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A FAILED INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GREAT POWERS COMPETITION: THE NORTH CAUCASIAN STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE (1917-1920)

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ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, with the collapse of the Tsarist government and the Bolsheviks coming to power, the North Caucasian independence struggle became complicated inextricable. This article examines the role of great power competition in the North Caucasian independence movement in the early twentieth century. Focusing on the events between 1917 and 1920, this study analyses how the relations among the great powers and the local actors in the region shaped and directed the course of the events in the region. It explains the difficulties that the North Caucasians faced in the process of formation of 'The Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus,' and it seeks to indicate the reasons of the failure of the Mountaineers' attempt to form a unified republic. Benefiting from The *Times* newspaper's archives, this study explicates whether and how the Russian, German, British and Ottoman states contributed to the course of events that ended with the failure of the newly founded North Caucasian Republic.

Keywords: North Caucasus, Russia, Bolsheviks, Ottoman Empire, Germany, Britain

BÜYÜK GÜÇLER YARIŞI BAĞLAMINDA BAŞARIYA ULAŞMAMIŞ BİR BAĞIMSIZLIK HAREKETİ: KUZEY KAFKASYA BAĞIMSIZLIK MÜCADELESİ (1917-1920)

ÖZ

Yirminci yüzyılın başlarında, Çarlık hükümetinin çöküşü ve Bolşeviklerin iktidara gelmesi ile Kuzey Kafkasya bağımsızlık mücadelesi içinden çıkılamaz bir hale geldi. Bu makale, yirminci yüzyılın başlarında Kuzey Kafkasya bağımsızlık hareketinde büyük güç rekabetinin rolünü incelemektedir. 1917-1920 yılları arasındaki olaylara odaklanan bu çalışma, bölgedeki büyük güçler ile yerel aktörler arasındaki ilişkilerin olayların seyrini nasıl şekillendirdiği ve yönlendirdiğini analiz etmektedir. Ayrıca, Kuzey KafkasyalIların 'Kuzey Kafkasya Dağlı Cumhuriyeti'nin oluşum sürecinde karşılaştıkları zorlukları ele almakta ve Dağlıların birleşik bir cumhuriyet kurma girişimlerinin başarısızlığının nedenlerini irdelemeye çalışmaktadır. The *Times* gazetesinin arşivlerinden de yararlanan bu çalışma, yeni kurulan Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti'nin başarısızlığı ile sonuçlanan olayların gidişatına Rus, Alman, İngiliz ve Osmanlı devletlerinin nasıl ve ne düzeyde etkide bulunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuzey Kafkasya, Rusya, Bolşevikler, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Almanya, İngiltere

1. INTRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century, North Caucasians were left in the middle of a power struggle, which involved the Tsarist Russia and later the White Army*, the Bolsheviks, the Ottomans and European powers.

Throughout this entire struggle, the Mountaineers[I II] persistently sought to establish and preserve an independent North Caucasian state. For this purpose, they sought help from different powers at different times. The Mountaineers' struggle for independence, during 1917-1920, was one of the most crucial moments in the history of the interwar period, as this struggle was shaped by the presence of the Tsarist army, the Bolsheviks, the Great Britain, Germany and the Ottomans on the scene. During 1917-1920, the power struggle in the Caucasus reached its peak. The North Caucasians seeking to preserve their newly founded Republic and to secure the recognition of the great powers, found themselves in the middle of that power struggle.

This study explores the role of the competition between the great powers in the North Caucasian independence movement. The existing literature contains insufficient discussion on the role of the struggle between the great powers and generally focuses more on how specific events and developments influenced the course of the independence movementJ This study aims to provide a wider perspective by focusing on the role of the struggle between the great powers in the North Caucasian Movement. It tries to show how the relations among the great powers and the local actors in the region shaped and directed the course of the events. To analyse the roles of the great powers, this study also draws on The Times newspaper's archives, which shed light on the contemporary developments in the region thanks to a widespread intelligence and correspondent network. In the first years of the World War 1 and in its aftermath the Great Britain was a powerful actor in the region. As a matter of fact, the British government was more competent than the other great powers in dealing with the Bolshevik regime and in controlling the activities and goals of other states in the North Caucasus region. The Times was a powerful source of the war and post-war information network, with its reporters spread around the world. Particularly, it provided detailed information flow on the developments in the Caucasus from many places, including Istanbul, Baghdad, Berlin, and Petersburg. It also contained the summary and translation of the articles on Caucasia published in many European newspapers, as well as the Ottoman ones. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the issues of The Times dated between 1 January 1917-31 December 1920 were scanned focusing on the international and local developments concerning the North Caucasus.

This study proceeds as follows: It first provides a historical background of the North Caucasian struggle for independence. It then focuses on the North Caucasian position facing the 1917 revolution and the first attempts of forming a unified state. It then explores the relations of the Mountaineers with the Ottoman Empire, the German and British government. It traces the struggle between the White movement and the North Caucasians. Consequently, it discusses how the independence movement come to an end with the intervention of the Bolsheviks. The concluding part briefly discusses how the independence movement failed in the context of the great power struggle.

2. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The 1917 Revolution took different forms in the Russian Empire, which consisted of various ethnic and cultural groups of people with different languages, cultures, and historical backgrounds. The only feature common to all North Caucasians was their wish to get rid of the Tsarist rule. (The

[*] The White Army is the army of the White Movement that is composed of Russian Imperial Generals who fought against the Red Army of Bolsheviks after the October Revolution.

