
ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

VLADIMIR KIRICHENKO. IRANIAN AZERBAIJAN: PAST AND PRESENT

Keywords: Iran; Azerbaijan; Turks; Islamic revolution.

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Citation: Kirichenko V. Iranian Azerbaijan: Past and Present // Russia and the Moslem World, 2023, № 3 (321), P. 57–71. DOI: 10.31249/rmw/2023.03.05

Abstract. The article examines the history of Southern or Iranian Azerbaijan, pays attention to the place occupied by the Turks in the history of Iran. The policy of Reza Shah Pahlavi aimed at assimilation of the Azerbaijanis of Iran is also considered. In general, the Azerbaijanis were able to overcome difficulties and fit into the political system of modern Iran.

In the 1st millennium BC – the beginning of the 1st millennium AD on the territory of modern Azerbaijan and the northern regions of Iran, there were a number of powerful states, including Manna, Atropatena and Albania. [1] After the conquests of Alexander the Great (330 BC), a representative of the local nobility Atropates (some researchers believe that the word

“atropate” meant the title of ruler) was appointed ruler of Media. In 323, he was removed, but retained power over the northern part of the country, which received the name “Atropatena”. [2] It is believed that the current name “Azerbaijan” came from the name of Atropatene. [3] In the 3rd century AD Azerbaijan was conquered by the Persian Sassanid Empire. [4] In the 7th century The Arab conquest contributed to the spread of Islam in this territory. It is worth noting that the formation of the Azerbaijani ethnos was influenced by the Gutians, Lullubis, Turukians, Hurrians, Cimmerians, Saki-Scythians, Huns, Bulgars, Khazars, Barsils, Pechenegs, and other peoples. [5] From the 9th century from the territory of Central Asia the Oghuz Turks [6] started penetrating to the territory of modern Azerbaijan. It was the Oghuzes that had a decisive influence on the Azerbaijani ethnos. Since the 10th century the Turks began to play an important role in the history of Iran. It was then that the Ghaznavids [7] captured eastern Iran and became the first Turkic dynasty ruling the territory of this country. [8]

During the reign of the Turkic Safavid dynasty, [9] Shiism in Iran received the status of the state religion. Initially, the city of Tabriz, located on the territory of Azerbaijan, became the capital of the Safavid state, but later, due to Ottoman pressure, the authorities had to move the capital to the city of Qazvin, located further from the border with the Ottoman Empire. Later, Shah Abbas the Great [10] moved the capital to Isfahan. [11, p. 281–282]

Throughout the entire period of the Safavid rule (beginning of the 16th – 18th centuries), the Azerbaijani language was the official language of the royal court. Also this language was used in the army. [12] At the same time, the Persian language was used in diplomatic correspondence and was the language of fiction and history.

The Qajar dynasty (1779–1925) [13] was the last Azerbaijani dynasty of Turkic origin in Iran. The first ruler was Agha Muhammad Shah Qajar [14], who established Qajar hegemony in the Iranian plateau. During the reign of Mohammed Shah Qajar (1741-1797), Iran began to experience foreign influence. [11, p. 254]

At the same time, it was under the Qajars that the influence of the Islamic clergy became more pronounced in Iran. [11, p. 255]

Agha Mohammed Shah Qajar's nephew, Feth-Ali Shah, [15] suffered major defeats from Russia in two Russo-Persian wars. [16] According to the Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828) treaties, Azerbaijan was divided between two empires. Russia received the northern part of Azerbaijan, and the southern part went to Persia. Thus, new political-geographical units appeared: "Northern Azerbaijan" (or "Russian Azerbaijan") and "South Azerbaijan" (or "Iranian Azerbaijan"). [17]

After Reza Khan, [18] the first Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty, [19] came to power, Iranization policy began in Iran. In this regard, teaching in the Azerbaijani language was prohibited in the schools of South Azerbaijan. [20] Most of the important positions in the territory of Iranian Azerbaijan were occupied by the Persians. [21] Also, toponyms of Azerbaijani origin were renamed in the province. The authorities pursued a policy of economic discrimination in the region. At the same time, the border with Soviet Azerbaijan was closed, and Iranian Azerbaijanis could not travel there for seasonal work. Therefore, Azerbaijanis, historically living in the north of the country, had to move to large cities, primarily to Tehran. [22]

The authorities considered Azerbaijanis to be "Turkicised Aryans", Persians by origin, and encouraged a sense of cultural and racial inferiority of the Turks as descendants of nomadic barbarians, in contrast to the ancient cultured Persians. In this regard, some Azerbaijanis since the 1960s and 1970s have distanced themselves from the Turkic identity, replacing it with the Persian one. [23]

