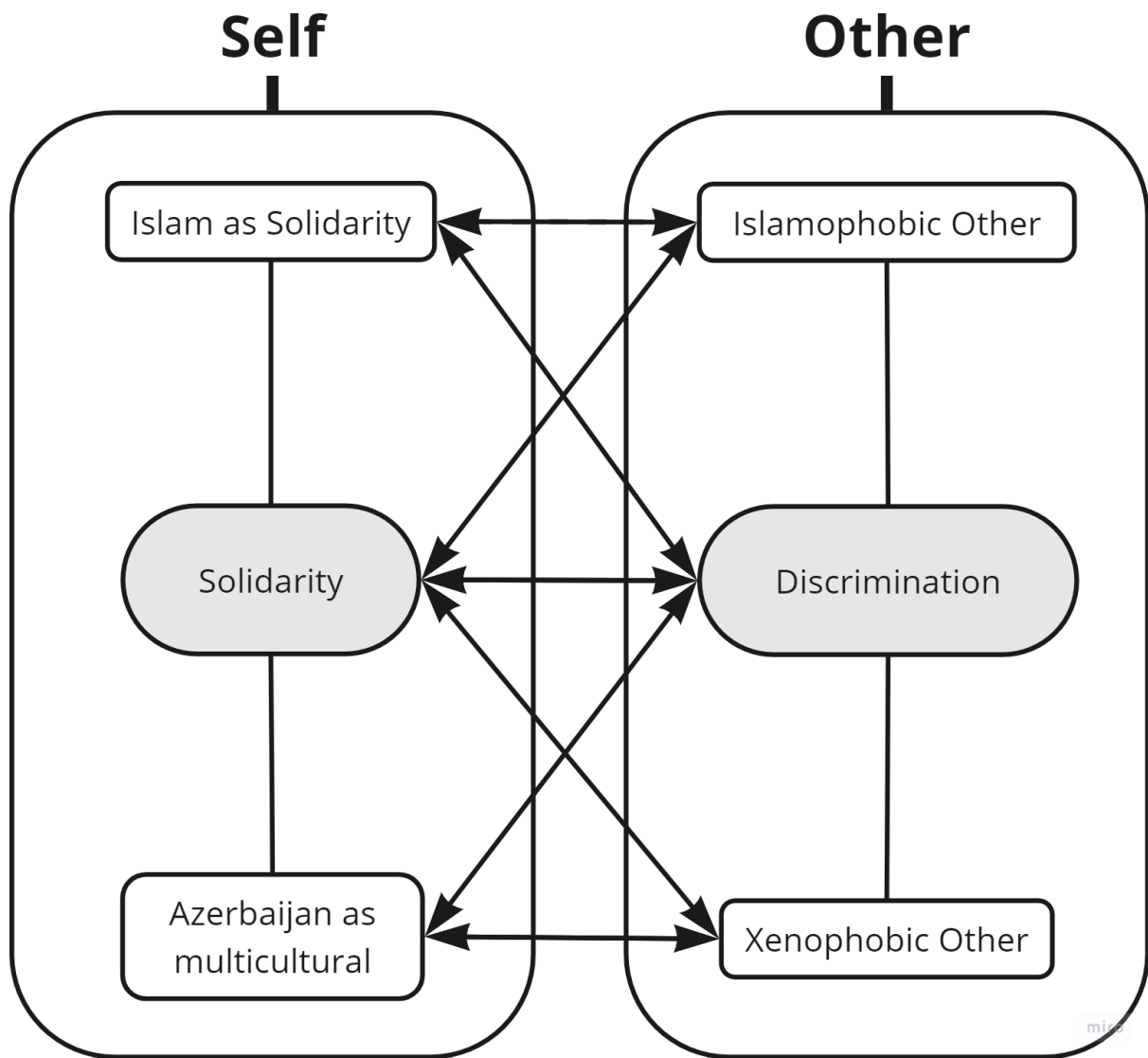


Figure 9: Construction of Self and Other in discourse of solidarity

5.2 Heritage

Complementing the discourse of solidarity analysed above, Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse also constructs Islam through a discourse of respect for national heritage, both material and spiritual. This analysis explores how Islam as heritage engages in a post-secular dialogue with discourses of multiculturalist heritage and secular modernity, leading to a broader narrative of the Self as committed to national heritage. The section concludes by showing how this heritage-focused discourse differentiates Azerbaijan from two Others—an unrooted Other and a non-secular Other—thereby reinforcing its sense of exceptionalism.

5.2.1 Occurrence

Discourses linking Islam to national heritage were recognized structurally throughout the analysed data. These discourses are produced by both the President and the MFA. While both institutions produce discourses of both material and spiritual Islamic heritage, discourses revolving around spiritual Islamic heritage feature more frequently in presidential discourse than in MFA discourse. Most prominently, references to Islamic national heritage feature in every UN GA address delivered between 2011 and 2020. In each address, this is primarily done through accusations of Armenia destroying Azerbaijani national heritage, and reference to Azerbaijan's aim to protect this heritage. Although only the addresses given by Aliyev in 2017 and 2020 specifically refer to this heritage being Islamic, all other addresses given by Foreign Minister Mammadyarov reference this heritage as including various sacred and religious sites, including Islamic heritage. Azerbaijan additionally produces discourse of Islamic heritage within the UN bodies of UNESCO, UNAOC, and the UN Security Council. Azerbaijan's use of discourses of Islamic heritage at such high-level UN institutions signals its gravity in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse. More explicit discourses of Islamic heritage, both material and spiritual, feature in addresses and statements directed towards the OIC, again produced by both the MFA and President. Most notably, explicit discourses of Islamic national heritage feature in five of the nine analysed addresses of the MFA to the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers between 2011 and 2019. Furthermore, continuous reference to Islamic national heritage can be found in addresses of the President at various international events and conferences, as well as in addresses directed towards the diplomatic corps in Azerbaijan. Finally, accusations of Armenia destroying Azerbaijani Islamic heritage are regularly reflected in various tweets of the MFA between 2012 and 2020.

6.2.2 Discursive strategies

In the discourse linking Islam to national heritage, Azerbaijan employs distinct discursive strategies for material and spiritual aspects of this heritage. For material Islamic heritage, the country uses two discursive strategies: linking the histories of material Islamic heritage and the nation, and emphasizing care and protection of material Islamic heritage in the context of destruction. Likewise, the country uses two discursive strategies to signify its spiritual Islamic heritage: presenting Islamic values as national values, and advocating Islamic values abroad. Together, these discursive strategies construct a foreign policy identity of Azerbaijan as respecting its Islamic national heritage.

This analysis will first discuss the discursive strategies pertaining to Azerbaijan's material Islamic heritage. The first discursive strategy through which Azerbaijan constructs Islam as part of its national heritage is by linking the history of material Islamic heritage and the nation. Throughout its foreign policy discourse, Azerbaijan frequently connects the ancient history of material Islamic heritage located on the territory of Azerbaijan to the history of the Azerbaijani nation. By doing so, Azerbaijan constructs a national historical legacy intertwined with the history of Islam, presenting the nation as equally ancient as this Islamic material heritage. This is best illustrated by a quote from Aliyev's speech at the opening ceremony of the conference '2017- Year of Islamic Solidarity: Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue' in 2017:

"Our people have an ancient history. Our religious monuments of architecture are evidence of that. We are proud that one of the most ancient mosques in the Muslim world, the Shamakhi Juma Mosque built in 743 and completely restored several years ago, is our great asset. This mosque is evidence that Azerbaijan is an ancient Muslim region."²²⁶

In this quote, Aliyev refers to Islamic material heritage located on the territory of Azerbaijan as evidence of the ancientness of the Azerbaijani nation. Additionally, he regards this mosque as evidence that this ancient Azerbaijani nation has historically been Muslim. By doing this, Aliyev thus links the histories of Islam and the Azerbaijani nation through endowing material Islamic heritage with both national and religious historical meaning. By doing so, Aliyev projects the nation as tied to Islamic heritage, and thus constructs a discourse of Islam as connected to Azerbaijani heritage.

