The Role of Kalmyks for Turkish Policy of Tsarist Russia in the Period of Peter I*

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Introduction

Tsar Peter I struggled to determine new strategies to save his country from backwardness in his early years when he acceded the Tsardom government. The most important deficiency which he realized was the lack of natural boundaries that the country had never reached by that time. Therefore geographical adversity had to be ended. However, in order to provide this end, firstly some reforms were needed in the country. Mentioned reforms were carried out with the goal of developing the country with administrative, military, bureaucratic and cultural aspects and turning Russia into a major, strong European country.¹

The expansion of the Russian lands towards the inland of Asia was only possible by developing new defense methods for the new lands. The effort of Peter I to dominate Asia from the Caspian Sea side ended upon destroying the cooperation of Kniaz (Prince or Duke) Berkovic – Cherkassky in Khive. During the times of Catherine II, Russia did not extend through Asia; at the same time improvements such as military and diplomatic structure of the country were always pursued. During that time, Russia spread the first seeds of its political domination over Asia, almost without any military operation and castle construction. This success was achieved by the governors of Orenburg and Siberia by utilizing the principle divide and govern to benefit from the disputes among the Bashkir, Kyrgyz and Kalmyk²

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¹ Thanks to Miss Hatice Pehlevan for English grammar fixes of this article.
² We observe that Peter I’s sense of wonder of passion to discover played an important role in the reforms. The major embassy mission carried out between 1697 and 1699, as stated by d’Encausse, is one of the remarkable samples. During this period, Peter I kept secret his identity when visiting Europe together with a committee of two hundred and fifty members. It is recorded that Peter I returned to his country with eight hundred people who are expert in their fields at the end of that long visit. For Tsar Peter I’s visit to Europe, see d’Encausse, Tanrıankömrün Rusyası, Ötüken Yayınevi, Istanbul, 2003), pp.105–106; Oscar Browning, Peter The Great, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1898, pp.83–116; K. Walliszkewski, Peter The Great, William Heinemann, London, 1897, Vol. I, pp.74–100.

² The term Kalmyk that we see in various sources is usually used for western Mongolians. However, the term of Kalmyk is also used for Oirat, Dzungar, and Russian Mongolians and therefore there is no compromise on the term. For a different usage of Kalmyk, see Монахом Якунфом, Историческое
tribes. In this way, the rival tribes were manipulated and impoverished against each other. In addition, it was aimed to improve the welfare of Siberia by establishing a peaceful environment among the said people and the borderlands of Russia.

In foreign policy, during the 18th century, on one hand there was the attempt to bring together many groups under the Tsarist Flag by means of national and religious elements such as Pan-Slavism and orthodoxy, on the other hand the struggles among the other tribes or communities were manipulated. This act, which is the main characteristic of the divide and govern principle, led to a perception that the Tsarist regime was the protector of these people, because the groups in difficulty were sometimes protected and they were provided with military and economic aids. In this way, the lands of these groups were used as military buffer zones as well as their military forces were used in wars to win victories.

The Tsarist Russia benefitted from the castles which were built in order to keep in hand the new lands to acquired and extend its borders. These castles were used as outpost areas for Tsardom on one hand; on the other hand they served as anchor points for Russianization activities pursued in these newly acquired lands. Therefore,
a kind of colonization activity was carried out by settling Russian villagers into and around these castles. For example, the Russian villagers who lived in Russian lands were brought to settle at the riversides of Irtysh, and Terek and Kuban. In this way, a military defense line was naturally established in these two regions.

With Peter I, the interest and connection of Tsarist Russia with the external world increased. Especially, it is suggested that a new period began for relationships with the Far East and Islamic World. While Peter I tried to use a different method to solve the political and commercial problems of the seventeenth century, cultural activities were also launched. For example, the first scientific Russian researches were directed to oriental studies in this period. It is well-known that Peter the Great, himself, ordered for many activities from protection of remnants found in various cities to translation of copies of inscriptions in other languages. In addition to this, the discovery of the near and far regions including Asia became an important target. For example, Peter’s passion to discover inspired a great expedition to Siberia and far north lands. This travel, which was known as The Great Northern Expedition, and which was very crowded, was also named as The First Expedition of the Academy. Because the expedition meant valuable knowledge for the academies founded by Peter the Great. Barthold defines this action as the world’s most important scientific expedition in history that no other countries have achieved to that date, in terms of the expansion of the task fulfilled. Even if the comment of the author would be found exaggerated, it explains the value of the data obtained there. This action, The Great Northern Expedition or the First Expedition of Academy to the north of Asia, had a discovery characteristic. The geographic, cultural and commercial data obtained from the region provided clues for the Tsarist Russia in what kind of policy he should pursue. Thus, the action, which seemed to be a cultural expedition, actually aimed at determining the political policies that should be pursued in these regions.

