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Foreign Policy Orientations in Azerbaijan: Public and Elite Opinion

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Introduction

Since gaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan is searching for its own place and role in the dynamical system of the contemporary international relations, and is now in the uneasy process of determining its partners and allies abroad in an effort to become one of the key "players" in the South Caucasus region and on international scene.

The current transitional period is very crucial and of great importance for Azerbaijan's foreign policy, as right now the process of formation of its foreign policy consciousness and behavior on international scene, the system of approaches to the decision of complex foreign policy problems are being shaped.

There is a great need for our newly independent state to integrate into changing and complicated structure of the international relations, to adapt to the main tendencies in the modern integrative processes and world order and civilization.

Tasks of paramount importance for the country are to work out a long-term optimum strategy of Azerbaijan external policy, to establish mutually advantageous economic, political, military and cultural relations with the other members of the world international community, to improve contacts with contagious countries, to improve its relations with European countries and the other regions, as well as to take care of its own positive, favorable image abroad.

The contemporary geopolitical situation, which has dramatically been changed since the collapse of the USSR, makes it necessary for Azerbaijan to work out a balanced foreign political line aimed at promoting a durable peace, stability and security in the South Caucasus region.

In this context it is extremely important for the new state to determine its geo-political priorities in long-term perspectives. It is obvious that in many respects the future development of the country and its people will be dependent on the system of foreign-political orientations and preferences to be formed henceforth.

The balanced and optimal model of foreign policy development chosen by Azerbaijan is expected to have a strong impact on its international relations, raise the level of stability and security on the whole South Caucasus region and lessen the possibility of new ethno-political conflicts.

It would be appropriate to note that the system and the configuration of the international relations, dynamics of contacts of our country are rather complex, many-dimensional and ambiguous. There is a set of alternatives and options of foreign policy development for the country.

The newly independent country has been gradually gaining a certain experience of foreign policy dialogue and interaction, communication and contacts with the other countries and international organizations. Over the past few years Azerbaijan has launched some important foreign policy initiatives.

Since proclaiming independence, the cooperation with the international organizations has become a key element needed for quick and effective involvement of Azerbaijan into international politics. In this regard, the entry of the country into such key international structures as UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe turned out the doubtless progress in this process.

One of the basic directions of Azerbaijani foreign policy is progressive integration within European and Euro-Atlantic political and economic structures, as well as security structures. Azerbaijan considers itself to be an integral part of Europe, adheres to its fundamental values: free market economy, democracy and rule-of-law, respect for human rights, and secularist society.

Our country intends to intensify its participation in European integration processes, in particular, in its security structures. Within this context Azerbaijan seeks to develop the cooperation with European and Trans-Atlantic partners, first of all, within the framework of international organizations, integrate into these structures.

Ties between Azerbaijan and NATO, Trans-Atlantic and European organizations have increasingly intensified in recent years. Close relations with NATO and integration into European, Western institutions (CE, EU) are regarded to be the best formula for Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is taking an active part in the "Partnership for Peace" program, an arrangement designed to speed up the consultation and military cooperation with NATO, other related activities and programs.

In May 1994, Azerbaijan signed a frame agreement on joining the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, Brussels, Belgium.

Note that the participation of Azerbaijan in the NATO "PfP" Program, signing of agreement on partnership and cooperation with EU, membership in the Council of Europe and activities aimed at the adaptation of national law to European standards are the first steps on the path of integration of Azerbaijan into Europe.

The South Caucasian region, like Central Asia and Balkans, is likely to turn into the zone for the Alliance's responsibility and reaction. At the same time, there are other approaches to the Azerbaijan's foreign policy strategy.

In this regard, it is rather important for the newly independent state to identify its priority geo-political orientations in the long-term perspective. Hence, the future international development of the country will primarily be affected by the already formed foreign-policy priorities.

The importance of the scientific research into of the proposed issue - foreign policy orientations in Azerbaijan: public and elite opinion - has been accounted for by the factors as follows:

1. The geopolitical importance of the South Caucasus region has appreciably increased due to the new large-scale projects on exploitation and transportation of tremendous energy resources;

2. The raising influence of the external actors in the region, the overlapping of interests of different countries and alliances, trying to safeguard here their own strategic and economic interests, as well as the proximity of this region to another vital strategic regions, like Russia, the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf;

3. The importance of promoting the security and resolution of long-lasting, protracted territorial disputes and ethno-political conflicts in this region characterized by extremely unstable and crisis-ridden, and simultaneously having high developmental potential;

4. Azerbaijan's precarious international geopolitical position, its location at the cross-road of different ideological, political, ethno-cultural and religious influences of various countries, which are competing, in fact, for their influence over Azerbaijan.

Part I. The General Overview of the Study: Main Concepts, Objectives and Methodology

1.1 The Role of Public Opinion in Making and Implementing Foreign Policy

At the present stage, in Azerbaijan's development there take place considerable transformations in all the spheres of social life. Particularly, these changes have affected the area of public consciousness and psychology. The collapse of the Communist system led to an ideological vacuum in mass consciousness, which came to be rapidly filled with various ideological trends, theories and concepts.

Complicated and painful processes of demolishing old stereotypes and attitudes and social re-evaluation of social values are ongoing. People are currently in a state of difficult search for new social, ideological, political and foreign-policy identities and loyalties.

At present, Azerbaijani society is experiencing an extremely crucial and responsible period in its socio-political, cultural and moral development. In a relatively short period of time it has found itself in a completely new socio-psychological situation. Its distinctive feature is the absence of monopoly of any ideology and a particular world-outlook or mode of life. Emerging on the scene is a real pluralism of thoughts, opinions and views. Citizens are in position to make a deliberate, free choice of different forms of their socio-political and socio-cultural existence.

It is evident that directions of social changes and transformations will, to a large degree, depend on what ideas and values are accepted or rejected by different groups and categories of the population. The Azerbaijan society's short- and long-term development model will be accounted for by the system of values to play the first fiddle.

This time, Azerbaijani society undoubtedly comes across an important historical threshold. This situation offers an opportunity of quite a precise analysis of the complicated nature of opinions, attitudes, and factors that influence changes, taking place in the sphere of internal and foreign policy.

* * *

Foreign policy strategy of the country should be determined, first of all, by its objective geo-strategic interests, social-economic and political factors. At the same time, the process of the establishment of foreign policy priorities depends, in the main, on public and elite opinion. Public opinion can play an important role in these processes and thus have an impact on their dynamics.

The public opinion would be able to significantly accelerate specific governmental decisions and foreign policy initiatives, for example, the establishment of regional, bilateral and multilateral integrative links, and, on the other hand, to come out as a powerful hindering factor.

To all appearances, the implementation of the official foreign policy course needs a broad public support by majority of citizens. Foreign policy initiatives should also be backed by the majority of the population. And on the contrary, the lack in the society of an adequate consensus may prevent the realization of certain programs and projects in the field of foreign policy.

It should be confessed that this influence is not unequivocal, one-dimensional. The broad range of issues related to the impact of public opinion on foreign policy-making has intensively been debated among political scientists, researchers and practitioners **(***See Annex A. Endnote 1).*

One of the central issues in democratic theory is the proper role of public opinion in the conduct of international affairs. The capacity of the public to make informed judgments about these complex issues which are often far removed from their experience has been questioned. Not everything is clear in this regard. There are alternative versions, points of view on the role of public opinion in the conduct of foreign relations. *(See H. Morgenthau. "Politics among Nations", N.Y., 1973; Almond G. "The American People and Foreign Policy", N.Y., 1964; Key V.O. "Public Opinion and American Democracy", N.Y., 1961; Small M. "Public Opinion: Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy: Studies of the Principal Movements and Ideas", N.Y., 1978.)*

For example, theoretical disputes are taking place among experts on the following crucial issues: the role of public opinion in state politics; nature, force and intensity of this influence; how rapidly and how permanently does opinion change in response to international developments; how does public opinion affect foreign policy; by what means, and with what impacts, do elites shape general public opinion; how and when do politicians listen to the public; policy responsiveness to the public. They also provide for the relationship between opinion and policy that has changed over time; key political actors' use of public opinion to formulate domestic and foreign policy.

Moral-psychological atmosphere, prevailing public moods in the country determine support or rejection for some foreign policy initiatives and actions, approve foreign policy strategy of the country, serve as criteria for performing a certain official course, for example, officially proclaimed pro-Western orientation of Azerbaijan.

Therefore, the issue how the population of Azerbaijan perceives and understands the current international situation, what is the set of foreign policy attitudes and orientations dominating in the mass consciousness is becoming an increasingly important factor.

In consideration of the above-mentioned, a number of issues regarding mechanisms of interplay between foreign policy and mass consciousness have gained high theoretical and practical importance for Azerbaijan:

What does the present foreign-policy consciousness phenomenon look like? What are the main peculiarities, trends and dynamics of its development for the recent period of independence? What is the current state of the public opinion on our country's foreign policy and the modern international contacts, current developments and processes in the sphere? What is the range of foreign-policy attitudes and orientations dominating in the mass consciousness? What are the factors determining formation of the vector foreign-policy attitudes and dispositions both at the mass, societal and elite consciousness level? How do citizens view Azerbaijan's place and role in the contemporary system of international relations, its relations with the other countries and international organizations? What is the image of the different countries, blocs and alliances in the mirror of the Azerbaijani public opinion?

What factors - economic interests, ethnic or religious identity, shared cultural values, security issues, a common historical background - are prevailing in determining the partners and allies abroad? What is the extent of the public opinion's impact on the foreign policy strategy? What is the role of the

mass media and communication in the formation of the public opinion on the foreign policy? What are the main sources of information concerning foreign policy that enjoy greater popularity among the population? What are the channels and mechanisms of the public opinion transmission to influence the foreign policy-makers?

Even a preliminary, superficial analysis of the situation shows that presently in the country there is no consensus on external policy priorities. In the Azerbaijani mass consciousness there is a sharp differentiation of ambivalent, mutually contradictory orientations, opinions and divergent perceptions of the current developments in the area of international relations.

Different social and political groups are of different views on the future foreign political development of Azerbaijan, its place and role in changing international structure. Some groups of people think that Azerbaijan should ally itself with the West and they are mostly oriented on the Western-democratic, European values; another groups suppose that our country should be developed within Turkish or Islamic world, according to oriental values; there is also a group of Russia-oriented or Iran-oriented people.

It should be noted that the problem of foreign policy orientations within the context of contemporary geo-political realities is one of major research subjects. Applied researches and surveys of the phenomena and mechanisms of foreign policy orientations and attitudes have been conducted in various countries and regions of the world. (See *Holsti, Ole R. 1996. Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press; John E. Rielly, ed. 1999. American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1999. Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations; Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy, edited by Jeff Manza, Fay Lomax Cook, and Benjamin I. Page, 2002, Oxford University Press.)*

At the same time, there is a great lack of concrete and reliable empirical data regarding foreign policy orientations in the post-Soviet context and, in particular, a rather scanty knowledge of the state of the public opinion and the aspiration of people in Azerbaijan during independence. The problem of foreign policy orientations in Azerbaijan has not yet become a focus of the special research attention.

All these predetermine a high importance of special sociological measuring of the state and character of foreign-policy orientations of Azerbaijan's population within the context of contemporary internal and geo-political realities.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of Research

The main overall purpose of the research was to obtain comprehensive sociological information concerning the peculiarities, dynamics and basic trends of the foreign-policy orientations in post-Soviet Azerbaijani society.

The research was designed to explore the basic sociological characteristics, parameters and spectrum of the mass foreign-policy awareness of Azerbaijan’s population, analyze the system of social, political and psychological factors and circumstances affecting changes in the foreign-policy consciousness, as well as the assessment of the role of public opinion in performing foreign policy strategy.

The research objectives were the following:

1. To explore the images of NATO, international organizations and selected countries in the mass consciousness;
2. To determine the dominating trends in the Azerbaijani public opinion on current international affairs, international cooperation, security and conflict resolution issues;
3. To study the people's views and attitudes towards the modern international processes taking place in the South Caucasus region and the world;

4. To find out the subgroup differences in foreign-policy orientations, to explore the specific attitudes towards foreign policy among various social and demographic groups of population;

5. To identify the key types of the foreign-policy consciousness among the population to comply with the present period;

6. To reveal the experts' assessments of the various aspects of the current international affairs and Azerbaijan's foreign policy, international cooperation, security and conflict resolution issues;

7. To examine the role of mass media in public opinion formation process, its effect on the foreign-policy preferences and stereotypes.

These issues are of a big theoretical and practical importance for our country. The research conclusions and findings may serve a sort of basis for understanding, realization of the general social-political situation in modern Azerbaijani society and adequate estimation of the prospects for its long-term development.

1.3 Methodological Aspects of Sociological Analysis

Operationalisation of concepts. The concept of "foreign policy orientation" is a key notion for our research. Using this term we implied a particular sphere of public consciousness, reflecting a specific type of relations and institutions related to external affairs of the country. Under this term is meant the impact of international relations on the consciousness both on the entire social and demographic groups of population, as well as individuals. Regarding goals of the research, it was very important to use this notion for a specific empirical-sociological analysis.

Multidimensional model of foreign-policy consciousness. In our study, we regarded a foreign-policy consciousness as a multidimensional phenomenon. "Multidimensional" model implies the use of a balanced system of indicators, which provides comprehensive and valid information about the state and conditions of foreign-policy awareness in the Azerbaijani society.

The following sets of empirical indicators were used: 1) Cognitive components, which include such basic parameters as knowledge in this area, availability of basic information on these issues; person's self-identification, i.e. subjective affiliation to followers to a certain foreign-policy paradigm; motivation, i.e. a hierarchy of motives for this choice; 2) Affective components, which include sentiments reflecting a complex of people's emotional and psychological reactions regarding their choices; 3) Behavioral components, which include the aptitude or the disposition of a certain type of behavior to a certain object, event, or situation connected with international affairs.

The "public opinion on foreign policy" is a certain socio-psychological state of specific people, social groups and communities, set of their attitudes and orientations regarding foreign policy issues. Within the context of our research the public opinion on foreign policy represents a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon, which includes public perceptions of Azerbaijan's foreign policy; public attitudes to NATO; opinion of selected countries; opinion of international organizations; opinion of international economic cooperation and collaboration; and public attitudes towards security issue.

Survey Research

The methodology of the research was based on the complex sociological analysis, providing a broad range of empirical data regarding the different aspects of the foreign-policy orientations and priorities in contemporary Azerbaijan.

Methods. The following methods of sociological research were used:

I. Public Opinion Survey

Regions. The public opinion survey was conducted in 5 towns of Azerbaijan shown below: 1) Baku (capital of the country) in September 2001-October 2001 (500 respondents) and in September 2002-October 2002 (500 respondents); 2) Gandja on 12-18 November 2001 (100 respondents) and on 16-22 November 2002 (100 respondents); 3) Sumgait on 17-23 December 2001 (100 respondents) and on 10-16 December 2002 (100 respondents); 4) Guba on 15-21 January 2002 (100 respondents) and on 16-22 January 2003 (100 respondents); 5) Lenkoran on 10-16 February 2002 (100 respondents) and on 17-23 February 2003 (100 respondents).

Total number of respondents interviewed - 1600 persons.

Procedure. The survey has been conducted through structured, formalized face-to-face interviews. Interviews were conducted in household conditions in the Azeri and Russian languages. Confidentiality of the interviewees was strictly guaranteed, which led to higher of reliability and validity of the data collected. The survey was carried out by the trained interviewers under permanent control and supervision of the Project's Author.

Tools. A special questionnaire has been constructed as a main tool for the public opinion survey. This questionnaire contained 40 main questions (35 closed-ended and 5 open-ended questions) and 8 supplementary questions covering all topics envisaged in the project to comply with the research aims and purposes. This was a system of unified questions directed to achieving intended purposes.

Sampling. Development of a relevant and adequate sampling strategy was one of the most important tasks of the survey. The probability multi-stage cluster sampling has been used. This method consisted of a number of logical stages and procedures of randomly selecting and identifying respondents. This procedure guaranteed a high reliability, validity and objectivity of the data obtained. The sample was representative for different social and demographic groups of the population of the selected regions of Azerbaijan.

