



A Brief Overview on Karabakh History from Past to Today

Ercan Karakoç*

Abstract

After initiation of the *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) policies in the USSR by Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union started to crumble, and old, forgotten, suppressed problems especially regarding territorial claims between Azerbaijanis and Armenians reemerged. Although Mountainous (*Nagorno*) Karabakh is officially part of Azerbaijan Republic, after fierce and bloody clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, the entire *Nagorno* Karabakh region and seven additional surrounding districts of Lachin, Kelbajar, Agdam, Jabrail, Fizuli, Khubadly and Zengilan, it means over 20 per cent of Azerbaijan, were occupied by Armenians, and because of serious war situations, many Azerbaijanis living in these areas had to migrate from their homeland to Azerbaijan and they have been living under miserable conditions since the early 1990s.

Keywords: Karabakh, Caucasia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ottoman Empire, Safavid Empire, Russia and Soviet Union

* Assistant Professor of Modern Turkish History, Yıldız Technical University, ercankarakoc@hotmail.com

Geçmişten günümüze Karabağ tarihi üzerine bir değerlendirme

Ercan Karakoç*

Özet

Mihail Gorbaçov tarafından başlatılan glasnost (açıklık) ve perestroyka (yeniden inşa) politikalarından sonra Sovyetler Birliği parçalanma sürecine girdi ve birlik coğrafyasındaki unutulmuş ve bastırılmış olan eski problemler, özellikle Azerbaycan Türkleri ve Ermeniler arasındaki sınır sorunları yeniden gün yüzüne çıktı. Bu bağlamda, hukuken Azerbaycan devletinin bir parçası olan Dağlık Karabağ bölgesi ve çevresindeki Laçın, Kelbecer, Cebrail, Agdam, Fizuli, Zengilan ve Kubatlı gibi yedi semt, yani yaklaşık olarak Azerbaycan'ın yüzde yirmiye yakın toprağı, her iki toplum arasındaki şiddetli ve kanlı çarpışmalardan sonra Ermeniler tarafından işgal edildi. Ayrıca, olumsuz savaş şartları nedeniyle, binlerce Azerbaycan Türkü yaşadıkları topraklardan Azerbaycan'a göç etmek zorunda kaldı ve söz konusu göçmenler hala çok kötü şartlar altında yaşamlarını sürdürmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karabağ, Kafkasya, Azerbaycan, Ermenistan, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Safavi İmparatorluğu, Rusya ve Sovyetler Birliği

*Yard. Doç. Dr., Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, ercankarakoc@hotmail.com

Meaning of Karabakh and Its Early History

Karabakh is a geographic region extending from highlands of the Lesser Caucasus down to the lowlands between the Kura and Aras rivers. Karabakh was also the name of a Turkic Khanate founded in the middle of the 18th century upon the demise of the Safavid Empire. This de-facto independent state lasted until the Russian conquest of the South Caucasus in the first quarter of the 19th century. The term Karabakh (spelled *Karabağ* in Turkish), which is an amalgamation of terms *kara* (“black” in Turkish) and *bağ* (“garden” in Persian or “vine” in Turkish), literally means “Black Garden”. The contemporary “bakh” ending stems from the Russification of the word “*bagh*”. Moreover, *Nagorno* simply means “mountainous” in Russian. The region is referred to as *Yuxarı* or *Dağlıq Qarabağ* in Azerbaijani, and *Lernayın Gharabagh* or *Artsakh* in Armenian.¹ There is a bitter dispute over the ownership of the Karabakh region between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Since the 4th century B.C., the area of present-day Azerbaijan Republic was known as the kingdom of Caucasian Albania² (unrelated to modern Albania in the Balkans), while southern parts of historical Azerbaijan were known as the Ancient Media.³ During the rise of Cyrus the Great (also known as Cyrus the Mede), Media became a province of the Achaemenid Empire that he founded. When Alexander the Great overran the Achaemenids in the 4th century B.C., he kept the satrap (governor) of Media, by the name of Atropates, in control of the province. Upon Alexander's death in 323 B.C. and disintegration of his empire, the province of Media was divided into northwestern (Media Minor) and eastern (Greater Media) parts. Atropates remained an autonomous governor of Media Minor, which later became known as Atropatene (*Āturpātakān* in Parthian).⁴ The name of Azerbaijan derived from Atropatene in the later Arabic spelling.

In the north, the Caucasian Albania (known as *Alovan-k* or *Alvank* or *Aghvank* in the Armenian historical texts) remained autonomous throughout most of its history, though was briefly invaded by Romans in the first century A.D. and became a vassal of Sassanid Persia in the later times. While ancient Romans and Greeks used to refer to this region as Albania,⁶ after invading and capturing the Caucasus in the 8th century, Arabs called the area *al-Ran* or *Arran*,⁷ possibly in reference to peoples called *Arran* or *Arianoi* living the region in the Hellenistic period.⁸ Initially practicing pagan religions and Zoroastrianism, the Caucasian Albanian tribes, who spoke indigenous Caucasian and Turkic languages, became among the first peoples to adopt Christianity in the 4th century A.D. The territory of present-day Mountainous Karabakh (Artsakh) belonged to Caucasian Albania by the first century A.D. After the Arab conquest of the Caucasus, Artsakh was ruled by the Christian Albanian princes,⁹ while the Albanians in the eastern plain of Karabakh mixed with the Turkic-

¹ Svante E. Cornell, “The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict”, *Report No. 46*, Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, 1999, pp. 3-6.

² Vladimir Minorsky, “Caucasica IV”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1953), p. 504.

³ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)*, Templar Press, Birmingham 1951, p. 4.

⁴ M. L. Chaumont. “Atropates”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. III, Fasc. 1, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1987, pp. 17-18.

⁵ Minorsky, p. 504.

⁶ For detailed information, see M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Albanlar Tarihi (M.Ö. IV.-M.S. X. Yüzyıllar) Üzerine*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1994, pp. 3-68.

⁷ For further information, see Abdülkerim Özyayın, “Arran”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, Vol. 3, İstanbul 1991, pp. 394-395; A. Zeki Velidi Togan, “Arran”, *İslam Ansiklopedisi (İA)*, Vol. 1, İstanbul 1940, pp. 596-598.

⁸ Mustafa Aydın, “Karabağ”, *DİA*, Vol. 24, İstanbul 2001, p. 367.

⁹ C. J. F. Dowsett, “A Neglected Passage in the ‘History of the Caucasian Albanians’”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1957), pp. 456-468.

speaking population and eventually embraced Islam.¹⁰ Thus, the “Canons of Aghvan”, composed in the 5th century A.D., were also part of the Caucasian Albanian historical heritage shared by present-day Azerbaijanis.

Caucasian Albania was first conquered by the Muslim Arabs during the reign of the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan. Although the area was briefly recovered by the Turkic Khazars, Arabs regained the region in the next century. In the course of the first Arab rule, the Arran territory included Derbent, Shamakhi and Tbilisi.¹¹ Later, the majority of Christian Albanians accepted Islam, so by the time of the Great Seljuk conquest in the middle of 11th century, when the Caucasus witnessed a major wave of Oghuz Turkic migration, local populations easily blended with incoming Muslim Turkic nomads.¹²

After his Georgian campaign of 1064 A.D., renowned Seljukid Sultan Alp Arslan selected Arran as a shelter for his Turkic nomads to take refuge during the winter months. Under Alp Arslan's command, in 1064, the Seljuks took control of Ani which, throughout the reign of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, remained a buffer zone between the Byzantium and the Great Seljuks. Less than a decade later, on August 26, 1071, Alp Arslan decisively defeated the Byzantine Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes at the Battle of Manzikert. It is worth noting that the Armenians, who fought in the Byzantine army, had fled the battlefield¹³ to protest the Byzantine repressions based on sectarian differences.¹⁴ After Alp Arslan's victory at Manzikert, the Seljuk Turks expanded their empire into all of Armenia and South Caucasus. Alp Arslan's son and successor Malik Shah I settled the area completely in 1076 for the benefit of the Turcoman (Turkmen) tribes. Malik Shah appointed Kutbettin İsmail, his uncle, Yakuti's son, as the governor of Arran. Meanwhile, Yakuti became a governor general of all of Azerbaijan under the Seljuks.¹⁵ After the death of Malik Shah, his son Muhammad Tapar took the area as iqta¹⁶ from his brother, Barkiyaruq, and captured all of Arran.¹⁷

The period between 1220 and 1232 was marked by several Mongol invasions. In 1236, unable to fend off Mongol attacks, Armenians and Georgians accepted the Mongol domination. Upon the death of the great emperor Mongke Khan in 1259, the Mongol Empire fell apart and Genghis Khan's grandson, Hulagu, founded the Ilkhanate on the southwestern flank of the former empire. Hulagu's Ilkhanate encompassed the territory of historical Azerbaijan, including Arran. Ilkhanid rulers set up their summer capital in Arran and generally spent the winter months in the same region as well. Throughout the Ilkhanid era, the Eastern Caucasus also experienced an influx of Kipchak Turkic tribes from Central Asia.¹⁸ During this time, the Artsakh region of Arran also became known under its Turkic name Karabakh.¹⁹

¹⁰ Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking towards Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis 1993, p. 193.

¹¹ Togan, *Arran*, p. 596.

¹² Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan (1905-1920): The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, p. 1.

¹³ Ali Sevim, *Anadolu'nun Fetih: Selçuklular Dönemi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1993, p. 88.

¹⁴ For further information, see *Urfa'lı Mateos Vekayi-nâmesi (952-1136) ve Papağ Grigor'un Zeyli (1136-1162)*, translated by Hrant D. Andreevyan, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1962, p. 82, 98, 113, and 147.

¹⁵ Sevim, *Anadolu'nun Fetih: Selçuklular Dönemi*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁶ For further information, see Mustafa Demirci, Said S. Kucur and Beşir Gözübenli, “İkta”, *DİA*, Vol. 23, İstanbul 2000, pp. 43-52.

¹⁷ Mirza Bala, “Karabağ”, *İA*, Vol. 6, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul 1967, p. 213.

¹⁸ Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Karabağ Meselesi*, Genelkurmay Basımevi, Ankara 1995, p. 58.

