



INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES OF THE CAUCASUS

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**The Central Caucasus:
The Clash of Civilizations in Retrospect**

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The Central Caucasus: The Clash of Civilizations in Retrospect
(Collection of articles)
By Oleg Kuznetsov

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The articles published in this book can be described as an attempt to analyze the logic of Russia's policies and actions in the Caucasus during the last third of the 18th-early 20th centuries. The author offers his own geopolitical assessment of the Treaty of Gulistan of 1813 and reveals the culturological dimension of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the context of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations theory.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	5
<i>Evolution of Russia’s Geopolitical Interests and Priorities in Transcaucasia</i>	9
<i>The Treaty of Gulistan: 200 Years After (the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 and the Treaty of Gulistan in the Context of Its 200th Anniversary)</i>	34
<i>The Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: Is It a “Clash of Civilizations”? How Samuel Huntington’s Theory Explains Its Culturological Dimension</i>	72

Foreword

The articles in this collection (published earlier in *The Caucasus & Globalization* journal in 2012-2013) do not offer a consistent or systemic analysis of the entire range of civilizational communications and antagonisms that form a greater part of the region's past. I deliberately limited myself to the Central Caucasus (Transcaucasia) as an arena or "chess-board" (by a twist of fate or geographic location) of the interaction and conflicts among very different civilizations to present my own subjective opinions of individual episodes of the region's history of cooperation and confrontation among civilizations, states, cultures, and religions unfolding on both sides of the Great Caucasian Range in the last third of the XVIII – the beginning of XX centuries.

The articles collected here give an idea of what individual events and aspects of local history "look like when seen from the North." I am fully aware that what I have seen when looking from the North may be misunderstood or even rejected by local historians. I do hope, however, that this contribution will add new dimensions to the range of views and opinions on many of the key issues relating to the history of the Central Caucasian countries. I also hope that my colleagues, who in their intellectual quest proceed from different civilizational values and moral dominants, will find it easier to

understand and assess the logic of history presented from different philosophical positions. Each of the three articles looks at the logic of the policies and actions of the Russian Empire and its heirs in the Caucasus based on intellectual values and dominants, the typology of which makes them part of contemporary Russia. I do hope that I have avoided monochromic assessments of any of the subjects, either historical or relating to political science, to ascend to the level of their civilizational analysis. When discussing each of the problems of the scientific quest in an effort to achieve clarification, I do not claim to have arrived at the ultimate truth, rather I am inviting experts on the Central Caucasus to enter into dialog on this subject. The history of mankind tolerates no “ifs” — it is what it is; there is no other history. This gives us a chance to understand why what happened did happen to avoid repeating negative scenarios in the future. This is the civilizational mission of historical science put in a nutshell.

The collection opens with an article titled “Evolution of Russia’s Geopolitical Interests and Priorities in Transcaucasia,” which appeared in Issue 1, 2012 of *The Caucasus & Globalization* journal. It is best described as an attempt to explain the logic of Russia’s expansion in the Caucasus during the last third of the 18th-early 20th century, misinterpreted by some Azeri, Armenian, Georgian and Russian historians. In the context of the global Russo-Ottoman confrontation (which throughout the 18th and 19th centuries constituted the gist of the foreign policy pursued by two key empires), the Caucasus was but a secondary theater of war set up to distract some of the enemy forces, first from the main theater in the Northern Black Sea littoral and, later, in the Balkans, or to keep some of them away from Southeastern Europe.

The article “The Treaty of Gulistan: 200 Years After (the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 and the Treaty of Gulistan in the Context of Its 200th Anniversary) (Issue 3-4, 2013) looks at the roots and sources of contemporary Azerbaijan statehood and the corresponding national-political identity of Azeri society. The Gulistan Treaty of 1813 was one of the key events in the history of the Azeri people; in the context of world history, however, it was a minor event. It merely made legal the intermediate results achieved in the Central Caucasus by the world’s leading powers in their struggle for geopolitical domination. Today, it has become possible to say objectively and authoritatively that the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 was a logical continuation of European geopolitics of the early 19th century, fueled by Britain’s colonial policies in India and its Central Asian neighbors. The territory of contemporary Azerbaijan was nothing more than a chess-board used by the key players for their geopolitical games in total disregard of what the local peoples wanted and how they were affected.

The third article “The Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: Is It a ‘Clash of Civilizations’? How Samuel Huntington’s Theory Explains Its Culturological Dimension” (Issue 1-2, 2013), which completes the collection, puts the social and psychological roots of the conflict between Armenians and Azeris over the occupied Azeri lands (Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts) into a historical and culturological civilizational context. I proceeded from the “clash of civilizations” model built in the 1990s by Samuel Ph. Huntington, an outstanding American expert on the management of national and confessional relations, that has become a new gospel of sorts among political scientists of post-modernity. According

to his theory, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict appears to be the hardest to resolve among all the other conflicts mankind has had to grapple with for the simple reason that “the fault line” passes through several planes at the same time — territorial, religious, national, culturological, and even racial. This makes its peaceful resolution less and less likely, especially since a large part of Azeri territory has been occupied for over twenty years now.

I do hope that these articles will provide answers to the questions about Russia’s past and present attitude toward the historical and political fate of the Central Caucasus. The 21st century suggests that our peoples should move closer, if not culturally, at least in their understanding of the world, to lay a cornerstone of our future cooperation.

I would like to thank the heads of the Institute of Strategic Studies of the Caucasus and the editors of *The Caucasus & Globalization*, a journal of social, political, and economic studies, for this opportunity to familiarize readers with my thoughts on the most burning issues of the past and present of the Central Caucasus.

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Evolution of Russia's Geopolitical Interests and Priorities in Transcaucasia

My discussion of the subject outlined above calls for several stipulations of fundamental importance.

First, here the term “Russia” is applied to all the states that existed at different periods in time in the territory of the Russian Federation and other territories which formed part of the Russian state prior to 1 February, 1918. In other words, the term is used as a political scientific, rather than a state legal concept to make it easier for European and North American readers to perceive the world, or Eurasian, center of power and geopolitical influence now called the Russian Federation (and its predecessors — the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire).

Despite the different or even mutually exclusive state ideologies of the three Russian states, their geopolitical interests, priorities, and ambitions have retained their strategic continuity. In this sense, the Russian Federation is an heir, in the true sense of the word, of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. And this comes as no surprise, since the logic of continued external stability in a state as large as Russia suggests that it should steer the same foreign policy course as its predecessors. However, if it decides to change it (or its geopoliti-

cal priorities for that matter), which may not even be possible today, then only in an evolutionary way, keeping in mind the strategic interests of its neighbors.

Second, I will use the term “Transcaucasia” here to describe the territories of the Central and Southern Caucasus (within the methodology suggested by Eldar Ismailov) which belonged to the Russian Empire, that is, the territories of the sovereign states of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, as well as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, partly recognized as independent states, the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, and Artvin and Kars, historical regions reunited with the Republic of Turkey as a result of its War of Independence of 1919-1923. This means that the term “Transcaucasia” is used here in the strictly political scientific rather than regional studies context and is synonymous with the terms “Central and Southern Caucasus” preferred by Azeri and Georgian political scientists.¹ I will continue using the term “Transcaucasia” in the political scientific context and the terms “Central Caucasus” and “Southern Caucasus” when dealing with issues that relate to regional studies.

Russia's Claims to Geopolitical Hegemony in “Slavic” Europe

Transcaucasia, which includes the Central and Southern Caucasus, is a graphic example of the potential of the changing vectors of Russia’s geopolitical interests in this part of the world and the stage-by-stage evolution of Russia’s foreign policy. In fact, today Russia is completing a rapid, with re-

¹ See: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *Tsentralny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 2007.

spect to the history of world civilization and diplomacy, and very slow, from the viewpoint of the man-in-the-street, rearrangement of its priorities in Transcaucasia. For objective reasons, this demanded and still demands that the Russian political establishment not only discard the centuries-old ideological stereotypes, but also replace them with fundamentally new political and ideological imperatives. They have not been made public and will probably remain unpublished for an indefinite period of time, because neither Russian society nor the international community is prepared to face them. For this reason I will limit myself to the suggestion, underpinned by facts and logic, that there has been a “shift in paradigm” in Russia’s foreign policy priorities in the Central and Southern Caucasus.

It was in the last quarter of the 18th century that Russia supplied its claims to the Caucasus, and Transcaucasia as its part, with ideological and military-political arguments. It was at that time that the so-called Greek Project elaborated by Chancellor Count Bezborodko on the instructions of Empress Catherine the Great moved to the fore in the Russian system of foreign policy aims.² It was presupposed that the large-scale project would be realized in the military-strategic and ideological dimensions. They predetermined the southern vector of Russia’s foreign policy for many decades or even centuries, in which the Southern Caucasus was expected to play an important, but not the main, role.

By 1783, Russia had finally moved into the Crimean Peninsula and the entire continental territory of the Crimean Khanate in the Northern Black Sea area. This not only

² See: V.S. Parsamov, *Istoria Rossii: XVIII-nachalo XX v.*, Academia, Moscow, 2007, p. 156.

ensured strategic security of its southern borders along the Black Sea coast and the Dniester as its natural limits, but let it move further in full accordance with the empress' ambitious plans. By that time, Catherine the Great had two grandsons — Alexander and Constantine — on whom she pinned great hopes. She planned to put Alexander on the Russian throne, bypassing the dynastic rights of her son Paul; Constantine, his name being deliberately chosen with the aim of putting the Russian Grand Prince on the Greek throne (at that time, Greece was still part of the Ottoman Empire), was the namesake of Constantine IX Palaeologus, the last Byzantine emperor whose daughter was married to Grand Prince of Muscovy Ivan III of the Rurik dynasty (later replaced by the Romanov dynasty). A young Greek woman Elena was the wet nurse of Grand Prince Constantine, who taught him fluent Greek. The Greek culture was deliberately popularized at the Russian royal court. In her correspondence with Voltaire, Catherine the Great discussed the possibility of reviving an interest in Greek culture in Europe and restoring the Greek state with its capital in Constantinople (Istanbul) by the force of arms and active involvement of Russia's land forces and navy.³ The military-strategic logic of the Greek project the Russian empress loved so much can be described as a "Slavic Orthodox" Reconquista on the Balkan Peninsula with the intention of detaching it from the Ottoman Empire and restoring Byzantium, or the Eastern Roman Empire, under Russia's control.

³ See: V.S.Mirzekhanov, "Ideologia i diplomatia Rossii v epokhu Ekateriny II: historiografia poslednikh desiatiletii," in: *Istoricheskie, kulturnye i ekonomicheskie svyazi mezhdurusskimi i Rossiei: materialy mezhdunadronogo simposiuma. Stambul, 5 aprelia 2012 g.*, Compiled by O.Yu.Kuznetsov, Turkish-Russian Cultural Center, Moscow, 2012, p. 34.

This ambitious military-political expansion to the South (in the political scientific sense of the term) required ideological underpinnings in the eyes not so much of European as of Russian society unwilling to live in a protracted or even escalated armed confrontation with the Ottoman Turks: the conquered Crimea and the lands of the former Crimean Khanate had made Russia's borders safe enough. Ideological justification took the shape of the "Moscow, the Third Rome" formula borrowed from the 16th century as a political-religious conception of state legal succession between the Byzantine and Russian empires (the centers of Christian and later Orthodox civilizations had been moved from Rome to Constantinople and then to Moscow). It was the Russian Orthodox Church that promoted the idea in all social groups; at that time it performed the social and political role that now belongs to the media. This meant that the geopolitical Greek Project contained a military-strategic and several cultural and political dimensions.

Restoration of Constantinople as an Orthodox, state, and spiritual center was seen as religious revenge: the "primordial" Orthodox capital should be retrieved from the "infidels" and restored to its previous religious-cultural and civilizational grandeur. Russia's southward movement into the "wild," from the European point of view, Black Sea area looked like a civilizational offensive against the "barbarians." Catherine the Great acted very much in line with the geopolitical designs of first Russian Emperor Peter the Great and competed with his glory in Russia's political history. While in the eyes of his enlightened contemporaries, Peter the Great was pushing "barbarian" Russia toward the civilized West, Catherine the Great marched in front of "civilized" Russia to the "bar-

barian” East and South under the banner of cultural progress.⁴ In fact, in the last quarter of the 18th century, Empress Catherine the Great initiated another (tenth or eleventh) European crusade against the Muslims of Hither Asia and the Middle East under Orthodox, rather than Catholic, holy banners.

In present reality we can hardly totally accept the idea, actively promoted by “classical” historical science in Russia, that the Greek Project of Count Bezborodko was nothing but another ideological ruse Catherine the Great exploited for propaganda purposes outside the empire: the Russian empress intended using the noble idea as a smokescreen behind which she would detach, with the use of force, as much Ottoman territory as possible. Her extremely ambitious designs (grandiose political, social, and cultural transformations of the expanses along the North-South axis) stemmed from deliberations about Byzantium as heir to the Greek culture fed by its roots; it brought true faith and enlightenment to Russia, thus making the Russian Empire its legal state and religious heir. Russia took up cultural and religious values from Byzantium, preserving and developing them throughout the centuries, while the Byzantine Empire disappeared under the blows of the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks. Under Catherine the Great, Russia, which had been preserving and multiplying the spiritual values of the Orthodox statehood it received from Byzantium via dynastic marriage (legal and ideological justification of the state-legal and religious-cultural continuity typical of that period), was prepared to return them by restoring an independent Greek state. The Russian empress and her

⁴ See: V.N. Vinogradov, *Dvuglavy rossiiskiy orel na Balkanakh. 1683-1914*, Indrik, Moscow, 2010, pp. 78-79.

chancellor believed that Constantinople should be restored as a center of Orthodoxy, of which Russia remained the guardian for many centuries, and classical culture. The northwestern vector of the development of the Russian civilization under Peter the Great was replaced with a southern vector; Russia's geopolitical interests were shifted in the same direction.

In the 18th century, the idea of state religious messianism was typical of the Eastern Slavs (with the Russians as their ethnic core) and of the numerous Turkic peoples who professed Islam and lived in the Ottoman Empire, where the Ottoman Turks were the titular ethnicity. In the 18th century, religious life in both empires was completely secularized, that is, it was administered by the state. In Russia, there was no autocephalous Russian Orthodox Church *de jure*: since 1716 it functioned as part of the state apparatus (the Sacred Governing Synod) or a spiritual administrative structure (*prikaz*); it was headed by the emperor, not by the patriarch as it is today. The emperor represented the highest secular (administrative-state) and spiritual (Church and religious) authority, a system called absolutism in historical science. In the Russian Empire, any ideological religious doctrine belonged to the foreign policy context. In the Ottoman Empire, likewise, the sultan was also the caliph (the spiritual leader of all faithful Muslims irrespective of where they lived). In fact, in the last quarter of the 18th century the two empires were practically identical (classical absolute monarchies) with the exception of one, although very important, religious-political aspect. Russia was seeking domination in the Slavic Orthodox, while the Ottoman Empire wanted control in the Arabic-Turkic Islamic oecumene, their ambitions stretching far beyond the spiritual sphere.

Since the time of Byzantium Orthodox Christians have been living in Southeastern Europe, in the territories now occupied by Moldavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, etc. Under somewhat different names they belonged to the Ottoman Empire and were guided by the Patriarch of Constantinople rather than the Russian Synod. Since the early 14th century, Muslims have been living on the Middle and Lower Volga and in the Northern Caucasus (which belonged to Russia). Therefore, very much in tune with their own political and legal interpretation of Islam, the Ottoman Turks claimed religious and administrative power in Russia's Muslim regions. To stem the claims of the Ottoman Sultan and quench his ambitions, Russia waged several wars against the Porte and even stipulated in the Kuchuk-Kainarji Peace Treaty signed on 10 (21) July, 1774 that the Sultan renounce his administrative and political power over the Crimean, Kuban, Astrakhan, Kazan, and Volga Tatars, as well as the Nogays, Circassians, and other Muslim peoples of Russia, while retaining, for some time, his religious leadership. Russia's Muslim peoples became completely autonomous in the religious sphere under the Russian-Turkish agreement of 28 December, 1783 that made the lands of the former Crimean Khanate and the Taman Peninsula part of the Russian Empire and their population, Russian citizens. This meant that the wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century were waged not only to gain control over the disputed territories or due to trade and economic preferences, but also to acquire religious and political domination in the Black Sea area, the Balkans, and the Caucasus.

In the last decades of the 18th century, the Greek Project of the Russian Empire pushed it and the Ottoman Empire into

a military-strategic confrontation and stiff ideological struggle based on the religious messianism of both sides. This accounts for the protracted and uncompromising geopolitical rivalry in the Black Sea-Caucasian region. An impartial student of Russian-Turkish or Turkish-Russian relations can trace the influence of the Greek Project of Empress Catherine the Great until World War I; it greatly affected the relations between the two countries. It comes as no surprise that this confrontation gradually extended from the Northern Black Sea area to the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Transcaucasia (the Central and Southern Caucasus).

