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RESETTLEMENT POLICIES AND REGIONAL INSTABILITY: ARMENIAN POPULATION AS A STRATEGIC TOOL IN THE CAUCASUS

(İSKÂN POLİTİKALARI VE BÖLGESEL İSTİKRAR:
KAFKASYA'DA STRATEJİK BİR ARAÇ OLARAK ERMENİ NÜFUSU)

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Abstract: *The Caucasus has always been a region at the forefront of the attention of other states, characterized by a diverse population possessing rich civilizations and cultures. This region boasts a lengthy historical background. The favorable geographical position of the southern Caucasus and its abundant natural resources have consistently attracted the interest of major powers throughout history, occasionally transforming the region into an arena of contention.*

The northern Caucasus, due to its complex ethnic composition, can be considered one of the most intricate regions globally. Consequently, relationships and tensions among the various ethnic groups living here are prioritized issues in the northern Caucasus.

While the majority of the population constitutes the indigenous inhabitants of the region, the demographic composition of the region has undergone

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changes due to recent migrations. Mutual migrations at the regional level, coupled with a deliberate increase in the number of diverse ethnic groups, have not only altered the ethnic composition but also disrupted the balance of power in the region.

The Armenians, one of the peoples residing in the Caucasus, are cognizant of the region's favorable environment. The territorial claims and separatist inclinations directly and indirectly asserted by representatives of this people, who were mass-migrated to the region at certain stages of history and artificially increased in number, contribute to conflicts and confrontations in the Caucasus.

In the presented article, the components of the Caucasus region, its population, the Armenians residing here, and their activities, as well as their settlements and separatist tendencies in these areas, have been elucidated. The article answers the question of how the historical resettlement policy of the state against the Armenian population in the Caucasus affected the ethnic balance and caused modern territorial conflicts in the region.

Keywords: *Caucasus, South Caucasus, North Caucasus, Armenians, ethnic composition, conflicts.*

Öz: *Kafkasya, zengin uygarlıklara ve kültürlere sahip, çok çeşitli bir nüfusla karakterize edilen, her zaman diğer devletlerin dikkatinin ön planda olduğu bir bölge olmuştur. Bu bölge uzun bir tarihi geçmişe sahiptir. Güney Kafkasya'nın elverişli coğrafi konumu ve zengin doğal kaynakları, tarih boyunca sürekli olarak büyük güçlerin ilgisini çekmiş, zaman zaman bölgeyi bir çekişme alanına dönüştürmüştür.*

Kuzey Kafkasya, karmaşık etnik yapısı nedeniyle dünya çapında en karmaşık bölgelerden biri olarak kabul edilebilir. Dolayısıyla burada yaşayan çeşitli etnik gruplar arasındaki ilişkiler ve gerginlikler Kuzey Kafkasya'da öncelikli konular arasında yer alıyor.

Nüfusun çoğunluğunu bölgenin yerli halkı oluştururken, son yıllarda yaşanan göçler nedeniyle bölgenin demografik yapısı da değişime uğramıştır. Bölgesel düzeydeki karşılıklı göçler, çeşitli etnik grupların sayısındaki kasıtlı artışla birleştiğinde, yalnızca etnik yapıyı değiştirmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda bölgedeki güç dengesini de bozmuştur.

Kafkasya'da yaşayan halklardan biri olan Ermeniler, bölgenin elverişli ortamının bilincindedir. Tarihin belli dönemlerinde bölgeye kitlesel olarak göç eden ve sayıları yapay olarak artan bu halkın temsilcilerinin doğrudan

ve dolaylı olarak öne sürdüğü toprak iddiaları ve ayrılıkçı eğilimler; Kafkasya'daki çatışma ve çatışmaların koşullarını yaratmaktadır.

Sunulan makalede Kafkasya bölgesinin bileşenleri, nüfusu, burada yaşayan Ermeniler ve faaliyetleri ile bu bölgelerdeki yerleşimleri ve ayrılıkçı eğilimleri aydınlatılmıştır. Makalede, devletin Kafkasya'daki Ermeni nüfusuna yönelik tarihi iskân politikasının etnik dengeyi nasıl etkilediği ve bölgede günümüzde toprak çatışmalarına nasıl yol açtığı sorusuna cevap verilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kafkasya, Güney Kafkasya, Kuzey Kafkasya, Ermeniler, etnik yapı, çatışmalar.*

Introduction

The Caucasus is a geographical and socio-historical region divided into Northern Caucasus and Southern Caucasus, covering an area of 440 thousand square kilometers.

Northern Caucasus stretches from the Caspian Sea in the east, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov in the west, the Manych River and its marshes in the north, to the point where the Samur River flows into the Caspian Sea in the south-east and the Inguri River flows into the Black Sea in the south-west.

Southern Caucasus, on the other hand, is located south of the Greater Caucasus Mountains, comprising territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia.

Since ancient times, the Caucasus has been subjected to migrations of various peoples. Situated between Europe and Asia, the Caucasus has witnessed invasions by Persians, Huns, Mongols, Arabs, Russians, and others.

Historical sources indicate that the state of Armenia did not exist in the Caucasus, and Armenians migrated from the Balkan Peninsula to Eastern Anatolia (Asia Minor), then to Southern Caucasus, including the modern territory of Georgia. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus, in his work "Histories," described the inhabitants of Asia Minor as descendants of the Phrygians, stating that they were a branch of the Phrygian tribes who migrated to Asia Minor, settling in the mountainous country at the sources of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

The distinguished Russian scholar I.M. Dyakonov also wrote that Armenians not only came to Southern Caucasus but also "searched for their homeland" in Asia Minor. He classified the Armenian language as belonging to the Indo-European language group and confirmed that Armenians are not related to the Hurrian-Urartian, Hittite, modern Caucasian languages, or Semitic languages. The presence of Armenians in the Caucasus during the Middle Ages was primarily for trade purposes. Additionally, they were brought as slaves and used for menial labor by the indigenous Turkic and Georgian rulers.

After the complete occupation of the Caucasus by Tsarist Russia, the purposeful resettlement of the Armenian population began. This process began at the beginning of the 19th century, accelerated at the end of the 19th century, and continued during the Soviet period. The policy of transferring the Armenian population to the Caucasus by Tsarist Russia had a serious effect on the change of the ethnic balance in the region and the occurrence of modern territorial conflicts. This process consisted of two main stages. In the 19th century, especially after 1828, the Russian Empire encouraged the resettlement

of the Armenian population living in present-day Iran and the Ottoman Empire. This relocation was mainly carried out for strategic purposes. In the south of the Caucasus, especially in the southern regions of present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan, the number of Armenians increased and the ethnic landscape of the region changed. The central government purposefully carried out a resettlement policy in order to create an ethnic base in the South Caucasus and increase the number of the Christian population. The relocation of Armenians to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the presence of other ethnic groups caused ethnic tensions in the region. This, in particular, paved the way for the beginning of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, since 1988, ethnic conflicts began in Karabakh. The presence of Armenians in the region became one of the main factors of this conflict. These displacements further confused the ethnic composition of the area and made it difficult to resolve the conflict. The relocation of the Armenian population to the Caucasus had a serious impact on the ethnic and political balance in the region.

1. Armenians in the North Caucasus

The North Caucasus region, with its favorable geographical position and valuable mineral reserves, has consistently been a focal point of attention. The region includes Adygea, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania Republic, as well as the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories, all of which are part of the Russian Federation. Covering an area of 258.3 thousand square kilometers and a population of 14.8 million, it is the most diverse region in Russia. The presence of fertile soils, favorable climatic conditions, valuable mineral resources, and its economic-geographical position have contributed to the economic development of the North Caucasus.

