

Academic Freedom and University: The Case of Azerbaijan

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Academic freedom, which is a broader and separate concept from civil and political freedoms, is the most important value that any university must protect. University is a place where scholars should be able to freely inquire without any hindrance from their administrators or faculty members. The freedom of academics in authoritarian countries, however, is restricted to protect the high-ranking government officials and university administrators from any criticism. In Azerbaijan, academic freedom suffers from regular interventions and restrictions from university administrators who, presumably due to the authoritarian rule in Azerbaijan, assume that academics are not supposed to criticize the current social and political structure, or the universities they work at. These administrators who, in most cases, are also academics, wrongly believe that the priorities of universities are or ought to be something other than seeking the truth and transmitting knowledge. They fail to see that, at least for the sake of intellectual inquiry and discoveries, all other important values should be subordinated to the highest value of universities: the freedom of expression and the freedom from any restrictions of academics within, as well as outside, of the university borders. That is, some crucial values such as civility, loyalty, friendship, respect for the elderly and others are embraced by other institutions in the society, but none of them can be the supreme value for a university. When free scholarly enquiry clashes with other values, the former should be preferred for the sake of academic freedom.¹

The notion of *university* as we know it today was developed by the establishment of Berlin University by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1810.² The German model emphasized the necessity for the freedom of scholars, as well as for the autonomy of universities. Later, the model of the university as a research centre was borrowed by American universities in the late nineteenth century and the leading American institution in this model became the University of Chicago. Americans first argued that scholars were

¹ M. Moody-Adams, "What's So Special About Academic Freedom", in A. Bilgrami and J. R. Cole (eds.), *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015, p. 113.

² *Ibid.* See also the introduction of the book.

citizens with full citizenship rights and that they could adopt any political position they wanted. Secondly, they argued that scholars were free to be (public) intellectuals, thus they could actively write about and participate in social as well as political movements; in addition, people outside of academia also had a right to directly benefit from the contributions and insights of scholars in any matter of public interest.³

My aim in this article is to demonstrate the vital importance of academic freedom for universities. My argument here is conventional and simple – a university without academic freedom is not a university. Throughout the article, I base my arguments on the assumption that knowledge is valuable because it is communicable, more stable, more reliable than true belief or because it is virtuously formed, and it is an intellectual good.⁴ Here I am not concerned whether knowledge has a *special* or *extra value* because in any case, I argue that scholars need academic freedom in order to be able to acquire *knowledge* or *justified opinion* or *information* without fearing the economic, political or moral implications of their logical conclusions. Unless one is against academia itself, one has no option but to defend academic freedom.

To articulate this point, in the first section, I define academic freedom through three main points. While it is possible to defend academic freedom from many perspectives by appealing to different values, in the next section, I will be focusing essentially on what I call *the argument of consistency*. I will then use a few recent examples of the negative effects of the lack of academic freedom in Azerbaijani universities. I take the lack of freedom of scholars in Azerbaijan as *prima facie* evidence and assume that no reasonable person would challenge this premise thus, I do not find it necessary to present more than a few cases of academic unfreedom. By taking Azerbaijan as an example, the section on the effects of academic unfreedom aims to demonstrate that a university without academic freedom is impossible.

What is Academic Freedom?

Academic freedom⁵ should not be understood as a subgroup or an extension of freedom of speech. Similar to the right to property, academic freedom is to be understood as a bundle of rights. If one has full property rights over something, it means that one has a right to *use*, *transfer*, *modify*, or *destroy* it, or *exclude* others from using it. In this sense, academic freedom, which is specifically designed for licensed scholars, includes the rights of scholars to (1) freely determine the content

³ R. J. Zimmer, "What Is Academic Freedom For?", in A. Bilgrami and J. R. Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

⁴ E. J. Olsson, "The Value of Knowledge", *Philosophy Compass*, vol. 6, n° 12, 2011, p. 874-883.

