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## **CHAPTER 2**

# **THE IMPACT OF COMMON HISTORY AND IDENTITY ON AZERBAIJAN-TÜRKİYE RELATIONS AND AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SAFAVID PHENOMENON**

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## THE IMPACT OF COMMON HISTORY AND IDENTITY ON AZERBAIJAN-TÜRKİYE RELATIONS AND AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SAFAVID PHENOMENON

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### **Abstract**

Each region in the Turkic world has its own unique place and value. Evaluating and presenting these values individually is crucial for the future of the Turkic world. Azerbaijan's proximity to the mainland regions of the Caucasus, Iran, Anatolia, Eastern Europe, the Caspian Sea, and Inner Asia serves as a bridge. While Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations possess the potential to develop under constructive influences such as a shared history and identity, they also bear the challenges of certain regional and historical legacies. Chief among these challenges are the devastating Ottoman-Safavid wars and sectarian differences. Azerbaijan and Türkiye, on the basis of common enlightenment and modernization, have created an intellectual and political accumulation to overcome these difficulties in the 19th century and beyond. It seems possible for relations between the two countries to achieve lasting progress on the basis of peace, stability, cooperation, reciprocity, brotherhood, prosperity, and development, but only by taking into account both the opportunities and challenges. Azerbaijani Turks, along with the Turks of Türkiye, are noteworthy for being one of the two fundamental components of the Western Turkic community. To demonstrate Azerbaijan's importance, it is necessary to reassess certain historical events and phenomena within the Turkic world, which has quietly emerged since 1991. This structure can only complete its unity with Azerbaijan, and only through Azerbaijan can it integrate with the greater Turkic world. Azerbaijan, like Türkiye and Kazakhstan, is a state founded on the Turkic enlightenment in terms of its founding values.

### **Keywords**

*Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Common History and Identity, Safavid, Ottoman, Turkic World*

## **Introduction**

While the nature of Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations is based on unique principles in many respects, it requires understanding within the framework of specific theories and facts from different disciplines, particularly international relations and history. We can say that only in this way will we be able to address the past, present, and future of relations with a more predictable approach.

Although international relations originally emerged from the science of history, it weakened its connection with history, particularly during the Cold War, and turned more towards theoretical approaches. However, we can still say that these theories are intertwined with history, albeit to varying degrees. Following the Cold War in 1991, the relationship with history reached a more advanced level (Büyükbaş, 2013, pp. 107-120).

In all areas of international relations, it is necessary to delve into historical depth and access and utilize knowledge of the past to examine and explain facts and events, as well as the political attitudes and behaviors of states. However, these studies need to be based not only on historical facts but also on a theoretical and analytical perspective. (Kurubaş, 2008, p. 130) This is equally true for studies on Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations.

History studies, vulnerable to the pressures of chronology, are often deprived of the opportunity to see the whole, under the intense influence of archival documents reflecting the traces of the official ideology of the period. The theoretical perspective has the ability to give meaning to facts, organize them into a system, and transform them into a form that can be analyzed. Only theories show us which data to use or what kind of relationship to seek from among the infinite mass of data (Waltz & Quester, 1982, pp. 11-13). In addition to allowing us to see the whole through a system of similarities, we can also say that theories enable us to understand possible or impossible situations. (Thompson, 1955, pp. 733-746) However, it is important to remember that theories are only valid to the extent that they can explain facts, and that they can be modified as they lose this quality (Kurubaş, 2008, p. 133).

### **1. Common Identity**

Examining a state's defense and foreign policy stances necessitates examining national identity alongside national interests (Viotti & Kauppi, 2016, p. 289; Zehfuss, 2004, p. 40). Identity, which can be defined as the emergence of our individual and social affiliations to the level of consciousness, is also a natural manifestation of educational development and modernization due to its acquired nature (Hall, 1998, p. 67). In this respect, identity, a qualified expression of our affiliations, is a fundamental concern of nearly all social sciences across a wide spectrum, including philosophy and psychology, sociology, international relations, linguistics, anthropology, and history.