¹⁹ Christopher J. Walker, “The Armenian Presence in Mountainous Karabakh”, *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, edited by John F. R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg, Richard Schofield, UCL Press, London 1996, p. 92.

By the end of 14th century, the Timurids reigned over the Karabakh region and Turkic migration continued in a steady stream. During his 1400-1402 campaign against the Ottomans, Timur the Lame (Tamerlane) used Karabakh as a winter camp for his forces. After the Anatolian campaign, he had brought nearly 50,000 Turks from Asia Minor and Syria, and settled them in Karabakh.²⁰ The Timurid dominance was gradually replaced by the Qara Qoyunlu (Black Sheep) Turkmens, who established a first state encompassing all of historical Azerbaijan as well as present-day Armenia, eastern Turkey and Iraq. Fierce and bloody fights between the Timurids and the Qara Qoyunlus continued until 1434, when peace finally came to the region during the reign of Jihan Shah (1437-1467) who signed truce with the Timurid Shah Rukh Mirza. Praising this period of peace, historian Abd al-Razzaq wrote in 1462:

*“Owing to the benevolent administration (husn-i 'inayat va lutf-i atifat) of Mirza Jihan-shah, Azerbaijan was a highly thriving state. That well-meaning sovereign was anxious to practice justice, to secure prosperity of the country, and to treat his subjects honorably. The capital, Tabriz, by its numerous population and the prevalence of tranquility, emulated Egypt (misr-i jami). The rumors of the good behavior of that felicitous king spread throughout the world. The inhabitants of his God-protected kingdom, indifferent to the arrows of events, enjoyed peace.”*²¹

Jihan Shah was also first to bestow the title of *Malik (Melik)* upon local Armenian feudals and allowed the establishment of all-Armenian Catholicosate²² in Echmiadzin in 1441.²³ After the fall of Qara Qoyunlu state, Karabakh came under the reign of Aq Qoyunlu (White Sheep) Turkmens. Throughout the Aq Qoyunlu period, along with the rest of Azerbaijan, Karabakh experienced an impending Qizilbash (*Red Head* in Turkish) militant religious movement, which ultimately brought to the establishment of the Safavid Empire by Shah Ismail I (1501-1524). Ismail's grandfather, Sheykh Junayd, used Karabakh as a staging ground for his campaign against Shirvanshahs in 1459. And by 1488, a significant part of the Qizilbash force of Shaykh Haydar, son of Sheikh Junayd, was made up of the Safaviyya disciples (*mürütler*) from Karabakh.²⁴

After defeating the last Aq Qoyunlu ruler near Sharur (in present-day Nakhchivan), Ismail Safavi marched into Tabriz where, in July 1501, he was enthroned as the Shah of Azerbaijan.²⁵ This event marked the establishment of the Safavid Empire which had a profound impact on the formation of contemporary Azerbaijani identity in subsequent centuries. Not only did Ismail establish the Shiite branch of Islam as a unique official religion of his state, but as a native Turkic speaker, who composed poetry in Azerbaijani,²⁶ he also made it the formal language of the Safavid court.²⁷ As a result of these historical events and the subsequent Ottoman-Safavid confrontation throughout the 16th century, Azerbaijan, including its Karabakh region, experienced significant demographic changes. Ismail's son and successor, Shah Tahmasp, appointed Sultan Shahverdi, royal servant from a Qajar clan, as a governor of Karabakh province. Qajars were a Turkic tribe which moved

²⁰ Bala, *Karabağ*, p. 213.

²¹ V. Minorsky. “Jihan-Shah Qara-Qoyunlu and His Poetry (Turkmenica, 9)”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1954), p. 277.

²² Supreme leader of the Armenian Church, patriarch, katholikos and, also see, Ali Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı, Eçmiyazın Kilisesi'nde Stratejik Savaşlar*, Truva Yayınları, İstanbul 2005, pp. 11-18.

²³ Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, Palgrave Macmillan 2007, p. 104.

²⁴ Walter Hinz, *Uzun Hasan ve Şeyh Cüneyd*, translated by Tevfik Biyıklıoğlu, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1948, pp. 16-77.

²⁵ Ghulam Sarwar, *History of Shah Ismail Safavi*, Ams Press Inc., New York 1939, pp. 37-38.

²⁶ Massoume Price, *Iran's Diverse Peoples: A Reference Sourcebook*, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara 2005, pp. 65-66.

²⁷ Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1980, p. 213.

from Anatolia to support Safavid struggle against the Aq Qoyunlus, and in consequence of Sultan Shahverdi's appointment, many Qajar families settled in Karabakh. After a brief Ottoman takeover, Safavids restored the full control of Karabakh by the beginning of the 17th century, during the reign of Shah Abbas I. Qajar influence in the region persisted, and during the reign of Shah Abbas II, Karabakh's governor was Murtaza Quli Khan, another Qajar seigneur.²⁸

The interest of the Ottomans in Karabakh coincided with their Safavid campaigns in the first half of 16th century. This was a period of ideological and political confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid State, in which the Caucasus was a primary battlefield. The Ottomans conquered the Caucasus several times throughout the 16th century. Following the Battle of Chaldiran between the Ottomans and the Safavids in 1514,²⁹ the Ottoman Empire had decisively defeated the Safavids, and the Ottoman Sultan Selim I had marched into the Safavid capital of Tabriz. Although Selim intended to stay in Karabakh after withdrawing from Tabriz, he gave up this plan because of a serious mutiny among his troops, especially among Janissaries (i.e. *Yeniçeri*, new recruits).³⁰ In 1534, his son, Sultan Suleiman I the Magnificent, temporarily took control all of Azerbaijan, reinforcing his grip on the regions through 1548. While the Ottomans were busy addressing Hungarian unrest on the western frontier in 1551, Shah Tahmasp passed the Ottoman border and invaded Eastern Anatolia (contemporary Turkey). In order to punish the Safavids, Suleiman came into the territory of Azerbaijan and overran Erevan, Karabakh and Nakhchivan. As the Ottomans were constantly on alert in Europe and the Caucasus, with its rough terrain, was too far from Istanbul, it was impractical for them to continue the struggle with the Safavids. Therefore, in 1555, the Ottomans concluded the Treaty of Amasya with the Safavids, formally accepting the Safavid rule over the territory of Azerbaijan.³¹ During the reign of Sultan Murat III, the rulers of Shirvan, Tiflis and Dagestan rebelled against the Safavids and sought support from the Ottomans. Therefore, he sent the Ottoman army under the command of Lala Mustafa Pasha in 1578 and his forces took-over all of the South Caucasus up to Shirvan and Derbent. The Karabakh area had remained under the Safavid control until Ferhad Pasha's entrance of Erevan. After bloody battles between 1577 and 1589, the Ottomans took control of the Karabakh region, and the whole of northern Azerbaijan was effectively captured by 1585. The Safavids were forced to seek peace and both parties concluded the Treaty of Ferhad Pasha in 1590. According to the treaty, the Safavids admitted Ottoman gains, including most of the South Caucasus and north-western Iran.³² Yet, the Safavids were able to restore control of some parts of Azerbaijan, including Tabriz, Nakchivan, Erevan and Karabakh in 1603. Shah Abbas I also recaptured Ganja, Shirvan, Ardabil and helped the *Jelali* rebels in Anatolia, in order to distract the Ottoman troops from other fronts. Under the Ottoman rule, the Karabakh region extended to the borders of the Ganja Province (*Gence Eyaleti*) which was precisely founded after the take-over of Ganja.³³ This area was named "Ganja-Karabakh Province"³⁴ (*vilâyet-i Gence Karabağ*)³⁵ per the Ottoman records of 1593. During the period

²⁸ Taşkıran, *Karabağ Meselesi*, p. 60.

²⁹ Selcuk Aksin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*, the Scarecrow Press, Oxford 2003, p. 35.

³⁰ Baron Joseph von Hammer Purgstall, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, translated by Mehmet Ata, Vol. 2, Üçdal Neşriyat, İstanbul 1993, p. 433.

³¹ Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1976, p. 109.

³² Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi (Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches)*, Vol. 3, translated by Nilüfer Epeçli, Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul 2005, p. 213.

³³ For more information, see Mirza Bala, "Gence", *İA*, Vol. 4, pp. 762-766 and Oktay Efendizâde, "Gence", *DİA*, Vol. 14, pp. 17-20.

³⁴ M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas-Elleri'ni Fethi (1451-1590)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1993,

of Sultan Ahmed I, Ottoman forces under the command of Murat Pasha reoccupied Tabriz and Azerbaijan in 1610 and concluded a truce with Shah Abbas. Furthermore, in 1617, as the people of Shirvan and Dagestan put forward new complaints about the Safavids administration, a large Ottoman force came into Azerbaijan. Subsequently, due to Khalil Pasha's intense pressure, the Safavids had to temporarily evacuate Tabriz and Ardabil, though this Ottoman campaign in Azerbaijan failed. In 1635, Sultan Murat IV came into Azerbaijan with a strong army, captured Erevan and plundered Tabriz. The war concluded with the Treaty of Zuhab (*Kasr-ı Şirin*) in May 1639. The agreement divided the territories by granting Erevan in the southern Caucasus to the Safavids and all of Mesopotamia including Baghdad, to the Ottomans.³⁶

Political Developments in Karabakh throughout the 18th Century and the Karabakh Khanate

In 1714, during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed III, the rulers of Dagestan and Shirvan sought renewed assistance from the Ottomans. The latter decided to put an end to the Safavid tactic of fostering sectarian conflicts among the Muslims in order to maintain their control. The Ottoman campaign led to the capture of Erevan and Karabakh. In the beginning of the 18th century, Russians began to interfere in the struggle for the Caucasus. In 1722, during the reign of Peter the Great, they raided the Caucasus for the first time and occupied the shores of the Caspian Sea. The Russians wanted to take advantage of the weakness of Shah Tahmasp II, the last Safavid ruler. Thereupon, the Ottomans under the command of Köprülü Abdullah Pasha took action against the Russian Tsar Peter I and occupied Tabriz, Nakchivan and Merend. In 1724, they also took control of Ardabil, Karabakh and other large parts of Azerbaijan. In the same year, Ottomans and Russians signed an agreement through French mediation. According to this treaty, the Russians admitted the Ottoman authority in Erevan, Tiflis, Ganja, Tabriz and Karabakh.³⁷ Meanwhile, Armenians in Karabakh benefited from the Ottoman-Safavid conflict, and proclaimed feudal "melikdoms" (fiefdoms) which, under the leadership of David Bey, sought to assist Russians in their campaign against Ottomans.³⁸ While the Russians were using Slavic people in the Balkans against its main enemy, the Ottomans, they, also, decided to take advantage of the Armenians in the South Caucasus and Anatolia.³⁹

Although the Ottoman policy in the East was aimed at annexing Azerbaijan entirely, Russians under the reign of Peter I, and subsequently, Nader Shah Afshar of Persia prevented this Ottoman objective. Inconclusive wars between the Ottomans and the Nader Shah persisted. First Nader Shah defeated Ottomans forcing their retreat from Azerbaijan in 1729,

pp. 372-373.

