

Geopolitics Quarterly, Volume: 9, No 4, Winter 2014

PP 180-202

Geopolitical Analysis of Azerbaijan Autonomous Movement

Najleh Khandagh* - Assistant Professor of Political Sciences, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran

Received: 12/01/2013

Accepted: 09/10/2013

Abstract

The establishment of the Dimokrat party of Azerbaijan has been traditionally interpreted by both Western and Persian scholars as nothing but a soviet creation. It is an approach characterized by the importance given to the role of the Soviet Union within the province of Azerbaijan: the presence of this Communist regime has been assumed to have been such a powerful factor that the establishment of a party with so marked an affinity with socialist ideas could not have come about except under its direction and aegis. This is an answer, however, which fits the facts too neatly, a trap of which we must beware, since it conveniently hides much more complicated motivations and tensions.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Autonomous movement, Qavam, Soviet revelation, Britain, American.

* E-mail: najlekhkhandagh@gmail.com

Introduction

Autonomy is a concept found in moral, political, and bioethical philosophy. Within these contexts, it is the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision. In moral and political philosophy, autonomy is often used as the basis for determining moral responsibility for one's actions. One of the best known philosophical theories of autonomy was developed by Kant. In medicine, respect for the autonomy of patients is an important goal of deontology, though it can conflict with a competing ethical principle, namely beneficence. Autonomy is also used to refer to the self-government of the people.

According to Nika Chitadze There are three types of autonomy: 1. Emotional Autonomy 2. Behavioral Autonomy 3. Value Autonomy (Chitadze, 2013).

The end of the Twentieth Century is still characterized by geopolitical fluidity and socio-economic effervescence that tend to challenge the sovereignty of the developing state both from below and above. Violent ethnopolitical conflicts, separatist movements, rivalry for autonomy or political power, or territorial control, economic dislocation, among others, assail the integrity of the developing state.

The consequence is that states, in particular, developing states, are progressively losing their individual identities, rights, and obligations vis-à-vis civil society, in the wake of external impositions (E. Morgan, "INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION: CONFLICT, ECONOMIC DISLOCATION, AND THE HEGEMONIC ROLE OF DOMINANT ACTORS").

On the United Nations as authoritative interpretation of the Charter's norms. (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 in Wikisource states) (M., Edward 2007). It states that nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and fair equality of opportunity have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no external compulsion or interference (Chapter I - Purposes and Principles of Charter of the United Nations) which can be traced back to the Atlantic

Charter, signed on 14 August 1941, by Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, and Winston Churchill.

The problem of Azerbaijan was the corner-stone of negotiations between the central government and the Soviet Union in both a positive and negative way. The lack of understanding and attention paid to its resolution, however, elevated its negative elements at the same time as eclipsing any positive features it might have possessed. It thereby increased in magnitude and significance, and Azerbaijan and the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat* suffered the consequences.

The wishes of both the Soviet Union and Iran were fulfilled in the treaties concluded between the two countries: Iran's desire for Soviet withdrawal was, on paper, guaranteed by her agreement to a Soviet Oil concession, for which purpose the Soviets had primarily opened negotiations with Iran. However, fulfillment of these treaties was in practical terms dependent upon resolution of the disturbance in Azerbaijan, since a stable situation there was the prerequisite for the central government's ability to approve the oil treaty; while a safe border was necessary to avoid the return of Soviet military forces for 'defense' purposes.

Research Methodology

This research has been conducted thoroughly on the question whether the autonomous movement in Azerbaijan was indigenous or stimulated by Soviet Union, as many scholars pointed out.

In this research, I tried to use published books and scholar's articles in different scientific journals, mainly I have used newspapers also public record office papers.

Findings

Azerbaijan plays important geopolitical role in region. Despite of geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic (Hafeznia, 2011), historical heritage and cultural importance, has not yet progressed. As many scalars believe Azerbaijan always had been the bread basket of Iran.

Article 3 of the April 4th treaty laid down proposals concerning

Azerbaijan. These were in no way, however, sufficient or adequate to deal with the problem. No practical measures to implement the proposed peaceful negotiations or reforms were specified, despite the condition that these should be performed according to the Constitutional Law. Furthermore, it contained no assurances from the Soviet Union that she would support the democratic movement, a necessary factor, since the Soviet aid was in reality the only surety for the survival and establishment of such movements in Iran.

The Soviet Union itself approved the treaty of April 4th, 1946, but had several reservations and apprehensions (*Azerbaijan (newspaper)*, 11th April, 1946).¹ Azerbaijan measures laid out in it, it raised no voice of protest. Neither were the leaders sure about Qavam's reconciliation policy, since they distrusted his motives and purposes, but wished to avoid conflict with the central government and further bloodshed; thus when Qavam announced in a press interview (*Iran-i Ma*, 8th April, 1946)² that he was in the process of preparing an invitation to an Azerbaijan delegation for talks, the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat* accepted reluctantly in the hope that the negotiations might prove successful in the long run.

Future events vindicated their pessimism, since Qavam's promises were broken, nor could the Soviet Union support the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat* due to international pressure. Therefore, the central government, backed by the West, finally suppressed the movement in December 1946.