⁵ Here I do not discuss *university autonomy*, namely the right of higher education institutions to freely take their decisions, and *academic rule*, which among other things, includes preparation of course materials, student admissions or exclusions, professional appointments within the university, and standards for the evaluation of students and their works, i.e., "the detailed allocation of resources between competing uses within a department or faculty" (G. C. Moodie, "On Justifying the Different Claims to Academic Freedom", *Minerva*, vol. 34, n° 2, 1996, p. 131).

of their research and (2) teaching, and (3) to be free from “institutional censorship or discipline” from the State, or any organization or university, including the one that they work at.⁶ A university is not a family (an analogy⁷ that Azerbaijani rectors and deans love to use to defend themselves in front of any criticism), that one ought not to criticize among non-family members. A university, among other things, is a place of work for academics; a place where their academic freedom to enquire should not be restricted. In short, academic freedom means that “academics [...] should be free to pursue and proclaim the truth in both teaching and research without interference from unqualified outsiders”.⁸ Academic freedom can neither be restricted by a “political autocracy, [nor by] a tyranny of public opinion” because a university, which is “an intellectual experiment station”, is “an inviolable refuge from such” impediments.⁹

Freedom of speech, on the other hand, is concerned with providing equal rights to all citizens to speak their mind and participate in public discussions or collective decision-making processes *regardless of* their professional backgrounds. In this regard, while it is crucial to create an environment where students can learn and practice dissension with their teachers, academics do not have a moral or legal obligation to provide *balanced* discussion of the subject matter or to allow the students to express their opinions for as long as they wish during the lectures. Academics are free to include or exclude certain viewpoints based on their expertise; as an expert, an academic is the one who decides what is relevant for their courses. The right to determine the content of your academic interests and publications means that academics are also free to advocate certain positions that they are convinced to be true: balance is *only* relevant when it comes to academics’ “survey of the evidence on which [their] convictions are based”.¹⁰ For example, a professor of political science cannot be expected or forced to allot equal time for different, and maybe rival, viewpoints or theories. Since the right to determine the content of one’s academic activities include the “rights to (1) exclude, (2) to advocate, and (3) to risk giving offense,” academics then have a right to non-neutrality in their researches and teachings.¹¹

Academics are not encyclopaedias that can define and give background information about anything without picking a side in academic debates. We cannot expect a biology professor to provide a *balanced* argument between creationism and the theory of evolution, nor a historian of World War II to entertain the views of the Holocaust deniers. Michele Moody-Adams suggests a helpful analogy between academics and doctors to emphasize the crucial role of expertise: “just as it is unreasonable to demand that medical patients should be able to write their own prescriptions and determine their own treatment, it is unreasonable to demand that the content of the curriculum

⁶ Moody-Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 101-102.

⁷ I have studied and worked at different Azerbaijani universities, and where I did not give any reference in my discussion to the attitude of university administrators towards academics and academic freedom, I have relied on my own personal observations, as well as the observations of other Azerbaijani scholars that I have interviewed.

⁸ G. C. Moodie, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁹ AAUP, “AAUP’s 1915 Declaration of Principles”, The American Association of University Professors, 1915 - http://www.aaup-ui.org/Documents/Principles/Gen_Dec_Princ.pdf (accessed on 23 December 2020).

¹⁰ A. Bilgrami, “Truth, Balance, and Freedom”, in A. Bilgrami and J. R. Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹¹ Moody-Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

be determined by reference to what students want to discuss”.¹² A conflict between academic freedom and democratic values ought not to surprise us because the former is mostly based on the authority of expertise rather than, for example, equal opportunity for both teachers and students. A liberal or a libertarian, nevertheless, may say that academic freedom, albeit important, is just a different name for individual rights. Or one might argue that there is nothing special about *academic freedom* because academics are just workers and what we call academic freedom is simply the combination of the freedom of workers to freely express themselves and “due process in the workplace”.¹³ Thus, I find it necessary to emphasize that in addition to traditional liberal rights or civil and political rights like the other citizens of any democratic country or workers in any workplace, academics also enjoy the right to exclude certain viewpoints on the grounds that they are irrelevant or unjustified beliefs, and this academic *right to exclude*, that is to choose what and how to transmit knowledge, derives from the expertise of academics in their respective fields.

