

# ملاحظات ضد عثمانی و منافع قفقازی:

روابط سیاسی ایران و روسیه در سال‌های ۱۶۳۹-۱۵۸۷

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دانشیار تاریخ - دانشگاه دلاویر، آمریکا

○ ترجمه و تلخیص: دکتر منصور صفت گل

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اشاره

دکتر رودی ماتی به دعوت کتاب ماه تاریخ و جغرافیا پاسخ مثبت دادند و این مقاله را اختصاصاً برای شماره ویژه مطالعات صفوی آماده کردند و ارسال داشتند. اینک خلاصه فارسی مقاله به همراه متن اصلی مقاله ایشان بنا بر تصمیم تحریریه کتاب ماه تاریخ و جغرافیا به زبان انگلیسی در اینجا نشر می‌یابد. تحریریه مجله از آقای دکتر ماتی به دلیل توجه به این شماره ویژه سپاسگزاری می‌کند و امیدوار است همکاری ایشان استمرار داشته باشد.

درباره دیپلماسی دوره آغازین اروپای جدید نسبت به آنچه در آن روزگار تهدید ترکی تلقی می‌شد مسائلی چند وجود دارد که توجه به آنها ضروری است. فتح قسطنطنیه توسط سلطان محمد دوم در سال ۱۴۵۳ میلادی سبب نخستین واکنش سازمان یافته غرب در برابر پیشروی عثمانیان در بالکان گردید. اما پس از محاصره دوم وین در سال ۱۶۲۸ م. بود که زمینه برای ائتلاف دولت‌های اروپایی به منظور جلوگیری از فتوحات ترکان کاملاً آماده شد. در طی دو سده کوشش‌های فراوانی به عمل آمد تا اروپای مسیحی از حملات ترکان در امان بماند. طی این مدت رهبری فعالیت‌های ضدترکی در اروپا گاه برعهده نهاد پاپی، گاه در اختیار ونیز که یک جمهوری مبتنی بر فعالیت دریانوردی بود از سویی به مسیحیت می‌انداشید و از سوی دیگر نگران منافع اقتصادی خویش بود. و گاه توسط دولت لهستان - لیتوانی هدایت می‌شد. دولت اخیر در اواخر سده هفدهم میلادی نقشی بس چشمگیر در ائتلاف بر ضد تهدید ترکان در اروپای مرکزی داشت.

درباره دوره موردنظر تاکنون بررسی‌های

گونگونی انجام شده است. اما درباره مسائل مربوط به کوشش‌های اروپا برای تشکیل یک اتحادیه ضدعثمانی با تأکید بر مسائل داخلی روابط اروپا و تأثیر آن بر این کوشش‌ها یا درباره روابط میان تک‌تک دولت‌های غربی و دربار امپراتوری در استانبول چندین تحقیق وجود دارد. تحقیقات موجود حتی شامل روسیه در عهد رومانوف‌ها نیز می‌شود. روسیه در این زمان از طریق یک محدوده مرزی استپی از عثمانی جدا می‌شد اما نقشی مؤثر در اتحاد مقدس با جامعه مشترک لهستان - لیتوانی و امپراتوری اتریش - مجارستان که در سال ۱۶۸۴ به وجود آمد، داشت. در عین حال اروپاییان به ایران نیز توجه داشتند. ایران گرچه از لحاظ جغرافیایی از قلمرو اروپا دور بود اما به عنوان یک نیروی بالقوه برای اروپاییان اهمیت داشت زیرا در صورت لزوم می‌توانست به عثمانیان حمله کند و به این ترتیب حلقه جنگی بر گرد امپراتوری عثمانی کامل می‌شد. در واقع ایران پیش‌تر از این دوران نیز مورد توجه اروپا بود. از سده سیزدهم میلادی اروپا کوشید با دولت ایلخانی در ایران روابط برقرار کند بدین امید که ارض مقدس را از مملوکان بازپس گیرد.

بنابراین هنگامی که عثمانیان مملوکان را کنار زدند، آق قویونلوها و سپس صفویان متحدانی بالقوه برای اروپا در نظر گرفته می‌شدند و شرایط به همان وضع پیشین باقی مانده بود.

در شبکه روابط ضدعثمانی، موضوع ارتباط میان ایران و روسیه هنوز چندان که باید و شاید مورد بررسی قرار نگرفته است. به سادگی می‌توان دریافت که چرا در این باره محققان غربی و ایرانی تحقیقات چندان انجام نداده‌اند. در متون تاریخی عهد صفوی توجه چندان به روابط ایران با دنیای بیرون از قلمرو جهان اسلام نشده است. روسیه نیز به عنوان سرزمینی که در نواحی دوردست شمالی قرار داشت و نیز به دلیل اینکه ساکنان آن

چندان اعتباری نزد ایرانیان نداشتند، کمتر مورد توجه آنان واقع می‌شد. بخش اعظم مواد تحقیق در این باره در آرشیوهای روسیه نگهداری می‌شود و بیشتر تحقیقات دانشمندان روسی درباره روابط ایران و روسیه برای پژوهشگران غیرروسی ایران‌شناسی شناخته شده نیست. شمار قابل توجهی از مجموعه اسناد روسی مربوط به این موضوع توسط ان. آی وسلوفسکی گردآوری و منتشر شده است. بررسی‌های محقق روسی، پی. پی. یوشف - که عمدتاً مبتنی بر اسناد چاپ شده توسط وسلوفسکی است - در بردارنده اطلاعاتی با ارزش درباره روابط سیاسی و اقتصادی ایران و روسیه در عهد صفوی است. این مجموعه برای آن دسته از محققانی که می‌خواهند تصویری جامع از چگونگی روابط اقتصادی و سیاسی این دو دولت در این عهد عرضه کنند، بسیار مغتنم است.

پژوهش حاضر عمدتاً متکی به همین مجموعه اسناد روسی انجام یافته است. ضمن اینکه از اشاره‌ها و اطلاعات گاهگاهی وقایع‌نگاری‌های ایرانی، گزارش‌های تجاری، مشاهدات سفرنامه‌نویسان خارجی نیز در آن استفاده شده است. تا نگاهی عمومی به گسترش تماس‌های میان ایران و روسیه حول محور مشترک تهدید عثمانی انداخته شود. تمرکز اصلی این پژوهش بر دوره زمانی روی کارآمدن شاه عباس یکم، یعنی دوره‌ای است که طی آن سیاست داخلی ایران تثبیت شد و در عین حال روابط ایران با دنیای خارج گسترش یافت. تا سال ۱۶۳۹ که شاه صفی جانشین شاه عباس با عثمانیان پیمان صلح امضاء کرد، قرار دارد. تأکید ویژه در این مقاله بر ماهیت این تماس‌ها و دلایل آن است که چرا صفویان در ارتباط با روسیه عمدتاً در حد یک مقوله تشریفاتی برخورد کردند.

75. Ibid., 429-32.
76. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1613-1621*, 13ff.
77. [H. Chick, ed.], *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, 2 vols. (London, 1939), 1:194-97.
78. Svanidze, "Une ambassadrice," 122.
79. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1613-1621*, 49ff.
80. Ibid., 62.
81. Ibid., 44-45, 53. Shahmatov protested against the Iranian invasion and occupation of Georgia, but his remonstrations were categorically rejected and he was sent back home without a letter for the tsar. See *ibid.*, 129-30.
82. Ibid., 109-19.
83. Ibid., 89-96.
84. In response to a Russian request for the huge sum of 400,000 rubles (ca. 40,000 tumans), Shah 'Abbas eventually included a sum of 7,260 rubles in the presents carried by Bulat Beg, who accompanied Leont'ev on his return voyage. See *ibid.*, 154ff.
85. Ibid., 198-99.
86. Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il pellegrino*, ed. G. Gancia, 2 vols. (Brighton, 1843), 1:832.
87. Ibid., 2:41. This is no doubt the embassy referred to by Iskandar beg Turkaman, *Tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*, 940, which he says was received by the shah in Qazvin. Iskandar Munshi, however, does not mention anything about the fate of the mission and only talks about its handing over of gifts and letters.
88. P. P. Bushev, "Posol'stvo V. G. Korobina i A. Kushinova v Iran v 1621-1624 gg.," *Iran. Ekonomika, Istoriia, Istoriografiia, Literatura (Sbornik statei)* (Moscow, 1976), 135, 142.
89. See Uebersberger, *Russlands Orientpolitik*, 1:19.
90. Bushev, "Posol'stvo V. G. Korobina i A. Kushinova," 124.
91. H. Dunlop, ed., *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië 1611-1638* (The Hague, 1930), 60, 191. The 1624 embassy also seems to have been sent to seek the release of the Georgian Queen Ketivan, called Didemal in the Persian sources, who, with her grandson Alexander, had been held as a hostage by Shah 'Abbas since 1615. See "De la gloriosa muerte que la Serenisima reyna Gativanda Dedopoli padeció en Xirás, metrópoli de la Persia, por mandato de Xá Abbás, rey de ella. Año 1624 a dos de septiembre," in Carlos Alonso, O.S.A., *Misioneros Agustinos en Georgia (siglo XVII)* (Valladolid, 1978), 133.
92. For more information on this, see Rudolph P. Mathee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge, 1999), 139-42.
93. B. N. Floria, "Russko-osmanskie otnosheniia i diplomaticheskaia podgotovka smolenskoï voïny," *Sovietsko Slavianovedenie* (1990): 17-27. Poland at this point also actively tried to form an anti-Ottoman coalition, seeking to include Iran in it. The arrival of a Polish envoy in Isfahan in 1637 must be seen in this light. It was his task to conduct negotiations with the Safavid court about a silk contract, but his mandate also included the Ottoman question. In the same year a Safavid embassy visited Poland. See Dunlop, ed., *Bronnen*, 614; and Vaughan, *Europe and the Turk*, 214.
94. Iskandar Beg Turkaman and Valah Isfahani, *Zayl-i tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*, ed. Suhayli Khansari (Tehran, 1317Sh./1938), 188. For the various embassies, see Dunlop, ed., *Bronnen*, 505, 528, 566.
95. E. Zevakin, "Konflikt Rossii s Perseie v serednie XVII stoletia," *Azerbaidzhian v nachale XVIII veka* 8:4 (1929): 24-31.
96. For Iran's Ottoman policy in the second half of the seventeenth century, see Mathee, "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy."
97. P. P. Bushev, "Puteshestvie iranskogo posol'stva Mokhammeda Khosein Khan-Beka v Moskvu v 1690-1692 vv.," *Strany i Narody Vostoka* 18 (1976): 135.

