

## THE ARTSAKH PROBLEM AND THE IDEOLOGY OF PAN-TURKISM

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The Artsakh problem is a crucial issue not only for the Armenian people and Armenian statehood, but it also has been on agenda of global geopolitics since long ago, especially in the context of the strategically important location of Transcaucasia where the interests of global and regional actors intertwine and clash.

### *The History of Emergence of Pan-Turkism Ideology and its Main Goals*

The main idea of Pan-Turkism is unification of all Turkic peoples or Turkic world in a single state, under the leadership of Turkey. It found fertile ground among the Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire. The ruling elites and intelligence services of Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria and other European powers have encouraged the ideas of Pan-Turkism out of their own interests<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details about emergence of Pan-Turkism, its founders and major representative see e.g. Demirağ Yelda, "Pan-Ideologies in the Ottoman Empire Against the West: From Pan-Ottomanism to Pan-Turkism", *The Turkish Yearbook*, Vol. XXXVI, 2005, p.150; Мартиросян А., *Заговор маршалов. Британская разведка против СССР*, Москва, Вече, 2003, с.31; Nadir Devlet, *İsmail Bey (Gaspıralı)*, Ankara, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1988; Hakan Kırımlı, "İsmail Bey Gaspıralı, Türklük ve İslam", *Doğu-Batı*, N31, April 2005, pp. 147-176; Мухамметдинов, *Зарождение и эволюция тюркизма*, Казань, 1995.

Fig. 1

*The Ottoman Empire at its apogee in 17<sup>th</sup> Century*



Their main objective was to redirect the potential Turkish expansion from Europe to the Russian Empire that ruled most of the Turkic peoples outside the Ottoman Empire. The logic of the Pan-Turkism's formation was very simple. This policy allowed achieving two important objectives simultaneously. This policy allowed achieving two important objectives simultaneously. First, Turkey that sought revenge against European powers for the loss of its possessions in Europe, would no longer consider return of these territories as a primary goal, and thus would no longer be a threat to the European countries. Second, Turkey would cast an interested look on Russian territories and a clash of these two empires would weaken both, whereas the great European powers would stand to gain, having the chance to bring immense territories under their influence.

Fig. 2

*The Ottoman Empire before the World War I*



The idea of creating a pan-Turanian empire was put forward by Arminius Vambery, a Hungarian professor (1832-1913). His first name brings an ironic connotation, given that the Armenian people paid the highest price for the ideology of Pan-Turkism. This man was Turkish sultan's adviser in 1857-1863 and it was in this period that he introduced the idea of pan-Turanian superpower to the sultan. Vambery also worked for Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary who later became Prime Minister. The Hungarian professor's idea was quite nimbly utilized by the British. Vambery's main objective was to create an anti-Slavic movement in order to weaken Russia's positions and eventually lead this country away from the struggle for influence on Persia, Central Asia and the Indian direction.

*Fig. 3**The proposed Pan-Turkic Empire*

Wilfred Blunt, a British intelligence agent who is often called the founding father of Pan-Arabism, was another European who played a pioneering role for Pan-Turkism. This very person conceived the idea of Young Turks movement. The activities of Emmanuel Carasso, an Italian national, still remain under veil of secrecy. He founded the Young Turks Society in Thessalonica, the first and main office of the Young Turks Party in the Ottoman Empire. Another European, Vladimir Jabotinski was the editor of the “Young Turks” newspaper. Representa-

tives of Turkic peoples of the former Russian Empire contributed greatly to the development of the Pan-Turanism idea, including Russian Tatars Ahmed Agaev, Yusuf Akçura, Ali Hussein Zade, Ismail Gasprinski and others. The idea of Turkic peoples' unification was first heralded by "Terciman" ("Translator"), a newspaper featuring the slogan "Unity in thoughts, words and deeds," which was published by Ismail Gasprinski in Bakhchisaray, Crimea since 1883. However even these figures acquired their knowledge and inspiration with Pan-Turkism ideas in European educational institutions.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Turkic studies began to develop as one of the disciplines of the Oriental studies in such European countries as France, Germany, Great Britain and Denmark. In this context we should mention the book by Léon Cahun on Turkic race, the dictionary of Turkic languages by Radloff and other works.

In the Ottoman Empire such statesman as Suleiman Pasha, who used to be the Minister of Military Academies, was among the first ideologists of Turkism. He disseminated the ideas of Turkism and Pan-Turkism among the cadets of military schools, which was conditioned by the influential position of the army in the Turkish society. Suleiman Pasha was the first person in the Ottoman Empire to write the history of Turks in his book *History of the World* (1874). He also argued against using the term "Ottoman language," as he contended that Ottoman language is just a mix of Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages, and so he proposed using the epithet "Turkish language"<sup>1</sup>. The story of Pan-Turkism development in the Ottoman Empire would be incomplete without mentioning Mustafa Celaledin Pasha (1826-1876). His true name was Konstantin Borzecki and he descended from a Polish noble

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<sup>1</sup> Мухамметдинов, Зарождение и эволюция тюркизма, указ. соч., с.32.

family. At the age of 22 he took part in the Polish rebellion against the Russian Empire and after the uprising was quelled, he immigrated to Istanbul. He then enlisted in the Ottoman Army and converted to Islam, as well as assumed a new name. Celaleddin Pasha proposed the idea of “Touro-Aryanism”, claiming that the European and Turkic peoples compose a single race, and that the Western culture is a product of “Touro-Aryan” intellectual activities. He argued that part of the Turkic people who converted to Islam converged with the Semitic culture. He also proposed to connect the Christian peoples of Ottoman Empire with the Turkic element through cultural and linguistic bonds, or simply to assimilate them.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the ideology of Ottomanism also began to develop in the Ottoman Empire, the essence of which was a common supranational identity for all peoples of the empire regardless of their ethnicity and religion. The Ottoman identity was viewed as such. However, this ideology did not pay off and failed to halt the Christian peoples’ aspirations for independence. In this situation Islamism began to develop in the Ottoman Empire, championed by bloodthirsty sultan Abdul Hamid II. To some extent Islamism was of advantage to the European powers, as it divided the Ottoman society in two camps – Muslims and Christians. On the one hand, this allowed encouraging secessionist aspirations of Christian peoples in the Ottoman Empire, and on the other hand it helped direct the Ottomans against the Russian Empire.

In 1908 the Young Turks swept to power after a revolution. The national liberation war of Balkan Christian peoples and subsequent loss of most of the Ottoman Empire’s possessions in Balkans in 1912 put a decisive end to the idea of Ottomanism. At some point the Young Turks attempted to return to the idea of Islamism. This time it was thwarted

by the rebellion of Muslim peoples, in particular Arabs and Albanians. This gave a strong boost to the development of Pan-Turkism ideology in the Ottoman Empire.

Turkism was implanted in parallel with active propaganda of Pan-Turkism. It actually it was quite a difficult process. Suffice it to say, the word “Turk” was one of the most derogatory expressions in the Ottoman Empire<sup>1</sup>. Implementation of these plans first of all required establishment of a common “ethnic” border between Turkomen of the Ottoman Empire and those of Transcaucasia and Iran. This was a key precondition for successful accomplishment of Pan-Turkist plans. The main obstacle on this route was the Armenian people, whose native mono-ethnic area divided the Turkic peoples of the Ottoman Empire from their brethren in Iran and Transcaucasia, through which an access to Central Asian Turkomen could be gained.