At the same time academics may also want to gain the public trust. In order to gain the confidence of the people, academics ought to be truthful individuals and, therefore, they should possess some academic virtues such as *seriousness*, *sincerity*, and *accuracy*.¹⁴ When I say seriousness, I mean a scholarly and disinterested enquiry into which outcomes should be used in one’s publications and teaching. Sincerity means teaching, discussing or advocating positions that one indeed believes in, rather than promoting certain positions, by which one is not convinced, for economic, political, or other reasons. And accuracy refers to using reliable information and strong methodology in one’s research, as well as avoiding self-deception or wishful thinking for any reason. Academic freedom of scholars, however, *cannot be restricted* on the grounds that they are unserious, insincere, or inaccurate. First, the definitions of these three virtues can easily be manipulated by anyone, including university administrations and State officials. Second, academics *are not* obliged to gain the public trust. Therefore, while it is desirable for academics to possess these three virtues, their academic freedom cannot be based on any of these virtues.

Defense of Academic Freedom

My ambition is to defend the freedom of each scholar within and outside the borders of universities. Although it is possible to justify academic freedom based on different values such as liberty, utility, creativity, and diversity, here I try to shortly elaborate *the argument of consistency*, which I take as the main argument in defense of academic freedom. *The argument* is that the idea that universities should have a

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹³ R. F. Ladenson, “Is Academic Freedom Necessary?”, *Law and Philosophy*, vol. 5, n° 1, 1986, p. 59-87.

¹⁴ B. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 11, 96-100, 125.

purpose to benefit from the intellect of its scholars, is inconsistent with the restriction of academic freedom. For example, if someone opens a restaurant, I would reasonably assume that they want to earn money by selling food and beverages. But if they sell bricks and cement in the restaurant, a reasonable person would suggest that they change the name of the establishment from a “restaurant” to a “building/construction materials shop”. If they refuse to do so, they would not be taken seriously. A restaurant has a different function to a construction materials shop. Similarly, with *the argument of consistency*, my point is that if one names an establishment a *university* or an *academy* or any form of *higher education* institution, then they would *have to* defend academic freedom.

The purpose of academic freedom is to allow scholars to freely enquire and reach the logical conclusion of their enquiry without concern for its social, political, or moral implications. It is common knowledge that scholars cannot effectively enquire and strive for knowledge if their freedom is restricted. Under such circumstances, scholars would face serious challenges if they wrote anything against the accepted orthodoxy. A free enquiry is one in which scholars follow their arguments to their logical conclusion. If, during this process of enquiry, they realize that due to the political implications of their research, they will be persecuted, then it is hardly a free enquiry. Furthermore, a critic of academic freedom would say that the job of academics is merely to transmit the accepted scholarly paradigm to their students without adding anything. This claim can easily be countered by saying that the job of scholars is not “merely passing on truth received from the past”, but participating in the production of knowledge.¹⁵ Academics are not just university teachers; they are researchers. Thus, universities should make the necessary arrangements to create incentive and time for scholars to do research.

Universities hire scholars based on their expertise in order to listen to their insights, which tend to be valuable, justified, and true. Academic freedom should not be perceived as a privilege for academics because it is a necessary “condition for being able to do the job for which the university exists”.¹⁶ Since restricting academic freedom would also restrict the ability and productivity of scholars, it would be unreasonable and self-defeating to restrict the academic freedom of paid scholars with the hope that they will make contributions to their fields and share the valuable results of their own or their colleagues’ research to their students. Even if, as a university administrator, one sees academic work simply as a *job* and the scholars as *workers* rather than *professionals*, still, it would be unreasonable to restrict their freedom.¹⁷ To put it differently, and with all due respect, university administrators who restrict academic freedom, “keep a dog while they bark themselves”.¹⁸ If one hires people to bring new insights, then one should allow them to properly do their jobs.

¹⁵ G. C. Moodie, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁷ By following Stanley Fish (viz. *Versions of Academic Freedom: From Professionalism to Revolution*, The Rice University Campbell Lectures, University of Chicago Press, 2014, p. 3), I define a worker as a person who fulfils the requirements of a job, which is an agreement between a worker and a boss; a professional, however, is a person whose main concern is “a continual, indeed lifelong, responsiveness to an ideal or a spirit” rather than performing a specific and immediate task.

