Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics

A publication of the Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics (EGP)*

With contributions for analysis & debate

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We, all having a background in academia, have recently founded an association called EthnoGeoPolitics. It was a good move especially because of the inertia in the academic realm regarding this field. We try to offer a new perspective towards the study and perhaps solution of global challenges.

Ethnogeopolitics is a new concept, indicating an emerging multidisciplinary field of research. Its definition and scope of study depends much on those of related (sub-) disciplines, particularly those of geopolitics.

There is no general consensus on the definitions of geopolitics and ethnopolitics, and hence ethnogeopolitics also cannot be easily or non-controversially defined. In order to be able to define ethnogeopolitics as an academic field, one has to define what is politics and political science, ethnicity, ethnopolitics and geopolitics.

It is needless to say that political science is a broad field and that theoretical conceptions about ethnicity vary. Even less clear is the definition of geopolitics. Approaches towards geopolitics may be either purely academic (e.g. critical geopolitics) or policy-related, as it delineates and gives direction to one country’s (foreign) policy and the ways it pursues and safeguards its national interest and security.

Geopolitics can be focused on military strategy, economics and natural resources, but also on culture. The latter focus on culture is what could be called ethnogeopolitics. In fact, ethnogeopolitics in a narrow sense is an intersection of ethnicity and geopolitics; that is, when ethnicity and ethnic identity, and in general cultural attributes of peoples, matter – and affect the foreign policy and security of one or more countries. Ethnogeopolitics is thus a good tool for understanding and explaining ethnic conflict, civil war and transnational political issues.

Ethnogeopolitics can also be also defined in a broad sense. It then encompasses all its sub-elements, and what each sub-element contains. It encompasses ethnography, ethnopolitics and geopolitics, as well as ethnic studies, geography and political science in general. All these disciplines and subdisciplines are broad, and their definitions and scopes vary in different schools and among different scholars.

Arguably, the difference between geopolitics and ethnogeopolitics lies in the fact that the latter concept approaches geopolitics at the level of peoples. States and global regimes are central to the traditional approaches of geopolitics. However, in ethnogeopolitics peoples and states interact closely with each other. It is the dialectic between them that constitutes
the core of ethnogeopolitics. Ethnogeopolitics can be delineated in this way, though definitional consensus may remain elusive, as in other social scientific (sub-)disciplines. Be as it may, its scope and focus will depend much on the ongoing scholarly dialogue, discourse and hence development.

Ethnogeopolitics, like any other academic filed, is dynamic and subject to change and conceptual and methodological development. A better understanding of this field can only evolve as time passes. Therefore, we encourage contributions from academics, policymakers and thinkers—in order to engender dialogue with each other and with us—which should contribute to the further development of ethnogeopolitics. Our publication, Forum of Ethnogeopolitics, is established for this goal.

We have chosen the name of ethnogeopolitics for our association as well, because this emerging and promising field is undermined by neglect and financial cutbacks in the academia, especially in the Netherlands. We hope that our journal Forum of Ethnogeopolitics can function as a forum for research findings, dialogue and discussion on ethnogeopolitical studies, and will contribute to the development of this field.

Forum of Ethnogeopolitics intends to break with the dominant practice among scientific journals. We encourage and publish critical reviews. Nevertheless, unlike the practice in other journals we also publish critical reviews of articles and papers. These books, reports, papers, etc. do not necessarily have to be published recently. Yet they have to be useful and conducive to scholarly dialogue, and hence also to the development of ethnogeopolitics and other related disciplines. In addition, we also seek response from the authors.

Although research articles and essays in Forum of Ethnogeopolitics will undergo rigorous peer-review, we also welcome and publish open comments. These can be anonymous if the commentators wish so. Yet we encourage the commentators and reviewers to allow us to publicize their names under their contributions. We may also publish the peer-reviewers' comments upon their consent—anonymously or otherwise—if we think that their comments may encourage discussion, feedback and dialogue. Nevertheless, we believe that open comments after the acceptance of an article is a better instrument in that regard, because, usually, most of the peer-reviewers' comments will already be addressed by the author after he or she revised his or her article.

We believe that an open comment system contributes to transparency and enhances the quality of critical responses and reviews, produce sensible comments, and hence positively contributes to the scientific development of ethnogeopolitics and other disciplines. Everyone can freely comment on the previous articles in this or other journals. We will gladly publish such “free” or “open” comments if we believe they are conducive to dialogue. This practice fits our journal, which after all intends to be a transparent journal. Our journal's format shows contributors how to present their articles, announcements, reviews and open comments (critical responses), and how to cite sources.

We have noticed that certain geographical regions of the world get less attention than others. Africa and Latin America get much attention from scholars in Europe and the USA. Also
South, East and Southeast Asia get fair attention from scholars from the UK, the Netherlands and elsewhere. Nevertheless, Central Eurasia—i.e. the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Iranian Plateau—does not get sufficient attention, and the facilities to study it are very meager. Similarly, the study of native peoples of the North Americas has a marginal position, even in the USA and Canada.

Although we do not exclude the study of other regions—our association officially covers the study of ethnogeopolitics anywhere in the world—we particularly encourage research on and discussion about Central Eurasia and Native America. We welcome comments for and contributions to the *Forum of Ethnogeopolitics*, from policy makers, thinkers, practitioners and scholars, so that it becomes a valuable addition to the existing publications and resources on similar disciplines, fields and subjects.

*Babak Rezvani*  Amsterdam, March 2013

NB: Babak Rezvani formally received his Doctor degree (PhD) on February 12th 2013, at the University of Amsterdam, for his thesis on "Ethno-Territorial Conflict and Coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydan". See Announcements below and on page 8.
Foundational Declaration, with a Summary of EGP’s Activities

Caspar ten Dam & Babak Rezvani

The aim of the Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics (EGP), or EthnoGeoPolitics in short, is to further the study of and teaching on the cultural, social, ethnic and (geo-)political characteristics, processes and developments in different areas of the world, at universities, institutes and colleges in and outside the Netherlands.

Our initial focus will be on the ethnogeopolitics in Eurasia, especially in Central Eurasia (Caucasus, near Middle East, Central Asia) and Southeastern Europe or the Balkans. However, the Association's research and teaching topics are expressly intended to cover in principle all possible regions, countries and localities in the world where aspects of ethnogeopolitics – a vital concept in the field of conflict studies – are salient.

To this end the founders offer their expertise, and wish to expand the association (and its activities) with more members and contributions to Forum of Ethnogeopolitics, to appear three to four times per year, which hopefully will evolve into a fullfledged journal. We intend to organise lectures and symposia, hold (guest) lectures ourselves, develop teaching modules, and strengthen and deepen our research, with (more) publications. The association's Forum of Ethnogeopolitics will include some of these publications, but is above all intended to elicit analytic debate by allowing scholars to air their views, perspectives and research findings - with critical responses from others who may hold a different view or research approach (submit articles and responses to europeanreview@gmail.com).

We already cooperate with CERES (Center for Resource Studies for Development / Research School for Resource Studies for Development, http://ceres.fss.uu.nl). Some of the said tasks we are willing to conduct without pay, while others need to be funded.

Foundation; past activities; call for contributions

EGP's informal founding meeting was in congress center The Balie in Amsterdam on 11 May 2010, from 19:00 till 21:00 (present: founders B. Rezvani, C. ten Dam and S. Sahin).

. EPG's first activity was organising the 17 May 2010 symposium “Central Eurasia: Islam, Culture and Conflict” at the University of Amsterdam, with as main Globe Lecture speaker the world renowned Prof. John Schoeberlein (Harvard). Babak Rezvani and Caspar ten Dam were among the speakers on this symposium.

The EPG subsequently organised the Conflict Studies panels in the CERES Summerschools on “Global Governance, The Crisis and Development” at the International Institute of Social Studies (IISS) in The Hague (23-24 June 2010), and on “Sustainability after the Crash” at the Utrecht School of Economics (30 June-1 July 2011); B. Rezvani and C. Ten Dam were among the speakers on these panels.
The Association has been formally established, by Statute, on 21 September 2011. Hopefully, more experts will join the Association, help fund its activities with gifts and donations, contribute in *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics*, or become part of the Advisory Committee.

**Recent activities**

We organised an "EthnoGeoPolitics" panel in the CERES Summerschool on "International Development Studies: A Challenge for the Future?", at the University of Amsterdam (Roeteseiland) on 25-26 June 2012 (see photo's below, courtesy CERES). During the discussion with the audience of the panel, we debated—apart from the panel's paper presentations—the place of ethnogeo politics in international development studies, as well as conflict studies. We discussed how insights from ethnogeo politics can be used in international development studies, and how it can contribute to (post-)conflict resolution and development.

*C. ten Dam (photo left), and B. Rezvani, C. ten Dam and P. Sen at CERES Summerschool 2012*
A Case of Historical Misconceptions?—Congressman Rohrabacher’s Letter to Hillary Clinton Regarding Azerbaijan

Kaveh Farrokh

Abstract  United States Congressman Dana Rohrabacher—a former member of the Reagan Administration, who has represented several Californian congressional districts from 1989 till the present-day—dispatched a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on July 26, 2012 outlining support for the separation of Iranian Azerbaijan and the joining of this entity to the Republic of Azerbaijan. The letter promotes the notion of the historical existence of a Greater Azerbaijani kingdom that was divided by Iran and Russia during the early 19th century. This paper examines the treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchai (1828) between Iran and Russia, historical sources and maps and other academic works to examine the validity of the “Greater
Introduction

Congressman Dana Rohrabacher drafted a formal letter on July 26, 2012 to Hillary Clinton (then US Secretary of State) that essentially was an invitation to US law and policy-makers to formalize a policy towards the territorial balkanization of Iran by encouraging the secession of its Azerbaijan province. The Congressman has specifically noted in his letter: "...the homeland of the Azeri is divided...the territory was split between Russia and Persia by the Treaty of Turkmenchai in 1828, without the consent of the Azeris". Congressman Rohrabacher's statement suggests the notion of the historical existence of a Greater Azerbaijani 'kingdom' in the early 19th century that had been divided by the Russian Czarist Empire and the Iranian Qajar dynasty into "northern" and "southern" segments respectively. The views conveyed by the Congressman to the US Congress are consistent with the views of historical falsification propagated by the former Soviet Union and its successors in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Shireen Hunter—who has noted that in “the Republic of Azerbaijan, the long Soviet practice of historic falsification has left a legacy...”—has summarized these historical distortions or “myths” in the following three general categories (Hunter 1998: 106-107): (1) the claim of the existence of an ancient Azerbaijani state which was incorporated mostly in northern Iran with the rest by Russia; (2) the alleged conspiracy between Russia and Iran that divided the united and ancient Azerbaijan into two separate regions; and (3) that Persians colonized and oppressed the Azerbaijanis. This paper will examine the academic and historical validity of the Greater Azerbaijan thesis. The conclusion section will examine Congressman Rohrabacher's statements with respect to projects to dismember Iran as a state since the 20th century.

