CAUCASIAN UNION PARTY AND ITS VIEWS ON AZERBAIJAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The Caucasus Mountains are generally considered as in both Europe and Asia, located from the end point of Dnieper, Don and Volga Rivers toward the South to the high plateaus of Anatolia, extending to Baghdad and Tehran and then from the Gulf of Iran toward Indian Ocean where the intersection of the old way exists. That is, the Caucasus is a region at the border of Europe and Asia, situated between the Black and the Caspian Seas.

The Caucasus has a strategic position from Central Asia to Europe, following a significant geopolitical path from Black sea to the Mediterranean via the Straits. On the other hand the Caucasus Mountains is one of the world's largest mountains which is extending within the boundaries of the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. The Caucasus Mountains also extends From the northeast coast of the Black Sea, to the west coast of the Caspian Sea. The Mountains Which is considered the natural boundary between Europe and Asia and covers an area of approximately 400,000 km².

On May 28 Azerbaijan had declared its independence. The main apparatus of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan which was temporarily located in Gence was moved to Baku in September 1918. In this period, Caucasian Union Party was established secretly in the Caucasus in the vicinity of Gokçay, and second its activities seem to have taken place on 30 January 1918. Caucasian Union and Progress Party and Union Party which had a special position in the development of the political and cultural life as a whole in Azerbaijan.

In this paper, we have generally used articles quoted from Ittihad newspaper which was printed by Ittihad Party. This paper basically examines Caucasian Union Party and Its views on Azerbaijan foreign policy in the early 20th century on empirical grounds.

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ÖZET


Anahtar Kelimeler: Kafkasya, Azerbaycan, Dış Politika, Kafkas İttihat Fırkası, 20. Yüzyıl, Uluslararası İlişkiler

Introduction

Since the end of the 19th century, national awakening had initially emerged among Turks in Tsarist Russia and one of the most effective regions of this awakening was of Azerbaijan. Economic and social prosperity which started with the discovery of oil, and Westerners who came to the region had created a new modernization movement in Baku and Gence.

Caucasian Union Party was established secretly in the Caucasus in the vicinity of Gokcay, and second its activities seem to have taken place on 30 January 1918. The most interesting characteristic of the Caucasian Union Party may be associated with its programme (Atı̇nur, 2006:39-58).
Caucasian Union Party and Its views on Azerbaijan Foreign Policy

The expressions under title such “Meramnâme” as a general title in the programme seem to have reflected the effects of Turkey. According to this, Muslims in Caucasus must have been annexed to Turkey, claiming that all Turks in the world must have gathered together under the leadership of Turkey, and also that all Muslims in the world must have gained their freedom, must have founded a state apparatus, must have incorporated around the Caliph against the outside world. With Russia which was the most important and the closest neighbour of Turkey, the would be state, that was supposed to have been established, must have coexisted as friends.

According to these expressions, the intentions of the programme were aimed at the unity of the Turkish under a single common banner, which first had emerged with Hüseyinzâde’s ideas, later formulated by the Ottoman thinker Ziya Gokalp. There were some important factors related to the re-emergence of such ideas: elegantly balances in the region of power favouring Russia as a communist country. The second factor that was linked with an existing writing and reading language was barely Turkey’s daily used language called Turkish. This is an example showing how the tendency under the effectiveness of Turkey’s Turkish language remains alive in Azerbaijan since 1905. The situational circumstances of Islamic world were described shortly. In Turkey as education was significantly valued, the question of the investment, development and land issues had had an important place in the programme. (About Caucasian Union Party and Relations with Union and Progress Party in Turkey you can see at: Atnur, 2006:39-58)

In respect with the unions vision over foreign policy of Azerbaijan, in a paper of union’s newspaper on 11 March 1920, Mr. Naci Said that (Ittihad, 21–11 March 1920:3):

“Policy carried out by the government is going forward rather flabby and reluctantly.”