1. Kalmyks in Foreign Diplomacy and Turkestan Policy of Tsarist Russia

The Tsarist Russia experienced many bureaucratic and social transformations in internal policy during the 17th century. During the long period from 1584 to 1613,

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6 About the colonization activities carried out by Tsarist Russia during 18th century, a declaration was released in 10th International Turkish World Social Sciences Congress. See Oktay Berber, "XVIII. Yüzyılda Çarlık Rusyasının Türkistan Siyasetine Bölm Yönetimi İliksisi Başlamışa Bir Bakış", 10. Uluslararası Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Kongresi Bildirileri, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, pp.729-736.

7 As a result of topographic and astronomical studies obtained during the Great Northern Expedition, the academic infrastructure of Russia and its lands in Asia was released in 1745. For the Northern Expedition, see V.V. Barthold, Rüya ve Avrupa’da Oryantalizm, Küre Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, pp.285, 296, 299.
this transformation caused many events and this period was called the Convulsion Period in Russian history. While the Tsardom was trying to solve the problems of this period on one hand, the Polish and Swedish interventions that continued during the first half of the 17th century delivered a static period in external politics for Tsardom.\textsuperscript{8} However, the enterprises to improve the domination on the Siberian lands were continued and the political and peaceful policies were carried out in this direction.\textsuperscript{9}

We observe that the Moscow government, acting in Siberian lands, developed their relationships with some communities in the region in peaceful ways. It is recorded that the two Oirat group, the Turghuts and Derbets named as Kalmyks, entered into agreements with the Tsardom. The Kalmyks, who swore Loyalty Oath, called Shert, agreed to pay taxes to the Tsardom and guaranteed to send the charges of the Tsardom to the central government. In return, the Kalmyks received privileges to continue their nomadic life on the riversides of Kamishi, Ishim, Irtysh and Ob rivers and to do business in Tara and Tomsk cities.\textsuperscript{10} With this agreement, the Kalmyks began to take an active role in Russian external policy. For Tsardom, the agreement with the Kalmyks meant to allow them to use their combative specifications that improved because of their nomadic lifestyle. This can be observed in the period we have studied. In addition, the loyalty oath agreement of Kalmyks with Tsardom government contributed to the establishment of a military line of defense that we have mentioned above.

One of the concrete steps representing the improvement of Russian – Kalmyk relationships, and a kind of cooperation, was taken in February 1673. The Kalmyk Khan, Ayuke, signed an agreement with 13 articles, which is called shert as we have mentioned above, with Russia. According to the Article 5 of the agreement, Kalmyks would not have any relationships with the Ottoman Empire, Iranian Shah, Crimean Khanate, Azov Princes, Temruks, Tabans, Beslensys, Kumyks and others in any ways and provide human force and horses.\textsuperscript{11} This article of the agreement shows the importance paid to the military force of the Kalmyks. In addition, the effort to prevent the Kalmyks to contact the other people and groups states the

\textsuperscript{8} Considering the Russian history, it will be observed that the rapid splashes were frequently enjoyed, and, immediately after these, the periods of stagnation appeared almost every 40–50 years. In fact, if we consider these periods as the time to unwind after rapid splashes and re-gather force, we would see that these periods are not the periods of stagnation but the preparation periods for rapid improvements in external policies.


\textsuperscript{10} Ibidem, p.28.

importance of the other groups and communities in Russian foreign policy. This agreement is the first preview of the Russian – Kalmyk alliances that would take place in the subsequent periods.

After Tsarist Russia showed interest in Turkestan with the beginning of the times of Peter I, the Moscow government began to put into effect new strategies for the region. Particularly, a sound central administration had not been established in Turkestan and therefore a fragmented political structure had appeared upon the end-up of Timurid times. The invasion launched by Kalmyks in this disordered structure meant a disaster for the Turkish world, because it led migration waves and a long unsteady period in terms of socioeconomic, cultural and political aspects.