²²⁶ Appendix A: A42.

The second discursive strategy through which Azerbaijan constructs Islam as connected to national material heritage is by talking about this material Islamic heritage through a discourse of care and protection in the context of destruction. Throughout its foreign policy discourse Azerbaijan continuously refers to material Islamic heritage in Azerbaijan as being destroyed by Armenian aggression, while referring to itself as the subsequent protector and restorer of this Islamic heritage. This is best reflected in a quote from a 2017 speech by Aliyev at an Iftar ceremony with religious leaders and the diplomatic corps:

“The Armenians have destroyed our mosques in the occupied lands. The Govharaga Mosque, the analogue of which has been built in Jojug Marjanli, lies in ruins. A building can be destroyed, but the enemy must know that the destroyed mosques live in our hearts. We have built these mosques in our hearts. Immediately after the liberation of these lands from occupation, within two months, a beautiful mosque was built there.”

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In this quote, Aliyev constructs a discourse of destruction versus restoration, where Armenia is represented as a force which has destroyed Islamic heritage, yet Azerbaijan is presented as protecting and restoring Islamic heritage. Additionally, through the phrase “the destroyed mosques live in our hearts” Aliyev constructs the commitment to Islamic heritage of the Azerbaijani nation, as denoted by using the first person plural, as indestructible. By doing this, Aliyev once again links Islamic heritage to the Azerbaijani nation. By linking the Azerbaijani nation to Islamic heritage, and by constructing Azerbaijan as committed to reconstructing destroyed heritage, Aliyev thus again constructs Azerbaijan as in touch with its Islamic national heritage. Moreover, by constructing a discourse of destruction versus restoration and of Azerbaijan as a nation of indestructible faith, Aliyev represents Azerbaijan as the morally superior party in the conflict.

Additionally, by linking the liberation of certain lands²²⁸ to the reconstruction of Islamic heritage, Aliyev constructs a discourse where the national interest (liberating land) is linked to a religious interest (rebuilding mosques). Linking the national and religious interest projects Azerbaijan’s actions in Nagorno Karabakh as not just pursuing its national interest, but as protecting the heritage that belongs to a communal Islamic civilization. This link is explicitly

²²⁷ Appendix A: A37.

²²⁸ Certain lands because Aliyev in his speech speaks about “lands” and does not specify which regions or lands he means.

reflected in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse, and is demonstrated through a quote from Aliyev's 2017 article in the OIC Journal:

“[...] Armenia's policy of occupation is an attack not only on Azerbaijan's religious and cultural assets, but on historic and cultural legacy of Islam in general. Hundreds of Islamic culture monuments, mosques, temples, cemeteries, etc. were destroyed in the territories occupied by Armenia [...]”²²⁹

In this quote, Aliyev explicitly constructs the destruction of Azerbaijan's Islamic heritage as an act of destroying the heritage belonging to Islam in general. Given the context of this quote, namely being directed at OIC members through an article named “The strengthening of Islamic solidarity is a challenge of time,” one can see how this quote should also be understood as reflecting the civilizationalist discourse mentioned in the previous part of the analysis, as it presents Armenia as attacking heritage that belongs to the ‘Islamic civilization’. Conversely, this discourse thus presents as Azerbaijan as the protector of not just its national Islamic heritage, but of the heritage that belongs to the entire Islamic civilization. Constructing such discourse of Azerbaijan standing on the side of Islam within the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse thus again constructs Islam as part of Azerbaijan's national heritage.

In relation to referencing material Islamic heritage, Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse also employs discursive strategies based on spiritual Islamic heritage. The first discursive strategy through which Azerbaijan constructs Islam as part of its spiritual national heritage is by presenting Islamic values as national values. This constructs a discourse of Azerbaijan's national values, and therefore the Azerbaijani nation, as being rooted in Islamic heritage, and the other way around. This is best demonstrated in a quote from Aliyev's 2017 speech at an Iftar celebration with religious leaders and the diplomatic corps:

“I should also note that the Azerbaijani state rests on very strong national values. Islamic values are an integral part of our national values. So we have very strong foundations. These are our national values, which are above all for us.”²³⁰

²²⁹ Appendix A: A35.

²³⁰ Appendix A: A37.

In this quote, Aliyev clearly constructs a link between Islamic values, which can be considered as spiritual Islamic heritage, and Azerbaijani national values. Aliyev presents Islamic values as “an integral part” of these national values, and by doing so constructs Islamic values as a part of this spiritual foundation of the Azerbaijani nation. By creating this discourse, Aliyev further reinforces the idea of the Azerbaijani state as being rooted in Islamic heritage, and therefore of Islam as part of Azerbaijani heritage.

The discourse of Azerbaijan being rooted in national and religious spiritual values often recurs in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse in reference to national development. This is illustrated in the quote below, taken from Aliyev’s speech at a 2014 Iftar celebration:

“At the same time, the main condition for our successful development is the spiritual foundation – the spiritual foundation of our society. An economy may be strong, and history tells us that there have been developing countries which then plunged into a recession. But if there is no spiritual foundation, if there is no basis, such a country has no future.”²³¹

While not specifically referring to Islam, this analysis has shown how Aliyev takes Islamic values to be included in Azerbaijan’s spiritual foundation. This point is further supported by Aliyev in a 2012 meeting with ambassadors from Muslim-majority states stating: “Islamic values are dear to us. At the heart of our national values are Islamic values.”²³² The quote above then links this spiritual foundation of the state to its successful development by arguing that it constitutes the only basis on which such development can be built. In this way, Aliyev constructs a discourse in which Azerbaijan owes its modern development of the state to spiritual roots which are informed by Islamic heritage. Moreover, the discourse suggests that continuity of these national values in the future is necessary for continued development of the state, crediting these values with not just contemporary but also future national importance. By doing so, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse constructs Azerbaijan and its development as deeply rooted in its spiritual Islamic national heritage, again constructing Islam as part of Azerbaijan’s heritage.

²³¹ Appendix A: A19.

²³² Appendix A: A6.

The second discursive strategy used to construct Islam as spiritual heritage throughout Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse, is advocating Islamic values. The recurrence of Azerbaijan stressing its commitment to promoting Islamic values in its foreign policy constructs Islam as a spiritual legacy to which Azerbaijan is committed. This is best reflected in a quote from a meeting between Aliyev and the Secretary General of the OIC in 2015:

“For this reason, younger generations of the Muslim world should be raised in accordance with our national and traditional values. [...] In its turn, Azerbaijan is also doing its best to promote our values. In order to demonstrate the culture of the Muslim world, present Islam as a religion of peace, brotherhood and tolerance, we have organized a lot of conferences, exhibitions and other cultural events in different parts of the world.”²³³

In this quote, Aliyev explicitly states Azerbaijan's dedication to promoting Islamic values, here referred to as the national and traditional values of the Muslim world. Aliyev then demonstrates Azerbaijan's dedication to this by referring to Azerbaijan having organized various events promoting Islamic values and culture around the world. In making this reference, Aliyev both refers to material and spiritual Islamic heritage. By stating Azerbaijan's dedication to promoting Islamic values, Aliyev thus constructs Azerbaijan as committed to Islamic heritage. Moreover, Aliyev's reference to this Islamic heritage as “the culture of the Muslim world” again reinforces a civilizational discourse of Islam. Subsequently, Aliyev connects Azerbaijan's dedication to promoting Islamic values as a form of Islamic solidarity, by referring to these values as being based on “peace, brotherhood, and tolerance,” and by additionally representing the promotion of Islamic values as a deed that benefits the image of the entire Muslim world.

Together, the four discursive strategies outlined above – two pertaining to material Islamic heritage and two pertaining to spiritual Islamic heritage – present one coherent foreign policy discourse of Islam as Azerbaijan's heritage, and Azerbaijan in turn as being rooted in this Islamic heritage. This argument is schematically represented in Figure 10.

²³³ Appendix A: A21.

