

Shīrvānian Beylerbey Khosrow Khān and the Russian-Persian Conflict in the Middle of the 17th Century

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In the mid-17th century, the relatively stable trade and diplomatic relations between Russia and Safavid Persia were disrupted by a conflict (1651–1653). The study's main aim is to examine the immediate and indirect causes, and particularly, the role of Shīrvānian beylerbey Khosrow Khān in the conflict. According to several historians, he played an important role in this struggle. As the governor of the Safavid frontier province in the South Caucasus, he was an integral part of official Russian-Safavid trade relations. Khan's merchants regularly travelled to Russia and traded at the local markets. However, Shīrvānian and Persian merchants' trade sustained losses caused by frequent attacks of the Cossacks. Khosrow Khān sent several letters to the governors of Astrakhan and Terek complaining about these Cossack plundering raids. In addition, he also expressed dissatisfaction with the construction of a fortress on the territory at the mouth of the Terek and Sunzha rivers, which the Russians and Safavids considered their own sphere of political influence. All these factors gradually provoked Khosrow Khān, and other local Dagestani and Kumyk rulers (probably with the approval of the Safavid Shah), to organize military operations against the Shunza fortress. This seemingly local conflict was immediately noticeable at the official Russian-Safavid state diplomatic level. The research draws on a range of archival and published Russian and Persian sources, as well as on scholarly literature on the subject.

Keywords: Russian-Safavid relations, Shīrvān, Caucasus, trade, war, diplomacy, 17th century.

Ширванский бейлербей Хосров-хан и русско-персидский конфликт в середине XVII века

Л. Рыбарь

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В середине XVII века относительно стабильные торговые и дипломатические отношения между Россией и сефевидской Персией были нарушены конфликтом, продолжавшимся с 1651 по 1653 г. Основная цель исследования — изучить непосредственные и косвенные причины конфликта, в частности, место ширванского бейлербея Хосров-хана в этом конфликте, который по мнению ряда историков, сыграл важную роль в этой войне. Хосров-хан, будучи бейлербеем сефевидской пограничной провинции в районе Южного Кавказа, непосредственно участвовал в официальных русско-сефевидских торговых отношениях. Ханские купцы регулярно приезжали в Россию и торговали на местных рынках. Однако частые нападения казаков на ширванских и персидских купцов приносили им убытки. Хосров-хан отправил несколько грамот астраханским и терским князьям, жалуясь на эти грабительские набеги казаков. Кроме того, Хосров-хан выразил недовольство строительством крепости на территории в устье рек Терек и Сунжа, которую Россия и Персия считали сферой своего политического влияния. Все эти факторы постепенно спровоцировали Хосров-хана и других местных дагестанских и кумыкских правителей (по всей видимости, с согласия сефевидского шаха) организовать военные атаки на крепость. Этот, казалось бы, локальный конфликт стал сразу предметом официального русско-персидского государственного дипломатического диалога. Исследование проведено на основе ряда архивных и опубликованных российских и персидских источников.

Ключевые слова: русско-сефевидские отношения, Ширван, Кавказ, торговля, война, дипломатия, XVII век.

During the 17th century, the Russian Tsardom and Safavid Persia had relatively stable diplomatic and trade relations. However, in the middle of the 17th century, a conflict broke out between both states. Some deterioration in diplomatic relations occurred after the Treaty of Zohāb (1639), which put an end to the long-standing Ottoman-Safavid conflict¹. The treaty also established the distribution of spheres of influence in the Caucasus region. The Safavid Empire intended to consolidate its power and political positions in the North Caucasus, from the city of Darband to the Sunzha River. The Ottoman Empire focused on controlling the western territories of the Caucasus, from the shores of the Black Sea to the Kabarda region. From the north, however, Russia also sought to strengthen its positions in several neighbouring Caucasian regions (from Kabarda to Dagestan)². Therefore, the Caucasus became a territory where the interests of three great powers met: Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the west of the Caucasus, and Russia and the Safavid Persia in the east of the Caucasus. Although the discussion here is about great power politics in the Caucasus area, one should not omit the position of local rulers, whose role in Russian-Persian relations in the 17th century was far from insignificant. Several sources indicate that the Shīrvānian beylerbey Khosrow Khān played a role in the outbreak of the Russian-Persian conflict in 1651–1653. Based on Persian and Russian archival sources, this study aims to examine the role of this beylerbey in the emergence of the conflict as well as to explore his position within the complex Russian-Persian military-diplomatic struggle in the Caucasus in the middle of the 17th century.

¹ *Novoseltsev A. P. Russko-iranskie otnosheniia v pervoi polovine XVII veka // Mezhdunarodnye sviazii Rossii v XVII–XVIII vv. Moscow, 1966. P. 103.*

² *Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653 // Reitar. 2006. No. 31. P. 9.*

Historiography

As yet, no study has dealt with the position and role of the Shīrvānian beylerbey Khosrow Khān in the Russian-Persian conflict (1651–1653). Naturally, the conflict has been scrutinized by several Russian, Azerbaijani, Iranian, and other historians, however in a rather general fashion. The most important are the articles by E. S. Zevakin and I. Babulin³. While E. S. Zevakin focused mainly on the political aspects of the conflict, I. Babulin analysed in detail the course of military attacks on the Sunzha fortress in 1651 and 1653. Azerbaijani historian Gulshen Saidova also studied the Russian-Persian conflict, following some aspects related to Azerbaijan and its position in Russian-Safavid relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries⁴. In addition to these works, there are others that briefly referred to the conflict in a broader historical context⁵. Furthermore, Iranian and Western historians contributed to the topic. However, their historical research has mainly relied on Persian sources offering a one-sided view on the conflict⁶. Moreover, compared with numerous Russian archival materials, the Persian ones contain little information about the Russian-Persian conflict. The exceptions are the works of Rudi Matthee, who has also referred to the works of Russian historian E. S. Zevakin⁷. In an attempt to further examine the issue, I will draw on both Russian and Persian sources, and thus arrive at a summarizing conclusion.