The Caucasus in the Orbit of Russia's Geopolitical Interests

It was by sheer chance that the Central and Southern Caucasus, an area of stiff confrontation between Persia and the Porte which had been going on for a long time with variable success and never outside the region, were caught in the web of Russia's geopolitical interests: the Russian Empire continued to concentrate on the Greek Project. At the early stages of its geopolitical expansion in the Balkans, Russia had no intentions, no strength, no forces and assets, or no resources to open up a "second front" against the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus or Transcaucasia. External circumstances beyond its control forced Russia to pay attention to this region: in 1768, ruler of the Georgian princedoms Kartli and Kakheti Heraclius II (he inherited the throne from Vakhtang VI who in 1722 concluded a union treaty with Russian Emperor Peter the Great) asked Russia for military support in his struggle against the Ottoman Turks. In 1768-1772, a Russian

unit under Lieutenant General Gottlieb Heinrich Totleben, audacious on the battlefield but a man of dubious morals beyond it, was fighting in Georgia. Totleben's military maneuvers and several victories (he captured Kutaisi and besieged Poti) brought Russia practically no political dividends: the crafty general not only quarreled with the Georgian king, but also betrayed him twice: the first time, in the battle of Akhaltsikhe in April 1770 when he deserted the battlefield and, the second, when he sided with the claimants to the Georgian throne.⁵ This expedition supplied the Russian military command with detailed information about the terrain beyond the Kura River to be used for future military operations. This was the only tangible geopolitical result of Lieutenant General Totleben's Georgian expedition. In fact, it was thanks to Baron Totleben that Russia began paying attention to the Central and Southern Caucasus, even though they still remained outside the empire's geopolitical scope.

Ten years later, when Kartli and Kakheti invited Russia to discuss its military protectorate over their lands, Transcaucasia and its military-political importance attracted the empire's attention once more. On 24 July (4 August), 1783, the sides signed the Georgievsk Treaty. Without going into details, I will say that the treaty proved to be short-lived. In 1787, under Ottoman pressure, Russia pulled out its troops (two infantry battalions) from Eastern Georgia (Kartli-Kakheti) even though it still considered these lands to be its vassal possessions. This is confirmed by the order Empress Catherine the Great sent to General Field-Marshal Count Gudovich, Commander of the Kuban Corps, on 4 September,

⁵ See: V.A. Potto, *Kavkazskaia voyna*, in 5 vols, Vol. 1, *S drevneyshikh vremen do Yermolova*, Tsentrpoligraf, Moscow, 2006, pp. 128-132.

1795: “You should support King Heraclius as a Russian vassal against unfriendly attacks with two full infantry battalions in conformity with the treaty”⁶ to help him rebuff the onslaught on Tiflis (Tbilisi) of Persian Shah Aga Mohammed-khan Qajar. The Georgian capital was destroyed on 12 September: the order reached General Gudovich on 1 October.

Military protectorate over Eastern Georgia of 1783 and Georgia's accession to the empire in 1801 drew Russia into several wars against two strategic rivals in the Caucasus — the Sublime Porte and Persia; their never-ending armed border confrontation made Russia's task much easier. Between 1796 and 1829, Russia was involved in an aborted march of the Kuban Corps under Colonel-General Count Zubov to Northern Azerbaijan against the Persian troops, which was cut short by the death of the empress, two wars with Persia (in 1805-1813 and 1826-1828), and two wars with Turkey (1806-1812 and 1828-1829). While planning these armed conflicts and fighting them, Russia finally identified its geopolitical interests and aims in the Central and Southern Caucasus; by that time Russia had become their closest neighbor.

These armed conflicts were mainly ignited by the unregulated border problems among Russia, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus and their drive for domination in all sorts of feudal state units in Transcaucasia: makhalahs, khanates, etc. In the context of a conflict of interests, the three power centers selected the religious sovereignty of the Caucasian peoples as the first step toward a more or less equal balance of power in the region. This is confirmed by the Yassy Peace Treaty of 29 December, 1791 (9 January, 1792) between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, under

⁶ Ibid., p. 135.

which the River Kuban served the state border between them, while the Christian peoples of the Caucasus (Ossetians and Eastern Georgians) and their lands became the zone of geopolitical interests of Russia.⁷ Neither Persian Shah Aga Mohammed-khan Qajar who twice, in 1795 and 1797, invaded Kartli-Kakheti (Christian Eastern Georgia), nor the Muslim peoples of Western Georgia, who continued their inroads in Kartli-Kakheti and Imeretia, liked this arrangement. This forced Georgy XII, the last independent king of the Georgians, to seek Russia's military and state protection. The political and legal aspects of the process are well known and have been studied in detail,⁸ therefore there is no need to discuss them here. On 12 April, 1802, the imperial Manifesto on Georgia joining Russia was officially read in the Sioni Cathedral in Tiflis. This meant that Russia had to identify its geopolitical interests and priorities in the region.

Strategic security of the newly acquired lands was the linchpin of Russia's geopolitical interests in Transcaucasia. Indeed, it had to reach natural borders along which it could delimitate its possessions with the neighbors and organize layered defense. Two rivers, the Arax in the south and the Chorokhi in the west, looked best suited for this purpose. In the first third of the 19th century, Russia waged several offensive wars described above to finally reach the rivers. These

⁷ See: "A Detailed Description of the Road the Russian Imperial Embassy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary followed after the Yassy Peace, from Rushchuk via Shumla to Constantinople, in 1793, Complete with Military Descriptions of the Terrain and Methods for Delivering Foodstuffs for an army of 30 to 40 thousand", Notes by N.A.Osokin, *Russkaia starina*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1878, pp. 100-124.s

⁸ See: Z.D.Avalov, *Prisoedinenie Gruzii k Rossii*, Montivid Print Shop, St. Petersburg, 1906.

and later armed clashes with the Ottoman Empire, accompanied by the sides' territorial claims, are precisely the background against which the place and role of the Central Caucasus in the context of Russia's geopolitical interests and its importance should be discussed.

It should be said that the Central Caucasus acquired the status of a sub-region in its own right and became a target of geopolitical attention solely because Russia had moved into it. It was formed, acquired a legal basis, and became a political scientific spatial entity because the Russian Empire was moving into new lands by concluding international treaties with Persia and the Porte: the Treaty of Gulistan of 12 (24) October, 1813 and the Turkmanchay Treaty of 10 (22 February), 1828 with Persia; the Treaty of Bucharest of 16 (28) May, 1812 along with the Akkerman Convention of 25 September (7 October), 1826, the Adrianople Treaty of 2 (14) September, 1829, and the Berlin Treaty of 1 (13) July, 1878 with the Ottoman Empire. Under these international legal instruments Russia joined Daghestan, Kartli, Kakhети, Megrelia, Imeretia, Guria, and Abkhazia; the Baku, Karabakh, Ganja, Shirvan, Sheki, Derbent, Quba, Talysh, Nakhchivan, and Erivan khanates; the entire stretch of the Black Sea littoral from the mouth of the Kuban to St. Nicholas Port with the fortresses of Anapa, Sujuk-kale, and Poti; and the Ottoman provinces Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Batum, Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin. From the historical legal point of view these lands should become a target of comprehensive studies as parts of the Central Caucasus, since *de facto* it was Russia that determined their historical fate.

This means that we can say that the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey, the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic

lic of Armenia, the Republic of Georgia, as well as the partially recognized or unrecognized state units (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh) are all subjects of the Central Caucasus. The political elites of some of the regional countries and, indirectly, certain centers of power outside it which support these elites are actively striving to undermine the influence of Russia and Turkey on the Central Caucasus, and even strike them off the list of subjects to leave Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia as the only Central Caucasian entities.

This cannot be accepted not only because this approach pushes aside historical reality and traditions, but also because it rejects the historical and cultural heritage of its peoples. They are beholden to the ambitions of certain groups of the local political elites and international financial-industrial circles that patronize them. Since the second third of the 19th century, the Central Caucasus has been and remains a zone of Russia's geopolitical interests or even its priorities. In the last two centuries, its policy has been radically transformed, which allows certain trends to form.

As distinct from Southeastern Europe, the Central Caucasus has never been an area of Russia's religious expansion: there was no sense in spreading Christianity as the vehicle of its political domination in the traditionally Muslim areas (after abandoning primitive paganism the local peoples embraced Islam). The areas where Christianity had become widespread since early times and where feudal relations had taken shape by the early 19th century became part of the Russian state and society without much trouble; few people among the local elite felt that their interests were infringed upon.

The traditionally Muslim state-territorial Transcaucasian units had to follow a much more complicated administrative

procedure in order to join the Russian Empire; it was fairly logical for the local feudal lords to preserve, during their lifetime, their personal administrative status (even though they lost their political sovereignty); their heirs and close associates became Russian nobles with corresponding property and social privileges. In fact, the Southern Caucasus preserved its traditional social, property, administrative, and economic relations. This explains why the local people remained indifferent to their new status of Russian subjects.

Here is an example: the Russian authorities paid practically no attention to trade in young girls and women from among the local Muslims who were sold to Turkish harems. In the newly acquired territories this trade went on unhampered in Muslim villages; purchase of slaves or serfs was registered with Russian policemen; the corresponding dues went to the state treasury.⁹ It should be said that in the Christian part of Russia, serfs were likewise sold and bought; this means that the lifestyle of the ordinary people in the Caucasus and European Russia differed but little: Russian colonization of the Caucasus presented no social or economic problems.

During the first decades of Russian colonization, the local Muslims offered no political or religious resistance. This is best confirmed by the fact that at the height of the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829, four cavalry corps (720 cavalymen in each) and a cavalry division, the Cavalry Kyangeryly for the Russian Separate Caucasian Corps, were formed in the newly acquired lands of contemporary Azerbaijan. Fight-

⁹ See: N.M.Emelyanova, M.Kh.Ekzekov, "Torgovye i kulturnye svyazi Rossiskoy, Osmanskoy imperiy i narodov Kavkaza v pervoy polovine XIX veka", in: *Istoricheskije, kulturnyje i ekonomicheskie svyazi mezhdju Turtsiej i Rossiej*, pp. 45-47.

ing against the Ottoman Turks, their co-religionists, on the battlefields in Eastern Anatolia they looked much better than the Russian units.¹⁰ After the war, a special Transcaucasian Muslim Cossack Army in the territory which is now called the Southern Caucasus was contemplated. The project was first postponed because the forces and assets allocated for it were used to suppress the Polish uprising of 1830-1831¹¹ and then buried in the 1840s when the mountain peoples led by Shamil rebelled in Daghestan and Chechnia. This means that the problem of religious affiliation surfaced in multinational and poly-confessional Russia only at times of disturbances among its subjects.

The “Armenian Question” as an Instrument of Russian Geopolitics in the Caucasus

The so-called Armenian Question was the only dissonant sound in Russia’s policy in Transcaucasia; this was the only aspect of Russian colonization of the Central Caucasus which upturned the otherwise logical geopolitics in the region. I should say that this was a religious-confessional rather than a national issue since until February 1914 (when a new law on the freedom of religion was passed) there had been no idea of “nationality” as an element of the formal legal description of the individual. Its role belonged to the description of the individual’s confessional or religious affiliation. There was

¹⁰ See: *Utverzhdenie russkogo vladychestva an Kavkaze: k 100-letiyu prisoedineniya Gruzii k Rossii*, in 5 vols., ed. by V.A. Potto, Vol. 4 (Part 2), Tiflis, 1909, pp. 415-416.

¹¹ See: F.F.Nagdaliyev, *Khany Nakhichevanskie v Rossiiskoy imperii*, Novy argument, Moscow, 2006, pp. 93-98.

no Armenian Question, from the state legal point of view, in Russia. This issue is even better described as the Armenian Gregorian Question.

In the Russian Empire, the Armenian Gregorian religious affiliation was a social and legal attribute of the Armenian ethnicity. The inadequately developed Orthodox theology of the time created the impression in the state political establishment that the Armenian Gregorian Church was canonically related to Orthodoxy because of similar rituals and attributes. In fact, the Armenian Apostolic Church is one of the Ancient Eastern Orthodox churches; it did not attend the IV Ecumenical Council, never accepted its decisions and, therefore, relies on the dogmas of the first three Ecumenical Councils and follows the Non-Chalcedonian Christology of St. Cyril of Alexandria who preached One Nature of God the Logos Incarnate (miaphysitism). As distinct from the Orthodox dogma, the Armenian-Gregorian teaching rejects the idea of the Holy Trinity which brings its adepts closer to the Judaists and followers of all sorts of pseudo-Christian sects of the Judaizers (the Dukhobors, Molokans, etc.). From the viewpoint of contemporary Christian theology (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant), the Armenian Gregorians are not Christians in the full sense of the word. The Russian military administrators in the Caucasus never went too deep into the theological subtleties: the followers of the Armenian Gregorian Church were Russia's allies in the Southern Caucasus when it came to implementing military and political plans and ambitions. In fact, by the second quarter of the 19th century, the Armenian Question had developed into a linchpin of Russia's geopolitics in Transcaucasia and retained its role for at least two centuries until the early 21st century.

Throughout the several decades Russia needed to detach the Central Caucasus from Persia and Turkey, the Russian Empire actively moved Armenian Gregorians from Persia and the Porte to the newly conquered Transcaucasian lands as stipulated both by the Turkmanchay Peace Treaty with Persia and the Adrianople Peace Treaty with the Sublime Porte. The process was realized on a mass scale: according to the official Russian figures, between the fall of 1829 and the spring of 1830, up to 15 thousand Armenian families were moved from the Ottoman Empire to Russia (between 90 and 100 thousand people). They arrived from the Erzurum and Kars regions.¹² Two years earlier, approximately the same number of people was moved from Persia, and another 30 thousand from the Trabzon area. In fact, in less than three years, the Armenian population of the Southern Caucasus increased by a third of a million. This fast and massive movement of Armenians sanctioned, organized, and funded by the Russian administration can be described as the most convincing illustration of Russia's geopolitics in the Southern Caucasus.

It is not my intention to cast doubt on the fact that Armenian Gregorians have been living in Transcaucasia from time immemorial. It cannot be disputed, however, that the huge wave of Armenian settlers from Persia and Turkey which engulfed the region at the turn of the 1830s radically changed the settlement structure of the Armenians in the newly acquired territories. Before that, the Armenian Gregorians never lived in compact groups in any of the feudal states of Transcaucasia and were never in the majority (the Erivan Khanate being no exception). The 1830 campaign of resettlement

¹² See: *Utverzhdenie russkogo vladychestva na Kavkaze...*, Vol. 4 (Part 2), pp. 453-454.

from Eastern Anatolia created compact Armenian settlements where they were in the majority. This is best illustrated by settlement in the environs of Gumr (now Gumri) and the Lori Valley¹³ organized by the Russian Caucasian Administration for Armenian settlers from the Ottoman Empire. Later they became the core of national statehood of contemporary Armenia.

This means that Russia selected Armenian Gregorians (with no special services to the empire except for similar religious rites and attributes) as the main national and religious instrument of its geopolitics in the Southern Caucasus rather than the Azeri Muslims or Georgian Christians, who had many times demonstrated their loyalty to Russia and its geopolitical interests on the battlefield. The reasons lie outside the scope of this article; here I will limit myself to facts without plunging into the depths of explanations.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, the Armenian vector determined Russia's geopolitical priorities in the Southern Caucasus; this is further confirmed by the directions in which Russia moved its troops when fighting Turkey in Transcaucasia. Highly doubtful from the military-strategic point of view, they were fully justified in the military-political context. In the last four wars with the Ottoman Empire (1828-1829, 1853-1856, 1877-1878, and 1914-1918), the Russian generals invariably selected Erzurum (rather than Trabzon or Sinop) as the direction of the main thrust and final point of their offensive, even though the two ports would have made deliveries to the Russian troops fighting in Anatolia much easier. The Turkish Black Sea coast did not figure as a strategic aim in any of these wars: the Russian Empire was

¹³ See: *Ibidem*.

obviously determined to detach several regions of dubious military-strategic and economic importance with a large share of the Armenian Gregorian population from Turkey. This meant that for several centuries, the Armenian Project (which was never openly admitted) was on a par with the Greek Project.

