

The Iran-Ottoman Conflicts Over the Caucasus in the Era of Safavid Interregnum (1576- 1587)

Jahanbakhsh Savagheb^{*}, Ahmad Lobatfard

Professor of History, Lorestan University, Lorestan, Iran

PhD in history, Researcher and Lecturer in the History Department of Yasouj University, Yasouj, Iran

Abstract

In the sixteenth century, the strategic region of the Caucasus had a set of political, economic, transportation, and religious benefits for both the Safavid and Ottoman governments that led the two powers to compete for profound influence and attention in the region. During this period, when some weak and unstable kings such as Ismail II and Muhammad Khudābanda came to power, lack of strength and better performance caused the Ottoman government to grasp the most of the opportunity to extend their influence over the Caucasus. This study aims at investigating the geographical location of the Caucasus considering the Safavid diplomatic policies and the challenges between the Safavids and the Ottoman Empire through analyzing historical data and library studies. Descriptive data analysis has been considered as the method utilized for this research. The research findings indicate that the ineffectiveness of Safavid foreign policy at this time and the consequence of this policy would have an inevitably negative impact on maintaining and controlling the Caucasus. As a result, this policy would provoke the Ottoman invasions, leading to the occupation of some parts of the Caucasus.

Keywords: Caucasus, Safavid, Ottoman, Shah Ismail II, Shah Muhammad Khudābanda.

* Corresponding Author, Email: jahan_savagheb@yahoo.com

Introduction

One of Safavid territory policies (or policies towards territory) (907-1135 AH/ 1502-1722 AD) was to maintain the cohesion of the geographical areas belonging to Iran in the past. The Safavid kings had been struggling to liberate these areas from powerful neighbors to control over them. One of these regions was the Caucasus, whose relations with Iran go back to ancient times. It has made strong ties with the history of Iran in cultural, civilization, and historical spheres even to some extent in terms of racial and linguistic affinities. Throughout Safavid history, between the death of Shah Tahmāsb I (r.1524-1576AD/) and the accession of Shah Abbās I to Safavid throne (r. 1587-1629AD), there was a period called the “Safavid Interregnum”(1502 -1722 AD) when the state was going to lose its power and sovereignty inside and outside of the country. Consequently, the developments occurred in the Caucasus in this era in large parts relied on the internal situation in Iran, internal dynamics of Iran’ foreign policy had significantly influenced it. A combination of factors caused the Safavids to fall from power, leading to the self-determination of the rulers of the border areas on their own political statues with the Ottoman government, and In contrast, the inhabitants of some Caucasus regions such as Sharvān and Dāghistān took the opportunity assist the Ottomans against Safavids. Consequently, the Ottoman government seized this opportunity, and would launch several full-scale attacks on the Caucasus in the reign of Sultān Murād III (R. 1574 -1594 AD/ 982-1003 AH). These attacks came to end in the reign of Shah Muhammad Khudābanda (R.1578-1587AD/985-995 AH) by occupying large parts of the Caucasus, which was totally contrary to the peace of Āmāsya of (1555 AD/962 AH).

Owing to the prominence of studying the Caucasus and examining the developments of it in this period, the aim of this study is to analyze the Iran-Ottoman conflicts over the Caucasus during the Safavid Interregnum period (1576-1587AD/ 984-995 AH). “What were the most important factors influencing the developments in the Caucasus throughout this period?” To explore this question, the research tries to hypothesize the impact of three important variables including:

The Internal Conditions of the Safavids in this Period; the Ottoman government's aggressive policies toward Safavids and the Caucasus; and the movements of dissatisfaction in the Caucasus region. This study is based on historical sources and descriptive data analysis through the original library resources has been considered as the method utilized for this research.

The significant aspects of the Caucasus from Safavid's view

In terms of being located in one favorable geopolitical position, situated between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and, , the existence of natural resources, the economic benefits (especially agricultural products including silk) and abundant wealth and other positive features, all contributing to make this region a significant one considered by various governments.

With the advent of Safavids’ policies, especially in the Junaid (d. 1460) and the Haidar (d. 1488), some parts of the Caucasus such as the Circassians, Dāghistān, and Shirvan were being considered as one of the primary regions by them , from which they could receive some economic, religious, and military benefits. Shah Ismail I (R.1502-1524 AD/ 907-930 AH) conquered some areas of this region, the Shirvān. Shah Tahmāsb I could control over it through diminishing the influence of the local rulers in the Shirvan and conquering Shekī district and appointing his relatives and some rightful rulers there. Moreover, repeatedly invading to Georgia and subjugating the rulers of the provinces of Kakheti, Kaārtli, and Masaq, and Meskhete could help him exclusively govern this region. Having implemented series of measures, the Safavid state largely reached its apogee of political objectives in the Caucasus region. They, therefore, accomplished such objectives in a myriad of ways. These objectives would provide the groundwork necessary to achieve their other objectives. By these actions, the Safavids achieved many goals in Caucasus region such as eliminating the Shīrvānshāh, spreading Shi’ism in these areas, performing cultural and religious actions like constructing mosques and schools, employing talented and efficient personnel in production line and military affairs, gaining a lot

of booties after military expedition to these regions, possessing a vast part of fruitful land for agriculture and silk production and also controlling caravan routes that linked central Asia to Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Safavid paid attention to Caucasus region for diverse reasons.

