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*Just Peace Diplomacy Journal's* primary areas of interest are peace, security and stability, militarism, energy and international presence in the Middle East and Central Asia.

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## **Our Vision:**

*In the beginning all people were one nation* (Holy Qur'an, 2:213)  
Throughout human history, peace has always been the 'primary state' and war the 'accidental state'. Peace is beautiful, compassionate and constructive, while war is fearsome, merciless and destructive. Unfortunately, despite this, war has been one of 20<sup>th</sup> century's most major problems, and has proved to be the symbol of the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As portrayed by the contemporary history of international relations, particularly in the Middle East and Central Asia, war is not the solution, nor is it constructive or helpful in solving problems; rather, it causes problems and is the root of the continuation of violence, instability and insecurity.

War is not the solution to the differences between governments and nations. Only with peace which is based on justice, i.e. '*Just Peace*', can we reach a stable and permanent solution to our differences. Diplomacy and constructive dialogue which take into consideration the rights of both parties, is the only path to establishing '*Just Peace*', stability and world security. Our aim is to change international relations with the active participation of nations on the basis of '*Just Peace*'.

*Let there be a group among you who will invite others to good.*  
(Holy Qur'an, 3:104)

We, as part of the international network of intellectuals, are able to play an important and constructive role in the establishment of mutual understanding, of dialogue and in the reduction and amelioration of global problems. Our intention is to provide solutions and means for the positive and just cooperation of nations with each other, and to reach this end independent of governments, through a realistic understanding of nations and governments from each other, and through clear, truthful and constructive dialogue.

## **The Principles of Establishing 'Just Peace':**

1. Establishing justice between the countries of the South and the North.
2. Mutual respect between different nations and different governments.
3. Respecting and considering the valid interests of all parties which have a vested interest in any given conflict.
4. Thinking globally and acting against extreme nationalism.
5. Realistic understanding of the realities of the world.
6. Upholding and respecting human rights and the principles of democracy.
7. Accepting and moving towards the destruction of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world/on a global scale

Our priorities in the current situation are to analyse the issues and problems of conflict-zones such as those of the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.

Our tools for aiding in the establishment of world peace are:

1. Inviting and facilitating for intellectuals from different parts of the world to engage in dialogue with each other.
2. Dialogue between intellectuals and international organizations.
3. Preparing the groundwork for dialogue between on the basis of mutual respect between opposing governments.
4. Organising international scientific conferences dealing with regional and global issues.
5. Publishing scientific research work on peace studies in the form of books and journals.
6. Providing education internationally on the culture of dialogue, understanding, compromise, justice, freedom and spirituality.

We are a private, non-governmental organisation. Our offices are based in Europe and the Middle East.

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# Just Peace Diploamcy Journal

International Peace Studies Centre (IPSC)

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## **Revisiting the History of Iran: Geopolitics and Geoculture**

Kafkazli Seyed Javad  
International Peace Studies Center (IPSC)

### **Abstract**

Every nation is in need of a ‘Collective Identity’ which is rooted in the soil of history in an authentic fashion. By a cursory look at the history of Iranshahr we can find common grounds between all the people of contemporary Iranian Plateau, Central Asia, Caucasia, Volga Region, and Asia Minor. In other words, in this paper we have taken into consideration the significance of ‘Culture’ in the constitution of geographical makeup of the region. By doing so, it is argued that the future of politics in this geographical context could not afford to ignore the cultural commonalities which have made up the textures of ‘Identity’ in this vast region over the long course of history in Eurasia.



## Introduction

In the title of this article we have used two concepts in relation to the history of Iran, namely 'Geopolitics' and 'Geoculture'. These concepts have been defined in various different fashions by scholars within humanities and social sciences but here we have employed them in a particular fashion in regard to the history of Iran which is not solely a matter of the past but a 'cultural capital' that could have 'contemporary significance'. It is this contemporary significance of Iranian geopolitical past which we think it could be of constructive importance for building a geocultural future where all actors in Eurasia could benefit. In the abstract, geopolitics generally indicates the links and underlying relationships between political power and geographic space; in actual terms it is often seen as a body of thought assessing specific strategic prescriptions based on the relative significance of land power and sea power in world history. The geopolitical discourse had some consistent concerns, like the geopolitical correlates of power in world politics, the identification of international core areas, and the relationships between naval and terrestrial capacities. (Oyvind, 1988. p 192) Now we turn to the next concept, namely Geoculture which is of great importance in creating the necessary space for the future of a commonwealth based on common symbolical universe rooted in the soil of history. Geoculture is focused on cultural dimensions of geography since it brings together in an unprecedented way the values, ideas, lifestyles, and views of certain areas of the world. Common histories open symbolic areas that may not always correspond to the national-international borders. Relations between societies develop in space lest constrained by territorial frontiers or imposed colonial policies of the past. Geocultural areas do not necessarily coincide with the Nation-State's borders and they acquire a strategical dimension. How should one define and deal with geocultural issues along with geopolitics? The creation of the State and the Nation-state changed the definition and the perception of social, political, economic and cultural space to the extent that it seems impossible to think about space beyond state borders. (Wallerstein, 1991) This would lead us to consider cultural exchanges as intertwining processes, a concept very different from geopolitics based on frontiers. In other words, the Geocultural

map of Iran would be quite different from a geopolitical or political map of Iranian Plateau, Central Asia, Caucasia, Asia Minor and generally the Eurasian region.