Habsburg envoy Nikolai Varkac, who was staying in Moscow to discuss a grand European coalition against the Ottomans. Varkac apparently proposed that Iran be included in this coalition as well. See *ibid.*, 191-92, 201.

51. *Ibid.*, 202.

52. See M.-F. Brosset, ed. and trans., *Histoire moderne de la Géorgie, depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIXe siècle*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1857), 2:336-37.

53. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 217-27.

54. *Ibid.*, 228-29.

55. M. Svanidze, "Une ambassadrice géorgienne (sur l'histoire du traité de paix turco-persan de 1612," *Revue des Etudes Géorgiennes* 4 (1988): 110.

56. Audrey Burton, *The Bukharans: A Dynastic, Diplomatic and Commercial History 1550-1702* (London, 1997), 79-80. This must be the Russian ambassador mentioned by Iskandar Munshi as having visited Iran in 1003/1594-95. See Iskandar Beg Turkaman, *Tarikh-i `alam-ara-yi `Abbasi*, 2 vols. paginated as one (Tehran, 2nd edn., 1350/1971), 504.

57. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 258.

58. Imam Quli Beg is one the few Safavid envoys to Russia who are mentioned by name in the Safavid chronicles. See Iskandar Beg Turkaman, *Tarikh-i `alam-ara-yi `Abbasi*, 507.

59. The story of the Tiufiakin mission may be found in Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 294-320.

60. On the Safavid perception of the Russians, see Rudi Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West," *Iranian Studies* 30 (1998): 233-35; and *idem*, *Suspicion, Fear and Admiration: Pre-Nineteenth-Century Iranian Views of the English and the Russians*, in Nikki R. Keddie and Rudi Matthee, eds., *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle, 2002), 121-45.

61. Augustin Courbe, ed., "Relation d'un voyage de Perse fait es annees 1598&99 par un gentilhomme de la suite du Seigneur Scierley Ambassadeur du roy d'Angleterre," in *Relations véritables et curieuses de l'isle de Madagascar et du Brésil* (Paris, 1651), 151-52. Originally, the Pir Quli Beg delegation was not part of the mission that, led by Sir Anthony Sherley and Husayn `Ali Beg, set out for Russia from Iran in 1599. The two groups did, however, travel together from the time they met in Astrakhan.

62. Pir Quli Beg was severely punished by Shah `Abbas upon his return to Iran. His tongue was cut out and his eyes were gouged. See Maria Szuppe, "Un marchand du roi de Pologne en Perse, 1601-1602," *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 3 (1986): 98; and Mulla Jalal al-Din Munajjim, *Tarikh-i `Abbasi ya ruznamah-i Mulla Jalal* (Tehran, 1366Sh./1987), 212.

63. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv, 1586-1612*, 357.

64. *Ibid.*, 362ff. Zhirov-Zasiekin apparently carried a letter from the Habsburg monarch Rudolph II, perhaps in response to a proposal made by Bayat Husayn Beg in Prague. However, nothing is known about its contents. Since the surviving Russian archives remain silent about the stretch of the journey beyond Astrakhan, relatively little is known about the mission's activities and results. Bushev suggests that the mission never even reached Iran, speculating that it may have been recalled once it became clear to the Russians that Shah `Abbas did not intend to sign a treaty. Yet Maria Szuppe, basing herself on documentation provided by an Armenian merchant residing in Safavid territory at the time, has demonstrated that Zhirov-Zasiekin mission did stay in Iran in 1601. See Szuppe, "Un marchand," 90-91.

65. Munajjim, *Tarikh-i `Abbasi*, 212.

66. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 383.

67. *Ibid.*, 387.

68. David Marshall Lang, *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy 1658-1832* (New York, 1957), 12. Antonio de Gouvea, a Portuguese friar who was in Iran at the time, explained the murder as part of a conflict involving the shah's desire to retake Shirvan from the Ottomans. Since Alexander showed little inclination to move against the Ottomans, the shah had him and his other son, Gurgin, eliminated and replaced by Constantin, who was then ordered to conquer Shirvan. See Antonio de Gouvea, *Relation des grandes guerres et victoires obtenues par le roy de Perse Cha Abbas contre les empereurs de Turquie Mahomet et Achmet son fils*, trans. A. de Meneses (Rouen, 1646), 254-59. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv, 1586-1612*, 408, basing himself on Georgian historians, is a little more circumspect in speaking out on the reasons why the shah had King Alexander and Grigori/Gurgin killed.

69. See Muhammad Mufid Mustawfi, *Mukhtasar-i mufid*, ed. Seyfeddin Najmabadi, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1991), 1:184-85.

70. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 382-83.

71. *Ibid.*, 420.

72. See Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, 237-44.

73. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 432-33; and *idem*, "Iranskie kuptsina Kazim Bek v Rossii, 1706-1709 gg." *Iran. Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1973), 168.

74. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 429.

(Wiesbaden, 1972), 11.

29 The notion that a confrontation between Russia and the Ottoman was the inevitable outcome of a rivalry that goes back to the sixteenth century has recently been refuted as anachronistic by Victor Ostapchuk. Ostapchuk argues that prior to the Chyhyryn/Chrehrin campaign of 1678, very little fundamental antagonism can be detected and that an image to the contrary is an anachronistic projection originating in the bad blood that existed between the two states since the reign of Peter the Great. The Ottomans, in this revisionist portrayal, showed little zeal for expansionism into the steppes beyond the northern shores of the Black Sea. They rather conducted a defensive policy designed to perpetuate the status quo by establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with the Crimean Tatars, the main force of the steppes, whom they used as a buffer against Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy. See Victor Ostapchuk, "The Ottoman Black Sea Frontier and the Relations of the Porte with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy, 1622-1628" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1989); and idem, "The Human Landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the Face of the Cossack Naval Raids," *Oriente Moderno*, new ser., 20 (2001): 23-95, esp. 30-36.

30. This expedition is discussed in Alexandre Benningsen, "L'expédition turque contre Astrakhan en 1569," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 8 (1967): 427-46.

31. Von Rauch, "Moskau und die europäische Mächte," 27.

32. For the diplomatic exchange between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, see Uebersberger, *Russlands Orientpolitik*, vol. 1, pt. 1.

33. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 44. The figure of 30 cannon is reported by the Polish envoy Andrzej Taranowski, who in 1559 traveled to Istanbul and from there to Astrakhan, where he witnessed the Ottoman expedition, siege of the city, and retreat. Taranowski does not mention 500 arquebus, but instead, and rather implausibly, claims that 500 expert arquebusiers accompanied the mission to Iran. See Maria Szuppe, "Les Polonais dans l'espace ottoman au XVIe siècle: deux relations de voyage (E. Otwinowski, 1557, et A. Taranowski, 1569)," in Michele Bernardini et al., eds., *Europa e Islam tra i secoli XIV e XVI/Europe and Islam Between 14th and 16th Centuries* (Naples, 2002), 643-84 (671).

34. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 63-64.

35. Hasan Bayg Rumlu, Ahsan al-tavarikh, ed. 'Abbas Husayn Nava'i (Tehran, 1357), 225.

36. B. B. Piotrovskii, ed., *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavakaza s drevneishikh vremen do kontsa XVIII v.* (Moscow, 1988), ch. 13, "Nachalo prisoedineniia severokavkazkikh narodo k Rossii v XVI-XVII vv.," 340.

37. *Ibid.*, ch. 12, "Severnii Kavkaz v mezhdunarodnoi obstanovke XVI-XVII vv." 317; and ch. 13, "Nachalo prisoedineniia," 330.

38. Carl Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus* (New York, 1972), 90-92; and Alexandre Benningsen, "La poussée vers les mers chaudes et la barrière du Caucase. La rivalité Ottoman-Moscovite dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986): 31.

39. For the beginning of Russian contacts with the khanates of Bukhara, see M. Iu. Iul'dasev, *K istorii torgovykh i posol'skikh zviazei srednei Azii s Rossiei v XVI-XVII vv.* (Tashkent, 1964), 47ff.

40. Falsafi, *Zindigani*, 1833. The Russians distinguished between three types of mission: "heavy," *veliki*, "light," *legki*, and those performed by messengers, *gontsi*. See Iul'dashev, *K istorii torgovykh i posol'skikh zviazei*, 23-24.

41. Joseph Hammer von Purgstall, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiche*, 10 vols. (Pest, 1963), 4:181.

42. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stvo, 1586-1612*, 72. Falsafi, *Zindigani*, 1832-33, erroneously states that the shah received these envoys in Jumadi I, 996H.Q./April 1588.

43. Hammer Purgstall, *Geschichte*, 181; Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stvo, 1586-1612*, 121; and Muhammad Amin Riyahi, ed., *Sifaratnamahha-yi Iran. Guzarishha-yi musafiriat va ma'muriyat-i safran-i 'Usmani dar Iran* (Tehran, 1368Sh./1989), 38-39.

44. The letter appears in Falsafi, *Zindigani*, 1835, and is discussed in Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 131.

45. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 118-19.

46. *Ibid.*, 136ff, 149ff. It is hardly surprising that Russia's interest in diplomatic relations with Gilan was minimal compared to the weight it accorded to entertaining ties to Iran proper. Diplomatic and commercial initiatives on the part of Gilan were anyhow doomed, as Shah 'Abbas incorporated the region into his realm in the mid 1590s.

47. Kaia, the name under which this mission appears in Veselovskii, *Pamiatniki 1:160ff.*, is likely to refer to the rank rather than the name of its main envoy. See W. E. D. Allen, ed., and Anthony Manog, trans., *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings (1589-1605)*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1970), 2:534.

48. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 165-66. On the other hand Russia had to operate carefully in light of the same threat. The Russians were also reluctant in their relations with Iran because they wished to await the results of simultaneous talks with various European powers as well as the end of the war with Sweden. See *ibid.*, 177.

49. Uebersberger, *Russlands Orientpolitik*, 13.

50. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 177-81. It seems that in Moscow Hajji Khusraw conducted talks with the

4. See N. I. Veselovskii, *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii moskovskoi Rusi s Persiei*, 3 vols., in *Trudy Vostochnogo Otdeleniia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Archeologicheskogo Obshchestva* (St. Petersburg, 1890-98). See especially P. P. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii russkogo i iranskogo gosudarstv v 1586-1612 gg.* (Moscow, 1976); and idem, *Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii russkogo i iranskogo gosudarstv v 1613-1621 gg.* (Moscow, 1987). Modern Persian studies that include sections on relations between Iran and Russia in the Safavid period are Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali Jamalzadah, "Rus va Iran," *Kavah* 3:28 (7 Day 1287H.Q./25 May 1918): 1-6; idem, "Tarikh-i ravabit-i Rus va Iran," supplement to *Kavah* 5:1 (22 Jan. 1920): a, b, j; Najaf Quli Hussam Mu'izzi, *Tarikh-i ravabit-i siyasi-yi Iran ba dunya* (Tehran, 1326Sh./1947), 333ff; Nasrullah Falsafi, *Zindigani-yi Shah 'Abbas-i avval*, 5 vols. in 3 tomes, paginated as one (Tehran, 4th edn., 1369Sh./1990); 'Abd al-Husayn Nava'i, *Ravabit-i siyasi-yi Iran va Urupa dar 'asr-i Safavi* (Tehran, 1372Sh./1993), 183-260; and 'Ali Akbar Vilayati, *Tarikh-i ravabit-i khariji-yi Iran dar 'ahd-i Shah 'Abbas-i avval-i Safavi* (Tehran, 1374Sh./1995), 195-212.

5. Hans Wilhelm Haussig, *Die Geschichte Zentralasiens und der Seidenstrasse in islamischer Zeit* (Darmstadt, 1988), 25, 170.

6. See Wilhelm Heyd, *Geschichte des Levantehandels im Mittelalter*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1879), 1:53-54, 69ff.; H. A. Manandian, *The Ancient Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to the Ancient World Trade*, trans. from the Russian (Lisbon, 1965), 135; and Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 32.

7. Janet Martin, "Muscovite Relations with the Khanates of Kazan and the Crimea (1460s to 1512)," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 17 (1983): 442-43.

8. Fisher, *Foreign Relations of Turkey*, 34-35; and Robert M. Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practice in the Reign of Ivan III* (New York and London, 1987), 129.

9. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv, 1586-1612*, 34-35. Papin was accompanied by Afanasi Nikitin, the famous Russian merchant who later was to visit India and who was the first Russian to write an account of India.

10. In a seminal article, Leslie Collins has refuted the long-held and oft-repeated notion that the Great horde was destroyed and utterly vanished in 1502. See Leslie Collins, "On the Alleged 'Destruction' of the Great Horde in 1502," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 16 (1991): 361-99.

11. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv, 1586-1612*, 36. This in contrast to Falsafi, *Zindigani, 1827*, who claims that the earliest diplomatic contacts between Russia and Iran in the Safavid period only occurred in the reign of Shah Tahmasb I.

12. See Arnulf Hartmann O.S.A., "William of St. Augustine and His Time," *Augustiniana* 20: 3-4 (1970): 182.

13. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv, 1586-1612*, 39.

14. *Ibid.*, 40.

15. V. A. Baiburtian, *Armianskaia koloniia Novoi Dzhul'fy v XVII veke: Rol' Novoi Dzhul'fy v irano-evropeiskikh politicheskikh i ekonomicheskikh sviazakh* (Erevan, 1969), 86.

16. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv, 1586-1612*, 42; and Jenkinson's report in E. Delmar Morgan and C. H. Coote, eds., *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia*, 2 vols. (London, 1886), 1:125-26.

17. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 42.

18. See Morgan and Coote, *Early Voyages*, and T. S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russian Company 1553-1603* (Manchester, 1956, repr. 1968), for the various expeditions of the Muscovy Company to Iran.

19. Bushev, *Istoriia posol'stv 1586-1612*, 61-62.

20. See Adam Knobler, "The Rise of Timur and Western Diplomatic Response, 1390-1405," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, third ser., 5 (1995): 341-49.

21. Von Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, 9.

22. For the diplomatic traffic between Rome and the court of Uzun Hasan, see Angelo Michele Piemontese, "La représentation d'Uzun Hasan sur scene à Rome (2 mars 1473)," *Turcica* 21:3 (1991): 191-203; and idem, "The Nuncios of Pope Sixtus IV (1471-84) in Iran," in Eslami, ed., *Iran and Iranian Studies*, 90-108.

23. Von Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, 16-31.

24. For this, see Jean Aubin, "La politique orientale de Selim Ier," in Raoul Curiel and Rika Gyselen, eds., *Itinéraires d'Orient. Hommages à Claude Cahen* (Bures-sur-Yvette, 1994), 207ff; and Palmira Brummett, "The Myth of Shah Ismail Safavi: Political Rhetoric and 'Divine' Kingship," in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A book of Essays*, ed. John Victor Tolan (New York and London, 1996), 331-59.

25. Von Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, 68.

26. Fischer, *Foreign Relations of Turkey*, 55.

27. Ana Maria Schop Soler, *Die spanisch-russischen Beziehungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1970), 21-22.

28. See Michel M. Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safavids, Ši'ism, Sûfism, and the Gulât*

As a result, the number of Russian emissaries sent to Iran in the 1630s remained limited to just a few, and it was only in 1636-37, seven years into Shah Safi's reign, that a Russian envoy offered the tsar's congratulations with the shah's accession.<sup>94</sup> Relations sharply deteriorated in the 1640s, as the Iranians threatened to invade Daghestan and began to meddle in that region's internal affairs, as a result of which its rulers once again turned to Russia for protection. Conflict also arose over a series of caravan robberies in the Caucasus, the detention in Iran of a number of Russian merchants, and the construction of Russian garrison towns on the Iranian side of the River Terek. This conflict briefly turned violent when in 1652 Khusraw Khan, beglerbeg of Shirvan, torched one of those garrison towns, after which it would take a full decade and the exchange of a number of missions for the outstanding issues to be resolved.<sup>95</sup> By then Moscow was again keen to seek Iran's assistance against the Ottomans, but since the Safavids had definitively made peace with the Ottomans in 1639, their new overtures failed to resonate in Isfahan. Until the end of the Safavid era, Iran would conduct a foreign policy designed not to provoke the Ottomans into breaking the peace of Zuhab.<sup>96</sup> The imbalance is suggested by the number of embassies traveling back and forth during the reign of Shah Sulayman. While three major Russian ambassadors and eleven envoys visited Iran between 1670 and 1692, the Iranians reciprocated with just two delegations. The second, led by Muhammad Husayn Khan Beg, was mainly designed to congratulate Tsar Peter with his accession. Through it, the Iranians also notified the Russians that they were not willing to engage in an anti-Ottoman coalition, thus formally rejecting a proposal that Shah Khudabandah had made more than a hundred years earlier.<sup>97</sup>

\* A different and slightly shorter version of this article was published in Dutch in the Dutch Journal of Middle Eastern Studies *Sharqiyyat* 5 (1993): 1-22.

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1. See, in chronological order, C. D. Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature (1520-1660)* (Paris, 1940); Sydney Nettleton Fisher, *The Foreign Relations of Turkey 1481-1512* (Urbana, Ill., 1948); Dorothy M. Vaughan, *Europe and the Turk: A Pattern of Alliances 1350-1700* (Liverpool, 1954); Massimo Petrocchi, *La politica della Santa Sede di fronte all'invasione ottomana (1444-1718)* (Naples, 1955); K. M. Setton, "Pope Leo and the Turkish Peril," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (1969), 367-427; Carl Göllner, *Turcica III Bd., Die Türkenfrage in der öffentlichen Meinung im 16. Jahrhundert* (Bucarest, 1978); and Ekkehard Eickhoff, *Venedig, Wien und die Osmanen: Umbruch in Südosteuropa 1645-1700* (Stuttgart, 2nd edn., 1988).

2. A selection of the available literature on this aspect of the "Turkish Question" in Western languages other than Russian includes H. Uebersberg, *Österreich und Russland seit dem Ende des 15. Jahrhundert* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1906); idem, *Russlands Orientpolitik in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1913); R. Neck, "Diplomatische Beziehungen zum vorderen Orient unter Karl V," *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchiv* 5 (1952): 63-86; W. E. D. Allen, *Problems of Turkish Power in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1963); B. H. Sumner, *Peter the Great and the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1949); Georg von Rauch, "Moskau und die europäischen Mächte des 17. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 184 (1957): 531-54; Günther Stökl, "Russland und Europa vor Peter dem Grossen," *Historische Zeitschrift* 184 (1957): 531-54; Philip Longworth, "Russian-Venetian Relations in the Reign of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 64 (1986): 380-400.