1. The religious dimension: first of all, sparked by a zeal to fight against the Christian infidels, then spreading Shi'ism in the Caucasus and restricting the Sunni religion in Dāghistān, Sharvān and other areas

2. The economic dimension: occupation of new territories, control of transportation routes, and making an estimate of economic resources and revenues

3. The commercial dimension: establishing trade network with trade organizations and centers of the East and even Europe through the north

4. The political dimension: aspiration towards occupying the Christian lands in Georgia, Armenia and the territories belonging to the Shīrvān kings and other parts of the Caucasus.

Ottoman goals of capturing the Caucasus

After the peace of Āmāsyā, the Safavid government throughout the reign of Shah Tahmāsb "I" managed to take some main trade and pilgrims' ways in Anatolia (such as the Caravan route from Central Asia to the Ottoman Empire passing through Anatolia). The occupation of Āstrākhān by the Russians in 1556AD (963 AH) (Uzūn Ćaršīli, 2/555) led the communication route between Turkistān and Kāzān-Crimea to be blocked. However, these routes could be a vital lifeline for the Ottomans. The Ottoman attention to Turkistān and the Silk Road, which was giving a boost to their economy, could escalate the Ottoman-Iranian wars through this period. At that time, Iran was facing a serious political crisis and Abd-Allāh Khān II, the ruler of Turkistān, was ready to cooperate with them. To overcome main roads in order to create a trade network with Asia, some actions such as the domination of the North Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, invasion of Iran and Āstrākhān and the Caspian coasts and Tabriz City during the reign of Sultān Murād III would be sought (Gündoğdu, 153).

At the time, to compensate for the adverse

economic consequences of the degenerate era, the Ottomans sought to seize the Shirvān region and most of the western coasts of the Caspian Sea and further advance to the northward into Armenia and to the southward into Āzerbāijān. Possessing these areas producing silk caused booties and a lot of income to be adding into the Istanbul treasury (Shaw, 312). The Ottoman government also sought to take over the Caucasus in order to facilitate their connection with the Crimean houses through roadways. The Caucasus, therefore, had a high strategic and cultural position for the Ottoman government. Besides its geographical location at the crossroads, the Caucasus in the intercontinental junction as an Islamic territory with the presence of Sunni-religious communities in some parts of it drummed up a special interest to Sublime Porte. The Ottoman government ensured the geographical continuity between the Muslims of the Caucasus and Crimea, and far beyond Turkistān. This could not be achieved unless they would prevent from Russian infiltration into the Black Sea and control over trade routes, resulting in the importance of the position of Caucasus in terms of communication between the Ottoman Empire and their allies (Cherāghchi, 84).

Following the plan of Sultān Suleiman for the Volga-Don canal (Shaw, 305; Gündoğdu, 151; Itzkowitz, 102; Inālçik, 70, 71), through observing the internal situation in Iran, Sultān Murād III linked the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea to have important coastal areas. The Ottomans could be given a good opportunity from the internal conflicts in Iran to gain more control of northern Āzerbāijān and most of Georgia. Throughout this period, the main purpose and method of the Ottoman military changed completely.

The Ottoman government decided to occupy the territory between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, where they could improve defensive fortifications to infiltrate the Caucasus and secure their eastern borders. In addition, they were spreading the Sunni religion in those areas and taking control of the Caspian Sea coasts, which were promoting silk production (Itzkowitz, 111). The defeat of the Ottoman at Lepanto in 1571AD (979 AH) and the peace concluded with Rudolf II, the Austrian king of the Hābsbürg dynasty,

enabled Sultān Murād III to exclude the territories of Europe, consequently, prompted him to launch the process of invasions of Safavid territory to occupy some parts of Āzerbaijān, Georgia, Shirvān and other areas. Sultān Murād III sparked a wave of internal unrest in the Shirvān and Kurdistān regions and provoked hostility among the Georgian princes in Georgia (Newman, 138; Pārsādoust, 68-69). Thus, besides the long-standing Sunni-Shi'ite tensions between the Safavids and the Ottomans, the reasons for the Ottoman war against Safavids were that the Safavids were planning to dominate the trade and pilgrims' routes of Asia, especially Anatolia. Additionally, the Sunni communities of Shirvān were asking the Ottoman to support them.

According to Yunus Zeyrek, the main objectives of the Ottomans in the Caucasus and their fight against the Safavids were as follows:

1. To support the Sunni communities of Shirvān and Dāghistān, who had been forced to pay taxes to the Safavid government because of their Sunni religion,

2. Coming to the help of the rulers of Georgia, who were planning to oppose the Safavid government from the time of Sultān Suleimān the Magnificent,

3. Opening the trade and pilgrimage routes and making roads to Turkistān accessible through occupying the shores of the Caspian Sea (Abu Bakr, Introduction / 33).