The North Caucasus has a complex ethnic composition, hosting various nations such as Avars, Circassians, Azerbaijanis, Balkars, Dargins, Ingush, Karachays, Kumyks, Lezgins, Nogais, Ossetians, Russians, Chechens, Rutuls, Udins, Armenians, and others.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the social-economic situation in the North Caucasus was challenging, and political stability was lacking. To address these issues, the Russians sought to create favorable conditions by granting privileges to various ethnic groups living in the North Caucasus. Looking back in history, in the 18th century, Russian Tsar Peter I considered Armenians as allies in wars against the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The intention was to utilize Armenians in pursuing a Machiavellian policy aimed at occupying the Caucasus and

eliminating a significant portion of the Muslim-Turkic population. Catherine I, in 1768, utilized Armenians against the Turks when initiating military actions.¹

Armenians believed they could establish an “Armenian Kingdom” in the territory between Iran and the Ottoman Empire with the support of the Russian Empire. However, the Russian government began a policy of Russification in the occupied territories, thwarting the Armenians’ desire for a “Greater Armenia.”

Starting from 1778, Armenians were resettled to Crimea by the Russian Empire, facilitating the unification of Crimea with Russia and strengthening its influence in the North Caucasus. The Russian Empire thus took advantage of Armenians to resolve issues in the region.

The influx of Armenians into the North Caucasus occurred mainly in the 19th and 20th centuries. During this period, Armenians migrated from the Ottoman Empire to the Black Sea coast of the North Caucasus. Many settled in the former Adyghe-Cherkess territory. In the early 19th century, a significant number of Armenians arrived in the Stavropol region and established the town of Edessa. In the late 1800s to the early 1900s, 46% of Armenians settled in the North Caucasus region, while the remaining 39% migrated to Krasnodar during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenians in the Krasnodar region became the second-largest ethnic group after Russians.

1.1. Armenians in the Republic of Adyghea

One of the Northern Caucasus republics with the most compact Armenian population is the Republic of Adyghea. Adyghea is a subject of the Russian Federation and constitutes a republic within its structure, with its capital being the city of Maykop. The republic’s territory is surrounded on all sides by the Krasnodar Territory, covering an area of 7,792 km².

Adyghea is an agrarian-industrial country, and it is rich in various valuable mineral deposits. The majority of industrial enterprises in the country are concentrated in Maykop. In the Maykop region, there are oil and gas deposits, as well as mineral springs. The local extractive industries, forestry, and agricultural products primarily contribute to the creation of diverse industrial activities.

1 Toksoy.A. XIX. Yüzyılda Rusya’nın Kafkas Politikası ve Ermeniler. 04.04.2014, <http://ekoavrasya.net/duyuru.aspx?did=136&Lang=TR>

The Adygeans (Adyghe or Circassians) predominantly reside in 45 villages, as well as in the city of Maykop and the towns of Enem, Yablonovsky, and Tlyustenkhable. They are most densely populated in the Taxtamukaysk, Koshexable, Teuchezhsk, Shovgenovsk, Koshexable, and Krasnoqvardeysk districts. Adygea Republic is home to various ethnic groups, including Adyghe, Circassians, Kurds, Azerbaijanis, Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Tatars, Uzbeks, Avars, Ossetians, and others.

Based on statistical data for the year 2023, the total population of the Republic of Adygea in this autonomous region of the Russian Federation was 497,985 people. Within the republic, the Russian population accounted for 287,800 individuals, while Armenians constituted 14,800 individuals. Armenians in Maykop city are actively engaged in various fields and professions.²

In the 19th century, the ethnic group known as the Central Armenians formed in this region. They are a branch of Armenians who migrated among the Northern Caucasus peoples. Currently, they are primarily concentrated in the capital, Maykop. The Armenians residing here are mainly involved in trade, craftsmanship, and industrial sectors. In 2015, there were around 5,000 Armenians living in Maykop, working in various government agencies, agriculture, and as entrepreneurs.

Central Armenians, living alongside Circassians, have assimilated their customs, clothing, culinary traditions, and language, while preserving their religious identity. Although their initial language was Armenian, historical processes led to the loss of this language, replaced by the Adyghe language. The reason for adopting the Adyghe language as their own is explained by the close interaction with Circassians in various aspects of public life. This interaction is prominently evident in economic, social, family, and cultural spheres.

The prevalence of Central cultural elements in the Central Armenian community is attributed, in part, to the frequent intermarriages between Central Armenians and Circassians. It's worth noting that the strongest factor preventing the complete assimilation of Adyghe Armenians is their membership in the Armenian Gregorian (Orthodox) Church. Representatives of the local Adyghe community in Adygea celebrate Armenian holidays. The significance of these celebrations lies in the emergence of vivid emotions and the strengthening of family traditions through national rituals.³

2 Численность постоянного населения Российской Федерации по муниципальным образованиям на 1 января 2023 года (с учётом итогов Всероссийской переписи населения 2020 г.). Федеральная служба государственной статистики. 18.08.2023.

3 Кочеткова, С., Армяне Адыгеи народными гуляньями отмечают древний праздник Терендез. 13.02.2012, <https://www.yuga.ru/news/253542/>

1.2. Armenians in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria

Another region where Armenians reside is the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. It is bordered by the Karachay-Cherkess Republic to the west, Stavropol Territory to the north, North Ossetia-Alania Republic to the east and southeast, and shares a southern border with Georgia. Established on September 1, 1921, as the Kabardian Autonomous Region, it was later transformed into the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Region on January 16, 1922, and finally became the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on December 5, 1936. Since 1992, it has been known as the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, with its capital in the city of Nalchik. The republic covers an area of 12.5 thousand square kilometers.

Kabardino-Balkaria is a developed region with a diversified industrial sector and highly intensive agriculture. Its industrial activities include non-ferrous metallurgy, machine-building and metal processing, food production, chemicals, construction materials, and wood processing. The non-ferrous metallurgy industry is primarily based on tungsten-molybdenum ore deposits. The automotive transportation sector is the most advanced within various transportation types, while railway transportation is also progressing.

According to the statistical data for the year 2023, the population of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria is 904,338 people. The ethnic composition is as follows: 56% Kabardins, 22% Russians, 12% Balkars, 0.45% Armenians, and others.⁴

In the Republic, the number of Balkar Turks is slightly over 90 thousand. The Balkars endured the bloody deportation during the Second World War and could only return to their homeland in the 1950s.

The main part of the Armenian diaspora is concentrated in the city of Nalchik. In 2001, the regional branch of the Russian Armenians Union was established based on the “Aхpyр” national cultural center. This organization brings together ethnic Armenians born in the region, as well as immigrants from Armenia and other countries. In September 2018, the activities of the Armenian Sunday School, where members of the diaspora can learn the Armenian language and familiarize themselves with national culture, literature, and fine arts, were restored in Nalchik.

4 Численность постоянного населения Российской Федерации по муниципальным образованиям на 1 января 2023 года (с учётом итогов Всероссийской переписи населения 2020 г.). Федеральная служба государственной статистики 18.08.2023

For an extended period, Jirayr Shavarshovich Ioannisyán led the Kabardino-Balkar division of the Russian Armenians Union. Since 2014, Artur Poghosyan has been the president of this public organization.⁵

The foreign trade relations between the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic and the Republic of Armenia are experiencing mutual development. The Republic of Armenia is traditionally one of the leading trade and economic partners for companies in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. In 2011, the total trade turnover was only 0.03 million US dollars, but in 2012, the volume of export-import operations increased, reaching 0.16 million US dollars. In 2013, the volume of foreign trade turnover decreased again, amounting to 0.09 million US dollars. However, during the first 9 months of 2016, a significant increase of 0.92 million dollars was observed in foreign trade turnover. In 2022, the foreign trade turnover of Kabardino-Balkaria with Armenia has doubled compared to 2021.

One of the most relevant areas of Russian-Armenian cooperation is tourism and recreation. According to Rosstat, Armenia ranks 9th in the ranking of the most popular countries among Russian tourists. By the end of 2022, more than 780 thousand Russian tourists have come to Armenia.