### **Relocating the past**

The post-Soviet period, reminiscent of and in many cases seeming to repeat, the events of 1917-1921 after the break-up of the Russian Empire, has demonstrated quite clearly that the difficulties in Caucasia and Central Asia cannot be resolved by the newly independent countries alone due to many historical, cultural, political, economical and geographical indices which have shaped up the collective identities as well as imagined communities of this vast region. Before 1991, Islamic Republic of Iran shared long borders with the USSR on the northeast, northwest and through the Caspian Sea. On the northeast, it was bordered by the Russian Turkestan, whose main part was Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic and on the west of the Caspian Sea, it was neighbored with the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. (Hunter, 2010. p xi) After Gorbachev's failure to reform the system, the Russian Turkestan, which had been split into five socialist republics after the October 1917 Revolution, turned into five independent and non-communist republics; i.e., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. In Caucasus, similar to the Central Asian republics, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia declared their independence from the Russian rule, each establishing their respective republics. The reason for the declaration of independence was rooted in the events that had begun earlier in the *post-Turkmenchay* and *post-Akhal* treaties which were imposed on Iran during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the reign of Peter the Great and Catherine II, the policy of expansion on Muslim land (in Caucasus and Central Asia) began in the Tsarist Russia.<sup>1</sup> The tsars of the Romanov family such as Paul I, Alexander I, Nicholas I, Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II, the last tsar of Russia, continued the expansionist policy. In the time of the Communist Revolution led by Lenin, these republics, which were then called "Russian Turkestan", appeared as united republics in the geopolitical map of the USSR. It is worth noting that the Central Asian republics<sup>2</sup> were part of Iran until the middle of the

reign of Naser al-Deen Shah Qajar in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was in that time that a number of treaties were signed between Iran and Russia, according to which these republics were annexed to Russia and some of the Turkestan khans, who were tributary to Iran in the Qajar era, went under the control of Russian Tsars. According to the treaties of Gulistan and Turkmenchay, Iran's territories from Kabardino-Balkaria<sup>3</sup>, Dagestan and Chechnya in the north of Caucasus to the coast of the Aras River were transferred to Russia. Currently, Iran shares a sea border with the Russian Federation in the Caspian Sea and is also its indirect neighbour through several countries in the Central Asia and Caucasus. The Central Asian countries and Caucasus have a total area of a little more than 4 million square kilometers and a population of about 70 million people. (Wa'zi, 2008. Pp 71-4) Both of these regions have a common history with Iran and Russia. Let us first have a cursory look at the history of Turkestan and Caucasus and their mutual cultural relations, then consider how they were separated from Iran and at the end, reflect on their current geocultural situation.

### **A Brief History of Turkestan and Caucasus**

Turkestan begins from the *Tian Shan* (Tengri Tagh) Mountains, the Altai Mountains and Kashghar region in the border of Mongolia on the east and extends west, to the *Dasht-i-Kibchak* (The Kypchak Plains), which lies in the north of the Caspian Sea and Transcaucasia and near the coast of the Black Sea and in which Tatarstan, a region still in Russia, is located. The Western Siberia is situated in the north of this region and the borders of Iran and Afghanistan, the Himalaya Mountains and the Kashmir region are on its south. This wide region has one of the multifaceted histories in the world of human civilizations. Mass immigrations from the east of this region to the west and south, especially to Europe are considered of high importance in history. The contact of cultures and civilizations has caused most of the historical events to occur. The immigration of Aryans from the south of Siberia, their settlement around the Amu Darya (Jahyoun) and Syr Darya (Seyhoun) Rivers and then their migration to the Iranian Plateau and India, resulted in the establishment of some of the greatest civilizations of the world; such as the Indus Valley Civilization and the Median,

Persian and Parthian civilizations in the Central Iranian Plateau. (Becker, 1968)

After leaving the Karakum (Black Sand) and Kyzyl Kum (Red Sand) Deserts in western Turkestan and migration to the Seyhoun and Jayhoun Rivers, the Turkic tribes quarreled over the wide thriving and inhabitable lands around these rivers. In addition, they sometimes had fights with the Aryans who were migrating from these regions. However, throughout the history of Iran, especially after Islam, Turks and Persians have collaborated in the progress of the Islamic culture and civilization. (Toynbee, 1961)

The tribes who inhabited Turkestan were:

1. Tajiks; who are Persian-speaking people of Iranic origin. Their famous cities are Khujand, Kulob, Qurghonteppa, Ura-teppa<sup>4</sup> and the capital of their country, Tajikistan, is Dushanbe.