Factors influencing Ottoman military policy towards the Caucasus

With the death of Shah Tahmāsb I, followed by his succession crisis to the throne and the unsuccessful reign of Shah Ismail II, the internal problems in Iran deteriorated once again. The Safavid government, therefore, was thrown into disorder and turmoil. The events of the period have been given in historical reports in details (Rūmlū, 3 / 1498-1517; Afushta-yi, 19-32, 70-72; Munshi Qazvini, 235-238).

At that time, the Ottoman court which was at peace with Europe seized the opportunity and coveted Iran. In the year 1578 AD (986 AH), during the reign of Shah Muhammad Khudābandeh, the Ottomans resumed hostilities against Iran. Owing to internal unrest, despite the courage and audacity of Crown Prince Hamza

Mirzā, the Ottoman troops succeeded in capturing all of the western provinces of Iran and gaining control of some parts of the Caucasus, where had been dominated by Safavid rule. Factors and contexts, contributed in changing the Ottoman government's policy from peace to war towards Iran throughout this period and the pursuit of their own military objectives in the Caucasus, can be mentioned.

1. The Shirvān rebellion and their beg for help from Ottomans

In the battle between Shah Ismail I of Iran and Farrukh Yassār the Shirvānshāh of Shirvān occurred in December 1501 AD (906 AH), Ismail defeated the Shirvānshāh and Farrukh Yassār died in the battle. After the capture of Shirvān, followed by the fall of the local dynasty of Shirvān-Shāhs of Darbandi (Cf. Khwānd Amir, 4/456-459; Amini, 116-139), the Shirvān grasped any opportunity to restore their ancestry's power in Shirvān. The examples can be seen in the rebellion of Shaikh Ibrahim known as Shaikh Shāh in 1510 during the reign of Shāh Ismail I (Jonābadi, 224; Amini, 317-322; Rūmlū, 2 / 1038-1039) and the movements of Burhān Ali, Mehrāb and Qāsem Begin the period of Shāh Tahmāsb I (Rūmlū, 1313-1314, 1331, 1378-1379; Shirāzi, 103, 108-109, Jonābadi, 518-521, 540-543). In 1576 AD (985 AH), throughout the reign of Shāh Ismail II, a rebellion broke out in the Shirvān, and the people of Shirvān pledged allegiance to Kāvūs Mirzā, the niece of Burhān, who was one of the Shirvān princes to oppose the Safavids. However, the Safavids quelled this revolt and Kāvūs Mirzā and a number of his companions were killed (Rūmlū, 3/1535; Qummi, 2/645, Afushta-yi, 52-53).

The actions of the Safavid government in Shirvān and Dāghistān, which had concluded Sunni communities, became less effective since the people of Shirvān were retreating to Dāghistān and the surrounding mountains after their struggles. Early in the reign of shāh Muhammad Khudābanda, Abu Bakr Mirzā, the son of Burhān, one of the former Shirvānshāh who had fled to Dāghistān and Circassia from the maltreatment of Qizilbāsh, invaded the surrounding provinces along with a military he had provided. He, therefore, could send a group

of Shirvān residents to the Ottoman court to ask for the support of Sultān Murād III (Munshi, 1/357). He claimed that the property of Shirvān belonged to his ancestors and had gone through excruciating trouble due to the Safavid rule. He wrote some letters to the Ottoman commanders and Pāshās so that he might motivate Shirvān to execute some military campaigns to the Caucasus. He hoped that the Ottoman army coming to Āzerbaijān, would move to Georgia and after capturing it, they could gain some of Shirvān's rich booties. Abu Bakr Mirzā, who could not assume the power without the Ottoman military's support, called for the Ottoman army to invade the region so as to suppress the Qizilbāsh, and in return, they guaranteed to obey the Ottomans and pay an annually kharāj (tribute) to the state treasury for Shirvān (Qummi, 2 / 677-678). In response, the Ottoman commanders and Pāshās answered to Abu Bakr Mirzā's letters to incentivize him to conquer Georgia and Shirvān (Text in: Ibid.) Due to the incontrovertible weakening of the Safavid state, the Safavid dictator in Shirvān with a large number of Qizilbāsh adherents and forces were massacred by Abu Bakr Mirzā and his troops. The rulers of Dāghistān also attacked the Qizilbāsh and the people of Darband arrested and murdered the ruler of Qizilbāsh (Abu Bakr, 68-70; Selāniki, 233; Munshi, 1 / 365-366). Moreover, Sultān Murād III offered the people of Shirvān 50,000 rifles and guns if they would sever their relation with the Safavids and recite the sermon in his name (Tāheri, 321).

