

Administrative-Territorial Organisation of the States in the Caucasus Region in the 20th Century and the Beginning of the 21st Century

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Abstract

Eurasia comprises numerous self-sufficient and, in many ways, important regions. One of the most polyethnic, polyconfessional and, as a result, culturally varied Caucasus, on the border of Europe and Asia, is one such place. The region is divided into two political-geographic parts: “North Caucasus” and “South Caucasus”. These terms represent the modern geopolitical transformation of the Russian terms “кавказ” and “закавказье,” which were formed in the 19th century. It is important that these two terms did not occupy the whole area of the Caucasus and separate about ¼ part of the territory from the region; according to modern political geography, this land is part of the Middle East. Though, according to the various physical-geographic, historical-geographic and ethno-geographic sources, this land is part of the Caucasus. Eldar Ismailov, an Azerbaijani scientist, and Vladimir Papava, a Georgian scientist, defined the Caucasus region and developed a theory that divides it into three parts. The determination of the internal political-geographic structure during the close past and the modern time is the main goal of this article.

Keywords: North Caucasus, Central, Caucasus, South Caucasus, Region, Province

Introduction

Despite numerous cultures in the Caucasus and the political-geographic separation of the region, the various physical-geographic, historical-geographic, and ethnic facts, as well as the political and economic facts, help us to determine it as the entire region. Even though political geography owns the main role when we speak about the state and the internal regional frontiers. The political geography of the Caucasus changed in the 20th and the beginnings of the 21st centuries. The basis for these changes was formed in the very beginning of the 19th century when Russia’s state adamantly based itself in the North and South Caucasus. Despite many successful conflicts, the Russian Empire could not occupy the entire ethnic and historical-geographic region of the Caucasus, so it was divided among three empires at the beginning of the 20th century. The Russian geopolitical terms “кавказ” and “закавказье” occupied only Russia’s territory of the Caucasus. “The North Caucasus” and “the South Caucasus”, which replaced those two terms, also occupy only Russia’s Caucasian territory and the Caucasian territory liberated from this state. As a result, the Caucasian lands of the Persian Empire/Iran and the Ottoman Empire/Türkiye remained out of the native region (Ismaylov & Papava, 2007). They occupy the historical “Adarbadagan”, which name is one of the steps in the forming of the toponymy “Azerbaijan”, whereas the land is unofficially known as “the South Azerbaijan” or “Iran’s Azerbaijan”. They also occupy the historical Georgian and the Armenian lands, a part of which remained in the Ottoman Empire at first, and then an even larger part was given to the Republic of Türkiye by 1921 year’s agreements in Kars and Moscow (Metreveli, *The History of Caucasus – part 1*, 2023).

The February Revolution in 1917 in Russia led to the formation or restoration of new states in the Caucasus. Their administrative and territorial organisation was based on the laws of the Russian Empire. The multicultural region became the centre for the different interests and the mutual and the internal conflicts, which were successfully used by Soviet Russia, and the Caucasus remained divided among three states once again in 1921. The administrative and territorial organisation of the Soviet

Caucasus remained under the influence of the Russian imperial order for a long time and was gradually rearranged in the new Soviet system. This Soviet system became the base for the modern administrative-territorial organisation when the Caucasus comprised six states, in 1991. This research aims to identify the situation that best illustrates the structure of the Caucasus as a complete geographic region, along with its historical context and modern political organisation.

Methods and Materials

The main sources for the theory of this article are Eldar Ismailov's and Vladimir Papava's monograph: "Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy" and two-volume edition of the Georgian National Academy of Science: The History of Caucasus. Besides, the various important issues like the frontiers of the states and regions or their changing during the years have the own Georgian and foreign sources. The analysis of the maps is widely used in the article too (Gachechiladze, 2023).

Results

Frontiers

The geography of the frontiers in the Caucasus Region (fig. 1), including the internationally admitted ones, is complex and varied. The dispute and the conflicts about the state frontiers form the important problems for the countries of the Caucasus. As for the borders of the entire region, they may be drawn as on the physical-geographic as on the political-geographic lines. These lines coincided with each other or not on the various parts of the entire border.

The western border of the Caucasus Region is situated along the coast of the Azov and the Black seas from the town of Yeysk in the north to the Trabzon city in the south. Though, the different source widens this part of the frontier from the estuary of the Don River in the north to the Ordu city in the south. According to the opinion of the author, Trabzon City may be included in the Caucasus Region, as the physical-geographic, historical-geographic, and ethnic facts give us such a possibility. On the other hand, there is room for debate regarding the relocation of the borders to the Don River and the Ordu city. Besides, the writing sources do not confirm these borders.

The eastern border starts at the estuary of the Kuma River in the Caspian Sea and continues along the coast until the Talish Mountains and the Iranian part of the Mughan Plain. Various sources suggest that the western part of the Alborz Mountains moves this frontier to the southeast. Physical-geographic and historical-geographic facts allow the entire territory of the Mughan Plain to enter the Caucasus Region. It is important that this plain was the land which had been used for the controlling of the Caucasus by the various empires that owned Iran during many centuries. In contrast, the Alborz Mountains and their inhabitants lack a direct physical, historical, or ethnic connection to the Caucasus Region and its people. This moved border is not confirmed by the writing sources.

The northern border of the Caucasus Region starts at the town of Yeysk on the coast of the Azov Sea and continues to the east by the Eya, Yegorlik, West Manich and East Manich rivers; also, the Manich Lake and the lower basin of the Kuma River till the Caspian Sea. According to the different source, the frontier is slightly moved to the north and draws the border line on the lower basin of the Don River, the Manich River, the Kuma-Manich Depression and the lower basin of the Kuma River. Numerous maps show us that only the autonomous republics of "the North Caucasus"—the members of the Russian Federation, comprise this region. But this idea banishes "the Krasnodar Kray" – the basin of the Kuban River – and "the Stavropol Kray" – the basin of the Kuma River – from the Caucasus Region.

The southern border is situated along the East Pontus Mountains, the Armenian Highlands, and the Anti-Caucasus Mountains east of Lake Van; the region also comprises the Karadag Ridge and the Iranian part of the Mughan Plain. Though the southern frontier of the Caucasus is problematical (there are not such clear physical-geographic lines in this direction as in others,) another physical-geographic fact is important. The entire basins of the Mtkvari (Kura,) Aras and Chorokhi rivers are parts of the Caucasus, whereas the basin of the Euphrates River is not, though the East Euphrates or Murat River starts in the Anti-Caucasus Mountains too.

It is important that the physical map in "the Geopolitical Atlas of the Caucasus" [Relief, page 12] formed by Jean Radvanyi and Nikoloz Beruchashvili mainly coincide with the frontiers told in "the History of the Caucasus" with one important difference. This map does not comprise the Caucasian territories of the Republic of Türkiye and the Islamic Republic of Iran (Radvanyi & Beruchashvili, 2009).



Figure 1. The Physical-Geographic Map of the Caucasus Region (Caucasus, 2018)

According to the written information, the Caucasus Region mainly comprises Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia; the administrative-territorial parts of the Russian Federation: the Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya and the Dagestan autonomous republics, the Krasnodar and the Stavropol krais; the ostan of the Islamic Republic of Iran: West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Ardebil and Gilan; the ills of the Republic of Türkiye: Artvin, Rize, Trabzon, Ardahan, Kars, Iğdir and the northern part of Erzurum. Though, there can be different ideas about the Caucasian territories of Russia, Iran and Türkiye (fig. 2).



Figure 2. Territory of the Caucasus Region and Its Sovereign States

The state frontiers in the Caucasus are as complex and varied as the borders of the entire region. They are based as much on the orographic as on the hydrographical objects. The de jure and the de facto frontiers have been often changed during the 20th-21st centuries, which forms the important

internal and the foreign problems. The republics of Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, as well as the Russian Federation, are neighbours of Georgia. The length of Georgia's frontier with Türkiye comprises 240.8 km, with Armenia – 194.4 km, with Azerbaijan – 402.2 km, and with Russia – 915 km. The neighbours of Azerbaijan are not only Georgia but also the Russian Federation, the republics of Armenia and Türkiye, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The length of Azerbaijan's frontier with Russia is 390.3 kilometres, with Türkiye – 9 km, with Armenia – 1007.1 km, and with Iran – 765 km. Türkiye and Iran are the neighbours of Armenia, with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Armenia shares a frontier of 311 km with Türkiye and 44 km with Iran. Türkiye and Iran share a long state frontier that measures 499 kilometres. Interestingly, Türkiye's section of the Caucasian frontier with Iran is quite short, located only within the territory of the Igdir Ill. In contrast, the entire frontier between Iran and Türkiye is located in the Caucasus Region, specifically within the territory of West Azerbaijan Ostan (Goishvili & Chkheidze, 2001).

