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## CIVIL SOLIDARITY

AND ETHNIC POLICY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASIAN COUNTRIES

### SOLIDARIDAD CIVIL Y POLÍTICA ÉTNICA EN LOS PAÍSES DEL CÁUCASO MERIDIONAL

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#### ABSTRACT

The paper comparatively considers the issue of ethnic policy and civil solidarity in the South Caucasus countries – Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia from a sociological standpoint. According to the research objective, the ethno-religious composition of the three countries is reviewed, and the current state of civil solidarity is analyzed. Also, relevant issues such as inter-ethnic relations, the state language, the current situation with the languages and cultures of ethnic minorities, the environment of religious tolerance, and representation in elected bodies are analyzed for all three countries. The paper notes that in Azerbaijan and Georgia, civil solidarity and national unity have become the philosophy of the ethnic policy pursued at the state level. In Armenia, assimilation, anti-Turkism, Azeriphobia, anti-Semitism, racism, etc. have formed the state policy. As a result of the ethnic cleansing of its territory from local Azerbaijani Turks and all non-Armenians, Armenia turned into a monoethnic country. On the other hand, Azerbaijan and Georgia have managed to ensure civil solidarity due to their successful ethnic policy and as a result, both countries preserved their polyethnic landscape and gained positive experience in ensuring the coexistence and collaboration of citizens within a single country.

**Keywords:** Society, Caucasus, Ethnic, Solidarity, Policy.

#### RESUMEN

El artículo considera comparativamente la cuestión de la política étnica y la solidaridad civil en los países del Cáucaso Meridional: Azerbaiyán, Georgia y Armenia desde un punto de vista sociológico. De acuerdo con el objetivo de la investigación, se revisa la composición étnico-religiosa de los tres países y se analiza el estado actual de la solidaridad civil. Además, para los tres países se analizan cuestiones relevantes como las relaciones interétnicas, el idioma estatal, la situación actual de los idiomas y culturas de las minorías étnicas, el entorno de tolerancia religiosa y la representación en los órganos electos. El documento señala que en Azerbaiyán y Georgia la solidaridad civil y la unidad nacional se han convertido en la filosofía de la política étnica aplicada a nivel estatal. En Armenia, la asimilación, el antiturquismo, la azerifobia, el antisemitismo, el racismo, etc. han formado la política estatal. Como resultado de la limpieza étnica de su territorio de los turcos azerbaiyanos locales y de todos los no armenios, Armenia se convirtió en un país monoétnico. Por otro lado, Azerbaiyán y Georgia han logrado garantizar la solidaridad civil gracias a su exitosa política étnica y, como resultado, ambos países preservaron su paisaje poliétnico y adquirieron experiencia positiva en garantizar la coexistencia y colaboración de los ciudadanos dentro de un solo país.

**Palabras claves:** Sociedad, Cáucaso, Étnica, Solidaridad, Política.

## INTRODUCTION

Civil solidarity refers to the idea of unity and mutual support among the members of society, especially in times of crisis or in addressing common problems. It is understood as the willingness to collaborate and work together for the general well-being, beyond individual or group differences (Bayertz, 1999). Civil solidarity implies a sense of collective responsibility and empathy towards others. This notion is essential for the healthy functioning of a society (Kalogeraki, 2019). Civil solidarity can manifest in actions such as volunteering, peaceful protests, donations to charitable causes, overcoming challenges, and fighting injustice, among others (Durán et al., 2021; Vandevordt & Verschraegen, 2019). In general, when people are united by civil solidarity, they can build stronger and more cohesive communities. On the other hand, ethnic policy focuses on how ethnic groups, defined by factors such as ancestry, culture, language, or religion, interact in a political and social environment. This involves how these groups seek political representation, defend their interests, and maintain their identity in the context of a state or a nation (Brittian et al., 2015). Ethnic politics may include debates about cultural rights, official recognition of ethnic groups, equitable distribution of resources among diverse communities, and the fight against racism and discrimination based on ancestry or ethnicity (Berkers, 2009; D'Rozario & Yang, 2015; Herath, 2015; Petersen, 2004).

