

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

FEATURES OF INTERACTION BETWEEN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BODIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

Relevance of the topic and degree of elaboration of the problem. Civil society plays important role as an institution in ensuring democratic governance, social justice, and sustainable development in the modern era. In the context of globalization, digitalization, and the expansion of the information environment, civil society has become particularly relevant in terms of strengthening public oversight, implementing transparency and accountability mechanisms, protecting human rights, and promoting public participation. In modern societies, civil society institutions actively participate not only in the political sphere but also in addressing social, cultural, environmental, and economic issues. They expand the potential for public influence on government decision-making and contribute to the stability of the democratic environment.

On the other hand, the importance of civil society is also reflected in improving the well-being of the population and addressing social problems in a timely manner. Where the administrative resources of the state are limited, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and public associations perform such functions as providing services at the local level, raising public awareness, shaping public consciousness, and strengthening social solidarity. Their activities contribute both to the formation of social capital and to the consolidation of public trust. This, in turn, is one of the key factors ensuring the sustainability of democratic processes.

For the Republic of Azerbaijan, the relevance of civil society is primarily associated with the need to strengthen modern state-building on democratic principles. Azerbaijan's political and legal system is based on the rights and freedoms of citizens, freedom of speech and the press, as well as freedom of association, as enshrined in the Constitution and national legislation. In this regard, civil society institutions play an important role in increasing transparency and accountability in public administration, strengthening the fight against corruption, protecting citizens' rights, and expanding their participation in socio-economic development processes. Azerbaijan's international commitments, including those undertaken within the

framework of the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe in the areas of human rights and democratic governance, also promote the active engagement of civil society.

Another important consideration is that, during Azerbaijan's socio-economic transformation, civil society serves as an important means of representing the interests of various groups within the population. Creating equal opportunities for people living in the regions, women, young people, persons with disabilities, and other social groups, bringing their problems to public attention, and supporting their resolution are among the key areas of activity of these institutions. For example, the activities of NGOs in such areas as addressing environmental problems, organizing social services, expanding employment opportunities for young people, and developing women's entrepreneurship complement state policy. This is also of strategic importance for increasing public participation and strengthening social solidarity.

Finally, the importance of civil society for the country is also determined by its potential for active participation in peacebuilding, reintegration, and social adaptation processes in the post-conflict period. Following the Patriotic War, the participation of civil society in the reconstruction of the liberated territories, the return of internally displaced persons to their ancestral homes, and the establishment of social infrastructure in these areas contributes both to the development of local communities and to the establishment of sustainable peace. Civil society institutions cooperate with international partners, exchange experience, attract donor-funded projects, and bring additional resources to the reconstruction process. Thus, summarizing the above, it can be concluded that civil society in Azerbaijan is of strategic importance for the development of democratic governance, the improvement of socio-economic well-being, and the strengthening of national unity.

Strengthening civil society institutions is also part of state policy in Azerbaijan. In his speech at the inauguration ceremony on 14 February 2024, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

emphasized that the process of building civil society in Azerbaijan would continue and identified national solidarity as an important factor in strengthening this process.¹ He stated that the Agency for State Support of Non-Governmental Organizations had been established, that a clear program was in place for the development of NGOs, and that their participation in the formulation and implementation of state policy, as well as in decision-making processes, had been increasing. The President also specifically noted that the Law “On Public Participation” and Public Councils had been established with the aim of strengthening public oversight, while state support was based on the principles of transparency, partnership, and responsibility.

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that the relevance of the topic under study is determined by the following main factors:

- The growing role of civil society in modern democratic states as a mechanism for ensuring transparency, accountability of government institutions, and public oversight.
- The intensification of globalization and digitalization, which expands opportunities for public participation, information exchange, and citizen involvement in decision-making.
- The need to protect human rights and freedoms and to strengthen the principles of the rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and public participation.
- The growing importance of non-governmental organizations and public associations in addressing social, educational, environmental, and economic issues in the context of limited state resources.
- The need to strengthen social capital and public trust, which are essential conditions for sustainable development and the stability of democratic processes.
- The relevance of developing civil society in Azerbaijan in the context of modernizing public administration, improving

¹ İlham Əliyevin andıçmə mərasımı keçirilib: [Elektron resurs] / Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin rəsmi internet səhifəsi. — Bakı, 2024. — URL: <https://president.az/az/articles/view/63979>

democratic institutions, and enhancing the effectiveness of interaction between the state and society.