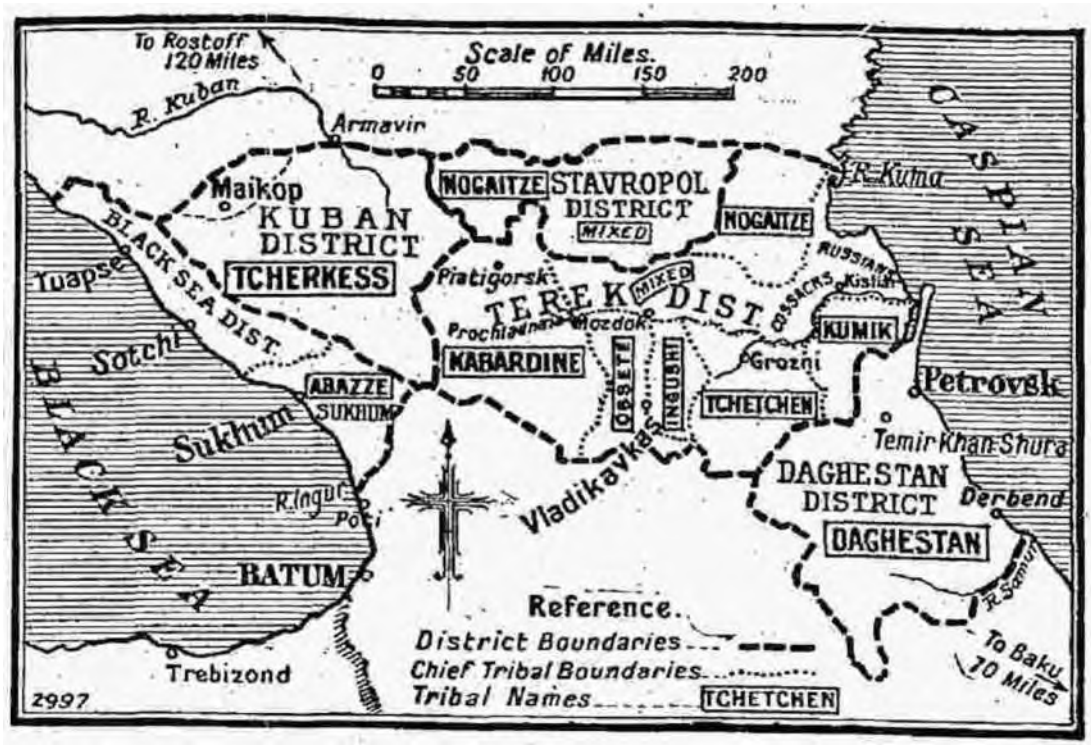
[+] **The Mountaineers is used in lieu of the expression "The North Caucasian Mountaineers." This is a common** usage both among the North Caucasus people and in the academic literature.

II For this literature **see**: (Boeck, 1998; Bennigsen, 1983; Werth, 2006; Saparov, 2010; Gokay, 1998; Reynolds, **2005; Reynolds, 2008; Jersild, 2002; Yemelianova, 2001; Henze, 1996; Aydm, Ergün, 2019; Çelik, 2020; Hacısalihoğlu, 2013; Yeşil, 2017; Yağcı, 2016; Sukhanova, 2013; Polivina, 2008; Kajarov, 2001; Saydumov,** 2018; Golovin, 2011; Murzaev, 2007)

Times, June 5, 1919: 13) The 1917 revolution, thus, was seen as an opportunity to reach independence. These people sought to establish an ethnic, linguistic or religious union and to rearrange their borders in cases where injustice was believed to be at stake. (Kosok, 1956: 47) The North Caucasian people considered the 1917 revolution as a chance to free their region from the Russian rule. Therefore, they looked for any support from the great powers, especially from Germany, Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire. This quest for a protector resulted in the establishment of cooperation with different great powers, which aimed at gaining the national sovereignty of the Mountaineers.

In fact the establishment of an independent North Caucasian state had a long journey starting from the Sixteenth Century. Since the second half of the sixteenth century the Russian goal of reaching the warm seas remained unachievable. North Caucasus had always been a strategic region in that sense, as it could provide the Russian access to both the southern seas and the Iranian market. Since 1783 Russian advance towards the North Caucasus faced uprisings (the first jihad by Sheikh Mansur[*]), which blocked Russian advance southwards. Until the sixteenth century the North Caucasus was populated by tribal societies such as Adyges, Ossetians, some of the Kabardians in the west; Muslims in the east, in Daghestan; and Chechens and Ingush in the centre. After the conquest of Astrakhan in 1556 by Russian Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) the North Caucasus became the focus of regional conflicts between Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Iran, the Crimean Khanate and the Shaybanis of Turkestan. (Broxup, 1992: 1-4) As V. O. Klyuchevskiy admits the migration and colonization of the country was the most important factor of Russian history. (Klyuchevskiy, 1918: 25) Between 1556 and 1604 the Russian Empire widened its area of annexation over the North Caucasus (aiming at expanding towards Kabardian lands and Daghestan) by means of assimilation, Christianization, military campaigns and building fortresses for further advance. (Jersild, 2000; Yıldız, 2021; Broxup, 1992) By that time Iran and the Ottoman Empire became aware of the Russian threat and began to take part in the division of power in the region.