While the Iranian case was being discussed at the U.N., Qavam was making efforts to settle the central government's dispute with the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat* on a purely internal basis. Qavam outlined a set of proposals which were already approved by the Council of State in the absence of *Majlis*, which was in recess, on 22nd April, 1946 (*Dad*, 23rd April, 1946):

1. The National Parliament of Azerbaijan was to be dissolved, and its ministers to become directors of various departments, with their instructions coming from Tehran, within the new Provincial Council.
2. The governor of Azerbaijan should be approved both by the Provincial Council and the central government; and the army chiefs and gendarmerie officers were to be appointed by the central government.

3. The official language of Azerbaijan was to be Persian, but official documents should also be written in Turkish, and the first 5 years of primary education should be in Turkish.
4. Part of the annual tax revenue received from Azerbaijan would be spent on reforms in the province.
5. Freedom of activity should be granted to all democratic movements and trade unions.
6. There should be no persecution or harassment of Firqa-yi Dimokrat members.
7. The central government agreed to a system of proportional representation for Azerbaijan, in the Majlis. Since the elections had already been held, this proposal would be given to the 15th Majlis for approval, and additional Map's subsequently elected, to complete the necessary number.

These proposals were sent to Azerbaijan through Ipakchiyan, the Azerbaijan representative in the 14th Majlis (Khandagh, 2009), with an invitation to Firqa-yi Dimokrat leaders to come to Tehran for discussions over them. Pishavari thus led a delegation, which arrived in Tehran on 29th April, 1946. Before leaving, Pishavari gave a speech at Tabriz airport: "The freedom which we have achieved is safeguarded by the Fidais and is inviolable. Azerbaijan will fight to the last man to retain this freedom" (Azerbaijan, 29th April, 1946).

Analysis

Analysis of the press editorials of this time indicates that the Iranian people as a whole favored the system and reforms instituted in Azerbaijan, and wished for their implementation throughout Iran, in spite of the propaganda campaign mounted by the central government against the Firqa-yi Dimokrat. Kayhan, a non-political paper, urged Pishavari to extend his activity beyond Azerbaijan: if Qavam did not accede to this, Pishavari should return Azerbaijan and cut off any further negotiations (Kayhan, 9th May, 1946).

The Azerbaijan delegation met with a delegation appointed by Qavam. After several meetings, however, no agreement had been reached: the

Azerbaijan delegation was unable to accept the proposals because most depended upon the approval of the 15th Majlis which was not yet in session and the delegation could not trust its future consideration; and it also refused to amalgamate the National Army of Azerbaijan with the Iranian army as called for by Qavam. Pishavari resisted this fiercely out of past experience of the brutality and crimes perpetrated by the gendarmerie in Azerbaijan. The nascent democratic movement would be crushed by the Iranian army and gendarmes if neither were reformed.

Although both parties were eager for a solution, with the constant encouragement also of Sadchikov, the negotiations between Qavam and the Firqa-yi Dimokrat were ultimately unsuccessful due to the uncompromising objection raised by Riza Shah to the autonomous movement or to the Soviet influence in Iran. Thus, the delegation returned to Azerbaijan after 15 days, on 13th May, but the way was left open for continued diplomatic negotiations.

Despite the completed withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran by May 9th, 1946, Ala subsequently sent a formal letter on behalf of Tehran to the U.N. Secretary General, stating that the requested report by Iran and the Soviets on the withdrawal could not be made because Iran could still not implement its authority over Azerbaijan as a result of Soviet interference; conditions for the making of the report were thus not available.

Qavam was angered by Ala's unauthorized statement, and immediately sent a telegram to the U.N. denying its validity, and confirming the complete withdrawal of Soviet forces. The Security Council ignored Qavam's telegram, and retained the Iranian case on its agenda: the West was not in fact satisfied with withdrawal. Her ultimate aim was the suppression of all movements in Iran, particularly in Azerbaijan, which were contrary to her interests, so withdrawal could not therefore be for them the end of the matter. Secondly, the contradiction between Ala and Qavam made a proper decision concerning the issue impossible.

For the above reason, Qavam ordered Ala not to attend any further meetings of U.N., although he was permitted to remain as Iranian ambassador

in Washington.

Qavam's real aim was the suppression of all democratic movements within Iran, and especially the Firqa-yi Dimokrat Azerbaijan. His enthusiasm for negotiations was merely a front to buy popular support, for while publicly denying bloodshed, (Keyhan, 3rd April, 1946) Qavam was preparing the ground for an invasion of Azerbaijan. For example, in the summer, Qavam assured the American embassy in Tehran that following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the Iranian army would be sent into Azerbaijan to restore order and the authority of the central government without delay. His pretence of negotiations had nevertheless continued, and Qavam sent a delegation headed by Muzaffar Firuz, his political assistant, to Tabriz. An agreement was reached on 13th June, 1946, according to which the Firqa-yi Dimokrat accepted the establishment of a Provincial Council upon the dissolving of National Parliament, and gave the central government authority over Khamsa and its capital Zanjan. In return, they gained the some concessions:(Abrahamian, 1982)

This treaty was signed on 13th June, 1946 in Tabriz. The Firqa-yi Dimokrat switched policies following the signing of the treaty: They believed Qavam truly to desire a democratic government; it was their task to be the model for the whole of Iran, and they should thus unite with all progressive and democratic movements in order to free Iran from its reactionary elements and establish a democratic state.