- The growing role of civil society in the post-conflict period, including in the processes of rebuilding the liberated territories, reintegrating the population, facilitating the return of internally displaced persons, and strengthening social cohesion.

A review of the existing academic literature shows that research on civil society institutions has been conducted by both local and international scholars. Nevertheless, much of the existing research has focused on individual civil society institutions, their formation and development, as well as specific aspects of their interaction with the state. The specific mechanisms, forms, and characteristics of interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions, by contrast, have not been sufficiently examined as a distinct area of research in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

Among local researchers, M. Babakhanova directly investigated the role of civil society in public administration, analyzed its impact on transparency, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making. In her study on Azerbaijan, the author identified NGOs, political parties, interest groups and local self-government as the main elements of civil society and emphasized the need for their interaction with state structures.² E. R. İsmayilov examined forms of citizen participation in governance in the context of classical and contemporary models and put forward practical proposals for mechanisms that could be applied in local governance.³

A. Nuriyev provided practical guidelines on the activities of Public Councils, explaining how the principles of transparency and accountability can be applied to improve institutional cooperation

² Babakhanova, M. Civil society and government: an analysis of its role in public administration // – Florencia: Amazonia Investiga, – 2024, 13 (80), – p. 89–98.

³ İsmayilov, E.R. Vətəndaşların idarəetmədə iştirak formaları / E.R. İsmayilov. — Bakı: Ümman, — 1998. — 84 s.

between the state and civil society.⁴ H. Aliyev comparatively examined the use of informal networks by NGOs in Azerbaijan and Georgia. The findings of the study showed that, although informal ties can fill institutional gaps in some cases, they may also create problems of transparency.⁵ R. Iskandarli analyzed the role of NGOs in peace consolidation in Azerbaijan during the post-conflict period. The study highlighted areas in which NGOs can contribute to national security and social integration.⁶

A. Guliyev studied the role of non-governmental organizations in the formation of civil society in Azerbaijan, paying attention to their institutional development, functions and mutual relations with state structures. He paid particular attention to the creation of legal and organizational conditions for the activities of NGOs and the expansion of their participation in solving socially important issues.⁷ R. Seyidov studied the relationship between democratic political regimes and civil society, paying special attention to the development of civil society in the context of its interaction with the state. The study also emphasized the mutual interests of the state and civil society, the importance of public participation and the role of civil institutions as a source of information about social interests and public sentiment.⁸

In the studies of foreign authors, greater emphasis is placed on the theoretical and conceptual aspects of civil society. Russian researcher O. Ergashov classifies the structure and principal

⁴ Nuriyev, Ə. İctimai şüraların fəaliyyətinə dair bələdçi: Şəffaflıq Naminə Vətəndaş Cəmiyyəti (ECSOFT) layihəsi / Ə. Nuriyev, R. Səfərləliyeva; rəy. M. Quluzadə, N. Bourjaily. — Bakı: MG Consulting MMC, — 2020. — 56 s.

⁵ Aliyev, H. Examining the Use of Informal Networks by NGOs in Azerbaijan and Georgia // — Abingdon: Journal of Civil Society, — Vol. 11. — 2015. No. 3. — p. 317–332.

⁶ Iskandarli, R. Post-Conflict Azerbaijan and Development for Peace: The role of NGOs // Handbook of Research on Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Conflicts and Their Impact on State and Social Security. — Hershey, PA: IGI Global, — 2022. — p. 121–136.

⁷ Quliyev, A. Vətəndaş cəmiyyəti quruculuğunda qeyri-hökumət təşkilatları // — Bakı: Dövlət idarəçiliyi, — 2014. №1 (45), — s. 165–170.

⁸ Seyidov, R. Demokratik siyasi rejim və vətəndaş cəmiyyəti: / siyasi elmlər üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. avtoreferatı. / — Bakı, 2016. — 28 s.

institutions of modern civil society and explains their functional roles. The author also focuses on mechanisms of interaction among these institutions and their place in the development of society.⁹

A. Tikhovodova systematizes the existing conceptual models of relations between the state and civil society. Drawing on the experience of various countries, she presents practical forms of applying theoretical approaches.¹⁰ A. Sungurov, in turn, analyzes models of interaction between public authorities and civil society structures. The study examines the institutional framework, forms of cooperation between the parties, and their effectiveness.¹¹

L. Nikovskaya and M. Molokova examine the role of civil society in development policy, particularly in the context of digitalization and institutional innovations. The authors also identify the mechanisms through which civil society institutions influence socio-economic development processes.¹² A. Volchanskaya analyzes the functions of civil society institutions in the protection of human rights. The study provides an extensive examination of legal mechanisms, forms of public oversight, and issues of institutional cooperation in this area.¹³

English-language authors have also conducted a number of studies in this field. For example, B. Barber provides an extensive interpretation of the concept of participatory democracy, emphasizing

⁹ Ergashev, O. STRUCTURE AND BASIC CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS // — Саратов: Экономика и социум, — 2021. № 4-1 (83). — p. 113–116.