One of the first attempts to materialize Pan-Turkist ideas was made in Xinjiang, China, in late 1860 – early 1870s. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a series of large-scale uprisings swept through Xinjiang, which culminated in establishment and existence of a theocratic Islamic state of Yettishar (“country of seven cities”) in 1865–1878 with capital in Kashgar city. The emissaries of the Ottoman Empire were the first ones to visit Kashgar. In 1869 Said Yakupkhan, the special envoy of Yettishar’s ruler Yaqub Beg, was personally received in audience by the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz, who formally recognized Yettishar and its ruler. Abdülaziz gave the envoy a gift for Yaqub Beg as a sign of Yettishar’s recognition and sent high-ranking officers to Kashgar to assist in establishing the armed forces of the new state. The symbols of the state

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<sup>1</sup> История человечества, под общей редакцией Г.Гельмольта, том V, Юго-Восточная и Восточная Европа, С-Петербург, типо-литография книгоиздательского товарищества «Просвещение», 1905, сс.117, 122.

were similar to those of Ottoman Empire, with its flag being just a copy of the Ottoman flag, which later became that of Turkey. In 1874 Yaqub Beg officially declared about a new political status: Turkish protectorate over Yettishar. Coins depicting Abdülaziz were minted in his honor in Kashgar<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, China managed to eliminate this state in 1878. The Heavenly Empire always attributed much importance to maintaining control over Xinjiang, assuming that its loss may threaten other regions of the country as well. It was in 19<sup>th</sup> century when Chinese strategists first pointed out that if Xinjiang is detached from China, then Mongolia may follow suit and the security of Gansu and Zhili (pre-1928 name of Hebei province – *D.B.*) provinces would become uncertain<sup>2</sup>.

It is absolutely obvious that Turks needed to exterminate the Armenian people for accomplishment of Pan-Turkist plans. The Armenian Genocide of 1915 was the first and to date the most outrageous manifestation of Pan-Turkism ideas in practice.

### ***The Russian Empire and Pan-Turkism***

It is also clear that the Russian Empire was the largest barrier for Pan-Turkists. It has to be noted that the Russian Empire did take a number of important steps to mitigate the threat of Pan-Turkism. Conspicuously, there were no large-scale ethnically-inspired uprisings of non-Christian peoples in the Russian Empire. The most mass-scale unrests of Caucasian highlanders were more of a religious movement, rather than an ethnic one.

Moreover, the Russian Empire saw itself as the one that subdued the Turkic khanates, as well as the inheritress of the subdued Turkic

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<sup>1</sup> See: *Хожамберди Кахарман*, Уйгуры. Этнополитическая история с древнейших времен до наших дней, Алматы, 2010, с.189.

<sup>2</sup> *Ходжаев А.*, Цинская империя, Джунгария и Восточный Туркестан, Москва, 1979, с.70.

countries. No wonder that the coat of arms of the Russian Empire incorporated symbols of Kazan (Fig. 5), Astrakhan (Fig. 6) and Siberian (Fig. 7) khanates as inescutcheons<sup>1</sup>.

Fig. 4

*The Great Coat of Arms of the Russian Empire*



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



One of the methods to confront the consolidation of national liberation movement was the corresponding administrative-territorial policy. The borders of the Russian Empire's governorates, especially at the national peripheries, did not match the ethnic areas of the peoples that inhabited them. They had mixed populations. Also, the national component was gradually removed from the names of the governorates. For

<sup>1</sup> See more details on the Russian Imperial heraldry in *Дворянские роды Российской империи*, СПб., 1993; [www.geraldika.ru](http://www.geraldika.ru); *П.П. фон Винклер, Гербы городов Российской империи*, СПб. 1900 (переиздано: Москва, 1991).



instance, after the Russian Empire annexed Transcaucasia, such units as the Armenian Oblast, Georgian-Imereti Governorate were created, but later these governorates were named after their administrative centers. Incidentally, there never existed an administrative formation under the name of “Azerbaijan” in Transcaucasia. There was a *Caspian Oblast*, but no “Azerbaijan”.

### *Pan-Turkism during the World War I*

The World War I and the October Revolution in Russia provided the most real opportunity to implement the ideology of Pan-Turkism in practice. The prospect of unifying the Turkic peoples of Transcaucasia, Caucasus, Iran and Central Asia through conquest of these territories by the Turkish army came into sight at this very time<sup>1</sup>. For instance, Ahmed Kemal, a high ranking representative of the Committee of Union and Progress party, was sent to Artux city of Kashgaria in 1914 to organize studies of pan-Turkic “legacy” in secular schools. Together with the local clergy and intelligentsia he opened a school and taught Pan-Turkism concepts there. Soon after, hundreds of volunteers arrived in Xinjiang to spread the ideas of pan-Turkic unity, and by the 1920s the extensive activities of the emissaries led to creation of a network of schools, training courses and groups<sup>2</sup>. These institutions studied the common history of Turkic peoples, preached ideas of their cultural, linguistic and religious unity, and advocated the need for a common struggle for liberation and establishment of a federal Turkic state which would also include the territories and population of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, the whole Xinjiang and Western Mongolia.

<sup>1</sup> See for example: *Pomiankowsky I.*, *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches*, (The Total Collapse of the Ottoman Empire), Wien, 1928, pp.29-30; *Hostler Ch.*, *Turkism and the Soviets*, London, 1957, pp.146-148.

<sup>2</sup> *Хожамберди Кахарман*, *Уйгуры. Этнополитическая история с древнейших времен до наших дней*, указ. соч., с.340.

Yet the Caucasus was the primary target for Pan-Turkist plans. A country named “Azerbaijan”, that had no relation whatsoever to the Iranian Azerbaijan – historical Atrpatakan – was created in Eastern Transcaucasia exactly in this context. There was one objective: if there were Caucasian and Iranian “Azerbaijans”, then they should have been united and Turkey intended to annex this “unified” formation, reach Central Asia and thus establish a united Pan-Turkic state. Naturally, Turkey’s plans and actions caused negative feelings in the neighboring countries, particularly in Iran. In his report to the German Reichskanzler, the head of the German Delegation in the Caucasus wrote the following: “In Persia, the fact that Turkey has selected the name “Azerbaijan” for the most eastern of the three Transcaucasian republics in order to be able to construct a claim to the Persian Azerbaijan has caused very strong ill-feelings in Persia. Agitation in Persia is even greater, because the Persians are by no means friends of the Tartars<sup>1</sup> (*that is how Turkic population of “Azerbaijan” was called prior to the second half of 1930s – D.B.*)”.

In addition to establishment of a Pan-Turkic power, creation of “Azerbaijan” in Transcaucasia aimed at incorporating Iran in it. The point is that for quite a long period the historical Atrpatakan had been the spiritual and political center of Iran Azerbaijan. Since the Sassanid times Atrpatakan was a Zoroastrian center. One of the most important Zoroastrian fire temples, Adur Gushnasp (Takht-i Soleymān archaeological site), was located in Atropatene<sup>2</sup>. It was considered to be one of the three main Zoroastrian temples; actually the greatest of all, as it belonged to the royal family and the warriors’ caste, whereas the other two, Adur Farnbag in

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<sup>1</sup> Central register: 1918-A-48749, Embassy/consular serial number: J. Nr. D. 1629.

<sup>2</sup> P. Фрай, Наследие Ирана, М., 1972, с. 197, 253.

Fars and Adur Burzen-Mihr in Khorasan belonged to the caste of priests and caste of commoners, respectively. Also, Iranian Azerbaijan had been the center of some states established in Iran and Western Asia by nomadic Mongol and Turkic tribes, including the states of Hulaguids, Chobanids, Kara Koyunlu, Ak Koyunlu and Safavids.

