

“The War of Conferences” in Russia and Turkey: The Circassian Dimension

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Abstract

The term “war of conferences” was offered by Abraham Shmulevich to describe research events activity on the edge of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. Using this term as basic, we focused on the research events activity on the Circassian problematics in Russia and Turkey in 2010-2014. The study includes 26 Russian and 37 Turkish activities. We have analyzed their geographical and time-frequency localization, format, scope, participants and organizers, informative content. Research results demonstrated fundamental differences, caused by the format, composition of participants and organizers, as well as historiographical traditions of Russia and Turkey. Taken as a whole it provoked polarity of opinions and views. Terminological and historiographical gap is grounded not only on local traditions, but also on the tasks that the expert communities are facing.

Keywords: Caucasus, Turkey, Russia, War of Conferences, Circassian History, Circassian Question

1. Introduction

The term “war of conferences” first appeared in the article “War of conferences around the Caucasus, and again the Jews are to blame ...” (Shmulevich, 2010) of a known politologist, rabbi, founder of Hyper-Zionism Ideology and the president of the “Institute of Eastern Partnership” (Israel) Abraham Shmulevich. In this way the author of scandalous feature articles on the Caucasus and Circassians described the research events activity on the edge of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. The term has gained popularity among researchers, but without mentioning the original source. For example, Sufian Zhemukhov disguised Shmulevich, calling him “one observer” (Zhemukhov, 2010), and Lars Funch Hansen used the expression “the so-called 'war of conferences'” (Hansen, 2012).

The starting point of the “war of conferences” is a politicized event “Hidden Nations, Enduring Crimes: The Circassians & the Peoples of the North Caucasus Between Past and Future”, organized in March 2010 in Georgia by the Jamestown Foundation and the Ilia State University's International School for Caucasus Studies. On the conference a request to the Georgian President and the Parliament on the recognition of the Circassian genocide had been prepared, and a year later the Parliament of Georgia adopted a respective resolution. As noted by Tiago Ferreira Lopes, from this moment “The word Circassia is back to the minds and concerns of the Kremlin politicians, and for a moment was even able to shape Georgian domestic and regional policies” (Lopes, 2013).

Georgia became the first and only country that has officially recognized the Circassian genocide. This step of the Georgian authorities demonstrated their attitude to the Circassian question – the complex of demands made by the Circassian activists, including the following main points:

- recognition of the Caucasian war events and resettlement of the Circassians to the Ottoman Empire as genocide and deportation;
- repatriation of Circassians to their homeland;
- reconstruction of the Circassia on the territory of Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Krasnodar and Stavropol regions.

Herewith, the radical part (“nationalists” according to the classification of Zhemukhov (Zhemukhov, 2012)) requires full and unconditional independence of Circassia, moderate (“sovereignists” and “centrists” (Ibid)) – the sovereign status within the Russian Federation. As the Turkish representative of the “Patriots of Circassia”

Bülent Birs points out, “public recognition of expulsion and genocide, repatriation and nation-building are the three inseparable and mutually reinforcing responsibilities of the Circassian (Adyghe) people. Failure of any of them is the failure of others” (Birs, 2013).

Although such conferences were held in the past too (Note 1), only the Georgian initiative was perceived in Russia as the opening of the “Circassian front” (Dvali, 2010). After the Georgian conference a number of similar events took place. The participants and organizers also called for the recognition of the Circassian genocide and a boycott of the Sochi Olympics. The roundtable “Circassian Issue'. Who Benefits from Falsifying the History of the Caucasian War?” was held by RIA Novosti news agency in May, 2010 as a Russian response. This roundtable was followed by other activities that can also be regarded in the context of the “war of conferences”.

2. Materials and Methods

A number of researchers preceded by Abraham Shmulevich have focused on the political aspect of this confrontation. The form and content of the ongoing showdown of various historical schools and approaches proved to be out of investigation. Taking this in consideration, we undertook a comparative study of research events activity on the Circassian problematics in two countries – Russia and Turkey. The Russian Federation comprises territory of Circassia, and the world's largest Circassian diaspora resides in Turkey. These geographical frames also reflect the division on Homeland and Diaspora accepted among Circassians themselves.