The Greater Azerbaijan Thesis

The Treaties of Gulestan and Turkmenchai. As noted in the introduction, Congressman Rohrabacher has claimed that the Treaty of Turkmenchai divided a sovereign Greater Azerbaijani state into two halves. This is not entirely accurate, as the treaty makes no such references. Second, there were actually two treaties that had been signed between Imperial Russia and Qajar Iran. The first was the Treaty of Gulistan (containing eleven articles), which
was signed on September 24, 1813 (Lambton 1987: 119) in the village of Gulistan in the khanate in Nakhchevan. This treaty had been signed in the aftermath of Qajar Iran's defeat by Russian imperial forces in the Caucasus in 1804-1813 (Farrokh 2011: 188-193). Following Qajar Iran's second defeat at the Russian hands in 1826-1828 (Farrokh 2011: 195-197), Iran was forced to sign the Treaty of Turkmenchai on February 21, 1828.

Examination of the territorial entities cited by the Gulistan and Turkmenchai treaties fail to reveal the existence of an independent Greater Azerbaijani state. Article Three of the Gulistan treaty forced Iran to yield its Caucasian territorial possessions, namely the khanates of Karabagh (Qarabagh), Ganja, Sheki, Shirvan, Darband, Mughan, Kuba, Baku and the northern part of Talysh (Lambton 1987: 19). The only Caucasian territories that the Gulistan treaty allowed Iran to retain were the khanates of Iravan (modern Armenia) and Nakhchevan. Article Four of the treaty of Turkmenchai forced Iran to acknowledge her territorial losses as stipulated in the earlier Gulistan treaty as well as the surrender of the khanates of Nakhchevan, Iravan as well as other regions such as Mughan and Ordubad to the Russian empire (Kazemzadeh 1991: 338).

As the Gulistan and Turkmenchai treaties make clear, all of the khanates that Iran surrendered to Russia in 1813 and 1828 were situated to the north of the Araxes River. None of these were collectively or individually recognized as being part of the Iranian province of Azerbaijan, which was located to the south of the Araxes River. As noted by Zenkovsky [in reference to modern Republic of Azerbaijan and not Azerbaijan in Iran] “Azerbaijani territory never formed a separate, united state, and even under Persian domination eastern Transcaucasia was divided into a multitude of loosely connected feudal principalities. ... The very term ‘Azerbaijan’ was rarely applied before 1917 to the Elizavetopol [Ganja] and Baku provinces which later formed the Azerbaijani Republic, this term being commonly used only for the Persian provinces bordering Russian Transcaucasia” (Zenkovsky 1960: 274). In summary, neither the Gulistan nor Turkmenchai treaties contain any references to geographical entities such as “north Azerbaijan”, “south Azerbaijan”, “Greater Azerbaijan” or “Kingdom of Azerbaijan”. As noted by Hunter “…historically, the Republic of Azerbaijan was not known by this name until 1918” (Hunter 1998: 106).

The Gulistan and Turkmenchai treaties also demonstrate the fact that the Khanates surrendered to imperial Russia were territories belonging to Iran. Thorez for example has noted that “Although throughout history the Caucasus has usually been incorporated in political entities belonging to the Iranian world...Russia took it...from the Qajars (1779-1924), severing those historical ties”.

**Historical references and cartography.** A brief overview of historical sources and cartography fails to corroborate the Greater Azerbaijan thesis having been in existence since antiquity. Classical references fail to corroborate the existence of an ancient Azerbaijani kingdom situated on both sides of the Araxes River. Strabo (64 BCE-24 CE) has written in the *Geographica* that the origins of the name of Media Atropatene (Azerbaijan) are attributed to modern north-west Iran (Strabo, *Geographica*, Book XI, Chapter XIII) with the region north of the Araxes River being cited as Albania (Strabo, *Geographica*, Book XI, Chapter XIV). In his
Naturalis Historia (77-79 CE), Pliny cites Atropatene as being situated south of the Araxes River (Pliny, *Natural History*, translated by Bostock & Riley 1890: 27-28). Justin (3rd century CE) cites the region south of the Araxes River as *Media Atropatene* and the region north of the Araxes River cited as Albania (Justin, XXIII.IV.13). The Sassanian King Shapur I (r. 240-270 AD) recorded at the Kaabe Zartusht the following regions as separate provinces of the Sassanian Persian Empire “And I [Shapur I] posses the lands [provinces; Greek ethne]: Adurbadagan, Armen [Armenia]...Arran...” (Wiesehofer 2001: 184). A reconstruction of the geography of this region by Whittow makes clear that *Adurbagan* (Iranian Azerbaijan) is distinguished from Arran (Republic of Azerbaijan) (Figure 2).

Islamic and medieval era historians from the 10th century CE such as the *Hodud-ol-Alam Text*, Al-Muqaddasi, *Ibn Khordadbeh* (9th – early 10th centuries CE) and *Hamdollah Mostofi* (10th Century CE) all continue to report Arran and (Iranian) Azerbaijan as two distinct regions divided by the Araxes River. These types of reports are also attested to by the Syrian geographer, biographer and encyclopedia writer *Yaqut al-Hamavi* (1179-1229) in the 13th century CE (*Yaqut al-Hamavi*, ed. Wustenfeld 1866: 173). All of these sources report the Araxes River as the northern limit of Azerbaijan and Arran as being north of that river. A map of the Caucasus region drawn by Ibn Hawqal during the Arab caliphates make a clear cartographic distinction between Arran (north east Caucasus above the Araxes River cited as the southern limit of Arran) (Figure 3), Armenia (north/northwest Caucasus also above the Araxes River) and Azerbaijan inside Iran and below the Araxes River.

The distinctions between Arran and Azerbaijan remained in place at the time of the Safavids (1501-1722). The *Borhan Qate* (completed by 1632) (*Borhan Qate*, Moin 1963: 41) describes the Aras (Araxes) River flowing past Tbilisi in Georgia to then form the boundary between Arran and Azerbaijan [Actually the Kura river flows past Tbilisi; the Aras river flows much farther south, just below Yerevan and Nakchivan, and joins the Kura close to the Caspian Sea. – Ed.]. These distinctions continue to be reported after the fall of the Safavids in 1722. A map of the Caucasus printed in 1742 (part of Senex’s map of the Caspian Sea) (Figure 4) fails to reveal the existence of a “Greater Azerbaijan”. The location of the region known today as Republic of Azerbaijan is identified as “Schirvan” which is located to the north of the Araxes River. The
only reference to historical Azerbaijan is the Iranian province of that name located to the south of the Araxes River. The map also demonstrates that the territory of Schirvan (also known as Arran, Albania, etc.) was a province of Iran (as is Azerbaijan province today).

A French map of 1749 drafted by Robert de Vaugoudy (Figure 1) is consistent with that of Senex by making clear that the territories to the north of the Araxes River were not known as “Azerbaijan”. The only Azerbaijan identified by the 1749 map is shown as residing to the south of the Araxes River, corresponding to the province of that name inside modern Iran's northwest. Even after the Russian conquests by 1828, the book Golestane-Aram written by Abbas-Gholi Agha Bakikhanov in the 19th century in Transcaucasia reports historical Azerbaijan as being situated to the south of the Araxes River inside Iran, this being totally distinct from Shirvan and Arran.


The 1911 edition of the Encyclopaedia Brittanica confirms the historical Azerbaijan as being “...the north-western and most important province of Persia...It is separated from Russian territory on the N. by the river Aras [Araxes]”. The 1911 report coincides with the final years of the Romanov dynasty of Russia which clearly shows that the Russians recognized that Azerbaijan in Iran was clearly differentiated from those khanates now known as the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Origins of “Greater Azerbaijan” Thesis

The lack of evidence for the existence of a “Greater Azerbaijan” in historical maps and references necessitated the re-narration of historical events. Mehdiyeva has alluded to the fact that "...the myth [of a North versus South Azerbaijan] was invented under the Soviets for the purpose of breaking Azerbaijan's historical links with Iran. To make this historical revisionism more acceptable, the Soviet authorities falsified documents and re-wrote history books. As a result, the myth became deeply ingrained in the population [of the Republic of Azerbaijan] ... as part of the rhetoric." (Mehdiyeva 2003: 280).

In like manner, Croissant notes that “During the Soviet-era historical revisionism and myth-building ...the notion of a "northern" and "southern" Azerbaijan was created and propagated...It was charged that the "two Azerbaijanis" once united were separated artificially by conspiracy between imperial Russia and Iran” (Croissant 1998: 61).
The origins of these falsifications began a few years prior to the arrival of the Soviets into Baku. The first application of the Iranian term—its Turkified form “Azerbaijan”—was first applied to the present-day republic by the Musavat party in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution. The Musavats were first known as the Islamic Democratic Musavat Party (IDMP) which had been established in Baku in 1911 (Matini, 1989: 452).

Despite its apparent pan-Islamic outlook, the IDMP was pan-Turkist in orientation, using Islam to attract Turkic speakers in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan in Iran. The collapse of the Czarist Russian Empire by 1917 led to closer ties between the IDMP and the Turkish Federalist Party in the Ottoman Empire by June 1917, which resulted in the IDMP being renamed as the Turkish Democratic Musavat Party (TDMP) or “Musavats” by November 1917.

The Musavats took power in March 1918 and convened on May 27 1918 in Tbilisi to select the name "Azerbaijan", as the title of their newly established “Independent Republic of Azerbaijan”. The main proponents of this name-change were local Turkic and non-Turkic Muslim elites as well as Ottoman pan-Turk activists (Matini 1989: 445). The latter were ex-Ottoman war veterans who had fought in the Caucasus during the First World War.  