Krasnodar Krai, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and the Dagestan autonomous republics are the bordering territories of the Russian Federation in the Caucasus. All of them are the neighbours of Georgia's one or more administrative territorial regions, and only Dagestan A.R. is the neighbour of Azerbaijan's two unofficial administrative regions. The Krasnodar Krai has the frontier with the occupied Abkhazia Autonomous Republic, Georgia. The Karachay-Cherkessia A.R. has the frontier with the Abkhazia A.R. and the Samegrelo – Upper Svaneti Region, whereas the Kabardino-Balkaria A.R. has the frontier with the Samegrelo – Upper Svaneti region and the Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti regions. North Ossetia has the frontier with the Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti Region, the Occupied Tskhinvali Region and the Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region. The Ingushetia A.R. has the frontier with the Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region; the Chechnya A.R. has the frontier with the Mtskheta-Mtianeti and the Kakheti regions, whereas the Dagestan A.R. has the frontier with only the Kakheti Region.

The administrative-territorial districts (provinces) of Azerbaijan are collected in wider "economic regions". Russia's Dagestan Autonomous Republic has the frontier with two of them: Shaki-Zaqatala and Quba-Khachmaz.

The Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti regions and the Adjara Autonomous Republic are the bordering territories of Georgia too. These regions and Kakheti have a state border with the various regions of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Türkiye. Kakheti bordered the Shaki-Zaqatala and the Ganja-Dashkasan economic regions of the Azerbaijan Republic; Kvemo Kartli – with the Kazakh-Tovuz economic region. The Kvemo Kartli Region also shares a border with the Tavush, Lori, and Shirak "marzes" (regions) of the Armenian Republic. Samtskhe-Javakheti is bordered by the Shirak Marz too. This region of Georgia also has the frontier with Türkiye's Ardahan Ill. The Adjara Autonomous Republic has the frontier with the Ardahan and Artvin provinces, both bordering regions of Türkiye with Georgia.

The republics of Armenia and Turkey, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, are the neighbours of the Azerbaijan Republic, along with Georgia and Russia. 8 economic regions of Azerbaijan have borders with the various regions of these states. Four economic units, namely the Kazakh-Tovuz, Ganja-Dashkasan, East Zangezur regions, and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, share a state border with six marzes of Armenia: Tavush, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor, Syunik, Ararat, and Armavir. The Nakhchivan A.R. has the shortest border with the Republic of Türkiye. The same autonomous republic, also the East Zangezur, Karabakh, Mil-Mughan, Shirvan-Salyan and the Lankaran-Astara economic regions, have the state frontier with the ostans of the Islamic Republic of Iran: West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Ardebil and Gilan.

Four marzes of the Republic of Armenia—Shirak, Aragatsotn, Armavir, and Ararat—share a state border with various provinces of the Republic of Türkiye. Shirak has the border with the Ardahan and Kars ills, Aragatsotn – with only the Kars ill, Armavir – with the Kars and the Igdir ills, Ararat – with only the Igdir ill. The Syunik Marz of the Armenian Republic has a state border with the East Azerbaijan Ostan of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

4 ills of the Republic of Türkiye: Igdir, Agri, Van and Hakkari have the state frontier with the only ostan of the Islamic Republic of Iran, West Azerbaijan. Among these regions, Türkiye's Igdir and Iran's West Azerbaijan are part of the Caucasus.

The establishment of state frontiers and internal borders became a long-term process. It lasted for about two centuries and became painful for the various states of the Caucasus Region. Regrettably, we have not yet completed this challenging process.

Administrative-Territorial Organisation of the Caucasus Region in the Beginnings of the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian empires divided the Caucasus Region. “The Caucasian Viceroyalty” of the Russian Empire comprised 13 various governorates, oblasts and the okrugs. Besides, the Caucasus Region comprised the Stavropol Governorate, which was not part of “the Caucasian Viceroyalty”, and also the Trabzon and the Erzurum vilayets of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Azerbaijan and the Gilan khanates of the Persian Empire (Metreveli, *The History of Caucasus – part 2*, 2023).

The large administrative-territorial regions of Russia—the governorates and the oblasts (regions)—were divided into smaller provinces: the uyezds, okrugs, districts, and “otdels”. They were also subdivided into “the police districts”. “The North Caucasus” comprised the Stavropol and the Black Sea governorates and the Kuban, Ter, and Dagestan oblasts. It's crucial to note that the modern Abkhazia Autonomous Republic occupied the south-eastern region of the Black Sea Governorate, stretching from the Bzipi River basin to the Psou River, as depicted on the 1913 Map of the Black Sea Province.

Formated in 1847, the Stavropol Governorate (fig. 3) underwent internal territorial changes from 1910 to 1917. The governorate comprised 5 uyezds and 2 districts until the collapse of the Russian Empire: the Alexanderevskoe, Medvejye, Blagodranoe, and Stavropol uyezds and the Sviato Krest uезд, which had the same names, as well as the Turkmen and Achikul districts.



Figure 3. Stavropol Governorate in 1913 (Stavropol Governorate, 1913)

In 1896, the Black Sea Governorate came into existence. Novorossiysk City was its centre. Novorossiysk, Tuapse, and Sochi were the three okrugs that divided the region. The Sochi Okrug comprised the northwestern part of the modern Abkhazia Autonomous Republic.

In 1860, the Kuban Oblast came into existence. The city of Ekaterinodar (modern Krasnodar) was its centre. In the beginning of the 20th century, the region comprised seven "otdels": Bataplashin, Yeysk, Ekaterinodar, Kavkasky, Labin, Maykop, and Temryuk. “The Temryuk Otdel” was renamed as “Taman” in 1910. Only 3ut of 5 owned the towns as the centres at that period: Ekaterinodar, Labin and Maykop. The centres of the Bataplashin, Yeysk, Kavkasky and Taman otdels were only the stations: Bataplashin (the modern Cherkessk,) Umman, Kavkasky and Slavyansk (the modern Slavyansk on the Kuban) (Kuban Region, 1913).

In 1860, the Terek Oblast came into existence. Vladikavkaz City was the centre of this region. The oblast comprised five okrugs and three otdels at the beginning of the 20th century: the Vladikavkaz, Grozny, Nalchik, Pyatigorsk, and Khasavyurt okrugs; the Kizlar, Mozdok, and Sunja otdels. 5 territories owned the towns as the centres at that period: Vladikavkaz, Grozny, Pyatigorsk, Kizlar and

Mozdok. The centres of the Nalchik and Khasavyurt okrugs as well as the Sunja Otdel were the stations. It is important that Nalchik and Khasavyurt are the towns of the Russian Federation today, whereas Sunja is a village ([Map of the Terek Region, 1913](#)).

The Dagestan Oblast was formed in 1860. The town of Temir-Khan-Shura (now Buynaksk) was its centre. At the beginning of the 20th century, the region comprised nine okrugs: Avarskiy, Andiyskiy, Gunibskiy, Darginitskiy, Kazikumukhskiy, Kaytago-Tabasaranskiy, Kyurinskiy, Samurskiy, and Temir-Khan-Shurinskiy. Their centres were the villages: Khunzakh, Botlikh, Gunib, Levashi, Kumukh, Madzhalis, Kasumkent, Akhty, and the town of Temir-Khan-Shura ([Map of the Dagestan Region, 1913](#)).

“The Central Caucasus” comprised the Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Yerevan, Elizavetpol and Baku governorates, the Zaqatala and Sokhumi okrugs, and partly the Batumi Oblast. The Russian Empire began the conquest of “the Central Caucasus” in 1801, gradually forming its parts over a long period of time. This ultimately led to the formation of the Tbilisi Governorate in 1846. It comprised 9 uezds in the beginning of the 20th century: Tbilisi, Borchalo, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Gori, Dusheti, Tianeti, Telavi and Signaghi. The centres of 7 Uezds were the cities or towns with the same names, whereas Tbilisi was also the capital of the entire “Caucasian Viceroyalty.” Only the centres of the Borchalo and the Tianeti uezds were the villages, Shulaveri and Tianeti. The Zaqatala Okrug, the province under the military power, was part of the Tbilisi Governorate until 1903. This province was separated from the governorate and formed as the individual territory into “the Caucasian Viceroyalty”.