The chronological framework embraces the period 2010-2014. In accordance with the thesis of Abraham Shmulevich, taken as a basic one, congresses, conferences, roundtables, seminars and other research event activities on Circassian problematics were subjected to the analysis. The study includes 26 Russian and 37 Turkish activities. We have analyzed their geographical and time-frequency localization, format, scope, participants and organizers, informative content. Carrying out our research we used the open sources in Russian, Turkish and English languages: published programs, final statements, resolutions, charters, books of reports, speech copies, participants' statements and videos, as well as media coverage and personal outlook of the author as the participant observer.

3. Results

The first event was held in May, 2010, the latest at the moment of completion of the study – in May, 2014 (Figure 1). Throughout this period the positive dynamics of activity remained, and as the Sochi Olympics and the 150th anniversary of the end of the Caucasian War approached, the interest to the marked problematics was constantly increasing. Although it is still too early to sum up the results of 2014, however according to the half-year period data it is already possible to predict the peak values of activity in Russia and Turkey.

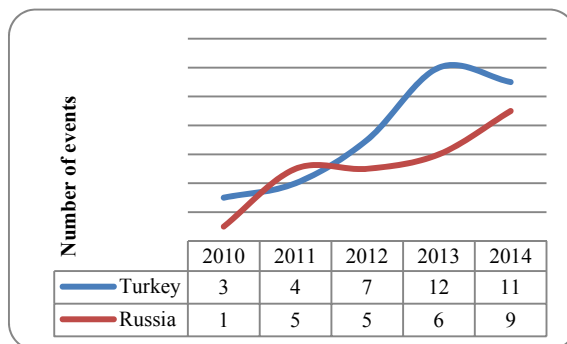


Figure 1. Research events activity

Geography of the research events activity (Figure 2) also allows to draw several conclusions. First of all, it is obvious that the Circassian subject in Russia didn't widespread and remained localized within the southern region and Moscow. This makes clear a considerable amount of research activities in Rostov-on-Don, city, traditionally playing the role of the gate of the North Caucasus, as well as their total absence in such a significant research center as St. Petersburg.

The situation in Turkey is quite different. The foremost in research events activity is Istanbul, followed with a considerable breakaway by the country's capital, Ankara. Sporadic events are held in various cities of Turkey. This situation may indicate the importance of the Circassian problematics across the country, as well as the impact of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey's largest cities.

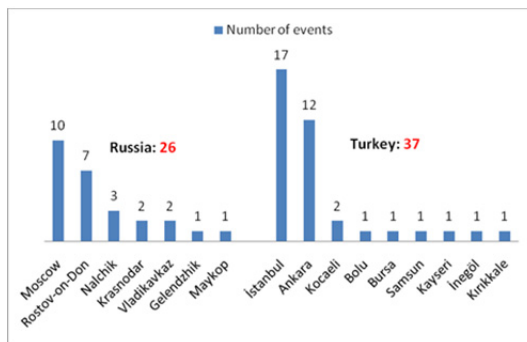


Figure 2. The number of events

With significant disparity in number of activities in favor of Turkey, still Russia possesses the first place in number of speeches and outstrips Turkey in this aspect two times as many (Figure 3). Such a result is connected with the activities' scale that is especially noticeable in the cities with single events. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that due to the absence of relevant statistics it is problematic to estimate the attendance of an event. Report of one person could attract a large audience, and on the contrary, the event with a lot of contributors could comprise only the speakers. As a rule, the Turkish events belonged to the first type, and Russian – to the second.