Although international relations is predicated on relations between nations, the unit of this relationship is the state, based on a nation, that is, the nation-state (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, pp. 194-205; Yalvaç, 1996, pp. 131-184). Alexander Wendt, an American political scientist and one of the founding figures of social constructivism and the Social Theory of International Politics in the field of international relations, defines nation-building processes as a two-stage structure. According to this, first, social structures are produced by abstract values generated by shared emotions and thoughts rather than material elements. Second, the identities and interests of the components participating in the process are not given by nature but are constructed by shared values. Wendt considers the right to sovereignty recognized by other societies as one of the fundamental elements determining social identity (Wendt, 2012, p. 15; Wendt, 2013, pp. 679-708).

Nation-building is also a form of identification process. This process, however, transforms the nation, a historical entity, into a supra-identity while pushing its existing multiple identities into sub-identities.

This new social structure emerges as a result of complex interactions and communication carried through historical heritage. The nation system, upon which the political structures underlying international relations are based, is largely directly related to this *process of acquiring national identity*. Among the cultural elements shaping identity are gender, lineage, faith, and shared history, as well as external factors. Consequently, it is possible to speak of the relevance of international relations, anthropology, sociology, and psychology to this process, as well as the relevance of education, culture, and the arts at various levels (Baumann, 2006, p. 37; Grad & Rojo, 2008, pp. 3-9).

Nation-states derive their legitimacy largely from history. One of the first steps in achieving domestic and international recognition of this legitimacy is the organization of a shared history. A country's desired respected position requires it to have a unique and meaningful story. In this story, the symbols of the nation, which are organized by establishing a consistent relationship between yesterday, today and tomorrow in a way that does not contradict each other, can only build the national identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, pp. 110-121).

## 2. A General Overview of the Shared History of Azerbaijan and Türkiye

Azerbaijan became a Turkic homeland during the process in which steppe tribes in general, and Turkic tribes in particular, brought global unity to Eurasia. These steppe tribes filled Azerbaijan in waves during their long marches westward. Indeed, Azerbaijan remained under Turkic control during the reign of the Hun-Turk (Göktürk) Khaganate and their western successors, the Khazars. The Turkic advance occurred from two directions: north and south of the Caspian Sea. Demirkapı should be mentioned as a significant point for both directions. It was the great Oghuz migration that gave the region its fundamental Turkic character. The basic route followed by previous Turkish migrations until the mid-10th century was that the tribes first came to the Caspian region, gathered there for a while, and then, with a new move, spread to Eastern Europe, the north of the Black Sea, and Central and Southern Europe (Kurat, 1972, pp. 30-43; Togan, 1981, pp. 182-186).

However, the great Oghuz migration that developed after the Pechenegs turned its direction southwards via Cend due to the strengthening of the Eastern Slavs and the blocking of this route by the Kiev-Novgorod Principality (See Povest' Vremennih Let' (PVL), 2012; Vernadsky, 2010, p. 30; Peacock, 2016, pp. 26-44). We described this situation as the *Russian Wall* (Gündoğdu, 2024, p. 22).

The great historian Faruk Sümer examines the Turkification process of Azerbaijan in three stages: the Seljuk, Ilkhanate, and post-Ilkhanate periods. The first stage is defined as the beginning, the second as the development, and the third stage, which includes the Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu, and Safavid periods, as the completion of Turkification (Sümer, 1957, p. 429).

The Oghuz began arriving in Azerbaijan in large numbers after 1029. Following the failure of their initial conquest attempts, the Seljuks took control of the region in 1054, following campaigns personally led by Sultan Tughril Beg. During the reign of Sultan Alp Arslan, Azerbaijan would become the center of gravity of the Seljuk Empire. The Mugan and Maraga pastures, along with the Karabakh plateau, possessed geographical opportunities suitable for steppe military campaigns, giving Azerbaijan the status of a heartland that would later ensure the Turkification of Syria and Iraq, particularly Anatolia (Togan, 1981, pp. 191-200; Sümer, 1957, pp. 429-434).