Image-1: The North Caucasian People



Source: The Times Archive, June 5, 1919 (p.13)

From 1604 to 1783, the North Caucasus became less important for the Russians, Europeans and Iran. However, at the same time religion started to turn into a chief factor in the rivalry between the Ottoman and Russian empires over the North Caucasus. While the Islamic movement gained progress in the western and central part of the region, the Christianization movement decelerated. (Broxup, 1992: 1-4) After the end of the Crimean Khanate in 1783, the North Caucasus was directly faced to Russian offensive. 1783-1824 was the period of Russia's systematic offensive against the North Caucasus. The only exception in that period was the years from 1785 to 1791, when Sheikh Mansur Ushurma's (a Chechen Naqshbandi sheikh) successfully attempted to ünite the North Caucasian people against the Russian expansionist policies. In 1791 Sheikh Mansur was captured by Russians, but the possibility of a unity around Islam remained in the memory of the Mountaineers. (The Times, June 5, 1919: 13) However, arguing that the North Caucasian struggle for independence was part of the clash between Islamic Union and the Russian Orthodox rule would be an oversimplification of the issue. The literature that put Islam at the centre of the North Caucasian liberation movement can be considered as superficial as we cannot talk of a homogenous linguistic, cultural and social entity of people, who were just seeking to form an Islamic unity. Instead, the common ground for the Mountaineers' struggle was their struggle for the independence from the Russian rule. However, the Islamic unity partly contributed to the successful organisation of the Mountaineers in their struggle for independence. The period between 1824 and 1922 is generally considered as the ghazawat in the Northern Caucasus, referring to the holy wars, aiming at providing the Islamic unity. During this period a new ideology established among the Mountaineers by the Sufi orders and the Shariat law became the centre of unity. Moreover, this period is also marked as the occurrence of Shamil's* imamate and his struggles against Russians. (Cornell, 1999: 87; Broxup, 1992: 1-4)

After the Mountaineers were left without the leadership following the capture of Imam Shamil by Russian forces in 1859, the population of the North Caucasus failed to resist against Russian forces and they were left with no alternative but to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire. As the evidence shows, many of them were forced to emigrate and the lands left by the Mountaineers were repopulated by trusted subjects of the Russian Empire. (Henze, 1992: 102) Following the defeat of Shamil in 1859, not only the physical capacity of the North Caucasian army was destabilized, but also the influence of the *Naqshbandiya* tariqat, which had been a religious driving force behind the Mountaaineers' struggle for independence, was significantly undermined. (Henze, 1992: 62-111; Broxup, 62-112, 117-119) North Caucasian Mountaineers, militarily defeated and spiritually hopeless, found the impulsive force in the rising religious order Qadiriya. In 1877 Naqshibandiya and Qadiriya forces had even joined forces to fight against the Russians, but eventually they were defeated; some of the murids (followers) were hanged and thousands of them were sent to exile in Siberia. Until 1917, they disposed of the idea of *ghazawat* and transformed into an underground organisation, which was a turning point in the history of North Caucasians. * (Henze, 1992: 62-111; Broxup, 1992: 117-119)

From the conquest to the re-conquest$ of the North Caucasian region, the Mountaineers fought not only against the Bolsheviks but also the Tsarist White Army. Even before the fall of the Tsarist government, North Caucasians were involved in an intensive struggle for their lands against the Cossacks** who were convinced that these lands actually had belonged to them. (Pipes, 1995: 103) ‡ § ** †† ‡‡

3. NORTH CAUCASIAN STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND THE GREAT POWERS

Since the conquest of the Caucasus region by Tsarist Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century, the region suffered from land and military governance strategies because there were a twofold leadership in the Daghestan, and the former Kuban and Terek regions: a military governor with the authority of a governor general and an ataman of the Cossacks.* (Kosok, 1956: 47) (The Times, June 5, 1919: 13) The land question frequently

‡ Imam Shamil is the Daghestani leader in the North-East Caucasus, who resisted to the imperial policies of Russian Empire until 1859.

+ For the details on the religious sects' history in Northern Caucasus **see**: (Kutlu, 1999: **67-77); (Tuğrul, 201**1: **42**44)

***** For more information on the spread of İslam to the Northern Caucasus and religious effect on the formation of political movements in the region **see**: (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985: 4-39); (Tarran, 1991: 103-117)

†† The conquest of the Caucasus refers to the Tsarist conquest by 1860s, and the re-conquest refers to the Bolshevik conquest of the region by the early 1920s.

‡‡ Cossacks are an eastern Slavic military community living in the south of Russia. For further detail **see**: (Pipes, 1995: 103)

caused tensions between the North Caucasians and the Cossacks. Throughout almost a century of war, due to Russian offensive the native population were pushed back to the mountainous area of the North Caucasus. When the war ended by 1864, Russians gave much of the fertile lands and the woodlands to the Cossacks. The conflicts between the Cossacks and the Mountaineers began in March 1917, even before the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. The chaotic environment of that year had caused the Chechen and Ingush attacks on Cossack villages. In return, the Cossacks began an intensive war against the Mountaineers. (Baddeley, 1999: 5-18, 32-34, 39-45)

In addition to their conflict against the Cossacks, the Mountaineers' struggle against Russian expansionism rose severely following the February Revolution. By the first days of March 1917, a number of elites from several ethnic groups of the Mountaineers met at Vladikavkaz (the centre of the Terek district) with the purpose of discussing the possible outcomes of the Revolution, the breakdown of the Tsarist rule and the possible effects of these developments on the North Caucasian population. The meeting resulted in the establishment of an organisation named "The Union of North Caucasian People," which laid the foundation of the North Caucasian Republic. However this organisation was not the only political institute in the region. In some parts of the Terek district such as Vladikavkaz, Grozny and Kuban, several 'unified committees' were formed by Chechen, Cossack and Bolshevik delegates. This Bolshevik attempt was a turning point that prevented a monopolist North Caucasian control over the region. The North Caucasians faced the same threat they lived through under the Tsarist rule; this time the Bolsheviks could manage to unite Cossacks with a pro-soviet Chechen group to block the counter-revolutionary activities, and most importantly the establishment of an independent North Caucasian state. (Berzeg, 2006a: 16-20)