In the absence of reliable and well-documented information, we cannot tie together Russia's Armenian Project and the Project of Greater Armenia, a state structure to be set up in the Ottoman territories Russia occupied during World War I under the Armistice of Moudros of 30 October, 1918 and the Sevres Peace Treaty of 10 August, 1920 between the Entente and the Ottoman Empire. The very fact that it was intended to transfer the Turkish territories earlier occupied by Russia (after it had withdrawn from the war under the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of 3 March, 1918) to Armenian nationalists confirms that the Armenian Project, which Russia and France had lobbied together, remained relevant even after Russia suffered a military and political defeat. The victory of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his supporters over the Allies in the War of Independence of 1919-1923 (of which the 1920 armed conflict with Armenia was a part) buried the Armenian Project. The future Republic of Turkey restored its sovereignty over the territories of Eastern Anatolia occupied first by Russia and then by Armenian armed units.

The Armenian Project echoes in Russia's contemporary foreign policy: in the 1990s, with the Soviet Union no longer on the stage, the Russian Federation actively supported the Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I will not go into the details of this choice suggested by the subjective preferences of certain people: it is not for a historian to comment on the positions of living people, yet I deem it neces-

sary to say that there is an Armenian lobby in Russia's political establishment. Recently it has been losing its clout: its members are growing old and can no longer shape Russia's geopolitics in the Central Caucasus.

Russia's New Geopolitical Priorities in Transcaucasia

Today, Russia is gradually shifting its geopolitical priorities in Transcaucasia to fundamentally new principles and in accordance with current reality: ideological determinism with its obvious national and religious hues is being replaced with pragmatic approaches to foreign economic and foreign policy issues in the Central Caucasus. For objective reasons, a foreign policy U-turn in this extremely important sector will take time: the momentum created over the span of two centuries is too strong; it requires strength, time, and political will to be overcome. Recently, it has become clear that there is enough political will even though the political elites of the Central Caucasian states delighted with the first more or less significant date — 20 years of national statehood — prefer to ignore this to remain in the habitual system of geopolitical coordinates.

Throughout the two post-Soviet decades, Russia regarded Armenia as its natural ally in Transcaucasia, the most stable and predictable in the military and political respects. In the 1990s, against the background of Armenia's and Armenians' consolidated determination to dominate in the Central Caucasus, Georgia and Azerbaijan torn apart by clan wars looked like, or even were for a while, territories of permanent chaos. Today, the situation has changed dramatically, which means

that Russia should look for new partners for conducting its course in Transcaucasia and Hither Asia (of which the region is geographically a part). Armenia is too weak economically; throughout the recent history of its national statehood it has been and remains a recipient of Russia's financial assistance and that of the Armenian diaspora. It can hardly develop into Russia's strategic ally in the Central and Southern Caucasus. For political or national-religious reasons, which cropped up in a series of unfriendly foreign policy moves in relation to Russia, neither Georgia nor Azerbaijan can occupy the still vacant niche of Russia's geopolitical partner in Transcaucasia. They are not in a position to drop, at short notice and unilaterally, their earlier obligations to the other world power centers.

To preserve its strategic influence in the Central and part of the Southern Caucasus, Russia has to look for allies outside the region. The choice is limited to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey. The former is ill-suited to the role of a strategic partner in Hither Asia because of its highly specific and unpredictable foreign policy and its dependence on the religious messianism of the political religious elite in the Islamic (Shi'a in the first place) world. From this it follows that Turkey looks like the most probable candidate for the role of Russia's geopolitical partner in Hither Asia, as well as in the Central and Southern Caucasus. Recently, state, political, economic and humanitarian relations between the two countries have been developing by leaps and bounds. Today, there is an obvious trend toward new Russia's geopolitical priorities in Transcaucasia and Hither Asia: the failed Greek and Armenian projects are being replaced with a Turkish project, a fact that all Caucasian countries should bear in mind.

The strategic economic union of Russia and Turkey, which is daily acquiring new organizational traits, will inevitably deprive the sovereign Caucasian states of strategic political impact not only on a global, but also on a regional scale. This means that they will no longer be able to obtain any type of technical support directly from other world or regional power centers. During the August 2008 South Ossetian armed conflict, Turkey's passive assistance to Russia demonstrated to the world that its establishment was prepared to exchange its geopolitical weight in the Caucasus for raw material and other economic preferences. In recent years, the political and economic partnership between Russia and Turkey has been moving toward the mutually advantageous ideology of Eurasianism actively promoted in both countries at the political and academic level. This will soon lead to a mutually advantageous ideological concept of Slavic-Turkic Eurasian unity that will leave no room for the politically independent national, state, and ethno-religious interests of the Caucasian peoples.

In the mid-term perspective, Azerbaijan will profit more than its Central Caucasian neighbors from Russia's new foreign policy vector. Baku, however, has done nothing to tap the favorable potential. Moreover, in the last twelve months Azerbaijan has been exposed to a campaign that propagandizes an ideology hostile to Russia geared toward the idea of "two centuries of genocide of the Azeri people" allegedly carried out in the Russian Empire. It is most graphically presented in the Russian-language printed matter published by the Azeri diaspora in Russia (on the pages and in the electronic version of the *IRS-Nasledie* journal and the *Azerbaidzhanskiy kongress* newspaper in the "200 Years of Genocide" co-

lumn). This is obviously aimed at Armenia and its idea of the “genocide of the Armenians” during World War I. Baku, which funds these publications, and the Azeri diaspora prefer to ignore the fact that the year 2013 will mark the 200th anniversary of the Gulistan Peace Treaty between Russia and Persia which allowed the Azeri ethnicity, subjugated by the Persians, to develop into a nation. However, this process can only unfold if the Russian state demonstrates tolerance toward all of the peoples and confessions present in its territory. This made the Azeris a state-forming nation. On the other hand, the Azeris of Iran, who have been trying to acquire their statehood in Southern Azerbaijan for nearly 100 years, have not yet accomplished this.

Today we are watching, and are involved in global transformations of Russia’s geopolitics in the Central and part of the Southern Caucasus. We have a good chance of seeing with our own eyes whether the Turkish Project will replace the Armenian and Greek projects in the next ten years. My first conclusion about Russia’s geopolitics in Transcaucasia is that there is a geopolitical idea of Eurasian Slavic-Turkic unity in which Russia and Turkey are jointly involved. The Turkish project is one of Russia’s objective foreign policy imperatives, the realization of which will strongly affect the situation in the Central Caucasus.

In any case, the independent states and self-proclaimed state units in the Central Caucasus will have to take the changed geopolitical context in the Black Sea-Caucasian region into account. The European Union and NATO (which the ruling elites of some of the Central Caucasian countries regard as their natural allies) are losing their grip on the re-

gion. The shift in the power centers of Caucasian regional geopolitics will inevitably deprive the political elites of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia of their continued opportunity to exploit the conflict of interests among stronger and more responsible political players, since some of them are joining forces for the sake of their own corporate interests, thus contradicting the corporate interests of the Central Caucasian political elites.

In the next ten years, the Caucasus will live through serious transformations designed to promote its further integration into the world system, which has so far been impossible because of regional conflicts. The world around the Central Caucasus has undergone qualitative changes, and it is up to its local political elites to decide how they will adapt to these transformations.

The Treaty of Gulistan: 200 Years After

**(the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 and the Treaty
of Gulistan in the Context of Its 200th Anniversary)**

On 24 October, 2013, we marked the 200th anniversary of the Treaty of Gulistan, which ended the longest war of the nineteenth century between the Russian and Persian empires; it went on for nearly ten years, from 1804 to late 1813. No other open armed conflict of the time was that long: the fifteen years of Napoleonic wars in Europe and Northern Africa was a string of fairly short and mainly local armed conflicts that cannot be described as the first world war in the history of mankind. Many events and many repercussions of this Russo-Persian war remain unclarified, and many questions are still waiting for direct and honest answers. This war was of fundamental importance for the historical destiny of the Azeri people; it predetermined, for many centuries to come, the directions of its national, intellectual, political, and state development. This means that the historical lacunae left by the previous generations should be filled in good faith. A comprehensive analysis of the military actions, political steps, diplomatic efforts, and other events of the time requires an extensive monographic study. For want of space I will li-

mit myself to those aspects that should be further discussed by Russian, Azeri, and Iranian historians.

Pre-Soviet Russian historical tradition (represented by two outstanding historians Perpetual Academician-Secretary of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences Lieutenant-General Nikolay Dubrovin and Head of the Department of Military History of the Headquarters of the Caucasian Military District of the Russian Imperial Army Lieutenant-General Vasily Potto) saw Russia's intention to spread its geopolitical impact far and wide beyond the Greater Caucasus Range (the first step in this direction was taken in 1801 when Georgia became part of the Russian Empire) as the main or, even, the only cause of the 1804-1813 war.¹ Soviet historiographic tradition, both Russian and Azeri, proceeded from the ideological postulate of "proletarian internationalism" and, therefore, tacitly ignored the subject or reduced it to realization of the "historically justified" desire of the Azeris to join the Russian Empire.² In the last twenty years, that is, in the post-Soviet

¹ See: N.F.Dubrovin, *Istoria voyny i vladychestva russkikh na Kavkaze*, in 8 volumes, Print shop of the Department of State Lands, St. Petersburg, 1871-1888, Vol. IV; V.A.Potto, *Kavkazskaia vojna v otdelnykh ocherkakh, epizodakh, legendakh i biografiakh*, in 5 volumes, Print shop of E.Evdokimov, St. Petersburg, 1887-1889, Vol. I; *Utverzhdenie russkogo vladychestva na Kavkaze: 1801-1901. K stoletiu prisoedineniia Gruzii k Rossii*, in 4 volumes, Vol. I, ed. by N.N.Belyaevsky, V.A.Potto, Print shop of Ya.I. Liberman, Tiflis, 1902.

² See, for example: Kh.M.Ibragimbeyli, *Rossia i Azerbaidzhan v pervoy treti XIX veka (iz voenno-politicheskoy istorii)*, Nauka Publishers, Main Department of Oriental Literature, Moscow, 1969; J.M.Mustafaev, *Severnye khanstva Azerbaidzhana i Rossia (konets XVIII-nachalo XIX v.)*, Elm, Baku, 1989; I.P.Petrushevsky, "Khanstva Azerbaidzhana i vozniknovenie russkoy orientatsii", *Izvestia AN AzSSR (Department of Social Sciences)*, Issue II, No. 5, Baku, 1946; *Prisoedinenie Azerbaidzhana k Rossii i ego progressivnye posledstviia v oblasti ekonomiki i kultury (XIX-nach. XX v.)*,

period, Russian and Azeri historians consistently ignored the subject despite the “chronologically favorable” suggestions in the form of the 200th anniversary of its beginning or its end. This shows that the academic community of both countries is not interested in the events and repercussions of the war. In fact, a 28-page leaflet *Sovremennoe znachenie Gulistanskogo mirnogo dogovora* (The Treaty of Gulistan: Its Importance Today),³ a highly tendentious political, rather than historical effort, the International Institute of New States issued in early 2013 was the only response to the 200th anniversary of the end of the Russo-Persian war. This means that this war has been and remains an unknown or “forgotten” war despite its continued pertinence for the Azeri and all the other Caucasian peoples.

This article is an attempt to fill the lacuna in the mainstream of contemporary historical science in the post-Soviet expanse.

I have not aspired to write a detailed account of the causes, course, and results of this war (this task requires a monograph). I pursued the much humbler task of drawing my colleagues’ attention to facts, events, and processes that have remained outside the field of interest of Russian and Azeri historians, and therefore, escaped scholarly interpretation, even though they are obviously worthy of closer scrutiny. In fact, I intend to formulate here a set of questions in the hope that at some time in the future Azeri historians will answer them (in their own interests) in a straightforward and sincere manner.

ed. by A.S.Sumbatzade, Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan S.S.R., Institute of the Peoples of the Middle and Near East, Baku, 1955.

³ See: *Sovremennoe znachenie Gulistanskogo mirnogo dogovora*, International Institute of the New States, Moscow, 2013.

Debates on the War's Causes and Beginning

The geopolitical reasons for the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 are obvious. First, the Russian Empire sought a wider presence in the Caucasus by moving into territories that were legally dependent on Persia. The Georgievsk Treaty of 1783, which joined Georgia to Russia, was the first step in this direction. Second, the Persian Empire was obviously unable to protect its Caucasian vassals against the external military and political threat from the north amply confirmed by that fact that neither Fath Ali Shah Qajar nor Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, who ruled the Persian Caucasian territories populated by Turkic tribes (the ethnic foundation of a single Azeri people and, later, Azeri nation), responded to the Treaty of 1783 and its results. The Russian military in the Caucasus were past masters of using the slightest pretext to extend their imperial domains in the Caucasus and were equal to the task. The patrimonial nature of the relations between the local feudal lords and the administration of Prince Abbas made these territories de facto independent: there were no Persian armed contingents to protect these lands against external aggression. Disunited Northern Azerbaijan, which consisted of thirty feudal states (khanates) (close in their state and legal status to European dukedoms), was, therefore, fairly easy prey for the Russian troops hardened in the wars against the Ottoman Empire. This meant new lands for the Russian Empire and a shower of medals and orders for generals and the officer corps: the logic that moved all empires, Russia being no exception, was death or subjugation for the weak — *tertium non datur*.

There were other, less obvious yet equally important reasons previously either ignored by Russian and Azeri histo-

rians or not widely publicized, separatist sentiments among the Azeri khans being one of them. In his *Severnye khanstva Azerbaidzhana i Rossia (konets XVIII-nachalo XIX v.)* (The Northern Khanates of Azerbaijan and Russia in the Late 18th-Early 19th Centuries), J.Mustafaev has fairly convincingly demonstrated that by the end of the 18th century, Baku, Ganja, Shaki, Shamakhi, and their neighbors had outstripped, economically and socially, the Persian regions of the Persian Empire. For this reason, many of the Caucasian khans dreamed of maximum detachment from Tabriz and Tehran and even of political sovereignty. The largest of the khanates had already acquired its material prerequisites in the form of financial and fiscal systems, currency, and measures and weights, which differed greatly from those used in Persia. In June 1812, soon after a large chunk of the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan was de facto acceded to Russia, General of Infantry Nikolay Rtishchev, Chief Commander in Georgia and Chief Manager of the Civilian and Border Affairs in Georgia and the Caucasian and Astrakhan Gubernias (he filled this post from 1811 to 1815), the highest Russian official in the Caucasus, initiated financial auditing of the lands that later became part of Russia under the Treaty of Gulistan. Carried out by the Fiscal Expedition of the Supreme Georgian Government, the auditing revealed that the Caucasian khanates were administratively and economically absolutely independent from the Persian Empire: the local administrations developed fiscal and financial structures based on local monetary systems, mints, and treasuries.⁴ This confirms that the khans of Karabakh, Ganja, Shirvan, and Shamakhi, sick

⁴ See: *Akty, sobrannye Kavkazskoy arkhograficheskoy komissiey* (Acts Collected by the Caucasian Archeographic Commission), in 13 vol-

and tired of their political dependence on the Persians, were eager to end this dependence even by changing the suzerain.

These sentiments were partly born by the domestic instability in the Persian Empire: throughout the 18th century, it was not an empire in the true sense of the word, but a state of shakhinshakhs (kings of kings), their supreme power limited by the administrative sovereignty of the local khans. The supreme power of the rulers of the Zand and later Qajar dynasties stopped at the patrimonial dominants of tribal corporations, which made a centralized state an illusion. In fact, in this respect Persia closely resembled the contemporary German princedoms or Rzeczpospolita, a situation fraught with centralization of the former and several partitions of the latter carried out by neighbors with strong armies or stable state systems. In the political, legal, and culturological respects, Persia differed little from the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation made up of over 350 more or less independent states, the only difference being the number of semi-sovereign subjects. The retrospective political and legal analogies suggest the objective conclusion that the developments in the Caucasus in the early 19th century were absolutely identical to those unfolding in Central Europe. In 1806, Napoleon and his Grande Armée set up the Confederation of the Rhine (*Rheinbund*) out of numerous German princedoms and cut down the number of sovereign subjects of the German statehood from 350 to 36, which made it possible to establish the German Empire in 1871. Russia, in turn, fighting in the Caucasus, brought together the disunited Azeri khanates and tribes under the jurisdiction of the Russian Empire; this

umes, Print shop of the Main Department of the Caucasian Viceroy, Tiflis, 1866-1904, Vol. 5, 1873, pp. 201-207.

served as the starting point for the emergence of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which became the Azerbaijan S.S.R., followed by the sovereign state of Azerbaijan as we know it.

At the turn of the 19th century, the relations between Persia and Azerbaijan and the Caucasus in general (by this I mean relations with Georgia and Daghestan) had developed into an open confrontation very much because of the national and religious factor. Under the Zand dynasty, the lands of contemporary Azerbaijan were a province, the population of which was oppressed and abused by Persian (Iranian) aristocrats. The tension led, in the 1780s, to a feudal war that brought to power the Azeri (that is, originating from Azeri territory or, to be more exact, from Ganja) Qajar dynasty. This defused the contradictions between the Azeris and the Persians by elevating the former and lowering the status of the latter, as well as exacerbating the contradictions among the Azeris.