¹⁸ G. C. Moodie, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

Effects of Academic Unfreedom in Azerbaijani Universities

Although academics, in their capacity as scholars, are not required to gain the public trust or benefit society, in most cases, the consequences of their research also benefit society. While academic freedom is necessary for scholars to properly conduct their research, teach their classes, and participate in the production of knowledge in their respected fields, especially in authoritarian countries, the consequences of academic freedom are also vital for the society to defend itself against the unlawful and immoral acts of the governments. In such countries, governments are inclined to harass their critics, including any independent institution such as non-governmental organizations or think tanks, and conduct smear campaigns against opposition-minded intellectuals in order to discredit them in the public sphere, or at least to deprive them of the tools that they can use to transmit their ideas.¹⁹ Thus, in authoritarian countries, academic freedom is vital to enable academics to speak up about various topics, including the defence of human rights and holding governments accountable. In Azerbaijan, for instance, academics are mostly seen as the most esteemed figures in their own fields; in this respect, when the government defends its economic policy and budget expenses based on unconvincing evidence, an economics professor is needed to publicly debunk the arguments of the government. In the absence of the latter, however, the government acquires better chances to manipulate the public view. The same line of argument also holds when it comes to defending democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The activities of Azerbaijani scholars are usually restricted on political grounds. For example, in December 2013, Baku State University (BSU), the first and the biggest university in Azerbaijan, “deprived unified opposition presidential candidate Jamil Hasanli of his teaching position by refusing to assign classes to him”.²⁰ In 2016, historian Yadigar Turkel was allegedly dismissed from the Azerbaijani National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) on the grounds that in one of his books he characterized Heydar Aliyev’s coming to power in 1993 as a coup.²¹ Although the legal reasons behind his dismissal were unrelated and Turkel himself denied these allegations, before his dismissal, Khalig Bashar, his colleague from ANAS explicitly said that the scholars of the ANAS Institute of Philosophy denounced Turkel’s “unsubstantiated” claims

¹⁹ See A. E. Öztürk, “Lack of Self-Confidence of the Authoritarian Regimes and Academic Freedom: The Case of İřtar Gözaydın from Turkey”, *European Political Science*, May 25, 2018; A. Goyushov and H. Ilkin, “Halted Democracy: Government Hijacking of the New Opposition in Azerbaijan”, in O. Leißle (ed.), *Politik und Gesellschaft im Kaukasus: Eine unruhige Region zwischen Tradition und Transformation*, Wiesbaden, Springer Fachmedien, 2019, p. 27–51.

²⁰ USDS, “Azerbaijan”, U.S. Department of State, 2014: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrprt/2013/eur/220255.htm> (accessed on 23 December 2020).

²¹ On 15 June 1993, Heydar Aliyev, the former leader of Soviet Azerbaijan and the father of the current president, was invited to the capital by the then President Abulfaz Elchibey to negotiate with Surat Huseynov who was leading the military revolt in Ganja against the Elchibey government. Upon his arrival in Baku, Aliyev was elected Speaker of the Parliament. After the departure of Elchibey to his village in Nakchivan, Aliyev became the acting president. In October, Aliyev became the president. Since 1997, 15 June is celebrated as the *National Salvation Day of Azerbaijanis*.

concerning the late President Aliyev and the Institute emphasized that “someone with the morality of Turkel cannot work in our ranks”.²² By dismissing Hasanli and Turkel, the government demonstrated that it did not wish to tolerate anybody who challenged President Ilham Aliyev, or the official narrative regarding his late father.