Kabardino-Balkaria also collaborates with Armenia in the humanitarian field. In June 2012, students from Armenia participated in the international festival “Student Spring in the Caucasus,” held in Kabardino-Balkaria, aimed at bringing together youth from the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to promote creativity and intellectual exchange.⁶

1.3. Armenians in Karachay-Circassian Republic

One of the diverse republics in the region is the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, which is a subject of the Russian Federation. Administratively, it is part of the North Caucasus Federal District. The capital city is Cherkessk, and the republic’s territory spans 14,277 square kilometers. The population of the republic exceeds 469,000.

5 Кабардино-Балкарское региональное отделение общероссийской организации Союза армян России «Ахбюр». İstifadə tarixi: 10.03.2024, <https://nalchik.bezformata.com/listnews/kabardino-balkarskoe-regionalnoe/70795926>

6 Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации. О сотрудничестве субъектов Северо[15]-Кавказского федерального округа с республикой Армения.20.02.2017, https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/economic_diplomacy/vnesneekonomiceskie-svazi-sub-ektov-rossijskoj-federacii/1542690/

Approximately 80% of the republic's territory is mountainous, with Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in the Caucasus, situated here. The republic is rich in water resources, boasting 130 glacial lakes and 172 rivers, contributing to its diverse landscape. Karachay-Cherkess Republic is primarily an agrarian country, with key sectors in agriculture including chemical and petrochemical, as well as food and textile industries. Agriculture and animal husbandry are pivotal areas within the agricultural sector of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

The republic is home to representatives of more than 80 different ethnic groups, with the Karachays constituting 60% of the population.⁷ According to the 2018 geographical distribution statistics in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, approximately 700,000 Cherkess live in the region. The diaspora consists of around 6-7 million Cherkess, and nearly 95% of them are estimated to reside in Turkey.⁸

According to the information from the Republic Statistics Committee, there are more than 3,000 Armenians living in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic. The majority of Armenians in this region migrated from the territory of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁹

In the capital city of the republic, Cherkessk, the Surb Gevorg Apostol Church has been built.¹⁰ According to information from the editorial office of the Armenian-Russian newspaper "Yerkramas," the Armenian community in Cherkessk initiated the construction of the church in 2005, and the church was built based on the contributions of its members.¹¹

The main direction of mutual relations between the Karachay-Cherkess Republic and Armenia is in the fields of culture, education, and art. In July

7 Официальный сайт Главы и Правительства Карачаево-Черкесской Республики: Общие данные о Карачаево-Черкессии. Accessed: 20.02.2024,

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwivIrYqOyEAxUWcPEDHYqMCa8QFnoECBYQAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fpravo.gov.ru%2Flinks%2Fkarachaevo%2F&usq=AOvVaw0sqq2PMqSlgcjIkuYhbsEv&opi=89978449>

8 Кабардино-Балкарское региональное отделение общероссийской организации Союза армян России «Ахбюр». Accessed: 01.03.2014,
<https://nalchik.bezformata.com/listnews/kabardino-balkarskoe-regionalnoe/70795926/>

9 Balancar F. 1864'ten günümüze Çerkesler ve Ermeniler, 26.02.2018,
<https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/20266/1864ten-gunumuze-cherkesler-ve-ermeniler>

10 Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации. О сотрудничестве субъектов Северо-Кавказского федерального округа с республикой Армения. 20.02.2017,
https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/economic_diplomacy/vnesneekonomiceskie-svazi-sub-ektov-rossijskoj-federacii/1542690

11 Tasam, Kafkasya'da Bir Ülke: Çeçenistan. 21.06.2011,
https://tasam.org/tr-TR/Icerik/2213/kafkasyada_bir_ulke_cecenistan/

2012, representatives from Armenia participated in the “Dombay-2012” III Caucasus Forum of Russian (Eurasian) Youth, discussing the issues and perspectives of the Eurasian Union. In November 2012, representatives of science and art from Armenia participated in the international scientific-practical conference “Ancient Times in Modern Art” held at the special Astrophysical Observatory of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.¹²

1.4. Armenians in the Chechen Republic

The Chechen Republic, situated approximately 100 kilometers from the Caspian Sea in the Northern Caucasus, is part of the Russian Federation. It is bordered to the northwest by Stavropol, to the east and south by Dagestan and Georgia, and to the west by Ingushetia. The capital city of the republic is Grozny. The territory of the republic covers 15.3 thousand square kilometers. Despite its industrial production being 1.4 times greater than current agricultural production, the economic stability of Chechnya was severely disrupted in the 1990s due to the conflicts that took place during that period.

The economy began to actively develop in the early 2000s. According to the information for the year 2019, Chechnya’s Gross Regional Product (GRP) growth rate was 2.5%. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic split into two entities: the Republic of Ingushetia and the newly independent Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Following the first war, Chechnya de facto gained independence as the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Russian federal control was restored during the Second Russo-Chechen War.

According to Rosstat, the population of the republic is 1,533,209 people.¹³

In the year 1897, there were only 339 Armenians living in the Grozny district of the Russian Empire, constituting 0.2% of the region’s population. However, by 1939, Chechnya already had a population of 8,170 Armenians, representing 1.5% of the total population. In 1959, the Armenian community in this region reached 12,136 individuals, constituting 2% of the overall population of the autonomous republic.

12 Многоголосая культура народов Кабардино-Балкарии, İstifadə tarixi 20.02.2024, <https://гнбкбр.рф/wp-content/uploads/proects/culture/ethnos/armenians/overview.html>

13 Численность населения по полу по субъектам Российской Федерации на 1 января 2022 года (с учётом итогов Всероссийской переписи населения 2020 г.). Федеральная служба государственной статистики 30.12.2022.

During the early 20th century, Grozny had a significant Armenian community with its own school, church, and even a theater. In the 1920s, one of the key figures in the creation of the Chechen autonomy, which centered around Grozny, was Anastas Mikoyan, who was the People's Commissar for Nationalities at the time.

The Soviet People's Commissariat issued a resolution on November 21, 1945, regarding the return of Armenians living abroad to Soviet Armenia. Subsequently, on February 22, 1946, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, in collaboration with the Soviet People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, adopted a resolution on "measures for the return of Armenians from abroad to Soviet Armenia."¹⁴

In the city of Grozny, trade houses from Armenia, such as "Georgiy Pitoyev," "Lazar Mailov and Sons," have been established and are actively operating. These establishments deal in explosives, oil equipment, industrial goods, and more. Armenian mining engineers, technologists, and mechanics played a significant role in the oil industry of Grozny. They held responsible positions in various organizations. Until 1919, about 75% of mining engineers and technical workers in Grozny were of Armenian origin. Therefore, Armenian capital contributed to the development of the Grozny oil industry complex.

1.5. Armenians in the Republic of Dagestan

Dağistan, a multi-ethnic region within the Russian Federation, is also home to Armenians. Dağistan is a federal subject of Russia, part of the North Caucasus Federal District. It shares borders with Azerbaijan to the south, Georgia to the southwest, Chechnya to the west, Stavropol Krai to the northwest, and the Republic of Kalmykia to the north. The capital city of the republic is Makhachkala, and its total area is 50,270 square kilometers.

Dağistan has a diverse economy with a focus on agriculture and industry. The agricultural complexes play a leading role in the production of food, textiles, and machinery. The region is also rich in various natural resources, with deposits of valuable minerals and oil and gas reserves discovered in places like Izberbash and Terek-Kumek.

As of January 1, 2013, according to available information, the permanent population of the Republic of Dagestan is 2,946,303 people. Out of this total, 1,328,915 reside in urban areas, while 1,617,388 people live in rural areas.