As can be seen, "Civil Solidarity" and "Ethnic Politics" are important concepts in the study of societies and the relationships between different groups within a nation. The relationship between these concepts may be complex and sometimes contradictory. For example, in some situations, ethnic groups can come together in civil solidarity to address problems that affect the entire society, overcoming cultural or ethnic differences such as, after natural disasters or in the promotion of universal human rights (Hölscher & Berhane, 2008; Peruzzi, 2023; Ultramari, 2016). However, there are also frequent tensions between ethnic groups that challenge civil solidarity. This way, ethnic conflicts, racial discrimination, or exclusionary policies can undermine the principles of solidarity and unity in a society (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Onwuzuruigbo, 2010; Sekulić et al., 2006).

For example, in the context of civil conflicts, including ethnic wars, revolutions, or genocides, political and social equalities are found to be more critical in mitigating violence than economic inequality (Besançon, 2005). Thus, the importance of solidarity and social equality in addressing ethnic violence is highlighted, emphasizing the role of civil rights and equality in conflict resolution. On the other hand, non-profit public organizations have played a

crucial role in these situations as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. That scenario highlighted the importance of solidarity and activism in dealing with crises, when civil society played a significant role in addressing disparities and structural problems (Briozzo et al., 2021). As a last point, the involvement of refugees and asylum seekers in government planning and policy processes may be crucial for building more inclusive and effective asylum policies. This is even more important nowadays when multiple wars in multiple locations have exploded.

Therefore, as can be seen, the study of these concepts is crucial to understanding the dynamics of societies and to seek ways to promote harmony and justice. By understanding civil solidarity, we can strengthen social cohesion and build more resilient communities in the face of common challenges. In addition, the analysis of ethnic politics allows us to identify inequalities, injustices, and conflicts that can arise within a multicultural country. This can help to develop inclusive policies and measures that recognize and respect cultural and ethnic diversity, thus promoting more equitable and peaceful societies. Considering the above, the objective of this work is to analyze the most important elements of civil solidarity and ethnic politics in the countries of the South Caucasus.

## DEVELOPMENT

### **Successful Ethnic Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.**

The restoration of Azerbaijan's state independence at the end of the 20th century (1991) marked the start of a new stage in ethnic policy. The successful ethnic policy allowed the formation of civic solidarity and an exemplary atmosphere of religious and ethnic tolerance in the country. After the restoration of Azerbaijan's state independence, the legal basis for the ethnic policy started forming in the country. The Decree "On Protection of The Rights and Freedoms, State Support for The Development of Language and Culture of National Minorities, Small Nations, and Ethnic Groups Residing in the Republic of Azerbaijan," adopted in 1992, became the first legal act regulating ethnic relations and forming national unity.

Since then, the Azerbaijani laws and the new Constitution have played a key role in ensuring national unity in the country. Azerbaijan has acceded to international conventions and pacts in force in this area. For example, Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 30th, 1998, is entitled 'Equal Citizenship'. It reads: "The citizenship of the Azerbaijan Republic shall be equal for everyone regardless of the ground for acquiring it. The rights,

freedoms, and obligations of the citizens of the Azerbaijan Republic shall be equal regardless of their origin, social and property status, race and nationality, gender, educational background, language, religious, political, and other views, type and nature of employment, place and time of residence, and other factors.”

To strengthen the civic solidarity of national minorities in Azerbaijan, the Coordination Council for Cultural Diversity was established under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Regular radio broadcasts in Kurdish, Lezgi, Talysh, Russian, and Armenian languages are funded from the state budget. Alphabets, curricula, other textbooks, school dictionaries, and other literature are also published in national minority languages at the expense of the state and distributed free of charge (Council of Europe, 2007).