It is a well-known fact that in 1783-1784 and in 1797-1799, Ibrahim Khalil Khan Javanshir, a vassal of the Zand dynasty, was engaged in secret talks with the Russian Empire on Russian sovereignty for his Karabakh Khanate. In 1795 and 1797, he stood alone against the Persian inroads under Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar (Shah of Persia since 1796), the founder of the Qajar dynasty in Persia. He plundered and routed Karabakh. According to Mirza Jamal Javanshir, historian of the Karabakh khans, Ibrahim Khalil Khan Javanshir was absolutely independent in his khanate: "After arriving in Karabakh, Ibrahim Khalil Khan became an independent khan and ruler and took commands from no one." This does not refute the fact that Isfahan of the Zand dynasty and Tehran of

the Qajars regarded him as their vassal, even if recalcitrant; he inherited this status from his father Panah-Ali Khan Javanshir, who received his title from Adil Shah Afshar of Persia in 1748.⁵ Very much like the khans of Karabakh, the khans of Shaki had no sympathy for Persia of the Qajars. This was especially true of Mohammad Hasan Khan, grandson of Haji Chalabi Khan (from the Kara-Keshish dynasty), who founded the khanate. (In 1805, Mohammad Hasan Khan transferred his khanate to Russian protectorate.) In 1795-1797, he fled from his khanate under the pressure of Agha Muhammad Shah Qajar and his army. Mir Mustafa Khan of Talysh was another confirmed opponent of the Qajars; he applied for Russian protectorate in 1795; during the Russo-Persian war, his khanate became a protectorate of Russia, a status destroyed by Abbas Mirza in 1809. On the other hand, there was Jawad Khan Qajar, a member of the junior branch of the Persian dynasty; he ruled Ganja and predictably sided with his Persian relatives during all internecine wars in the Caucasus in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In short, this period in the history of the Caucasus is better described as a never-ending *bellum omnium contra omnes* waged in the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan, a situation typical of Europe of the 12th-16th centuries.

This suggests a logical question: why did several vassals of Persia — the rulers of Georgia, Karabakh, Nakhchivan, Shaki — all of a sudden enter into negotiations with Commander of the Russian Kuban Corps Sergeant Major General Pavel Potemkin and why did King of Kartli-Kakheti Heraclius II even express his desire to become vassal of Russia?

⁵ See: M.D. Javanshir, *Istoria Karabakha*, Publishing House of the AzSSR Academy of Sciences, Baku, 1959, pp. 13, 47.

In the latter case, this led to the Treaty of Georgievsk signed on 24 July (4 August), 1783. Here is the answer. In 1747, the Persian Empire began moving toward internal strife caused by a power struggle between the Persian tribes united around the Zand dynasty and the Turkic tribes of the Caucasus and the Caspian led by the Qajars. The khans of Northern Azerbaijan knew that Agha Muhammad Khan would become their ruler, a cruel tyrant whose name was associated with what is now called “crimes against humanity.” Unable to protect themselves, they had to look for patrons and defenders on the other side of the Greater Caucasus Range, that is, in Russia.

This means that, strange as it may seem, the Azeri khans were interested in the Russo-Persian war of 1804-1813; they hoped to use the Russian army to acquire even more rights and privileges than those they enjoyed in the Persian Empire. No matter how unpalatable this might be for contemporary Azeri self-awareness, the above is confirmed by facts. For example, convinced that the Crimean Tatars were the only source of the centuries-long confrontation between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, many of the Ottoman statesmen tried to persuade the rulers (sultan and padeshah) to withdraw their state and religious sovereignty from them.⁶ Just like the corps of Ottoman Janissaries under Serasker Ibrahim Pasha stationed in Theodosia during the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 showed no zeal in defending the interests of the

⁶ See: A. Resmi Efendi, *The Juice of Truth: On the Causes, Beginning and Most Important Events of the War that Took Place between the Sublime Porte and Russia from 1182 to 1190 year of Hegira: A Story by Resmi Efendi, Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire, of Seven Years of Struggle between Turkey and Russia (1769-1776)* (in Turkish). Russian translation by O.-Yu. I. Senkovsky was published in *Biblioteka dlia chtenia*, Vol. 124, St. Petersburg, 1854, pp. 9. 77-78.

last Crimean khans Devlet IV Giray and Bahadır II Giray,⁷ the Persian sarbazes (regular infantry) of the Fath Ali Shah Qajar's army were unwilling to shed blood in the interests of the khans of Aderbidjan (Azerbaijan); the shah left his son Abbas Mirza to deal with his fairly fickle Azeri subjects using the means and forces at his disposal. This finally brought Persia to a military and political defeat in 1813.

One of the important, though far from obvious, causes of the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 should be sought in the level of civilizational development of the North Azeri khanates in the late 18th-early 19th centuries. The economies, handicrafts, and trade of Baku, Ganja, Nukha, Shamakhi, and Shusha were fairly developed; this is confirmed by the fact that they had their own currencies and mints superior to those of the Persian Empire. At the same time, Europe, which had entered the industrial development stage, outstripped the khanates of Northern Azerbaijan by at least two centuries: these ethnicities still lingered at the political development stage, which fell behind the industrial (bourgeois in classical Marxist terms) type of organization of social relations. Within the context of the formational approach to the periodization of human history, we can place Europe and Russia in the Modern Times, leaving Persia and Azerbaijan in the Middle Ages. This made it much easier for Russia to spread its military and political domination in the Caucasus, as well as along the border with the Muslim ecumene — in the Greater Black Sea area, the Balkans, and Central Asia — since by the

⁷ See: E.-M.-A.Necati Efendi, *The Crimean Story: Notes by Muhammed Necati Efendi, Turkish Prisoner-of-War in Russia in 1771-1775* (in Turkish). Russian translation by V.D.Smirnov appeared in *Russkaia starina*, No. 4, 1894, pp. 190-194.

turn of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire had fallen far behind the European states in civilizational, economic, and military-technical respects.

In other words, the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan was unavoidably engulfed by Russia in the same way as India was doomed to become a British colony. It remained to be seen whether the process was peaceful or not. In the course of history, it became clear that some of the khanates were willing to join Russia, while others were easily conquered: resistance was feeble, while the local people showed no taste for guerilla warfare. This meant integration cum colonization: force was used to remove disagreements with the elites who refused to negotiate a peaceful transfer to imperial jurisdiction.

The fact that, at the turn of the 19th century, Persia and Azerbaijan were civilizationally lagging behind Europe was responsible for another not obvious yet very important cause of the war. In the latter half of the 18th century, there was no longer any room for unhampered expansion left and right. The spheres of imperial geopolitical domination had to be delineated. By that time, the world had already been divided among the six main empires: the Austrian, British, Ottoman, Persian, Russian, and French, which had moved into all formally independent “buffer zones” in Scandinavia, the Baltic, the German principalities, in the Balkans, North Africa, the Caucasus, and North and Central America. In short, the first division of the world was complete, which meant that human civilization had entered a period of permanent geopolitical re-division of the world, which is still going on unabated. For two centuries, each of the local wars was fought in the interests of one of the empires trying to use other states to undermine the position and influence of its geopolitical rival in a

particular region. The Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 was one of the first such wars: France and Great Britain set Persia against Russia in an effort to force it to pull the largest possible number of Russian troops and the greatest possible share of other assets out of continental Europe. In the early 19th century, neither Fath Ali Shah Qajar, nor Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, nor the Azeri khans were ready to accept the fact that they were pawns on a geopolitical chess-board.

The Russo-Persian War was a logical continuation of the global Russian-British confrontation that started in 1799: The two empires could not agree on the status of the Isle of Malta, even though it was far removed from the Caucasus and Azerbaijan. The story is interesting enough to be told here. In 1797, soon after Paul I had become Russian Emperor, he declared himself protector of one of Europe's oldest Christian military orders — the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Rhodes and of Malta (the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem), commonly known as the Order of Malta. In the summer of 1798, Napoleon captured the island without much fighting. This left the order without the Grand Master and without its base; the Knights of Malta asked the Russian emperor for help in exchange for the title of Grand Master. On 16 December, 1798, Paul I was elected Grand Master of the Order of Malta and immediately demanded that Napoleon leave the island, which he had declared a “gubernia of the Russian Empire.” Napoleon refused; Russia joined the First Coalition fighting Napoleon. In 1799, a Russian corps under Field-Marshal (later Generalissimo) Alexander Suvorov took part in the Italian Campaign, which ended in the legendary crossing of the Alps in the winter of 1799/1800. On 5 September, 1800, the British capitalized on Napoleon's defeat in Egypt

to occupy Valetta, the capital of Malta. The recently elected Grand Master asked the British crown to return the “gubernia of Malta” to Russia’s jurisdiction; predictably, the Brits refused. The two empires separated by the European continent could not start a war in Europe. The Russian emperor removed the impediment by sending the Don Cossack Host to India on 28 February, 1801 to punish the British. Several days later, in the small hours of 12 March, 1801, the emperor was murdered and the punitive expedition was folded up.⁸

The planned Indian campaign of the Russian emperor worried London and stirred up rivalry between the two empires for domination in inner Asia, known in Britain as the Great Game and in Russia as the Tournament of Shadows. The British term refers to the struggle of the two empires for geopolitical domination in Central Asia, while the Russian term indicates their rivalry in the Transcaucasus.⁹ On 12 Shaban the year 1215 of Hegira (29 December, 1800), Great Britain signed military and trade treaties with Persia (commonly dated 4 January, 1801 in British sources) as part of the Great Game. On the British side, the treaties were signed by Captain John Malcolm, and on the Persian side, by First Grand

⁸ See: V.A.Bezotosny, “Napoleonovskie plany Pavla Petrovicha”, *Rodina*, No. 7, 2008, pp. 56-62; P.N.Krasnov, “Pokhod v Indiiu”, *Russkiy invalid*, No. 22-23, 1900; A.A.Mitrofanov, “Russko-frantsuzskie otnosheniya v zerkale bonapartistskoy propagandy. 1800-1801 gg.”, in: *Frantsuzskiy ezhegodnik 2006*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 2006, pp. 184-190; N.K.Shilder, *Imperator Pavel I*, Veche, Moscow, 2009, pp. 308-312.

⁹ See: M.V.Leontiev, *Bolshaia Igra: Britanskaia imperia protiv Rossii i SSSR*, Astrel, Moscow; Astrel-SPb, St. Petersburg, 2012; E.Yu. Sergeev, *Bolshaia igra, 1856-1907: mify i realii rossiysko-britanskikh otnosheniy v Tsentralnoy i Vostochnoy Azii*, Partnership for Scholarly Publications KMK, Moscow, 2012; P.Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.

Vizier Haji Ibrahim. It is a well-known fact that the British authorities in India dispatched John Malcolm to the Persian court to prevent Persia's possible rapprochement with France and use of Persian territory as a springboard for a French attack on India. (Much earlier, in 1796, the French sent a mission to Persia under Olivier to achieve rapprochement with Fath Ali Shah.) By the same token, the British hoped to protect India against Afghan attacks. Under the military and political treaty, the shah pledged to send troops against Afghanistan if the latter attacked Britain's Indian domains, as well as drive the French away from Persia and never allow them back. In exchange, London promised weapons and armaments in the event of a French or Afghan attack on Persia. Indirectly, the treaty was aimed at Russia, which was regarded as an ally of France after the British seizure of Malta.

The military alliance with the United Kingdom made Persia, a hitherto neutral or even friendly state, an opponent of Russia and pushed Tehran into a series of unfriendly actions, the main one being the closure of the Russian trading station on Ashuradeh Island off the Caspian coast of Persia, in the Gorgan Bay (better known as Astrabad in historical writings). The trade treaty with Britain under which Persia was expected to fulfill its obligations was not the only cause of this unfriendly act. The Persians were irritated with their Georgian vassals who had moved under Russia's jurisdiction, this act being legally confirmed by the Manifesto of Emperor Paul I dated 18 January, 1801. Emperor Alexander I, who ascended to the throne after the murder of his father Paul I during a palace coup, responded to the closure of the Astrabad trading station with a rescript of 19 December, 1802 addressed to Chief Commander in Georgia Lieutenant-General

Pavel Tsitsianov, which established a Russian monopoly on naval trade in the Caspian. The Azeri khans could only use fishing boats, not because “they were entitled to this right, but because of the provinces to which bread was delivered by kirzhims (the local name for big flat-bottomed sea-going boats used for cabotage navigation. — *O.K.*), which look more like boats rather than ships.”¹⁰

The winter of 1800-1801 was of immense importance for the Caucasus: this was when it became a region in which the geopolitical interests of four out of six empires clashed. Persia, incited by Great Britain, and Russia, encouraged by France, were rapidly moving toward a war that would turn, by a whim of fate, the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan into a theater of warfare. Without external impact, or even pressure, the two countries could have avoided an armed conflict and achieved, relatively peacefully, without the use of arms deliberately prolonged for ten years, a delimitation of the spheres of influence in the Caucasus by depriving some of the khanates of their political sovereignty and administrative independence. This happened later; in the early 19th century, however, the Russo-Persian War began under the strong pressure of Britain and France. At first, both sides did not consider the lands of contemporary Azerbaijan a prize: they were a chess-board used by the participants in the Tournament of Shadows, or the Great Game, which had India in mind, a much richer and, therefore, much more desirable booty.

It remains unclear which of the several events should be described as the beginning of the war. There was no clear answer to this question, either in imperial Russia, or in the So-

¹⁰ *Akty, sobrannye Kavkazskoy arkhograficheskoy komissiey*, Vol. 2, 1868, p. 789.

viet Union, even if responsibility was vaguely piled on Tehran. According to this tradition, the date 10 June, 1804 was considered to be the first day of the war. On that day, Persian Shah Fath Ali, who had signed a treaty of alliance with Great Britain, declared war on Russia. It should be said in all justice that Russia was equally guilty of the war: on 3 January, 1804, the troops of the Georgian Corps took Ganja, the capital of a Persian vassal, by storm. St. Petersburg and Tiflis regarded the capture of the Ganja Khanate as another victory of Russia's colonial policy in the Caucasus and a logical continuation of Georgia's accession to Russia in 1801. This was not directly associated with the rapidly worsening relations with Persia for the simple reason that seen from the Russian capital and from Tiflis and very much in line with the European tradition (by analogy with the parts of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation), the khanate looked like an independent feudal state. Tehran and Tabriz could hardly agree: they interpreted the capture of Ganja as an act of military aggression against Persia and the Qajar dynasty: the captured khanate was home to the Qajar clan (a demesne in West European terminology). Seen in this light, the war started as a Russo-Qajar war and later developed into the Russo-Persian War. This perfectly fits it into the concept prevalent in the contemporary Azeri history writings: the Russo-Persian War and the Treaty of Gulistan interrupted the development of the Azeri statehood, which potentially could have created a Greater Azerbaijan spreading to the larger part of the Caucasus and the Southern Caspian (Northern Iran).

There is one more concealed, yet important, cause of the war, which can be referred to the Marxist postulate on the role of the individual in history. I have in mind the sub-

jective ideas about the world rooted in the ethnic origins of Russia's Chief Manager in Georgia General of the Infantry Paver Tsitsianov (1754-1806). He belonged to the Georgian princely family of Tsitsishvili (Panaskerteli) from Kartli, the members of which moved to Russia in 1724 together with King Vakhtang VI. On his mother's side, he belonged to the Georgian royal family and was closely related to Mariam (Maria) Tsitsishvili, the last Georgian queen, the second wife of King Georgi XII and the queen of Kartli-Kakheti. It was a well-known fact that in 1797 Agha Muhammad Shah Qajar and his troops invaded Georgia and plundered the domains of the Tsitsishvili-Tsitsianov princes in the Mzovreti Gorge. This makes the march of the Russian troops on Ganja in 1803-1804, which triggered the war between Russia and Persia, cost Jawad Khan Qajar of Ganja his life, and joined the khanate to Russia, an act of Tsitsishvili revenge. This means that at first this was an anti-Qajar rather than anti-Persian or anti-Azeri war. Whatever the case, until the murder of Prince Tsitsianov on 8 (20) February, 1806 in Ichari Shahar (Old City of Baku), revenge played a significant part in the actions of the commander-in-chief of the Russian troops in the Caucasus.

In the Modern Times (in the European periodization of history), or in the 18th century, many of the peoples living on the periphery of the Muslim ecumene tended to solve the problem of national self-determination by entering alliances with neighbors of different faiths. The Azeris were no exception in this respect. The Arabs relied on the British and French to detach themselves from the Ottoman Turks in the Maghreb; the Greeks, Rumanians, and their Slavic neighbors in the Balkans looked to Russia and the Austrian Empire; the people of the Pamir relied on the British to liberate them-

selves from Persian and Afghan domination. This explains why today Azeri historical science cannot arrive at a satisfactory assessment of the role, place and importance of the Russo-Persian wars of 1804-1813 and 1826-1828 and the treaties of Gulistan and Turkmanchay in their national history.