There were also examples of how ethnic Azerbaijanis shared the ideology of Persian nationalism. For example, the scholar and diplomat Sayed Hasan Taghizade (1878–1970), [24] being an Azerbaijani, supported Persian nationalism. He headed the "Persian Committee" created on the initiative of the Germans in 1915, which was located in Berlin. The purpose of the organization was spreading nationalist propaganda and the possible creation of a nationalist government in Iran. [25] The scope and influence of the

Persian Committee is evidenced by a Persian-language journal called Kaveh. [26]

Another ethnic Azerbaijani who influenced the nationalist movement in Iran was the historian and linguist Seyyed Ahmad Kasravi. [27] In his work "Azeri, or the ancient language of Azerbaijan", he tried to show that the word "Azeri" is found in most ancient historical books, especially those relating to the first centuries of Islam. He believed that it was the name of the ancient language of Azerbaijan and had nothing to do with Turkic. In his opinion, this language was formed as a result of the merging of two ancient languages – the language of the Medes (after their invasion of Azerbaijan) and the language of the indigenous inhabitants of the country, and is close to the Persian languages, and not to the Turkic ones. [28]

Yu.N. Timkin, a Russian researcher, notes that, despite the spread of nationalist ideas under Reza Khan, the ruler himself: "was connected with the Azerbaijanis by many ties. So, his mother Nush Afarin Ayromlu belonged to the ethno-cultural group of Azerbaijanis, airomlu. Reza Khan's wife, Taj ol-Moluk, who bore him the heir to the throne, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, [29] was the daughter of Brigadier General Teimur Khan Ayromlu, who was very influential in Iran in the 1920s. A cousin, Taj ol-Molouk, became head of the Iranian Police Headquarters in the 1920s." [21]

From 1918 to 1920, there existed the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, independent of Russia. [1] Subsequently, it became part of the USSR. In 1945, with the support of the USSR, the Kurdish Republic and the Republic of Azerbaijan were created on the territory of Iranian Western Azerbaijan with the dominance of the Communists in power. However, Iranian forces regained control of the region in 1946–1947 after the Soviet armed forces withdrew beyond their borders. [30]

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Even before the events of the Islamic revolution (1979), one of the most important cities in the Azerbaijani provinces, Tabriz, became the center of protest activity. Starting from December 1977, students of the University of Tabriz held demonstrations. The students chose December 12, 1977 (21 Azar in the Iranian calendar) as the day of one of the most important protest demonstrations against the Shah's regime. This date is important for Azerbaijanis because it marks both the day of establishment and the day of the fall of the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Iran in 1945 and 1946, respectively. It is noteworthy that the government newspaper Ettelaat reported that the demonstration took place on December 19 and not December 12, so as not to link the demonstration with historical events.

In Tabriz, anti-Shah activity entered a new phase on February 18, 1978. This is due to the fact that in response to the killing of approximately 162 demonstrators in Qom on January 9, 1978, Ayatollah Mohammad-Kazem Shariatmadari [31] called on the people of Iran to strike on the fortieth day of mourning for the dead. [32] It should be noted that during the last years of the reign of Muhammad Reza Shah, Ayatollah Shariatmadari (an ethnic Azeri) was the senior cleric in the important religious center of Qom. While Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini [33] was in exile, Shariatmadari was a very popular and influential religious figure in Iran. Ayatollah headed that part of the Shiite clergy that remained loyal to the Shah and took part in the Islamic revolution only at its final stage. [34] When Khomeini returned, the popularity of Shariatmadari began to interfere with the new Islamic regime. Shariatmadari disagreed with Khomeini on such key issues as the place and role of the clergy in government. For example, the ayatollah did not like the idea of direct participation of the clergy in political life. Such views of the clergyman caused a confrontation with Khomeini. However, Shariatmadari did not completely abandon political activity. Together with a group of associates, the ayatollah participated in the

creation of the Moslem People's Republican Party (MPRP). This political force emphasized collective leadership, its members called for cooperation with secular parties and freedom of the media. [11, p. 305] Shariatadari was especially popular among Iranian Azerbaijanis. He also drew support from the Westernized business community and secular political parties.

