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**CAUCASIAN POLICY OF RUSSIA IN THE 16TH–17TH
CENTURIES**

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Abstract

The paper refers to the Caucasian policy of Russia, the role of the Caucasian region in the politics of Russia, Turkey and Iran in the 16th–17th centuries, the formation of Russian-Caucasian relations during this period, and the order of priority of relations with Russia for the North Caucasus. Diplomacy and military opposition of the peoples of the North Caucasus to foreign invaders played a great role. Russia in the 16th-17th centuries was not yet a strong state. Besides, the troops of the Russian regular army were almost constantly engaged in foreign policy problems on the western and northern borders. Therefore, Russia in the 16th-17th centuries, unlike Iran and Turkey, did not have huge military resources to be sent to the North Caucasus to conquer the region. At the same time, Russia in the Caucasus had an advantage over the Ottoman Empire and Iran: the presence of the Terek-Grebensky Cossacks here and the desire of the leaders of the Caucasian peoples to enter into an alliance with Russia and establish friendly relations with it. Due to its military weakness Russia was interested in a military-political alliance with these forces using them in the fight against their opponents, which led to the treaty acts between them and the vassal-allied relations.

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1. Introduction

In the middle of the 16th century, after the accession of the Astrakhan Khanate to Russia, Russia represented a centralized state and it literally approached the borders of the Caucasus, and this became the main direction in Russia's eastern politics. Undoubtedly, the political and economic presence and the significance of Russia could not but be noticed by the Caucasian peoples. This was the beginning of a mutual search for friendly mutually beneficial political relations between the peoples of the North Caucasus and the Russian state. Far-sighted politicians of the North Caucasus understood the importance of establishing peace with such a centralized and therefore strong neighbor as Russia. Russia attached great importance to the Caucasus, and did not intend to miss the Caucasus to Iran or Turkey. Russia's strengthening on Caucasian lands could be the most reliable means in ensuring the southern borders of Russia. In the 16th century, the Caspian Sea and the Volga connected Muslim kingdoms from Persia to the mouth of the Oka in one political world ... From the 16th century, the idea of sovereignty in the Caucasus became hereditary in Russian history; during the periods of weak government it seems to fade; but every strong reign brought it out (Fadeev, 2003). Thus, in this case there was an interest of both parties.

2. Problem Statement

The appeal to the Caucasus, as a territory that was important in the politics of the Russian state, falls for the reign of Ivan IV. The accession of the Kazan Khanate, which was in vassal relations with Turkey, to Russia in 1552 inflicted heavy losses on the Ottoman Empire. This year can be considered the starting date of appeals by various groups of West Adyghe, and then Kabardian feudal lords to Moscow with a request to "receive into allegiance". Great importance was also attached to the Caucasus in the fight against the Turkish-Crimean danger that threatened the southern borders of the state. It was important on whose side the Caucasian peoples will be. Since the mid-50s of the 16th century, Caucasian peoples represented by Kabardian and Circassian rulers have made their choice towards the Russian state. The efforts of Russians and Caucasians were aimed at uniting the struggle against the Crimean Khanate. This was the beginning of a joint struggle with the Crimean Khanate (Isaeva, 1981).

The coverage of the key issues is of particular scientific and political importance, because it is designed to help overcome stereotypical, to the extreme simplified and not true schemes that consider the centuries-old relations of the peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan with Russia and among themselves.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study are issues of foreign policy interests of Russia and the leading world powers in the Caucasus, and accordingly, the actions of Russia and the leaders of the peoples of the North Caucasus to establish vassal-allied relations.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to summarize the experience of scientists on the problem under consideration. The authors, based on sources, seek to show the policies of Tsarist Russia, Shah Iran and Sultan Turkey in the Caucasus, the favorable position of Russia in the region, which ultimately led to the victory of Russia in the struggle of the three empires.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis included the principles of objectivity, scientificity and historicism, which involve the study of facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in the specific historical conditions of their emergence and development.

This study used a comparative historical method. This method considers different phenomena and events within the framework of historical reality changing under the influence of time and specific historical conditions.