We believe that the active search for national identity and self-awareness makes national unity and civic solidarity an urgent sociological issue in Azerbaijani society. As a result of the sociological research, the concept of National Unity was clarified by surveying 100 experts, including researchers from Azerbaijani academic institutions, university teachers, politicians, sociologists, and public figures. During the survey, a group of experts assessed national unity as the common interests of all segments of Azerbaijani society. Another group of experts stated that the interests of all segments of Azerbaijani society should unite around a common all-national idea of Azerbaijan's independence. In this context, national unity is based on civic integration and tolerant, civilized relations between different national, social, and political groups. Another group of respondents understands national unity as an ethnocultural union of the entire population of Azerbaijan. Some respondents state that national unity is required only in emergencies (war, severe economic crises, natural disasters). Experts specified the following basic principles of national unity (Mammadli, 2008, p. 75):

- specific domestic and foreign political actions
- specific all-national ideology
- a certain level of national consciousness.

Thereat, the basic principles of national unity and civic integration are formed in the constitutional state and civil society. Herewith, national unity and civic integration are based on Azerbaijanism and a strong national state as uniting ideas. In civic integration, appointing representatives of non-titled nationalities to high positions and awarding honorary titles and scholarships to them is important. “National minorities are widely represented in the government, parliament, central executive bodies, as well as in the official state structures and local self-government bodies of the regions where they live (Babayev, 2009, p. 27).” In general, in Azerbaijan, national minorities make up 9.4% of the country's population (Table 1).

Table 1: Data about national minorities in Azerbaijan.

National Minorities	Population	Language	Compact Residence Area
Lezgins	178,000	Lezgin language belonging to the Dagestan group of Caucasian languages, as well as Azerbaijani and Russian languages	Northern regions of Azerbaijan
Russians	141,700	Russian language belonging to the East Slavic group	Industrial cities and some agricultural regions
Armenians	70,000	Armenian language belonging to the Indo-European language family	40,000 in Karabakh and about 30,000 in Baku
Talyshs	76,800	Talysh language belonging to the Iranian group of the Indo-European language family, and Azerbaijani	Southern regions
Avars	50,900	Avar language belonging to the Dagestan branch of Caucasian languages, and Azerbaijani	Northern regions
Ahiska Turks	43,400	Azerbaijani	Northern and lowland regions
Tatars	30,000	Tatar language belonging to the Turkish language family, and Russian	Cities of Azerbaijan
Ukrainians	29,000	Ukrainian language belonging to the East Slavic language family, and Russian	Baku
Sakhurs	15,900	Sakhur language belonging to the south-eastern group of the Dagestan branch of Caucasian languages, and Azerbaijani	Zagatala Region

Georgians	14,900	Georgian language belonging to the Kartvelian group of Caucasian languages	Gakh Region
Kurds	13,100	Kurdish language belonging to the Iranian language group	Before the armed conflict with Armenia, in Lachin, Kalbajar, Gubadli, and Zangilan Regions. Forcibly migrated to other regions due to the occupation of these territories.
Tats	10,900	Tat language belonging to the Iranian language group	Northern regions
Jews: European (Ashkenazi), Mountain, and Georgian ones	8,900	Jewish language belonging to the Semitic group of the Semitic language family	Guba Region and Baku
Udis	4,100	Udi language belonging to the Dagestan branch of the Caucasian language family	Northern regions

**Source:** own elaboration.

In 2001, the Republic of Azerbaijan signed the European Charter of the Council of Europe for Regional or Minority Languages. International organizations report various positions held in Azerbaijani government bodies by national minority representatives: Representatives of national minorities (Lezgins, Russians, Tatars, Kurds, Avars, Tatars, Jews, etc.) hold more than 1,000 positions (up to 4%) in the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including senior ones (at the level of heads of departments and units). In addition, the absence of the 'Ethnicity' field in new ID cards in Azerbaijan restricts the possible discrimination against citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including national minorities, by this factor (Council of Europe, 2007).

