

“Long live the Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood”

A Study of Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations

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Abstract

The bilateral relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are often described as brotherly and friendly in everyday life as well as by foreign policy elites as their societies share several close cultural and linguistic ties. The influence of kinship and friendship on states is becoming a field within International Relations, and these concepts can be fruitful to better understand relations between states by providing a perspective that is often taken for granted or not studied systematically. Theoretically, the thesis draws on discourse analysis to uncover how foreign policy elites categorise the world, their interpretation of meaning, and how they perceive and describe kinship and friendship. The objective of this study has been to explain how and to what extent Turkish and Azerbaijani elites are using claims of historical and metaphorical kinship to legitimise their bilateral relationship and conduct foreign policy. This is more specifically analysed by looking at the frozen conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus because it underlines the special character of the bilateral relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan, as Ankara has been supporting Baku's position against Armenia. The temporal focus of the thesis spans primarily from 1991 until 2016, and a genealogical approach is adopted to attempt uncovering how Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites began to speak about each other in terms of kinship, and to which extent such discursive representations have become naturalised and dominant. The data material constitutes both written and oral texts, and includes official foreign policy texts, such as speeches, press releases and statements in addition to semi-structured interviews conducted in Turkey and Azerbaijan with academics and experts. The empirical analysis shows that Turkish and Azerbaijani elites started representing one another as kin after the Cold War, and that today, the concept seem to be naturalised in the foreign policy discourse, also in the context of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The analysis thus demonstrates how these discursive representations of kinship and friendship for the most part persists, and has become a significant part of their shared narrative or common story enforcing the affective character of inter-state relations. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic ties are important in facilitating the bilateral cooperation, and this partnership has mutual benefits for Turkey and Azerbaijan.

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Turkey has fascinated me for many years, but it was not until I started university that this interest manifested itself in a more academic and professional way. After visiting Azerbaijan in my childhood, the memories from the trips were never forgotten. When I was starting the process of finding a topic for my thesis, Turkish and Azerbaijani relations felt like a natural choice.

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All errors, mistakes and misperceptions are fully my own.

Julia Aybeniz Ensrud Abedi
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Abbreviations

ADR	Azerbaijan Democratic Republic
AKP	Justice and Development Party (<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>)
APF	Azerbaijan Popular Front (<i>Azərbaycan Xalq Cəphəsi</i>)
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (<i>İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti</i>)
EU	European Union
MHP	Nationalist Action Party (<i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i>)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê</i>)
SCP	South-Caucasus Project
SOCAR	State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic
TANAP	Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline
TAP	Trans Adriatic Pipeline
TBMM	Turkish parliament (<i>Türkiye Büyük Meclisi</i>)
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (<i>Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı</i>)
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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1. Introduction

Turkey and Azerbaijan's inter-state relationship is often described as unique, brotherly and friendly (Aydın, 2004; Cinar, 2013; Ismayilov & Graham, 2016; Robins, 1993). Not only are state leaders, ministers and other foreign policy elites of the respective countries often referring to each other as "kardeşlerimiz" (translated to *our brothers*), but it is also commonly employed in the everyday use by many Turks and Azerbaijanis.¹ A survey of public opinion of foreign policy in Turkey found that a majority of the persons asked answered that Azerbaijan was Turkey's closest friend, increasing from 59.3 % in 2016 to 71.3 % in 2017 (Kadir Has University, 2017). Politicians and elites in Turkey and Azerbaijan can further be observed using slogans such as "One Nation, Two States" (*tek millet, iki devlet*) to describe the bilateral relations. Then what does it imply? And what can it tell us about the political implications and relations between states? Linguistic and cultural ties are often mentioned as factors that create a bond between the Azerbaijani and Turkish societies (Göksel, 2009, p. 2). In this thesis, I explore how applying theoretical concepts of kinship and international friendship between states can therefore better insight into inter-state relationships and the conduct of foreign policy (Berenskoetter, 2007; Haugevik & Neumann, 2018; Oelsner & Koschut, 2014).

Following the end of the Cold War, Turkey started seeking a new regional role and wanted to enlarge its zone of influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, mostly as a response to its unstable relations to the United States and the EU (Erşen, 2017, p. 268).² It was also with the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) that Turkish political leaders started to talk about as Turkic peoples from Central Asia and the Caucasus as their *brothers*, and used this kinship to establish closer ties with these groups. In more recent years, Azerbaijan and other states with a large Turkic-speaking population has also been presented as an alternative path for Turkey, should its Western allies in NATO, or the EU, close its door and turn its back to them for good (Wigen, 2018, pp. 133-134).

¹ The people living in the Republic of Azerbaijan are referred to as Azerbaijanis, Azeris or Azerbaijani Turks. Throughout this thesis, I have decided to use the term *Azerbaijani* for brevity. It is nevertheless worth mentioning that Altstadt argues that the term *Azerbaijani Turk* is more accurate as it both reflects on ethnicity and geographic location, and has been regarded as the most correct usage by historians in Azerbaijan (Altstadt, 1992, p. x).

² There is no distinction between *Turkish* and *Turkic* in Turkish or Azerbaijani language, as the word "Türk" often is used to describe both the language and people of Turkic ethnic origin (Oran, 2010, p. 752).

14 January 2017 marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, as Turkey was the first country to officially recognise Azerbaijan after it became an independent republic from the Soviet Union. İlham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, then congratulated his Turkish counterpart, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with the following statement:

The brotherly Turkey is the first country, with which Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations in its independent history. Ties between our countries and nations have deep historical roots. “One nation, two states” principle has covered all spheres of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations that have no analogues in the world (Trend News Agency, 2017).

Expressing similar sentiments in his representations of Azerbaijan, Erdoğan said that the “*one nation, two states*” slogan “*is not an empty statement*” during a meeting bilateral meeting in Ankara on 25 April 2018. He further put emphasis on the importance of the special bilateral relations by stating that:

In this way, I am commemorating father Heydar [Aliyev, former President of Azerbaijan] with compassion. This statement carries the signatures of the blood of our fallen knights. In the epic [battle of] Çanakkale, in the liberation of Baku, you can witness the spirit of this brotherhood. Solidarity and cooperation between our countries continue today. Where? Our partnership has presented itself to the world in Upper Karabakh as well as in Afrin. Since the emergence of the Upper Karabakh issue, we have seen it as our own problem (Çelikkan, 2018).³

In both statements, there is a focus on the shared linguistic, historical and cultural ties, and the relations are described as unique and characterised by solidarity and commitment. This is particularly pronounced in the conflict that emerged in the late 1980s in Nagorno-Karabakh,⁴ where Turkey has been Azerbaijan’s most important supporter (Balçı, 2014, p. 46; Shiriyev, 2018b). Nagorno-Karabakh is a landlocked region in South Caucasus internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, but has declared itself a republic, supported by Armenia (de Waal, 2003, pp. 23-29; Shaffer, 2009a). To some extent, claims of shared ties may appear farfetched, since albeit sharing historical, cultural and linguistic bonds, there are also significant differences between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan was for instance under

³ Own translation.

⁴ I have chosen to refer to the conflict as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as it is more used internationally and encompasses both the Russian sense of the word (*Nagorno*, meaning mountainous in Russian) mostly employed in Armenia, and the Turkish and Azerbaijani meaning (*Karabakh*, meaning black garden). In Armenian the region is also known as *Artsakh*.

Russian control for more than 200 years as it first as part of the Russian Empire (1828-1918), and later part of the Soviet Union (1920-1991) (Shaffer, 2001, p. 22). Turkey, on the other hand, was established in 1923, and is the successor state of the Ottoman Empire (ca. 1300-1923). This empire controlled most of the Middle East, North Africa and parts of Europe for centuries. One might also argue that Azerbaijan and Turkey are involved in separate security problems in their surrounding regional neighbourhood which is not depending on their mutual support to be resolved (see Buzan & Wæver, 2003). This is quite apparent in the case of Turkey's policy towards the Middle East and conflict with Kurdish militant groups which is not interlinked with Azerbaijan nor requiring their support to be resolved. Another dissimilarity is that Turkey is a NATO member and a Western ally, whereas Azerbaijan is not (NATO, 2017).⁵ Azerbaijan has however aspired to enforce its ties to Europe and the US through Turkey, but is at the same time attempting to balance its relations to Russia and other regional powers (Shaffer, 2009b, p. 69). Despite these differences, they are perceived to be among each other's closest partners.

1.1. Research Question

As briefly illustrated above, references to kinship can be observed in the discursive representations of foreign policy elites in Azerbaijan and Turkey when describing the bilateral relationship.

This thesis therefore considers the following research question: *To what extent and how do Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites use claims of kinship to legitimise their relationship and conduct foreign policy?*

The objective of this study is to understand how and to what extent foreign policy elites are using such claims and referring to other states as kin. It also aims at giving an answer to if and how representing others as brothers or similar effects the conduct of foreign policy, or a specific foreign policy practice or direction, and is therefore posing a question that is important and consequential for political and social life (King et al., 1994, p. 15). The concept of kinship is frequently employed when speaking about family relations between individuals, and less used about states. How can states then be kin, and what does it imply? As concepts

⁵ The Republic of Azerbaijan has joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1992) and the Partnership for Peace (1994). Azerbaijan has also been contributing to NATO-led operations, for instance in Kosovo and in Afghanistan (NATO, 2017)

such as kinship, but also friendship, which is linked to it, can be fruitful to apprehend International Relations (IR) and international politics, this research project aims to better understand these dynamics and how they are at play in the inter-state relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Kinship between states can here be understood as *metaphorical or felt form of kinship*, which can be explained as similarities between states based upon “a shared history, similar political systems or ideologies, cultures, languages or religion – or a combination of some or all of these” (Haugevik, 2018, p. 52). Kinship can also be understood as having its origin in common ancestry or descent, referred to as *blood kinship* (Haugevik, Neumann & Lie, 2018, p. 3). In this thesis, I will regard persons who are in a position to influence the foreign policy of a state as a *foreign policy elite*, by leaning on the definition that “they are those individuals in a society who actually contribute, by their own minds and activities (...) to steering or formulating the foreign policy of a national state actor” (Hveem, 1972, p. 18). The actors I define as foreign policy elites differ to what extent they are able to influence the foreign policy of a state. For instance, I include elites who have a key role in decision-making processes, such as high-ranking officials of a government like presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, although they, depending on the political system, will also differ on their degree of power. A second group includes academics and experts who contribute to shaping the foreign policy of a state, for instance by being summoned for advice or conducting academic analysis, which is later read and attended to by others, such as state officials, but also by the public.

Analysing the discourses on the inter-state relationship in both Azerbaijan and Turkey, which can be described as collective structures of meaning, will provide information about the status of the relationship and the strength of their shared bonds. This will be uncovered by studying how Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites are representing one another in terms of kinship and friendship in the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh, which will be employed as a case in this context, as the relations are especially pronounced in this aspect. The Nagorno-Karabakh issue has been chosen because it is a central element in the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and because claims of kinship appear to be particularly pronounced.

1.2. Overview of theory and method

The research question will be explored through a qualitative research design and method of the language in use by Turkish and Azerbaijani elites. It is a well-fitted choice for this study, as it focus on few units, and has its focus on an in-depth approach in the analysis (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, p. 122). More specifically, as the thesis will study how kinship is expressed discursively by Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites, I will apply discourse analysis which looks at how language is used and linked with certain actions and practice (Dunn & Neumann, 2016; Hansen, 2006). Hansen argues that discourse analysis is a particularly appropriate tool for studying the foreign policies and identities of states (Hansen 2006), and this will be fruitful to apply also in this project.

I suggest that theories on friendship and kinship can further be useful concepts to understand IR, both as a complement to more traditional theories, but even provide an alternative, for a better understanding of the dynamics of inter-state relations in some cases, especially where cultural, historical and linguistic bonds are close. Kinship between states is an emerging as a field within IR, as the role and implications of kinship in IR and international politics has to a little degree been explored and thought about systematically. The volume *Kinship in International Relations* is the first to do so (Haugevik & Neumann, 2018). The concept of friendship is also a relatively new field within IR, and the scholarly interest in friendship in IR has augmented over the past decades (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 650; Devere & Smith, 2010 p. 341; Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 3; Roshchin, 2017, p. 2). International friendship among states has been treated in loose terms by scholars, and it is not until the past decades that it has acquired more scholarly interest (Devere & Smith, 2010 p. 341). In addition, the theoretical framework of friendship between states will further be presented and used as an analytical tool in this thesis (Berenskoetter, 2014; Oelsner & Koschut, 2014; Roshchin, 2017). I also apply theoretical concepts of the nation and how it can be discursively represented as imagined in addition to theories on identity construction (Anderson, 1983; Haugevik & Neumann, 2018; Neumann, 1999).

Analysing the Turkish and Azerbaijani discursive representations will provide insight into the status of this relationship, and will thus be able to uncover the strength of the ties between them. My research design is primarily built upon Lene Hansen's (2006) discourse analytical framework. Many different expressions and perspectives can be studied through discourse analysis, where texts serve as the data material. This thesis nevertheless has its limitations caused by time and scope. Consequently, I have selected to primarily focus on the

discourse of foreign policy elites, such as presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, to study the official discourses of Turkey and Azerbaijan. The textual material will thus include statements, speeches and other announcements by these actors. Many of these texts have been collected through the Internet, mainly the official webpages of the governments, such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of the respective countries. I have also employed academic articles and books in addition to media articles that refers to statements and speeches by government officials. Additionally, I include the academic discourse of experts and other elites rendered possible by conducting semi-structured interviews in Baku, Ankara and Istanbul in January and February 2018. One advantages with including the academic discourse in discourse analysis is gaining insight into how Turkish and Azerbaijani elites categorise the world and their understanding of meaning, which can be more challenging in more scientist-oriented approaches where only the researcher decide which aspects are the most important.⁶ In contrast, by including research interviews in the analysis, I will benefit from getting access to an insider's perspective on two states that I study, as well as also being an observer from the outside.

It can further be necessary to the delimit the timeframe of the events that one wants to study when conducting discourse analysis (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 94). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, focusing particularly on the historical development from the end of the Cold War until 2016, will be used as a case to explain how Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites have employed claims of kinship to legitimise their relationship, and how they affect the conduct of foreign policy. Adopting a *genealogical approach* to this study can be fruitful as I will look at the discourses in a historical perspective, as it can tell us how certain structures came about by telling a history of the present by looking at the past (Bartelson, 1995, p. 7; Neumann, 2001, p. 56). It will therefore be a useful tool to analyse how certain social phenomenon became possible in the first place and their consequences (Vucetic, 2011, p. 1296). Several historical events has been mapped out to serve as a basis for the discourse analysis (Hansen, 2006, p. 80). For instance, several events during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will structure the analysis, such as specific episodes during the first war (1991-1994) like the border closure in 1993, the 2008-2009 normalisation efforts between Armenia and Turkey, and finally the 2016 Four Day War. These events have been selected as they are regarded as important for the development of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but also for the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship.

⁶ This is often referred to as the emic and etic divide in anthropology. For more on this, see e.g. Headland, Pike & Harris (1990) *Emics and etics: The insider/outsider debate*.

1.3. Empirical material: The thesis and the field

There have been written several different works on Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, particularly in the last two decades after the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, there exists a significant amount of literature on the foreign policy of Turkey focusing on various historical periods (Hale, 2002; Kösebalaban, 2011; Uzer, 2011; Weisband, 1973). Although to a smaller extent, this also applies to the foreign policy of Azerbaijan (Ipek, 2009; Mehdiyeva, 2011; Petersen & Ismailzade, 2009). Turkish foreign policy in the Caucasus, especially after the Cold War, has also been a much-researched topic (Aydın, 2004; Cinar, 2013; Ismayilov & Graham, 2016; Winrow, 2000). Regarding the bilateral Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, much of the scholarly interest have been on energy trade between the two states, and particularly on the pipeline projects in the South Caucasus (Altunişik & Tanrısever, 2018; Ibrahimov, 2015; Kardaş, 2011; Wigen, 2012). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including the historical developments and its political implications, has also been written extensively about (Cornell, 2017; de Waal, 2003; Kambeck & Ghazaryan, 2013). Several articles have touched upon the regional character of the conflict, and Turkey's position vis-à-vis Azerbaijan in the conflict has also been analysed (Cornell, 1998, 2001). Some of the literature has focused on the peace mediation and efforts in the conflict (Ambrosio, 2011; de Waal, 2010b; Gahramanova, 2010). The book *One nation, two states – Turkish-Azerbaijani relations* (Ismayilov & Graham, 2016) is a significant contribution to the literature existing on kinship, identity and culture in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, as it investigates the underlying causes that has shaped the dynamics of their bilateral relations. Even though much of the literature refers to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as one of the outmost cases of Turkey's support to Azerbaijan (Aydın, 2004; Pashayeva & Göksel, 2011; Soltanov, 2016), few of them provides a systematic or intensive focus on the discursive representations of kinship in the context of the conflict. Consequently, this thesis may fill a small research gap by looking at Turkish-Azerbaijani relations in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, using identities, kinship and culture as a point of departure.

1.4. Structure of the thesis

In *Chapter 2* I will present the theoretical framework that is used to understand how Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites are using claims of kinship to legitimise their relations and make foreign policy. More specifically, I will present theories on discourse, in addition to the analytical concepts of kinship and friendship in International Relations, and the implications of such concepts on the foreign policies of states.

Chapter 3 will assess the research design and the methodological choices of the thesis. I will first present and discuss the choice of a case study design and a discourse analytical method and research design, in addition to addressing their advantages and challenges.

In *Chapter 4* I will assess the first part of my analysis, by looking at the research question from a *diachronic* perspective by analysing how and to what extent foreign policy elites in Turkey and Azerbaijan have used claims of kinship to legitimise their bilateral relations and conduct foreign policy. This is done by adopting a genealogical approach where I will trace and follow the historical development of the official foreign policy discourses of the respective countries in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In *Chapter 5*, I will assess the second part of my analysis, where the representations in the Turkish and Azerbaijani academic discourse will be observed from a *synchronic* perspective, thus focusing on how claims of kinship at a given point in time to legitimise the bilateral relations and the conduct of policy. This part of the analysis will analyse the more contemporary political relevance of kinship.

Finally, *chapter 6* summarises and discusses what conclusions can be drawn from the analysis in addition to giving some remarks on possible future areas of research.

2. Theoretical framework

This thesis seeks to explain how Azerbaijani and Turkish foreign policy elites are using claims of kinship to legitimise their bilateral relations and conduct foreign policy. In this chapter, I will present the theoretical concepts and framework applied to help answer this question. In section 2.1. I present the theoretical aspects of discourse and discourse analysis. In section 2.2. I present the concept of kinship, and in section 2.3. I present the concept of international friendship among states. Moreover, in section 2.4, the role of emotions and affect in international relations will be presented. Finally, at the end of this chapter, I will summarise the empirical expectations that can be drawn from this chapter.

2.1. Discourses, representations and practices

Discourse analysis can function both as a theory and a method in the social sciences, in which it has had a central role particularly after the ‘linguistic turn’. In discourse analysis, interpretation is placed at the center of research, as collective understandings or beliefs are key (Bratberg, 2017, p. 19). These collective understandings will be connected to certain ideas and understandings that actors relate to in various ways (Bratberg, 2017, p. 29). In order to better understand how the world is constructed and actors relate to it, poststructuralists regard language as unique and essential to understand and perceive the world around us. One definition of *discourse* is that it is a “particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). In other words, language is not neutral, and play a role in creating and changing our world, identities and social relations. Another definition of discourse in the words of the Norwegian scholar Iver B. Neumann is that it is “a system for generating of statements and practices, that by entering institutions and by appearing more or less normal or common, constructs the reality for actors, and has a certain degree of regularity in social practices” (Neumann, 2001, p. 18).⁷ Discourses can therefore be understood as structures giving different texts a meaning that provides the basis for action that is normative and collective (Bratberg, 2017, p. 30). Discourse analysis further regards ideas and understandings – or meaning – as a basis for action. Language therefore has to be analysed, because meaning is produced and constructed through language, as it also will provide insight into the production and reproduction of certain representations, and their potential contestation (Bratberg, 2017, p. 32).

⁷ Own translation.

A discourse can consist of representations – either many or just a few. *Representations* are based on language, and are not neutral. A definition of representation is that they “are things and phenomena as they appear to us (...) not the things themselves but things filtered through the fabric existing between the world and ourselves: language, categories, and so on” (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 33). In other words, representations are descriptions of how we interpret and are understanding the social world. Some representations can achieve hegemony or be dominant if they to a small degree are contested or opposed (Neumann, 2001, p. 57).

Representations have political implications because they make actors act based upon what they know. As a consequence, certain discourses will make distinct practices or paths of action more plausible than others (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 60). Discourses are therefore connected to practices, as discourses here are a “system for generating statements and practices which become institutionalised and constructing the reality of actors”, and since they shape our understanding of the world, they can bring a certain extent of regularity in social relations (Neumann, 2001, p. 18). For instance, when Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policymakers and elites use claims of kinship in their representations of one another, it can render some patterns of action more possible or likely than others, such as establishing a closer partnership.

In this thesis, I will explore a poststructuralist perspective. Although there exist several approaches to discourse analysis, a poststructuralist approach is that *everything* can be read as texts, and because language enters between humans and the world (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, pp. 39-40). That does not imply that there exists nothing but text and talk, but that the discourse itself is material because is entities such as economy, infrastructure and institutions also are a part of it (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 19). Poststructuralists argue that there are no “additional texts” establishing a connection between the linguistic world and the world outside. This can be exemplified by Hansen who argues that “the point is not to disregard material facts but to study how these are produced and prioritized” (Hansen, 2006, p. 22).

2.1.1. The production of knowledge and power

Discourses can be seen as producing the social world and how we apprehend it, and they can further be regarded as producing power. Dunn & Neumann writes that “power is the practice of knowledge as a socially constructed system, within which various actors articulate and circulate their representations of truth” (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 54). Dunn & Neumann says that it is because of the *strength* of specific representations in comparison with others. Following a poststructuralist view of power, language is constitutive for what is brought into

being, because it is social, political and relational, and that every aspect of the social world is a product of power relations and has a political aspect (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 55). The social and political spheres are regarded as constitutive of discourses, which can provide a framework to understand the world, as there exists “regimes of truth” or knowledge within the discourses. Foreign policy decision-makers and elites can be regarded as situated within a larger political and public sphere, and their representations are consequently shaped by numerous factors, such as individuals and institutions. For instance, top politicians such as foreign policy elites seldom have a very detailed knowledge about *all* the issues they handle, and therefore rely upon advisors, media covers and sometimes academic literature. In order to establish their representational framing of a policy, they therefore rely on such sources (Hansen, 2006, p. 7). By referring to these forms of representations, foreign policy elites will influence what is regarded as official representations within a specific issue. By accepting that discourses are producing knowledge, one also assumes that there is a link between discourses and power. Discourse analysts can examine the dominant or hegemonic discourses, where the production of knowledge appears to be “stable”. They can be examined to better understand how such discourses structure meaning, and in which ways they are connected to practice. In order to analyse such discourses, Dunn & Neumann suggest adopting a *genealogical approach* where the objective is to understand the present in terms of the past (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 51).⁸ The methodological considerations connected to such an approach will be further examined in the following chapter.

2.1.2. Identity and foreign policy

Identity can be characterised by belonging to a certain group or community, which is different from other groups. The Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth’s theoretical argument in *Ethnic Groups and their Boundaries* is that an ethnic group is a collective that defines itself vis-à-vis Others (Barth, 1969, p. 15). Identity is therefore constructed in relations to others (Neumann, 2001, pp. 124-127). This form of identity construction can also be visible in IR. In IR scholarship, much work has been oriented towards how states construct their identities by differentiating themselves from other states, and draw borders between them and the others. One example is the theoretical argument of the American scholar David Campbell who argues that the state is articulating threats and Others in constructing its identity and is constituted in relation to differences separating what is known from what is foreign, or the insiders from the

⁸ Bartelson argues that knowledge, and particularly political knowledge, is intertwined with history and identity because it *differentiates* by telling who is the Same and the Other (Bartelson, 1995, p. 6).

outsiders (Campbell, 1998, p. 9). According to Campbell, foreign policy is an act of differentiating against others that are dissimilar and perceived as threatening (Campbell, 1998, p. 98). The Other can further be constituted as familiar rather than foreign, implying a certain degree of trust, such as between states who regards one another as friends. Because national biographies are not built in isolation, but rather in interaction with others, states seek the positive recognition of their identities and narrative by others, particularly from a “significant Other” (Berenskoetter, 2014, pp. 56-57). I suggest that Turkey and Azerbaijan can be regarded in this light, as elites represent Turks and Azerbaijanis and the states as friends, and this might go even deeper, which will be further explored in the following section. The representation of one another as a friendly, familiar or even a brotherly Other is further linked to power and the strength of such representations (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 55). In other words, much discursive effort is put into maintain certain representations, such as being kin or friend, and sharing communalities, for instance in daily life or by politicians.