The population flow that would later Turkify Anatolia and pave the way for the establishment of numerous Turk states is thought to have arrived via Azerbaijan in a massive wave of migration around 1080. The Seljuk period was the period when Azerbaijan and Anatolia were first united with Inner Asia under a single political administration. Thus, Azerbaijan rose to a vital position within the Turkic world, whose center of gravity had shifted westward. Thus, the phenomenon we call Turkification in Azerbaijan and Anatolia signified the collapse of the old order, which had remained unchanged for centuries, and the establishment of a new social and economic order. The movements of Turkic tribes from Far East to Asia Minor were not

merely military. They meant the transfer of a massive population and lifestyle, transforming the fauna and flora of their respective regions. The Turkic lords established a new order in the cities and surrounding areas they conquered. Moreover, this order was constantly nourished by new waves of migration to Anatolia via Azerbaijan, paving the way for expansion into new territories. The lightly armed, mounted Turkmen nomads, who followed their leaders and their families, initially established a summer and winter settlement in the region's rural areas. It was these very people who gave this scattered conquest its truly uniform and majestic appearance. Non-Turkic populations, unwilling to be subjected to their domination, abandoned their settlements, and the rural areas and livestock they abandoned fell into the hands of these pastoralists. Deserted villages and ancient ruins became their permanent residences, and a completely new way of life arose in place of the old order (Runciman, 1986, p. 51; Sumer, 1962, pp. 215-219).

After the disintegration of the Seljuk Empire, the existing local feudal administrations in Azerbaijan were first dominated by the Iraqi Seljuks (1118-1194) and then by the Ildenizids (1137-1225), also known as the Atabegs. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, Azerbaijan fell under the rule of the Khwarazm Shahids (1225), the Ilkhanids (1231), and the Timurids. Genghis Khan, who launched two campaigns against Azerbaijan in 1222 and 1231, re-established Azerbaijan, along with Anatolia, as part of Inner Asia. During this period, Azerbaijan, centered in Tabriz, became the center of a wide axis extending from the Far East to Europe. The Ilkhanate, founded by Hulagu Khan, expanded its borders from the Turkestan border to encompass Azerbaijan, Anatolia, and Iraq. During this brief and tranquil period, the region witnessed significant commercial and cultural development. Especially during the reign of Ghazan Khan (1295-1304), Tabriz became the world's most popular center of science, art, and trade. Following Timurid rule, the Western Turks were governed by independent states of various sizes in Anatolia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan, extending into Eastern Anatolia and Iraq, came under the rule of the Kara Koyunlu (1380-1468) and Ak Koyunlu (1340-1514). Although politically divided throughout the 15th century, commercial and civil relations between Azerbaijani and Ottoman Turks remained vibrant, marking a glorious century for the Turkic world (Togan, 1933a, pp. 101-107; 1933b, pp. 247-253; 1993, pp. 91-118; Sümer, 1957, pp. 435-445).

### **3. The Great Economic, Political, and Civil Collapse in the Turkic World**

By the 16th century, much of Eurasia was dominated from east to west by Turkic dynasties such as the Mughal, Kazakh, Uzbek, Safavid, and Ottoman dynasties. However, due to changing global economic and commercial conditions, the center of power was rapidly shifting to European countries. The establishment of new maritime trade routes on the high seas in the south, replacing the old land trade routes for silk, spices, fur, and jade from the Far East to Western Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean world, led primarily to the economic backwardness of the Turkic and Eastern worlds. The relocation of the caravan trade routes, which had sustained the Turkic world economically, to the high seas with the European discovery of the sea routes to America and India, and the establishment of Russian dominance in Siberia, also created an alternative land route from Europe to the Far East. The deadly struggle between many Turkish dynasties, struggling to control the old ways and share their dwindling financial resources, deepened the scale of the disaster (Barthold, 2013, p. 198).