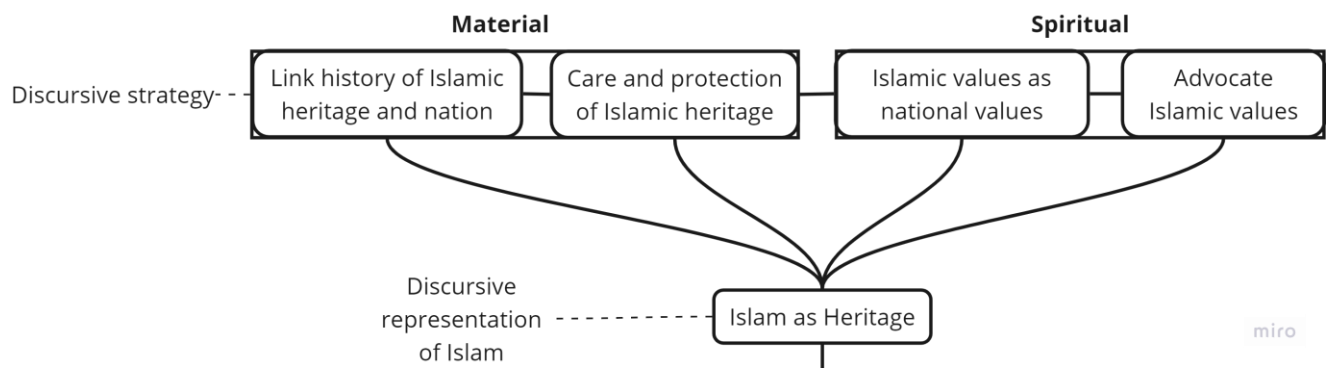


Figure 10: Discursive construction of Islam as heritage

5.2.3 Dialogue: Islamic heritage and secular-multicultural heritage

In line with the overarching argument of this thesis, this discourse of Islamic heritage is presented in post-secular dialogue with discourses constructing multiculturalism as Azerbaijan's national heritage. This discursive representation of Azerbaijan as based on multiculturalist heritage is placed in post-secular dialogue with discourses of Islamic heritage using two dominant discursive strategies: presenting multiculturalism as historical Azerbaijani tradition, and contextualizing references to Islamic heritage with references to Azerbaijan's secularist heritage. Through this post-secular dialogue, these two discourses reinforce each other and create one coherent overarching discourse in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse of Azerbaijan as rooted in its national heritage.

The first discursive strategy of multiculturalism as a historical Azerbaijani tradition is best reflected in a quote from a 2014 interview with Aliyev on the "Russia-24" news channel:

"The traditions of multiculturalism, a relatively new concept in our vocabulary, have existed in Azerbaijan for centuries. They simply had a different name, but the essence has always remained the same. I think that the positive traditions created over the centuries, including the Soviet time, have been strengthened further in modern Azerbaijan."²³⁴

In this quote, Aliyev explicitly portrays multiculturalism as part of the history and traditions of the Azerbaijani nation, thereby representing multiculturalism as part of Azerbaijan's national heritage. This discourse is further enforced by claiming that even before the concept of multiculturalism existed, it was already a practice in Azerbaijan. Moreover,

²³⁴ Appendix A: A20.

Aliyev portrays contemporary Azerbaijan as committed to this heritage of multiculturalism, thereby reinforcing the idea that Azerbaijan is committed to its heritage. In this way, the discourse used to present multiculturalism as Azerbaijan's heritage is similar to the discourse used to link Islam to Azerbaijan's national heritage. Representing both Islam and multiculturalism through discourses of national heritage places both within the same overarching discourse of Azerbaijan as committed to its national heritage. Moreover, these discourses link both Islam and multiculturalism to Azerbaijan's national values and spirit. The connection between multiculturalism and national values is repeatedly constructed by referring to multiculturalism as Azerbaijan's "way of life," illustrated in the following quote from a speech by Aliyev at the Leaders' Forum of the 38th Session of UNESCO General Conference in 2015:

"[...] for us multiculturalism is our tradition. Today it is not only tradition, it is a straight state policy, and our lifestyle."²³⁵

The representation of multiculturalism as Azerbaijan's lifestyle is frequent throughout its foreign policy discourse. This discursive device denotes an understanding of multiculturalism as tightly connected to Azerbaijan's national values and identity, and as a continuing practice throughout Azerbaijan's society. In this way, it connects multiculturalist values to Azerbaijan's national values in a similar way in which Islamic values were connected to national values. By doing so, it thus also depicts multiculturalism as another element in the foundational heritage on which the Azerbaijani state rests. Both discourses therefore reinforce a post-secular discourse of Azerbaijan's national values as informed by Islamic and multicultural heritage, constructing Azerbaijan as committed to its national heritage.

Another way in which Azerbaijan places discourses of Islamic heritage and secularism in dialogue is by contextualizing references to Islamic heritage with references to Azerbaijan as a secular state, in which secularism is often represented as part of Azerbaijan's modern heritage. The permanent combination of discourses of Islamic heritage and discourses highlighting Azerbaijan's secular statehood presents contemporary Azerbaijan as an exceptional case of both a 'modern' successful state and one that remains connected to its religious heritage. This discourse is best illustrated by two quotes from Aliyev, the first one

²³⁵ Appendix A: A26.

from a 2016 interview with Russian news agency Sputnik, the second from a 2014 interview with Russian news channel Russia-24:

“We honor our holy places and are very sensitive about that. At the same time, our society is secular and modern. And I think that the example of a secular Muslim state of Azerbaijan has yet to be studied. It could be a good example for many countries.”²³⁶

“We, of course, are a Muslim country, our society is committed to its traditions and religion. Islam is a religion of peace. Our national and religious values dictate such a peaceful approach to all issues. At the same time, Azerbaijan is a secular country with a secular society, a modern state with a high level of education.”²³⁷

Both quotes above reflect how immediately after mentioning Azerbaijan’s commitment to religious heritage, Aliyev contextualizes this commitment by presenting Azerbaijan as simultaneously a “secular and modern” state. By explicitly stating this after referring to the state’s connection to Islam, Aliyev implies that it is not a given to be both in touch with religious heritage and secular, signalling a perceived binary between commitment to religious heritage and being a secular state. Moreover, by linking secularism to modernity, Aliyev constructs a perceived binary between modernity and religion. However, by constructing Azerbaijan as being both in touch with its religious heritage and being secular and modern, Aliyev constructs Azerbaijan as defying this previously constructed binary and therefore as an exceptional case of a state that is modern and secular, yet also in touch with its religious national heritage. This exceptionality is reflected in Aliyev’s reference to Azerbaijan as an “example” that “has yet to be studied,” constructing Azerbaijan as an example of how to combine heritage and modernity. This discourse additionally reflects an understanding of Azerbaijan as morally superior over either non-secular or unrooted states, yet this will be further elaborated on when discussing the construction of the Other in this discourse. In sum, this discourse of secular modernity and heritage gives extra weight to Azerbaijan’s foreign policy identity of being in touch with its heritage, by constructing this identity as exceptional for a secular, modern state.

²³⁶ Appendix A: A32.

²³⁷ Appendix A: A20.

Moreover, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse also explicitly constructs secularism as a part of Azerbaijan’s heritage. This is illustrated in Aliyev’s 2013 address at the opening of the Azerbaijan-USA forum “Vision for the Future”:

“We take into account our historical heritage. Back in the mid-1990s, we made a specific decision to build a secular, modern and democratic country”²³⁸

In this quote, Aliyev calls the decision for Azerbaijan to become a secular, modern state part of Azerbaijan’s historic heritage. By doing so, ‘modern’ secularism is also constructed as part of Azerbaijan’s national heritage. In this way, discourses of Islamic heritage and secularism are not only in dialogue when constructing Azerbaijan as a unique example where heritage and modernity coexist, but also by both being referred to as parts of Azerbaijan’s national heritage. Therefore, this discursive strategy constructs Azerbaijan as founded on secular heritage. The discursive representation of Azerbaijan as founded on secular-multicultural heritage, informed by the discursive strategies constructing Azerbaijan as having a multiculturalist tradition and being founded on secularist heritage, is schematically represented in Figure 11.