The latter state became the core of Iranian statehood revival in the Safavid era. Understandably, control over the historic Azerbaijan would increase the potential of controlling the whole Iran by an order of magnitude, not only in political, but also in historic-psychological terms. In this case Pan-Turkists would have gained an opportunity to “legitimize” their claims over the entire Iran, portraying the history of all mentioned states as a continuous Turkic “legacy”, whereas in fact, ethnicity played no role in these states and they feuded with each other, as well as with Ottomans. This was the exact reason why dictated by Ottomans the new formation in eastern Transcaucasia took the name “Azerbaijan”, and not e.g. something like Caucasian or Trans-Caspian Turkestan or Tatarstan. In the latter case encroachments on Iran would have been a lot more difficult. Besides, for many centuries the territory of Iran was a bridge (connecting Turkomen invaded into Asia Minor (Anatolia) and Caucasus with Central Asia), which was feeding the territories conquered by Turks with new waves of immigrants from Central Asia that has become the historic homeland for Turkic peoples.

In September 1918, the Turkish troops captured Baku. It seemed that the goal is attained. However, the defeat in the World War I ruined their plans. Nonetheless, the first phase – Turkism – was successfully implemented in practice and a separate “Turkish nation” emerged in Turkey. Still the idea of Pan-Turkism was given up neither in Turkey, nor outside. Given that Turkism triumphed in Turkey, a new and rather

intensive phase of development for the Turkic peoples began in the Soviet state, where the religious component was completely excluded from the national identity establishment process. For the external forces Pan-Turkism became a quite suitable leverage against communism and the Soviet regime. Having been defeated in the WWI and having sustained extensive territorial losses, Turkey viewed Pan-Turkism as an opportunity to revive its erstwhile grandeur.

In order to exploit this opportunity Turkey needed an “ethnic” border with Turkic peoples of Transcaucasia and Iran. In this context the Armenian question was a major obstacle, as the great powers of the time were not interested in detaching the historically Armenian lands from Turkey. For this very reason the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres and the US President’s arbitrating decision that conferred large portions of Van, Bitlis, Erzurum and Trebizond vilayets remained on paper. The great European powers (France, Great Britain and Italy) not only failed to effectuate those, but even opposed to Armenia’s admission to the League of Nations, stating that had Armenia been admitted to the League, they could have not guaranteed the borders as required by the famous Article X of the Covenant. As a result of this policy the Soviets and Kemalists simply crushed Armenia in a joint effort and divided it between themselves. As for the fate of the Western Armenians, at the Conference of London in 1921 the Allies still talked about establishing a “national home” at the eastern border of Turkey, but at the Paris Conference in 1922 the location of such home at the eastern border was already absent, and at Lausanne Conference the great powers dropped the idea of Armenian home altogether. Hence, the larger portion of the Armenian Highland, a strategically important area in Western Asia, ended up in the hands of Turks whom the Allies intended to use against the

Bolsheviks. Thus, Pan-Turkism was perceived as one of the political and ideological forefronts of struggle against Bolshevism.

### *The Soviet Union and the Ideology of Pan-Turkism*

The Bolsheviks did not let the grass grow under their feet either. If the Turks planned to use the newly created Azerbaijan for attaining Pan-Turkist goals, the Bolsheviks saw Azerbaijan as a good opportunity to disseminate Bolshevism in Iran and the whole Middle East. It has to be noted that Bolsheviks did not arrive at this conclusion immediately, and this was reflected on the approaches of the Azerbaijan's Bolsheviks. For instance, foreseeing the imminent Sovietization and trying to determine the political future of this newly created state, they decided to join the Soviet Russia in the form of Baku and Elisabethpol Governorates, as it used to be in the times of the Russian Empire. Meanwhile, the Armenian and Georgian communists chose to form Soviet states of Armenia and Georgia. The Centre initially did not have any objections to such scenario. Incidentally, this showed how artificial Azerbaijan was as a state and that the name had not struck root during the 1.5 years of the state's existence. A major role in creating Soviet Azerbaijan was played by Anastas Mikoyan, who convinced Ordzhonikidze and Stalin that specifically this approach was appropriate, and through them eventually persuaded Lenin, too<sup>1</sup>.

After the Sovietization and establishment of Azerbaijani SSR, this republic was turned into an outpost for spreading Bolshevism in the

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<sup>1</sup> See for details e.g.: ПААФ ИМЛ, ф.1, оп.48, ед.хр.265а, л.5; ПААФ ИМЛ, коп.фонд. д. 164, л.248; Микоян А., «Бакинское подполье при английской оккупации (1919 год)», журнал «Юность», N10, 1968, с.87; Киров С., Статьи, речи, документы, т.1, Москва, 1936, с.144; Орджоникидзе З., Путь большевика, Москва, 1967, с.267; Гулиев Дж., Борьба коммунистической партии за осуществление ленинской национальной политики в Азербайджане, Азербайджанское государственное издательство, Баку, 1970, сс.278-290; Борьба за победу Советской власти в Азербайджане 1918-1920 гг., Документы и материалы, Баку, 1967, с.138.

Middle East<sup>1</sup>. Virtually all Bolshevik leaders talked about this. Baku was chosen as the venue for the Congress of the Peoples of the East, representatives of various subjugated countries and peoples of the East were trained there, etc.

Against this backdrop a key foreign policy role was reserved for Azerbaijan and this formation was supposed to become an exemplary model of a Muslim socialist state for the colonial countries. In addition, by the time of the creation of the USSR, Azerbaijan was the only Muslim Soviet republic and because of this Moscow satisfied virtually all its demands, especially in terms of territorial claims. A number of historically Armenian lands (Artsakh (Karabakh), Nakhijevan, Utik), some Georgian lands and part of Dagestan (Quba uyezd, Zaqatala district, etc.) were given away to Azerbaijan.

However, initially the Soviet authorities conducted a very interesting policy. For example, the ethnic diversity and national self-consciousness were supported in Azerbaijan in every possible way<sup>2</sup>. For one thing, every ethnic group was entitled to using own language in paperwork at the local and republican state institutions. Moreover, two Armenian autonomous state entities were established in Azerbaijan: Nakhichevan ASSR and Nagorno-Karabakh AO. Of course, presently the Azerbaijani authorities and historians attempt to deny the Armenian origins of Nakhichevan (Nakhijevan) ASSR, but its state symbols, particularly the coat of arms and flag, bear evidence that this was an Armenian entity.

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<sup>1</sup> Ленин В., Полное собрание сочинений, т.51, Издательство политической литературы, Москва, 1970, с.227; *Первый съезд народов Востока. Стенографические отчеты*, Петроград, 1920, с.8; ПААФ ИМЛ, ф.7, оп.1, ед.хр.5, л.3.

<sup>2</sup> See: Собрание узаконений и распоряжений рабоче-крестьянского правительства Азербайджанской ССР, Баку, N1, 1920, с.5; Собрание узаконений и распоряжений рабоче-крестьянского правительства Азербайджанской ССР, Баку, N2, 1921, сс.24-25; Резолюции 2-го съезда АКП(б), Баку, 1920, с.6; Орджоникидзе Г., Статьи и речи, Москва, 1956, т.1, с.296; ЦГАОР СССР, ф.1318, оп.1, д.657, л.29-30; ПААФ ИМЛ, ф.14, оп.1, ед.хр.8, л.65; ЦГАОР Азерб.ССР, ф.57, оп.1, д.44, л.3.