On August 20th, 1992, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religious Belief" was adopted. The Azerbaijani state considered it expedient to undertake some reforms in the field of freedom of religious belief and regulation of religion-state relations, in which regard, the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations was established by Decree No. 512 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 21st, 2001. Religious tolerance plays an important role in the formation and development of ethnic and civic solidarity in Azerbaijan. During the years of independence, new mosques, churches, and synagogues have started operating, belonging to different religions. In the late 1980s, 50% of respondents considered themselves religious believers (Mammadov, 1991, p. 225). According to ethnosociological research in 2006, 72% of respondents considered themselves religious believers. Recently, the number of young believers has increased.

In Azerbaijan, Russian-Orthodox, Georgian-Orthodox, Molokan Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Christian Bantis, Albanian Udi Church, European, and Mountain Jews religious communities operate; Sunday schools and Bible and training courses function near the churches. All citizens have equal rights and are not discriminated against, irrespective of their religious views.

In general, the ethnic policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan comprises the following areas (Babayev, 2009, pp. 31–32):

- Closely involving ethnic minorities in the life of the state and society.
- Protecting native languages, cultures, and religious beliefs of ethnic minorities.
- Establishing a coordination council to regulate relations with cultural associations of ethnic minorities.
- Protecting the rights of ethnic minorities in terms of international law.
- Improving the socio-economic situation in the regions.
- Taking measures to improve employment and living conditions.

The European Commission's European Neighborhood Policy Report on Azerbaijan states:

Azerbaijan has taken positive steps to combat racism and intolerance and improve the protection of minorities by ratifying the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The rights of national minorities are protected by appropriate articles of the Constitution. These provisions are also reflected in the 1999 Criminal Code. The Code defines the commitment to a crime based on national, racial, and religious hatred as aggravating circumstances (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2022)".

Former President Heydar Aliyev has taken serious steps to build civic solidarity and national unity in Azerbaijan. Thus, he identified Azerbaijanism as the main idea for forming national unity in the country. H. Aliyev clearly defined the urgency of an integrative ideology for the formation of civic solidarity and national unity in the country and considered it important for strengthening state independence:

Currently, the Republic of Azerbaijan needs unity, national solidarity, national unity, civic unity as air to breathe, water to quench thirst. We must defend our lands, return our occupied areas, ensure the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and preserve its Independence (Aliyev, 2021).

Dozens of national cultural centers operate in Azerbaijan. Among them, Birlik Society, Russian Community, Slavic Cultural Center, Azerbaijan-Israeli Community, Ukrainian Society, Ronai Kurdish Cultural Center, Samur Lezgin National Center, Azerbaijan-Slavic Cultural Center, Tat Cultural Center, Azerbaijan-Tatar Society, Turgan-Tel Tatar Cultural Society, Yashlig Tatar Cultural Center, Krim Crimean Tatar Society, Georgian Society, Humanitarian Society of Azerbaijani Georgians, Ingiloy Community, Chechen Cultural Center, Vatan Society of Akhiskha Turks, Sona Akhiskha Turkic Women Society, Talysh Cultural Center, Avar Society, Mountain Jews Community, European Jews (Ashkenazi) Community, Georgian Jewish Community, Jewish Women's Humanitarian Association, Kapelhaus German Cultural Community, Udi Cultural Center, Polonia Polish Cultural Center, Mada International Talysh Association, Avesta Talysh Association, Orain Udi Cultural Center, Budug Cultural Center, Sakhur Cultural Center, as well as amateur societies, national and state theaters, amateur associations, and interest groups operating in regions where national minorities are concentrated. For example, Lezgin and Georgian State Theaters operate, respectively, in Gusar and Gakh, and Talysh folk groups operate in the Astara and Lankaran regions.

The civic integration policy is currently being successfully pursued in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Sociological

research shows no religious or national tension in society. Azerbaijani is the state language and a tool for communication between all Azerbaijanis. The legal framework strengthening civic unity has been further improved and the participation of citizens in the state policy, political, social, and regional integration processes has intensified.