Pretest. The pretest survey was conducted among 50 respondents in Baku in August 2001, in order to verify the quality of the questionnaire. Necessary corrections were made on the basis of the pretest.

Interviewers. A particular emphasis was made on the training of the interviewers. Among the interviewers there were 16 persons - local teachers, librarians, students from state and private universities, majoring in sociology, political science and international relations. Several theoretical and practical training sessions on modern applied social research methods have been conducted by the Project's Author. The interviewers were provided with a set of appropriate training materials and guidelines for interviewing and administering the questionnaire. The quality of interviewers' work was under a permanent control and supervision by the Project's Author.

Data processing. The public opinion survey data processing and statistic-correlative analysis was carried out through using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Data Entry and Processing program (Version 9.0).

Trend research. A distinctive feature of our approach was the use of the trend research. This meant that the public opinion survey included two successive stages: I stage - from September 2001 till February 2002, II stage – from September 2001 till February 2002. An interval between the stages was precisely one year. The same survey in the same regions was conducted through using the same sampling procedure and strategy to comply with the same methods and tools of data collection and analysis. Then results of the two stages were compared.

Such an approach made it possible to identify the dynamics and leading trends in the foreign-policy orientations of the Azerbaijani people, to assess the stability and steadiness of the trends explored. At the

same time, it ensured both the validity and reliability of the data gathered. Moreover, repeating the same questions across time provides a unique data base for analyzing trends within country and cross-nationally.

Social-demographic parameters. The sociological survey of foreign policy orientations and preferences was conducted with due regard for socio-demographic status of our respondents. We extrapolated from an assumption that various socio-demographic factors (age, gender, education, occupation) have a certain influence on the attitude of respondents towards foreign policy issues. Therefore, manifestation of foreign policy orientations in various social categories of the population has its own peculiarities. The subgroup differences in the patterns of perception of foreign policy issues may be preconditioned by the system of people's basic life values, interests and needs, their lifestyle and social activity.

II. Elite Opinion Survey

In-depth personal interviews were conducted by the Project's Author among 200 experts. This expert survey involved a wide range of persons holding quite high positions and playing a leading role in the diplomatic, academic, political, military, cultural, religious, and public life of Azerbaijan.

Experts interviewed represent the following major groups: 1) Diplomats involved in negotiation process, practitioners who conduct foreign policy; 2) Researchers, analysts, social and political scientists - scholars who study foreign policy, international relations and law, conflict resolution, sociology; 3) Governmental officials, top policy- and decision-makers, who deal with issues in the field of international relations, high level civil servants, members of parliament; 4) Military and justice officers; 5) Political leaders, elected politicians, representatives of different political parties, social-political movements and organizations; 6) Journalists, representatives of the local mass media; 7) Representatives of the educational establishments, university professors, lecturers, students majoring in international relations; 8) Activists of non-governmental public organizations - human rights and peace-related NGOs, youth and women's organizations; 9) Religious leaders and activists, representatives of various religious communities, groups and organizations; 10) Business and labor leaders; 11) Workers of culture; 12) Representatives of the national-cultural associations and organizations.

A special questionnaire containing 24 open-ended questions has been designed for the interviewing experts. The expert's opinions and assessments were analyzed by using both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

III. Mass Media Content-Analysis and Monitoring

The monitoring and analysis of the content of Azerbaijani press (most read governmental, pro-governmental, independent and opposition newspapers), as well as analysis of the content of the most popular TV channels were conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003. The special instruments have been worked out for content-analysis of the mass media.

IV. Analysis of the Official Documents, Statistics and Other Relevant Materials

There has been conducted the analysis of official documents, statistics to comply with other related materials on the topic.

Greatly contributing to the analysis was Author's direct work at the Library of the NATO Headquarters in Brussels (10 May - 8 June, 2002).

Part II. Findings of the Public Opinion Survey

2.1 Public Perceptions of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

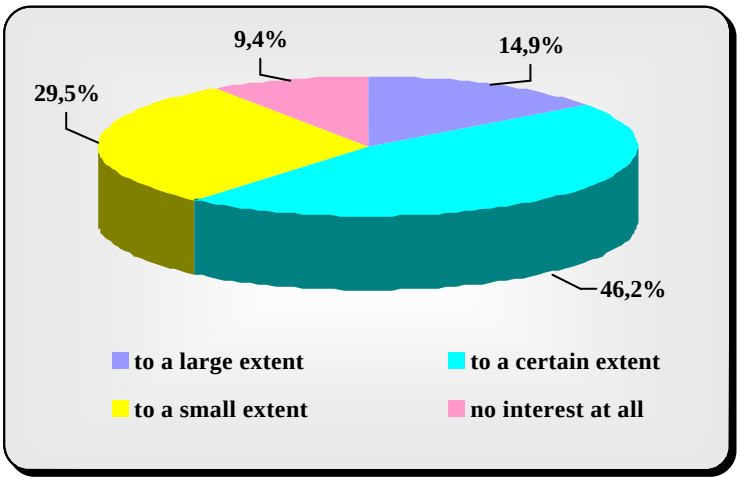
Interest in the issues of foreign policy and international affairs. First of all, in the course of the survey it was important for us to identify an extent and nature of the interest and concern of the country's population in the problems of foreign policy and international affairs. This was an attempt by an empirical way to determine what place the issues of foreign policy occupy within the structure of mass consciousness of the Azerbaijani population, within the set of people's social values and preferences.

It was important for several reasons. Firstly, there is a certain possibility that in terms of transition and social-economical hardships the ordinary citizens are not up to these external problems. They could react with an absolute indifference to what is going on outside the country, what kind of relations Azerbaijan maintain with other countries, in what international unions, entities and organizations our country has been involved, what would be our future development in international arena.

Thus, it would be appropriate to suppose that if the social apathy and nihilism do exist regarding the intra-social and political life and processes, what should one say in this case concerning external policy and affairs? On the other hand, different points of view can also exist. In terms of radical social-political transformations and crises, the public attention and concern can be predominantly focused on external-political problems and events. Therefore, we faced with the necessity to verify these alternative hypotheses.

According to the survey, in average 14.9% (i.e. 16.0% in September 2001 - February 2002 and 13.8% in September 2002 – February 2003) of respondents are taking the interest on the subject "to a large extent", 46.2% (47.6%-44.8%) - "to a certain extent", 29.5% (28.5%-30.5%) - "to a small extent", while 9.4% (7.9%-11.0%) - "practically taking no interest at all" in the issues of foreign policy and international affairs *(See Annex A. Endnote 2).*

Figure 1. Interest of Respondents in the Issues of Foreign Policy and International Affairs



As is evident, these figures are mostly affirmative of the second hypothesis. The general level of cognitive interest of our respondents in the issues of foreign policy and international affairs is quite high. It provides interest in the foreign policy phenomenon as it is (its essence, goals, tools), in the latest developments in the international relations area and, correspondingly, to the broad diversity of processes and events in this realm.

We think it rather natural that for an overwhelming majority of the survey participants' this interest is of sporadic nature, from event to another event, "if something interesting and attractive does happen". However, it is also quite symptomatic that there are some people among our respondents who take not only purely abstract interest in the issues of foreign policy and international affairs, but also rather stable and permanent "theoretical" interest, such as reading popular and even special professional literature on the

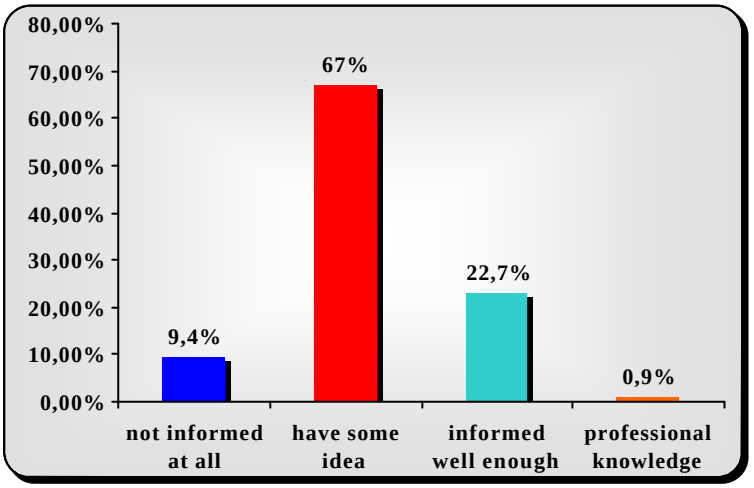
topic, involvement in various public discussions, talk-shows, etc. There is also a group of highly educated people, intellectuals, who take an acute and even professional interest in these issues, are deeply and seriously interested in the issues of foreign policy. This group is basically comprised of students of universities, representatives of science and policy, public figures.

In fact, a varying interest in foreign policy has been identified among different educational categories of the population. If people with lower educational level are more interested in the day-to-day news and events, intellectuals primarily concentrate on analytical aspects and special literature.

Awareness of the events and processes in the international life. An important component of people's foreign-policy consciousness is their awareness in this field, knowledge of the main, principal current events and processes in the area of international life and affairs. Our respondents have been asked to express their subjective opinion on the level of their competence in foreign policy and international affairs.

The below-shown are self-assessments of foreign-policy awareness: "not informed at all" - 9.4% of respondents (7.6%-11.1%); "some idea in this field" - 67.0% (65.9%-68.1%) ("I can maintain a conversation on the subject, but would like to know more"); "informed well enough" - 22.7% (25.4%-20.0%) ("familiar quite well with recent developments in this area"); "professionally deal with these problems" - 0.9% (1.1%-0.8%) ("I have good enough level of knowledge", "I have had professional training in the field"). And, at last, some respondents said that it was hard to evaluate their own knowledge.

Figure 2. Awareness of the Events and Processes in the International Life



As is seen, a rather considerable portion of respondents subjectively consider themselves as quite well-versed and informed in the area of international life, foreign policy and international affairs. Meanwhile, a share of those stressing insufficiency of their knowledge and being interested in gaining more additional information is substantial as well. Of empirical interest is the fact that while men are more informed in foreign policy and international affairs (27.6% vs. 17,8%), more women are trying to get the additional information about these issues (16.1% vs. 12.5%).

It is quite natural that awareness of foreign policy issues is higher with the educated part of the population than that with the less educated one. At the same time, they are characterized by a more realistic assessment of their knowledge and the desire to learn more about foreign policy.

Sources of knowledge and information about international relations. What are the main sources of information for citizens of Azerbaijan about events and processes taking place in the area of international relations?

Table 1. Major Sources of Information about International Life and Relations (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Foreign TV (Russian, Turkish)	72.9	77.3	75.0
2.	National TV	67.3	77.3	72.3
3.	Local newspapers and magazines	38.3	33.6	35.9
4.	Foreign newspapers and magazines	29.8	24.8	27.3
5.	Foreign radio	11.3	9.1	10.2
6.	National radio	9.6	8.0	8.8
7.	Public discussions	9.0	8.1	8.6
8.	Conversations, rumors	7.4	6.8	7.2
9.	Internet	7.3	4.9	6.1

As follows from the Table, presently there are numerous sources of information about international life and relations *(See Annex A. Endnote 3)*. It is quite natural that mass media is the widely spread and popular sources of information. This, first of all, involves TV programs. People apply quite frequently (75.0%) to foreign (Russian, Turkish) or our national (72.3%) Azerbaijani television programs, take an active interest in current events, news, reports, interviews dealing with the international life and relations. Moreover, official (AZTV-1, AZTV-2) and independent channels (ANS, "Space", "LIDER") are approximately equal in terms of their popularity among citizens.

Thus, television has been the main source of information on foreign policy and international affairs for the respondents residing in Baku (capital of the country) or large cities, such as Gandja and Sumgait. An exception here have been small towns like Guba and Lenkoran, since most respondents in these regions receive information mostly from newspapers or occasional sources.

Next in importance for our respondents are local newspapers and magazines (35.9%), and foreign newspapers and magazines (27.3%). People prefer to read special articles in periodicals on various international topics. Special issues, scientific-popular books and magazines are very popular among the young generations, in particular, among students.

Considerably less popular with the Azerbaijani broad public are foreign radio (10.2%) and national radio (8.8%) programs. Among not very widely spread sources are also public discussions (8.6%), conversations and rumors (7.1%), which is, however, quite natural, for ordinary people like to talk about foreign policy and international affairs, to exchange of "confidential", "first-hand" information in this area. By the way, it has turned out that over one-third of respondents quite often touch upon on the topic. Some information is obtained by people, basically, youngsters, also from Internet (6.1%). Also mentioned were such sources of information as lectures, seminars, schools, universities, colleges, workplaces.

Regarding these matters, respondents noted in their comments as follows: "I am very much interested in events taking place in the world, especially, in the Middle and Near East, Iraq, antiterrorist campaign", "I watch very often any news on international contacts of Azerbaijan", "I like a special program about these issues", "it draws me closer to the world, I feel my relation to this world, since I'm aware of what is happening", "I want to know, what occurs in the modern world, because it may have its affect on events in our country, as well as on ordinary persons too", "for example, world developments may affect dropping dollar exchange rate in our country". The opposite opinions were as follows: "The events that occur in the world are very far from us, we have our own problems and difficulties, therefore, everything that occurs in contemporary world is not interesting for me".

Some respondents believe it is necessary to increase the number of special programs on television and radio devoted to international affairs ("it is very important"), while another group is prone to think that "there is already enough of them", "it is not so important".

Important and pressing problems for Azerbaijan. Respondents were offered to name what they believe to be the most serious and relevant problems for Azerbaijan today. The spectrum of important problems facing the country, listed by the respondents, was quite extensive. All of them can be grouped into the following key categories (in order of priority for respondents):

Table 2. Important and Relevant Problems for Azerbaijan (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Settlement of Nagorno Karabakh conflict	68.6	77.3	72.9
2.	Restoration of territorial integrity of the country	55.6	65.4	60.5
3.	Economic reforms	55.8	48.8	52.3
4.	Struggle against corruption and criminality	49.1	39.4	44.3
5.	Decrease of the unemployment	39.9	44.1	42.0
6.	Social security of the citizens	43.8	39.1	41.4
7.	Return of refugees' to their lands	30.9	42.3	36.6
8.	Establishment of stability and order in society	25.9	38.0	31.9
9.	Establishing the rule of law	35.0	28.4	31.7
10.	Democratization of public life	36.4	26.8	31.6
11.	Development of good, friendly relations with neighbouring countries	26.4	24.8	25.6
12.	Development of international relations	24.0	22.5	23.3
13.	Attraction of foreign investments	21.9	16.8	19.3
14.	Creation of favourable international "image" of the country	22.8	14.8	18.8

As has been expected, the overwhelming majority of respondents voiced problems related to unresolved conflict situation in our country. In the opinion of our respondents, the most important, "hot" and exigent for Azerbaijan are the problems of "settlement of Nagorno Karabakh conflict" (72.9%) and "restoration of territorial integrity of the country" (60.5%). Moreover, during one year passed since the first stage of the survey, this percentage has essentially increased - by 10 percent in both cases. Also, during the interview our respondents repeatedly referred to the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons as a consequence of this conflict, 36.6% of them believe that today the problem of primary concern is "return of refugees to their lands".

It has to be kept in mind that the problems of Armenian aggression against our country and ethnic separatism undoubtedly are of primary concern for citizens of Azerbaijan irrespective of their nationality. Representatives of all ethnic groups who took part in the survey practically were unanimous in stressing the extremely negative role of Armenia on this track. It was repeatedly mentioned by many respondents that Armenian armed forces still occupy a fifth part of Azerbaijan's territory.

Further, it is seen that many external problems are viewed by Azerbaijani people in the light of the unresolved conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. Even people's attitudes to either country depend on latter's official position and action regarding the conflict.

Another large group (52.3%) of respondents' answers dealt with the issues of "economic reforms", social and economic problems, such as poverty, social polarization and industrial decline. Respondents have also attached a particular attention to such mutually related problems as "struggle against corruption and criminality" (44.3%), "decrease of the unemployment" (42.0%) and "social security of the citizens" (41.4%). Another category of answers (one-third in average) touched upon such important issues as democracy-building in Azerbaijan: "democratizing public life" (31.6%), "establishing the rule of law" (31.7%) and closely related "maintaining the stability and order in society" (31.9%). As is evident, quite a great number of respondents consider the problem of building of the democratic, civil and legal society to be one of the most important and challenging for Azerbaijan at the present stage.