The agreement, while admittedly giving a fair number of concessions to Firqa-yi Dimokrat, could not however stand up for use as a model for democratic government in the whole of Iran, since it was a narrow treaty made solely with the Firqa-yi Dimokrat-i Azerbaijan. Most of the concessions were dependent, further, on approval by the 15th Majlis, the elections for which had not yet been held, and the results of which were an unknown factor.

The future of the National Army, and the Fida'i groups, the main defenders of Azerbaijan, was given into the hands of a somewhat undefined and therefore powerless commission, which ultimately was incapable of reaching

a decision that favored the Azerbaijani people: the National Army was finally dissolved into the Iranian army, and the Fida'is into the gendarmerie.

The most far-reaching consequence of the treaty was perhaps the surrender of Khamsa and Zanjan. The Khamsa people were hurt by the action of the Firqa-yi Dimokrat, since they had participated in the revolution against the central government in Azerbaijan from its inception, and had before that raised their own revolt in sympathy (Rahbar, 5th December, 1945). At the start of the talks between Tabriz and Tehran, they had urged Pishavari that they resisted belonging to Tehran but rather wished to belong with Azerbaijan: a declaration was issued following meeting of 50000 in Zanjan which stated (Fred H., Aug., 1989):

Zanjan is the outlet of Azerbaijan to Iran. Khamsa culturally, linguistically, and geographically is bound to Azerbaijan, and it is therefore not fair to exchange it with Takab and Sardasht, bearing in mind also the large size of Khamsa. We are frightened of the consequences of central government control, and fight to the last man to belong to Azerbaijan.

Pishavari sent a reply to this assuring the people of Khamsa that they had no cause for worry, since the Firqa-yi Dimokrat would continue to support them: as long as the Firqa existed, Khamsa and Zanjan would be under its protection. Therefore, while the province had temporarily been given to Tehran, it was merely to allow Azerbaijan to reach a speedy agreement with the central government and thus resolve their difference. Yet again, when the central government and army occupied Khamsa, the pessimism which had prevailed despite Pishavari's reassurances, was proved justified, for much brutality ensued throughout the province (Namvar, 1977).

The central government claimed that concessions to democratic movements within Iran were dangerous because they were infectious: once compromises were made to Azerbaijan, other similar groups would immediately demand the same rights and treatments. To his end, uprising took place E. g., in Khuzistan, Isfahan, fars, ... They condemn that Qavam was employing a discriminatory policy that granted rights to one group and denied them to another.

This was further confirmed by the continuation of disturbances during the negotiations. Such acts had the purpose of demonstrating to the Iranian people that concessions to democratic movements such as those in Azerbaijan resulted only in instability in Iran, an unfavorable situation, and gave Qavam justification for their suppression.

Thus, the Khuzestan rebellion was a deliberate uprising staged by the British in collusion with the Iranian reactionary elements, in order to discredit the Azerbaijan movement in the eyes of the Iranian public, thus dissuading them from supporting such democratic demands. It was closely supervised both by Qavam and by Muhammad Riza Shah himself, and did not accord with the actual wishes and desires of the Khuzistani people themselves. The tribes within Iran were traditional instruments of the British and Tehran to instigate government-planned uprisings, so that the participation of the Qashqai clearly points to government in the Khuzestan revolt.

Proof for the complicity of the central government in the Khuzestan rebellion lies in various sources. Belief in British inspiration and guidance behind the Qashqai was widespread in Iran. Qavam himself was unable to hide the fact, yet no official condemnation was forthcoming from Tehran of such involvement. It was nevertheless recognized openly by Muzaffar Firuz upon his return to Tehran, when he announced to the press that the uprising was engineered by Iranian traitors in collusion with the British. The press also reported that arms, ammunition and financial backing were flowing to Khuzestan out of Tehran, believed to be supplied by reactionaries within the capital (Iran-i Ma, 9th October, 1946). Finally, the almost immediate release of the rebellion's instigators was in sharp contrast to the arrest and imprisonment of two army pilots who attempted to attack Nasir Qashqa'i's tent.

Despite the efforts of Qavam and the government to hide their conspiracy, their motives in employing a policy of deterrence were seen through without difficulty by the majority of interested Iranians. As a consequence, the Khuzestan rebellion was not taken as a serious democratic movement, nor did it discourage support for the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat-i Azerbaijan*, or similar

movements elsewhere in Iran. The only common factor obtaining between Khuzestan and Azerbaijan was foreign sponsorship: yet even here, however, a difference of motive was clear, for while the British policy was essentially negative and destructive, the support received from the Soviet Union by Firqa-yi Dimokrat was at least positive, in that it was leading to a better, democratic rule in Azerbaijan.

The Firqa-yi Dimokrat leaders were freedom lovers, reformists, progressivisms; old experienced politicians, with good educations, who wanted democratic rights for Azerbaijan and for the whole of Iran, instead of its exploitation. Azerbaijan had also been known for centuries as the seat of popular uprisings in Iran, manifested in its primary role in the Constitutional Revolution.