In order to ease the conflict in the Terek Oblast, the creation of a government in the form of a Mountain Republic could have been a solution for the North Caucasians. Thus, by the first days of May 1917 the *First Mouaıtaineera' Congrese* met in Vladikavkaz. On September 20, 1917 the Second Congress met in the village of Andi. The main task of these congresses was first to establish a North Caucasian Republic despite the cultural and political differences, and secondly to establish a federal- democratic state structure within Russia. (Richmond, 2008: 105-106); (Tavkul, 1993: 54-56) But, these congresses soon faced counter attacks from the Bolshevik followers in the region. However, this is not to suggest that all the Mountaineers were against the Russian rule. In fact, some even expected help from the Russians. This could be seen in the case of the First Mountaineers' Congress, where there were pro-Russian and pro-Bolshevik people among the Mountaineers. While pro- Russians were prudent, the newly emerging communists (with Celal Korkmazov[§§ ***] at the head) sought to prevent the emergence of the Second Congress in Andi. (Kaflı. 1942: 134-135); (Kosok, 1956: 47) Yet, despite all the impediments, the Mountaineers managed to declare the independent North Caucasian Republic[1] by the end of 1917.

By early 1918 the power balances in the region started to turn to the Mountaineers' disadvantage. The Cossacks, the Volunteer army and the Allied powers entered into cooperation against both the newly founded Republic and the Bolsheviks. Therefore the North Caucasians had no other option but to side with the Ottoman Empire, which had always had close relations with the North Caucasus people. Since 1915 North Caucasian emigres had formed several committees and confederations in İstanbul, one of them being the 'North Caucasian Association,' *('Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti'')* established in the spring of 1918, and provided communication between the Mountaineers in the North Caucasus and the Ottoman government. (Kaflı, 1942; Çelikpala, 2002: 82-86) After the foundation of North Caucasian national assembly, the Bolshevik Government expressed its objection about Ottoman Empire's policies towards the Caucasus. However, both sides continued their operations in the region. The Ottoman government established an army composed of North Caucasian emigres in the empire, and called it the 'Army of İslam'. This Caucasian army was under the command of Enver Pasha's brother Nuri Pasha, and its ultimate aim was to provide help to the North Caucasian State. (Gökay, 1998: 38; Ailen, Muratoff; 468) In addition to Nuri Paşa, Yusuf îzzet Paşa††† was sent to the North Caucasian Republic

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* Kuban-Terek districs cover all the northern ramp of the Caucasian Mountains.

+ Celal Korkmazov (1879-1938) was the son of the founder of the Daghestan Socialist Party. He was a pro- Bolshevik. For more Information on Korkmazov **see: (Abdulkadırov, Gasanov, 2016:** 359-364)

*** The original name of the republic was "The Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus," it was also names as "The Mountaineers' Republic" (**Gorskaya Republika**).

††† Yusuf Izzet Pasha was a Circassian Ottoman, and one of the most prominent members of the North Caucasian Association.

t For more information on the Brest-Litovsk Peace Agreement **see: (Warth, 1956); (Schapiro, 1977); (Wheeler-**

as the representative of the Ottoman government. (Çelikpala, 2002: 95)

Before a peace treaty was signed in Brest-Litovsk? the Bolshevik forces had occupied Vladikavkaz with the help of Celal Korkmazov. After that attack the Bolshevik rule was extended to all around in the North Caucasus. (Kosok, 1956: 56; Cabağı, 1996: 83-84) During the meetings in Brest-Litovsk, The North Caucasian Association attempted to send delegates to the Brest-Litovsk under the supervision of the Ottoman Government. However, on the basis of Russian reaction the Ottomans immediately disclaimed their connection with these attempts. (Berzeg, 2006a:143-144) As a response, the Mountaineers refused to accept the authority of the Bolsheviks in the region, which meant that their struggle for sovereignty would become tougher. (The Times, 8 April, 1918: 8) On January 18, 1918 at the Peace Conference in Brest-Litovsk, Lev Trotsky and Ahmed Nesimi* held a meeting, where Trotsky complained about the organisation of the newly emerging independent governments in the Caucasus, and he declared that the Soviet government recognized none of them. Having witnessed Trotsky's threatening manner, Ahmed Nesimi informed Talat Pasha® on the Russian protest, and Talat Pasha delivered this message to Enver Pasha.‡‡‡ (Berzeg, 2006a: 130; Murgul, 2007: 117)

By March 1918, Lenin started a new effort for annexing the North Caucasus. He appointed the Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shahumyan as the head of the Baku Commune on March 1918, with the mission of Sovietising the Caucasus and fighting the counter-revolution in the region?[1'] At that time, the annexation policy of Lenin was continuing and with that purpose the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Bolsheviks went to Baku, and soon Baku became the centre of Sovietization of Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus. (Berzeg, 2006a: 121-122) The North Caucasian Republic refused to contribute to the configuration of a new constitution and objected the authority of the new Russian government over the North Caucasus. These attempts in a sense referred to a de-facto declaration of North Caucasian state's independence. (Berzeg, 2006a: 117-118) Following the Brest Litovsk peace treaty, a delegation under the leadership of Abdulmedjid Chermoy** and Haidar Bammat[5]® arrived at Trabzon in April, 1918, in order to unite against Russians and to found the Transcaucaisan Confederation, (The Times, February 18, 1919: 6) which was supposed to include the Central Committee of the Union of the Mountaineers as well as Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. The Ottomans were supposed not only to extent military help but also to have a mediator role between the Southern and the Northern Caucasus. Enver Pasha undertook this mission and organized a meeting with the participation of the two parties.§§§ (Kosok, 1956: 47); (Tavkul, 1993: 54-55); (Kaflı, 1942: 136)

On the other side, the independence movement of the Mountaineers took the attention of another power towards the Caucasus. The German government, which was concerned about the Porte's involvement in the North Caucasian affairs, decided to take part in the affairs of the region. The German primary plan was to pursue economic interests in the Caucasus. The natural resources and the strategic location of the area appealed to the Germans to such a high extent that they aimed at not leaving the Caucasus to the British and Ottoman hands? (Çelikpala, 2002: 91-92) Both the Porte and the British government were suspicious about the German ambitions in the North Caucasus. The Times wrote, "the German newspapers on the East are paying the Russian Moslems

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Bennett, 1940); (Kılıç, 1998)

i At the Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference, Lev Trotsky was the Soviet representative and Ahmet Nesimi was the Ottoman representative.