³⁵ There is an important record in the Ottoman cadastral survey book and tax registers of the Ganja-Karabakh Province of 1593. Namely, the native Christians who lived on this territory and spoke a Turkic dialect, were called and recorded as Arranians (*Aramyan* or *Aranlılar* in Turkish) [Albanians] in the Ottoman Codes of Ganja-Karabakh Province's cadastral survey book. This information may indicate that among diverse Albanian tribes, there were Turkic-speaking natives (possibly mixed with Turkic Hun, Khazar or Kipchak tribes) in this area prior to the major Oghuz Turkic migration from Central Asia in the 11th century. For further information, see Kırzioğlu, *Albanlar Tarihi Üzerine*, p. 60.

³⁶ Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 306. The peace established a permanent equilibrium of power in the region, and despite future conflicts and minor adjustments, the frontier postulated by the treaty remains to this day the western border of Iran with Iraq and Turkey.

³⁷ Hammer, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. 7, pp. 305-306.

³⁸ Taşkıran, *Karabağ Meselesi*, p. 63.

³⁹ For more information about development in Russo-Armenian relations, see Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, pp. 28-34.

but in 1731, Ottoman army reentered and in 1732, Nader Shah was forced to accept Ottoman authority over all territories north of the Aras River. Yet, when the Ottoman forces withdrew from the region, Nader Shah initiated a new campaign and attacked northern parts of Azerbaijan. After long and fierce fights among them, both sides signed an accord in 1736 and the Ottomans acknowledged Iranian dominance over Tiflis, Ganja, Erevan, Nakchivan and the Karabakh provinces including Shirvan. Incidentally, the Karabakh province, for a short time, was controlled by Ganja rulers and thus was the case until the assassination of Nader Shah.⁴⁰ Also, before the accord between the Ottomans and the Persians, the Russians and the Persians concluded the Treaty of Ganja in 1735. According to the agreement, Russians agreed to withdraw all of their troops from Persian territory. In 1747, Nader Shah, the strong ruler, who had established his hold over Iran eleven years earlier, was assassinated in a palace coup, and his empire fell into anarchy. These circumstances effectively terminated any remaining Persian suzerainty over Azerbaijan, where local centers of power emerged in the form of indigenous principalities, independent or virtually so, inasmuch as some maintained tenuous links to weak and unrecognized Zand dynasty in Persia. Thus began half a century long period of Azerbaijani independence, albeit in a condition of deep political fragmentation and internal warfare. Most of the principalities were organized as khanates (feudal states), including Karabakh, Shaki, Ganja, Baku, Derbent, Kuba, Nakchivan, Talysh, and Erevan in northern Azerbaijan and Tabriz, Urmu, Ardabil, Khoi, Maku, Maraga, and Karadagh in its southern region. In the northern region of Azerbaijan, the khanates of Shaki, Karabakh, and Kuba became the most powerful.⁴¹

When Nader Shah recaptured the region, Karabakh was under the domination of the Ziyadoglu family of the Javanshir tribe which had not surrendered to the Persian rule. Therefore, Nader fought against them and drove the Javanshir tribe from the region to Khorasan territory. Yet, the head of the tribe, Panah Ali Javanshir, escaped from Khorasan and withdrew to the Karabakh mountains, and continued his struggle against Nader Shah. After Nader's assassination,⁴² the Javanshir tribe came from Khorasan to Karabakh under the leadership of Panah Ali's son, Ibrahim Khalil and the tribe consolidated their power through Panah Ali's agency, before founding the Karabakh Khanate around 1750. Panah Ali Khan expanded the territory of the Karabakh Khanate by subjugating Meghri, Tatev, Karakilise, Karabakh, Kafan in Zangezour and the Nakchivan Khanate. The borders of the Karabakh Khanate were composed by the Kura River and the Ganja Khanate in the North, the Aras River in the South, the Nakchivan Khanate in the West and the intersection the Kura and Aras rivers in the East. The lowlands between the Kura and Aras rivers' triangle were also included into the Karabakh Khanate. The new ruler of Persia, Adil Shah issued a *firman* (decree) and recognized Panah Ali as the Khan of Karabakh. Panah Ali Khan thought to build a fortified castle to secure himself and newly-established khanate from external threats, especially from neighboring rulers; such as the khan of Ganja, the khan of Shaki, and the meliks of Karabakh. Although two fortresses were constructed in 1748 and 1752, because these were not sufficient and strong, he ordered to build a new one in Shusha in 1757 and this fortress was called *Panahabad*, lending its name to the coins that were minted there: *Panahabadi*.⁴³

After the death of Nader Shah, Fath Ali Shah Qajar recaptured Azerbaijan, came to Karabakh and, took Panah Ali's son, Ibrahim Khalil, as hostage. Panah Ali agreed to

⁴⁰ Mirza Cevanşir Karabağlı, *Karabağ Tarihi*, translated by Tahir Sünbül, Kök Yayınları, Ankara 1990, p. 3.

⁴¹ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 2.

⁴² For more information, see Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, Luzac & Co, London 1938, p. 262.

⁴³ Bala, *Karabağ*, p. 214.

subjection to Persian dominance. Later, Panah Ali cooperated with Karim Khan Zand, who was a self-proclaimed shah of Persia from 1749 to 1779, and successfully rescued his son from captivity. He would ultimately leave the khanate to Ibrahim Khalil, go to Shiraz and die there. In conformity with his last will, his body was carried to Karabakh and buried there. The reign of Ibrahim Khalil coincided with renewed Russian expansions and intensive power struggles in Persia. Ibrahim Khalil succeeded to quell the revolt started by the Albanian Catholicos and Christian *meliks* in Karabakh incited by Russians in 1789. In 1783, Tsarina Catherine II the Great notably issued a decree promulgating that Georgia was under protection of Russians.⁴⁴ In the meantime, Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar organized a new campaign in 1795 not only to punish the Georgians who had accepted Russians dominance, but also to discipline the Khanate of Karabakh, which refused to accept his authority. The khans of Ganja, Erevan and Nakchivan complied with Agha Muhammad Khan's edicts, but Ibrahim Khalil resisted. Although Agha Muhammad had a large force of 85,000, he failed to capture the Shusha fortress. In 1797, Agha Muhammad organized a new campaign against the Karabakh Khanate and attacked them a second time with a large and powerful force. After several days of resistance, due to hunger and shortage of supplies, Ibrahim Khalil escaped from Shusha and withdrew to the Ilisu Khanate located at the foot of the Caucasus Mountains. Soon, Agha Muhammad took the city and slaughtered residents en masse. He also killed Mirza Ali Mehmet Agha, who was sent as an envoy to the Ottoman Empire by Ibrahim Khalil to get assistance against Qajars and Russians. Because the Ottomans did not want to ruin their diplomatic relations, especially with Russians, they refused to assist the Karabakh Khanate.

Ibrahim Khalil returned back to Shusha two months later, only to notice that his cousin, Mehmet Bey Javanshir, had taken power and killed many of his supporters. Upon Ibrahim Khalil's return, Mehmet Bey Javanshir fled Shusha and Ibrahim Khalil briefly regained control. He resorted to take measures against imminent Russian threats. Nonetheless, his efforts would not suffice to stop the Russian advance in the region.⁴⁵

Russian Activities in the Region in the 19th Century

At the beginning of the 19th century, Russians embarked on a decisive attack against Qajar Persia in the Caucasus. During the reign of Alexander I, the Russians officially annexed Georgia in 1801⁴⁶ and took the capital of the Ganja Khanate in January 1804.⁴⁷ General Pavel Tsitsianov –of Georgian descent– was the military commander of the Russian army, changed the name of the city from Ganja to Elizavetpol,⁴⁸ in honor of Alexander's wife Elizaveta.⁴⁹ In 1805, the imperial government officially abolished the Karabakh Khanate and the military district of Elizavetpol was created. Under such adverse conditions, on May 14, 1805, Ibrahim Khalil was forced to conclude an accord with General Tsitsianov known as *Kurekchay Treaty*,⁵⁰ which included eleven articles. Under the terms of the treaty, Ibrahim Khalil Khan declared his submission to the Russian emperor and denounced any loyalty to Qajar shah, and was to pay tribute annually. Russian authorities were to have full

⁴⁴ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 3

⁴⁵ Taşkıran, *Karabağ Meselesi*, p. 66.

⁴⁶ Kazemzadeh, *Karabağ Meselesi*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*, I. B. Tauris, London 2006, p. 15.

⁴⁸ The name Elizavetpol never found acceptance among Azerbaijanis, who continued to call the town Ganja.

⁴⁹ Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, pp. 28-31.

⁵⁰ For more information, see Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier*, p. 16.

control over the khanate's external affairs and would station troops in Shusha.⁵¹ In return, Russia recognized Ibrahim Khalil and his descendants as rulers of Karabakh in perpetuity with full authority over all domestic affairs of the khanate.