3. Studies on this topic include C. Piot, "Relations diplomatiques de Charles V avec la Perse et la Turquie," *Messages des Sciences Historiques de Belge* (1843): 44-70; V. Minorsky, "The Middle East in Western Politics in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Centuries," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 27 (1940): 427-61; Hans Robert Roemer, "Die Safawiden. Ein orientalisches Bundesgenosse des Abendlandes im Türkenkampf," *Saeculum* 4 (1953): 27-44; Barbara von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453-1600* (Wiesbaden, 1968); Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago, 1974); Jean Aubin, "Per viam portugalsensem. Autour d'un projet diplomatique de Maximilien II," *Mare Luso-Indicum* 4 (1980): 45-88; Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, *Les Ottomans, les Safavides et leurs voisins; contributions à l'histoire des relations internationales dans l'Orient islamique de 1514 à 1524* (Istanbul, 1987); and Rudi Matthee, "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy During the Reign of Shah Sulayman I (1077-1105/1666-1694)," in Kambiz Eslami, ed., *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar* (Princeton, 1998), 148-77.

ture is illustrated in the rather rude manner in which a Russian delegation led by Mikhail Petrovich Bariatinski and Ivan Ivanovich Chicherin was treated at the Safavid court in 1618-20. When Bariatinski died on the way to Qazvin, Chicherin, the second in command, became the head of the delegation.<sup>85</sup> The Italian traveler Pietro della Valle, witnessing the collective audience that Shah `Abbas granted to a number of foreign envoys including the Russian ones, noted how only the shah and the Indian ambassador entered the maydan of Qazvin on horseback while the Muscovite envoy and his retinue were made to dismount and enter on foot.<sup>86</sup> Della Valle also observed how Chicherin was snubbed in his request for a loan for his master and how he was forced to return empty-handed.<sup>87</sup>

`Abbas's resumption of war preparations against the Ottomans shortly thereafter had the effect of changing his Russia policy once again. This redirection explains the generous attention the Iranians accorded to the Korob'in mission, which visited Isfahan in 1622-23. Just as in the case of the Zvenigorodskii mission almost three decades earlier, the Iranians seem to have been especially keen to demonstrate to the Ottomans that they had close ties with the Russians.<sup>88</sup> Yet this time around Shah `Abbas may have underestimated the complexity of the Russian interests which, as was seen earlier, went well beyond a desire to join forces with Iran in an anti-Ottoman coalition. In the absence of concrete objectives, the Korob'in mission illustrates how radically Moscow's position had changed. Russia's traditional anti-Polish orientation now prevailed, and the significant third party here was the Ottoman Empire rather than the Safavid state. It is true that the Russians in 1618 had concluded the treaty of Deulino with Poland-Lithuania. Yet this agreement did little to change their long-term strategy, which continued to be strongly anti-Warsaw. Thus, while Moscow officially remained neutral in the Thirty-Year War that broke out in the same year, in reality it leaned toward participating in it on the side of the Ottomans and against Poland-Lithuania, which had joined the Austrians in their fight against Istanbul. Such considerations formed the backdrop to the intensive contacts that the Russians had maintained with the Ottomans ever since 1613.<sup>89</sup> These circumstances also explain why the mandate that V. G. Korob'in brought with him to Iran did not include an anti-Ottoman proposal.<sup>90</sup>

This Russian reorientation seems to have continued during the last few years of Shah `Abbas's reign, for nothing points to a revival of Irano-Russian diplomatic traffic in this period, despite the resumption of the Safavid-Ottoman wars and Shah `Abbas's seizure of Baghdad in 1623. Two Russian embassies are known to have visited Iran, in 1624 and 1626, respectively, but both seem to have concerned mostly trade matters.<sup>91</sup>

#### After Shah `Abbas

The death of Shah `Abbas in 1629 and the enthronement of his grandson Shah Safi marked the beginning of considerable change in the relationship between the Safavid and Romanov states. Shah `Abbas's successors paid much less attention to bilateral relations, and the continuous interaction that had characterized his reign began to level off, to the point where a delegation led by an obscure Iranian envoy may have been the extent of Shah Safi's interest in sending representatives to Russia. This diminished frequency may have been due in part to a change in commercial relations between the two countries. From the sources one gets the impression that, with the death of shah `Abbas I, the Safavid state's involvement in trade relations diminished, giving private initiative gained the upper hand in trade relations. This is clearly true for the trade in silk. Shah `Abbas had turned the export of his country's silk into a royal monopoly in 1619. Shah Safi canceled this monopoly upon his accession, and commerce may have decreased as a rationale for sending missions north. The frequency of official traffic between both states leveled off accordingly.<sup>92</sup>

The Russians, too, in this period showed themselves less keen on continuing cordial relations with Iran. Aggressive behavior on the part of the Crimean Tatars and the perennial enmity of the Poles, made worse by a Polish-Swedish alliance, led them to seek closer ties with the Ottomans. As early as 1627 an Ottoman envoy visited Moscow with a proposal to form an alliance against the Crimean Tatars who, supported by the Zaporozhian Cossacks, at that point presented a threat to both the Turks and the Russians. Beyond that there was the ever-present threat from Poland-Lithuania as a mutual concern. Istanbul, for instance, seems to have seen King Sigismund III as the instigator of unrest in the Crimea. Russia's enmity with Poland-Lithuania was further sharpened when the later country concluded the Treaty of Altmark with Sweden in 1629. All this prompted the Russians to seek support in what appeared to be leading to a war with Poland-Lithuania. This policy automatically led to closer ties with the Ottomans, the other foe of the Poles and a state that might be willing to provide military support. The Ottomans, in turn, were interested in Russian assistance against the Zaporozhian Cossacks.<sup>93</sup>

1613, which allowed a resumption of diplomatic and commercial traffic between the two countries. By that time Shah `Abbas had concluded a peace treaty with the Ottomans (20 November 1612) that stipulated Iran's neutrality in Ottoman dealings with Russia.<sup>78</sup> The first Russian mission to make its way to Iran following the Time of Troubles was that of Mikhail Tikhanov. Sent to Isfahan in 1614 to inform the shah of the enthronement of Tsar Mikhail Romanov, Tikhanov was also charged with the task of finding a solution for the problem of the Cossacks who continued to hold Astrakhan occupied and to try and reestablish diplomatic and commercial relations with the Safavid state. In receiving Tikhanov, Shah `Abbas displayed little of his usual diplomatic charm. As if to show his contempt for the impoverished Russian state, he welcomed the Russian envoy, whose meager presents reflected Russia's financial plight and were accordingly deemed unworthy of a Safavid ruler, in a most undiplomatic manner and, adding insult to injury, in the company of an envoy representing the very same Cossacks whose aggression had been the main reason for the Russian mission.<sup>79</sup> In the negotiations that followed, Shah `Abbas applied his habitual strategy: while demanding from Moscow that it safeguard Iran's northern border against Ottoman aggression, he made vague promises about financial and military assistance. Astrakhan still occupied, Tikhanov, like Amir `Ali Beg before him, was forced to follow the eastern littoral of the Caspian Sea on his return to Russia.<sup>80</sup>

The Tikhanov mission was followed by embassies headed by Shahmatov in 1615-16 and Leont'ev in 1616-17, respectively. Their request for financial assistance and the circumspection with which they raised the issue of Georgia and the savage campaign Shah `Abbas had conducted against it can only be interpreted as a reflection of Russia's continued weakness.<sup>81</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the various Safavid missions that headed north between 1614 and 1617 exhibited little spontaneity or energy. One of those was that of Hajji Murtaza, who went north at the same time that Tikhanov set out for Iran. Hajji Murtaza's mission was typical of diplomatic exchange at the time in being concerned with trade as much as with politics. In fact, the commercial task of this personal merchant of Shah `Abbas—he brought a quantity of silk with him and was to inquire about buying gerfalcons, sable tigers, and squirrels for the shah—is likely to have overshadowed his political mandate. The latter centered on Isfahan's concern about the fate of Iranian subjects living in Russia, the tsar's request for military and financial aid and, most importantly, the question of sovereignty over the Caucasus and, more specifically, the territory of the shamkhal. His standing as an embassy merchant did not, however, prevent Hajji Murtaza from promising the Russians not just Safavid monetary aid but also military assistance. He may have acted on his own initiative in making such statements, though it seems more likely that he operated under instructions from the shah, who, after all, had a long record of making promises to Russia's rulers that were designed to buy good will and time and to safeguard his northern borders rather than as pledges to be honored in fact.<sup>82</sup>

Shah `Abbas's response to the Tikhanov mission and the first official Safavid diplomatic initiative toward Russia following the Time of Troubles was a delegation led by Bulat Beg, who accompanied Tikhanov on his way back to Moscow in late 1614. Dispatched to congratulate the new tsar with his accession, Bulat Beg's mission also represented a return to the themes that Shah `Abbas has pursued before the interruption in relations with Russia. The letter that Bulat Beg submitted to the tsar spoke of Iranian assistance to Russia, and in his talks Bulat Beg relayed the shah's wish to strengthen the Irano-Russian border by way of a rebuilding of Russian strongholds on the Rivers Sunzha and Koisu and a ceding to Russia of Shamakhi. Yet neither in the letters he carried with him nor in his negotiations was mention made of the specific promises extended by Hajji Murtaza.<sup>83</sup>

Shah `Abbas's subsequent diplomatic initiatives continued in the same vein. A second mission, that of Muhammad Qasim (1616-17), and the third, which was again led by Bulat Beg (1617-18), were meant as a response to the Leont'ev mission and aimed at obtaining further guarantees with respect to the borders in the Caucasus, following Iran's bloody quelling of a revolt in Kakheth'i in 1616.<sup>84</sup> The potential usefulness of Russia as a military coalition partner and its territory as a conduit for trade diminished even further when Iran's armies defeated the Ottomans in 1618 and the shah concluded the peace of Sarab with the sultan later that year. What is more, Shah `Abbas, in a reorientation of his foreign policy, at this very same time turned his attention to his southern shores, where a new outside force had made its appearance. Though the English had come to Iran to engage in trade, Shah `Abbas saw in the armed ships of the English East India Company a useful instrument to further his political agenda. In 1622 he persuaded them to assist him in the ouster of the Portuguese from the isle of Hurmuz. Needless to say, the Russians did not play any role in this project. How far Russia's stock had fallen at this junct-