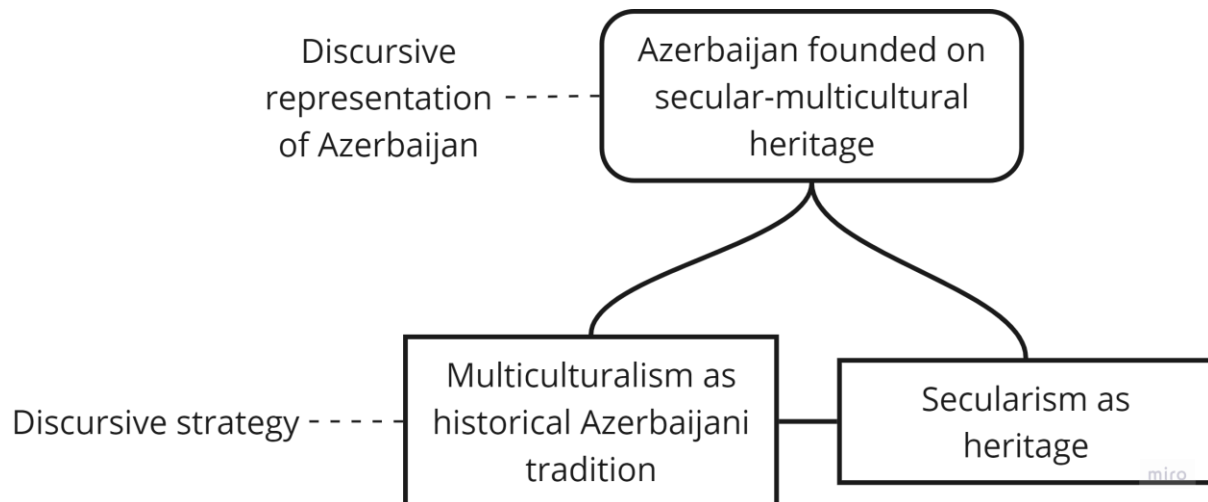


Figure 11: Discursive construction of Azerbaijan as founded on secular-multicultural heritage

5.2.4 The Self as committed to national heritage

Through a post-secular dialogue between Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourses of Islamic national heritage and multicultural, secular national heritage, Azerbaijan in its foreign policy discourse creates one overarching discourse of the Self as upholding its national heritage. Through this dialogue, this national heritage is thus taken to have both religious and secular meaning. In addition, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse stresses the exceptionality

²³⁸ Appendix A: A15.

of being committed to national heritage while also identifying as secular and modern. By giving both secular and Islamic meaning to this overarching identity of commitment to heritage, Azerbaijan again presents a post-secularist identity constructed through the interaction and merging of religious and secular discourses. The discursive formation of this overarching discourse of the Self is schematically presented in Figure 12.

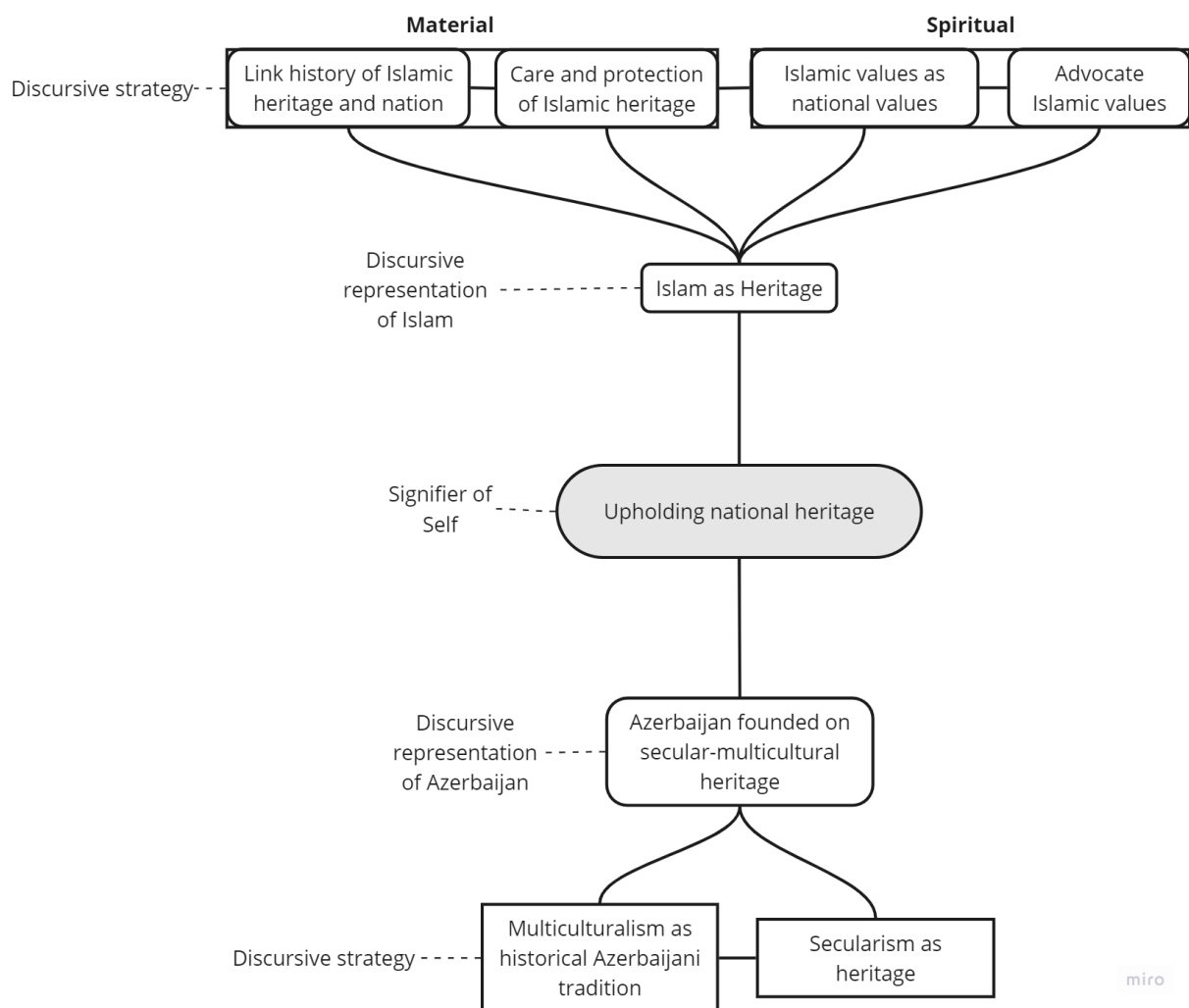


Figure 12: Discursive formation of the Self as upholding national heritage

5.2.5 Construction of the Other

Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity as upholding its heritage is shaped not only by how it constructs the Self but also by how it differentiates the Self from a constructed Other. Central to understanding this differentiation is the aforementioned notion that Azerbaijan constructs the Self as unique in its ability to blend spiritual heritage with secular-multicultural heritage—two elements it views as existing in a binary. This subsection will show that the Other, by contrast, is portrayed as embracing only one side of this binary. Therefore, the Azerbaijani Self as upholding its heritage differentiates itself from either an unrooted Other, lacking spiritual

heritage, or a non-secular Other, not grounded in secular-multicultural values, thus reinforcing the exceptional identity of the Self.

Azerbaijan differentiates itself from an unrooted Other primarily in its discourses of Islamic heritage. As shown before, when constructing discourses of material Islamic heritage Azerbaijan regularly constructs itself as a protector of this heritage, while constructing an Other as the destroyer of this heritage, and thus as lacking respect for any heritage. As shown in the section above, this Other is typically concretely referred to as Armenia. Through this discourse of differentiating the protecting Self from a destructive unrooted Other, Azerbaijan's discourse of commitment to Islamic heritage also becomes a discourse of Azerbaijan's moral superiority over Armenia. Similarly, by producing a discourse linking ancient material Islamic heritage on the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan to the history of the Azerbaijani nation, Azerbaijan denies an Other from claiming historical ties with this land. This in turn constructs an ancient Self which is legitimately rooted in Azerbaijan's heritage, and which differentiates itself from a constructed unrooted Other which cannot claim its history to be rooted in the heritage of the land of contemporary Azerbaijan.