This period that was severe for the Turkish world presented an opportunity for the Tsardom government, which developed policies towards the region. The destruction of Turks’ civilization accumulations by Kalmyks paved the way for the Turkish communities to live dispersed and apart from each other. By the 19th century, the Russian march that became concrete and gained speed on the Turkish lands was an important result of the Kalmyk oppression in the 17th and first half of 18th centuries. The oppression of Kalmyks on Kazakhs, who live in cuzes (parts) led these cuzes (parts) to seek refuge in and protection from Tsardom. A similar process is observed with the Kyrgyz. As a result of the Kalmyk oppression on Kyrgyz during the 17th century, a part of Kyrgyz people moved to East Turkestan while another part had to migrate to Fergana valley.

2. Kalmyks as a Military Force in Russian – Ottoman Relationships in the Period of Peter I

After Ukraine adopted the Ottoman dominance, Poland and Moscow governments concerned about this case, because the possibility that the Doroshenko Kazakhs might shoot out the Poles from Podolia and the Russians from Kiev, with the aid of Turks, had appeared. At the end of 1671, when the Ottoman Empire decided to an

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12 The term Turkestan we use herein is the historical and cultural name of the region that is geographically called as Central Asia or Middle Asia. The term Central Asia has been used since 1925 as a term belonging to the terminology used by Soviet period of Russia. A comparison on imposing the use of the term Central Asia during the Soviet period is remarkably observed in the works by Barthold, who delivered important studies on Turkish history and culture. Barthold had used the term Turkestan in his works up to 1925, and began to use Central Asia thereafter.

13 A work of ours that includes the Kalmyk invasion movement and its influences on the Turkish world is ongoing and will be released to the world of science when completed.

14 The term cuze used herein equals to the term orda in the meaning of administrative and political governing center or capital city in Middle Age organization. Kazakhs were organized in three cuzes, the large, medium and small.
expedition to Poland, the Russian government reacted against this decision. With reference to the Article 4 of the Andrusovo Treaty between Russia and Poland, Russia sent an envoy to Istanbul. Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich stated that they would go to establish a pact with the Christian countries and the Kazakhs of Don would be sent to Black Sea and the Kalmyks, Nogais, and Yedisan Tatars would be brought together to attack the Turks, if the Ottomans would launch an expedition. This was the first threat of the Tsardom addressing the Ottoman Empire. The most important characteristics of these statement mentioned by the envoy sent by the Tsar were that the Russians explicitly declared the Turks as their enemies in terms of the Turkish–Russian relationships.

The Azov Castle, which was very important for the Tsarist Russia in Black Sea and North Caucasus policy was occupied on 6 August 1696 upon a siege began in June 1696 once again after a failed siege in 1695. Later on, the first navies were immediately built at the side of the Azov and the region became a place where the Russians were able to dominate the North Caucasus through the Don River.

After the invasion of Azov by Peter I, some changes appeared in the region; particularly the communities which did not have political unity began to get closer to the Tsardom. The Khan of Kalmyks, Ayuke, who was at around the Itil (Atil or Volga), sent an envoy to the Don Cossacks to convey them his message saying that their friendship with the Crimean Khanate by the time had ended-up, upon the invasion of Azov by Russians. In addition, the Tsardom concluded an agreement with the Don Kazakhs to attack the lands of Crimea Khanate and Kuban Nogays. Later on in July 1697, an agreement, including 6 articles, stipulating that both parties help each other was concluded between Ayuke Khan and the Tsar. After the treaty between the parties, the Tsardom sent nine sable coats, an amount of baize of seventy clothes and an amount of money to Sultan Murad, one of the notable leaders of Nogays. And then, upon agreement, Ayuke Khan sent a group of princes to stand by Chapdarchap Mirza to go about the Kuban River after crossing Itil on an expedition. After the parties signed this agreement, an army of 6,000 members including Cossacks was put under Peter I's order. A castle was built at

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15 Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya TarlN Başlangıçtan 1917 ve Kaçak*, 5th Edition, TTK Yayımları, Ankara, 2010, p.236. In Andrusovo Treaty, Article 4, it says “If the Turkish sultan launched an expedition to Poland, the Russian Tsar would send the Kalmyks, Nogais and other alliances to the Turkish lands by land and the Don and Zaporozhian Kazakhs by sea”. In Article 5 of the treaty said “The Turkish and Crimean rulers were sent letters to withdraw from organizing an expedition to Poland”.