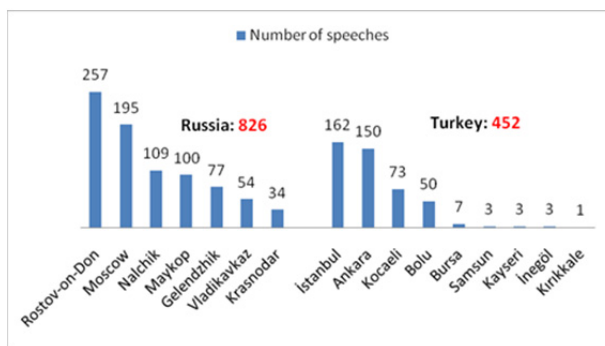


Figure 3. The number of speeches

The number of speeches clearly shows the differences in the format of research events in Russia and Turkey. Large international conferences, forums and roundtables with a great number of speakers were typical for Russia (Figure 4). Seminars with one or two speakers and roundtables with two or three participants took place only in Moscow. However, thanks to the well-known organizers and extensive media coverage these events have had a great public response. The Moscow three roundtables deserve special mention: two of them have been in the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, the third one – in the online mode of the information resource “Kavkazskiy Uzel”. In addition, a number of the research and practice conferences with the elaboration of recommendations for the government can be considered a noticeable peculiarity.

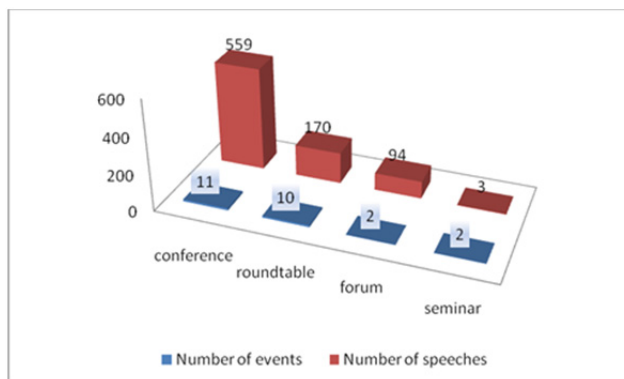


Figure 4. The format of events in Russia

Quite a different picture is observed in Turkey (Figure 5). First of all, notwithstanding a great amount of conferences, only three of them can be called multiple (35, 17 and 16 persons). All the other numbered several participants, and in four cases the conference was a lecture of a single speaker. Half of research meetings on Circassian problematics were presented only by a few speakers. For panel discussions the average number of participants was five. One of the two symposiums was attended only by ten participants at all. All lectures except the Ankara lecture in 2011 were carried out by one speaker.

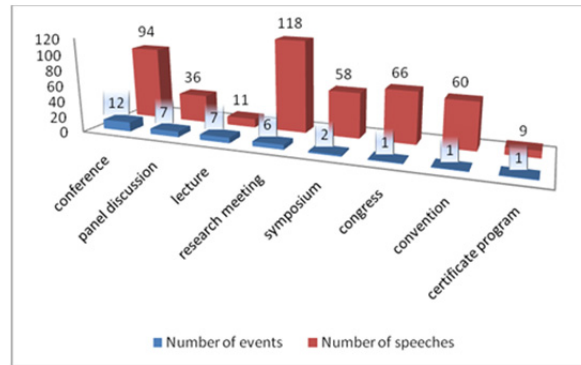


Figure 5. The format of events in Turkey

In this case, the reason for diversity in format of activities was not so much a local tradition as the specifics of the organizers. In general, the weight of higher education institutions and research organizations working on Circassian problematics was significantly lower in Turkey (Figure 6). This niche was occupied by public associations and religious foundations, namely, Circassian or Caucasian cultural associations and Islamic waqfs. Among them the Federation of Caucasian Associations (Kafkas Dernekleri Federasyonu), Circassian Association (Çerkes Derneği), Istanbul Caucasian Cultural Association (İstanbul Kafkas Kültür Derneği) have been particularly active.

In Russia, the Circassian problematics had been mostly developed in Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS) and in the Southern Federal University (SFEDU). The information agency RIA-Novosti monopoly was challenged only by the “Kavkazskiy Uzel” Internet resource. Among the organizers of research events on this topic there was not a single religious foundation.