Russian researcher V.I. Sazhin notes that "the Azerbaijani nationalists tried to take advantage of the differences between Khomeini and Shariatmadari, who tried to establish local autonomy in Iranian Azerbaijan. The confrontation between Shariatmadari and Khomeini reached its peak in December 1979 and January 1980, when clashes broke out between the followers of both ayatollahs in Qom and Tabriz. Mass demonstrations in Tabriz in December 1979 demanded autonomy for Azerbaijanis and other ethnic minorities. Since Shariatmadari adhered to the religious principle of solving interethnic problems, he did not become the leader of the autonomists". [22]

In 1982, the ayatollah was accused of plotting against Khomeini and sentenced to prison, and his party was dissolved. The ayatollah ended his days under house arrest in 1986. [11, p. 305] One of Khomeini's supporters, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, [35] is also of Azerbaijani origin. Ayatollah Khamenei was elected the third president of the Islamic Republic in October 1981. After the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in June 1989, Khamenei became Iran's supreme leader (rahbar) and remains so to this day. [11, p. 165]

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For most of the history of modern Iran, there was a single province, Azerbaijan, located along the Zagros mountain range in the plateau region of northwestern Iran. [11, p. 40] In 1937 the province was divided into West and East Azerbaijan. At the same time, some traditional territories of Azerbaijan became part of other Iranian provinces. In 1993, a new province of Ardabil was formed from part of the territories of the province of East Azerbaijan, to

which part of the northern territories of the Caspian province of Gilan was also transferred. [36] The provinces, traditionally inhabited by Azerbaijanis, have developed trade and industry, combined with a relatively prosperous agriculture. Agriculture is supported by sufficient year-round rainfall, as farmers do not have to rely solely on irrigation systems to support the cultivation of wheat, barley, tobacco and cotton. In this regard, Azerbaijan is often called the “breadbasket” of Iran. The industry of Azerbaijan is represented by carpet weaving, tanning, textile industry and copper mining. [11, p. 41] It is noteworthy that about 30 million Azerbaijanis lived in Iran, and 10 million in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2015). [37]

When the former Azerbaijan SSR became independent in 1991, the popularity of nationalist ideas increased among Iranian Azerbaijanis. This was facilitated by the fact that the Iranian authorities did not allow the teaching of the Azerbaijani language in schools. Since 1996, large demonstrations have taken place in Tabriz, Urmia and other predominantly Azerbaijani cities in northwestern Iran about once a year. The main requirement was the introduction of teaching in the Azerbaijani language and the recognition of the linguistic autonomy of the Azerbaijanis. [38] The National Liberation Movement of Azerbaijan, founded in 1994, was behind the actions. One of its prominent representatives was professor of linguistics Mahmudali Chekhregani. In 2002, he founded the South Azerbaijan National Awakening Movement (SANAM). [39]

In 2006, mass protests erupted in the areas inhabited by Azerbaijanis in Iran. Their reason was the publication in one of the magazines of a drawing that was considered offensive to the Azerbaijani people and their language: in a sketch intended for children, a boy pronounces several words in Persian meaning “cockroach”, and a cockroach sitting at a table answers him with a question “What?” in Azerbaijani. The protest demonstrations sparked by this publication escalated into riots, and the Iranian security services cracked down. According to official sources, 330 protesters were arrested and four were killed. [40]

In 2005, protests erupted again in Tabriz, Urmia, Maragha, Ardebil and some other large settlements in northern Iran populated by Azerbaijanis. The reason was the show “Fitile” (“Wick”), which depicted an Azerbaijani boy brushing his teeth with a toilet brush and complaining of bad breath. Part of the program was in Farsi, but some of the dialogues were in Azerbaijani. [41]

In 2019, the teaching of the Azerbaijani language began in the schools of the Iranian province of East Azerbaijan. According to the new curriculum, schoolchildren were given the opportunity to study Azerbaijani for 2 hours a week (60 hours in total per academic year). [42] The change in the attitude of the Iranian authorities towards the teaching of the Azerbaijani language may have been influenced by external factors. Probably, the Iranian authorities are afraid that the US may use the Azerbaijani issue in the confrontation with Iran, and therefore changed the language policy. Apparently, this decision was also aimed at strengthening ties with the Republic of Azerbaijan. [42]

It should be noted that the majority of Azerbaijanis today identify themselves as Iranians, and not along ethnic lines. The fact that Azerbaijanis occupy important positions in the Islamic Republic of Iran is a deterrent to ethno-nationalist feelings. Former prime ministers Mehdi Bazargan and Mir Hussein Mousavi, as well as Ayatollahs Abdul-Karim Mousavi Ardabili, Abu al-Qasim Khojeh and Sadeq Khalkhali are prime examples of how Azerbaijanis have integrated themselves into the political structure of Iran. [43]

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Azerbaijan is trying to strengthen mutually beneficial economic, political and cultural relations with Iran. Since Azerbaijan's independence in 1991, relations between Baku and Tehran have not been without problems. Relations with Iran under President Heydar Aliyev (2003–2013) were close, based on ties established during Aliyev's rule in Nakhichevan (1991–1993).