The Instigation of the Russian-Persian War. The Letters of Khosrow Khān to the Governors of Astrakhan and Terek

Historians have described a number of causes of the Russian-Persian war in 1551–1553. However, a closer analysis of their works reveals that the reasons given for the outbreak of the conflict differ substantially depending on the sources examined. It follows that the role of Shīrvānian beylerbey Khosrow Khān is also perceived differently. While Iranian historians have predominantly relied on Persian sources, Russian-writing historians⁸ have mostly drawn on Russian archival documents.

³ Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia // Azerbaidzhan v nachale XVIII veka. Baku, 1929. P. 24–31; Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653. P. 6–33.

⁴ Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaimootnosheniiakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke (po russkim istochnikam). Baku, 2004. P. 54–71.

⁵ For instance, the studies and works of Russian and other historians: Koraev T. K. Moskovskaia Rus' i Safavidskii Iran v Prikaspii XVI–XVII vv.: Sosedstvo, sopernichestvo, sosushchestvovanie // Istoricheskii vestnik. 2015. No. 11 (158). P. 154–199; Bazilenko I. V. Pravoslavnaia Rossiia i shiitskii Iran po stranitsam istorii otnoshenii: XVI — nachalo XX v. // Khristianskoe chtenie. 2011. No. 2 (37). P. 139–185; Akhmedov Ia. Z. Ocherki politicheskoi istorii narodov Severnogo Kavkaza v XVI–XVII vv. Grozny, 1988. P. 105–128; Rybár L. Širván a jeho úloha v európskom obchode (16.–17. storočie). Bratislava, 2014. P. 76–78. (Acta Historica Posoniensia XXVI.)

⁶ Barāzesh A. H. Ravābaṭ-i siyāsī-dīplomatīk-i Īrān va jahān dar 'ahd-i šafaviya. Tehran, 1392/2013; Jamālzaada M. A. Tārīkh-i ravābaṭ-i Rūs va Īrān. Tehran. 1358/1979; Mu'izī N. K. Tārīkh-i ravābaṭ-i siyāsī-yi Īrān bā duniyā. Jild-i avval. Tehran. 1324/1945. 452 p. Navā'ī A. Ravābaṭ-i siyāsī va iqtisādī-yi Īrān dar dūre-yi Šafaviya. Tehran, 1377/1998.

⁷ Matthee R.: 1) Rudeness and Revilement: Russian-Iranian Relations in the Mid-Seventeenth Century // Iranian Studies. 2013. Vol. 46, issue 3. P. 333–357; 2) Persia in Crisis. Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan. New York, 2012.

⁸ By “historians writing in Russian” I mean historians from a number of mostly post-Soviet countries (Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, etc.) who wrote their scholarly works mainly in Russian.

Persian sources. It has to be said that there is little information on Khosrow Khān in Persian historical sources. He was the shah's ghlām of the Bakhtiari tribe, who later held several state and military positions (darugheh, hakem) in Safavid Iran⁹. During the reign of Shāh ʿAbbās II (1642–1666), Khosrow Khān was appointed beylerbey (governor) of Shīrvān province and held this office from 1643/1644 to 1653¹⁰. As far as the instigation of the Russian-Persian conflict is concerned, Khosrow Khān is scarcely mentioned in the Persian sources. Drawing on them, Iranian historians have indicated as the main reason for the outbreak of the conflict the establishment of the Russian garrison on the Koy Su River (or Sulak) and the construction of other fortresses on the Terek River, which, from a military point of view, was of strategic importance¹¹. The impetus was given by Georgian ruler Teimuraz I, who was deposed by ʿAbbās II. Subsequently, in 1652, Teimuraz sent his grandson with his mother to Moscow to ask the Russian tsar for military assistance in order to regain control of the Kakhetian kingdom. Teimuraz intended to encourage the tsar to build several forts nearby the Koy Su (Qūyīn Sū) River, which would protect the Persian borders from the entry of Cirkassians, and at the same time if the Russians provided help to the Georgians, the forts would make the defense easier. Then, the Russians constructed several fortresses along the river¹². Because of this, Shāh ʿAbbās II ordered Shīrvānian beylerbey Khosrow Khān and the governors of Chokhūr-i Sʿad, Qarābāg, Ardabil, and Āstārā, to destroy the fortresses. Their army was reinforced by other tribal troops led by the ruler (Shamkhal) of Tarki, Surkhay Shevkal (in Persian Sorkhāb Shamkhāl Khān), ʿAbbās Qulī Khān Usmī, and others. Russian and Nogay garrisons were unable to defend the fort. They were defeated and some of them fled. After their victory, Persian forces razed the fortress to the ground¹³. However, Persian sources do not provide more information on this conflict.

Russian sources. Russian sources offer a different perspective on the Russian-Persian conflict. Based on the archival sources from the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (fund 77), it is possible to argue that the beylerbey of Shīrvān, Khosrow Khān, played a significant role not only in the conflict itself but even in its very instigation. The first signs of a dispute arose as early as 1647 and 1649 when Khosrow Khān sent letters to the governors (or voivodes) of Astrakhan. He complained of the attacks of Russian Cossacks robbing the merchants (“teziki”)¹⁴ in the Caspian Sea. The Cossacks took goods and two hundred tumans from merchants and admitted that they had been sent by the gover-

⁹ Floor W. Safavid Government Institutions. Costa Mesa, 2001. P. 117. — Abbas-Kuli Bakikhanov claimed that Khosrow Khān held the beylerbey position for eight years. See: *Bakikhanov Abbas-Kuli Aga. Giulistān-i Iram*. Baku, 1991. P. 91.

¹⁰ Floor W. Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran. A Third Manual of Safavid Administration by Mirza Naqī Nasiri. Washington, 2008. P. 287.

¹¹ Barāzesh A. H. Ravābaṭ-i siyāsī-diplomatīk-i Īrān va jahān dar ʿahd-i šafavīya. P. 521; *Jamālza-da M. A. Tāriḫ-i ravābaṭ-i Rūs va Īrān*. P. 157; *Muʿizī N. K. Tāriḫ-i ravābaṭ-i siyāsī-yi Īrān bā dunīyā*. P. 377; *Navā ʿī A. Ravābaṭ-i siyāsī va iqtisādī-yi Īrān dar dūre-yi Šafavīya*. P. 232.