### **Ethnic Policy of the Republic of Georgia**

The Republic of Georgia is a multinational country of geopolitical and geoeconomic importance between East and West and North and South, inhabited by different peoples and ethnic groups. Georgia's title nation is the Georgians. The Georgians call themselves Kartveli, their country – Sakartvelo, and their language – Kartuli (Gumba, 1994). "The Kartvelebi group includes not only the Georgians but also other nations and sub-ethnic groups living in the country (Omarov et al., 2018, p. 13)". The Georgian population consists mainly of the Georgians (Kartvels). They belong to the Iberian-Caucasian language group. The Kartvels include Ajars, Megrels, Lazs, Svans, Zans, Gurias, Mokhaves, Imeretins, Kheveurs, and other sub-ethnoses (Omarov et al., 2018, p. 128). Abkhazians, Ossetians, Kurds, Yezidis, Azerbaijanis (Azerbaijani Turks), Tatars, Dagestan peoples, Avars, Aysors-Assyrians, Poles, Jews, Moldavians, Russians, Estonians, Chechens, Kistins, Armenians, and Greeks live in Georgia. Different religious believers – Christians, Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans, Nestorians, and Judaists – live in this country.

Despite some mistakes in the ethnic policy of the Republic of Georgia in the 1990s, i.e., the first years of independence, successful work has been done, and positive results have been achieved in this area. Thus, Georgia keeps close contact with international organizations protecting national minorities, such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the United Nations. It has acceded to the European Social Charter, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, complies with the Oslo Recommendations for the Language Rights of National Minorities, undertakes to protect the rights of national minorities in its constitution and laws, and seeks to ensure civic integration. For this purpose, the Council for International Relations and Civic Integration was established. Georgia's state structure also includes the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality. Georgia wishes to attract Abkhazians and Ossetians with a civic integration model based on cultural, language, and educational programs. Officials consider non-integrated groups as ethnic groups not speaking the state language and living compactly:

We provide them with the necessary information in their native languages. In parallel, we are creating conditions for teaching the state language to the local population under a long-term education program. Herewith, civic integration cannot be understood as assimilation. We are not trying to do that. (Wheatley, 2009).

According to the Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of the Republic of Georgia, Katevan Sikselashvili, the state protects and preserves the uniqueness of each group and individual. Georgia's national-state civic identity comprises components such as ethnicity, native language, traditions, and faith. Tolerance is manifested in society in an environment of diversity. In Georgian, tolerance is 'shemsknarebloba'. This word expresses respect for the identity of other people. "In regions of compactly residing ethnic Azerbaijanis and Armenians, 95% of schools provide education in their native languages. Small-group language courses have also been introduced in schools. This refers to Kistins, Chechens, Kurds, Greeks, and Abkhazians (residing in Adjara) living in the country" (Wheatley, 2009).

The Republic of Georgia is currently trying to build a model of national civic integration based on European experience, free of ethnic and religious conflicts. The National Council for Civic Integration and Tolerance, established by the relevant decree of the former President of the Republic of Georgia, M. Saakashvili, has started implementing an Action Plan in the country in this area. The Council is chaired by the Minister for Civic Integration of Georgia, Zinaida Bestayeva. The Council members are the Finance Minister of Georgia, A. Aleksishvili, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President, P. Kublashvili, the Minister for Science and Education, A. Lomaya, and the Minister for Economic Development, I. Chogovadze (Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, 2014).

The National Council has developed the National Concept of Civil Integration and Tolerance according to the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Adopted in 2008, this Concept defines the state strategy and objectives in six areas (Administration of the President of Georgia, 2008, p. 3):

1. The rule of law.
2. Education and the state language.
3. Access to media and information.
4. Political integration and civic participation.
5. Economic and regional integration.
6. Preservation of culture and identity.

In this regard, the Georgian and Azerbaijani civic integration models are similar. The main goal of the Georgian national concept was to create an environment of mutual respect and tolerance among all people living in Georgia, ensure the political, economic, and social rights of all citizens, develop the culture of national minorities, and create favorable conditions for preserving their identity, religion, and cultural heritage.