2. Kurdish movements in frontier and their alignment with the Ottomans

The other reason for Sultān Murād III's invasion of the Caucasus was the boundary disputes among the Kurdish people (Khosrow Pāshā, ruler of Van, and the Kurds of Khūy and Salmās). For ages, these Kurds, dwelling in the frontier between the two countries turned to either the Ottomans or the Safavids, depending on their situation, causing severe trouble. In 1576(984 AH), the Kurds accompanied by Beglerbegi Vān, Khosrow Pāshā, provided the Ottomans with reports about the Safavid court and the invasion of the Caucasus. With the death of Shah Ismail II, when they observed the disorder of the

government and the incoherence of the Qizilbāsh army, went to the Van, revolting against the government. Then, in 1577(985 AH), Khosrow Pāshā, while leading a large army along with the Kurds, ignored the peace of Āmāsyā of 1555, looted some parts of Āzerbaijān such as Khūy and Salmās, and massacred people there, then looted their property, and disrupted the period of peace and tranquility in these zones (Afushta-yi, 76; Munshi, 1 / 355-356; Selāniki, 227-228). Owing to hypocrisy existing among the Qizilbāsh rulers of Āzerbaijān, other Kurdish tribes seized the opportunity to invade the other areas such as Khūy, Salmas, Urmia, Oshnavieh and Maragheh with the support of the Ottomans (Vālah, 596; Bidlisi, 2/256).

At the beginning of the campaign, Sultān Murād officially ordered the Kurdish rulers to plunder Āzerbaijān (Bidlisi, 2/256). Since Iranian court had expressed no reaction to it the others considered that the situation were more favorable. Some Kurdish people, such as the Mukri tribe, following up the Safavid state seized this opportunity and started riots (Munshi, 1/357). Qāzi Beg Kurd, who had come to the rule of Salmās and Tasūj by Shāh Ismail II, took the opportunity to stage a rebellion after the death of Shāh. Consequently, he proclaimed independence (Munshi, 1/355).

According to some Turkish writers' views, the actions by Ottoman army generals in inciting Kurdish people, more importantly, those living in frontier and leading these seduced kurds to massacre and raid in some areas of Iran have been described in details (See Kütükoğlu, 23-25, 41-45, 51; Kirziöglü, 318; Peçevi, 1/39). Such objectives paved the way for the advance of the Ottoman army towards Āzerbaijān and then the Caucasus region. As a result, it brought the Caucasus to the attention of the Ottomans.

3. Deficiency in the Safavids' internal position

Along with the Kurdish movements and revolts of people of Shirvān, discord between the Qizilbāsh chieftains led to the decentralized structure of the government in the provinces, thus weakening of the Safavid state. More problematic for the Safavids was the powerful Ottoman Empire, who would enter into military relations with Iran. One of the consequences of the short

reign of Shah Ismail II was the emergence of hypocrisy, enmity and rivalry between the Qizilbāsh tribes, caused the state and military affairs to be disrupted and the integrity of the tribes to be destroyed. Shāh Ismail II had been less concerned with the affairs of the country, and had neglected the affairs of the frontiers and the regulations on lead-based ammunition of the country (Munshi, 327/1; Qummi, 661/2). This behavior reduced the Safavid state's authority and the greed of foreign enemies, principally the Ottomans. This weakness was exacerbated by the sovereignty of Shāh Muhammad Khudābanda, who was visually impaired, which disallowed him to rule over the country. This invisible disability was a major hindrance for taking in such a country like Iran, where rebellions and revolts were common movements, exclusively when it comes to disinterest of the shāh in the government affairs (Bayāt, 162-163). As a result, it elevated his wife's power. However, the conflicts between her and Qizilbāsh chieftains eventually led to the affairs of the country plunging into turmoil (Munshi, 1/343, 348, 382; Afushta-yi, 70-72).

Historian Iskandar Beg, through presenting a list of the internal chaos in the reign of Shāh Muhammad Khudābandeh, concluded that the emergence of obvious gaps in the government provided the neighboring kings and foreigner invaders with great opportunities to seize Iran's territories in the east and west of the country. Hence, Sultān Murād coveted to Āzerbaijān and Shirvān and foreign agitators who had been obedient to the Safavids for years committed arbitrariness and aggression (Munshi, 1 / 351-352). The struggle between Qizilbāsh masters and the lack of unity and integrity among them both increased the vulnerability of Safavids' internal situation, and defense power and instigated Lala Pāshā to wage wars, massacre and further their territories. Thus, despite their political, economic, and territorial aspirations, the most important factor contributing in the Ottomans' success was internal weakness of Iran.

The actions of Sultān Murād III before the military invasion

Sultān Murād III, taking advantage of the internal events in Iran, through ignoring the peace of

Āmāsyā of 1555 he sent some insulting letters to the King of Iran, Muhammad Khudābandah (Feriyyun Beg, 2 / 283-286; Navā'i, 1 / 64-74), while he was planning to conquer Shirvān and Āzerbaijān. Before taking military operations in Iran and coming into the Caucasus, he took steps to achieve his goals. The Ottoman sultān used any plans from the religious and psychological ideologies to seeking company of the Safavid opposition forces and their military service.

1. Turning Kars into a military base

In 1578 AD (986 AH), by the order of Sultān Murād III, the city of Kars became the Ottoman stronghold and the eastern base of operations for the troops (Selāniki, 236-237). Notwithstanding the provisions of the Āmāsyā peace, in his military policy and military campaign, firstly the Ottoman Sultān had the fortress of Kars repaired, then allowed the importation of foodstuffs into it and equipped it with cannons and guns (Qummi, 2/676, 717; Mustawfī Bāfqī, 181; Bayāt, 189, 192). Moreover, he had the road between Erzerum and Georgia repaired and constructed. Therefore, to do so, some engineers and workers from Aleppo, Damascus and Egypt would be sent there (Bayāt, 187).