The tribal chiefs, on the other hand, were uneducated men who sided with the landowners, the exploiters of the peasants. Democracy threatened their power and rule, and they were thus anxious to stamp out any indications of it when they arose. Their interests coincided not with the local population, but rather with the British outside, as evidenced in 1924 under Shaykh Khazal. Khuzistan had no background of democratic uprisings as had Azerbaijan.

Kayhan reported, for example: "The destruction and killing in Khuzistan was not repeated even by 1% in Azerbaijan", (Kayhan, 14th August, 1948) and Qiyam-i Iran stated: "The Azerbaijan revolution, whatever it was, was based on humanity, and wished to free millions of suppressed people. But in Fars, nothing was created except destruction and murder" (Qiyam-i Iran, 22nd August, 1948).

Despite this disparity between Khuzistan and Azerbaijan, it was the Firqa-yi Dimokrat whose leaders were arrested, imprisoned or executed, and its members harassed, while those of Khuzistan were released, and the participants in the revolt treated differentially after its failure.

The staging of the Khuzistan revolt in order to disaffect people with the Firqa-yi Dimokrat was followed by further steps in that direction taken by Qavam. On the advice of Allen, the American ambassador to Tehran, Qavam set up the Hizbi Dimokrati Iran on June 29th, 1946, as a rival party to Tudeh,

whose power was increasing, and who were allied to the Firqa-yi Dimokrat(Edwards, A.C., 1947).

The Hizbi Dimokrat was the official government Party, around which Iranian reactionaries, such as Sayyid Ziya and his followers, the Union of Khuzistani tribes, and other conservative right-wing elements gathered. The establishment of Qavam's party was met with a worried reaction from the progressive parties in Iran, and led to the formation of a coalition between the Hizbi Iran and the Tudeh (Foreign Relations 1946).

The strength of the Tudeh was dramatically demonstrated to Qavam with the Abadan oil strike, inspired by the Tudeh. Qavam accordingly announced the establishment of a Coalition Cabinet on August 1st, 1946, in which four members of the two parties were appointed – three from the Tudeh and one from the Hizbi Iran (Le Rougetel to Foreign Office 2/8/46). Qavam justified this step, saying that "it makes it possible for all parties to participate in the implementation of reforms in Iran" (Ramazani, 1971).

The truth lies, however, in Zabih's statement that Qavam's purpose was the weakening of the Tudeh opposition.

The inclusion of Tudeh and Hizbi Iran (Khandagh, 2011) members in the new Coalition Cabinet raised its prestige amongst the population, among whom support for these parties ran high at this time. This was indeed political skill by Qavam, who thereby effectively removed their voice of criticism since Tudeh members were now represented in the government. The latter kept silent, therefore, and allowed time to pass for Qavam to institute reforms throughout Iran. Therein lay their greatest mistake, however, for their lack of opposition gave Qavam the time to establish himself and the Hizbi Dimokrati Iran. The Hizbi Dimokrat ran a campaign of harassment against the Tudeh, especially in the South.

For this reason, allied with the reaching of an agreement between Qavam and Qashqai to consider the Khuzestan rebellion as a revolutionary movement, and the setting up by Qavam of an electoral commission composed entirely of Hizbi Dimokrat members, the Tudeh ministers withdrew from their posts in protest and the Coalition Cabinet collapsed after

only 75 days existence (Jabha, 21st November, 1946).

The Tudeh stated that their alliance with Qavam had been made in the hope of gaining democracy throughout Iran. However, events had proved that Qavam in reality only desired the suppression of democratic movements, and thus the Tudeh were forced to end their co-operation in his Cabinet. In the face of criticism that the Tudeh should never have participated in the Cabinet, the party justified its involvement on the ground that if they had not, Iran would have fragmented into warring parties.

The Cabinet collapse was unimportant for Qavam's situation in fact and even furthered his own interests. His own Hizb-i Dimokrat-i Iran had consolidated, and was, with the support of conservative, reactionary, anti-Communist elements, strong enough to oppose the Tudeh. Qavam astutely realized also, however, that his co-operation and conciliatory policy towards the left-wing in Iran was drawing the disapproval of his Western allies, and therefore welcomed the break between them (New York Times, July 18th, 1946).

Qavam was worried, however, over the Firqa-yi Dimokrat-i Azerbaijan. The Firqa were only force, with a National Army and Fida'i groups, which possessed the capability of overthrowing Qavam's government. Here again, nevertheless, Qavam acted very astutely: Qavam approached the ambassador, Allen, in August 1946, informing him that his primary aim was the suppression of the Firqa-yi Dimokrat in Azerbaijan. His eagerness to achieve this goal was modified by his fear on the other hand, that such an act would lead to immediate Soviet intervention. He was therefore requesting an assurance from the United States that she would take steps on Iran's behalf in the event of such an occurrence. Allen replied indirectly, by intimating that the case would be taken up by the U.N. if events happened to make it necessary (Allen, G.V., Papers, 'et al', Harry S.).

Qavam therefore invited a delegation from Tabriz to continue negotiations in Tehran, which arrived on 20th August. The delegation was confined to accommodation on the outskirts of Tehran by Qavam, in order to ensure their isolation from unwelcome lobbyists. Qavam ignored the former treaty signed

between Pishavari and Muzaffar Firuz (Atabaki, 2000), for his object in inviting a further delegation was merely to employ delaying tactics: negotiations would appease Azerbaijan over the treaty, but Qavam would also be able to buy the time he needed for the instigation of the Khuzistani rebellion. This would function as a weapon to wield against the Firqa-yi Dimokrat in the autonomy propaganda war being waged by Tehran.