And, at last, worthy of note are such issues, as "developing good, friendly relations with neighbouring countries" (25.6%), "developing international relations" (23.3%), "attracting the foreign investments (19.3%) and "creating favourable international "image" of the country" (18.8%) occupy close positions on the list.

It should be noted that Azerbaijani people mostly tend toward internal social, economic and political problems, but it does not mean that they ignore external problems. Despite of their location in the lower part of the list, the issues of international relations are taken quite seriously, interestedly and attentively by our general public. In fact, fourth/fifth part of interviewed people indicated these problems.

In other words, these problems occupy in the mass consciousness and public life a smaller portion, "density" only in comparison with internal problems of the country. Of interest is the fact that nearly the

fifth part of the surveyed people is anxious for international "image" of the country. This is largely indicative of a certain maturity and developed nature of mass foreign-policy consciousness of Azerbaijan's citizens. Ordinary people, apparently, start to realize importance and necessity of the given issue for the international development of the country, its progress and the status on international scene.

Attitude towards current Azerbaijan's foreign policy. How have respondents assessed the current Azerbaijan's foreign policy and the foreign political line of our country?

Table 3. Attitude Towards Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Completely approve	10.1	12.8	11.4
2.	Basically approve	57.6	45.9	51.8
3.	Basically disapprove	23.5	26.8	25.1
4.	Totally disapprove	6.3	8.5	7.4
5.	It is difficult to answer	2.5	6.1	4.3

It has been ascertained that the considerable majority (63.2%) thinks that the current Azerbaijan's foreign policy may be approved. Among them 11.4% (10.1%-12.8%) of respondents "completely approve" ("reforms in this area are progressing fast enough", "we have achieved a lot of impressive, remarkable diplomatic victories thanks to our political leaders' and diplomats' efforts") and 51.8% (57.6%-45.9%) of respondents "basically approve" the external political course of the Azerbaijani government. For example, respondents stressed some achievements of our foreign policy over the last few years, such as a membership in the Council of Europe and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, improvement of relations with the West and Russia, diplomatic successes at the PACE and OSCE Summits in Lisbon and Istanbul.

There are no particular differences between men and women in their approving attitudes towards foreign policy matters. Also, all educational and occupational groups were represented in approximately equal proportions.

Meanwhile, 32.5% of respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction with the Azerbaijan's foreign policy and, respectively, international development of our country. They were saying that positive changes and reforms in this area "are not as rapid as they should be", "extremely slow and ineffective" and even that "reforms are not carried out at all". And finally just 4.3% (2.5%-6.1%) of respondents failed to answer the question.

Public's influence on decision-making in the area of foreign policy. What is the role of civil society in the foreign policy pursued by the country? Is the general public of our country capable of affecting the decision-making in the area of foreign policy?

Table 4. Public's Influence on Foreign Policy (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Does not influence at all	43.6	51.9	47.8
2.	Influences to a certain, somewhat degree	46.1	31.4	38.8
3.	Influences quite strongly	7.9	11.0	9.4
4.	It is difficult to answer	2.4	5.8	4.1

The survey has shown that approximately a half of respondents - 47.8% (43.6%-51.9%) are sure that general public does not influence foreign policy at all ("it could influence properly if we had democratic society", "no one is interested in our opinion"). Moreover, this category rose by 8 percent during a year. Another group of respondents - 38.8% (46.1%-31.4%) express an opinion that such kind of civil society's influence on the foreign policy takes place to a certain degree. On the contrary, this proportion reduced since the first stage of the research. Approximately one out of ten of respondents - 9.4% (7.9%-11.0%) is rather optimistic on this issue, suggesting that ordinary citizen are capable to influence foreign policy quite strongly ("this has led to the improvement of our foreign policy activity", "there are some significant positive changes in this area").

As viewed by some respondents, the lack or absence of public control over foreign policy may lead to undesirable consequences, inadequate decisions on this track, "the influence of common people on foreign policy is mostly positive as there is a lack of trust towards political leaders and diplomats, bureaucrats". On the other hand, some respondents regard the growth in impact of public opinion on foreign policy as a negative phenomenon only, substantiating their position by the fact that "so far every political force or movement is making use of foreign policy for its own benefit", "unfortunately, foreign policy is being politicized", “it is not so easy, maybe impossible, to find decision that satisfies everybody”, "I am categorically against all kinds of ordinary people’s involvements and activities because they are completely incompetent in this area”.

2.2 Public Attitudes to NATO

As is known, military-political contacts of Azerbaijan with the NATO block have intensified over the past few years. Azerbaijan is actively involved in different NATO programs, in particular, the "Partnership for Peace” program. Various news of the Alliance got widely distributed in the country and became accessible for ordinary people.

Therefore, one of the major goals of our empirical study was to analyze the public perception of the Alliance, social estimation of its role and place in the modern world as a whole and in the South Caucasus region, in particular, as well as opinions about its influence on geopolitical situation in the given region. A special emphasis was laid on the problems of development relations between Azerbaijan and NATO.

Awareness of N???’s activity. Major element of public perception of particular international organization is a certain amount of knowledge about it. Any attitudes and adherence to international subject account for, al least, an elementary level of familiarization with this entity. Therefore, during the survey, respondents were asked about the extent of their awareness and knowledge of NATO, its primary, dominant activity and mission.

Table 5. Awareness of N???’s Activity (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Not aware at all	17.8	24.3	21.0
2.	Have some information of it	59.0	61.0	60.0
3.	Informed rather well	23.3	14.8	19.0

It has turned out that 60.0% (59.0%-61.0%) of survey participants have some information of it ("have heard about it"), 19.0% (23.3%-14.8%) are familiar and informed rather well, while 21.0% (17.8%-24.3%) are absolutely unaware of N??? and its activity. We think that the revealed, quite reasonable level of people’s general familiarity with N??? activity became possible due to the openness of Azerbaijani society that was achieved in recent years. But it is just one side of the coin.

In the survey context the respondents were also asked about their understanding and comprehension of some key principles, dominant activity and mission of the Alliance. In this regard, the picture was completely different. It has turned out that just a few understand quite well and know the nature of all these issues, for example, for what purposes the Alliance had been created (“to protect each other against the Soviet block,” as most frequently mentioned explanation). The interview found out that vast majority of respondents had never heard about the program called “Partnership for Peace”. Even just a few (around 3 percent) of our respondents do know the meaning and abbreviation of term as “NATO”. Only one in twelve of the respondents identified term “NATO” correctly following the September 2002 – February 2003 survey. As compared to the September 2001 – February 2002 survey, where 7% of those surveyed said that they know what the NATO is, it was an insignificant increase of people who were informed in these matters. Nevertheless, one can conclude that the term “North Atlantic Treaty Organization” is still very poorely understood by ordinary people in Azerbaijan.

Major differences were identified between various educational and occupational groups. Based on profession, the percentage of the population who know the term “NATO” is highest amongst those engaged in education, mass media, public entities, science, law; and lowest amongst those employed in

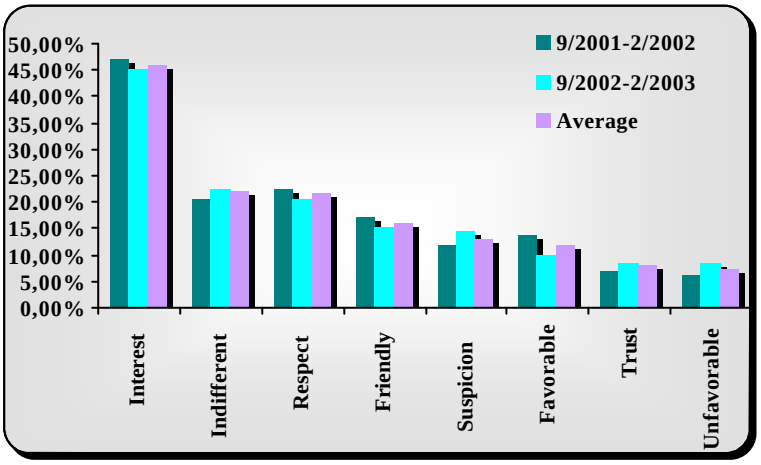
public catering, agriculture, transport, communication, trade and commerce. Industry, business, public health services, state administration, government, culture and art showed an average level of familiarity with the term “NATO”.

At the same time, we consider as remarkable the fact that some respondents expressed interest in gaining the more detailed and precise information about the Alliance. Those interested in receiving more information on NATO were also asked in what areas they would like to receive more information. The area which respondents were more interested in was the prospective NATO enlargement and Azerbaijan’s chance of becoming NATO member. The score of NATO enlargement, around 8 out of 10, is very indicative of the great interest the respondents show in such a process. The interest of the respondents to learn more on NATO enlargement found its parallel in all social categories. In each of them, NATO enlargement and Azerbaijan’s chance of becoming NATO member received the highest score, despite variations in the level of interest in other areas. This once more confirms the importance that the respondents attach to Azerbaijan’s NATO membership. Also our respondents would like to have a clearer view of this organization, to become closely familiar with its key principles.

As for professional categories, there were high levels of interest in greater awareness of NATO. There were, however, differences from one category to the other, some more interested to receive more information on NATO, others - less. Thus, the most interested categories were the mass media, which could have been expected. Yet even in this case, some 10% of the journalists showed no interest in receiving more information on NATO. State administration, government was the next category with highest percentage of respondents, 86.7 %, interested to receive more information on NATO. Business and local NGO respondents were least interested in this respect, although in both groups there is limited information on NATO.

Attitude towards NATO. What is, as a whole, people’s attitude towards the NATO block? What is the “image” of NATO in the mirror of the Azerbaijani public opinion? The following spectrum of perception and attitudes towards the block has been discovered during the survey:

Figure 3 . Respondents’ attitude towards NATO



As is seen, quite an extensive range of attitudes and opinions regarding NATO has been ascertained. First of all, it is necessary to specify rather interested attitude of our general public to the Alliance - 45.9% (46.8%-45.1%). Predominating are also positive, tolerant attitudes of "respect" - 21.6% (22.5%-20.6%), "friendliness and amiability" - 16.0% (16.9%-15.1%), “favorability, sympathy” - 11.7% (13.5%-9.9%), “trust, confidence” - 7.8% (7.0%-8.5%). This makes a total of approximately 60 percent.

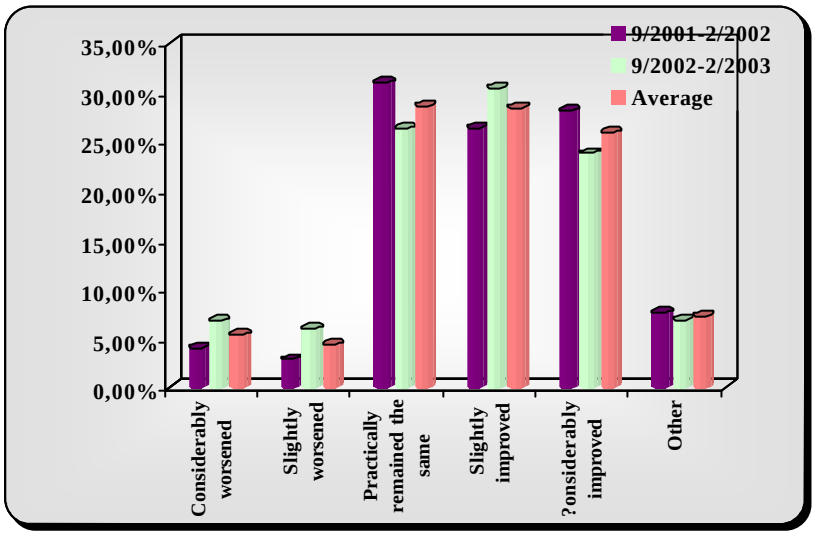
By contrast, unfavorable, negative and non-tolerant attitudes to NATO (“suspicion” - 12.9% (11.6%-14.3%), "dislike, hostility, contempt, criticism” - 7.3% (6.1%-8.5%)) were encountered only in a quite small portion (in total of 20 percent) of respondents. It is also quite symptomatic that one in five respondents expressed towards the block NATO "indifference and neutrality" - 21.9% (20.3%-23.6%). This proportion is totally in line with the number of respondents (roughly 21.0%) who were absolutely unaware of N??? activity. In parallel with these assessments, some portion of respondents (around 5-6%)

was characterized having other emotional responses and feelings regarding this organization, for example, “hope”, “great expectation”, “understanding” and even “sense of inferiority” ("sometimes I feel that we need very long way to achieve their advantages”).

Some differences regarding this issue have been discovered between residential areas. Judging by the obtained information, particularly favorable and amicable situation is in Baku (21%), Guba (19%) and Sumgait (18%), unlike Gandja and Lenkoran, where, for instance, the share of those who have pointed out the "unfavorable" and "unfriendly" nature of NATO perception is the biggest (9.4% and 8.9%). For comparison, in Baku this indicator constitutes 5.6%. Probably, such a tendency is explained by the existence of a great number of various well-educated, intellectual, westernized groups of people in the capital of the country. Provincial respondents have displayed much more negative sentiments in their views of NATO. Nevertheless, in general it would be quite justifiable to talk of normal, calm perceptions of this organization in the surveyed regions, towns of our country.

Changing attitude towards NATO in comparison with the Soviet period. It was important to follow up on the dynamics of the changing attitude of the Azerbaijan’s population towards NATO as compared to the Soviet period. Judging by the obtained information, a rather complicated picture of dynamics of NATO public perception is observed.

Figure 4. Dynamics of attitudes towards NATO



As is seen, a greater portion of respondents (54.3%) have changed their views on NATO towards growth of positive perception of the organization, while 28.4% of them have indicated that their attitudes “slightly improved" and 25.9% have pointed out that their attitudes towards NATO “considerably improved” since gaining independence. And at last, a very small portion was made of respondents, whose attitudes have "considerably worsened" (5.4%) or "slightly worsened" (4.4%) in comparison with the Soviet times. NATO perception of every fourth (28.6%) respondents has practically remained on the previous level ("just like before, in the socialist time").

It is, of course, quite natural that the negative facts of the representation of NATO for general public our respondents mainly associate with the Soviet times. Those are just few comments of our respondents - “in those days, NATO looked extremely badly”, “we were afraid to tell something good about this block, while we are not now», “it was forbidden at that time, especially if you were a member of Communist party”, “there were a lot of obstacles on the way of getting objective and true information about the Alliance”.

It is indicative that many representatives of older and middle generations could not forget fear, restriction and prohibitions in the Soviet times related to the “aggressive”, according to official propaganda, nature of the Alliance. They recall such examples of “political brainwashing”: “even now, when I hear by TV about NATO, I feel a sense of fear”, “even now it is unpleasant to me to speak on this theme”, “this propagation was consequence of cold war”, “then we lived as if in the besieged fortress, we

had a besieged mentality", "an idea of tight opposition between the two camps constantly took roots into our mind and consciousness", "now it is not so easy to accept something good about the block".

Meanwhile, young generations are not able to compare these two periods. In their comments, they indicated and appreciated the present freedom, absence of fear in this area. Opinion of youth on the NATO is of the big interest, because they have no negative Soviet experience and are open to such kind of dialogue. According to the survey, young people in Azerbaijan mainly tend towards the West, Europe and America, are more susceptible to the Western democratic values, capable to apprehend the common universal concepts and values. It could be explained by the fact that now there is immeasurably more information on the outside world, there is no previous division into ideological camps and poles caused by "cold war". Young respondents marked present openness of our society as a very important factor in Azerbaijan's road towards European community, almost as important as the reforms in economy and politics.

Azerbaijan's relationship with NATO. An essential part of the survey explored opinions on the level and character of relationship between Azerbaijan and NATO, existing problems, contradictions and difficulties in this area. These relationships could be considered as a complicated phenomenon of various patterns of interactions existing in this area.