ner—and a potential threat—for Iran. To be sure, the Russians did not cease to interfere in Caucasian affairs in this period. In 1604-05, for instance, they attacked Daghistan in an attempt to avenge their earlier defeats against the Qumuq, though they justified their campaign as a defense of Kakhet'i, which the year before had suffered an invasion from the Daghistanis. However, the Russians did little to resist Shah `Abbas's own expansionism in this period, and even when the shah attempted to strengthen his hold on Kakhet'i, their reaction was rather muted. In the same years that the Russians took on Daghistan, the Safavid armies recaptured Azerbaijan and Armenia from the Ottomans. Shah `Abbas next engineered the death of King Alexander of Kakhet'i by the latter's son, Constantin, a renegade living in Iran as a hostage, ostensibly as a way of punishing the Georgians for their suspected pro-Ottoman leanings and for having established diplomatic relations with Tsar Boris Godunov, but in reality with the aim of being able to put his own protégé on the Georgian throne.<sup>68</sup> The shah's subsequent expeditions into Transcaucasia led to the eviction of the Ottomans from Kartli (the Georgian principality adjacent to Kakhet'i), parts of Kakhet'i, and Shirvan. In the process the shah took the cities of Ganja, Baku, Darband, and eventually Shamakhi, ordering Zu'l Fiqar Khan, the newly appointed ruler to Shirvan, to build defensive fortresses on the border between Tabarsaran and Daghistan.<sup>69</sup> All the while the Safavid ruler merely sought guarantees that the Russians would not form a threat to his northern borders.<sup>70</sup> As it was, Iran's annexation of these cities and regions elicited but a faint Russian response. Moscow did dispatch an embassy to Isfahan to convey its displeasure with the course of events as well as to affirm that the Russians considered the shamkhal their vassal. The tsar's reaction to these conquests never reached Iran, however, since the mission's leader, Ivan Petrovich Romodanovski, perished en route.<sup>71</sup> Instead of continuing to seek Russian partnership, the Safavid ruler now turned to Western Europe, which at the same time began to show an active interest in Iran as a potential ally in its anti-Ottoman strategy. In 1603-04 Shah `Abbas would send six to seven missions to various European courts, requesting military assistance and implying that, in exchange, he would be willing to entertain a diversion of Iran's silk trade from the Levant route to the maritime route around the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>72</sup>

As a result, the period between 1604 and 1613 witnessed relatively little interaction between Isfahan and Moscow. It did not help that, as a result of the unsettled state of Russia, the connecting route was frequently made impassible by bandits and rebels—so much so in fact that the road north of the Caspian Sea became temporarily blocked in this period.<sup>73</sup> Even the Peace of Sitva Torok between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottomans in 1606 was unable to alter this situation, though it raised fears in Iran about a new Ottoman offensive, causing the shah to launch a new search for potential allies. Following the rapprochement between the Austrians and the Ottomans, Shah `Abbas sent several missions to Moscow, in part to gauge Russia's interest in assisting in his struggle against the Ottomans, in part to gain information on the troubled state of the country after the death of Boris Gudonov. Sayyid `Azim headed north in 1606, just after the shah had taken Ganja after a long and arduous siege. The inclusion in his mandate of a suggestion to form a military union against the Ottomans may be explained by the length and difficulty of that siege, which must have convinced the shah that it would not be easy to fully oust his enemies from Shirvan and Daghistan. As Bushev surmises, the shah may also have been prompted momentarily to seek Russian assistance by his knowledge of the ongoing peace talks between the Austrians and the Ottomans—talks that in late 1606 would lead to the Peace of Sitva Torok.<sup>74</sup> Sayyid `Azim's mission did not achieve its goal, however. Neither did that of Mujib Beg, who set out for Russia the following year, carrying with him the news that the shah had taken Shamakhi (on June 25, 1607), and who would only return to Iran in 1613.<sup>75</sup> Something similar happened to yet another Safavid envoy, Amir `Ali Beg, who in 1608 was dispatched to gather intelligence about political conditions in Russia as well as to resume ties with Moscow. Owing to the turmoil in Russia, it was only in 1613 that he was able to hand his letters to the (newly acceded) Tsar Mikhail Romanov. The Cossack occupation of Astrakhan forced Amir `Ali Beg's mission to travel via Khiva and Khurasan on the way back to Iran, where the delegates arrived six years after their departure.<sup>76</sup> In early 1611, finally, Shah `Abbas commissioned the Carmelite friar John Thaddeus to journey to the tsar of Russia, the king of Poland and the Pope, and to propose the diversion of Iran's silk and carpet trade via the northern route. The mission never even made it to Russia, for upon arrival in Astrakhan, its members were taken prisoner by the Cossacks who held the town. After much effort, the Iranians managed to secure their release three years later. Shah `Abbas never sent Thaddeus back to Moscow, possibly because he had made peace with the Ottomans shortly after the envoy's first departure in 1611.<sup>77</sup>

It was only the return of order and stability in Russia, symbolized by the accession of the Romanov dynasty in

the same time Shah `Abbas was about to conclude an anti-Ottoman alliance with Simon I, the ruler of Kartli, and Alexander II, the ruler of Kakhet'i.<sup>55</sup> Zvenigorodskii and his men were well received in Qazvin and during the Nawruz festivities of 1595, where the shah celebrated his recent victories against the Uzbeks, they were paraded in full view of the Ottoman and Bukharan merchants present in town so as to show Iran's rivals that it had important allies.<sup>56</sup> During the audience granted on the occasion of the New Year, the shah brought up the issue of the shamkhal, asking the Russians not to wage war on this vassal of the Iranians, but to turn their armed forces against the Ottomans who were still occupying Shirvan. As a way of encouraging the Russians to assist him in ousting the Ottomans from that region, the shah reiterated his promise of Darband and Baku should the Russians wrest those towns from the Ottomans.<sup>57</sup> This seems to have been little more than rhetoric, however, and though well treated at the Safavid court, Zvenigorodskii returned without any commitment on the part of the Safavid ruler.

Things deteriorated from there. The next Russian mission, that of Vasilii Andreivich, which in 1595 was sent to Iran to explore the shah's position on the Ottoman question and Russia's expansionism, was rather coolly received at the Safavid court. Vasilii Tiufiakin, who headed south in 1597 in the company of Imam Quli Beg, a commercial agent whom the shah had previously sent to Russia, was the next envoy to try and convince Iran's ruler of the need to join the Russians in their struggle against the Ottomans.<sup>58</sup> His mission found a tragic end, for Tiufiakin himself died before reaching Iran, his successor, Emel'ianov, succumbed to the plague in Gilan, and a third leader, Dubrovski, perished in Iran as well.<sup>59</sup> The rather uncivil manner in which Shah `Abbas treated the surviving members of the mission bespeaks the general Iranian contempt for Russians, people they thought boorish and primitive, but no doubt also reflects the Safavid ruler's lack of interest in Russia as an ally by that time.<sup>60</sup>

Shah `Abbas responded to the hapless Tiufiakin mission by sending the Pir Quli Beg delegation to Moscow in 1599. Pir Quli Beg did not command a full-fledged diplomatic mission. Trade, so often the *raison d'être* of official relations between early modern courts, seems to have been its most important rationale, judging by the fact that Pir Quli Beg was accompanied by a number of merchants who carried precious cloth with them.<sup>61</sup> Though its members seem to have misbehaved rather badly while in Russia, they were nevertheless treated quite cordially by that country's authorities.<sup>62</sup> Bushev plausibly sees the indulgence of the Russians and the tolerance with which they met the many demands of the Iranians as a sign that Moscow was keen on forging an anti-Ottoman coalition with Shah `Abbas.<sup>63</sup>

By this time a clear asymmetry had developed in the energy with which both states pursued their contacts. How much the Iranians and Russians differed in the importance they attached to the formation of an anti-Ottoman coalition becomes abundantly clear from the way in which the regent Boris Godunov responded to the rather insignificant Pir Quli Beg mission following his accession as tsar in 1600. The head of the mission that headed south in that year to explain Russia's behavior and designs in the Caucasus and to suggest the formation of a military mission with Iran, Prince Alexander Zhirov-Zasiekin, is called *veliko-posol'*, great envoy, in the Russian sources. Apparently still hopeful that Iran might provide real military assistance, the tsar instructed Zhirov-Zasiekin to act cautiously with regard to Russian claims on the Caucasus.<sup>64</sup> Shah `Abbas meanwhile, having concluded his Uzbek campaigns, was little inclined to consider the Russian proposal, which was in part intended against the Uzbeks, whom the Russians considered a growing military threat. According to the Safavid court chronicler Mulla Jalal Munajjim, the Russian envoy implored the shah to grant him the favor of the *pa-bus*, the foot kiss, but was even denied the *zamin-bus*, the ground kiss.<sup>65</sup> Even his renewed plans for a confrontation with the Ottomans did not translate in a changed position vis-à-vis the Russians; it merely prompted the shah to intensify his strategy of trying to convince Moscow that an alliance was still among the possibilities. In 1603, shortly before the outbreak of the new Safavid-Ottoman conflict, Shah `Abbas dispatched a new mission, headed by Lachin Beg, to Moscow. Its mandate did not include a joint military strategy but merely aimed at discussing Russian military action in the Caucasus with the aim of indirectly weakening the Ottomans.<sup>66</sup>

There were yet other reasons why at this point Shah `Abbas distanced himself from Moscow, despite the outbreak of yet another round in the war with the Ottomans. For one, Russia itself now seemed less keen on cultivating closer relations with Iran, perhaps because its leaders now envisioned a wider European coalition against the Ottomans.<sup>67</sup> Rather more important was the fact that Russia by that time had fallen victim to a period of widespread internal chaos, manifesting itself in unstable leadership and loss of control over outlying areas in revolt. This so-called Time of Troubles (1598-1613) severely diminished the country's status as a credible military part-

which, though humiliating, gave the Safavid army a free hand against the Uzbeks. Nor were the Russians deceived by this policy, having known about a pending Ottoman-Safavid accord since 1589. The tsar was clearly not interested in peaceful relations between the Safavids and the Ottomans, fearing that the Ottomans might be tempted to use Cossack incursions into the Azov region as an excuse to threaten Russia with an attack by their proxies, the Crimean Tatars.<sup>48</sup> In a show of their dissatisfaction with the direction of Shah `Abbas's policy, the Russians returned the presents brought by the Iranian envoy. Simultaneously Moscow prodded Istanbul to keep the Cossacks in check. What is more, its relations with Poland having taken center stage, Moscow even gauged the sultan's interest in forming a joint anti-Polish alliance. This latter strategy would remain an abiding factor in Russia's foreign policy, even if it failed against the Ottoman condition that it give up Kazan and Astrakhan in return.<sup>49</sup>

The Russians reacted with the same reluctance to the next Iranian mission, led by Hajji Khusraw. Shah `Abbas, buffeted by losses against the Uzbeks, had dispatched the Hajji Khusraw mission to Moscow in 1592, even before the return of the Kay mission. Awaiting the results of talks with the Habsburg ruler, Rudolph II, with regard to the formation of an anti-Ottoman coalition, the Russian tsar was not in a rush to receive Hajji Khusraw.<sup>50</sup> It was Hajji Khusraw's task to communicate Shah `Abbas's conquest of Gilan to the Russians, but commercial motives seem to have prevailed. He was charged with buying weaponry in Russia, and as a result of the talks he conducted the Russians granted toll freedom to the goods that were imported into their country under the shah's auspices. Once again `Abbas did not await the return of the envoy before he sent yet another mission to Russia, this one led by Hajji Iskandar, the first Safavid state merchant to travel north.<sup>51</sup> Neither Hajji Khusraw nor Hajji Iskandar achieved much in the way of closer political relations, for which obviously little common ground existed. For the time being, Iran and Russia would concentrate on maintaining and strengthening their commercial relations.