At the same time as Qavam publicly avowed and apparently pursued a conciliatory policy, he was reaching agreement with the Shah, the Western Allies and internal conservative elements in Iran to prepare for the invasion of Azerbaijan by government troops. The Tabriz delegation remained in Tehran for two months and finally left without any conclusive agreements in hand, except over minor and insignificant points, recognizing the game being played with them by Qavam, when he eventually became open with them: Qavam threatened that Khuzistan was about to separate from Iran if Azerbaijan did not give up its demands (Azerbaijan, 24th September, 1946).

The Firqa-yi Dimokrat were anxious not to provide Qavam with any excuse to justify his suppression of the movement. They therefore made great efforts to abide by the treaty of 13th June, 1946, as well as by the oral agreements reached by the subsequent delegation. The Provincial Council agreed the withdrawal of the Firqa-yi Dimokrat from Zanjan: it was begun thereafter, and completed on 21st November, 1946. Resistance arose on the last day from the local Fadai, but subsided upon their receipt of a message from Pishavari urging them not to fight. They also received a guarantee from Qavam that no reprisals would be made if they surrendered.

However, on 23rd November, the Iranian Army, supported by gendarmes and heavy arms, invaded Zanjan under the command of Col. Hashimi. The Firqa-yi Dimokrat and trade union members were arrested and executed, so many people were killed on the streets and roads that many became impassable; two hundred houses at least were ransacked and their occupants fled (Khandaniha, Amirani, A.A. (newspapers). At 1a.m, martial law was imposed in Zanjan by the central government.

The Firqa-yi Dimokrat sent complaints to Qavam, protesting that only 300

gendarmes were to be brought into Zanzan according to the treaty, not the Iranian army nor the resulting bloodshed. Qavam's response came with a declaration claiming that such a force had been necessary to control the sabotage and public harassment pursued by the local Fidayis, while denying the scale of the crimes perpetrated. The Tehran press also participated in the vilifying of the Firqa-yi Dimokrat, portraying the democratic movement and central government in reverse roles: the Firqa were executing patriotic figures and were anti-monarchists, since they removed pictures of the Shah throughout the province. All of this propaganda was groundless, since in reality the Firqa-yi Dimokrat brought about public welfare and security through Azerbaijan. Its aim was to prepare the ground for the invasion of the whole of Azerbaijan.

This is shown in the declaration made by Qavam on 22nd November, where he said that security was a necessity for the holding of Majlis elections. He therefore intended sending troops to all provinces, including Azerbaijan, in order to safeguard the free electoral procedure without pressure upon the individual's choice. Qavam thus opened the way for similar action to be taken in Azerbaijan as had been initiated in Zanzan.

The effect of Qavam's declaration was, despite its clarity, one of great amazement. The governor of Tabriz, Javid, inquired of Qavam whether he was intending to send forces also to Azerbaijan: Qavam's reply was a clear affirmative (Dad, 22nd and 25th November, 1946). This sparked off another telegram from the Provincial Council of Azerbaijan, indicating that since the Azerbaijan army and gendarmes belonged to the armed forces of Iran, there existed no grounds for a further influx of troops; neither did, or should, a democratic country resort to military safeguarding of elections. The entry of military forces into Azerbaijan would be considered as an act of aggression: they urged Qavam to instead send inspectors to supervise the elections.

Qavam ignored the request of the Provincial Council, but made it clear in another telegram to Javid that the Provincial Council possessed no authority to reject Qavam's proposal to send troops into Azerbaijan, for it in no way violated the treaty but was concerned solely with the supervision of elections.

Qavam concluded by threatening Javid with the consequences if Azerbaijan refused entry to Iranian forces. This was followed by a letter in which Qavam urged Javid to facilitate the entry of troops so that the elections might be soon get underway. A similar telegram was received by Ghazi Muhammad, the leader of Hizb-i Dimokrat-i Kurdistan, from Qavam, informing him of military supervision also in Kurdistan. Ghazi Muhammad replied that Kurdistan's Provincial Council was well capable of supervising elections in the province, and had no need of extra, outside Iranian army forces (Kristen Blake, 2009).

Qavam's response to the appeals made both by Azerbaijan and Kurdistan was indeed in violation of the treaty of 13th June, 1946: Qavam was thereby repealing the authority given to the Provincial Councils in the treaty. The pretext of electoral supervision was a very thin disguise for Qavam's real intention to invade Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijan forces were in themselves quite capable of performing the task without additional help. The necessity for troops belonged rather to the South, where the central government faced competition and resistance, and where authority ultimately rested in the hands of the British and the tribal chiefs, and outside the control of Tehran – compared to the opposite situation in the North.

In spite of Qavam's insistence on the need for free, democratic elections, this, too, was made under false pretences. In radio, press and newsreel interviews, Qavam claimed that the elections must be won by the Hizb-i Dimokrat-i Iran, (Rahbar, 1st December, 1946) so that free elections would have been held in name only; nor would it have been possible for such a short-lived, government, party to have won in such elections.