Tsitsianov's death in 1806 and the breakup of the Russian offensive persuaded Ibrahim Khalil Khan to switch allegiance and ask the shah for aid in ousting the Russian garrison. He had married one of his daughters to the new shah, Fath Ali Shah Qajar. As the Persian army approached Shusha, Ibrahim Khan left the fortress and camped in the open. On 2 June 1806, the Russians, prompted by Ibrahim Khalil Khan's grandson and fearful of their own vulnerability, attacked the camp and slaughtered Ibrahim Khan, one of his wives, one of his daughters, and his youngest son.⁵² To gain support from the local Muslims, the Russians appointed a son of Ibrahim Khalil, Mahdi Qulu, as khan of Karabakh, later forcing him to flee to Iran in 1822 however.⁵³ The Treaty of *Gulistan*⁵⁴ signed on October 24, 1813 between Russian Empire and Qajar Persia formalized the first stage of incorporation of North Azerbaijan, including Karabakh, Ganja, Baku, Shirvan, Shaki, Derbend, Quba and parts of Talysh, along with Dagestan and Eastern Georgia, into the Russian domain. In 1822, along with other khanates, the Karabakh Khanate was abolished and replaced by Shusha district administered by Russians. This district was later incorporated into the Elizavetpol, in 1868, governorate of Russian Empire⁵⁵

In 1826, series of Muslim revolts against the Russian rule took place in Baku, Shirvan, Shaki and Lankaran, followed by a Qajar attack to drive Russians out of the Caucasus. Qajar army was, however, decisively defeated and Russians advanced towards Tabriz. On February 21, 1828, the Qajars concluded the Treaty of *Turkmenchay*⁵⁶ with Russian Empire. As the Russians were facing a prospect of another conflict with the Ottoman Empire, they somewhat tempered the harshness of their terms.⁵⁷ By Article 4 of the treaty, Qajar Persia renounced claims over the Erevan Khanate (most of present-day Armenia), the Nakchivan Khanate (most of the present-day Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan), the remainder of the Talysh Khanate, the Ordubad and Mughan regions (now also part of Azerbaijan), in addition to all lands annexed by Russia under the *Gulistan* Treaty. Article 15 also stipulated the resettlement of Armenians from central Persia to the Caucasus, which included an outright liberation of Armenian captives who were brought and had lived in the Qajar domain since 1804 or as far back as 1795. In addition, the resettlement permitted to compensate the loss of 20,000 Armenians who moved to Georgia between 1795 and 1827.⁵⁸

When the Armenians noticed that all the areas, they were living in, were under Russian control, they decided to seek their assistance. They presented a project of

⁵¹ For a brief history of Shusha, see Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden*, New York University Press, New York 2003, pp. 188-190

⁵² John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, Longman, Green and Co., London 1908, p. 76.

⁵³ Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden*, p. 189.

⁵⁴ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia (1964-1914)*, Yale University Press, London 1968, p. 5; Martin Sicker, *The Islamic World in Decline*, Praeger, London 2001, pp. 117-118 and Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, p. 90.

⁵⁵ Walker, *The Armenian Presence*, p. 97.

⁵⁶ For further information, see Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, pp. 5-6, V. Minorsky, "Türkmen Çayı", *IA*, Vol. 12/2, pp. 660-661; Michael Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran*, Hurst & Company, London 2007, p. 184; Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, p. 176, Sicker, *The Islamic World in Decline*, p. 119-120.

⁵⁷ For more information, see Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford 1992, p.15-17, and Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 6

⁵⁸ *The Cambridge History of Iran* by William Bayne Fisher, Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville, Vol. 7, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 339.

protectorate to the Russian Tsar. According to the project, the Russians would unite all the areas settled by Armenian populations. Although Tsar Nicholas I rejected it in its original form, he ordered to establish an Armenian province including the Nakchivan and old Erevan khanates in March 1828 even though 80 percent of the population of these two khanates, including Turks and Kurds, were Muslim.⁵⁹ Doing so, Russian imperial authorities sought to diminish the Muslim influence, which was considered alien to Russian rule, and to use the Christian Armenian population as a loyal base of support against the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Persia.

Planned Armenian Migrations from Persia and Ottoman Turkey to the Newly Designated Territory

Over the first quarter of the 19th century thousands of Armenians started to migrate from the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Persia into the Russian-controlled South Caucasus.⁶⁰ In accordance with the Treaty of *Turkmenchay*, almost 50,000 Armenians migrated from Persia to the newly designed territory. In addition, by Article 13 of the Treaty of Adrianople (*Edirne*),⁶¹ that concluded the Russo-Turkish war in 1828 and 1829 between the Russian and the Ottoman Empire, many Ottoman Armenians moved to the Caucasus. During the war, Armenian inhabitants in the eastern parts of the Ottoman Empire lent great assistance to the Russians. Fearing Ottoman reprisal over this betrayal, at the end of Russo-Ottoman war, nearly 90,000 Armenians from Erzurum, Kars and Beyazid, under the leadership of Karabet, the episcopo (bishop) of Erzurum, had crossed the Ottoman-Russian border and settled in the Caucasus.⁶² According to the Ottoman official records, only 4,230 household, i.e. nearly 21,150 persons emigrated from Erzurum alone into that region.⁶³ Although the Ottomans tried to prevent this Armenian migration and appointed Tekirdağlı Ragıp Ali Bey as a controller, they were not successful.⁶⁴ Therefore, several thousand Armenians were settled in the newly incorporated regions of Erevan, Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe. The Erevan province, territory of which forms the present-day Armenia, had a Turkic-speaking Muslim majority at the time.⁶⁵ By the Treaty of Adrianople, the Ottomans also recognized Russian sovereignty over Georgia (including Imeretia, Mingrelia, Guria) and of the khanates of Erevan and Nakhchivan which had been ceded to the Tsar by Persia in the Treaty of *Turkmenchay* a year earlier.

According to the Turkish historian Kemal Beydilli, numerous Armenians were transplanted to Russian Caucasia. One of his studies is about “Armenian Migration from Eastern Anatolia to Russia in the course of Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829”. In this article, he scrutinizes relocation and settlement movements of Armenians from Qajar Persia and Ottoman Turkey to the South Caucasus. He examines an important German text, *Geschichte der Uebersiedlung von vierzig tausend Armeniern, welche im Jahre 1828 aus der persischen Provinz Aderbaidshan nach Russland auswanderten*, (Leipzig 1834), written by Karl Friedrich Neumann. Neumann, in his text, touches upon “two complaint letters of Persian

⁵⁹ Walker, *The Armenian Presence*, p. 97 and Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 100.

⁶⁰ For further information, see Kemal Beydilli, “1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında Doğu Anadolu’dan Rusya’ya Göçürülen Ermeniler,” *TTK Belgeler*, Vol. 13, Ankara 1988, pp. 365-434; idem, “Tehcir”, *DİA*, Vol. 40, İstanbul 2011, p. 320

⁶¹ For more overview, see Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuku ve Siyasi Tarih Metinleri (Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Antlaşmaları)*, Vol. 1, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1953, pp. 275-276; and King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, pp.51-52.

⁶² Esat Uras, *The Armenians and the Armenian Question*, Documentary Publications, İstanbul 1988, p. 889

⁶³ Beydilli, *TTK Belgeler*, p. 407.

⁶⁴ See, Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁵ W.E.D. Allen, *Caucasian Battlefields*, Cambridge 1953, p. 43.

crown prince, Abbas Mirza and a Russian-Armenian colonel Lazarev's responses to such complaints; Marshal Paskevich's ordinance included 19 articles, which were given to Lazarev to implement in the process of relocating Persian Armenians; declaration of Lazarev to invite them to migrate from Persia to Transcaucasia; and a detailed report written by Lazarev so as to submit to Marshal Paskevich." According to Lazarev's report, 8,249 families, (i.e. 41,245 Armenians) were transplanted to the area within three and half months. He also underlined in his report that "... Fertile fields were allocated in Erevan, Nakchivan and Karabakh regions for immigrants."⁶⁶ Beydilli, in his article, indicates that many Armenians were forcibly located against their will and he offers significant examples. He also emphasizes that Article 13 of the Treaty of Adrianople and Article 15 of the Treaty of *Turkmenchay* were legal cover of forced Armenian migrations from Persia and Ottoman Turkey.⁶⁷ During the wars with Iran and the 1828-1829 Russo-Ottoman war, many Turks and Muslims emigrated from Caucasus to Ottoman Turkey and Iran. This emigration coupled with Armenian immigration led to the establishment of an Armenian majority in certain areas.⁶⁸ The essential goal of Russians in practicing forced immigration into such areas seems to have been to change the structure of the population of the territory, establish Christian inhabitants and create a buffer zone, namely with Christian Armenians against the Ottomans and the Persians.⁶⁹

Armenian immigration affected mainly the Shamakhy, Ganja, and Karabakh regions and areas west, including Erevan. This immigration would grow as tens of thousands of families increased the size of Armenian communities in the towns and created Armenian majorities in some rural areas. Russian imperial surveys of the 1860s called most of the rural populations "Turkic tribes" (*Tatars*) and "Iranian tribes" (*Tats* and *Talysh*). Russians and Armenians in the Baku *guberniia*⁷⁰ (Russian imperial province) were less than 7 percent of the population. According to 1871 figures, in the Elizavetpol (Ganja) *guberniia* the numbers of Turks (Tatars)⁷¹ and Armenians, concentrated in Karabakh, were 878,000 and 292,000 respectively.⁷² According to the imperial census of 1897, there were 485,146 Azerbaijani Turks and 52,233 Armenians in the Baku province; 534,086 Azerbaijani Turks and 292,188 Armenians in Elizavetpol (Ganja), and 313,176 Azerbaijani Turks and 441,000 Armenians in the Erevan province.⁷³ Moreover, the city of Erevan retained a Muslim majority until the 1st World War.⁷⁴ By means of Armenian immigrations from the Qajar Persia and the Ottoman Turkey, throughout the 19th century, the ethnic composition of the South Caucasus was modified by the Russians in favor of the Armenians.⁷⁵ Thus, the Russians constituted strong buffer zones against their two main enemies and they cut ties and relationships linking the Ottoman Turks with Azerbaijanis and other Caucasian Muslims.⁷⁶

⁶⁶ Beydilli, *TTK Belgeler*, p. 407.

⁶⁷ Beydilli, *TTK Belgeler*, p. 408.

⁶⁸ Altstadt, *the Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 100.