16 For Tsarist Russia's Azov Expeditions, see Oscar Browning, 1898, pp. 64–83.


the river-mouth of the Kuban River, where it flew into the Azov, and support was provided from the Nogay rulers against the probable attacks from Ottomans.\textsuperscript{20}

The close relationships between Russia and the Kalmyks was carefully pursued by the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, an army of 17,000 soldiers was put under Morali Ali Pasha’s order in order to take measures against military activities of the Russians and to save Azov. Also, Peter I brought together an army of 30,000 soldiers in the Azov and left there upon seeing the Ottomans going toward the region. The Crimean Khanate, Selim Giray I, who was supporting Morali Ali Pasha, built Adgu Castle at the end of Shah Island to prevent the passage of the Russians to the Black Sea and go towards around Taman and Kuban rivers through Azov, instead of besieging the Azov. Acting in accordance with the agreement they concluded with the Russians, the Kalmyks tried to prevent the construction of the castle but failed.\textsuperscript{21}

Aiming at dominating Turkestan and reaching India from there, Peter I was paying a special importance to Caucasus since it was the first step.\textsuperscript{22} That’s why the Tsardom wanted to dominate Caucasus on one hand and on the other hand aimed to protect the Russian and Cossak villages nearby the Terek River from attacks. For this purpose, Pyotr M. Apraksin, the governor for Middle and Upper Volga\textsuperscript{23}, who was the envoy of Peter I, met with Ayuke Khan and signed an agreement consisting of 8 articles on 30 September 1708. With the agreement, the Kalmyks declared their loyalty to the Tsar. After signing the agreement, Ayuke Khan was asked to fight

\textsuperscript{20} Topal, 2001, p.239.
\textsuperscript{21} Even if the Kalmyk attacks did not prevent the construction of the castle, they resulted in death of many Nogay in the Kuban region in 1697 and 1698. The Nogays, who were also called the people in ten thousand tents, had to leave their lands since they were urged to adopt Christianity. Some of them were settled in the Shah Island while the others had to move to the Ottoman lands. The Kalmyk Khan Ayuke and his sons with an army of 12,000 soldiers moved to kill the Nogays who fled from their lands but were defeated by Kalgay Devlet Giray. The Nogays who thus saved their lives from the Kalmyks settled in Circassia. See Bilge, 2005, p.95; Topal, 2001, pp. 275–277.
\textsuperscript{22} The defeat of Peter I in the Pruth War in 1711 by the Ottoman Empire resulted in further developments of the Russian policies on Turkestan. Particularly the aim to obtain the gold resources of India and Yarkent resulted in the new steps in the region. In addition to consolidating the political connections with Kazakh Ordas, the Russians established military constructions along the Yuyik and Irysh Rivers. In parallel with this, the castles Yamshev (1716), Omsk (1716), Jelezinsk (1717), Semipalatinsk (or Semey) (1718), Kolbasinsk, Ust-Kamenogorsk (or Oskemen) (1720) as a part of the military construction were established. In addition, in the Kalmyk lands to the left side of the Irysh in the weld side was established Irysh Military Construction Line, including Russian castles and posts, which was as long as 888 verst (941.28 km). These castles that were constructed upon the development of the relationships between Russia and Kazakhs, Russia and Kalmyk, Kazakhs and Kalmyks smoothed the way for Russians in the subsequent periods particularly in dominating the Small and Medium Orda Kazakhs. See Orhan Doğan, “Rusya’nın Orta Asya’ya Yönelik Siyasetinde Kazaklarnın Önemi (XVIII. Yüzyıllın I lk Yarısı)”, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi, S.37, 2002, pp.79, 81–82; Hayri Çapraz, “Çarlı Rusyası’nın Türkistan’da Hakimiyet Kurması”, SDU Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, S.24, 2011, p.54.
\textsuperscript{23} The Middle and Upper Volga region includes Terk, Astrakhan, Ufa, and Kazan.
against Chechens and Nogays, and an army of 5,000 soldiers was provided for him to support Terskiy. In addition, with reference to this agreement, a significant support was provided from Kalmyks in quashing the Bulavin Rebellion began at the line of Don River and threatened the dominance of Russians there, and the Bashkir Rebellion began in the same year.\textsuperscript{24} After this alliance, on 17 September 1710, a new agreement was concluded between Pyotr Apraksin and Kalmyks and the dependence of Kalmyks to Russia was consolidated.\textsuperscript{25}