6. Findings

By this time the strategic goals of Turkey and Iran in the Caucasus were determined. Turkey sought to conquer the entire Caucasus and establish close contacts with Central Asia through the Volga and the Caspian Sea; Iran aimed to conquer Transcaucasia and Dagestan, enter the Volga-Astrakhan trade highway and establish its dominance in the Caspian Sea, block Turkey and Crimea from roads to the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia; Russia sought to defeat Turkey, consolidate its dominance on the Volga-Astrakhan trade highway and establish its hegemony on the Terek-Derbent-Baku-Shemakha, ousting Iran from there. As Professor Gapurov (2016) says: "In the considered period, i.e. in the second half of the 16th- the first half of 17th centuries Iran and Turkey were undoubtedly stronger than Russia in terms of their military capacity and number" (p. 59). In 1556, despite the joint actions of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire, their troops were defeated as a result of which the Astrakhan Khanate joined Russia. The Caspian-Volga route for Asian-European trade was open to Russian ships, the entire Volga became part of Russia. The accession of the Big Nogai Horde to Russia ended with the accession of Astrakhan (Akhmadov, 1991).

The period of accession begins on the terms of vassalage of the peoples of the North Caucasus. So in 1557 Dagestan ambassadors from Shamkhal Kazikumukhsky and the ruler of the Tyumen Khanate arrived in Moscow through Astrakhan with a request for allegiance and their protection from enemies.

A significant date in the history of Russia's rapprochement with the North Caucasus should be 1557, when an embassy arrived in Moscow from the Kabardian prince Temryuk, who had a lot of weight and influence among the people, with a request "that their ruler grant and order himself to serve". In the same 1557, Kabarda was accepted under the protection of Russia. Later, in accordance with the agreements, the Kabardians already participated together with the Russian detachments in the campaign against the Crimea in 1558. Friendly relations with Kabarda were fixed in 1561 by the marriage of Ivan

the Terrible with the daughter of Prince Temryuk, who converted to Orthodoxy and was baptized as Maria (History of Chechnya from ancient times to the present day, 2008).

In turn, based on not only friendly, but also blood-related relations, in 1566 Temryuk sent a representative embassy to Moscow with a request to build a city secured by fortifications on the lower reaches of the Terek at the mouth of the Sunzha. The proposal of a relative was accepted. In the fall of 1567 the Russian fortress Terek City was built (Isaeva, 1981).

Due to the circumstances, the struggle for the Caucasus between Russia and Turkey was escalating (Tesaev, 2019).

In 1569 for the first time Russia and Turkey faced hostilities that were conducted not only for the control over the mouth of the Volga, but also for the North Caucasus. The outcome of this first Russian-Turkish war was such that the Turkish troops, having suffered significant losses, returned to Azov (Gapurov, 2016).

However, during this period the Crimean Khan Devlet Giray, speaking for Turkey, laid down ultimatum demands on Russia: to immediately withdraw Russian troops from the Terek City. In February 1571, taking into account the current conditions, Ivan the Terrible agreed to fulfill the requirements of Devlet Giray. However, the situation was out of control. Devlet Giray and his troops supported by Turkish artillery captured Moscow in May 1571 and burned a significant part of the city (Akhmadov, 1991).

After such successful actions Devlet Giray demanded the Russian side to immediately abandon not only the Terek City and Astrakhan, but also Kazan (Isaeva, 1981).

But this followed a series of successful battles for Russia, when the Turkish fleet was defeated by the Russians, and later in 1572 – the Crimean army. The question about the return of Astrakhan and Kazan was never raised again. Regarding the issue of the Terek City, Moscow, given the international situation and the situation in the Baltic states, decided to temporarily retreat. In 1572 Russian troops were withdrawn from the Terek City (Isaeva, 1981).

The North Caucasus and Transcaucasia remained an apple of discord between the three empires. Already in 1578, these contradictions were resolved in the Iranian-Turkish war for Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus. In the spring of 1578, a representative of Kabardian embassy led by Temryuk's brother Prince Kambulats, arrived in Moscow. The delegation appealed to the Russian tsar with a request for support against the Crimean Khan and the restoration of the Terek City fortress. The fortress was restored. But a year later in January 1580 Tsar Ivan the Terrible had to decide to liquidate the fortress on the Terek (Akhmadov, 1991). The question of restoring the fortress as an important strategic center connecting the Caucasus and Russia arose in subsequent years.