The basic principles of the Concept of National Tolerance and Civic Integration are:

1. Equality of rights of all citizens of Georgia, non-discrimination, strengthening tolerance,
2. Civic integration and protection of the identity of national minorities, voluntary civic integration, and prevention of forced assimilation, maintaining a balance between them (Administration of the President of Georgia, 2008, p. 5).

The national concept provides for publishing the Teacher magazine in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages, translating textbooks into those languages, broadcasting the Moambe (news) TV program once a week in Abkhaz, Ossetian, Russian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian languages, radio broadcasting daily news in Abkhaz, Ossetian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Russian, and Kurdish languages, assisting in publishing the Armenian-language Vrastan, Azerbaijani-language Gurjustan, Russian-language Svobodnaya Gruziya (Free Georgia) print media, supporting the activities of the Georgian Jewish Ethnographic Museum, the Caucasus House Cultural Center, the Azerbaijani Cultural Museum, the Russian Cultural Center, as well as theaters, music schools, clubs, and libraries of national minorities.

However, civic integration in Georgia faces certain challenges. Georgian sociologists note that errors in the national liberation movement in the first years of independence impact civic integration negatively. The issues of disengagement of national minorities from society, failure to develop their civic identity, and ignorance of the state language can also be added. Inadequate representation of national minorities in public administration and open and covert separatism also pose a problem. A member of the Georgian Parliament's Committee for Civil Integration, researcher Guram Svanidze writes:

... the young Georgian democracy has a very contradictory legacy. On the one hand, the country's people can be proud of the rich traditions of tolerance, and on the other hand, the elements of ethnonational thinking are still alive in their minds (Svanidze, 2007, p. 172).

G. Svanidze recommends that national and ethnic minorities actively and effectively participate in social life and public administration for the successful integration of citizens:

The key task is to create a socialized environment facilitating the formation of a social subject with mature civic awareness, capable of effectively and freely participating in creating material and cultural wealth, social life, and public administration, irrespective of ethnic origin. The rule of law shall be the basis of such a society. (Svanidze, 2007, p. 173).

The Defender of Georgian People reports to the Georgian Parliament once a year on the protection of human rights and freedoms, including the rights of national minorities. The Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Civic Integration also operates under Parliament.

On August 17th, 2015, the Georgian Government adopted the State Strategy for Civil Equality and Integration (2015-2020) (Garibashvili, 2015). The Strategy aims to involve ethnic minorities in the country's social and political life, create equal economic and social conditions for them, provide access to quality education, create opportunities to preserve their culture and ensure a sustainable tolerance environment in the country. However, we believe this Strategy lacks a systematic approach and therefore, its implementation has faced certain difficulties. The state considered the consequences rather than the causes of the integration of minorities. Overcoming this problem requires the more active involvement of minorities in political life, a higher level of civic participation, access to objective information, focus on not only issues of ethnic but also religious minorities, and an equal election environment.

The imbalance in ethnic policy leads to the isolation of national minorities, depriving them of civic participation. As a result, destructive processes such as separatism and irredentism are emerging among national minorities. The dangerous extreme of integration is assimilation. Ethnic assimilation is forcible reunification with the titular nation, which today is considered an unacceptable political model.

### **Ethnic Policy of the Republic of Armenia**

Deporting the local Muslim-Turkish population from the Western Azerbaijani lands started before the establishment of the Armenian state. However, this process intensified after its establishment. Deportation of the local Muslim-Turkish population in Western Azerbaijan mainly covered the following 4 phases:

- Phase 1: 1905-1906
- Phase 2: 1918-1920
- Phase 3: 1948-1953
- Phase 4: 1988-1991

About 500,000 Azerbaijanis have been deported from Armenia, pursuing the policy of 'Armenia without Turks'. The displacement of up to one million of our compatriots from the Upper Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, occupied by Armenia, can be considered the 5th stage of ethnic cleansing. The Armenians make up 98.1% of the population of the Republic of Armenia (Table 2) since they have performed a step-by-step ethnic cleansing. Armenian Orthodoxy remains the main religion in the country.