### **4. The Safavid Phenomenon in Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations**

Azerbaijan responded to the process of radical change that dominated this century with new political formations. By the beginning of the 16th century, Azerbaijan had come completely under Safavid rule. Shah Ismail (1501-1524), who brought together the Turkmen tribes dispersed by the collapse of the Karakoyunlu and especially the Akkoyunlu states, as well as the migrants from Anatolia, with renewed religious fervor, established his dominance in the region by establishing Tabriz as his capital (Tarih-i Kızılbâşîyye, 2015, pp. 19-76). Following the first century of the Safavids, Tabriz's long golden age continued until Shah Abbas the Great shifted the state's focus to non-Turkic regions (Sümer 1999; Sümer, 1957, pp. 445-447).

In fact, this situation can be seen as a result of the policy of transition to cosmopolitan Shiism, replacing the Kizilbash sect, which represented the Turkish feudal character in the establishment of the state, which began during the 52-year reign of Shah Tahmasb (1524-1576), when the Safavids' struggle with the Uzbeks and Ottomans escalated (Dağlar, 2019, pp. 71-93).

The Safavid period can be considered a period of great economic and civil development within the political unity of Azerbaijani Turkic history. However, this period also included devastating wars for the Turkic world and Azerbaijani history.

With the establishment of the Safavid state at the beginning of the 16th century, the Western Turks were represented by two major political powers: the Ottoman Empire, centered in Anatolia and Rumelia, and the Safavid Empire in Azerbaijan. The Safavid state, established with the support of the disgruntled Ottoman periphery, maintained its influence in this region for a long time. Heterodox Turkic Sufism brought the Safavid center and the Ottoman provinces closer together. Hasan-i Rumlu (died 1577), a historian of the Safavid era, describes the contemporary Ottoman sultans, whom he calls the "King of Rum," within the context of a unified political geography when recounting developments in Azerbaijan. In fact, in his work *Aḥsenü't-tevârîḥ*, a primary source for the early Safavid period, he also provides information about the Khans of Turkestan when relevant. (Hasan-ı Rumlu, 2006, p. 556) However, the devastating wars that began between the two great powers and spread over centuries marked the beginning of major disasters for both sides and the Turkic world. The fact that these disasters were occurring within Western Turkic lands exacerbated the situation for the Turkic world. In other words, from this perspective, the events resembled a complete civil war. From the 16th century onward, the two Turkic countries located along the Silk Road became mortal enemies, imposing incessant economic and political sanctions on each other. The Ottoman Turks considered a solution to offset the financial losses of the Silk Road by substituting the Spice Route, which passed through the Red Sea and the Arab lands to the south.

The Ottoman Turks paid the greatest price for this, the weakening of their national life, the effects of which are still felt today. After the spread of Islam among the Turks, Turkish spiritual life, until the end of the 15th century, was acquiring a national character through the work of Sufis of the Yesevi school. However, after the 16th century, it rapidly departed from this state. As Arab religious and scientific understanding, based on extreme Sunni interpretations, took hold of the Ottoman scholarly class and madrasas, the Ottomans turned their backs on the Turkish national spiritual life upon which they had been founded. A similar negative situation occurred for the Safavid Turks. There, too, the Turks fell under the monopoly of non-national, institutional Shi'ism. The Ottoman-Safavid wars, as civil wars, had a deeper and more lasting impact than their economic and social devastation; we can see this in the spiritual fragmentation of a nation along the lines of Sunni and Shi'ite fundamentalism (McNeill, 2001, pp. 61-62).

Under the impact of this devastation, Western Turks were shaken by the Jelali and Suhte rebellions, and messianic movements, falling into a major social and economic depression and suffering a profound spiritual collapse. In this respect, it is valuable that experts such as Mustafa Akdağ and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, who have studied Ottoman social and religious movements in the 16th century and beyond, have sought to trace the Messianic movements of the 16th century not so much to religious factors as to the increasingly disintegrating socio-economic structure of Ottoman Anatolia (Akdağ, 2009, 121; Akdağ, 2010, s. 635; Ocak, 1989, pp. 817-825).