At this point, Iran's preoccupation with Russia's expansionism in the Caucasus region moved into the foreground as a complicating factor and an additional obstacle to closer relations between the two states. This development had its origins in the turbulent state of the Caucasus, where especially the fiery tribes inhabiting Daghistan frequently launched incursions into the territory of surrounding peoples. Matters were further complicated by the fact that, with the Russian penetration and the Ottoman expedition against Astrakhan of 1569 and their subsequent occupation of Azerbaijan and parts of Georgia a decade later, the area had become fiercely contested between Ottomans, Safavids and Russians. As was noted earlier, it was to seek protection against the Ottomans, the Crimean Tatars and the Daghistani tribes that a number of local khanates in the Caucasian turned to Moscow. Over time, the Russians more and more sided with the rulers of Kakhet'i, acting as the overlords of this Georgian kingdom. In 1587, as King Alexander of Kakhet'i and his sons decided to seek protection against the Qumuqs of Daghistan by declaring themselves vassals of the Russian tsar, Russia announced that it would build a fortress on the River Terek for the sake of Georgia's safety. In the next five years Russian armies went to war several times, routing the Kabardians and briefly occupying Tarkhu, the residence of the shamkhal, the ruler of the Qumuq. In the process the Russians built new fortresses on the Sunzha and Koisu rivers.<sup>52</sup>

As long as Shah `Abbas was preoccupied with his wars against the Ottomans and the Uzbeks and engaged in his internal administrative and military reforms, he was forced to acquiesce in Russia's activities in and on behalf of Kakhet'i and in particular the ongoing building of Russian fortresses on the Caucasian frontier. After 1590, however, as he made peace with the Ottomans and his domestic power and authority became more firmly established, Russia's southern forays became one of Shah `Abbas's direct preoccupations. Iran's subsequent diplomatic missions to Moscow reflect this. A Russian expedition against Daghistan in 1593 prompted Shah `Abbas to dispatch Hadi Beg to Moscow once again, charging him with finding ways to prevent the Russians from encroaching further on the Caucasus.<sup>53</sup> However, mindful of the possibility that Iran might need Russian support in a future conflict with the Ottomans, the Safavid ruler decided to move cautiously in his resistance to Russian claims on Daghistan and other parts of the Caucasus that were still tied to Iran in a tributary relationship.<sup>54</sup>

As it was, `Abbas did not have immediate plans to resume war with the Ottomans. For the time being all of his time and energy were absorbed by his struggle against his domestic enemies, the Qizilbash tribesmen, and his continuing confrontation with the Uzbeks. The Russians, meanwhile, having been rebuffed by the Ottomans, were seeking a rapprochement with Iran. An embassy led by Andrei Zvenigorodskii arrived in Iran in 1594 with the task of exhorting the Safavids to move against the Ottomans (as well as the Uzbeks). The timing was auspicious, for at

ward again. Ever since the outbreak of a new Ottoman-Safavid war in 1578, large parts of the Caucasus had fallen to the Ottomans. In 1583-84 Osman Pasha's armies had taken control of Shirvan in addition to Daghestan and Georgia, and in 1588-89 their domination would extend to Ganja in Qarabagh and Nakhjavan in Armenia. In the process the Ottomans had destroyed the fort that the Russians had constructed at the mouth of the Terek River. The Russians reacted to these developments by establishing diplomatic and commercial relations with Kakhet'i, the richest part of Georgia, which had not fallen under direct Ottoman domination and which managed to balance both outside powers, and by building new fortifications in the Caucasus.<sup>38</sup> Moscow was now ready to resume relations with the Safavid state as well as with the khanates of Central Asia.<sup>39</sup> This reorientation coincided with the coming to power of Shah `Abbas I in Iran.

### Relations under Shah `Abbas I

The Russian reaction to Shah Khudabandah's dispatch of the Hadi Beg mission was swift. Iran's promise with regard to Baku and Darband, which anyhow was of little weight since it had only been transmitted orally, did not elicit the enthusiastic Russian response and commitment to assistance that the Iranians may have hoped for. Yet Moscow did reciprocate, for Hadi Beg returned to Iran accompanied by a Russian envoy named Grigorii Borisovich Vasil'chikov. We know precious little about this mission, but since it concerned a so-called "light" delegation, intelligence gathering and, perhaps, official or "royal" trade are likely to have been its main task. Vasil'chikov no doubt also was to probe the chance of continuing friendly relations with Iran, in addition to requesting more details about the promises with regard to Darband and Baku.<sup>40</sup>

Regardless of Tsar Feodor's motives for dispatching Vasil'chikov to Iran, circumstances had changed since the accession of Shah `Abbas. His extensive military campaigning brought the new Safavid ruler face to face with a series of adversaries and the constant risk of having to fight simultaneously on two fronts against his most formidable external enemies, the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. He therefore naturally searched for ways to be relieved on either front, and in the end resolved to conclude a temporary peace with his western neighbors so as to have the time and opportunity to take on the Uzbeks as well as to engage in pressing domestic reforms. This must have been the nature of his dealings with the Ottoman embassy that stayed in Iran while Vasil'chikov was awaiting the shah's return from Khurasan. Seeking an accommodation with the Ottomans was also the aim of the mission that Shah `Abbas sent to Istanbul later in 1589.<sup>41</sup> This priority of concerns explains why the shah was not in a particular rush to meet Hadi Beg and Vasil'chikov and only received them after his return from Khurasan, in April 1589.<sup>42</sup>

The missions that Shah `Abbas dispatched to Moscow and Istanbul, respectively, in 1589—Budaq Beg and Hadi Beg went north while Mihdi-quli Khan, the governor of Ardabil, headed west—further reflect the difference in importance that `Abbas attached to relations with Russia and the Ottoman Empire, respectively. Whereas Budaq Beg and Hadi Beg set out for Moscow accompanied by a mere thirty-six men, including a separate contingent from Gilan, and without a mandate, the mission going to Istanbul consisted of one thousand persons.<sup>43</sup> Of course, this discrepancy illustrates the inherently greater weight and significance Safavid rulers tended to accord to the Ottoman state, both as a neighboring empire and a Muslim realm, and as Iran's most formidable adversary. Yet it also suggests that the shah, unwilling to jeopardize a pending agreement with the Ottomans, had no obvious plans to join the Russians in an alliance. The letter presented in Moscow on behalf of Shah `Abbas expressed a generic desire for cordial and firm relations, and Hadi Beg and Budaq Beg spoke of a military alliance only in the vaguest of terms, thus dispelling any illusions about concrete plans in that direction. The reiteration of the previously made commitment with regard to the cession of Baku and Darband, also stated in the letter, suggests an attempt to create a rift between the Russians and the Ottomans—the latter were, after all, still in possession of those two cities—while appearing amenable to the Russians.<sup>44</sup> The same design is reflected in the apparent approval given to the construction of a number of Russian fortresses south of the Terek and Koisu rivers.<sup>45</sup> The only other result of the mission, the expression of a Russian desire to improve economic relations, must have pleased above all the separate delegation from Gilan, whose main task it was to complain about the poor treatment of Iranian merchants in Astrakhan.<sup>46</sup>

Shah `Abbas continued his policy of disinformation with the so-called Kay mission, which set out for Moscow in 1591.<sup>47</sup> Through this mission he reiterated his previously made proposal to form a military alliance, in spite of the fact that he had just made peace with the Ottomans. In reality, the shah did not intend to jeopardize the peace,

with that country's reputation as a primitive and barbarian realm, a reputation that earned it the nickname of "Alter-Turca" in Western Europe.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, the Russians considered the Ottomans far less threatening than the Poles or, for that matter, the Crimean Tatars, who as late as 1571 marched on Moscow and torched the city. Indeed, Moscow saw the Ottomans as potential allies in its struggle against those two enemies, and the Russians naturally were reluctant to give up good or at least working relations with Istanbul in exchange for vague promises from either Western Europe or Iran. During the entire subsequent episode Russia, while increasingly willing to entertain anti-Ottoman proposals, left the door open for initiatives from the sultan and never ceased to exchange embassies with the Sublime Porte.<sup>32</sup>

The aggression of the Crimean Tatars and heavy losses in its wars against Poland and Sweden in the early 1570s must have motivated Moscow to keep its options with Istanbul open. Yet the simultaneous Ottoman thrust toward the Caspian Sea and beyond it, Central Asia, probably made the Russians realize the fragility of relations with the Porte. When in 1569 the Ottomans launched a direct attack against Astrakhan, by then a rising commercial emporium serving international trade, Tsar Ivan IV understandably turned to Iran, a country that had long felt threatened by Turkish expansionism. The first mission he sent to Qazvin was clearly designed to underscore the importance Russia attached to opening relations, for it carried a number of German-made cannon, varyingly reported as 30 and 100, 500 arquebus, and 4,000 muskets, all items that were in great demand in the Safavid realm.<sup>33</sup>