Once Pishavari realized Qavam's firm intention of suppressing the Firqa-yi Dimokrat, he announced that Azerbaijan would only be entered by Iranian forces over the bodies of Azerbaijan people. Thereafter, the whole of the province mobilized itself – the National Army, Fidai, and a partisan group, Babak – as well as the Firqa-yi Dimokrat and trade unions. The paper Azerbaijan played an important role in the mobilization, also informing the world of Azerbaijan's response to Qavam's policy. Thus on 1st November, an

article was published under the title, "To be killed as a martyr is better than life under dictatorial rule" (Rahbar, 1st December, 1946), and another on the following day saying, "Azerbaijanis are prepared to die rather than to live under suppression" (Gary R. Hess, Mar., 1974). The military staff of the army college in Tabriz also went on radio urging the Iranian army not to co-operate or participate in Qavam's plan for Azerbaijan.

On 3rd November a large meeting was held between members of the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat* and trade unions to receive permission from the movement's leaders to arm themselves. Pishavari declared that their intention was to gain democracy not simply for Azerbaijan but over all Iran, by replacing the reactionary central government in Tehran with a democratic one. Pishavari thus gained approval from many other progressives throughout Iran, who gave Azerbaijan their support.

Simultaneously, the committee overseeing the electoral proceedings began preparations for the supervision of the 15th *Majlis* elections, despite the mobilization. Qavam, however, declared their function to be illegal, since it was his decision that it belonged to the Iranian army and not to the Azerbaijan committee, although this, too, was an illegal act according to the 13th June treaty.

Qavam announced the entry of Iranian forces into Azerbaijan on 10th December, 1946: troops were moved from Zanzan towards Miyana. This advance was met by mobilization of Azerbaijan troops to the fortress of Qafankuh.

The *Fidai* were able to push Qavam's forces back to Zanzan, and Pishavari indeed encouraged the *Fidai* groups to march all the way to Tehran in order to overthrow the government.

Qavam's policy towards Azerbaijan was carried out on the basis of a systematic and carefully developed plan. Since Iran had become an international issue, with Azerbaijan at its centre, Qavam was dealing with external factors and influences of which Azerbaijan had now become a part. British and American interest was exhibited in a concern for the suppression on the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat*, and therefore supported Qavam's view; (New York

Times, November 30th, 1946) on the other hand, Qavam was aware that the Soviet Union would in an eventuality not back the Firqa. With this knowledge, and because of it, Qavam drew up his course of action as regarded Azerbaijan.

Qavam's assessment of the Soviet reaction was confirmed by their response, which clearly indicated their acquiescence in Tehran's actions.

The Soviet military and political advisors to Firqa-yi Dimokrat withdrew from Azerbaijan three days before the invasion, taking with them the heavy arms which the Soviet Union had supplied to the movement, and leaving the National Army solely with light weapons. Furthermore, the Azerbaijan military commanders received orders from the Soviets to retreat from Qafankuh to Tabriz. Pishavari himself was given personal instructions not to resist, and urged together with all those who were under threat of death to flee to the Soviet Union. Pishavari was therefore compelled to leave Azerbaijan for the USSR (Allen, G.V., Papers. 'et al', Harry S.) and was succeeded as leader of Firqa-yi Dimokrat by Biriya.

Consequently, despite the willingness of the Azerbaijanis to fight, the Fidai's advance to Zanjan and the wide support of progressives throughout Iran, the result of the Soviet instructions was to effect the dissolution of the Firqa-yi Dimokrat's resistance, in complete confusion, on the orders of army headquarters and the Firqa-yi Dimokrat leaders, a retreat was thus begun.

Biriya subsequently declared the surrender of Azerbaijan on 11th December, 1946. He followed this with a further declaration the next day, urging the Azerbaijanis to lay down their arms and allow the Iranian army to enter the province. Telegrams were sent by Javid and Shabistari announcing Azerbaijan's surrender to Muhammad Riza Shah and Qavam. This action foreclosed the options of Azerbaijan public to fight and continue resistance, and they were left to await the destiny of Azerbaijan at the hands of Tehran. 70000 National Army and Fidai members, however, were recruited into the Soviet armed forces, since they did not trust the intentions of the Iranian army, and feared for their lives (Rossow, R., 1964).

The Iranian army entered Tabriz on 13th December. Martial Law was

immediately proclaimed, and Gen. Hashimi announced the annulment of all previous and standing treaties between Tabriz and Tehran (Dad, 18th December, 1946). Widespread brutality broke out, with so much slaughter that the gutters ran with blood and the streets were filled with corpses: the military units' behaviour resembled that of a foreign invading army. According to eye-witnesses (The many witnesses include: Mr. Nawbakht, Mr. Madani, Mr. Shamshiri). Fidai members were 'quartered' by horse carriages, with medieval savagery, together with Firqa-yi Dimokrat members and others. All Azerbaijan, town by town and village by village, was occupied by Iranian forces, while the carnage proceeded apace; throughout the province, more than 20000 civilians were killed, and many others injured. Even according to the records of the Iranian army, which minimized the figures, 2500 were executed, 8000 imprisoned, and 36000 people expelled from Azerbaijan. This minimization is found in Western sources also, including, for example, Robert Rossow, who puts the number merely in hundreds. William Douglas on the other hand, states that the behaviour of the Iranian troops far exceeded the brutality of the Soviet forces, while the brutality of the gendarmes and landowners in the countryside was so bad that the hardship suffered by the peasants was overwhelming: vast numbers were either killed or died from starvation, as a result of the landowners harassment and exploitation of them.