A leading proponent of applying the name of Iran's Azerbaijan province in northwest Iran to the former khanates that had surrendered to Russia in the early 19th century, was Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh (1884-1955), the first leader of the newly created Republic of Azerbaijan.

Rasulzadeh who was born of Iranian parentage in Baku, had been heavily involved in the constitutional democratic movement of Iran during the early 1900s (Chaqueri, 2001: 118, 174-181, 209-210). He became the chief editor of the newspaper Iran-e-Now (The New Iran).
Rasulzadeh's writings at this time indicates that he viewed himself, as well as fellow citizens in the Caucasian Khanates, as members of "Our beloved homeland Iran...".\(^7\)

Czarist Russian coercion forced the Iranian (Qajar) government to deport Rasulzadeh from Iran into exile in Istanbul in 1909. Rasulzadeh arrived in Istanbul during the ascent of the Young Turk movement which exerted a profound influence upon Rasulzadeh. It was during his sojourn in Istanbul that Rasulzadeh became a major advocate of pan-Turan/pan-Turk ideology. He abandoned his Iranian identity in favour of pan-Turkism, and wrote extensively on Iranian Turkic-speakers for the *Turk Yurdu* publication (in favour) of the Young Turks.\(^8\)

As soon as Rasulzadeh and the Musavat consolidated their regime, they began to propose the annexation of the historical Azerbaijan (in Iran) into their newly founded republic (Matini 1989: 452). This was officially demanded by Nasib Bey Ussubekov (a Musavat activist and one of the leaders of the republic in 1918) who stated that he regarded Iranian Azerbaijan as a part of the newly created Republic of Azerbaijan. Such policies were opposed in Iranian Azerbaijan by political activist Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani (1880-1920) who suggested that the name of Iranian Azerbaijan be changed to "Azadistan" (Lit. Land of Freedom). This was his way of differentiating his province from the recently created Republic of Azerbaijan in the Caucasus (Atabaki 2006: 132; Kasravi 1998: 749).

The term "Azadistan" also referred to the "heroic" role of Azerbaijan in Iranian history, especially with respect to the constitutional movement (Azari 1983: 299). The Musavat policy of using the name "Azerbaijan" in reference to the khanates was also protested by north Iranian (Gilan) activist, Mirza Kuchek Khan (1880-1921) (Swietochowski 1995: 69).

The armies of the Soviet Union arrived in Baku on April 27, 1920 to terminate the two-year rule of the Musavats. The Soviets however retained the Musavat concept of "Azerbaijan" in relation to the Trans-Caucasus. The Soviet policy was to continue applying the name of "Azerbaijan" to those Caucasian Khanates now known as the Republic of Azerbaijan in the endeavor to create separatist sentiments in Iranian Azerbaijan.

As noted by Bartold, under the tutelage of the Soviet Union, "The name "Azerbaijan" for the Republic of Azerbaijan was selected on the assumption that the stationing of such as republic would lead to that entity and the Iranian to become one...this is the reason why the name “Azerbaijan” was selected ..." (Bartold 1963: 217). Bartold's quote makes clear that the Soviets realized that "Azerbaijan" did not historically exist as an appellation for the republic of that name until the early twentieth century.

**Thesis 2: Colonization by Persians**

The Greater Azerbaijan thesis advocated by Congressman Rohrabacher is also linked to the hypothesis (as cited previously by Hunter) that the Persians colonized the Azerbaijanis and imposed the Persian language upon them. This misconception is in fact composed of three components, namely that the populations of modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan and Iranian Azerbaijan (1) were one single ethnic group since antiquity, (2) have spoken a single
language (Turkic) since antiquity, and (3) that Persians colonized this population and imposed the Persian language upon them.

An examination of historical references and recent genetic studies fail to corroborate these hypotheses. Classical sources make a clear distinction between the populations of Iranian Azerbaijan and those of modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan. Strabo noted that the origins of the name of Media Atropatene is derived from Atropates, the Achaemenid satrap of Media (Strabo 11.523) at the time of Alexander's conquests. Atropates (lit. protected by fire) ruled in the northwest region of the province of Media of Greater Media, which was the Achaemenid Empire's largest province, and encompassed much of northern, western and central Iran. It is notable that Strabo's Geographica (c. 1st century CE) describes the people of Media Atropatene (Iranian Azerbaijan) as Iranians with Persian as their language (Strabo 11.13.1). Note that the "Persian" cited by Strabo would have most likely been of the Parthian Pahlavi variety at the time.

The people of Albania were primarily of Ibero-Caucasian stock (Hewson 1982: 27-40) with the people speaking "...twenty-six languages, because they have no easy means of intercourse with one another" (Strabo, Book XI, Chapter XIV). The cultural identity of the Caucasus was heavily influenced by the Iranian world with very little mention of Turkic cultural or linguistic influences. Professor Whittow has noted that: "The oldest outside influence in Trans-Caucasia is that of Persia...many of its populations, including Armenians and Georgians, as well as Persians and Kurds, the Transcaucasus had much closer ties with the former Sassanian world to its south and east than with the world to the west" (Whittow 1996: 203-204).

References to the Iranian identity and language of Iranian Azerbaijan continue into the post-Islamic era. Arabo-Muslim historian, Al-Mas'udi, notes clearly that "The Persians are a people whose borders are the Mahat Mountains and Azerbaijan up to Armenia and Arran [modern Republic of Azerbaijan since 1918 – see below], and Bayleqan and Darband, and Ray and Tabaristan and Masqat and Shabaran and Jorjan and Abarshahr, and that is Nishabur, and Herat and Marv and other places in land of Khorasan, and Sejistan and Kerman and Fars and Alvaz...All these lands were once one kingdom with one sovereign and one language...although the language differed slightly. The language, however, is one, in that its letters are written the same way and used the same way in composition. There are, then, different languages such as Pahlavi, Dari, Azari, as well as other Persian languages" (Al Mas'udi, Kitab al-Tanbih, transl. De Goeje 1894: 77-8).

In reference to the in 816-837 CE anti-Caliphate rebellion of Babak Khorramdin in Iranian Azerbaijan, Whittow observes that "Azerbaijan had a Persian population and was a traditional centre of the Zoroastrian religion..." (Whittow 1996: 203). Babak is also identified as a Persian by historians (Flügel 1869: 406-407; Sadighi 1938: 239-41).

Languages spoken to the south of the Araxes River in the historical Azerbaijan in Iran, were Persian and other Iranian languages (i.e. Gilani, Kurdish) until the arrival of Seljuk (Oghuz) Turkic invaders in the 11th century CE (Thomas, 1977:45; Atabaki, 2000: 8-9). The indigenous Iranian culture and Persian language remained in place after the Seljuk arrivals, despite the
change in language over the ensuing centuries. Iranian agricultural techniques and settlement patterns in the villages and towns remained unaltered in post-Seljuk Azerbaijan in Iran.9

The continuity of Iranian culture in the post-Seljuk period is witnessed in the continued usage of Old Iranian geographical names such as Sahand (a large volcanic mass near Tabriz) and names of cities such as Ardabil, Tabriz, and Mianeh (Planhol 1966: 305). While the Seljuk invaders were certainly Oghuz Turkic, they were absorbed by the culture and technology of their Iranian subjects. As noted by Planhol “Thus Turkish nomads, in spite of their deep penetration throughout Iranian lands, only slightly influenced the local culture. Elements borrowed by the Iranians from their invaders were negligible”10 Kazemzadeh notes that by the early 1200s CE (just prior to the Mongol conquests), the Turkic element in Arran and Azerbaijan were “...disappearing rapidly owing to the influence of ... Persian civilization” (Kazemzadeh 1950: 5). This is because local Iranian Pahlavi vernaculars had continued to exist, alongside Persian (itself a post Pahlavi language). The Syrian geographer, biographer and encyclopedia writer Yaqt al-Hamavi (1179-1229) for example, makes reference to another Iranian language known as Azari or Azariyeh (distinct from modern Azeri-Turkic) as late as the 13th century (Yaqt al-Hamavi 1866: 173).

The linguistic Turkification of Albania/Arran and Azerbaijan actually began during the Mongol era (1190-1400) and post-Mongol era (1400-1500) which can be subdivided into the Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu and Safavid eras.11 However, it is incorrect to assume that Iranian languages disappeared in Azerbaijan as a result of Turkification. Iranian languages remained in usage after the Mongol conquests of the 1200s.

Persian was spoken in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus in the 14th century as demonstrated with the Nozhat ol Majales (lit. Joy of the Gatherings), a massive compilation of 4,100 Persian quatrains organized in 17 chapters. The book was compiled during the 14th century (circa July 1331) through the efforts of Ismail b. Esfandiyar b. Mohammad b. Esfandiar Abhari. The text contains the works of at least 115 poets from Iran's Azerbaijan province and the Caucasian territories of Shirvan, Arran, Ganja, etc. The Nozhat ol-Majales also has very rare quatrains from Iranian savants such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and famous Persian poets such as Fakhreddin Asad Gorgani and Nesami Ganjavi. There are also historical references to Fariborz III Shirvanshah of the Caucasus and the Seljuq rulers. Ganja (now in the Republic of Azerbaijan) is represented by 24 Persian poets in the Nozhat ol Majales. Other Persian poets from the Caucasus include Bakhtiar Shirvani and Kamal Maraghi.

It is also highly notable that many of the Caucasian poets were women, including Dokhtar-e-Salar and Razziye Ganjai. Unlike many other parts of Iran, many of the Caucasian poets originated from the regular working class and not from the elites, with many of the Caucasian poets being women (i.e. Dokhtar-e-Salar and Razziye Ganjai). This highlights the role of Persian as the popular language of the mainstream populace in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan before the gradual linguistic Turkification of the region.

Other Iranian languages also existed in Azerbaijan such as the Persian (Pahlavi) based Fahlavi (Arabized version of Iranian term “Pahlavi”) language which existed as late as the
mid 1400s in Iranian Azerbaijan. In addition, the Safina, a literary work written in Tabrizi (a west-Iranic language) was originally compiled during the Qara Qoyunlu-Aq Qoyunlu eras (Abdullaeva 2007; Melville 2007; Radtke 2007; Rezazadeh 1973; Sharma 2007; Tourkin 2007). These sources point to the existence of Iranian languages in cities such as Tabriz (capital of Iranian Azerbaijan) for at least four centuries after the Seljuk Turk arrivals.