Tajiks are divided into two groups: Lowland Tajiks and Highland Tajiks who are also known as Pamir Tajiks. Pamir Tajiks live in the area of Badakhshan and their language is Persian. Some of them live in Afghanistan and China. The Uzbek, Kazakh and Kirgiz minorities also live in Tajikistan. After the dominance of Russia over Tajikistan, a Russian minority was also added to the population of Tajikistan and this was followed by the immigration of Ukrainian people to this region. Tajiks are predominantly Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School while the mountain Tajiks are Shia Muslims. (Soucek, 2000)

2. Uzbeks; who are a Turkic ethnic group. However, some of them have both Turk and Mongol origins. Their famous cities are Samarqand, Bukhara, Andijan, Namangan, Kokand and Khiva. The capital of Uzbekistan is the historical city of Tashkent which was the fourth most populated city in USSR. Uzbeks are Sunnis of the Hanafite School. Tajik, Kirgiz, Turkmen and Kazakh minorities live in Uzbekistan. Russians and Ukrainians who immigrated to Uzbekistan during the dominance of the Soviet Union also live there. (Akiner, 1986)

Although most of the people of Uzbekistan have a Turkic or a Turko-Mongolic origin, this region, with Bukhara as its center, has always been the cradle of Persian literature. Khiva, a historical city in Xorazm or Khorezm Province in Uzbekistan, is located in the lower reaches of Jayhoun (Amu-Darya) River.

3. Kazakhs; who live between the Tian Shan Mountains and the Caspian Sea, occupy the largest area in Central Asia. In fact, the area of their country is more than two million square kilometers. Kazakhs are descendents of Kypchaks, a Turkic tribe who lived in the north of the Caspian Sea. According to the history of Turkistan, Kazakhs had once been nomadic tribes who were ethnically mixed with the Mongols of the steppes of Central Asia. However, some historians believe them to be from a Kyrgyz origin. They speak Kypchak Turkic language, which has a Mongolic origin. They are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafite School. Kyrgyz, Ingush-Chechen, Ukrainian and Russian minorities also live in Kazakhstan. The capital of Kazakhstan is Astana, and Taraz and Karagandy are amongst her major cities. Through history, Kazakhs have always been in the way of Mongols' and Huns' invasion of Europe. Thus, facing the threat of invasion of different tribes, they chose constant migration and a nomadic lifestyle. (Demko, 1997)

4. Kyrgyz people; who have a mixed Mongol and Eastern Turkic origin. They initially lived in the upper Yenisei River valley and are ethnically mixed with Chinese and Mongols. The capital of Kyrgyzstan is Bishkek and its famous cities are Osh, Jalal-Abad, Tokmok and Karakol. They follow the Sunni Islam of the Hannafi School. Kyrgyz people speak Kyrgyz language, a central Turkic language which is closely related to Mongolian language. Uzbeks, Tatars, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Kashgars, Ukrainians and Russians are the minorities who live in Kyrgyzstan. A group of Kyrgyz people live in China, Uzbekistan and Tajikestan. (Pulleyblank, 1990. Pp 98–105)

5. Turkmen; the tribes of Oghuz Turks who immigrated from the borders of Mongolia to a region which is nowadays known as Turkmenistan. Five major tribes of Turkmen are Teke, Yomut, Arsary, Chowdur and Saryk. Some Turkmen live in China, Tajikistan

and Afghanistan. Their religion is Islam and they belong to Sunni branch (Hanafite School) and their language is a member of southern Turkic sub-branch, more specifically the Oghuz group. Turkmens also live in Iran; in Turkmen Sahra, from the cities around Gorgan to eastern ports of the Caspian Sea and regions near Khorasan province. Turkmens took part in the “Basmachi Revolt”, an anti-Communist and anti-Russian guerrilla uprising. (Becker, 1968) This movement encompassed all of Central Asia and went beyond Syr Darya and Amu Darya regions. (Clark, 1997) In 1918, the Turkmen hero, Muhammad Qurban Junaid Khan took possession of Khiva and in 1920, drove the Soviet Red Army back into the desert. The capital of Turkmenistan is Ashgabat and its famous cities are Mary<sup>5</sup>, Daşoguz and Türkmenabat. Other ethnic groups who live in Turkmenistan are:

1. Jamshidis; who initially lived in the west of Afghanistan and were moved to Turkmenistan by Nader. The lifestyle of Jamshidis is close to Turkmens and they speak dialects of the Iranian language. (Miri, 2011)
2. Hazaras; whose majority live in Afghanistan and a small group of them, who are Shia Muslims, live among Turkmens. Despite their probable Mongolic origin, historians consider Hazaras an Iranic ethnic group because they were moved to Turkmenistan by Shah Abbas of the Safavid dynasty and are Shia Muslims, *en masse*. (Miri, 2011)

### **A Brief Look at the History of Caucasus and its Inhabitants**

Caucasus is amongst the lands from which, some groups of Aryans, on their way to the Iranian Central Plateau, passed. Below is the name of the ethnic groups who live in this area, from the north of Aras River, respectively:

1. Azeris; they live in current republic of Azerbaijan and speak Azeri, a branch of the Turkic language. They are Muslim and predominantly Shia. Azerbaijan was an integral part of Iran since the time of Medes. (Miri, 2011)

2. Armenians; a group of Indo-Europeans whose name appears in the inscriptions of Darius the Great as Armenia was an Iranian province until the imposition of treaties of Gulestan and Turkmenchay. Armenians are of the Aryan race and are predominantly Christian. (Miri, 2011)