As it is known, the coats of arms and flags of the former USSR's autonomous republics were identical to those of the Union-level republics that they were incorporated in. The only difference was that in addition to inscriptions in the Union-level republic's language, there were also writings in the language of the main ethnic group of the given autonomous republic.

Article 112 of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic Constitution adopted on September 18, 1937 by the 10<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Congress of the Nakhichevan ASSR Soviets contained the following description of this autonomous entity's flag: "The state flag of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic is that of the Azerbaijani SSR, comprised of red field with gold hammer and sickle on the upper hoist left canton and inscription in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages "AzSSR", with an additional smaller writing "Nakhichevan ASSR" in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages underneath the "AzSSR"<sup>1</sup>.

Fig. 8

*The flag of Nakhichevan ASSR  
before 1937*



Fig. 9

*The coat of arms of Nakhichevan ASSR  
before 1938*



<sup>1</sup> See: «Нахичевань», Russian Centre of Vexillology and Heraldry, <http://www.vexillographia.ru/azerbaj/nahic.htm>.

Similarly, Article 111 of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic Constitution adopted on September 18, 1937 by the 10<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Congress of the Nakhichevan ASSR Soviets (approved on April 7, 1941 by the VI Session of the Azerbaijan SSR Supreme Soviet) contained the following description:

“The coat of arms of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic is that of the Azerbaijani SSR, featuring the hammer and sickle and a drilling rig on a background of sunrise, rimmed with cotton and wheat, with inscriptions in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages ‘Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic’, ‘Workers of the world, unite!’ and ‘Nakhichevan ASSR.’ A five-pointed star sits at the top of the emblem”<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time during the first years the Soviet government supported the Pan-Turkic unity of the Turkic peoples living in the USSR. For example, this unity was manifested in the cultural and linguistic aspect, again vividly displayed on the state symbols of the Soviet Union. According to the Article 11 of the 1924 Constitution of the USSR, the State Emblem of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was composed of a sickle and a hammer on a globe depicted in the rays of the sun and rimmed with ears of wheat, with the inscription “Proletariat of the world, unite!” in six languages (mentioned in the Article 34). There was a five-pointed star atop the Emblem. The six languages used for the motto were Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Georgian, Armenian, and Turko-Tatar (in Arabic script). After creation of Tajik SSR a seventh ribbon was added with inscription in Tajik language, the writing system of which was changed to Latin alphabet by that time. This was not the only modification. The March 17, 1931 Resolution of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: «Нахичеванская автономная республика», <http://www.heraldicum.ru/azerbaij/index.htm>; *Поцелуев В.*, Гербы Союза ССР: Из истории разработки, Издательство политической литературы, Москва, 1987.



Soviets of the USSR on the Report Regarding Constitutional Issues introduced very interesting amendments in the USSR Constitution, as follows: “In Article 70 of the Constitution of the USSR replace the words “inscribed in six languages” by “inscribed in languages commonly used in the Union-level republics.” The same resolution changed the list of the languages commonly used in the Union-level republics, which was given in Article 34 of the USSR Constitution (Fundamental Law). Now it included “Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik (Farsi)”. Azerbaijani, Uzbek and Turkmen languages were represented on a single ribbon with an inscription on Turkic (Turko-Tatar) language in Arabic script. The motto in Russian moved to the central portion of the ribbon<sup>1</sup>. Later on, the Arabic script of Turko-Tatar language was changed to Latin alphabet.

The emerging dilemma between the support and shattering of Turkic solidarity is clearly manifested here. First, new names of separate Turkic languages appeared: Azerbaijani, Uzbek and Turkmen. Yet in representing these peoples on the state emblem of the USSR they all remained part of the single Turko-Tatar mass.

So what was the reason for such policy of the Soviet state? The system of checks and balances in the context of the Pan-Turkism ideology is clearly exhibited in this case. As paradoxical as it may seem, the Soviet Union was a proponent of Pan-Turkist ideology from 1920s to early 1930s. However, the Soviet Pan-Turkism was different from the “classical” one by its ideological focus. It was a Communist Pan-Turkism of sorts. The majority of Turkic peoples and their “historical, ancestral home” “Turan” were part of the USSR. Moreover, through proliferation

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<sup>1</sup> For more details on the state emblem of the USSR, Union-level and Autonomous republics see e.g.: *Сборник законов СССР 1938-1967*, Москва, изд. «Известия», 1968; *Поцелуев В.*, Гербы Союза ССР: Из истории разработки, указ. соч.; *Болотина С.*, «Как создавался наш герб», *Наука и жизнь*, N11, 1983.

of the “World Revolution” the Soviet Union could in principle incorporate all Turkic peoples and thus materialize the Pan-Turkist dreams about creating a single state. Such state would not be Turkic alone, but would not be national either. This would allow Turkic peoples develop using not only their own resources, but also the resources and potential of other peoples. Eventually they could grow strong enough to secede from this country in future.

At the same time, the Soviet strategists apparently felt that it would not be possible to rapidly fulfill the main dreams and ideas of Bolshevism, such as nonviolent extirpation of nationalism, instilling the ideas of communism, etc., and they began introducing a system of checks and balances among which the most effective one appeared to be division of the Turkic masses in different ethnicities and administrative units. The further global geopolitical trends turned this scenario into the most suitable and in some sense the only possible alternative. In the global power struggle Pan-Turkism was again ascribed an important role as one of the effective instruments against the USSR.

Many countries promoted the idea of Pan-Turkism, primarily in the context of struggle against the USSR. For instance, in 1920s Japan was one of its main proponents. In this period Tokyo actively developed plans for establishing a “Turan Empire” under auspices of Japan, which would incorporate Xinjiang, Mongolia, Middle Asia and Kazakhstan. In addition to the Turan Society founded by the Japanese in 1918, a school was opened to prepare Uyghur national personnel, a special magazine was issued about Xinjiang, and an Ottoman Dynasty offspring Abdul Kerim then residing in Tokyo was groomed for the throne<sup>1</sup>. It was not for nothing that after the

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<sup>1</sup> *Петров В.*, Мятёжное сердце Азии. Синьцзян: краткая история народных движений и воспоминания, Москва, Крафт+, 2003, с. 345.

end of the World War I the Chinese authorities imposed a strict ban on import of religious literature to Xinjiang from abroad, which had been brought before from Tashkent, Kazan and Turkey<sup>1</sup>.

The first half of 1930s was marked by a new active phase in materialization of Pan-Turkist ideas. On November 12, 1933 the Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET) was proclaimed, also known as East Turkestan Islamic Republic. Kashgar became the capital of this formation. Turkey played an instrumental role in creation of this state. Leaders of this republic, Sabit Damulla and Muhammad Bughra used to covertly send their envoys to Turkey in early 1933, whereas a group of political, military and other experts traveled from Ankara to Kashgar. There were some politicians among them, such as Mustafa Kentli, Ali Bey and Harbiyaddin Mahmud. Some Uyghur scientists and researchers contend that the Turkish emissaries wielded serious influence on organization and naming of this state<sup>2</sup>. The leaders of Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkestan believed that the Kemalist government of Turkey would take steps in the international arena to protect the fledgling state from external aggression and at the same time anticipated substantial military and economic assistance from it. However, emergence of an independent state with Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism as underlying ideologies was obviously perceived in a negative light not only by China, but also the USSR. TIRET was eventually abolished owing mainly to the interference of the USSR.