[5] Talat Pasha was one of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Ottoman Empire, and served as the Minister of Interior during the First World War.

‡‡‡ Enver Pahsa served as the Minister in War and the Commander-in Chief of the Ottoman Army during the First World War. He was also one of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress. He was effective in Ottoman **Empire's entrance to the First World War on the side of Central Powers.**

tt For further detail on the Azerbaidjan commune **see:** (Ibrahimova, 2008).

** Abdulmedjid Chermoy is the leader of the National-Liberation movement of the Peoples of the North Caucasus and the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Union of the Peoples of the North Caucasus (the North Caucasian Republic).

[55] Haidar Bammat is the leader of the National-Liberation movement of the Peoplesof the North Caucasus and the Foreign Minister of the North Caucasian Republic.

§§§ For the Transcaucasian Confederation **see:** (Slye, 2020); (Jane, 2018); **(Çolak, 2014).**

t To read more on German policies towards the Caucasus during the First World War **see:** (Fischer, 1967).

* General Kress von Kressenstein was a German General who assisted the Ottoman Army during the World War One.

[5] The Volunteer Army was an anti-Bolshevik army who fought in the southern part of Russia during the Civil War of 1918-1920.

great attention, but it may be doubted whether their sympathy with the present movement is sincere." (The Times, 7 January 1918: 13) The newspapers in Istanbul had already called on the Ottoman government to help North Caucasians. Moreover, the Times dated 10 September stated that the region had utmost importance for the Ottomans to safeguard their frontiers in the East, and the Porte was concerned about the Germans' plan to destroy the confidence that the Ottomans had acquired in the region. (The Times, September, 10, 1918: 5) In this atmosphere the North Caucasian Republic was declared on 11 May 1918. After this declaration the Bolshevik government sent a diplomatic note on 30 May 1918, stating that it did not recognize the Mountaineer government, and also stated their concerns about Alliance's recognition of this government. After this declaration the Mountaineers turned to the great powers to ask help against the Bolshevik occupation of the region. The Bolsheviks captured the Petrovsk and began to move to Temir Khan Shura, the capital city of the North Caucasian Republic. (Çelikpala, 2002: 89-93)

On 12 May 1918 the North Caucasian Republic, as usual, turned to the Ottoman government for military help against the Bolshevik troops. The Ottoman Empire sent its forces to the area. (Çelikpala, 2002: 94) On June 4, 1918 a peace treaty was signed in Batumi, between the North Caucasian Republic and the Ottoman Empire. According to this treaty, there would be a continuous peace between the two parties, and the Ottoman government would support the North Caucasians militarily whenever needed. (Kurat, 1990: 662-674); (Kosok, 1956: 58-59) However, by that time, the North Caucasian State appealed also to the German Republic for help. The ambassador of the German Republic in Istanbul, Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff, delivered this appeal to his government on June 12, 1918. (Berzeg, 2006a: 228) Furthermore, on June 28, 1918 the head of the North Caucasian State Abdulmecid Chermoy met with General Kress von Kressenstein, and made clear that although they asked for both the Ottoman and German help, they had no intention to accept the Ottoman protectorate in the region. Chermoy stressed that if the Germans failed to help the Mountaineers, the North Caucasian Government would have no alternative but to turn their face to Britain for help. After that confession, the German General first accepted to help the North Caucasians, but soon revoked his promise, as he realized that such assistance would put the German government in a difficult position in the region. (Berzeg, 2006a: 239)

Another player of the power game in the region was the Volunteer Army with the British support. By the beginning of 1918 the Volunteer Army[5] began to assume an active role in the region. On 13 April after the death of General Lavr Kornilov[****], General Anton Denikin took the command of the Volunteer Army. Denikin, whom General Mikhael Alekseev fully trusted, was aware of the fact that the Red troops were better equipped and superior in number compared to the White Army. (Kenez, 1971: 115-118) The Cossacks, who were composed of a large number of anti-Bolshevik combatants in the south and east, were supporting the White Army of Denikin and Admiral Kolchak[††††] (Rieber, 1988: 36)

Concerned with the German and Ottoman presence in the North Caucasus The British government decided to support the anti-Bolshevik groups in the region. (Ainsworth, 1991: 621) An article in the Times dated 7 January 1918 suggested: "it is highly possible that during the present anarchy the Moslem groups... are severally falling away, and a belated attempt to restore strong government may drive them out of the Russian orbit altogether. This is the course of events to which the Turks and Germans look forward, for it opens the way for a scheme of their own..." plans in the North Caucasus. (The Times, 7 January 1918: 13) The Russian ex-officer Colonel Lazar Bicherakhov, who was in the Volunteer Army, became the main actor that the British government contacted in the Caucasus. The North Caucasian leaders, chiefly Pshimaho Kotse (Kosok), Abdulmejid Chermoev and Vassan Girey Jabagiev were in close contact with the Ottoman authorities and with Yusuf İzzet Pasha. As a result of all their endeavours and the success of the Army of Islam, a crucial strategic territory, Derbent was captured on 6 October 1918. On the other hand, Bicherakhov's troops under General V. M. Thomson's command went to Baku by October 1918, with the aim of liquidating any Ottoman and German forces left in the Caucasus. By the end of the October, all the Ottoman military personnel left the region. The North Caucasian authorities contacted the British representatives for asking their help against a conquest of the

[****] Lavr Kornilov was the General of the Russian Imperial Army (the White Army) in the First World War. He took part in the Volunteer Army during the Russian Civil War, together with the other White Army Generals Mikhail Alekseev, Anton Denikin and Pyotr Wrangel.