2. Religionization of the struggle against the Safavids

Sultān Murād III officially barked a command at the Ottoman army and their commander, Osmān Pāshā, to attack on Iran under the name of "Jihād" and declared that "at present, the obligatory task is defeating and expelling the humiliated infidels according to Shari'a." (Text of this decree in: Feriyyun Beg, 2/208; Navā'i, 1 / 86-90). To dispel any doubt about the war with the Safavids, the fatwā of Shaikh al-Islām Shams-Al-din Ahmad Qāzizādeh Efendī was given to Mustafā Pāshā that killing the Qizilbāsh has been religiously permissible and that they were considered as infidels due to rebelling against the Ottoman sultān. Hence, their possessions were allowed lawful¹ to the soldiers who had killed them, and if anyone was killed by them, he would

¹ Halāl The words *halāl* and *harām* are the usual terms used in the Quran to designate the categories of lawful or allowed and unlawful or forbidden

be viewed a martyr (Peçevi, 1 / 36-38; Kirzioğlu, 280-281; Abu Bakr, Introduction / 35; Varjāvand, 86). Religious *expressions of sharp* and even violent criticism about the Safavids and the Qizilbās in the writings of the Ottoman Sultān have been widely discussed and the religious differences between the two countries have been emphasized for the military expedition. The letter of Sultān Murād III's to Muhammad Khudābanda can be seen as an example (in: Feridun Beg, 2 / 283-286; Navā'i, 1 / 70-72).

3. Instigating the Tartars against the Safavids

The Khānāte of Crimea (1420-1782 AD/ 823-1197 AH) as a successor and heir to the Golden Horde and in fact as a mediator between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, played a crucial role in the development of the region and policies between them. The Ottomans were planning to invade the Caucasus accompanying with the Khānāte of Crimea, their Sunni ally. Their sufficient could be stated including the strategic position of the Caucasus, the pursuit of the succession of the Shirvānshāhān, the geographical proximity to the Ottoman borders and the Sunni sects of Dāghistān, the favorable economic situation, and most importantly, when the Safavid state was losing their power (Cherāghchi, 84). During this period, The Khānāte of Crimea were independent to the Ottomans, reciting their sermons, minting coins in the name of them and fighting in wars with Europe and Asia to support the Ottomans (Ūzūn Čaršili, 495, 497). They took part in the Ottoman wars against the Safavids in the Caucasus and created some problems beyond the Caucasus during the Ottoman invasion of the Safavid state (Raiisnia, 249). Through a letter, the Ottoman Sultān, therefore, asked Muhammad Girai Khan Tartar of the Batū Khan¹ dynasty, who ruled in the Qebchāq district to invade Shirvān with a number of his troops through the northern states of the Caucasus and the Caspian coasts (Munshi, 1/358; Abu Bakr, 68). In this letter, while recalling the efforts of his forces to repel the "Rafida" and adhere to the Ottomans, follow Sunni Shari'a in Shirvān, and expel the seditious scum and the thugs of Qizilbāsh from the realm

of pure provinces, Sultān Murād III provoked the religious emotions of Khān Tartar and asked him to join the Ottoman army to liberate the A'jam country from the evil Rafida and rescuing the Sunnis communities from pledging their obedience to them (Feridun Beg, 2 / 123-126; Navā'i, 1 / 77-85). Additionally, in the other letter about Shirvān, he addressed to Muhammad Girai Khān, emphasizing the importance of uniting the military forces to fight the Qizilbāsh (Feridun Beg, 2/122; Navā'i, 1 / 91-93)., the Ottomans, therefore, who had drawn their attention to the Caucasus, were struggling to take control of the Caspian Sea ports and Darband with the valuable help of Crimea Khan.

4. Much efforts to making the accompany of Dāghistān ruler

In 1578(986 AH), Sultān Murād III addressed to Dāghistān ruler (whose name has not been mentioned) in one letter to join the Ottoman army with his troops along with the support of the Georgian rulers so as to defeat the Rafid and carry out Jihād in the path of God and conform with the worthy of Islam toward the moral betterment to free the Sunni communities suffering from their persecution. Sultān Murād reminded Dāghistān ruler "in the previous wars against the Safavids, your ancestors had been closely cooperating with the Ottomans to rescue the "pure Sunnis" of Shirvān from the conquest of the Rafid and atheists. Likewise, according to your ancestors' tenets, deal with the enemies of our religion (the Rafid) with the spirit of hatred, demonization and vengeance" (Feridun Beg, 2 / 316-317; Navā'i, 1 / 99-103).