⁶⁹ Hovsep Argutyan (1743-1801), an Etchmiadzin Catholicos, had applied Catherine II to establish Ararat Kingdom as a barrier against her Muslim enemies, the Ottomans and the Persians. See, Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Guberniia (province), gubernator (governor), oblast (region)

⁷¹ The term Tatar was customarily used by Russians to refer to various Turkic-speaking peoples of Russia. It was used as a misnomer with regard to the Azerbaijanis.

⁷² Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 14.

⁷³ For a detailed overview, see Altstadt, *the Azerbaijani Turks*, pp. 28-32.

⁷⁴ King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, p. 159.

⁷⁵ For a detailed overview about Armenian resettlement in Caucasus, see Sulejman Alijarly, "The Republic of Azerbaijan: Notes on the State Borders in the Past and the Present", in *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, edited by John F. R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg, Richard Schofield, UCL Press, London 1996, pp. 125-128.

⁷⁶ Already in the years of the First World War, as a historian humbly writes in one official report-addendum presented to the state organs of Russia, the following was said: "[t]he Armenian people, who split Tatar

The Azerbaijani and Armenian Conflicts in the Region

In the late 19th century, the Russians suppressed the nationalist sentiments in the South Caucasus. For instance, Prince Grigory Sergeyevich Golitsyn, who had been appointed by Tsar Nicholas II as the governor of Transcaucasia in 1876, closed down Armenian schools and confiscated the property of the Armenian Church. His attempts of Russification by way of oppressive administrative measures resulted in a new awakening in the Armenian community.⁷⁷ The governor was wounded in an assassination attempt in 1903, and soon left his post. The appointment of Count Vorontsov-Dashkov in May 1905 signaled a return to pro-Armenian posture in the Russian regional policy.⁷⁸ Except during the Golitsyn episode, Armenian Church properties and priests were not threatened, neither was their work ever impeded.⁷⁹ In contrast, Muslim clerics were brought under direct state control and subjected to harsh government regulations. Their religious properties were confiscated and they were subjected to intense Russian Orthodox proselytizing.⁸⁰ On these historical developments, the First Russian Revolution took place, because of hard economic and ethnic tensions in Russia in 1905. The revolution brought about some crucial changes in the lives of ethnic non-Russian subjects of the empire. Namely, new nationalist movements were reinvigorated, and newspapers, journals began publishing in national languages.

The first outbreaks of Armenian-Azerbaijani violence occurred in Baku in 1905. The immediate cause was the murder of an Azerbaijani Turk by a Dashnak (members of Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaksutiun) militant. On February 6, 1905 many Azerbaijanis arriving from nearby villages attacked the Armenian sections of the city. The horrors of Baku recurred, on a smaller scale, in Erevan on February 20-21, then in May of the same year, in Nakhchivan and other parts of the Erevan *guberniia*, as well as in early June in Shusha. Another wave of violence swept Baku towards the end of August with an even more destructive fury than in February. One of the bloodiest clashes took place in Ganja on November 15-18, and there was another one in Tiflis on November 21. The fighting continued well into the next year, though with lesser intensity. Nor was it contained in the towns: An estimated 128 Armenian and 158 Turk villages were pillaged or destroyed. The estimates of lives lost vary widely, ranging from 3,100 to 10,000. The number of the Muslims killed was greater than the Armenians.⁸¹ However, the events were reported in the world press, generally with a tone of favoritism toward the Armenians. In some Armenian quarters exception was proudly taken to the portrayal of the Armenians as merely victims. A publication of the American-Armenian community quoted the following contemporary report from Transcaucasia:

“The view of the Armenians as harmless sheep uncomplainingly stretching their necks to the slaughter is not borne out by the facts... It is also untrue that the Armenians have always been the chief sufferers. Although in Baku and Nakhchivan this was the case, at Erevan and Etchmiadzin they remained the victors. At

Transcaucasia and Azerbaijan from the Turks of Asia Minor, are wedge driven into flesh of the Turkic tribes... We cannot permit this wedge to disappear and in its place the appearance of a compact mass of Muslims who are hostile towards us.” Alijarly, *The Republic of Azerbaijan*, pp. 131-132, from J. Kirakosyan, *Western Armenia in the Years of the First World War*, Erevan University Press, Erevan 1971, p. 411 (in Russian).

⁷⁷ For more overview, see Hayrullah Cengiz, “Rusya’nın 1895-1905 Yılları Arasında Kafkasya Ermenileri Politikası”, *Kafkas Araştırmaları*, Vol. IV, İstanbul 1998, pp. 175-194.

⁷⁸ He wrote to Nicholas II “Your Majesty is aware that throughout the history of our relations with Turkey in the Caucasus area, Russian policy has been based from the time of Peter the Great on benevolence toward the Armenians who have rewarded us with their active aid in the course of wars.” Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 43.

⁷⁹ It is worth noting that because of Russian oppress on the Armenian Church, the Armenians decided to carry the old Etchmiadzin Catholicosate to Istanbul. See, Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, pp. 89-90.

⁸⁰ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 19.

⁸¹ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 41.

Shusha and Baku in September they suffered heavy losses, but otherwise they fully held their own and paid the Tatars [Turks] in their own coin.”⁸²

In response to the superior organization of the Dashnaksutiun,⁸³ Azerbaijani Turks formed a secret body in Ganja in 1905 named *Difaî* (Defense). It was created by the local intellectuals to counter the Dashnaks and Russian support for the Armenians.⁸⁴ Despite its struggles, the Armenians increased their powers in the region by means of the Russian backing. The incidents between the two communities continued till July 1906 and the situation calmed until the demise of Russian Empire in 1917. After the October 1917 Revolution, Russian State Duma had closed down and the Transcaucasian representatives of the Duma had formed the Transcaucasian Commissariat, also known as the Sejm, which proclaimed an independent Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic by February 1918. The Transcaucasian Federation was divided into five administrative units: the provinces of Baku, Ganja, Erevan, and Tiflis and the Zakatal Sanjak. The Ganja Province included Shusha, Zangezur and Jabrail districts. Thus, Karabakh was within the Azerbaijani part of the federation, an arrangement acknowledged by the other parties to it. Meanwhile, the Ottomans and the Russians had signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918, putting an end to World War I hostilities between them. During this period, against all odds Azerbaijani Turks and Armenians lived in peace in the Karabakh region.⁸⁵

The truce, however, proved to be short-lived, and the Armenians started to lay claims upon Karabakh and other regions populated by Azerbaijanis, resulting in ever more bloody confrontations. On March 30–April 3, 1918, over 12,000 Azerbaijanis were slaughtered by the Bolshevik and Armenian forces throughout the Baku governorate. These massacres took place when the head of the Bolshevik Baku Soviet, Stepan Shahumyan, an ethnic Armenian, enlisted the support of Dashnak forces in a political struggle against the Azerbaijani Musavat party.⁸⁶ Therefore, since 1919, Azerbaijanis mark March 31st as the day of national mourning, and in 1998, this date was officially designated as the Day of Azerbaijani Genocide.

The Transcaucasian Federation finally fell apart when Georgia proclaimed independence on May 26, 1918, followed by Armenia and Azerbaijan two days later. While the government of the newly established Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) temporarily settled in Ganja, Azerbaijan's main industrial center –Baku– remained under the control of the Bolsheviks and the Dashnaks since the massacres two months earlier. In a

⁸² Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 42.

⁸³ In order to make the assassinations and the attacks more effective, the Caucasian Central Committee of Dashnaksutiun published the following declaration in Russian: “The Federation of the Armenian Revolutionary warn and inform the police force, and the gendarmerie that if any attempts is made to disarm the Armenians or to harm them in any way, ruthless action will be taken in return. Let anyone with such intentions remember those killed by the decision of the Dashnaksutiun, namely: Nakashidze, the governor of Baku, Andriev and many others such as Slavski, Bohlov, Sahardow...” Uras, p. 794, from the Armenian version as quoted by Varandian, *the History of the Dashansutiun*.

⁸⁴ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, pp. 43-45.

⁸⁵ Walker, *The Armenian Presence*, p. 98.

⁸⁶ Michael Smith, “Anatomy of Rumour: Murder Scandal, the Musavat Party and Narrative of the Russian Revolution in Baku, 1917-1920”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36, No. 2, April 2001, p. 228. For more overview, see Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, pp. 116-117.

See also, Elçin Neciyev, *Kafkaslarda Türk Katliamı*, Emre Yayınları, İstanbul 2006, pp. 56-96.

Nariman Narimanov stated his feelings about the Bolshevik-Dashnak alliance against the Azerbaijanis and described the March Days as follows: “Even if a Muslim happened to be a Bolshevik, no quarter was given. The Dashnaks would say: ‘We do not recognize any Bolsheviks; once you are a Muslim that is enough’. They killed whom they pleased; they stripped and emptied houses... Under the banner of Bolshevism, the Dashnaks committed all kinds of atrocities against the Muslims. Not only men, but even pregnant women were not spared.”

given situation, the ADR government turned for help to the Ottomans. The ADR representative, Nagi Sheykhzamanli, visited Istanbul to seek support of a fraternal Turkic nation from the Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha. The latter agreed to send an Ottoman force, under the leadership of his own brother Nuri Pasha, in support of Azerbaijan. After fierce battles against the Bolsheviks and the Dashnaks, endorsed by a small British expeditionary force under General Dunsterville, the Ottoman Caucasus Army of Islam finally entered Baku on September 15, 1918.⁸⁷