3. Dagestanis; they live in the north of Azerbaijan. Dagestan was an inhabited area since pre-historic periods. Its impassable mountains had created a protective shield against the invaders, making the north of Caucasus impermeable. Currently, Dagestan is a federal subject of the Russian Federation. A mixture of ethnic groups including Avars (Sunni), Dargins (Sunni), Kumyks (Sunni) - Urban Kumyks during Safavids became Shias-, Lezgins (Sunni/Shia), Russians (Christian/Muslim), Laks (Sunni/Shia), Tabassarans (Sunni/Shia), Azeris/Turkic (Shia), Chechens (Sunni), and Nogais (Sunni) live in Dagestan. The people of Dagestan speak a mixture of Caucasian, Turkic and Iranian languages. Their religion is Islam and both Sunni and Shia branches of Islam are present in the region. In addition, it should be mentioned that the Shias are mainly located in the city of Derbent on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Besides it should be emphasized that the character of Islam is very close to the spirit of Sufism. In other words, two schools of Naqshbandiya and Qadiriya orders are strongly present in the region. The capital of Dagestan is "Makhachkala", located near the Caspian Sea. Dagestan was an Iranian province and lost to Russia by the treaties of Gulestan and Turkmenchay which were signed between Iran and Russia in Qajar period. By these treaties Iran lost all areas in the north of the Arax River including Armenia, the current Republics of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Dagestan (and all khanates which lied beyond). It was after signing these treaties that Russian Tsars suppressed the long-lasting anti-Russian revolts led by an Iranian Sheikh from Maraghe, i.e. Imam Ali Shamil, who was defeated in 1868 during the reign of Alexander II. (Miri, 2012)

### **A Brief Look at the History of Turkestan and Caucasus**

It was after the Communist seizure of power in Russia that the whole Central Asia, which had been previously known as the Russian Turkestan, was split into the republics of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan. Therefore, before dealing with the history of each of these republics, let us have a brief look at the history of Turkestan and how Russians dominated Iranian territories.<sup>6</sup> Caucasus has a similar condition. Therefore by narrating the history of Caucasus, we mean to tell the history of the whole area; Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Armenia, Georgia and all that was known as Circassia. Central Asia has the longest history in the world. Immigrations and massive invasions from the eastern regions of Central Asia to Eurasia, Europe and the Iranian Plateau were sometimes destructive and sometimes constructive. After the decline of the Achaemenid Empire, Greeks went to Bactria, a region in today's Afghanistan and from there to Mawarannahr, where they called "Transoxiana" in their literature. "Transoxiana" is a region between the Seyhoun and Jayhoun Rivers which are called "Yaxartes" and "Oxus" in Greek. Parthians (Arsacids) who are of the same ethnic group as Scythians (Sakas), formerly lived in Mawarannahr and historians believe that Parthians, together with the Dahae, a branch of Sakas, lived in the lands between Gorgan and "Krasnovodsk", a port on the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea in today's Turkmenistan which is nowadays called Türkmenbaşy. They were later settled in "Quchan" (Asaak) and revolted against Seleucids, establishing the Arsacid Dynasty. At the same time, a tribe of the "Yuezhi" ethnic group called Kushans took control over Turkestan and after domination over the regions around Aral Sea, moved south to Afghanistan, establishing the Kushan Empire. (Shakuri & Shakuri, 2009) They were wiped out by the Huns (also known as Hephthalites in Greek and Haytals in Arabic), who had invaded Asia from the north of Mongolia. After plundering the north of Central Asia, the Huns crossed impassable Ural Mountains in Eurasia and under the leadership of a man called "Attila" first settled in the "Pannonia Plain" in Hungary and afterwards, moved to the borders of the Roman Empire and plundered that region. After the fall of Sassanid Empire in 800 AD, Muslims gained control over Central Asia and



Caucasus. The Samanids who were the descendents of Bahram Chobin, were the first Muslim and Iranian dynasty who ruled over Bukhara, Samarkand, Khwarezm and the entire Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. (Narshakhi, 2007. Pp 77-78) Ghaznavids and Seljuqs who lived in the north of the Caspian Sea, established a great empire in Iran by attacking it from Mavarannahr and Caucasus. In the twelfth century, the Khwarezmid Turks dominated thriving cities built by Seljuk rulers. Soon after that, Genghis Khan from a Mongol tribe united all the Mongol tribes and invaded the Central Asian cities through Tarim and Gobi deserts in 1231 AD. He overthrew the Khwarezmid Empire after the destruction of its cities. His descendents called Ilkhanid Dynasty dominated all over Caucasus and east Turkestan. They even constituted the Golden Horde in the coasts of the Black Sea. The Mongols subdued the Russians and plundered and dominated the Muscovite Principality.<sup>7</sup> The Mongol invasion of Central Asia and Caucasus affected the language and customs of the people who lived in these regions and even in the north of the Caspian Sea and the region which is nowadays called Tatarstan. (Takmil-Homayoun, 2001. p 25)