14 Армяне хотели заселить Чечню: российский историк опубликовал рассекреченные документы. 03.04.2019, <https://minval.az>

If you have any further questions or need additional information, feel free to ask.¹⁵

The Republic of Dagestan is administratively divided into 42 districts, with over 100 ethnic groups residing in the region. Among these, 30 are indigenous peoples, including Nogais, Tabasarans, Avars, Dargins, Lezgins, Aguls, Kumyks, Tats, and others. Azerbaijanis living in Dagestan are among the ancient peoples of the region. In Xasavyurt, located in the western part of Dagestan, and its surrounding areas, approximately 70,000 Chechens reside. The diverse composition of the population in Dagestan reveals distinctions in language, religion, and clothing among the various ethnic groups.

As of the 2010 census, there are around five thousand Armenians living in Dagestan. The major cities of Makhachkala, Derbent, and Kizlyar host significant ethnic communities.¹⁶

Dağistan has been one of the republics affected by Armenian terrorism, specifically through the actions of the “Armenian Secret Liberation Army” (ASOA) and the “Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia” (ASALA).¹⁷ These organizations committed terrorist acts in Dagestan as well as in different regions.

In the vicinity of Xasavyurt railway station in the Dağistan Republic of the Russian Federation, a passenger train of the “Moscow-Baku” route was bombed on May 30, 1991, resulting in 11 fatalities and 22 injuries. On June 31 of the same year, near the Temirtau station in the Dağistan Republic, another “Moscow-Baku” passenger train was bombed, resulting in 16 deaths and 20 injuries.

On February 2, 2013, an explosion occurred in the “Shehristan” hotel-resort complex, owned by Azerbaijanis, located in the center of Derbent. A bomb planted in a car exploded at the entrance of the hotel. Although there were no reported fatalities, three people were injured, with one in critical condition.

In the center of Makhachkala, on July 13, 2014, a terrorist incident resulted in 35 deaths, and nearly 100 peaceful residents were injured. Following the investigation, five individuals were arrested.

15 Ermənistan-Azərbaycan münəqişəsi. İstifadə tarixi: 09.03.2024.
<https://president.az/az/pages/view/azerbaijan/karabakh>

16 Численность постоянного населения Российской Федерации по муниципальным образованиям на 1 января 2023 года (с учётом итогов Всероссийской переписи населения 2020 г.). Федеральная служба государственной статистики. 18.08.2023

17 Erməni terrorizmi, <https://azerbaijan.az/related-information/120>

Looking at the year 2017, during that period, Dağıstan experienced 531 incidents of a terrorist nature. This information was presented by Abdurashid Magomedov, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Dağıstan, during a parliamentary session.

It should be noted that the terrorist acts of Armenian terrorists (ASOA) and terrorist organizations (ASALA) in Dagestan resulted in the death and injury of hundreds of people. The Minister of Internal Affairs of Dagestan, Abdurashid Magomedov, noted that in 2017, 40 militants were eliminated, 312 fighters and their associates were detained, and 19 individuals surrendered voluntarily. Additionally, the security forces in Dagestan eradicated six terrorist-diversion groups in the republic.

Armenian cultural figures declare Dağıstan as their historical homeland, promoting integration into the cultural sphere of the region under the guise of integration. The forced policies and terrorism initiated by Armenians in Dağıstan since the early 1990s have, in recent times (2012-2015), transitioned towards ideological and cultural terrorism. During these years, it is important to mention acts such as the explosion of trains and railway lines, as well as the explosions in the “Şəhristan” hotel complex in the center of Derbent. Armenians are implicated in all these crimes against humanity. Dağıstan is considered the battleground for a hidden war, as daily incidents of public unrest occur in the region.

1.6. Armenians in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania

The Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, one of the subjects of the Russian Federation, is part of the North Caucasus Federal District. Its capital is Vladikavkaz, and its territory covers 8,000 square kilometers with a population of 693,098 people. Established as the North Ossetian Autonomous Oblast on July 7, 1924, it was later renamed the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania in 1991. The region's predominant sector in the economic complex is heavy industry, with non-ferrous metallurgy, mining, and machine-building contributing three-quarters of the total production.

Similar to other regions, Armenians have settled in North Ossetia-Alania, considering it their homeland. According to the 2017 statistics, there were around 19,000 Armenians living in North Ossetia-Alania.¹⁸

The process of forming Armenian communities continued into the 19th century. Due to the influx of Armenians, especially to the southern regions of Russia,

¹⁸ Северная Осетия, 30.11.2017, <https://moyaokruga.ru/sevosetia/Articles.aspx?articleId=133629>

old Armenian communities merged and new ones were established, leading to a significant increase in the number of Armenian communities. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, changes occurred in the social and cultural life of Armenian communities in Russia. During those years, there was an unseen flow of Armenians to Russia.

The city of Vladikavkaz hosts the largest Armenian diaspora in the region. The establishment of a church for Armenians in Vladikavkaz dates back to the 19th century, known as the Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator. In the early 20th century, a new church was constructed, and its consecration ceremony took place with great solemnity. This church not only served as a place of worship but also became a venue for community discussions on important matters. By the end of the 19th century, the Armenian population in Vladikavkaz had reached 1,700.

In the early 20th century, the Terek region became a significant settlement for Armenians. Until November 1920, the Armenian community in this region consisted of around 12,000 individuals.

Armenians actively participate in the social-political and socio-economic life of North Ossetia and work in various positions in various fields of the national economy. In Vladikavkaz, about 8% of the Armenian community's trading posts are mainly managed by Armenians and Persians.¹⁹ As early as the 1840s, Armenian merchants were engaged in trade in cloth and food products in the city of Mozdok in North Ossetia-Alania. The Armenian community in the city of Mozdok is actively engaged in trade and crafts, and operates in the region by building churches, schools, and workshops. The Armenian diaspora in Mozdok region is also active.

1.7. Armenians in Krasnodar Territory

The Krasnodar Krai is located in the western part of the Greater Caucasus and in the Kuban-Azov transit plain. The eastern part of the region extends toward the Stavropol elevation. Krasnodar Krai covers an area of 83.6 thousand square kilometers, with a population of 5 million people. Approximately 54% of the total population resides in urban areas, resulting in a population density of 66 people per square kilometer. The main cities include Krasnodar, Sochi, Novorossiysk, Armavir, and Eysk.²⁰

19 Северная Осетия. 29.12.2002, <https://moyaokruga.ru/sevosetia/Articles.aspx?articleId=422324>

20 Açma B., Yenişen K. Kafkasya'nın ekonomik potansiyeli ve dönüşümü için politika ve stratejiler // yönetim ve ekonomi. Cild 20. Türkiye, Celal Bayar ün-si, 2013, s.132-149.

Its industry includes food processing, machinery manufacturing, construction materials, and more. Large quantities of sugar, vegetable oil, and canned goods are produced. Mountain rivers are abundant in hydroenergy resources. The region possesses reserves of oil, gas, and construction materials. Krasnodar is Russia's main agricultural region, specializing in wheat, sunflowers, and rice cultivation. The transportation infrastructure is well-developed, featuring major ports such as Novorossiysk and Tuapse. Based on the 2002 census, approximately 275,000 Armenians were living in this area. This figure constitutes about 24.3% of the total Armenian population in the Russian Federation²¹ (in 2010, there were over 1.7 million Armenians living in the Russian Federation, with more than 1.182 million being Russian citizens and 515,000 being citizens of Armenia).²²

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Krasnodar Krai became one of the regions where Armenians migrated. There was an observed influx of Armenians from Abkhazia and Chechnya to Krasnodar Krai. Since the mid-1990s, a significant number of Armenians left Armenia, mainly due to harsh economic conditions. Other Armenian migrants in the North-Western Caucasus came from Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and Georgia. Armenian migrants settled along the Black Sea coast, in the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions, and surrounding areas. Armenians preferred migrating to the Kuban region to maintain close family and friendship ties with the large diaspora living far beyond the region's borders.