This issue became even a higher priority when the Nazis swept to power in 1933, making it obvious that a new world war was imminent. The scenario of 1918, when Pan-Turkist plans had been fully underway,

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<sup>1</sup> See: Жизнь национальностей, N14, 1922, с. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Хожамберди Кахарман, Уйгуры. Этнополитическая история с древнейших времен до наших дней, указ. соч., с.342.

could possibly recur. It is a widely known fact that both Germany and Turkey really intended to employ Pan-Turkism again. For example, on November 24, 1941, officials of the German embassy in Turkey sent a message to Berlin regarding the efforts made by Azerbaijani Turks for liberation of Caucasus from the Soviet rule, and in this case Turkey would become the actual master of the region<sup>1</sup>. Some documents of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the activities of the Musavatist émigrés during the World War II are especially interesting. For instance, von Papen, German ambassador to Turkey, in a letter dated August 5, 1941 reported to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs that: “Considering the German successes in Russia, Turkish government circles were showing increasing interest in the fate of their kinsmen across the Turkish-Russian border, particularly the Azerbaijan Turks.” He then continued: “These circles recollect 1918 events: their wish is to annex the above area, especially the rich Baku oil fields”<sup>2</sup>.

Under these circumstances the USSR launched large-scale ethno-political projects at the Turkic “frontline.” New Turkic state entities popped up. The total number of Turkic Union-level republics increased to five: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. The Russian SFSR also incorporated Turkic autonomous entities: Tatarstan, Bashkiria, Chuvashia and Yakutia (the last two ones are Turkic Christians). To counter Pan-Turkism in Caucasus, the Soviet authorities “diluted” the Turkic masses in a number of administrative units, among which were Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia. Naturally, creation of the new administrative/territorial

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<sup>1</sup> «Руководитель азербайджанских тюрков об освобождении Кавказа», transl. from German, Copy, German Embassy in Ankara, document No.A6032, November 24, 1941, <http://9may.ru/unsecret/m10011709>.

<sup>2</sup> Документы министерства иностранных дел Германии. Выпуск II. Германская политика в Турции (1941-1943 гг.), Москва, Огиз, Политиздат, 1946, с.34.

units was not an end in itself. The peoples who acquired their Union-level and autonomous republics entered a qualitatively new stage of nation building: rethinking of history, new impetus to cultural development and other things ensued. Thus the Soviet Union shattered both the unity of Turkic masses and their Islamic solidarity, as previously unseen political, economic, ethno-cultural and other serious antagonisms often appeared among the various Muslim peoples that found themselves in one administrative/territorial unit. Such antagonisms still exist in all above-mentioned former Soviet Union and autonomous republics.

After establishment of the new Union-level republics, relevant changes were introduced in the state emblem of the country. In the Constitution of the USSR approved by the 8<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Congress of Soviets of the USSR on December 5, 1936, the number of ribbons on the coat of arms increased to 11 and it took the pattern commonly known thereafter.

### *The Role and Place of Azerbaijan in the Context of the Global Pan-Turkism Geopolitics*

#### *The Geopolitical “Imperatives” for Creation of “Azerbaijani People”*

The shifts in international situation occurring in 1930s and related changes in the USSR’s tactics and strategy with regards to Pan-Turkism somewhat peculiarly reflected on Azerbaijan. The Soviet Union utilized an exceptional approach in this case by developing and implementing a historically unprecedented project of creating a new people made of various ethno-national groups.

It has to be noted that the Soviet state has conducted similar experiments before, again on Turkic peoples. For instance, in Central Asia formation of the Uzbek nation was given a thrust, which encompassed

also Sarts<sup>1</sup>, a rather populous settled group that was a symbiosis of Turkic and Iranian ethnicities. In 1921 a conference of united Uyghur intelligentsia of Turkestan ASSR and Xinjiang was organized in Tashkent by the initiative of Abdulla Rozybakiyev, a statesman, public figure, educator and publicist, as well as with active participation of Sergey Malov, a Turkic studies expert. In this conference a decision was made on officially restoring the “Uyghur” self-designation as an ethnic-wide naming<sup>2</sup>. In 1923 an extraordinary session of the RCP(b) Central Committee Bureau for Central Asia adopted a special resolution on “Uyghur” ethnonym. It also has to be mentioned that till 1930s the national identities of Xinjiang Muslims were manifested in quite a peculiar manner. Academician Aziz Narynbekov, a renowned Central Asian philosopher, wrote about Xinjiang of that period: “The locals had a vague idea about belonging to a single nation. When asked about their ethnicity many of them would answer: Kashgarian, Hotani, Yarkandi, Kuqarian, etc., i.e. they would name the place they were from”<sup>3</sup>. In this situation Pan-Turkists were very active to avail themselves of such opportunity and turn the location-based system of identities into a supranational system of Pan-Turkism. One of the already mentioned Pan-Turkist leaders, Muhammad Bughra used to say: “Our motherland is Turkestan, our ethnicity is Turkic, and our religion is Islam.”<sup>4</sup>

However, Azerbaijan’s case was a lot more complicated. The main reason for this was the ethnic specificity of this state unit. Azerbaijan was

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<sup>1</sup> For more details on Sarts and their merger with Uzbeks see for example: *Бартольд В.*, «О преподавании туземных наречий», газета «Окраина», N19, 1894; *Бартольд В.*, Сочинения. том. II, часть 2, Москва, 1964, сс.303-305; *Bregel Y.*, “The Sarts in the Khanate of Khiva”, *Journal of Asian History*, Vol.12, N2, 1978; *Ильхамов А.*, «Археология узбекской идентичности», *Этнический атлас Узбекистана*, Ташкент, 2002, сс.268-302.

<sup>2</sup> *Хожамберди Кахарман*, Уйгуры. Этнополитическая история с древнейших времен до наших дней, указ. соч., с.354.

<sup>3</sup> See: *Нарынбаев Азиз*, Избранные произведения, Бишкек, 2004, с.513.

<sup>4</sup> *Хожамберди Кахарман*, Уйгуры. Этнополитическая история с древнейших времен до наших дней, указ. соч., с.343.

the only republic of the Soviet Union the name of which did not derive from the name of an ethnic group. For example, *Armenia* is a derivative from *Armenians*, *Ukraine* – from *Ukrainians*, etc. Unlike the other Soviet republics, “Azerbaijan” was inhabited by ethnic groups of Turkic, Caucasian, Iranian origin, as well as by Armenians, Georgians, Russians and Jews. About 55 percent of population was Turkic-speaking peoples combined under a common name “Turks of the Soviet Azerbaijan.” Interestingly enough, in the census data of 1920s the Turkic population of Persia who lived in Azerbaijan is even mentioned as a separate ethnic group: Turkic population of Persia<sup>1</sup>.

The Soviet authorities acted quite decisively and quickly. In 1936 all Muslim peoples of Azerbaijan SSR were united in a single people called “Azerbaijani”<sup>2</sup>. The logic was rather simple. The new nation not only unified the Turkic and indigenous Caucasian and Iranian peoples, but also became the “successor” of the rich cultural, historical and socio-political heritage of the peoples who lived and continue to live in the region. Many ethnicities officially disappeared in Azerbaijan SSR, including the native Tats, newcomer Kurds, a number of other Iranian and Dagestan peoples. The number of Talyshis, Lezgins and people of some other ethnic groups drastically diminished.

The case of “Meskhetian Turks” is especially remarkable. As stated earlier, in 1920-1930 censuses they were mentioned as Turkic. Later Turkish schools were opened in the regions where they lived, and subsequently those became Azerbaijani Turkic schools<sup>3</sup>, and this ethnicity

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see: Большая советская энциклопедия, том 1, раздел «Азерб. ССР», Акционерное общество «Советская энциклопедия», Москва, 1926, с.641.