[††††] Alexander Kolchak is the Russian naval commander and leader of the anti-revolutionary White forces, who fought against the Red Army during the Russian Civil War.

t For further detail on the British mission in the Caucasus during the First World War see: (Lemon, 2015)

region by the Red Army. (Kosok, 1956: 50)

On 26 November 1918, a delegation of the Northern Caucasian government went to Baku to meet with the British General William Thomson, the commander of a British force at Baku. The aim of the delegation was to ask General Thomson for help against a re-conquest of the region by the Bolsheviks? In his response letter dated 27 November 1918, the British General William Thomson informed the delegation that the question of independence would be resolved later; until that date the Northern Caucasian Republic would have the opportunity to govern itself on the condition of removing all the remaining Ottoman and German troops from the area. (Berzeg, 2006a: 360-361; Kosok, 1956: 58-59) Following the provisions of the armistice the Ottoman units also left the Northern Caucasus. (The Times, January, 10, 1919: 8; The Times, 11 November 1919: 18) Moreover, in February 1919, in a personal visit to the General Thomson in Baku, the President of the Northern Caucasian government requested to stop the advance of Denikin's White army. However, although Thomson made the promise, it did not prove possible to use his cards in favour of the Mountaineers. (Berzeg, 2006b: 51) In November 1919, in a session of the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for War Sir W. Churchill stated that the British government's only representative in the region was acting with General Denikin. (The Times, 12 November 1919: 18) Although the British government seemed to protect the rights of the Mountaineers' Republic, in fact it aimed at removing the Ottoman and German forces from the region. While accusing Germany of being interested only in the strategic location and the natural resources of the area, Britain was also interested in the oil reserves in the North Caucasus. (The Times January 16, 1918:13)

On November 1919, a parliamentary discussion on the British policies in the North Caucasus revealed important facts. Some parliamentarians were suspicious that the British government had overlooked the invasion of the North Caucasus territory by the Volunteer army under Denikin, They also raised concerns over "whether charges of murder, violation of women, and defiling of mosques had been brought against these volunteer troops; and what steps it was proposed to take to test the truth of these allegations and to make certain that British munitions were not being used to maltreat- the people of Northern Caucasia." But the representatives of the British government tried to avoid giving clear answers to these questions by holding the Ottomans, Germans and Bolsheviks responsible for the unease in the region. (The Times, 12 November 1919, 18)

The White army, under Denikin's command, continued to move in the North Caucasus, but faced the resistance of the Kabardins, Ossetins and Ingushs. Denikin stated in his memories 'Ocherki russkoi smutty' (Denikin, 1991) that "The Northern Caucasus, as before, showed itself to be a boiling cauldron. Chechnya and Daghestan became a new arena of military action that diverted large forces." (Kosok, 1956: 61) Indeed, although the Whites and Reds agreed by the Novocherkassk agreement on not entering the North Caucasian region and recognizing their independence, both violated the agreement. As a result, while General Denikin's army was being expelled from the North Caucasus the Red Army started to take its place. (Kosok, 1956: 60-61)

By the end of 1918 the independence of the North Caucasian Republic was under the threat of both the Bolshevik and the Tsarist armies. The British government was aiming at restoring the Tsarist rule in the region, thus giving support to the White Generals. By that time the Mountaineers' Republic had not yet established a functioning bureaucratic cadre within the Republic. In December 1918 Pshimaho Kotse (Kosok) became the new President of the Republic, after the resignation of Chermoy. Within a month General Denikin attacked the region. President Kosok asked help from the British General Thomson once again, this time against the Denikin army. However the British government continued to support the White Army under the command of Denikin. (Kosok, 1956: 53), (The Times, 10 May 1919: 11) (Çelikpala, 2002: 104-106) By April 1919 the Kosok government was held responsible for the failure and was replaced by the government of General Mikhail Halilov. The British government directed General Halilov to agree with the proposition of Denikin, which finally ended with the disintegration of the North Caucasian Mountaineer Republic. The Republic was divided into four parts. The British administration had long hoped that Wrangel's Army would finally defeat the Bolsheviks. (The Times, August 28, 1920: 10; The Times, 1 September 1920: 9) However, after the disintegration the Bolsheviks managed to turn the situation to their own advantage. Indeed the Mountaineers attempted once more to form a unified state, after the initiatives of Celal Korkmazov, Haydar Bammat and Ali Khan Kantemir. But by February 1920, the Red army took the region under control liquidating General Denikin's Army and ending this second attempt at founding a North Caucasian State. (Çelikpala, 2002: 107-113)

4. CONCLUSION

Initially the Tsarist and then the Bolshevik governments sought to halt the rising nationalism on the

North Caucasian side. Actually the Tsarist policy towards nationalities was mainly conservative. Principally, Russian officers resisted any radical reformulations of nationalism. So the army leadership was also conservative in their short-term goals, but in fact in their long-term objectives they were assimilative. In this respect, there was continuity between the Tsarist and Soviet periods. The Bolshevik policies of ethnicity, actually had their roots in Tsarist governance strategies. (Vitarbo, 2007: 700-701) This policy can clearly be observed in Lenin's efforts to annex the North Caucasus. In March 1918, Lenin made a step to fight against counterrevolutionary attempts and transformed Baku into the centre of Sovietisation of Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus.