In another case, in 2014, historian Altay Goyushov was dismissed from BSU because of his political ideas, harsh criticism of the government, and finally, because of his article published in *Foreign Policy* in which he argued that the Azerbaijani government was hypocritical in its commitment to democracy, since it suppressed the opposition and free media.²³ BSU attempted dismissing him a few times before the publication of this article. In one of these attempts, Abel Maharramov, the former rector of BSU, claimed that Goyushov missed his own classes, and that there was no political reason for his dismissal. However, Maharramov’s statement clearly demonstrated the true rationale behind his action. In one of his interviews, he highlighted his priorities for an academic by stating that “it seems to me that national fervor should come before knowledge [and] intellect”, therefore, he continued, “if [Goyushov] is *strongly attached to his homeland*, if he is committed to education, *if he has national fervour*, he will remain in the university”.²⁴

These comments by Maharramov and Bashar concerning the priority of national affection for academics and the evaluation of scholars’ morality based on their loyalty to the former president demonstrate that, in their understanding, an academic is anything but the one who “tries to speak the truth to power”.²⁵ An academic who does not conform with the official State policies is portrayed as a (potential) traitor and an unpatriotic, immoral person. The main task of an academic, in this view, is to legitimize rather than criticize the government and its authoritarian rule. The expectation of the government and the university administrators from academics is that they should espouse the national interests, meaning the interests of the current government.

Academic freedom is also restricted by university administrators who assume that they can treat scholars as they wish. Regardless of their fields, scholars are persecuted, intimidated or *advised* by the rectors or deans if they criticize the university or the government. Hierarchical structure is so significant that it is not even necessary for a scholar to be told that the university or the government cannot be criticized – it is just obvious. For instance, rectors or deans can enter the class and disrupt the lesson without any permission from teachers. Rector’s receptions are usually the best place for observing the rigid discipline in Azerbaijani universities and the rectors’ degrading treatment of their “subjects”.²⁶ Academics are clearly dominated by the university

²² Moderator, “Hüquqşünas Alim Hacı Xaliq Bəşərin Şok Cavabı,” 2016. [Law Scholar Haji Khalig Bashir’s Shocking Response], <http://www.moderator.az/news/125082.html> (accessed on 23 December 2020).

²³ USDS, *op. cit.*; and A. Goyushov, “The Two Faces of Azerbaijan’s Government”, *Foreign Policy*, 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/06/the-two-faces-of-azerbaijans-government> (accessed on 23 December 2020).

²⁴ A. Maharramov, *Altay Goyushov’s Facebook Profile*, 2015 (accessed on 23 December 2020): <https://www.facebook.com/altaygr/videos/10203342461122329/?permPage=1>.

²⁵ E. W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, The 1993 Reith Lectures, Vintage, 1996, p. xvi.

²⁶ A. Goyushov, “BDU-Da Modernləşmə Haradan Başlamalıdır...,” 2011. [Where Should Modernization Start at Baku State University] <https://www.facebook.com/notes/altay-g%C3%B6y%C3%BC%C5%9Fov/bdu-da-modernli%C9%99%C5%9Fm%C9%99-haradan-ba%C5%9Fflamal%C4%B1d%C4%B1r/200718433287355> (accessed on 23 December 2020).

administrators in the sense that they *depend on the good will* of the latter, they are *at the mercy* of their rectors or deans if they want to continue their jobs. They are expected “to rely in good part on their native wit and cunningness: to get them to look after their own freedom by forcing them to develop and exercise strategies of placating and anticipating the powerful” because their choices as academics can arbitrarily be interfered by their administrators.²⁷

One of the side effects of academic unfreedom is that universities fail to provide quality education since they are not willing to hire good academics. Since my field is political science (political philosophy) and political scientists are quite well known in the public at large, I think it is appropriate to give a few examples in order to demonstrate the lack of competence of some of these experts. First, let us look at Professor Fikrat Sadixov, a former diplomat who received his Bachelor’s Degree in Oriental Studies at BSU and his Master’s Degree from the English Department of the Azerbaijan University of Languages. In one of his interviews, he responded to the question “Is it necessary for political scientists to receive relevant education?” by saying that “a political scientist should be accepted by the public [and] *the main criterion* for a political scientist is the public acceptance of their comments”.²⁸ Another well-known political scientist, Elxan Shahinoglu, a graduate of the BSU Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics, responded to the same question by claiming that “readers should decide whether to accept a person who received different education [other than political science] and then switched to political sciences”.²⁹ Arzu Nagiyev, a self-described political analyst, simply said that this skill “is actually a gift from God”.³⁰