Full-fledged linguistic Turkification in the eastern Caucasus and Azerbaijan began from the 16th century CE with the arrival of the Safavids. The latter were supported and joined by large numbers of Shi'ite Turcomen Qizilbash supporters from Anatolia who migrated into the province of Azerbaijan in Iran. Despite the full-fledged process of linguistic Turkification of Azerbaijan during the Safavid era, Iranian languages continued to be reported by travelers into the province. One such case is reported by as late as the 17th century by Ottoman Turkish traveler Evliya Chelebi, who noted that the majority of women in [the city of] Maragheh conversed in Pahlavi or Middle Persian. Ganjakets'i states in explicit terms that Maragheh “...was densely populated with Persians and a small number of Christians” (Ganjakets'i 1986: 197).

Interestingly Chelebi also found that “Pahlavi, Dari, Farsi and Dehqani” were among the Iranian languages prevalent in the Nakhchevan khanate in the Caucasus, across the Araxes River, north of Azerbaijan province (Sadeqi 2003: 1-12). There were no defections from Iranian Azerbaijan to the Ottoman Turks during the wars between Safavid Iran and the Ottoman Empire (Farrokh 2011: 7-84). Even after the conquests of the Transcaucasus by imperial Russia in the early 19th century CE, local populations looked to Iran for their cultural identity rather than to the Ottoman Turks or the conquering Russians (see below).

In summary, the Classical, pre-Islamic and post-Islamic references report that (1) the inhabitants of Iranian Azerbaijan and modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan were separate ethnic groups with separate languages; (2) Turkic was not spoken in either Iranian Azerbaijan or modern day Republic of Azerbaijan before the Turkic and Mongol arrivals; and (3) Iranian Azerbaijanis were not colonized by Persians, as they were categorized as Iranian peoples with Iranian languages like the Persian. In contrast, it was the arrival of Turkic peoples which introduced the Turkic languages upon the indigenous Iranian-speaking population of Iranian Azerbaijan.

Origins of “Colonization by Persians” Thesis

Despite having defeated Qajar Iran, the Czarist Russians were concerned with the Caucasus’ long-standing Persian cultural legacy which continued to resonate into the 19th century. Hostler has highlighted this concern by noting that “This cultural link between the newly conquered country [modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan] and its still strong Persian neighbor annoyed Russia who tried to destroy it by supporting local Turkish cultural developments” (Hostler 1957: 22).

Zenkowski has noted the centrality of the Persian language in the cultural link between Iran and the Caucasus despite the finalization of Russian conquests by 1828: “...the Persian
language remained the main language of administration in these provinces [Karabagh, Ganja, Sheki, Shirvan, Derbend, Kuba, Baku, and Talysh] until the reforms of 1840...the Persian tongue continued to be spoken in the courts until the 1870s...Persian also remained the language of the upper classes and of literature” (Zenkowsky 1960: 94).

In the northern Caucasus, notably Georgia, Persian literature and language were to be greatly patronized by the local populace and nobility, a process well in place until the Russian arrivals in the early 19th century. The bulk of the literature of the post-Islamic era was written in Persian in the Caucasus as well as Central Asia (Tajik form of Persian) instead of Turkic languages by the local populace. The majority of the Turkic city inhabitants and intelligentsia of the Caucasian Khanates and Central Asia were bilingual in Turkic and Persian up to the period of 1900-1920 (Zenkowsky 1960: 10).

Loyalty to the Iranian state was evident in 1826, when Abbas Mirza crossed into the Khanates recently occupied by Russia (now Republic of Azerbaijan) (Van der Leeuw, 2000: 96). Persian culture and language were widespread among the educated elites of Baku, Shirvan and Nakhchivan (Hostler, 1957: 22).

Pro-Persian sentiment in the Caucasus was so high during the Russo-Iranian wars, that Russian officials complained to St. Petersburg that “…almost all of the residents of Baku are secret spies for the Persian” (As cited by Mostashari, 2006: 17). Even after the end of the first Russo-Persian War (1804-1813) authorities in the region were suspicious of the loyalty of the Caucasian Muslims, especially the nobility and religious clergy (the Ulema) (Mostashari, 2006, pp.16).

The local authorities in the Khanates were either Persian-speaking or of aristocracies who spoke Persian. The local authorities in the former Iranian khanates were either Persian-speaking or of aristocracies who spoke Persian. The Shiite clergy who held considerable influence over local courts and schools, were a major element in helping to maintain the influence of Iranian culture in the Caucasus.

Czarist authorities realized that the persistence of Persian language, traditions and literature was a potential threat to Russian rule, as it served as a common cultural bond with Iran to the south across the Araxes River. Put simply, Czarist Russia wanted to stamp out the legacy of Persian civilization in its newly conquered Caucasian territories. The first step was to reduce the use of Persian in schools, official institutions and cultural affairs as much as possible. Rather than forcefully imposing Russian upon the local populace, Czarist policy focused on the promotion of local Turkish vernaculars in a successful bid to first diminish and (eventually) replace Persian as the dominant language in the region.

By the early 1860s, local sentiments against Russification had been successfully channelled away from an Iranian cultural-literary expression into a distinctly Turkic-Tatar form. By 1910, only one of Baku’s 41 primary schools taught in Persian (Altstadt 1992: 52-56).

The Russian authorities also invested in the propagation of anti-Iranian literature in the eight Caucasian khanates. The “Akinci [Cultivator]” newspaper founded in Baku in 1875 (Kushner 1977: 12)-1877 mainly targeted the local Turkish-speaking peasants of Albania for
its readership (Zenkowsky 1960: 94, 297) and was hostile against Persian-speakers and the Shi'ite religion (Zenkowsky 1960: 94, 297). Written in Turkic-Azerbaijani, the Akinci made a deliberate effort towards avoiding the use of Persian and Arabic words, even to the extent of inventing new vocabulary.

The editor of the Akinci, Hassan Majidi Zardabi (also known as or Hasan Bey Zardabi), originally a teacher in the Russian secondary school in Baku (1837-1897) (Zenkowsky 1960: 94) summarized the entire Persian literary tradition as being that of the “braying of a donkey” (Hajibely 1930: 757). As noted by Swietochowski (1995: 29), Zardabi and the main contributors for the paper were Sunni Muslims. The Akinci also targeted Persian culture and civilization by consistently providing “…innuendos that Persia was a backward, fanatical, and inhuman country…” (Swietochowski 1995: 29).

Zarbadi’s writings aroused numerous protests from the Caucasian Persian-speaking community (Zenkowsky 1960: 94). The Czarist Russians continued to sponsor Persophobic literature into the early twentieth century. According to Zenkowski, one notable journal of this genre were the stories and cartoons of the Mulla Nasreddin, which he describes as ridiculing Iranian culture as well as the Persian language and the Perso-Arabic script (Zenkowsky 1960: 95). Nevertheless, a comprehensive recent survey of the “Mulla Nassreddin Magazines” by the Slavs and Tatars Society published by the Christoph Keller Publications in 2011 (see references) would suggest that the journal was critical of a wider array of contemporary social issues than just Iran, including: east versus west issues, class struggles, status of women, colonialism, Islam, education, the press as well as social problems in the Caucasus, Iran, the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans.

Be as it may, the success of Russian socio-cultural engineering is summarized by Swietochowski as follows: “The hold of Persian as the chief literary language in Azerbaijan was broken, followed by the rejection of classical Azerbaijani, an artificial, heavily Iranized idiom that had long been in use along with Persian...This process of cultural change was initially supported by the Tsarist authorities, who were anxious to neutralize the still-widespread Azerbaijani identification with Persia” (Swietochowski 1995: 29).

The fall of the Romanov dynasty did not interrupt the anti-Iranian cultural policies in the Caucasus. Anti-Iranian or Persophobic cultural policies acquired a more targeted form by re-defining the populace of Khanates as “Azerbaijanis” rather than Muslims, Tatars, etc. As noted by Roy, with respect to those territories situated above the Araxes north of the historical Azerbaijan province in Iran: “The concept of Azeri identity barely appears at all before 1920...Before 1924, the Russians called Azeri Tatars “Turk” or “Muslims” ”(Roy 2007: 18).

As noted previously in the citations of Mehdiyeva and Hunter, the Soviets falsified historical books and documents to convey the impression of a single Azeri ethnic identity that had existed across both sides of the Araxes River since antiquity, which had been Turkic in identity and speech. Soviet historians worked at removing pre-communist (Tsarist) archives that referred to the historical designations of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This included the
Russian-language “Russian Encyclopedia”21 which clearly distinguished Albania/Arran or the khanates from Azerbaijan in Iran.

Museums and maps of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan soon referred to Azerbaijani cities in the Soviet Union and Iran as if they were one region. The objective was the removal of all historical and geographical distinctions between the former Iranian khanates (Soviet Azerbaijan) and historical Azerbaijan (in Iran). Soviet historians (both in Soviet Azerbaijan and Russia) were instructed to revise the entire history of the khanates and their associations with Persia. As noted by Slezkine much of the history of the USSR regions (including Azerbaijan SSR) were “…invented by specially trained professionals” (Slezkine 1994: 447).

By 1937, Soviet anthropologists had formally coined the ethnic name of “Azeris” for the Albanians/Arranis (published as Azerbaidzantsi in Russian and Azarbaycanli in Turkic). Fragner has characterized these politicized Soviet methods of historiography as being propelled by “arbitrary decisions” (Fragner 2001: 20). Citing the methodology of Georgian linguist Nikolai Marr, Fragner also noted that Soviet historiography was characterized by the “…theoretical rejection of any migrations in world history…this concept never vanished from the national discourses in the Soviet Union, albeit on a scholarly or on a popular and even folkloristic level” (Fragner 2001: 20).

This meant the rejection of the essentially scientific process of “linguistic displacement” in which an arriving ethno-linguistic group can change the language of the indigenous ethno-linguistic group(s) in a particular region by means of military and/or economic dominance as well as mass migration (Renfrew 1994: 116-120, 122-123; Mallory 1989: 147, 183).

Therefore according to this Soviet model of historiography, regions corresponding to the Republic of Azerbaijan and the historical Azerbaijan (in Iran) are Turkic speaking today not as a result of migrations or military dominance, but simply because Turkic has been indigenous to those regions since time immemorial.