Shah Tahmasb, bound by the Treaty of Amasya and reluctant to antagonize the Ottomans, did not take advantage of this and other opportunities to join an anti-Turkish alliance. He thus declined a Venetian proposal to that effect in 1571, and until the end of his reign Iran and the Ottoman Empire would coexist in peace. It was under his successor, Shah Khudabandah, whose accession in 1576 was shortly followed by an outbreak of yet another round in the Safavid-Ottoman wars, that Iran's policy underwent a change. Following a Russian decision in 1586 not to enter into joint military action with the Ottomans against Iran, Khudabandah, buffeted by the loss of Azerbaijan, including Tabriz, and large tracts of Shirvan stretching as far as the Caspian Sea, sent the first official and full-fledged Safavid diplomatic mission to Moscow. Its leader, Hadi Beg, is said to have suggested an anti-Ottoman alliance, promising the Russians sovereignty over Baku and Darband, even if the shah himself would recapture these cities from the Ottomans.<sup>34</sup>

That promise reflects the fact that in this period relations between Iran and Russia were increasingly influenced by developments in the Caucasus. Russia's offensive against Astrakhan in the mid-sixteenth century was soon followed by a further penetration of the lands between the Black and Caspian Seas. In its attempt to extend its power farther into the Caucasus, Russia entered a mountainous region inhabited by a bewildering variety of mostly tribal peoples who often engaged in plundering raids against each other's territory. Further complicating the instability caused by regional conflict was the geopolitical status of the Caucasus as a frontier region where the territorial claims of adjoining powers—Safavids, Ottomans and eventually the Russians as well—came together and collided. Safavid claims to Georgia went back to 1521, when a Qizilbash regiment entered the eastern region of Kakhet'i and plundered the towns of Zagam and Giram, forcing King Levan (Lavand Khan) to submit to the authority of Shah Isma'il.<sup>35</sup> Shah Tahmasb's expedition against Georgia of 1540 caused a great deal of destruction and formed the prelude to further campaigns and a more lasting Safavid presence in the region. The Ottoman defeat of a combined Georgian army a few years later enabled Istanbul to extend its influence over Imeret'i, the western half of Georgia. As for the Russians, they were initially drawn into the area in part because various, especially Christian, groups living there approached them, seeking protection against aggressive neighbors and expansionist outsiders. The Daghestanis in 1567 sent an envoy to Moscow to request help against the Kabardians and the Crimean Tatars.<sup>36</sup> It was a Kabardian request for protection against the Ottomans and their vassals, the Crimean Tatars, that led to the building of the first Russian fortress on the confluence of the Terek and Sunzha rivers, the first of what would become a string of strongholds on this segment of Russia's southern frontier. And it was the building of that fortress which gave the Ottomans the excuse to invade the area and attack Astrakhan in 1569, thus prompting the local rulers to draw even closer to the Russians as potential protectors against hostile neighbors and encroaching outside forces.<sup>37</sup> For the time being, however, the Russians were in no position to give their full attention to the south, preoccupied as they were with a protracted struggle with Poland and Sweden over domination of the Baltic region. Only the (temporary) conclusion of the Livonian War in 1583 and a succession crisis in the khanate of the Crimean Tatars enabled Tsar Feodor, who in 1584 succeeded Ivan IV, to turn his attention south-

Nicopolis in 1396 raised the specter of an unchecked Muslim advance into south-central Europe. Timur's rout of the Turks at Ankara in 1402 brought temporary relief, rekindling hopes among European rulers of joint action against the Ottomans.<sup>20</sup> The fall of Constantinople in 1453, though it dealt a severe blow to Christian morale, also revived the Crusader spirit, prompting the Pope to call for a combined reconquest of the capital of Eastern Christianity and the liberation of the Holy sepulcher in Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> This led to a series of contacts between Europe and the Aq-qyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan (r. 1453-78), the only remaining eastern ruler of consequence to be approached after the fall of the Christian enclave of Trebizond (Trabzon) in 1461.<sup>22</sup> Several missions went back and forth between Tabriz, the Aq-qyunlu capital, on the one hand, and Venice and to a lesser extent Rome, on the other. When Uzun Hasan requested weapons it briefly looked as if these contacts might bear fruit, in spite of the complications involved in transporting armaments by sea. Yet Venetian opportunism quickly doomed the enterprise. Though the Venetians knew themselves threatened by the Ottoman march into central Europe, they also realized that Istanbul held the key to the lucrative Levant trade. The Serenissima therefore reacted halfheartedly to the initiatives and in 1479 eventually bowed to a Turkish peace proposal.<sup>23</sup>

A new round in relations between Europe and Iran was launched with the establishment of Safavid power in 1501. Shah Isma'il's fame as a ruler able and willing to take on the Turks soon grew to mythical proportions among Europeans who, desperate for relief from the Turkish scourge, were eager to believe the inflated stories of a superhuman warrior coming out of the east. Isma'il was thus quickly incorporated into the new Crusading project that was launched by Pope Leo X in 1517.<sup>24</sup> In fact, at that point Safavid interests paralleled those of the Christian West, for Shah Isma'il, bruised by his defeat against the Ottomans at Chaldiran in 1514, was keen to find allies as well. Missions were again exchanged, mostly with Rome, which had begun to overshadow the declining Venetian republic, but little was achieved. Nor were the diplomatic exchanges between Shah Tahmasb and the Emperor Charles V any more fruitful. The Ottomans, after all, were not Iran's only concern; the Safavids also had to include their eastern neighbors, the Uzbeks, in their strategic considerations, for the latter maintained diplomatic contacts with the Ottomans that were partly directed against the Safavid state. In 1530 Tahmasb, mindful of the dangers of having to fight on two fronts at once, made peace with the sultan before waging war against the Uzbeks. This naturally diminished the chances of an alliance between Iran and the European powers.<sup>25</sup>

Moscow had been part of the western efforts to form a coalition against Istanbul since 1497, when it had formed an anti-Ottoman alliance with Moldova, Hungary and Poland.<sup>26</sup> Further contacts between Russia and countries such as France, the Habsburg Empire, and Spain, took place during the reign of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V.<sup>27</sup> These did not immediately generate communications between the tsar and the shah over the same issue. Russia had its own agenda, and the Ottomans were hardly at the top of it. Thus, when Muscovy dispatched envoys to Uzun Hasan, it was not with the intent of finding common ground against the Ottomans so much as to seek assistance against the Golden Horde.<sup>28</sup> Shah Isma'il engaged in diplomatic traffic with western European states and, as was seen earlier, also approached Russia. Though receptive to European overtures, especially after his defeat at Chaldiran, the Safavid ruler was prevented from pursuing too close a bond by the strategic dilemma that the Safavids would face until the mid-seventeenth century: a need to balance Ottoman and Uzbek threats. More serious contacts, including contacts with Russia, took place in the reign of Shah Tahmasb, when the Ottomans repeatedly invaded Azerbaijan and Shirvan. The Ottoman attempt to take both provinces was no doubt the direct reason for the shah to send envoys to Moscow. But Shah Tahmasb, too, proved reluctant to antagonize the Ottomans by openly allying himself with a third party, especially after concluding the Peace of Amasya with Istanbul in 1555.

The role played by the Golden Horde in Russia's strategic considerations suggests how misleading it would be to regard the triangular relationship between Europe, Russia and Iran as it emerged after 1550 as a simple configuration aimed at a common enemy. To be sure, the expansionist policy of especially the Russians in the Black Sea zone would eventually lead to a clash between the two, but not until the late seventeenth century.<sup>29</sup> Until that time, they occasionally encroached upon each other's spheres of influence, such as happened in the 1560s, when Sultan Selim II launched a campaign against the eastern Caucasus and Astrakhan, blocking the transit route to Iran by occupying the western littoral of the Caspian between Baku and Darband.<sup>30</sup> Yet the ambivalent position of Moscow in the international geopolitical balance of power renders its relationship with Istanbul a good deal more complex than a simple antagonism pointing to Russia's inevitable incorporation into an alliance with Western Europe that would also include Iran. First and foremost, Europe's desire to include Russia into such a coalition was at variance

In Iran, the foundations were laid for a viable and enduring center of authority with the rise of Shah Isma`il as a warrior-king keen to extend his realm beyond Tabriz, where he had proclaimed his sovereignty in 1501. Within a short period Shah Isma`il managed to conquer large parts of western and central Iran, building a reputation as an intrepid leader whose fame reached far beyond the borders of his realm. Upon the shah's death in 1524, the throne passed to his son, Tahmasb. Shah Tahmasb I (r. 1524-76) first had to contend with a serious tribal challenge to his authority that almost overwhelmed him. Emerging victorious from this power struggle, he ended up reigning for over half a century and in that period succeeded in consolidating and strengthening the legitimacy of the dynasty and its territorial claims.

Russia, meanwhile, was in the process of broadening its power and influence as well. Muscovy had long been part of a triangular relationship with Kazan and the Crimean Tatars that was aimed at a common enemy, the Golden Horde. This alliance did not, however, prevent each of these parties from harboring its own expansionist dreams. Vulnerable because negative, the coalition broke up as soon as the Golden Horde ceased to be a common threat by submitting to Mengli Giray, the ruler of the Crimean Tatars.<sup>10</sup> In 1521 the latter attacked Moscow, forcing the Russians to reassess their strategic interests and to seek assistance from the khanate of Astrakhan, situated north of the Caspian Sea at the mouth of the Volga. Its annexation of the city-states of Kazan and Astrakhan provided Muscovy with a stepping-stone for a further southward thrust.