Table 6. Azerbaijan's Relationship with NATO (in %)

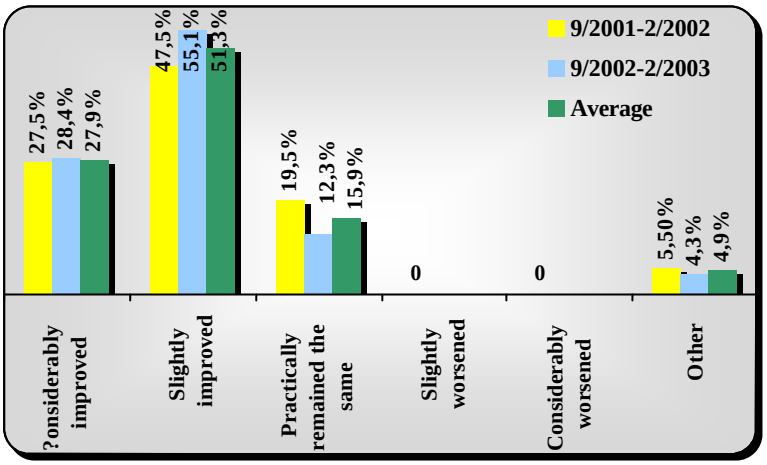
		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Relations of partnership	27.3	30.5	28.9
2.	Friendly, amicable	26.1	30.3	28.2
3.	Neutral	33.5	22.4	27.9
4.	Mutual distrust, dislike	7.4	8.3	7.8
5.	Competitive, rival	-	-	-
6.	Conflict	-	-	-
7.	It is difficult to answer	5.8	8.6	7.2

As is seen, present relationship between Azerbaijan and NATO is as follows. In the majority of cases (57.1%) these relations were evaluated as "partnership" - 28.9% (27.3%-30.5%) and "friendliness, amiability, mutual respect" - 28.2% (26.1%-30.3%), i.e. a favorable and benevolent estimation prevails. Further, these relations were perceived as "neutral" by 27.9% (33.5%-22.4%) of interviewed. Only 7.8% (7.4%-8.3%) of respondents think that these relations are based on "mutual mistrust and dislike". Also, 7.2% (5.8%-8.6%) of respondents had difficulties in giving their assessment. It is noticeable that no one from Azerbaijani general public indicated the "conflicting and tense" or "competitive, rival" character of these relations ("how can a relationship of competition between our entities be possible, since we are incomparable ones").

The answers to the given question, as a whole, illustrate mainly positive estimation of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and NATO; these estimations are essentially shifted to the positive edge of the rating scale. Our respondents practically have not specified any serious, unsolvable problems in sphere of our mutual relations.

Change in Azerbaijan-NATO relations for the last several years. Our intention was to determine respondents' perception regarding how relations between Azerbaijan and NATO have changed for the last 3-4 years, how people subjectively evaluate recent developments, transformations in this area. It was important in terms of monitoring of public opinion dynamics.

Figure 5. Change in Relations between Azerbaijan and NATO for the Last Several Years (in %)



The survey has illustrated that the absolute majority of respondents (around 80 percent) thinks that the relationship between Azerbaijan and NATO has improved in recent several years. Among them more than a half (51.3%) (47.5%-55.1%) think that these relations have slightly improved, while every fourth respondent (27.9%) (27.5%-28.4%) believes that these relations have improved considerably ("the relations are becoming broader, friendly and constructive", "the situation in this respect has cleared up and ameliorated"). Only about 16 percent (19.5%-12.3%) suppose that relationship between Azerbaijan and NATO has remained practically on the previous level, unchanged. At the same time, none of the respondents has indicated that these relations have deteriorated.

Thus, Azerbaijani respondents have subjectively observed a considerable shift for the better in the area of Azerbaijan-NATO relations. In fact, this category was made up of representatives of different social, demographic and ethnic groups that have participated in our survey. This is an obvious indicator of the fact that such a positive response for the general state of Azerbaijan-NATO relations is not characteristic of any particular social group, but is rather connected with the real tangible general changes in this sphere over the last several years. Ordinary citizens just adequately perceive and follow these radical geopolitical transformations and dynamics.

Role NATO plays in the modern world. The respondents have been offered to define their opinions concerning the role NATO currently plays in the modern world and how its impact on international processes has changed over the past few years.

Table 7. Respondents' Views on the Role of NATO in the Modern World and its Impact on International Processes

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Positive	15.4	17.0	16.2
2.	Rather positive, than negative	52.9	49.3	51.2
3.	Rather negative, than positive	15.4	18.4	16.9
4.	Negative	4.1	5.0	4.6
5.	Other	8.0	4.8	6.4
6.	It is difficult to answer	4.3	5.6	4.9

The survey has demonstrated that the considerable majority (about 68 percent) regards this role as positive: as exclusively positive - 16.2% (15.4%-17.0%) and as rather positive, than negative - 51.2% (52.9%-49.3%). In so doing, the respondents most frequently used the following comments and arguments: "this Alliance gave the impetus to the system of international development", "without NATO's pressure on former Warsaw Pact countries, Soviet block, we would not have become an independents state", "we owe NATO countries for our independence, as the Soviet Union has broken up, being in no position to stand the arms races". It is a little bit more than 20 percent of respondents who perceive this role as negative: as

exclusively negative - 4.6% (4.1%-5.0%) and as rather negative, than positive - 16.9% (15.4%-18.4%). Another part of respondents – only 6.4% (8.0%-4.8%) presume that the role of NATO in the modern world has been dual: in some sense as positive and some sense as negative.

No statistically evident differences between respondents, representing various social and demographic sub-groups, have been discovered. It is worth indicating that some respondents as bearers of indifferent, even unfavorable attitudes towards NATO have stressed an important role of this organization in the modern world, its substantial impact on international developments.

Role NATO plays in the South Caucasus region. The respondents have been offered to define their opinions concerning the role of NATO in the South Caucasus and its impact on regional development. As is evident, this region is an extremely, vitally important for Azerbaijan nation's internal and external development and security conditions. Any changes in the balance of forces essentially influence security conditions of our country that we could observe repeatedly for the last several years. With that end in view, respondents were also asked to express their opinion concerning the growing or decreasing role of the organization in our region.

Table 8. Attitude of Respondents towards the Role of NATO in the South Caucasus and Its Impact on Regional Processes

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Positive	11.1	12.1	11.6
2.	Rather positive, than negative	46.1	36.3	41.2
3.	Rather negative, than positive	19.8	20.8	20.3
4.	Negative	4.6	5.8	5.2
5.	No role at all	4.9	9.3	7.1
6.	Other	6.1	4.3	5.2
7.	It is difficult to answer	7.4	11.6	9.5

Thus, more than a half of respondents (52.8%) think that the role of NATO in our region has been advancing in the positive direction. This role is perceived as exclusively positive by 11.6% (11.1%-12.1%) and as rather positive, than negative by 41.2% (46.1%-36.3%) of respondents. In so doing, some survey participants indicate that the role of NATO is on the increase of late, that this organization has started playing a more decisive and noticeable role in this region. Some respondents noted that this role is growing, but only for the time being, while Russia has considerably weakened for last years. It is indicative that the opinions concerning the positive role of NATO have been expressed equally by representatives of various social and demographic sub-groups.

A twice smaller is a share of respondents (25.5%) who guess that the role of NATO in the South Caucasus and its impact on regional processes is negative. Among this group of respondents are those who perceive this influence as exclusively negative - 5.2% (4.6%-5.8%) and as rather negative, than positive - 20.3% (19.8%-20.8%). Respondents primarily explain their negative vision by reason that the presence of this organization in our region brings split and isolation to the regional countries. Just an insignificant part of respondents (around 7 percent) said that the role of the organization is "equal to the zero", "very minor". Those are more frequently mentioned comments: "influence of NATO in our region at the present time is weakening", "several years ago the role of this organization was higher than now".

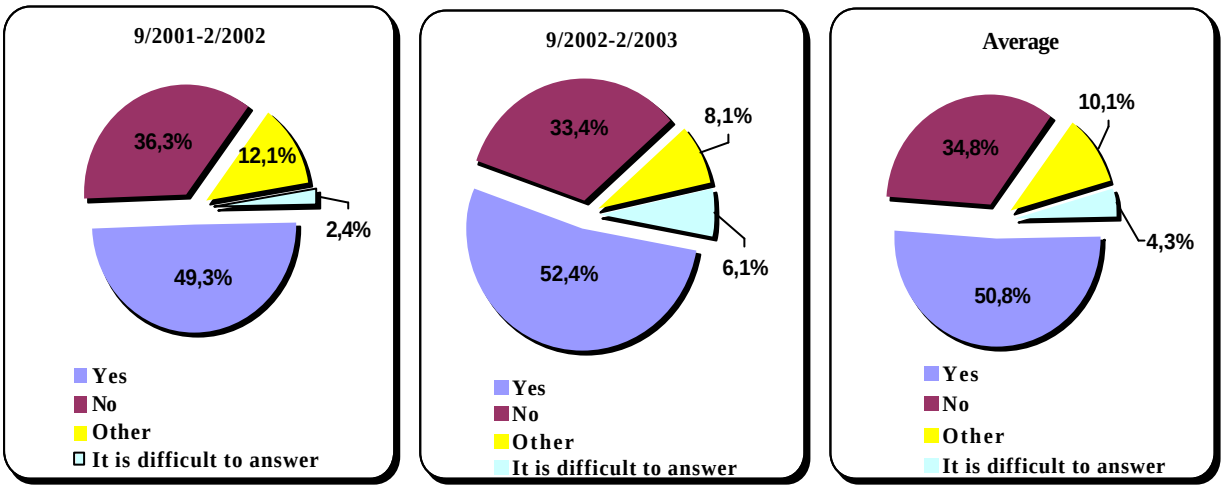
Approximately every third respondent declared that the influence of NATO in our region is on the increase of late, and generally welcomed the growth of this role. A tenth part of all respondents said they attach a tremendous importance to the role of NATO in our region. Every fourth respondent thinks that this organization occupies an important place in the region. This role is also regarded as moderate and insignificant for a small group of respondents, while one in ten has indicated that NATO does not play any role in this region.

It may be supposed from the obtained data that respondents allocate to NATO quite a noticeable part and sometimes an outstanding influence in the South Caucasus region. At the same time, they singled out some negative and alarming aspects of the NATO activity in this region and foresaw a number of potential problems in this regard. Some, for instance, have paid attention to the fact that "over the last several years

the role of NATO has increased, but one should not forget that we live in the region, which historically controlled by such great regional powers, as Russia and Iran", "we are very weak state and can not pursue independent policy yet".

Confidence in NATO's ability to promote peace, stability and security in the South Caucasus. Is NATO, in respondents' opinion, capable of dealing responsibly with problems and promoting peace, stability and security in our region?

Figure 6. Confidence in NATO's Ability to Promote Peace and Stability in the South Caucasus (in %)



As was the case (49.3%) a year ago during the first stage of survey, a small majority (52.4%) of respondents voiced during the second stage their confidence in NATO's ability to promote peace, stability and security in this region. At the same time, each third respondent - 34.8% (36.3%-33.4%) has stated mistrust regarding ability of this organization to deal responsibly with regional problems and to establish here stable and safe situation. There were also other reactions - 10.1% (12.1%-8.1%), like "doubt" and "skepticism". And, at last, just 4.3% (2.4%-6.1%) of respondents failed to answer this question.

It is interesting that these obtained data generally coincide and correlate with a previous positive estimation by our respondents the role NATO plays in the South Caucasus region. As this case is concerned, this role is specified in the stabilization of the situation in our region. This also reaffirms an overestimated level of expectations from this organization. One of the basic expectations is its assistance in the creation of stable and safe political atmosphere here. Owing possibly to the latest developments in the South Caucasus, certain frustrations and disappointments could arise among some groups of population concerning proper and improper actions.

Approval or disapproval actions that Alliance has taken in recent years. Of interest was to find out if Azerbaijani people approve or disapprove various actions and operations taken by this Alliance in recent years.

Table 9. Approval Actions That Alliance Has Taken In Recent Years (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Approve	51.1	56.6	53.9
2.	Disapprove	30.3	27.0	28.6
3.	Other	11.4	5.5	8.4
4.	It is difficult to answer	7.3	10.9	9.1

From these data we can see that although Azerbaijani people are well-disposed in general toward NATO and desire closer ties with the Alliance, they do not necessarily approve all types of its actions.

Almost one-third of respondents - 28.6% (30.3%-27.0%) disapprove actions that Alliance has taken in recent years. For example, such actions as NATO Allied Force Operation in Former Yugoslavia, have particularly been disapproved. They said that NATO was wrong in taking military actions against Serbia.

At the same time, it is interesting that more than half - 53.9% (51.1%-56.6%) of the Azerbaijani general public react positively to the actions and operations taken NATO of late. Among mostly approved actions there were NATO peace-making operations in Former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, mission in Kosovo. Almost one in ten - 9.1% (7.3%-10.9%) offered no opinion on this issue.

Accession of Azerbaijan to NATO: "for" and "against". What is citizens' attitude towards the idea of the accession of Azerbaijan to NATO? Is this idea supported or rejected by the majority of the population of our country? This is a crucial question of our survey. We guess that the general attitude to this organization, finally, should be realized in the aspiration to enter it, to become its full-fledged member. Respondents were asked a question: "What is your attitude towards the idea of the accession of Azerbaijan to NATO?"

Table 10. Attitude towards the Idea of the Accession of Azerbaijan to NATO (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Totally support this idea	17.6	22.8	20.2
2.	Basically it is a good idea, but now we do not meet their requirements and standards	37.8	40.4	39.1
3.	It is possible in principle, only if it will not lead to c?nflicts with another countries	21.0	19.9	20.4
4.	Neutral, indifferent	12.6	11.6	12.1
5.	This problem should not have something to do with our country	7.4	2.6	5.0
6.	Absolutely against this idea	3.6	2.8	3.2

As is seen from the Table, rather stable, even increasing trend is in the mass opinion on supporting idea of accession of Azerbaijan to NATO. If in September 2001 – February 2002 17.6% of respondents totally supported this idea, in September 2002 – February 2003 a proportion of respondents, who fully support the idea of Azerbaijan accession to NATO, reached 22.8%. In fact, a percentage of respondents having of neutral, indifferent attidude towards this issue remained almost the same - 12.1% (12.6%-11.6%).

Moreover, about 60 percent of our respondents generally accept the idea of future membership of Azerbaijan in NATO structure. Meanwhile, they stipulate this support by a number of conditions and circumstances. For example, 39.1% (37.8%-40.4%) of respondents think that basically it is a good idea, but now we do not meet their requirements and standards: "especially in the area of democracy and fair elections", "we have a lot of bribe in government and army", "there is no elementary order and respect for laws in our country", "presently our armed forces are at a very weak and low level".

There were also 20.4% (21.0%-19.9%) of those respondents, who expressed their concern in this regard. Thinking that this integration with NATO is possible in principle, they worry that this act will lead to conflict and clashes with other countries. The most frequently mentioned countries in this context were Russia and Iran ("if we enter NATO, their reaction might be very tough and unpredictable").

The survey has also illustrated that there is a part (around 8 percent) of respondents, who are strictly oppose the process of entry of Azerbaijan into NATO system. Among them 5.0% (7.4%-2.6%) of the interviewed, who justify this opinion by the statement that this problem should not have something to do with their country. In this case the following motivations were used most frequently: "we have now more important, vital problems and should solve them first of all", "it will have very bad, destructive consequences for our nation". But, it is also worthy to note that a share of respondents, who are absolutely against the idea of Azerbaijan's strive for the NATO membership even decreased on the second stage of our survey (2.8% versus 3.6%).