The assumption in these answers is that the expertise of political scientists should be acknowledged and accepted by the public rather than other academics. According to this understanding, political scientists are not people who have received proper education and/or published articles in academic journals; rather they are people whose views are accepted by their readers. Lack of theoretical knowledge, however, is not the only problem of Azerbaijani political scientists; many of them also try to delegitimize democratic developments abroad, especially in the other Post-soviet countries. For instance, Elshad Mirbashirolu, who works at the ANAS Institute on Human Rights, said that Armenian prime minister Nikol Pashinyan³¹ was “a fake leader [and] the tool of foreign powers”. He also added that “as a result of colour revolutions in post-Soviet countries, the people [of Georgia and Ukraine] did not achieve

²⁷ P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 87.

²⁸ J. Ahmadi, “Həkim, Riyaziyyatçı, Tarixçi... – Politoloqlarımız,” 2016 (accessed on 23 December 2020): <https://femida.az/az/news/35548/H%C9%99kim,-riyaziyyat%C3%A7%C4%B1,-tarix%C3%A7i...%E2%80%93-Politoloqlar%C4%B1m%C4%B1z#.W57Avb6unQw.twitter>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Nikol Pashinyan was the leader of the 2018 revolution in Armenia. He became the Prime Minister of Armenia after he managed to force the then Prime Minister and the previous president, Serzh Sargsyan (2008–2018) to resign. On the attitudes of the Azerbaijani government and the public to the Armenian Revolution, see Z. Shiriyev, “For Azerbaijan, Armenia’s Political Upheaval Is a Double-Edged Sword”, Crisis Group, 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/azerbaijan/azerbaijan-armenias-political-upheaval-double-edged-sword> (accessed on 23 December 2020).

anything".³² Unfortunately, the other fields, especially the humanities, are not different from political science in terms of their quality.

Many of these "experts" teach at universities either because university administrators are unable to find professional political scientists, they do not understand the incompetence of the people they hire, or they assume that the most important contribution for a university professor is not the expertise but something different, such as loyalty. There are several reasons behind this difficulty to find professional political scientists. First, there was no department of Political Science in Azerbaijan SSR. After independence in 1991, many academics from three departments (Scientific Communism, Political Economy, and the History of the Communist Party) from various universities changed career paths and became political scientists. These departments were dissolved and Political Science departments were established based on the departments of Scientific Communism and the History of the Communist Party. Thus, after 1991, the professors of political science were in fact academics who changed their profession. That is to say that the teachers themselves were not professional political scientists. Second, many young people who studied abroad preferred to work at well paid jobs rather than work in universities. Third, because free-thinking intellectuals were perceived as troublemakers, the university administrators sought loyalty instead of expertise when they hired someone.³³ Lack of academic freedom in Azerbaijan hinders possible internal criticism of the unsuccessful hiring practices of the university administrators.

Conclusion

The purpose of universities is to discover truth and bring new insights. For this, they need to be free from political, economic, ideological, religious or other forms of restriction. Universities should not be a place for political propaganda, economic gain, or ideological and religious indoctrination. The most important value for a university is academic freedom, which creates appropriate conditions to produce knowledge and free discussions. However, the rigid discipline of Azerbaijani universities and the unfree relationship between high-ranking administrators and scholars – a relationship based on the domination of the former over the latter – do not only stymie academic discussions and development, but also squelch the liberty and creativity of scholars. All this leaves an informed person with no choice but to strongly argue that Azerbaijani universities are a façade for an ulterior motive. Indeed, universities may be used for

³² İkisahil, "Elşad Mirbaşiroğlu: "Paşinyan Hakimiyyətinin Sonu Yaxındır," ["Elshad Mirbashirolu: The End of the Pashinyan Government Is Near"], 2018: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YF__OwhB614 (accessed on 23 December 2020). For more information about the language used by pro-government political scientists and experts in Azerbaijan, see A. Novruzov, "An Identikit of Enemy", Baku Research Institute, August 10, 2018 – <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/an-identikit-of-enemy/> (accessed on 23 December 2020).