The Ottoman presence in Baku was short-lived, however, due to the defeat of the empire in World War I. Ottoman army units retreated from the South Caucasus after the Armistice of Mudros concluded on October 30, 1918 between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers. Instead the British force under the command of General Thomson landed in Baku and took control of Azerbaijan. Soon after snubbing the Russians over Azerbaijan, Thomson found himself taking the side of the Azerbaijani Turks in their quarrel with the Armenians. The issue at point was the region of Mountainous Karabakh, the western part of the Elizavetpol *guberniia*, whose population consisted of Azerbaijanis and Armenians in a ratio of 3:2. A strategic corridor, Karabakh formed a link or a barrier (depending on who controlled it) between the Muslim Turks in the Eastern Caucasus and Anatolia, Asia Minor. After the Ottoman withdrawal, Armenian warlord, Andranik (Ozanian), made an attempt to establish Armenian authority over this disputed territory, but on December 1, General Thomson asked him to cease his military operations.⁸⁸ Andranik complied, and the British general resolved in mid-January 1919 to put Karabakh, together with Zangezur, also claimed by the Armenians, under provisional Azerbaijani administration. Furthermore, he approved the nomination of Khosrow Sultanov as governor of the two regions. Reacting to bitter Armenian criticism, Thomson remarked: "The fact is that in Azerbaijan some Armenians are much disappointed that the British occupation is not an opportunity for revenge. They are reluctant to accept it that [the] peace conference is going to decide and not military forces."⁸⁹ During the British occupation, Karabakh Armenians gathered their 7th Assembly⁹⁰ in Shusha in August 1919 and they signed a temporary agreement with the governor, Dr. Sultanov, on May 15, 1919. According to this agreement, the Karabakh was administered by a city council including Azerbaijanis and Armenians. This agreement would be temporary until its final resolution at Paris Peace Conference when all parties accepted its terms. The Peace Conference of Paris in 1919 additionally recognized Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Karabakh.⁹¹

A major uprising supported by Erevan government was started on March 22, 1920 in Karabakh. Thereupon, the Azerbaijani high command promptly committed virtually the entire army against the insurgents. Because of the army's business in Karabakh, Baku was vulnerable to Bolshevik attacks. Meanwhile, in late March and early April of the same year, the Red Eleventh Army was consolidating its occupation of the North Caucasus and Dagestan. Moscow had already decided to carry the momentum of conquest in Transcaucasia. On March 17, Lenin issued a directive to the head of the North Caucasus Revolutionary Committee, Grigorii Ordzhonikidze, stating that "it is extremely, extremely

⁸⁷ Halil Bal, *Azərbaycan Cümhuriyyətinin Kuruluş Mücadelesi və Kafkas İslam Ordusu*, İdil Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2010, pp. 216-223. This study is an important work due to author's use of the Ottoman records, military archives and memoirs of generals as well as the British records in preparation of his dissertation.

⁸⁸ Walker, *The Armenian Presence*, p. 99.

⁸⁹ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 143.

⁹⁰ For more information regarding Assemblies of Karabakh Armenians, see Walker, *The Armenian Presence*, pp. 98-100.

⁹¹ Altstadt, *the Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 102.

important for us to take Baku. Exert all efforts in this direction, but at the same time do not fail to show yourself doubly diplomatic in your announcements and make as sure as possible that firm local Soviet authority has been prepared...⁹² Before the Armenian revolt, the Bolsheviks knew that if they marched on Baku, they would face strong resistance. The Azerbaijani defenses were therefore weakened through Moscow's support for the Armenians using "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" tactic.

Karabakh under Soviet Administration

As already mentioned, until the Bolshevik occupation on April 27, 1920, the Ottoman and the British forces had alternatively controlled Azerbaijan, and both powers accepted that Karabakh was a part of Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, Armenians in Karabakh started a large-scale rebellion in April 1920 with great support and assistance from Russians. While Azerbaijani forces were dispatched to suppress the rebellion, the Bolshevik Revolutionary Committee ordered the 11th Red Army to cross Azerbaijani border and start an offensive on Baku. After the Bolshevik occupation, the Karabakh problem was brought back to the table in Moscow and Anastas Mikoyan submitted an important report to Lenin, in which he stated that "the unification of Karabakh to Armenia would mean, for the population of Karabakh, deprivation of their source of life in Baku and being tied to Erevan, with which they have never had any kind of connection."⁹³

With Soviet power established, the political struggle for Karabakh began, and would drag for a long time, as it took the Soviet leadership three years to settle the unrest. The problem of Karabakh was on the agenda of Kavburo (the Caucasus Bureau) in the first half of 1921. An agreement seems to have been reached on Karabakh in Armenia's favor on 12 June 1921. However, a few weeks later, the Kavburo was still discussing the future of the territory, which had apparently not been resolved in June. There were two more meetings on 4-5 July, both attended by Stalin. On 4 July, the discussion centered on whether to treat all of Karabakh as a unit, or to treat the mountainous part as separate from lowland Karabakh. The latter option was eventually chosen, and the meeting decided to include mountainous Karabakh to Armenia, and to carry out a plebiscite there (those in favor of this resolution included G. K. Ordzhonikidze, A. Miasnikian, Yu. P. Figatner, S. M. Kirov and A. M. Nazaretian; Narimanov, opposed, and so, apparently did Stalin⁹⁴). The matter was raised again the next day with Ordzhonikidze and Nazaretian dissenting from the resolution agreed on in the previous meeting, stressing the importance of reaching inter-ethnic peace. The earlier decision was overturned, and citing the economic linkage between upper and lower Karabakh, the region was declared an autonomous region in respect to Azerbaijan, with Shusha as its administrative capital. This was the origin of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO).⁹⁵

The Karabakh problem gave rise to competition among local statesmen and the communist party in the 1920s. The Presidium of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party (the CC AzCP)⁹⁶ established a three-man Central Commission on

⁹² Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 177.

⁹³ Altstadt, *the Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 102.

⁹⁴ Even given Stalin's (at the time Commissar for Nationalities) tendency to divide Caucasian peoples to prevent unified resistance, the idea of separating the Armenians into two entities –the Armenian republic and Nagorno Karabakh– must have been welcome. Also, Stalin managed not only to divide the Armenians but also the Azerbaijanis, into the Azerbaijan republic and Nakchivan. See, Svante E. Cornell, "Turkey and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh: A Delicate Balance", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, January 1998, p. 53.

⁹⁵ Walker, *The Armenian Presence*, pp. 101-102.

⁹⁶ The only Communist party in the territory that its first secretary, Kirov, was not native was Az CP. Also, in

Karabakh Affairs, made up of Kirov (Russian), Mirzabekian (Armenian), and A. N. Karakozov, to administer the area. This Presidium also appointed a seven-man committee headed by Karakozov to pursue the establishment of an autonomous region in mountainous Karabakh. This committee comprised of two Azerbaijanis and four Armenians (besides Karakozov), including the party secretary for Zangezur and a member of Armenian Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars-Soviet Narodnykh Kommissarov). In June 1923, Karakozov's committee recommended to the Presidium of the CC AzCP that mountainous Karabakh become an autonomous administrative unit. The Zakkraikom (Transcaucasian Regional Committee) ordered the AzCP to comply within one month. A protocol of 1 July 1923 from the Presidium of the CC AzCP under Kirov's signature 'suggested' to the Azerbaijan CEC (Central Executive Committee) the creation of an "Autonomous Karabakh Oblast" with its administrative center Khankendi (later Stepanakert), not the historical capital, Shusha. In November 1924, the Autonomous Oblast' of Nagorno-Karabakh (AONK) was officially proclaimed and confirmed as a constituent part of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. AONK's own CEC, Sovnarkom, and Congress of Soviets were established, and Karakozov chaired the Sovnarkom until 1928. The name was changed to Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' (NKAO) in 1937.⁹⁷ From that point, Armenians persistently aimed to persuade Moscow to detach NKAO from Azerbaijan and to turn it over to the Armenian SSR.

In the final stages of the Nagorno-Karabakh debate, the status of Nakhchivan as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan SSR was confirmed by the government of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (TSFSR), the Russian Communist Party (RCP Bolsheviks), by the third all-Nakhchivan Congress of Soviets (February 1923), and by the AzCEC in June 1923, just before the final decision on AONK. In return to granting autonomy to Armenians in the Mountainous Karabakh, the AzCEC and Azerbaijani Sovnarkom under Musabekov demanded not only an administrative, but also a political autonomy for Nakhchivan within the Azerbaijan SSR. Moscow accepted this demand, and political autonomy was secured in March 1924 with the formation of the Nakhchivan ASSR.⁹⁸

In its handling of Karabakh, Nakhchivan and Zangezur, Moscow achieved a subtle balancing act: Zangezur was carved out of Azerbaijan and granted to Armenia as a barrier between Nakhchivan and Karabakh, a portion of which was removed from the direct control of Baku and placed under a de jure Azerbaijani government and de facto Armenian party administration. For Azerbaijan, the loss of Zangezur was bitter medicine, albeit it was quickly accepted as the price for peace. The manipulation of Karabakh and Nakhchivan was carried out simultaneously, with steps in each process offsetting the other. Azerbaijan regained its nominal sovereignty over Karabakh and Nakhchivan but lost actual control of Mountainous Karabakh.⁹⁹ The cultural and administrative character of that enclave encouraged Azerbaijani emigration and renewed Armenian claims. Armenia, which prior to that point had no control over any of the three regions, suddenly got special cultural rights and great political power for its co-nationals inside Azerbaijan without providing comparable rights for Azerbaijanis inside the Armenian SSR. This embittered the Azerbaijani Turks in Armenia and in Azerbaijan. The AONK was proclaimed as a "shining example of Leninist nationality policy", and so it was. The territorial settlement demonstrated the primacy of

contrast to the Armenian and Georgian parties (93 percent and 71 percent indigenous cadres), the Azerbaijani party apparatus in 1925 included 43 percent Azerbaijani Turks, 38 percent Russians and 18 percent Armenians. Altstadt, *the Azerbaijani Turks*, pp. 122-123.

⁹⁷ Altstadt, *the Azerbaijani Turks*, pp. 125-126.

⁹⁸ Altstadt, *the Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 127.

⁹⁹ King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, p. 188.

Moscow, particularly of the Communist party. Neither republic could feel safe from border adjustments or interference in its internal affairs, despite written guarantees of sovereignty. Tensions were perpetuated; “apples of discord” remained.