Hansen argues that discourses are constituted by identities, as identities are both a product and a precondition for discourses (Hansen, 2006, p. 20). A poststructuralist assumption of this is that foreign policies draw upon a conceptualisation of identity. Identity is regarded as discursive, political, relational and social (Hansen, 2006, p. 6). First, identity is regarded as constructed *through discourse*. Representations of identity also place foreign policy within an “interpretative optic” which have consequences for the formulations of foreign policies that are regarded as acceptable, for instance to the public or the political opposition. Identity is regarded as *social* as it is established through a set of codes of what is collectively acceptable, and as *relational* because it is established by referring to something that it is not, and is constructed in relation to others. Finally, identities are *political* because identities will be produced and reproduced over time (Hansen, 2006, pp. 6-8).

Moreover, identity is often constructed by juxtaposition, or through *linking* and *differentiation processes* (Hansen, 2006, p. 19). To illustrate this, Hansen draws on the example of gender roles. Women as a group have traditionally been identified with being “motherly, reliant, simple, emotional” through a positive process of linking. At the same time, there is a process of differentiating, as the identify if another group is defined by what the first group is not. As a consequence, men as a group has been identified with being “rational, complex, intellectual, independent” (Hansen, 2006, pp. 19-21). But one can argue that these descriptions or representations are less accurate today than they were fifty years ago. This can offer some theoretical understandings of how discourses can be stabilised, but also can be challenged by other or newer representations.

Policy is often made and shaped with a reference to a shared identity, often reconstituted. According to Hansen, foreign policy makers and other actors attempting to influence and shape the foreign policy of a state, needs to present a foreign policy that seems legitimate and acceptable to others, such as other politicians, the public, and so on, and therefore needs to be linked to and consistent with the identity of the state (Hansen, 2006, p. 28). The stability of the link between foreign policy and identity might vary when expressed in discourses, due to the acceptance or critic of certain discourses for instance from the political opposition or the public (Hansen, 2006, p. 30). It can also be the case no other representations are challenging the dominant representations within a discourse, and in those cases there exist some form of discursive hegemony (Neumann, 2001, p. 60). In such cases, it can be understood as the dominance of one perspective.

2.2. Kinship in International Relations

Kinship has remained a rather unexplored topic within the field of IR, and the volume of *Kinship in International Relations* suggests that it could be included to better understand and apprehend relations between states (Haugevik & Neumann, 2018). It should be regarded as a good starting point for how and why states formulate and practice their foreign policies in certain ways, and to understand relations between different actors on the international arena, such as sovereign states (Neumann, Haugevik, & Lie, 2018, p. 1).

There can be different varieties of kinship between states. Haugevik, Neumann & Lie presents a dichotomy between *blood* and *metaphorical* kinship. The former is treated as having its origin in a common ancestry or descent, whereas the latter rather refers to a *felt* or *imagined* kinship (Haugevik, Neumann & Lie, 2018, p. 3). In the case of blood kinship, the state representatives will be related by blood, or are related to the populations living in one of the states – assuming that two states cannot be directly related by blood, because states are constituted by more than the people (Haugevik, 2018, p. 49). One can, however, argue that the concept of sharing blood ties may have various meanings and implications, as it also can be understood as arguing that *all* humans share blood ties.

Metaphorical kinship will be based on “a shared history, similar political systems or ideologies, cultures, language or religion – or a combination of some or all of these” (Haugevik, 2018, p. 52). Metaphorical kinship can also originate from blood kinship, such as belonging to the same ethnic group, but this is not an absolute criterion (Haugevik, 2018, p. 52). Moving onwards, there exists different expressions or indicators of metaphorical kinship.

State leaders can share the same ideology or the governments of two states can regard themselves as kin because the ruling political parties belong to the same party family. States can be described as related because they have similar political systems, or are belonging to the same international organisations. A shared history between states can be a reason for regarding one another as kin. Finally, states can feel a deeper connection and familiarity because of cultural or linguistic values (Haugevik, 2018, pp. 52-53). The latter is linked to the concept of nations nation. Benedict Anderson (1983) saw the nation as an *imagined community*. This implies that nations are a socially constructed community, imagined by people who perceive themselves as part of that group. Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). The nation is regarded as *imagined* not because it does not exist, but because most of the members of a community such as a nation will never meet each other, and this communality exists only in their minds. The nation is also imagined as *limited*, because even the smallest of nations has a boundary to other nations, and *sovereign* as it is somewhat linked to the state. Finally, the nation is imagined as a *community* and a fraternity (Anderson, 1983, pp. 6-8). This definition fits partially the description of Turkey and Azerbaijan as one could argue that they belong to the same Turkic nation, due to their cultural and linguistic ties, although the description of the nation as sovereign might be less fitting.

When state representatives are referring to other states as family and kin it implies a strong, almost unbreakable bond between certain states. For instance, when states invoke ideas about kinship it will be particularly because they draw on morality of friendship, too (Haugevik, 2018, pp. 44-43). Being kindred states does also have certain *political* implications, particularly with regards to foreign policy. Internationally, state leaders can be observed invoking kinship terminology when referring to other states as their “brothers” or similar.

According to Haugevik, these “recurring public representations of other states as kin help determine and specify the bandwidth of possible actions within that relationship” (Haugevik, 2018, p. 43). The representations therefore create conditions for agency and actions, and defines what are expected of the relationship, including what can be said and done, and enable certain diplomatic practices. When President Erdoğan and President Aliyev refers to each other as “brothers”, it has some implications, and legitimise what they can say and do. It may further imply a shared identity, which emphasises the production and reproduction of certain identities through their representations (Neumann, 2002, in Haugevik, 2018, p. 54). Thus, the ties that connects states can be reinforced through social and

diplomatic practice. Kinship can also allow for hierarchy between states perceiving each other as kin (Haugevik, 2018, pp. 43-48). For instance, there will be differences between a state belonging to the 'nuclear family', such as being a mother or brother state than a cousin. There can further be differences in power between states expressed by being the older or younger brother, and can in some cases even imply rivalry often observed between siblings.

2.3. Friendship in International Relations

"For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods"

-Aristotle

The concept of friendship is a relatively new field within IR, and the scholarly interest in friendship in IR has augmented over the past decades (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 650; Devere & Smith, 2010 p. 341; Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 3; Roshchin, 2017, p. 2). Friendship can be a useful tool to better understand IR, as friendship is a way to conceptualise and apprehend relations between states (Smith, 2014, p. 48). Similar to drawing upon kinship, claims of *friendship* can often be observed in statements of government officials, or on academic analysis (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 648). In IR research such expressions have often been lacking some meaningful practical significance other than pleasing other states (Eznack & Koschut, 2014, p. 71). Sceptics have also regarded concept of friendship as too idealistic and naïve, especially when regarding the international system as characterised by anarchy where fear, distrust and self-interest is claimed to play an essential role. The link between politics and friendship have further appeared peculiar to some, as friendship is presumed to be a private and emotional affair, which also could imply partiality (Devere & Smith, 2010 p. 341).

The literature describes different forms of friendship among states. According to Berenskoetter, international friendships are *negotiated relationships* where states continuously adapt and confirm domestic ideas of the world other, and because friendships are negotiated, they are further regarded as having a shared or common political project (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 672). In particular, Koschut & Oelsner argues that international friendship mainly take two forms, namely *strategic friendships* and *normative friendships*. International friendships can be called strategic when actors are referring to one another as 'friends' for instance in the political discourse or in agreements and treaties, but not resulting

in a significant change of behaviour or their mutual perception. In strategic friendships self-interest - not trust - is a crucial component, and such friendships will be more temporary and unstable than other forms of friendship among states (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 14). The normative form of international friendship might provide a better description of bilateral relations that are even deeper or more profound due to significance their shared cultural and linguistic ties has on their relations, as self-interest or strategic interests alone does not sufficiently explain the depth of the relationship. *Normative international friendship* can evolve among “actors who share high levels of ideational and emotional bonds that permit mutual identification and trust” (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 14). This form of friendship exists for moral and normative reasons, not mainly strategic calculations, and is characterised by genuine trust. It is argued that normative friends genuinely trust each other because their relationship is based on “trust-as-bond”, as an emotional and moral disposition, and not as an instrumental rational thought-process (trust-as-predictability (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 14). In this perspective, friendly states will care about each other due to the appraisal of good qualities and the value of the relations itself. The relations are deeper and more intimate than other forms of friendship and acquaintance. Normative friends engage in shared activities that are not motivated by self-interest, but in part by the relationship itself. In sum, normative friends will share experiences, values and activities, and will based on such factors build a joint history together (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, pp. 14-15).

2.3.1. Indicators of international friendship

Having defined international friendship, it may be useful to mention some indicators of what it means to be friends. Berenskoetter argues that *geographic proximity* or *trade links* not necessarily are factors that facilitate establishing friendships due to the recurring conflict between neighbouring states. Nor does similar political systems nor perceptions of the regional environments (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 670). For instance, Turkey and Azerbaijan are cooperating on energy trade. Both Turkey and Azerbaijan shares borders with Armenia, but their bilateral relations can hardly be described as friendly. Neither does regarding another state as a *mutual enemy* necessarily lead to establishing friendship (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 671). Turkey does too have a complicated relationship to Armenia, which is enforced by Ankara’s position in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and which in some sense can be regarded as a mutual enemy.

Oelsner & Koschut identifies four indicators of international friendship. The first is *symbolic interaction*, as “international friendship involves predominantly bilateral social

bonds and meanings between political leaders and societies enhanced through summits, meetings, events” (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 20). International friendship is further characterised by a collective identification that is spanning across different levels and domains. This is also the case with Turkey and Azerbaijan, as the ties between their societies are close, and this is visible on different such as cultural exchanges, education, infrastructure, trade and other areas of cooperation. The second indicator is *affective attachment*, namely that the parties share an “emotional history” tied to certain events, symbols, or institutions that are providing a shared understanding of meaning and trust (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 20). For instance, events in the early 1900s are some examples that may have created some attachment. Another condition is *self-disclosure*, as friends will expect to reveal more information to friends than outsiders, and they are also likely to develop a friendly discourse with using particular language and codes. Equally important, policymakers and elites will often refer to one another with reference to kinship, family and friendship (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21). The final indicator is *mutual commitment* building on solidarity and reciprocal commitment (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21). When conflicts among friends emerges, the parties will share the expectation that they will be settled peacefully. It also implies that friends will have each other’s back by protecting, defending and morally supporting each other either violently or non-violently against outside threats (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21), which the Nagorno-Karabakh again may illustrate as Turkey has supported Azerbaijan.

The indicator of mutual commitment and reciprocity resembles Marcel Mauss’ arguments about gift relations and exchange in archaic societies, which might be applied to explain modern IR. By giving gifts, actors are also expected to give something back, and creates some expectations that the gift can encourage political loyalty or economic gains in the future. He further draws these observations to our modern societies, where such exchanges are also relevant, although not everything are “categorised into buying and selling” such as invitations and courtesy, but also has a sentimental value. Additionally, he argues that one tends to give back more than one receives (Mauss, 1990, pp. 65-66).

2.3.2. Security and power in international friendships

Friendship is also linked with security and establishing order. According to Berenskoetter, international friendships among states are negotiated relationships where states attempts to adapt and confirm their ideas about order in the international society. Friendships between states are not established randomly, as they are an investment in a common political project

(Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 672). Some IR scholars distinguish ontological security from physical security. Physical security seeking states are seeking the protection of their territory and governance structures from threats, whereas states can also be ontological security-seeking wanting to protect a stable sense of Self which enables and motivates actions, and knowing one's place within and in relation to the world (Berenskoetter, 2014, pp. 55-57; Mitzen, 2006, pp. 641-644). In IR, this is examined by looking at identities as a fundamental element of being. International friendships among states is argued to provide such ontological security, as friendships and the Self is intertwined. Friendship among states can contribute to positively recognise each other's narratives, and strengthen them by "making productive use of their overlapping experienced space and link it to a shared future" (Berenskoetter, 2014, pp. 55-57).

Power does also operate in and have implications on international friendship among states. First, friendship is a source of mutual empowerment because it makes it possible to achieve something together. In that sense, friendship can be transformative and enhancing mutual learning. Second, friendship can also give rise to a form of soft power, which stands in contrast to hard power (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 671). The concept of *soft power* was coined by Joseph S. Nye who defined it as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas, and policies" (Nye, 2004, p. x). When states who are friends establish transnational or mutual biographies, they share intimate knowledge, which again creates a relationship between friends of growing interdependence, as states come to depend on each other for taming their anxiety. As friendly states create a stable sense of self or a common project among them, and are trusting one another, one also becomes vulnerable. This vulnerability may even be particularly strong in international friendships, because "no power is as total as one has over friends", and soft power capabilities are especially visible in asymmetrical relationships where one of the parties is more powerful than the other (Berenskoetter, 2007, pp. 671-672). Turkish-Azerbaijani relations where Turkey often is regarded as a regional power.

2.4. Emotions and affect in international friendships

Studying emotions is an emerging as a topic of research within IR, and this is sometimes referred to as the emotional turn in the study of world politics (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2008). Jonathan Mercer defines a social emotion as a "feeling that has intrinsic importance to an

actor in some relationship with an entity” (Mercer, 2014, p. 60). One of the greatest challenges with theorising emotions in world politics is to theorise the process through which individual emotions become collective and political (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2008). For instance, the sadness of an individual can be easy to identify, but what about a state or a population? Mercer further puts emphasis on the fact that all group-level emotion is social, and thus different from individual experiences of emotions, as the sum of all individuals’ emotions in a state, tribe or school are producing a stronger emotion than one single individual, as these groups are more than the individuals they consist of (Mercer, 2014, pp. 517-518). Emotions are further intertwined with identity, because “who we are is how we feel” as identity and emotion are dependent on each other and makes group-level emotion possible. Finally, identities are situational because they are activated in certain situations and circumstances (Mercer, 2014, p. 522). Particularly four mechanisms explain the switch from personal identity to social identity. First, emotion is structured by culture, as it influences feeling and thinking. For instance, sharing cultural ties can enforce the feeling of belonging to a certain group. Second, group members are more likely to interfere with other members of their in-group, and less likely with people outside it. By experiencing group emotion, group identity is reinforced and the boundaries to other groups enforced. Third, emotions can also be contagious, as other people’s emotions influences one’s emotion, and it is more likely when actors share mutual goals, a close relationship and a common social identity. Finally, certain events can produce a group-level reaction, as actors belonging to the same in-group are prone to have similar interpretations of events (Mercer, 2014, pp. 523-524). These are all factors that could enforce the common feeling of groupness between Azerbaijani Turks and Turks who share cultural and linguistic ties, and to some extent foreign policy goals, particularly in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is argued that that there exists a link between friendship and emotions because they are tied together by emotional knowledge and learning. Eznack & Koschut argues that the occurrence of *foundational moments* is a significant source of affect in friendly inter-state relations, and is necessary for highly affectively charged relationships to develop between states. These moments or determining events, such as war and other politically challenging moments, that can have a strong symbolic impact on policy-makers as well as the public living in both states, or mutual assistance during politically challenging times (Eznack & Koschut, 2014, p. 78). They should further have similar strength and symbolic value for both states, and will be commemorated by the states in a certain way, thus creating *a joint emotional history* creating a feeling of mutual belonging and sense of solidarity (Koschut,

2012, p. 18 in Eznack & Koschut, 2014, p. 79). Friends can be drawn even closer by rituals and expressions of solidarity, such as through thoroughly performed and standardised verbal emotional expressions which can draw friends even closer (Eznack & Koschut, 2014, pp. 79-80). Following this argument, Nagorno-Karabakh and episodes during the conflict can be regarded as a foundational moment being a source of affect.

Culture can also be described as a tool-box. The main idea of the American sociologist Ann Swidler in her book *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* is that individuals use culture as a tool-kit and selecting useful strategies to fit specific needs in various situations. Love is further discussed as a romantic reference by using the ‘Hollywood image’ of love as an example (Swidler, 2001, p. 14). People are adjusting to, and uses cultural references in their own lives about what love is supposed to be like, although it might not fit with their own lived lives. Likewise, one could argue that this could be applied to inter-state relations, as Turkish and Azerbaijani relations for instance might have been affected by an initial euphoria of establishing ties after the end of the Cold War, before they later became more aware of their differences.

2.5. Chapter summary

The point of departure of this thesis is that metaphorical kinship and friendship are important and fruitful concepts to conceptualise and apprehend relations between states. I find that these concepts could be useful to combine with discourse analysis with the objective of uncover discursive domination and change during a specific period of time. Moreover, when observing the foreign policy discourse of states, invoking claims of inter-state friendship and kinship will contribute to certain practices, and this theoretical framework can be useful to better apprehend the power invested in foreign policy elites, and how they use different practices to produce and reproduce hegemony in discourse. Within this framework, the empirical expectations are that kinship based on various bonds such as linguistic and cultural bonds, have an impact on the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship and their conduct of foreign policy, and that this can be particularly observed in the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh.

3. Research design and methods

“Without theory there is nothing but description, and without methodology there is no transformation of theory into analysis”- (Hansen, 2006, p. 1)

When choosing a fitting method for a study, it is suggested that one “should be guided by which data best answers our questions” (King, Keohane & Verba 1994, p. 68). Regarding my research question, conducting a discourse analysis seems like a good choice, as it is a useful tool to study the identities and foreign policy of states (Hansen, 2006, p. 5). In this chapter, I will elaborate on *how* the discourse analysis will be conducted, moving on from the theoretical concepts presented in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the research design and the choices of delimitation will be thoroughly presented. At the end of this chapter, there will be a brief discussion about the validity and reliability of the research. My research design is primarily built upon Lene Hansen’s (2006) discourse analytical framework, which delimits the study along four different dimensions: the number of Selves, intertextual models, the temporal perspective and number of events. This will be further described and discussed in this chapter.

When conducting discourse analysis, the relationship between knowledge and the researcher is also worth mentioning, as it can be challenging for the researcher to detach herself from the world that she is studying, often referred to as *mind-world monism* (Jackson, 2011, p. 6). This is particularly linked with the objectivity of the research, which is particularly relevant in discourse analysis because the process of acquiring knowledge and undertaking science often are drawn upon interpretation will have an influence on the construction of practice. It is further helpful to have some previous knowledge about the issue or *cultural competence* when conducting discourse analysis (Neumann, 2001, p. 51). This can allow for a better understanding of the discourse that studied, in addition to the representations and nuances in their use. In this project, it was helpful to have some prior knowledge to both Turkish and Azerbaijani culture and language in addition to politics and history which I have acquired through internships and studying abroad, as well as my personal background.⁹ I have an intermediate knowledge of Turkish and Azerbaijani, and through my fieldwork I got in touch with experts on Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy and relations. Having some cultural competence obviously has several advantages, but it can

⁹ I lived and worked as an intern at the Norwegian Embassy in Ankara for six months in 2015, and in 2014, I studied Turkish language, history and politics at Boğaziçi University for three months. The recent fieldwork was conducted in January and February 2018.

also be argued that the researcher should be aware by distancing oneself as one can be part of and maintaining certain discourses that are under study, and take some understandings and representations for granted by becoming naturalised (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 85; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 21).¹⁰

3.1. Case study as research design

The choice of research design and methods should always be adjusted to the research question. In this thesis, the research question is formulated to understand how and to what extent Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites are using claims of kinship and friendship to legitimise their relations and conduct foreign policy. According to Robert K. Yin, case studies can be particularly useful when one wants to understand *how* something happened, and also if one wants to study a social and political phenomenon extensively (Yin, 2009, p. 4), which is also the aim of this thesis. John Gerring provides the following definition: “a case connotes a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over a period of time. It comprises the type of phenomenon that an interference attempts to explain” (Gerring, 2007, p. 19). In this thesis, I seek to explain a specific phenomenon, namely how claims of kinship are employed by Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites, and I will therefore adopt an inductive approach by explaining a phenomenon by using various theories, rather than testing a theoretical framework. In addition, case studies can be a particularly good choice of design when one seeks to understand historical events of a certain complexity (George & Bennet, 2005, p. 45). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be described as a complex historical event, as it is an unresolved conflict ongoing for almost three decades. In addition, case studies might also be an appropriate choice when a subject is being “(...) encountered for the first time or is being considered in a fundamentally new way” (Gerring, 2007, p. 40). This is also fitting for this research project, which attempts to fill a small literature gap on kinship in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations by studying the discursive representations of Turkey and Azerbaijan by foreign policy elites in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Gerring argues the case that is studied will always provide more than one observation, which can be constructed either *diachronically* over time or *synchronically* at a single point in time (Gerring, 2007, p. 21). In this thesis, the case is observed both

¹⁰ It was particularly important for me to distance myself to some extent, as part of my family background is Azerbaijani, as parts of the culture and language that I am studying is my own and not foreign to me, although I was born and raised in Norway. This potential lack of objectivity, although I have been highly aware of this and attempted to avoid it, should be mentioned.

diachronically and synchronically, in chapter 4 and 5 respectively, in order to map different observations – both across time and at a single point in time. There are various advantages and challenges linked to case study research. One weakness is connected to *external validity*, or “the problem of representation between the sample and the population” (Gerring, 2007, p. 43). For instance, case studies are less useful to provide statistical generalisations or shedding light over a larger population of cases (Yin, 2009, p. 15). With regards to *internal validity* in case studies, there are fewer weaknesses, as it is referred to as “the virtue” of case studies. This is because the researcher more easily can establish a causal relationship in single or smaller case studies (Gerring, 2007, p. 43), although the specific challenges linked with causality in discourse analysis will be further discussed later in this chapter.

3.2. Discourse analysis: Method and research Design

Discourse analysis is a type of textual analysis which can be described as “the close study of language in use” (Taylor in, Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 4). Language is regarded as particularly important because it structures our understanding and how we perceive the world, and as laid out in previous chapters connected to poststructuralism, there are nothing existing outside of texts. In discourse analysis, discourses, which were defined in the previous chapter, are the regarded as the data subject to analysis because they produce social realities through the construction of meanings enabling actors to make sense of the world, and act based on their knowledge. Social and political aspects of the world are thus understood by using texts as a point of departure (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, pp. 43-44). It is argued that the essence of the discourse analysis is to bring forth a method that can analyse both linguistic as well as material factors, as discourses are regarded as both linguistic and material, which illustrates this. In other words, the purpose of discourse analysis is to study how certain social practices are activated through key distinct discursive representations (Neumann, 2001, pp. 81-83).

3.2.1 Data and delimitations

When formulating a research design, it is necessary to make various choices and delimitations (Hansen, 2006, p. 73). Hansen proposes four dimensions to formulate a discourse analytical research design: whether one should include or several intertextual models as mentioned above, the number of Selves in addition to what temporal perspective and number of events one should include (Hansen, 2006, p. 75).

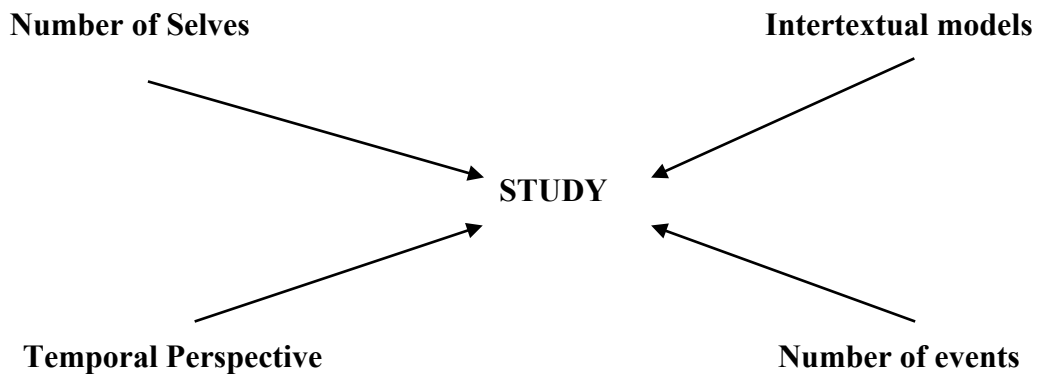


Figure 1: Replication of figure 5.1 “Research design for discourse analysis” (Hansen, 2006, p. 75).