Thus, as it can be seen in the data above, the trend in the years 2001–2003 was rather steady – the results indicate that the support for NATO accession is expressed by over four-fifths of the Azerbaijani

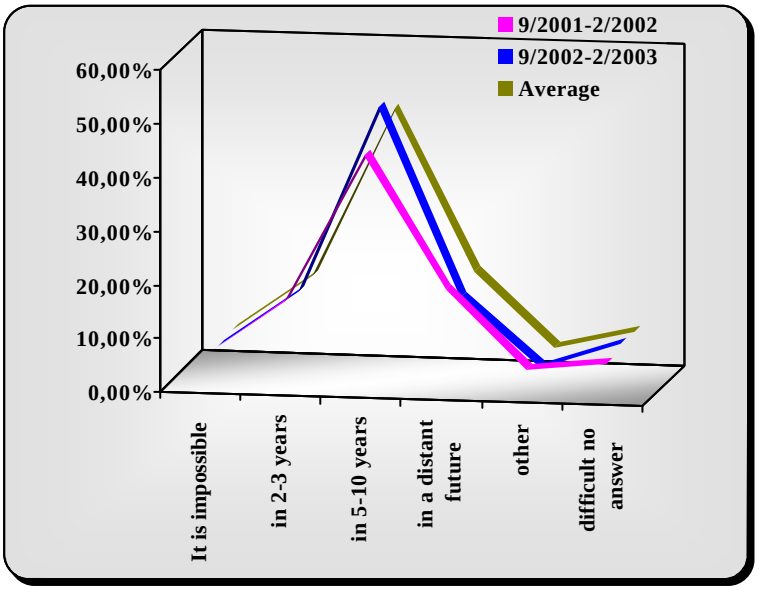
population surveyed. The same empirical fact that vast majority of Azerbaijani people have explicitly stated their desire to join NATO means, firstly, that they do not perceive it as hostile alliance and, secondly, they consider Azerbaijan's NATO membership as a very important factor in our path to the West, as a major chance for having safe and prosperous life. Rather high level of support for Azerbaijan's NATO membership was also reflected in the fact that respondents in all categories thought that strengthening relations with NATO should be priority for the Azerbaijani government.

The surprising fact came to light during the interview - a considerable number of respondents seem to think that NATO should admit Azerbaijan even if the latter is not ready to become a full-fledged member of this alliance. The answers among the professional and occupational categories varied considerably. In some of them, housewives, pensioners, unemployed, refugees, IDPs, the majority of respondents, answered that NATO can admit Azerbaijan even before the country is prepared to become its member. The fact that most respondents thought that NATO should admit Azerbaijan even despite its low standards reflects a major misconception on this process. Sometimes, integration with the Alliance seems to be perceived as a decision to be taken in Brussels rather than an ongoing effort on the Azerbaijani side to raise its economic, political, social and military standards.

During the survey, we checked up a hypothesis that the attitude to the integration into NATO is strongly correlated with social-demographic status of the interviewed, especially, with age and educational categories. This hypothesis basically has proved to be true. The strongest pro-NATO tendencies are connected with the age and the level of education. Note that age and education differences are striking, especially regarding the idea of the accession of Azerbaijan to NATO: the younger the person is and the higher his education, the stronger is the will to join NATO. Rise in educational level also increased the degree of acceptance this idea: from 15.3% when declaring that the level of education is "the lowest" to 24.8% when it is "the highest". It is obvious that as the educational level notably surges a share of "supporters". A great percentage of "supporters" is made up of people with elementary, incomplete secondary and incomplete higher education, while most of all "pessimists, nihilists" are among people with secondary education. Ironically, support for this accesion was weaker among the younger age group 18-25 years old than among the older age groups. Our country's joining NATO was also of much less importance to women than it was to men. Among ethnic Azeri people the support rate is around 26 percent, which is higher than the average both among non-Azeris.

When will membership of Azerbaijan in NATO be possible? What are our respondents' prognostications regarding the possible prospective of NATO membership timeframe for Azerbaijan? The following distribution of answers from respondents was obtained:

Figure 7. When Will Membership of Azerbaijan in NATO Be Possible (in %)



Despite the empirical fact that the closer ties with NATO generally are favored and welcomed by Azerbaijani people, the majority (approximately 66 percent) of respondents is not very much optimistic on the issue of membership in this organization. As is seen, the biggest group - 47.8% (44.5%-51.0%) is comprised of those predicting that this event can become possible, but not earlier, than in 5-10 years. Another group - 18.0% (19.9%-16.1%) of respondents predicts the real and full-fledged membership of Azerbaijan in NATO only in a very long-term, distant future. It should be underscored that the percentage of convinced pessimists within a year has remained unchangeable: 5.8% (6.1%-5.4%) of the interviewed are sure that joining of Azerbaijan to NATO is impossible in principle. The percentage of "cautious optimists", who suppose that it can become possible in short-term perspective, in 2-3 years is not very high - 16.4%. Over the year it varies just from 16.9% to 16.0%. Moreover, almost one in ten respondents was at a loss to give any reasonable forecast in this matter. As one of them has noticed, "even our government does not know anything about it".

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the NATO membership term is not very clear and obvious for Azerbaijani broad public. People basically are inclined to see terms of the entering of our country into this organization only in a very distant future.

Related to the narrow understanding of NATO integration were also some serious misconceptions regarding the timeframe of the integration process. The first major misperception concerned the pace of the integration process. Most respondents thought Azerbaijan would join NATO somewhere between 5 to 10 years, while at the same time the majority of respondents thought it was moving slowly. Business and state administration were the two most optimistic categories. They had the largest percentages of respondents who thought that Azerbaijan will join NATO in 2 or 3 years, and the lowest percentages that marked 5 or more as the time needed for Azerbaijan's joining NATO. The three categories, less optimistic in this regard, were mass media, science and local public entities, NGOs. Of the three, mass media had the largest percentage of those who thought Azerbaijan would join NATO in 15 or more, i.e. it was the least optimistic.

It is difficult to find the source of such a high level of naive optimism regarding Azerbaijan's NATO integration process, besides, a lack of correct unbiased information and/or persuasive political propaganda on the process. No matter what the source of respondents' optimism is, it is important to note that there was a correlation between such optimism and the way in which respondents perceived NATO and Azerbaijan's benefits from this membership. The more optimistic they were on the pace of the integration process, the more positively they perceived NATO and Azerbaijan's benefits from this membership. Since the membership timetable for Azerbaijan becomes clear, it is very probable that perceptions on NATO might deteriorate and expectations of membership benefits drop.

Importance and necessity for Azerbaijan to expand co-operation with NATO. The survey data suggest the following palette of attitudes in the public opinion regarding importance and necessity for Azerbaijan expanding cooperation with NATO:

Table 11. Importance and Necessity for Azerbaijan Expanding Cooperation with NATO (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	It should become a strategic, priority direction of our external politics	16.8	22.3	19.5
2.	The social-economical and democratic progress of our country will considerably, in many respects depend on a solution of this problem	9.0	10.4	9.7
3.	Support in principle such cooperation, but only if it will be on mutually beneficial conditions	42.6	39.9	41.3
4.	Such cooperation must be only on voluntary and good will basis, but not under Western pressure	19.6	22.3	20.9
5.	Now we have another, more important problems, while it is not so urgent now	21.8	23.6	22.7
6.	This problem has no importance and value for our country	5.0	5.6	5.3
7.	Other	4.9	2.1	3.5
8.	It is difficult to answer	3.5	3.3	3.4

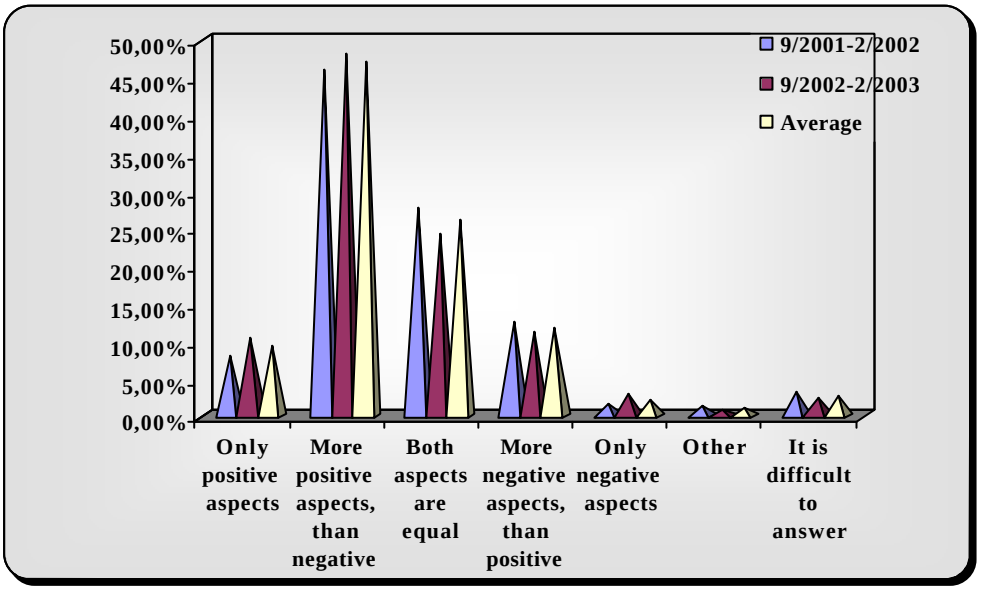
Almost one in three (29.2%) of respondents believe that Azerbaijan should work more closely with NATO unconditionally. Among them 19.5% (16.8%-22.3%) of respondents, who think that it should become a strategic, priority direction of our external politics, while 9.7% (9.0%-10.4%) of respondents suppose that the social-economical and democratic progress of our country will considerably, in many respects depend on the solution of this task. “I fully support the efforts of our government to develop and maintain friendly relation with this prestigious organization” - this is a leitmotif of numerous respondents’ comments. It was emphasized that Azerbaijan “should continue to work with NATO as it does now”.

At the same time, 62.2% of the surveyed in principle, basically being supporters the idea of expanding Azerbaijan-NATO cooperation, simultaneously stipulate it with mutually beneficial conditions - 41.3% (42.6%-39.9%). Another proportion of people stipulate this support by the voluntary and good will basis, not under the Western pressure - 20.9% (19.6%-22.3%). Around 29 percent of respondents do not consider this problem as important for Azerbaijan at present. Among them only 5.3% (5.0%-5.6%) think that this problem has no importance and value for their country and do not regard this problem as important for the country at all, while 22.7% (21.8%-23.6%) suppose that “we have another, more relevant and important problems, it is not so urgent now and, therefore, our country should work less closely with this Alliance”.

Apparently, the general level of public support of Azerbaijan-NATO cooperation is very high. These circumstances create a good favorable social-psychological ground for the expansion of the cooperation, for the realization in practice a broad range of various specific programs and actions. It is very important in terms of maintenance of public support for the foreign policy actions directed at the development of bilateral contacts with this Alliance.

Positive or negative aspects of cooperation with NATO. Do our respondents regard the growing Azerbaijan’s cooperation with NATO as a positive or negative phenomenon?

Figure 8. Positive or Negative Aspects of Cooperation with NATO (in %)



The subjective perception of the growing Azerbaijan’s cooperation with NATO has turned out to be quite different.

For the majority of respondents (ranging between 55-60 percent), this kind of cooperation was associated with positive aspects. For every tenth respondent - 9.2% (8.0%-10.4%), collaborative relations between Azerbaijan and NATO are, beyond any doubts, a positive phenomenon only. According to their opinion, these contacts have positive impact on various spheres of mutual relations - "improves situation in our region", "helps overcome difficulties of our international status", "promotes security and consolidation of the nation", "strengthens and revives our army".

A quarter - 26.0% (27.6%-24.3%) of surveyed persons see both positive and negative sides that are present to the equal extent in the area of Azerbaijan-NATO cooperation. And, at last, just around 14 percent think that the cooperation with NATO is largely negative for Azerbaijan. Within this share of respondents either those, who notice more negative sides, than positive aspects of these relations - 11.8% (12.5%-11.1%) or those, who mark only negative sides - 2.2% (1.5%-2.9%). Thus, a portion of those seeing negative consequences of NATO's impact on our country was extremely insignificant (no more than 3 percent).

As is evident, dominating in the Azerbaijani society is the public sentiment of support and approval of the expanding sphere of Azerbaijan-NATO cooperation and NATO impact. At the same time, a certain apprehension is observed concerning the rapid changes taking place in this area of our social-political life, in particular, among ordinary people who are not directly or slightly interested in this field of international relations, being not properly politicized.

Positive aspects of collaboration with NATO. What are, in respondents' opinion, the positive aspects of Azerbaijan-NATO collaboration?

Table 12. Respondents' Views on Positive Impact of Azerbaijan-NATO Collaboration (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Strengthen international status and position of our country	42.3	46.1	44.2
2.	Help to attract western investments	44.0	33.6	38.8
3.	Help to resolve the existing regional conflicts	37.6	38.8	38.2
4.	Expand access to the world, global market	40.0	24.4	32.2
5.	Give us additional guarantees of our security	30.0	34.4	32.2
6.	Strengthen security and stability in the region	28.4	35.5	31.9
7.	Promote democratic development in our country	26.9	31.0	28.9
8.	Remove, take out ground for interference, intrusion of exterior forces	28.3	24.6	26.4
9.	Strengthen the state sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan	25.4	22.3	23.8
10.	Help to restore territorial integrity of our country	20.4	17.3	18.8
11.	Other	2.4	2.1	2.3
12.	It is difficult to answer	2.5	3.5	4.3

Expanding collaboration of Azerbaijan with NATO, in respondents' opinion, promotes the formation of many positive implications and elements. Particularly frequently mentioned were such positive affects, as strengthening international status and position of our country - 44.2% (42.3%-46.1%), helping to attract western investments - 38.8% (44.0%-33.6%), helping to resolve the existing regional conflicts - 38.2% (37.6%-38.8%), expanding access to the world, global market - 32.2% (40.0%-24.4%), giving us additional guarantees of our security - 32.2% (30.0%-34.4%).

Also referred to were such positive consequences of Azerbaijan-NATO collaboration as strengthening security and stability in the region - 31.9% (28.4%-35.5%), promoting democratic development in our country - 28.9% (26.9%-31.0%), removing grounds for interference of external forces - 26.4% (28.3%-24.6%), strengthening the state sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan - 23.8% (25.4%-22.3%), helping restore territorial integrity of our country - 18.8% (20.4%-17.3%).

It follows from the above-stated that Azerbaijani people focus on five important issues arising from Azerbaijan-NATO collaboration: a) security and stability arrangements (roughly 90 percent); b) investments and access to global market (roughly 71 percent); c) country's international status (roughly 68 percent); d) regional conflicts resolution and peace process (roughly 57 percent); e) democratic development and consolidation (roughly 30 percent). But it is also necessary to emphasize that people's expectations of cooperation and membership benefits have been dropped over a year by some items, including the attraction of Western investments, access to global market, intrusion of external forces, state sovereignty and independence, restoration of territorial integrity.

Our local people are extremely concerned with the regional conflicts' resolution. According to the survey, as viewed by approximately 40 percent of our respondents, there dominates an idea of Azerbaijan-

NATO collaboration as the strongest device of the resolution of existing regional conflicts. In all appearances, this idea is highly idealized by our local general public or imposed on them by politicians and mass media. It is interesting, that hopes on the resolution of the conflict on the part of this Alliance prevail among such categories, as refugees, students, public service and trade servants.

In consideration of the answers to the question, NATO is undoubtedly perceived by Azerbaijani public as an entity capable of effectively protecting not only their own members, but partner countries as well. This seems obvious, since the percentage of people who believe that there is some external menace to our country considerably arouses expectations. Moreover, the feelings of safety were suggested not on "today", but most likely on "tomorrow", in the perspective of the next several years. In the mass consciousness of Azerbaijani citizens NATO's protective "umbrella" is viewed as the matter that is not so much about the "here and now", as about the prospect for the future.

Negative aspects of collaboration with NATO. What are, in respondents' opinion, the negative aspects of such collaboration?

Table 13. Respondents' Views on Negative Impact of Azerbaijan-NATO Collaboration (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Be perceived negatively by some countries	54.8	52.1	53.4
2.	Boost intrusion of external forces into our domestic affairs	35.0	23.3	29.1
3.	Not help restore territorial integrity of our country	25.1	28.6	26.9
4.	Only lead to "freezing" regional conflicts	22.3	23.6	22.9
5.	Be favorable for NATO only, not for us	23.6	19.3	21.4
6.	Lead to limitation or loss of the state sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan	13.6	10.8	12.2
7.	Not comply with our key national interests	11.6	11.4	11.5
8.	Not be able to guarantee our security	11.6	9.8	10.7
9.	Other	3.5	3.0	3.3
10.	It is difficult to answer	3.8	2.4	3.1

Judging by results of our investigation, respondents also pointed out some negative aspects of collaboration with NATO. The basic concern was as follows: collaboration with NATO will be perceived negatively by some countries - 53.4% (54.8%-52.1%). In this regard, such countries as Russia and Iran were referred to more frequently.