¹⁰ Тиховодова, А.В. Взаимоотношения государства и гражданского общества: обзор концептуальных моделей // — Нижний Новгород: Научные проблемы водного транспорта, — 2015. № 44. — с. 222–231.

¹¹ Сунгуров, А.Ю. Модели взаимодействия органов государственной власти и структур гражданского общества: российский опыт // — Ростов-на-Дону: Научно-культурологический журнал, — 2008. № 9. — с. 21–39.

¹² Никовская Л.И., Молокова М.А. Роль гражданского общества в политике развития // Публичная политика: институты, цифровизация, развитие: монография / Е.А. Блинова, Г.И. Грибанова, С.М. Елисеев [и др.]; под ред. Л.В. Сморгунова. — Москва : Аспект Пресс, — 2018. — с. 146–158.

¹³ Волчанская, А.Н. Роль институтов гражданского общества в защите прав человека // — Волгоград: Вестник Волгоградской академии МВД России, — 2011. № 2 (17). — с. 22–27.

the importance of involving citizens directly in decision-making processes in order to strengthen the political system. The study also explains the role of public dialogue and collective action in strengthening democratic institutions.¹⁴

L. Jordan, P. van Tuijl, and M. Edwards assess NGO accountability mechanisms within political and ethical frameworks. They present innovative approaches and international practices for developing a culture of accountability.¹⁵ A. Barrow systematizes theoretical approaches to relations between the state and civil society. The study analyzes mechanisms of interaction between the parties within different political models.¹⁶

Thus, the review of the literature demonstrates that the existing body of research sheds light on the legal framework, institutional mechanisms, and certain practical aspects of relations between civil society institutions and public administration bodies. However, this subject has not been sufficiently comprehensively and systematically analyzed, particularly in the context of the legal, technological, and institutional transformations of recent years. Most studies either remain limited to a normative approach or focus on the activities of specific institutions. There is a lack of analysis of interactions among different platforms, regional differences, the influence of informal networks, and national security priorities. Therefore, there is a need for research based on a periodic and phased approach that takes into account both existing problems and new opportunities for cooperation. The present dissertation has been developed in response to this scholarly need.

Object and subject of the research. The object of the research is the interaction between public administration bodies and civil

¹⁴ Barber, B.R. Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age / B.R. Barber. — Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, — 2003. — 320 p.

¹⁵ Jordan, L. NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles and Innovations / L. Jordan, P. Tuijl, M. Edwards. — London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., — 2006. — 270 p.

¹⁶ Barrow, A. Relationship between State and Civil Society: Theoretical Review // — Indonesian Journal of Sociology, Education, and Development, — Vol. 2. — 2020. No. 1. — p. 71–77.

society institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as the dynamics of their development. The subject of the research is the nature and main areas of interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions, their impact on social, political, and economic processes, as well as the mechanisms through which this interaction is implemented.

Aim and objectives of the research. The aim of the research is to identify the principles governing interaction between civil society institutions and public administration bodies in Azerbaijan, the existing problems in establishing effective and high-quality relations, and the prospects for developing these relations. In this regard, the research sets the following objectives:

- To clarify the essence of interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions;
- To identify the criteria and indicators for assessing the interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions;
- To examine models of relations between civil society institutions and public administration bodies;
- To investigate the legal foundations governing the interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- To analyze the current state of interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan in the context of existing problems and prospects;
- To examine mechanisms for strengthening dialogue between public administration bodies and civil society institutions;
- To identify ways to support joint projects and programs implemented by public administration bodies and civil society institutions.