Under these conditions, the survival of the Firqa-yi Dimokrat was an impossibility, and it therefore dissolved. Some of its members joined Tudeh committees; as a result, the Tudeh adopted the partisan policy formerly employed by the Firqa, instead of its own previous parliamentary approach (Personal interview with Col. Shrif, March 1982). They subsequently went underground until February 1946, when the Shah's life was threatened and the Tudeh was finally outlawed (Cuyler Young, t., Spring 1952).

1946 ended with the suppression of the Firqa-yi Dimokrati Azerbaijan and the Kurdistan rebellion, in Iran, and the sympathetic Tudeh Party suffered much pressure from Qavam, who appointed anti-communist governors in various important provinces and encouraged direct suppression of

organization and public expression. 1947 opened, however, still with no resolution of the proposed oil concession to the Soviets. In Soviet eyes, elections for the 15th Majlis were of paramount importance, in order for the ratification of the oil treaty made on April 4th, 1946. Anxiety for elections within Iran itself was also growing because Qavam's disguise was wearing thin, and his unpopularity was increasing. As a result, Qavam announced that elections would finally be held in Tehran from January 11th-17th, and in the provinces following that date. Progressives and nationalists in Iran were concerned that Qavam would make sure that the Hizb-i Dimokrat-i Iran would gain the majority, and therefore appealed to the Shah to wield his influence to prevent such an event occurring. Either because of inability or unwillingness the Shah did nothing, and the Hizb-i Dimokrat-i Iran gained an overwhelming majority in the elections, announced on February 21st, 1947.

Immediately upon the sitting of the 15th Majlis, however, Qavam came under sharp criticism from Musaddiq and the nationalists for even opening negotiations with the Soviets for an oil concession while the bill prohibiting concessions, passed by the 14th Majlis, was still in force (New York Times, September 8th, 1947). Qavam gave them no satisfactory reply, and, in anger, he walked out of the Majlis with 90 other sympathetic members. Nevertheless, Qavam won a vote of confidence on October 5th, 1947, with the support of 93 members out of 120.

It was therefore obvious that the Soviet oil concession would be rejected by the 15th Majlis, for the majority of M.P.s were pro-Western and anti-Communist and Qavam's leanings towards America meant that the Truman Doctrine would be applied to Soviet expansionism in the Middle East. It was thereby refused on October 22nd, 1947, on the grounds that it had originally been made under duress.

Qavam suppressed the Firqa-yi Dimokrat, and the Hizb-I Kumala-yi Kurdistan, and the Tudeh Party, and rejected the Soviet oil concession all on the basis of Western support in the face of aggression from the Soviet Union (Doenecke, 'et al', Allen, G.V., Papers, 1972 Spring-Summer).

Conclusion

The Azerbaijan democratic movement arose out of general dissatisfaction with the central government's policies and the regime in Tehran. It was fueled by the readiness of the Azerbaijanis to fight for reforms after years of suppression, and given the opportunity to develop through the presence of Soviet forces sympathetic to democratic movements in Iran. Following the oil treaty signed with the USSR, the localized policy of the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat* was universalized to extend over the whole of Iran. By so doing, they received further support and backing from other progressive parties in the country, and together with others, formed the Freedom Front in November, 1946. At the end of one year, the movement had reached such strength as to be able to take over Tehran: it refrained from doing so, however, as a consequence of Qavam's conciliatory attitude. This was in all probability their greatest mistake, for it gave time and occasion to Qavam to plan their destruction.

The primary factor in the events that led to the collapse of the Azerbaijan movement lay in the withdrawal of support by the Soviet Union. Confusion still exists over the radical alteration in Soviet policy: some observers (George Allen; cf. Papers of G.V. Allen, 'et al', Harry S.) believe that it was a result of the promise of an oil concession, together with the view that Azerbaijan should be the internal affair of Iran, and opposition to the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat* from within Azerbaijan itself. These reasons, however, do not do justice to the complexity or truth of the issue. Two alternative explanations can be seriously put forward: the threat made by the United States to drop an atomic bomb (Javid, 1979) on the Soviet Union if she did not withdraw her support from Azerbaijan, or from similar movements in the rest of the world, a threat which the Soviet Union at that time could not return. More likely, is the suggestion that the Soviet Union, America and Britain came to an agreement whereby Soviet influence was approved in China in return for withdrawal of support from the *Firqa* regime, Gen. Markos Vafiades in Greece, the Communist Party of Italy, and other communist parties throughout the world (Woodhane, 1968).

The Azerbaijan movement, while being democratic, modern and progressive, achieving many reforms, thus fell victim to international politics and intrigues and was sacrificed to factors and interests external both to Azerbaijan itself and to Iran.