5. Assuming the power of the Kurds in the border zone and the insurgent forces in Shirvān

The Ottoman sultan instigated the Kurds in the Iran-Ottoman border zones, and the Shirvān to clash with the Safavid forces, as described earlier. He, thus, formed a coalition of Turks, Kurds, Tartars, Lezgiāns, Georgians and Sharvāns and others against the Safavids.²

¹ .A descendant of Djötchi Khan, the son of Genghis Khan

² .Sultān Murād even contacted Sayyid Sajjād Mushasha'i, the leader of Hoveyzeh (from 1541 to 1584) and ordered him to unite with the rulers of Baghdad, Basra and Shahr-e Zour and to be ready with his nomads and tribes with

The ostensible excuses of the Ottomans for a military attack on Iran

To justify a military attack on Iran and disrupt peaceful relations between the two countries, Sultān Murād III and his commanders accused the Safavids of violating the peace of Āmāsyā. The Iranian delegation has been emphasized by the Ottoman Chancellor in one letter that after coming to power, Shah Ismail II jeopardized the peace agreement by taking some actions such as looting from an Ottoman trade and pilgrimage caravan, putting Van and Erzerum delegation in prison who had been sent to investigate the incident, involving in sedition and corruption, being reported by border officers to the Ottoman court. Therefore, all had contributed to break the peace agreement. In addition, after ascending the throne, Shah Muhammad Khudābanda must have apologized to the Ottoman sultān. Furthermore, in order to keep the terms of peace treaty had to send asylum seekers who had taken refuge in Iran to their countries. In fact, refusing to do implied that the Safavids had violated the peace treaty (Feridun Beg, 2/277; Navā'i, 1/110). From the Ottoman point of view, Other reasons why the peace agreement had been broken by Iran included that the Safavids were struggling to intervene in Ottoman affairs through instigating the tribes and nomads in boundaries, and to increase the scope of their propaganda activities even through establishing a connection between the adherents of the Safavids in Anatolia and the monastery of Ardabil. These intentions were perceived to be in violation of the peace of Āmāsyā. It has even been claimed that the Safavids had closely cooperated with European governments against the Ottomans, having promised the Russians to cede the Sunni areas of Darband, Bākū, and Shamākhi (Abu Bakr, Introduction / 33) which of course is not confirmed by the historical sources of the Safavid era.

Bidlisi writes without any details that Sultān Murād Khān was planning to annihilate the land belonging to the Ajam since Shāh Ismail II reneged on the agreement, and sunni communities had been treated in an unjust way

by him. Immediately, with receiving the news about the death of Shah Ismail II, he was determined to come to his decision (Bidlisi, 2/255). Principally, when Shāh Muhammad Khudābanda came to the power, the affairs were handled by Qizilbāsh. At the time, the treasury left by Shah Tahmāsb I perished, and the governmental engagements were disrupted in Iran. Sultān Murād III who was aware of this situation devoted all his efforts to conquering the territory of Iran and “destroying the atheists”(Ibid. 256).

In addition, Sultān Murād III used the remaining property of Prince Bayezid¹ in Iran as an excuse to invade Safavid territory, particularly the Caucasus. According to the Ottoman Turks, Bayezid's treasury consisted of 17 small cannons and a number of rifles and approximately 1,000 horses, which the Safavids had not returned to the Ottomans (Tāheri, 321).

Safavid's reaction to the Ottomans' claims

According to the Safavid historians, the peace of Āmāsyā was violated by the Ottomans. In their reports, the news of the violation of the treaty and the dispatch of troops by the Ottoman sultān to Qazvin, and sending a letter from Shāh Safavid to the Ottoman Sultān through which asked him why the peace treaty had been broken and the border rulers attacked have been mentioned (Munshi, 1/358, 363). Even the reasons for the early advances of the Ottoman army in Āzerbāijān and the infliction of human losses and casualties caused by military operations have been declared that the Ottoman sultān reneged on the peace agreement did no longer occur to the Qizilbāsh due to reconciliation and friendship existing between them and him. They, therefore, did not err on the side of caution (Ibid. 356). To restore him to the dynastic power in Shirvān, Abu Bakr Mirzā Shirvāni dispatched someone to the Ottoman sultān to request from him to be granted his support. In turn, Abu Bakr Mirzā would be attached to his affinity. Moreover, a group of Shirvān people went to Istanbul and owing to their religious affiliation to each other, to ask for the aid of Sultan Murād III against the aggression

weapons to act wherever necessary. He emphasized that he needed continuously to be informed the news about the Safavids. (Feridun Beg, 2 / 315-316; Navā'i, 1 / 94-98).

¹. The son of Sultān Suleimān the Magnificent, who had taken refuge in the court of Shah Tahmāsb.

and violence of the Qizilbāsh. The issue has been also stated in the official Safavids' texts, in which these events were associated in abrogating the peace of Āmāsyā by Sultān Murād III and dispatching his troops to occupy Azerbaijan and Shirvān. (Ibid 358; Qummi, 2 / 677-678).

Although Iskandar Beg Turkamān confirms attaching some Kurdish dignitaries to Shāh Ismail II and serving apprenticeship and training under his supervision, he has emphasized they would provoke riots between the two countries. As a result, their movements led to repudiating the peace of Āmāsyā and the Ottomans taking advantage of these movements (Munshi, 1/356).