Research methods. The research methods employed in the dissertation are primarily based on a combination of theoretical and empirical approaches. At the theoretical level, the principal political theories explaining interaction between public administration bodies

and civil society institutions—including the social contract, participatory democracy, and deliberative democracy—are examined extensively, while the functional content and mechanisms of interaction underlying these approaches are investigated comparatively. At the empirical level, analyses were conducted of the existing legislative framework, institutional mechanisms, and practical examples of activities, while public administration effectiveness indicators were examined on the basis of international assessment indicators. In addition, observation, document analysis, and comparative assessment methods were used to examine NGO activities, public participation, and practices of public oversight. Thus, the theoretical propositions were assessed against the actual situation.

Main provisions submitted for defense. Based on the results of the research, the following provisions are submitted for defense:

- In the Republic of Azerbaijan, state–civil society relations are moving beyond a formal framework toward genuine cooperation through the existing legal framework and institutional mechanisms.
- As the institutional capacity and operational transparency of NGOs increase, their influence within public administration processes is strengthened.
- Expanding the powers of Public Councils and establishing membership criteria based on professional competence significantly enhances the effectiveness of public participation.
- The introduction of digital platforms and regional cooperation mechanisms strengthens inclusiveness and trust in state–society relations.

Scientific novelty of the research. The research contains the following scientific novelties:

- The nature of interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions has been systematically analyzed and generalized on the basis of a synthesis of three fundamental theories: social contract theory, participatory democracy, and deliberative democracy.

- Comprehensive assessment criteria covering the legal, institutional, and functional aspects of relations between public administration bodies and civil society institutions have been identified.
- The functions performed by civil society institutions in public administration—including interest articulation, interest aggregation, participation in policymaking, and public oversight—have been examined on the basis of specific mechanisms.
- The legal and institutional foundations of interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions in the context of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been systematically analyzed, and the principal factors influencing the development of these relations have been identified.
- The specific features of state–civil society cooperation during the post-conflict period experienced by the Republic of Azerbaijan have been identified, and the functional role of this cooperation in reintegration, peacebuilding, and ensuring social stability has been analyzed.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research. The theoretical significance of the dissertation lies in the systematic analysis of the principal political and theoretical approaches explaining interaction between public administration bodies and civil society institutions, linking their functional and institutional characteristics to the realities of Azerbaijan. Overall, this approach provides a perspective on the existing academic literature from the Azerbaijani context, establishes a theoretical basis for understanding the nature of state–society relations, and provides a methodological foundation for further in-depth study of the subject in political science. The research also makes it possible to assess the transformation of state–civil society relations in the context of contemporary political challenges. The findings of the research may serve a theoretical purpose in conducting comparative analyses in future studies and in comparing the Azerbaijani model with the experience of other

countries. In addition, the theoretical findings contribute to a more systematic understanding of the dynamics of state–society relations.

The practical significance of the dissertation lies in the fact that the functional areas, public oversight mechanisms, and forms of participation identified in the research can be applied to expand opportunities for cooperation between public administration bodies and civil society institutions. The analyses conducted in the dissertation are recommendation-oriented and may be used in the future for the development and implementation of legislative initiatives and state programs, the organization of Public Council activities, and the improvement of transparency and accountability mechanisms. The findings can be used by both public authorities and NGOs to optimize their practical activities. At the same time, the proposals put forward in the research are important for increasing citizen participation, expanding public dialogue platforms, and strengthening inclusive governance. The results of the research may serve as analytical and practical guidance for specialists working in the public and non-governmental sectors.

Approbation and application of the research results. The main provisions and findings of the dissertation research have been reflected in a number of articles published in international and local academic journals. In addition, papers prepared on the basis of the research have been published in conference proceedings of national and international conferences.

Name of the organization where the dissertation was completed. The dissertation was completed at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University.

Total volume of the dissertation indicating the volume of each structural section separately (in characters). The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, seven sections, a conclusion, and a list of references. The introduction comprises 20,508 characters; Chapter I, consisting of three sections, comprises 119,626 characters; Chapter II, consisting of two sections, comprises 64,797 characters; Chapter III, consisting of two sections, comprises 53,095

characters; and the conclusion comprises 8,176 characters. Overall, the dissertation consists of 266,202 characters, excluding the list of references.

MAIN CONTENT OF THE STUDY

The “**Introduction**” section of the research substantiates the relevance of the dissertation topic, defines the object and subject of the research, as well as its aim and objectives, identifies the scientific novelty and theoretical and practical significance of the research, presents the provisions submitted for defense, and briefly outlines the structure and length of the dissertation.

