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THE FOUNDED OF NAKHCHIVAN AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Abstract

The Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (NAR) stands as a testament to the intricate interplay of historical, ethnic, and geopolitical factors that have shaped the South Caucasus region. Established in 1924 amidst the dissolution of the Russian Empire and the emergence of independent states, Nakhchivan's autonomy marked a significant milestone in the region's geopolitical landscape. This article aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical context, legal framework, and political dynamics surrounding the establishment of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. From its ancient origins as a hub of trade and cultural exchange to its status as an autonomous entity within Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan's evolution embodies resilience, adaptation, and cultural diversity. Through a scholarly exploration of Nakhchivan's history and evolution, this article seeks to shed light on the complex interplay of historical, cultural, and geopolitical forces that have shaped its development.

By tracing Nakhchivan's trajectory from antiquity to the present day, this study aims to elucidate its enduring significance within the broader context of Azerbaijani history and regional politics.

Keywords: *South Caucasus, Azerbaijan Republic, Silk Road, Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Treaty of Kars, Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic*

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Naxçıvan Muxtar Respublikasının yaranması: keçmişdən bu günə

Xülasə

Naxçıvan Muxtar Respublikası (NMR) Cənubi Qafqaz regionunu formalaşdıran tarixi, etnik və geosiyasi amillərin qarşılıqlı təsirinin sübutudur. 1924-cü ildə Rusiya İmperiyasının dağılması və müstəqil dövlətlərin yaranması fonunda yaradılan Naxçıvanın muxtariyyəti regionun geosiyasi vəziyyətində mühüm mərhələ oldu. Bu məqalə Naxçıvan Muxtar Respublikasının yaranması ilə bağlı tarixi kontekst, hüquqi baza və siyasi dinamikanın hərtərəfli təhlilini vermək məqsədi daşıyır. Ticarət və mədəni mübadilə mərkəzi kimi qədim mənşəyindən tutmuş Azərbaycanın tərkibində muxtariyyət statusuna qədər Naxçıvanın təkamülü dayanıqlılığı, uyğunlaşmanı və mədəni müxtəlifliyi təcəssüm etdirir. Bu məqalə Naxçıvanın tarixi və təkamülünün elmi tədqiqi yolu ilə onun inkişafını formalaşdıran tarixi, mədəni və geosiyasi qüvvələrin mürəkkəb qarşılıqlı təsirinə işıq salmağa çalışır.

Bu tədqiqat Naxçıvanın qədim dövrlərdən bu günə qədər keçdiyi tarixi yolu izləməklə onun Azərbaycan tarixi və regional siyasətinin daha geniş kontekstində qalıcı əhəmiyyətini işıqlandırmaq məqsədi daşıyır.

Açar sözlər: *Cənubi Qafqaz, Azərbaycan Respublikası, İpək Yolu, Rusiya İmperiyası, Osmanlı İmperiyası, Qars müqaviləsi, Naxçıvan Muxtar Respublikası*

Introduction

Nestled in the rugged terrain of Azerbaijan's southwestern corner lies the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, a region with a rich historical and cultural heritage. The establishment of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in 1924 represented a significant development in the geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus region.

The formation of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic occurred against the backdrop of the dissolution of the Russian Empire and the subsequent emergence of independent states in the region. Following the collapse of imperial rule, various ethnic and territorial disputes arose, prompting the need for new administrative structures. The decision to grant autonomy to Nakhchivan was influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, including the desire to accommodate the region's predominantly Azerbaijani population and to mitigate potential conflicts with neighboring states (Huseynov, 2016).

This article aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the historical context, legal framework, and political dynamics surrounding the establishment of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. By exploring the evolution of Nakhchivan from its early history to its status as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan, it is aimed to shed light on the complex interplay of historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors that shaped its development. This scholarly exploration of the birth of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic aims to trace its origins and examine its enduring significance in the broader context of Azerbaijani history and regional politics.

Historical Background and Establishment of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic

Throughout antiquity, Nakhchivan was part of several empires, including the Persian, Median, and Achaemenid civilizations. These ancient empires left their mark on the region's cultural landscape, contributing to its rich heritage and architectural legacy. During the medieval period, Nakhchivan was part of the Seljuk and Safavid empires, serving as a center of trade, culture, and intellectual exchange. The region witnessed the flourishing of art, architecture, and literature, with notable contributions to Islamic civilization (Smith, 2021).

Nakhchivan, situated in the South Caucasus region, boasts a rich and diverse ancient history dating back to the Bronze Age. Archaeological excavations and research have unearthed significant evidence of human habitation in the region, indicating continuous settlement for millennia. The fertile valleys and strategic location of Nakhchivan at the crossroads of ancient trade routes contributed to its importance as a center of civilization and cultural exchange. Archaeological findings in Nakhchivan reveal evidence of human habitation dating back to the Bronze Age, approximately 3,000 to 1,200 BCE. Excavations at various sites across the region, including Julfa and Ordubad, have uncovered artifacts such as pottery, tools, and burial mounds, providing insights into the daily life, customs, and technological advancements of ancient inhabitants (Asadov, 2019).