Contrary to the general view of political historiography, the Ottoman-Safavid wars were not external but civil, and the greatest price of this civil war was paid by Eastern, Central, and Northern Anatolia, especially Tabriz and its surrounding areas. Kâtip Çelebi clearly describes this situation in 1635: "*For 12 years, after traveling through the lands and seeing most of the villages in ruins, and after reaching the lands of Hamadan and Tabriz from the Shah of Persia, not a single village was seen in ruins within 15 or 20 distances. It has been reported that the provinces were completely destroyed within 20 years*" (Kâtip Çelebi, 1286, p. 180).

The mutually destructive marches of the armies devastated the entire region. Besides Evliya Çelebi, some contemporary Western travelers such as Pietro della Valle, Tavernier, Adam Oleraius, Jean Chardin, and Tournefort described the destruction in the region with similar expressions. Tavernier, describing what he witnessed during his journey from Yerevan to Tabriz in 1632, vividly depicts the devastation in the region. He explains that the Ottoman soldiers burned and destroyed everything, and even Shia and Sunni mosques were mutually affected by this destruction (Tavernier, 2006, p. 79). Evliya Çelebi, who had the opportunity to visit the region twice on official missions in approximately twenty years, in 1646-47 and 1655, went to Iran. On the first occasion, he was sent as an envoy by Defterdarzâde Mehmed Pasha to Kelb Ali Khan, the governor of Tabriz. During his assignment, he traveled through the northern territories of the Safavid state (Azerbaijan, Shirvan, Dagestan, and Georgia) and returned to Erzurum (Küpeli, 2011, pp. 69-97). According to his account, Ottoman buildings, in particular, suffered similar destruction as when the Safavids reclaimed the region during the reign of Shah Abbas (Evliya Çelebi, 1999, pp. 23-124).

When comparing the Safavids and Ottomans in terms of their national history, it is striking that the Ottomans transitioned to a cosmopolitan empire based on an earlier national monarchical dynasty. The Safavids achieved their foundation with the support of Turkish feudalism, which reacted against this cosmopolitanism within the Ottoman sphere. However, the Safavids preferred to base their understanding of sovereignty on the protest tendencies of the Arab-Persian-Islamic tradition through the Seyyid tradition rather than their own national roots. While Shah Ismail traced his fabricated family lineage to Ali, he was nourished by the cultural grounds that gave rise to the Abbasid revolution, such as in Khorasan. When this dynasty transformed into a cosmopolitan empire like the Ottomans during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great, they lacked a national political tradition to draw upon. As in the Ottoman realm, Turkish feudal lords demonstrated their discontent with this situation throughout the 18th century. Nadir Shah (1736-1747) (See Shaded, 2016), who was at the center of the reaction to this situation, and then the Qajars (1789-1925), failed to establish a tradition of national sovereignty (Sümer, 2002, pp. 51-53). Only starting in the second half of the 19th century did the Azerbaijani Turks begin to remember their own traditions and embark on a national awakening. From the time the Ottomans reached the Middle East and Central Europe, when they had their widest borders, until their collapse, they were able to maintain their concept of national sovereignty. This ensured that the Turks of Türkiye retained their sovereignty even under the most difficult circumstances.

The division of the 16th-century Western Turkic lands, coupled with the dissolution of the Golden Horde, had another devastating impact on the Turkic world. As is well known, the Russians established a permanent settlement in the Volga River, which had been home to the Turks for over a thousand years, by capturing Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1556. After appearing along the Terek River to establish a base in the North Caucasus, the Russians descended to the Sea of Azov at the end of the 17th century. A century later, they annexed Crimea in 1795. Less than a century later, during the 19th century, they completed their occupation of the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, and Turkestan, effectively ending Azerbaijan's historical unity. During this period, they also caused economic devastation in the Turkic world through their efforts to monopolize East-West trade. Consequently, the 16th-19th centuries were dark ages, during which the Western Turks were divided and turned into enemies, their ties with the Turkic world were severed, and they experienced a profound and increasingly severe decline in material and cultural aspects. This situation continued until the national awakening among the Turks began in the second half of the 19th century.