¹² *Mīrzā Muḥammad Tāhir Vahīd Qazvīnī. Tāriḫ-i jahān-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*. Tehran, 1383/2004. P. 536; *Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī. Favāʿid-i šafavīya*. Tehran, 1322/1943. P. 67.

¹³ *Muḥammad Yūsuf Vāleh Qazvīnī Ešfahānī. Īrān dar zamān-i Shāh Šafī va Shāh ʿAbbās-i devvom (1038–1071 h. q.)*. Tehran, 1380/2001. P. 509–510; *Mīrzā Muḥammad Tāhir Vahīd Qazvīnī. Tāriḫ-i jahān-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*. Tehran, 1383/2004. P. 537.

¹⁴ *Teziki* — old term derived from the word *Tajik* for the Iranian or Central Asian merchants trading in Russia.

nors of Astrakhan and Terek¹⁵. Similarly, two years prior to the incident, the Cossacks of Astrakhan and Terek sailed to the coast of Gilān and robbed the ships of merchants. Then near the shores of Baku, they attacked a merchant called Haji Bakiyev from Farabat, who came there to buy oil. The Cossacks stole 600–700 tumans (6.000–7.000 rubles) from him. At the same time, they took this merchant and asked for a ransom of 130 tumans for him. Subsequently, the Cossacks went to the Terek fortress. The governors of Terek took money from the Cossacks, but instead of punishing them, released them¹⁶. Khan obviously suspected the governors of supporting these attacks on trade ships by sending “gunmen and rifles”. The attacks of the Cossacks significantly damaged the trade run by Shīrvānian and shah’s merchants. For that reason, Khosrow Khān threatened the governors by attacking the cities of Astrakhan and Terek with “a lot of Shīrvānian, Azerbaijani and Dagestani people” in order to capture and punish the guilty Cossacks¹⁷. In addition, he threatened to confiscate all the goods from Russian merchants trading in Shamākhī¹⁸. It seems that Khosrow Khān was still very angry about these events, as he sent more letters to Astrakhan in the following period. One such letter dated by 1652 was brought to Astrakhan by the messenger called Murza (Kulbeg) Aga. It is not clear whether the letter is original. Russian historians A. A. Andreev and M. E. Rezvan assume that it is a copy of the original from 1647¹⁹. Anyway, this letter has a similar content to the previous ones. In the letter, Khosrow Khān described the Cossacks’ attacks on merchant ships in the Caspian Sea and gave an ultimatum to the governors of Astrakhan and Terek to stop these plundering actions²⁰.

Even in 1647, the tsar’s government in Moscow was alarmed by the threats of Khosrow Khān. Russian Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (1645–1676) responded with a protest through his envoy Grigorii Bulgakov and asked the Safavid Shah to punish Khosrow Khān for his audacity. Shah, however, refused to do so²¹. On the contrary, he asked the Russian tsar to take action against the Cossack raids in the Caspian area²². In the end, both sides did nothing to solve the problem. The Safavid Shah did not punish the Shīrvānian beylerbey, and the Russian tsar and the governors of Astrakhan did not intervene against the looting Cossacks. The Safavid envoy Muḥammad Qolī Beg, who came to Moscow in 1650, also sought to resolve the matter, but without any results²³.

In 1650, Greben and Terek Cossacks again attacked a caravan of Shīrvānian and Dagestani merchants, killed several people, and stole 300 tumans worth of the Khan’s goods²⁴. Khosrow Khān was outraged and in 1651 sent his messenger Ḥossein (in Russian Usein)

¹⁵ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (hereafter RGADA). F.77. Op.1. No.2. 1649. Fol.7.

¹⁶ Ibid. Fol. 6, 8; Ibid. No. 6. 1652. Fol. 1; *Zevakin E.* Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia // *Azerbaidzhan v nachale XVIII veka.* Baku, 1929. P.24.

¹⁷ RGADA. F.77. Op. 1. No. 2. 1649. Fol. 2, 6, 8; Ibid. No. 6. 1652. Fol. 2–3.

¹⁸ Ibid. Fol. 2.

¹⁹ Ibid. Fol. 1–3.

²⁰ For the letter see: *Andreev A. A., Rezvan M. E.* Pervyi ultimatum Khosrov-khana astrakhanskim i terskim vovodam // *Klio.* 2022. No.6 (186). P.18–22.

²¹ For the mission of Grigorii Bulgakov to Persia in 1647–1648 see: *Stateinyi spisok* // RGADA. F.77. Op.1. No.2. 1647. Fol.1–52.

²² *Zevakin E.* Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P.24.

²³ Ibid.; *Matthee R.* Rudeness and Revilement: Russian-Iranian Relations in the Mid-Seventeenth Century // *Iranian Studies.* 2013. Vol.46, issue 3. P.344.

²⁴ *Zevakin E.* Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P.24–25; *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissiei.* Vol.4. St. Petersburg, 1842. P.162.

to the governors of Astrakhan and Terek. He accused them of supporting the Cossacks and requested that the stolen goods be returned. Since in the 17th century, Greben and Terek Cossacks protected the borders from attacks of “mountain people” (i. e. Caucasians), Tatars and Turks, Russians often supplied them with weapons and other materials²⁵. Thus, the governors of Astrakhan and Terek were not entirely blameless in this matter. Shīrvānī-an messenger Ḥossein came to the town of Terek, where he was warmly received by the governor. The Cossacks were also summoned for questioning. It was clarified that the caravan was moving without the permission of the governors, as it should have been done under the terms of a previous agreement. Therefore, the caravan was attacked and looted by the Cossacks. Nevertheless, they were not punished, and Ḥossein returned to Shamākhi without returning the stolen goods²⁶.