Moreover, Azerbaijan differentiates itself from entities which are not rooted in strong spiritual heritage in order to validate Azerbaijan's successes. This is for example reflected in a quote from Aliyev's 2014 speech at an Iftar ceremony:

"An economy may be strong, and history tells us that there have been developing countries which then plunged into a recession. But if there is no spiritual foundation, if there is no basis, such a country has no future"²³⁹

In this quote Aliyev clearly differentiates Azerbaijan as successful because of its spiritual rootedness, which can be both religious or secular-multiculturalism, from undefined "developing countries" which are not spiritually rooted and therefore prove unsuccessful. Azerbaijan thus differentiates itself as successful from a constructed 'unrooted' Other. This discourse of a rooted self as differentiated from an unrooted Other likewise reflects a construction of the Self which upholds heritage as morally superior.

²³⁹ Appendix A: A19.

Azerbaijan differentiates itself from a non-secular Other only through its discourse of secular-multicultural heritage. This way of discursively differentiating has been elaborately discussed in section 5.2.3, and is reflected in quotations referring to Azerbaijan as exceptional and an example for being able to be both religious and modern on page 67. In these quotes Aliyev indicates that it is unusual for states to be both Muslim and secular, differentiating itself from a vague body of “many countries” by its ability to be both secular and Muslim. By differentiating itself from them, Azerbaijan constructs this body of other states as either not secular and modern, therefore constructing a non-secular Other, or to states which are unrooted in religious heritage, referring back to the previously mentioned unrooted Other. The construction of these Others which are incapable of uniting religious heritage with secularism not only constructs the identity of the Azerbaijani Self as again morally superior, but also signifies the exceptionality of this identity.

In sum, Azerbaijan thus constructs its identity of the Self as upholding its heritage through a process of differentiating the Self from an unrooted Other and a non-secular Other. These Others reflect the binary Azerbaijan constructs between being rooted in heritage and being modern and secular, and through differentiation from these Others Azerbaijan is able to claim exceptionality by bridging this binary. Thereby, Azerbaijan constructs its identity of being committed to heritage also as one of moral virtue. This argument is visually represented in Figure 13.

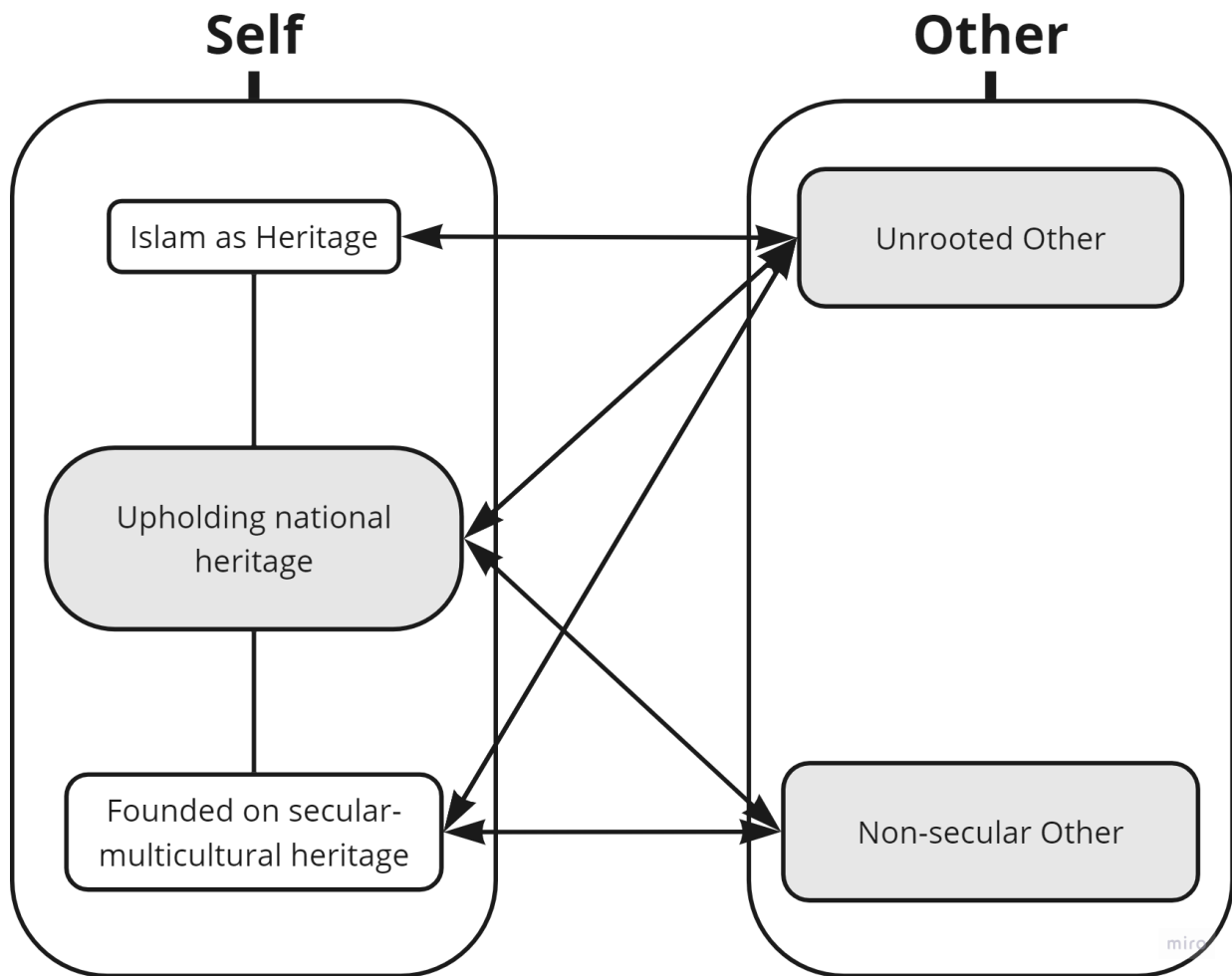


Figure 13: Construction of Self and Other in discourse of heritage

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to research how Islam is discursively constructed in Azerbaijan's official foreign policy discourse between 2011 and 2020, and how such constructions of Islam feature in the construction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. Using PDA, the analysis showed that Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse during this period constructs Islam in two dominant ways: through a discourse of solidarity, and through a discourse of heritage. Using the concept of post-secularism, the analysis showed how both these discursive representations of Islam stand in dialogue with secular discourses to construct an overarching post-secular discourse of the Self, called the signifier of the Self. The discursive representation of Islam as a form of solidarity stands in dialogue with a discourse of Azerbaijan as multicultural, creating an overarching signifier of the Self as solidary which is endowed with both secular and religious meaning. Likewise, the discursive representation of Islam as part of Azerbaijan's national heritage stands in dialogue with a discourse of secular-multiculturalism as Azerbaijan's heritage, creating an overarching post-secular signifier of the Azerbaijani Self as upholding national heritage.

Finally, it was shown that both signifiers of the Self construct Others from which they differentiate themselves to reinforce an aspect of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity and endow this identity with exceptionality and moral virtue. The Self as solidary constructs a discriminatory Other, differentiating itself from discourses of Islamophobia and xenophobia. This differentiation reinforces the Self's solidary identity and enhances its moral virtue. The Self as upholding national heritage constructs both an unrooted Other and a non-secular Other. Its differentiation from these Others enables Azerbaijan to bridge a constructed binary between religion and modernity, reinforcing its identity as a nation that upholds heritage while simultaneously embodying modernity, positioning itself as exceptional and morally virtuous.

This analysis answers the first part of the research question by showing that Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse between 2011 and 2020 constructs Islam through a discourse of solidarity and through a discourse of heritage. The analysis also answers the second part of the research question by showing how these representations of Islam then feature in the construction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity. The main findings presented above show that Islam features in the construction of this identity by complementing the secular discourses of Azerbaijan as solidary and upholding national heritage through a post-secular dialogue. In this way, Islam features in Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity in a post-secular

way, endowing Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity with both religious and secular meaning. Consequently, the construction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy identity can thus be regarded as a post-secular process, accommodating for both religious and secular discourses to be used within this process.