Here is a graphic example of how hard it is to choose between different approaches to the voluntary (or practically voluntary) transfer, on the strength of the Kurakchay treaties of 1805, of several Azeri khanates (Karabakh, Shaki, and Shirvan) and the Shuragel sultanate, to Russian jurisdiction. Azeri historians doubt the legitimacy of the Kurakchay treaties Russia signed with Karabakh and Shaki, as well as the “Requests and Vows of Allegiance of Mustafa Khan of Shirvan;” they allege that the three khans (Ibrahim Khan of Karabakh, Mustafa Salim Khan of Shaki, and Mustafa Khan of Shirvan) signed the documents under threat of the use of force. This, however, contradicts the fact that even before the treaty of transfer to Russia’s protectorate was signed, Ibrahim Khan rebelled against Prince Abbas Mirza and the Qajars and in 1804, unaided by Russian infantry and artillery, crushed the Persian troops sent to pacify him. In the first decade of the 19th century, the Azeri national elite chose Russia’s patronage as the lesser of the two evils (the other being Persia and its rulers).

The War in the Geopolitical Context

The military aspects of the Russo-Persian War are fairly well known not only from Russian, Persian, and Azeri sources, but also from British and French sources and literature, which means that the military aspects and course of the fight-

ting have been exhausted. Few authors, however, put the war into the context of geopolitics; Russian and Soviet historiography made no such attempts (at least in the works available). This lacuna should be filled before we start assessing the war's impact on the historical destiny of the Caucasus and the Eurasian continent.

From the military point of view, it was a fairly strange war: hostilities were resumed and discontinued; truces were entered; and the fighting flared up and died down without obvious reasons. It looked very much like a camp fire that continues burning while there is wood, only to die down and then flare up again when a new supply of wood is placed on the coals by some hand invisible in the dark beyond the circle of light created by the fire. It seems that the sides had no intention initially to become bogged down in a large-scale war; it was a local border conflict into which the sides were drawn against their will. The numerical strength of the Georgian Corps of the Russian Imperial Army on both sides of the Greater Caucasus Range (10 thousand men) hardly permitted wide-scale hostilities. Historical sources have supplied us with exact numbers: on 1 May, 1805, the Russian troops stationed in the Caucasus had 42 field officers, 286 subaltern officers, 755 warrant officers, 326 musicians, 6,055 privates, and 883 low-ranking noncombatants; the cavalry had 4 field officers, 25 subaltern officers, 57 warrant officers, 15 musicians, 485 privates, and 59 noncombatants; and there were 4 field officers, 29 subaltern officers, 19 sergeants, 5 clerks, and 840 Cossacks in the Cossack regiments and detachments.¹¹ This constituted a total of 9,888, not counting the generals, obviously not enough to invade a country with a multi-mil-

¹¹ See: N.F.Dubrovin, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

lion population. No matter how unwilling the sides were, the war went on and on for ten years. This means that it was a way of protecting the interests of third countries.

To reach a better understanding, let us take a look at the arrangement of the Russian troops in the Caucasus. In 1804, they were united into the Caucasian Inspection set up as part of the military administrative reform realized by Paul I in 1796. It was a military-territorial administration responsible for all aspects of military life: from quartering and supplies to military training. At the time of the war, the troops were organized into an acting army (armies) divided into line corps, as well as infantry and cavalry divisions strengthened by units and formations registered with different inspections (the troops of the Caucasian, Orenburg, and Siberian inspections were never sent to the active army, they were used for garrison service and guarding the borders). This means that the units of the Caucasian Inspection designed to protect and defend rather than to invade were drawn into the war with Persia. It was their lot to carry the burden of fighting at the first stage of the war. They fought in Karabakh and in the Erivan direction from the very first day right up until the Uzun-Kilis truce. Signed early in 1807, it allowed Russia to reorganize, in February 1807, the troops of the Caucasian Inspection into the 19th and 20th infantry divisions with the 19th and 20th artillery brigades attached to them in order to adjust the military command and supply to meet the needs of an offensive, rather than defensive, war.¹² This marked the beginning of Russia's organized and consistent military expansion in the Caucasus. Before that, Russian rule beyond the Greater Cau-

¹² See: A.A.Kersnovsky, *Istoria Russkoy armii*, in 4 volumes, Vol. 1, Golos, Moscow, 1992, p. 184.

casus Range went on according to the will of Chief Administrator in the Caucasus Prince Pavel Tsitsianov. It followed the natural course of the region's policies: Karabakh, Shaki, Shamakhi, and Shuragel, which sought Russia's protectorate and received it. This went on until 1808, when the Persians, under French and then British pressure, dissolved the truce, leaving the Russian military commanders with only one option: consistent conquests in the Caucasus in order to inflict the biggest possible military and technical damage on the Qajars and their allies from among the khans of Northern Azerbaijan.

Chronologically, the Russo-Persian War is divided into two periods: before and after the Uzun-Kilis truce. During the first period of the war associated with Prince Tsitsianov, Russia sought to bring the greatest damage to the Qajars, their relatives, and allies and drew all the enemies of this new dynasty into the orbit of Russia's geopolitics. Between the summer of 1804 and late 1806, the Russian military administration in the Caucasus distinguished between the Azeri khanates siding with Russia and supporting the Qajars. Those rulers of Northern Azerbaijan who remained undecided were subjected to various methods of coercion up to and including murder. This fate befell Ibrahim Halil Khan Jawanshir of Karabakh. This was very much in line with the practices of the time: earlier, in 1801, Russian Emperor Paul I was assassinated in a palace coup paid for by British Ambassador in St. Petersburg Sir Charles Whitworth. The first stage of the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 can be described as anti-Qajar; the second (after 1808) can be described as anti-Persian. At this stage, Russia was consistently seeking military-strategic and military-technical defeat of Persia; it was determined to

destroy or capture the weapons and equipment supplied by Tehran's European allies — first Great Britain, then France, and later Great Britain.

European politics directly affected the war dynamics. For ten years, Fath Ali Shah and his son Abbas Mirza had been consistently protecting the geopolitical interests of the main European rivals of Russia's (Britain and France) in the Caucasus. When moving into the war in June 1804, both expected that Britain would continue its military and technical support delivered from India, one of the British colonies, under the political and trade treaty of 4 January, 1801. The treaty envisaged supplying weapons and ammunition to allow the Persian army to rebuff a possible Afghan inroad into Britain's domains in India. Fath Ali Shah and his son used the British weapons and ammunition against Russia. After exhausting what was delivered by Britain, the Persians, in anticipation of further supplies, concluded the Uzun-Kilis truce. This time, however, London, unwilling to waste its material resources on the actions unrelated to India's safety, refused to comply.

Fath Ali Shah turned to Napoleon with the same request and sent Mirza Riza to negotiate and conclude a Franco-Persian alliance in the shortest time possible. A treaty on a defensive and offensive alliance signed on 4 May, 1807 at Finckenstein (East Prussia) was followed by a French mission of 70 members under General Claude-Matthieu Gardane. As soon as he arrived, the Shah ratified the treaty and extended considerable trade and other privileges to the French. However, the cooperation between France and Persia was short-lived: on 9 July, 1807, Napoleon and Russian Emperor Alexander I signed the Treaty of Tilsit. The French pulled out of the treaty with the Persians in their war with Russia and called back

the mission. The British colonial administration, in turn, in an effort to trim French influence in Persia resumed the talks on military and technical cooperation between the two countries. In this way, the Franco-Persian treaty produced no results. The short-lived (not more than two months) Franco-Persian rapprochement cut short the Uzun-Kilis truce. The Persian army defeated at Karababa lost Nakhchivan to the Russians. The 1808 campaign demonstrated once more that in the military and technical respect the Persian Empire was too weak to rely on its own forces and resources in a war. After the defeat at Karababa, the Persians stopped fighting. Hostilities resumed a year and a half later when Fath Ali Shah and his son Abbas Mirza found a new-old source of weaponry and ammunition — Great Britain.

The Treaty of Tilsit presupposed the joint offensive and defensive actions of France and Russia against external enemies, Britain and Persia among others. The treaty was potentially dangerous for British domination in India (since 1798, Napoleon had been planning a march on India); this forced London to resume deliveries of money, weapons, and ammunition to Persia to revive the hostilities against Russia, an ally of France at the time. Military and technical aid was to be extended under a preliminary treaty on alliance and friendship signed in Tehran on 12 March, 1809 by Grand Vizier Mirza Mohammad Shafi Mazanderani and Envoy Plenipotentiary of Britain Sir Harford Jones. The treaty demanded that the shah rupture its relations with France and other enemies of Britain. The Brits, in turn, pledged to pay the Persians 160 thousand tomans every year, resume weapons supplies, and send British military instructors. In June 1812, Brigadier-General Sir John Malcolm accompanied by 350 British officers and

warrant officers arrived in Persia on ships that also carried 30 thousand rifles, 12 cannons, and woolen cloth for uniforms of the sarbazes.¹³ It was these British servicemen, weapons, and assets that allowed Abbas Mirza to organize the last march of the war. In August 1812, the Persians captured Lenkoran and Arkivan; in October, they were crushed at Aslanduz. A large group of British supporting officers was taken prisoner; one was killed. The Russian side learned their names and ranks.

This means that at the first and second stages of the war — before and after the Uzun-Kilis truce — the Persian army used British weapons and British money to get all it needed. This makes Great Britain one of the sides in the war. The Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 was Britain's first "long-distance" colonial war: London carefully avoided direct armed clashes with the Russian Empire, one of its main geopolitical rivals in Europe. Instead, the Brits were waging a "proxy war" using the army of another state to weaken Russia's military might. Later, in 1904-1905 London returned to the methods of "soft" interference in the colonial war of another state, using them against Russia. It supplied the Japanese Navy with intelligence and latest artillery fire control systems. Persia, in fact, was not fighting for its interests and the interests of the Azeris: it was protecting the northern approaches to India, the Jewel in the British Crown (an expression attributed to Disraeli, British prime minister from 1874 to 1881).

At first glance this supposition sounds strange, however there is some grain of truth in it. Today, very much like in

¹³ See: J.W.Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir John Malcolm, from Unpublished Letters and Journals*, in 2 volumes, Vol. 2, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1856, p. 625.

the Soviet Union textbooks on history (even those intended for higher educational establishments), the fact that the Russo-French Treaty of Tilsit created a state of war between Russia and Great Britain is passed over in silence, probably because it did not lead to large-scale confrontations on land. Between November 1807 and July 1812, however, there were several naval battles in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Adriatic, Barents, and Baltic seas. On 3 May, 1808, the British detained Russian sloop *Diana* under Vasily Golovnin, which was headed to the northern Pacific, in Simon's Town in South Africa. On 26 August of the same year, the British sank 74-gun liner *Vsevolod* in Ragerswik Bay (in the territorial waters of contemporary Estonia), as well as three gunboats; on 17 May, 1809, an English squadron (consisting of three liners, four frigates, and one brig) attacked the Russian detachment of five liners, one frigate and two corvettes under Captain 1st rank Ivan Bychevsky in Trieste and had to retreat under counter-pressure from the Russians. A month later, on 12 June, 44-gun British frigate *Salset* overtook Lieutenant Gavril Nevelskoy's 14-gun small ship *Opyt* off Nargen Island. Nevelskoy surrendered only after losing thirteen crew members and all of the ship's guns. The list of similar incidents at sea goes on. The Russian-British naval war stirred up a war between Russia and Sweden on land, which ended in 1809 when Russia joined Finland and the Åland Islands in the Baltics to its domains under the Treaty of Fredrikshamn. Speaking of the Persian-British Tehran Treaty of 12 March, 1809, we have every reason to say that it established a land front of the Russo-British War of 1807-1812 in the Caucasus functioning with British organizational assistance and material aid to Persia. The consequences of the Russo-Swedish War of 1808-1809 and

the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 have a lot in common: Sweden, fighting for British interests, on the land front lost Finland; Persia in similar circumstances lost Azerbaijan.

It should be said that after signing the Uzun-Kilis truce Russia no longer needed the war in the Caucasus: it had acquired more than it expected to get. By late 1806, it had spread its jurisdiction (either legitimate or comparatively legitimate) to Karabakh, Shamakhi, Shaki, Shuragel, Baku, and Talysh, to say nothing of Ganja. This was more than enough to declare the war victorious. The political, military, and strategic situation in Europe demanded Russia's complete attention, which meant that the war in the Caucasus had to be promptly discontinued. After the Uzun-Kilis truce, there were five (!) consecutive attempts to arrive at a peace treaty; the talks started in 1810 and restarted twice in 1812 and 1813. Certain forces behind the scene obviously wanted the war to go on.

External influence is confirmed by the way the Persian army was fighting in the second period of the war (after 1808): Prince Abbas did not push forward to capture the khanates in what is today Northern Azerbaijan; he limited himself to marches and inroads to keep the Russians riveted to the Caucasian front for the longest time possible. It seems that Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza merely wanted to knock together another army of volunteers, give them arms, and push them to fight without bothering about the possible results. They treated the war as a game or a process in which the final aim was unimportant. The Persian rulers were indifferent to the quality of training and battle-worthiness of their armed forces, which was very much inferior to that of the Russians. Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza wanted no changes: they counted on numerical superiority. The Persians, satisfied

with the fairly extensive British military and technical aid they were receiving in 1809-1812, saw no reason to modernize their army or warfare tactics: they remained in the Middle Ages with their inroads, plunder, and capture of slaves. The Russian troops hardened by many years of rebuffing similar tactics of the Crimean khans, the Ottoman Empire, and the North Caucasian mountain people coped without much trouble. Plunder of peaceful people required no tactics, no concerted actions or discipline of the sarbazes — no wonder they stood little chance against Russia's Georgian Corps.

An analysis of the attack on Lenkoran of a unit under Major General Pyotr Kotlyarevsky undertook in the small hours of 1 (13) January, 1813 is the best proof of the above. Normally, the losses of the attacking side are three times higher than those of the defenders. The Russian unit at Lenkoran was 1,761 strong: 6 field officers; 57 subaltern officers, 131 warrant officers, 37 musicians, and 1,530 rank-and-file servicemen; the city was defended by 4,000 sarbazes. The Russian side lost 341 killed and 609 wounded; the Persian losses were 3,737 killed, not counting those who drowned while retreating and civilian losses.¹⁴ Simple calculations show that the attackers lost 12 times fewer people than the Persians behind the city walls, which means that the battle-worthiness of the Russian troops was 36 (!) times higher than of the Persian units. The above suggests that at the second stage, the Qajars systematically exterminated the adult males of the Persian Empire by pushing them into the war for the sake of their ambitions or to fulfill the obligations assumed under treaties with the British and French sponsors.

¹⁴ V.A.Sollogub, *Biografia generala Kotlyarevskogo*, 2nd edition, K. Kray Print shop, St. Petersburg, 1855, pp. 230-233.

Today, some Azeri historians extol Mirza Khan as nothing short of a national hero fighting for the national interests of his people. Is this true? A negative answer is confirmed by the economic conditions of the treaties Persia entered, with his direct involvement, with Britain and France and their negative repercussions for the Empire's population.

Under the Finckenstein Treaty between Persia and France of 4 May, 1807 (also known as *Traktat Kamieniecki*), the shah pledged to end all political and trade relations with Britain, declare a war on it, persuade the Afghans to do the same, move his army into Britain's Indian domains, allow French troops to cross Persia to India, and supply them with food. According to the secret clause added to the Treaty later, when General Gardane's mission reached Tehran on 24 December, 1807, the Persians transferred the Isle of Kerek to Napoleon and gave the French the right to set up military posts in Gomburn and Bushehr. In other words, for the first time in history, Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza allowed a foreign state to set up its extra-territorial military bases in Persian territory. This created a diplomatic and legal precedent used by European colonialists and imperialists to spread their influence far and wide on other countries and peoples without establishing their legal dominance over them. I doubt that what the Qajars did can be described as protection of the national interests of the Persians and Azeri.