<sup>2</sup> See: Алекперов А., Исследования по археологии и этнографии Азербайджана, Издательство Академии наук Азербайджанской ССР, Баку, 1960, с.71.

<sup>3</sup> «Турки-месхетинцы», Энциклопедия Народы России, Москва, Научное издательство «Большая Российская Энциклопедия», 1994, сс.342-344.

was deemed part of the newly created “Azerbaijani” people<sup>1</sup>. However, the further events showed that it was impossible to incorporate this segment of the Turkic mass in the new “Azerbaijani” ethnicity and in 1944 they were deported having been charged with treason, i.e. due to concerns about Pan-Turkism. The new name and identity did not stick to the Turks from Meskheti and in exile they began to solidify as a new ethnic group “Meskhetians”, and in 1950-60s they started to officially refer to themselves as “Meskhetian Turks”<sup>2</sup>.

After the official establishment of the “Azerbaijani nation”, Moscow promoted their unity and supported instilling the new “Azerbaijani” identity in every possible way. The one-time tolerance to ethnic minorities disappeared and any disobedience was brutally punished.

***The Armenian Factor in the Process of Shaping  
the Azerbaijani People and in Restraining Pan-Turkism***

The Armenian factor had a special significance in “shaping” the new “Azerbaijani people”. Unlike other peoples compactly residing in Azerbaijan SSR, Armenians could not become part of the newly created Azerbaijani people. First, Armenians are Christians, and second, Armenian people have millenniums-long history of statehood. Unlike the Muslim peoples who at least had a common religion that although inwardly, but still played an important role, there was no way Armenians could be incorporated in a new ethnicity.

The Soviet state developed a twofold approach to the Armenian factor. In the context of shaping a new, Azerbaijani people, the Armenian factor was both a serious barrier and a leverage to effectively con-

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<sup>1</sup>“Meskhetians” in Minahan James, Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations, Vol.3, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London, 2002, p.1239.

<sup>2</sup>“Meskhetians” in Minahan James, Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations, Vol.3, указ.соч., с.1237, 1240.



trol the planned processes. The barrier was that there were two Armenian administrative/territorial units in Azerbaijan SSR: Nakhichevan ASSR and Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, both of which at that time had common borders with Armenian SSR<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, there was dense ethnic Armenian population in Northern Artsakh and other regions of Azerbaijan SSR and thus quite a delicate situation arose for this newly established nation. It turned out that virtually the whole western part of the republic was not a natural part of the ethno-cultural area of this “newly created ethnicity” that was supposed to gain “autochthony” on the whole territory of their republic. Considering that these territories have always been the organic part of the Armenian Motherland - ethnic, political and cultural space and played a crucial role in the history of the Armenian nation, a real risk of discontent of both the Armenian population forcibly incorporated in Azerbaijan SSR and the newly created “Azerbaijani population”.

Under these circumstances, out their own geopolitical considerations the Bolsheviks preferred the option to “legitimize” Azerbaijani autochthony, which resulted in a powerful blow to the Armenian people and statehood in Nakhichevan. The main course was the consistent destruction of Armenian statehood in Nakhichevan. By the end of 1938 or according to other information, late July of 1939, changes were introduced in state symbols (coat of arms and flag) of Nakhichevan ASSR. Inscriptions in Armenian language were removed leaving only those in Azerbaijani, and later inscriptions in Russian were added<sup>2</sup>. Naturally, relevant changes were also introduced in the Constitution of Nakhiche-

<sup>1</sup> See for example the maps in sections «Азерб. ССР» and «Арм. ССР» in *Большой советской энциклопедии* 1926 года издания, том 1 и том 3, указ. док.

<sup>2</sup> «Нахичевань», Russian Centre of Vexillology and Heraldry, <http://www.vexillographia.ru/azerbaij/nahic.htm>, указ. док; «Нахичеванская автономная республика», <http://www.heraldicum.ru/azerbaij/index.htm>, указ. док.

van ASSR. As it is known, subsequently a “white genocide” was carried out in Nakhijevan resulting in total depopulation of Armenians in the region. Even now, after not a single Armenian is left in Nakhichevan, the Azeri authorities continue the policy of genocide, this time against the Armenian cultural heritage, barbarically destroying churches, khachkars and other monuments.

The stance of Soviet authorities in Nakhijevan actually brings more questions than answers. For example, in 1930s Turkey actively took steps for having a common border with Nakhijevan. In 1932 and 1937 Turkey and Iran signed two treaties by which Turkey ceded a number of territories to Iran and instead gained a common border with Nakhijevan<sup>1</sup>. This political move clearly demonstrated Turkey’s intentions. Despite this the USSR carried out total and rapid Turkification of Nakhijevan instead of maintaining the bi-ethnic composition in order to support the leverage for directing Azerbaijan in the needed geopolitical course. It is difficult to explain this decision. This was not the best mechanism to appease Turkey, especially given that Turkey’s potential involvement in war hardly depended on that. A *casus belli* could have been found without that.

On the other hand Iran exchanged the territories based on a deep geopolitical analysis. Before the border change Turkey had no political and demographic boundary with the Turkic masses of Transcaucasia, and the only bridge demographically connecting Turkey with Turkic masses in Transcaucasia and Central Asia was Iran. This circumstance made Iran the main target of Pan-Turkism and was a reason for concerns for this country. Thus an effective solution was found in affording

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<sup>1</sup> See: International Boundary Study, Iran – Turkey Boundary, The Geographer Office of the Geographer Bureau of Intelligence and Research, US Department of State, N28, February 3, 1964, pp.6,7.

Turkey an access to Nakhijevan and hence opening an alternative path. This was a very attractive solution for Turkey, which was separated from Azerbaijan only by a narrow strip of Armenian territory. Even if this barrier would have not been effectively removed in the political terms given the international character of the Soviet state and its evident support to creation of Azerbaijani ethnicity, yet in the demographic dimension having a common border was quite realistic. A transformation to a political dimension could have been only a matter of time. In this perspective the words of Ataturk are pertinent, as he said in 1933 that the Soviet empire will collapse and fraternal Azerbaijan will become free<sup>1</sup>.

Artsakh (NK) resisted Azerbaijan's encroachments for seven decades. Azerbaijan used the most sophisticated methods of struggle against Artsakh Armenians, anything from economic and demographic pressure to hydro-terrorism<sup>2</sup>. During the whole period of Azerbaijan's rule over Karabakh 85 Armenian villages (about 30%) disappeared, but none of the Azeri ones did. Between the population censuses of 1970 and 1979 the Armenian population in NKAO increased by 1.7% (2,000 people), whereas the Azerbaijani population grew by 37% (10,000 people). Discriminatory policies particularly gained momentum after Heydar Aliyev was brought to power. Ramil Usubov, Azerbaijan's Minister of Internal Affairs, presented Aliyev's policies in Nagorno-Karabakh in the following manner: "It can be stated without any exaggeration that Azerbaijanis of Karabakh started to feel themselves masters of the region only after Heydar Aliyev's rise to power in Azerbaijan. A lot of work was

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: «Посольство Турции: Турция, сближаясь с Арменией, хочет ускорить развязку карабахского конфликта», [http://www.aze.az/news\\_posolstvo\\_turcii\\_turciya\\_27331.html](http://www.aze.az/news_posolstvo_turcii_turciya_27331.html), 6 ноября 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular: *Бабаян Д.*, Проблема воды в контексте урегулирования нагорно-карабахского конфликта, Степанакерт, «Дизак Плюс», 2007.

done in 1970s. This created favorable conditions for an inflow of Azerbaijani population to Nagorno-Karabakh from neighboring regions: Lachin, Agdam, Jebrail, Fizuli, Agjabedi, and others. All these measures taken thanks to the far-sighted policy of Azerbaijan's First Secretary of CP CC helped strengthen increase the inflow of Azerbaijanis"<sup>1</sup>. Aliyev himself characterized the strategic objectives that he pursued in Nagorno-Karabakh at the time of being the communist leader of Azerbaijan: "When I governed Azerbaijan... we paid much attention to Karabakh. Some amateurs used to blame me for that. I did that because firstly, it was necessary to populate Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijanis, and secondly, we could not let the Armenian raise the issue"<sup>2</sup>. It is well known what all of this ended up with.