## **5. Azerbaijan's Role in the Turkish National Awakening**

The last quarter of the 19th century coincided with a period when political dominance in the Turkic world was rapidly eroding while national awakening gained significant momentum. During this period, when great enlightenment leaders emerged in Türkiye and among the Turks of Russia, all intellectuals shared a desire for modernization, and consequently, linguistic innovation was a common ideal for almost all.

The generation of Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura, who followed Namık Kemal, Ziya Pasha and Ahmed Mithat Efendi from the Young Turk movement in Türkiye, believed that simplifying the Turkish language within the framework of the Turkish Hearth and Turkish Homeland would both facilitate the awakening of the Turks of Türkiye and enable easier communication with Turks abroad.

Hasan Bey Zerdabi (1832-1907), the most important teacher and writer intellectual in the Caucasus, is also the first representative of the national awakening generation. He transformed Ahunzade's modernist line into a national path. *Ekinci*, the first Turkish newspaper he published in Baku in 1875, became a turning point in the national awakening among the Turkic peoples. After *Ekinci* was closed in 1877, citing the Ottoman-Russian war as a pretext, Zardabi gained experience in newspapers and magazines such as *Ziya* (1879-1981), *Ziya-yi Kafkasya* (1881-1884), and *Keşkül* (1884-1891) whenever he could, under Russian censorship (Devlet, 2002, pp. 31-111). Another symbol of national awakening, comparable to Zardabi, was İsmail Gaspıralı (1851-1914). He was also educated in Moscow and lived in Istanbul and later in Paris. While in Moscow, he embarked on a path that would ensure national awakening against Pan-Slavism, which he was closely acquainted with. In Azerbaijan, one of the three major centers of the Turkish national awakening, a similar process was underway, albeit with some differences from the enlightenment in Türkiye and the Volga-Ural region. The most fundamental difference between Azerbaijan and other Turkish enlightenment centers was the more secular nature of the enlightenment there. Secularism was seen as the only solution that could prevent sectarian conflicts and create a sense of unified society in Transcaucasia. This principle was paramount in all of Ali Merdan Topçubaşı's activities and speeches, especially in the Duma. Ağaoğlu and Hüseyinzade Ali Bey, as national thinkers committed to secularism and contemporary values, developed the Turkish enlightenment in this direction. In fact, this situation more closely aligned with the nature of enlightenment movements worldwide.

## 6. The Azerbaijan National Movement and the Azerbaijan National Democratic Republic

Russia's southern expansion largely took place during the reign of Catherine II. The conquest of the region between the Crime and Kuban Rivers in 1785, in particular, allowed Russia to establish its dominance over a large portion of the Caucasus. The Treaty of Turkmenchay, signed by Tsar Nicholas I with Iran in 1828, not only ended Iranian influence beyond the Caucasus (Transcaucasia) but also brought Iran under Russian commercial and political influence. Shortly after the Tsar's armies suppressed Shamil's resistance in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan was divided into two provinces (gubernia) in 1867, Baku and Elizavetpol. Administrative and financial measures were taken to ensure the region's direct integration with Russia. Below the provinces were uyezds, and below them were uchasteks. The division of these provinces focused on the Turks' demographic superiority and implemented regulations designed to shift their position in these regions to their detriment. In Elisabetspol Governorate, in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which is currently in dispute, the Turks constituted 878,000, while the Armenians constituted 292,000. In Baku Governorate, this number included 165,000 Turks and 63,000 Mountaineers, for a total of 228,000 Muslims, 77,000 Russians, 52,000 Armenians, and 8,000 Jews, along with 137,000 other nationalities. In the five uyezds of Yerevan Governorate, the Turks constituted a population ranging from 32% to 57%. In Tiflis Governorate, a substantial Turkish population also lived as a minority (Zenkovsky, 1971, pp. 87-94; Sarıahmetoğlu, 2006, pp. 25-30).