The British-Persian agreement was even less adjusted to the interests of Persian sovereignty in the international context. The Tehran Trade Treaty signed by two countries on 29 December, 1800 reconfirmed the privileges bestowed on the Indian and British merchants by members of the Zand dynasty under the 1763 British-Persian Agreement in the form

of the firman of Karim Khan Zand issued on 2 July in Shiraz, which gave the Ost-Indian Company several important rights. These included the right to own land and set up fortified trading stations in Gulf ports (in Bandar-e Bushehr, in particular) and elsewhere in Persia and the right of duty-free trade on the condition that the gold and silver thus earned would remain in Iran to be used to buy Iranian goods. The company received the monopoly right to import woolen fabrics and exempted the people employed by the British trading stations from paying all sorts of taxes and duties, etc. This made Persia the main market for British goods; it also permitted foreign military bases and trading stations to be set up inside the country in free economic areas. In fact, Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza laid the foundations of economic concessions and allowed enterprising foreigners to exploit the natural riches of their country. This policy survived until 1925, the year the Qajars were deposed by Reza Pahlavi amid internal unrest stirred up by foreign domination and foreign intervention. The Revolution of 1357 (the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979) removed the remnants of the policy started by Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza: foreign commercial property was nationalized, concessions liquidated, and natural riches took Islamic state jurisdiction. It took the people of Persia/Iran 170 years to become aware of the negative effects of the economic dependence on foreign capital established by Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza Qajars, while it also took thousands of deaths to cast off the yoke. I wonder what contemporary Azerbaijan would look like if the short-sighted Qajars rather than the brave Russian troops had won the war of 1804-1813?

Behind the Scenes of the Treaty of Gulistan

The Treaty of Gulistan, which ended the mutual enmity of Russia and Persia, was not an act of their free will. To a great extent, it was imposed from the outside, by the British Empire in particular; its role in the war cannot be underestimated. The treaty was brokered by Sir Gore Ouseley, Ambassador of Great Britain and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Persian court, who in June 1812 met Crown Prince Abbas Mirza in Tabriz to persuade him to start another round of peace talks with Russia. London did not want the war to go on, since peace talks between Britain and Russia were going on at full speed in Örebro in Sweden. The treaty was finally signed on 18 July, 1812. Acting under pressure, Abbas Mirza entered into negotiations and hastened to recall his peace initiatives as soon as Napoleon had invaded Russia and captured Moscow. The Russian troops in the Caucasus resumed fighting and routed the Persians at Aslanduz on 19-20 October, 1812; the Persians had no choice but to return to the negotiation table. Late in December, a detachment of Major General Pyotr Kotlyarevsky was sent against the Talysh Khanate across the Mugan steppe to push the Persians toward a peace treaty. In the small hours of 1 January, 1813, the Russians, having destroyed an enemy three times superior in numbers to it, took Lenkoran by storm. On 30 March, 1813, Colonel of the Tiflis Infantry Regiment Andrey Pestel routed a unit led by Hosein Qoli Khan Sardar Qajar, the last battle-worthy Persian unit in the Caucasus, in Karabük, on the border between Nakhchivan and Erivan. This proved to be the final straw: Abbas Mirza sent his representatives supervised by Sir Gore Ouseley to start preliminary talks on the peace treaty.

The British diplomat wrote the text of the treaty. He was probably the best expert in Persia among his British colleagues: for several years he had served as interpreter for the Persian Ambassador to London Mirza Abul Hasan Khan; on 10 March, 1810 he was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Britain at the Persian court. On 18 June, he left for Persia accompanied by his wife and brother William. He travelled together with the British diplomatic mission and Mirza Abul Hasan Khan. In April 1811, he reached Shiraz. In November 1811, Sir Gore Ouseley arrived in Tehran and was given audience with Fath Ali Shah. On 14 March, 1812, after prolonged and vehement discussions, he finally persuaded the shah to sign a treaty with Britain, his efforts rewarded with an Order of the Lion and Sun set in diamonds.¹⁵ In 1812, Caucasian Governor General Nikolay Rtishchev twice, in August and September, invited the Persians through his representatives (first Major Popov and Court Councilor Freygang and later Commander of the 19th Infantry Division Major General F.Akhverdov) to resume the peace talks. Both times, the British-Persian team — Mirza Abdul Qasim, Sir Gore Ouseley, and Robert Gordon — refused; they wanted Russia to leave the Transcaucasus without preliminary conditions.¹⁶ By that time, however, the news about the Örebro Peace Treaty between Russia and Great Britain had reached Tabriz, transforming Sir Gore Ouseley from a Russophobe into a Russophile. A typical Brit,

¹⁵ See: W.Price, *Journal of the British Embassy to Persia, embellished with numerous views taken in India and Persia, also, a Dissertation upon the Antiquates of Persepolis*, London, 1825, pp. 84-86.

¹⁶ *Utverzhdenie Russkogo vladychestva na Kavkaze: 1801-1901*, Vol. 2, pp. 426, 428.

he continued to insist on a peace treaty with the same ardor he had wanted the war to continue. He passionately wanted Persia to lose the talks in the same way as he had passionately wanted Russia to lose the war. He went to Tiflis to discuss the conditions to be imposed on the Persian court with Rtishchev. Much later, on 1 March, 1848, Prime Minister of Britain Palmerstone clarified the British tactics before the House of Commons: “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual.”

The honor of formulating the main principles of the Treaty of Gulistan, the central of them being *status quo ad praesentem* (which drew new borders along the borders of the lands occupied by Russia) belongs to Sir Gore Ouseley. Persia had to reconcile itself to the loss to Russia of Dagh-estan, Kartli, Kakheti, Megrelia, Imeretia, Guria, Abkhazia, and parts of contemporary Azerbaijan: the Baku, Karabakh, Ganja, Shirvan, Shaki, Derbent, and Quba khanates, as well as part of the territory of the Talysh Khanate. In the summer of 1814, Sir Gore Ouseley’s diplomatic services to Russia (he had prepared the text of the peace treaty) were rewarded with an audience with Emperor Alexander I, as well as an Order of St. Alexander of Neva and a gold snuff-box set in diamonds and embellished with a portrait of the Russian emperor. He was elected Honorary Member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and received thanks from the State Collegium of the Foreign Ministry.¹⁷ In 1825, a book by William Price, secretary and interpreter at the Persian embassy of Sir Gore, called *Journal of the British Embassy to Persia, embellished with numerous views taken in India and Persia, also, a Dissertation upon the Antiquates of Persepolis* was published

¹⁷ See: W. Price, op. cit., pp. 112, 114.

in London, in which he revealed the twists and turns of the diplomatic games played during the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813 and the intrigues of Great Britain to fan and, later, quench the fire of war. Unlike Russia, Britain made no secrets about its diplomatic victories.

Despite his exceptionally important role in signing the Gulistan Treaty, Sir Gore was mainly acting on orders from Sir Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh, Marquess of Londonderry, the true architect of British foreign policy in Hither Asia, who filled the post of Secretary of State for War and the Colonies in 1807-1812 and Foreign Secretary in 1812-1822. It was his idea to wage “proxy wars” against Napoleon and his allies, pushing third countries into the fighting while preserving the British troops and developing Great Britain’s military industry. He was not alien to military provocations and started wars without announcement (the war against Denmark that started on 14 August and ended on 21 September, 1807 is the best known among them). The Ouseley mission was an initiative of the Secretary for War and the Colonies; he kept the supplies of British weapons to the Qajars under control; he was behind the U-turn in the way Russia was treated in the Caucasus after the Örebro Peace Treaty was signed in July 1812.

Sir Robert Stewart and Sir Gore Ouseley were true British diplomats: the preliminary text of the Gulistan Treaty allowed a revision of the results of the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813. Art 4 of the Treaty related the final decision on the borderline between Russia and Persia in the Caucasus to a bilateral commission on border delimitation, but said nothing of its members and set no dates. Lieutenant General Nikolay Rtishchev, head of the Russian Caucasian Administration and

promoted to Infantry General in reward for his services related to the peace treaty, could not have failed to notice this “delayed action mine,” but was not in a position to defuse it. By that time, Russia did not have enough battleworthy troops to continue fighting — in 1813, each of the Russian infantry regiments stationed in the Caucasus had 200 to 250 bayonets and 10-15 officers. Persia, deprived of British military and technical support because of the war in Europe, was equally powerless to go on with the war. It had to accept the provisions, which nurtured the hope that the border disagreements might develop into *casus belli*. The Treaty of Gulistan suspended rather than stopped the war in the Caucasus. It never brought peace there.

The Russian-Persian demarcation commission completed its mission in 1818 thanks to the Tabriz mission of Commander of the Caucasian Corps General of Artillery Alexey Ermolov. The official text of the treaty was published shortly afterwards. Persia, supported and encouraged by Great Britain, spent the four years that separated the treaty from the final demarcation in a frantic effort to revise its conditions and restore the 1801 borders. In other words, Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza were prepared to exchange the territory of contemporary Georgia for restored Persian jurisdiction over the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan. Alexey Ermolov, a general whose name became known during the wars with Napoleon, proved to be a valiant defender of Russia’s interests in the Caucasus: it was thanks to him that the borders of the Russian occupation zone were not pushed northward. The former Talysh Khanate, divided between Persia and Russia, was affected more than the other lands: its northern part, together with Lenkoran, became part of the Russian Empire,

while its southern part, together with Astara, remained in Persia.¹⁸

London profited from the mutual territorial claims and disagreements over borders to gain a tighter grip on the Qajars. On 25 November, 1814, Britain and Persia signed another treaty, this time “on perpetual peace” based on the preliminary treaty of 12 March, 1809. Under its conditions, Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza pledged to annul all the treaties and alliances Persia had with European countries hostile to Britain; they promised not to allow the European powers to cross Persian territory into India and to force the rulers of Khorezm, Bukhara, and Samarkand to do the same. Moreover, the treaty obliged the Qajars to send Persian troops to help the Brits in the event of a war between Afghanistan and British India and to invite military instructors from Britain or its allies. Great Britain, in turn, promised its support to Persia if it was attacked by a European country (for geographic reasons the choice was limited to Russia) either by sending troops or extending financial support of 200 thousand to-mans every year. London promised to insist on a revision of the Russo-Persian border legalized by the Treaty of Gulistan, not to interfere in the domestic affairs of Persia or its possible war with Afghanistan, and not to occupy any part of its territory. The treaty on “perpetual peace” of 1814 was spearheaded at Russia; it was prompted by the desire of Foreign Secretary Sir Robert Stewart to keep Russia as far away from British India as possible. In fact, in the first quarter of the 19th cen-

¹⁸ See: *Obozrenie rossiyskikh vladений za Kavkazom v statisticheskoy, etnograficheskoy, topograficheskoy i finansovoy otnosheniakh*, in 3 volumes, Vol. 3, Print shop of the Department of State-owned Lands, St. Petersburg, 1836, pp. 175-176.

ture, the British establishment was indifferent either to contradictions between Russia and Persia or to the future of the khanates of Northern Azerbaijan: it was solely concerned about the safety of its rich Indian colonies, which it was determined to exploit for the sake of world domination of the British crown. This is what the Treaty of Gulistan was about.

The 200th anniversary of the Treaty of Gulistan provides us with a good opportunity to reassess its place and the events that predated it in the historical destiny of the contemporary Azeri nation. I will not engage in primitive deliberations about whether the Qajars were Azeri or autochthonous Persian rulers of contemporary Iran. Likewise, it is useless (or even stupid) to talk about alternative variants of regional and world history. It is useless to try to imagine what would have happened if back in 1812 Persia, supported by Britain, had defeated Russia and moved closer to the Greater Caucasus Range. History tolerates no “ifs.” Today, Russian and Azeri historians should join their British, French, and Iranian colleagues to write a true history of the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813. The following facts should be accepted as a starting point.

The Russo-Persian war of 1804-1813 was a logical product of the processes and trends of European geopolitics of the early 19th century fed, to a great extent, by Britain’s colonial policy in India and neighboring Central Asian states. In fact, for ten years, Persia fought Russia not for its Azeri domains in the Caucasus, but for Britain’s interests in India. The Russian and British empires were not interested in Azerbaijan and its people: the former wanted to destroy and the latter to preserve its monopoly over use of the riches of India. Persia

was nothing but the shortest overland route to India and a door that Britain wanted to keep closed, while Russia wanted it open. St. Petersburg took advantage of the discontent of the majority of the Azeri khans (Karabakh, Shirvan, and Talysh) with the policies of Crown Prince Abbas in the Azeri lands. He did not live long enough to become the shah, a status he wanted more than anything else in order to step out of the shadow of his royal father.

Abbas Mirza was one of the tragic figures of the time: with no significance and no power he wanted to prove to himself and others that he had both. Hence his readiness to “play at war” with Russia in defiance of common sense, morality, and Persia’s national interests. He did not stop at setting up (for the first time in world history) extraterritorial foreign military bases and transferring the management rights of the most profitable economic and trade branches to the British or the French. The senseless war with Russia destroyed the country’s economy to the extent that it was left without money, weapons, and even cloth for uniforms. Persia found itself in the trap of European (mainly British) concessions, from which it was unable to free itself for another 150 years. The Iranian people had to carry out the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979 to finally rid themselves of the poisoned heritage of the Qajars. Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza are personally responsible for the loss of Northern Azerbaijan and economic independence. It was Great Britain that profited most from the Russo-Persian war of 1804-1813 formally won by the Russian Empire.

Azerbaijan was a chess-board on which the grand-masters of the time, indifferent to the moods and fates of the local peoples, played their geopolitical gambits and end-games.

The Azeri people became a divided people, but the responsibility should not be heaped on Russia alone. It should be shared among Moscow and St. Petersburg, Tehran and Tabriz, London and Delhi, as well as Shusha, Shamakhi, Nukha, and Lenkoran.

There is another aspect of the Treaty of Gulistan, named after the place where it was signed back in 1813. Today, the village of this name is found in the Goranboy District of Azerbaijan, dangerously close to the line that separates the armed forces of the Azerbaijan Republic and the separatists of Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, the 200th anniversary of this treaty cannot be celebrated at the place where it was signed. So the Treaty of Gulistan is related to two armed conflicts: the war that ended 200 years ago and the conflict that has been going on for 20 years now.

The Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: Is It a “Clash of Civilizations”?

How Samuel Huntington’s Theory Explains Its Culturological Dimension

Samuel Phillips Huntington (1927-2008) is one of the outstanding political and social thinkers of recent times, whose theoretical contribution to our understanding of geopolitical processes is beyond comparison. His theory of the clash of civilizations presented to the public in the form of an article “The Clash of Civilizations?”, which appeared in 1993 in *Foreign Affairs*, an American journal of political science,¹ and later extended to a historical-philosophical monograph *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* published in 1996,² was an ideal model and real pattern of comprehensive and unbiased understanding of the sources, the driving forces behind and development prospects for the absolute majority of regional (local) wars and conflicts of the last quarter of the 20th century, including the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

¹ See: S.P.Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

² See: S.P.Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996.

Strange as it may seem, during the twenty-five years of open confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas, the political scientists in both countries have made no attempt to analyze the sources, nature, and possible repercussions of the conflict from the point of view of a civilizational-culturological approach within the framework of Huntington’s theory. They have had every opportunity to do this, but in the last two decades there have been no political scientific works (to say nothing of Ph.D. and doctoral theses) in Russian carrying an analysis of the Armenian and Azeri positions in the Karabakh war of 1991-1994 and its follow-up in the region in the context of the clash of civilizations theory. I can offer two explanations: either no one in Armenia and Azerbaijan was able to undertake this analysis, or the conclusions of such efforts proved to be too “unpalatable” for either side to be published.

It is my turn to fill in the gap.

Nagorno-Karabakh: A Fault Line War

It is commonly believed that the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is a conflict between two antagonistic civilizations — Armenian and Azeri — even though the nationalist-minded Armenian intelligentsia refuses to accept this. They consistently deny that the Azeri ethnicity has the right to national self-identity as a very specific social organism and dismiss its members as “Caucasian Turks.” There is nothing new in this; it is an echo of the official position of the Russian Empire which, at the turn of the 20th century (that is, a century ago) refused to treat the Azeris as an ethnicity in their own right and insisted on the term Transcaucasian Tatars. The fact

that some Armenians deny the right of the Azeris to ethnicity is the best proof that the confrontation between these two nations is civilizational (cultural-ideological) rather than socio-economic and political.

Samuel Huntington used the term “fault line war” to describe conflicts similar to that around Nagorno-Karabakh and discussed them in Chapters 10 and 11 of his book. It should be said that the variety of causes and multitude of reasons behind this conflict are much greater than behind any other local conflict or sluggish regional war of our time (this is true of the confrontation between the Christians of the south and the Muslims of the north of Sudan, which has been going on for a long time; the same applies to the Israeli-Arab confrontation in the Middle East). The fault line between the sides in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is much deeper than in any typical conflict between states or peoples represented by the Afghan war the Soviet Union waged in 1979-1989, the Falkland War between the U.K. and Argentina in 1982, or even the 1991 Storm in the Desert operation of the multinational coalition in the Gulf against Iraq. The gap is much deeper than it looks to a superficial observer, the fire being maintained by a much larger number of factors, more on which will be discussed below.