A year later (1652), Khosrow Khān again dispatched two envoys Ḥossein and Aga Muḥammad (in Russian Aga Mamet) to Astrakhan with the demand for compensation for the damage caused. At the same time, Khosrow Khān warned the governor that the shah had ordered him (i. e., Khosrow Khān) to gather forces of all the governors — from Chokhūr-i S'ad (Chugur-i Sad), Qarābāg, Ardabīl, and Āstārā — to come to Shīrvān in order to provide assistance to Khosrow Khān during the military expedition to Astrakhan and Terek²⁷. This fact is also confirmed by Persian sources²⁸. Khosrow Khān noted that if the stolen goods were returned, he would stop organizing the military expedition²⁹.

There were also other indirect reasons for the outbreak of the Russian-Persian conflict. As for the policy in the Caucasus, the Russians sought to extend their sphere of influence in the region — near the Safavid frontline, where fortresses along the Terek River had been built since the seventeenth century onwards. The construction of forts was to serve as a defensive line against their southern neighbours³⁰. One of these fortresses stood on the river of Sunzha (*Sunzhenskii ostrog*), built on the so-called “Ottoman road” in 1590. Located at the mouth of the Sunzha and Terek rivers, where the trade route passed, the fortress was of strategic importance³¹. This route connected the Black Sea coast with the Dagestan region and the Caspian Sea. Although the fortress was demolished in 1605, in the middle of the 17th century it was erected again. On March 31, 1651, the Russian tsar ordered the governor of Astrakhan Mikhail Pronskii to restore the fortress in order to

²⁵ For Cossacks in the Caucasus and Caspian area, see: *Kozlov S. A. Kavkaz i sudba kazachestva (XVI–XVIII vv.)*. St. Petersburg, 1996; *Shorokhov V. A. “...I oni dobra nikakova ne delaiut krome durna”: “Vorovskie” kazaki v russko-sefevidskikh otnosheniakh 1620–1630-h godov // Novoe proshloe. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–41.*

²⁶ *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 58; Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P. 24–25.*

²⁷ *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 58; Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P. 25.*

²⁸ *Mīrzā Muḥammad Tāhir Vahīd Qazvīnī. Tārīkh-i jahān-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī. P. 537.*

²⁹ *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 58; Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P. 25.*

³⁰ *Matthee R. Facing a Rude and Barbarous Neighbor: Iranian Perceptions of Russia and the Russians from the Safavids to the Qajars // Iran Facing Others. Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective. New York, 2012. P. 102.*

³¹ *Magomedova T. S. Pervye russkie kreposti v mezhdureche Tereka i Sunzhi v XVI–XVII vv. // Vestnik Akademii nauk Chechenskoi Respubliki. 2010. No. 2 (13). P. 111; Vinogradov V. B., Magomedova T. S. Gde stoyal Sunzhenskie gorodki // Voprosy istorii. 1972. No. 7. P. 206.*

“protect from the arrival of military people [i. e. mountain people from the Caucasus]”³². Cossacks from the town of Terek were entrusted with the defense of this fortress³³. The defense system included ditches around the fort, a tower and a wooden wall. The fortress was also supposed to protect merchants as well as the trade route passing through the land. Naturally, the main motive for the construction of the fortress was to pursue an important strategic goal — to strengthen the Russian positions in this region³⁴.

According to some historians, the construction of the fortress at Sunzha became the immediate cause of the conflict³⁵. Undoubtedly, Khosrow Khān as well as other local rulers of Dagestan were bothered by the construction of a new garrison. The letter of Khosrow Khān addressed to the governors of Terek confirms this claim as Khan expressed disagreement with the construction of the fortress of Sunzha³⁶. However, neither the attacks on Safavid merchants nor the construction of the fort was the immediate cause of the attack on Sunzha. Khosrow Khān and the other local rulers, in a joint letter from 1653 addressed to the governors of Astrakhan, detailed the reasons for their attack on the fortress. According to the letter, after the construction of the fort, on the orders of the Circassian Prince Mutsal, the Baraguns (“Baraguntsy”)³⁷ settled in its vicinity, blocking the passage for merchants and all who wished to pass through. Khosrow Khān two or three times sent messengers to the governors demanding that the road be free and the towns (i. e., forts) be demolished, but they did not respond to Khan. Eventually, Khan ordered Shevkal to attack the fortress and punish the Baraguns. He also sent troops to help Shevkal³⁸. The same reason for the attack on the fortress was given by Shevkal in his letter to the governors of Astrakhan³⁹.

Prior to this, in 1651, Safavid Shah sent an order to Khosrow Khān to lead the military campaign against the fortress of Sunzha. However, the tasks of the campaign were much broader than punishing the guilty Baraguns and destroying the fortress. As Khosrow Khān expressed in the abovementioned letter to the governors of Astrakhan, he received an order from Shāh ‘Abbās to prepare for a campaign against the Sunzha, to destroy it, and then to go to Astrakhan and Terek⁴⁰. There is, however, another source on the subject. Referring to the manuscript of *Zubdat al-tavārikh* by Molla Kamal, the Azerbaijani historian A. A. Rakhmani claimed that Khosrow Khān asked Shāh ‘Abbās II for permission to attack the city of Terek. The shah denied this for fears of deteriorating relations with the

³² The Response of governors of Terek Mikhail Shchetin and Ivan Aliaiev to governor of Astrakhan Mikhail Pronskii // *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissiei*. P. 157.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Magomedova T. S. Pervye russkie kreposti v mezhdureche Tereka i Sunzhi v XVI–XVII vv.* P. 111. *Vinogradov V. B., Magomedova T. S. Gde stoyal Sunzhenskiy gorodki.* P. 206.

³⁵ *Akhmedov Ia. Z. Ocherki politicheskoi istorii narodov Severnogo Kavkaza v XVI–XVII vv.* P. 111, 115; *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke.* P. 59.

³⁶ *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke.* P. 59.

³⁷ Baragun-Kumyk principality with the center in the village of Braguny located near the confluence of the Terek and Sunzha rivers.

³⁸ *Russko-dagestanskii otnosheniia XVII — pervoi chetverti XVIII v. Dokumenty i materialy.* Makhachkala, 1958. P. 189.

³⁹ *Ibid.* P. 190–191.

⁴⁰ *Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653.* P. 16; *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke.* P. 58; *Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletii.* P. 25.