Nakhchivan's strategic location at the junction of major trade routes linking the civilizations of the Near East, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Caucasus played a crucial role in facilitating trade and cultural exchange. During the heyday of the Silk Road, Nakhchivan emerged as an important node along this ancient trade network, connecting the East and West. Merchants, travelers, and caravans passing through Nakhchivan brought with them exotic goods such as silk, spices, precious metals, and ceramics, enriching the local economy and fostering cultural diversity (Guliyev, 2020).

Nakhchivan's position as a cultural crossroads facilitated the exchange of ideas, languages, religions, and artistic influences among diverse civilizations. The region witnessed the convergence of various ethnic groups, including Persians, Armenians, Greeks, Arabs, and Turks, each leaving their mark on its cultural landscape. The architectural legacy of ancient Nakhchivan is evident in its numerous historical monuments, fortifications, and religious sites scattered throughout the region. Examples include the ancient city of Shahar Yeri, the Alinja Fortress, and the Mausoleum of Noah, each reflecting the architectural styles and cultural influences of different periods in history.

Nakhchivan, has a storied past deeply intertwined with the rise and fall of ancient empires. Archaeological excavations have unearthed evidence of cultural exchanges between Nakhchivan

and the Median heartland, including pottery styles and architectural motifs, reflecting the region's integration into the Median sphere of influence (Cornell, Svante, and Seyidov, 2020).

Diplomatic Relations and Treaties

The incorporation of Nakhchivan into the Russian Empire was preceded by a series of diplomatic negotiations and treaties between Russia and neighboring powers. The Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828), signed between Russia and Persia, delineated the boundaries of their respective territories and resulted in the cession of Nakhchivan and other territories in the South Caucasus to Russia.

Administrative Changes Under Russian Rule: A Scientific Perspective

The establishment of Russian rule in Nakhchivan during the 19th century heralded a period of profound administrative transformation, as the region became integrated into the administrative structures of the Russian Empire. Through a series of reforms and administrative measures, Russian authorities sought to impose their governance system and institutions on Nakhchivan, reshaping the region's administrative landscape and governance mechanisms (Cornell, Svante, and Starr, Frederick, 2017).

One of the key administrative changes introduced by Russian rule was the imposition of imperial bureaucracy and administrative structures in Nakhchivan. Russian authorities established administrative offices, such as governorates, districts, and local administrative councils, to oversee the governance and administration of the region. These institutions were staffed with Russian officials and bureaucrats tasked with implementing imperial policies and directives in Nakhchivan.

Russian rule brought about significant legal reforms and the establishment of a new judicial system in Nakhchivan. Russian legal codes and statutes were introduced, replacing traditional legal norms and customary practices.

Traditional forms of landownership and taxation were replaced by Russian land reforms and fiscal policies aimed at centralizing control over land and resources. Land surveys and cadastral mapping were conducted to delineate property boundaries and assess land value for taxation purposes. Russian authorities implemented taxation systems based on land assessment and income, imposing levies and duties on Nakhchivan's population to generate revenue for the imperial treasury (Aliyev, 2015).

Russian language and culture were promoted as part of imperial assimilation efforts, leading to the establishment of Russian-language schools, cultural institutions, and religious organizations in the region. Traditional educational practices and religious teachings were subjected to state oversight and regulation, with Russian authorities exerting influence over the curriculum and content of educational materials.

The Significance of the Treaty of Kars: Recognizing Nakhchivan's Autonomy

The Treaty of Kars, signed on October 13, 1921, between the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Soviet Union, with participation from the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (AzSSR) and the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ArmSSR), played a pivotal role in defining the territorial boundaries and political status of the South Caucasus region following the collapse of the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Central to the Treaty of Kars was the recognition of Nakhchivan as an autonomous region within the newly formed Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, marking a significant milestone in the region's political development and autonomy (Yilmaz, 2018).

The Treaty of Kars represented a culmination of diplomatic negotiations and compromises between the signatory parties, aimed at resolving territorial disputes and establishing stable borders in the aftermath of World War I and the Russian Civil War.

Safeguarding Strategic Interests

From a geopolitical perspective, the recognition of Nakhchivan's autonomy within Azerbaijan under the Treaty of Kars served to safeguard the strategic interests of the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan. Nakhchivan's strategic location along the border with Turkey and Iran made it a vital

transit point for trade, transportation, and military logistics, necessitating a stable and reliable governance structure to ensure Soviet and Azerbaijani interests were protected (De Waal, 2010).