The Kutaisi Governorate was formed in 1847, and the region comprised 7 uezds at the beginning of the 20th century: Kutaisi, Shorapani, Racha, Lechkhumi, Senaki, Zugdidi and Ozurgeti. The centres of the Kutaisi, Senaki, Zugdidi and Ozurgeti uezds were the towns with the same names. The centres of the Shorapani, Racha, and Lechkhumi Uezds were the villages: Kvirila (the future Chiatara), Oni, and Tsageri. According to one map, the town of Shorapani was the capital of the Shorapani Uezd in 1914. The Sokhumi Okrug, the province under military power like Zaqatala, was part of the Kutaisi Governorate until 1903. Then, it broke away from the region and became its own independent territory.

The Batumi Oblast was part of “the Central Caucasus” more or less. It comprised the Batumi and Artvini okrugs, with the centres of the same names. This oblast was part of the Kutaisi Governorate till 1903 and then separated from it. The Kars and the Moscow agreements between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Türkiye, 1921, drew the modern line between “the Central” and “the South Caucasus”. According to these agreements, the largest part of the Batumi Okrug (the modern Adjara Autonomous Republic) remained in the central part of the region, whereas the entire Artvini Okrug with the southwestern part of the Batumi Okrug became the parts of “the South” ([Georgia at the end of the 19th century, 2012; Sanadze, Beradze, & Thopuria, 2009](#)).

The Yerevan Governorate ([Erivan Province, 1913](#)) was formed in 1849, whereas the region comprised seven uezds at the beginning of the 20th century: Alexandropol, Nakhchivan, Novo Baiazet, Surmalin, Sharuro-Daralagez, Yerevan, and Echmiadzin. 5 of them had the centres in the face of the towns with the same names. Only the centres of the Surmalin and Sharuro-Daralagez uezds, Igdir and Bash-Norashen, were the villages. In 1921, Türkiye received only the Surmalin Uezd, while the majority of this governorate remained in the Central Caucasus. Later, that territory formed the Igdir Ily.

The Elizavetpol (the Ganja-city) Governorate was formed in 1867, whereas the region comprised eight uezds at the beginning of the 20th century: Aresh, Jevanshir, Elizavetpol, Zangezur, Kazakh, Jebraiyl, Nukha, and Shusha. It is important that the centre of Jebraiyl Uezd moved to Karyagino in 1905; as a result, the name of the province was changed too. Only 3 uezds owned the towns as the capitals: Elizavetpol, Nukha and Shusha. The centres of the Aresh, Jevanshir, Zangezur, Kazakh and Karyagino provinces were the villages: Agdash, Terter, Gerusy, Kazakh and Karyagino.

The Baku Governorate was formed in 1859, whereas the region comprised six uezds at the beginning of the 20th century: Baku, Geokchay, Javad, Kuba, Shemakha, and Lenkoran. The capitals of all 6 provinces were the towns of Baku, Geokchay, Salyan, Kuba, Shemakha and Lenkoran ([Ethnographic map of the Baku Governorate, 1901](#)) (fig. 4).



Figure 4. The Caucasus Region and the Caucasian Viceroyalty in the Beginning of the 20th Century

“The South Caucasus” mainly comprised 5 large administrative-territorial regions in the beginning of the 20th century: the Kars Oblast of the Russian Empire, the Trabzon and the Erzurum Vilayets of the Ottoman Empire, the Azerbaijan and the Gilan khanates of the Persian Empire.

The Kars Oblast (fig. 5) was formed in 1878 and comprised 4 okrugs in the beginning of the 20th century: Ardagan, Oltis, Kars and Kagizman. The centres of all four were the towns by the same names. This part of the Russian Empire became the territory of the Kemalist Türkiye in 1921, as the result it went to “the South Caucasus.”



Figure 5. Kars Oblast in 1913 (Administrative map of Kars Oblast, 1913)

The administrative-territorial organisation of the Ottoman Empire was changed during “the Tanzimat,” the reforms in the state, 1864. The large territorial units – “Eyalets” were replaced by smaller regions – “Vilayets.” They were divided into “the Sanjaks” which were subdivided into “the Kazas.” The Ottoman Empire kept only two vilayets in the Caucasus after the Russia-Ottoman War in 1877-1878, Trabzon (fig. 6) and Erzurum (fig. 7). The Trabzon Vilayet comprised 4 “sanjaks” in the beginning of the 20th century: Trabzon, Lazistan, Gumushhane and Samsun. The cities and towns of Trabzon, Rize, Gumushhane and Samsun were their centres. The Erzurum Vilayet comprised 3 sanjaks in the beginning of the 20th century: Erzurum, Erzincan and Bayezid. The towns with the same names were the centres of these provinces.

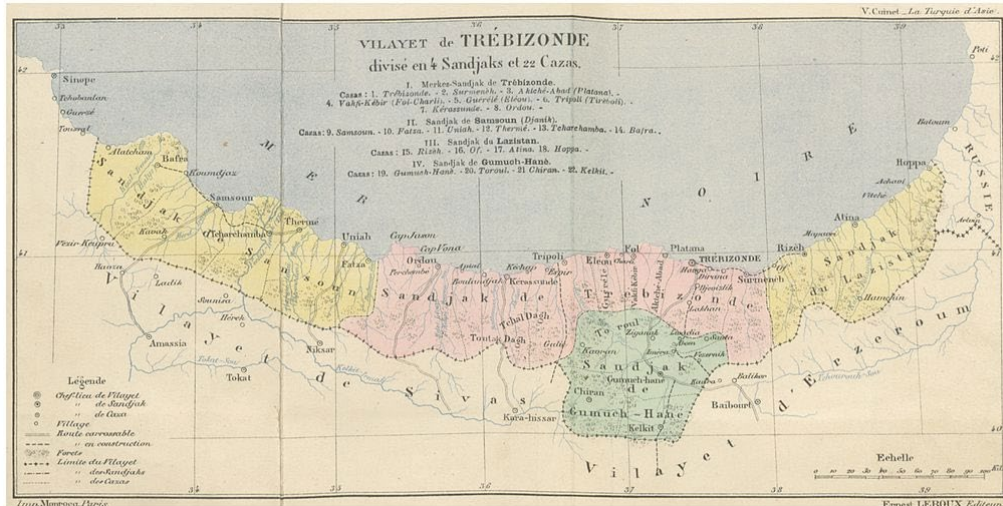


Figure 6. Trabzon Vilayet (Cuinet, Vilayet of Trebizond, 1890)

“The South Azerbaijan” or “Iran’s Azerbaijan” was one of the largest khanates of the Persian Empire, but the information about the administrative-territorial system of this state in the beginning of the 20th century is very poor. We know just two important administrative changes about the northern Iran. “The Qajar Dynasty” made the Tabriz-city, the capital of “the South Azerbaijan,” the ruling centre for the successors of their throne in beginning of the 19th century. But we do not know if this reform continued the existing during the second half of the century and especially in the beginning of the 20th or not. It is important that the Russian Empire and the United Kingdom formed the agreement which finished the forming of “the Antanta” in 1907. According to this agreement, the northern Iran, including “the South Azerbaijan” and the Gilan regions, went under the influence of the Russian Empire.