The first chapter of the research is entitled “**Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects**”. The first section of this chapter, entitled “**The Essence of the Problem of Interaction between Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions**”, analyzes the theoretical foundations and functional characteristics of relations between public administration bodies and civil society institutions. It is noted that effective cooperation between public administration bodies and civil society institutions is of great importance for the development of democratic governance and the protection of public interests. A mature civil society is not a rival to the state; rather, it is a stabilizing factor that serves as an intermediary between society and the state. In a democratic system, one of the main responsibilities of the state is to create the legal and organizational conditions necessary for the free operation of civil society institutions. This is primarily achieved through the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework governing their activities, the creation of institutional communication channels, the provision of information, and organizational support.

The section notes that civil society institutions act as representatives of public interests in the formulation and implementation of public policy. They also serve as coordinators and

intermediaries between society and public administration bodies. One of the state's principal functions in this process is to establish institutional mechanisms that ensure transparency, accountability, and public participation. It is also emphasized that the provision of information is an important element of state–civil society cooperation, as an open information environment enables civil society institutions to perform their functions of public oversight, monitoring, and public awareness-raising more effectively. Consequently, the effective performance of the functions of both parties is important for ensuring the rule of law, sustainable development, and the protection of citizens' rights.

It is noted that there are three principal theories explaining the essence of these interactions: social contract theory, participatory democracy theory, and deliberative democracy theory. According to social contract theory, the state is understood as the result of a mutual agreement formed between individuals and authority for the purpose of ensuring security, stability, and public order in society. This approach places particular emphasis on the legal foundations of state authority, the rights and obligations of citizens, and the regulation of state powers within the framework of the law. Participatory democracy theory advocates the importance of citizen participation not only in elections but at all stages of political decision-making. Deliberative democracy, in turn, emphasizes the achievement of consensus and legitimacy through open and reasoned dialogue.

The second section of the chapter, entitled “**Criteria and Indicators for Assessing the Interaction between Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions**”, analyzes the criteria for assessing relations between public administration bodies and civil society institutions. It is noted that the effectiveness of these relations is determined on the basis of the participation of civil society institutions in decision-making processes, opportunities for public oversight, the protection of the interests of social groups, and the extent of their influence on public policy. At the same time, the section identifies such risks as the failure to ensure a full institutional balance, limitations on opportunities for cooperation, and a decline in the level

of mutual trust. Therefore, the importance of establishing mechanisms for institutional cooperation, mutual trust, and sustained dialogue in state–civil society relations is emphasized.

Quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as expert assessment and comparative analysis, are used to evaluate these interactions. Quantitative approaches take into account such indicators as voter turnout, the number of protest actions, social media activity, the level of corruption, transparency in decision-making, and the effectiveness of public services. Qualitative methods, in turn, make it possible to assess whether interactions are systematic, the presence of purposeful cooperation, adherence to democratic principles, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the intensity of communication channels, and the existence of civilized communication with opposition-minded segments of the public. For this purpose, methods such as interviews, document analysis, and observation are applied.

The section also notes that assessment mechanisms such as GRICS, CSOSI, the Rule of Law Index, and the Democracy Index are widely used in international practice. Key indicators used in assessment include NGO participation in decision-making, the number and scale of joint projects, the availability of cooperation platforms, forms of state support, the level of transparency, financial dependence, the intensity and nature of participation, the scale of cooperation, the degree of freedom, and organizational governance characteristics. Although these indicators are often based on quantitative measures, the application of qualitative methods and expert assessments is also necessary to provide a more complete reflection of the actual situation.

Consequently, an objective assessment of interactions between civil society institutions and public administration bodies requires the use of both international indices and quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted with the participation of local experts. Although international indicators are important for global comparisons, obtaining fully objective results is not always possible due to methodological differences, the characteristics of data sources, and subjective elements in assessment approaches.

The third section, entitled **“Models of Relations between Civil Society Institutions and Public Administration Bodies”**, provides a comparative analysis of models of interaction between the state and civil society institutions in different countries. It is noted that the US model is liberal in nature and is characterized by the financial independence of civil society institutions, traditions of philanthropy, and their capacity to influence public policy. The British model is distinguished by pluralism, institutional diversity, and a well-developed framework of cooperation with the state. The Canadian model is characterized by the reconciliation of liberal and social approaches and the promotion of the principles of multiculturalism and inclusiveness.