The migration of Armenians to the territories of Krasnodar and Stavropol has contributed to their historical reinterpretations. The Armenians' objective is to consolidate their power in these lands and completely marginalize the local population, especially Russians and representatives of other ethnic groups. The Armenian massacres in the Ottoman territory (1915), the declaration of war on Georgia (a two-week war in December 1918), and the processes that started against Azerbaijan (in the Nagorno-Karabakh region since 1988) give reason to say this.

Russian Caucasian scholar I.N. Kanadeev noted that the Caucasian peoples must protect themselves from the pernicious influence of the Armenians. Because their separatism leads to Armenian autonomy, even to the creation of Armenian statehood, which has never existed in the Caucasus.²³

21 Açma B., Yenişen K. Kafkasya'nın ekonomik potansiyeli ve dönüşümü için politika ve stratejiler // yönetim ve ekonomi. Cild 20. Türkiye, Celal Bayar ün-si, 2013, s.132-149.

22 Национальный состав Российской Федерации. Информационные материалы об окончательных итогах Всероссийской переписи населения, 2010 года/http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/perepis_itogi1612.htm

23 Канадеев И.Н. Указ.раб., с. 5- 33.

Many Armenian scholars and historians of Armenian descent note that Armenians lived in the Krasnodar, Stavropol, and Rostov regions long before the Russians and other local ethnic groups. Armenians in the southern part of the Russian Federation have already chosen the city of Armavir in the Krasnodar region as their “capital.” This city shares the same name as the city of Armavir in Armenia.

Armenians in the aforementioned regions of the Russian Federation have formed an organization called the “Krasnodar Armenian Republic.” It is essential to pay attention to the assertiveness and self-confidence of the members and founders of this organization

As evident from the organization’s name, a neutral term has not been chosen, openly indicating their territorial claims towards the Russian region. The establishment of branches of this organization in Stavropol and Rostov is also not an exception.

Armenians claim that, supposedly since the time of the “Great Armenian” King Tigran, they have been living in the south of Russia up to the present day. They not only convince themselves of this fabricated idea but even manage to persuade some Russians. By distorting historical facts, Armenians attempt to assert that they were the first settlers in these lands and even try to affirm that these territories are their ancestral lands.

The Krasnodar region plays a significant role as a lucrative market for Armenians. In 2015, to support business interests and rights in Kuban, the Kuban Entrepreneurs Union was established in Krasnodar. The union includes businessmen from various fields (ranging from tourism and restaurant business to manufacturing industries). In many industrial sectors, Armenian businessmen hold management positions.

1.8. Armenians in Stavropol Territory

The Stavropol region covers an area of 66.5 thousand square kilometers with a population of 2.7 million people. It was established on February 13, 1924, as the Southeastern Province. From October 16, 1924, until March 13, 1937, it was known as the North Caucasus region, and from March 13, 1937, until January 12, 1943, it was recognized as the Orconikidze region. Currently, it is referred to as the Stavropol region. The Stavropol region is the center of the North Caucasus macro-region, which is a strategically important geostrategic area for ensuring the territorial integrity and state security of the country.²⁴

24 Стратегия социально-экономического развития Ставропольского края до /2035года/<https://economy.gov.ru/material/file/2be4c8d2cabdb0ce884b047834a7540f/210119sk.pdf>

In this region, agriculture is specialized in crop farming and sheep breeding. Large herds of sheep, highly regarded for their wool, occupy a prominent place in the Russian Federation. Irrigation is being developed, allowing the cultivation of vegetables and garden crops on these lands. The transportation network is well-established, featuring pipelines, automobiles, and air transport. According to statistical data from 1979, there were 40,000 Armenians living in the Stavropol region. By 2010, their number had increased fourfold, reaching 161,324 individuals. According to official information, Armenians constitute 6% of the region's total population. Unofficial sources suggest that there are approximately 300,000 to 400,000 Armenians in the Stavropol region, comprising 11% to 15% of the local population.²⁵

Armenians constitute the second-largest population in Stavropol after the Slavic community. They can be encountered in significant numbers in Stavropol, Pyatigorsk, and other residential areas of the region.

Various Armenian groups on digital platforms publish fabricated articles about the “ancient” Armenian settlements in the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions of the Russian Federation. These articles create a fictitious historical foundation for such territories. Armenians claim to have been present in the Stavropol region since the 12th century. According to their assertions, they have two major residential areas in the Stavropol region.

One of these areas is the city of Budyonnovsk in the eastern part of the region (originally named Surb-Khach in Armenian, meaning Holy Cross). The other is the large village of Edissiya (supposedly named after the Armenian city of Edessa) located near the border with Chechnya. Currently, Armenians make up almost 90% of the population in Edissiya.

2. Armenians in the South Caucasus

In the 7th century, the southern part of the Caucasus witnessed the spread of Islam with the conquest of the region by the Caliphate. Subsequently, after being under the rule of the Seljuks, Mongols, and various Turkic tribes, the area came under the leadership of the Safavid state in 1501. Until the mid-18th century, the region remained under the sovereignty of the Safavid state. Independent Turkic khanates were established in the southern part of the South Caucasus in 1747 after the assassination of Nader Shah Afshar. Following Nader Shah's death in 1747, the territory of what is today Azerbaijan was

25 Цифры предоставлены А.Е. Тер-Саркисянцем, Российская академия наук. Интервью Хьюман Райтс Вотч, Москва, 1996 г., <http://www.omri.cz/ Elections/Russia/Regions/About/Stavropol.html>

divided among various khanates. Afterward, the interest of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus grew.

As a result of two Russo-Persian wars in the early 19th century, the entire South Caucasus was completely occupied by the Russian Empire. Subsequently, in the 19th century, Armenians began to migrate to Georgia. Tsarist Russia desired the placement of Armenians in the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom. The presence of Armenians in Georgia would, in theory, be advantageous for the Tsar, as they would be loyal to him and help defend the country. Therefore, the existence of Armenians in Georgia would serve the Tsarist political agenda. After the dissolution of the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom, Armenians started claiming that the part of Georgia up to Qori was supposedly the “historical lands of Armenians.” However, the South Caucasus and Georgia were not historically the homeland of Armenians. They were not indigenous to the region but settled there at various times. Armenians played a significant role in suppressing the uprisings against colonial rule and the abolition of the Georgian kingdom

2.1. Armenians in the Republic of Armenia

The Republic of Armenia is one of the three states located in the South Caucasus. The country borders Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north, and Azerbaijan to the east and south. The capital is Yerevan.

Regarding the formation of the Armenian ethnic group, Armenian authors assert its connection to the eastern part of Anatolia and the “Hayas country.” According to them, Armenians originated outside the Caucasus, specifically in the eastern part of Asia Minor, and had difficulties establishing their roots in the region, alongside tribes of uncertain Balkan origin that were supposedly part of the Hayas tribal alliance. They claim that Armenians appropriated the self-designation “hay” among other things.²⁶

Until the relocation of the Armenian Catholicosate center to the Ararat region (Chukhur Saad) in 1441, there were no specific villages or land areas exclusively owned by Armenians within the present territory of the Republic of Armenia. Even the village of Uchkilsa (Valarshabad), where the Armenian Catholicosate was located, was gradually acquired by Armenians through various means from Azerbaijani Turks starting from the year 1443.²⁷

During the First Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813, the Iravan Khanate faced two attacks by Russian forces but managed to resist and maintain its

26 Qasımlı M., Öməröv V., Məmmədova N., Həbibbəyli S., Salayev K., Gürcüstanda erməni təşkilatlarının fəaliyyəti (XIX əsr – XXI əsrin əvvəlləri), Bakı: 2020, 606 s.