He then claims that the discriminative policy of the Western Powers against the Turkish and Islamic world enforced those countries to side with the Soviet Russia. He readily says:

“With any evidence it may not be seen that the government took a strongly well defined step in this matter. The policy, being carried out in line with European capitalist states, engraves criticism under all conditions. In that case, one may raise the following question as to whether the national and religious movements had been pushed toward the communist side: What kind of common policies did Turkish-Islamic State share with European states in a way that those policies of the Western states consist of merely struggling to be destroying Turkish-Islamic States, breaking up and dispersing Muslim States which seems to have been in favour of the newly emerged communist Russia in the final analysis.” (Ibid)

In that respect he did not avoid criticizing the snobbish, oppressive, humiliating western attitudes toward the Turkish and Islamic world. He successfully exposes how the western powers gradually came to experience a deep pleasure linked to the violent exploitation and manipulation of Muslims on the basis of deliberate misjudgements:

“Today’s victorious Western countries get used to claiming their absolute rightfulness. But later they became oppressive themselves. Telling that they would provide Muslim societies with their rights, they were simply trying to mistake nations that have already lost their rights. Entente states were not in a sincere attempt of trying to deliver their promises given to the world nations during the period of the war. What they were intent to do had been to impose their imperialist sovereignty and their capitalist ideas upon the small and weak nations. They take the small and weak countries under the political, cultural and economic influence of their sovereignty. In this way they try to make those states weak extremely. Every act of English, French, American and Italian states verify our opinions.” (Ibid)
He also clearly tries to describe how Islamic countries had been willing to stand for the
universal democratic values including basic human right issues. He then goes on to disclose the
barbaric treatment of Muslims by the hands of the Westerns themselves:

‘‘In Caucasus; something made by British people to Dagistan, Kars and Nahcivan nations are
clear.

Injustice committed by Entente states against Turkish Government about Ottoman Empire
was to contradict with mankind values and liberal democracy. Entente states carry out their policy
as the weak and small nations have had to use their weapons and have had to enter bloody conflicts
in protecting their rights and independence, namely sovereignty.

Farmers in Izmir, Adana, Maras and in the rest of the Ottoman Empire came under
injustice, oppression of the French and British because of Entente States’ policy. Millions of
Ottoman citizens had been destroyed due to their reckless and relentless policy.

Thousands of innocent farmers of Kars and Nahcivan had been subjected to the unfair
treatment of the Armenian government under the economic and political control of Entente states.

In spite of the struggle and resistance performed by Dagistan citizens to become
independent, they got murdered under the iron boot of the Denikin Kazakhs that Entente states
feverishly supported and approved. The voices of the Egyptian and the Indian were heard across
the world but they could not afford to attain the fairness of Entente states.

What could one expect from them as long as the opinions of victorious countries about East
and Muslim community effectively have been produced under historically deep rooted prejudices?
Could one with any positive expectation and interest advocate the Western policy so that all sorts
of agreement with them could have been satisfactorily reached? But, in that context there is no sign
marking an expected point in the contents of their policy.

Due to this reason, one has had to find different solutions alternative to the expectation of
the western states to protect one self and Muslim community against such injustice and cruelty
unleashed. One has had to find a different supporter for themselves. There has occurred a great
power that has achieved to take under control of European Imperialists and Western Capitalists
disrespecting the right of the poor.

This power is a powerful and strong alliance of all democrats.

See also our foreign polic become allied with that power. To lean against policy of Entente
states which are deceptive and getting hard on weaks; we should benefit from British, Russian
including all Democrats’ power.” (Ibid)

His desire for universal democratic rights was basically rather focused on the concept of
national self determination despite accepting the conditional dependency on the Russian
communist over the foreign affairs. His conditional political submission to the Russian communists
is more clearly expressed as follows:

‘‘To become, as a nation, a weak state among the powerful ones, its existence and
soverignty depends on power of democrats. Therefore, the foreign policy of the government should
be far away from slackness and hesitation. It should determine a healthy way for itself. The
government should think well about its political position from which that takes its own legitimacy
for power. In that case, our thinking should be focused on the foreign policy of our country and on
the way that has been followed by the democrats of the world.
Absolutely one of the world’s democrats that we want to ally with are of the democrats of Russia. They have combated tsar supporters and emperor generals who have tried to domicile imperialism by tsardom despotism.

In this matter, Russia’s democracy and our interests are identical. We are of the same opinion as them. The policy is carried out by the leaders of Russian democracy is appropriate for our benefits. Their promises to world nations are also our desires. Because of this jointure of these two parts is possible in all condition. It is possible that politic committees of each party will be unanimous in foreign policy.