Safavid's situation on the eastern borders with Uzbekistan and on the northwestern borders with Ottomans was unstable until 1740, when Nader defeated Uzbeks and gained control over Turkestan. It was in this time that Abulfeiz Khan, the Emir of Bukhara, declared himself a tributary of Nader and married his daughter to Shahroukh, son of Reza Gholi Mirza. Afterwards, Nader gained control of Bactria, Chechnya, Dagestan, Shirvan, Georgia, Armenia and the entire Caucasus from the Ottomans. After Nader's death, anarchy prevailed in Iran and the Khans of Bukhara and Caucasus declared independence. Then, Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar attacked Tbilisi during his reign and gained control of Georgia and parts of Caucasus. After the Russian military attacked cities in Caucasus and Central Asia, the resistance of Muslims against Russification set in intensively up to this very day in areas which have not yet gained independence from Russian colonial rule. (Hopkirk, 1997)

### **The Inclusion of Caucasus in the Russian Empire**

During the reign of Fath Ali Shah Qajar in Iran and Alexander I in Russia, two sets of wars occurred between Iran and Russia. In the first set of wars, after the defeat of Abbas Mirza's forces, the Tsarist Russia established control over Dagestan and north of Azerbaijan, according to the 1813 treaty of Gulistan. Following the Russian invasion of "Chechnya" and those parts of Caucasus which were in possession of Iran during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the second set of wars began between Iran and Russia and by the 1828 treaty of Turkmenchay, Russia gained control over Nakhchivan, Armenia and parts of Azerbaijan located in the north of the Araxes River including Georgia. This treaty was signed in the time of Nicholas I. (Svante, 2001. p 37)

### **Resistance of Caucasians under the Leadership of Sheikh Shamil**

It was not long after the treaty of Gulistan that Caucasians, especially in Dagestan, began to confront the Russians. Before Sheikh Shamil, and his sister Fatima<sup>8</sup>, Sheikh Mansur had fought with Tsars for 17 years. After Sheikh Mansur, the resistance was led by Ghazi Mullah and Gamzat-bek until Sheikh Shamil, who was known as the lion of Dagestan, undertook the fight against Russian hegemony. In the middle of the Dagestan war, Nicholas I, in a prescript to General Paskevich, while making him "the Count of Erivan", wrote: "Having thus accomplished one glorious task (domination over the plains of Armenia) you must now embark upon another, in my eyes no less glorious and in respect of the advantage which will directly accrue, of much greater import - the pacification for all time of the mountain peoples or destruction of the insubordinate." According to Russian historians, 280 thousand of Russian soldiers with heavy artillery fought a long term war with Sheikh Shamil's forces, which were equipped with elementary weaponry. Shamil even dominated Chechnya. During the reign of Alexander II, Sheikh Shamil's revolt was defeated and he was captured and sent to Saint Petersburg but one of his close Chechen deputies (Bai Sangur) did not surrender and continued the resistance movement until he was hung. (Kundukh, 1987) Sheikh Shamil went to Medina and died in the vicinity of the mausoleum of the Prophet. After

the defeat of Sheikh Shamil's followers, the entire Caucasus remained in possession of Russia with certain sporadic oppositions until Russian Revolution began, when the possibility of retrieving the occupied areas of Iran was once again an unrealistic option by some Iranian diplomats who believed they may be able to negotiate with the French and British in Paris over the fate of occupied territories of Iran. Although there were many documents at the Iranian foreign ministry archives in this regard but soon Iranians realized that the Communist regime of Lenin had other plans than those which they announced for the oppressed nations of the world. (Bayat, 2009)

This is a suitable place to note that the move towards freeing Caucasia from the Russian colonialism was not confined to Iranians in the mainland but even inside the occupied areas of Caucasia one could witness guerrilla movements which resulted in the establishment of a new state by the name of the 'Union of the Peoples of the Northern Caucasus'. It included most of the territory of the former Terek Oblast and Dagestan Oblast of the Russian Empire, which now form the republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan and part of Stavropol Krai of the Russian Federation. Although the new state was a short-lived political entity on the world map but lasted from March 1917 to June 1920. Said Shamil, a grandson of Imam Shamil, was one of the founders of the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus, which survived until it was crushed by the Red Army. (Jackson & Fidarov, 2009)

### **The Inclusion of Turkestan in Russia**

During the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar, Russia realized that the king of Iran was willing to annul the treaty of Turkmenchay with the help of European and Ottoman governments. In order to direct his attention towards the eastern borders of Iran in Turkestan, the Russian government attacked the borders in Jayhoun and Khwarezm. In 1839, during the reign of Nicholas I, the Russian army led by General Perovsky occupied the city of Khiva in Khwarezm. In 1863, during the reign of Alexander II, the Russian forces gradually occupied the regions of Aral, Samarqand and Tashkent and finally reached Merv. By

a treaty signed in 1868, the Khan of Bukhara, who had asked for help from Nasser al-Din Shah but had not received any help from Tehran, was forced to recognize Russian rule over Samarqand.