Azerbaijan uses this post-secular discourse in its foreign policy identity to assert an identity of exceptionalism and moral virtue. By placing secular and Islamic discourses in dialogue when constructing its foreign policy identity, Azerbaijan constructs an identity characterized by duality. Ultimately, the signifiers of the Self as solidary and upholding heritage can finally be linked through their shared purpose of affirming this duality. This duality is not limited to being both secular and Islamic; the analysis has shown that it extends to Azerbaijan constructing itself to be solidary with 'Islamic civilization' and with 'European civilization'; dedicated to both Islamic solidarity and multiculturalist solidarity; and connected to both Islamic and secular heritage. Likewise, the analysis demonstrates that Azerbaijan constructs this dual identity by differentiating itself from Others constructed as unidimensional, incapable of embodying dual identities. Azerbaijan's Self as solidary differentiates itself from an Islamophobic and xenophobic Other, unable to engage with multiple 'civilizations' as Azerbaijan claims to do. Similarly, Azerbaijan's Self as upholding heritage differentiates itself from an Other that is either non-secular or unrooted, reinforcing Azerbaijan's dual identity as a state rooted in both religious heritage and secularism. By constructing discourses which represent Azerbaijan as being two things at the same time and differentiating itself from Others that cannot, Azerbaijan constructs itself as exceptional and morally virtuous.

However, as the analysis highlights, Azerbaijan's claim to exceptionalism and moral virtue relies on discursively constructing dichotomies that it then claims to bridge. When constructing these dichotomies, Azerbaijan uses discourse reminiscent of secularization theory. For instance, to claim exceptionality for being both secular and in touch with religious heritage, Azerbaijan presents secularism and religious heritage as typically irreconcilable. Similarly, in positioning itself as exceptional and virtuous for fostering solidarity with both Europe and the 'Islamic civilization,' Azerbaijan constructs these entities as typically separate, additionally reflecting a civilizationalist perspective on Islam. Thus, while Azerbaijan adopts a post-secular discourse when constructing its foreign policy identity, it does not extend this reasoning to its portrayal of the world around it.

The discursive representation of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse as found in this thesis contrasts with the five discursive approaches toward Islam identified by

Ismayilov, as discussed in the literature review.²⁴⁰ However, the way Azerbaijan constructs dichotomies between religion and secularism largely aligns with the discourse Ismayilov identified that constructs Islam as backwardness.²⁴¹ This discourse is mainly represented when Azerbaijan constructs dichotomies pitching respect for Islamic heritage against being a ‘modern’ secular state. Moreover, Ismayilov posits that Azerbaijan takes a more hostile discursive line towards Islam to be perceived as a Western, democratic, developed state whose leadership is legitimized by the absence of Islamic extremism.²⁴² However, this thesis did not identify such a hostile discourse towards Islam in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse. Nonetheless, the post-secular nature of Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse and its emphasis on multiculturalism and secularism enables Azerbaijan to still aim at gaining legitimacy and be perceived as a developed democratic state. Moreover, building on Ismayilov’s argument, the positive discursive representation of Islam in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy discourse may reflect a similar aim of being perceived favourably by other Muslim-majority states. Ultimately, Azerbaijan’s post-secular foreign policy discourse and dual identity allow it to appeal to a broader range of states than a solely secular or Islamic identity would. This aim to be perceived favourably by a wide variety of states would fit within the general consensus that Azerbaijan pursues a multi-vector foreign policy.²⁴³ However, such claims cannot be made with certainty since they are outside of the scope of this thesis.

In the end, the main conclusions of this thesis underline the post-secular argument that religion and secularism should not be taken to be mutually exclusive, and that IR should not be taken to be a field only accommodating secular state-centred discourse. This thesis has shown that even in the case of a state that has been revered for its secularism, religious discourse takes up a place in the formation of its foreign policy identity. This finding implies that analysing foreign policy identities requires a nuanced approach that studies the complex interplay between religion and secularism. By analysing this complex interplay, this thesis’ findings contribute to creating a better understanding of post-secular identities in IR. Moreover, this thesis has explored studying post-secular foreign policy identities through the theory of PTFP and method of PDA. While this approach is notoriously complex, this thesis demonstrates that applying this methodology—or drawing inspiration from its core principles—offers a valuable

²⁴⁰ Ismayilov, “The Changing,” 344.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Strîmbovschi, “Azerbaijan’s Balanced,” 121; Mammadov, “Azerbaijan’s foreign policy,” 29.

framework for systematically analysing how religious and secular discourses interact to shape post-secular identities in foreign policy through constructions of Selves and Others. This finding opens new theoretical and methodological pathways for future studies of the role of religion in IR, and the study of post-secularism in general.

While this thesis has yielded significant results, its limited scope leaves several questions open for future research. Future research could delve deeper into the evolution of how Azerbaijan discursively constructs Islam over time, explicitly linking these changes to the country's socio-political context. While this thesis identified two consistent representations of Islam over a ten-year period, examining a broader timeframe or focusing on specific institutions could uncover shifts in Islamic discourse over time. Additionally, exploring longer timespans or applying different theoretical or methodological approaches might reveal additional ways in which Islam has been constructed in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse. Another avenue for future research is to investigate the contextual factors and geopolitical interests that drive states to adopt post-secular foreign policy identities. In Azerbaijan's case, there appears to be a connection with its multi-vector foreign policy, but establishing this link was beyond the scope of this thesis. Future studies could focus on demonstrating such connections, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations behind post-secular foreign policy identities.

Most of all, it will be interesting to observe whether and how representations of Islam will evolve in light of Azerbaijan's rapidly shifting foreign policy. Following Azerbaijan's full integration of Nagorno Karabakh after the September 2023 military offensive, with Azerbaijan-EU relations at an all-time low, slow progress on a peace agreement with Yerevan, and the increased logistical and economic relevance of Azerbaijan for Europe and Asia due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the country's foreign policy is currently undergoing a reshuffle. What the position of Islam in Azerbaijan's foreign policy discourse will be once the dust settles, remains to be seen.

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Appendix A: Documents from website of President

N	Title	Produced by	Date	Link		
A1	Ilham Aliyev attended the opening ceremony of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue	President	07-04-2011	https://president.az/en/articles/view/1845/print		
A2	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening ceremony of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue	President	07-04-2011	https://president.az/en/articles/view/1849/print		
A3	Ilham Aliyev gave audience to participants of reporting conference of the Supreme Religious Council of Caucasian Peoples held in Baku	President	16-05-2011	https://president.az/en/articles/view/2173/print		
A4	Ilham Aliyev received ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions of Muslim countries in Azerbaijan	President	10-08-2011	https://president.az/en/articles/view/2951/print		
A5	Ilham Aliyev participated in the Iftar ceremony	President	12-08-2011	https://president.az/en/articles/view/2957/print		
A6	Ilham Aliyev received ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions of Muslim countries in Azerbaijan on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan	President	13-08-2012	https://president.az/en/articles/view/5539/print		
A7	Ilham Aliyev participated in the Iftar ceremony on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan	President	14-08-2012	https://president.az/en/articles/view/5551/print		
A8	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the fourth meeting of the heads of diplomatic service	President	21-09-2012	https://president.az/en/articles/view/6304/print		
A9	Ilham Aliyev attended the opening of the Second Baku International Humanitarian Forum	President	04-10-2012	https://president.az/en/articles/view/6335/print		