Russian tsar⁴¹. Given these contradictions, it is not clear whether Khosrow Khān acted on his own volition or at the behest of the shah. Although several documents confirm the latter claim, in G. Saidova's opinion, he was playing a tactical game⁴². There is no doubt that the shah knew about these cases and discussed them with the Khan and other local rulers in the Caucasus. Anyway, there were several reasons for the military conflict, and the Khosrow Khān decided to act on the matter.

Khosrow Khān and the Military Expeditions to the Fortress of Sunzha

In contrast to the Persian sources, Russian documents mention not one, but two expeditions to the fortress of Sunzha. Drawing on them, it is possible to provide a brief overview of both military actions. Although the Safavid Shah entrusted Khosrow Khān with the leadership of the military march, in the end, he did not take part in the military expedition himself. Instead, he delegated the leadership to Surkhay Shevkal. At this point, it is necessary to point out that Khosrow Khān was not the only contributor to the escalation of the Russian-Safavid tensions in the Caucasus area. Apparently, several Caucasus rulers sought to balance between the Russian Tsardom and Safavid Persia. In 1651, Nogay's Mirza Cheban refused to submit to the Russians and took refuge with Surkhay Shevkal, who also did not accept the tsar's sovereignty⁴³. The ruler of Enderey, Kazan Alp, and Kaitag Utsmi, Amir Khan Sultan (in Persian sources 'Abbās Qulī Khān Usmī), also joined their side. In November 1651, they all marched to the fortress of Sunzha⁴⁴. Khosrow Khān sent the military aid of five hundred soldiers from Shamākhī, three hundred soldiers from Darband, and two cannons to strengthen the army⁴⁵. Some Chechen divisions also joined this military expedition. The total number of the Persian army amounted to twelve thousand soldiers⁴⁶. However, the Russians learned of this military march and prepared sufficiently for defence which was led by Prince Mutsal and supported by Kabardians, Baragunians, and Terek Cossacks. Subsequently, they defended the fortress from the attack of Surkhay's army, which was forced to withdraw. The first attempt to conquer and destroy the fortress failed⁴⁷.

In late 1651 and early 1652, the correspondence between Khosrow Khān and the governors of Astrakhan and Terek intensified again. The final reason for the further attack was the above-mentioned fact that the garrison of the Sunzha fortress and the Baraguns

⁴¹ *Rakhmani A. A. Azerbaidzhan v kontse XVI i v XVII veke (1590–1700 gody)*. Baku, 1981. P. 104. — However, A. A. Rakhmani gave an incomplete reference to Zubdat al-tavārikh by Molla Kamal. According to him, this document is stored in Tashkent. *Rakhmani A. A. Azerbaidzhan v kontse XVI i v XVII veke (1590–1700 gody)*. P. 225. Footnote 71.

⁴² *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke*. P. 64.

⁴³ *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissiei*. Vol. 4. P. 164.

⁴⁴ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v XVI–XVIII vv. Dokumenty i materialy v 2 tomakh*. T. 1. Moscow, 1957. P. 304; *Russko-dagestanskii otnosheniia XVII — pervoi chetverti XVIII v.* P. 181, 185.

⁴⁵ *Parsamyān V. A. Armiano-russkie otnosheniia v XVII veke: v 2 t.* T. 1. Yerevan, 1953. P. 20; *Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia*. P. 25.

⁴⁶ *Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653*. P. 17.

⁴⁷ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v XVI–XVIII vv.* P. 304–306. *Russko-dagestanskii otnosheniia XVII — pervoi chetverti XVIII v.* P. 181–184, 185–188. — For thorough analysis from a military point of view, see: *Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653*. P. 16–19.

in its vicinity were blocking the passage⁴⁸. According to Ia. Akhmedov, during the year 1652 the attack on Sunzha was delayed because Safavid Shah ordered the military forces to be concentrated on the war against the Mughals⁴⁹. Therefore, at the turn of 1652 and 1653, Khosrow Khān again ordered Surkhay to prepare for a second attack on Sunzha. Soon Surkhay assembled an army of twenty thousand soldiers composed of the Kumyks, Qizilbashes, Nogays, Tatars, and other Caucasus tribes, and on March 7, 1653, they attacked the fortress⁵⁰. As in the previous expedition, Khosrow Khān did not take part in this military action but remained in Darband, where he gathered additional military forces in order to attack Terek and Astrakhan. However, the governor of Astrakhan Ivan Petrovich Pronskii still considered him the main coordinator. For that reason, he sent to him a messenger, Mikofor Prokofiev, with a letter. When Prokofiev was passing through Dagestan, Skurhay detained him and took the letter. He then told the messenger that he would arrange for the delivery of the letter to Khosrow Khān. Surkhay, however, did not do so and attacked the fortress of Sunzha with his army⁵¹. As for the letter to Khosrow Khān, the content is unknown. Since Surkhay was holding the messenger in captivity, it is possible to assume that the governor of Astrakhan intended to dissuade the Khan from attacking the Sunzha fortress. This claim is also supported by the fact that, due to logistical difficulties, the governor of Astrakhan was not able to send military assistance to the fort's garrison⁵². The defenders of the fortress resisted for several days, but then some North Caucasians, in light of the military superiority of the attackers, defected to the enemy side. Consequently, the rest of the garrison was no longer able to effectively defend the fortress. They made a deal with Surkhay, abandoned the fort and left it at the mercy of the enemy. After that, Surkhay with his army devastated the surroundings of the fortress and returned to Tarki on April 1, 1653. Afterwards, Shevkal sent a letter to Khosrow Khān and the other khans in Darband and asked them to come to him with their troops⁵³. Khosrow Khān, however, ordered Surkhay to come to Darband⁵⁴. Khosrow Khān's military intentions were also proved by the words of a servant from Tarki, called Utemyshko Arakhcheev, who confirmed that "he heard from Kumyks that he [Khosrow Khān] and eight khans came to Darband with Qizilbash people" in order to march towards Terek⁵⁵. This fact is confirmed by other sources, although they give different numbers of khans and troops gathered in Darband⁵⁶.