In 1873, due to a treaty signed between England and Russia in the time of Alexander II, the British government recognized the Khanate of Bukhara to be a Russian protectorate and in the same year, after defeating Iranian army in Merv, the Russian forces, with an excuse of chasing the Yomut Turkmens, reached the coasts of Atrek River under the leadership of General "Kaufman". In 1881, the entire Turkmenistan was occupied by the Russians. In December 1881, that is Muharram 29 in the Hijra calendar, a treaty was signed between Iran and Russia by Mirza Saeed Khan, the foreign secretary, and Ivan Zinoviev, the Russian Ambassador in Tehran, according to which Nasser al-Din Shah was forced to officially recognize the dominance of the Russians over the regions in the north of the Atrek River. After total separation of Turkestan, the Russians called the region the Russian Turkestan and began the Russification of the people of Central Asia. (Akbarzadeh, 1996. Pp 273-9)

In 1917, after the Communist Revolution, the Central Asian Republics called Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were established. Facing the anti-Islam policy of the Communists in Turkestan, in 1911, that is before the Communist Revolution, the Muslims began an armed uprising called "Musavat Uprising" in Caucasus. This uprising was against Russian hegemony. In February 1918, in the city of Bukhara and then most of the regions in Turkestan and current Central Asian Republics a new movement called the "Basmachi Movement" was established. This movement was the uprising of the people of Turkestan against Russian hegemony and especially against Communists who wanted to close the mosques. The Russians considered Basmachis as rebels who threatened the security of the Russian Empire. In Turkic language, "Basmach" refers to a bandit or marauder. When the areas around Seyhoun and Jayhoun and the nearby cities fell in the hands of the Communists, some Muslims began a thorough rebellion against Communists' actions, such as closing the mosques, confiscation of properties and lands and disrespecting the

Islamic rules and Turkish traditions. This rebellion lasted till 1930. (Bennigsen & Wimbush, 1979)

After the death of Lenin in 1924, Stalin took power and chose his trusted party leaders for running the occupied territories of Iran. He changed the name of the cities. For example, he changed the name of Dushanbe in Central Asia to Stalinabad and Khujand to Leninabad. He also abolished the use of Kufi alphabet and replaced it with Russian alphabet in textbooks. He tried to uproot the people of occupied lands from their Iranian identity and tried to keep them, as much as possible, away from Islam until the collapse of USSR.

### **From Multi-ethnic Communities to Ethnic Societies**

Before concluding this study I would like to look at the role of Persian language in Central Asia and Caucasia by revisiting the question of decline of Persian in these regions after the Russian colonization. Before doing so we need to elaborate the concepts of ‘Community’ and ‘Society’ as they are conceptualized in sociological tradition by Ferdinand Tönnies. In other words, we have attached a normative importance to these concepts and the disappearance of Persian language in Eurasia could be problematized by employing the Tönnian approach of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. I don’t intend to elaborate on this question at length but shall dwell upon them in brief as this could assist us in fathoming the complexities of the existing problematique within the frame of our analysis.

Ferdinand Tönnies distinguished between two types of social groupings. *Gemeinschaft* — commonly translated as *community*— refers to groupings based on feelings of togetherness and on mutual bonds, which are felt as a goal to be kept up, their members being means for this goal. *Gesellschaft* — frequently translated as *society* — on the other hand, refers to groups that are sustained by it being instrumental for their members' individual aims and goals. Moreover it should be noted that Tönnies’ distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, like others between tradition and modernity, has been criticized for over-generalizing differences between societies, and

implying that all societies were following a similar evolutionary path. In addition, Tonnies claimed that the equilibrium in *Gemeinschaft* is achieved through morals, conformism, and exclusion - social control - while *Gesellschaft* keeps its equilibrium through police, laws, tribunals and prisons. Amish, Hassidic communities are examples of *Gemeinschaft*, while states are types of *Gesellschaft*. Rules in *Gemeinschaft* are implicit, while *Gesellschaft* has explicit rules (written laws). (Wirth, 1926. Pp 412-422)

This is how these concepts have been defined by Tonnies within sociological tradition. But what is of interest for us in this context is why and how did Persian language lose its significance in Central Asia, Caucasia and Eurasia? These regions before the creation of the Soviet Union were multilingual communities where diverse ethnic groups lived side by side over the course of history. Although the *Turkification* of the region started much earlier than the Russian colonization in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries but the Turkic rulers of various khanates and emirates in Central Asia and Caucasia did not opt for transformation of Persian as the language of the court and intellectual expression. In other words, they used Persian as the *lingua franca* up to 1930 when Stalin changed the Soviet Policy towards Russian Turkistan (as well as Caucasia) by introducing the system of Republic governance in these vast areas of Caucasia and Central Asia. This is to state that prior to Stalin's Soviet Policy in these areas we were faced with communities where ethnic groups of various stocks lived side by side and Persian served as the *lingua franca* of these multi-ethnic communities but by establishing distinct republics based on 'ethnic factor' where for each ethnic group the policy promised an ethnic republic, the whole scenario was transformed into a new state of affairs which coincided by state-modernization program that entailed mass migrations and fast urbanization and so on and so forth. In other words, the whole region was forced into the direction of *Gesellschaft*. To put it differently, if prior to this new politics of Soviet governmentality we had various ethnic groups such as Uzbeks, Kazaks, Kyrgyzs, Armenians, Ingushs, Chechens, Azeris, Georgians, Ossetians, Tajiks, Turkmens, Bashkirs, Tatars, and many other ethnicities who chose Persian as the literary medium of expression, then, after the establishment of these new