A10	Ilham Aliyev attended the 12th summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)	President	16-10-2012	https://president.az/en/articles/view/6422/print
A11	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening of the “International Conference on Strengthening Cooperation in Preventing Terrorism”	President	18-03-2013	https://president.az/en/articles/view/7655/print
A12	To the participants of the International scientific and practical conference “Muslims of the CIS are in favor of peace and sustainable development”	President	16-04-2013	https://president.az/en/articles/view/7828/print
A13	Ilham Aliyev received participants of the Baku conference “Muslims of the CIS for peace and sustainable development”	President	23-04-2013	https://president.az/en/articles/view/7902/print
A14	Baku Conference of Ministers of Labor of the Organization of Islamic	President	25-04-2013	https://president.az/en/articles/view/7924/print
A15	Speech by President Ilham Aliyev at the opening of the Azerbaijan-USA forum “Vision for the Future” in Baku	President	29-05-2013	https://president.az/en/articles/view/8311/print
A16	Ilham Aliyev received ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions of Muslim countries to Azerbaijan over the holy month of Ramadan	President	20-07-2013	https://president.az/en/articles/view/8736/print
A17	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Iftar ceremony on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan	President	24-07-2013	https://president.az/en/articles/view/8827/print
A18	Ilham Aliyev received ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions of Muslim countries in Azerbaijan on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan	President	09-07-2014	https://president.az/en/articles/view/12297/print
A19	Ilham Aliyev attended the Iftar ceremony on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan	President	17-07-2014	https://president.az/en/articles/view/12411/print

A20	Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by “Russia-24” news channel	President	28-11-2014	https://president.az/en/articles/view/13559/print
A21	Ilham Aliyev met with the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation	President	06-04-2015	https://president.az/en/articles/view/14741/print
A22	Ilham Aliyev performed Umrah pilgrimage	Presidential Administration	07-04-2015	https://president.az/en/articles/view/14761/print
A23	Ilham Aliyev visited the Prophet's Mosque in Medina	Presidential Administration	07-04-2015	https://president.az/en/articles/view/14776/print
A24	Ilham Aliyev attended the Iftar ceremony on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan	President	11-07-2015	https://president.az/en/articles/view/15819/print
A25	Opening speech by Ilham Aliyev at the first meeting of the Organizing Committee of the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games	President	23-09-2015	https://president.az/en/articles/view/17339/print
A26	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Leaders' Forum of the 38th Session of UNESCO General Conference	President	25-11-2015	https://president.az/en/articles/view/17318/print
A27	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening of the 12th session of ISESCO General Conference	President	26-11-2015	https://president.az/en/articles/view/17313/print
A28	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the first session of 13th Summit of Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul	President	14-04-2016	https://president.az/en/articles/view/19728/print
A29	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Iftar ceremony on the occasion of holy month of Ramadan	President	17-06-2016	https://president.az/en/articles/view/20324/print

A30	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening of the Fifth Baku International Humanitarian Forum	President	29-09-2016	https://president.az/en/articles/view/21234/print
A31	Ilham Aliyev and Pope Francis addressed representatives of general public at Heydar Aliyev Center	President	02-10-2016	https://president.az/en/articles/view/21251/print
A32	Ilham Aliyev responded to questions from Sputnik International News Agency	President	17-10-2016	https://president.az/en/articles/view/21409/print
A33	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the ceremony of Baku 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games journey starts from the Caspian	President	06-04-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/23298/print
A34	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening of 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue	President	05-05-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/23555/print
A35	OIC Journal has published an article headlined “The strengthening of Islamic solidarity is a challenge of time” by Ilham Aliyev	President	10-05-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/23584/print
A36	4th Islamic Solidarity Games kicked off with solemn Opening Ceremony at Baku Olympic Stadium Ilham Aliyev declared the Games open	President	13-05-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/23635/print
A37	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Ifar ceremony on the occasion of holy month of Ramadan	President	20-06-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/24399/print
A38	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the first Summit on Science and Technology of Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Astana	President	10-09-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/25189/print
A39	Ilham Aliyev received delegation of Council of European Union	President	04-10-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/25414/print

A40	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Summit of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation	President	20-10-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/25697/print
A41	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Conference on OIC emergency summit on Jerusalem	President	13-12-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/26561/print
A42	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening ceremony of the conference on "2017- Year of Islamic Solidarity: Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue"	President	21-12-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/26557/print
A43	Ilham Aliyev received group of Muslim religious figures of Russia's North Caucasus republics	President	22-12-2017	https://president.az/en/articles/view/26487/print
A44	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening ceremony of the 6th Global Baku Forum	President	16-03-2018	https://president.az/en/articles/view/27472/print
A45	Ilham Aliyev interviewed by First Deputy Director General of Russian news agency TASS Mikhail Gusman	President	05-04-2018	https://president.az/en/articles/view/27757/print
A46	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening ceremony of Mid-Term Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Movement	President	05-04-2018	https://president.az/en/articles/view/27764/print
A47	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the inauguration ceremony	President	18-04-2018	https://president.az/en/articles/view/28071/print
A48	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the Ifar ceremony on the occasion of holy month of Ramadan	President	05-06-2018	https://president.az/en/articles/view/29096/print
A49	To participants of Baku Summit of the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe	President	09-06-2018	https://president.az/en/articles/view/29024/print

A50	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening of the 6th Baku International Humanitarian Forum	President	25-10-2018	https://president.az/en/articles/view/30454/print
A51	Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Real TV	President	12-02-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/31826/print
A52	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening of 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue	President	02-05-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/33027/print
A53	Ilham Aliyev received ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions of Muslim countries to Azerbaijan	President	17-05-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/33121/print
A54	To participants of the 2nd International Symposium "Islamic Civilization in the Caucasus"	President	11-07-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/33796/print
A55	Ilham Aliyev received OIC Secretary General	President	24-08-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/34071/print
A56	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the 7th Summit of Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States	President	15-10-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/34458/print
A57	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the 18th Summit of Non-Aligned Movement gets underway in Baku	President	25-10-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/34600/print
A58	2nd Summit of World Religious Leaders gets underway in Baku	President	14-11-2019	https://president.az/en/articles/view/34790/print
A59	Ilham Aliyev met with President of Council of Ministers of Italy Giuseppe Conte	President	20-02-2020	https://president.az/en/articles/view/35884/print

Appendix B: Documents from website of MFA

N	Title	Produced by	Date	Link
B1	Azeri FM calls on OIC to support Azerbaijan`s candidacy for non-permanent membership of UN Security Council	MFA	28-06-2011	https://azertag.az/en/xeber/azeri_fm_calls_on_oic_to_support_azerbajians_candidacy_for_non_permanent_membership_of_un_security_council-608317
B2	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the Ministerial Meeting of the UN Alliance of Civilization Group of Friends	MFA	28-09-2012	https://mfa.gov.az/az/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-ministerial-meeting-of-the-un-alliance-of-civilization-group-of-friends
B3	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 39th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Organization of Islamic Cooperation	MFA	16-11-2012	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-39th-session-of-the-council-of-foreign-ministers-of-organization-of-islamic-cooperation
B4	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 12th Session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation	MFA	11-02-2013	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-12th-session-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation
B5	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 40th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation	MFA	10-12-2013	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-40th-session-of-the-council-of-foreign-ministers-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooper...

B6	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends Annual Ministerial Meeting	MFA	26-09-2014	https://mfa.gov.az/az/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-united-nations-alliance-of-civilizations-group-of-friends-annual-ministerial-meeting
B7	Azerbaijani FM delivers speech at meeting of Foreign Ministers of OIC member states	MFA	27-09-2014	https://azertag.az/en/print/799000
B8	Statement by Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov Mnster of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan 42nd Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organizaton of Islamic Cooperation	MFA	29-05-2015	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-42nd-session-of-the-council-of-foreign-ministers-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation
B9	Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov received the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation	MFA	26-08-2015	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-received-the-secretary-general-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation
B10	Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov met with lyad bin Amin Madani, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation	MFA	29-09-2015	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-met-with-iyad-bin-amin-madani-secretary-general-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation
B11	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the annual meeting of the Group of Friends of the UNAOC	MFA	01-10-2015	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-annual-meeting-of-the-group-of-friends-of-the-unaoc