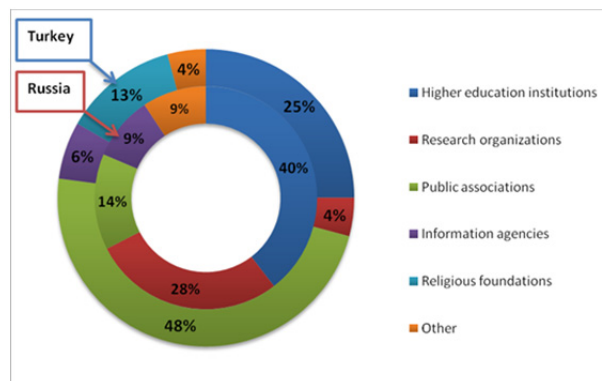


Figure 6. The organizers of the events

The composition of participants of Russian and Turkish events differed a lot. For example, in Russia the absence of Western scholars was typical, but in Turkey they used to play a very prominent role. German scholar İrma Kreiten, known for her commitment to the idea of the Circassian genocide, participated in two panel discussions, conference and certificate program. A report on the panel discussion “Circassian Genocide, the Sochi 2014 and the Growing Circassian Opposition” (“Çerkes Soykırımı, Soçi 2014 ve Yükselen Çerkes Muhalefeti”) was delivered by an American researcher Walter Richmond. Director of the Ethnographic Museum of Hamburg Wulf Köpke participated in two Turkish conferences and British historian Norman Stone presented a report at the symposium. Lectures on the Circassian movement were held by Lars Funch Hansen (Denmark) and John Colarusso (Canada).

Researchers from Russia took part in only two of the thirty-seven events. At the Ankara Symposium in 2011 “Circassians in the 21st Century: Problems and Opportunities” (“21. Yüzyılda Çerkesler: Sorunlar ve Olanaklar”) almost half of the reports was delivered in Russian. In addition, several reports of researchers from Russia were made in English (e.g. Khatko Samir). This symposium was also attended by researchers from Georgia and the Middle East. The second event “Turkish-Russian Relations between Realpolitik and Historical Memory: Partnership and Rivalry in the Caucasus from the XIX Century to the Present Day” (“Reelpolitik ve Tarihi Hafıza Arasında Türk-Rus İlişkileri: 19.yy'dan Günümüze Kafkaslarda İşbirliği ve Rekabet”) was organized in 2013 by the Moscow State University (MSU) together with the University of Economics and Technology (TOBB ETÜ) in Ankara, and there were a great number of Russian researchers.

In other research events certain activists, religious leaders and representatives of the administration of Adyghea and Kabardino-Balkaria took part. The researchers from Abkhazia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Belgium, the USA, Israel, Jordan and Qatar delivered single reports. Russian events attracted participants from USA, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Iran, Ukraine, Abkhazia and Georgia. However, the share of foreign researchers among the speakers was extremely small, and participants from Turkey – a rare exception, that is not a result of privacy of the events. For example, many Turkish researchers of the Circassian problematics were invited to the conference “Metamorphosis vs. Transformation. A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Study of the History of the Circassians in the XIX-XXI Centuries”, held in Rostov-on-Don in 2013, but only one person could come.

The representatives of Adyghe and Abkhaz world were a feature of Russian events. At the same time, the local Circassian researchers and activists played a leading role in Turkey. Russian event speakers often represented academic institutions, universities and government institutions, while Turkish speakers were presented by Circassian associations and Information Resources. In Turkey well-known researchers, writers, journalists and Circassian activists were endowed with the same expert competence. For example, “Radical” newspaper journalist Fehim Taştekin, who in 2013 was deprived from entry to Russia for five years, delivered lectures on Circassian problematics side by side with famous Western researchers. The conference “Multiculturalism, Identity and Circassian Culture in EU-Turkey Relations” (“AB-Türkiye İlişkilerinde Kültürel Çeşitlilik, Kimlik ve Çerkes Kültürü”) attracted to discussion the experts on international relations, engineering and health care.