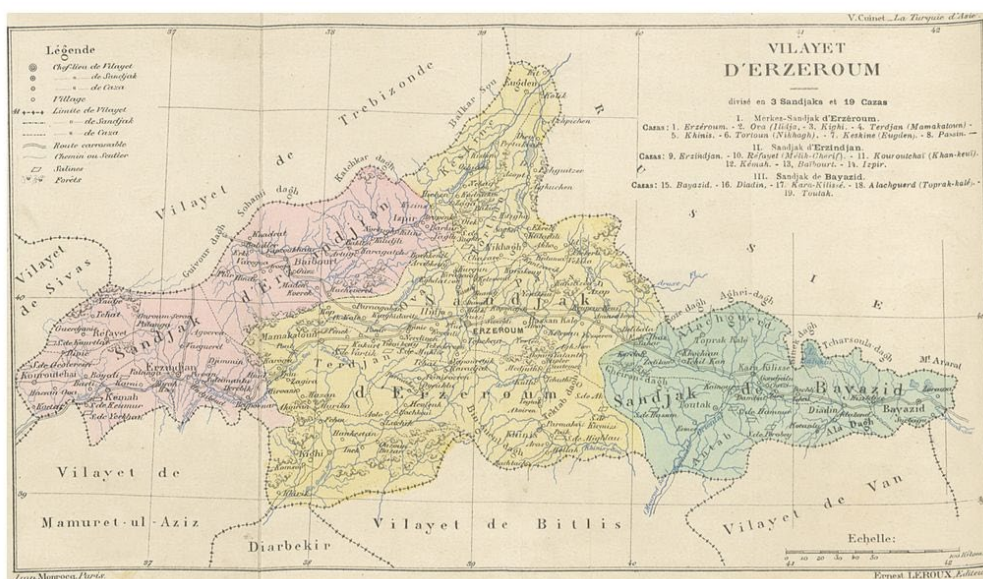


Figure 7. Erzurum Vilayet (Cuinet, Erzurum Vilayet, 1890)

Caucasus from the Empire till the Soviet Epoch

The two new states were formed in "the North Caucasus" after the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917: "the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus" and "the Kuban People's Republic." "The Mountainous Republic" declared independence in 1917, according to the collapse of the Russian Empire, and existed till 1919. This confederative state primarily occupied the territories of the former Dagestan and Terek oblasts. The town of Temir-Khan-Shura was its capital. The confederation was composed of seven ethnic countries: Dagestan, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Alania, Circassia (which also included Adygea), Karachay-Balkaria, and Nogai. "The Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus" had the claim for Abkhazia, the part of Georgia's First Republic, too (Hille, 2010).

"The Kuban People's Republic" existed during 1918–1920 on the main territory of the former Kuban Oblast and the Black Sea Governorate. The Ekaterinodar city was its capital. The state comprised the former otdels and okrugs of these regions: Bataplashin, Yeysk, Ekaterinodar, Kavkasky, Labin, Maykop, Taman, Novorossiysk, Tuapse and Sochi. Though, the south-eastern part of the former Sochi Okrug, from the basin of the Bzipi River to the Psou River, returned to the Georgian state.

"The Soviet Russia" conquered "the Kuban" and "the Mountainous" republics during 1919-1920. The second state was temporarily replaced by "the North Caucasian Emirate" (1919-1920,) but the Russian state defeated and occupied this country too.

The collapse of the Russian statehood in the Caucasus started after the revolutions in 1917. "The South Caucasian Federation" declared independence in April 1918, though this confederation was separated into the Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaija sovereign states in May of the same year. It is important that the Ottoman Empire occupied a large part of "the Central" and "the South Caucasus" with the Brest-Litovsk peace agreement formed on March 3, 1918. But it had to leave the territory soon because of the failure in WW1 (Kazemzadeh, 2016).

"The First Republic of Georgia" (fig. 8) declared independence from "the South Caucasian Federation" on May 26, 1918. The state comprised the former Tbilisi Governorate, Kutaisi Governorate, Batumi Oblast, Sokhumi and Zaqatala okrugs, as well as the historical Georgian land of the former Kars Oblast. The Tbilisi city was the capital of the state.



Figure 8. The Territories Demanded by the First Republic of Georgia in 1920 (The Map of the Territories Demanded by Georgia in 1920, 2024)

The administrative-territorial organisation of Georgia was the same as during the imperial epoch with some differences. The East Georgia, or "the Tbilisi Governorate", comprised the Tbilisi, Borchalo, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Gori, Dusheti, Tianeti, Telavi, and Signaghi uyezds. The West Georgia, or "the Kutaisi Governorate", comprised the Kutaisi, Shorapani, Racha, Lechkhumi, Senaki, Zugdidi and Ozurgeti uyezds. The Artaani and Oltisi okrugs were in the south of the state, though Georgia could not control the Oltisi Okrug. The Abkhazia (the former Sokhumi Okrug,) Zaqatala, and "the Muslim Georgia" (the former Batumi Oblast) regions were in the bordering parts of the state. The

government of “the First Republic” was planning to form the autonomous republics on these lands, but it could not fulfil the plan. It is important that the basin of the Bzipi River returned to the Georgian state during the period of the first republic.

The territorial formation of “the First Republic of Armenia” (fig. 9) became the complex process. The aggression of the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasian interests of the United Kingdom were hindering it. Additionally, Armenia was involved in military conflicts with its two closest neighbours, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The territory of the state gained its main form in 1919 when Armenia occupied the former Yerevan Governorate and the historical Armenian land of the former Kars Oblast. This land comprised the uezds and the okrugs of the collapsed empire: Alexandropol, Nakhchivan, Novo Baiazet, Surmalin, Sharuro-Daralagez, Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Kars and Kagizman. Besides, “the First Republic of Armenia” occupied the part of “the Nagorno-Karabakh” by the Armenia-Azerbaijan War. This land comprised the parts of the former Elizavetpol, Jevanshir and Zangezur uezds in the former Elizavetpol Governorate ([Administrative map of Elisabethpol Governorate – 1913, 1913](#)). Yerevan was the capital of “the First Republic of Armenia”.

This is important: according to the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, which the defeated Ottoman Empire formed with the winner states, Armenia should have gained about 100,000 km² of former Ottoman territory, so-called “West Armenia”. But this project was not done because of some reasons, such as Armenia’s occupation by Soviet Russia, the Kemalist movement in Türkiye and the alliance of the Kemalists and the Communists.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 9. The First Republic of Armenia according to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 ([Armenian Delegation on Paris Peace Conference, 1919, 2024](#))

The Georgia and the Armenia states were restored in face of the republics in “the Central Caucasus,” May 1918, whereas the sovereign state with the name of “Azerbaijan” – “the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic” was formed for the first time at the same period. The Ganja-city, which returned its historical name, was the capital of the state till the September of the same year as Baku was occupied by “the Bolshevik.” The capital of Azerbaijan moved into this city for good after the banishing of “the Red.” This is important that this state had the territorial claims to both closest neighbours, the Georgia and the Armenia democratic republics.

“The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic” occupied the former Baku and Elizavetpol governorates of the collapsed empire. Besides, it was controlling the southern part of the former Yerevan Governorate

till 1919. Azerbaijan had the claim for the Zaqatala Okrug, the territory of “the First Republic of Georgia,” too. “The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic” comprised the former uyezds of the collapsed empire: Baku, Kuba, Shemakha, Goychay, Javad, Lenkoran, Ganja, Kazakh, Nukha, Aresh, Jevanshir, Shusha, Garyagin and Zangezur, as well as the Sharuro-Daralagez and the Nakhchivan uyezds on the territory of the former Yerevan Governorate, till 1919.



Figure 10. Administrative-territorial Organisation of the Republic of Türkiye in 1927 (Ana Vatan : [Turkey], 1927, 2024)

“The Red Army” of “the Communist” conquered the Azerbaijan and Armenia democratic republics in the April and the December of 1920. They also occupied “the First Republic of Georgia” in the February 1921.