B12	Statement by Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov at the preparatory meeting of the Foreign Ministerial Council of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to the 13th Islamic Summit Conference of the OIC	MFA	13-04-2016	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-at-the-preparatory-meeting-of-the-foreign-ministerial-council-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-oic-to-the-13th-islamic-su
B13	Statement by Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov at the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States	MFA	23-09-2016	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-at-the-annual-coordination-meeting-of-the-foreign-ministers-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-member-states
B14	Statement by Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov at the UN Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends Ministerial Meeting	MFA	24-09-2016	https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-at-the-un-alliance-of-civilizations-group-of-friends-ministerial-meeting
B15	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the 43rd Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation	MFA	19-10-2016	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-in-the-43rd-session-of-the-council-of-foreign-ministers-of-the-organization-of
B16	Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov received Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othameen	MFA	04-05-2017	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no12317-foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-received-secretary-general-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-dr-yousef-a-al-othameen
B17	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of	MFA	20-09-2017	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no25417-statement-by-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-meeting-of-the-ministerial-committee-of-the-non-aligned-movement-on-

	Azerbaijan at the Meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement on Palestine			
B18	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Second Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Contact Group on the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan	MFA	20-09-2017	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no25517-statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-second-meeting-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-oic-contact-gro
B19	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Group	MFA	23-09-2017	https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no-26317-statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-un-alliance-of-civilizations-unaoc-group-of-friends-ministerial-meeting
B20	Speech by Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Annual Coordination Meeting	MFA	23-09-2017	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/speech-by-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-annual-coordination-meeting
B21	Statement by Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan OIC Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference	MFA	22-05-2018	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no12918-statement-by-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-oic-extraordinary-islamic-summit-conference
B22	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Third Meeting of the Organization of Islamic	MFA	25-09-2018	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no21118-statement-by-he-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-third-meeting-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation

	Cooperation (OIC) Contact Group on the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan			
B23	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States	MFA	29-09-2018	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no24218-statement-by-he-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-annual-coordination-meeting-of-the-foreign-ministers-of
B24	Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov met with the President of Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum	MFA	03-03-2019	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no05119-foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-met-with-the-president-of-islamic-cooperation-youth-forum
B25	Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov held a meeting with the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Dr. Yousef Bn Ahmad Al-Othameen	MFA	03-05-2019	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no12719-foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-held-a-meeting-with-the-secretary-general-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-dr-yousef-bin-ahmad-al-othameen
B26	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Fourth Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Contact Group on the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan	MFA	24-09-2019	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no26919-statement-by-he-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-fourth-meeting-of-the-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-contact-gr

Appendix C: Discourse produced in UN

N	Title	Produced by	Date	Link
C1	Statement by Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the General Debates of the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly	MFA	28-09-2011	https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-general-debates-of-the-66th-session-of-the-un-general-assembly
C2	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the UN Security Council meeting	President	04-05-2012	https://president.az/en/articles/view/4845/print
C3	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the General Debate of the Sixty-Seventh Session of the United Nations General Assembly	MFA	28-09-2012	https://www.mfa.gov.az/index.php/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-general-debate-of-the-67th-session-of-the-un-general-assembly
C4	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the General Debate of the Sixty-Eight Session of the United Nations General Assembly	MFA	28-09-2013	https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/68/az_en_25.pdf
C5	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the General Debate of the Sixty-Ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly	MFA	26-09-2014	https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/69/az_en_25.pdf
C6	Statement by H. E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the General Debate of the 70th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations	MFA	30-09-2015	https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-general-debate-of-the-70th-session-of-the-general-assembly-of-the-united-nations

C7	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the General Debate of the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly	MFA	23-09-2016	https://un.mfa.gov.az/en/news/3120/statement-by-foreign-minister-elmar-mammadyarov-at-the-general-debate-of-the-71st-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly
C8	Statement by His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the General Debate of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly New York, September 20, 2017	President	20-09-2017	https://geneva.mfa.gov.az/files/az_en.pdf
C9	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the General Debate of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly	MFA	28-09-2018	https://berlin.mfa.gov.az/de/news/3490/statement-by-he-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-general-debate-of-the-73rd-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly
C10	Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the General Debate of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly	MFA	28-09-2019	https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no30419-statement-by-he-mr-elmar-mammadyarov-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-at-the-general-debate-of-the-74th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly
C11	Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the general debates of 75th session of United Nations General Assembly	President	24-09-2020	https://president.az/en/articles/view/42794/print

Appendix D: Tweets by MFA

N	Link to tweet	Account	Date
D1	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/226206513369346048#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	20-7-2012
D2	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/269357809609625600#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	16-11-2012
D3	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/344085571825704961#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	10-6-2013
D4	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/383952723793571841#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-9-2013
D5	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/383950531607007233#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-9-2013
D6	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/394886668966043648#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-10-2013
D7	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/394886160821940224#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-10-2013
D8	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/394881477558538240#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-10-2013
D9	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/394883975547588608#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-10-2013
D10	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/398417854430584832#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	7-11-2013
D11	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/400524895039131648#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	13-11-2013
D12	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/408181763223994368#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	4-12-2013
D13	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/40992978555330176#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	9-12-2013
D14	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/411458986097926146#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	13-12-2013
D15	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/463911282731540480#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	7-5-2014
D16	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/481100797187354626#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	23-6-2014
D17	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/481098364331638784#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	23-6-2014
D18	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/483849007383326722#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	1-7-2014
D19	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/484571941102030848#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	3-7-2014
D20	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/491660237183533057#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	22-7-2014
D21	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/515663345047699457#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	27-9-2014
D22	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/517651110505361408#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	2-10-2014
D23	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/517530812636737536#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	2-10-2014
D24	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/537538403856695296#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	26-11-2014
D25	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/552344079691153408#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	6-1-2015

D26	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/621259746008416256#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	15-7-2015
D27	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/639289633721810944#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	3-9-2015
D28	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/649850317421547520#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	2-10-2015
D29	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/719893868410454016#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	12-4-2016
D30	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/719893400590381056#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	12-4-2016
D31	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/724897789382131712#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	26-4-2016
D32	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/779019678236741632#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	22-9-2016
D33	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/779018910876200964#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	22-9-2016
D34	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/779017347667460096#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	22-9-2016
D35	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/779499983556968448#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	24-9-2016
D36	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/781400502596734976#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	29-9-2016
D37	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/788365052130660352#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	18-10-2016
D38	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/789007058049896448#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	20-10-2016
D39	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/818422895856812032#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	9-1-2017
D40	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/818821668051238912#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	10-1-2017
D41	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/818820881103339520#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	10-1-2017
D42	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/818820121640701952#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	10-1-2017
D43	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/822024378187706368#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	19-1-2017
D44	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/822024067268116480#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	19-1-2017
D45	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/822023389942575104#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	19-1-2017
D46	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/822022441711108096#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	19-1-2017
D47	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/846345336906010624#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	27-3-2017
D48	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/866216881031716864#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	21-5-2017
D49	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/867989091152928769#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	26-5-2017
D50	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/868318085731811328#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	27-5-2017
D51	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/878871726494539776#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	25-6-2017
D52	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/903529705797804032#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	1-9-2017
D53	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/903529134487457792#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	1-9-2017
D54	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/905077095231094784#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	5-9-2017
D55	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/905075448975159296#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	5-9-2017

D56	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/940939292309893120#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	13-12-2017
D57	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/940938336792965121#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	13-12-2017
D58	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/957551929885945857#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-1-2018
D59	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/975616446947581952#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	19-3-2018
D60	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/978604626290380802#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	27-3-2018
D61	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/995969010209624064#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	14-5-2018
D62	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1045981482924339200#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	29-9-2018
D63	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1067763464012275712#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-11-2018
D64	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1089254941254959112#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	26-1-2019
D65	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1101568352898727942#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	1-3-2019
D66	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1109341518475726849#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	23-3-2019
D67	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1123942531912302592#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	2-5-2019
D68	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1133231845158600704#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	28-5-2019
D69	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1135541604398374912#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	3-6-2019
D70	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1160462924642750464#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	11-8-2019
D71	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1172421564744122369#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	13-9-2019
D72	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1173878273488621568#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	17-9-2019
D73	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1174198678808084485#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	18-9-2019
D74	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1243489076524781569#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	27-3-2020
D75	https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanMFA/status/1283091008167780353#m	@AzerbaijanMFA	14-7-2020