

The Issue of Azerbaijan in Ottoman Society and the role of the Special Organization Teshkilat-i Mahsusa

Asim Jannatov 

Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Baku, Azerbaijan
aze.asim93@gmail.com

Abstract

The issue of Azerbaijan was the focus of attention of the Ottoman Empire before the proclamation of the Republic of Turkiye. The Ottoman dynasty, which had conquered a large part of Europe up to the gates of Vienna, later lost much of its territory. The loss of large areas of the Ottoman Empire forced him to take security measures in neighboring countries. Despite extensive conquests in Africa and Europe, the Ottoman Empire lost much of its territory and vitality in its wars with Russia. This factor gave grounds to take more serious steps against Russia. In order to prevent Russia from advancing further, uniting the Azerbaijani Turks in the Caucasus and Iran against it was the right choice for the security of the Ottoman state. The Ottoman Special Organization – Teshkilat-i Mahsusa established on the eve of the war due to a lack of troops, which was active in Iran and the Caucasus, did much to strengthen security in the Ottoman Empire before and during the World War I. In general, the Organization played an important role in raising the Azerbaijani Turks against Tsarist Russia and in the formation of the Azerbaijani question in Ottoman society.

Keywords: Ottoman, Azerbaijan, Caucasus, Iran, Teshkilat-i Mahsusa

Introduction

Obviously, the eastern neighbor, ruled by Turkic dynasties for 1000 years, has been a serious threat to the Ottomans at some point in history. However, there has never been a second state dealt a serious blow and heavy losses to the Ottoman Empire in history. Unfortunately, the disappearance of the Golden Horde from the stage of history led to the transformation of Russia into an empire and a dangerous character for the two neighboring Turkic dynasties. The weakening of the Qajar state, its eastern neighbor, was decisive in the implementation of the Russian ruling circles' plans for the Caucasus. Since the beginning of the reign of Fatali Shah, the Qajar state was also defeated by the Russian threat and gradually fell into decline. On the eve of World War I, the Qajar state was not a serious rival to the Ottomans, and

Russia's influence over Iran forced the Ottomans to take serious steps in this regard. A number of factors that brought the collapse of the Ottoman Empire closer and the above-mentioned threat of Russia prompted the Ottomans to create an alternative state in their eastern neighbor. It is known that Enver Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of War had thoughts about Azerbaijan (Sadik, 1995, p. 503).

As the World War I included many states, it did not bypass Iran, including South Azerbaijan. Although Iran officially declared its neutrality in the war, the warring parties occupied its territory, because it was in the interest of the allies (Shovkat, Ekrem, Samad, 2000, p. 179). For this reason, the territory of Iran has also become a battlefield. Surely, both Britain and Russia, members of the Allied Powers, and the members of the Triple Alliance had their own plans for Iran because of rich resources. The intensification of foreign reaction made the Qajar dynasty even more miserable in the last years of its rule and created conditions for Russian occupation in the northwestern lands. This war made former rivals such as the Ottomans and Russia confront on the Caucasus front. Certainly, the occupation of northern Iran (South Azerbaijan) by Russian troops could not but disturb the Triple Alliance and the Ottoman Empire. Considering all these, the Ottoman state sent its troops to South Azerbaijan in late 1914. Naturally, the Ottoman army, which was met with great sympathy by the people of South Azerbaijan, won the battle with the Russian troops, and thus, as a continuation of the Caucasus front, a new front was opened in Iran. However, the heavy defeat of the Ottoman army by the Allied forces in Operation Sariqamish in January 1915 changed the situation again. The Ottoman state directed the main part of its troops stationed in Iran to the Caucasus front. Taking advantage of the weakening of the Ottoman power in Iran, the occupying Russian army invaded South Azerbaijan. On January 17, 1915, the city of Tabriz was again occupied by Tsarist Russia, and South Azerbaijan remained in captivity of the Russian occupying forces until early 1918. The World War I led to the complete eradication of the Ottoman Empire as a state. However, Enver Pasha's plans for Azerbaijan and the activities of the Organization in the Caucasus and Iran played a very important role in the formation of ideas about Azerbaijan in Ottoman society.