Huntington proceeded from the thesis that in the near future religion will become the main driving force behind civilizational clashes. This is true — to a certain extent. He compared the present “clashes of religions” with the previous epochs of “clashes of ideologies” of the second-fourth quarters of the 20th century and did not go further. In the past, religious wars occurred on the fault line between Christianity and Islam (the Crusades of the 11th-15th centuries, the Re-

conquista in Spain in the 8th-15th centuries; and the wars the Ottoman Turks waged in Southern and Eastern Europe in the 14th-17th centuries). This does not mean, however, that the wars inside the Christian or Muslim worlds were free from religious overtones: in the 13th century the Baltic peoples were baptized in the course of what looked very much like another crusade; the military inroads of Swedish and Teutonic knights into northwestern Russia in 1240-1242 were, in part, confrontations between Orthodox Christians and Catholics over domination in the eastern Baltic lands. The Reformation wars in Europe between the Catholics and Protestants went on and on for over a century with short respites, while the Persians and Ottoman Turks fought for several decades over the rights of the Caliphate. Religious hues were added to play down the economic reasons invariably present in all wars; this means that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, likewise, cannot be reduced to a religious war of Armenian Christians against their eternal foe, the Muslim Turks. This is how ideologists from among the activists of ARF Dashnaktsutiun (who speak of all Azeris as Muslim Turks) describe the conflict.

For two reasons, however, this conflict defies this description. Correctly grasped and correctly interpreted they point to the deepest sources of this civilizational confrontation.

First, from the very first days of its independence proclaimed in 1918, the Azerbaijan Republic has been a secular state; it outstripped in this respect not only the Turkish Republic, but also all countries of the Islamic ecumene. Throughout the 20th century the Muslim factor was present in the life of the country and the nation as a culturological rather than political factor and could not, therefore, affect state life. The contemporary Azeri variant of secular (non-po-

litical) Islam demonstrates loyalty, tolerance, and non-conflict relations with other religions and cultures. In this respect it differs greatly from the Arab-Maghreb variant of political Islam (in the last few decades it ignited wars and fed violence and hatred in the Middle East and North Africa; recently it moved to Western Europe).

Second, over the last century, the Armenians have been building their country as we see it now without relying on Monophysite Christianity, the official religion, but by delving deeper into the past, to the pagan roots of their national mentality. In the mid-19th century, the cults of pagan deities Vahagn, Mihr, Anahid, and Hayk, the legendary forefather of the Armenians who entered a contract with supreme deity Ara (from whom he received the staff of power and strength), co-existed in the nation's spiritual and public life with Christian Gregorian religious rites, the attributes of which were very close to pagan. In their time, Russian historians of the Caucasus and ethnographers pointed to this similarity.³ This is explained by the fact that throughout the entire period when Armenians were scattered across the Muslim ecumene, the Armenian Apostolic Church was an administrative instrument on which the Armenians relied in their dealings with the powers of the corresponding titular nations. The Church was part of the unshakeable world order and de facto part of the system in which the Armenians depended on the Muslim peoples. This explains why it was not and could not be either a revolutionary, or even an evolutionary force behind the Armenians' national-self-identification process. For obvious reasons this identity should be placed on a cornerstone very

³ See, for example: N.F.Dubrovin, *Istoria voinny i vladychestva russkikh na Kavkaze*, in 8 volumes, Vol. 2, St. Petersburg, 1871, pp. 409-410.

different from the religious ideology of the Armenian Gregorian Church.

Late in the 19th and throughout the 20th centuries, political self-identification of the Armenians proceeded from paganism or neo-paganism rather than from Christian morals and ethics. This process gained momentum under Soviet power. It was instigated by the leaders of the Armenian S.S.R., who used legends about Greater Armenia, the Old Armenian Kingdom, the Armenian State of Urartu, and other myths as trump cards in the ideological struggle against the ideologues of the Armenian diaspora in the bourgeois and Third World countries. They looked at Soviet Armenia as a reincarnation of Greater Armenia and the center of attraction for all Armenians. In view of the anticlerical nature of Soviet ideology and, therefore, of the ideology of the Armenian S.S.R., the Armenian Gregorian Church could not serve as an ideological center for the Armenian ethnicity. This explains why pagan legends and myths of the Armenian forefathers (proto-Armenians) and the points of view of social evolution that corresponded to the archetypes of the ideology of the clan and tribal period were permitted (and used) as an archetypical foundation of the ideology “Armenians of all countries, unite!” under the red banner of the U.S.S.R.⁴ This ex-

⁴ In view of a possible negative response from the Armenian academic community, let me explain. The world of antiquity of Southeastern Europe and Hither Asia as well as the Hellenic world of the Mediterranean were pagan and yet the first empires (from the Macedonian Kingdom of Alexander the Great to the Roman Empire of Caesar Augustus and Octavianus Augustus) were built on the social foundations of paganism. At the early stages of human civilization, paganism was a state-forming ideology, the role which later belonged to Christianity and Islam. Before he baptized Rus in 988, Grand Prince St. Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles (Grand Prince of Kiev Vladimir Svyatoslavovich), tried to build a united

plains why the religious fault line between the Armenians and Azeris in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is much deeper and much harder to negotiate than it might seem because it divides not a religious or confessional but a mental-ideological space.

This means that the intellectual foundations of the ideological component of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict do not belong to the level of contradictions between Islam and Christianity, but go much deeper, to the level of comprehension of the world beyond the canonical traditions of the world religions. The political identity of the contemporary Armenian ethnicity extends beyond the moral laws and canons of the Armenian Gregorian confession; it is rooted in the legends and myths of pre-Christian times, which is amply confirmed by the materials and designs of the Internet resources of the Armenian International or Hay Dat; they operate under the ideological impact of extremist slogans of the Armenian Revolutionary Faction Dashnaktsutiun. The site www.k4500.com in the Russian sector of the Internet is a typical example of these resources. It functions under the slogan “Know! Know How! Dare!” that Dashnaktsutiun brought into political practice. Nothing is said about Christ and His death on the cross to redeem mankind; there is not a word about the Gospels or Christianity in general, while the main accent in visualization is on Ara, the world creator, Vahagn, the Armenian deity of fire and war, Hayk, the forefather of Armenians who received the staff of power from Ara, and the battle between Hayk and Bel, king of Babylon, which took place on 11 August, 2492 B.C. on the eastern shore of Lake Van (Hayots Dzor). This removes all doubts: political self-awareness of the contem-

Old Russian state on the pagan ideas and even created, in 980, a pantheon of pagan deities common to all the Eastern Slavs, starting with Perun and ending with Simargl.

porary Armenian ethnicity is far removed from the publicly declared common Christian or Armenian Gregorian religious self-awareness.

This means that either the Armenians were never Christians throughout their history in the canonical sense of this definition and the Armenian Apostolic Church served as a screen behind which Armenian paganism was concealed from the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians (since the 19th century), or that the politically active and extremist minded part of the Armenians, disappointed with the ability of their Church to fully express their spiritual needs and hopes, turned to neo-paganism. These people were appealing to pagan archetypes of national self-awareness to build their political ideology. The truth of this is not guaranteed since both theses rely on argumentation of their own. If the second argument is true, the fact that the nation turned to the ideology of neo-paganism shows that the political establishment of the Armenian ethnicity is highly aggressive. The degree of its psychological aggressiveness can be compared with the degree exhibited by the leaders of the Third Reich in the 1930s, with the only difference that the Nazis geared their aggression against the Jews, while the Armenians geared theirs against the Turks (the ideologists of contemporary Armenian nationalism call Azeris “Caucasian Turks”). This means that the exaltation with which the Armenians do this and which has already manifested itself in recent history (the Khojaly massacre) and may cause new geopolitical upheavals is much more lamentable than the fact that the Armenians are sliding back toward paganism (a trend typical of many nations today).

Vahagn, the Armenian god of fire and war, who is actively cultivated by the ideologists of ARF Dashnaksutiun and

Hay Dat, the worldwide Armenian International, is identical in written form and pronunciation to the name of Baal, the god of all Semites, who in the Christian tradition is Satan's brother and broke away with him from God the Father. Placed in this context, Armenian neo-paganism makes the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (from the culturological viewpoint) eschatologically tinged, or a precursor of Doomsday. In this conflict, the Azeri side (both in the light of Christian and Islamic metaphysics) represents Light, while the Armenians represent Evil. An opposite interpretation of the metaphysical roots of the Armenian-Azeri confrontation is also possible from the position of Armenian paganism, in the context of which the Muslims are associated with Babylon tyrant Bel killed by Hayk, the forefather of Armenians (on the whole, this story is very close to the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel). This brings us to the limits of metaphysics where it borders on eschatology with opposite signs: the Armenians represent Light, while the Turks and Azeris represent Darkness.

Irrespective of the eschatological signs, this aspect moves the civilizational conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh far beyond the framework of Huntington's "fault line war" between two world religions and adds the pathos of the universal struggle between Good and Evil. Each of the sides involved sees itself as an instrument of Good; in this case the Armenians' archetypal mentality plays a much more important role than the religious mentality of the Azeris. Traditionally secular, they tend to look at the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a conflict between states or nations, but not eschatological as it appears to or, at least, is publicly declared to be by the radical Armenian political neo-pagans.

In the context of our discussion of deeply-rooted archetypical stereotypes of national self-awareness of ethnicities, we should pay attention to a fundamentally important circumstance, i.e. the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict bears imprints of the millennia-old confrontation between the Semites and Aryans. It appeared in the Old Testament times when the Babylonians and then the Romans conquered the Middle East and North Africa and has been present in world history ever since. As distinct from the events that took place four thousand years ago, today it is the descendants of the Semites, not of the Aryans, who are the aggressors. Seen from this position, contemporary geopolitics shows that at the turn of the 21st century the Semitic peoples exhibited much more passion and aggression, amply confirmed by the never-ending troubles people from Arab countries stir up in Europe and the never-ending wars in the Middle East. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is an inalienable part of these geopolitical processes and is, in fact, a “war of retribution” of the Armenian Semites against the Azeri Aryans. The interest of the Armenians in this war is encouraged (deliberately or not) by the radically minded national intelligentsia; it relies on the religious-eschatological ideas of neo-paganism cultivated among co-tribesmen scattered all over the world. This is how it looks to an Orthodox Christian. The above can be summed up by saying that the smoldering Armenian-Azeri confrontation around Nagorno-Karabakh is a vivid and classical example of a clash of civilizations. The fault line is much deeper and, therefore, much harder to negotiate than a religious fault line. It runs across five spheres: state, national, religious, cultural, and racial; this makes the Karabakh conflict very different from any other war known to mankind.

The Dominants of the Conflict

The active phase of the Karabakh war (1991-1994) and its “smoldering” continuation was not a war between states since in Nagorno-Karabakh the army and the police of Azerbaijan fought not the army of the Republic of Armenia but organized forces of local separatists and international terrorists, among whom were Armenian servicemen from the regular forces of the United Armed Forces of the CIS and mercenaries from the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. This was an intervention of the coalition forces of the Armenian International, or Hay Dat, organized by ARF Dashnaksutiun, which assumed all sorts of hypostases and reincarnations, the most prominent among them being the notorious ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) which moved to the fore in the last quarter of the 20th century.

Aggression of the international Armenian forces against the Azeris of Nagorno-Karabakh was not a colonial war either in its classical or contemporary interpretation, that is, a war for natural resources or living space. After winning, the Armenians acquired neither new sources of raw materials nor new consumer markets; this victory did not change the vector or balance of trade and economic relations. This is especially true of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, which still exhibit many features of a feudal natural economy. In the last two decades, occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and its military, administrative, and economic infrastructure has cost the Armenians dearly; the investors gained nothing — neither money nor even minimal dividends.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is not a civil war, nor is it a traditional war for self-identification (an anti-colonial war). The Armenian separatists of Artsakh show no desire to isolate the territory (liberated or conquered) they control. They are actively invading the political and economic space of Armenia and the neighboring countries with deeply rooted Armenian diasporas (Russia, Ukraine, and Abkhazia in particular). For this reason the Armenian side treats the conflict as part of military and economic expansion, a colonial cold war of sorts, to spread its geopolitical domination and economic dominance across the Transcaucasus, the Caucasus, and even Hither Asia as a whole.

Neither Armenia nor Artsakh profited from the victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict either in the foreign policy and military-strategic or economic spheres. The international community, as represented by U.N. institutions, looks at the Armenians as aggressors, occupants, and interventionists; this hypothetically may produce sanctions against Artsakh, non-existent twenty years ago when the war was still going on (no-flight zone over Armenia and Artsakh or arms and dual technologies embargo). In any case, any rational-minded observer can say that the war cost Armenia and the Armenians dearly, while the gains were minimal; and it will cost even more in future. This means that as seen from Erevan the conflict is of political and ideological, rather than of military and economic importance. This also means that the term “identity war” (Huntington) is fully applicable. In plain words, the Armenians started the war to preserve their national identity.

Armenian Identity

The Armenians are one of the few peoples, the majority of whom live beyond the borders of their state (that is, beyond the borders of the Republic of Armenia). In other words, the numerical strength of the Armenian diaspora, the members of which have no citizenship in what is called “the historical homeland,” is much larger than the population of this state. Some ethnographers think that it is impossible to arrive at an exact number of Armenians because they are scattered all over the world, however approximate assessments (up to a hundred of thousands) are possible. I think that a figure of about 11.5 million is more or less correct; today, the population of Armenia is under three million, a quarter of the total number of Armenians in the world.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a unifying factor indispensable for consolidating the ethnicity scattered all over the world. We should bear in mind the historical conditions in which it was started: in the Soviet Union the citizens of Soviet Armenia and Armenians from other countries were divided by an iron curtain that created an ideological abyss between two communities of the same ethnicity. For a long time, the Armenians in the Soviet Union were guided by moral values and social landmarks very different from those that guided the Armenians in Lebanon, Syria, the U.S., and France. Disintegration of the Soviet Union and the national statehood of the former Soviet Armenians made their prompt integration into the worldwide Armenian community a priority, since the numerical strength of the diaspora has exceeded and exceeds the size of the Armenian population living in the Republic of Armenia. Armenia and the diaspora had to unite. The war

over Artsakh (called the Karabakh war of 1991-1994 in recent history) was the main driving force. Indeed, post-Soviet Armenia with its weak economic and social infrastructure (in many places there is no running water) stood little chance without Artsakh of attracting money from the Armenian diaspora in the volumes that arrive today. In fact, the Karabakh war became the ticket for the former Soviet Armenians (in Armenia and Karabakh) to the world Armenian community. Today, Artsakh is Armenia's main instrument for extracting investments or subventions from the diaspora in order to maintain relative financial stability and wellbeing. This means that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be preserved, in its present smoldering state, for as long as possible.

Armenia is a recipient country that lives on financial aid from abroad. The main source of its financial wellbeing, besides its own GDP, is regular donations from international Armenian NGOs which, in turn, collect donations from the Armenian diaspora to keep their “historical homeland” afloat. This brings Armenia up to \$10 billion every year. In other words, Armenia is not self-sufficient and, therefore, not a completely sovereign state; to go on living it needs outside help from the Armenian lobbies in other countries, the members of which are citizens of these countries. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia around Nagorno-Karabakh would have been settled long ago in full conformity with international law if the Armenian diaspora or its financial elite needed this. A settlement could have been achieved by suspending financial aid for several months. Nothing of the sort was done and nothing is being done; this means that there are extra-economic reasons behind the seemingly unjustified spending.

An answer to the question of why the sluggish Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is vitally important for the top crust of the Armenian diaspora would have explained why this seat of international tension in the Caucasus is seemingly irrationally preserved in its present state. It seems that these people regard Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) as an Ark of sorts, which in the near future will serve as a heaven amid the upcoming global geopolitical transformations and metamorphoses. Active Islamization of Europe and radicalization of political Islam in Hither Asia and the Balkans, which we have been watching for two decades now, are narrowing down the range of political impacts and related financial possibilities of the Armenian diaspora in the traditional countries — Syria, Lebanon, France, and the Balkan states. The dwindling numerical strength of the titular population groups in the main European countries and the growing share of Muslim immigrants from Africa and Asia (mainly from the Maghreb), together with the aggressive promotion of so-called liberal values there (unconditionally rejected by the Christian traditionalists and Islamic fundamentalists), will very soon exacerbate all social contradictions and add vigor to the social and political activity of the followers of fundamentalist religions, Christian Orthodoxy, and Islam in particular.

