

Interview #15 Duration: 49 mins 58 sec

1. 4
2. male
3. 23 years old
4. Baku, Azerbaijan
5. Baku, Azerbaijan
6. Bachelor's degree Azerbaijan,
7. No party membership
8. NGO
9. Internet, international, foreign media; online :Trend.az; 1news.az; BBC
10. Mostly going for events, trainings
11. Azerbaijani speaking

Summary

Part I

Freedoms and protection of human rights are the most important concepts for me. In any case, we should not underestimate the role of security and the political stability. I prefer to have more freedoms than more security.

In Azerbaijan case, currently civil society is very weak. Therefore it is the responsibility of the government to take care of the cleaning. In fact, civil society, municipalities should do it. Community itself should do it.

Azerbaijan certainly have to accept refugees and immigrant , who are relocating because they are in need to do so. This is their basic right and it must be maintained. All of their rights must be equally protected as the citizens of the state.

Ethnic groups should definitely have a right to study in their own language. I think in Azerbaijan the rights of the ethnic groups are violated in terms of getting education in their own language, or having media channels.

Ethnic and cultural diversity is positive, it is enrichment. Everyone should be free to express his or her identity. By being able to express his/her identity he/she will understand himself/herself better and it will prevent aggression.

I totally disagree with that we should help economy and government first. Government and economy serves for the ensuring better life of its citizens. First comes the humans. Perhaps in case of devaluation or crisis, the government may justify it and explain its citizens why they choose economy first. As a human, I will not protest it, by understanding the hard times for the economy. Overall, I would not be happy about it.

Part II

My gender identity is not traditional male identity. My sexuality is heterosexual, however romantically I am attached to both sexes. I have a faith, but I do not have religious identity. Human rights is very important to me. It is forming my morals. It is almost like religion.

The main part of my identity is my gender. Ever asked about who I am, I never think about being Azerbaijani. I do not feel ashamed of being Azerbaijani. However, I do not think about it as a part of my identity.

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Religion as an institute is not very positive. I do not like, if Muslims are convincing, dictating their truth and lifestyle to others or Christians are convincing other groups to follow their truth. It is more a social norm and culture than faith. Apparently, globalization will effect on these norms and culture. Religion has been used for bad actions a lot. At the same time, the last Pope Francis's reformation of religion is absolutely positive. He is supporting Darwinism, LGBT rights. This is phenomenal. Religion can be used for both bad and good. Convincing violence through religion is very bad.

Nation is more of the symbols. Nation is a social construction. The society has shaped who we are. Geographic symbols like mountains, Karabakh, events like Kojaly, figures like Uzeyir Hajibeyov, shaped our nation.

I do not think borders are very important. There are some powers who are interested in keeping the borders. I am skeptic about the narrative that borders strengths stability or security. However, borders strengthens the identity. If there is no unmanageable conflict, it is appropriate to open borders. Soon it will be eliminated around the world.

Social media allows breaking the stereotypes and helps people to see life overseas and all around the world. It is good that it has eliminated borders.

Historical borders in itself is very disputable. Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians have different historical border maps in the Caucasus. Claiming historical borders increases the nationalism and results with was and bloodshed. When I was talking to people in Albania, for instance, even the most liberal Albanian was talking about Great Albania, including Serbia, Kosovo. It was strange for me to hear it. I think it is useless to want it. I believe that globalization is happening and the borders are eliminating more rapidly than restoring borders. In case of Azerbaijan, I think South and North Azerbaijanis are culturally, socially different. The freedom movement in South Azerbaijan is resulted because of oppression of Iran government. In case of Karabakh, both sides have hard lines. Karabakh is very important part for Armenian identity. The monastery in Karabakh is very important for them. They will never want to lose it. Or for Azerbaijan Shusha is a part of Azerbaijani identity. The conflict should be solved through compromise, resulting with sustainable peace.

Part III

Firstly the rights of Azerbaijani people from Karabakh is violated. They have lost their households, their everything. It is unfair for them. Secondly, despite of being neighbor countries we have null relations. This is very absurd for me. Caucasus is a small place. It is not normal to isolate from each other. Thirdly, the trauma is widespread. The education system is spreading hatred and trauma. Of course territorial dispute is also a reason for the conflict not being resolved. The regions around Nagorno Karabakh has no relations with Armenia, but it is still under the control of Armenia. Kurds and Azerbaijanis have been living in those 7 regions for a long time. Those regions must be given back to Azerbaijan. About the referendum in Karabakh, I do not think referendum should be organized in all Karabakh. It should be local referendum in every city, town. In Karabakh currently the majority of citizens are Armenians. The local referendums will help regions, cities to decide which country they want to be part of. If as a concession we are giving Lachin corridor to Armenians, then they should also give a corridor in Mehri region for connecting with Nakchivan.

There are a lot groups to be blamed. Azerbaijan authoritarian government uses the conflict for their own interests and remain in power. In Armenia the government uses the conflict in the same way as well. I see a lot of people blame Elchibey, call him fascist. However, the resources I

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have seen, read about him allows me to say that he was regionalist, peaceful. He was more independent, more democrat than the current government. As much as the ongoing conflict continues, more brains are washed, more deaths arises and our development slows down.

For the solution of conflict, civil society, track 2 diplomacy should work. There should be an opportunity for people to meet. In the political level it is not difficult to solve the conflict. There are Madrid Principles. If Azerbaijan really prioritizes solution of the conflict, even the Russia will come to compromise. Both states (Armenia and Azerbaijan) is militarizing. Any time a small flash is able to destroy all negotiations. From realist point of view, Russia is not very satisfied with the current situation. There is a possibility that Russia solves the conflict by pressuring Azerbaijan to be a part of EuroAsia Union. I do not mind the solution of conflict to be solved in this way. Anyways, we did not benefit from EU much. If the compromised is gained, both governments and nations are satisfied, there is no problem in becoming a part of Euro Asia Union.

I think the life style, traditions, behaviors of Armenians and Azerbaijanis are very similar. Therefore, I do not think there will be serious problems during living together. Of course, traumas should be healed through social work, trainings. There will be marriages, common trade, activities like it used to be before. I am not saying that it is going to be ideal community. However, it is going to be a common co-existing community with its own stereotypes.

Enemy in itself is a social construction. What do we mean by enemy? In some situation, interests of some groups may clash. However, it does not necessarily means to make enemy out of them. For instance, even terrorists must be a target to work with, not to kill. We should gain those people involved in the terrorist groups not by excluding them, but by including them, allowing them to heal.

Nagorno Karabakh belongs to both Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Both ethnic groups have history, figures, and collective memories about Karabakh. Both ethnic groups should have access to live there safely. Of course, if any other ethnic groups want to live there, Karabakh also will belong to them.

Conflict should be solved through up to bottom. There is a need for political will. It is very ambitious to ask the civil society to solve the conflict. We do not have enough resources to reach our goal. The current regime will not allow any small initiate of the civil society towards the resolution of the conflict, by barriering them, by imprisoning them, by torturing them. Today's reality allows only political powers to solve it. Russia has a power to pressure both states to solve the conflict. Europe or USA is not interested in this conflict. Perhaps Iran also has a power to pressure the states. Iran is Shia state, but the opposition is mostly connected with Armenia. Even during April escalation the *Mullah* in Iran gave *fatwa* in order to call men to fight in Karabakh to support Azerbaijan.

We can learn from each conflicts and use some elements from some of them. But overall Karabakh is a specific conflict. New model should be developed. Madrid principles for instance is a successful model. Only think that is need is political will.