27 M. Yaqub., “İrəvan xanlığı”, <https://mod.gov.az/az/irevan-tarixi-410/>

independence. Tsarist Russia, with the aim of annexing the Iravan Khanate, successfully achieved its goal with the assistance of the Armenians living in the region. The Russian army, besieging the fortress of Iravan, received information from Armenians about the location of Azerbaijani forces within the fortress and the directions to deploy artillery fire. Consequently, in 1827, Tsarist Russia captured the Iravan Khanate, triggering mass migrations of Armenians into the khanate's territory.²⁸

In the years 1828-1832, there were a total of 1,111 settlements in the Armenian province, with only 62 villages being inhabited by local Armenians. In the remaining 1,069 villages, Azerbaijani Turks were the residents.²⁹

Starting from the 1820s and 1830s, Tsarist Russia, through the resettlement of Armenians, altered the traditional ethnic, political, and religious landscape of the South Caucasus, particularly the Azerbaijani territories in the region. A new Christian ethnic group was established in the borderlands of Northern Azerbaijan with Iran and the Ottoman Empire. In 1911, N. Shavrov wrote about this development, stating, "Currently, more than one million of the 1.3 million Armenians living in the South Caucasus are not native to this region. We [meaning the Russians] have resettled them here."³⁰

Until 1918, there was no Armenian state in the South Caucasus. The Armenian Democratic Republic was formed by leaders of the Dashnaktsutyun organization after the dissolution of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. Under pressure from major powers and certain political circles, the government of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, on May 29, 1918, ceded the ancient Azerbaijani city of Yerevan and the surrounding 9,000 square kilometers to the Armenians. Based on the Batumi negotiations and agreements, the Armenian side sought the transfer of Yerevan and the surrounding Azerbaijani territories to them. In return, the Armenians undertook several obligations. According to the agreement reached during the Batumi negotiations, the Armenians had to refrain from territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Additionally, the Armenian government was obliged to withdraw Armenian armed forces from Baku and put an end to the mass atrocities committed against Muslims by Armenian armed formations in Azerbaijani regions.

28 Rusiya işğalı dövrü. https://iravan.preslib.az/rusiya_igal_dovru.html

29 Qərbi Azərbaycan ermənilərin köçürülməsi: tarixi torpaqlarımızda erməni dövlətinin yaradılması. 09.09.2023, https://azertag.az/xeber/qerbi_azerbaycana_ermenilerin_kochurulmesi_tarixi_torpaqlarimizda_ermen_i_dovletinin_yaradilmasi__arasdirma-2747575

30 Mahmudov Y ., "İrəvan xanlığı", <https://mod.gov.az/az/irevan-tarixi-410/>

During the existence of the Armenian Democratic Republic for two years, it pursued a policy of territorial expansion by constantly occupying neighboring states' territories and making territorial claims against them. Armenia engaged in military conflicts with neighboring states, including Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Georgia.

In 1920, Armenia was invaded and Sovietized by the USSR on November 29th. This state, which was an independent socialist republic until 1922, was then transformed into a federative entity named the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic on December 13, 1922. In 1924, following the formation of the Soviet Union, the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic joined the Union. In 1936, the Transcaucasian state was abolished, and the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) emerged as one of the republics of the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia became an independent state.

On February 22, 1946, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party approved the draft prepared by the People's Commissariat of the USSR on the "Practical Measures for the Transfer of Armenians from Abroad to Soviet Armenia." This marked the beginning of the influx of Armenians from abroad to Soviet Armenia. In general, from 1946 to 1949, 96 thousand Armenians were resettled from foreign countries to Armenia, with a significant portion of them being settled in Yerevan and its surrounding regions.

In 1946, 50,900 Armenians immigrated to Armenia from Syria, Greece, Lebanon, Iraq, Bulgaria, and Romania. The following year, 1947, saw the resettlement of 35,400 Armenians from Palestine, Syria, France, the United States, Greece, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon to Armenia. Armenian leadership explained the decrease in the number of immigrants from 1946 to 1947 by stating that those coming from abroad were primarily urban residents, and it was not feasible to settle them in mountainous regions. On the other hand, those who were resettled were mainly interested in settling in and around Yerevan.

Concurrently, a policy was initiated to settle arriving Armenians and purposefully relocate Azerbaijani inhabitants from historical territories in order to alter the country's national-ethnic composition. In Armenia, based on the decisions of the Soviet Ministers' Council on December 23, 1947 (No. 4083) and March 10, 1948 (No. 754), more than 100,000 Azerbaijanis were mass deported from their ancestral homes in the territory of the Armenian SSR from 1948 to 1953.³¹

31 Mustafa N, Azərbaycan xalqına qarşı böyük ədalətsizlik – 1948-1953-cü illər deportasiyası, Xalq qezeti, 23.12.2022, https://www.elibrary.az/docs/qazet/qzt2022_5867.pdf - No 281. - s. 10

The Azerbaijani population faced mass killings and atrocities, with thousands of historical and cultural monuments and residential areas destroyed. After Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, the pace of Azerbaijani deportations from Armenia decreased, and a process of return for the population began.

On February 20, 1988, the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR, with the participation of only Armenian deputies, adopted a decision on the removal of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast from the composition of the Azerbaijan SSR and its inclusion in the administrative-territorial region of Armenia. After the Azerbaijan SSR Supreme Soviet rejected the unconstitutional decision of the Armenian SSR Supreme Soviet, the nationalist leaders of Armenia began implementing the "Turkless Armenia" program of the Dashnaksutyun party. This policy, carried out from 1988 to 1991, resulted in the ethnic cleansing of all Azerbaijanis living in the territory of present-day Armenia. As a protest against the forced measures against Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, a rally was held on February 27-28, 1988.

As a result of the most recent ethnic cleansing, approximately 250,000 Azerbaijanis were expelled from 22 villages and 6 cities in Armenia. Over the past 200 years, more than two hundred Azerbaijani settlements on the current territory of Armenia have been erased from the map through various means, creating a mono-ethnic Armenian state on historical Azerbaijani lands.³²

As of January 1, 2023, Armenia has a population of 2,976,800 Armenians, according to the available information.³³

2.2. Armenians in the Republic of Georgia

The Republic of Georgia, one of the three states located in the South Caucasus, is situated at the intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. It shares borders with Russia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, Armenia and Turkey to the south. The Black Sea lies to the west of the country. The capital and largest city is Tbilisi, and the total area of the country is 69,700 square kilometers. Georgia gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

In the 80s and 90s of the 19th century, the process of Armenians migrating to Georgia began. Ivan Stepanovich Khatisov was the one who proposed the migration of Armenians to Georgia. In the years 1865-1875, he served as a special advisor to the Russian Czar for the Caucasus region.

32 Arzumalı V, Mustafa N. Tarixin qara səhifələri. Bakı, 1998, səh. 130-151

33 Демография - Правительство Республики Армения - Gov.am

In the years 1887-1893, he worked as the head of state property administration. With his participation, thousands of Armenians were resettled in Borcali, Javakheti, and along the Black Sea coast.

Between 1897 and 1902, 55,000 Armenians migrated to Georgia, settling mainly in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Tbilisi, Batumi, Gori, and other regions. In Tbilisi alone, the Armenian population increased from 46,700 to 124,900 between 1897 and 1910, with 68,000 being newcomers. In the 19th century, the largest Armenian community was located in Akhalkalaki, numbering 52,500 people. Apart from Akhalkalaki, significant Armenian populations lived in Akhaltsikhe, Sukhumi, Batumi, Tbilisi, and Borcali.