There are also academic references to the role of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) in deliberately falsifying history of Persian civilization to suit imperialist purposes. Kolarz for example noted of Stalin’s statement with respect to the Persian-language poet Nezami Ganjavi (1141-1209): “…the great poet of our brotherly ‘Azerbaidzhani people’ who must not be surrendered to Iranian literature, despite having written most of his poems in Persian” (Kolarz 1952: 246).

Academic sources prior to the Soviet takeover of Russia, such as the 1911 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, affirm that Nezami was an Iranian who composed exclusively in Persian.22 Contemporary scholarship pertaining to the life and works of Nezami identify him as having composed his poetry exclusively in Persian with his cultural identity having been Persian.23 Nezami’s literary masterpiece, the Haft Paykar (Persian: Seven Sagas) pertains to the exploits of Sassanian monarch Bahram Gur (r. 420-438 CE), the same monarch who defeated and expelled a Hun-Hephthalite force from northeast Sassanian Persia in 421 CE (Farrokh 2007: 209-213).
Nezami’s narration of Bahram Gur who campaigned against the Huns indicates that he did not culturally associate himself with the Hun-Turkic realm. Stalin’s statement was meant to re-interpret the history of Nezami Ganjavi by conveying the false impression that (a) Nezami was Turkic in origin and (b) wrote his “other” poems in Turkish. This does not correspond with historians who acknowledge that Nezami was “…one of the famous Persian poets…” and “…wrote exclusively in Persian”.24

While a full discussion of historical falsifications originating the Soviet-era are beyond the scope of this text, de-Iranization policies have continued to take place in the Republic of Azerbaijan since the fall of the Soviet Union in early 1990s. These activities were highlighted by a BBC-Persian report in March 2004, which observed that many citizens of the republic believe that ancient Iranian historical figures such as Zoroaster were not Iranian but Turkish in origin, and that the ancient Avesta hymns of the Zoroastrian religion were originally written in Turkish and not Old Persian. When the BBC reporter asked one of the citizens the source of his information he replied “…our scholars have found historical documents that show he [Zoroaster] was Turk and from Azerbaijan”.25 Many citizens believe that Babak Khorramdin, who led a major rebellion against the Abbasid caliphate in the 9th century, was not Persian-speaking or of Iranian stock (Shnirelman, 2001: 123). Even Nowruz, the ancient Iranian festival of the Spring Equinox (March 21), is claimed to be a Turkish ceremony.26

Conclusion: Balkanization of Iran - a new or old policy?

In conclusion of this article we return to Hunter, who highlights the use of the “Myth of...a united and ancient Azerbaijan” to: “…justify irredentist claims toward Iranian territory...even the most ardent pan-Turkists are aware—as indeed were the Communists—of the historic falsity of their views. They freely admit this in private and argue that the reason for their continued promotion of these themes is to help strengthen nationalist feelings and to forge a purely Turkic Azerbaijani identity” (Hunter 1998: 106-107).

Congressman Rohrabacher’s letter to Hillary Clinton would indicate that US policy-makers have adopted Soviet-era historical falsifications for the promotion of political and economic objectives. In that endeavor, there are indications that the overall thrust of US policy at the time of writing is to Balkanize Iran along ethnic and linguistic lines. The adoption of Soviet and post-Soviet historical narratives of a “Greater Azerbaijan kingdom” would serve as the main instrument towards alienating the population of Iranian Azerbaijan from Iran to then join the Republic of Azerbaijan. The funding for the promotion of separatist movements may be as high as 400 million dollars.27

Despite denials by some US officials that no US operatives are operating inside Iranian territory 28, there is ample evidence of US sponsorship of separatist movements inside of Iran. The process of promoting separatism with the objective of dismembering Iran has been characterized as the “Right-sizing of Iran” (Olson 2002: 236). Michel Chossudovsky of the University of Ottawa has noted that “Washington has been involved in covert intelligence
operations inside Iran. American and British intelligence and Special Forces (working with their Israeli counterparts) are involved in this operation...".29

There are a number of sources that indicate that the US is supporting militant anti-Iran separatist groups inside and outside of Iranian territory30 by utilizing the Soviet fissionist method, which entails the exploitation of minority or nationality issues for geopolitical purposes. (Ramazani 1971: 401-402). Iran is highly vulnerable to the fissionist technique as it is a nation composed of numerous linguistic and ethnic groups. The Soviet Union had encouraged and supported Azeri and Kurdish insurrections when Soviet armies were occupying northern Iran in 1941-1946, which Dzhirkvelov observes had "...the aim of detaching Azerbaijan from Iran and annexing it to the Soviet Union" (Dzhirkvelov 1987: 66).

There are strong indications that the US has adopted the fissionist technique for the promotion of separatism to dismember Iran as a state.31 As noted by Downing, these groups are reported to be in contact with US Special Forces and intelligence assets.32 This was corroborated earlier by The Financial Times which observed that "the Pentagon ... appeared to be studying whether Iran would be prone to a violent fragmentation along the same kind of fault lines that are splitting Iraq".33

The Sunday Telegraph also reported on February 25, 2007 that "Funding for their separatist causes comes directly from the CIA's classified budget...Fred Burton, a former US state department counter-terrorism agent...said 'The latest attacks inside Iran fall in line with US efforts to supply and train Iran's ethnic minorities...'".34 US support for ethnic unrest among Iran's minorities are consistent with attempts by the US government to politicize and internationalize the issues of Iran's minorities.35 The plans for dismembering Iran however can be dated at least as far back as 1979, when Bernard Lewis first unveiled the proposal for the partitioning of the Middle East (Engdahl 2004: 171).

The Bernard Lewis proposal promotes the division of Iran along regional, ethnic and linguistic lines (Dreyfus & LeMarc 1980: 157) especially among the Turkish speaking Azerbaijanis (the greater Azerbaijan project), Arabs of Khuzistan (the Al-Ahwaz project), the Baluchis (the Pakhtunistan project), and the Kurds (the Greater Kurdistan project). The plan is also directed against Turkey and Arab states such as Iraq.

The formation of a Greater Kurdistan for example, may potentially lead to the disintegration of not only Iran, but Turkey, Iraq and Syria. A "Pakhtunistan" would assist in the process of the disintegration of Pakistan, Iran and possibly Afghanistan. Dreyfus and Le Marc note that "According to Lewis, the British should encourage rebellions for national autonomy by the minorities such as the Lebanese Druze, Baluchis, Azerbaiajni Turks, Syrian Alawites, the Copts of Ethiopia, Sudanese mystical sects, Arabian tribes...[and thereby]...spark a series of breakaway movements by Iran's Kurds, Azeris, Baluchis, and Arabs...these independence movements, in turn would represent dire threats to Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and other neighbouring states" (Dreyfus & LeMarc 1980: 157). As noted by Engdahl, the Bernard Lewis proposes that the west "...encourage autonomous groups such as the Kurds...Ethiopian Copts...Azerbaijanis" (Engdahl 2004: 171).
The formation of a Greater Azerbaijan would potentially be the most damaging separatist development, as this would eliminate much of Iran's industrial base as well as its demography. This would in turn encourage a pan-Kurdish separatist movement encompassing Iran, Turkey, and Syria, leading to the break-up or diminution of those states. Dreyfus and LeMarc note that “the goal [of the Bernard Lewis Project] is the break-up of the Middle East into a mosaic of competing ministates and the weakening of the sovereignty of existing republics and kingdoms” (Dreyfus & LeMarc 1980: 157-158). Engdahl has also noted that the Bernard Lewis Plan endeavours to “…promote the Balkanization of the entire Muslim Near East along Tribal and religious lines” (Engdahl 2004: 171).

The most direct (and public) adoption of the aforementioned Bernard Lewis proposal has been made by U.S. Army Lieutenant-Colonel (ret.) Ralph Peters (he worked with the U.S. National War Academy until his retirement). Peters published a map for the Middle East in the 2006 June issue of the *Armed Forces Journal* in which the borders of Iran and the surrounding states in the Middle East, Caucasus, and Central Asia had been changed. The Peters map bears a strong resemblance to the aforementioned Bernard Lewis proposal for the fragmentation of Iran and the Middle East along ethnic and religious lines. It must be noted however that official statements by US officials in support of separatism in Iran had been reported at least four years earlier by conservative columnist Arnaud de Borchgrave. The latter reported in the *Washington Times* that he had been informed by political leaders in the Bush Administration that they “had decided to redraw the geopolitical map of the Middle East” with respect of the implementation of regime change in Iran.

Reuel Marc Gerecht—a former CIA operative specialized in the Middle East, and currently senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies—has succinctly encapsulated current US objectives in Iranian Azerbaijan and Iran. Jason Athanasiadis reported in the *Asia Times* (Apr 29, 2005) that “Gerecht ...mulls over ... cultivating high-ranking Azeris to inciting separatist Kurds ...he sheds valuable light on how an intelligence professional might approach the dismemberment of a hostile country. "I continuously scripted possible covert action mischief in my mind. Iranian Azerbaijan was rich in possibilities. Accessible through Turkey and ex-Soviet Azerbaijan, eyed already by nationalists in Baku ...Iran's richest agricultural province was an ideal covert action theatre".” US Support for militant separatist groups in Iran are mainly focused towards the Sistan and Baluchistan province in the southeast bordering Pakistan, Iranian Kurdistan to the west, and Iranian Azerbaijan to the northwest.

As noted by reporter Seymour Hersch, the Pentagon is “....working with minority groups in Iran, including the Azeris, in the north, the Baluchis, in the southeast, and the Kurds, in the northeast... the broader aim...is to encourage ethnic tensions and undermine the regime”. In addition, the Pentagon reportedly provides funds to ethnic tribes in Iran, and is recruiting scouts among them. Congressman Rohrabacher's letter to Hillary Clinton endorsing pre-and post Soviet-era historical revisionism appears to be consistent with US policy and its economic and political objectives against Iran at the time of writing.

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Ibn Hawqal’s Surath ul-Ardh, BNF Paris, MS Arabe 2214, p. 58, 1145 CE.


Mohammad b. Khala’f Tabrizi Motakahales be Borhan. In M. Moin (ed.), Borhan Qate.