But the Russians should happen to be proving their sincerity to us by their deeds which speak louder than words. Their politic committee as a leader of the Russians should ensure that we are also inside this family and that we will have all rights of democracy. Otherwise they should guarantee that Azerbaijan’s democrats are able to experience freedom including all Muslim democrats in their internal affairs and that no one must be justified in interfering with their internal affairs. Hence no power else should be given permission in affecting the decision making process of our foreign policy at the same time.” (Ibid)

He explicitly went on to disclose the historical weakness of Muslim political movements. He implicitly compares and contrasts Armenian’s unjust political ambitions and their strength with that of Muslims, highlighting the achievement of Armenian nationals at the expence of Muslims who seems to have been unable to have the integrity of the territory they have been inhabiting throughout centuries in South Cacusia recognised by both internal and external forces. İn that case he claims that:

“Russia’s democrats should account for well, taking into account these manifestations of Azerbaijan’s democrats. Their political leaders should accept and announce urgently that taking these rightful and democratic manifestations of Azerbaijan’s democrats seriously is at stake.” (Ittihad, 21–11 February 1920: 3).

In accordance with the union’s vision about Zengizur issue in a paper of union’s newspaper on 12st February 1920 the following was published as an editorial article (Ittihad, 19–12 February 1920):

“As a matter of fact, our government is acting quite neglectful and cowardly upon the problem of Zengizur. Zengizur is the heart of Azerbaijan. Armenia’s attaching importance to the Zengizur is also not less than we do.

Making use of our laziness and cowardice, Armenian government has been struggling to do its best to obtain Zengizur on all occasions at any cost.

In this issue, Armenian government has been materalizing a well plotted nationalistic plan. It is for sure that, If we continue with our sluggish and timid attitude, Armenian government seems to easily achieve their plan, which targets the following aims:

1. Temporising the Azerbaijan government with formal-diplomatic quibbles
2. Slandering and fussing in the meetings to influence European and Georgian representatives.
3. Simultaneously, arming and mobilizing the regular and irregular Armenian forces and driving them toward Zengizur."

The Armenian invasion of Karabag seems to have made any solution impracticable in the region. Moreover, the exodus of thousands of Muslim civilians in the wake of the Armenian

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military offensive was already a fact which was not created by any agreements. In that sense he appeals to the Russian communists to allow Muslims to obtain formal regional recognition and bury forever the assaults of the Armenian. Subsequently he hopelessly and desperately turns his face to the Russian communists in order that Karabag is restored to Azerbaijan: (Ibid)

“Thereby, once sufficient military build-up is deployed in Zengizur, starting up an incursion and rapid invasion of Zengizur and Cebrail territories, together with Karabagh have been planned to complete.

Armenian government’s plan for Azerbaijan briefly aims to separate Nahcevan from Azerbaijan by capturing the Zengizur, Karabagh and Cebrail and Culfa Railroad.

Recently, Armenian Government is implementing this plan without losing time.

Up to now, we have tried to undercover and address plainly this plan; however, the real matter is that our government must be aware of it and taking action right away accordingly.

Members of the Armenian Government, mainly the Hatisof, declaring to the world as well as to us that he formally has not acquainted with the current developments in Zengizur.

Even to give us the impression that they are really unaware of the conjuncture, what they intend to do is actually asking us for the further information about the territory.

However, Hatisof, who is telling us and to the whole world that he is not aware of the current developments in Zengizur, after his furious and fierce speeches, let many of his troops to march Zengizur from Erevan via the route of Nuvo Bayezit within the last week of January.

According to some reliable sources we have reached out, the Armenian government seems to have succeeded in deploying about 12,000 regular volunteer soldiers in the volatile region concerned.

These Armenian military troops are lead by the commanders such as General Silikof, renowned for slaughtering Muslim residents of Novu Bayezit or Armenian national heroes Dirov and Deli Kazar, who razed Muslim populated Surmeli.

From Erevan to Zengizor, a well designed road for automobiles has been built up by Armenian government despite the inappropriately rough geographical conditions.

Armenian interests in the Zengizur have been proven by the presence of the Armenian armed forces in Zengizur. While the General Silikof is busy with the military organization, Dirov and Deli Kazar are transferring new troops and military equipments by vehicles from Erevan to Zengizor.