In European countries, state–civil society relations are generally based on the principles of institutional cooperation, consultation, and public participation. It is noted that European countries share a number of common characteristics due to their common historical development, democratic values, and shared legal and political principles formed within the framework of the European Union. At the same time, relations between the state and civil society in each European country demonstrate distinctive features corresponding to its specific political, legal, and institutional characteristics.

In the post-Soviet space, the model of interaction is characterized by a paternalistic and state-oriented approach. The Soviet legacy, the leading role of the state, and sensitivity to political stability remain predominant. In the transition toward liberal values, the formation of civil society institutions has largely taken place through state initiatives. In Latin American, African, and Asian countries, models of interaction remain at relatively early stages of development. These countries face resource constraints and dependence on external assistance, while the activities of civil society institutions primarily focus on meeting social needs, reducing poverty, and developing education and healthcare.

The second chapter of the research is entitled **“Development Characteristics of the Interaction between Public Administration**

Bodies and Civil Society Institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan". The first section of this chapter, entitled "**Legal Foundations for Regulating the Interaction between Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan**", examines the legal framework governing these relations. It is noted that the regulation of relations between public administration bodies and civil society institutions on a legal basis in the Republic of Azerbaijan is of significant importance both for clearly defining the rights and obligations of the parties and for strengthening democratic governance. In this context, the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan was the first major legal instrument, and the freedoms of thought, speech, peaceful assembly, and association enshrined therein provided a legal basis for citizens' participation in public initiatives. Amendments to the Constitution adopted in 2016 identified the formation and development of a strong and effective civil society as one of the important priorities of state policy.

The section also analyzes the principal normative legal acts regulating the activities of civil society institutions and providing a legal basis for their institutional development. It is noted that the laws "On Public Associations", "On Non-Governmental Organizations (Public Associations and Funds)", "On Public Participation", "On Media", "On the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman)", "On Trade Unions," "On Freedom of Religious Belief", "On Culture", and "On Youth Policy" have established an important legal framework for defining the legal status of civil society institutions, regulating their relations with the state, developing public participation mechanisms, and ensuring transparency, accountability, and public oversight.

The second section of the chapter, entitled "**The State of Interaction between Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Modern Period: Existing Problems and Prospects**", emphasizes that the existing potential of civil society in the Republic of Azerbaijan is characterized by both challenges and positive trends. Human resources and experience, expanding financial opportunities in certain areas, and the development of a certain level of public support provide grounds

for an optimistic assessment of the sector's development. To use this potential effectively, it is important to strengthen institutional sustainability, promote NGO activities in the regions, and expand legal and practical mechanisms that increase the role of civil society in public policy.

The section notes that the activities of civil society institutions are not limited to the national level but also play an important role at the international level. In this regard, statements disseminated by NGOs on international platforms are of strategic importance, as they complement official diplomatic channels by communicating Azerbaijan's position to a global audience, shaping public opinion in response to biased approaches, and strengthening national solidarity. Statements adopted in 2022 concerning demands for environmental justice in the South Caucasus and appeals regarding prisoners and hostages are cited as prominent examples.

The research established that, in recent years, cooperation between the state and civil society institutions has become more systematic in areas such as social services, environmental protection, human rights, and the fight against corruption. The partnership model established between the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population and specialized NGOs has contributed to deeper institutional cooperation in this field and facilitated the operation of hundreds of social service centers. The expansion of rehabilitation and social adaptation services, particularly for vulnerable groups, demonstrates the practical outcomes of state–society cooperation. The cooperation framework established between the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and environmental NGOs has also produced tangible results in environmental protection, forest fire prevention, and raising environmental awareness. Joint projects implemented by public institutions and NGOs in the field of human rights have focused on public awareness, preventing radicalization, and protecting family values.

At the same time, shortcomings remain in the existing mechanisms of cooperation. The advisory status of Public Councils limits their ability to influence decision-making processes.

Restrictions on cooperation with foreign donors and the complexity of grant registration procedures weaken the financial and entrepreneurial independence of NGOs. Greater support for NGOs closely affiliated with the state, while organizations holding critical positions remain excluded from the process, creates inequality in public participation. Shortages of resources and personnel in the regions, as well as the concentration of social projects primarily in the capital, further limit the scope of activities. Therefore, it is important to expand the powers of Public Councils, diversify grant mechanisms, support the institutional development of organizations in the regions, and create a favorable environment for the participation of independent NGOs.