The Soviet System's main objective was to encourage the plurality of nations rather than the nation- state model. "The Bolsheviks attempted to fuse the nationalists' demand for national territory, culture, language, and elites with the socialists' demand for an economically and politically unitary state." (Martin, 2001: 15) In the mid nineteenth century after imam Shamil's capture by Russian forces in 1859, many North Caucasians immigrated to the Ottoman Empire. Although the North Caucasian people assumed the status of minority in the region, beginning from the second half of the nineteenth century they still developed a sense of nationality. By the rise of the idea of ghazawat the Mountaineers entered into a period of consolidation by the formation of The Union of North Caucasian People. This contributed to the rise of their national consciousness. By the February Revolution of 1917, the nationalist demands became more vocal among Caucasian people (both Northern and the Southern), and their anti-Russian/ anti-Bolshevik feelings became more obvious. From then on, the Bolsheviks saw the approaching threat in the southern Russia. But, this was obviously not the sole threat that they faced. The emergence of the Volunteer Army in the Southern Russia and the support that they received from the European powers, were definitely as threatening as the Mountaineers' independence movement. Because the Bolsheviks did not consider the Ottoman aid to the North Caucasus as threatening as the European and the White Army involvement in the region, they contented themselves protesting the Ottoman govemment's supportto the Mountaineers, and paid more attention to their struggle with the Europeans and Denikin's Army.

Furthermore, the Bolshevik tactics to take the North Caucasus under control were well-thought. It should be admitted that what brought success to the Bolsheviks in the North Caucasus was their politico-military organisation and their policy to serve the interests of the political elites of the region. The formation of unified committees of Chechens, Cossacks and Bolshevik forces at the Terek district and collaboration with the Bolshevik sympathizers as Celal Korkmazov and Stepan Shahumyan can be considered as examples of this policy.

Throughout the centuries, the Mountaineers did not manage to establish an independent North Caucasian State. The North Caucasians had always been in struggle with the invaders due their specific geographic location. During the Tsarist period, the struggle was against the imperial army and the Cossacks, which were used by the Russians. Later, as they hoped for independence after the overthrow of the Tsar, they continued their fight against the Bolsheviks. In the meantime, the Mountaineers asked for the Ottoman help. However, the War conditions and the military weakness of the Porte prevented a consistent long-term support from the Ottomans to the North Caucasus. The arrival of the European forces in the scene changed the situation yet again. Considering the difficult situation of the Ottomans in the region, the North Caucasians first set their hopes on the German govemment and then on the British govemment. However, when the British allied with Denikin's White Army, the Mountaineers were left without support once again. From then on the establishment of a North Caucasian State entered into a new stage, as things were getting complicated further. Finally, when the General Denikin left Russia in 1920, it became apparent that neither the Ottomans nor the German and British governments would or could do more to support the Mountaineers' struggle for independence. Considering the continuity of nationalist aspirations in the Tsarist and Bolshevik governments, the North Caucasian Republic was condemned to live under Russian rule. Actually, the British, German or Ottoman support to the Mountaineers were nothing but attempts to keep a foothold in the region in case the Bolsheviks would be expelled from there. The North Caucasian independence movement took place against the background of the great powers' struggle in the Caucasus in the early twentieth century. In this, the Mountaineers were vulnerable and helpless pawns rather than actors shaping and directing the events.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç

Bu çalışma, 1917-1920 yıllan arasında, Kuzey Kafkasya bağımsızlık hareketine büyük güçler arası rekabetin bölgedeki yansımalarının rolünü araştırmaktadır. Mevcut literatürde Kuzey KafkasyalIların bağımsızlık mücadelesi kapsamında belirli olayların ve gelişmelerin bağımsız hareketinin seyrine nasıl etki ettiği mercek altma almırken, Osmanlı devleti, Almanya ve İngiltere'nin kendi aralarındaki mücadelenin Kuzey KafkasyalIların bağımsızlık mücadelesine etkileri ve bunun sonuçlarını geniş bir perspektiften ele alan çalışmalar yok denecek kadar azdır. Bu çalışmada, bölgedeki büyük güçler arasındaki ilişkiler ve yerel aktörlerin de etkisiyle Kuzey KafkasyalIların hangi süreçlerden geçerek bağımsızlıklarını kazandıkları ve yine hangi olayların ve politikaların etkisiyle bağımsızlıklarını tekrar kaybettikleri ortaya konmaktadır. Ayrıca, 1917-1920 arasındaki dönemde Kuzey Kafkasya'daki dağlı halkların Rusya'ya karşı mücadelesinin, hangi kültürel ve sosyal tarihi arka planda cereyan ettiği de çalışmada analiz edilmektedir.

Metodoloji

Bu çalışma, İngilizce, Türkçe ve Rusça dillerindeki ikincil kaynaklar ile İngiliz *The Times* gazetesi arşivinden faydalanılarak hazırlanmıştır. Çalışmada seçilen ikincil kaynakların bir kısmı Yirminci Yüzyılın başmda yaşamış olan ve dönemin olaylarına tanıklık etmiş ve detaylıca kaleme almış şahısların eserleridir. Bunun yanı sıra, aslen Kuzey Kafkasya kökenli olan ve Kuzey Kafkasya'ya dair tarihsel süreci yakından takip etme ve kaleme alma fırsatı bulunan araştırmacıların eserlerinden de faydalanılmıştır.