Establishment of the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa and the issue of Azerbaijan

The First World War, which began in 1914, forced some states and swept others unwittingly. Each of the great powers had its own interests in relation to the smaller states. One of the countries mostly affected by this war was the Ottomans. Events in neighboring countries and the unification of major powers forced the Ottoman state to take security measures. First, during the Tripoli War in 1911, the Organization Teshkilat-i Mahsusa organized by special volunteer unities, due to a lack of troops, was active in the Tripoli and Balkan wars (ATASE, BH K01., K1s., 230, D.158, F.1-55). Demonstrating psychological strength against rivals and obtaining intelligence

information during the war were also key principles of the organization. If we pay attention to the reason for the establishment of the organization and the main principle of its activity, we can see that no serious research has been conducted in this direction for many years in historiography. In some cases, misconceptions about the organization's activities were made. Dr. Philip H. Stoddard commented on his research on the Organization in 1960: *Books written by Turks and Westerners do not mention the Organization very much. Most of the information about this organization is not true... Although they were aware of the existence of the organization, very few Ottoman officials knew about its activities. Many Turkish sources, formed from the writings of politicians and soldiers who were active in 1908-1918, mention the Organization's activities in the Balkans, the Caucasus, or Tripoli from time to time. Western writers, on the other hand, speak of agents sent to various places, giving money and pamphlets to the jihadist propaganda of the Ottoman state against the Allies. It is not surprising to see that many of these references are similar and many writers use the same sources* (Philip, 2003, p. 53). However, it must be acknowledged that not all biased information about the Organization and its activities can be true.

The Ottoman Empire planned to take serious measures against the divisive policy of the Western countries against the East and the Islamic world. In order to make extensive use of the voluntary associations organized in the Tripoli and Balkan wars, to prevent the Muslim peoples to be overthrown by the Western powers and to unite them around the Ottoman state, the “Umur-i Sharkiyye Circle” was established in January 1914 (Polat, 2012, p. 242-256). Iran and the South Caucasus were among the branches of the Eastern Circle of Organization Teshkilat-i Mahsusa. Important historical moments related to Azerbaijan have come down to us due to the work of these departments of the organization. In recent years, researches on the Organization, its causes of establishment and activities have revealed new historical facts. It is no coincidence that Teshkilat-i Mahsusa was one of the organizations that played an important role in the National War of Independence in Turkiye in 1918-1922. Although not officially active, this organization and its Eastern Circle played an important role in the War of Independence. It is said that the people who worked in the General Staff, Foreign and Interior Ministries, which formed the Presidium of the National Security Service a few years after the establishment of the Republic of Turkiye, were in the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa (“Umur-i Sharkiyye Circle”) (Ahmet, 2019, p. xii). This once again confirms the fact that the activities of the organization and many mysterious facts about Azerbaijan are real.

Undoubtedly, the important point for us is the activity of the organization related to Azerbaijan and the formation of the issue of Azerbaijan in the pre-republican Turkish society. The organization's activities in the Caucasus and Iran contain a number of

important issues related to Azerbaijan. Considering Enver Pasha's views on Azerbaijan, the organization's activities in both Iran and the Caucasus are extremely important to us. According to the instructions given to the three-members delegation sent to the Russian front on September 5, 1914 by the order of the Commander-in-Chief Suleyman Asgar, the head of the organization, they had to obtain some important information on the Caucasus front: *“Russian infantry regiments, artillery, cavalry regiments and numbers in Sariqamish, Kars, Ardahan, Kagızman, Oltu, Gyumri; If there are military units and Armenians in the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku region, their numbers; Whether existence of a soldier or an ammunition in the vehicle coming from Baku or Tbilisi; How much food and weapons are in Kars; Whether the Caucasian army is ready to act; Are there any soldiers in the Caucasian army who have gone or will go against the Germans, if any, their regiment numbers and names; What happened on the Ravan, Batumi sides and whether the fortification was built; Whether the Russians have the idea of advancing on Erzurum, Van, Trabzon, and the idea of Russian soldiers going to war with the Ottomans; the views of Muslims, Georgians and Armenians on this issue; To find out what news is heard from the forces inside Iran and what is the position of Muslims, Georgians and Armenians, if the Ottoman army advances”* (ATASE, BDHKol., Kls.2868, D.269, F.2-1). The above-mentioned are part of the instructions given to the representatives of the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa and once again show the strategic importance of the Caucasus front. The existence of the Russian threat in these tasks, the level of activity of the Armenians in the Caucasus, the study of the position of the Muslim population of the Caucasus, the Azerbaijanis in this issue, contain important points about Azerbaijan. In general, the reasons for raising the issue of Azerbaijan in Ottoman society can be assessed as follows:

- The occupation of South Azerbaijani lands (Iran) by Russia and the issue of security on the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire;
- The provocative activities of the Armenians within the Eastern Anatolia region of the Ottoman Empire at the instigation of Russia;
- Ethnic cleansing policy of Armenians against the Azerbaijani Turks with the help of the Russian ruling circles and the possibility of the same risk in the eastern lands of the Ottoman Empire;
- To unite Azerbaijani Turks in a single front against the Russian threat in order to provide support for the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus and Iran.

As mentioned above, Tsarist Russia was not content to be a threat to the Ottoman state. At the same time, on the eve of the World War I, the Russian authorities raised the Armenian population in the Eastern Anatolia region against the Ottomans in order to weaken and separate the Ottoman state from within. At such a tense time, both preventing the Russian threat and neutralizing the Armenian armed groups required the Ottoman state to take security measures. In order to combat the Allied

Powers, the Russian threat and the separatist activities of the Armenian armed forces, the Umur-i Sharkiyye Circle was divided into 4 main regions: (Ahmet, 2019, p. 294)

1. Narman-Yusufeli region
2. Kotek area
3. Garakilsa and Bayazit region
4. The Iranian region

Issues related to the Ottoman Special Organization Teshkilat-i Mahsusa, especially Azerbaijan, are mostly related to the activities of this organization in the Iranian region. From this point of view, the organization's activities in Iran and especially in South Azerbaijan should be closely monitored.

Teshkilat-i Mahsusa's activities in Iran and the issue of Azerbaijan

On the eve of the outbreak of World War I, the political situation on the Caucasus front was very chaotic. From this point of view, the main points about Azerbaijan are related to the organization's activities in Iran. Enver Pasha, the former Ottoman Minister of War, played a very important role in raising the issue of Azerbaijan in Ottoman society and bringing the Azerbaijani Turks to the forefront of the Organization's activities in Iran, and this, of course, stemmed from his views on Azerbaijan. At a time when the Armenians committed genocide against the Turkic-Muslim population in Azerbaijan, it was natural that the Azerbaijani people had great expectations from Enver Pasha. Even Aziz Alpoud commented on it in his Life Stories: *"When our nation heard that Enver Pasha was coming to Azerbaijan, they felt great delight and congratulated each other as if they were living on holidays ..."* (Aziz, 2011, p. 186). Of course, all these facts stemmed from people's sympathy for the Ottomans in Azerbaijan.

Thus, the weakening of the central government in Iran during the Qajar dynasty and the intensification of foreign reaction led to the division of the country into Russian and British spheres of influence. Taking advantage of the current political situation, Russia, as in the Russo-Iranian war, sent troops to South Azerbaijan. The Ottoman state, which closely followed the activities of the allies in the region, tried to turn the population against the British and the Russians in both Iran and Afghanistan in order to prevent the advance of rivals. Of course, in such a tense situation, the Ottoman army was not strong enough to fight alone. To do this, the Ottoman state had to act together with its main ally, Germany, and take advantage of the financial support provided by Germany in the wars. Despite Iran's declaration of neutrality in the war, the attack on the Ottoman consulate in Urmia, the arrest of the consul, and similar

incidents in Khoy and Tabriz in October 1914 aggravated the situation. After that, the Ottoman state decided to move towards Iran. Forces under the command of Commander Rauf Bey moved south of Iran and took control of Lorestan. A telegram sent by the Ottoman ambassador to Tehran, Asim Bey, to the Interior Ministry on December 18, 1914, gave detailed information about the events in the region. The Ottoman command also tried to attract the Qashqai, South Azerbaijani Turks living on the shores of the Gulf. Of course, all the steps taken served to weaken the position of Russia and Britain in Iran.