A series of Ottoman-Safavid military conflicts in the Caucasus

Throughout this period (1578 AD/986 AH), the struggles of the Ottomans with the Safavids was officially beginning with the order of Sultān Murād III to Mustafā Pāshā Lala, a supreme military commander, known as Prime Minister Lala Pāshā, to invade the Caucasus along with the troops of about one hundred and fifty thousand people from Ūskūdār to Iran (Bidlisi, 2/256). Once Mustafā Pāshā moved to the Caucasus, the ambassador of Iran who was going to deliver the letter of the Safavid Shāhin the protest of this campaign, (Abu Bakr, 50) was not allowed to enter the Ottomans' territory, because they did not want to reach Kars after letting someone be informed the direction of the Ottoman army (Munshi, 1/358).

After receiving the news of the Ottoman invasion, to find the cause of abrogating the peace concluded between his father and Sultān Sūleimān Khān Qānūni (the peace of Āmāsyā), Shāh Muhammad Khudābanda sent a letter to Sultān Murād III (Ev-oğlu, 260-266; Afushta-yi, 76-77). He also dispatched his son Hamza Mirzā to Āzerbaijān along with some government dignitaries and officials to oust Mustafā Pāshā. Sultān Murād III responded that he would intend to reclaim Kars and occupy Georgia." (Abu Bakr, 50)

In another detailed letter, while emphasizing the need for preserving the peace between the two countries by the Safavids, Shāh Muhammad Khudābanda asked the Sultān to prevent the war from escalating and even to forgive the actions of

Shāh Ismail II whose objectives were not also appreciated by the current Safavid shāh (Ev-oğlu, 266-273; Navā'i, 1 / 43-63). Nevertheless, Sultān Murād III replied to Muhammad Khudābanda by using coarse expressions and insult offered to the Safavid dynasty in a threatening letter (Feridun Beg, 2 / 283-286; Navā'i, 1 / 64-74). In 1582, the Minster Mirzā Salmān also addressed a respectful letter to the Ottoman Grand Minister (Vazir-e-a'zam) Sinān Pāshā, requesting the Ottomans refrain from fighting with the Safavid state. The letter addressed the Grand Vizier to absolve the Safavid government from nullifying the peace of Āmāsyā Shāh Ismail II (Qummi, 2 / 717-721). These letters can find that the Safavids did not intend to engage in war with the Ottomans for various reasons and were struggling to preserve the peace of Āmāsyā and to prevent the Ottoman sultān from waging costly dead war. This military expedition went through several stages, which of them would lead to a great achievement the Ottomans were awarded.

1. The Battle of Chīldīr¹ and the conquest of Erivān and Qarābāgh

As the Ottoman military forces advanced into the Safavids' territory, the armies of Chokhur-e-sa d and Qarābāgh clashed with the Ottoman forces in Childir (near Chokhur-e-sa d). The efforts of the Qizilbāsh forces did not meet with success and they were forced to retreat due to hostilities and tribal prejudice between them causing the Qizilbāsh commanders not to coordinate with each other to use one military method (Munshi, 1 / 358-361; Qummi, 2/677; Bayāt, 168-170, Salānīki, 229-230, Kirzioğlu, 327). These defeats left the [Caucasus](#) to Ottoman conquest. Lala Mustafa Pasha soon conquered [Tiflis](#). After the battle of Chīldīr, Lala Pāshā conquered [Akhaltzikhe Castle](#) and equipped it with food and army (Munshi, 1/361). Because of this defeat, the Erivān province or Armenia belonging to the Safavids were captured by the Ottoman military armies. By this conquest, the Ottoman commander was able to reach Georgia.

2. Conquest of East Georgia

After defeating the rulers of Erivān and [Karabakh](#)

¹The Battle of Çıldır

provinces, the Ottoman commander Mustafā Pāshā went to Georgia and conquered various territories, including [Tiflis](#), Kartlia, Kakheti, Zagem and Gūri (Kūri, Lūri) and Āltūn- Qaleh (Bidlisi, 2/257; Qummi, 2/679; Afushta-yi, 86; Munshi, 1/358, 361, 362; Vāla, 596, Abu Bakr, 54-57).

3. The battle of Shamākhi and the capture of Shirvān

The Ottoman army invaded Shirvān after occupying Georgia. When Isā Khān Gurji was forced to retreat due to his inability to confront, it allowed Lala pāshā to reach Shirvān comfortably. The Lezgi inhabitants and the rulers of Dāghistān also obeyed the Ottoman government (Munshi, 1/361; Astarābādi, 107). The Safavid attack in Shirvān on Shamākhi was defeated by the Ottoman army and most of their leaders were killed and their property was seized and plundered (Afushta-yi, 85-93, 90-93; Qummi, 2 / 687-679; Abu Bakr, 64-70; Qaramāni, 3/113). One of the fiercest battles that had taken place was the battle of Shamakhi because at the request of Sultān Murād Ottoman, Mohammad Girai Khān Tartar sent his brother Ādil Girai Khān to lead the Ottoman military forces in Shirvān. The army was able to inflict a severe defeat on the Qizilbāsh forces, being in a state of siege by the Ottomans, Tartar, Lezgi, and Garabork¹ forces and the Shirvān. The Ottomans fortified the forts of Shamakhi, Aras and Baku, and appointed a governor in each area (Munshi, 1/358, 362-365, Afushta-yi, 94-100, Bayāt, 182-183). Occupying these areas that produced silk (Abu Bakr, 60) brought a lot of booty to the Ottoman treasury and could economically enrich the Ottoman court to some extent.