In twenty years' time, that is, one generation later, Western Europe will become completely Islamized. If events unfold according to the Bosnian, radical, scenario, the decline of the West (which Spengler predicted in 1918 in his book of the same title) will cause irreversible and relatively prompt removal of two ethnic and religious minorities (Armenians and Jews) traditionally hostile toward Muslims from the continent. This may happen to the European Christians too; they,

however, will have Russia as a safe place (probably if and when they publicly declare their devotion to the traditional Christian values). The Jews can count on Israel and the United States; while the European Armenians will be sheltered in the United States, Russia, and Ukraine with their strong Armenian diasporas, or in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) as the second Ark. This explains the lavish, and strategically important, funding by the Armenian diaspora of the continued Armenian presence in Karabakh via the Republic of Armenia, the building of an international airport in Khankendi that will receive large airliners, the unyielding position of Erevan at the talks on the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement at all levels, and the provocations of all sorts connected in one way or another with Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian presence there. Resettlement of Armenians from Syria has already begun to test the exodus mechanism.

Armenians and Artsakh

Huntington wrote that “fault line wars go through processes of intensification, expansion, containment, interruption, and, rarely, resolution. These processes usually begin sequentially, but they also often overlap and may be repeated. Once started, fault line wars, like other communal conflicts, tend to take on a life of their own and to develop in an action-reaction pattern. Identities which had previously been multiple and casual become focused and hardened; communal conflicts are appropriately termed ‘identity wars’.”⁵ He hinted that fault line wars (the Nagorno-Karabakh con-

⁵ S.P.Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, p. 432.

flict belongs to this category) never reach resolution all by themselves since each of the sides (or one of them) interprets continued awareness of a war (even if not the war itself) as an expression of its national identity. In Armenians, the demonstration of national identity in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is most open and most impulsive: no Armenian is recognized as such by other Armenians if he admits that Nagorno-Karabakh (the second Ark of the Armenians) is legally Azeri, not Armenian, territory. This is easily explained by geopolitical reality: in the mid-term perspective the Armenians have no choice but to regard Artsakh as the Promised Land.

This calls for a profound psychological analysis of the Armenians' attitude toward the conflict; in other words, we must turn to ethnopsychology.

Many Russian ethnographers and memoir writers pointed to the practically pathological greediness of the Transcaucasian Armenians as one of their most prominent immanent features; their striving for material wealth, however, never conflicted with religious ethics. They are not merely closefisted — they are misers; for the smallest profit they are ready to go far, to what borders on, but does not violate, ethnic and religious prohibitions.⁶ Translated into academic parlance this means that Armenians at all times and in all circumstances have been guided and are guided by their private or selfish interests both in their relations with individuals and with society; they, however, keep within their traditional norms of religious ethics.

I have already written that throughout the centuries the Armenians have been inspired and kept together by the es-

⁶ See, for example: N.F.Dubrovin, *op. cit.*, pp. 405-406.

chatological dream of national statehood (either in the form of a revived theocratic Old Armenian Kingdom or a bourgeois Greater Armenia republic). Disintegration of the Soviet Union, which gave the Armenians a chance to set up the Republic of Armenia, deprived them, by the same token, of the irrational meaning of their collective national-religious existence. In the late 1980s, amid the turmoil of perestroika, Armenian fighters from the Middle East, Europe, and the United States moved to Armenia in great numbers to fight for the national idea against the Soviet troops. Later, when there were no longer Soviet troops in the Transcaucasus, they became the main striking force of the Armenian separatists of Nagorno-Karabakh. I do not mean to say that the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was an accidental war. The Karabakh war of 1991-1994 was the logical outcome of the natural death of the ethnoreligious eschatological ideological dominant of Greater Armenia reincarnated. It died as the result of its practical implementation. If you like, this war was a product of the Armenians' collective idea of reinstating Greater Armenia.

Strange as it may seem, the newly acquired national statehood deprived the Armenians and the thinkers among them — the nationalist-minded intelligentsia — of the meaning of social existence. The dream disappeared together with the meaning of life. The fate of Paruyr Hayrikyan, dissident No. 1 in Soviet Armenia in the 1970s, may serve as a good example. He fought energetically and sincerely against the Soviet Union, then in post-Soviet times became a political outcast (in fact, he was an outcast in Soviet times) for most of his compatriots. This was the tragedy of a man who, inspired by an idea, proved in real life not to be the man he imagined

himself to be, and found this hard to accept. The Republic of Armenia, which in the twinkling of an eye stopped being a dream and became harsh reality, left an intellectual and emotional vacuum in the minds of those who for many years had been inspired by it. The loss, to use a psychological term, of a dominant constellation or motivation for action caused frustration which, to be cured, required a fundamentally new eschatological idea. The war over Nagorno-Karabakh, which the Armenians anticipated as a triumph after the triumph, became this idea.

Despite the obvious military-technical success in the war, the Armenians suffered a crushing psychological defeat, which was very obvious to the nation's more rationally minded members. The creative and therefore fundamentally collectivist idea of Greater Armenia was replaced with a negative and therefore hopeless idea of a defensive war on the Karabakh front. In fact, this is an even gloomier and even more hopeless idea of survival in extreme conditions that people created for themselves; this is a situation in which man is left alone to come to grips with no matter what might happen. So far, the idea has meant something to its creators — the middle and older generations of Armenians; it says nothing to their children and grandchildren; this much is amply shown by the contacts of young Armenians in the social networking services.

Very much like their fathers and grandfathers, young Armenians are enthusiastic nationalists; they are more determined than their ancestors to divide the world into “us” and “them.” They are intoxicated by the fact that Armenians live not only in Hither Asia, Europe, and North America, but have reached Australia, Oceania, Central Africa, and even Japan

and China with their alien mentalities. This means that the younger generation of Armenians is no longer interested in its “historical homeland”: today, the diaspora has become a center of attraction for the subjective interests of the younger generation and a dream reincarnated. They no longer associate their personal future with Armenia, its ideal has lost its former luster; young minds are concerned about the alternatives and possibilities of joining the diaspora; young souls have been conquered by the Wandering Jew. The pendulum of history has started moving in the opposite direction — Armenians have begun scattering all over the world, away from the ideal of Greater Armenia; they have started moving; this means that fairly soon the Republic of Armenia will weaken. I am not talking about next year or in two years’ time; this will happen in the mid-term perspective, in the next decade. Armenia’s economy and politics will slide down into stagflation — permanent stagnation, plummeting standards of living, and a gradual loss of all former values.

Armenia and Karabakh, to an even greater degree, will remain a distant moral ideal for the younger generation, which they are light-heartedly and remorselessly prepared to exchange for material wellbeing in the Armenian quarters of Glendale and Hollywood, Montebello or Burbank in the United States, Toronto or Montreal in Canada, to say nothing about Russia’s South, Moscow, or St. Petersburg. The Armenian diaspora will collect money to help the Armenians in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, using, on numerous occasions, the state or local budgets of the countries and regions where they live (for example, since 2008, the Haut-de-Seine department, the General Council of which is headed by ethnic Armenian Patrick Devedjian, has been sponsoring the deve-

lopment of the communal infrastructure in agricultural areas of Armenia at the expense of French taxpayers). This money will be a compensation of sorts; it will buy the right to call oneself an Armenian and enjoy the related benefits without being a citizen of the Republic of Armenia and not living in it or Nagorno-Karabakh.

Current globalization has deprived the religious mystical idea of Greater Armenia of its ideological consequence of the continued existence of the Armenian ethnicity as a whole; it has become the ideology of a closed elite club of those who have power and money and who are ready to earn more doing business with their ilk, holding forth on the subjects commonly discussed in these circles and paying membership dues. Similar structures of social and business communication organized by the ethnoreligious principle need the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. We all know that people are brought closer together by their awareness of social belonging and collective responsibility. Among the Armenians this awareness was cultivated for centuries through the payment of the poll tax (jizyah). There are no longer Islamic, Russian imperial, or Soviet rulers in Armenia and Karabakh, but the practice of money gathering and money distribution for national needs has survived. Over the centuries this practice has become a rational and viable tradition which will not and cannot be abandoned. Allocations for common national needs are like ballast that adds very much needed stability to the Armenian ship in a sea of troubles, calamities, and wars. It remains to be seen how this money will be spent.

Donations of the Armenian diaspora cannot be used to feed the Armenians in Armenia lest they become its spongers. The diaspora cannot afford this because of their members' in-

born stinginess and selfishness. Giving money to those who suffer because of a war is a horse of another color: for Armenians the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is a sort of psychological compromise between private and public interests; they need it to keep the centuries-old rules and forms of public relations alive in their ethnoreligious environment. This conflict allows the Armenians scattered across the world to retain their feeling of belonging while changing nothing in their habitual life style and habitual way of thinking. The Middle Eastern conflict plays a similar role for the world Jewry. Both conflicts allow the predominantly scattered peoples — Armenians and Jews — to preserve their national and religious unity and feeling of belonging, without which their ethnoreligious awareness would have collapsed.

When talking about the future of the Karabakh Armenians, who comprise a meager 2 percent of the total number of Armenians, we should bear in mind that we are talking about the mode of existence of the Armenian nation in its present form. We also need to keep in mind that the Republic of Armenia today is not the center, not even a tiny point of attraction for the Armenians of the diaspora. Armenia is ballast that makes the diaspora’s ship more stable; Karabakh (Artsakh) is a Kingston valve that connects the ship to the sea. In other words, a man or an organization, who/which means Artsakh when talking about Karabakh, is a “friend of the Armenians” and can count on their support. If the man or organization publicly expresses a different opinion, he/it becomes subject to obstruction and is persecuted in the same way as the Armenians were persecuted in the Islamic world.

Azeri Identity

I have written a lot about the Armenians' position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, discussed the sources and motives of their actions, and tried to forecast the future. To complete the picture I will turn to the Azeri side and its position.

The Karabakh war of 1991-1994 greatly affected the self-identification or forming of identity (Huntington) of the contemporary Azeri ethnicity, which transformed the Azeris into a state-forming nation in the true sense of the word. It should be said that in Azerbaijan the process followed a vector very different from that of the ideology of the Armenians and most other peoples who acquired national and state independence in the 1990s (I have in mind the peoples of former Yugoslavia, Slovakia, Eritrea, the Central Asian countries, and partly Sudan). In most of these countries (former Yugoslavia, Eritrea, and Sudan) and on the Armenian side of the Karabakh conflict, fault line wars were the consequence and frequently the main result of national and religious polarization of the ethnicities involved. In Azerbaijan, on the other hand, the war produced a different effect: the country and the people acquired their national and state identity; they started looking at themselves not as Transcaucasian Muslims (something which the Armenians would like very much) but as a nation deliberately and consistently building its united poly-ethnic state.

It stands to reason that choice of the Azeris, as an ethnicity, of this vector of identification was not caused by external factors (the war). The choice was predetermined by the content and the course of ethnogenesis of the Azeri nation within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as a secular nation. Secularism strongly affected the historical destinies of

the Azeri nation during the (civilizationally) short life of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic of 1918-1920, the first ever secular state in the Islamic ecumene. Islam was a factor of political identity in the relations between the Azeri ethnicity (in its contemporary state and political interpretation localized in the triangle formed by the Caspian, the Arax, and the Great Caucasian Range) and its northern and eastern neighbors. In the country itself Islam served as a background rather than an ideological (system-forming) factor; this explains why the process of self-identification among the Azeris was of a secular (national-state) rather than ethnoreligious nature.

Samuel Huntington never grasped the secular specifics of the Azeri ethnic identity of recent times or, probably preferred to ignore it because it did not fit his clash of civilizations concept in the form of “fault line wars” caused among other things by the religious factor. It should be said, however, that he correctly pointed to this factor as the driving force behind Armenian separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh when he said that the “local groups” of Armenians there were “at best, embryonic states.”⁷ This, deliberately or not, answers the question of why neo-paganism serves as the cornerstone of national and religious identity for the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh: any society at the stage of clan-tribal relations cannot objectively appreciate the moral values of any of the world monotheist religions, be it Christianity, Islam, or Judaism.

No matter what Baku thinks about the Karabakh war, it was this war that transformed the Azeri ethnicity into a nation. In the early 1990s, Armenian separatism in Nagor-

⁷ S.P.Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, p. 272.

no-Karabakh stirred up centrifugal trends in other regions of Azerbaijan. This revived separatist sentiments in the compact settlements of Lezghians and Avars. In the south, a self-proclaimed Talysh-Mugan autonomy appeared; local separatism was partly fed by the contradictions between the Shi'a and Sunnis, very typical of Islam. At that time, in the specific historical conditions, no single national-religious identity could have appeared in polyethnic Azerbaijan. Guided by its collective instinct of national and state self-preservation, society opted for civil-political identify and unity: the local people demonstrated that they were first adherents of statism, and only then secular nationalists, and, finally, Muslims. This explains why the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict does not completely fit the Huntington concept of the clash of civilizations as a confrontation between communities and religions. In this conflict, the fault line ran between the desire of the citizens of Azerbaijan to preserve their sovereign statehood and the Armenian desire to destroy it. The fault line divided ideas of statehood and ideas of anarchy, ideas of civilization and ideas of barbarity. Barbarity wins tactically, while civilization carries the final victory; this means that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an exception that proves the rule (Huntington's theory).

It was the Armenian International (Hay Dat) that drew Azerbaijan into the conflict. From the very beginning it was "catching up with the developments" or defending itself against Armenian attacks. Azerbaijan never held the strategic initiative either during the war or after its active phase ended. It seems that this happened because Baku demonstrated a very rational approach to the forms and methods of settlement based on the principles and norms of international law and diplomatic practice. Its traditional instruments and its le-

gal demands to observe Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity were not sufficiently supported by the instruments of force and coercion: the international community did not dare to use them against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Statism and secularism as two dominants of the Azerbaijani national identity suggest that once returned to Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh would not be impulsively rejected by the country’s social organism after decades of occupation. The nation, which managed to overcome an internal social and political split in wartime, is able to cope with the repercussions of a territorial split imposed from the outside. As distinct from those who rule Artsakh and Armenia and the establishment of the Armenian diaspora, official Baku has clear-cut plans for the reinstated territories of Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent, so far occupied, territories. This is confirmed by the clear and fully substantiated reintegration plans. They are absolutely realistic provided there is political will and enough material resources.⁸ It seems that there is enough of both.

An analysis of these plans shows that reintegration of the conflict zone into the country’s state and public life will be based not on the political principles Baku declares from time to time to create a liberal, that is, positive image outside the national borders. The economic, social, administrative, and humanitarian re-adjustment of the returned region will proceed according to the principles of statism and secularism, which will exclude any possibility of any type of autonomy (even national-cultural autonomy) for the Armenian minority in the future. This is not an anti-Armenian model; it fully

⁸ See: N.Muzaffar, E.Ismailov, *Basic Principles for the Rehabilitation of Azerbaijan Post-Conflict Territories*, CA&CC Press, Stockholm, 2010.

corresponds to the present nature of the political regime of Azerbaijan that took shape in the conditions of and under the impact of the Karabakh war of 1991-1994 today tolerantly called the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Prospects for Settlement

Samuel Huntington wrote in his time that “as violence increases, the initial issues at stake tend to get redefined more exclusively as ‘us’ against ‘them’ and group cohesion and commitment are enhanced. Political leaders expand and deepen their appeals to ethnic and religious loyalties, and civilization consciousness strengthens in relation to other identities. A ‘hate dynamic’ emerges, comparable to the ‘security dilemma’ in international relations, in which mutual fears, distrust, and hatred feed on each other. Each side dramatizes and magnifies the distinction between the forces of virtue and the forces of evil and eventually attempts to transform this distinction into the ultimate distinction between the quick and the dead.”⁹ I can add that in the final analysis the frontline of any protracted war becomes a border which later appears on the political map of the world (the Korean Peninsula divided along the 38th parallel into the South and the North is one of the examples. The process began back in 1895).

By way of conclusion, I can say that Armenia alone needs the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. As distinct from the Azeris, the Armenians do not need Karabakh as a living space (they do not live there) or as a source of material boons (the money poured into the region will be never returned). For the

⁹ S.P.Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, p. 266.

Armenians, Karabakh or, to be more exact, Artsakh is another reincarnation of the metaphysical myth of Greater Armenia, a copy of the original that never existed; it is a simulacrum, a new semiotic sign that divides the world into allies and enemies of Artsakh, not Armenia. If there is no Artsakh, there will be no Armenia; if there is no Armenia, there will be no Armenian diaspora as we know it. We should register the fact and derive the only possible conclusion: no matter how hard Azerbaijan tries, no matter what new steps the international intermediaries of the Minsk Group of OSCE suggest, it is impossible in principle to return the region to *status ante bellum*. In both capitals, the solution to this territorial and military-political problem is seen as “all or nothing”; the Romans would have said *tertium non datur*. As the Armenian occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh goes on, Baku’s chances of reinstating its jurisdiction (actual and formal) by peaceful means are gradually disappearing. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh the “relatively soft” methods of settlement of similar geopolitical problems (such as mandates of the League of Nations or Anschluss) will be neither efficient nor legal.

I have written above that the fault line between the sides in this local conflict on a contemporary planetary scale is the deepest and has the sharpest edges. This may be precisely where humanitarian development is pushing mankind.

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