Table 2: Ethno-Demographic Picture of Armenia (2019).

<b>Nation</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Armenians	2 million 900 thousand	98.1 %
Yezidis	35,272	1.17 %
Russians	11,862	0.39 %
Greeks	900	0.03 %
Ukrainians	1,176	0.04 %
Kurds	2,131	0.07 %
Georgians	974	0.02 %
Belarusians	214	
Poles	124	
Jews	127	
Germans	33	

Source: (Omarov et al., 2018).

The Advisory Committee's report on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted by the Council of Europe on February 13th, 2017, states that since Armenia is a mono-ethnic state, it places too little emphasis on the development of cultures and languages of national minorities (Council of Europe, 2024). In Armenia, Assyrians, Belarusians, Georgians, Germans, Greeks, Jews, Kurds, Legs, Russians, Molokans, Ukrainians, and Yezidis are considered national minorities. Armenians, pursuing an ethnic cleansing policy to create a Turkish-free Armenia, have repeatedly arranged deportations and genocides against Azerbaijanis and eventually have created a mono-ethnic state in Azerbaijan's historical lands. Armenian sources admit that Azerbaijanis experienced violence in Armenia and were expelled from the country. The Armenians systematically put their wicked designs into effect, violating international norms, even the rules of ordinary humanity, and falsifying history.

According to the Advisory Committee's report on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Armenia violates international human rights and the rights of national minorities and delays the adoption of a law banning discrimination (Council of Europe, 2024). Armenia not only deported Azerbaijanis but also pursued a policy of ethnic discrimination against Yazidis and Jews. The Armenian government is systematically acculturating Christianity among national minorities, including Yazidis. The languages of national minorities are banned, and all nations are forced to speak Armenian and adopt Armenian surnames.

The discriminatory policy pursued by Armenia at the state level forces national minorities to leave the country. The Advisory Committee's report notes that of all ethnic minorities, the number of Yazidis has decreased the most. It was stated that this number decreased from 40,620 in 2001 to 35,308 in 2011. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and economic problems that emerged as a result of Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan have had a severe impact on the socio-economic situation of the Armenian majority, created by long-term resettlement in the country, and minorities. They also restrict the implementation of projects concerning national minorities (Council of Europe, 2024). In addition, The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Armenia tyrannically continues the Christianization of the Yezidis.

Hatred of all ethnic minorities is sustained in the country. As is known, Armenians pursue a policy of anti-Semitism against Jews. Anti-Semitism is a kind of ideology of nationalism and racism, expressing hatred and persecution of the Jewish nation and culture and Judaism. Today, in Armenia, which is trying to establish friendly relations with

Israel, anti-Semitic calls are not a myth but a reality. Thus, extreme nationalism, hostility towards other peoples, and anti-Semitism have become an integral part of state policy in Armenia (Hajiyev et al., 2019, p. 185).

The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia formally 'protects' the national and ethnic identity of all minorities. In reality, the rights of Jews, like all other minorities, are violated. In his article published in the American Jewish newspaper *The Algemeiner*, entitled 'Anti-Semitism in Armenia: A Clear and Present Danger,' Israeli expert Arye Gut stresses the following: "The rise of anti-Semitic attacks and ongoing economic collapse in Armenia drive the Jews of Armenia to flee the country. In just 20 years, the Armenian Jewish population has shrunk from more than 5,000 to just a few hundred (Gut, 2014)."

The hatred of the Jewish minority in Armenian society is related to the Armenians' ethnopsychology. Another reason is the assimilation of groundless allegations in Armenian society that Ottoman Jews participated in the so-called 'Armenian genocide' and supported Ottoman soldiers (O'Malley, 2018). In Armenia, anti-Semitism is pursued at three levels (Hajiyev et al., 2019, p. 187):

1. Anti-Semitism in Armenian society,
2. Anti-Semitism supported by the government and politicians,
3. Anti-Semitism is propagated through the media.