Respondents also stated the following rather significant (ranging between 20-30 percent) reasons and concerns: collaboration with NATO will boost intrusion of external forces into our domestic affairs - 29.1% (35.0%-23.3%), not help restore territorial integrity of our country - 26.9% (25.1%-28.6%), only lead to "freezing" regional conflicts - 22.9% (22.3%-23.6%), will be favorable for NATO only, not for us - 21.4% (23.6%-19.3%). Least of all, (around 10-12 percent) negative influence of Azerbaijan-NATO collaboration manifested itself in the spheres of limitation or loss of the state sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan - 12.2% (13.6%-10.8%), not complying with our key national interests - 11.5% (11.6%-11.4%) and that it will not guarantee our security - 10.7% (11.6%-9.8%).

It may be noticed that there is a certain inconsistency where over 10-15% group that votes for NATO is convinced that in a sense it may lead to the loss of our sovereignty and independence.

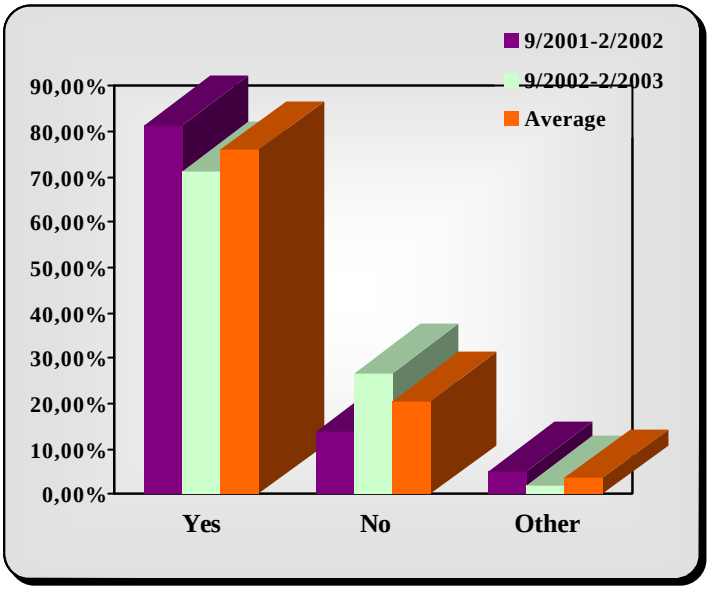
All identified tendencies are quite stable, particularly, regarding the concern over possible negative reaction by third countries (54.8% versus 52.1%). However, some fluctuations between all these positions in terms of time perspectives should be taken into account. For example, one can notice that the fear of intrusion of external forces into our domestic affairs over the last year has diminished from 35.0% to 23.3% and the concern that this collaboration will be profitable only for NATO, not for us has decreased from 23.6% to 19.3%, while skepticism regarding the impossibility of restoration of territorial integrity of our country has a slightly risen from 25.1% to 28.6%.

To conclude, major reasons of concern for Azerbaijani people are brought from the outside. These and other facts, as is evident from answers, have raised concerns of a considerable number of people and are regarded by them as disapproval and condemnation of collaboration with NATO regardless of

disrespect for these relations. This is also accompanied by some doubts - "do they really want to see us there?"

Obstacles on the way of cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO. During survey respondents have been asked to assess the general situation regarding some obstacles in the Azerbaijan-NATO relations. Respondents were asked: "What do you think, there are any obstacles on the way of cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO?"

Figure 9. Obstacles for Cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO (in %)



As is seen, the overwhelming majority - 75.9% (81.3%-71.4%) stated that they can observe a number of obstacles in this area, while one in five respondents - 20.6% (13.8%-26.6%) do not mention any obstacles ("there is no problem with this nowadays", "Azerbaijan has never encountered such difficult situations"). It is worthy to note that a portion of those seeing no obstacles, rose from 13.8% to 26.6% within a year since the first stage of survey.

What prevents collaborative relations between Azerbaijan and NATO. What, to respondents' mind, prevents establishing effective relations between Azerbaijan and NATO?

Table 14. What Prevents Collaborative Relations Between Azerbaijan and NATO (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Differences in the level of democracy, p?litical systems	48.0	58.6	53.3
2.	We are not ready for this, unpreparedness of our country	30.9	26.5	28.7
3.	Unsolved conflicts in the region	23.6	32.3	27.9
4.	Social-economical discrepancies	28.1	24.1	26.1
5.	Destructive activity of some countries	19.8	14.8	17.3
6.	Existence of old Soviet stereotypes	17.3	14.0	15.6
7.	Lack of mutual confidence, distrust	11.5	8.4	9.9
8.	Lack of political will of our government, leaders	4.5	13.5	9.0
9.	Reluctance, unwillingness of the ordinary people to such dialogue	5.5	4.9	5.2
10.	Negative historical experience, heritage of Soviet times	4.5	4.0	4.3
11.	Propaganda in the mass media of negative image of NATO	2.4	1.9	2.1
12.	Other	3.0	2.4	2.7
13.	It is difficult to answer	6.4	10.3	8.3

Our respondents mentioned a plenty of hindrances on the path to fruitful collaboration between Azerbaijan and NATO. The major one, according to the surveyed, is differences in the level of democracy and political systems - 53.3%. Moreover, this indicator has sharply risen within a year from 48.0% to 58.6%. Next to priority group of respondents (around 26-28 percent each) is comprised of the following judgments: we are not ready for this, unpreparedness of our country - 28.7% (30.9%-26.5%), unsolved conflicts in the region - 27.9% (23.6%-32.3%), social and economical differences - 26.1% (28.1%-24.1%).

The survey participants also emphasized such (ranging between 16-17 percent) hindrances, as destructive activity of some countries - 17.3% (19.8%-14.8%) and existence of outdated Soviet stereotypes - 15.6% (17.3%-14.0%). The less importance is attached by respondents to such aspects as lack of mutual confidence, distrust - 9.9% (11.5%-8.4%), lack of political will of our government, leaders - 9.0% (4.5%-13.5%), reluctance, unwillingness of the ordinary people to such dialogue, relations - 5.2% (5.5%-4.9%), negative historical experience, heritage of Soviet times - 4.3% (4.5%-4.0%), propagation in the mass media of negative image of NATO - 2.1% (2.4%-1.9%).

Our respondents are able to distinguish very well between developed countries and our country in terms of differences in the level of democracy, social-economical and political systems. More likely, these examples were taken from people's present-day social-political and economic practice.

Specific spheres of prospective cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO. In what spheres, in the opinion of Azerbaijani people, should the cooperation and ties between Azerbaijan and countries of NATO be developed and promoted? The following distribution of answers from respondents was obtained:

1. Struggle against international terrorism - 58.6%
2. Defense and security - 54.7%
3. Protection of oil pipelines - 30.7%
4. Peace-building and peace-keeping - 30.1%
5. Diplomatic contacts and relations - 29.4%
6. Science and education - 17.1%
7. Ecological projects - 14.8%
8. Coordination of foreign policy - 8.9%
9. Energy projects - 8.0%
10. All of them - 1.7%
11. It is difficult to answer - 3.6%

As is seen, the prospective cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO is supposed to be predominantly developed, in respondents views, in such specific areas, as struggle against international terrorism (58.6%), defense and security (54.7%), protection of oil pipelines (30.7%), peace-building and peace-keeping (30.1%) and diplomatic contacts and relations (29.4%). Of less importance, according to our respondents, are the following areas: science and education (17.1%), ecological projects (14.8%), coordination of foreign policy (8.9%) and energy projects (8.0%).

How would it be possible to interpret these answers? The data obtained should be interpreted in terms of today's complicated events and world processes, as well as those taking place in our region and country proper. They, in one or another way, reflect realities of modern international life and relations. At the same time, these are apparent indicators of our national public expectations and sentiments.

For example, after tragic events of September 11, the problems of anti-terrorist struggle are given much more special attention in different countries. The international coalition against terrorism has been formed. Ordinary people realize that without active involvement of such powerful and influential organization as NATO, this struggle can not be efficient and productive. These problems are extremely significant and valuable for our country which is also a victim of the Armenian terrorism and aggression. The Azerbaijani people, therefore, assign particular hopes on NATO, realizing that for the West this struggle is both of strategic and tactical priority.

The security problems are also closely interlinked to these above-mentioned points. Our people feel their vulnerability to the multiple external threats and hazards. Therefore they long for the warranties of security for themselves and their country as a whole. The problems of national defense also concern our respondents very much. An essential role is attached by the respondents to peace-building and peace-

keeping problems. For our country, that for many years has been living in a situation of the frozen conflict ("neither war, nor peace"), this problem is also of vital importance.

A particular importance is also attached to the political and diplomatic aspects of ties between Azerbaijan and NATO. For the several past months, the problem of oil pipelines protection has been also essentially actualized, included in the agenda owing to the start of the construction of the new oil pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan. The fact that this item takes one of the leading places, confirms our previous deliberations.

The answers to this question reaffirm that the concept of "NATO", "relations with NATO" at the level of Azerbaijani mass consciousness are predominantly considered in collaborative, partnership terms. Relations with NATO are primarily regarded by the common people as a major and effective regulator of external, international life and status of our country.

Basically, this organization is regarded, in fact, as the most powerful external factor of economic and political life of our society, as an additional impetus for further development, as an supporting organization to rely on in the course of various types of exchange and cooperation.

2.3 Public Opinion toward Selected Countries

Ranking Azerbaijan's relations with selected countries. Attitude towards various countries is a major indicator of the geopolitical orientation, world-outlook and awareness of a person. Any country, no matter, neighboring or remote, can be perceived in various dimensions. Our respondents have mentioned wide range of the countries, which they treat either with a special respect and esteem, or, vice versa, with disrespect, disapproval, neglect and even contempt. So, how do our respondents rank Azerbaijan's relations with the following countries? How does Azerbaijani public opinion perceive the major determinants of Azerbaijan's relationships with other countries?

Table 15. Ranking Azerbaijan's Relations with Selected Countries (in %)

N	? ountries	Friendly	Strategic partnership	Key ally	Neutral	Rival , competetive	Conflictual, hostile
1.	Georgia	72.1	20.5	5.9	5.1	3.1	1.8
2.	Armenia	-	-	-	-	11.6	96.6
3.	Russia	29.9	25.6	8.8	14.4	21.0	1.6
4.	Iran	8.4	3.1	-	31.6	57.6	10.6
5.	Turkey	49.8	30.1	61.8	-	-	-
6.	USA	35.7	33.9	5.3	28.4	-	1.5
7.	UK	25.8	19.1	2.6	49.6	-	-
8.	France	26.6	18.3	1.9	50.3	-	-
9.	Germany	28.8	15.0	0.3	42.6	-	-
10.	Turkmenistan	12.4	-	-	18.5	56.4	10.3
11.	Pakistan	40.8	7.3	3.1	49.8	2.5	-
12.	Uzbekistan	35.1	2.1	1.3	51.6	5.8	-

Among friendly for Azerbaijan countries most frequently were mentioned Georgia - 72.1% (75.9%-68.3%), Turkey - 49.8% (49.0%-50.6%), Pakistan - 40.8% (40.5%-41.1%), USA - 35.7% (33.8%-37.6%), Uzbekistan - 35.1% (43.4%-26.8%) and Russia - 29.9% (29.8%-30.1%). USA - 33.9% (34.8%-33.1%), Turkey - 30.1% (26.4%-33.9%), Russia - 25.6% (31.1%-20.1%), Georgia - 20.5% (17.8%-23.3%) and UK - 19.1% (20.8%-17.5%) are considered as strategic partners for Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's relations with Iran - 57.6% (55.4%-59.8%), Turkmenistan - 56.4% (54.1%-58.6%) and Russia - 21.0% (23.9%-18.1%) are of competitive and rival nature, respondents hold. Such an attitude is quite understandable if we take into account constant, never-ending disputes between our countries over the status of the Caspian Sea and oil deposits.

In fact, Turkey is a country, which exclusively is regarded as a key ally for Azerbaijan - 61.8% (63.3%-60.4%). In comparison with this country, all other countries received much more lower rating in this respect, for example, Russia's rating is 8.8% (7.8%-9.9%), Georgia - 5.9% (5.4%-6.5%) and USA - 5.3% (5.4%-5.1%) respectively.

It is interesting that our respondents draw a clear distinction between such concepts as “friendship” and “strategic partnership”. The first of them is mostly associated with emotional reaction to a particular country. It is clearly traced back in the attitude to Uzbekistan: only 2.1% of respondents view it in the capacity of “strategic partner”, while 35.1% of respondents experience friendly feelings to this country. Meanwhile, these aspects practically coincide with regard to such country as UK – 25.8% and 19.1% respectively. The percentages are also identical in regard to Russia - 29.9% and 25.6% respectively.

Our respondents voice the greatest neutrality concerning the Muslim countries of Asia like Uzbekistan - 51.6% (48.5%-54.6%) and Pakistan - 49.8% (50.6%-48.9 %), as well as the countries of the Western Europe, including UK - 49.6% (48.5%-50.6%), France - 50.3% (49.1%-51.5%) and Germany - 42.6% (45.0%-40.1%).

The attractive image of such countries, as Turkey, Georgia and USA is the most stable, unchangeable. The positive perception of these three countries has not lately changed over the past few years. On the contrary, an attitude to Armenia, Iran and Turkmenistan remains stably negative and adverse. Moreover, relations with Armenia, as viewed by our respondents, go from year to year from bad to worst. Public moods concerning Georgia have somewhat increased in terms of rivalry and competitiveness. Meanwhile, the negative aspects of recognition in relation to Russia have slightly fallen.

An extremely favorable, positive attitude of Azerbaijani people to Turkey is accounted for by scores of factors. This country is depicted in positive spectrum only. A favorable and attractive image of Turkey is, of course, a natural phenomenon because of historical past, common ethnic, traditional values, congeniality of languages, and the most important thing for Azerbaijani people - unconditional support of Azerbaijan in Nagorni Karabakh conflict issue, its firm and fair position in this regard.

The Azerbaijani public resolutely and persistently supports a line on the strengthening of the foreign policy toward the cooperation with Turkey. The population counts this country not only as the most reliable and consecutive political ally, but also simply fraternal nation. For Azerbaijan, the military cooperation with Turkey has to be deepened, strengthened and expanded – maintains an overwhelming majority (88.1%) of respondents, participants of virtual weekly Internet-poll, attended by 219 persons (newspaper "Echo", on September 1, 2001, N 147).

Suffice it to refer to some typical views and statements of the large number of the surveyed regarding Turkey: this country is our practically unique, single ally and friend; it will never betray us; they are our brothers by birth; the trading, political, military, economic relations between our both countries constantly develop, become stronger; the foreign policy of this country is a good example for us how to behave on international scene; during Soviet times, no possibility to communicate with our Turkish brothers was available for us, but now we are free in communicating. At the same, there were some negative stereotypes - “they are artful and selfish”.

It should be underscored that Russia’s image is very contradictory and is comprised of mutually exclusive elements. Russia is mostly blamed for supporting Armenia. Such an attitude is not astonishing in the view of the latest developments in our region. Some respondents have expressed fears that Russia will introduce the visa regime, as with Georgia. At the same time, Azerbaijani respondents expressed respect for the Russian language, culture, mass media and ordinary people. Symptomatic is the fact that high enough is the percentage of people who believe that the reason of Russia’s objection (as to Azerbaijan’s rapprochement or accession to NATO) is its desire to restore its former sphere of influence in our country. Such a stand is taken by people with university education, as well as those who declare much interest in foreign politics.

The perception of Iran is enough complex, dual and inconsistent. On the one hand, people realize that it is our nearest, “next door” neighbor. It is also indicative, that approximately 10 percent specify friendly character of our bilateral relations. On the other hand, about 70 percent of respondents concentrate on disputable, tense and hostile aspects of our mutual relations. Many people have stated displeasure and discontent with a political line of Iran in relation to our country. Iran is primarily accused with rendering constant moral-psychological and, even military, pressure, as well for taking the pro-Armenian position. People are perplexed why they do support Armenians. “It is wrong, in fact, we are the Muslim nation too”.