So in 1586 the Kakhetia embassy arrived in Moscow, which also asked to restore the fortress on the Terek, since this could provide a stable connection between Astrakhan and the Georgian kingdoms – Kakhetia and Kartli (Gelaeva, 2013).

The Kabardian princes also requested the restoration of the fortress on the Terek. The fortress was again restored in 1589 (History of Chechnya from ancient times to the present day, 2008).

Chechen representatives also did not stand aside. "To the sovereign Tsar and Grand Duke Fyodor Ivanovich ... On 7 August 1594 atamans and Cossacks wrote to us from Terek: they served you, the

sovereign, on the Terek and practiced all your sovereign deeds for one Okutsky mirza with Shikh ... and Shih de Mirza wants to go to you sovereign”. The North Caucasus was given great importance, Russian ambassadors heading to Transcaucasia had to go through Chechnya and of course they needed a safe passage. The interest of the Moscow Government in Chechnya was primarily due to its geographical location, its direct proximity to the Terek towns and the fact that the most convenient communication routes with Georgia passed through its territory. In the 16th-17th centuries the tsar did not set the task of conquering or subjecting Chechnya, but the strategic importance of Chechnya for the Moscow government to advance in the North Caucasus was recognized in accordance with it. As E.N. Kusheva believed, the establishment of political and other relations with the Chechens was connected for the Russian government with the general issues of Russian politics in the Caucasus and wider – in the East, with the tasks of fighting Crimea and Turkey (Gapurov, 2016).

“And this is a letter from the sovereign Tsar and Grand Duke Fedor Ivanovich of all Russia to Okutsky Shikh on the passage of sovereign envoys” (Gapurov, 2016, p. 64). Russian envoys were accompanied by Chechen guards, and they freely passed to the borders of Georgia. Each of the Russian and Caucasian sides sought ways of mutually beneficial cooperation. A nephew of the Chechen owner Chih-Murza Isherimov arrived in the capital with a diplomatic mission.

And in the summer of October 7097, on the 20th day, his nephew Baitav da Alkass, Ambassador Aslambek with companions, 7 of them in total, came to the sovereign Tsar and Grand Duke of Moscow with Georgian ambassadors from Cherkas from Okutsky Shikh (Gapurov, 2016, p. 68).

In the mid-90s of the 16th century, a meaningful addition was made to the full title of the Russian tsar: “The Tsar of Iversky lands of the Kartala and Georgian kings and Kabardian lands of Cossack and mountain princes ... the Tsar”. This meant that after lengthy diplomatic negotiations and numerous discussions in the Boyar Duma in Moscow, an official decision was made to consider Kakhetia, Kartli, East Kabarda, North Dagestan, and, apparently, the foothills of modern Chechnya and Ingushetia the vassals (under the Russian protectorate) (Akhmadov, 1988).

The rulers of the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran informed on the decision of the tsarist government and the Boyar Duma regarding the establishment of a protectorate over a significant part of the territory of the North Caucasus. This meant that Russia was ready to defend its newly acquired positions by force not only in the North Caucasus, but also in part in Transcaucasia (Akhmadov, 1991).

Taking advantage of the weakening of the Russian state at the beginning of the 17th century (Time of Troubles), Turkey and the Crimean Khanate intensified their aggression in the North Caucasus, seeking, first of all, the subordination of the Adygeis and Kabardians, which was to bring the main road leading from the eastern coast of the Black Sea to the western coast of the Caspian Sea again under their control. However, they did succeed much. Only a few Adyge princes recognized themselves as vassals of the Crimean Khan hoping with his help to strengthen their power at the expense of neighboring feudal rulers (History of Chechnya from ancient times to the present day, 2008).

7. Conclusion

Thus, the Caucasus played a very important role in Russian politics. Moscow made many efforts to defend its significance in the Caucasus. Thus, vassal-allied relations between Russia and the Caucasian peoples, which spoke of the pro-Russian orientation of the North Caucasus during this period, were established in the 16th–17th centuries as a result of the Caucasian policy of Russia.

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