According to statistical documents from 1897, the population of the Georgian territories under the rule of the Russian Empire was 2,109,273 people. In Kutaisi Governorate, the Georgian population was 1.8 times higher than in Tiflis Governorate. Georgians constituted 44.3% of the total population in Tbilisi and 82.1% in Kutaisi Governorate. In Georgia, there were 197,000 Armenians. Armenians and Russians had a greater influx into Georgia during the second half of the 19th century. In the 19th century, Georgia's population increased by 2.7 times, while the Georgian population increased by 2.1 times. In comparison to 1895, the incoming Armenians increased by 4 times, Russians by 4 times, and Ossetians by 8 times.³⁴

It is true that in the 19th century, determining the national composition of the Georgian population was surrounded by difficulties. In 1897, it was decided to use the mother tongue to clarify the national composition. Although initially recorded on the basis of designations based on ethnic and religious characteristics, later this data was compiled in a form that would help determine the proportion of Russian speakers and develop a policy of Russification. As a result of the migration process, major changes in the national composition took place, it is known that tsarism tried to apply the policy of russification, to destroy the unified national form in the area and to dissolve the union.³⁵

After the dissolution of the Russian Empire in 1917, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was established but only lasted for a month. On May 26, 1918, the Democratic Republic of Georgia was formed and existed until 1921. The republic was bordered by the Kuban People's Republic and the North Caucasus Mountain Republic to the north, the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian Republic to the south, and the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to the southeast. During the era of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the

34 Антадзе К. Население Грузии в XIX веке (Историко-демографическое исследование). Тбилиси: Образование, 1973, с. 114

35 Джаошвили В. Население Грузии в XVIII-XX вв. Тбилиси: Наука, 1984, с. 110-111.

country's territory was approximately 107,600 km², and the population was around 2.5 million.

Following the declaration of independence in Georgia, the socio-political situation in the region became complex. In major administrative cities like Tbilisi and Kutaisi, local Armenians played a significant role in movements such as “Virk” and “Javakhk.”

The “Javakhk” movement was first established in 1988, when the separatist movement began in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The first committee established by this movement was established in Akhalkalek and later expanded its activities under the name of “Javakhk” National Movement. At the same time, one of the other important institutions operating in the region is the political party called “Virk” and the Union of Public Organizations “Samsxhe-Javakhk”. This union unites more than 10 public organizations and tries to represent the interests of the Armenian community living in Georgia. The activity of such organizations in Georgia has led to the increase of ethnic tensions and the complication of the socio-political situation in the region.

Like Armenians in other parts of the Caucasus, their migration to Abkhazia began in the 19th century. Initially arriving as guests, Armenians started claiming the land as their own after residing in the region for some time, following the pattern observed in other areas.

During the Abkhazian conflict in the 1990s, Armenians sided with Abkhazians against the central Georgian government. Subsequently, the Armenian population in the region increased rapidly. Today, Armenians in Abkhazia refer to the area as the “Black Sea coast of Armenia” and consider themselves indigenous inhabitants. During the war when Armenia was involved in military operations to seize Azerbaijani territories, Armenian residents of Abkhazia collected funds to support the invading forces. Some Armenians from Abkhazia formed terrorist groups and traveled to Nagorno-Karabakh to participate in the conflict.

The Armenians in Georgia constitute the portion of the Armenian diaspora living outside the Republic of Armenia within Georgia.

As of January 2002, according to the general population census of Georgia, the number of Armenians living in the country was 248,929.³⁶

36 Федеральная служба государственной статистики Российской Федерации: Предварительная оценка численности постоянного населения на 1 января 2013 года и в среднем за 2012 год (человек).

In the article published in the “Noev Kovcheg” newspaper in 2014, Armenians were portrayed as part of Abkhazia’s elite.³⁷

In 2016, according to the findings of the population census conducted by the National Statistics Committee of Georgia, Armenians comprised 4.5% (168,100 individuals) of the Georgian population. Armenians held the second position in terms of numerical representation among ethnic minorities residing in Georgia. Nevertheless, if we take into account Armenians with Georgian surnames, the percentage would likely be higher. During the early post-Soviet era, particularly in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Armenians articulated radical perspectives and advocated for reunification with Armenia. Presently, it is acknowledged that there are 20 Armenian public organizations (possibly 40, as per some sources) actively functioning in Georgia.

2.3. Armenians in the Republic of Azerbaijan

One of the most challenging periods in the history of Azerbaijan encompasses the years 1801-1813. The fragmentation of Azerbaijan into more than 20 smaller states, the absence of a strong unified state, and Russia’s expansionist policies exacerbated the situation. Russia, persisting in its incursions, crossed the Araz River and advanced southward, culminating in the signing of the Treaty of Gulistan. With the exception of the Khanates of Iravan and Nakhchivan, all Azerbaijani territories north of the Araz River, including the Khanate of Lenkaran, were annexed by Russia.

As part of their strategy, the Russian military aimed to relocate all Armenians from the occupied territories of Tabriz, Khoy, Salmas, and Maragha to the provinces of Nakhchivan, Iravan, and Karabakh. To justify this policy, Russia asserted that historical Azerbaijani territories like Iravan and Nakhchivan were Armenian lands.³⁸

In the 19th century, the migration of Armenians to South Caucasus marked the beginning of numerous events. During that period, Armenians enjoyed increased privileges in the region. In 1823, of the approximately 20,000 families in the Karabakh province (the territory of the former Karabakh Khanate), Armenian families constituted around 15,000. Following this migration, the ethnic composition of the population underwent a significant transformation. In 1832, Azerbaijanis made up 64.8% of the population in

37 Скаков А. Армянское лицо Абхазии // Газета «Ноев Ковчег» No 2 (232) февраль (1-15) 2014 г. <https://noev-kovcheg.ru/mag/2014-02/4312.html>

38 О именовании присоединенных к России ханств Эриванского и Нахичеванского Областия Армянского // Полное собрание законов Российской империи. Собр. вт. т. III. СПб., 1830, ст.1888

Karabakh, while Armenians accounted for 34.8%. By the 1880s in the Shusha district, Azerbaijanis constituted 41.5% of the population, while Armenians made up 58.2%.

According to the population census conducted in Russia in 1897, these figures changed to 53%, and by 1917, it was 52.3%. Subsequent censuses in 1926, 1959, 1970, and 1979 revealed that the ethnic composition of the population in the Azerbaijan SSR, in terms of Azerbaijanis and Armenians, was 89.1%, 84.4%, 80.5%, and 75.9%, respectively.³⁹

The establishment of an Armenian state under Russian protection and the relocation of Armenians to the territories occupied by Russia from Iran and Turkey was not a random occurrence. The fifteenth article of the Treaty of Turkmenchay, signed on February 10, 1828, specifically addressed the relocation of Armenians. As a result of the Treaty of Turkmenchay, 40,000 Armenians were resettled in various areas of Azerbaijan.

As a result of the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, 90,000 Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire were resettled in Azerbaijan. They primarily settled in the Khanates of Nakhchivan, Iravan, and Karabakh. Committees for resettlement were established in Iravan and Nakhchivan to facilitate the relocation of Armenians, and significant privileges were granted to the migrants. They were exempted from taxes and obligations for a period of six years, and funds were provided to them from the compensation received from Iran.

The migration of Armenians from Iran, Turkey, and other Eastern countries to Russia continued throughout subsequent periods. In 1827, Russia had occupied the Khanates of Nakhchivan and Iravan, dividing Azerbaijan into two territories controlled by the Russian Empire and the Qajar state.

From 1828 to 1831, a considerable number of Armenians were relocated to the Nakhchivan region. In Nakhchivan province and the Ordubad district, 2,387 families or 11,992 individuals (6,339 men, 5,653 women) were resettled from Iran, and 8 families or 27 individuals (17 men, 10 women) were relocated from Turkey.⁴⁰

As a result of this policy, approximately 130,000 Armenian migrants (of which 50,000 settled in the territory of the Karabakh Khanate) were relocated to the territories of Azerbaijan Khanates, spanning from 1828 to 1830.

In connection with the Armenian migration to Karabakh in the 19th century, a monument called “Maraga-150” was erected in the town of Shikarx in the

39 Ermənilərin Qarabağa köçürülməsi, <https://azerbaijan.az/related-information/105>

40 Şahverdiyev Z. Naxçıvan bölgəsi XIX-XX əsrin əvvəllərində. Bakı:2008, 133 s.