The Ottoman Empire, on the brink of World War II, attached great importance to the organization's activities in Iran in order to take security measures. The weakening of Russian position here also demanded the unification of the Azerbaijani Turks against it. For this, it was necessary for a person with experience in Iran to command the troops to be sent to South Azerbaijan. Considering all this, Omar Naji Bey was elected head of the branch of the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa operating in the Iranian region. Because he was the one who knew Iran better at that time. His main task was to turn the South Azerbaijani people against the Russians and to attack the Russian troops with the forces under his command and drive them out of Azerbaijan (Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi, III Ordu Harekatı, 1993, p. 886). Certainly, the Ottoman command was able to take a short but successful step in this regard in early 1915. Taking advantage of the weakening of the position of the Russian troops, Omar Naji Bey managed to clear Urmia and then Tabriz from the Russian troops. However, the defeat of Sariqamish changed the situation in favor of the Russians again. Russian troops soon managed to take control of South Azerbaijan, and the army under Omar Naji's command was forced to retreat to Savujbulag on January 25, inflicting heavy casualties (Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi, III Ordu Harekatı, 1993, 582). Another negative nuance against the Ottomans at that time was the spread of propaganda against them among the local population in Iran. In this regard, even the head of the Organization, Yarbay Suleyman Asgar, in his report to the General Command dated January 27, 1915, noted that the Iranian movement did not have the opportunity to cooperate with the Germans. However, there is propaganda in Iran that the Ottoman state actually sold these lands to the Germans (Mehmet, 1928, p. 64-65). However, the representatives of the special organization Teshkilat-i Mahsusa of the Ottoman Empire that did not reconcile with this situation, tried to weaken their position in Iran by using all their strength against the Russians for security.

In February 1915, a new government was formed in Iran under the leadership of Mustavvahul-Mamalik. The Ottoman embassy in Tehran met with Prime Minister Mustavvah in the presence of a German representative to discuss the incidents. In this discussion, a representative of the newly formed government overtly spoke

about the evacuation of Iranian lands. Asim Bey said that if the Ottomans left completely, Russian forces would be strengthened in the north of Iran, in South Azerbaijan, and conditions would be created for the occupation of Tehran. At the end of the meeting, the Iranian Prime Minister Mustavvah asked Asim Bey to provide a written document confirming that the Iranian lands temporarily occupied by the Ottoman armed unions had no intention of annexation (BOA, HR. SYS., D.2337, G.12 (59)). Asim Bey, the Ottoman ambassador to Tehran, introduced the required document to the Prime Minister on April 22, 1915.

Although the Ottomans and Germany fought together against the allied forces in Iran, after entering Kermanshah, there was a political dispute over which side would lead. The wrongdoing of the German ambassador to Tehran, Prince Reuss, against both the Ottoman Empire and the Muslims deepened this political intrigue. A special telegram sent by Asim Bey to the Foreign Minister Said Halim Pasha on August 9, 1915 covered all the events in Iran in detail. During the meeting of the Ottoman official with the German Foreign Minister, these issues were seriously discussed and it was emphasized to eliminate the obstacles to the joint activities of the parties. Another negative nuance of working against the Ottoman state, which was fighting on all fronts against the Allies, was to re-ignite Sunni-Shiite discrimination, as in the Safavid-Ottoman wars, and to turn Shiite tribes in Iran against the Ottomans. However, this attempt was not so successful. Realizing the real purpose of the allies, the Iranian leadership, while neutral in the war, supported the activities of the Ottomans. Omar Naji, who correctly analyzed the events in Iran, tried to draw the attention of the Ottoman command to the Iranian front and considered the protection of Iranian independence important from the point of view of the Ottoman self-defense. Even the report sent by the Ambassador to Berlin, Hakki Pasha, to Said Halim Pasha, stressed the importance of anti-Russian action to protect Iran's territorial integrity (BOA, HR. SYS., D.2337, G.12 (33-35)). The joint struggle against the allies required the establishment of a union of Muslim states with Iran and Afghanistan. However, this step was necessary for the Ottomans to save themselves.