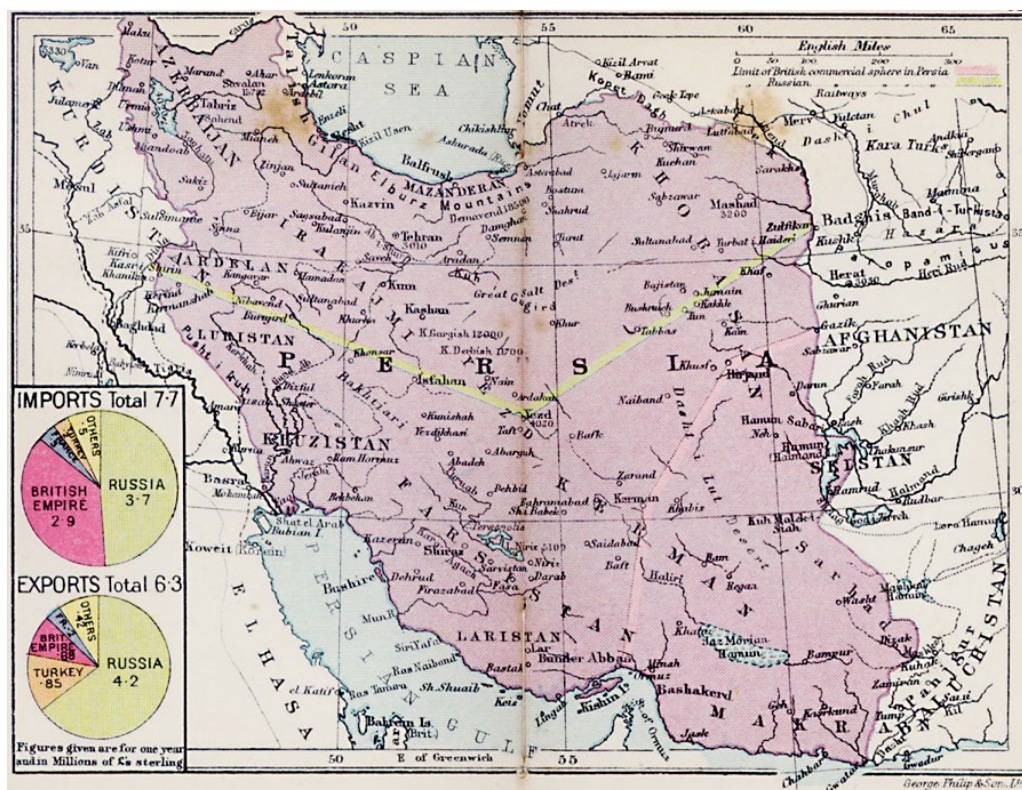


Figure 11. The Persian Empire in 1920 (Persia, 1920)

As of “the South Caucasus” during the 1920s, the earliest source about the administrative-territorial organisation of the Republic of Türkiye is dated by 1927 (fig. 10). This is the map where the toponymy is still written by the Arab script as well as the document of Türkiye’s first census of the population in the same year. Both show that the Caucasian territory of this republic comprised four ills entirely and two – partly in the end of the 1920s. The whole territory of the Kars, Artvin, Rize and Trabzon ills were part of the region at that time, as well as the northern part of the Erzurum Ill and the

north-eastern part of the Bayezid (later Agri) Ily. As for Iran (Persia till 1935), (fig. 11) this state was divided into 12 “ostans” till 1950, whereas the Caucasian territory of this state comprised two of them: Azerbaijan and Gilan.

Caucasus during the Soviet Epoch

“The North Caucasus”, (fig. 12) the territory of “the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic,” comprised the Dagestan and the Mountainous Autonomous Republics, the Kuban-Black Sea and the Terek Autonomous Oblasts in 1922. The Dagestan A.R. kept its self-government. “The Mountainous Autonomous Republic” was separated into the Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Chechnya and the Ingushetia autonomous oblasts. The Kuban-Black Sea Oblast was separated into the Adygea A.O. and into the Krasnodar and the Stavropol krays after some administrative-territorial formations.

The numerous territorial changes as well as the changes of the administrative system had a place in “the North Caucasus” during the Soviet Epoch. The exile of the North Caucasian ethnics (the Kabardian, Chechen and the Ingush) during WW2 and their emancipation in 1957 had an important influence on these changes too. As the result, “the North Caucasus” comprised 8 administrative-territorial units at the end of the Soviet Epoch, 1989: the Krasnodar and the Stavropol krays, the Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Chechnya-Ingushetia and the Dagestan autonomous soviet socialist republics, the Adygea and the Karachay-Cherkessia autonomous oblasts (Soviet Union Administrative Divisions, 1989, 2024)



Figure 12. The North and the Central Caucasus during the Soviet Epoch (Administrative map of Caucasus in USSR, 1952-1991, 2024)

Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan formed “the South Caucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic” after “the Red Occupation” of these countries. This state became one of four founders of “the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” in 1923. Though, the federation of “the Central Caucasus” was separated into three individual Soviet socialist republics in 1936.

It is interesting that the administrative-territorial changes of Georgia were continuing from the 1920s till 1968 during the Soviet epoch. The country lost quite a large territory after the occupation. It was distributed among Türkiye, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. According to the map dated by 1928, the administrative-territorial organisation of Georgia comprised the systems of the Russian Empire, the First Republic and the Soviet Union. The Tbilisi Uezd kept its territory in East Georgia, whereas the part of the Borchalo Uezd was given to Armenia. The town of Luxemburg (the modern Bolnisi) was the centre of the other part. The Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe uezds had the same borders as during the imperial epoch, whereas the northern part of the Gori Uezd was comprised of “the South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast” at that time. This territory also occupied Akhagori and several communes in Racha and Imereti. The Dusheti Uezd was located north of Tbilisi, but we cannot see Tianeti province on this map. Though, according to unspecified information, this territory was abolished during 1929-1930 with other uezds. The Telavi Uezd occupied the former territory of Tianeti on this map, and the Signaghi province was situated south-eastern from it.

West Georgia comprised the Kutaisi, Shorapani, Racha, Lechkhumi, Senaki, Zugdidi, and Ozurgeti uezds, as well as the Upper Svaneti uezd from 1921. The Abkhazia and Adjara autonomous republics were the individual territorial units in Georgia. They were the legacy of “the First Republic”. Though, the Adjara A.R. had twice the smaller territory than “the Muslim Georgia”, as the other part was given to the Republic of Türkiye.

The active administrative-territorial reform took place during the beginnings of the 1930s, so the imperial uezds were replaced by “the districts”. The map dated 1938 is badly distinguishable, but it has the list of these districts, and we can group them according to the modern regions of Georgia.

In 1938, the modern Kakheti region comprised the Sagarejo, Gurjaani, Telavi, Kvareli, Lagodekhi, Signaghi, and Tsitelitskaro districts. The modern Akhmeta Municipality (district of province) was part of the Telavi District until 1951 at first and then during 1963-1964. Only in 1964 did it officially become an independent district. In 1938, the modern Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region comprised the Dusheti, Kazbegi, and Tianeti districts. The modern Kvemo Kartli Region – the Karaiazi (Gardabani,) Borchalo (Marneuli,) Aghbulaghi (Tetritskaro,) Luxemburg (Bolnisi,) Tsalka and Bashkichi (Dmanisi) districts. In 1938, the Kaspi, Gori, and Khashuri districts formed the modern Shida Kartli Region, with the Kareli District forming as early as 1939. Gori and Khashuri divided its territory prior to that date. The modern Samtskhe-Javakheti Region comprised the same six provinces in 1938 as today: the Borjomi, Adigeni, Akhaltsikhe, Aspindza, Akhalkalaki, and Bogdanovka (Ninotsminda) districts.

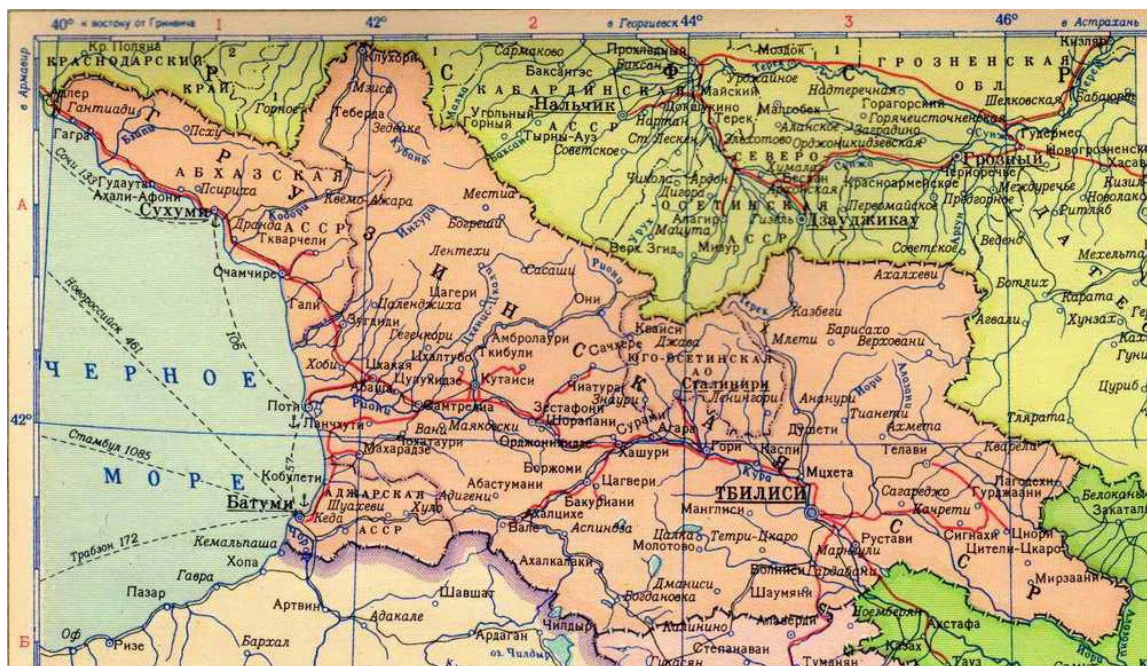


Figure 13. The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic during 1944-1957 (Georgian SSR, 1944 - 1955, 1954)