‘ethnic republics’ the inhabitants of these new entities were forced to abandon Persian. Instead people in these new republics did not have any choice but to work on their own ethnic language within the frame of Russian alphabetic system which, in turn, resulted in disconnecting these people and regions from their historical identities as well as turning them into moldable targets for the future cultural engineering of Soviet System. In other words, the change from multi-ethnic communities in Central Asia and Caucasia into ethnic societies resulted in the decline of Persian language which was the *lingua franca* in these vast regions. In Tonnian approach, the tissues which intertwined the people of these regions into historical communities were destroyed by colonial policies which resulted into constructed societies that had no authentic relation to the historical experiences of these people who lived over the long course of history in these regions. For instance, the territories which were designed for each ethnic group in Central Asia have never been home to one ethnic group such as Uzbek or Tajik and Turkmen. In other words, the Soviet policy forced upon the Iranic and Islamic world a new kind of modernity which seems leaving behind many scars even 22 years after its disintegration and shall continue the contours of future life of the region. To put it differently, the decline of Persian is not the beginning of the prosperous future of ethnic identities of the people of Central Asia and Caucasia. On the contrary, the decline seems to have been tantamount to an intellectual regress which has becoming ever-deeper by the arrival of new extra-regional neo-colonial players since the power vacuum left by Russia.

### **Cultural Integration and the Impacts of Literature and Philosophy**

As aforementioned the question of ‘identity’ is of a pivotal significance in the stability of Central Asia and Caucasia. In other words, the future of this vast region is dependent upon the makeup of contours of identity or competing or conflicting identities which are at work in the hearts of these nascent decolonized nations of Caucasia and Central Asia. Any politics of culture is dependent upon a sound cultural politics which is based on an integrated roadmap that does not exclude or neglect the complexities of the historical memories in an authentic fashion. To put it differently, the future of these nations go through the past which in

that sense is related to the present of Iran as we all share a very rich heritage which is expressed in our common literature and philosophy and also preserved partially in Iran due to the anti-colonial resistance. For example, the impact of thinkers such as Farabi, Aviceenna, Rudaki, Kharazmi, Sanaei, Mulavi, Gazali, Khajeh Abdullah Ansari, Fozoli, Khaghani, Nezami, Vahed and many others in various fields of art, poetry and religious sciences is undeniable and could also assist us to integrate our current diverse socio-political realities in a fundamental fashion. One example of such a cultural politics could be a revival of common historical personalities within the field of 'Wisdom Philosophy' or 'Hekmat' in relation to contemporary challenges which we all are facing due to the globalized nature of modernity. To put it otherwise, the role of 'Hekmat' in the public square based on the paradigms provided by thinkers such as Farabi and Aviceenna would be of great significance in terms of geocultural integration. Said differently, the building of inter-regional philosophical associations and communities may lead to exchanges of students and professors which could be examples of how to craft geocultural integration policies in operationalized fashions. In other words, the past does not need to be frozen in the historical archives but employed as a transformative tool for making a confederative future. We have already embarked upon such projects but the efforts are not enough to bring sea-change transformations. One of the current issues is the absent of quality in modern life and the disability of discursive philosophy in addressing the question of meaning of life. On the other hand, the discourse of Hekmat or Wisdom Philosophy which is our common cultural heritage could be employed in demonstrating both the commonality between these various nations and the ability to embark upon alternative modernities which are not based on Eurocentric vision of life. Our common literary as well as philosophical figures such as Rudaki and Nezami or Gazali and Farabi could be the keys in these ventures. Of course, we could mention the roles of common traditions and customs such as Nouroz, Fitir Bayram, Kurban Byram and many Islamic festivals which bring us closer to each other. However, another very significant factor which could work as a common denominator between Iran and these diverse regions of Central Asia and Caucasia is the role of Sufism or Sufi Orders such as Naghshebandiyye and Ghaderiyye.



There are scholars who argue that the regions of Central Asia and Caucasia are very different from each other and both have very little commonality with Iran. In my view, this approach is based on a colonial reading of historical paths of these regions which could be named as inalienable parts of "Iranshahr". A non-colonialist reading of history could reveal that in despite of many imposed differences (e.g. introduction of Cyrillic alphabet, Russification policies, mass deportations of Ulema, genocides and many other atrocities) we can see today the Sufi Orders which have deep-rooted connections with the mainland of Iran. For instance, the veneration of twelve Imams among Naghshebandiyye Order in Central Asia and Caucasia (and even among Tatars in Volga Region) or "Spiritual Shiism" of Ghaderiyye Order are aspects of significant signs of commonalities which need to be galvanized by all sides. Because the future of these regions and people who live in these areas should be aimed at some kind of confederative system which need to be based upon profound cultural fundamentals rooted in the soil of our common history such as literature, Hekmat, poetry, Sufism, and so on and so forth.