When formulating a discourse analytical research design, one will often begin with deciding what or Which Self or Selves should be included in the study (Hansen, 2006, p. 74). In this project, I have decided to look at the *discursive encounter* between two different states, namely Turkey and Azerbaijan. Studies of discourse encounters is contrasting the discourse of the Self with the Other’s counter-construction of the Self and the Other (Hansen, 2006, p. 76). The Other can be constructed as an enemy and radically different, but also an ally or even a friend, as laid out in the theoretical framework. Discursive encounters can further evolve around constructions of inferiority or superiority. One challenge with discursive encounters is that it requires additional linguistic knowledge and cultural competence about the objects one are studying (Hansen, 2006, p. 76). In my case, I had a better general knowledge of Turkey and Turkish language than of Azerbaijan Azerbaijani language, which sometimes made comparison tricky.

A second choice is regarding which intertextual models are to be incorporated into the discourse analysis. Hansen presents four different intertextual research models with different analytical focus and which differ in their link to the official foreign policy discourse. A key question when designing a research analytical design is whether one should focus on the official discourse or go further. In this project, the research models focusing on the official discourse (‘Model 1) in addition to the marginal political discourses (‘Model 3B’) of which the academic discourse is part have been selected (Hansen, 2006, pp. 63-65).¹¹ In order to map the official foreign policy of Turkey and Azerbaijan, I will draw upon official texts as my primary data, such as statements, speeches and press releases by heads of states, governments ministers or other high-ranking officials in both states. These texts have primarily been collected from the official webpages of the Azerbaijani and Turkish

¹¹ The two other of Hansen’s models, ‘model 2’ focusing on the wider policy debate including the political opposition, and ‘model 3A’ focusing on cultural representations has been left out (Hansen, 2006, p. 64).

governments. By focusing only high-ranking officials of each governments, there exists a risk of ignoring other nuancing views, such as from the political opposition, or the wider public. But as foreign policy elites, such as state officials, do not have absolute knowledge about all issues, they will rely on representations from others, which make them less partisan and objective. They do also have substantial access to information, and it is still important to study these actors because they are situated in a larger public and political sphere which give them a crucial position, and can speak to and influence the representations of the Turkish and Azerbaijani societies (Hansen, 2006, p. 7).

The academic discourse is further included, as academics and other experts can be regarded as foreign policy elites because of their influence on foreign policy, leaning on the following definition: “the foreign policy elite are those individuals in a society who actually contribute, by their own minds and activities, or as agents of others, to steering or formulating the foreign policy of a national state actor” (Hveem, 1972, p. 18). Foreign policy elites such as experts and scholars occasionally comment on various foreign policy issues in the media, and is regarded as having an influence on shaping the foreign policy discourse of Turkey and Azerbaijan. They are also contributing to the reproduction and sustainment of certain representations and perceptions, and is therefore valuable data for the thesis. Hansen argues that if certain representations are regarded as particularly stable, which I assume is mostly the case with the representation of the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship, it will be useful to move beyond the official discourse. This is because one to a larger degree can argue for discursive stability and assessing the hegemony of an official discourse when expanding the scope of intertextual models (Hansen, 2006, pp. 73-74). Therefore, I selected to include the academic discourse in the project by conducting interviews with experts on Turkey, Azerbaijan and their inter-state relationship, and the South Caucasus. The methodological considerations regarding interview research will be further discussed later in this chapter. The official and the academic discourse will be analysed in different sections, in chapter 4 and 4 respectively. In chapter four, the research question will be sought answered by observing discourses across time or diachronically, following a genealogical approach, whereas chapter 5 will analyse and observe data synchronically at a given point in time.

Hansen suggests than the research design also must address the temporal perspective of the study including the number of events. As mentioned in previous chapters, my study will focus on the historical development of discursive representations in the temporal period between 1988 and 2016. Some events that can be studied when mapping the official foreign policy discourse are moments of intense political concerns, such as a war or a conflict, which

fits the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh (Hansen, 2006, p. 78). I will particularly observe multiple moments during the conflict, described as “events-within-events” (Hansen, 2006, p. 80), and will also imply that the conflict is regarded as a longer historical process or development. All the moments, however, has in common that they are related by an issue, namely the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Examples of these moments or events are the emergence of the conflict 1980s and the escalation to the Nagorno-Karabakh war between 1991 and 1994, including events such as the Khojaly tragedy, and the 2008-2009 bilateral tensions between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and finally the 2016 Four Day War. The events have mainly been selected because of their importance for the bilateral relations in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and they are also often referred to by historical books and in the academic literature.

Hansen stresses that the historical moments should not be too far in time from each other that the comparison becomes difficult or are providing too little information (Hansen, 2006, p. 79). For instance, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has been ongoing for more than 25 years which might make direct comparison of certain events difficult due to domestic, regional and international developments, but it can also be valuable as it will give insight into the development of the discourse and formation of identities, in addition to the ruptures, repetition or persistence of the discursive representations over time (Hansen, 2006, pp. 79-80). This is to some extent an advantage with this research design, but the historical scope could also have been expanded even further in other projects with more resources to better provide analytical insights about the origins of the Turkish and Azerbaijani identities.

When there are few or no other contesting representations challenging the dominant representations within a discourse, and in those cases there exist some form of discursive *hegemony*, and a discourse can have achieved a hegemonic status (Hansen, 2006, p. 21; Neumann, 2001, p. 60). It can be useful to adopt a *genealogical* approach as a way of analysing hegemonic discourses and how certain constructions of knowledge became ‘naturalised’. One concern with adopting such a method is that one might “overemphasize continuity” in the analysis (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 51). Certain parts of the analysis will fall out of the temporal selection, and refer to events before the 1990s as they are significant to understand “how one got there”. According to the Swedish scholar Jens Bartelson, a genealogy is not merely a history of the past but a “history of the present in terms of its past” and how the present became logically possible (Bartelson, 1995, p. 7). If one want to get insight into how Turks and Azerbaijanis started to refer to one another as kin, it is necessary to ask how one got there in the first place, and it became logically possible. To understand

social phenomena that appears commonplace like this, should, as put forward by Michel Foucault one should ask “how it came about in the light of contingency and power” (Foucault in Vucetic, 2011, p. 1301). This can support the necessity to mention events prior to the 1980s as well, such as the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, and the relationship between modern Turkey and the Soviet Union.

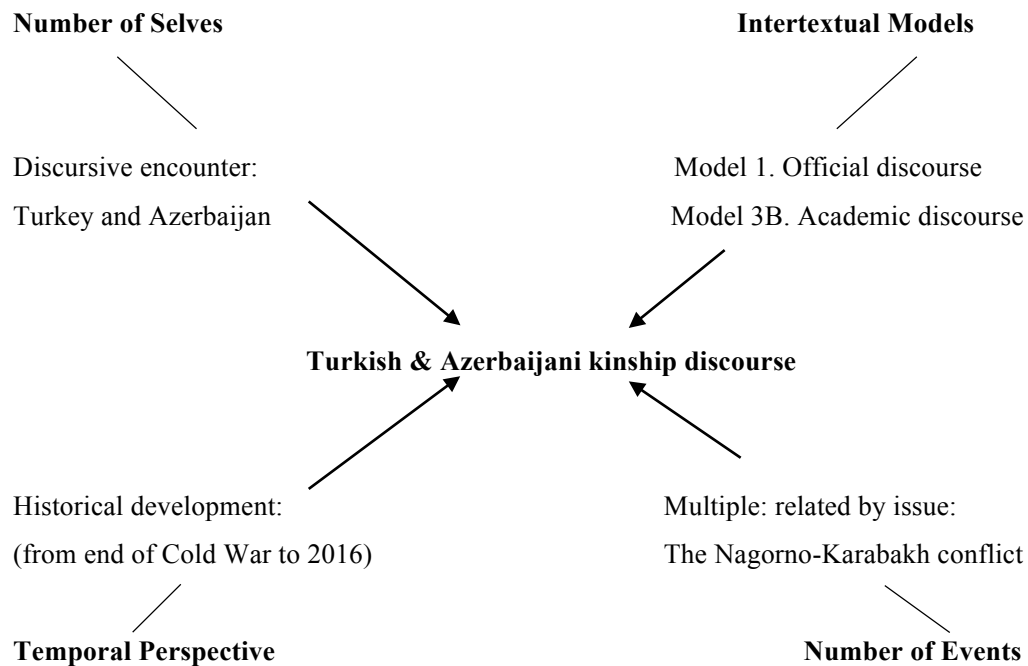


Figure 2: Illustrating my research design based on figure 5.2. “Elaborated research design for discourse analysis” (Hansen, 2006, p. 81).

3.3. Selection and reading of texts

When identifying key texts to base the analysis on, Hansen suggests first doing a broader reading of various texts, including policy speeches, media coverage and academic analysis (Hansen, 2006, p. 84). The texts studied in this project has been selected after these criteria developed by Hansen to ensure the selection of key texts, namely that: (1) the texts should define or articulate an identity and/or a policy, (2) the texts are widely and extensively read and attended to, and (3) the texts have an authority to define a political position, implying that they are produced by someone with an authority to shape the foreign policy agenda (Hansen, 2006, p. 85). General material, such as presidential addresses or other official texts meets all

the three criteria because they are articulated clearly, they are widely read and thus have a key role in defining dominant discourses, and finally because the persons who articulate them have a formal political (Hansen, 2006, p. 85). The official documents are therefore thought to meet all of the above-mentioned criteria. When studying the official foreign policy discourses and identity, it is possible to delimit the textual material, because “the actors who carry the discourse normally will belong to a limited circle” (Bratberg, 2017, p. 64). These texts will therefore often be close to the foreign policy elites. The academic discourse fit the first and the third criteria best, but not the second as they might not necessarily widely or extensively read.

With regards to the official documents, a challenge has been that not all the documents from the official webpages have been available for the entire temporal period under study in this thesis. For instance, most of the material on the webpages of the Turkish ministry of foreign affairs is only available from 1997 and later. Most of the material from the Azerbaijani ministry of foreign affairs is only available from 2004 and after. I have also employed academic articles or books and media articles that have included statements or speeches by foreign policy elites. As Hansen argues, such texts can also become primary material if they are significantly read and attended to, or for instance being frequently quoted by elites or the wider public, and therefore becoming substantial texts structuring the discourse. It is also possible to acquire knowledge of the sedimentation of some representations over others (Hansen, 2006, pp. 82-84). Including these kinds of texts in the data material can further be an advantage when having little prior knowledge about the topic under study, and can be an advantage in projects, like a master’s thesis where time, knowledge and resources often are limited (Hansen, 2006, pp. 82-83).

3.3.1. Original versions and translations

When reading texts one also must decide when one has enough data material to analyse.

Then, when can one stop reading and how much should be read? According to Hansen, it is impossible to define a standard of the number of texts necessary for successfully conducting a discourse analysis, particularly because the analysis does not lean on quantitative methodology or statistical findings. It will therefore depend on the scope of the project (Hansen, 2006, p. 86). A master’s project is limited with regards to time, access and resources like this one, it is not possible to read an unlimited amount of texts.

Another issue concerns whether one is reading texts in their original language or translations.

In reading the texts, I have also been wary of texts that are translations, and not written in

Turkish or Azerbaijani, because somethings might be lost in translation (Hansen, 2006, p. 83). In this project, the focus has been on texts written in their original language, or texts in English aimed at an English-speaking audience, in order to avoid important language codes getting lost in translation (Hansen, 2006, p. 83). The texts are mainly collected from official webpages in Turkey and Azerbaijan. Many of these texts, for instance those of the ministries of foreign affairs, are often aimed at an English-speaking audience and are less than other texts translated from Turkish or Azerbaijani to English where meaningful content might be misinterpreted.

3.4. Integrating semi-structured interviews

In this study, interviews that was conducted in Turkey and Azerbaijan have been included in the discourse analysis to acquire addition discursive data material to analyse, as it is possible to integrate interviews in discourse analysis (Hansen, 2006, p. 85).¹² Combining written and oral textual sources, such as data from open and relatively unstructured research interviews is also possible (Silverman, 2006, pp. 223-224). The main objective of the interviews was acquiring knowledge about how the informants, who were considered foreign policy elites, were reflecting, interpreting their surroundings, in addition to the Turkish-Azerbaijani interstate relationship. The intention has not been to primarily get empirical insight into and understanding of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations today, but rather to study the informants', discursive representations of kinship.

Based on the data that I wanted to collect, the interviews have been designed to be *semi-structured*, which is common in in qualitative research.¹³ In order to get insight into processes and the reasoning of the informants when talking about a specific phenomenon the semi-structured format was chosen. Some structure in the interviews was maintained by asking the informants somewhat similar questions to enable comparison between the informants' responses and more control over the interview in addition to ordering the questions in a specific order in the interview protocol, although not followed too strictly to assure that the interview was easy-going (Leech, Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, & Kimball, 2013, p. 217). It further ensured that the essential topics were covered and prioritized in the

¹² See Der Derian (2009) *Virtuous war* and Chouliaraki (2000) *Political discourse in the news* for other studies integrating interviews in discourse analysis.

¹³ Semi-structured interviews are a hybrid between the *structured* interview often containing a standardised questionnaire and closed-ended questions, and the *unstructured* interview with open-ended questions (Bryman, 2012, pp. 209-210).

interview, in case the interview ended earlier than planned, which can occur in elite interviews (Beckmann & Hall, 2013, p. 205).¹⁴

Before travelling to Turkey and Azerbaijan, I designed an interview protocol often used when conducting semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 2). Including only open-ended questions was useful as they provided rich and detailed answers on the questions (Martin, 2013, p. 117). This encouraged the informants to answer freely and with their own argumentation – not being restricted to a simple yes or no and, and avoid interfering with their own argumentations. Including open-ended questions is also regarded as an advantage when interviewing elites by some because they prefer to elaborate, whilst others disagree (Beckmann & Hall, 2013, p. 206; Leech et al., 2013, p. 216). I consider this a advantage when including interview data in discourse analysis.

Responses to open-ended questions can, however, be challenging to compare and code. The questions were therefore often succeeded by specific follow-up questions, commonly referred to as *probes*, which ensured some control over the topics discussed by the informants (Leech et al., 2013, p. 217), or if the informants did not answer the main question sufficiently or clearly.¹⁵ I did only formulate one interview protocol, but ensured that the formulated questions were flexible and adaptable to be able to ask similar questions, but targeted at either Turkish or Azerbaijani foreign policy experts.

One of the questions was strongly inspired by previous interview research projects, which can be efficient and favourable to reduce the amount of resources spent (Converse & Presser, 1986, p. 50; Fink, 2003, p. 54). For instance, I began all interviews by asking an open and general question: *Could you please describe and elaborate on the bilateral relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan?*¹⁶ In my judgement, this would ensure a soft start of the interview and highlight what the informant regarded as the most important aspects of the bilateral relationship, which often included answering several of the questions in the interview protocol. In those cases, the questions were not repeated.

¹⁴ None of the interviews did not last longer than one hour, but some of them also ended earlier than planned, in some cases even abruptly.

¹⁵ The probes were not formulated or “written out” prior the interviews, and in a few instances, it was difficult to formulate an appropriate question quickly, which for the most part did not cause any difficulties as I was familiar with the interview protocol.

¹⁶ The first opening question in the interview protocol was borrowed from Leech et. al (2013). Such questions are often referred to as a “grand-tour” question, which functions as an ice-breaker in the beginning interview (Leech et al., 2013, p. 216).

3.4.1. Selection of informants

During the period I spent in Azerbaijan and Turkey, I interviewed seven researchers and experts on Turkish or Azerbaijani foreign policy and South Caucasus. The informants in this project, as mentioned earlier, had an academic background in IR and were employed either at well-known universities, research centres or think-tanks in Turkey and Azerbaijan (see Appendix 3 for more details). I applied a *purposive* sampling in the selection of informants. For instance, I initially used my existing network in Norway, Turkey and Azerbaijan to identify relevant and interesting informants. Once I had established a base of some possible informants, I used the *snowball* sampling method by asking all informants if they suggest other possible relevant informants at the end of the interviews (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). Such sampling is *non-representative* (Lynch, 2013, pp. 41-42) as it does not represent the entire population of foreign policy experts within the field, and one risk that the informants recommend other people with similar views who might contribute to which can create a bias and little variation, especially because they might be part of the same discourse. As the informants are not randomly selected, generalising to a broader population is therefore challenging, and non-representative sampling effects the reliability of the study as it is unsure whether another research would reach the same informants or not.

After I had identified the relevant interviewees, I contacted them by e-mail and sent them a request letter (see Appendix 1) where they were asked to participate in the project. The letter contained a description of the project and it also contained information regarding anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. The project was not notified to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD, *Norsk senter for forskningsdata*)¹⁷ as I did anonymise the interviews and did not process or store any sensitive personal data which could be possible to identify the interviewees. *Non-response* of the informants was yet another challenge because elite informants can be hard to reach as they have a busy schedule, and are even sceptical of being interviewed by an outsider, and this can be some of the causes to why potential informants do not answer the interview request by phone calls or e-mail (Beckmann & Hall, 2013, p. 201; Beyers, Braun, Marshall, & de Bruycker, 2014, p. 184). Although not substantial, non-response among informants resulted in that I occasionally had to interview others or include fewer informants in the project.

¹⁷ For more information regarding the notification of research projects to NSD, see www.nsd.uib.no.

3.4.2. Interviewing informants

Possible methodological issues can also arise during the interview itself, and is connected to the questions that are asked. These interviews were designed to shed light on Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy and bilateral relations. Some validity issues can occur if the researcher does not ask the right questions, or are asking them the right way, or because of the accuracy of the informants' answers (Mosley, 2013, p. 21). Validity of the interview can also be affected if there occur misunderstandings between the informant and the interviewer. Although interviewing experts, I was concerned with on using a comprehensible language during the interview by avoiding excessive use of technical terms and foreign words (Converse & Presser, 1986, pp. 10-11). This was particularly essential as the interviews were conducted in English - and not in Turkish or Azerbaijani – which might have created some language barriers.

Furthermore, one should be aware of the particular textual form of the interviews when including interviews in discourse analysis, as the text is produced through dialogue between the informant and the interviewer. Because the interview is a result of interaction and produced through a dialogue between the informant and interviewer, the interviewer can have an explicit impact on the production of this text (Hansen, 2006, p. 86), which is equal to studying a speech or statement. Thus, the effect of the interviewer on the informant can be relatively strong, and influence the direction of what is said and the person's ideas and representations. This can further be linked to what is often referred to as interviewer effects *interviewer effects* (Beyers et al., 2014), which can be especially relevant when including interviews in discourse analysis. These are the effects of certain of the characteristics of the interviewer, such as age, gender, profession and similar that influences the informants and their answers in the interview (Mosley, 2013, pp. 12-13). There might also have been an asymmetrical power balance in the interview in favour of the informants because of their seniority and expertise in the field, professional or academic experience, age and gender when interviewing elites (Beyers et al., 2014, p. 179). Whether one tape record the interviews or take notes during the interview will also have some implications on the reliability. An advantage with taping and transcribing interviews is can both be beneficial for the researcher analysing the data after the interviews as well as for other researchers, as the data can more easily be shared and preserved for future research (Silverman, 2006, p. 237). In this project, neither of the interviews were recorded, and notes were instead taken during the interviews, which have affected the reliability of the interviews. To improve the reliability, I 'wrote out'

the notes from the interviews in detail straight after all the interviews to keep important information, representations and statements fresh in mind.

3.5. Advantages and challenges

Reliability and validity are important criteria to attain when conducting any form for research and different challenges and advantages will often occur in projects, including this one.

Discourse analysis cannot strictly be evaluated by criteria of validity and reliability, as it rarely gives the foundation for a clear operationalisation or causality (Bratberg, 2017, p. 54; Hansen, 2006, p. 25). Another criticism of discourse analysis is that there is no extra-discursive materiality that can be tested against, and it can be challenging to identify the causality between identity and policy, especially since poststructuralists argue that identity is produced and reproduced through foreign policy (Hansen, 2006, p. 26). This has limitations on construct validity and internal validity. Discourse analysis is rarely useful to generalise to a defined population often referred to as external validity (Bratberg, 2017, p. 54). It is therefore suggested to adopt a broader understanding of validity as the more *general* validity of discourse analytical research, which can hardly be said to be invalid because of the limitations posed by interpretations (Bratberg, 2017, p. 54).

One of the major challenges with discourse analysis is that it can provide low *reliability*. In discourse analysis, there are obvious reliability challenges because much of the analysis will be based on textual interpretations that often are subjective. In discourse analysis, the reliability issues concerns *how* the interpretations were conducted in addition to *which* texts or documents were selected as data of the analysis (Bratberg, 2017, pp. 63-64). The reliability will be affected in this study, as another researcher could uncover different findings and conclusions than I due to differences in the interpretation of texts. Discourse analysis can still provide valid empirical research, but it is important to be explicit on which documents or texts are subject for the analysis, and which analytical tools are used (Bratberg, 2017, p. 63). In this project, I have made efforts to be clear on which texts and documents that are going to be analysed, for instance by providing sufficient references to citations and textual excerpts throughout the analytical chapters. An advantage with including the official discourse of Turkey and Azerbaijan, is that this will likely capture the essence of the foreign policy discourse, because the key texts are likely to be limited and found close to the elite, which facilitates the identification of important material (Bratberg, 2017, p. 55). This could further

have implications on reliability, as it might increase the possibility of other researchers coming to the same conclusions.

4. Empirical analysis

In this chapter I present the dominant representations in Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy discourse from the beginning of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1991 until 2016. The aim is to give an answer to how Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites are drawing upon claims of kinship to legitimise their inter-state relationship and conduct foreign policy illustrated by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The research question will in this chapter be analysed through a *diachronic* perspective, focusing on the discursive evolvment and possible changes in the official foreign policy discourse of Turkey and Azerbaijan across time by focusing on various historical events. I have adopted a genealogical approach to trace the origins, ruptures and persistence of representations across time, as the objective of the analysis is to understand the present in terms of the past. Consequently, this has necessitated to include certain historical events prior to 1991, and these moments will we briefly analysed in the very beginning of this chapter and used as a point of departure. Thereinafter, the analysis is structured based on various historical events during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which will be further analysed in the sub-chapters in this chapter.

4.1. Ottoman-Safavid relations

Turks from Turkey and Azerbaijani Turks share many historical and linguistic ties (Soltanov, 2016, p. 21). For instance, it is believed that immigration by Oghuz Turks under Seljuk rule in the 10th and 11th centuries and Mongol rule in 13th century created a clear Turkic majority in the territories which constitutes Azerbaijan today (Shaffer, 2001, p. 18). Anatolia was also part of these empires and dynasties before the Ottomans seized control. Turks and Azerbaijanis, together with other ethnic Turkic peoples, lived in a unified territory conquered by the Turco-Mongol Timur Leng, also known as Tamerlane (1336-1405) (Hale, 2002, p. 288). Turkey is the successor state of the Ottoman empire. The Ottoman Empire came into existence in the wake of the Mongol invasion of the Anatolian principalities. In 1435, forces led by Sultan Mehmet II, known by his epithet “the Conqueror”, seized Constantinople, which later became known as Istanbul and the centre of the empire (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, pp. 34-36). Today’s Azerbaijan was not a part of the Ottoman Empire, but was a part of the Safavid Empire (1334-1722) and later the Qajar dynasty (1789-1925) of Iran.¹⁸ The Safavid

¹⁸ In the Safavid and Qajar courts, Azerbaijani Turkish was the predominant spoken language. Persian, on the other, was employed in literature (Shaffer, 2001, pp. 20-21)

Empire, ruled mostly by Azerbaijanis or Kurds, was another significant power in the Middle East that in the 15th century expanded into the eastern parts of Anatolia and Syria (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, pp. 47-48). American scholar Brenda Shaffer argues that the Safavid regime was an important even in the development of Azerbaijani national identity, because it is regarded today by many Azerbaijanis as a “Azerbaijani” dynasty. For instance, Tabriz, a large city located in what is the Azerbaijani province of Iran today, served as the Safavid capital, also commercially.¹⁹ The Safavids were also in rivalry with the Ottomans and the Uzbeks, which separated the Azerbaijanis from other Turkic peoples and enforced the ties to Persians (Shaffer, 2001, pp. 19-20). In this historical period, the Safavid and Ottoman Empires did not identify with each other, but instead defined itself vis-à-vis Others (Barth, 1969).

Relations between the Safavids and the Ottomans were characterised by hostility and rivalry, not friendship or brotherhood, as two empires fought in several wars against each other during the 16th and 17th centuries, such as the battle of Çaldıran in 1514 (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 48). In the early 16th, uprisings known as the *Kızılbaş*-uprisings (translated to Redhead) by followers of the Safavid Shah, challenged the political authority and religious legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire (Dressler, 2005, p. 151). Under the rule of the Safavid Shah Isma’il, Shi’a Islam was selected as the official religion of the Empire, and remains to be the official religion in modern Iran. The Ottomans in particular regarded the Safavids Shi’a beliefs as a threat as they were another powerful empire ruling in the region (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 49). The Ottomans considered themselves Sunnis, and an institutionalisation of Sunnism as a state doctrine and orthodoxy was fostered because of the political rivalry over Eastern Anatolia with the Safavids, and was a reaction to the empire’s view of the Safavids and *Kızılbaş* as a religious ‘Other’ (Dressler, 2005, pp. 160-163, 171). Conversely, the establishment of Shi’a Islam as an orthodoxy in the Safavid dynasty can also be regarded as a result of the competition with the Ottoman empire (Dressler, 2005, p. 172). Religion and the Sunni-Shi’a divide was a significant factor of the hostile relations, but there is reason to believe that the empires had more in common than what is often assumed (Dressler, 2005, p. 160). It can nevertheless be argued that although sharing some similarities, the two empires constructed their identities in relation to their differences and as an Other, which was based on both political rivalry and religious differences.