In the 1870s, when major reforms were undertaken in Russia, the most notable issue regarding political participation for Turks was the Municipal Law. According to this law, urban residents were granted self-government bodies called the *duma*, consisting of a municipal council, a mayor, and an executive board. These self-government bodies handled matters related to health, education, and economic matters. Municipal council elections were based on a feudal representation system. They were elected by taxpayers who voted at three different levels based on their property ownership. The law's implementation in the Caucasus was delayed by 8-18 years due to reasons such as the population's lack of maturity, the region's

underdevelopment, and the lack of sufficient funds. Zemstvos, the representative bodies in rural areas, were never implemented in areas with a large non-Russian population. Muslim residents never had the opportunity to be represented in municipal councils in proportion to their population. This ratio was only around 1/3 (Zenkovsky, 1971, pp. 95-100; Sariahmetoğlu, 2006, pp. 48-50). A significant injustice in representation was revealed when compared to the population. Azerbaijan began to benefit from Russia's economic potential only after the mid-19th century. The establishment of refineries near Baku in 1859 led to a revival in oil production. After 1872, Azerbaijan's economic potential began to increase due to the significant increase in production. For example, copper mines gained a significant place in the Russian market. Along with tobacco and wine production, the demand for cotton created by the American Civil War mobilized a large workforce for cultivation. Along with silk cultivation, traditional carpet weaving also rapidly revived, leading to the export of valuable goods in demand outside the Russian market. With the contribution of foreign capital, Baku would become the world's most important oil production center by the end of the century. Baku, a small port city on the Absheron Peninsula with a population of 14,000 in 1863, reached 206,000 in 1903, becoming the largest city in Transcaucasia. Baku had the fastest population growth in the entire Russian Empire. Despite economic development and industrialization, urbanization progressed slowly. In Elisabethpol Governorate, 70% of the population still lived in rural areas. In Baku Governorate, this proportion rose to nearly 50% due to immigrants brought in by the oil industry. Most Muslims constituted the poorest subgroup in the region. Initially, due to the increase in oil production, those who owned oil wells, refineries, and land around Baku rapidly prospered. A large portion of these were Turks. However, after 1872, with the granting of oil concessions through bidding, this situation rapidly shifted, favoring foreign, Russian, and Armenian capitalists and detrimental to Azerbaijani Turks. Initially, this ratio of approximately 88% fell to less than 13%. Despite this rapid transfer of wealth in Azerbaijan, wealthy Turkish families such as Tagizade, Nakizade, Assalauzzade, Mukhtarzade, and Sultanzade held a position similar to that of the Turkish Tatar bourgeoisie (Swietochowski, 1988, p. 72; Baykara, 1975, p. 48).

Towards the end of the 19th century, Russia's direct control from Central Asia to the Chinese border made Tatar intermediation unnecessary for Russian capital and businesspeople. Competition from the immense Russian capital, which gradually increased its influence in these areas with the support of Russian state administrators and railways without the need for a Tatar intermediary, partner, or representative, worsened the Tatars' situation. The Russian bourgeoisie, seeking to remain independent in economic life, had been using Orthodoxy and Slavic nationalism, the state ideology since 1830, as a means of oppression against non-Russian (inorodets) peoples. In the face of this unjust competition, the Tatar bourgeoisie had no difficulty finding an ideology powerful enough to counter Pan-Orthodoxy and Pan-Slavism. This was undoubtedly Turkism. The development of industry and the growth of rail and sea transportation increased horizontal mobility in Russia, facilitating contacts between the various Turkic peoples of Russia, which had the largest Muslim Turkic population in the world, as well as with the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman possession of the Caliphate and the Holy Lands had a lasting influence, fostering respect among Russian Muslims. During the 19th century's Russo-Turkish wars, the Russian administration's skeptical attitude toward its own Muslim subjects forced Turkism, an ideology of national awakening, to be perceived as a counter-movement capable of bringing down Russia. In this sense, the skeptical shadow of Russian conservatism fell upon a correct understanding of Turkism. This shadow has remained palpable from time to time.