Endnotes

3. Also known as the history of Shirvan and Darband; See Floor & Javadi (2009) in references.
4. Bakikhanov was a native of Baku. It is noteworthy in that he is among the first Muslim historians of the Transcaucasus who was trained in European methods of historiography and analysis, an academic legacy which is revealed in his book.
5. This occurred formally at the first Musavat congress in the Caucasus.
6. The Ottoman Turks had defeated and expelled the Russians from Kars on April 26, 1918, a full month before the declaration of the “Republic of Azerbaijan” by the Baku Musavatists. On Ottoman military operations and personnel in the Caucasus and Iran during WWI, see Nicolle 1994: 37, 39-40.
7. See also citation by Atabaki, 2000: 38, and Rasulzadeh (1910) in references.
8. *Turk Yurdu*, nos. 1/4, II/2, II/6, II/2. The articles were titled as “The Turks of Iran” (*Iran Turkleri*).
9. Examples of agricultural techniques include terraced cultivation and rotation systems. And for settlement patterns there is the example of using widespread underground stables. Consult also Planhol (1966) in the references.
11. In the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu eras, Oguz Turkic tribes advanced or were driven to the western frontiers (Anatolia) and Northern Azerbaijan (Arran, the Mugan steppe). In the Safavid period, the Turkic elements in Iran (derived from Oghuz, with lesser admixture of Uygur, Qipchaq, Qaluq and other Turks brought to Iran during the Chinggisid era, as well as Turkicized Mongols) were joined by Anatolian Turks migrating back to Iran. This marked the final stage of Turkicization.

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Although there is some evidence for the presence of Qipchaqs among the Turkic tribes coming to this region, there is little doubt that the critical mass which brought about this linguistic shift was provided by the same Oguz-Turkmen tribes that had come to Anatolia.


13. The entire manuscript was published in 2001 by Tehran University Press. See Abu’l majd Muhammad ibn Mas’ud Tabrizi in references.

14. There is also a record of the use of Pahlavi in Maragheh four centuries earlier, at the height of Ilkhanid rule. Hamdollah Mustawafi (13th century CE). reports that a “Pahlavi Mughayr” (modified Pahlavi) was the predominant language of Maragheh.


16. Zenkovsky (1960: 10) notes that these were “considered profane or vulgar” by the local inhabitants of the region.

17. The Turkish-language newspaper was closed in 1877 due to the Russo-Ottoman war in that year.

18. Unclear whether Zardabi was born in 1842 or 1837.

19. Mulla Nasreddin is the name of a satirical-comical character highly popular in Turkey, Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Georgian Republic.

20. Content Analysis of a number of cartoons published by the Mulla Nasreddin papers provides evidence of consistent anti-Islamic and anti-Islamic imagery. A number of these cartoons are now posted on the official website of the Republic of Azerbaijan: www.Azer.com. Examples of these cartoons include the depiction of Persian-speakers as donkeys with their rulers as oriental despots, Turks as white-skinned Herculanean heroes overpowering and dominating “Orientals” (presumably Persians) portrayed as satanic dark-skinned gnomes, the ascendancy of Latin-based script over the Arabo-Persian script (especially the “complicated” nature of the latter) and Shi’ite Mullahs as representative of the “orient” and backwardness.


22. The 1911 edition of Encyclopedia Britannica states that Nizami was the “greatest romantic epic poet in Persian literature, who brought a colloquial and realistic style to the Persian epic... Nezami is admired in Persian-speaking lands for his originality and clarity of style, through his love of language for its own sake”.

23. The general consensus is that Nezami Ganjavi was half Kurdish. His other half was either Iranian or Arabian. His great grandfather could trace his ancestry back to the Shaddadid era. In a strictly cultural sense Nezami was unequivocally Persian; see Browne 1998; Chelkowski & Ganjavī 1975; Horne 1917; Rypka 1968; Talattof & Clinton 2001; and Van Ruymbeke 2007.


26. Ibid.

31. As noted by Ritter, "The ethnic links between the Azeri of northern Iran and Azerbaijan were long exploited by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and this vehicle for internal manipulation has been seized upon by CIA paramilitary operatives and US Special Operations units..." Full report in "The US war with Iran has already begun", Al-Jazeera, June 20, 2005, at: http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0620-31.htm
39. Ibid.
First Critical Response to Kaveh Farrokh's "A Case of Historical Misconceptions"

Generally a very well researched but somewhat paranoid look at "The Question of Azerbaijan" ... Thus I believe that the "Peters Map" [of Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Peters; see Conclusion - Ed.] first appeared as the cover to The Atlantic, and while not a joke, was less than perfectly serious. ... That said, I would not hesitate to share this article with my students as a nice scan of relations between (historical) Iran and Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as a good study of how ethnicity and language are malleable.

- Prof. Thomas Goltz (Political Science & Caucasus), Montana State University

Second Critical Response to Kaveh Farrokh's "Case of Historical Misconceptions"

The author has some strong points and I basically agree with the thrust of his argument. The idea that the region north of the Aras River was referred to normally as "Azerbaijan" is indeed a fiction. It was not generally referred to as a geographical unit, but, as the author points out, by the various khanates which made up this region. Yet the author defeats his purpose by broad-brush techniques, leading to some factual errors, misinterpretations and polemical over-reach.

Thus the author at one point [in section 'Origins of "Greater Azerbaijan" Thesis' - Ed.] claims that calling the area in the South Caucasus north of the Aras River as "North Azerbaijan" was a Soviet idea, and then, a few paragraphs later, attributes it (rightly) to the Mussavat government which preceded it by two years.

The author cites secondary sources on Akinji [spelled Akinci by the author - Ed.] and Molla Nasr od-Din [spelled Mulla Nasrredin by the author - Ed.]. Having read both journals cover to cover, I assure you that he is mistaken on their content. Moreover, the idea that the Tsarist officials were backing these journals is without foundation. The editor of Akinji had warm relations with enlightened thinkers in Iran and showed no prejudice against Iran at all, much less did he attack Iranian culture. It survived on the good will of wealthy Caucasian Muslims, and collapsed when their limited public spirit could not bear the strain of supporting such an enterprise. It should be mentioned that during the journal's existence, Tsarist Russia was in an alliance with Iran against the Ottomans.

Molla Nasr od-Din was similarly not a project of the Tsarist government, which found its provocative attacks against the Muslim clergy (whose cooperation it sought) to be a nuisance and once or twice closed it down for this reason. Nor did the Tsarist government encourage it to attack Iran. On the contrary, it expressed its displeasure with the journal's hostile attitude toward Iran. The idea that the Tsarist government was promoting pan-Turkism to defeat Iranian culture is similarly fanciful. The Tsarist government had a policy of malignant neglect towards Turkish culture, ignoring its development in the schools in favor of a policy of Russification.

- Prof. Evan Siegel (Mathematics, Middle East & Caucasus), New Jersey City University
Editorial Comments on Kaveh Farrokh’s “Case of Historical Misconceptions” and Critical Responses

Thank you, Evan. I agree with a large number of your comments about Akinji and Mulla Nasreddin .... But I do not see much contradiction in the author's statements about the language of the Caucasian Albania/Arran. He refers to many sources which mention the difference in the origin (i.e. the Median vs. the Caucasian Lezgic) origin of the two region. I personally do not hold these views, because even in classical times we have had Iranian speaking Talysh and Tats in the Caucasus, while the Udins (=Albanians) where Christians and spoke a Lezgic language. Then in the post-Islamic times, we had the process of Persification, all around the Islamic world. Only after the 12th-century arrival of the Seljuqs did the Turkification start. The Turkification proceeded through the Aq Quyunlu and Qara Quyunlu tribes.

Incidentally, there are plenty of references to Arran in the post-Antique sources. After the 16th century, however, Arran is only referred to one area, while such names as Shirvan and Qarabagh gained currency for the whole area in question.

Although not called “Azeris” in olden times, the Shi'ite Muslim Turkic-speaking people of the South Caucasus were culturally similar to Azerbaijanis in Iran and belonged similarly to the Iranian civilizational realm.

Azerbaijanis are Iranian in all aspects. Iran has begun two times from Azerbaijan (the Median and Safavid empires). That area has always been the Iranian coreland and most important social and political movements were initiated there. In all cultural aspects the Azerbaijanis are Iranian, similar to other ethnic groups in Iran. They, indeed, speak an Oghuz Turkic language, full of Persian words, but language is not a criterion of ‘Iranianess’. Iran is a multilingual country. Persian serves as its lingua franca and the main literary language, and Azerbaijanis have contributed to the Persian literature as well as most other ethnic groups of Iran.

Also the Turkic-speaking Shi'ite people of the South Caucasus were part and parcel of the mainstream Iranian nation before their incorporation into the Tsarist Russian Empire, the same way other ethnic groups were. Even after their incorporation into the Russian empire they remained active in the Iranian social and political movements.

- Babak Rezvani, Main editor

Author’s Reactions to Critical Responses and Editorial Comments

Thank you indeed gentlemen for sharing with me your expertise, guidance and perspective. These form an integral part of the learning process and I greatly benefit from this. I was hoping to share a couple of points which may be of interest.
Identity and the role of the Persian Language in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan

Like much of Iran, the Trans-Caucasus was far from being a monolithic ethnic entity but instead (in this case), having been a confluence (or meeting ground) of (for the main part) of local, Iranic and Turkic arrivals. In the overall sense, these processes were apparent in the Transcaucasian Khanates: by the stabilization of Safavid rule especially, the region was (predominantly) Shi’ite, Turkic-speaking (this became stronger in my view especially after the wholesale arrival of the Qizilbash Turkmen Sufi followers into Iran when Shah Ismail came to power). Persian was also a strong literary vernacular, which in combination with the Shi'ite faith, served as bonds to the Iranian realms, with the Turkic language also becoming a significant element of the myriad of dialects and languages; Turkic or Turkish-speaking were to remain very important in the political, cultural and linguistic developments within Iran and the Transcaucasus.

The Persian language was also characterized by a strong presence in Azerbaijan and the Transcaucasus, even after the Seljuk and Il-Khanid arrivals. The Nozhat ol Majales was a major document attesting to history of Persian legacy in Azerbaijan and Caucasus long after the Seljuk and Mongol arrivals. The book preserved for posterity during 14th century (circa July 1331) through efforts of Ismail b. Esfandiyar b. Mohammad b. Esfandiar Abhari. This Contains Persian language works of at least 115 poets from Iran's Azerbaijan province and eastern Caucasus (esp. Shirvan, Arran, Ganja). This is a compilation of 4,100 quatrains organized in 17 chapters. Ganja for example, is represented by 24 Persian poets with other Persian poets from Caucasus, including for example Bakhtiar Shirvani. Many of Persian-language Caucasian poets were women including Dokhtar-e-Salar and Razziye Ganjai.