What has been our government planning against all these manoeuvres of the Armenian government? Are we going to be aware of all these after we violently get stabbed in the back?” (Ibid)

We can be able to discover the essential nature of the party’s point of view about world politics and its historical perspective in another article of the İttihad. In that article he describes how Muslims politically and culturally ended up with giving in to the will and desire of the Western Powers. His lamentations extend to the once gained glory days of successive Muslim civilizations followed by the long periods of dark ages which blackout and shake up the integrity and identity of Muslims constantly being disintegrated. His lamentations also goes further to a fact that no Muslim power in sight might have been able to gain momentum leading to the emancipation of the Muslim world:
“Once in the past, in the eras of Emevid, Abbasid, Fatimid and the Early Islam Caliphs Muslims were the main leading and influential power of the World.

Prior to this, Uyghur, Gokturk, Hun, Eftalit, Iskit, Massaget, Yaçinak, Siyenpi, Oguzs, Altays, Cengizs, Khazars; and also afterwards, Timurid, Harezmid, Seljuk and Ottoman became the main unitive powers of the World.

Likewise the Abbasids’ period, there had been in the past times during which it had been possible to wave the flag of the Islam freely under the power of the Turkish heroes.

Once it was Arabs holding the flag of Islam in the political arena and then being followed by the Turks.

During these periods there was a profound and substantial solidarity between these two powers, namely Turks and Arabs; they had been holding and glorifying the flag of Islam influentially across the world.

This influence was emerging from the “Union” of these two big powers and their mutual trust and sincere relations.

But afterwards, because of many inducements, Muslim countries were hampered to be able to accommodate and follow the changing world dominantly and eventually they lost their advantageous position to and had been replaced by their traditional rivals.

Such a negative atmosphere together with the trauma of the economical, technological and sociological defeats brought about a sort of process of alienation and estrangement within the every rank of the Islamic societies.

Great Turkic and Islamic states got weakened and lost their independence. They lost their dominant strong and solid positions in world politics and were subsequently subjected to the mandate by European states. Imperialist and capitalist European states started to be effective on the intellectuals and ideological activities of the Turkish and Muslim democrat elites.

The weak governments of the Turkish and Muslim democrats have been abolished by the Imperialist European states with different tricks and then, they successfully made them buckle down to capitalist hegemony. Because, the independent existence of these Turkish and Muslim states was, to the great extend, upsetting their various agendas.

It has happened such as Netherland has done to the Cava Muslims,

It has happened such as the French have done in Morocco, Algeria, Tonus and Madagascar,

It has happened such as the Russian aristocrats have done to Turks and Tatars of Russia.

Because of the weakness and lack of administration, Turkish states, which have very rich underground or aboveground natural resources, fell into the hands of European countries one by one. Turkish and Muslim democrats, who are the real owners of these inherited Turkish states, are turned into economic materials which can be bought and sold out like slaves in the Antiquity by these European aristocrats.” (Ibid)

At this point one may claim that his article is an indicative of the resentment of the Turkish and Muslims as a whole against the Western powers. His article seems to have been inspired under some certain circumstances in which intervention by the Western countries into the affairs of Russia already began. And the aim of such intervention was to aid the anti-communist elements in Russia to establish themselves in order to keep Russia in the war on the side of the Allies. Their intention in the final analysis was to carry on rooting out the supportive elements of
the Ottoman among Muslims on Russia’s southern periphery. And thus the consequent cryout in
the article may still be felt profoundly today:

‘‘If still there is a God that European imperialists and capitalists worship, that seems to be
the money and selfish economic interests. These imperialists and capitalists every time wish to
impose their self-serving interests upon the weak states, keeping them under their greedy paws at
the cost of their developments.

Mostly the Muslim states and Turk-Islam Democrats have been subordinated by the greedy
tendencies of the European invaders and capitalists.

These have inevitably taken place due to the Turkish and Muslim societies’ inability of
comprehension of the realities of the epoch.

Benefitting from the inefficiencies and weaknesses of the Muslim societies, imperialists of
Europe are expanding their recent advantages and benefits further.

As they are willing to sustain and solidify their superiority over the Turk-Islam Democrats,
they have been constantly applying new methods to achieve that aim.

Besides not having any plan or thought of giving freedom or autonomous rights to the
Muslim societies under their sovereignty, they even try to find ways to enslaving other free Muslim
states which are not subjugated by them yet.

They even seed hostility between Turkish and Islamic societies. All these tricks
implemented in the past decades and centuries have been unfortunately being revived by
Europeans.