¹⁹ The city of Tabriz served as Iran’s capital under Safavid rule, but was moved to Qazvin and later to Isfahan due to numerous attacks by the Ottomans in the periods 1514-1603 and 1722-1728 (Shaffer, 2001, pp. 20-21).

4.2. The late Ottoman Empire and Azerbaijan under Russian rule

Although the bilateral relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan were formally established and developed as friendly after the end of the Cold War, it is possible to trace the roots of brotherly relations even further back in time. During the 20th century, the first historical events in which Turks and Azerbaijani Turks faced challenges together and collaborated occurred. One significant event is the battle of Gallipoli (1915-1916) where Azerbaijani volunteers fought alongside Turkish armed forces during the first world war.²⁰ The Ottomans supported the Azerbaijanis against the Bolsheviks in 1918 under the command of Nuri Pasha (Aslanov, 2011, p. 9). In 1918, Azerbaijan established the independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) after the Russian Empire lost the control over its territories. The Republic was short-lived and Azerbaijan became under Soviet control in 1920, but during these two years, the first ties of modern Turkey and Azerbaijan were established.²¹ In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), referred to as the Young Turks, had started a revolt against the ruling Sultan Abdul Hamid II of the Ottoman Empire, marking a clear break with its multi-ethnic orientation. Enver Pasha was particularly responsible for making pan-Turkism an official state policy (Landau, 1995, p. 51). He was also pursuing the pan-Turkist orientation on the military field, motivated by the possible liberation of Turkic peoples who were under Russian control in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which led to the momentary Turkish control over Baku in 1918 (Jung & Piccoli, 2001, p. 178)

The support of the Ottomans is often referred to as the first example of the Turks' support of Azerbaijanis, but it has also been argued that the Ottoman's campaign was not solely motivated by helping its brethren out of solidarity, but also because of strategic interests (Soltanov, 2016, pp. 25-28). Several Azerbaijani intellectuals did also settle in the Ottoman Empire, which is another important factor in the initial establishment of ties between what is Turkey and Azerbaijan today. Some of these ideologues and intellectuals were Ali Bey Hüseyinzade and Ahmet Ağaoğlu. These ideological contributions have been described as crucial in being "the first serious links between Azerbaijani Turks and Ottoman Turks" (Soltanov, 2016, p. 25). These intellectuals were active proponents of the establishment of

²⁰ The battle of Gallipoli, which took place in the coastal city of Çanakkale, is regarded as one of the last victories of Islam and the Ottoman empire over the West by some Turks (Ongur, 2015, p. 428)

²¹ For instance, the Friendship Agreement between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Azerbaijan was signed in June 1918, which was the first agreement signed between Baku and a foreign government (Hasanli, 2009, p. 32).

the pan-Turkist movement and development of the doctrine, and they are regarded as some of the founders of Turkish nationalism and pan-Turkism (Landau, 1995, pp. 14-16)²².

As an ideology, *Pan-Turkism* had been developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, both in the Ottoman Empire, but also in Russia, as a reaction to the Russification and Christianisation processes in the empire. Pan-Turkism, despite being an original concept, must be regarded in the context other pan-movements at the time, and in particular the pan-Slavic movement, from which it borrowed many terms (Landau, 1995, pp. 7-8). One of the founding thinkers was Ismail Gaspirinski, a Crimean Tatar, in addition to Yusuf Akçura, another Tatar, from the Volga region. He is particularly known for his article Three Systems of Government (Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset), which is regarded as the key manifesto of pan-Turkism (Landau, 1995, p. 43). In the article, Akçura favoured and defined a Turkish nationalism in ethnical terms which was presented as an alternative to pan-Islam and Ottomanism for the different paths that the Ottoman empire could embrace. British-American historian Bernard Lewis defines pan-Turkism as a “political programme, which in its maximalist form implied the political unification of all the Turkish-speaking peoples, in Turkey, Russia, Persia, Afghanistan, and China, in a single state” (Lewis, 2002, p. 351).

Ziya Gökalp is often referred to as the chief ideologist of the doctrine of Turkishness and its movement which professed the discovery, spread and promotion of Turkish culture, reform of the Turkish language, and the social and economic well-being of the nation (Kushner, 2007, p. 222). In contrast to Akçura, Gökalp focused more on cultural bonds than on blood ties and ethnicity in his work the ‘Principles of Turkism’ published in 1923. Gökalp’s view of Turkish nationalism was also embraced by the founders of the Turkish republic, most notably by Mustafa Kemal (Jung & Piccoli, 2001, p. 177).

With the establishment of the Soviet Union, Turkey shifted its focus away from the Outside Turks (*Dış Türkler* in Turkish) who were Turkic-speaking communities outside of Anatolia, such as Tatars, Kazakhs, Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kirghiz, and Azeris. In 1921, the Soviet Union and the TGNA (Turkish Grand National Assembly) signed a treaty containing the provision that “the parties undertake never to allow the formation or the establishment on their territories of organisation or groups that would claim to be the government of the other party or one of the territories of that party” (Oran, 2010, p. 750). Thus, Turkey should not

²² Many Muslim minorities such as Azeris, Kurds, Muslim Georgians and Circassians living under Russian control fled to the Ottoman Empire in the late 1800s and early 1900s because they regarded it as a “kin state” (Hale, 2002, pp. 16-17). For instance, the 1915-1916 occupation of Eastern Anatolia by Russia did also create a wave of refugees (Cağaptay, 2006, p. 9).

actively spread pro- or pan-Turkish feelings within the USSR whereas the Soviets should abstain from doing the same with regards to communism in Turkey.

4.2.1. Kemalist Turkey and the Others

Following the end of World War 1, the Ottoman Empire collapsed and a new Turkish republic was being shaped. Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) (1923-1938) who had been a military field commander became the leader of an emerging national movement in Turkey, and later became the first president (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013).²³ The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres led to a war as some of the Eastern parts of Anatolia were not recognised as parts of the future Turkey, but rather as parts of an Armenian state and a proposed Kurdish zone (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 151).²⁴ In the republican era of Atatürk, the traditional security discourse had two major components, namely the fear of abandonment and loss of territory, in addition to an assumption of geographical determinism emphasising Turkey's geographical location and linking them to security needs and interests (Bilgin, 2005, pp. 183-185). The first component is directly linked to what is often referred to as the *Sèvres Syndrome*, which is a tendency to think that foreign powers want to weaken and divide Turkey, which continues to be relevant today (Guida, 2008, p. 38). In other words, the Turkish security discourse was oriented towards looking at the Turkish Self different from the Others, which here are the foreign powers with interest in Turkey.

The new Turkey was shaped on various reforms which marked a clear break with the Ottoman past (Hale, 2002, p. 13).²⁵ This created a distinction between the new Turkish Self and the Ottoman Other in the official discourse, which had a significant impact on the national identity in modern Turkey. During the rule of Atatürk, the foreign policy was focused on promoting peace domestically – and internationally, such as in the Middle East and the Caucasus. This is further illustrated by Atatürk's famous slogan structuring both foreign and domestic policies "Peace at home, Peace abroad" (*Yurtta Sulh, Cihanda Sulh*). Atatürk did as mentioned restrain himself from embracing pan-Turkism, mostly because under his rule the government did not want to meddle into other state's internal affairs – even with Turkic groups. This was further illustrated by Atatürk's definition of the Turkish republic in territorial terms and rejection of pan-Turkism: "*I am neither a believer in a league of nations*

²³ Mustafa Kemal was given the surname Atatürk, meaning father of Turks, by the parliament in 1935 (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 166)

²⁴ The conflict over the Sèvres Treaty was finally settled in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty (Hale, 2002, pp. 50-56).

²⁵ Central in the doctrine of Atatürk, referred to as *Kemalism*, was based on six different pillars: reformism, republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, and statism (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, pp. 167-168).

of Islam, nor even in a league of the Turkish peoples (...) Neither sentiment nor illusion must influence our policy” (Jung & Piccoli, 2001, p. 178). In other words, with regards to the people living within Turkey, Atatürk wanted to unify different ethnic, religious and sectarian groups in the Turkish identity of the republic. In that sense, modern Turkey was not motivated by kinship ties to engage with Turkic groups outside of its borders.

In the Second World War, Turkey remained *de facto* neutral throughout the war although the government signed an agreement with Britain and France in 1939 (Hale, 2002, p. 79). The devastating experiences from the First World War, where Turkey had sided with the Entente Powers, had not been forgotten. This time, Turkey’s military was not strong enough to face either Germany or the Soviet Union. Thus, protecting Turkey’s relatively newfound sovereignty, territory and people became the primary objective for President İsmet İnönü and his government (Hale, 2002, pp. 80-82). During the Cold War, Turkey did still not have the sufficient technical, military or economic resources to protect itself from the USSR, which it saw as a potential threat of its independence. Turkey therefore needed to look to the Western for allies against the Soviet Union (Hale, 2002, pp. 109-110). The Soviet Union was also regarded as a threatening Other by Turkey. This was materialised when Turkey became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1952, and since then has the organization been an important pillar in Turkish security policy and thinking (Hale, 2002, p. 119).

4.3. Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh - “the black garden”

In line with Turkey’s cautiousness towards foreign powers and the Soviet Union, this reflected upon the relations with Azerbaijan as well, who was part of the USSR and not yet an independent state. Nagorno-Karabakh (meaning *black garden* in Turkish and Azerbaijani language) was established as an Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) within the borders of Soviet republic of Azerbaijan in July 1923.²⁶ The majority of the population were ethnic Armenians (Cornell, 1998, p. 53).²⁷ The dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh since the late 1980s. The very beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute is often set to February 1988, but there was also evidence of violence even before that, and the region have been regarded as the first dissident region of the USSR (de Waal, 2003, p.

²⁶ Autonomous oblasts were smaller territorial and administrative units in the USSR that were created within smaller nations, such as the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic.

²⁷ According to the 1989 Soviet census, there were 40.700 Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh whose overall population was 189.100 at the time. 145.500 of the population were ethnic Armenians (Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2008, p. 143).

18; Swietochowski, 2004, p. 109). In February 1988, the parliament in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to become a part of Armenia, which led to violence and protests spreading through the region, in addition to in Yerevan and Baku (de Waal, 2003, pp. 23-29; Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2008, p. 141). Between 1991 and 1994 a full-scale war between Azerbaijan and Armenia broke out claiming a large number of casualties and internally displaces persons (IDPs) the latter estimated to approximately 1 million refugees (de Waal, 2016). Azerbaijan also lost control over territories it had previously controlled.²⁸ Close to half of the IDPs were Azerbaijanis who fled from Nagorno-Karabakh and other Azerbaijani regions that were occupied. Interethnic violence, such as the pogroms targeted at Armenians in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait in 1988 triggered a spiral of violence and reprisals. Similar clashes in both Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan proper resulted in the mass exodus of Azerbaijanis from Armenia and Armenians from Azerbaijan (Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2008, pp. 141-142).²⁹ The violence continued, and in 1990 anti-Armenian pogroms again erupted, but this time in Baku, which resulted in the Soviet Army being sent to the capital (Swietochowski, 2004, pp. 111-113). The arrival of the Soviet troops in Baku on January 20, is often referred to as Black January by Azerbaijanis, which resulted in many casualties and losses following a Soviet imposed state of emergency, and this incident will be further discussed in the section below. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, both Azerbaijan and Armenia declared itself as independent states (de Waal, 2010a, p. 98). As independent states, they were facing severe challenges, particularly because both states were born into a violent and deadly inter-state war which caused at least 24.000 deaths until a truce was agreed upon in 1994 (Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2008, p. 141).

4.3.1. *Black January – Azerbaijan as a less familiar Other*

Inter-ethnic violence occurred on both sides of the conflict - against Armenians and Azerbaijanis - during the build-up to the fall of the USSR. In January 1990, anti-Armenian pogroms in Baku as mentioned in the section above erupted, which led to the Soviet army being sent to the capital. By Azerbaijanis in Baku, this was experienced as a violent crackdown against civilians, as the entrance of the Soviet military troops resulted in many casualties. For the Azerbaijani population, it was experienced as a tragedy, leaving 147

²⁸ In 1993, due to the seizure of territory, the UN Security Council adopted four resolutions (822, 853, 874, 884) (Mustafayeva, 2018, p. 120).

²⁹ As a result of the war and the conflict, the population in Nagorno-Karabakh is highly homogenous today with 99.7 % of the population being ethnic Armenians according to a 2005 census (Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2008, p. 143)

people dead and more than 800 injured (Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Black January was and still is regarded as a ‘tragedy’ and ‘massacre’ by Azerbaijanis, remembering it as an attack of a national movement in Azerbaijan led by the APF (Azerbaijan Popular Front) (Oran, 2010, p. 753). The interferences by the Soviets fostered strong anti-Russian and pro-independence sentiments among the Azerbaijani public, the influence of which is still present in Baku’s contemporary policies (Ipek, 2009, p. 229).

During the Cold War, Turkey’s policies towards the USSR had been very cautious, and this was also the case during the Black January massacre, as Azerbaijan was still a part of the Soviet Union. Then president Turgut Özal had argued that Turkey did not want to meddle in Azerbaijan’s internal affairs because it was respected as the responsibility of the Soviet Union, of which it had been a part since 1920 (Aydın, 2004, p. 3). It was not until August 30th, 1990 that Azerbaijan declared itself as an independent state, and Ankara recognised it on 9 November 1991 (Hale, 2002, p. 271).³⁰ In other words, supporting Azerbaijan was not regarded as Turkey’s responsibility, as Azerbaijan was part of the Soviet “Other” which could not easily be approached by Ankara, who also was a NATO member state. As a reaction to the events, Özal stated that Turkey was committed to Atatürk’s policy of non-interference abroad and was further suggesting that “*Shiite Azerbaijanis were more the concern of Iran than of Turkey*” (Özal cited in Oran, 2010, p. 753). Özal’s statement can be perceived to distance Turkey from the issue, which at the time, at least not officially, appeared to feel an obligation to support Azerbaijan or the Azerbaijanis. It is further emphasising a construction of Azerbaijan as a different Other (Campbell, 1998; Hansen, 2006) who was a part of the USSR, not a more familiar or friendly one. Religion – or sectarian differences is particularly drawn upon as a reason for why Turkey is not obliged to provide any support or assistance, as a majority of Azerbaijanis are Shi’a Muslims, similar to the official religion of Iran, whereas the Turkish population is predominantly following Sunni Islam. Özal’s statement can therefore be read as regarding Azerbaijani’s as closer to Iran than Turkey, as for instance Iran has a large Azerbaijani minority (Shaffer, 2001, p. 222).³¹ To sum up, the sense of solidarity and mutual commitment to Azerbaijan was not yet established, as Ankara instead reacted with caution.

³⁰ It was the Motherland Party government led by Mesüt Yılmaz who recognised Azerbaijan’s independence, and the succeeding government led by Süleyman Demirel further recognised all the former Soviet republics on 19 December 1991 (Hale, 2002, p. 271).

³¹ Iran still has a highly multi-ethnic population where Persians are the majority. The ethnic Azerbaijani minority is the largest one, in addition to other minorities such as Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmens and the large Azeri minority (Shaffer, 2001, p. 222).

4.4. Blossoming of relations post-Cold War

With the end of the Cold War, a new political world order was established which had major implications. For Azerbaijan, it meant that it was now able to successfully establish an independent state after almost two centuries of being under Russian control and influence. When the republic of Azerbaijan declared itself as an independent state on 18 October 1991, Turkey was set to be the first state with whom they established relations shortly after. The Azerbaijani foreign minister at the time, Hüseyn Sadikov, is said to have encouraged the Turkish consul to Baku to be the first state to recognise Azerbaijan. Turkey's early recognition was partly also a result of pressure from the public in addition to not wanting to be left behind by a recognition by Iran, who competed with Turkey for influence in the post-Soviet regions. Allegedly, Ankara was also aware that it had acted very cautiously with regards to the 1990 January events, and therefore wanted to recognise their independence early to 'compensate' for their lack of action earlier (Oran, 2010, p. 755).³² In this period, Turkey was the only link and bridge between Azerbaijan and the world, as Azerbaijan also had interests in accessing the Western countries through Turkey (Ismayilov, 2016, p. 13).

With the collapse of the USSR, Turkey found itself in a geopolitical environment in Eurasia which underwent rapid changes where Turkey was able to pursue a more independent foreign policy in the former Soviet territories than before and was increasing its contact with Turkic groups in the Caucasus and Central Asia (Aydın, 2004, p. 3; Landau, 1995, p. 4). Turkey saw a region where it could have the potential of becoming a significant regional player, as the communities living in these areas shared several historical, linguistic and cultural bonds with Anatolia (Hale, 2002, pp. 287-288).³³ In 1992, president Turgut Özal (1989-1993) had in a famous speech stated that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR gave Turkey new opportunities and that:

This opportunity is the biggest that we might take in 400 years. Today we are in such a cornerstone of history that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a large field opened before us from the Balkans to Central Asia full of Muslim or Turkish inhabitants (Özal quoted in Ongur, 2015, p. 423).

³² Interestingly, Turkey was also one of the first states to recognise the independence of Armenia in 1991 (Aydın, 2004, p. 10), with whom the relations historically have been far more complicated, and at the time of writing, there has not been established official relations between Turkey and Armenia.

³³ Although there are linguistic similarities between the Turkic languages spoken in Central Asia such as Uzbek, Kazakh, Kirgiz and Uighur, and the language spoken in Turkey, they are also quite different as Turks in Turkey must learn them as a foreign language. Azeri, however, can be understood by Turks from Turkey, and is more similar (Hale, 2002, p. 288)

The opportunity here referred to by president Özal presupposes that ,firstly, the people living in these areas are represented as kin, and thereafter in line with Anderson’s concept about *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1983). In this statement, the official discourse on Azerbaijan appears to have shifted. Contrary to 1990, the territories inhabited by Turkic peoples including Azerbaijan, are envisioned as a field for Turkish influence and cooperation, and not as an “Other” which had been the case only years earlier. Özal did clearly envision the revelation of vast territories inhabited by various people who shared kinship ties with Turkey and belonging to a shared community. As the excerpt from Özal’s speech illustrates, possible influence in states where both people identifying with a Turkic identity as well as a Muslim identity was represented as a unique opportunity for Turkey after the Cold War (Ongur, 2015, p. 423; Yavuz, 1998, pp. 23-24).³⁴

In 1993, President Özal was succeeded by Süleyman Demirel (1993-2000). Demirel also promoted the creation of “*a Turkic world from the Adriatic Sea to the Chinese Wall*” (Balcı & Bıçakçı, 2001). It was alternatively referred to by Demirel as *Eurasia* (*Avrasya* in Turkish).³⁵ This view had obvious pan-Turkist connotations, as it expanded the definition of who was belonging to the Turkic world or nation, as it for instance could include Uighurs living in China and some of the Balkan populations. Demirel, however, underlined that the slogan was pragmatic and aimed at promoting cooperation: “*the word pan-Turkism exists only in the dictionary (...) When we say Turkish world, this does not mean that the peoples of Turkish origin are seeking a single state. They are seeking cooperation*” (Demirel quoted in Erşen, 2017, p. 268). This can be interpreted as Turkey saw it could exert its influence and promote cooperation with these regions facilitated by metaphorical kinship and shared linguistic, historical and cultural ties. In this example, claims of kinship seem to be invoked by the political leadership to promote cooperation, but did not go any further.

³⁴ Possible influence over territories inhabited by people identifying with being Muslim, is often represented as neo-Ottomanism which was a dominant ideology on the rise in Turkey in the early 1990. In neo-Ottomanism, Turkey is envisioned as a powerful and industrialised power in the region (Yavuz, 1998, p. 23).

³⁵ The concept of Eurasia is geographically defined in two different ways: 1) as a joint Euro-Asian supercontinent, and 2) ideologically oriented regarding Eurasia as the region inhabited by Turkish/Turkic communities (Erşen, 2017, p. 269).

4.4.1. Bridging opportunities

Turkey was further presented as a bridge and potential link between civilisations in the East and the West, as Turkey wanted to play a dynamic role by connecting the newly independent states to the rest of the world, and assist them in shaping a national identity (Aydın, 2004, p. 4). This can be illustrated in the following statement from 1992 by Hikmet Çetin, Turkish foreign minister (1991-1994), who described Turkey as *“located at a crossroads, meeting point of a key region, Atlantic, Europe, Eurasia region, that with the help of scientific, technological and economic potential would turn into a locomotive of global peace and welfare”* (Çetin quoted in Yanık, 2009, p. 537). Here, Turkey are represented as a crossroad and meeting point between different regions who, because of its geographical location, economic and technological advantages, could be a global mediator in conflicts. In 1995, Tansu Çiller further said that *“it is not just Turkey that is concerned there: there are millions of Turkic speaking people of Central Asia at two models: ours or the Iranians. I see my tasks as changing the history because Turkey can become a bridge for peace between the two areas (...) We can be the link. We are democratic, we are secular and our economy is the first open, sophisticated economy in the area”* (Çiller quoted in Yanık, 2009, p. 538). In this statement, Turkey is also perceived as a bridge of peace between Central Asia and the rest of the world, particularly the West. This was also encouraged by the Western allies of Turkey, who feared that Azerbaijan would fall under the influence of Iran or Russia (Balçı, 2014, p. 44). References to what is often described as the Turkish model is also made. For instance, Turkey was presented as a big brother and a model for political and economic development for the newly independent post-soviet states, including Azerbaijan (Aydın, 2004, pp. 5-6). Turkey’s aspirations materialised in various ways. For instance, the Turkish government arranged the first Turkic Summit in Ankara 1992, where increased cooperation such as establishing a Turkic commonwealth and a common market between the Turkic countries was discussed (Hale, 2002, p. 291). From 1993 to 2000, 835 Azerbaijani officials had received Turkish military training on missions in Azerbaijan and the exclave of Nakhichevan, (Oran, 2010, p. 760). This can be examples of what Oelsner & Koschut refers to symbolic interaction and affective attachment between states, as bilateral and even multilateral bonds and meanings are enhanced for instance through summits and meetings, and that such institutions can provide a shared understanding of meaning and trust (Eznack & Koschut, 2014, p. 20).

Turkey’s ambitious policies in the Caucasus and Central Asia eventually became more pragmatic because of the Turkic states’ reluctance to be imposed by foreign influence yet again (Aydın, 2004, p. 5; Balçı, 2014). Furthermore, Russia re-established itself as a

significant power in the surrounding regions after a short period of isolation (Aydın, 2004, p. 8; Hale, 2002, p. 291). Turkey underlined that it would comply with principles such as “*non-interference in internal affairs*” and “*respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity*” as well as making sure that the Central Asian states shared equal rights with Turkey and ensuring common interests (Oran, 2010, p. 756).³⁶ This can be understood in line with Swidler’s argument of the concept of “Hollywood Love”, namely that people - and maybe even states - can be have overly high expectations about others, but ends up finding themselves disillusioned as the quest for a love that is without imperfections takes work and more time than expected (Swidler, 2001). Consequently, this form for romanticising another state and have high expectations about the bilateral relations appears to have been prevailing in the early 1990s, as the similarities between Azerbaijan and Turkey was giving more importance by political leaders than their dissimilarities (Ismayilov, 2016, p. 12).

4.4.2. *Khojaly as a foundational moment*

In the following years after Azerbaijan’s independence, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh continued, and evolved into an existential war for Azerbaijan between 1991 and 1994 who lost large parts of its territory – and it was under these conditions that relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan were established and developed (Soltanov, 2016, p. 22). From Ankara, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was regarded as the most critical conflict in its neighbourhood, as it was a direct war between two independent states (Hale, 2002, p. 270). The Turkish public strongly supported and sided with Azerbaijan in the conflict, as the relations to Armenia had been difficult following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish government adopted a more pragmatic stance, due to the fear of provoking a direct military conflict with Armenia – or even Russia as a worst case scenario (Hale, 2002, p. 270). Consequently, the Turkish government was forced to act more cautiously than what the public opinion may have wanted them to be, and this can be an example of identity and emotion, as group emotions and identity are situational and can be activated under particular circumstances (Mercer, 2014, p. 522).

