

## Abstract

This study explores the life histories and everyday practices of queers in Azerbaijan at the intersection of gender, sexuality and class. It investigates queers and queer communities, predominantly working- and middle-class activists, primarily in relation to authoritarianism, state violence, political homophobia, nationalism, and the military service. As much as queer lives are shaped and controlled by the state and its institutions, queers also co-exist and develop practices of resistance under the hostile regime in Azerbaijan. This dissertation therefore uses a queer lens to analyse the conflicts between the authoritarian Azerbaijani state's violent efforts to regulate and delegitimise queer lives, and how queers navigate and challenge these efforts in a post-Soviet oil-rich authoritarian regime. It unpacks how the authoritarian state and its institutions produce political homophobia by silencing queers and refusing to protect them on legal, political, social, and economic grounds, while the police remain unwilling to register cases of physical assaults against queers. It further explores how queers are constructed as 'mentally ill' and consequently, are excluded from military service, how they are forced to support the state's war on Nagorno-Karabakh and are subject to the state's controls and constraints on civil society and queer initiatives especially, and how they respond to state violence in Azerbaijan. In response to these state practices, different forms of queer practices of resistance have emerged, examples of which include queers concealing their identity in the military, forcing the police to register physical queerphobic attacks, integrating themselves into nationalist narratives as a way of seeking acceptance and protection through a queer *şəhid* (martyr) image, and doing queer activism by organising workshops, events, and community meetings.