But they became tense after the Americans excluded Iran from the Azerbaijan International Operating Company, which was set up to exploit three Azerbaijani oil fields in the Caspian. [43]

Iran's admission to an international consortium set up in 1996 to explore the Caspian Shah Deniz field have, probably, helped to improve relations. In the past, Heydar Aliyev accepted Iranian assistance in setting up large refugee camps in Azerbaijan. Iran feared a huge influx of Azeri refugees that could fill up the ethnic Azeri minority in northern Iran. In February 1992, Azerbaijan joined the Economic Cooperation Organization, which Iran considered as a forerunner of the Islamic Common Market. In October 1996, Azerbaijan and Iran signed an agreement on the construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to Nakhichevan. [44]

The first Armenian-Azerbaijani war that broke out around Nagorno-Karabakh (1991-1994) highlighted Tehran's position. Initially, Iran supported its Shia comrades-in-arms in Azerbaijan with loans, weapons and ammunition (apparently hoping for the successful export of its ideas). However, after Baku began to establish ties with Turkey, the United States and Israel, Tehran began to gravitate towards Armenia. [45]

Iran has always recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and considered as part of Azerbaijan seven regions that came under the control of Armenia during the Karabakh war (1992-1994), but were not part of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region during the Soviet era. However, it also maintained good relations with Armenia. The status quo, which was in effect from 1994 to 2020, was beneficial to Iran. Iran serves as a link between mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. Turkish goods also enter Asian markets through Iran. [46]

Relations between Baku and Tehran deteriorated after the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020. Tehran has repeatedly stated that changing the borders in the Caucasus would be tantamount to a "red line". At a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held on July 19, 2020 in Tehran, Khamenei said: "If attempts are made to

close the border between Iran and Armenia, the Islamic Republic will oppose it, because this border has been a communication route for thousands of years.” [47] It should be noted that Azerbaijanis in northern Iran staged public celebrations after Azerbaijan's victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020 and demanded the closure of the Iranian-Armenian border after the war. [48]

At the end of the summer of 2020, publications concerning South Azerbaijan appeared in the Azerbaijani media. “The time has come: South Azerbaijan must secede from Iran,” such a headline appeared on August 26, 2020 on the website Caliber.az, which is associated with the presidential administration of Azerbaijan. An unknown author wrote, referring to the Iranian Azerbaijanis: “The Azerbaijani state has sufficient mobilization power to protect the rights of its compatriots.” [47]

It should be noted that Türkiye also uses the Azerbaijani factor in its anti-Iranian policy. In December 2020, a political scandal erupted. The Turkish president uttered a few lines from a folk song about the reunification of the lands along the Azerbaijani-Iranian border during a military parade in Baku on December 10, 2020, drawing criticism from Tehran. After that, the Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the Turkish Ambassador to the country, Deryu Orsa, to hand him a note of protest. [49] In response to Erdogan's actions, a demonstration was held outside the Turkish consulate in Iranian Tabriz. The participants spoke out for the territorial integrity of Iran and condemned the actions of the Turkish President. [50]

Conclusion

The Turks, including the natives of Azerbaijan, had a considerable influence on the history of Iran. Despite certain difficulties associated with discrimination suffered by Azerbaijanis in Iran after the fall of the Qajar dynasty (1925), after the Islamic revolution (1979), representatives of this people managed to take their place in the political structure of Iran. In addition, the majority

of Azerbaijanis feel like Iranians, and ethnic origin for them goes by the wayside.

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Received: 23.12.2022.

Accepted for publication: 11.01.2023.

OLGA BIBIKOVA. "NON-CITIZENS" IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Keywords: bidoons; non-citizens; stateless persons; migrant workers; naturalization; deportation; Jus soli; Jus sanguinis.

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Citation: Bibikova O. "Non-Citizens" in the Countries of the Arabian Peninsula // Russia and the Moslem World, 2023, № 3 (321), P. 71-89. DOI: 10.31249/rmw/2023.03.06

Abstract. The countries of the Arabian Peninsula are young states in which the measures forming state institutions (drawing borders, population census, legislative acts, etc.) have not yet been fully implemented. Huge revenues from the extraction and sale of oil and gas allow the rulers of these states to hire labor abroad, multiplying their wealth at their expense. These funds allow a part of the indigenous population with political rights to lead a rentier lifestyle without participating in economic life. At the same time, there is a separate