The final, third chapter of the research is entitled **“Directions for Improving the Interaction between Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan”**. The first section of this chapter examines **“Directions for Developing Interaction and Strengthening Dialogue between Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions”**. Based on existing research, this section notes that the reliance of some non-governmental organizations in Azerbaijan on informal networks and the establishment of relationships based on patron–client ties may result in dialogue with the state becoming formal in nature and may reduce the effectiveness of cooperation. In this regard, the introduction of institutional transparency and accountability mechanisms is of particular importance. In particular, the selection of NGO representatives participating in Public Councils should be based on open, inclusive, and objective criteria, which is essential for establishing genuine and credible dialogue. Under such conditions, minimizing informal influences, increasing financial and managerial accountability, and making state decision-making processes open to the public should be among the key priorities.

The research notes that expanding the participation of various social groups, including young people, in the activities of civil society institutions contributes to making state–citizen relations more inclusive. In this regard, the establishment of inclusive dialogue platforms encourages the integration of diverse public perspectives

into governance processes and contributes to strengthening mutual trust between the state and civil society.

The model proposed in this section of the research envisages strengthening these relations in a phased manner: first, addressing the problem of informal networks, followed by ensuring transparency, promoting participation, deepening dialogue, and ultimately developing intergenerational cooperation. These stages complement one another and ensure a flexible, adaptive, and sustainable transformation of state–civil society relations. The main objective of the model is to increase institutional trust, strengthen social capital, and ensure the genuine and constructive participation of various social groups in decision-making processes.

The model proposed here is an institutional mechanism that strengthens relations between public administration bodies and civil society institutions in a phased manner and can be implemented flexibly and cyclically. The first stage of the model envisages eliminating informal networks observed within NGOs and addressing internal transparency problems. At the second stage, ensuring openness in financial and decision-making processes becomes a priority in order to strengthen mutual trust between the state and NGOs. The third stage involves expanding participation through Public Councils, consultations, and digital platforms. At subsequent stages, dialogue moves beyond the formal level toward a meaningful and sustained environment for discussion, while intergenerational cooperation that combines experience and innovation is encouraged. This sequence strengthens both institutional transparency and social capital, while also reinforcing democratic legitimacy in governance.

The final section of both the chapter and the research is entitled **“Ways of Supporting Joint Projects and Programs of Public Administration Bodies and Civil Society Institutions”**. This section notes that in the context of Azerbaijan’s post-Soviet transformation and its history of independence, support for joint projects and programs between public administration bodies and civil society institutions has developed gradually and entered a qualitatively new stage, particularly since the 2010s. Although during the early years of

independence such cooperation was weak and unsystematic due to institutional gaps, political instability, and economic difficulties, a legal and regulatory framework was subsequently established, and these relations were strengthened through political commitment. Since the 2010s, the establishment of institutional mechanisms for state support to NGOs, the development of relations with donor organizations, the formation of Public Councils, and the participation of civil society in international events have demonstrated progress in partnership at both the institutional and functional levels.

The initiative demonstrated by non-governmental organizations and their coordinated activities with public authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Patriotic War played an important role in strengthening public trust and national solidarity. In recent years, the introduction of legal restrictions on foreign sources of funding and the protection of national security interests have made it necessary to establish institutional mechanisms in this area that ensure transparency and accountability while safeguarding national interests. This approach has contributed to the sustainable development of state–civil society relations in a manner consistent with security considerations.

Looking ahead, important directions for further strengthening this cooperation may include the application of digital technologies, the establishment of unified communication platforms, the expansion of participatory budgeting models, increasing the effectiveness of Public Councils at the regional level, and promoting new forms of cooperation within the “state–private sector–NGO” triangle. At the same time, these cooperation models need to be adapted to local conditions, taking into account Azerbaijan's social structure, cultural characteristics, religious and political sensitivities, and national security priorities.