On one hand Ayuke Khan was trying to set up good relations with Tsardom and on the other hand he was aware of the Ottoman Empire that was having a struggle with Russia. The evidence of this case was the greeting letter\textsuperscript{26} which he sent to Sultan Ahmet III in 1703, in which he was stating his loyalty to the Ottomans saying “The allies of the Great State (Devlet-i Aliyee) are allies for me and the enemies of the Great State are my enemies as well”.\textsuperscript{27} In return for the Kalmyk Khan’s declaration of loyalty, the Grand Vizier sent a letter to Ayuke Khan on 9 October 1704, in which he stated their loyalty was accepted and their loyalty should continue, and sent an envoy to Selim Giray, the Crimean Khan, to ask him to declare his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{28}

The Kalmyks took part not only in the Russian-Ottoman struggle, they were also asked to present support for the Tsardom in the Russia – Sweden struggle. According to the Tsardom government’s plan, Kalmyks would provide for the Russians 10–15 thousand mounted troops in 1705–1706, because the Russian army seriously needed to have mounted troops. In parallel with this, the Russian government asked Kalmyks to go to the pastures around the Dnieper River, spent the winter there to make preparations for spring. However, despite the expectations, only 3,000 Kalmyks arrived in Moscow in 1707 to join the Russian troops against the Swedish army. In June 1709, Ayuke Khan sent 3,300 mounted troops to Ukraine to combat against Sweden.\textsuperscript{29}


\textsuperscript{25} Bilge, 2005, p.98.

\textsuperscript{26} This letter, found in Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive in Istanbul and among the documents released by the institution, is dated 1703 (H. 1115). See Osmanlı Devleti ile Kazakistan, Türkistan ve Kırım Hanlıkları Arasında Mınasbettware Daire Arşiv Belgeleri (1687–1908 Yılları arası), (edited by Yusuf İhsan Genc, Haci Osman Yıldırım et al.), Prime Ministry State Archive General Directorate Publications, Ankara, 1992, vol. 3, pp. 63–64. However, Akdes Nımet Kurat claims that the said letter was sent in the midst of 1704, in his work Prut Seferi ve Bars. See Akdes Nımet Kurat, Prut Seferi ve Barsı 1123 (1711), C.I TTK Basmevi, Ankara, 1951, p.221.

\textsuperscript{27} Osmanlı Devleti ile Kazakistan, 1992, p.63.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibidem, pp.64–65.

A short time after Numan Pasha was dismissed and Baltaci Mehmet Pasha became the great vizier in 1710 for the second time, the envoy of Kalmyks presented the servitude letter to the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{30} With this act that is a clear sign that the Kalmyk Khan, Ayuke Khan, was beware of Ottoman, they would win over Turks and therefore live a more comfortable life. In fact, the desire of Kalmyk Khan to establish good relationships with both Ottomans and the Tsardom indicates how important these two political forces were in the region; in other words, no community might continue its existence without receiving support from them.

According to the work called Nusretnâme, the Russian army entered Bogdan (Moldova) on 17 March 1710, attacked the Swedish troops, who were lodging there to spend the winter, and then killed some of them while holding captive the others. And then, the Russian troops combined with Kalmyks passed through a place called Checkcheken to enter Crimea and killed 20 Muslims, plundered their properties and captured 1,700 hergeles\textsuperscript{31} (untrained young horses and donkeys).\textsuperscript{32}

During the Pruth War between Russia and Ottoman Empire, Russia asked Ayuke Khan to attack Nogays (Kuban Tatars), who lived around the Kuban River, in order to prevent a probable attack from Nogays.\textsuperscript{33} Kalmyks took action in June 1711 to come together with the Russian troops under the leadership of Pyotr Apraksin, burned down many villages, killed many persons, held captive some of them and plundered their properties. After that successful operation of Kalmyks, Tsar Peter I sent Ayuke Khan a greeting letter in November.\textsuperscript{34} During the Pruth War, a Swedish military officer stayed with Nurettin Sultan and kept a journal during his lodging. From these journals, it is understood that there were disputes between Ayuke Khan and his sons. In the report, it is said that Nurettin Sultan was warned that a man of Ayuke Han and his sons collaborated with the Russians, and they would attack on Kabarda Circassians and Kuban Tatars. The subsequent notes in the same report indicate that the Kuban Tatars under the command of Nurettin Sefagiray Sultan combated against Russian, Kalmyk and Circassian troops under the command of Pyotr Matveyevich Apraksin, but were overwhelmed. Moreover, the Swedish officer who wrote the report claimed that he had to flee on a horse because of this defeat and he had seen only deserted villages, carriages and houses.\textsuperscript{35} The notes by the Swedish officer are very important in terms of indicating the Russian oppression in the region.