The modern Imereti Region comprised the Orjonikidze (Kharagauli,) Zestaponi, Chiatura, Tkibuli, Chkhari, Kutaisi, Baghdati, Vani, Tsulukidze (Khoni) and Samtredia districts in 1938. The Sachkhere District separated from Chiatura and the Tskaltubo District from Kutaisi as soon as in 1939. Besides,

the territory of the Chkhari District became the Terjola Province because of Chkhari's demotion in 1950. The modern Samegrelo – Upper Svaneti Region comprised the Abasha, Gegechkori (Martvili,) Tskhakaia (Senaki,) Khobi, Poti, Zugdidi, Chkhorotsqu, Tsalenjikha and Upper Svaneti districts in 1938. Poti is the self-governing city today, whereas the largest part of its district was given to Khobi. The modern regions of Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti, as well as Guria, comprised the same provinces in 1938 as today. The first one, the Ambrolauri, Oni, Tsageri and Lower Svaneti districts; the second one, the Lanchkhuti, Makharadze (Ozurgeti) and Chokhatauri districts.

Tbilisi was the individual district in 1938. The modern Mtskheta Municipality was part of the Tbilisi District in the 1930s. As for the autonomous regions, the Abkhazia ASSR comprised the Gali, Ochamchire, Sokhumi, Gudauta and Gagra districts in 1938. The Gulripshi District separated from Sokhumi in 1946. The Adjara ASSR comprises the Batumi, Keda and Khulo districts. The territory of the Batumi District became the Khelvachauri Province in 1968, whereas the city is self-governing today. The Shuakhevi District separated from Khulo in 1952, joined it again in 1963-1964 and separated for good in 1965. The South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast comprised 4 districts in 1938: Staliniri (Tskhinvali,) Leningori (Akhlagori,) Znauri and Java.

Important territorial changes happened in the Georgian SSR during 1944-1957 (fig. 13). Georgia received a portion of "the North Caucasian" territory following the exile of the local population. It was the Klukhor District in the west and the Akhalkhevi District in the east. The last province joined the Dusheti District in the beginnings of the 1950s. These lands were returned to the Northern Caucasians after their emancipation and the returning home.



organisation of the Georgian SSR on the map dated 1981, which can be considered the base of the administrative formation for independent Georgia (fig. 14).

Armenia like Georgia was under the influence of the Russian imperial administrative system and was divided into 9 uezds during the 1920s: Leninakan, Lori-Pambak, Dilijan, Ejmiatsin, Yerevan, Nor Bayazet, Daralagyaz, Zangezur and Meghri. It is important that 3 of them: Dilijan, Meghri and Lori-Pambak were formed after the Soviet occupation. 37 districts and the self-governing cities were established in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic during 1929-1937. Two more were formed during the 1970s and the 1980s.



Figure 15. Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (Soviet Armenia, 2024)

The Shamshadin District was formed in the eastern part of the country, 1929. 24 districts were established in 1930: Kotayk, Aghbaba, Aparan, Vedi, Ghamarlu, Artik, Ashtarak, Basargechar, Goris, Gharakalisa, Dilijan, Daralagez, Ijevan, Nor Bayazet, Kafan, Martuni, Meghri, Kurdukulin, Akhta, Sisian, Stepanavan, Talin, Alaverdi and Vagharshapat. The Pashalu District was formed in the south of Armenia, 1931. 11 districts were established in 1937: Agin, Alagyoz, Duzkend, Ghukasyan, Kalinino, Gharabaghar, Krasnoselsk, Zangibasar, Noyembrian, Sevan and Spitak. The Nairi District was formed in 1972 and the Baghramyan District, 1983. The first was established in the central part of the country, the second – in the south-western part. The Yerevan-city – the capital of Armenia was the individual district.

20 districts of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic changed their names as during the Soviet Epoch as after the finishing of this age, during the beginnings of the 1990s. Two of them made this twice or more times. 14 provinces changed their names during the Soviet Epoch, 7 – after its finishing during very beginnings of the 1990s. 19 districts formed during the various years never changed their names: Aparan, Ashtarak, Baghramyan, Goris, Dilijan, Ijevan, Gharabaghar, Krasnoselsk, Martuni, Meghri, Nairi, Noyembrian, Sevan, Sisian, Spitak, Stepanavan, Talin and Shamshadin (fig. 15).

The information about the administrative-territorial organisation of the Azerbaijan SSR (fig. 16) can be highly arguable as unfortunately, the author could not find the just sources in face of the literature or the well-distinguishable maps. According to the unspecified information, this soviet socialist republic comprised 13 administrative regions. Though, we can exactly say that Azerbaijan comprised the Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast during the Soviet Epoch.

The Caucasian territory of the Republic of Türkiye comprised 6 regions entirely or partly in 1927. This number became 4 in 1935. The Caucasian land of “the Agri III” joined to “the Kars III” – the part of “the South Caucasus.” The Artvin and the Rize ills united and formed “the Chorokhi III.” As the result, the Turkish part of “the South Caucasus” had being comprised the Chorokhi, Trabzon, Kars ills

and the northern part of the Erzurum Ill. The Chorokhi Ill was separated during the 1950s, whereas the new administrative-territorial changes happened in Türkiye during the 1990s (Statistic Organization of Türkiye, the Census of the Population in 1927, 2024); (Statistic Organization of Türkiye, the Census of the Population in 1935, 2024).

The Caucasian territory of Iran comprised only two regions, Azerbaijan and Gilan, in the beginning of the 20th century. The Azerbaijan Region was divided into two parts during the 1940s where the Soviet Union formed the puppet governments. Neither of them existed for a long time. These ostans formed in “the South Azerbaijan” were named as “the West Azerbaijan” and “the East Azerbaijan” during the 1960s.

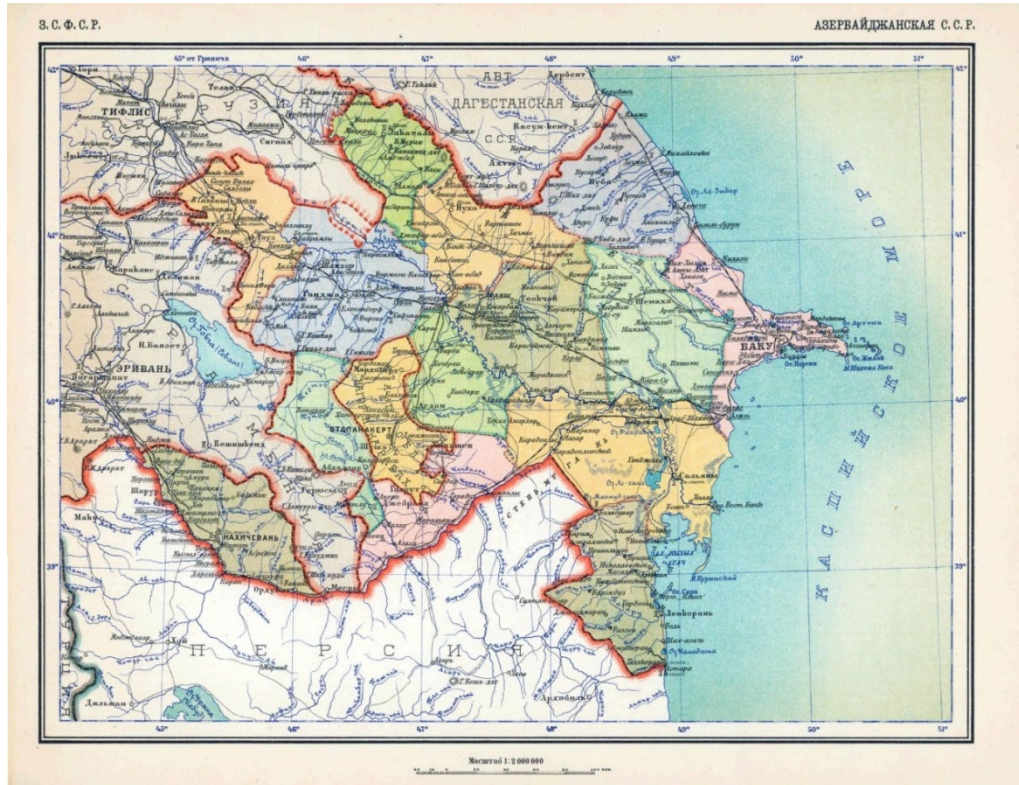


Figure 16. Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic (Map of the Azerbaijan SSR, 1928)

