This research paper examines the assistance of US government to Azerbaijani government on democracy between 1991-2009. First, definitions of democracy will be discussed. Second, democracy is demonstrated in all possible ways and it does not reflect one position on an issue, but rather each expression reflects a particular understanding and meaning of democracy. The democracy is studied according to the following categories: pro-democracy, neutral and anti-democracy or critical of the US democracy. Third, the assistance of the US to promote democracy in Azerbaijan. Particularly, my interest lies in US government aid to the Azerbaijani state. Moreover, I use a comparative analysis of Azerbaijani elites, culture and strategic environment and their implication to sustain democracy in Azerbaijan. My aim is to analyze how the country is reacting to US promotion of democracy in particular. I am interested in how US interpret democracy in Azerbaijan? I am looking to see what messages are being used for the Azerbaijani audience by Azerbaijani government on reacting to US democracy promotion.

I employed both quantitative and qualitative data in my thesis as research material. My purpose is to discuss the theoretical concepts of the thesis (democracy, political elites and political culture) and fill the gap by combining the theory with the political context of Azerbaijan. I aim to design a new theory to fit the political realities of the Caucasian Azerbaijan and demonstrate how the Azerbaijani elites and political culture contribute from the US governmental assistance on democracy in Azerbaijan. Thus, the empirical part explains the case of Azerbaijan within a new build theory-comfortable democracy that examines strategic environment of Azerbaijan and its democratization process and geopolitical significance. The theory of comfortable democracy discusses some strengths and weaknesses of political elites and political culture and geostrategic environment in terms of democratisation. Most importantly it explains the result of US assistance on democracy in Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan is a gray-zone country with a different semi-authoritarian sub-model. The theory of comfortable democracy better explains the US assistance on democracy of Azerbaijan. The results of the quantitative analysis shows that the effect of USAID democracy assistance has not played an essential role in promoting democracy in Azerbaijan in the period 1992–2009. However, the qualitative research demonstrates a positive impact of foreign assistance on democracy compared to the quantitative research of this thesis. In particular, both the US administrations and Azerbaijani government claim that Azerbaijan achieved a certain level of democracy and that there are positive democratic results.

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Azerbaijan
democratisation
comfortable democracy
political elites
political culture
US democracy promotion
strategic environment