As for the dynamics of public moods in Azerbaijan, it is possible to ascertain some decrease of initial euphoria toward the West in the first years of independence, and step-by-step increase of the level of

positive perception of Russia. An eloquent testimony is the attitude of the Azerbaijani respondents to America. Carried out in September 2001 - February 2002 and in September 2002 – February 2003, our investigation has fixed high enough rating of this country in the mass consciousness. Azerbaijani respondents increasingly view the US as our country's main ally and even as counterbalance to Russia. But, it is indicative, that over the past few years this rating has decreased a little.

For example, in 1997 I carried out a survey titled "America and Americans in the eyes of residents of capital of Azerbaijan" among 400 persons. It demonstrated that the significant majority of interviewed (63%) estimated bilateral relations of our two countries as friendly and favorable. About the fourth (24%) estimated them as neutral, while, practically, none of respondents believed that relations between our two countries were tense. Thus, prevailing were sentiments of interest (54%), friendliness and sympathy (45%), respect (31%) unlike mistrust and suspiciousness (only 3%). However, a picture at present is a little bit different. Most likely, it is connected with unfulfilled hopes and expectations concerning the US and the West's assistance in the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, some disappointment at the Western political line in our region.

Attitude, perception and feelings of selected countries. What are respondents' attitude, perception and feelings of various countries?

Table 16. Attitude, Perception and Feelings of Selected Countries (in %)

N	? ountries	Favorable, friendly	Trust	Respect	Indifferent	Distrust	Unfavorable, negative
1.	Georgia	60.1	7.4	17.0	21.6	5.0	1.6
2.	Armenia	-	-	-	11.4	40.1	73.8
3.	Russia	33.4	12.8	39.7	6.4	30.3	6.1
4.	Iran	2.6	2.0	7.2	32.4	59.9	12.1
5.	Turkey	60.8	33.9	29.1	10.8	6.8	-
6.	USA	30.1	15.8	44.4	13.9	5.9	2.6
7.	UK	31.3	12.1	49.3	19.4	3.8	1.4
8.	France	28.3	7.4	48.9	23.8	2.6	-
9.	Germany	25.4	11.2	49.8	18.3	4.4	2.7
10.	Turkmenistan	12.8	-	5.7	49.7	29.6	13.2
11.	Pakistan	26.6	10.8	17.9	49.3	10.5	-
12.	Uzbekistan	25.3	6.3	16.1	58.6	6.6	-

As may be expected, most Azerbaijani respondents express favorable, friendly opinions of Turkey - 60.8% (51.0%-70.5%) and Georgia 60.1% (57.5%-62.6%). Presently, relations with these both countries are rather popular and widely welcomed in Azerbaijan.

Such countries, as Russia - 33.4% (29.1%-37.7%), UK - 31.3% (26.5%-36.1%), USA - 30.1% (25.6%-34.5%), France - 28.3% (24.5%-32.1%), Pakistan - 26.6% (24.1%-29.0%), Uzbekistan - 25.3% (23.8%-26.9%), Germany - 25.4% (24.5%-26.3%) are viewed in a positive manner. Opinions of Armenia and Iran are mainly extremely unfavorable.

It is indicative, that the countries, which have received the best rating, are, in the main, members of the North Atlantic alliance.

The most trusted countries are Turkey - 33.9% (30.1%-37.6%), USA - 17.5% (14.0%-15.8%) and Russia - 12.8% (12.3%-13.3%). Moreover, the level of trust to Turkey and USA has increased since September 2001 - February 2002. The most distrusted countries are Iran - 59.9% (55.6%-64.1%), Russia - 30.3% (37.0%-23.6%) and Turkmenistan - 29.6% (24.4%-34.9%).

It is interesting that Russia is simultaneously among both categories. This fact reaffirms the dual and uncertain image of Russia in Azerbaijani mass consciousness.

As in the prior stage of survey, our respondents hold overwhelmingly unfavorable opinions of Armenia - 73.8% (72.5%-75.1%). This country is also the most distrusted - 40.1% (29.1%-51.0%). Of course, people's assessment of Armenia is a particular case due to military conflict with this country. In this respect, attitudes to Armenia should be assessed specifically due to our protracted, deeply-rooted

conflict. It is also worthy to stress that Azerbaijanis are not optimistic about prospects of the settlement of the conflict. For example, when asked about the meetings between leaders of the two countries over the past few years, the prevailing majority said that the talks have not improved chances for the settlement, and just a few of them think that they have.

The unsettled conflict plays major role in forming attitudes towards Russia and Iran as well because of strategic positions of these countries concerning the current situation. There is a number of indications of the widespread mistrust of, and opposition to, Russia in Azerbaijani society. In particular, Russia's role in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict has substantially contributed to the mistrust of this country. Many people in Azerbaijan believe that the separatists could not have seized control of this region and occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan territory without covert support from the Russian military.

The popularity of Russia is considerably less high, as well as of Iran. Opinion of Iran is much more unfavorable than favorable, as people guess that from this country Azerbaijan should keep the greatest distance. However, slightly more voice unfavorable than favorable opinions of Iran, the country which is often criticized for how it treats its large Azeri population and for exhibiting excessive religious zeal, supporting Armenia, confrontation in Caspian Sea. Our respondents faced with several cases of disrespectful attitude from the Iranian government towards feelings of our people. This may reflect the mistrust that some Azerbaijanis harbor for Iran.

Most important countries for Azerbaijan. Relationships with a number of countries could have a certain impact on our country. Therefore, it was interesting to see how Azerbaijani people consider impact, positive or negative, of some countries on our country. What countries are considered as the most important for Azerbaijan?

Table 17. Countries Most Important for Azerbaijan (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Russia	57.8	63.8	60.8
2.	Turkey	51.0	55.8	53.4
3.	USA	54.5	51.5	53.2
4.	Georgia	8.0	6.1	7.1
5.	UK	7.6	6.0	6.8
6.	Germany	7.5	4.3	5.9
7.	European Union (EU)	3.5	6.8	5.1
8.	France	6.0	3.3	4.6
9.	Pakistan	4.6	4.1	4.4
10.	Iran	1.8	2.6	2.2
11.	India, Uzbekistan, none, all mighty countries of the world	1.8	2.4	2.1
12.	Do not know	2.6	2.4	2.5

When asked which country is the most important for Azerbaijan future, Azerbaijani people most often name Russia, up from 57.8% in September 2001 – February 2002 to 63.8% in September 2002 – February 2003. About two-thirds (60.8%) of our respondents consider Russia as the most important country for Azerbaijan, that is a bit unexpected result. Russia is seen as "number one" and received the highest score. People mostly understand the term "importance" in terms of ability of this country to influence on the inter-political situation in our country, bearing in mind some negative experience from the past.

And slightly more than half of respondents regard Turkey (53.4%) and USA (53.2%) as the most important countries for Azerbaijan. A more than half (55.8% in September 2002 – February 2003), up from 51.0% (in September 2001 – February 2002) suppose that Turkey is the most important country for Azerbaijan's future, as "this country is of a vital interest to our future", "we without this country nobody and nothing", while 53.2% (54.5%-51.5%) presume that USA is most important ("counterbalance of Russia"). Behind this shift is, probably, a growing awareness of the major role that the US and Turkey have taken in working with and strengthening the Azerbaijani government, in the process of increasing the

role of our country in regional affairs. Regarding these both countries respondents mentioned that they consider their impact has been positive to a large extent.

Relationships with other countries are of little importance to Azerbaijan. Just few cite Georgia - 7.1% (8.0%-6.1%), England - 6.8% (7.6%-6.0%), Germany - 5.9% (7.5%-4.3%) or countries of the European Union - 5.1% (3.5%-6.8%). Far fewer mention France - 4.6% (6.0%-3.3%), Pakistan – 4.4% (4.6%-4.1%), Iran - 2.2% (1.8%-2.6%) and any other countries.

Significantly, young people under 25 years of age are most likely to view the US as the most important country for Azerbaijan and to say that Azerbaijan should ally itself with the West. The West is valued primarily for its economic development, strengthening the rule of law, democratization and well being in general. Also our population is impressed with its military power and mighty. In the case of the US, it is striking that more Azerbaijani people consider the US "most important", but that fewer have a favorable opinion of it. The first judgment may be influenced more by geopolitical and economic considerations; the second, by news reporting and maybe by some cultural, traditional trends.

Countries are capable to deal responsibly with problems in our region. What countries, in respondents' opinion, are capable to deal responsibly with problems and conduct accountable policies in our region?

Table 18. Degree of Confidence in Countries' Ability to Deal Responsibly with Problems in the South Caucasus (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	USA	45.0	52.4	48.7
2.	Russia	38.8	55.1	47.0
3.	Turkey	36.3	44.8	40.6
4.	European Union (EU)	12.8	10.8	11.8
5.	UK	3.8	7.4	5.6
6.	Other (Germany, France)	1.9	2.4	2.1
7.	No one	6.1	8.1	7.1
8.	Do not know	8.6	5.8	7.2

Indisputable leaders in the given question are three countries – USA, Russia and Turkey. A slim majority - 48.7% (45.0%-52.4%) express at least a fair amount of confidence in US's ability to promote peace, stability and security in this region. As they did a year ago, two in five - 40.6% (36.3%-44.8%) Azerbaijani respondents express at least a fair amount of confidence in Turkey's ability to deal responsibly with problems and conduct accountable policy in our region.

Almost half - 47.0% (38.8%-55.1%) believe that Russia will deal responsibly with regional problems, but no more than one in ten – 11.8% (12.8%-10.8%) says the same of European Union (EU). A proportion of respondents, who voiced a favorable of Russia's new politics in this region, has considerably, essentially increased over a year, despite its tough policy in this region. Just 2.1% (1.9%-2.4%) of respondents voiced confidence in Germany and France in this capacity. As in prior stage of survey, almost all lack confidence in Armenia's and Iran's ability to deal responsibly with regional problems.

2.4 Public Opinion of International Organizations

Preferable and important for Azerbaijan international organizations and entities. Participation and involvement, entering in what international organizations, blocks and alliances our respondents consider as the most preferable and important for Azerbaijan?

Table 19. Preferable and Important for Azerbaijan International Organizations and Entities (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	United Nations	45.6	59.0	52.3
2.	European Union (EU)	55.4	39.4	47.4
3.	NATO	42.1	39.9	41.0
4.	Council of Europe	42.4	39.4	40.9
5.	OSCE	23.6	31.0	27.3
6.	Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	27.3	23.5	25.4
7.	Azerbaijan-Turkish Union	27.5	23.0	25.3
8.	Union of Turkic-language countries	23.8	26.8	25.3
9.	? rganization of Islamic Conference	26.8	21.6	24.2
10.	GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova)	14.3	18.6	16.4
11.	"Caucasian Four" (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Russia)	9.8	8.6	9.2
12.	Integrative union of three countries of the South Caucasus	6.8	4.8	5.8
13.	Russia-Byelorussian Union	2.0	0.9	1.4
14.	Other unions, blocks and alliances	3.5	2.0	2.8

As is seen from the Table, as the best option for Azerbaijan our respondents consider its integration into various Western, European institutions, i.e. European Union (EU) - 52.3% (45.6%-59.0%), Council of Europe - 40.9% (42.4%-39.4%) and OSCE - 27.3% (23.6%-31.0%). The other best choice for Azerbaijani respondents is integration with NATO - 41.0% (42.1%-39.9%). Opinion on this issue has changed little since September 2001 – February 2002.

Azerbaijanis' desire for close ties with the West is indicated in other ways as well. When asked during face-to-face interview about preferable Azerbaijan's place in the world, they say that our country should be more closely linked with Western institutions and organizations than with, let say, the CIS or GUUAM. Our respondents also quite highly support the continuation of Azerbaijan's participation in the United Nations structure - 52.3% (45.6%-9.0%).

The other preferable and enough desirable (around 50 percent) formula for Azerbaijan's international development is also its close relations with the Turkish world: Azerbaijan-Turkish Union - 25.3% (27.5%-23.0%) and Union of Turkic-language countries - 25.3% (23.8%-26.8%). Almost the same is the proportion of those adhering to the Islamic world, for closer and more versatile relations with the Organization of Islamic Conference - 24.2% (26.8%-21.6%).

The rating of such new regional organization as GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) is growing - 16.4% (14.3%-18.6%). Despite this, this relatively low rating was a little bit unexpected if we take into account the strong every-day propagation of it in our local mass media. It is accounted for by the fact that people have not yet seen any real advantage and benefit from participation in this newly-established entity. Even the very notion of "GUUAM" remains to be an abstract and non-understandable term for most of them.

Identified rather strong pro-Western and pro-Turkish orientation of our respondents does not mean that people do not orientate, at least poorly, to contacts and links within the South Caucasus region. Around 15 percent presume that Azerbaijan should develop closer contacts within either countries of "Caucasian Four" (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Russia) - 9.2% (9.8%-8.6%) or integrative union of three countries of the South Caucasus - 5.8% (6.8%-4.8%). But, at the same time, Azerbaijani people on no account want to see Azerbaijan within the Russian-Byelorussian Union, believing it is not an acceptable idea to join this Union - 1.4% (2.0%-0.9%).

For one quarter - 25.4% (27.3%-23.5%) of respondents, the participation in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is quite acceptable and preferable line of external politics, as "we should not introduce the visa regime with Russia and other CIS countries". There was also a small group - 2.8% (3.5%-2.0%) of respondents who mentioned other organizations, unions, blocks and alliances, like Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), World Trade

Organization (WTO), OPEC, etc. Also mentioned was “something like former USSR” by some elder people. In considering that this category of respondents remembers Soviet past rather well, it was not unexpected and surprising that some of them feel sorry that “the Soviet Union broke up”.

Today, like a year ago, many more respondents are convinced that Azerbaijan should develop doser relations with the US and other Western countries rather than with Russia and the CIS (40 percent versus 25 percent). About fifth declare that our country should seek a balance between the two “centers of powers”.

Role various international organizations play in our region. How do respondents estimate the role various international organizations play in our region? Of interest is how respondents evaluate the extent of their influence on the solution of various socially important problems of our society.

Table 20. Role Various International Organizations Play In Our Region (in %)

N		European Union	United Nations	OSCE	Council of Europe
1.	I am not informed about their activity at all	35.1	17.4	21.9	13.8
2.	Promote democratic development	23.6	20.3	14.1	29.9
3.	Help to solve economic problems	10.9	17.0	15.1	9.6
4.	Promote peace, stability and development in our region	11.6	23.5	21.8	7.7
5.	They act just for only their own interests	14.5	15.5	21.7	21.9
6.	Their activity is not constructive	15.4	26.6	26.4	13.7

Prevailing opinion is that organizations working in the country have had mainly a beneficial impact on Azerbaijan. For example, the biggest group of respondents - 29.9% (31.8%-28.0%) thinks that the Council of Europe promotes democratic development in our country. Rather considerable importance is attached to European Union for the solution of such social and national task, as promotion of democratic development - 23.6% (24.8%-22.4%) and to United Nations for “promotion of peace, stability and development in our region” - 23.5% (27.9%-19.1%). The peace-making potential of United Nations was also emphasized though this proportion has declined over the past year.

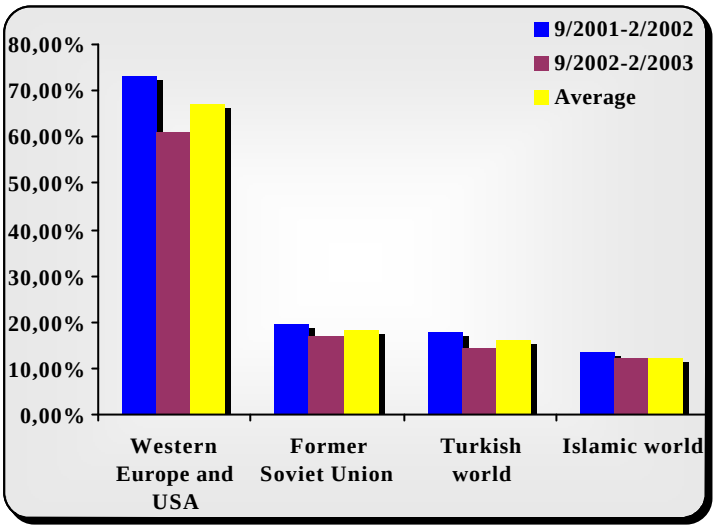
Mostly criticized for their not constructive activity were United Nations - 26.6% (23.0%-30.1%) and OSCE 26.4% (23.6%-29.1%), as well as for acting, operating just for only their own interests were Council of Europe - 21.9% (21.3%-22.4%) and OSCE - 21.7% (18.0%-25.3%). Least of all, influence of international organizations manifested itself in the peace, stability and development in our region by the Council of Europe - 7.7% (8.4%-6.9%) and assistance in the solution of economic problems - 9.6% (11.1%-8.0%). However, some fluctuations between all these positions in terms of time perspectives should be taken into account.