Çalışmanın ana kaynakçalarından biri The *Times* gazetesinin ilgili dönemi kapsayan arşividir. 1917-1920 yılları arası Kuzey Kafkas halklarının bağımsızlıkları için verdikleri mücadelenin en yoğun dönemidir. Aynı zamanda, bu tarihler "Kuzey Kafkasya Dağlı Cumhuriyeti"nin kuruluş ve sona eriş tarihlerini kapsamaktadır. Bu sebeple, çalışmada The *Times* gazetesinin 1917-1920 yılları arasında yayınlanan sayıları taranarak Kuzey Kafkasya ve büyük güçler mücadelesi eksenindeki haberler mercek altma alınmıştır. Bu haberlerde özellikle Almanya'nın Kuzey Kafkasya politikası, Osmanh împaratorluğu'nun bölgeye yaptığı yardımlar ve bölgede izlediği siyaset, İngiltere'nin Beyaz Orduya verdiği destek, İngiliz hükümetinin Kuzey Kafkasya halklarının mücadelesini nasıl değerlendirdiği gibi konular öne çıkmaktadır. Bu haberlerin analizi sonucu elde edilen bulgulara makalede yer verilmiştir.

Bulgular

Bu çalışmayla Kuzey Kafkasya'nın bağımsızlık mücadelesine etki eden faktörler ele alınmaya çalışılmış ve büyük güçlerin bölgedeki varlığının bu bağımsızlık mücadelesi üzerindeki etkilerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu kapsamda, 1917 yılında Rusya İmparatorluğu'nda meydana gelen Bolşevik İhtilali sonucu Rus Çarlık rejiminin sona ermesiyle başlayan yeni dönemde, Kuzey Kafkasya halklarının yeni güç mücadelelerinin ortasında kaldıkları anlaşılmaktadır. Bu yeni dönemde, Bolşevik kuvvetlerinin Çarlık Rusyası'ndan beri süregelen baskıcı rejimi devam ettirme eğiliminde olduğu ve bu sebeple Dağlıların bağımsızlık mücadelesinin zorlu bir sürece girdiği görülmektedir. 1917 yılında Kuzey KafkasyalI bir grup elit bir araya gelerek Kuzey Kafkasya Halkaları Birliğini kurmayı kararlaştırmıştır. Bu amaçla 1917 yılında Vladikavkaz ve Andi'de iki kongre toplanmıştır. Bolşeviklerin tüm müdahalesine rağmen Kuzey Kafkasya Dağlı Cumhuriyeti 1918 yılında kurulmuştur. Fakat kurulan Cumhuriyet 1918 ve 1919 yıllarında gerek Bolşeviklerle gerekse Beyaz Orduyla olan mücadeleleri sırasında büyük güçlerden yardım istemek durumunda kalmıştır. Büyük güçlerin bu yardım çağrışma verdiği karşılıklar dikkate alındığında Kuzey Kafkasyahlar için en büyük desteğin Osmanlı İmparatorluğundan geldiği anlaşılmaktadır. 1918'de Osmanlı împaratorluğu'nun bölgeye yolladığı Kafkas İslam Ordusu bu çerçeve Dağlıların mücadelesine önemli katkı sağlamıştır. 1918-1919 yılları arasında Almanya'nın bölgedeki doğal kaynaklardan ve bölgenin stratejik konumundan faydalanmak için Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti temsilcilerine yardım sözü verdiği görülmektedir. Aynı şekilde İngiltere'nin de bölgedeki doğal kaynaklarla ilgilenmekle birlikte asıl amacının Bolşevik kuvvetleriyle mücadelede General Denikin'in ordusuna destek sağlamak olduğu görülmektedir. Bunun yanında, Denikin'in ordusunun Kuzey Kafkasya'da girdiği mücadeleye direnen Dağlıların yardım çağrılarının İngiliz hükümeti tarafından geri planda tutulduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Yirminci yüzyılın başlarında, Kuzey KafkasyalI halklar uluslararası ve bölgesel bir güç mücadelesinin ortasında kalmıştır. Çarlık Rusya'sı/Beyaz Ordu, Bolşevikler, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Almanya ve İngiltere'yi

içeren bu uluslararası mücadele ortamında, Kuzey Kafkasya halkları bağımsız bir Kuzey Kafkasya devleti kurmak amacıyla farklı dönemlerde farklı güçlerden yardım istemişlerdir. 1917-1920 yıllan arasında Dağlı halklar diye de anılan Kuzey Kafkasyalılann bu mücadelesi, Çarlık ordusunun, Bolşeviklerin, İngiltere'nin, Almanya'nın ve Osmanlı devletinin Kafkasya'da bir güç unsuru olarak yerlerini alma arzularıyla şekillenmiştir. Kuzey KafkasyalIlar 1917-1920 yılları arasında bağımsız birleşik bir cumhuriyet kurmak için büyük devletlerden umduklan yardımı alamamışlardır. Beyaz Ordu'nun Rusya topraklarından tasfiye edilmesiyle, Kuzey KafkasyalIlar bölgede Bolşeviklerle karşı karşıya gelmişlerdir. Bolşevikler ise Çarlık Politikalarının bir devamı olarak Kuzey Kafkasya'yı baskıcı bir yönetim altmda tutmak gayretini sürdürmüşlerdir. Her ne kadar Dağlılara yardım sözü vermiş olsa da, Almanya'nın asıl amacı Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve İngiltere'ye bölgenin hakimiyetini bırakmamaktır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ise kendi sınır güvenliği için stratejik önemi haiz olan Kuzey Kafkasya bölgesinde 1917-1919 yılları arası bir güç olarak yer almış olsa da içinde bulunduğu savaş koşullarında bölgenin bağımsızlık mücadelesi için istikrarlı bir destek sağlayamamıştır. İngiltere ise 1917-1920 arası dönemde Beyaz ordunun Bolşeviklere karşı mücadelesine odaklanmış ve tüm desteğini Denikin ordusuna vermiştir. Kuzey Kafkasya Dağlı Cumhuriyeti temsilcilerinin Beyaz Ordunun bölgedeki baskısma karşı yardım çağrılarına destek sözü veren İngiltere, bu sözü tutmamış günün sonunda bu bölgedeki mücadelenin gidişatmı Beyaz Ordu generallerinin inisiyatifine bırakmıştır.