During September-October 1915, the Ottoman state was unable to overtake Kermanshah in its war against the Allies. Taking advantage of this situation, Russia is attracting additional troops to Iran to advance its troops in the direction of Qazvin-Hamadan. At the same time, the political conflict between the Germans and the Ottomans led to the strengthening of the British in the south of Iran. At the same time, the Armenians' revolts within the Ottoman state made the situation more difficult. Realizing that Iran is in a very poor financial and military situation, the Iranian Prime Minister met with the Ottoman Ambassador Asim Bey, emphasizing the expected assistance from the Ottomans, Germany and Austria-Hungary in order

to ensure Iran's territorial integrity. Even the Shah of Iran said in a meeting with the Austrian-Hungarian ambassador that the proposal of the British and Russian representatives would be taken into account if Iran was not assisted. Taking all these into account and closely following the events in Iran, Tehran's ambassador Asim Bey informed the Foreign Control about all the events and tried to draw the Ottomans' attention to the Iranian front. As we mentioned earlier, the Ottoman self-liberation required the establishment of an alliance with the Muslim states. The real states for this union were Iran and Afghanistan. However, the high level of British influence in Afghanistan forced the Afghan emir to be careful in this matter. Iran, on the other hand, has acknowledged its neutrality in the war in order to escape the crisis. In other words, the Ottomans took on the whole burden in the East and were somewhat dependent on Germany in terms of arms and funding. The main demands of the Shah of Iran from the Ottomans in accordance with the terms of the agreement to be reached with the Ottoman state to control the situation in his country were:

1. Ensuring Iran's political and economic existence;
2. Signing of the offensive and defense alliance;
3. Sending military aid with weapons;
4. Lending of the amount of one million Ottoman liras. (Ahmet, 2019, p. 249-250)

Germany's struggle in Iran stemmed from its rivalry with the Russians and the British and its economic interests. The war by the Ottomans was of greater importance in terms of securing the eastern borders, fighting the allies, and protecting the Islamic world. The Ottomans tried to drive Russian troops out of Iran at any cost. However, its main rival on the Iranian and Caucasus fronts was Russia. The Russians were concentrated in the north of Iran, where Azerbaijani Turks lived. In the first months of 1916, Omar Naji Bey, who had won the war with the Russian troops, was soon defeated again near Savujbulag and was forced to retreat with the forces under his command. Omar Naji Bey, who attributed his defeat to the lack of a sufficient number of regular soldiers in his order, said in a telegram sent to the 6th Army Command that the main purpose of the Russian action was to prevent the Ottoman troops from advancing towards Azerbaijan. In June of the same year, the 6th Army, under the command of Khalil Pasha, moved towards Qasri-Shirin, and although Omar Naji's forces were initially defeated in a battle with the Russians, they later succeeded in clearing some areas of the Russians. In August, the Ottoman army entered Hamadan. After that, the main goal was to enter South Azerbaijan and withdraw the Russians from here and move in the direction of the Caucasus through Tabriz. However, the complete expulsion of the Russians was possible only after the Brest-Litovsk peace.

The events of 1917 marked an important turning point in ensuring Iran's internal security and increasing the Ottoman influence in Iran. After the death of the experienced Omar Naji, the organization's main responsibility for transmitting the events in Iran to the Ottomans and ensuring security fell on Asim Bey, the Ottoman ambassador to Tehran, and Kaymakam Omar Fevzi Bey, a military attaché and an official of political affairs. The reliance of the Turkic population in Iran, especially the Azerbaijani Turks, on the Ottomans influenced the growth of its influence in these lands. Concerned, the British and Russians tried to intensify their anti-Ottoman propaganda in Iran as much as they could, and even tried to persuade the Qajar Shah to prove that the Ottoman army had remained in Hamadan for a long time (İslam Ansikopedisi 1987, p. 420-425). The coldness of the Germans towards Iran and the opposition of Rudolf Nadolni, who was appointed ambassador to Tehran after Prince Reuss, to the Muslim Union deepened political differences in the joint struggle against the Allies. During the Russian attack on Tehran, the Germans left the city without resistance to the Russians, which dealt a devastating blow to the German position. However, the Ottomans did not leave the local population alone in front of the Russians by sending their army to Hamadan. Concerned that the Ottoman army was seriously fighting on the Iranian front and was greeted with great joy by the local population, the Germans continued to carry out propaganda activities against the Ottoman state despite being allies.