Just fewer have lack confidence in the OSCE, which has played a key role in effort to negotiate a settlement of the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. The fact that confidence in this entity has declined over the past year may reflect strong disappointment about their inability to solve the intractable Nagorno Karabakh problem. Subsequent OSCE efforts to facilitate negotiations between the Azerbaijani and Armenian governments have not led to the settlement, to the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country and the return to Nagorno Karabakh and adjacent regions of about one million refugees and displaced persons. It is necessary to mention about public opinion in the country concerning activity of international mediators, which too is far from being positive. The number doubting in productivity of "intermediary three" (Russia, USA and France are co-chairmen of the Minsk group of OSCE) constantly grows. Our investigation became one more confirmation of opinion dominating in the Azerbaijani society on uselessness, inefficiency of activity of mediators of the Minsk group.

But what is striking about public opinion on the role of international organizations is the extent of ignorance of their activities; majorities offer no opinion, stated that they were not informed about their activity at all or think about them as just aid donors.

Countries and organizations preferable for economic collaboration. What countries and organizations are most desirable, preferable for economic collaboration and turning for assistance in solving social-economic problems of Azerbaijan?

Figure 10. Countries and Organizations Preferable for Economic Collaboration (in %)



As is seen, an absolute priority - 67.0% (72.9%-61.1%) here is held by countries and organizations of the West (Western Europe and USA). Probably, this perception is affected by social-economical, charitable and humanitarian activities of Western organizations, international oil companies in Azerbaijan. When asked whether certain Western organizations have had a positive or negative effect on Azerbaijan in recent years, a majority say that they have had a positive impact. Namely because of these reasons mainly all countries and organizations of the West are viewed positively.

At the same time, a joint rating (approximately around 46 percent) of all other countries and organizations, which have been taken together, does not exceed the rating of Western countries and organizations. Among them countries and organizations of the former Soviet Union were mentioned by 18.1% (19.5%-16.8%) of respondents, countries and organizations of Turkish world - 16.0% (17.8%-14.3%), countries and organizations of Islamic world - 12.1% (13.5%-12.1%).

2.5 Public Opinion of International Economic Cooperation and Collaboration

Importance and necessity of attraction of foreign investments and capital in Azerbaijan. Foreign investments have increased lately, much of it spent for the transportation of Azerbaijan's energy resources and construction of the oil pipeline running from Baku across Georgia to Ceyhan, a Turkish port on the Mediterranean Sea. Several agreements on this project were signed by the governments of these three countries. This project is already at the stage of realization.

Table 21. Importance and Necessity of Attraction of Foreign Investments and Capital in Azerbaijan (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	It should be encouraged, as promotes economic development of our country	46.0	39.3	42.6
2.	It helps implement large-scale international projects with Azerbaijan participation	27.9	38.5	33.2
3.	The more foreign businesses and businessmen will be in our country, the better	9.9	18.6	14.3
4.	It should be discouraged, because is implemented at the expense of natural resources of our country	12.3	9.5	10.9

5.	**Hardly, it will lead to increasing living standards of our population**	**18.3**	**20.5**	**19.4**
6.	**I fear that we become dependent on the foreign companies, that they might gain too much influence over situation and affairs in Azerbaijan**	**10.4**	**12.0**	**11.2**
7.	**Other**	**3.9**	**2.9**	**3.4**

There are various opinions about importance and necessity of attraction of foreign investments and capital in Azerbaijan.

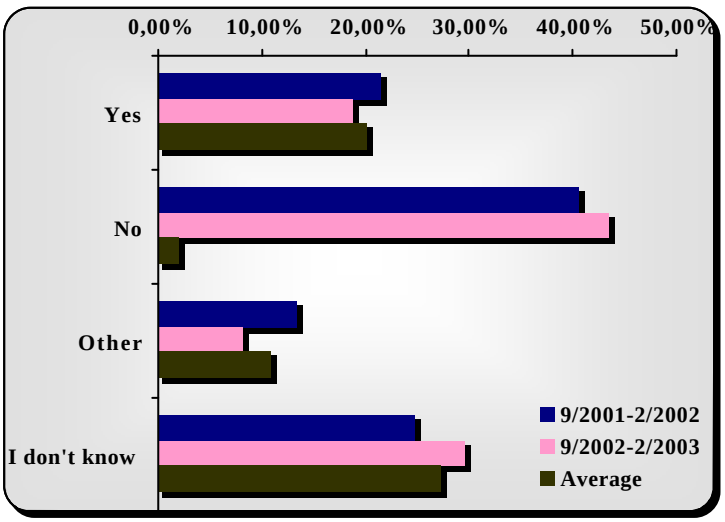
The huge majority (around 90 percent) totally support the process of attraction of foreign investments and capital in Azerbaijan. Among them two-fifths - 42.6% (46.0%-39.3%) of respondents say that foreign investments should be encouraged because it will promote economic development of our country. The third part - 33.2% (27.9%-38.5%) suppose that it helps implementing large-scale international projects with Azerbaijan participation, while the judgment "the more foreign businesses and businessmen will be in our country, the better" has been stated by 14.3% (9.9%-18.6%) of survey participants.

The proportion of those supporting foreign investments owing to its contribution to the implementation of large-scale international projects with Azerbaijan participation has risen from a quarter (27.9%) to two-fifths (38.5%) between September 2001 – February 2002 and September 2002 – February 2003. Young people and the better-educated people are generally more supportive of foreign businesses than are older, less-educated Azerbaijani people.

Roughly one-fifth - 19.4% (18.3%-20.5%) has expressed doubt that attraction of foreign investments and capital in our country will lead to increasing living standards of our population. This tendency is a quite stable. It is worthy of note that the same motives are characteristic of women and men (20.1% and 18.7% respectively). Yet, as many - 10.9% (12.3%-9.5%) say that it should be discouraged, because is implemented at the expense of natural resources of our country. Likewise, almost the same proportion - 11.2% (10.4%-12.0%) fear that we become dependent from the foreign companies, that they might gain too much influence over situation and domestic affairs in Azerbaijan. In so doing, women indicate twice as often (14.9% vs. 7.5%) than men.

Sufficiency of economic aid rendered to our country by the West. Do respondents consider as sufficient economic aid rendered to our country by the West?

Figure 11. Sufficiency of Economic Aid Rendered To Our Country by the West (in %)



In this case, views are distributed over foreign economic assistance. The largest part of interviewed - 42.0% (40.5%-43.5%) unsatisfied with the level, amount and volume of this help. One in five respondents

- 20.1% (21.4%-18.8%) has answered in the affirmative way to the given question. And also 27.2% (24.8%-29.6%) of respondents say they do not know anything about such help.

Known large-scale international projects with Azerbaijan participation. What large-scale international projects with Azerbaijan participation respondents can mention, are known for them?

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Export Oil Pipeline (BTC) was named in the overwhelming majority of cases - 62.1% (51.3%-72.9%). Also mentioned were several modern projects, as Great Silk Road - 26.8% (22.5%-31.0%), TRACECA - 13.6% (8.8%-18.3%) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzrum Gas Pipeline - 5.0% (2.6%-7.4%).

Disposition towards the construction of the new oil pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan. What is respondents disposition towards new international energy projects, for example, to the construction of the new oil pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan?

Table 22. Disposition Towards the Construction of the New Oil Pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Geyhan (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	P?sitive	60.5	64.8	62.6
2.	It is hard to say something particular, in concrete terms	29.5	22.1	25.8
3.	Negative	5.4	7.3	6.3
4	Other	4.7	5.9	5.2

As is known, there has been quite an extensive construction and reconstruction of oil pipelines in the country of late. These issues are constantly in the focus of public attention, are become a subject of intensive discussions in local mass media and political midst.

The attitude of respondents to the matter differed. Much more than half of respondents (62.6%) (60.5%-64.8%) have the positive attitude to this construction. The leading motives for supporting this kind of project were the following: this is very important at present for improving economic situation; as an indicator of respect and confidence for our country; restoration of historical justice, because now we can independently dispose of our natural resources. Approximately a fourth (25.8%) (29.5%-22.1%) could say nothing specific with this regard, as "it is hard to say something particular, in concrete terms".

Every fifteenth respondent (6.3%) (5.4%-7.3%) opposed these new international energy projects, for example, construction of the new oil pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, as saying that it is better to spend money on other social needs, increase allowances and pensions, income generation, medicine, assistance to the destitute, handicapped and orphans. In so doing, some think there has to be the restoration of oil pipelines only and no new ones should be built, so the construction of new oil pipelines should be limited or prohibited. And just 5.2% (4.7%-5.9%) of our respondents expressed their indifference to the question.

Benefits from oil contracts and agreements. What is respondents' attitude to expected benefits from the oil contracts and agreements, signed by our country? It remains to be important how much the oil contracts and agreements will contribute to the Azerbaijani economy or how widely and fairly the benefits will be distributed.

Table 23. Expectations of Benefits From Oil Contracts and Agreements (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	I look on it with optimism	63.0	70.6	66.8
2.	I look on it with skepticism	18.9	5.0	11.9
3.	It does not matter for me	11.8	16.6	14.2
4.	Other	6.4	7.8	7.1

The survey has shown a quite high level of optimism regarding benefits from the oil contracts and agreements, signed by our country: 66.8% (63.0%-70.6%) of respondents look on it with optimism. Within a year, this percentage has risen by 7.6%. At the same time, each in ten respondent -11.9% (18.9%-5.0%)

looks at it with skepticism. The same percentage has decreased from 18.9% to 5.0%. Also, for 14.2% (11.8%-16.6%) of the interviewed this issue does not matter at all.

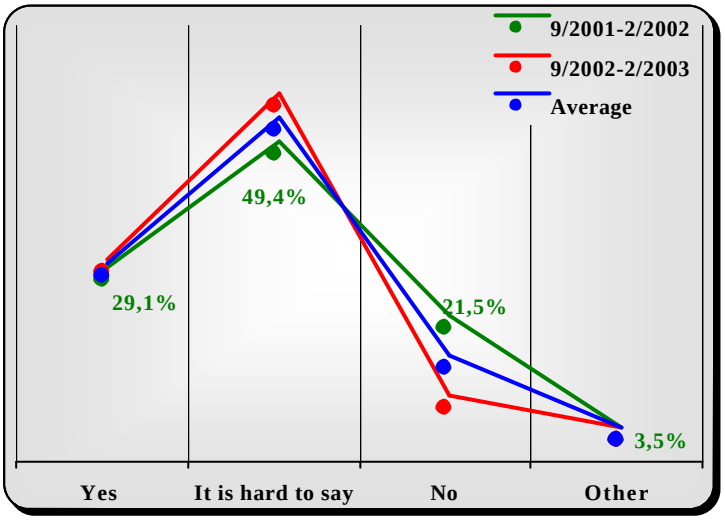
It is also important to note that there has been a correlation between such optimism and the way in which the respondents perceived importance and necessity of attraction of foreign investments and capital in Azerbaijan. The more optimistic they have been regarding benefits from the oil contracts and agreements, signed by our country, the more positively they have perceived importance and necessity of attraction of foreign investments and capital in Azerbaijan.

It should be also noted that now Azerbaijani public opinion is drastically split on those benefiting from the oil contracts and pipelines and those not; approximately two-fifths say that the people as a whole will, and three-fifths believe that only a few wealthy people will. At the same time, most believe that the development of the country's oil resources will enrich a few wealthy people rather than the people as a whole (60 to 40).

2.6 Public Attitudes towards Security Issues in Azerbaijan

External threats for security and independence of Azerbaijan. What people think, are there any immediate external threats and risks for security and independence of our country? Are they anxious about any aggression from the outside?

Figure 12. External Threats for Security and Independence of Azerbaijan (in %)



The figures speak for themselves: each in three respondents - 29.9% (29.1%-30.6%) is worried that another country might attack or try to destabilize situation in Azerbaijan in the next several years. As was the case a year ago in September 2001 – February 2002, the same proportion of respondents in September 2002 – February 2003 said that they are very concerned that a foreign country might attach Azerbaijan or try to destabilize situation here.

Insignificant proportion of respondents - 15.1% (21.5%-8.6%) is not very much concerned that a foreign country might attack or try to destabilize Azerbaijan in the next several years. It is worthy to note that this share visibly dropped within a year from 21.5% to 8.6%. And, at last, half - 53.3% (49.4%-57.3%) of respondents could not unequivocally describe their feelings.

The same fact that each third participant of interview is very concerned with external threat proves the lack or loss of the feeling of safety among a great number of people, who live under this psychological pressure during many years. Therefore, they aspire to obtain the safety guarantee through the inclusion in the NATO's framework, as they are convinced and realize that the core aim of this organization is to increase the safety of its members.

Countries posing greatest military threat for Azerbaijan's security and national interests. Which countries do respondents consider as posing the greatest military threat for Azerbaijan's security and national interests?

Table 24. Countries Posing Greatest Military Threat for Azerbaijan's Security and National Interests (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	Armenia	62.1	64.5	63.3
2.	Russia	32.0	29.0	30.5
3.	Iran	31.1	39.9	35.5
4.	Other (US, Turkmenistan)	3.5	2.5	3.0
5.	None	2.4	4.0	3.2

When asked what country or territory poses the greatest military threat to Azerbaijan, vast majority - 63.3% name Armenia (64.5% in September 2001 – February 2002, up from 62.1% in September 2002 – February 2003). Most citizens of Azerbaijan continue to view Armenia as the principal threat to national security. At the same time, they explain that this became possible only through the aid of its ally Russia.

Fewer (around 30 percent) mention Russia - 30.5% (32.0%-29.0%) or Iran - 35.5% (31.1%-39.9%) as the main immediate threat. Many Azerbaijanis believe that neighboring powers - in particular, Russia and Iran, seek to exploit our internal divisions, problems and difficulties for their own advantage. There are persisting worries about Russian and Iranian policy in this region.

Thus, according to the survey, external military threat is perceived mainly as coming from Armenia, but also from Russia and Iran. In the case of Armenia, this concern is predominantly connected with the occupation of our territories and constant territorial claims. In the case of Russia and Iran, it seems that the fear is connected with their military domination and imperial politics rather than the economic expansion.

Reaction to the possible stationing of foreign military bases in Azerbaijan. How would people react to the possible stationing of foreign military bases in Azerbaijan?

Table 25. Reaction to the Possible Stationing of Foreign Military Bases in Azerbaijan (in %)

		9/2001-2/2002	9/2002-2/2003	Average
1.	I would support this act	9.4	4.5	6.9
2.	It will depend on a specific country or block	48.0	50.9	49.4
3.	I do not care of it	11.8	13.5	12.6
4.	I would strongly oppose to it	25.8	24.5	25.1
5.	Other	2.4	2.9	2.6
6.	It is difficult to answer	2.8	3.8	3.3

The survey has identified different views on the possible stationing of foreign military bases in Azerbaijan. It is indicative that just an insignificant portion of respondents - 6.9% (9.4%-4.5%) would certainly support this act without any exceptions.

The largest portion - 49.4% (48.0%-50.9%) was made of those respondents, who put forward a condition that their attitude to the matter would depend on a specific country or block. As was the case a year ago in September 2001 – February 2002, four-fifths particularly oppose the presence of Russian troops on Azerbaijani territory and one-fifth is opposed to the stationing of American troops on Azerbaijani soil. Opposition to the stationing of Russian military bases on Azerbaijan territory has risen since September 2001 – February 2002. A quarter (25.1%) of the interviewed would strongly oppose to the possible stationing of foreign military bases in Azerbaijan without any exceptions, no matter, which block or country. This tendency remained stable over the year at the levels 25.8%-24.5%.