Nakhchivan's Transition to Independence: A Scientific Perspective

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 heralded a period of profound political upheaval and transformation in the South Caucasus region, including Nakhchivan. As the constituent republics of the Soviet Union asserted their sovereignty and independence, Nakhchivan embarked on a journey towards self-determination and autonomy within the framework of independent Azerbaijan.

Political Developments and Constitutional Reforms

The adoption of a new constitution in Azerbaijan in 1995 reaffirmed Nakhchivan's status as an autonomous entity with its own legislative, executive, and administrative institutions, providing a legal framework for its governance and self-determination. Nakhchivan's parliament, the Supreme Assembly, was empowered to enact laws and policies tailored to the region's unique needs and priorities, ensuring a degree of local autonomy and decision-making authority (Guliyev, 2020).

Nakhchivan's Endeavors within Independent Azerbaijan

One of Nakhchivan's foremost endeavors has been the preservation and promotion of its rich cultural heritage and historical legacy. It has reinforced Nakhchivan's sense of identity and pride. Cultural preservation initiatives, including the restoration of architectural landmarks and the establishment of cultural institutions, have underscored Nakhchivan's commitment to maintaining its unique cultural identity within the broader Azerbaijani context (Kheirkhah, 2020).

Nakhchivan has pursued a proactive economic development agenda aimed at diversifying its economy, stimulating growth, and improving living standards for its residents. Special economic zones, investment incentives, and business-friendly policies have attracted domestic and foreign investors, fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation. Nakhchivan's efforts to harness its natural resources, harness its human capital, and leverage its strategic location as a transit hub have positioned it as a dynamic economic engine within Azerbaijan.

Nakhchivan has actively engaged in regional cooperation initiatives and cross-border partnerships to strengthen its ties with neighboring states and enhance its role as a regional actor. Bilateral agreements, trade agreements, and joint ventures have facilitated economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and people-to-people contacts, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration. Nakhchivan's participation in international organizations, forums, and summits has raised its profile on the global stage and provided opportunities for diplomatic engagement and strategic alliances (Smith, 2021).

Nakhchivan's Path to Prosperity

Nakhchivan, as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan, has embarked on a strategic trajectory of economic development and regional cooperation aimed at securing its future prosperity and stability. Through a combination of targeted initiatives, investment strategies, and collaborative partnerships, Nakhchivan seeks to harness its resources, enhance its competitiveness, and foster sustainable growth within the framework of Azerbaijani statehood (Kheirkhah, 2020).

Central to Nakhchivan's economic development agenda is strategic investment in infrastructure projects designed to improve connectivity, facilitate trade, and stimulate economic activity. Initiatives such as the construction of roads, railways, airports, and seaports enhance Nakhchivan's transportation network, reducing logistical barriers and facilitating the movement of goods, services, and people. Investment in telecommunications, energy, and utilities infrastructure further strengthens Nakhchivan's economic foundation, ensuring reliable access to essential services and enhancing productivity and efficiency.

Nakhchivan is committed to diversifying its economy by promoting growth in key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and technology. Agricultural modernization programs, irrigation projects, and agribusiness initiatives bolster Nakhchivan's food security, increase agricultural productivity, and create employment opportunities in rural areas. Tourism development strategies focus on showcasing Nakhchivan's cultural heritage, natural beauty, and historical

attractions, attracting domestic and international visitors and generating revenue for the region. Investment incentives, innovation hubs, and technology parks stimulate entrepreneurship, research, and development, fostering a dynamic and competitive business environment.

Conclusion

Nakhchivan's journey from ancient times to the present day is a testament to its resilience, adaptability, and enduring spirit. As a crossroads of civilizations, Nakhchivan has witnessed the rise and fall of empires, the ebb and flow of trade routes, and the convergence of diverse cultures and peoples. From its ancient origins as a center of trade and commerce to its status as an autonomous region within independent Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan has navigated the complexities of history with steadfast determination and resilience. Through the centuries, Nakhchivan has preserved its cultural heritage, celebrated its ethnic diversity, and upheld its traditions, ensuring a vibrant and dynamic identity that continues to thrive in the modern era. The recognition of Nakhchivan's autonomy within Azerbaijan, enshrined in treaties and constitutional provisions, underscores its distinct status and role within the broader Azerbaijani state. Nakhchivan's transition to independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a new chapter in its history, characterized by political, economic, and social transformation. Through strategic initiatives, investment in infrastructure, promotion of regional cooperation, and commitment to cultural preservation, Nakhchivan has secured its future prosperity and stability, reaffirming its place as a dynamic and resilient entity within the evolving geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus.

As Nakhchivan continues its journey towards autonomy, prosperity, and progress, its rich history, cultural heritage, and strategic significance serve as pillars of strength and sources of inspiration for future generations. Through collaboration, innovation, and inclusive growth, Nakhchivan is poised to unlock its full potential and build a brighter future for all who call it home.

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