Apart from those external factors enumerated above and the opposition from central government, a further crucial reason for failure was disunity amongst the progressive movement generally and central leadership of the movement in particular. The talk of unity did not translate into practice; Qavam exploited this weakness and thus systematically destroyed the threat in a manner similar to that employed in the 1979 Revolution, according to certain critics.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my appreciation to the Research Deputy of Tarbiat Modares University for providing the possibility of doing this research.

References

- Abrahamian, E (1982), *Iran between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, pp. 217-218.
- Allen, G.V., Papers, 'et al', Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, p.59.
- Allen, G.V., Papers, 'et al', Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, p.62.
- Atabaki, Touraj (2000), *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran*, 129-79.
- Azerbaijan (newspaper), (11th April, 1946), no.170[in Azeri].
- Azerbaijan, (24th September, 1946), no.306[in Azeri].
- Azerbaijan, (29th April, 1946), no.185[in Azeri].
- Azerbaijan, (2nd December, 1946), no.363[in Azeri].
- Chapter I - Purposes and Principles of Charter of the United Nations.
- Chitadze, N (2013), *Journal of social sciences, Geopolitical Interests of Iran in South Caucasus and Georgian-Iranian Relations*[in Persian].
- Cuyler Young, t., spring 1952, "The Soviet Support of Current Iranian Policy", *MEJ*, vol.6, no.2, p.140.
- Dad, (18th December, 1946), no.909.
- Dad, (22nd and 25th November, 1946), nos. 889 and 891.
- Dad, (newspaper), (23rd April, 1946), no.720.
- Doenecke, 'et al', Allen, G.V., Papers (1972) Spring-Summer, "Iran's Role in Cold War Revisionism", *Iranian Studies*, p.100, . Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, p.56.
- E. Morgan, "INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION: CONFLICT, ECONOMIC DISLOCATION, AND THE HEGEMONIC ROLE OF DOMINANT ACTORS". The international of journal of peace studies. www.gmu.edu/pgm/icar/ijps/vol6_2/Conteh-Morgan.htm.
- Edwards, A.C., (1947), "Persia Revisited", *International Affairs*, 23, pp.57-59.
- *Foreign Relations* (1946), 7: 505-506.
- Fred H., (Aug., 1989), "The Iranian Crisis of 1945-1946 and the Spiral Model of International Conflict", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3., p. 316.
- Gary R. Hess, (Mar., 1974) *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 89, No. 1, pp. 117-146.
- George Allen; cf. Papers of G.V. Allen, 'et al', Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo., USA, p.65.
- Hafeznia, M.R (2011), *Emerging Perspective of the World Geopolitical Structure, Geopolitical Quarterly, an international Journal, Iranian Association of Geopolitics*[in Persian].
- *Iran-i Ma*, (9th October, 1946), no.649[in Persian].
- *Iran-i Ma*, (newspaper), (8th April, 1946), no.500[in Persian].
- *Jabha*, (newspaper), 21st November, 1946[in Persian].
- Javid, S (1979), *Nazhat-i Milli-yi Azerbaijan Haqqinda*, (In the Azerbaijan National Movement) , Tehran[in Azeri].
- Kayhan, (14th August, 1948), no.1609. [in Persian].
- Kayhan, (3rd April, 1946), no.960[in Persian].
- Kayhan, (9th May, 1946), no.943[in Persian].

- Khandagh, N (2009), The Democratic Movement in Iran's Azerbaijan Province in 20th Century :a Critical Analysis, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, an international Journal, Iranian Association of Geopolitics.
- Khandagh, N (2011), The political Parties in Iran between 1941-47, with particular emphasis on the Left-wings Parties, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, an international Journal, Iranian Association of Geopolitics.
- Khandaniha, Amirani, A.A. (newspapers), yr.7, no.52, p.12[in Persian].
- Kristen Blake, 2009, The U.S-Soviet Confrontation in Iran, 1945-1962.
- Le Rougetel to Foreign Office 2/8/46. F.O. 371/Persia 46/34-52709.
- M, Edward (2007). *Self-Determination of Peoples and Plural-Ethnic States in Contemporary International Law: Failed States, Nation-Building and the Alternative, Federal Option*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. p. 8. ISBN 9004158359.
- Namvar, R (1977), *Ya Nama-yi Shahidan, (Or, Facade of the martyrs)*, Tehran, pp.16-25[in Persian].
- New York Times, (newspaper), November 30th, 1946.
- New York Times, July 18th, 1946.
- New York Times, September 8th, 1947.
- Personal interview with Col. Shrif, March 1982.
- Qiyam-i Iran, (newspaper), (22nd August, 1948), no.383[in Persian].
- Rahbar, (1st December, 1946), no.874[in Persian].
- Rahbar, (newspaper), (5th December, 1945), no.647[in Persian].
- Ramazani, R.K (1971), "The Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kurdish People's Republic: Their Rise and Fall" *Studies on the Soviet Union*, 11, p.147.
- Rossow, R., 1964, "Red Tanks from a Moslem Graveyard", in Lisagou and Higgins, *Overtime in Heaven*, New York, p.31.
- The many witnesses include: Mr. Nawbakht, Mr. Madani, Mr. Shamshiri.
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 in Wikisource states.
- Woodhane, C.H., 1968, *The Story of Modern Greece*, London, 1968; Campbell, J. 'et al', Sherrard, p, *Modern Greece*, London.