

<https://doi.org/10.30546/3134-5778.101.2026.0018>

## SHAH ABBAS I THE SAFAVID: MAIN FEATURES OF HIS POLITICAL CAREER

Tofiq NAJAFLI\*

### ABSTRACT

The article sheds light on important moments in the political life of Shah Abbas I, one of the most powerful rulers of the Safavid dynasty, who opened a new page in the history of the statehood of the Azerbaijani people. The life and political activities of Abbas I, his transformation into a symbol of the righteous Shah are covered in detail in primary sources. During the reign of Abbas I, based on primary sources and scientific literature, the work on the way out of the Safavid state from the political crisis in which it fell, strengthening the central government and returning the state to its former greatness was studied. Abbas I, who came to power during the period of aggravation of the power struggle between various Qizilbash tribes with authority and power, demanded from him great determination and courage to neutralize these forces and strengthen the central government.

As a prominent statesman and commander of his time, Abbas I, having successfully completed the tasks assigned to him, went down in history as a patron of science and art, becoming famous for wise public administration and construction works. In the course of the research, the characteristic features of the political portrait of Abbas I were clarified.

Shah Abbas I, a famous commander and statesman of his time, remained in the memory of the people for his reforms, as well as the extensive construction work that he carried out, along with successful military operations. Possessing a strong will in the primary sources, Shah Abbas I was the most righteous, intelligent, capable ruler of his time and a skillful politician.

**Keywords:** Shah Abbas I, Safavid state of Azerbaijan, Safavid dynasty, Qizilbash tribes.

### Introduction

In the final quarter of the 16th century, the Safavid state of Azerbaijan, with its capital in Qazvin, extended from the North Caucasus in the north to the shores of the Indian Ocean in the south, from the Amu Darya River in the east to the borders of the Ottoman Empire in the west. It was one of the largest and most powerful states in the East and the Islamic world. During the reign of Shah Tahmasp I, the Safavid state managed to preserve its power and grandeur. Not only its large

---

\* Head of Department at the Institute of History and Ethnology named after A.A. Bakikhanov of ANAS, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, tofignajafli@gmail.com

and strong neighbors, but also the powerful states of Europe regarded the Safavid state as a significant force and sought, by all possible means, to establish relations with it.

However, following the death of Shah Tahmasp I, his successors were unable to maintain the might and prestige of the Safavid state. During the reign of Shah Mohammad Khudabanda, vast territories in the east and west of the realm were lost, and internal strife and power struggles among the Qizilbash emirs intensified. As a result, the Safavid state gradually weakened and began to lose its former power. If this process were to continue for an extended period, the fragmentation of the Safavid state could have become irreversible (Süleymanov, 2023, VII, p. 3).

It was in such a tense and critical period that the young prince Abbas Mirza Safavi entered the political stage. Despite being only 16 years old and lacking experience in governance, Abbas Mirza's ascent to the throne of such a vast empire and his subsequent success in leading it out of a deep crisis is now a well-established historical fact. How Shah Abbas I managed to achieve this remains one of the most important questions that continues to engage the attention of historians.

The accession of Shah Abbas I to the throne at a young age and his success in rescuing the Safavid state from a deep crisis is one of the most remarkable and frequently discussed events in history. Although Abbas Mirza ascended the throne at the age of 16-still very young and lacking in administrative experience – he managed, within a short period, to implement a series of crucial measures that revitalized and strengthened the state. The key factors behind his success can be summarized as follows:

1. **Political Reforms:** Shah Abbas I introduced significant reforms in the administration of the state, curbing the influence of the Qizilbash nobility and reinforcing central authority. He created a new, loyal military force composed of *ghulams* (slave-soldiers), which served as an alternative to the Turkoman tribal military contingents.
2. *Military Strategy:* After ensuring internal stability, he successfully confronted external threats from the Ottomans and Uzbeks. In particular, the newly formed regular army proved highly effective in the war against the Uzbeks.
3. *Economic Reforms:* Shah Abbas revived the Safavid economy by developing trade routes and expanding silk production. By relocating the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, he established a new economic and cultural hub for the empire.
4. *Diplomatic Policy:* Following prolonged wars with the Ottoman Empire, he negotiated a temporary peace and established diplomatic relations with various European states, thereby promoting international trade. This not only strengthened the economy but also brought valuable foreign alliances.