Tertar district. The monument commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Armenians' relocation from Maraga in Iran to the present-day Tertar district. The monument features intricately crafted mosaic work and has dimensions of 1.5 meters in width and 3 meters in height. It is based on the composition "Girls at the Spring." Marble columns from springs were used on the left and right sides of the monument. On top of one marble column, the year 1828 is inscribed, and on the other, the year 1978. It is said that Armenians visited this site on significant occasions. In addition to "Maraga-150," other monuments related to the relocation of Armenians in the territory of Mountainous Karabakh include "Chayli-150," "Tsghabert-150," and "Mets Shen-150." Armenians have changed the names of these settlements to reflect their own names over time.

As a result of the national struggle for independence against Tsarist Russia, Azerbaijan emerged as an independent state after the First World War. It stands as the first secular democratic republic and parliamentary republic in the Turkish and Muslim world. Initially, Ganja served as the capital, later replaced by Baku. In 1918, independent states were formed in the South Caucasus. During this time, the Armenian Democratic Republic was established on a portion of Azerbaijan's territories.

The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) covered an area of 113,900 square kilometers in South Caucasus, with a population exceeding 2.8 million. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic succumbed to the aggressive intervention of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) on April 28, 1920, violating international legal norms. The Soviet Socialist Republic was established in Northern Azerbaijan, and in 1922, it participated in the formation of the Soviet Union within the framework of the RSFSR. In 1936, it adopted the title of an independent allied republic.

Within the structure of the Soviet Union, the Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (MKAO) was established on July 7, 1923. At its inception, its territory covered 4,161 square kilometers, later expanding to 4,400 square kilometers.

In a letter to Stalin, the first secretary of the Armenian Communist Party Central Committee, Q. Arutinov, requested the unification of the Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Oblast with Armenia. According to archival documents, after Q. Arutinov's appeal to Moscow, on November 28, 1945, Georgy Malenkov forwarded the demand for the unification of Mountainous Karabakh with Armenia to Mir Jafar Bagirov.

On December 10, 1945, Mir Jafar Bagirov responded that he agreed to Arutinov's request with the condition that Shusha be excluded. Additionally,

he proposed that the territories of Azizbeyov, Vedi, and Qarabaglar, where Azerbaijanis lived, be annexed to Azerbaijan. Moreover, he suggested the return of the Azerbaijani-populated districts of Georgia's Borcali region and the Derbent and Qasimkend districts of the Dagestan Autonomous Republic to Azerbaijan. After this proposal, the issue was seemingly closed, but it was replaced by the deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia.

The Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (MKAO), possessing all essential elements of self-governance, had the status of an autonomous region within the Azerbaijan SSR according to the constitutions of the USSR in 1936 and 1977. As per the constitutions of the USSR and Azerbaijan SSR, the legal status of MKAO was presented to the Azerbaijani SSR Supreme Soviet by the People's Deputies Soviet of MKAO. This was regulated by a law adopted on June 16, 1981, concerning MKAO. The region had an established education system, with schools and institutions ranking relatively high among the republic's districts based on the number of places. The Armenian language was used in many areas, and it was employed in the government, administrative and judicial bodies, as well as in education reflecting language requirements. Local TV and radio broadcasts, as well as newspapers and journals, were also published in Armenian.⁴¹

Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict has become one of the most tragic conflicts in the history of the 20th century. In the late 1980s, Armenia began making territorial claims on Azerbaijan's historical lands, leading to acts of terrorism. Exploiting the weakening of the central Soviet government in the late 1980s, the leadership of the Armenian SSR and the Armenian diaspora initiated movements to separate MKAO, established within the Azerbaijan SSR in 1923, and annex it to the Armenian SSR. Subsequently, conflicts arose in Karabakh.

After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Armenia launched open military aggression. The territories of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts were occupied by Armenia, leading to ethnic cleansing of the population. Over a million Azerbaijanis were turned into refugees and internally displaced persons. Armenian settlers were brought illegally from abroad to the occupied territories, artificially increasing the Armenian population. Numerous other illegal actions were taken by Armenia during the occupation.

During the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, many Armenian militants, particularly those from the ASALA organization, were trained at the military training camp in Lebanon and later sent to Armenia. These terrorists played a

41 Qasımlı M.C. Azərbaycan Respublikasının tarixi (1991-2021): 2 cilddə. I cild (1991-2003). Bakı: Bakı Dövlət Universiteti, 2021. – 384 s.

significant role in the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions. During the occupation years, Armenian mercenaries, especially from Lebanon and Syria, were sent to these territories.⁴² After over 30 years of occupation, Azerbaijan reclaimed its historical territories as a result of the Patriotic War that commenced on September 27, 2020, and lasted for 44 days. In this war, Azerbaijan restored its sovereignty. The Republic of Azerbaijan, having freed its territories and restored its sovereignty, has also strengthened its position on the international stage. Today, in the liberated territories, efforts are underway to rebuild infrastructure and undertake foundational projects.

Conclusion

The research delves into information regarding the Caucasus region and the presence of Armenians in the area. Armenians are active in the North Caucasus, specifically in the Republics of Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Chechnya, Dagestan, North Ossetia-Alania, as well as in the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories. The Armenians residing in these regions benefit from the socio-economic opportunities and engage in various fields of activity. In general, the number of Armenians in the Russian Federation is 1,182,388.

Armenians can be found on all sides of the North Caucasus. In the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly between 1890 and 1920, the number of Armenians in the North Caucasus increased 2.3 times. The presence of Armenians in the region continues to contribute to tensions. This is naturally influenced by the problems they face in the areas they inhabit, as well as historical narratives and territorial claims.

It is known that Armenians are actively involved in the socio-economic sphere in the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories. In these regions, they are observed to gather in many resort cities. Many industrial sectors in these areas are managed by Armenian entrepreneurs who strive to promote the products and services of small and medium-sized businesses to the international market.

Research has revealed that the intentional resettlement of Armenians in the South Caucasus has shaped the ethnic-political map of this region with an “Armenian factor.” Despite the absence of an Armenian state in the South Caucasus until 1918, the decision of the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic on May 29, 1918, to concede the ancient Azerbaijani city of Iravan, along with its surrounding 9,000 square kilometers of territory, to

42 İşğal olunmuş ərazilərdə qanunsuz məskunlaşdırma, <https://mfa.gov.az/az/category/ermenistanin-azerbaycana-qarsi-tecavuzunun-fesadlari/isgal-olunmus-erazilerde-qanunsuz-meskunlasdirma>

the Armenians under the pressure of major powers and certain political circles laid the groundwork for Armenians to make territorial claims today and pursue a policy of expanding their territories by occupying the territories of neighboring states.

The intensive resettlement of Armenians to the South Caucasus in the mid-19th century to the early 20th century created favorable conditions for the emergence of Armenian separatism in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict has been one of the conflicts in the Caucasus region that has caused a significant loss of life. Armenians advocating for territorial claims pursued a cunning policy in this regard.

In present times, Armenian claims to the territories of Georgia are indirectly related to their mass resettlement into present-day Georgia. Armenians, who occasionally express cultural autonomy demands in Georgia and support separatists, primarily aim to acquire new territories. The basis for their claims lies in the massive resettlement of Armenians into Georgia.

During the Abkhazia conflict in the 1990s, Armenians sided with the Abkhaz against the central Georgian government. Subsequently, their numbers in the region rapidly increased, and they began to consolidate within separatist structures in various state institutions.

As a result, the resettlement of Armenians to the South Caucasus has contributed to the realization of their desires for a “Greater Armenia” or an “Armenia from sea to sea.” The presence and claims of Armenians have become a source of concern for neighboring states seeking stability in the region. This process continues into the modern era.

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