One of the major factors contributing in the victory of the Ottoman commander in Shirvān was that the Shirvān was cooperating with the Ottoman army and welcoming them (Munshi, 1/357, 361; Abu Bakr, 60) which caused the Turks to further. The necessary unpreparedness of the Qizilbāsh forces, which had been spending several years in prosperity and leisure in Shirvān, was associated with this defeat (Munshi, 1/364).

4. A series of Safavid-Ottoman conflicts in Shirvān

From the year 1580 AD (988 AH), later in the reign of Shah Muhammad Khudābanda, Shirvān was the executed scene of disputes and clashes between the Safavid and Ottoman military forces, each of which sought to consolidate their rule over the Ottoman Empire. However, they held some talks on the peace, which did not produce any results (Munshi, 1 / 388-391, 402-485; Vālah, 598-600, 617-625; Qummi, 2 / 702-704, 713-721; Bidlisi, 2/272; Abu Bakr, 92-98; Bayāt, 192 - 195) in the year 1586. Farhād Pāshā, the Ottoman commander, captured Erivān province, destroyed the Etchmiadzin Cathedral and fortified the Erivān Fortress. With the conquest of Georgia, Shirvān, Shakki, Bau, Erivān, all the regions of the Caucasus were occupied by the Ottomans. In 1585 (993 AH), they also captured Āzerbaijān (Munshi, 1/452, 472- 496; Bayāt, 202-203; Bidlisi, 2 / 270-275; Abu Bakr, 105-118). Hamza Mirzā was planning to expel the Ottomans, but he found the Qizilbāsh were attempting to sabotage, and not to cooperate with him. Subsequently, through dispatching his son, Haidar mirza, bearing gifts and offerings for Istānbūl, he answered to the letters of Farhād Pāshā, the Ottoman commander, to negotiate peace providing that the Ottomans evacuated Tabriz and delivered it to Iran (Munshi, 1 / 532-538; Afushta-yi, 112-113, 207-208; Vālah, 794-796). However, the assassination of Hamza Mirzā (night of 6 December 1586), which was plotted at the instigation of the Qizilbāsh rulers (Afushta-yi, 215; Bayāt, 239; Vālah, 798-799) prevented negotiating any peace between the two countries. Eventually, in the period of Shah Abbās I, the First Peace Treaty of Istānbūl (1591) was concluded between the two governments. The occupied areas had remained for Turks from 1578 to 1604 (985-1012 AH) almost for three decades until Shāh Abbās was able to retake these territories.

Conclusion

The interval between the death of Shah Tahmāsb I and the sovereign of Shah Abbās I in Safavid history marked a period in which the general characteristics of the Safavid era were instability and lack of authority in their territories, mainly in

¹ . From the race of the Shirvān's troops

the Caucasus, which was of great importance to the Safavids. In the pre-Safavid period and even from the time of Safavids' establishment to this mentioned period, this region was considered a key center of Iran's economic productivity in the agricultural sectors, principally silk production. Alongside, it could be associated with producing a great deal of grains and fruits, collecting taxes and promoting agriculture due to having abundant water and vast resources. Moreover, it was full of rich churches and an efficient workforce. The General developments during the reigns of Shah Ismail II and Shah Muhammad Khudābanda led to less attention being paid to the Caucasus region since the peace of Āmāsya was considered an obstacle to the Ottoman invasion of these areas. Nevertheless, the religious tolerance of Shah Ismail II and the lack of his religious bias created an atmosphere in Shirvān and Dāghistān where the people seized this opportunity to break away from the Safavid rule and attach to the Ottomans. Following the Ottoman's previous plans to infiltrate the Caucasus and the general objectives of the Ottoman government, including the revitalization of the old trade routes, the Don-Volgā canal, the mastery of vital transatlantic trade routes, and land networks with the Crimea, the Caucasus was attacked throughout the reign of Sultān Murād III. The Caspian coast of the Caucasus and the rich and silky region of Shirvān were conquered by the Ottomans.

The Ottomans pursued their economic goals between the years 1578-1590 (985-997 AH). They annexed all the western states of Iran from the Caucasus to Nahāvand to their territories. The search for a new route for the export of silk considered Anatolia the main center for the transportation of Iranian silk and European wool products. This commercial transportation and its customs revenues generated a significant income for the Ottoman treasury. In conclusion, these conditions caused the Ottoman government to make great efforts to take over the Caucasus. They, therefore, succeeded in occupying most of the Caucasus region and then occupied Āzerbaijān and the Ottoman forces were deployed in Tabriz. Imposing the order onmassacring the people of Tabriz and looting and vandalism of this city by Osmān Pāshā, the

Ottoman commander, was the ominous result of this occupation, which was followed in excuse of the killing of one of the Ottoman commanders by the people of Tabriz.

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