\textsuperscript{30} Topal, 2001, p.731.
\textsuperscript{31} *Hergele* is a term used for a flock of untrained horses or donkeys, which are gathered to use for riding and transportation.
\textsuperscript{32} Topal, 2001, p.737.
\textsuperscript{33} Kurat, 2010, p.192.
\textsuperscript{34} Bilge, 2005, p.99.
According to Article 9 of the memorandum of agreement (suret-i temessuk) signed in 1715, Kalmuks would not act against Crimean people and their affiliates such as Circassians and Nogay people, and in turn, the Crimean Tatars and Circassians would not take any actions against Russian, Kalmuks and Cossack lands. It is also stated in this agreement that if the articles would be violated by either party, every kind of measures should be taken.\textsuperscript{36}

Tsar Peter I organized a great expedition in Iran on 15 June 1722.\textsuperscript{37} Ayuke Khan, the Kalmuq Han welcomed Peter I in Saratov and declared his alliance, and put thousands of his soldiers under his order. A Russian army consisting of 20,000 infantrymen, 9,000 mounted troops, about 70,000 Cossack and Kalmuq soldiers occupied Agrakhan city on 22 July 1722. Later on, Enderi, a city affiliated to the Crimean Khanate, was occupied and thousands of Chechens were killed. The ruler of Enderi apologized to Tsar Peter I, who entered Tarhu on 12 August, and agreed the dependence to Russia. On 23 August, Derbend was occupied and Imam Kulu Khan, the governor of Derbend, was assigned as Khanate after he had presented the keys of the city to the Tsar.\textsuperscript{38}

The Russian operation against Iran was a serious threat for the eastern borders of Ottoman Empire. That’s why, the occupation of Tabriz, Revan, Tbilisi and Gence, the states on the borders of Iran was decided. In addition, the occupation of Dagestan, a state under the dominance of the Ottomans, was protested, and Kapicibasi Nišli Mehmed Aga was sent to have a meeting with Tsar Peter I as an envoy to ask him to free Derbend. The Ottoman threat and heavy winter conditions prevented the Russians from organizing a great expedition to southern Caucasus. Even, the Tsardom sent Istanbul a letter stating that the aim of constructing new castles was misperceived and their activities were to defend the Terskiy castle on the Terek River against attacks from Kalmuks.\textsuperscript{39}

The Ottoman troops were placed into the region in order to prevent Russia from going towards Iran. Tbilisi was conquered in July 1723 and then the Kartli lands were captured. Dagestan was conquered in September, Kermanshah in October, 1723, Sine in November 1723, Khoy in May 1724, and Hamedan in August 1724. The Russian Tsardom conquered Baku, which it considered as the key of the region, on

\textsuperscript{36} Topal, 2001, p.794.

\textsuperscript{37} For Peter’s expedition to Iran, see Browning, 1898, pp.321–329.

\textsuperscript{38} Bilge, 2005, p.104. Derbend is an important transit way between Asia and Europe. Since the region consists of highlands, the through roads run the top of the mountains and therefore a dangerous geography. However, Derbend is located among the highlands of Dagestan and coast of Caspian Sea and is a kind of defile lying from Petrovsk to Absheron peninsula. That’s why, the Derbend path gain importance as a unique transportation way. See John F. Baddeley, Ruskay'ın Kafkas'ı'na İtilası ve Şeyh Şamil, Kayhan Yayınları, İstanbul, 1989, pp.55–56.