There are also very rare quatrains from Iranian savants and famous Persian poets such as: Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Fakhreddin Asad Gorgani and Nezami Ganjavi; there are also references to Fariborz III Shirvanshah of Caucasus and Seljuq rulers.

Unlike many other parts of Greater Iran, most Caucasian poets originated from regular working class, not from elite courts. This appears to suggest:

1) Persian was a common language of ordinary people in Caucasus and Azerbaijan before gradual linguistic Turkification of the region.

2) Persian was not simply a language confined to select elites in Caucasus and Azerbaijan.

3) Persian was a popular language of the mainstream populace.

There is also evidence for the continuation of other Iranian languages in Azerbaijan, such as Fahralvi (Pahlavi or Middle Persian based–Fahralvi = Arab pronunciation of Pahlavi). This existed as late as the mid 1400s in Iranian Azerbaijan (see Taazolli, *Encyclopedia Iranica*). There is also Pahlavi, which was a main vernacular in Maragheh in 1200s at height of Ilkhanid rule. Hamdollah Mostofi (1281-1346 CE; author of "Nozhat ol Gholoob") reports of "Pahlavi Mughayr" (modified Pahlavi), which was predominant language of Maragheh. There are also reports of Tabrizi (a west-Iranic language).
The safineye Tabriz written in the 1400s and compiled in Tabrizi suggest the existence of Iranian languages in cities such as Tabriz for at least four centuries after Seljuk Turk arrivals.

*The Peeters Map:* This was drafted by a high-ranking (albeit retired) member of the US military. Had this map been drawn by a person of lesser importance, then of course it would be of far less consequence. The fact that such a high ranking military person would have this published in a major western outlet deserves mention. The concept of the map is nothing new and may be traced to Professor Bernard Lewis and even as far back as the 1905 Anglo-Russian accord. The drafting of maps by Western and/or European powers to partition the country is a matter of great study by Iranian academia in particular, the articles of Dr. Jalal Matini (editor of *Iranshenasi* journal) for example, being one example. Iran as a state has already witnessed the loss of much of its territories to (form) other countries such as Afghanistan in the 19th-century as well as modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan for example. The article has already provided references to official support provided by various political establishments for separatist organizations.

*Akinci and Mulla Nasreddin:* Professor Siegel’s explanations (whom I deeply respect for his expertise) may indeed be meritorious, as my main basis for the thrust of these publications has been Zenkowski, who describes these as anti-Persian. I am also aware of Akhund-zadeh’s pro (pre-Islamic era) Persian sympathies (indeed this was a mainstay of later Iranian nationalism), but he was also very highly critical of the Shi’ite clergy and did mention that contemporary Persian literature was decadent. My impression of Akhund-zadeh was that he had been ambivalent towards Iran: he admired ancient Persia which he identified with, but was not of the same persuasion when it came to contemporary Shi’ite theologians—as these were associated with the Persian language, this factor may have contributed to the association of Mullahs with the Persian language, especially after Akhund-Zadeh. I remain very open to Professor Siegel’s knowledge and suggestions in this domain.

- Prof. Kaveh Farrokh (Iranian and Persian history), University of British Columbia

NB: do you have any comments on Kaveh Farrokh’s article and/or the critical responses? Please send these to europeanreview@gmail.com, or post these on http://www.europeanreviewwebs.com.

Some of these comments the Editorial Board may publish as Critical Responses (maximum 3,000 words) in the next issue of the journal.
Iran in the Early Days of the Karabakh Conflict

Babak Rezvani

The conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region is one of the most stubborn conflicts in the post-Soviet space; despite more than one decade of armistice, the opposing Armenian and Azeri parties are still nowhere near to a solution. The conflict started when the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh demanded a transfer of the autonomous province to Armenia. Soviet Armenia agreed, but neither Soviet Azerbaijan nor the Soviet Center did want to agree. The conflict escalated after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Armenian separatists have proclaimed the independence of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh). They have taken control over the former Nagorno-Karabakh region as well as the area around it that is ethnically cleansed of local Azerbaijanis and Kurds. No countries has recognized the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, de facto, Armenia has incorporated the area into its own polity.

The role of regional powers is an interesting one. Russia tries to play the role of a mediator. It maintains good relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia, but allegedly supports Armenia more than Azerbaijan. This is not very odd as Armenia is a smaller country, and unlike Azerbaijan, does not possess oil reserves. Turkey has sided with Azerbaijan, which is also not a strange position as it has troubled relations with Armenia due to the latter demands of recognition of Armenian genocide by Turkey as the successor of the Ottoman empire, and possible payment of restitutions. Iran's role is the least analyzed one. Allegedly the Western powers, and even Russia, try to isolate Iran and do not let it play an important role with regard to the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. Certain news sources even suggest that Iran supports Armenia, which is not true. Officially Iran remains neutral in this conflict. Nevertheless, Iran does not recognize the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and regards it as part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On the other hand, Iran maintains good trade relations with Armenia. However, this is not surprising, as Armenia is the only Caucasian or Central Asian state in which Turkey has been less successful in business than Iran.

A former Iranian official claims in a recent article that Iran has supported the Republic of Azerbaijan in the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh War. The article, written by Joshua Kucera (8 March 2013), reads as follows:

Iranian Official: We Helped Azerbaijan In Karabakh War  March 8, 2013 - 4:04 pm, by Joshua Kucera The Bug Pit Azerbaijan Iran Nagorno Karabakh EurasiaNet's Weekly Digest

A top Iranian official has made waves in the Caucasus by claiming that Iran secretly helped Azerbaijan during the latter’s war with Armenia over Nagorno Karabakh in the 1990s. The official, Mohsen Rezaee, is in a position to know: he was the commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards at the time. He told Sahar TV (translation by Oye Times):

“I personally issued an order ... for the Republic of Azerbaijan army to be equipped appropriately and for it to receive the necessary training,” he said. “Many Iranians died in the
Karabakh War. In addition to the wounded, who were transported to [Iran], many of the Iranian martyrs of the Karabakh War are buried in Baku.” “Karabakh is a part of Islamic lands and the Republic of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity must be guaranteed through peaceful means.”

Iran, of course, is now fairly hostile towards Azerbaijan, and maintains good relations with Armenia. Armenians have claimed that Iran helped Azerbaijan during the war, but there has not been confirmation of this, nor have mainstream accounts repeated the claim. (The authoritative book on the war, Thomas De Waal's Black Garden, while devoting several pages to Russia's complex role in the war, doesn't address Iran's role at all.) Iran and Azerbaijan also have been quiet about this (if it is in fact true), though some opposition figures in Azerbaijan appear to have been supporting Rezaee's allegations.

Rezaee is now a candidate for president, and it's possible that this is a play for votes among Iran's substantial ethnic Azeri population. It also could be a subtle power play by Tehran against Baku, suggests Alex Vatanka, an Iran scholar at the Middle East Institute who has written a lot on Iran's relations to the Caucasus.

"Why come out now and say it? I can only assume that the Iranians know Armenia can't really afford to allow this historical fact [if it is true] to harm present ties with Iran," he told The Bug Pit. "On the other hand, Iran has a lot to gain from such news. If you are Tehran, and want to go over Aliyev's head, what would be better to play than the 'Islamic' or 'nationalist' card and shape Azeri public opinion. I see it all as part of Tehran's cold-hot approach to Aliyev's government."

So far there doesn't seem to be any official reaction from Baku.

UPDATE: A reader writes in to note that this is not actually the first time an Iranian official has made such a claim; an Ayatollah Said Hassan Ameli did so a couple of years ago, as well. (Kucera 2013)

I would like to make a few comments: Unlike what the (Armenian) article says, Iran did not only secretly but openly supported the Republic of Azerbaijan in keeping its territorial integrity in the Karabakh war. Iran turned neutral after Elchibey became aggressive towards Iran. Also Heydar Aliyev's presidency could not harmonize the troubled relationship. The main reason was oil politics. Moreover, unlike what the article claims, Iran is not “fairly hostile” towards Azerbaijan nor has it very good relations with Armenia.

Armenia is not important for Iran, but on the other hand, Iran is of extreme importance for Armenia. Iranian tourism offers money to the resource-poor republic and the Armenian economy would have collapsed if Iran had closed down its borders with Armenia, the same way Turkey did. Of course, Turkey did not do Baku a favor. Turkey wanted to pressure Armenia in order that they drop their demands of recognition of the Armenian genocide.

This article suggests that the Iranian statement may be fed by nationalism. This is true but this is not the only reason: of course the Iranian people regard the population of the Azerbaijan republic as part of their own nation; their brethren separated by an imperialist...
Russia. Iran can have normal relations with Armenia, but could not and cannot be indifferent towards the Karabakhi refugees. But another reason is that Iran will not recognize Karabakh the same way it cannot recognize Kosovo, Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Although not widespread, Iran does face separatist challenges in its Sunni-inhabited Kurdish and Baluchi areas. It is extremely important for Iran to defend the right of territorial integrity for all states. Still, the article is worth reading as it discusses one of the least spoken and nearly forgotten facts about the Karabakh Conflict and the Iran-Republic of Azerbaijan relations.

Reference

Turkey's political-economy and its challenges

Servet Sahin

The Turkish political-economic system is similar to some Central Asian countries. It has the same similarity and same challenges within her political economy. The Turkish state can be characterized as a weak state with strong centralized officials.

After the collapse of the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923 and the temporal and religious ruling institutions of the old empire, “the sultanate and caliphate”, were abolished. The leaders of the new republic concentrated on consolidating their power and modernizing and westernizing Turkey. Social, political, linguistic, and economic reforms and attitudes decreed by Ataturk from 1924-1934, continue to be referred to as the ideological base of modern Turkey.