Such heterogeneity was distinctive feature of some Russian events as well, mostly organized by news agencies. For example, the virtual roundtable “Circassian Question: Prospects after the Winter Olympics” held by “Kavkazskit Uzel” brought together representatives of Circassian organizations, researchers, activists, and they were joined by a lawyer and an engineer. At the RIA Novosti roundtable “The Circassians in Contemporary Russia and Abroad: the Faces of State Policy” Circassian activists, students and post-graduates of Kabardino-Balkarian State University (KBGU) participated in discussion together with the museum's director and the deputy head of the Rossotrudnichestvo (Note 2). The meetings in the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation were also of a mixed character.

Contributions to the discussion on Circassian problematics of caucasiologists, historians, politologists, specialists in Oriental and Islamic studies, ethnologists and sociologists can be considered a feature of Russian events. In a short space of time they have formed a special group of experts. Thus, Professor V. V. Chernous (SFEDU) and A. V. Baranov (Kuban State University, KubSU) participated in 5 of the events; senior research fellows N.A. Neflyasheva (Institute for African Studies, IAS) and N. Y. Silaev (Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MSIIR), Assistant Professors V. A. Matveev and R. F. Pateev (SFEDU) as well as E. A. Popov (RISS) took part in 4 events. In this case, it is impossible to agree with the statement of only Circassian researcher from this list Naima Neflyasheva that conference participants and authors of articles on Circassian problematics lack “knowledge of the historical background, have no competence to work in archives and expert interviews, nor they have 'field', or organized networks at the local level. Unfortunately, anyone but lazy rolled on the Circassian theme” (Shmulevich, 2014).

At the same time, Turkey's main experts were Circassian activists and researchers of Circassian origin, who built their career on the Circassian problematics. This can be explained by the fact that the subject did not attract Turkish historians and “could not find a place in the historical education at university level, or at the level of secondary education” (Hacısalıhoğlu, 2013a).

The board member of the Circassian Association and the Federation of Caucasian Associations Erdoğan Boz took part in 5 events in Turkey, Professor of the Marmara University Ergün Özgür and Japanese researcher Keisuke Wakizaka of Yildiz Technical University – in 4 events. If to sum up the number of participants on Circassian problematic, who delivered from 2 to 5 reports, one will get 37 in Russia and 33 in Turkey. Thus, formed in Russia and Turkey expert communities are comparable in volume.

Analysis of the informative component of the events demonstrated fundamental differences caused by the format, composition of participants and organizers, as well as historiographical traditions of Russia and Turkey. Taken as a whole it provoked polarity of opinions and views, although it should be noted that the representatives of the Adyghe historiographical schools on the one hand, and Turkish historians on the other hand, have broken this black and white picture.

The first major difference is evident in the attitude to the politicization of the Circassian issues. The participants of all Russian events insisted on the depoliticization of Circassian problematics. Their attempts to give to the discussion an academic character were reflected in reports and final conclusions. Participants of the Turkish events, in turn, undertook the opposite task and tried to influence the international agenda. Moreover, at the activities organized by the Federation of Caucasian Associations it was offered to politicize Circassian cultural associations and fill ethnonym “Circassian” with a political content. In such a way it was supposed to escape contradictions, generated in Turkey by historically formed unification of representatives of various Caucasian ethnic groups (from the Circassians to the Chechens) under the common name “Circassian” (Tsibenko, 2014). At the same time, at the research events in Russia only Adyghe were regarded as Circassians.

The polar attitude manifested itself toward the Circassian question. If in Turkey it was presented as a fundamental one, requiring immediate solution by means of the research activity, in Russia, on the contrary, its very existence was placed in question. The term was used either in quotes or preceded by the words “the so-called” to denote biased nature of the subject and its belongings to the sphere of politics. The activities undertaken by “Kavkazskiy Uzel” and the Carnegie Moscow Center can be called exceptions – their content was generally more close to Turkish ones.