The fact that a large part of Iran was occupied by the Allies and the Germans, who had more economic interests in the Iranian issue and the Germans were indifferent to the protection of Iran's internal security, forced the Ottoman command to take more serious steps in this direction. The weakening of the central government in Iran and the continuing Russian-British occupation of the north and south of the country have led some forces to take refuge in the Ottoman state. All the events that took place in Iran were reported to the command of the 6th Ottoman Army, after which the Iranian emigrants came to Mosul province and took refuge in the Ottoman state under the leadership of Nizammussaltana. After the order of Colord XIII to evacuate Iran, Germany continued to compete with the Ottoman state in Eastern policy (Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi Irak-İran Cephesi 1914-1918, 2002, p. 413-414). Even Germany tried to sign a separate agreement with Iran. According to the Umur-i Sharkiyye Circle, ensuring the security of the Nizammussaltana was extremely important for the Ottoman state at such a time. The Umur-i Sharkiyye Circle, which correctly assessed the Nizammussaltana's negative relations with Germany, provided for the signing of a 14-point agreement between the Ottomans and Iran to normalize political relations and fight against the Allies in order to prevent the collapse of Islam in the summer of 1917 (ATASE, BDH Kol., Kls. 1831, D.18, F.1-14-15). This agreement was an important step in the joint struggle against

the allies and in the protection of the territorial integrity of Iran, of which the Ottomans were also interested.

The fact that the Ottomans were so interested in the Iranian front and took the issue of Azerbaijan into account was of strategic importance to the Ottomans. The fact that the Ottomans sent a large number of troops to Iran, Iran's interest in internal security, its conflict with its ally Germany, and the events in the Mosul front confirm this. Thus, in March 1917, Kaymakam Omar Fevzi Bey and Nizammussaltana came to Kirkuk together with other Iranian emigrants and discussed important issues with the Ottomans. At that time, Kirkuk was under Ottoman control. Thus, while visiting the Sultani School, in Kirkuk with the representatives of Nizammussaltana, he came across an interesting sight. One of the teachers of that school surprised everyone by saying these words: *“Our aim is to climb a hill. This hill is Turan. The road passes through Iran. Only Azerbaijan is Turk in our way. One day we will leave Istanbul and go to Turan through Azerbaijan”* (Ahmet, 2018, p. 236-237). Undoubtedly, all these show how strategically important Azerbaijan was in the Ottoman war against the allies on the Iranian front.

Deterioration of political situation in Russia near the end of World War I and a revolution in the country brought about peace with Germany. On March 3, 1918, a peace treaty was signed between Russia and the Central Powers in Brest-Litovsk. According to the general agreement reached between the parties, Russia had to withdraw its troops from Iran in accordance with the terms of Iran's evacuation. That's what happened. Following the terms of the Brest-Litovsk peace, Russia withdrew its troops from the north of Iran, including from South Azerbaijan. However, when the Russian troops left Iran, they handed over their weapons to the Armenian armed forces and tried to occupy the Ottomans in this way. Taking into account the possible threat of genocide by the Armenians against the local population, the Ottoman command did not leave Iran completely and sent its troops to Iran to save the people of South Azerbaijan from the massacre. After the threat was completely eliminated, the Ottoman state also complied with the terms of the evacuation of Iran and left the territory of Iran, and Qajar Shah expressed his gratitude in a telegram sent to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, much of Iran remained under the control of British troops, which posed a threat to territorial integrity of the country. However, the Anatolian Turks were unable to send continuous military aid to Iran as they struggled to save themselves in the War of Independence.