The dissolution of the USSR gave a new thrust to Pan-Turkism. A new wave of Pan-Turkism swept through both Turkey and Azerbaijan. Immediately after the Belavezha Accords Turgut Ozal, Prime Minister of Turkey, issued the slogan "Great Turkestan from Mediterranean to Great Wall of China" (of course, under auspices of Ankara). It was supported by other Turkish politicians such as S. Demirel, B. Ecevit, N. Erbakan, etc. They all agreed on the idea of creating "Great Turan", or "Turanian Belt", i.e. a geopolitical alliance of Turkic peoples under patronage of Turkey<sup>3</sup>. Suleyman Demirel, then president of Turkey, addressed the Azerbaijani people during the grand opening of Baku airport in October 1999 with the following words: "Your sorrow is our sorrow. If you get pricked by a needle, we would feel a prick of awl"<sup>4</sup>. During his official visit to

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<sup>1</sup> *Усубов Рамиль*, «Нагорный Карабах, миссия спасения начиналась в 70-е годы», «Панорама», 12 мая 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Azerbaijan's Milli Mejlis session on Nagorno-Karabakh regulation, First Channel of the Azerbaijani television AzTV1, February 23, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> *Ульченко Н.*, Турция – история и современность, Москва, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Istanbul Milliyet (Ankara Edition) in Turkish, October 19, 1999.

Moldova in 1994, he declared: “Turkey creates a strip of peace around it throughout Balkans, Black Sea, Caucasus and Middle East”<sup>1</sup>.

The Azerbaijani leaders did not lag behind their Turkish colleagues in this matter. After the Popular Front led by Abulfaz Elchibey came to power in 1992, the new elite adopted an openly pro-Turkish stance. Turkish was declared the state language, the Cyrillic script was changed to Latin alphabet, and the Turkish generals began building the Azerbaijani army. Heydar Aliyev’s second rise to power in 1993 hardly changed anything in the orientation of the political elite. Aliyev took the course of pro-Turkish self-determination for the Azerbaijani people. The slogan “One nation, two states” became especially popular. In 1997 alone, the President of Azerbaijan Aliyev was awarded 19 high decorations of Turkey<sup>2</sup>. As his predecessor, Aliyev relied primarily on Turkish generals in creating the Azerbaijani army. For instance, Turkish brigadier general Yasar Demirbulak, who used to be Elchibey’s adviser, was asked by Aliyev to build the Azerbaijani army. Demirbulak also became a member of Azerbaijan’s Security Council<sup>3</sup>. Ilham Aliyev too chose Pan-Turkism as the main foreign policy doctrine for Azerbaijan. Many of his speeches and expressions come to prove this. In his speech at the ceremony to unveil the monument to the founder of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Ilham Aliyev said: “It has so happened that at certain stages in history we were separated from each other. However, although Azerbaijan has been independent for only about 20 years, our hearts and souls were always together in previous years as well. Our relations of friendship and brotherhood are not be undermined by any political structure or initiatives. It is not by chance that fraternal Turkey was the first country

<sup>1</sup> Московские новости, N23, 5-12 июня 1994 года.

<sup>2</sup> See: «Бакинский Рабочий», 8 сентября 1998, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Sapmaz Ifran, “Aliyev is Having a Turkish General Establish an Army,” Hurriet, October 13, 1993, p.13.

to recognize Azerbaijan's state independence. Since then we have been together at all times and worked together in all directions... We must do our best to continue to be together in the future, too. This is what the great leaders of the Turkic world wanted us to do"<sup>1</sup>.

However, admittedly the idea of Pan-Turkism did not gain the expected support among most of the Turkic-speaking peoples of ex-USSR, especially those in Central Asia. These countries do not like the role of younger brothers assigned to them by Ankara. Although in recent years Ankara somewhat changed the rhetoric and began presenting itself as an equal, rather than senior among the Turkic nations, no considerable results have been observed. This is a clear indication that the given idea can materialize only in case of an external support. As of today Turkey is able to do it alone neither economically, nor ideologically, nor militarily. Moreover, Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia are independent and have rich natural resources, so they often challenge Turkey's primacy in the Turkic world and even compete with it. Such position was often demonstrated by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. For example, one of the streets in Tashkent, Uzbekistan was renamed after Ataturk. Now this street is called Zarafshan, which according to the official explanation was brought in line with the name of a nearby complex<sup>2</sup>. Apparently this was a purely political move that fits well in the above mentioned concept.

Pan-Turkism is more popular among Turkic peoples that strive for independence, as well as in Azerbaijan. In case of Azerbaijan this is related to a number of factors, the most important one of which is that the

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<sup>1</sup> «Речь Президента Ильхама Алиева на церемонии открытия памятника основателю Турецкой Республики Мустафе Кемалю Ататюрку», <http://ru.president.az/articles/55/print>, 17 мая 2010.

<sup>2</sup> «В столице Узбекистана переименовали улицу Ататюрка», <http://www.regnum.ru/news/fd-abroad/1406283.html>, 19 мая 2011.

process of the new Azerbaijani nation building has not completed yet. Despite assimilation of entire peoples, there are still ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan who reside compactly and preserve their national identities. These include Caucasian-speaking Lezgins and Avars in the north of Azerbaijan, near the border with Dagestan, as well as Iranian-speaking Talyshis in southern part of Azerbaijan near the Iranian border. These ethnicities occupy about 22 percent of the total territory of Azerbaijan, and their number amounts to one-quarter of the country's population.

Azerbaijan is constantly under threat of self-determination of these peoples, which may potentially lead to disintegration of the state. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Talyshis twice proclaimed independence, in 1919 and 1993. In September 1991 Lezgins announced about establishment of united Lezgianstan. However, these attempts were not successful. Talyshis were able to preserve their state only for a few months, and the Lezgins' decision remained on paper. Nevertheless, these facts are not enough to comprehend the true ethno-political situation in Azerbaijan. The ethnic minorities continue the struggle for recognition of their rights. For example, Talyshis periodically appeal to various countries and the international community as a whole, inviting the attention of reputable organizations to the constant pressure from Azerbaijanis. In 2008 they appealed to the European countries<sup>1</sup>, and in 2009 – to the international community<sup>2</sup>. Other ethnic minorities have made such appeals, too. In 2008 Avars appealed to the President of Dagestan with a request to protect them from forcible Azerbaijanization carried out by the authorities in Baku<sup>3</sup>. These are the reasons why racist statements about ethnic mi-

<sup>1</sup> «Европа, ты должна услышать наш правый голос!», <http://tolishpress.org/news/364.html>

<sup>2</sup> «Заявление Талышского национального движения, адресованное всем международным организациям, всем правозащитным организациям и правозащитникам мира», <http://tolishpress.org/news/671.html>, 15 апреля 2009.