⁴⁸ Akhmedov Ia. Z. Ocherki politicheskoi istorii narodov Severnogo Kavkaza v XVI–XVII vv. P. 121.

⁴⁹ Ibid. P. 122. — During the 1652, the Mughals began to prepare for a second attempt to retake the city of Kandahār. However, it was unsuccessful. See: Gupta R. K., Bakshi S. R. Studies in Indian History: Rajasthan Through the Ages: in 5 vols. Vol. 4. New Delhi, 2008. P. 33–34.

⁵⁰ Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v XVI–XVIII vv. P. 313–314. — For thorough analysis of the second military expedition to Sunzha, see: Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653. P. 19–24.

⁵¹ Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v XVI–XVIII vv. P. 313–314.

⁵² Ibid. P. 313–315.

⁵³ Ibid. P. 315–316.

⁵⁴ Ibid. P. 316.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ G. Saidova gave data from several sources. For instance, some tezik Miniatka claimed that Qizilbashes with "Kenzhinskii" khan and other three sultans from Shah's cities came to Darband. Another source mentioned as many as ten sultans from different cities who arrived in Darband to help Khosrow Khān. See more: Seidova G. Azerbaïdzhan vo vzaimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 63–64.

Arsenii Sukhanov in Shamākhi

Khosrow Khān's attitudes and intentions can be also deduced from the words of the Russian cleric and diplomat Arsenii Sukhanov (1600–1658), who was returning from a journey to Jerusalem and Constantinople. In the middle of October 1652, Sukhanov came to Shamākhi and held talks with Khosrow Khān⁵⁷, who asked him to take the letter addressed to Shevkal in Tarki. Khosrow Khān also explained to him the reasons for the conflict. According to him, Prince Mutsal had built a fort on the Terek River in order to oppress the Circassians, and then his people attacked the shah's caravan and stole the goods. Because of this, Khosrow Khān sent messengers to Astrakhan, but they were detained and his "muzhik" (i. e., servant) was killed. Khosrow Khān also complained that the Russian governors were meddling in the affairs of Shevkal. They had tried to win him over to their side even though he was a subject of the shah. Therefore, the shah gave the order to Khosrow Khān to attack Terek and Astrakhan as well as to capture the Russian merchants and confiscate their goods in Shamākhi⁵⁸. This was confirmed by other sources. For instance, in 1654, a merchant from Gilān called Mamed Pirozhin reported that in the winter of 1651, Khosrow Khān had detained Russian merchants in Shamākhi on the order of the shah. They could not be released until the Russian tsar sent his envoys to Iran⁵⁹. Although Khosrow Khān intended to eventually release the Russian merchants to Astrakhan, the shah forbade him to do so. They had to wait until the shah gave the order to release them⁶⁰. Khosrow Khān subsequently asked Sukhanov to report it to the Russian tsar (who was apparently unaware of these events) and to send a messenger to the shah in order to settle the issue. He warned that if the tsar did not send an envoy to Persia, Khosrow Khān, together with Shevkal and other khans, would attack Terek. Sukhanov promised to inform the tsar about everything⁶¹.

Fedor Borisov in Darband

In 1653, Russian messenger Fedor Borisov was dispatched from Terek to Khosrow Khān in Darband. He was to inform Khosrow Khān that the Russian tsar intended to send envoys to Shāh 'Abbās II. In his report, Borisov also confirmed that Khosrow Khān was in town with several khans from Barda, Gandja, Yerevan, Rukhsetts, Ardabīl, and Tabrīz, and ten other sultans from various cities. Khosrow Khān explained to Borisov the cause of the attack on the Sunzha fortress. According to his words, the Russians had built this fortress without the shah's knowledge. Moreover, the Terek Cossacks and the so-called "Baragun people", living near the Sunzha, raided trade caravans and detained Persian merchants. Therefore, the Safavid Shah ordered Khosrow Khān and other khans to attack the fortress and punish the Baraguns. However, he also said to Borisov that if the Russian tsar sent an

⁵⁷ *Proskinitarii*. Khozhdenie stroitelia startsa Arseniia Sukhanova v 7157 (1649) godu do Ierusalim i v prochiia sviatya mesta, dlia opisaniia sviatykh mest i grecheckikh tserkovnykh chinov. Kazan, 1870. P. 116. — "Chelobytnaia" of Arsenii Sukhanov to the Russian tsar gives a different date of Sukhanov's arrival in Shamākhi (July 22, 1652). See: *Akty istoricheskie, cobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissiei*. Vol. 4. 1645–1676. St. Petersburg, 1842. P. 180–181.

⁵⁸ *Proskinitarii*. Khozhdenie stroitelia startsa Arseniia Sukhanova... P. 117.

⁵⁹ *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissiei*. Vol. 4. P. 205.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* P. 187.

⁶¹ *Proskinitarii*. Khozhdenie stroitelia startsa Arseniia Sukhanova... P. 117–119.

envoy to the shah, they would not attack Terek. Subsequently, he sent word to the shah about the arrival of the Russian messenger. When he released Borisov, he warned him that the tsar should soon send envoys to the shah in order to resolve the situation⁶². Khosrow Khān, in turn, sent his messenger Muḥammad ‘Alī (Mammad Ali) to the governors of Terek asking them to send Russian envoys to the shah as soon as possible to negotiate a solution to the conflict. Khosrow Khān also informed the governors that he intended to remain in Darband until the Russian envoys arrived⁶³. He even wanted to send his envoy to the tsar to resolve the dispute. That seemed to be true as at the end of May 1653, there was a report that Khosrow Khān, Shevkal, and other Kumyk khans had sent envoys to Moscow with a view to settling the conflict⁶⁴.