Anti-Semitism is supported in the country not only by the people but also by the government and politicians. The nationalist forces that came to power after the declaration of independence of the Republic of Armenia, in fact, created the 'Armenian model of fascism.' In the country, anti-Semitic books are published, TV programs are broadcast, and media representatives make anti-Semitic speeches. Anti-Semitism is supported at the state level in Armenia. Despite recognition of the Jewish genocide by Armenia, the country expresses cruel anti-Semitism and deep hatred against Jews.

In Armenia, not only national minorities but also representatives of the country's titular nation are discriminated against. There are conflicts between local Armenians and those once deported to Armenia from Europe and the United States, or moved from Azerbaijan to Armenia and Karabakh. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of Armenians have left Armenia since the end of the 20th century. The Armenian society comprises the following types of Armenians (Yeganyan, 2013, p. 6):

1. Armenian Armenians.
2. Azerbaijani Armenians, including Karabakh ones.



3. Georgian and Dagestanian Armenians.

4. Central Asian Armenians.

Sub-ethnic Armenians - Armenian Gypsies, Tat Armenians, Muslim Armenians (Hashins) - are treated differently (Asatryan & Victoria, 2002). Therefore, in 1992-1994, 620-690 thousand people – 18-19 percent of the country's population – left Armenia (Chindea et al., 1996). According to the National Statistics Center's 2017 data, the number of Armenia's permanent residents is currently 2 million 900 thousand. It is known that this figure decreased by 0.4% or 12,000 people compared to 2016. From 2010 to 2016 alone, the population of Armenia decreased by 8.5%. The UN's annual report World Population Prospects 2015 states that in the 21st century, Armenia's permanent population will decrease by 1.3 to 1.7 million.

After Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity in the Second Karabakh War, not civil integration, but civil war and disintegration intensified in Armenia."Thus, the analysis allows for drawing the following conclusions (Hajiyev et al., 2019, p. 195):

- Armenia is a monoethnic state.
- Oppression of other peoples and discrimination is Armenia's state policy.
- Strong nationalism, hatred, and chauvinism against other nations are rampant in Armenia.
- The official Armenian census data of national minorities is invalid.
- The Armenian government pursues a policy of forcible Gregorianization of national minorities.
- The Armenian government is trying to sow discord between Muslim and Yezidi Kurds.
- Anti-Semitism and hostility toward the Jews have become Armenia's state policy.
- National minorities face problems in education, culture, and social spheres.
- National minorities are constantly facing economic difficulties.
- The pursued policy forces national minorities to emigrate from Armenia.

Then, the Advisory Committee's report on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and other sources show that Armenia pursues an ethnic policy of discrimination, assimilation,

and ethnic cleansing instead of civic solidarity and national unity.

## CONCLUSIONS

Due to the successful ethnic policy of Azerbaijan, national-ethnic relations in the country are at a satisfactory level. Azerbaijanism, as an integrative ideology, forms national solidarity in the country. The state language, tolerance, and multiculturalism policy are commendable. Thus, the improvement of the legal framework in this field, the active involvement of representatives of national minorities in state administration and social and political life, the creation of equal opportunities in elections, and the protection of their rights, freedoms, and culture by the state create favorable conditions for the strengthening of civil solidarity and national unity in the country.

Another South Caucasian country, Georgia, has established close relations with international organizations, created the State Ministry, National Council, and Parliament Committee for implementing civil integration in the country, and adopted a national concept and state strategy in this area. However, despite all this, it still has some problems related to national minorities such as learning the state language, involvement in political life, and state administration, in short, integration into the unified Georgian society. Finally, the Armenian state supports racist and nationalist policies, where deportation and assimilation constitute the philosophy of its ethnic policy. In Armenian society, which pursues an assimilation policy, the most ordinary human rights of national minorities are violated, non-Armenians are not involved in political life and state administration, and their languages and cultures are suppressed.

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