³³ I would like to thank Altay Goyushov for his discussion of this point.

many purposes, such as legitimizing the current power structures, but they are clearly not used for the purpose of free enquiry.

While the current unfree situation of Azerbaijani universities is mainly the result of political unfreedom in the country, the inappropriate behaviour of university rectors and deans also contributes to academic unfreedom. There are some bright Azerbaijani scholars who have to be cautious because of the possible political implications of their research. Some of them cannot even work at universities due to academic unfreedom and the intolerable behaviour of university administrators. Unless State universities protect the academic freedom of their scholars, they will simply continue to waste the public's money. Similarly, private universities have to first preserve academic freedom if they do not want to waste their students' money and time.

In 1892, William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago, highlighted that "when for any reason [...] the [university] administration attempts to dislodge a professor because of his political or religious sentiments, at that moment the institution has ceased to be a university".³⁴ Following this statement, is there really a single university in Azerbaijan? Since a good deal hangs on our returning a negative answer, the government and the university administrators first need to understand the vital importance of academic freedom and make necessary arrangements in order to transform these nameless buildings into universities.

³⁴ G. R. Stone, "A Brief History of Academic Freedom", in A. Bilgrami and J. R. Cole (eds.), *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015, p. 5.

Résumé en français

La liberté et l'université : le cas de l'Azerbaïdjan

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Dans ce chapitre, l'auteur se penche sur la relation difficile entre le pouvoir autoritaire et l'université en Azerbaïdjan à travers l'étude d'une politique coercitive mise en place par les administrateurs des universités empêchant la libre pensée et entravant la liberté des universitaires. L'objectif de ce chapitre est d'exposer l'influence du politique sur la liberté académique en Azerbaïdjan, l'argument étant qu'une université sans liberté académique n'est pas une université. L'auteur avance l'hypothèse que le savoir est essentiel parce qu'il constitue un bien intellectuel intouchable, transmissible librement et que les chercheurs ont besoin de la liberté académique pour pouvoir acquérir des connaissances sans craindre une répression. Selon lui, les universités ne doivent pas être un lieu de propagande politique, de gain économique, d'endoctrinement idéologique ou religieux.

Pour articuler sa thèse, I. Huseynli définit la liberté académique dans la première section, développe en deuxième partie l'idée de défense de cette liberté sous toutes ses formes et termine son propos sur quelques exemples récents d'absence de liberté académique dans les universités azerbaïdjanaises. La thèse centrale de ce chapitre est que l'université est un lieu où les chercheurs doivent pouvoir exercer leur enseignement et mener leurs recherches librement, sans aucune entrave de la part de leurs administrateurs. Cependant, dans les pays autoritaires, comme en Azerbaïdjan, la liberté académique souffre d'interventions et de restrictions régulières de la part des administrateurs d'universités qui, sans doute en raison de la nature du régime, supposent que les universitaires ne sont pas censés critiquer la société, la politique ou les universités dans lesquelles ils travaillent. Ces administrateurs, qui sont souvent eux-mêmes des universitaires, croient à tort que les priorités des universités doivent être au service du régime aux dépens du savoir.

I. Huseynli constate que la situation actuelle de non-liberté des universités azerbaïdjanaises est principalement due à l'absence de liberté politique dans le pays et au comportement inapproprié des recteurs et des doyens des universités. Dans ce contexte, certains universitaires azerbaïdjanais choisissent de se plier aux exigences du régime et d'autres arrêtent de travailler en raison de l'absence de liberté académique et des pressions subies par les administrateurs d'université. L'auteur conclut son étude sur la politique rigide des universités azerbaïdjanaises et les relations corrompues entre les administrateurs de haut niveau et les universitaires. Des relations fondées sur la domination des premiers sur les seconds qui entravent les discussions scientifiques saines et musellent la liberté et la créativité des universitaires. I. Huseynli termine par une réflexion autour du rôle des universités azerbaïdjanaises comme façade pour le régime : des espaces privés de liberté, instrumentalisés pour la légitimation des structures du pouvoir.