While the tricks were being realised at the backstage in the past, today it is shamelessly
done openly, such as the recent political interventions that we are observing in bilateral relations of
Turkey and Iran.

It is obvious that, imperialists and capitalists of Europe are going to continue to have
disrespect for the international law with their revisionist and greedy policies.’’ (Ibid)

The last part of the quotation deals mainly with relations among Turkish and Muslim
organizations and governments. It seems important for the writer in renewing the Turkish and
Muslim sense of solidarity and their pride in belonging to a world-wide religion. However, at the
end of his writing he demands Muslims and Turks change their minds and take up the irredentist
banner against the Western powers. In that case he writes:

‘‘However, the dependent and independent states, especially the Turk-Islam States which
feel more pressurized, should cooperate with each other and unite under the well defined domestic
and international common policies for not letting their rights be infringed, defending their freedom.

As it may be seen, while the winning states have been granted a larger scale autonomy to
have rights and freedoms in the world politics, the same political measures have failed to be
applied to the Muslim societies in the same way.

There is no one defending or supporting the rights of the Turk-Islam Democrats, who
consist of the biggest portion of the whole democrats in the world.

Arabs, Indians, Bashkirds, Kirgizs, Tatars and Turkmens have been still leading a life
without their basic rights recognized.
An Armenian state is desired to be established on the territories where the Kurds have been living; however no one is willing to mention of bringing out the rights of the Kurdish community to the agenda.

Dagestanian people have been enforced to be fighting for the protection of their rights. People of Kars have been agonized under anomy and injustice. And the actual and real reason for all these can be linked with imperialists and capitalists of Europe. To resist all of this unrighteousness and to counterbalance the atrociousness of outrageous being committed by the European imperialists and capitalists, the unification of the Turk-Islam Democrats is the only possible way that can merely lead to the political and economic freedom.” (Ittihad, 19-19 February 1920:2-3)

Conclusion

After the occupation of Russian Bolshevists in accordance with the decisions of politic Office, Azerbaijan is divided into two groups about its policy of state control; on the one side were, in particular, strict sympathizers of the national statism, and the other side Azerbaijan Bolshevists persistently sempathaisizing with the Russian regime. As a result of the subsequent occupation of the Soviet Russia, Soviet sympathizers were appointed to the key positions of the administrative body. Economic conditions of the country could be depicted as miserable and messy; in addition to this vital point of economic life Petroleum Industry could be considered even worse. Following the occupation, within the domain of the foreign policy of Azerbaijan some important events had occurred as to Soviet Russia abolished Azerbaijan’s national statism; groundless territorial assertion of Armenia narrated; relationship with formerly Mensheviks, and later on Bolshevist Georgia.

With the April occupation, M. Huseynov was appointed as a foreign affair public commissioner and new foreign policy subsequently was designated and formulated. Due to the newly accorded foreign policy, following was his duties: Solving political and economic problems between Azerbaijan and her neighbors including European countries; political and intellectual loyalty to the Soviet Organization; finding way out as a passage to Black Sea; opening up to Europe and preparing the ethnographic map of the South Caucasia for the Red Army Headquarters.

Affiliation of the foreign affairs had transformed Azerbaijan into an external province of Russia like a vassal state. Soviet Government’s binding of ambassadorships in foreign affairs had undregone two stages; firstly, the government had installed Bolshevists later non-Azerbaijanis into the place of the foreign countries ambassadors. Secondly, diplomatic activities were separately shared among various organizations by Bolshevist Government to the full of action.

With the April Occupation of Bolshevist Russia, self-governing of Azerbaijan was utterly ruined and destroyed; the outcome was that Azerbaijan had been transformed into an occupation area of Russia. Under the pretext of co legality and autonomous, Azerbaijan was forced to come under the control of Russia. Actually consulate-general created by Russia in Baku was opened to take the control of Azerbaijan’s activities. Therefore, Bolshevist leaders of Azerbaijan started off meeting the complete requirement of Russia and they had stop the Azerbaijan statism functioning and performing her essential duties. As a consequence, from 1905 onwards to April 27, 1920, Caucasion Union and Progress Party and Union Party which, I have connected, had a special and cardinal position in the development of the political and cultural life that has not remained silent enough to observe the demise of the struggle for the Azeri society as a whole in Azerbaijan.
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