³⁶ During the first year of independence of the republics in Central Asia, more than 1200 Turkish delegations had visited the new states (Oran, 2010, p. 757).



Map of Nagorno-Karabakh (de Waal, 2010b, p. 161)

As it is with many wars and conflicts, atrocities and massacres have often been conducted by every side of a dispute. The violence in Khojaly in 1992 was regarded as one of the worst massacres in the war by Azerbaijan, but also in Turkey. On the 26th of February 1992, 613 people were killed, 487 persons injured by the Armenian attacks and more than 1200 inhabitants were taken hostage according to the Azerbaijani government (Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019).³⁷ As a consequence of the Azerbaijani government's disability of preventing the aggressions against civilians and the territorial, then Azerbaijani president Ayaz Mutabilov (1991-1992) was forced to resign the month after. The tragedy also caused massive anti-Armenian public protests within Turkey urging the government to take action, which made it challenging for Ankara to remain neutral (Cornell, 2001, p. 284; Hale, 2002, p. 271). Although the public, or at least fractions of it, may have wanted a more direct response to the war from the Turkish side as they felt a communality to their Azerbaijani neighbour in the East, the government eventually chose a more pragmatic line.

Then president Turgut Özal (1989-1993) used rather strong rhetoric when talking about Armenia, such as when he stated that "*we should frighten them [the Armenians] just a little*", but he was not backed by then prime minister Süleyman Demirel who wanted a peaceful

³⁷ There are differences in the numbers of casualties. For instance, de Waal argues that 485 persons died in the massacre (de Waal, 2010a, p. 119).

settlement (Özal quoted in Hale, 2002, p. 272). The Turkish political system prior to 2017 was a parliamentary one, and the power of the president were considered less powerful compared to the president, and present day. This excerpt clearly illustrates that Armenia is regarded as a distinct Other who is an external threat to Azerbaijan, especially in certain circles in the Turkish political leadership. Özal further stated that Turkey “*had the right to intervene*” in Khojaly (quoted in Financial Times Report on Turkey, 7 May 1993, in Oran, 2010, p. 768). Here, Turkey is presented as a rightful supporter and protector of Azerbaijan. Not only were Turkey the rightful protector of Azerbaijan’s physical security, but maybe equally or even more important their ontological security, or their stable sense of Self, which did also include Turkey (Berenskoetter, 2007, pp. 55-57).

There were, however, some dissonance within the Turkish government on the policies towards the conflict and their support for Azerbaijan with Özal favouring more interventionist options. Turkey was torn in two. On the one side, president Özal favoured the view that the dissolution of the USSR provided Turkey with unique opportunities in the Caucasus and Central Asia because of the kindred peoples living here, and Turkey should therefore adopt an active policy. The other side led by prime minister Demirel favoured development of relations with Armenia, which would could have positive implications on the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh (Oran, 2010, p. 773). Eventually, Turkey’s official policy did not intervene, as suggested by Özal, or the public’s demands, but support for Azerbaijan, especially from Özal, after Khojaly differed significantly from only two years earlier after Black January when Azerbaijan was still a part of the USSR. Later in 1992 and in 1993 the power balance shifted in the region, favouring Armenia after increasing Azerbaijani territories and provinces were captured, which Azerbaijan was unable to prevent.

After 1992, Azerbaijan has made serious efforts to for the international recognition of the massacre as a genocide The Khojaly massacre has also been used to create a hostile image of the Other, in this case Armenia. The Azerbaijani government has worked for the official recognition of the massacre as a genocide, and the Azerbaijanis want to define itself as victims of aggression of the Armenian Other. A worldwide campaign was initiated by Leyla Aliyeva, daughter of the president and vice president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, to build international civil awareness about the massacres. Since then, several countries, including Turkey, has recognised the massacres as a genocide.³⁸

³⁸ In addition to Turkey, Pakistan, Mexico, Jordan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Honduras, the Czech Republic, Panama, Sudan, Peru in addition to more than ten states in the United States and the Organization for Islamic

Seen from the eyes of Baku, increasing the awareness of Khojaly has served as a particularly important tool because the 1915 genocide plays a central part in the Armenian discourse. In Armenian discourse, Turks and Azerbaijanis are regarded as the same Other belonging to the same out-group, which has been used in the Armenian mobilisation campaign against Azerbaijan in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Nigar Göksel further argues that the view of Turks and Azerbaijani as “one and the same” created a self-fulfilling prophecy by drawing the two societies closer, but it not only in the advantage of Azerbaijan, because they are held responsible for and are suffering from the wrongdoings towards the Armenians by the Ottomans and the CUP (Göksel, 2012, p. 9).

The tragic event has been kept in many Azerbaijanis’ memories since then, and its anniversary is an official day of mourning. Turkey has also officially expressed strong solidarity with the Azerbaijani people and the government and leaders. For instance, the Turkish grand national assembly (TBMM, *Türkiye Büyük Meclisi*) recognised the Khojaly massacre as a genocide on 15 February 2012 (Turkish National Assembly, 15.02.2012). Turkish leaders and the MFA are often expressing their condolences to Azerbaijan on the anniversary of Khojaly. An example of such statements happened on the 26th anniversary of the Khojaly Tragedy in February 2018, former Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım said that “*we are one nation in two states, the joy of Azerbaijan is our joy, the sorrow of Azerbaijan is our sorrow. Long live the Azerbaijani-Turkish brotherhood!*” (Shirinov, 2018b).

This illustrates the segmentation and hegemony of the discourse and the representation of Khojaly as a tragedy and a massacre, both by Azerbaijani and Turkish political leaders. Khojaly also appears to have become a foundational moment and a joint emotional history shared by both Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 20), and therefore seems to play a vital part in structuring how these actors were legitimising their bilateral relations in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

4.4.3. Turkish vital interests & friendship with Azerbaijan

Only months after Khojaly, the enclave of Nakhichevan, outside of Nagorno-Karabakh, was under attack in May 1992. The province is bordering Iran and Armenia, and shares a short border with Turkey. In the Treaty of Friendship signed by Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan in 1921 in the Turkish city of Kars, it was agreed that Nakhichevan would remain an autonomous region under Azerbaijan’s protection. As the Nagorno-Karabakh war developed,

Cooperation (OIC) had adopted parliamentary resolutions by 2016 (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, 2016).

clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan threatened to spill-over to Nakhichevan (Oran, 2010, p. 769). Viewed from Ankara, this implied that the fighting also was approaching the Turkish-Azerbaijani border, and the Turkish government needed to take a decision on whether it should intervene militarily (Hale, 2002, p. 272).³⁹ Among some, Turkey was regarded as a “guarantor” of the exclave’s status, and did support a direct response if the conflict should escalate further into Nakhichevan (Aydın in Oran, 2010, p. 769).

It was believed, and possibly rightfully so, that any Turkish interference in the conflict could provoke Moscow, who has been, and still is, a key player in the South Caucasus. The Nakhichevan attacks is also an event that could have triggered a direct confrontation between Russia and Turkey. According to the Turkish Commander of Land Forces at the time, General Mühittin Fisunoğlu, “*all necessary preparations*” had been made for a possible military intervention in Nakhichevan (Hale, 2002, p. 272). The Minister of State, responsible for the economy, Ciller (1991-1993) warned that she would call on parliament to authorize war “*if one inch of Nakhichevan soil is touched and there is any attempt to change its status*” (Çiller 4 September 1992 quoted in Kesgin, 2012, p. 43). The statements were aggressive and indicated that Turkey threatened to go to war if the attacks continued. It expressed a distinct discontent with the development of the war, but ultimately, the Turkish government did not intervene. Turkey did instead limit itself to bring attention to the issue internationally in the UN, the OSCE and NATO, rather than provoking Armenia directly, which could have had serious repercussions with regards to Turkey’s allies in the West (Oran, 2010, p. 769).

Later, Turkey even took a surprising turn and seemed to leave its threats. For instance, Turkey’s border to Armenia had periodically been open to give humanitarian assistance to Armenia (Hill, Kirişci, & Moffatt, 2015, p. 132). The Turkish government and Armenia, who was suffering at energy shortage at the time due to Azerbaijani closure of the oil pipelines, signed an energy deal in November 1992, where Turkey accordingly would sell electric power to Armenia (Bölükbaşı, 1997, p. 84). The agreement sparked outrage and strong criticism from Azerbaijan as well from the opposition in Turkey, and the plans were soon cancelled (Hale, 2002, p. 273).⁴⁰ Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Tefik Kasimov, said that the energy deal between Armenia and Turkey was a “*stab in the back*” (Bölükbaşı, 1997, p. 85). In other words, Turkey did want to take some actions in favour of Azerbaijan, and was even tempted to intervene directly to protect the region, especially after public pressure. A military

³⁹ It is only between Turkey and Nakhichevan that Azerbaijan and Turkey are sharing a border. The border is only approximately 11 km long, and is marked by the Aras River.

⁴⁰ For instance, The Motherland Party, the main opposition party at the time, and its leader Alparslan Türkeş voiced concerns over the agreement and deemed it as unfriendly towards Baku (Bölükbaşı, 1997, p. 85).

intervention would have a severe impact on Ankara's relations to the West and Russia. As a pragmatic solution, Turkey finally decided to prove its support for Azerbaijan by dropping the energy deal. Turkey's attempt to have a more pragmatic approach towards Yerevan as it was in their economic interest, failed because of the pressure from Baku, who felt betrayed. The example however illustrates that Turkey was motivated by self-interest as economic gains potentially could matter more than maintaining the relations to Baku at the time. One could therefore argue that the inter-state relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan in 1992 could be better described by a more strategic form of friendship where self-interest is an important component (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, pp. 14-15). On the other hand, the Turkish government did articulate threats against Armenia, although any escalation would also provoke Russia, which was not in Ankara – or its allies in the West's interest. In sum, Ankara did still not want to risk jeopardising its relations to Baku, nor did the government want to lose support at home, even if it would result in economic gains. It therefore seems that Turkey was willing to sacrifice itself and potential revenues for maintain and continue to develop the relations with Baku for moral and normative reasons and because they perceived themselves as protectors of Nakhichevan, which can imply a deeper form of friendship than the strategic form.

4.4.4. The Elçibey period in Azerbaijan – a move towards Turkey

After the end of the Cold War, the inexperienced new republic of Azerbaijan found itself in a regional environment where it had to balance three different powers, namely Turkey, Iran and Russia (Mehdiyeva, 2003, p. 271). With the coming of power of the Azerbaijan Popular Front of Azerbaijan (APF, *Azərbaycan Xalq Cəbhəsi Partiyası*) and President Ebulfez Elçibey in June 1992, Azerbaijan's foreign policy had a strong pro-Turkish orientation and favoured even closer ties with Turkey. Consequently, Turkism gained an even stronger position within Azerbaijan. Affirming his support for cultural Turkic identity and close relations, president Elçibey said in a speech that:

There is no need to debate the direction to be taken. We wish to follow the direction which will give us the opportunity to be Turks, Muslim, and modern. This idea is symbolised by the national flag we have adopted for the Turkish Republic of Democratic Azerbaijan (...) Turkey is the window of all the Turkish peoples in Central Asia opening onto the Western world (...) We believe economic cooperation will form the basis of our relations with Turkey. Of course, this will lead to a political rapprochement. However, we do not have a pan-Turkic approach. Each side must own its own homeland and territory. The nations must always have the right to determine their own future. We do not want much from Turkey in this difficult struggle. Turkey's moral support will be enough for us. The Turkish Nation of

Azerbaijan is strong enough to resolve its problems by itself (president Elçibey in Shaffer, 2001, p. 131).

As a newly independent country, Elçibey's statement focuses on which direction Azerbaijan should take, and the objectives are to be *Turks*, *Muslim*, and *modern*, and cooperation with Turkey, an ally of and a gateway to the West, is represented as the preferred option. Elçibey does not seem to primarily focus on closer ties with Turkey because of blood ties primarily, but rather the shared cultural and linguistic ties, and a felt form of kinship. APF's policies under Elçibey was focused on strengthening the ties to Ankara because of their common ethnic origins and linguistic ties (Mehdiyeva, 2003, p. 274), but they were not advocate for pan-Turkism, which the statement also underlines. This resembles the statement of Demirel (p.62) where cooperation between Turkey and other Turkic states were favoured.

It is emphasised that it was primary economic cooperation that the relations were to focus on, and that it will result in a political rapprochement. In this light, the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan could fit the definition of strategic international friendship. It is further clearly stated that Elçibey and his government did not have any pan-Turkish ambitions in their relationship with Turkey and that *moral* support for Ankara was enough. This description can better fit the definition of a more normative form of international friendship, which runs deeper than strategic interests.

The position of Turkishness in the state identity of Azerbaijan's was highlighted as the state is referred to as the *Turkish Republic of Democratic Azerbaijan* and it is also represented as the *Turkish* nation. There are further references to the symbolism of the Azerbaijani flag, which is representing the modern, Muslim and Turkish identity of the state. In the statement, Elçibey also underlines the importance of respecting the sovereignty of Turkey and Azerbaijan, thus regarding them as two separate states belonging to the same nation, as Elçibey had an anti-imperialist orientation and critical of foreign influence after centuries of Russian control (Murinson, 2010, p. 26).⁴¹ In the eyes of Elçibey, Turkey was represented as a more familiar Other, but not the extent that they were inseparable. Elçibey did not want Turkey to support Azerbaijan in other than moral ways, not military - which could risk a stronger dependence on Ankara, and the representation of Azerbaijan and Turkey as two independent states was emphasised. Eventually, Elçibey were facing both domestic as well as regional challenges because of his political stance that favoured cooperation with Turkey and

⁴¹ For instance, the APF considered to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Alstadt, 2003, p. 7).

other Turkic states, because it challenged relations to Iran and Russia. Domestically the pro-Turkish orientation of the APF led to discontent among some of the ethnic minorities within Azerbaijan who did not identify as Turkic, which one feared could lead to destabilization of the country (Mehdiyeva, 2003, pp. 272-275).⁴²

4.5. 1993 Closure of the Turkish-Armenian border

In the spring of 1993, the seizure of Azerbaijani territory continued as the goal was to create a corridor to connect Nagorno-Karabakh by creating a corridor to Armenia by seizing the province of Kelbajar, as it lies beyond Nagorno-Karabakh. The UN Security Council condemned the occupation of Kelbajar in the Resolution 822 adopted in April 1993, and stressed the importance of respecting Azerbaijani sovereignty (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 189). This was also visible in Turkish statements. President Özal reacted by stating that “*it is impossible to see the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan as limited to Karabakh any longer (...) It is perfectly clear that Armenia plans to create a greater Armenia out of Azeri lands*” (New York Times, 1993). This illustrated a certain continuity in how Armenia’s territorial gains in the war was viewed from Ankara, as there had been attacks in provinces outside of Nagorno-Karabakh in previous years, but the issue now became even more pressing. Armenia is further perceived as a threatening Other planning to further seize Azerbaijani territory, which can be interpreted to illustrate that Azerbaijan, a friendly neighbour or even the younger brother of Turkey in need, and therefore additional assistance from Ankara was necessary.

It was now impossible for the Turkish political leaders, to regard the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent from other policies concerning Azerbaijan as the occupation of territory continued, as seven adjacent districts had been occupied as well (Mikhelidze, 2010, p. 2). Simultaneously, peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan had started within the Minsk Group of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the expansion of the occupation was thus met with frustration. Large protests were further arranged in Turkey by the public to pressure the government to intervene in the conflict. President Özal said that the conflict never would be settled if “*Turkey did not display its teeth*” (Oran, 2010, p. 769). The president did clearly envision that Turkey had a key position

⁴² In addition to ethnic Azerbaijani Turks who constitute approximately 91.6 % of the population of the Azerbaijani republic, 2 % are ethnically Lezghins, 1.3 % Russian, 1.3 % Armenian and 1.3 % Talysh, in addition to some other smaller ethnic groups (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018).

in resolving the conflict, and favouring to intensify the support of Azerbaijan. Prime minister Demirel rejected a request from Azerbaijan's government to send helicopters for evacuation of civilians on the ground as it could hurt relations with Russia (Bölükbaşı, 1997, p. 85). Hundreds of civilians allegedly died fleeing the occupation of Kelbajar in 1993 (de Waal, 2013, p. 225). Demirel did not want the government to be “*governed from the streets*”, and feared that by intervening, the conflict would turn into a sectarian issue between Muslims and Christians and lead to the establishment of an international bloc that would hurt Turkey and Azerbaijan in the long term (Oran, 2010, p. 774). In this light, it is interpreted that Demirel's government was satisfied with the continuity of pragmatism in the support of Azerbaijan, which was forced by Ankara's competition with Iran and Russia over influence in the Caucasus.⁴³ Turkey was also hesitant getting involved in conflicts with other states, a legacy of the Kemalist doctrine. In this way, this also resembled Turkey's representation of the policy issue in 1991 in the event of Black January, although not to the same extent as Azerbaijan was not represented as a more different Other which Turkey did not feel any commitment to.

In order to find a more pragmatic solution among those who wanted to intervene militarily and those who was committed to not getting involved at all, Ankara found a middle way. The government's reaction was therefore to close the border between Armenia and Turkey, and that no establishment of diplomatic ties between Yerevan and Baku was going to happen – unless the seizing of Azerbaijani territory stopped (Welt, 2013, p. 209). From Ankara, their position was thought to delegitimise the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and to allegedly encourage “*Yerevan to reach a compromise solution with Baku*” (Göksel, 2012, p. 8). The Azerbaijani government regarded this as an act of solidarity and was an act of solidarity with the Azerbaijani Turks (de Waal, 2010a, p. 121; Veliyev, 2011, p. 30). According to the Azerbaijani scholar Elnur Soltanov, viewed from Baku, it was also regarded as “the biggest favour ever done to Azerbaijan in its most pressing problem” (Soltanov, 2016, p. 30). Differently from the other states in Azerbaijan's immediate neighbourhood or outside of it, had taken similar measures to support Azerbaijan on the issue, although not militarily. This was the most active measure adopted by the Turkish government in the conflict so far. Differing from the events in Khojaly and Nakhichevan, Turkey strived further to prove their

⁴³ One of Russia's major concerns in the Caucasus post-Cold War was that pro-Turkish sentiments in the Caucasus could spill-over onto Turkic or Muslim minorities living within the Russian federation (Oran, 2010, pp. 781-782).

support for Baku, which was no longer limited to dropping energy deals with Armenia or voicing their concerns over the conflict.

Despite efforts to express solidarity with Azerbaijan, some have argued that Turkey could have gone even further in their support. Soltanov argues that Nagorno-Karabakh has been one of the largest tests to the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship, and that Turkey clearly was unable to provide the role that the majority of Azerbaijani people when the first phase of the war was lost (Soltanov, 2016, p. 23). The events and additional occupations by Armenians has made the limitations of Turkish power visible, as Turkey was not able to prevent the occupation of territory twice the size of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to create a security zone (de Waal, 2010a, p. 98). In May 1993, president Özal died, and no one was pursuing the same pro-Azerbaijani Caucasus policy to the same extent. After his death, Turkey took a mediator role in the conflict, for instance by joining the peace negotiations through the Minsk Group of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Oran, 2010, p. 774).

4.5.1. The beginning of the Aliyev era

The capture of meant that they lost the control over a significant province, but their ruling president was also overthrown. In late August 1993, Elçibey lost his presidency after a referendum made Heydar Aliyev the acting president (Alstadt, 2003, p. 8), and his rule had a substantial impact on modern Azerbaijan until his death in 2003. In the presidential election in October, Aliyev was elected the president of the republic. To begin with, the Turkish government was criticised internally by many for not being able to keep a pro-Turkish government in power in Azerbaijan, and seeing it as a failure of the impact of the Turkish model – at least in the Caucasus. Aliyev's strong connection to Russia from being a former KGB security agent working made Ankara hesitant to embrace Azerbaijan's new state leader in the beginning. It was argued that Aliyev would support cooperation and favouring Turkey and Turkishness when it suited him, but at the same time suspending agreements made by the Elçibey government, such as visa-free travel for Turks from Turkey to Azerbaijan, and dismissing Turkish military experts in Azerbaijan (Ismailzade, 2006).⁴⁴ Despite this, Aliyev did not ignore the cultural and linguistic affinities shared by the Azerbaijani and Turkish societies, and made several references favouring Turkism, and even pan-Turkism. Just after being elected president, Turkey was the first foreign country visited by Aliyev. In 1994, he held a famous speech to the Turkish parliament:

⁴⁴ Although these policies were reversed later and relations were improved, it still made some impact on the bilateral relations (Ismailzade, 2006).

The Azerbaijani-Turkish ties have a long history. We are *one people, we have common roots*; we have one history, one religion. During many centuries, our peoples preserved and developed similar or slightly different traditions, culture and science. We were shoulder-to-shoulder. The relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan were always called friendly and brotherly. These are relations of peoples united by one root. This was our past, and when we have been deprived of the possibility to communicate, we preserved these traditions in our hearts and we have returned to them now (Aliyev, 9 February 1994, quoted in Murinson, 2010, p. 36).

The statement illustrates that although Elçibey were no longer in power, there was to a large extent continuity in the representation of the relations to Azerbaijan. Most noteworthy is the continued commitment to the bilateral relationship with Turkey even with the change of power. In the speech, Aliyev clearly stressed that the bilateral relations shared by Azerbaijan and Turkey were important because the two republics were kindred and had shared historical roots (Oran, 2010, p. 770). As mentioned earlier, Turkey and Azerbaijan does to some extent share historical ties, but to a lesser extent than with many other states. For instance, historically, one could argue that Turkey might have more in common with states who was established after the fall of Ottoman Empire than with Azerbaijan. Aliyev also speaks about the representation of the bilateral relations as friendly and brotherly as naturalised, and that Turks and Azerbaijanis are “*one people*” who were deprived for ways of communicating in the past, and is presented as being caused by events and developments out of their control. Moreover, the metaphor of having common roots based on history and religion can also be understood in terms of not only a felt kinship, but also blood ties, which is putting an even stronger emphasis on this representation. The shared bonds between Turkey are presented as having always been there, and that each part now finally could approach each other. Furthermore, as Turkey was set as Aliyev’s first destination as the new head of state, illustrates a friendly practice that has continued until this day.⁴⁵

Another interesting point stressed by the president in this statement is the religious ties shared by Turkish and Azerbaijani societies. Religion and ideology are factors that can contribute to that states fell a deeper connection to one another and kindred (Haugevik, 2018). A majority of the Azerbaijani and Turkish populations can be described as Muslims, although with some sectarian differences. Most of the Turkish population is following Sunni Islam, whereas Azerbaijanis are predominantly following Shi’a Islam. It is, nevertheless, important

⁴⁵ For instance, the first official visit after being elected president for the first time in the 2018, President Erdoğan visited Azerbaijan followed by Northern Cyprus and Brussels (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018a).

to underline the position of secularism in Turkish and Azerbaijani states and societies, as secularism has been protected in the constitutions of both states (Murinson, 2010, p. 28). Despite the protection of secularism in both constitutions, some of the Turkish and Azerbaijani political leaders are observed as practising Muslims and acknowledged the role of Islam in society (Murinson, 2010, p. 30). Thus, the historical, but also religious ties, appears to play a role when Azerbaijani leaders, address the Turkish lawmakers and officials.

4.5.2. Energy cooperation: Sacrifices or mutual commitments?

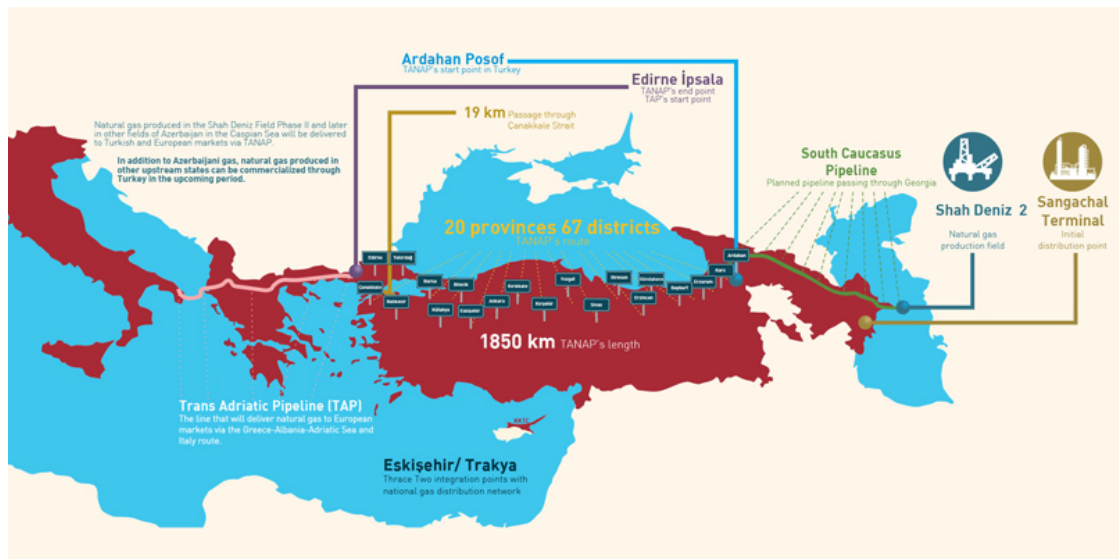
One of the immediate implications of the isolation of Armenia was the severely worsening of Ankara's already strained relations to Yerevan. Turkey's solidarity and support with Azerbaijan, has made any normalisation in the bilateral relations difficult in addition to having implications for Turkey's policies in the region (Balçı, 2014, p. 47). The difficulties in establishing bilateral relations is much rooted in the atrocities taking place in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, which Armenians regards and wants to be recognised as a massacre against them in 1915. Ankara, refuses to recognise the massacre as a genocide, and Baku shares their position on the issue (Balçı, 2014, pp. 48, 46). Another result of the border closure was that Armenia made serious efforts to get attention to its campaign for the international recognition of the 1915 genocide (Soltanov, 2016, p. 30).