<sup>3</sup> «Аварцы Азербайджана просят президента Дагестана защитить их от азербайджанизации», <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1223420.html>, 18 июня 2008.

norities can often be heard in Azerbaijan. In this regard it is worth citing the statements of Isfendiyar Vahabzadeh, which he made during his tenure as Azerbaijan's Permanent Representative at the United Nations Office in Geneva. He explained that the reason for various problems official Baku had to face in the international arena was that "non-genuine" Azerbaijanis have penetrated into the national diplomacy. In an official letter written in summer 2001 to Murtuz Aleskerov, Speaker of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan, Mr. Vahabzade stated that among the Azerbaijani diplomats there are many individuals who have foreign blood in their veins. Vahabzade believed it was unacceptable, because the diplomats whose mothers are Armenians, Jews, Russians, not to mention the smaller ethnicities, cannot decently and loyally serve Azerbaijan in foreign countries<sup>1</sup>. These are the words of Vahabzade, who is a representative of not only political elite, but in some sense also of intellectual elite, since he is the son of Bakhtiyar Vahabzade, People's Poet of Azerbaijan.

Incompleteness of the Azerbaijani ethnicity formation process is also reflected on the regulation of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijanis perceive Nagorno-Karabakh as a major threat to the very existence of their state. Azerbaijan cannot recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh because the other ethnic groups may follow the suit. Azerbaijan would not grant autonomy to Karabakh either, even though it is absolutely unacceptable for the Republic of Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia. Incidentally, the military and political balance established and maintained between Azerbaijan and Artsakh is in interests of the global actors. It is known that Transcaucasia is of great importance both for the West and Russia, as well as for Iran. This region is the only access

<sup>1</sup> See for example: Усейнов Ариф, «Чужая кровь», *Время МН*, Баку, 5 июня 2001 года; Аббасов Ш., «Отозван поспред Азербайджана в ООН Эльдар Гусейнов», интернет-газета «Эхо» от 5 июня 2001 года.



point for the West to Central Asia circumventing Russia and Iran. Transcaucasia also borders North Caucasus and northwestern part of Iran. These regions are ethno-politically vulnerable both for Russian Federation and Iran, and any serious instability there may result in unpredictable consequences. Considering the existence of a number of quite populous ethnic groups living in the region, as well as in North Caucasus and northwestern Iran, instability in Transcaucasia may easily proliferate to the neighboring countries. Therefore, maintaining stability in Transcaucasia is a critical imperative both for Russia and Iran. Support of the existing balance of powers in the region appears to be the most effective mechanism for maintaining actual stability, in the perspective of both the influence of great powers and interrelations of the regional states, including in the zone of Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict.

The military, political and territorial balance established since the May 1994 between Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the components in maintaining the geopolitical neutrality in eastern Caucasus between the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh Republic on one hand and Azerbaijan on the other hand. If this established configuration changes, a totally different situation may arise in Transcaucasia, leading to high degree of instability and unpredictability. Actually, a change of this configuration, i.e. simply return to the 1988 situation when Nagorno-Karabakh was an enclave surrounded by Azerbaijan, will virtually eliminate the significance of not only Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, but also the Republic of Armenia and thus the dominance in eastern Transcaucasia would pass to Azerbaijan, which is geopolitically too ambitious of a state. These ambitions are manifested particularly, in propaganda of Pan-Turkism, in turn reflected in claims on the northwestern Iran regions populated by Turkic-speaking ethnic

groups. The political elite of Azerbaijan frequently touches upon this topic. For instance, in September 2008 Gudrat Hasanguliyev, leader of the Whole Azerbaijan Popular Front Party and presidential candidate, proposed in his electoral program to change the name of the country from “Azerbaijan” to “North Azerbaijan.” In his words, changing the name would mean that North implies existence of also South<sup>1</sup>.

Clearly, if the balance in the zone of Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict breaks down, then Azerbaijan will dangerously veer in one geopolitical direction or another, which may bring instability inside the state, particularly among the already mentioned Lezgins, Avars and Talyshis. The first two are major ethnic groups in Dagestan, i.e. any serious problems with Lezgins and Avars in Azerbaijan may agitate their fellow people in Dagestan, which is fraught with Russia’s direct involvement in these processes. The same applies to Talyshis. About 2.5-3 million Talyshis live in Iran, and they are not indifferent to the fate of their fellow people living in Azerbaijan who are under a constant pressure of Baku. Evidently, the Talyshi factor may lead to a direct involvement of Iran. Immediate involvement of such powers as Russia and Iran would bring about a totally different situation with unpredictable effects. Considering this, support of the existing military and political balance in the zone of Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict is the most effective guarantee for maintaining the geopolitical balance and neutrality in eastern Transcaucasia.

The USA’s interests are almost the same. In this phase Washington needs stability in Caucasus, especially in the milieu of the Iranian vector’s growing importance in the American politics. As noted above, since the collapse of the Soviet Union the West always saw Transcaucasia as a

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<sup>1</sup> Сеңджаплы Тамилла, «Гудрат Гасангулиев: «Азербайджан должен изменить название», <http://www.day.az/news/politics/130533.html>, 15 сентября 2008.

pathway to Central Asia that circumvents Russia and Iran. However, this corridor is too vulnerable and cannot be the only reliable access way to the Central Asian region. Therefore, the West needs a more reliable route. Only Iran can serve this purpose, and if the USA could bring Iran in its sphere of influence, whether forcibly or otherwise, then Washington would drastically change the balance of powers in its favor not only in the region, but perhaps also in the world, and could hold the strategic initiative for decades ahead. Of course, a temptation like that is hard to resist. In such situation the USA is extremely interested in maintaining stability in Caucasus to secure the rearguard in the process of American-Iranian relations. Even if such initiative on Iran succeeds, the Turkish/Azerbaijani factor may drastically strengthen especially in northwestern regions of the Islamic Republic, and Washington would need an effective counterbalance to the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem.

One of the key intrinsic elements of this balance is the Armenian factor consisting of three components: the Republic of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Armenian Diaspora. However, if the 1988 situation recurs, the Armenian factor would be totally eliminated. The Republic of Armenia and Diaspora, let alone Artsakh, would be struck with a political and military shock that they would never be able to recover from. Naturally, such developments are not in the USA's interest regardless of the Iranian geopolitics, especially in the light of Turkey's inclination towards Islam and Turkism, as well as the related concerns about some of the key US allies, such as Israel. Apparently maintaining the current configuration in the zone of Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict is in the interests of the USA and their allies, as well.

### ***Conclusion***

Pan-Turkism is one of the most active ideologies in the global politics. This ideology was developed and implemented since the Ottoman Empire times, based on global geopolitical objectives, which continue to be of current interest, although in a somewhat modified forms. Despite the significant difference between the times of Pan-Turkism emergence/introduction and the current geopolitical situation, the strategic imperatives of Turkey have hardly changed. For Turkey this ideology remains to be a major vision to be accomplished in every possible manner. Pan-Turkism has found the most fertile ground in the Republic of Azerbaijan, a state that actually emerged as the offshoot of Pan-Turkism.

The Artsakh statehood is one of the key components of the Armenian statehood and the Armenian factor, simultaneously being one of the major barriers on the path of materialization of the Pan-Turkism ideology.

The Armenian factor, including in this context, is in the strategic interests of the global and a number of regional powers. The main function in supporting the Armenian factor in the current phase is maintaining the strategic balance between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. The geopolitical balance in whole Transcaucasia also depends on this, and given its importance in the global politics, the balance in world arena does as well. All of this creates additional opportunities for strengthening the Armenian statehood and its significance in the global politics.

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