\textsuperscript{39} Bilge, 2005, pp. 105–106.
25 June 1723. For Russian policies, Baku was an important port city. With conquering Baku first, Russia might change the transit ways of Anatolia under the dominance of Ottoman that were used by the eastern countries, which did business with European countries, to Volga-Caspian direction. Second, if that line gained importance, Russia, which is underdeveloped in agriculture, might become a strong country in industry. In addition, Russia would easily protect its southern borders and prevail against Ottoman, which it considered as its historical rival.⁴⁰

After conquering Baku, an agreement was concluded between Russia and Shah Tahmasp II on 12 September 1723. Russia received Derbend, Baku, Salyane, Lenkeran, Geylan, Resht, Anzali, Mazanderan and Astarabad (or Gorgan) against returning the Iran throne to Tahmasp II.⁴¹ Later on, the Tsarist Russia, which came to the table with the Ottoman Empire about Iran issue, agreed that the Kur River be accepted as the border among Russia and Ottoman Empire in reference to the Istanbul Treaty signed on 24 June 1724. With reference to the agreement, Geylan, Mazanderan, Astarabad were given to Russia while Shirvan, Gence, Revan, Karabakh, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan and Irak-ı Acem (Eastern Iraq) were given to the dominance of Ottoman.⁴²

By the death of Peter I on 8 February 1725, the Ottoman troops acted to centralize the Eastern Georgia, and Kakhet Kingdom was organized as Kakhet State and Kartli Kindom was organized as Tbilisi State and annexed to Ottoman in 1724, upon Russia had tried to dominate the Christian Georgian Kingdoms.⁴³

**Conclusion**

The times of Peter the Great, represent a period during which the Tsardom specified as the unique target the ideal to transform Russia into a strong and large state. It is observed that Tsarist Russia had to confront the Ottoman Empire in the efforts for this ideal. This confrontation was so natural that this was resulted from the Russian policies primarily on the Black Sea, Caucasus and Balkans.⁴⁴ The Black

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⁴⁴ We need to underline that these policies are not only of politics. More precisely, we should say that the cultural policies were implemented to achieve the political aims. Particularly, the Christianization missionary activities were the anchor points for such kind of cultural policies. During 18th century, The Newly Baptized Department was founded and the ones who adopt Christianity were exempted from implementing military service, with a decree issued on 2 November 1722. See Ilyas Topsakal, *Rus Misyoner Kaynaklarna Göre Rus Çarlığı ve Türkler (1552 – 1917)*, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009, pp.168, 170. These samples indicate how important the Christianization is for Tsarist Russia.
Sea was perceived as a Turkish Lake for Ottomans. In addition, even if the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century there were periods when the Ottoman Empire experienced some failures, it did not have serious losses and was one of the strongest forces of that time.

In foreign policies during the times of Peter I, the Tsardom actively benefitted from Kalmyks. This was because of the fact that the Tsardom needed to utilize the natural combative skills of the nomadic properties of Kalmyks. In turn, the Kalmyks needed to establish a close relationship with the Tsardom to maintain their lives in the region. This people, who left serious injuries on Turks living in Turkestan, moved toward the western regions, Idyll lands in due course, with the instinct to maintain their nomadic life. However, their existence there would only be possible under the protection of the Tsardom, which they considered as a significant force in the region.

Kalmyks, who led a heavy ravage on Turkistan, caused consolidation of the political vacuum had occurred after Timurid times. The Kalmyks' invasion operations in the region which was lost for more than one hundred and fifty years resulted in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Nogai and Uzbek people sought refuge in Tsardom. In other words, the Tsardom was perceived as a protector for these people. This situation paved the way for Russians, who would like to go towards the Turkish lands from the north, to easily move in the region by 19th century, and these large and small communities adopted the dominance of Tsardom. Kalmyks also played an important role in quashing the rebellions broke out in Asia against Tsardom government.

It is observed that Kalmyks and Tsarist Russia concluded many agreements as a result of they need each other. The agreements were concluded not only during the times of Peter I., but also before and after he was in force. However, during the times of Ayuke Khan, Kalmyks sent envoys a few times to Istanbul to declare their loyalty due to the Ottoman's force in the region. The bipartite policy of Kalmyks resulted from the fact that they were beware of enemies of Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Empire, which are the strongest forces in the time, in order to their lives in the region, as we mentioned above.

The existence of the Kalmyks in the struggle between Tsardom and Ottoman Empire allow Russians to overcome the deficiencies of the Russian troops. In this sense, the resistance shown by the Russian troops in Pruth War was remarkable. In addition, Kalmyks were actively used in Russian policies towards Crimea. Again, the activities of Kalmyks, who acted in cooperation with the Russians, have a significant role in oppressing the Kuban Tatars, and in this way, in the extinction of the Tatar people living in Kuban and Caucasus.