The decision to close the border can be understood as an expression of mutual commitment, as friendly states will have each other's back and support each other (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21). At the same time, Turkey's support of Azerbaijan had not come without costs. For instance, this could be observed for the oil trade in the region, because it would limit the possibilities for energy trade in the South Caucasus, which was in Ankara's interest. Although Turkey has few energy resources on its own, energy has been a central part of Turkey's foreign policy. Turkey has aspired to take part in various energy projects by taking advantage of the "uniqueness" geopolitical position between the West and the East (Wigen, 2012, p. 599). Therefore, it can further be understood as a representation or expression of normative friendship between Turkey and Azerbaijan, realised through mutual identification and trust, and where self-interest matters less compared to in strategic friendships, at least in the official discourse.

Turkey particularly seek to negotiate with other states with vast energy resources in the immediate neighbourhood after the USSR breakup, particularly with Azerbaijan who is rich in hydrocarbons. In March 1993, an agreement was signed between Ankara and Baku under the Elçibey government to construct an oil pipeline between the Turkish coastal city of

Ceyhan and Baku, which enabled the first explorations of the oil and gas fields in the Caspian Sea (Hale, 2002, p. 272; Wigen, 2012, p. 602). This happened after the Azerbaijani parliament ratified a landmark agreement commonly referred to as the “Deal of the Century” because of its political, economic and strategic importance in December 1994, initiated by then President Aliyev. The agreement has been an important part of Azerbaijan’s oil strategy, and safeguarded the involvement of foreign investors in the Azerbaijani oil industry, including its development and transportation. For Turkey, the potential revenues it would get from the pipeline was far less important than the political position it would gain by being an actor that could be reckoned with in the oil industry in the Caspian sea, which would also increase its strategic position with regards to Western states (Hale, 2002, p. 277).

The border closure was the strongest supportive measure taken by any country, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict gained international attention as Turkey, a NATO country and ally of the West, had its back. Some have argued that Azerbaijan wanted to return the favour to Ankara after they decided to support them in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue by agreeing with Turkey on building a pipeline shipping oil from the Caspian Sea through Tbilisi to the south-eastern coastal city of Ceyhan in Turkey, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) (Soltanov, 2016, p. 31). The BTC pipeline was finalised in 2005. The project was supported politically by the United States. The BTC, in addition to other energy projects such as the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), contribute to weakening Azerbaijan’s dependence on Russia (Aydın, 2004, pp. 13-16). In the eyes of Baku, the oil and gas pipeline projects have been favours provided to Turkey because of their decision to close the border (Soltanov, 2016, pp. 32-33). Thus, when Azerbaijan was in need, Turkey was providing a helping hand. This can perhaps also be understood in terms of gift relations (e.g. Mauss, 1967), as establishing energy cooperation with Turkey can be interpreted as an expression of gratitude by Baku because of the solidarity and support provided by Turkey during difficult times. According to Wigen, similar examples of Turkey giving a hand “when little brother is need” is especially effective as instrumentalist calculations are overshadowed because Azerbaijan actually needed Ankara’s help in the conflict, and because using claims of kinship makes such support appear more genuine (Wigen, 2018, p. 131). In sum, Turkey’s decision to close the border to Armenia had several implications with regards to its relations to Armenia and its political scope of action in the Caucasus region. With regards to Azerbaijan, it contributed to enforce Ankara’s commitment in terms of support and solidarity in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which was received with gratitude from Baku.



Map over pipelines in Southern Caucasus and Europe (Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project, 2019).

4.5.3. The AKP and energy hub ambitions

With the coming of power of the AKP government in 2002, there was still continuity in the energy policy and the relations towards Azerbaijan. The energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey continued and expanded with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in 2002. Under the AKP, one of their priorities has been in the area of energy and the realisation of the BTC pipeline, and it is still the key issue in Turkey's relations to Southern Caucasus, and Azerbaijan in particular (Balcı, 2014, p. 44). Taking part in energy trade can potentially make Turkey a central country and hub for the transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian Basin to Europe, because of geographical position between the East and the West (Balcı, 2014, p. 44; Wigen, 2012, p. 601). With regards to the pipeline projects, Turkey did not choose the most profitable option of transporting the natural gas from Iran through Armenia because of political reasons (Wigen, 2012, p. 608). For Azerbaijan, involving Armenia would not be an option. This political solution is also supported by Western actors, such as the US and the EU, transporting oil through Iran would be highly problematic.

Additional projects that could contribute to realising Turkey's ambitions have been finalised or are underway, as Turkey and Azerbaijan are cooperating on several pipeline projects in the region. Still, Azerbaijan contributes to help Turkey realise its energy dreams,

as the border still remains closed, which implies that the mutual commitment is still there, representing a continuity in both discourse and practice. At the same time, their energy cooperation benefits them both economically, and Azerbaijan gets a Westwards connection through Turkey. One project where their energy cooperation is visible is the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) bringing gas from the Shah Deniz II field in the Caspian Sea to Turkey and Europe (Soltanov, 2016, p. 32). The project was inaugurated in 2018, and represents the continued importance of energy trade on the bilateral relations. Turkey expressed their ambitions in the following words of president Erdoğan on the inauguration of the TANAP pipeline stated that “*our country is one step closer to its vision of becoming a hub of regional energy lines thanks to TANAP*” (Die Welt, 2018). In other words, it is clear that projects like the TANAP is envisioned as a unique opportunity for Turkey, and that this cooperation is significant for the inter-state relationship on various levels, as for instance the construction of an extension of this pipeline, namely the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) is also underway. The gas pipelines, in addition to South Caucasus Pipeline are part of the Southern Gas Corridor was constructed after the initiative of the European Commission to reduce Europe’s dependency on Russian natural gas (Balçı, 2014, p. 44).

4.6. Football diplomacy & the 2009 diplomatic crisis

In 2008, Yerevan and Ankara started efforts to normalise their bilateral relations, which remains to be developed. Various issues seem to challenge the reconciliation of Turkish-Armenian relations, and it was also these interconnected problems that the protocols aimed at resolving. From the perspective of Turkey, mainly two key aspects are making it difficult to establish and maintain relations with Armenia. The first issue is the delicate question of the events of 1915, which Armenia wants to be internationally recognised as a genocide and Turkey denies (Gunter & Rocthus, 2010, p. 157; Göksel, 2012, p. 1). In addition, the bilateral relations are further complicated due to Turkey’s support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Ankara’s decision to close its border to Armenia in 1993 (Göksel, 2012, p. 1).

With Turkey’s ambitions to become an energy hub and regional leader, the isolation of Armenia became an increasing challenge to Ankara and has had a negative impact on their ties (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 190). Compared to Turkey, the border closure has had much larger economic implications on Armenia, which is a landlocked state (Gunter & Rocthus, 2010, p. 158). Turkey’s growing ambitions for becoming a regional key player and economic

power in the Caucasus was somewhat halted by its closed border to Armenia, and which also created some preconditions for the normalisation efforts on the Turkish side, which was encouraged by the EU and the US as well, especially as stabilising the Caucasus was prioritised after the 2008 Georgian-Russian War (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 190; Ulutaş, 2010, p. 5).

The normalisation process began in September 2008, and was initiated by what is often referred to as “football diplomacy”, as then President Abdullah Gül accepted an invitation from his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan to visit Yerevan during a FIFA World Cup qualifying match between Turkey and Armenia.⁴⁶ The visit made Gül the first Turkish head of state to visit Armenia since its independence from the Soviet Union (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 190). At first, the initiative was welcomed by Azerbaijani officials. Some months later, in April 2009, it was announced that a common roadmap was agreed upon between Turkey and Armenia. Then Minister of Foreign Affairs, to begin with, Elmar Mammadyarov, stated that he would “*welcome this initiative positively*” (Mammadyarov in Gunter & Rocthus, 2010, p. 167). But the Turkish-Armenian efforts to establish and develop bilateral ties unsurprisingly provoked reactions and was regarded with vigilance from Azerbaijan as their closest friend now were warming up to their enemy.

4.6.1. ‘Zero Problems with Neighbours’ turning into a crisis

In the early 2000s, there were significant changes in the political leadership in both Turkey and Azerbaijan. Being the incumbent president of Azerbaijan for ten years, Heydar Aliyev passed in 2003, succeeded by his son, Ilham Aliyev who followed a similar, pragmatic political line of his father (Balçı, 2014). In Turkey, most striking was the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in 2002. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected prime minister, as he was the leader and a central figure of the AKP, which he continues to be today.

The process of normalising the relations between Turkey and Armenia must be understood in terms of the foreign policy of the AKP, of which former Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, is often described as the main architect. The foreign policy was formulated in his publication, *Strategic Depth* (Stratejik Derinlik), and the principle of ‘Zero Problems with Neighbours’ has been essential in shaping the AKP’s foreign policy. At the core of the policy was to establish good relations with the neighbouring countries of Turkey and to alter

⁴⁶ Diplomatic history illustrates that improvement and development of bilateral ties can happen through sport events. One of the most famous examples are the ping-pong diplomacy paving the way for improved relations between the US and China during the Cold War (Aras & Özbay, 2008; Gunter & Rocthus, 2010).

existing hostilities and minimise problems in its surrounding regions, and this even applied to Armenia. Similarly, Turkey did also strengthen economic ties and diplomatic relations with other Middle Eastern neighbours, such as Syria, Iraq, including the Kurdish Regional Government in Northern Iraq (Ulutaş, 2010, pp. 1-3). For instance, this was much due to the economic miracle of the “Anatolian Tigers” (Balcı, 2014, p. 44). Energy was also a central aspect of the foreign policy of the AKP government, particularly of becoming an energy hub in the broader Middle East. This geopolitical focus has often been described as *neo-Ottomanism*. It is also worth noticing that the AKP government has understood *Eurasia* and had strategic interests in establishing its influence not only in the Caucasus or Central Asia, but also in the former Ottoman territories highlighting the shared Muslim identity and cultural solidarity (Erşen, 2017, pp. 273-274).

The AKP government has largely focused on conflict resolution and energy cooperation in its foreign policy in its immediate regional neighbourhood and on a global scale. For instance, energy policies and capitalising on various oil and gas pipeline deals as mentioned in the section above with Azerbaijan, the EU, Iran, Russia, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Turkey did further want to serve as a model and leader in its surrounding neighbourhood, and has taken a third-party roles in the Middle East such as the Arab-Israeli conflict (Altunişik & Cuhadar, 2010).. The foreign policy of the AKP, however, affected the solid partnership with Azerbaijan, both with regards to conflict resolution and energy cooperation (Kardaş, 2011, pp. 55-56). Finally, Turkey did also want to continue cooperation with the EU and was aspiring to become a full EU member-state (Davutoğlu, 2010). Thus, the diplomatic rapprochement with Armenia must be understood considering these factors.

4.6.2. Ankara confirms its continued commitment

Turkey later reassured Azerbaijan that that any normalisation would not happen without the inclusion of and the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. With the visit of prime minister Erdoğan to Baku in May 2009 the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations began going back to what they were prior to the protocols (Kardaş, 2011, pp. 66-67). Addressing the Azerbaijani parliament, Erdoğan was underlining the commitment Azerbaijan:

Azerbaijan's independence, liberty, prosperity and peace of Azerbaijan are as important as our own independence, our liberty, prosperity and peace. There are unshakable bonds between us. Our language, beliefs, customs, civilization are one (...) I also want to express my brotherly sentiments through the verses of the great poets of Turkey and Azerbaijan. The deceased Bahtiyar Vahapzade said it so beautifully: ‘our religion is one, our language is one, our moon is one, our provinces are one, our pasts,

our paths are one'. Azerbaijan-Turkey, we are "One nation and two states", with the same wishes and the same intentions (Hürriyet, 2009).⁴⁷

In this statement, prime minister Erdoğan clearly draws on claims of metaphorical kinship and the shared linguistic, cultural and historical bonds between Turkish and Azerbaijani societies. The commonness and shared ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan are highlighted with the slogan "*One Nation, Two States*" and Azerbaijan's independence, liberty and peace is respected and equalled with the one of Turkey. In this statement, kinship is perceived as being invoked to underline Turkey's commitment to the inter-state partnership. Later in May, Erdoğan stated during a live broadcast that there were no tensions between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and that a potential rapprochement with Armenia was directly tied to the peaceful resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh:

There is a causal link here. As for this link concerning the border gates; Nagorno-Karabakh has been occupied by Armenians and, in addition, 1 million Azerbaijanis have been forced into emigration. We closed the [border] gate. The reason was the occupation and the result was our closing the gate. If the reason disappears – then let us open the gate (Erdoğan quoted in Today's Zaman, 2009).

In this statement, Erdoğan confirms the view that the conditions for opening the border has not changed, because the occupation of what is Azerbaijani territory continued. In the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship, establishing structure and shared meaning around this issue seems to have been crucial (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 670). It is also expressing commitment to maintain the good relations to Baku because of the value of the relations itself, as the prime minister did not want to lose their trust by approaching Yerevan without Baku's support.

4.6.3. Baku's reaction

After the signing of the protocols, Baku was of the impression that their friendly partner, Turkey, had crossed a red line, because it was widely acknowledged that a central principle in the Turkish-Azerbaijan partnership was that no agreement or rapprochement with Armenia and Turkey should happen before the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (Mehtiyev, 2010, p. 4). In other words, their shared position in the conflict and their view of Armenia, was part of their shared narrative.

⁴⁷ Own translation.

The bilateral crisis did officially escalate when then President Ilham Aliyev cancelled his visit to Istanbul for a summit for the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC) during the spring of 2009, and after the summit expressed his discontent with the rapprochement by calling it “*a mistake*” (Aliyev in Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 191). This illustrated that the rapprochement was not well received in Baku. Aliyev’s absence from the Istanbul summit did further underline this. Later, the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan stated the following in a press release declaring that the Turkish government’s decision “*directly contradicts the national interests of Azerbaijan and overshadows the spirit of brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey built on deep historical roots*” (quoted in Mikhelidze, 2010, p. 4). In this statement establishing ties with Yerevan is represented as in conflict with Azerbaijan’s national interests, and even overshadowing the spirit of their relations. Azerbaijan here invoke claims of metaphorical and historical claims of kinship to remind Turkey of their special bond and belonging to the same narrative (Haugevik, 2018, pp. 53-54) - which should not be taken for granted, as Turkey and Azerbaijan has had a shared understanding of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. As a less powerful and smaller state, Azerbaijan seems to be more prone to the vulnerability of the interdependence on and trust in Turkey and their common project and understanding of the conflict against Armenia (Berenskoetter, 2007, pp. 671-672). Armenia had up until the normalisation efforts been constructed as an Other by both, and it can seem that sharing the same view of Armenia was an important factor in the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship. Without Turkey’s support, Azerbaijan feared it would be left alone and without any say in Nagorno-Karabakh (Mikhelidze, 2010, p. 4).

President Ilham Aliyev further reacted strongly by pointing at the advantages given to Turkey in energy deals and threatened to increase the price of oil : “*it is not a secret to anyone that for many years Azerbaijan has been selling its gas to Turkey at one third of market prices*” (Mikhelidze, 2010, p. 4). Baku’s warnings did also go even further and involved threatening the bilateral energy cooperation, and even to use Russia as an alternative route for oil and gas instead of Turkey, which was a no-go for Ankara (Balci, 2014, p. 49). As mentioned earlier, Turkey’s ambitions and interest to be a key actor in energy trade became possible by the close partnership with Azerbaijan. Eventually, the threats towards the energy cooperation could imply that strategic factors and self-interest does play an essential part in the relationship – of which Azerbaijan was aware - as it was not merely based evolved around ideational or emotional bonds (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 14). One the one hand, Azerbaijan had pulled all its possible strings by warning Turkey about changing the

circumstances of the energy cooperation if the normalisation efforts had been successful, and this had an impact on Turkey. The answer to whether Turkey decided to take Azerbaijan's view into consideration was motivated by the potential of losing an important partner in the Caucasus, is not black and white. On the one hand, Turkey had strategic interests in energy trade and cooperation, but on the other hand, Ankara seem to not have been motivated by self-interest alone as they can have felt a moral commitment typical in normative friendships, and a willingness to re-establish the Azerbaijanis' trust in their commitment to their shared narrative and joint emotional history linked to Nagorno-Karabakh.

4.6.4. The flag crisis

On 10 October 2009, two protocols, the "Protocol on establishment of diplomatic relations" and the "Protocol on development of mutual relations" between Ankara and Yerevan was signed in the Swiss city of Zurich, and was attended by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in addition to other high-level officials (Gunter & Rocthus, 2010, p. 168; Mikhelidze, 2010, p. 2). The border issue proved to be a contested matter, particularly After the signing of the protocols, the exchange of words between the political leadership in Ankara and Baku became more tense (Göksel, 2012, p. 1). This was particularly so because the Turkish decision to close the border in 1993 was provoked by Armenia's seizing of Azerbaijani provinces, and that neither of the two protocols mentioned the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which ultimately was not well perceived in Baku.

Only days after the Zurich protocols had been signed by Armenia and Turkey in mid-October 2009, what is often referred to as the second round of football diplomacy took place. Different from the previous meeting between the Turkish and Armenian heads of state, this time it led to substantial discontent, which triggered a crisis between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Prior to these events, the Turkish public opinion had been mostly been in favour of and supporting Azerbaijan as the normalisation efforts took place between Yerevan and Ankara, but after the circumstances changed (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 201). It was during a second round of football diplomacy that truly sparked a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The presidents of Armenia and Turkey again participated at a qualifying match for the World Cup in the city of Bursa where a Turkish police officer showed disrespect for the Azerbaijani flag in the stadium. As a response, Azerbaijani authorities lowered the Turkish flags that are hanging in the Martyr's Alley in the capital Baku to commemorate fallen Turkish soldiers fighting to liberate Baku in 1918. Thus, the Azerbaijani authorities

action was symbolic as well by drawing upon the historical events, which is often represented as an example of and a constitutional part of the Turkish-Azerbaijani friendship and relations. Eventually, the dispute between Turkey and Azerbaijan became settled, as “the brief period of animosity had been sufficiently unpleasant to scare them back into friendship” (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 201).

This illustrated that Turkey’s rapprochement process with Armenia was not well-received. On the contrary, it illustrated that when Turkey moved away from their shared narrative, it triggered unfriendly actions and practices. It is evident that the 2009 crisis represented a rupture in the discursive representation of Turks and Azerbaijanis as brotherly and friendly states, as this was overshadowed by the possible normalisation with Armenia, which could leave Azerbaijan isolated in the conflict without any supporters in the region, or at all. Therefore, the crisis further illustrated that although the representation of Turkey and Azerbaijan as kin had been relatively stable until then following the Cold War, the stable character of the bilateral relations should not be taken for granted.

The settlement of the diplomatic fizzle between Turkey and Azerbaijan can further be understood in terms of mutual commitment as conflicts between friendly states often can be expected to be resolved quickly without further escalations. This is because disputes states enjoying deeper forms of friendship will share the expectation of a peaceful settlement due to their shared solidarity and commitment (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21). One can argue that Turkey was held back by its commitment to Azerbaijan, but also their strategic partnership including energy trade, and consequently could not go forward with the rapprochement.

4.6.5. Outcome and intensification of relations

The normalisation process between Armenia and Turkey did never enter into force as the protocols were not ratified by either parliament. There were several challenges to the rapprochement efforts, and for Ankara, the negative effects it had on the relations Baku was among the most pronounced. The reactions of the Turkish public and the political opposition against the normalisation efforts was another significant factor (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013, p. 195). This can perhaps be understood in terms of the link between emotions and identity in IR, as these actors in Turkey expressed sympathy with and a feeling of belonging to Azerbaijanis, and therefore were against the normalisation efforts.

The normalisation efforts proved that Turkey’s relations towards Armenia were not decided in Ankara, but really in Baku (Balçı, 2014, p. 48), because of Azerbaijan’s discontent and warnings. An interesting development post-2009 is that the bilateral relations between

Turkey and Azerbaijan appear to have intensified and be stronger than before 2008. To confirm the AKP government's commitment to Azerbaijan, then foreign minister Davutoğlu assured that: "*Our relations with Azerbaijan constitute the most important strategic axis not only in the Caucasus but also in our entire foreign policy. We will continue to maintain our relations with Azerbaijan, too, by deepening them*" (Davutoğlu quoted in Kardaş, 2011, p. 72). The central role of Azerbaijan in Turkey's foreign policy seems very clear, because of their converging interests in energy and security in the South Caucasus, which is facilitated and enhanced by historical and cultural ties. This can be an example of a symbolic interaction (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 20), as the cooperation evolves around various levels and domains. The broad cooperation is even expected to be *enhanced* on all areas, which is said here. The intensification has materialised in several ways. Firstly, the bilateral partnership and energy cooperation seems to have been strengthened, as exemplified with the TANAP project and Baku's investment in downstream projects in Turkey. SOCAR, Azerbaijan's State Oil Company, have also been expected to increase its investments in Turkey. Further, Turkey and Azerbaijan has deepened their bilateral military cooperation. For instance, Turkey did also take stronger measures to support the Nakhichevan exclave, isolated from Azerbaijani territory as it borders Iran and Armenia in addition to Turkey. In 2010, the states signed the bilateral agreement for Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support with Azerbaijan which obliged them to assist each other using "all possibilities" in the event of a military attack (Göksel, 2012, p. 15). This illustrated that the commitment to continue support Baku's position in Nagorno-Karabakh, especially as Azerbaijan more than two decades after the outbreak of the conflict had been able to join any security organisations and was still isolated. It is further worth mentioning that the agreement has its limitations, as Turkey did not have any immediate obligations to intervene in the event of military aggression against Azerbaijan (Abbasov, 2011).

4.7. The 2016 Four-Day War

During the first four days of April 2016, also referred to as the Four Day War or the April War, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh escalated and violent clashes reoccurred on the frontline of the separatist exclave.⁴⁸ The escalation claimed more than 200 lives on both sides of the conflict, and has been the most violent flare-up since the 1994 ceasefire (International Crisis Group, 2017), thus illustrating the continued emergency and severity of the broader security situation in the region. Armenia was regarded as the “winner” of the 1994 truce as Azerbaijan was unable to regain control over Nagorno-Karabakh or the other occupied provinces. More than 20 years after the truce, Azerbaijan’s economy developed strongly, mostly due to oil and gas revenues, which in turn has enforced its military capabilities.⁴⁹ Azerbaijan advanced by attacking territories that was under Armenian control, including Lala-Tepe, a strategically important hill, and this was regarded as a milestone because Azerbaijan hoped the military advantages would lead to a diplomatic solution (Shiriyev, 2017; Zolyan, 2017, p. 112). Territorial victories were limited, but it has been argued that Azerbaijan intentionally started “a carefully controlled escalation” to raise international awareness of the fragility of the status quo which Azerbaijan regards as unfavourable”(Shiriyev, 2016). During the four days, it was a widespread fear that the hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan would ‘spiral out of control’ into an even more militarised and violent conflict (BBC, 2016). There were also warnings that Armenia and Azerbaijan were even closer to war after April 2016 than they had ever been since 1994, that could evolve into a regional conflict (International Crisis Group, 2017).

⁴⁸ Although the flare-up that occurred in the first days of April 2016, there have been several other violent incidents. For instance, since the summer of 2013 until 2016 security incidents had become more frequent and intense, including the use of artillery in and around civilian areas (Grono, 2016)

⁴⁹ Between 2004 and 2007, Azerbaijan’s defence budget increased from 260 to 667 US dollars (Özdamar, 2010, p. 349). In 2018, approximately 2,4 billion USD was allocated for the national security budget of Azerbaijan, which includes the military, law enforcement, the police, and which represents almost 20 % of its total budget (Shiriyev, 2018a).