In the “Conclusion” section of the research, it is emphasized that relations between public administration bodies and civil society institutions in Azerbaijan have gradually developed and entered a qualitatively new stage. Various laws, as well as presidential decrees and orders, have established the legal basis for these relations and

created the necessary prerequisites for recognizing civic initiatives and developing mechanisms of transparency, accountability, and public oversight. Although platforms such as Public Councils, the Agency for State Support of Non-Governmental Organizations, the Association for Civil Society Development Assistance in Azerbaijan, the ASAN Service, and the Open Government Partnership initiatives have expanded opportunities for cooperation, interregional disparities, weak institutional capacity, the influence of informal networks, and representation based on political loyalty remain persistent challenges. The proposals put forward in this regard are aimed at strengthening the institutional sustainability of NGOs, expanding the powers of Public Councils, and ensuring more balanced development across the regions. Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are proposed:

- To strengthen the institutional sustainability of NGOs, it is important to simplify grant registration procedures, align mechanisms for cooperation with foreign donors with national security requirements, and ensure financial transparency. A “small grants” mechanism with simplified procedures and minimum documentation could be developed for new and small NGOs. In addition, the introduction of a unified electronic registry of grants and reports would be advisable in order to increase trust and reduce the administrative burden.
- To monitor progress and identify problematic areas, the effectiveness of government–civil society interaction in the country should be assessed regularly, for example, through participation and transparency indices. It would also be advisable to establish a unified online portal for government–civil society interaction, bringing together information on grants, consultations, Public Councils, and opportunities for public participation.
- To improve the effectiveness of Public Councils, their advisory status should be reconsidered and they should be granted decision-making powers in certain areas. At the same time, membership criteria should be based on professional

competence and balanced representation rather than political loyalty.

- To ensure balanced development of state–civil society cooperation across the regions, training programs aimed at strengthening the capacity of local NGOs, digital participation platforms, and state–private sector–NGO partnership projects should be expanded.

The main content and scientific provisions of the dissertation are reflected in the following scientific articles by the author and in the materials of reports presented at scientific conferences:

1. Mammadov, V. Co-creation, Citizen Participation, and Systemic Responsiveness: New Governance Pathways in the State–Civil Society Interface // 4th International Scientific Research and Innovation Congress, – New York: Liberty Publishing House, – 14-16 December, – 2025, – p. 1941–1947.
2. Mammadov, V. Green Economy and Public Participation: Effectiveness of State–NGO Co-Governance Platforms // Proceedings of the 3rd International Scientific Conference “Sustainable Development Strategy: Global Trends, National Experience and New Goals”, – Volume 4, – Mingachevir: Mingachevir State University; Baku: Azerbaijan Technical University, – 6-8 December, – 2025, – p. 304–308.
3. Mammadov, V. Institutional Reconfiguration of Civil Society in Digital Governance Ecosystems // HAGIA SOPHIA 10th International Conference on Multidisciplinary Scientific Studies, – New York: Liberty Academic Publishers, – 27-28 February, – 2026, – p. 338–342.
4. Mammadov, V. Contemporary Challenges Facing NGOs: Institutional, Financial, and Legitimacy Issues in the Modern Era // 7th International Black Sea Scientific Research and Innovation Congress, – Adiyaman: İKSAD Publishing House, – 22-23 February, – 2026, – p. 875–882.

5. Mammadov, V. The Role of Regional Disparities in Shaping State–Citizen Relations // Lyon: Journal of Science. Lyon, – 2026. №75. – p. 42–47.
6. Mammadov, V. The Transformative Impact of Social Responsibility on Collective Action // Bratislava: Slovak International Scientific Journal, – 2026. №105. – p. 71–74.
7. Mammadov, V. Institutional Trust and Civic Engagement: Exploring the Relationship Between Governance Quality and Citizen Participation // Астана: Международный Научный Журнал «Endless Light in Science», – 2026. №2. – p. 49–56.
8. Mammadov, V. Contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations to Community Development: Mechanisms and Contextual Factors // Naxçıvan: Naxçıvan Dövlət Universitetinin Elmi Əsərlər Jurnalı, – 2026. №1. – p. 108–116.
9. Mammadov, V. Political Stability and Civil Society in Democratic Governance: An Institutional Mediation Model // International Journal of Social Science and Human Research, – 2026. Vol. 9(3). – p. 1736–1741.
10. Mammadov, V. Citizen-oriented Digital Platforms and the Credibility of Public Sector Performance Assessment // Riga: Baltic Journal of Legal and Social Sciences, – 2026. №1. – p. 62–69.
11. Mammadov, V. Collaborative Governance: State–Civil Society Relations and Formation of State Policy // Bakı: “Gənc Tədqiqatçı” Elmi-praktiki jurnalı, – 2026. №1. – p. 52–62.
12. Mammadov, V. Effectiveness of Public Services from a Multidimensional Governance Perspective // Bakı: “Sosial Elmlər” jurnalı, – 2026. №1. – p. 327–335.

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