By 1936 “historical conditions” brought to the dissolution of the TSFSR. The old problem of national animosities having been officially solved, proletarian internationalism reigned supreme. Each republic became part of the USSR, under the 1936 “Stalin constitution”, the model for new constitutions in all the union as well as in autonomous republics. The constitutions of the constituent republics echoed a commitment to Marxism-Leninism, construction of socialism, and the equality of citizens and nationalities. Azerbaijan’s draft constitution was published in local newspapers in February 1937, debated, and officially ratified, with characteristic Soviet rapidity in constitutional matters, in three weeks. The constitution proclaimed republican power over its own territory but also affirmed Moscow’s control over the republic. Included were guarantees of freedoms and autonomy. The 1937 Azerbaijan SSR constitution contained 154 articles, grouped into fourteen chapters. The rights of the republic over both the Nakchivan ASSR and the NKAO were affirmed through the subordination of local organs of the state and judiciary to those at the republic level. Among others, Article 47 stated that the Azerbaijani Sovnarkom held the right to reverse decisions of the Nakchivan Sovnarkom or the NKAO Soviet of Deputies.¹⁰⁰

Armenian Struggles for the Annexation of Karabakh

Aghasi Khanjian, who was First Secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia in 1930-1935, worked for the transfer of Karabakh and Nakchivan to Armenia, but he was unsuccessful due to Stalin’s refusal.¹⁰¹ During Khrushchev’s time, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Sovietization of Armenia, the Armenians attempted to restart the debate over Nagorno-Karabakh, demanding its unification with Armenia in 1960. Because they did not get any result, they submitted a petition signed by approximately 2,500 Karabakh Armenians to Khrushchev on May 19, 1963. In their petition, they were protesting Azerbaijani attitude towards the region and claiming that the Azerbaijani was intentionally neglecting the NKAO economically. Khrushchev did not accept Armenians’ demands either. Armenians’ activities within the Soviet Union to re-unify Karabakh rose towards the end of the 1970s. On September 15, 1977, Sero Khanzadyan, a writer from Zangezour, wrote a letter including Armenian old claims to Brezhnev. His letter was inconclusive.

Initiation of the *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) policies in the USSR by Gorbachev, in the middle of the 1980s, aimed at economic, political and social transformation of the Union. Yet, these new policies brought about the end of the Soviet Union due to unleashing the dormant national and territorial enmities within the Soviet system.¹⁰² NKAO within AzSSR became one of the most important catalysts in the process of the collapse of the USSR. Loosening center-periphery relations within the Union with the introduction of *glasnost* led to the ignition of the contained yet deeply-rooted hostility between AzSSR and ArSSR republics over Karabakh. The conflict began in the summer of 1987. The NK Armenians asked the Supreme Soviet of the Union through a petition to correct a historical mistake made in 1921 when the Bolsheviks had transferred Karabakh to Azerbaijan, and urged that it be re-annexed to the ArSSR. When the Supreme Court rejected

¹⁰⁰ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, pp. 128-129.

¹⁰¹ Walker, *The Armenian Presence*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁰² As known, the dissolution of the empires, emergence of new independent states often lead to the rise of old, forgotten or suppressed political, economic, cultural and territorial claims among intra-state communities and inter-state relations. Güner Özkan, “Nagorno-Karabakh Problem: Claims, Counterclaims and Impasse”, *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları (OAKA)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2006, p. 119.

the Armenian demand, a mass protest began in February 1988 in Erevan, and in Karabakh in the forms of street demonstrations, industrial strikes and school boycotts. These demonstrations led to simultaneous outbreaks of ethnic violence in both AzSSR and ArSSR.¹⁰³ Through strikes and mass demonstrations, Armenians tried to benefit from the new political and economic liberalization policies in the Soviet Union. However, Moscow condemned the Armenian claims and declared it would not change the status of *Nagorno Karabakh* within the AzSSR. Yet, in mid-June 1988, the Armenian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution calling for the transfer of *Nagorno Karabakh* to Armenian SSR. On the other hand, the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet did not accept the Armenian demand on Karabakh by arguing that the latest decision of the Armenian Supreme Soviet was opposed to the Leninist principle of the preservation of territorial integrity of any Union Republics.¹⁰⁴ In compliance with the Azerbaijani demand, the USSR Supreme Court decided that *Nagorno Karabakh* should remain under AzSSR control according to Article 78 of the latest USSR Constitution of 1977, which pointed out the fact that no one can change the border of a constituent republic without its explicit agreement. The same article of the Soviet Constitution also asserted that “the boundaries between union republics may be altered by their mutual agreement, subject to ratification by the USSR.”¹⁰⁵ In 1988, the USSR Supreme Soviet agreed to strengthen the autonomous status of NKAO on the condition of remaining within AzSSR. Armenians refused to accept this decision by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, and in July 1988, the Supreme Soviet of the NKAO, in a joint session with the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR, declared its secession from AzSSR, and called for forming a “United Armenian Republic”. Under the pressures exerted by the ongoing communal clashes and mass deportation of peoples from one republic to the other, the USSR Supreme Soviet decided to solve the issue by strengthening its own control in the region. For this purpose, in January 1989, it established a special administration for the NKAO under the leadership of Arkadii Volski. Taking the NKAO under the control of this commission essentially meant that the region was separated from the AzSSR and put under the direct rule of the USSR Supreme Soviet. The formation of a special Commission did not stop the conflict however. Quite the contrary, it further intensified the clashes between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Thus, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet sent approximately 11,000 Soviet army, navy and KGB troops to both AzSSR and ArSSR to suppress the violence. The Soviet Army declared a state of emergency in the NKAO, and imposed curfews in its main towns.

In Azerbaijan, the re-ignition of Karabakh conflict facilitated emergence of a new nationalist movement, the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF, Azerbaijan Halk Cephesi). Established in 1989, and fueled by the ongoing ethnic clashes between Azerbaijanis and Armenians, APF quickly gained pan-national support through public rallies in Baku in December 1989. Authorities in Moscow could not tolerate this challenge to Soviet power, and on the night of January 19-20, 1990, under the directive signed by Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet special troops entered Baku opening fire at civilians. In what became one of the bloodiest episodes of recent Azerbaijani history, which Azerbaijanis refer to as “Black January”, 137 civilians were killed, scores were wounded. Soviet forces indiscriminately fired on elders, women and children, drove tanks over ambulance cars, and used bullets prohibited by the international conventions. Soviet crackdown in January 1990 did not

¹⁰³ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, pp. 195-196.

¹⁰⁴ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁵ Özkan, *Nagorno-Karabakh Problem*, pp. 127-129, from David Lane, *State and Politics in the USSR*, Blackwell, Oxford 1985, pp. 346-378.

distinguish Azerbaijani Turk from a Jew or a Russian, all of those were among victims. Meanwhile, Soviets claimed 14 military personnel deaths and detained 43 leading APF activists, taking some of them to the notorious Lefortovo KGB prison in Moscow.

Simultaneously, paramilitary formations grew in number and strength on both sides, as the parties seemed to build up for a military solution of the conflict. Armenians were more active than Azerbaijanis (who initially relied on the Soviet central government for a solution) and a considerable flow of arms from Armenia proper to Karabakh was reported. Observers noted how planes loaded with military equipment, coming from Beirut, landed in Yerevan and how the matériel was subsequently transported to Karabakh. In this environment of heavily armed paramilitary forces, the escalation of the conflict became inevitable. Sporadic clashes became frequent, and by June 1991 the casualties of the conflict were estimated at 816.

From this point onwards, Armenian militants started taking control of *Nagorno Karabakh*. As their uprising grew, the militants were supported by regular armed forces of the Republic of Armenia – a fact which Armenia still denies in spite of much evidence of the contrary – and, what is more, by Russian volunteers, in some cases complete armed units with full equipment. On 2 September 1991, the resuscitated Karabakh Soviet, renamed the Karabakh National Council, proclaimed the independent republic of *Nagorno Karabakh* over the territory of the NKAO and Shaumianiovsk district of the Azerbaijan Republic.

Faced with a powerful aggression, the ill-organized Azerbaijani forces were unable to protect their lands, and by 1994, Azerbaijan was disastrously defeated.¹⁰⁶ As a result of war over the *Nagorno Karabakh* region with Armenia, Azerbaijan has lost the entire *Nagorno Karabakh* region and seven additional surrounding districts of Lachin, Kelbajar, Agdam, Jabrail, Fizuli, Khubadly and Zengilan to Armenia. All in all, over 20 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan remains under occupation. This occupation of Azerbaijani territories has created about a million displaced Azerbaijanis who have been living in miserable conditions in Azerbaijan since the early 1990s.¹⁰⁷

Last but not least, the Karabakh region was settled and ruled by the Turkic peoples from ancient times until the Russian conquest in the first quarter of the 19th century. Upon taking control over the region, the Russians attempted to diminish and isolate the local Muslim populations from Russia's key regional adversaries, the Ottomans and the Qajars. To achieve this objective, Russians encouraged the resettlement of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire and the Qajar Persia in the Russian-controlled South Caucasus. Consequently, tens of thousands of Armenians moved to the region, joining the ranks of Russian army in its struggle against the Ottomans throughout the rest of the 19th century. Russians were also quite successful in using the local Muslim-Christian conflicts to retain domination over the region till the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Azerbaijan and Armenia in 1920, the Soviet leaders continued the prior Russian divide-and-rule policy, and used the existing Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation to control the region with its rich natural resources. The Soviets carved out Zangezur out of Azerbaijan and passed it to Armenian SSR, physically separating Nakhchivan from the rest of Azerbaijan, and created a political autonomy for the Armenian minority in the mountainous part of Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. By the time of Soviet demise, seventy years later, these deliberate territorial manipulations provoked another bloody Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over the Mountainous Karabakh. With a massive support from their diaspora in the United States, France and the Middle East, and a

¹⁰⁶ Cornell, *Turkey and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh*, p. 55-57.

¹⁰⁷ Özkan, *Nagorno-Karabakh Problem*, p. 120.

tacit military support of Russia, the Armenians managed to take a full military control of *Nagorno* Karabakh and adjacent 7 districts of Azerbaijan, expelling all of the Azerbaijani population, amounting to some 800,000 people. In the course of 1988-1994 *Nagorno*-Karabakh War, the Armenians were also informally supported by neighboring Iran which, despite its Shia affinity, viewed the newly independent Azerbaijan as a potential danger to its integrity: the southern regions of historical Azerbaijan are a part of Iran and well over third of Iran's population are ethnic Azerbaijani Turks. In its war with Armenia, Azerbaijan received only strong political support from Turkey and Azerbaijanis received training in Turkish military schools. When the Armenians advanced outside of the Mountainous Karabakh proper to occupy the neighboring Kelbajar district of Azerbaijan and expel its population in April 1993, the United Nations Security Council adopted its first resolution on *Nagorno* Karabakh conflict, calling for an immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from Kelbajar and allowing for the return of Azerbaijani residents. In its turn, on April 30, 1993, Turkey closed its border and ceased diplomatic relations with Armenia. Until the Turkish-Armenian protocols signed in October 10, 2009 in Zurich, Turkish authorities refused to normalize relations with Armenia before it withdraws from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan; Armenia has never fulfilled these international demands.