The Modern Epoch

“The North Caucasus” became the epicentre of the great conflict after the collapse of “the Soviet Union” in 1991. Chechnya declared the independence from Russia in 1991, whereas Ingushetia separated from “the Chechnya-Ingushetia Autonomous Republic” the next year. The Chechen warriors were heroically fighting against the Russians during “Two Chechen Wars.” They gained the victory in the first one, 1994-1996, but were defeated in the second, 1999-2000.

The Russian Federation organized the new administrative-territorial reforms in 2000. The state was divided into 8 unofficial “Federal Districts.” They exist to monitor the consistency between the federal and the regional powers, also to ensure the governmental control over the civil service and the judiciary in the regions. “The North Caucasus” was divided between two federal districts: “the Southern” with the capital in Rostov-On-Don and “the North Caucasian” with the capital in Pyatigorsk. The region comprised 9 federal subjects. The Krasnodar Kray – the capital in the Krasnodar-city and the Republic of Adygea – the capital in the Maykop-city became the parts of “the Southern Federal District.” “The North Caucasian Federal District” comprised other subjects: the Stavropol Kray – the capital in the Stavropol-city, the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia – Cherkessk, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria – Nalchik, the Republic of North Ossetia or Alania – Vladikavkaz, the Republic of Ingushetia – Nazran till 2002 and Magas after that, the Republic of Chechnya – Grozny and the Republic of Dagestan – Makhachkala. According to some sources, “the North Caucasus” comprises the southern parts of two more Russia’s territories: the Republic of Kalmykia and the Rostov Oblast. The regions and the countries of the Russian Federation are subdivided into the districts.

“The Central Caucasus” also became the epicentre of the great conflicts in the 1990s. The internal conflicts of Georgia became the main obstacle to solve the problem of the administrative-territorial organization for good. According to the state’s constitution of 1995, this problem must be decided when Georgia restores the control over its entire territory. Abkhazia and Adjara kept their autonomy into the Georgia’s state. Other territory was divided into 9 non-official “regions” under the state authority. Their function is to maintain the coordination and consultation between the state and the municipality governments. These regions are Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti, Samegrelo-Upper Svaneti and Guria. Tbilisi, the capital of the state, is independent of all regions (fig. 17).



Figure 17. The Modern Administrative-territorial Division of the North Caucasus (Walker, 2024)

The South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast was officially abolished in 1991, though “the South Ossetia Temporary Administration” was formed in 2007. Its government was situated in the village of Kurta. It has been exiled in Tbilisi since the Russia-Georgia War of 2008. This territory was officially divided into six parts: Akhlagori, Eredvi, Tigva, Kurta, Java municipalities and the Tskhinvali-city.

As for municipalities, Georgia was divided into 72 units (fig. 18), including 5 self-governing cities: Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Poti and Batumi, 2020. The Kakheti Region comprises 8 municipalities: Sagarejo, Akhmeta, Telavi, Gurjaani, Kvareli, Lagodekhi, Signaghi and Dedoplistskaro. Telavi is the administrative centre of the Kakheti. The Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region comprises 5 municipalities among which 1 – Akhlagori is occupied. Mtskheta, Dusheti, Tianeti and Kazbegi are other provinces. Mtskheta is the centre of this region. The Shida Kartli Region comprises 4 municipalities: Kaspi, Gori, Kareli and Khashuri, though some changes had been organized there when the state restored the independence. This region was officially divided into 5 municipalities in 1991-2007, before the creation of “the South Ossetia Temporary Administration.” Java was the fifth municipality, whereas the territories of the former Tskhinvali and Znauri districts were the parts of Gori and Kareli municipalities. Gori is the administrative centre of the Shida Kartli. The Kvemo Kartli Region comprises 7 municipalities: Gardabani, Marneuli, Tetritskaro, Bolnisi, Tsalka, Dmanisi and the Rustavi-city. The last one is the centre of the region. The Samtskhe-Javakheti Region comprises 6 municipalities: Adigeni, Akhaltsikhe, Aspindza, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda and Borjomi. The Akhaltsikhe-city is the centre of the Samtskhe-Javakheti.

The Imereti Region comprises 12 municipalities: Sachkhere, Chiatura, Kharagauli, Zestaponi, Terjola, Tkibuli, Baghdati, Vani, Tskaltubo, Khoni, Samtredia and the Kutaisi-city. The last one is the

administrative centre of the Imereti Region. The Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti Region comprises 4 municipalities: Ambrolauri, Oni, Tsageri and Lentekhi. Ambrolauri is its centre. The Samegrelo – Upper Svaneti Region comprises 9 municipalities: Abasha, Senaki, Khobi, Zugdidi, Martvili, Chkhorotsqu, Tsalenjikha, Mestia and the Poti-city. Zugdidi is the centre of this region. The Guria Region comprises 3 municipalities: Lanchkhuti, Ozurgeti and Chokhatauri. Ozurgeti is the centre.

The Abkhazia Autonomous Republic comprises 7 municipalities: Gali, Ochamchire, Gulripshi, Sokhumi, Gudauta, Gagra and Azhara. The territory of the Azhara Municipality was the only one under the Georgian control till 2008. It was officially formed in 2006. The term “Upper Abkhazeti” was established as its other name too. The Sokhumi-city is the capital of the Abkhazia A.R. though its official government is exiled in Tbilisi. The Adjara Autonomous Republic comprises 6 municipalities: Kobuleti, Khelvachauri, Keda, Shuakhevi, Khulo and the Batumi-city. Batumi is the capital of the Adjara A.R.

The significant changes were made in the naming of the municipalities and their centres after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Cities and towns returned their old names, so their territories’ names also changed. Tsitelitskaro in the Kakheti became Dedoplistskaro, Leningori in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti – Akhalkgori. The town of Kazbegi in the same region returned its old name Stepantsminda in 2006, but the municipality kept the former name. The former Znauri became Kornisi in the Shida Kartli. Bogdanovka returned the old Georgia name Ninotsminda in the Samtskhe-Javakheti. Three changes were made in the Imereti Region: Orjonikidze became Kharagauli, Tsulukidze – Khoni and Mayakovski – Baghdadi again. Besides, Gegechkori became Martvili, Tskhakaia – Senaki and Makharadze – Ozurgeti in Samegrelo and Guria. The names of the Tbilisi districts were changed too.

The last crucial administrative-territorial change was made in 2017, when seven self-governing cities lost this right: Telavi, Mtskheta, Gori, Akhaltsikhe, Ambrolauri, Zugdidi and Ozurgeti. All of them are the centres of the regions and the municipalities at the same time. The own government was kept by Tbilisi and those cities which are the centres of the regions, but not the municipalities, except Poti.



Figure 18. The Administrative-territorial Division of Georgia (Administrative Division, 2018)

The main administrative-territorial division of Armenia has two steps like in Georgia. The state is divided into 11 regions, 10 “marzs” and the capital Yerevan-city. The marzs are ruled by “the Marzpets” appointed by the central power. The capital is ruled by the mayor elected by the population. These marzs are Shirak, Lori, Tavush, Aragatsotn, Kotayk, Gegharkunik, Armavir, Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik.