Naturally, the approach to the requirements, put forward in the framework of the Circassian question, also varied. At Turkish activities the recognition of the genocide was presented as a guarantee of the reconstruction of Circassia and obstruction to further assimilation. At Russian activities an emphasis was made on the political background of the attempts to recognize the Circassian genocide and on the inapplicability of the term to the historical realities of the XIX century. Events of the Caucasian war were called a tragedy and a voluntary exodus. Participants of Russian events did not see the proper conditions for the mass repatriation of Circassians, considering it unlikely in the foreseeable future. Turkish activities' participants believed repatriation to be the main purpose at the moment, because monoethnicity is needed for the recreation of historical Circassia. The struggle for independence of Circassia was considered as the beginning of liberation of the peoples of the Caucasus, while participants at Russian events perceived it as a separatism.

Significant differences appeared in the description of historical events. At Russian activities the term “Caucasian war” was admitted to be obsolete because of its generalizing nature, though an adequate replacement has not been found. At Turkish activities the designations “Russian-Caucasian” and “Russian-Circassian” were used to nominate the war, as well as an extensive “Caucasian-Russian wars”. Chronology also did not coincide: the lower boundary of dating accepted in Russia (1817) shifted to the 1783, 1763, 1759 and even earlier time at Turkish activities. Discrepancies were found in counting the number of immigrants (from several hundred thousands up to 1 million) and evaluation of the number of the Circassian Diaspora (from several hundred thousands up to 7-8 million). Furthermore, the participants of Turkish activities appealed to the Ottoman archival sources as the final instance, and Russian participants used in the majority of cases only the Russian archives.

In general, the approach of the participants of Turkish events differed by greater emotionality, references to the historical memory and national consciousness. For example, the Olympic Games in Sochi were characterized as a “merrymaking on the bones” of Circassian ancestors. Emotional perception of history carried a unifying function, it contributed to ethnic mobilization and politicization (Hansen, 2013), though the emotional background was successfully combined with pragmatism. The Sochi Olympics were supposed to bring to Circassians, little-known globally, “their fifteen minutes of fame” (Petersson & Vamling, 2013). The Circassian Diaspora treated the opportunities provided by the upcoming sporting event as the very chance for the manifestation of their right for the territory of Circassia to the international community. Admitting that the Circassians were only a bargaining chip in the geopolitical rivalry between the main actors, they were calling to benefit from this situation, defending their interests by means of maneuvering between competing “imperialist powers”.

The major attention was given to the Olympics and the genocide, but such painful for Diaspora questions as assimilation, the loss of national identity and language were also raised. History of the Circassians within Russia considered through the prism of colonial subjugation, oppression and orientalism. This conglomerate of ideas was formed under the influence of western scholars. A prominent role also played soviet stereotypes inherited by

the Turkish researchers of Circassian origin from the very influential in Turkey before the collapse of the Soviet Union left movement, especially popular among the country's ethnic minorities. In addition, the focus on the events of the Caucasian War and the small acquaintance of the Circassian emigrants' descendants with the realities of the North Caucasus as part of Imperial and Soviet Russia led to a disregard of more than a century of Circassian history.

At Russian activities the Circassians were also observed as an object of manipulation for political purposes. A special role in this process was assigned to the Internet, promoting ethnic mobilization and radicalization of young Circassians. To counteract the collapse of the Russian cultural and political space it was offered to debunk historical myths and combat the perversion of history, taking as basic the principle of objectivity. Speakers regularly returned to the historical context of the events of the XIX century, analyzed the historical memory in the political perspective and studied the various interpretations of the past.