Klement Ievlev in Shamākhi

When the Russian tsar learned of the events, he had no intention to start a full-scale military conflict with Persia. For this reason, in late May 1653, he promptly dispatched messenger Klement Ievlev to Shāh ‘Abbās II. He was to inform him that an official Russian envoy Ivan Lobanov-Rostovskii would come to Persia to avert the escalation of the conflict at the borders⁶⁵. He was also instructed to secretly reconnoitre the situation in the Safavid state in order to find out if the negotiations would lead to a peace agreement.⁶⁶ The governor of Astrakhan I. P. Pronsii sent a messenger to Khosrow Khān asking him to allow Ievlev and his entourage free and safe passage from Astrakhan via Terek to Shamākhi. During the journey, Ievlev learned that Khosrow Khān and Shevkal had disbanded the army and left Darband. Shīrvānian Khan even sent a message to the governor of Astrakhan that the Russian envoys should travel overland “without delay” to Persia, and did not recommend travelling by sea because it was dangerous. He also promised to provide them with supplies and protection⁶⁷. Along with Ievlev, Shīrvānian messenger Muḥammad ‘Alī, as well as Fedor Borisov also went to Shamākhi⁶⁸. The governors of Terek sent Borisov with a letter to Khosrow Khān, accusing him and Shevkal of lying, attacking the Sunzha fortress, and capturing the merchants. Zevakin claims that Khosrow Khān did not respond to this accusation⁶⁹. However, a different document states that Borisov brought a letter from Khosrow Khān to Terek, which was to be translated and sent to Astrakhan⁷⁰. As for Ievlev, he came together with Borisov to Shamākhi in July 1653. Here, they learned from Shamakhian and Russian merchants that Safavid Shah was going with his army to Kandahār to defend it from an attack by the Mughal ruler. The khan of Tabrīz was also summoned to the battle. Originally, he was to take part in the expedition to Terek and

⁶² *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 64; Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletii. P. 26–27.*

⁶³ *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissieiu. Vol. 4. P. 186; Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 64.*

⁶⁴ *Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletii. P. 27.*

⁶⁵ *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissieiu. Vol. 4. P. 184.*

⁶⁶ *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 64–65.*

⁶⁷ *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissieiu. Vol. 4. P. 184–185.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid. P. 185, 187.*

⁶⁹ *Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletii. P. 26–27.*

⁷⁰ *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissieiu. Vol. 4. P. 187.*

Astrakhan together with the Khosrow Khān⁷¹. Arsenii Sukhanov even wrote that the shah had also summoned the servants of the Shīrvānian khan, but the latter refused, saying that he needed his men to defend his land against a possible attack by the Russians⁷². I. Babulin argues that the need for military support at Kandahār was the reason for the cancellation of the military expedition against Terek and Astrakhan⁷³. However, Khosrow Khān wrote in his letter to the governors that the reason for the cancellation of the attack on Terek was the information (conveyed by the messenger Borisov) that the Russian tsar had sent a messenger to the shah to resolve the conflict⁷⁴. The coincidence of these events seems to have led the khan to stop the attack. Ievlev remained in Shamākhī until the Russian envoy Ivan Lobanov-Rostovskii arrived in the Persian territory. Then Ievlev returned to Terek. Along with him, Russian merchants were also released from Shamākhī⁷⁵.

Death of Khosrow Khān and the mission of Russian envoy Lobanov-Rostovskii

Soon an official tsar's envoy Ivan Lobanov-Rostovskii was sent from Moscow to Persia. He arrived in Astrakhan as early as June 1653⁷⁶. In August he left Astrakhan and sailed across the Caspian Sea to the shores of Persia. He then proceeded overland to the city of Farabat, where he met Shāh 'Abbās II in April of the following year⁷⁷. In the meantime, news spread that Khosrow Khān had died in the winter of 1553/1554 in Shamākhī. The shah appointed a "Georgian khan" who had fought at Kandahār to the position of Shīrvānian beylerbey⁷⁸. The Russian document does not include the name of this "Georgian khan", but other sources state that Safavid ghulām Najafqolī Cherkes (Circassian) was appointed to this position⁷⁹. The death of Khosrow Khān changed the situation. It seems that the Russian merchants were released just after his death. Moreover, as the main initiator of the military marches on the Russian fortress in Sunzha dropped out of the diplomatic game, the shah's government reversed its stance on the conflict.

When the Russian envoy, Lobanov-Rostovskii, was granted an audience, he called for all the damage caused by the invaders to be paid for and demanded that the shah take responsibility for the destruction of the Sunzha fortress and punish the guilty parties. The Russian envoy, however, did not blame the shah himself. He identified Khosrow Khān and other perpetrators as the main culprits causing great damage to the Russians. Lobanov-Rostovskii also had other demands. He asked for the release of the detained Russian merchants (as well as other subjects) from Iran and for compensation for all losses. He also insisted that Khosrow Khān should not meddle in Dagestani affairs since Surkhay Shevkal and all Kumyks were subjects of the Russian tsar. In the envoy's words, the Sunzha

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Proskinitarii*. Khozhdenie stroitelia startsa Arseniia Sukhanova... P. 119.

⁷³ *Babulin I.* Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653. P. 26. — The Mughals attempted again to capture city of Kandahār in the spring of 1653. See: *Gupta R. K., Bakshi S. R.* Studies in Indian History: Rajasthan Through the Ages. Vol. 4. P. 34–36.

⁷⁴ Russko-dagestanskii otnosheniia XVII — pervoi chetverti XVIII v. P. 189.

⁷⁵ Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoi komissiei. Vol. 4. P. 205.

⁷⁶ Ibid. P. 185–186.

⁷⁷ Ibid. P. 206.

⁷⁸ Ibid. P. 207.

⁷⁹ *Floor W.* Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran. P. 172, 287.

fortress had been built on the Russian territory, which did not violate the agreement between the tsar and the shah. The Safavid party, however, disagreed. According to them, the Safavid Shah allowed the construction of only one fortress but the Russians built several towns instead. Nevertheless, the conflict did not start over the Sunzha fortress, but over the attack on Dagestani and Shīrvānian merchants. Therefore, Khosrow Khān gave the order to attack and destroy the fortress where the culprits were hiding. The shah claimed that Khosrow Khān had done this without his knowledge and consent⁸⁰. As mentioned above, however, most of the documents testify to the contrary. Since Khosrow Khān was already dead at that time, probably the shah decided to put the entire blame on him. Moreover, the shah did not wish to complicate the situation because this would significantly damage trade relations with Russia⁸¹. Regarding attacks on Safavid merchants, the Russian envoy still protested that it was the Don Cossacks who were responsible for the attacks on the khan's merchants, not the Cossacks of Terek and Astrakhan. Moreover, he still maintained that the traders were crossing without permission⁸². Regardless of the cause of the attack on the fortress, a comparison of the above statements shows that both sides claimed control of Dagestan. In historiography, there are several opinions about the results of this mission in Iran. While several authors point out the mission's failure, Babulin argues that the mission helped to stop the conflict and Lobanov-Rostovskii left Persia in October 1554⁸³. In fact, neither side achieved its aims. On the one hand, the shah ordered the release of all detained Russian merchants in Persian cities, but without compensation for stolen merchandise⁸⁴. On the other hand, the Russian tsar could not prevent the Cossacks from attacking Persian (as well as Russian) merchants in the Caspian area.