Map of the Conflict Zone in a Regional Context (International Crisis Group, 2016)

4.7.1. Continued support and solidarity with Azerbaijan

During the tensions, the Turkish government did not hesitate to express their continued support and solidarity with its Azerbaijan. In a press release from 2 April 2016, the Turkish MFA stated that:

We condemn the artillery fire launched against Azerbaijan on the line of contact and the attacks by Armenia affecting also the civilian population on the night of April 1 to 2. We wish God's mercy on our fallen Azerbaijani brothers, patience to their relatives and a speedy recovery to the injured. We invite Armenia to observe the ceasefire and immediately put an end to the clashes (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

In this statement, the Turkish government condemn the attacks launched against Azerbaijan, and is expressing solidarity with their “fallen Azerbaijani brothers”. Kinship is invoked to imply a shared identity between Azerbaijanis and Turks, and that this is putting emphasis on the production and reproduction of certain identities – which in this case is on being brothers. It can further illustrate the empowering impact of friendship, as friendship can encourage states to believe that it is possible to achieve something together (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 671). The government is here in support of Azerbaijan, and wants an immediate ceasefire to be put in place.

The Turkish position in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict seems thus not to have changed significantly, as the Turkish government expressed strong support with Azerbaijan in the flare-ups. In a speech to the Turkish Red Crescent Council on 4 April, president Erdoğan said that “*the fire of Armenia’s massacres continues to burn in our hearts*”, adding that “*Karabakh will surely be returned to its rightful owner, Azerbaijan, one day*” (Daily Sabah, 2016b). The statement can be regarded as a strong expression of solidarity with Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh is attached a strong affective character. It is here represented as a foundational moment, which has been created a joint emotional history between them and a feeling of solidarity (Eznack & Koschut, 2014, pp. 78-80). It thus represents a continuity with the Turkish representations of the conflict in the early 1990s. The expression can further be regarded as a ritual of solidarity, which is done by using standardised verbalised expressions like this in favour of supporting Azerbaijan, and these rituals consequently seems to enforce the inter-state relationship between them. This is very much the case with Nagorno-Karabakh, including specific atrocious massacres, which increasingly appears to be a part of not only Azerbaijan’s, but also Turkey’s history, because Ankara regards these losses as *their own* as well.

In spite of the relations between Turkey and Armenia and their continuous attempts of normalisation, and the tensions with Azerbaijan, Turkey still wanted to assure and confirm their support for Azerbaijan eight years after the crisis in 2008 and 2009. It was also the first true episode after the event where Turkey’s support could be tested. In stating their position from eight years earlier, Turkey confirmed that they would support Baku and the Azerbaijanis until the end of time and the liberation of the occupied territories. This position was reaffirmed by then prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (2014-2016), who at a AKP parliamentary meeting said:

The whole world needs to know that Turkey will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Azerbaijan against Armenian aggression and occupation until the end of time (...) Each soldier martyred in Azerbaijan is our martyr. We will stand by Azerbaijan until all of its land, including Karabakh, is liberated (TRT World, 2016).

In yet another statement Turkey’s unconditional support and solidarity with Azerbaijan in the conflict is highlighted, which can be regarded as a continuity with previous statements, also prior to 2009. The conflict is in this statement represented as not only a matter of Azerbaijan, but of Turkey too, and in some sense, the statements can appear even more intense. For

instance, during the first Nagorno-Karabakh war from 1991-1994, the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations were relatively new, and both were in the process of shaping their post-Cold War identities, which was also evident in the Turkish official discourse. In 2016, the relations had deepened and developed, where Turkey supporting Azerbaijan's position in Nagorno-Karabakh was a structuring element, which can be observed in the representations of the bilateral relations. The statement can be an example of the affective attachment indicating a deep form of friendship and friendship between states, as Turkey and Azerbaijan share an emotional history tied to Nagorno-Karabakh. It is particularly emphasised with the collective identification in the conflict as each martyred Azerbaijani soldier is regarded as a Turkish soldier. It further indirectly uses parts of the same wording in the famous speech by former president Heydar Aliyev, highlighting that Turkey stands "shoulder-to-shoulder" with Azerbaijan in the conflict, a same expression employed by Aliyev affirming his commitment to the relationship with Turkey which had historical roots (p.57). This can be perceived to signify that Turkey's commitment and support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was unchanged, and the inter-state relationship, despite the differences and challenges faced eight years earlier.

4.7.2. A trusted friend in challenging times?

"The Turk Has No Friend But the Turk"

[Türkün Türk'ten başka dostu yoktur]

One development to consider is Turkey's regional environment has been challenging the last decade. First, the conflicts in Syria and Iraq in the wake of the so-called 2011 Arab Spring are among the one of the factors that have had an impact on the region. The conflicts tested the 'Zero Problems with Neighbours' foreign policy, and Ankara quickly became involved in various ways in both countries resulting in deteriorating relations with other states in the Middle East. In Iraq, Turkish military forces has also been targeting Kurdish groups. In Syria, Turkey has been supporting the ousting of President Bashar Al-Assad, and has also sought to diminish the influence of various Kurdish militant groups which Ankara regards as strongly affiliated with the PKK, for instance in the Operation Olive Branch (*Zeytin Dalı Hariketi*) in the North Syrian city of Afrin.

Domestically, Turkey has faced various challenges as well. The political developments within Turkey the past few years, and particularly the aftermath of the attempted coup d'état on 15 July 2016 has challenged Turkey's relationship to the Western allies and has levelled criticism towards the AKP government. Several observers have also voiced concerns over the crack-down on critical voices and supporters of the Gülen movement who was blamed for trying to overthrow the government.

The above-mentioned saying - "*The Turk has no friend but the Turk*" - is an old Turkish saying. In terms of foreign policy, it can be understood as an expression of the lack of trust or the fear of foreigners or outside powers attempts to weaken or divide Turkey, which is often referred to as the Sèvres syndrome mentioned earlier (p.55). Azerbaijan, on the other hand, which these chapters have illustrated, are not regarded as a foreigner, an outsider or a different "Other", but rather as familiar and even part of the same Turkic nation. Azerbaijan, in particular, who is geographically close and to a larger extent shares linguistic and cultural ties with Turkey, in addition to other Turkic states, can therefore be regarded as an alternative path for Turkey and important to maintain partnerships with particularly in times of unstable relations to the West (Erşen, 2017, p. 268). If the EU and NATO should close their doors on Turkey, cooperation with states such as Azerbaijan and other Turkic states could be an alternative (Wigen, 2018, p. 121).

The position of nationalism in Turkish politics, and as an important for the ruling AKP is also an essential factor in understanding the bilateral relations. Although nationalism has always been existing in Turkish politics, nationalist rhetoric has had a surge and become a key tool under AKP rule (Hedenskog & Korkmaz, 2016). Although much of the literature on the AKP has focused on its relationship with Islamism, not nationalism (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015), nationalism has been an important factor in now president Erdoğan and the AKP's more recent policy. Following various political scandals the past years in addition to the failed peace process with the PKK, the leadership had to take a more 'nationalistic turn' due to domestic pressure, such as maintaining a firm stance against, to acquire support in other policy areas Yerevan (Hedenskog & Korkmaz, 2016).

One implication of Turkey's difficult relations to countries in the region as well as with its Western allies, might be an enforced appreciation for its Turkic brethren, including Azerbaijan. Considering the recent developments, looking further towards the Turkic populated states in the East, does appear to be a likely path for Turkey and the bilateral relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan can be regarded within this argument. Ever since the establishment of ties in the early 1990s, Turkey and Azerbaijan appears to enhance their

bilateral partnership on several areas. It does thus not appear unlikely that parts of Turkey's motivation are looking for alternative communities to engage with, should the relations to the EU and the US continue the same path in the future.

5. The contemporary political relevance of kinship

This chapter will discuss the relevance of the concepts and claims of friendship and kinship in the academic discourse in Azerbaijan and Turkey. It will particularly analyse how experts and academics on foreign policy categorise the world, their interpretation of meaning, because they are, to some extent, contributing in shaping the foreign policy. While the previous chapter traced the historical development of the discourse in Nagorno-Karabakh, this chapter has its primary focus on observations drawn *synchronically* from textual material collected through semi-structured interviews during January and February 2018. The aim of this chapter is not to test the other findings against a representative sample, or the findings from the previous chapter. Instead the objective is to illustrate the analysis' relevance of how foreign policy elites are using claims of kinship, and the informants are therefore treated as credible actors and a part of the wider political debate or discourse on Turkey and Azerbaijan.

5.1. Brother states – naturalised?

Representations of how the interstate relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan first came about was briefly analysed in the previous chapter, but how is the very origins described today? Some of the informants – particularly the ones interviewed in Azerbaijan in particular - shared a somewhat similar view of their origins, although with some nuances in which events they put special emphasis on. In addition to the establishment of relations in the 1990s, many of the Azerbaijani informants referred to other foundational moments. For instance, one informant in Baku argued that the brotherly relations were shaped and originating from when “*the Turkish army helped the Azerbaijanis in creating an army and free Baku from Bolshevik hands*” (Informant 1). The origins of the relationship dated from the campaign of the Young Turks in the Caucasus. Another informant in Baku supported this view and saw the establishment of state relations to begin in 1918 when “*the Ottoman Empire was the first to officially recognise the first Azerbaijan Democratic Republic*”, and also stated that Turkey “*was the first state to recognise the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan under USSR rule, and finally its independence after the fall of the USSR*” (Informant 4). In sum, according to these Azerbaijani elites, the relationship started to emerge in the early 1900s, particularly because of the pan-Turkist policies of the Young Turks during the late period of the Ottoman Empire, which for instance also was illustrated by the assistance by the Ottomans appears to be part of the Azerbaijani academic discourse on the relationship to Turkey (e.g. Soltanov,

2016). In structuring the Azerbaijani discourse and identity, the brief period of independence for the ADR between 1918 and 1920 also appears to have been important in constructing the national identity of Azerbaijan, and this representation can appear to be naturalised in the contemporary academic discourse. Moreover, this period can be regarded a foundational moments enforcing affect in inter-state relations materialised by mutual assistance during politically challenging times (Eznack & Koschut, 2014, p. 74). In the Azerbaijani academic discourse, these moments were commemorated as acts of solidarity, which was employed to create a sense of belonging to Turkey (Eznack & Koschut, 2014, p. 79), but was not equally present in the Turkish academic discourse.

Other informants highlighted the fall of the USSR as crucial in establishing inter-state ties, which has been substantially mentioned throughout this thesis. This can be illustrated by the following statement: *“Turkey was one of the first states to recognise Azerbaijan after its independence from the Soviet Union. This has been the strength of the relationship since day one”* (Informant 3). This statement highlights and represents the early recognition of Azerbaijan’s independence as significant in understanding the depth of the inter-state relationship. Interestingly, neither of the Turkish informants made to a much smaller extent explicit references to the events in the early 1900s structuring the discourse, but they were instead highlighting the official establishment of ties. Some further perceived and represented the relations as brotherly and friendly today, not only among themselves, but in most segments of the Turkish and Azerbaijani societies. For instance, One Turkish informant represented the relation in these terms: *“This concept [of kinship] was always there, and it is naturalised”* (Informant 5). In this light, the representation of the inter-state relationship as friendly and brotherly is presented as naturalised. With regards to the roots of the representation of Turkey and Azerbaijan as kindred states, another interviewee in Baku put emphasis on the development of ties and blossoming of relations after the fall of the USSR:

Turkish sentiments was on the rise at the early days of independence under the rule of President Elçibey (...). Today, the concept of brotherhood is rather naturalised and accepted in different parts of everyday life in Azerbaijan (Informant 4).

According to this informant, emerging in 1990s, pro-Turkish sentiments has later become a naturalised and normalised part of everyday life in Azerbaijan today, and appears to be naturalised as well and as a taken-for-granted attribute. This can also indicate a certain degree of stability in the representations, as kinship is evident in both the official foreign policy (as

illustrated in chapter 4) and the academic discourse. This can further indicate that such representations has become a naturalised way of understanding the world for Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites, which is linked to the production of knowledge (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 47). One could also argue that this is a result of the seemingly large political effort in maintaining the representation over time, as there are few other representations that challenges the key representation (Neumann, 2001, p. 60), which in this case presents Turks and Azerbaijanis as kin. Through these mechanisms, it has become a part of a naturalised practice which creates certain contingencies for action and practice. In other words, what one can say and do within a certain setting within the cases of the foreign policies of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

5.2. Kinship as a facilitator

The importance of cultural and linguistic ties, or metaphorical kinship, is often highlighted by elites when talking about the inter-state relationship and that this bond was particularly strong because of this, and this was also evident in the academic discourse in Turkey and Azerbaijan. One informant in Azerbaijan described the bilateral relations in the following manner:

There are no other cases like this, and the brotherhood between Azerbaijan and Turkey is unique. There exists no similar “kardeşlik” [brotherhood] in Central Asia and it is only marginal there. I have never heard anyone [in Azerbaijan] describe other countries as brothers to the same extent. This term has only been used about Turkey (...) It has not been used about Iran or Russia (...) but only the Azerbaijani minority living in Iran (Informant 3).

This Azerbaijan informant described the relations to be unique and exceptional compared to states in Central Asia, Iran or Russia, and did not regard their other bilateral relations to any other states as sharing the similar characteristics or dynamics, despite sharing cultural, historical and linguistic bonds with them, too. For instance, the Turkish foreign ministry describes the relations to Central Asian states as friendly and aided by “common historical, linguistic and cultural ties” (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). Additionally, Turks from Turkey have a harder time understanding Uzbek or Kazakh language than Azeri, and geographically, they are not as close. Azerbaijani officials does refer to Iran in kinship terms. During an official visit to Iran in March 2017, President Ilham Aliyev expressed his gratitude towards his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani neighbouring country: *“First of all, I would like to thank you for your invitation and the hospitality*

extended to me. I am very glad to visit the brotherly Iranian land' (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, 2017). However, here it is the *land*, and not specifically the people or the president himself who is referred to as a brother, which is often the case when they are referring to Turkey. Then how is the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship perceived as closer and more unique in comparison to other states who share bonds to them both? One explanation is provided by the same Azerbaijani informant mentioned above, contrasting Turkey's relations to Azerbaijan and states in Central Asia:

Trade and business is easier with Turkey than other Turkic states, such as the states in Central Asia. Similarities and ties concerning language and culture are not as close as with Turkey, and cannot facilitate these meetings the same way. (Informant 3).

As the excerpts illustrate, the primary focus is on the importance of shared linguistic and cultural ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan in their bilateral relations, and their function as a facilitator of meetings and other interactions at various levels – also at the highest political levels. It further indicates some of the significant factors of metaphorical kinship between states, based on the language and culture, amongst others (Haugevik, 2018, p. 52). In the statement, the informant perceives those factors to be stronger and deeper in the Turkish-Azerbaijani example than in others. It may also be further linked to the image of the nation as limited, as every nation has some boundary beyond which there are other nations (Anderson, 1983, p. 7). Considering this statement, the Central Asian states are not interpreted as different belonging to another nation, rather imagined as being further away in geographical, cultural and linguistic terms.

5.2.1. Natural partners

Moving beyond cultural, linguistic and historical ties, other factors may matter as well when explaining the depth of the bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and Ankara. An informant in Ankara further stated that historical and cultural ties did matter in the relationship, but that other factors could be equally important too:

They are natural partners because of their geographic proximity, Azerbaijan's enormous energy sources which Turkey does not have, in addition to Azerbaijan's position as a crossroad linking Turkey to Central Asia. Also, Azerbaijan has interests in reaching out to Europe through Turkey (Informant 5).

The informant highlights Azerbaijan and Turkey as *natural* partners and regards several other dynamics at play in their bilateral relations in addition to cultural and linguistic ties. In this excerpt, it is interpreted to indicate their concurrent interests. The reference to *geographic proximity* as a key factor also illustrates some nuances in the representations of the relationship as geopolitical factors and material interests are placed on equal terms as metaphorical kinship. In this view, material factors and interests appear to work together alongside cultural and historical ties which results in over-all closer and stronger ties. Azerbaijan is here represented as a crossroad by linking Turkey with the Central Asian states, who are located further away geographically but also culturally and linguistically, and this resembles the bridge metaphor used in the foreign policy discourse to describe Turkey (Yanık, 2009). Conversely, Turkey is also represented as a crossroad or link for Azerbaijan in approaching Europe through Turkey. Energy trade is further highlighted as an important component of their bilateral partnership, especially because Azerbaijan has significant petroleum resources, which Turkey does not. In this way, they are represented as matching the interests of one another which accordingly makes them natural partners. A similar representation of Turkey and Azerbaijan as interdependent can be found in the following statement by an Azerbaijani informant:

The brotherly relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are both political and social. After Azerbaijan's independence, Turkey was a secular country. Azerbaijan needs Turkey because it is isolated from the region. Turkey needs Azerbaijan because Azerbaijan has enormous energy resources, which Turkey does not. Azerbaijan is also geopolitically important because it connects Turkey to Central Asia. In conclusion, there is a kind of interdependence between the two states (Informant 4).

This textual excerpt from the interview with this Azerbaijani informant resembles how the Turkish informant described Turkey and Azerbaijan as “*natural partners*”, as they here are described as “*interdependent*” for many of the same reasons as listed above, as geopolitical considerations and energy trade are regarded as crucial in determining the relationship. This Azerbaijani informant, however, also refers to the secular orientation of Turkey after Azerbaijan’s independence. As mentioned, geographical proximity is a determining factor in relations between states who are friends or kin (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 607; Haugevik, 2018, p. 52). If geography and strategic interests matter as much as indicated by this Turkish informant, the bilateral relations cannot be solely understood in terms of kinship and

friendship, but other explanations may matter as well. Berenskoetter also argues that friendly inter-state relationship will be characterised by interdependence, because by sharing knowledge and establishing transnational biographies or “common stories”, states will depend on one another to create a stable sense of self (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 672). In this sense, the interdependence between Turkey and Azerbaijan does not only include their construction of identity and self, but strategic interests do also matter in this understanding of the relationship. Another informant in Baku partly sustained the importance of other factors than kinship mattering:

[Common] culture was (...) more important right after Azerbaijan got its independence. Then politics and culture became equal. Now, however, culture has a secondary role in the relations. After the independence, there was an initial euphoria about brotherhood, but later it started to transform like love transforms in a relationship (Informant 2).

In his representation of the relations, culture had an initial important part in shaping the relations, as Turkey and Azerbaijan reacted with *euphoria* because they discovered a potential partner in the region, with whom they shared kinship ties, and they were finally able to establish relations with them after Azerbaijan’s independence in 1991. But, as time went by, the dissimilarities and actual realities became clearer and more rational, and one had to adopt more pragmatic approaches to one another. Further, cultural ties and political interest is here represented regarded as equally important, and in interplay. The references to the bilateral relations changing “*like love transforms in a relationship*” can be tied directly to what Swidler refers to in her book (Swidler, 2001, pp. 113-114) about how people treasure the picture of love like in movies from Hollywood, but later are experiencing that love requires hard work, commitment and compromise. In this representation of the Turkish-Azerbaijani case, this can be interpreted to signify that Turkish and Azerbaijani political leaders first was blended by their similarities, but later became aware of their differences, and had to adopt a more pragmatic approach to one another. Moreover, cultural ties or metaphorical kinship is represented as less important now than earlier, and that political and strategic interests now matter more.

An informant I met with in Baku argued that trade between Azerbaijan and Turkey is favourable from an Azerbaijani perspective “*trade is facilitated by geographic proximity. Economy is perceived as bigger and better in Turkey than in Azerbaijan and other neighbouring states*” (Informant 2). Thus, Turkey is represented as a favourable trade partner

for Azerbaijan. When asked about the effects and implications of feeling like brothers and having a good relationship had on the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, many of the interviewees referred to the economic cooperation and energy trade. One interviewee in Baku said the following about the most important effects of being brothers:

It is visible on the economic area, as being brothers is implying trust and knowledge of language and culture. Many Turkish companies establish themselves and do business in Azerbaijan, and vice versa, and any Azerbaijanis travel and work in Turkey. Language and culture is facilitating these exchanges (...) Politics and trade drive each other, and this is also the case with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Turkey has invested in several mega projects with Azerbaijan, such as the BTC and other pipeline projects and smaller companies have established themselves (Informant 3).

In this excerpt from the interview, the informant is linking the implications and benefits of being brethren with energy cooperation and trade. Knowledge of one another's language and culture is set as preconditions for interaction on this arena, and referring to someone as a brother also indicates high levels of trust. Trust between states, as mentioned in the theoretical chapter, is regarded as an important criterion with regards to normative international friendship among states (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 14). Here it is connected to a shared language and culture among people from Azerbaijan and Turkey. A similar view can be found in one interview with a Turkish informant:

Common culture and language helps facilitate business relations. This has little to do with ethnicity, and rather culture as a facilitator. For business and diplomacy, culture always helps, and Turks and Azerbaijanis are aware of this benefit. For instance, it is easier for Turkey to work with Greece and Greeks than with Peruvian people. Not that Turkey has anything specifically against Peruvians, but rather that they don't share the same culture or language (Informant 5).

This can be read as an example of states who can be described by metaphorical kinship, as these states can feel a deeper familiarity and connection because of their shared cultural and linguistic values among other factors (Haugevik, 2018, pp. 52-53). In the two excerpts from the interviews with the Turkish and Azerbaijani informant, this felt kinship between Turks and Azerbaijanis – that including government officials – is a benefit and facilitates various interactions between the states. Strategic and concurrent interests are also represented as a significant part of the inter-state relationship, which are perceived to being prepositioned by kinship.

5.2.2. Soft power and instrumentality

In the representations of the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship, the concept of soft power was mentioned by some. Power can be an important component in international friendships between states. An Azerbaijani informant referred to the following about soft power in the bilateral relations. The informant stressed that politics, not culture, were the most important and primary driver and factor of Turkish-Azerbaijani relation, but that culture functioned as a soft power tool:

After Azerbaijan became independent, political choices was based on kinship, ethnicity, religion. Azerbaijan needed Turkey a lot of assistance in the beginning (...) For Turkey, geopolitics, interests and influence, and economy was important. Culture, on the other hand, was a good tool to produce soft power (Informant 2).

Soft power is here represented as playing an active part in the dynamics of the relationship on the Turkish side, particularly because of the cultural ties, as it can be defined as the attraction of culture, political ideas or policies of other states, especially because there is a form of interdependence between friends who are friends (Berenskoetter, 2007, pp. 671-672). Therefore, this informant can be understood as leaning towards a more instrumentalist understanding of how kinship is used, particularly by Ankara, as Azerbaijan has been perceiving Turkey as a model for its own political and economic development, and might therefore be more prone to the power of attraction (e.g. Nye, 2004). Turkey is also presented as non-entirely altruistic in its objectives, which could lean towards a more strategic form of friendship in this light. In contrast, another scholar in Ankara did not represent soft power the same way:

The concept of soft power is not applicable to Turkish-Azerbaijani relations as these states regards themselves as belonging to the same cultural universe (...) Some Azerbaijanis in Turkey feel truly like citizens of Turkey. Turkey and Azerbaijan does not use soft power on each other as they do might with other countries (Informant 5).

Different from the Azerbaijani expert, this Turkish informant did not share the view of cultural ties as a source of soft power. Rather on the contrary, soft power is represented as not being fitting to described the relations because of their cultural bonds and because their similarities. In this statement, claims of cultural ties and kinship is not employed

instrumentally. To sum up, the representations on soft power and the instrumentalist function of culture differs.

5.2.3. “One nation, one state”?

As it has been argued throughout these thesis, claims of metaphorical and historical kinship plays a part in how Turks and Azerbaijani elites legitimise the bilateral relations between them and conduct of international politics. However, as Wigen argues, Turkey does also use kinship to engage with other Turkic groups, in addition to Muslims worldwide and former Ottoman subjects (Wigen, 2018, p. 122). The use of such claims is therefore not restricted to the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship, but others too. One of the informants in Baku said that:

Azerbaijan and other Turkic states are the brother states of Turkey. In Azerbaijan, the concept of being kindred with Turkey is regarded as something positive. However, Azerbaijan does not want to be perceived as the younger brother and rather as an equal. Azerbaijan does not want to continue being a younger brother to any nation, as this was the case during the 200 years of Russian rule (Informant 3).