History of Adyghes as an integral part of Russian history was discussed in the sense of cultural exchange, social and cultural progress, mutual rapprochement and common development. As the professor of KubSU Temyr Hagurov noted at one of the Russian roundtables: "We through the example of a close to us country – Ukraine – see how the mistakenly understood past can now explode the present. And so it is important for all of us to get away from extremism, stop focusing on the division of peoples using dirty methods. It was a painful, difficult, often tragic, but in many ways the great process of the formation of the Russian state. Where through difficulties, ambiguity and with time, as members of one Russian peoples family entered the peoples of the Caucasus, including the Circassians" (Husht, 2014).

However, as it was already noted, the expert communities were not monolithic in relation to the Circassian problematics. Although researchers of Circassian origin in Turkey had Turkish names, they could be easily distinguished by the themes and content of their reports, as well as by the greater involvement into the Circassian problematics and self-perception as the subject of the current processes. Turkish researchers strove for greater distance and applied the term "migration" instead of "exile" or "expulsion". In accordance with Turkish historiographical tradition the relocation from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire was considered only as one of many migration processes on the imperial territories of XIX-XX centuries. This was clearly demonstrated during the conference "The Caucasian Migration of 1864: War and Exile" ("1864 Kafkas Göçü - Savaş ve Sürgün") in Yıldız Technical University in 2010 in Istanbul. Organizers of the event have not only failed to get any financial support from the Circassian associations and religious foundations because of the title of the event (Hacısalıhoğlu, 2013b), but were attacked by "the daughters and sons of the people, who in 1864 suffered of genocide and deportiert from their motherland" (Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi..., 2010). The latter suggested that the use of the term "migration" could save the perpetrators of genocide from the responsibility. The Circassian activists attended the event and gave the participants a map of historical Circassia, telling about genocide and exile ("146. Yılında 1864 Kafkas...", 2010).

The other Turkish event – "International Conference of the Caucasus" ("Uluslararası Kafkasya Konferansı") – showed another trend, namely the merger of the Circassian problematics with the common Caucasian and Islamic issues. There were calls for holy war against Russia, glorification of Imam Shamil, Sheikh Mansur and Doku Umarov. The events of 1864, 1944 and 1994 (Note 3) were integrated, i.e. the Circassian and Chechen agenda were brought together. Characteristically, the report on the genocide of Circassians was delivered by a researcher from Georgia and one speaker was representing at the same time Kabardians, Balkars and Karachays. Although the conference sparked an official protest of the Russian Foreign Ministry as anti-Russian, two years later, on the 21st of May, the "II. International Conference of the Caucasus" ("II. Uluslararası Kafkasya Konferansı"), dealing with similar themes was arranged and held in Islamic and anti-Russian way. It began with the reading of the Qur'an and a video film about the exile of the people of the Caucasus in 1864.

In Russia the representatives of national historiographical schools frequently advocated ideas close to those that were heard at the Turkish events. Tangible impact of diasporic agenda on the Circassians of Russia was exerted through activities of Circassian organizations (in particular, the International Circassian Association). They were continuously actualizing the issue of repatriation and voicing the requirements of the Circassian genocide recognition.

Nevertheless, one should not exaggerate the degree of similarity. Discursive gap between the Circassian researchers in Russia and Turkey, due to language barrier as well (Bram, 2008), clearly manifested itself at the Ankara symposium "Circassians in the 21st Century: Problems and Opportunities". As envisioned by the organizers of the religious Caucasian Research Culture and Solidarity Foundation (Kafkas Araştırma Kültür ve

Dayanışma Vakfı), the event was intended to bring together the Circassians from different areas of the humanities and to create a single research field.

Most Turkish reports were focused on the tragic past and the present aroused interest only from the point of view of the revival of traditions, strengthening ethnic identity and promotion of the Circassian activism. Russian reports on the modernization of the North Caucasus and innovation in traditional societies were met with incomprehension. In addition, if for the Turkish Circassians it was significant to justify mass migration and the lack of choice in XIX century, then for the Russian Circassians it was important to prove their autochthonous to the Caucasus.