Unlike other Turkic regions in Russia, the Caucasus has followed a course directly linked to developments in Türkiye. Although the Musavat Party, which began its open activities after the February Revolution, had previously held a socialist stance, it became central to the Azerbaijani national movement with its Turkist orientation in the midst of the turmoil created by Armenian attacks. The Caucasus Muslims Congress, held in Baku on April 15, 1917, was dominated by Turkist and federalist tendencies. After the congress, associations and parties advocating nationalist ideas within the country pursued a policy of joining Musavat. Nesib Bey Yusufbeyli's Turkish Decentralization Party, active in Ganja, was the most important of these. After this merger, the party changed its name to the Turkish Decentralization Equality Party, but

it continued to be known as the *Musavat Party*. Almost all Azerbaijani Turks dispersed abroad rallied around the Musavat Party. The party's central committee, in addition to Mehmed Emin Resulzade, included Mammad Hasan Hajinski, Musa Refiyev, Mustafa Vekilov, Nesib Bey Yusufbeyli, Hasan Bey Aghayev, Shefi Bey Rustembeyov, and Mirza Muhammed Akhundov. Because the Musavatists won the elections for the Baku Soviet on October 22, they were the sole representatives of the Turks in Azerbaijan in the days following the revolution. At the general congress they held from October 26 to 31, 1917, Mehmed Emin Resulzade was elected chairman of the central committee. Because Bolshevik promises aligned with the party's principles, the party program, consisting of 76 articles, was prepared cautiously, declaring Russia a democratic, federative people's republic based on national autonomy and recognizing freedom of thought and conscience (Swietochowski, 1988, pp. 130-132; Imanov, 2003, pp. 63-67). However, Azerbaijani Turkists would soon find more than they expected.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution, the Georgian Menshevik (Social Democrat) and Armenian Dashnaksutyun parties, along with the Musavat Party, formed the Independent South Caucasus Government against the Baku Soviet. However, this artificial political formation would not last long, disintegrating due to conflict between them. During this period, two powers in the region possessed sufficient military resources and capabilities: the Bolsheviks and the Ottomans, who dominated the Baku Soviet. The Baku People's Soviet, which was trying every possible way to seize control of the Caucasus, launched an attack on Baku's Muslim neighborhoods in March 1918 with nearly 5,000 Armenian troops gathered from various regions of Russia, massacring thousands of Azerbaijani Turks. As the attacks spread throughout Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, particularly in Shamakhi, Lenkeran, and Guba, the Caucasus Islamic Army, under the command of Nuri Pasha, brother of Enver Pasha, mobilized to stop the massacres. This not only ensured life safety in the region but also paved the way for independence from national autonomy. The Azerbaijan National Council, convened on May 28, 1918, proclaimed the National Republic of Azerbaijan by 24 votes, with two abstentions, and elected Mehmed Emin Rasulzadeh as President (Baykara, 1975, p. 259; Swietochowski, 1988, pp. 107-109).

For approximately two years, until April 27, 1920, Turkists experienced the spring of a national, independent republic in Azerbaijan. Resulzade expresses the pride of that period as follows: "*Azerbaijanis were the first Turkish dramatists, the first Turkish (opera) composers, the first to publish a newspaper among the Turks of Russia, the first to resolve sectarian conflicts, the first to consider reforming the (old) alphabet, and finally the first to declare a republic in the Islamic world*" (Resulzade, 1990, p. 45).

## Conclusion

While the 70-year Soviet era was a period in which Azerbaijan managed to survive despite great difficulties, among the republics that gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan remained one of the countries deprived of the opportunity to fully experience the pride of this achievement. The nearly 30-year Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territory prevented Azerbaijan from reaching this point of happiness. As a result, in the 44-day war that began on September 27, 2020, and ended on November 10, Azerbaijan was able to recover a significant portion of its losses and received a substantial morale boost. This victory also demonstrated to everyone that Azerbaijan possesses a national army capable of successfully defending its country and independence. Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan politically, diplomatically, and militarily during this process created a favorable climate for integration and cooperation, not only in Azerbaijan but also in the entire Turkic world public opinion. It is inevitable that this climate will show its policy-making effect.

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