Touching upon issues of superiority and inferiority in the bilateral partnership, this Azerbaijani scholar refers to relations being brotherly with Turkey as ‘something positive’, but stresses the importance of being regarded as equal – and not being treated as a younger brother, particularly due to its relatively newfound independence after two centuries of Russian dominance. As outlined earlier, kinship allows for hierarchy among states perceiving one another as kindred, for instance by differences in power and influence (Haugevik, 2018, pp. 43-48). A similar representation is also present in the Turkish discourse on the bilateral relations, as an informant stressed that “*Azerbaijan and Turkey both belong to the same Turkic nation, but they are two separate states, and this ought to be respected*”(Informant 5). Regarding the inter-state relationship as deep and brotherly does, according to these two statements, not imply that Turkey and Azerbaijan actually would be “one nation, one state”, and that the “one nation, two states” slogan therefore might provide a better description of the relations.

5.3. Representations of Nagorno-Karabakh

Throughout this thesis, it has been argued that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an important arena where the international friendship among Azerbaijan and Turkey can be observed. The interviews conducted illustrated that all the informants in Turkey and Azerbaijan regarded the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as an arena where Turkey is considered to be Baku's most important supporter. One Azerbaijani informant described the impact of the bilateral relations in these terms: *"Turkey has been the most important help to Azerbaijan. From 1993, Turkey closed its border to Armenia. No other states have done the same"* (Informant 1). In this statement, Turkey's supportive measures towards Azerbaijan in the conflict is regarded as significant and unique, as Ankara, unlike other states, has aided in challenging times. Another informant in Baku said that one of the impacts of being kindred states was being able to *"help each other, especially in challenging times, and support one another on important issues, such as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict"* (informant 3). This support can be understood as mutual commitment because friendly states will support one another and have each other's back in challenging times. Such support can manifest itself by protecting, defending or morally supporting each other violently or violently against outside threats under political difficult circumstances, such as frozen conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh which is an existential issue for Azerbaijan (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21). Another informant in Ankara further emphasised that: *"Turkey and Azerbaijan has encountered mutual problems in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the issue has been important in building the relation between the two states"* (Informant 6). Mutual commitment in international friendships among states can be linked to the reciprocal commitment of resolving problems together (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21). In this sense, the conflict with Armenia is not only regarded as Azerbaijan's problem, but also Turkey's, who for instance also have a complicated relation to Yerevan, and is a part of their shared narrative.

5.3.1. Suffering as a cause for solidarity

As mentioned earlier, Turkish foreign policy elites often drawing on claims of kinship in their support for and solidarity with Azerbaijan in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which for instance is the case with Khojaly. A Turkish informant in Ankara said that:

In Turkey, there is great support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, particularly due to the atrocities and suffering of Azerbaijan, such as the Khojaly massacre. There has also been great support for Azerbaijan as much of their territory has been occupied, and this occupation continues. But Turks

would also feel the same way for others, such as for the Macedonians. Turkey further tries to help with the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in the Minsk process, but so far, the situation is still locked and unresolved (Informant 5).

The references to atrocities like the Khojaly massacre can be regarded as a foundational moment and a reference to a joint emotional history between Azerbaijan and Turkey, which is present during politically challenging times, such as wars, and enforce affect. Khojaly is here represented as an atrocity and an episode of suffering – which is also felt by Turks in Turkey. Moments like Khojaly are further commemorated a certain way, for instance by expressing rituals of solidarity such as using standardised verbal emotional expressions that can draw states closer (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, pp. 79-80). Here in this statement, Khojaly is described as a *massacre* which is linked to *atrocities* and *suffering*, expressions that creates a feeling of belonging and solidarity. Similar language is found in both current and former Turkish leaders' representations of Khojaly, and the impact of Khojaly, and other episodes during the Nagorno-Karabakh war has had an impact on the inter-state relations drawing Turkey and Azerbaijan closer.

The excerpt further highlights that “*Turkey would feel the same way for others, such as for the Macedonians*”, which can imply that the solidarity and support voiced by Turks, including Turkish leaders, is not uniquely applicable in the Turkish-Azerbaijani case, but that is observable and does matter elsewhere. For instance, Turkey recognised Macedonia by its constitutional name in the beginning of 2019, and foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu then said that “we have strong ties with Macedonia that go back many centuries (...) regardless of political relations” (Ekathimerini, 2019). Nevertheless, Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Turkey and Azerbaijan’s common emotional history, but it might not be limited to their bilateral relations.

5.3.2. The flag crisis – “brothers always fight”

The diplomatic tensions between Ankara and Baku were as mentioned previously an implication of the normalisation efforts between Armenia and Turkey. Many informants mentioned the flag crisis when they were speaking about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. An informant in Baku stressed that the fact that “*brothers always fight*” was an important aspect of their inter-state partnership because they could “*easily confront each other, but also easily solve the problems later*” (informant 6). According to this informant, the Turkish-Azerbaijani bilateral relations appeared stable with some occasional changes or ruptures in what seems to

be the dominant policy towards of Baku and Ankara. The flag crisis is not regarded to have had a significant impact on the bilateral partnership, and the impression was that it was quickly resolved. As argued previously, conflicts that emerge between friendly states are often expected to be settled peacefully (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21). The flag crisis was relatively quickly resolved, and one outcome of the diplomatic fizzle was an intensification of the bilateral partnership. In sum, the interview excerpt is illustrated Turkey and Azerbaijan's mutual commitment to their shared partnership despite the minor tensions that did occur in the past. An informant in Azerbaijan described the diplomatic tensions the following way:

In Baku's eyes, Turkey proved to be vulnerable in the flag crisis. Turkey considered to open the borders to Armenia which Azerbaijan opposed strongly (...) as Azeri authorities threatened to impose sanctions on Turkey. After the crisis, Davutoğlu quickly travelled to Baku to "restore" the relations and reassure that Turkey would not open its borders. The crisis proved Turkey's vulnerability vis-à-vis Azerbaijan as it did not want to lose an important partner. Before the crisis, Turkey always had the upper-hand in the bilateral relations. However, Turkey is still more powerful regionally (Informant 2).

The diplomatic tensions are here regarded as 'shuffling' the power relations between Ankara and Baku because of Turkey's vulnerability and dependence on the bilateral partnership. As mentioned earlier, states who are friends have established a "common project". In the case of the normalisation efforts, the Turkish government was regarded by Baku as moving away from their shared truth. Berenskoetter argues that states who are friends will be especially prone to vulnerability because they are interdependent with regards to sharing a common project and a stable sense of Self. Such vulnerability can be particularly visible in asymmetrical power relations (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 672). One could therefore expect that Azerbaijan, not Turkey, would be the weakest part. Interestingly, Turkey is here represented as equally or more vulnerable, because it could not do as it wanted, and the outcome of the efforts illustrated that Turkey's policies towards Armenia were really decided in Baku (Balçı, 2014, p. 43). This may also illustrate that the relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey are not as asymmetrical as one could expect, at least not with regards to Turkey's policies in the South Caucasus where energy trade is a key component of their partnership, especially for Ankara.

5.3.3. Mutual commitment and solidarity with Turkey

The expressions of solidarity are not a one-sided matter, as Azerbaijan also has expressed solidarity with Turkey on various occasions the past years, particularly as a response to the

numerous terrorist attacks in 2016. An Azerbaijani informant represented this in the following way: *“When there have been terrorist attacks in Turkey, the Azerbaijani population have had strong feelings of empathy. Such feelings have been enhanced and shown through social media primarily”* (Informant 2). In Azerbaijani academic discourse, Turkey is not represented as the only part acting in solidarity, but these actions are reciprocal during politically difficult times in Anatolia, such as the several terrorist attacks in major Turkish cities such as Ankara and Istanbul (Daily Sabah, 2016c; Letsch & Khomami, 2015). This form for empathy has been observable at a higher political level as well. After the attack on Istanbul’s Atatürk airport, the Azerbaijani foreign ministry expressed that *“as a country suffering from terrorism, Azerbaijan firmly condemns all the forms of terrorism and expresses solidarity with fraternal Turkey in the fight against terrorism”* (AzerNews, 2016). Azerbaijan’s support towards Turkey can be understood in terms of the mutual commitment building on solidarity and having each other’s back either by defending, protecting or morally supporting one another against various threats (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014, p. 21) in which terrorism can be included. The representation of these acts of solidarity as reciprocal illustrates that the commitment of Turkey to supporting Azerbaijan is not one sided, but is indeed reciprocal.

Azerbaijan’s support for Turkey is not limited to official statements by government representatives. On 15 July 2016, a faction within the Turkish military attempted staging a coup to overthrow the AKP government, which the US-based cleric Fetullah Gülen and his movement was accused of. The Gülen movement has supported educational projects and schools worldwide, including Azerbaijan. Like the terrorist attacks in Turkey, the coup attempt is represented as producing a sense of solidarity with Turkey in Azerbaijan:

Turkish-Azerbaijani relations was deeply affected by the 15 July coup attempt (...) The coup attempt consolidated the relationship. The Gülen movement had strong influence in Azerbaijan as in many other countries, as it extended beyond Turkey. In the case, Azerbaijan proved to be the outmost supporter of Turkey on this issue (Informant 6).

This exemplifies that the support expressed both by Baku and Ankara goes both ways, as Azerbaijan is represented as being there for Turkey in thick-and-thin. Following the coup attempt, the Turkish government has had an extensive crack-down on the Gülen movement in Turkey, but also abroad. For instance, in Azerbaijan, the Qafqaz University, one of the first universities established abroad by the Gülen movement, was shut down only days after the attempted coup (Daily Sabah, 2016a). This illustrated that the mutual commitment of

Azerbaijan did go even further, as it did not only support Ankara in official statements, but also took active measures to demonstrate this.

5.4. Changes in the relationship

Although the Turkish-Azerbaijani inter-state relationship for the most part has appeared to be relatively stable after the dissolution of the USSR, there could be some factors affecting the relationship in the future. Turkey has also changed in several ways under more than 15 years of AKP leadership. With the coming of power of the AKP in 2002, Turkey was for the first time ruled by a political party with a clear moderate Islamist profile, which had previously been impossible. In 2018, Turkey changes its political system into a presidential system, granting more powers to the president. On issues regarding the implications of AKP rule and Turkey with regards to religion, one scholar in Baku stated that:

Turkey is more religious than Azerbaijan who is more secular. The Azerbaijani public sphere is secular and more pro-Western. In the 1980s in particular, Azerbaijan looked at Turkey as a model of democracy and a form of governance, and not only a brother in terms of primordial kinship. However, after 2002 and the election of the AKP, this hope started to decrease. (...) In the relations to Azerbaijan, Erdoğan and the AKP acknowledges that Azerbaijan is different from Turkey, and would never push it. That is a red line that the Turkish leadership would never cross (Informant 2).

In this textual excerpt, the Azerbaijani informant refers to the election of the AKP government as diminishing the hope of regarding Turkey as a model for democracy and governance. The AKP with its moderate pragmatism does have an Islamist orientation, despite hesitating to label itself as an Islamist political party. For instance, in 2013 the AKP removed the ban on wearing a headscarf in state institutions implemented in 1923 (Al Jazeera, 2013). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Turkey was presented as a model to the newly independent states in the Caucasus and Central Asia following the end of the Cold War. But the coming to power of the AKP represented in many ways a political shift in Turkey. In this light, Turkey is to a smaller extent regarded as a model than previously, and there are other aspects of the partnership that may be more important at the time of the interview.

When asked about possible factors that could strengthen the bilateral relations, an informant in Azerbaijan referred to the upsurge of nationalism in Turkey: *“If Turkish nationalists will be more powerful in Turkey, this could strengthen the relations with Azerbaijan even further”* (Informant 4). According to this textual excerpt, the Azerbaijani

interviewee understands the increased support for nationalism and political parties like the ultra-nationalist MHP, as factors that could strengthen the ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan further. For instance, there has been a coalition called the People's Alliance (or *Cumhur Ittifaki*), between the AKP and MHP on recent issues against other oppositional political parties, such as the referendum on implementing a presidential system, in addition to supporting Erdoğan's candidacy in the presidential snap election in June 2018 (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018b).

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to find out to what extent and how Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites are using claims over historical and metaphorical kinship to legitimise their bilateral relations and conduct of foreign policy. The theoretical framework is built upon the concepts of kinship and international friendship between states. These frameworks seem fruitful to better apprehend relations between states such as Azerbaijan and Turkey, where media, political leaders and elites and even the population make continuous references to their shared historical, cultural and linguistic ties. Discourse analysis has therefore been selected as the best method to answer the research question of this thesis because it can be a good tool for studying the foreign policies and identities of states. I have addressed this issue by examining the inter-state relationship in the context of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in the Caucasus, which emerged in the late 1980s and still remains unresolved and in a stalemate. Furthermore, Turkey has been regarded as Azerbaijan's most important supporter in the conflict. Foreign policy elites in the respective states started to use claims of kinship in their representations of their bilateral relationship after the end of the Cold War when Azerbaijan became an independent republic following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and this has also been particularly pronounced in the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh. The break-up of the USSR made it easier for Turkey to engage with the newly independent states in the Caucasus and Central Asia as the populations living in these states to some extent shares bonds with Turks from Turkey. Although Turks and Azerbaijanis often are represented as sharing various ties, cultural, linguistic and even historical bonds, the latter is also one of the most significant differences between them.

The main finding of this thesis is that claims of kinship are used in various manners by Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy elites to legitimise their relationship and conduct of foreign policy. The empirical study tracing the historical development of how claims of kinship has been employed by elites in the respective countries illustrates that the official foreign policy discourses of Turkey and Azerbaijan for the most part have been stable where the discursive representation of them as kin is dominant and has achieved hegemonic status, and therefore appears to have become naturalised especially after the end of the Cold War. Prior to Azerbaijan's independence, the state and its population was represented as a less familiar and even different Other in Turkish official foreign policy discourse. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan has developed on various areas, including trade, and claims of kinship paved the way for

economic cooperation. Turkey presented itself as a bridge and a model for political and economic development for Azerbaijan. The Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship can also be regarded as an international friendship between states. This thesis finds that normative, but also strategic factors, are at play in this friendship. For instance, shared bonds permit their mutual identification and trust, which highlights the normative aspect of their international friendship, but they do also have strategic interests. Additionally, being friendly has some practical implications and are not therefore not simply rhetoric employed to please the other part. Their relationship can further be regarded as an international friendship that is negotiated, by sharing a common story and narrative, which seems particularly relevant with regards to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

With the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict into a full-blown war, Turkey supported Azerbaijan's position, and this became one of the most important parts of their emotional history. In the context of Nagorno-Karabakh, claims of kinship are frequently voiced by foreign policy elites to legitimate Turkey's support for Azerbaijan in the conflict by foreign policy elites, especially following the first war in Nagorno-Karabakh (1991-1994), and can be regarded as a form of mutual commitment and solidarity for instance by Ankara's decision to close its border to Armenia in 1993. Also, the conflict and especially certain events during it such as Khojaly, are represented as foundational moments, and are an important source of affect in the inter-state relationship that are commemorated a certain manner and has become part of the shared Turkish-Azerbaijani narrative. My empirical study further finds that although there has been an overall stability in the discursive representation of kinship, the normalisation efforts between Yerevan and Ankara between 2008 and 2009 illustrates a rupture in this persistence because the Turkish government led by the AKP was regarded as undermining Baku's national interests by warming up to their biggest foe. The rapprochement consequently threatened the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan. I suggest that despite the stability in the discursive representations of Turkey and Azerbaijan as friendly and kin, it could still be fragile, particularly when one of the sides was moving away from their common narrative. The threat to Ankara's strategic interests in energy trade with Baku should also be mentioned, as it is an important part of their partnership. In the aftermath of the rapprochement, the relationship nevertheless appears to have be described as further deepened and intensified, and this is demonstrated by the 2016 Four-Day War where claims of kinship were represented as crucial for Turkey's support.

In this study, I argue that my empirical material from the elite and academic discourse clearly show a representation of Turks and Azerbaijanis as kin and belonging to the same

Turkic nation. Shared language and culture was represented as facilitating the bilateral cooperation between the states, and Turkey and Azerbaijan was described as natural partners who were interdependent, especially with regards to energy trade. Through their relationship, Azerbaijan could be closer linked to the West via Turkey, and Turkey to the Central Asian republics with the help of Azerbaijan. The mutual commitment of support during challenging time was also part of the discursive representations, and Nagorno-Karabakh was referred to as one of the outmost examples of solidarity. The solidarity, however, was represented as reciprocal, as Azerbaijan, too, was providing support for Turkey during politically challenging times. Using claims of kinship has various and mutual benefits for Turkey and Azerbaijan, particularly in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. For Azerbaijan, one avoids being isolated in the conflict and left without supporters against Armenia. For Turkey, supporting Azerbaijan has made it possible for them to exert a more active policy in the region. This has resulted in strategic and economic advantages, particularly with regards to energy trade as Turkey has been aspiring to become transportation hub for its surrounding regions. Although foreign policy elites in Turkey and Azerbaijan does not explicitly argue for the instrumental function of kinship, one can argue that it has enabled certain practices and actions over others. For instance, since Turkey closed its border to Armenia, energy trade has become an increasingly important factor in the bilateral partnership, which projects such as the BTC and TANAP illustrates.

It is worth addressing the methodological considerations and limitations of discourse analysis. More generally, and as mentioned in chapter 3, discourse analysis cannot be assessed along strict criteria for reliability and validity, as there for instance are challenges on drawing clear causal inferences between identity and foreign policy. It has also been necessary to make several delimitations in the thesis. As a genealogical approach was adopted to understand how certain representations became possible in the first place, studying an even longer process and including additional data material would have been beneficial, such as analysing additional textual material from before the end of the Cold War from various historical periods and events. My empirical study has further been limited to the official discourse and the academic discourses which excludes some outlooks and perceptions, such as the political opposition or the wider public. Including additional perspectives would give a stronger foundation for assessing the dominance and hegemony of an official discourse (Hansen, 2006, p. 74), especially if similar representations are produced and reproduced for instance in the wider foreign policy debate or in popular culture. This could therefore be a line worth following in future research on the topic.

6.1. Implications for further research

I argue that theories on friendship and kinship can provide a useful framework to understand IR, both as a complement to more traditional theories, but even provide an alternative, and provide a better understanding of the dynamics of inter-state relations especially where cultural, historical and linguistic bonds are close.

Although this thesis has not focused on events after 2018, the Turkish-Azerbaijani inter-state relationship appears to not have changed significantly, as Turkey is still Azerbaijan's key supporter. Nagorno-Karabakh still is unresolved, but proves an interesting case for further studies in view of similar conflicts in the region and the Turco-Russian power balance. More recently, during a visit by President Ilham Aliyev to Turkey in May 2018, President Erdoğan again expressed his support for the Azerbaijan and stated that "*the issue of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a national issue for Turkey*" (Shirinov, 2018a). Promises of strengthened and increased bilateral cooperation has also been presented, including on defence (AzerNews, 2018). The topic of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations and the employment of kinship to legitimise their relations may continue to be an interesting field of research in the future.

Based on the findings of this study, it would also be interesting and fruitful to do further research on how Turkey is using claims of kinship in other inter-state relationship, such as with Northern Cyprus, but also with regards to minority groups in other states. For instance, one can observe similar claims be employed with regards to Turkic groups such as the Crimean Tatars and the Uyghur minority in the Xinjiang province in China. For instance, the Turkish president stated in November 2018 that Turkey would "continue to defend the rights and interests of Crimean Tatars", and that they will not recognise the annexation of Crimea (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2018). These are also topics that would be interesting to explore in future research.

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Appendix 1. Interview Request

Request for your participation in a research project:

«Kardeşlerimiz» - Foreign Policy Discourse and Kinship in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations

With this letter, I invite you to participate in my research project about Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign policy discourse and Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. I am particularly interested in the origins and the implications of the concept of kinship on these relations. The project is aiming at explaining how and to what extent such concepts are employed by Turkey and Azerbaijan to legitimise their inter-state relationship and conduct foreign policy, u particularly in the Nagorno-Karabakh. Interviews are a significant part of this study, and I regard you as a highly appropriate source.

Serious efforts will be made to treat the information and data collected in this interview with confidentiality. Interviewees will be referred to anonymously in all stages of the project, and only I will know of your participation in the project.

The conversation will be structured as a semi-structured interview with a duration for 45 minutes or less.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time.

The project is a master's thesis written at the Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo. The master's project is expected to be finished in May 2018. All data will be deleted once the project is finished. I am the only person conducting the project.

If you wish, I would be happy to send to you a copy of the final thesis once it is finished.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or remarks at juliaaaa@xxx.no or my supervisor Einar Wigen at einar.wigen@xxx.no

Sincerely Yours,

Julia Aybeniz Ensrud Abedi

Appendix 2. Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

«Kardeşlerimiz» - Foreign Policy Discourse and Kinship in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations

City:

Date:

Duration of interview:

I. GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION OF PROJECT

Thank you so much for making the time for this meeting and interview. As mentioned earlier through our correspondence, I want to talk to you about Turkish and Azerbaijani relations. I am particularly interested in how Turkey and Azerbaijan use claims of kinship to legitimise their relationship and conduct foreign policy. The duration of the interview will be approximately 45 minutes. The interview will not be recorded, but I will take notes during the interview. If you wish, you can read my writings from the interview after they are completed. I will ask for your approval if I wish to cite directly from the interview. The interview is strictly confidential and you will be anonymous. Do not hesitate to ask any questions during the interview or if you need to clarify anything.

II. QUESTIONS

1. I wish to talk to you about Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. **Could you please describe and elaborate on the relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan? In your view, what are the most central aspects of this relationship?**

[If the respondent answers questions which are asked later in the interview during the first question, do not ask the (same) questions again]

2. Following Turkish media, I have the impression that Turkish officials sometimes describe Azerbaijan and their population as their *brothers* [or *kardeşlerimiz*] in press statements, speeches and press releases. **Are you familiar with this concept?**

- *Probe on foreign policy elites, academic scholars, etc.*
- *Probe on public opinion*
- *Probe on why not (political orientation, religious views, etc.)*

[if the respondent is not familiar with the concept, skip to question 11 and continue. If the respondent denounces such a concept, try to carefully find out why]

3. **According to you, what do you associate with this concept? What does it signify to be “brothers”?**

- *Probe on geography, cultural and historical heritage, language, political and economic cooperation.*

4. **From where does the concept of brotherhood [or *kardeşlik*] between the two states originate?**

- *Probe on politicians, organizations, media, history, mythology, etc.*
- *Probe on the Selcuks, before/after Ottoman Empire, the AKP (T)*

- *Probe on use of such terms before, during or after Russian empire & USSR(A)*
5. **Who are using this concept today? And to what extent are there any political connotations?**
 - *Probe on political parties (i.e. orientation and ideology)*
 - *Probe on organizations, media, academic scholars, culture etc.*
 6. **What are the effects of being “brothers” on TR-AZ relations?**
 - *Probe on advantages/disadvantages (cultural and economic exchange (i.e. TIKA), political support, energy trade/pipeline politics)*
 7. **To what extent does this notion of brotherhood have implications on TR-AZ relations in certain contexts? And how important is brotherhood?**
 - *Probe on political developments in T/A, regional developments, energy trade*
 - *Probe on advantages/disadvantages (cultural, economic exchange, political support)*
 8. **To what extent has there been any changes in TR-AZ relations and the feeling of brotherhood?**
 - *Probe on different events and (national, regional or int. developments), policy changes (political, historical, etc.),*
 - *Probe on developments in Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey-Armenia rapprochement*
 9. **To what extent does it exist any kind of seniority in the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan?/How are TR-AZ related? Twin brothers, younger/older brother?**
[Ask this question as cautiously as possible, as it might be perceived as sensitive or difficult]
 10. **Are there any other states TR/AZ regards as their brothers? If yes, then which states? If no, then why?**
 - *Probe on who: Muslim world, Turkic speaking groups/states, former Ottoman territories, Russia, etc.*
 - *Probe on why not*
 11. **Are there any specific texts/speeches/statements or similar that are important in studying Azerbaijan and Turkey’s relationship to each other in general?**
 12. **Do you have any additional comments or remarks? Are there any topics that we have not touched upon that you think we should have?**
 13. **Is there anyone else you think it might be useful for me to meet and interview?**

III. END OF INTERVIEW

Those are all the questions I have for you. Thank you so much for making the time for participating in this interview and your effort. Your participation is truly valuable for this research. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have about me or this research.

Appendix 3. List of informants

Interviews conducted in Turkey and Azerbaijan in January and February 2018

	Date	Place	Institution
1	23.01.2018	Baku, Azerbaijan	University
2	24.01.2018	Baku	Think-tank
3	25.01.2018 (A)	Baku	University
4	25.01.2018 (B)	Baku	Research centre
5	29.01.2018	Ankara, Turkey	University
6	30.01.2018	Ankara	University
7	31.01.2018	Ankara	Research centre
8	08.02.2018	Istanbul, Turkey	Research centre