### **Conclusion**

By demonstrating that the newly independent countries in Central Asia and southern Caucasia (and even the northern Republics of Caucasia which lie still within Russia) have had a common history with Iran until the treaties of Gulistan, Turkmenchay and Akhal in early 20<sup>th</sup> century we have intended to allude to the emancipative role of culture in the constitution of politics and policy in the future of the Eurasian region. In other words, we aimed to give a novel importance to the idea of 'Culture' in relation to geographical landscape which has been remolded thanks to the acts of human being in the tumultuous courses of multifaceted histories. The dialectics of *geography* and *history* is what we have termed as *geoculture*, i.e. where the physical landscape meets the spiritual element as well as cultural aspect and finally gives birth to a new dimension which the political reality cannot do without. To put it differently; the post-Turkmenchay Iran has left us with a *de jure* politico-cultural discontinuity while the post-Soviet Russia has created a climate where we can rebuild the broken cultural bonds and

also work together on the political level where in a globalized world the political borders may lose their hurdling presence. In other words, we need to re-read the history of the region in the postcolonial context where the culture could play a significant role in bringing together all these separated countries in this vast region by building some kind of confederation in the near future.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that this aggressive policy started two hundred years earlier when Kazan Khanate fell in the hands of Ivan the Terrible in 1552. The siege of Kazan in 1552 was the final battle of Russo-Kazan Wars. It led to the fall of Kazan Khanate. However, it was not the last battle on the khanate's territory. After the fall of Kazan, rebel governments formed in Çalım and Miṣātamaq, and a new khan was invited from the Nogais. This continuation guerilla war was ended only in 1556. Interesting also to note that the fall of Kazan coincided with the fall of Andalusia but the former has not received much attention while thinkers such as Allama Iqbal and Ustad Muttahari lamented the fall of the latter without realizing that the fall of Kazan has had even more profound impact on the geopolitical state of the world of Islam – which became clearer when the Russian state entered the world politics by the defeats of both Iran and Ottoman Empire in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

(Martin, 1995)

<sup>2</sup> Of course it should be noted that these regions were not called as ‘Republics’ but ‘Provinces’ or ‘Velayat’ and part of Qajar Empire.

<sup>3</sup> Some contemporary scholars attribute their origin to a cultural conglomeration of northern Caucasian tribes with the Iranian-speaking Alans. As with other parts of the Caucasus, the area that is now known as Kabardino-Balkaria has been inhabited for thousands of years. The origins of its inhabitants have been made somewhat obscure by Russian ethnologists who did not want to state the Iranian origins of the Muslim people in this region. The region was always under Iranian suzerainty until it came under the control of the Mongols between the years of 1242 to 1295. It returned into the hands of the Iranians from 1295 to 1827 before falling into Russian hands under the terms of Turkmenchay and Kuchuk Kainarji treaties. However the defeat of Iranian army was not the end of Muslim resistance as the mountain-dwelling Balkars resisted the Russians for many years. In the past the official written languages were Arabic for religious services, Persian for literature and Turkish for business matters. From 1920 on Balkar has been the language of instruction in primary schools; subsequent instruction is carried out in Russian. Until 1928 Kufi letters were used by the local people in writing the Balkarian and after that (in 1937), Cyrillic was imposed on the nations in the region *en masse*. Ninety-six percent of the population is bilingual in Balkar and Russian. Organs of mass culture, secondary school texts, newspapers, and magazines in both Balkar and Russian continue to increase in number. (Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (London: MacMillan, 1970))

<sup>4</sup> Since 2000, it is known as Istarawshan.

<sup>5</sup> Mary, the capital of the Mary Province in Turkmenistan, was formerly known as Merv. The ancient city of Merv lies near it.

<sup>6</sup> Whenever in this paper we use the term ‘Iranian Territory’ we do not mean Iran as a territorialized political entity based on the principles of ‘Nation-State’ model as this is a recent phenomenon in the history of political institutions. On the contrary, we refer to Iran both as an ‘Empire’ and as a ‘Civilizational Entity’ which at certain stage included even the Indian subcontinent as Asia Minor and many other places in Eurasia.

<sup>7</sup> The Grand Duchy of Moscow was a late medieval Rus' principality centered on Moscow, and the predecessor state of the early modern Tsardom of Russia. The Grand Duchy of Moscow grew from just 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> in 1300 to 430,000 in 1462, 2.8

million in 1533, 5.4 million by 1584. It is taken to originate with Daniel I who inherited the town in 1283, eclipsing and eventually absorbing its parent duchy of Vladimir-Suzdal by the 1320s. The power of Moscow expanded further, annexing the Novgorod Republic in 1478 and the Grand Duchy of Tver in 1485. It remained tributary to the Golden Horde (the "Tatar Yoke") until 1480. Ivan III, during his 43-year reign, further consolidated the state, campaigning against his major remaining rival power, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and, by 1503, had tripled the territory of Muscovy, adopting the title of tsar and "Ruler of all Rus". By his marriage to the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, he established Muscovy as the successor state of the Roman Empire, the "Third Rome". Ivan's successor Vasili III was also militarily successful, gaining Smolensk from Lithuania in 1512, pushing Muscovy's borders to the Dniepr River. Vasili's son Ivan IV (the later Ivan the Terrible) was an infant at his father's death in 1533. He was crowned in 1547, assuming the title of tsar together with the proclamation of Tsardom of Russia. (Moss, 2005. p 80)

<sup>8</sup> People of that region still talk of their courage. After many fights, Sheikh Shamil, the fighter for the independence of Caucasus and for protecting the territorial integrity of Iran, was captured by Russians. His sister, Fatima, continued his brother's fights against the Russian Tsarist regime and along with other courageous women of Caucasus fought the Russian soldiers. Finally, after causing a lot of damage to the enemy's army, she was killed while being surrounded by the enemy. According to some resources, she killed herself so the enemy would not capture her alive.