The first diplomatic contact between Safavid Iran and the rulers of Muscovy appears to have taken place in 1521, when an Iranian envoy visited Tsar Vasili III (r. 1505-33) on behalf of Shah Isma`il. Unfortunately, nothing more is known about this encounter, and no more envoys seem to have been exchanged during the reign of Shah Isma`il.<sup>11</sup> It is quite conceivable, however, that part of this envoy's mandate was to probe Moscow's willingness to join ranks against the Ottomans. After all, following his defeat against the Ottomans on the battlefield of Chaldiran, Shah Isma`il had approached Western rulers with similar intentions.<sup>12</sup> Information about Shah Tahmasb's contract with Russia is equally as scanty. In 1552 he sent an emissary named Sayyid Husayn to Moscow with the intent of establishing diplomatic relations with the Russians.<sup>13</sup> Other envoys traveled back and forth between Iran and Russia in this period as well, though on the Iranian side most of these represented the semi-autonomous regions of Shirvan and Gilan rather than the central Safavid state. Commercial relations are likely to have been central to such contacts. In 1544, for instance, Alqas Mirza, the brother of Shah Tahmasb and the beglerbeg (governor) of Shirvan, petitioned Tsar Ivan IV for a renewal of the privileges of Armenian merchants with respect to their trading activities in Russia.<sup>14</sup> The ruler of Shamakhi in 1554 sent representatives to Moscow to request a revival of the old Armenian trade.<sup>15</sup> The envoy who visited Moscow in 1562 probably represented Shirvan as well.<sup>16</sup> And the emissary who in late 1563 entered Moscow had been dispatched by the beglerbeg of Shamakhi.<sup>17</sup> In the aftermath of Muscovy's annexation of Kazan and Astrakhan, the Caucasus and by extension Iran became more accessible for merchants and diplomats coming from the north. The results are seen in the various expeditions undertaken shortly thereafter by the English Muscovy Company, an enterprise established with the purpose of opening up a trade route to Iran and India via Russia that undertook a series of commercial expeditions to the Safavid state between 1550 and 1580.<sup>18</sup> Yet commercial and diplomatic traffic continued to face huge obstacles. Primitive circumstances, a lack of safety, and the forbidding climate of the south Russian steppes made the route often impracticable, as a result of which the exchange of wares remained limited. Rus' offered leather, fur and metal wares, while Iran furnished precious cloth and silk. Caravans, usually equipped by Armenians, were forced to travel in great number and accompanied by armed convoy, and even then were exposed to attacks by bandits.<sup>19</sup>

### The Beginning of Anti-Ottoman Alliances

As stated earlier, Russo-Iranian diplomatic contacts in the Safavid period built on long-standing efforts by the Christian powers of Europe, including the papacy, to enlist Iran in their struggle against the Ottomans. In fact, these efforts go back as far as the Crusades and the quest of the Christian states participating in them to find eastern allies ready to join in the battle against the forces of Islam. The same quest had motivated the contacts between European courts and the Il-Khanid rulers of Iran, which lasted until the latter converted to Islam. The phenomenal rise of Timur Gurgan at the turn of the fifteenth century had given rise to similar expectations, though by that time the targeted enemy was no longer the Mamluk state but the upstart Ottomans, whose defeat of the Crusaders at

Veselovskii's source material—in particular contain a wealth of information on Russo-Iranian political and economic relations in the Safavid period and are indispensable for whoever wishes to gain a comprehensive picture of the diplomatic and commercial interface between these two states.<sup>4</sup> The present essay draws mostly on this latter scholarship—in addition to alternative sources such as sporadic references in the Persian chronicles, the odd merchant report, and contemporaneous observations by foreign travelers—to outline the development of Russo-Iranian contacts around the common Ottoman threat. Its particular focus is the period from the accession of Shah `Abbas I, which marked a return to stability in Iranian domestic politics and, by extension, its relations with the outside world, to 1639, the year when Shah `Abbas's successor, Shah Safi I, made peace with Istanbul and ceased being an active partner in the multilateral quest to encircle and isolate the Ottoman Empire. My focus in this will be on the nature of these contacts and on the reasons why, as far as the Safavids are concerned, they never rose above the level of rhetorical, almost ritual expressions of intent. An overview of the antecedents of the relationship will precede the actual discussion.

### Antecedents

Coin hoards from Russia and as far as Scandinavia provide evidence that commercial links between Russia and Iran go back to pre-Islamic times. The main route between the two had always been the fluvial Volga route and the Caspian Sea basin, where merchants would follow either the western littoral or, at least until the thirteenth century, avoid bandit-infested Daghestan by crossing the sea itself between the northern ports and Darband, traditionally the point of entry into Iran.<sup>5</sup> Over time, the interaction between the two lands followed a certain rhythm according to stability and prosperity or political unrest and economic crisis in either the north or the south, all of which was predicated on the existence or absence of viable political and commercial centers at either end and a modicum of safety *en route*. Thus the heyday of the Khazar state in the eighth and ninth centuries saw a certain degree of commercial activity between Rus' and the Middle East. The same is true for the emergence of the Kievan Empire in the tenth century and the rise of the Vladimir-Suz'dal state a hundred years later.<sup>6</sup> The Mongol invasion of Vladimir-Suzdalia and the eastern half of the Middle East in the 1300s destroyed much of this trading link, though the subsequent consolidation of Il-Khanid rule in Iran and that of the Golden Horde in northeastern Rus' created a relatively stable environment conducive to a resumption of trading activities

It was only with the decline of the Golden Horde and the rise of Muscovy as an independent and expansionist city-state as of the early fourteenth century that a lasting revival of trade between Russia and Iran was made possible. By the early 1500s Moscow's influence reached far enough south into the Don basin to lead to direct contacts with the Ottoman state, which by that time had extended its control to the northern shores of the Black Sea, reducing the Crimean Tatars to vassalage in 1475. Commercial relations along the River Don as far as the Sea of Azov dominated the contacts between Moscow and the Crimean Tatars. Until 1521, when the Crimean Tatars attacked Moscow, these contacts were based on the mutual benefit flowing from the assistance given by the khanate in Russia's struggle against the remnants of the Golden Horde, as well as from the free passage granted by the Tatars to Russian caravans in exchange for the payment of protection costs.<sup>7</sup> The Crimean Tatars operated in a mediating role as well. Thus in the first diplomatic contacts between Moscow and the Sublime Porte in 1492, Mengli-Giray Khan, the ruler of the Crimean Tatars, and at that point a vassal of the Ottomans, seems to have acted as representative and go-between for Tsar Ivan III.<sup>8</sup>

Contacts between Russia and the various post-Ilkhanid principalities that ruled over parts of Iran were sporadic at this time and appear to have concerned mostly commercial matters. Russian envoys visited Timurid Herat in 1464-65, while in the latter year an envoy called Hasan Beg appeared in Moscow as the representative of Farrukh Yasar, the ruler of Shamakhi and Baku. Tsar Ivan III in turn dispatched an envoy by the name of Papin to Shamakhi. Yet these contacts were incidental and their true import was most likely the exchange of trade commodities.<sup>9</sup> Two obstacles stood in the way of closer and more sustained diplomatic relations: the vast stretch of unpacified territory subject to a punishing climate separating the lands under Moscow's jurisdiction from the world of Islam, and the fact that, in the aftermath of the turmoil caused by Timur's campaigns at the turn of the fifteenth century, conditions in Iran long remained little conducive to sustained political and commercial contact with the outside world. Both circumstances were to change in the course of the sixteenth century. Iran, coalescing around a clearly defined political center, at this time entered a new period of relative stability. Russia, meanwhile, extended its dominion southward by incorporating the Muslim khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan.



# Anti-Ottoman Concerns and Caucasian Interests: Diplomatic Relations between Iran and Russia, 1587-1639\*

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## Introduction

Few questions preoccupied early modern European diplomacy as intensely and persistently as what was known at the time as the Turkish threat. Sultan Mehmed II's capture of Constantinople in 1453 prompted the first organized Western reaction to the Ottoman march into the Balkans, but it was only with the second Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 that the tide definitively turned in favor of the coalition of European powers that had been formed to fend off the advance of the Turks. The intervening two centuries witnessed an unending series of efforts to deliver Christian Europe from the Ottoman fury—efforts that halted and ultimately succeeded in repelling the sultan's armies. Leadership in this endeavor varied, switching back and forth between a Papacy keen on rekindling the Crusades, Venice, the maritime Republic that forever hesitated between Christian solidarity and its own commercial interests, and Poland-Lithuania, the state that in the late seventeenth century would play an important role in the coalition that helped put a definitive halt to the Ottoman thrust into Central Europe.

Much has been written on this episode in history; an extensive literature examines the struggle between the Sublime Porte and Europe's leading powers from the moment in 1453 that Pope Nicholas V called Christianity to a Crusade against the Turks, until the protracted Ottoman retreat from Central Europe that commenced in the late 1600s. Quite a few studies address questions pertaining to Europe's efforts to forge an anti-Ottoman alliance, focusing on the complexity of intra-European relations and its effect on these efforts, or on relations between individual Western countries and the imperial court at Istanbul.<sup>1</sup> The existing scholarship even encompasses Romanov Russia, which, being separated from Ottoman territory by a permeable steppe frontier, was at times approached as a partner in the endeavor and participated in the Holy Alliance with the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth and the Austro-Hungarian Empire that came into being in 1684.<sup>2</sup> Attention has also been paid to European initiatives toward Iran, a country that, though remote, was potentially attractive for the West as a force that might close the *cordon sanitaire* around the Ottoman Empire by attacking the Turks from the rear.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it has been recognized that the very antecedents of Europe's anti-Ottoman policy involve Iran, for as early as the thirteenth century various European powers had approached the Il-Khanids, the Mongol rulers who at that time ruled on the Iranian plateau, in the hope of gaining their assistance in recapturing the holy Christian sites of Palestine from the Mamluks. In the centuries that followed, the Ottomans took over from the Mamluks as the main adversary of the Christian powers, and the Aq-quyunlu and later the Safavids replaced the Il-Khanids as potential allies of the West. Yet the stakes remained the same.

The missing link in this search for alliances remains the relationship between Iran and the Russian state, originally called Muscovy after the city that formed the nucleus of its expanding power. It is easy to see why few Western or Iranian scholars have paid much attention to this connection. Safavid chroniclers pay little heed to Iran's relationship with the world beyond the realm of Islam, and Russia, a land located in a remote northern clime and populated by people who enjoyed a rather low reputation among Iranians, shares in their aloofness. Much of the material relevant to the relationship is found in Russian archives, and the mostly Russian scholarship on the issue remains little known among non-Russian students of Iran. The massive collection of primary documents assembled and published by N. I. Veselovskii, and the studies of P. P. Bushev—which heavily draw on