As a result, some reporters were searching for evidence of the genocide and repression, while others were finding the traces of the existence of ethnic Circassians 5 thousand years B.C. and determining the national writing system of the Circassian ancestors on the results of deciphering of the Hittite hieroglyphic tablets. As noted by one of the witnesses of what was happening Sevda Alankuş, “During this three-day symposium in Ankara, we were looking for pieces of the puzzle, which inevitably will never be assembled” (Alankuş, 2012).

4. Discussion

Observed research events activity and the intensity of the debate can be explained by the political environment and by such significant events as the Olympic Games in Sochi and the 150th anniversary of the end of the Caucasian War. All together provoked increased interest to the Northwest Caucasus over this period. Nevertheless, in Russia the Circassian problematics did not become a leading topic and remained localized in the capital and the southern part of the country.

Differences of forms of the events on the Circassian problematics were determined by the traditions and conditions of the country, as well as by the organizers' various purposes. If in Turkey, it was important to convey the “question” formulated by the Circassian activists to the widest possible audience, then in Russia a large number of experts were attracted in order to find an adequate “response”. This explains the holding of lectures and seminars in Turkey, and research and practice conferences in Russia. The consequences were the emotional presentation of the material and the politicization from one side as opposed to the pursuit of objectivity and avoiding of politics on the other.

In addition, the leading role of universities in Russia made debates academic, while in Turkey the organizational activity of public associations and religious foundations gave more political and educational rather than research character. With considerable involvement of the Turkish research community into Western discourse, the Russian appeared to be restricted.

The role and competence of the experts involved was not similar, however, the formed expert groups were comparable in volume. In Turkey diaspora was engaged into the Circassian problematics, and in Russia the issue was studied by experts from various fields of knowledge. And if at the Turkish activities there were calls for the creation of a special research field – “Circassianology”, then at Russian ones the participants agreed on the need to create a collective fundamental encyclopedic work on the history of the Caucasus and the Caucasian War, which would put an end to political disputes.

5. Conclusion

At the considered events there were presented opposite and mutually exclusive views, versions and interpretations of the history of the Caucasus of XIX-XXI centuries. The causes of the terminological and historiographical gap can be founded not only in the differences of traditions, but also in the features of tasks that the expert communities of two countries are facing.

For the Circassian diaspora in Turkey the determining motive was an expanding of its influence, possible for a given luck. The increase of its weight within the country and on the world stage became for it both a guarantee of survival in the conditions of assimilation and an assertion of its rights for the future as well. The recognition of the genocide and repatriation became the main tactical goals, as they subsequently had to lead to the recreation of Circassia. Desire to restore its rights and return to the Caucasus took place in logic of revenge. These reflected in the content of activities on the Circassian problematics and emotional involvement of participants.

There was another task for the Russian expert community – to develop a consolidated position on issues of concern, being actualized by the Circassian activists of Diaspora and Russia. For this purpose it was necessary to overcome the crisis of disunity, which resulted from the destruction of the Soviet system and the subsequent flourishing of competing national schools of historiography with their mythologized versions of ethnohistory. A deep restructuring process of the Russian Caucasus studies was launched, that followed by the search for a

unifying approach, rethinking of the research criteria, changing of the outdated terminology, introducing of new sources and creating of own concepts relevant to modern conditions. At Russian events the calls to end the “Caucasian War of historiography” and cease the “wars of memory” were constantly voiced. Thus, if to go back to the allegory of Abraham Shmulevich, then in the “war of conferences” one of the parties persistently sought peace.

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Notes

Note 1. For example, in 2007 in Washington, DC the Jamestown Foundation and the Circassian Cultural Institute held a conference “The Circassians: Past, Present and Future”. In 2008 Harvard hosted a conference “Russia and the Circassians: An Internal Problem or an International Matter?”. In the same year in New Jersey at the William Paterson University was made a conference “Embracing Circassia, Building Our Future”.

Note 2. Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation.

Note 3. The end of Caucasian War (1864), expulsion of Chechens and Ingushs from North Caucasus (1944), the beginning of the First Chechen War (1994).

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