In 1992, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now known as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE) established the Minsk group, co-chaired by Russia, France and the U.S., to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Azerbaijan and Armenia over *Nagorno* Karabakh. Despite dozens of high level meetings held between the conflicting sides, no progress has been achieved in the conflict settlement: Armenia continued its occupation of Azerbaijani territory, while hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from Karabakh and adjacent regions remained as internally displaced peoples (IDPs). The war hostilities came to an end in May 1994, when Russian-sponsored ceasefire signed between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis left the former in control of the fifth of Azerbaijani territory. Sporadic fire exchanges on the front line continue, resulting in casualties on both sides. Meanwhile, the Armenian government and the influential Armenian lobby in the U.S. and European countries continued to push for recognition of *Nagorno* Karabakh as an independent entity or a second Armenian state in the Caucasus, further stalling the conflict settlement and preventing the return of displaced Azerbaijanis to their homes. Armenia entered the Russian-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty (CST), which guarantees its security in case of war. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan maintained its independent policy by opening its vast oil and gas resources for exploration by Western companies, and pursuing strong bilateral relations with Russia, Turkey, Georgia, and other regional nations. While Armenia became even more dependent on Russia, both economically and politically, Azerbaijan is able to use its energy influence to shape the U.S., Russian and European policies towards itself and the region. Azerbaijani leadership remains hopeful that a strong say in the regional energy affairs will help the country to settle the *Nagorno* Karabakh conflict peacefully, preserving Azerbaijan's interests. Besides massive investment in internal infrastructure, Azerbaijan also uses the profits gained from energy exports to strengthen its armed forces and acquire advanced weapons technologies. In this goal, the Azerbaijanis work closely with Turkey, Israel, Pakistan and Russia.

Apart from already mentioned factors, the Mountainous Karabakh conflict remains a key factor for political elites in Armenia and Azerbaijan, in shaping their domestic policies and maintaining the political order. In summary, peaceful resolution of the *Nagorno* Karabakh conflict does not seem to be achievable in a short term, because Armenia and outside actors, with exception of Turkey, are interested in continued freezing of the conflict.

Historical Perspectives on the Administrative Identification of Karabakh

- 387-705 AD: *Arran*, Gardman principality, capital Barda
- 7th to 9th centuries: Rule of Islamic Caliphate
- End of the 9th century to beginning of the 10th century: *Arran*, Gardman principality
- 985/6-1088: *Arran*, state of the Sheddadids, capital Ganja
- 1088-1225: Portion of Seljuk and Atabeg-Ildenizid states under the administrative governance of Ganja
- Beginning of 13th century to end of 14th century: Rule of the Mongols
- 1410-1500: Portion of the Qara and Ak-Qoyunlu states under the administrative governance of Ganja,
- 1501-1736: Portion of the Safavid state, administrative unit was the Karabakh province (beylerbeylik) with administrative center in Ganja
- 1747-1822: The autonomous Karabakh Khanate with center in Shusha
- 1822-1840: The Karabakh province is in the make-up of the region (Okrug) of Islamic provinces.
- 1841-1844: The Shusha district (the former Karabakh province) in composition of the Caspian territory (Oblast).
- 1846-1867: The Shusha district is in the make-up of Shemakha (since 1859 called Baku) Governorate.
- 1867-1918: The Shusha district is in the composition of the newly established Elizavetpol Governorate and, in 1918, Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR)
- 1919-1920: The Karabakh General-Governorate, encompassing the Zangezur, Shusha, Jevanshir and Jabrail districts, within the ADR. The Azerbaijani Governor General, Khosrow Sultanov, was recognized as the primary authority in Karabakh by the Allied Powers in World War I, specifically by the commander of the British Expeditionary Force to Baku, General Thomson, and agent of the Council of the Allied Powers, Colonel Haskell. Moreover, at the demand of Thomson, Armenian General Andranik was expelled from Karabakh putting an end to hostilities
- 1920-1922: The Shusha, Jevanshir and Jabrail districts of the Ganja province of Azerbaijan SSR.
- From 1923: The Shusha district and some parts of the Jevashir and Jabrail districts were transformed into the *Nagorno* Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (Region) within the Azerbaijan SSR.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Alijarly, *The Republic of Azerbaijan*, pp.117 and 123-124.

References

- Abdülkerim Özaydın, “Arran”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, Vol. 3, İstanbul 1991.
- Ali Sevim, *Anadolu'nun Fethi: Selçuklular Dönemi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1993.
- Ali Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı: Eçmiyazin Kilisesi'nde Stratejik Savaşlar*, Truva Yayınları, İstanbul 2005.
- Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford 1992.
- A. Zeki Velidi Togan, “Arran”, *İslam Ansiklopedisi (İA)*, Vol. 1, İstanbul 1940.
- Baron Joseph von Hammer Purgstall, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, translated by Mehmet Ata, Vol. 2, Üçdal Neşriyat, İstanbul 1993.
- Cemalettin Taşkiran, *Karabağ Meselesi*, Genelkurmay Basımevi, Ankara 1995.
- Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.
- Christopher J. Walker, “The Armenian Presence in Mountainous Karabakh”, *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, edited by John F. R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg, Richard Schofield, UCL Press, London 1996.
- C. J. F. Dowsett, “A Neglected Passage in the ‘History of the Caucasian Albanians’”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1957).
- Elçin Neciyev, *Kafkaslarda Türk Katliamı*, Emre Yayınları, İstanbul 2006.
- Esat Uras, *The Armenians and the Armenian Question*, Documentary Publications, İstanbul 1988.
- Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*, I. B. Tauris, London 2006.
- Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)*, Templar Press, Birmingham 1951.
- Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia (1964-1914)*, Yale University Press, London 1968.
- Ghulam Sarwar, *History of Shah Ismail Safawi*, Ams Press Inc., New York 1939.
- Güner Özkan, “Nagorno-Karabakh Problem: Claims, Counterclaims and Impasse”, *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları (OAKA)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2006.
- Halil Bal, *Azerbaycan Cumhuriyetinin Kuruluş Mücadelesi ve Kafkas İslam Ordusu*, İdil Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2010.
- Hayrullah Cengiz, “Rusya'nın 1895-1905 Yılları Arasında Kafkasya Ermenileri Politikası”, *Kafkas Araştırmaları*, Vol. IV, İstanbul 1998, pp. 175-194
- John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, Longman, Green and Co., London 1908.
- Kemal Beydilli, “1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler,” *TTK Belgeler*, Vol. 13, Ankara 1988.
- Kemal Beydilli, “Tehcir”, *DİA*, Vol. 40, İstanbul 2011.
- Martin Sicker, *The Islamic World in Decline*, Praeger, London 2001.
- Massoume Price, *Iran's Diverse Peoples: A Reference Sourcebook*, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara 2005.
- M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Albanlar Tarihi (M.Ö. IV.-M.S. X. Yüzyıllar) Üzerine*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1994.
- M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas-Elleri'ni Fethi (1451-1590)*, Türk

Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1993.

Michael Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran*, Hurst & Company, London 2007.

Michael Smith, "Anatomy of Rumour: Murder Scandal, the Musavat Party and Narrative of the Russian Revolution in Baku, 1917-1920", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36, No. 2, April 2001.

Mirza Bala, "Gence", *İA*, Vol. 4, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul 1967.

Mirza Bala, "Karabağ", *İA*, Vol. 6, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul 1967.

Mirza Cevanşir Karabağlı, *Karabağ Tarihi*, translated by Tahir Sünbül, Kök Yayınları, Ankara 1990.

M. L. Chaumont. "Atropates", *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. III, Fasc. 1, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1987.

Mustafa Aydın, "Karabağ", *DİA*, Vol. 24, İstanbul 2001.

Mustafa Demirci, Said S. Kucur and Beşir Gözübenli, "İkta", *DİA*, Vol. 23, İstanbul 2000.

Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi (Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches)*, Vol. 3, translated by Nilüfer Epeçeli, Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul 2005.

Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuku ve Siyasi Tarih Metinleri (Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Antlaşmaları)*, Vol. 1, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1953.

Oktay Efendizâde, "Gence", *DİA*, Vol. 14.

Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1980, p. 213.

Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking towards Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis 1993.

Selcuk Aksin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*, the Scarecrow Press, Oxford 2003.

Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, Palgrave Macmillan 2007.

Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1976.

Sulejman Alijarly, "The Republic of Azerbaijan: Notes on the State Borders in the Past and the Present", in *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, edited by John F. R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg, Richard Schofield, UCL Press, London 1996.

Svante E. Cornell, "Turkey and the Conflict in Nogorno Karabakh: A Delicate Balance", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, January 1998.

Svante E. Cornell, "The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict", *Report No. 46*, Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, 1999.

Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan (1905-1920): The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985.

The Cambridge History of Iran by William Bayne Fisher, Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville, Vol. 7, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008.

Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden*, New York University Press, New York 2003.

Urfalı Mateos Vekayi-nâmesi (952-1136) ve Papaz Grigor'un Zeyli (1136-1162), translated by Hrant D. Andreasyan, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1962.

Vladimir Minorsky, "Caucasica IV", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1953).

Vladimir Minorsky. "Jihan-Shah Qara-Qoyunlu and His Poetry (Turkmenica, 9)", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1954).

Vladimir Minorsky, "Türkmen Çayı", *İA*, Vol. 12/2, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul 1967.

Karakoç, E. (2011). A Brief Overview on Karabakh History from Past to Today. *International Journal of Human Sciences* [Online]. 8:2. Available: <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>

Walter Hinz, *Uzun Hasan ve Şeyh Cüneyd*, translated by Tevfik Bıyıklıođlu, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1948.