Turkish politics, especially after the three military coups in 1960, 1970 and 1980, has been dominated by an authoritarian regime with a “Kemalist” ideology. Kemalism comprises a Turkish form of secularism, strong nationalism, statism, and to some degree a western orientation. The 1982 Constitution, drafted by the military in the wake of the 1980 coup, proclaims Turkey’s system of government as democratic, secular, and parliamentary. It also gives considerable power to the State Security Council to deal with offenses against the integrity of the state. The current ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) came to power in November 2002; it professes an Islamic-Sunni tradition that challenges many Kemalist precepts. Turkey’s current foreign policy has also changed fundamentally during past years, due to the Islamic-Sunni orientated AK Party.

Ironically, so-called “zero-conflict-with-neighbors” policy of prime minister and AKP-leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan has engendered tense confrontations with Syria, Iran, Iraq, Israel and even Russia over the last years—though Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s recent apology for the Turkish deaths at the 2010 ‘Gaza flotilla’ incident has improved relations between Tel Aviv and Ankara somewhat. Still, Ankara's grand ambition to make Turkey a regional power and agenda-setting country in the Middle East has been challenged by the Arab Spring and the consequent developments in Turkey's neighboring countries—especially the violent conflict in Syria. Indeed, Erdogan is currently being challenged by street protests against his partisan, intolerant, anti-secular policies—could this ‘Turkish Spring’ lead to his downfall?
The Turkish economy is in the early phase of liberalization, but was a planned-economy in the post Ataturk era. Turkey began to liberalize its economy when a series of reforms in the 1980s designed to shift the economy from a static, insulated system to a more private-sector, market-based model. But the economy is still not fully liberalized. The reforms spurred solid growth, but growth has been punctuated by sharp financial crises in 1994, 1999 and 2001. The Turkish economic growth also has been also contracted by the current global recession. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth shrank to 2.9 percent in the second quarter of 2012. The real GDP growth is expected to be 3.5 percent in 2013 according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Turkey and the European Union (EU) formed a customs union in the beginning of January 1996. The agreement covers industrial and processed agricultural goods. Turkey is harmonizing its laws and regulations with EU standards. It thus adopted the EU’s Common External Tariff regime, effectively lowering Turkey’s tariffs from the third countries, including the United States. Turkey is also a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It has signed free trade agreements with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Israel, and many other countries. In 1992 Turkey and ten other neighboring nations formed the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council to expand regional trade and economic cooperation.

Turkey’s failure to pursue additional reforms (such as democratic reforms), combined with large and growing public sector deficits, resulted in high inflation, increasing macroeconomic volatility, and a weak banking sector. The current political and economic developments around the world have also affected Turkey’s political and economic structure.

Additionally, the Security Council in Turkey still remains an important organization to determine today’s Turkey’s internal and external politics. The authoritarian-militarily dominated regime’s control over the economy has prevented Turkey from further progress in terms of democracy and full economic liberalization.

The limited economic development, traditional culture, weak civil society, nationalism, terrorism and the ongoing ethnical Kurdish conflict which caused almost 50 thousand deaths during the last decades, remain important risk factors that undermine Turkey’s political and socio-economic growth. Moreover, the adverse international and internal developments will constrain Turkey in its ability and willingness to adjust and progress its political and economic system. Especially with its Islamic-Sunni orientation, Turkey will face big challenges in the region.

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Ethnicity-Based Federalism: An Issue of State Restructuring in Nepal

Pawan Kumar Sen

Present Situation

Nepal has been witnessing a historic political transition over the past few years. The monarchy had been abolished and so had the unitary state structure and the state's association with the Hindu religion, which were the fundamental characteristics of the Nepali state since her formation. In the place of the Hindu constitutional monarchical unitary kingdom, the country was declared a federal, democratic, secular and republican state by the first meeting of an elected Constituent Assembly (CA) held on 28 May 2008.

Initially, the CA was mandated for two years to complete the task of formulating a new constitution. But due to the failure of the political parties to promulgate the constitution within the stipulated time, the CA extended the deadline four times. By the end of the final extension of the CA's term, it should have delivered the new constitution by 27 May 2012.

Unfortunately, the CA was dissolved in the night of this day without delivering the new constitution, after witnessing four years of political incongruity among the major political parties. The CA was dissolved after the political parties failed to reach consensus on issues of restructuring the state. The main obstruction in the state restructuring debate and decision-making process was due to a lack of consensus among political parties on the form of federalism.

The Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai proposed fresh elections of a new CA on 22 November 2012. He said that going for a fresh people's mandate was the only appropriate option available to him after the dissolution of the CA, because the Supreme Court had already issued a final verdict on 25 November 2011 that had ended all the possibilities of further extension of the CA term.

Issue of Federalism

Federalism has been the major issue of the state reform among Nepal’s political parties at present. Though the CA has already declared Nepal a federal state in May 2008, there remains a considerable divergence among the political parties as to the country's particular form of federalism.

The political parties are yet to have a common view on the basis of which the federal states should be demarcated and named. The United Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (UCPN
Maoist), which was the largest political party in the CA (it is a broad-based party) and other regional and ethnicity-based political parties stood in the favour of an ethnicity-based federal system (sometimes they also call it identity-based federalism). They claimed that various indigenous groups of the country have a historical attachment to certain regions, and only an ethnicity-based federal system could ensure sufficient or maximum autonomy to local indigenous groups in the decision-making process, and preserve their identity, language, culture etc. and bring them into the mainstream. These parties are demanding ‘priority rights’ for the indigenous peoples on natural resources such as lands, forests and water in the respective provinces. Beside these, they are also asking to make sure that only indigenous people in the respective provinces can successively stand in elections for two terms.

On the other side, the Nepali Congress (NC), the second largest party in the CA, the Communist Party of Nepal United Marxist Leninist (CPN UML), the third largest party (both are broad-based parties), and other fringe political parties said that federalism should be based on economic viability and geography. They have argued that federalism should not be based on ethnic identity, because it is not practical since every district and region of Nepal is ethnically and culturally heterogeneous, and there are more than a hundred ethnic and linguistic groups in the country. They further argued that an ethnicity-based federal system could bring communal disharmony and ultimately drive the country to disintegration. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that indigenous leaders and leaders from marginalized communities of the NC and CPN (UML) too were in favour of ethnicity-based federalism. Some central-level leaders of the CPN (UML) from indigenous and marginalized backgrounds, including the then party vice-chairman, departed from the party on 4 October 2012, accusing it of being against ‘ethnic’ federalism. Some of them erected a new political party, while some others joined other political parties which favoured ethnicity-based federalism such as UCPN (Maoist). Also in the NC, dozens of indigenous leaders resigned from the party on 3 October 2012 due to differences with the party leadership on the issue of ethnicity-based federalism.

Nepal is basically a country of minorities with more than 110 ethnic groups. Not a single ethnic group is in a simple majority. The numerically largest ethnic group known as Chhetri constitutes only 16 percent of the country's total population, followed by Bahun with only 12 percent in its share. These two groups are the only ones with double-digit proportions in the national population.

Most of the ethnic groups individually make up less than 5 percent of the population. Even though indigenous groups historically have been confined to particular regions of the country, they are only numerically significant minorities in those particular regions, not in the majority. So, nobody in Nepal is in majority at both the national and regional levels. In other words, Nepali society is culturally and ethnically mixed because every territorial boundary has multi-ethnic groups and cultural diversity. The creation of ethnically and culturally homogenous geographical units is not possible in Nepal whichever methods are adopted to demarcate boundaries.
Therefore, the idea of ethnicity-based federalism stands on weak ground and is not justified in the context of Nepal. So, adopting a federal system along ethnic lines may bring a new conflict among various ethnic groups living in a same region. The Prime Minister, who is also a leader of UCPN (Maoist), said in a press conference immediately after the dissolution of the CA that it had been dissolved due to the obstruction by ‘anti-federal forces’. By saying this, he meant to indicate to the NC and CPN (UML), which were against ethnicity-based federalism. But these political parties, too, are not against federalism as such. Even though federalism was initially a Maoist agenda, it has now become a national issue since the CA has already declared the country a federal state. The latter two parties are only opposed to single-ethnicity federalism with ‘priority rights’; they have been saying that the country should be federated on the basis of multiple-ethnic identities by taking financial capacity of federal provinces into account.

Possible Solution

The present deadlock on the issue of federalism among the Nepali political parties indicates that they have prematurely decided to go for federalism without thinking it through first. They made a big mistake by not reaching a consensus on the form of federalism through a series of national debates. The group of parties that are in favour of ethnicity-based federalism could not have clearly explained how they would convince those ethnic groups who would not have their own provinces and would not possess the ‘priority rights’.

On the other side, the group of parties which favours federalism based on economic viability and geography, not based on ethnicity, could not give concrete evidence that ethnicity-based federalism would bring the disintegration of the Nepali state. If they do not do the necessary preparatory work themselves, they should leave this to the general public. They have to listen to their own voters and constituencies, and certainly to the general public. Either they have to decide according to what a majority of the public think about this issue measured through a rigorous nationwide opinion poll, or they have to go for a referendum and accept the public’s preference.

In February 2013, a popular Nepali magazine published poll results showing that a very high majority of Nepali people did not want the country to be federated on the basis of ethnicity. They wish to delineate federal provinces by incorporating all the ecological belts (mountains, hills and plain lands) stretched from north to south in each of them. Other polls undertaken by various independent agencies also produced the same findings.

So, the political parties should either listen to the people's voice (preference) and decide accordingly, or go for a referendum. A logical alternative to these can also be the determination of provinces primarily based on economic viability and geography while at the same time choosing the names of the provinces based on ethno-history and by providing indigenous people maximum autonomy. This means that provinces can be named by taking the single-ethnic identity into account and allowing them to practice their traditional values,
but only with the legal guarantee of equal treatment of other ethnic groups and without giving any anxiety to others, so that nobody has to feel a second-class citizen.

So, the concept of autonomy is a better option than the concept of ‘priority rights’. Otherwise, there is always a possibility of separatist insurgency by those groups who do have a privilege of ‘priority rights’, or rebellion by those groups relegated to second-class citizenship. The alternative option combines both opposing federalism models, though giving primacy to civic federalism. Moreover, it can also satisfy indigenous groups and other marginalized groups by entitling them maximum autonomy with regards to politics, culture, religion, language, education, etcetera. This will maintain the centuries-old social cohesion in culturally and ethnically diverse Nepal. This type of federalism recognizes the cultural differences and should ensure harmonious relations between the different communities.

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