Thus, the Eastern Circle of Special Organization, which was first formed of volunteers during the Tripoli War in 1911, was abolished by a decree issued on October 15, 1918, by the Ottoman Ministry of War (ATASE, BDH Kol., Kls.55,

D.271, F.1-135). However, a closer look at the Eastern Circle of Organization's activities in the Caucasus and Iran, which are more concerned with political issues, shows that it played an important role in preventing the actions of the allies against the Ottomans, neutralizing Tsarist Russian destructive activities within the Ottoman Empire through the Armenians, eliminating the policy of genocide against Azerbaijanis and in the formation of ideas about Azerbaijan in Ottoman society in general.

Conclusion

As it can be seen, the World War I, which started in 1914, affected many states by force or unwillingly. Each of the leading states had their own interests in relation to the smaller states. One of the states that suffered the most from this war was the Ottoman state. Events in neighboring countries and the unification of great powers against the Ottoman Empire forced him to take security measures. For this purpose, before the World War I started, a military-political organization consisting of volunteers was established in the Ottoman Empire. It should be noted with regret that the Muslim lands were in danger of being completely colonized by Western imperialism towards the end of the war. In such a difficult moment, the Ottomans tried to create a Muslim Union together with Iran and Afghanistan. For this reason, the Iranian front was of great importance for the Ottomans.

The recent events in Iran and the fact that Iran was divided between the Russian and British power struggle were also in the focus of the Ottoman Military Command. However, the threat of Russia continued here. At the same time, the activities of Armenian armed groups towards the policy of ethnic cleansing against the Turkic-Muslim population in both the Caucasus and Iran and the existing territorial claims required the unification of Azerbaijani Turks against Russia and the Armenian threat. It is no coincidence that Iran was one of the regions where the Organizational Specialty was the strongest. Considering the location of South Azerbaijan, the activity of the organization in Iran is very important. The Russian occupation did not bypass Iran, including South Azerbaijan. The people of South Azerbaijan met the Ottoman soldiers with appreciation in the fight against the Russian invasion and supported them whenever possible. Immigrants from South Azerbaijan also took refuge in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman leadership, which carefully followed the processes, tried to unite the Azerbaijani Turks against Russia as a whole. All these factors played a crucial role in the formation of Azerbaijani issue in the territory of collapsing Ottoman Empire and the emerging Republic of Turkiye.

References

- Ahmet, T., (2019). Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Umur-ı Şarkıyye Dairesi) Tarihi, 1914-1916. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, Cilt I.
- Ahmet, T., (2018). Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Umur-ı Şarkıyye Dairesi) Tarihi, 1917. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, Cilt II.
- Aziz, A., (2011). Həyatımın hekayətləri. Bakı: Qanun.
- Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi İrak-İran Cephesi 1914-1918 (2002). Ankara: Genelkurmay Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayınları, Cild 3.
- Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi, III Ordu Harekatı (1993). Ankara: Genelkurmay Harp Tarihi Yayınları, Cild I.
- İslam Ansikopedisi (1987). İstanbul: MEB Devlet Kitapları, C. 5/1.
- Mehmet, K., (1928). Büyük Harpte İran Cephesi, İstanbul, Cild I.
- Philip H.,S., (2003). Osmanlı Devleti ve Araplar 1911-1918: Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Üzerine Bir Ön Çalışma. Çeviren Tansel Demirel, İstanbul: Arma Yayınları.
- Polat, S., (2012). The Ottoman Special Organization Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa: An Inquiry into its Operational and Administrative Characteristics. Ankara: Bilkent University, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi
- Sadık, S., (1995). Ömer Naci Bey Mufrezesi. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi TİTE Atatürk Yolu Dergisi, Cild IV.
- Shovkat, T., Ekrem, R., Samad, B., (2000). South Azerbaijan. Bakı: Qanun.
- Archives:*
- Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), HR.SYS., D.2337, G.12 (33,34,35,59)
- Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi (ATASE), BDH Kol., Kls.55, D.271, F.1-135; BDH Kol., Kls.2868, D.269, F.2-1; BDH Kol., Kls. 1831, D.18, F.1-14,15; BH Kol., Kls.230, D.158, F.1-55