The Russian-Persian conflict and Khosrow Khān were addressed later in two further missions. The Safavid envoy Dakul Sultan, who came to Moscow in 1658, claimed that the main reason for the instigation of the conflict was not the construction of the fortress but the Baraguns, who had settled in the fort and attacked and robbed the Persian trade caravan. According to his words, Khosrow Khān decided to attack the fortress and punish the culprits without the shah's permission⁸⁵. Since Khosrow Khān died, Shāh 'Abbās II again absolved himself of responsibility and blamed Khosrow Khān for attacking the Sunzha fortress. The Russian-Persian dispute over destroying the Sunzha fortress and compensation of Russian merchants had lasted until 1662 when the Russian envoy F. I. Miloslavskii arrived in Persia⁸⁶. In fact, none of the disputing parties had taken any action. The Russian side in vain demanded compensation for the damage caused to the merchant, and the Persian shah still stood his ground.

⁸⁰ Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P. 27–28.

⁸¹ Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 65; Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennii konflikt 1651–1653. P. 30.

⁸² Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P. 28.

⁸³ Ibid. P. 29; Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 65; Matthee R. Rudeness and Revilement: Russian-Iranian Relations in the Mid-Seventeenth Century. P. 345; Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennii konflikt 1651–1653. P. 27.

⁸⁴ Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletia. P. 29.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. P. 29–30.

Conclusion

It must be said that the international political situation at the time also helped to stop the Russian-Persian conflict. When the Mughal army laid siege to the city of Kandahār at the Safavid eastern borders, the shah had to provide his troops to defend the city, and thus, could not fight on two fronts. Russia was also preparing for the war with Poland (1654–1667) and could not bring itself to send troops to the Caucasus⁸⁷. In conclusion, neither the Safavid Shah nor the Russian tsar intended to continue the conflict and thus disrupt mutually beneficial trade contacts. Within this context, Khosrow Khān himself was also not interested in spoiling relations with Russia for the sake of trade. Yet, even during the conflict, he was still sending envoys and merchants to Astrakhan and Moscow in order to negotiate and conduct a profitable trade in the Russian market.

Regarding the Georgian ruler Teimuraz, several Russian sources also confirmed that his grandson went to the tsar asking for help⁸⁸. Shah ‘Abbās knew about it, which caused his concern⁸⁹. This was evident during Lobanov-Rostovskii’s visit at the Safavid court in 1653–1654. He asked the shah to return the rule over Kakheti to Teimuraz. The shah did not comply with this request. On the contrary, he demanded that Teimuraz’s grandson be handed over to him⁹⁰. The issue of Russian-Georgian rapprochement thus also contributed to some extent to the rise in tensions between Russia and Iran, although it was not the primary cause of the armed conflict. The argument is refuted by the fact that Georgian prince left for Moscow in 1652, i. e., before Khosrow Khān’s army attacked the Sunzha fortress for the second time. Thus, this mission could not have been the reason for the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Persia.

The whole situation seemed to have already been resolved in 1653/1654 by the death of Khosrow Khān and the release of the Russian merchants. Although it is not clear from the documents which factor was more decisive in the outbreak of the armed attack on Sunzha, it can be confirmed that Khosrow Khān played a primary role in the Russian-Persian conflict. Khosrow Khān repeatedly sent letters to the governors of Astrakhan and Terek and asked them to punish the Cossacks attacking Safavid merchants. Undoubtedly, the inaction of the governors contributed to Khosrow Khān’s decision to attack the fortress of Sunzha. As noted above, however, this was not the only reason. The construction of fortresses in the area of the Terek and Sunzha rivers resulted in resentment not only in the shah but also in Khosrow Khān. Along with this, the settlement of the Baraguns in the vicinity of the fort of Sunzha and their blocking of the trade route and attacking caravans became the final breaking point for the attack on the fortress. According to I. Babulin and E. Zevakin, the Russian government saw Khosrow Khān as the main initiator and organizer of the conflict⁹¹, although it is not certain whether he acted independently or

⁸⁷ Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653. P. 26.

⁸⁸ Document no. 4. Peregovory v Posolskom prikaze s persidskim poslom po voprosom Gruzii i Kavkaza // Parsamyan V. A. Armiano-russkie otnosheniia v XVII veke. T. 1. P. 10–21.

⁸⁹ Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaiimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke. P. 65.

⁹⁰ Ibid. P. 66.

⁹¹ Babulin I. Russko-iranskii voennyi konflikt 1651–1653. P. 7. — Apart from Khosrow Khān, Surkhay Shevkal and other local rulers played a role in this conflict. According to E. Zevakin, all of them had a significant political influence on the maintaining of trade contacts between Russia and Iran. See: Zevakin E. Konflikt Rossii s Persiei v seredine XVII stoletii. P. 28–30.

at the behest of the shah. However, Russian and Persian sources agree in most cases that the shah not only knew but even ordered Khosrow Khān and other local rulers to attack the fortress. The disputation did not occur until after 1553 when the shah repeatedly laid the blame on the dead Khosrow Khān. In any case, although the conflict had a diplomatic aftermath in the following years, it ended after Khosrow Khān's death. Considering mentioned arguments, he played a significant role in both the instigation and the end of the conflict, as a vital part of the complex Russian-Persian relations in the mid-17th century, among other factors.

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