According to the administrative reforms of Armenia during the 2010s-2020s (fig. 19), the Shirak Marz is subdivided into 6 municipalities: Gyumri, Artik, Ani, Akhurian, Amasia and Ashotsk. Gyumri is the centre of the region. The Lori Marz comprises 57 municipalities. Vanadzor is the centre. The Tavush Marz has 24 municipalities with the centre in Ijevan. The Aragatsotn Marz is subdivided into 9 municipalities: Alagyaz, Aparan, Arevut, Ashtarak, Metsandzor, Shamirman, Talin and Tsaghkahovit. Ashtarak is the centre of the region. The Kotayk Marz comprises 42 municipalities with the centre in Hrazdan. The Gegharkunik Marz is subdivided into 5 municipalities: Chambarak, Gavar, Martuni, Sevan and Vardenis. Gavar is the centre of the region. The Armavir Marz comprises 7 municipalities: Araks, Armavir, Baghramyan, Khoy, Metsamor, Parakar and Vagharshapat. Armavir is the centre. The Ararat Marz has 5 municipalities: Ararat, Artashat, Masis, Vedi and Verin Dvin with the centre in Artashat. The Vayots Dzor Marz comprises 5 municipalities: Areni, Jemruk, Vayk, Yeghegis and Yeghegnadzor. The last one is the centre of the region. The Syunik Marz is subdivided into 8 municipalities: Goris, Kajaran, Kapan, Meghri, Sisian, Gorayk, Tavet and Tegh. Kapan is the centre.

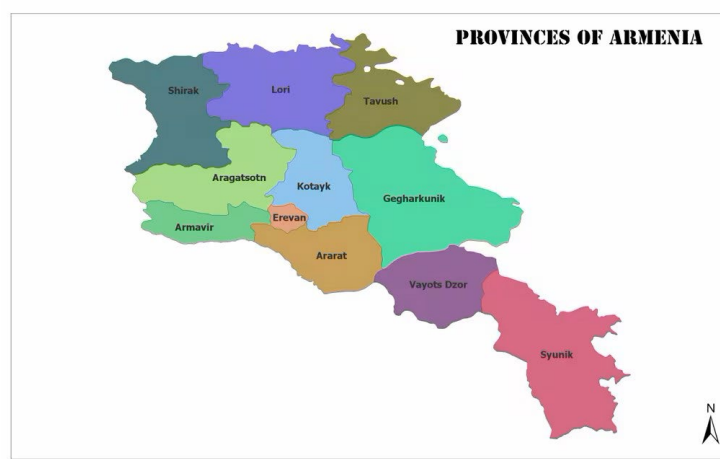


Figure 19. The Administrative-territorial Division of Armenia in 2021 (Provinces of Armenia, 2024)

The administrative-territorial division of the Azerbaijan Republic (fig. 20) had one main step until 2021, when the new “Economic Regions” were formed in the state. Though this system gained two levels after that, they are less connected to each apart from the administrative-territorial stages in Georgia or Armenia. There are 67 districts and 11 cities in the Azerbaijan Republic. Besides, the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic comprises 7 more districts and 1 city. All these provinces are distributed among 14 economic regions, which were mainly formed according to their geographic and economic similarities: Baku, Absheron-Khizi, Ganja-Dashkasan, Shaki-Zagatala, Lankaran-Astara, Quba-Khachmaz, Central Aran, Karabakh, East Zangezur, Mountainous Shirvan, Nakhchivan, Qazakh-Tovuz, Mil-Mughan, and Shirvan-Salyan.

The Baku Economic Region comprises only the capital and its district, which are the main economic centres of the state. The Absheron-Khizi Economic Region includes the Absheron and Khizi districts as well as the Sumgait city. The Quba-Khachmaz Economic Region is formed of 5 districts: Shabran, Khachmaz, Quba, Qusar and Siyazan. The Mountainous Shirvan Economic Region comprises 4 districts: Agsu, Ismayily, Gobustan and Shamakhi. The Shirvan-Salyan Economic Region includes 5 districts: Bilasuvar, Hajigabul, Neftchala, Salyan and the Shirvan city. The Lankaran-Astara Economic Region is made of 5 districts: Astara, Jalilabad, Lerik, Yardimli and Lankaran. The Mil-Mughan Economic Region comprises 4 districts: Beylagan, Imishli, Saatly and Sabirabad. The Central Aran Economic Region includes 7 districts: Agdash, Goychay, Kurdamir, Ujar, Yevlakh, Zardab and Mingachevir city. The Shaki-Zagatala Economic Region comprises 6 districts: Balakan, Qakh, Qabala, Oghuz, Zagatala and Shaki. The Qazakh-Tovuz Economic Region includes 5 districts: Aghstafa, Gadabay, Gazakh, Shamkir and Tovuz. The Ganja-Dashkasan Economic Region is made of 6 districts: Dashkasan, Goranboy, Goygol, Samukh, the Ganja and Naftalan cities. The Karabakh Economic Region comprises nine districts: Agjabadi, Aghdam, Barda, Fuzuli, Khojaly, Khojavend, Shusha, Tatar, and Khankendi City. The East Zangezur Economic Region includes 5 districts: Jabrayil, Kalbajar, Qubadli, Lachin and Zangilan. And finally, the Nakhchivan Economic Region comprises 8 districts of the autonomic republic: Babek, Julfa, Kangarli, Ordubad, Sadarak, Shuahbuz, Sharur and the Nakhchivan city.

The administrative-territorial changes took place in Türkiye and Iran, in the parts of “the South Caucasus”, during the 1990s.

The Republic of Türkiye is unofficially divided into 7 regions, whereas the parts of “the South Caucasus” are distributed among two of them: “the Black Sea Region” and “the Eastern Anatolia Region”. The Ardahan and the Iğdir ill separated from the Kars İly in 1992 and 1993. As a result, Türkiye’s “South Caucasus” comprised 6 ills entirely and 1 partly: Artvin, Rize, Trabzon, Ardahan, Kars, Iğdir and the northern part of Erzurum. The first three are the parts of “the Black Sea Region”; the other four – the parts of “the Eastern Anatolia Region”. It is important that the ills, the provinces of the Republic of Türkiye, are subdivided into “the İlches” or districts. As a result, the Artvin İl comprises 9 İlches, the Rize İl – 12 İlches and the Trabzon İl – 18 İlches. The Ardahan İl is subdivided into 6 İlches, the Kars İl – into 8 İlches, and Iğdir – into 4 İlches. The Erzurum İl is subdivided into 20 İlches. Though it is difficult to say how many of them the parts of the Caucasus Region are. The northern part of this province may contain up to eight districts.



Figure 23. The Economic Regions of the Azerbaijan Republic in 2021 (Economic Regions of Azerbaijan, 2024)

The Ardebil Ostan separated from the East Azerbaijan region in Iran, 1993. So, Iran’s “South Caucasus” comprised 4 regions or “ostans:” West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Ardebil and Gilan. The regions of the Islamic Republic of Iran are subdivided into “the Shahrestans” or the oblasts. As the result, the West Azerbaijan comprises 20 “shahrestans,” the East Azerbaijan – 23 “shahrestans,” Ardebil – 12 and Gilan – 17 of them.

Conclusion

The diverse Caucasian region is the land of the richest history. The history does not stand but actively moves here. The state and the internal borders move according to it even during our age. It is interesting that the administrative-territorial systems of all 6 states are similar, though there are the sharp differences too. The admitting of the new borders and the new dividing of this region would supposedly abolish the Russian imperial terminology and its legacy. The international relationships in the Caucasus are also significant. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye, the states of “the Central” and “the South Caucasus”, are the closest economic partners. Besides, Azerbaijan and Türkiye are the closest political allies too. Russia, Armenia and Iran, the states of “the North”, “Central” and “the South Caucasus”—are”also the closest economic and political partners to each other. These two trade alliances have the global role of two major lines from the west to the east and from the north to the south, the successors of the ancient and mediaeval trade routes. Though Armenia and Azerbaijan are adversaries, both are dependent on Georgia’s sea ports and vice versa, so these ports have the important role. The Turkish private companies actively work not only in the allied Georgia and

Azerbaijan but also in the opponent Armenia. At the same time, the Russian private companies own a large part of the economy of the adversary – Georgia. The state of “the Central Caucasus” – Georgia tries to have a close cultural relationship with the republics of “the North Caucasus”, the members of the Russian Federation. All these relations, also the role of the global trade routes in all parts of the region, interweave the three parts of the Caucasus into each other and confirm that the dividing of the entire region is just conditional. We do not need to go far for the rough comparison: the Caucasus Ridge, situated on about 1500 kilometres and the territories of three sovereign states, is conditionally divided into three parts. Despite this, it is still the entire mountainous system.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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