Thanks to his wise leadership and strategic vision, the Safavid state experienced its most powerful and prosperous period under Shah Abbas I. His accomplishments elevate him not only as a prominent figure in Safavid history but also as one of the great leaders in world history.

Shah Abbas I's statecraft, his strategic vision for governance, the accurate identification of the resources necessary for implementing his policies, and the effective organization of the tasks ahead distinguish him from other Safavid rulers. These qualities – his foresight, decisiveness, and capacity for leadership – are what set Shah Abbas I apart as a uniquely capable and farsighted monarch. For this reason, he has become one of the most extensively studied figures among the Safavid rulers.

At the same time, however, he is also one of the most frequently misrepresented figures in historical narratives. There are specific reasons for this distortion. The fact that a ruler of such global stature as Shah Abbas I was of Turkic origin has led certain scholars to approach his legacy with bias and envy. This attitude has hindered the objective and impartial study of his life and reign (Süleymanov, 2023, VII, pp. 6-7).

The purpose of this article is to shed light on the key elements of Shah Abbas I's political portrait, to explore the factors that elevated this remarkable statesman to the pinnacle of power, and to examine the defining traits of his extraordinary character – traits that enabled him to overcome profound challenges and leave a lasting legacy in world history.

### ***1. Shah Abbas I in Power: A Triumph of Strong Will and Courage***

Shah Abbas I Safavi holds a distinguished place in the history of Azerbaijani statehood, political thought, and national heroism. He is a figure whose name is always remembered with pride and enduring fascination. Born on January 27, 1571, in Herat, he was the son of Mohammad Khudabanda and Khayr al-Nisa Begum (Münşi, 2010, p. 245). At the time, his father - Mohammad Mirza, the eldest son of Shah Tahmasp I - was serving as governor of Herat.

One of the earliest and most serious challenges young Abbas Mirza faced was being separated from his parents at a very young age. This event occurred in 1573, when Abbas Mirza was just one and a half years old. The separation was linked to two concurrent developments: Mohammad Mirza's sudden illness and the onset of tensions between him and his *lala* (guardian), Shahqulu Sultan Ustajlu. Upon learning that his son had lost his eyesight due to smallpox, Shah Tahmasp I decided to remove him from Herat and appoint him governor of Shiraz (Süleymanov, 2023, VII, pp. 18-19).

Consequently, in 1573, while Mohammad Mirza was assigned to Shiraz, the infant Abbas Mirza was appointed governor of Herat, with Shahqulu Sultan Ustajlu serving as his *lala*. As both of his parents were in Shiraz, the upbringing and education of Abbas Mirza were overseen directly by his

guardian in Herat. Following the assassination of Shahqulu Sultan Ustajlu by order of Shah Ismail II, Aliqulu Khan Shamlu was appointed as the new *lala* of Abbas Mirza (Münşi, 2010, p. 244).

This early period of hardship and political turmoil played a formative role in shaping the resilient character and leadership qualities of Abbas Mirza, who would later become one of the most formidable and visionary rulers in the history of the Safavid dynasty.

In November 1577, although Shah Ismail II ordered the execution of Abbas Mirza, the act was delayed due to the intervention of Aliqulu Khan Shamlu's mother, Khanagha Khanum. As recorded:

*"...Since the evening of the 27th of Ramadan was the Night of Qadr, Aliqulu Khan's esteemed mother dissuaded him from committing the sin of killing an innocent and pure Sayyid on such a sacred night. She urged him to postpone the act until the next day. However, since the following day was a Thursday evening – another spiritually significant time – they again decided to delay the execution. Then the Eid holidays began. [Aliqulu Khan] did not wish to spoil the festive days of joy and celebration with bloodshed. Therefore, they waited for the holiday to end"* (Münşi, 2009, p. 488).

Before any action could be taken, news of Shah Ismail II's death arrived, and the six-year-old prince was spared.

In 1578, when his father Mohammad Khudabanda ascended the throne, Abbas Mirza retained his post as governor of Herat. During the weak and indecisive reign of Shah Mohammad Khudabanda (1578–1587), internal power struggles among the Qizilbash emirs intensified. Taking advantage of the internal instability, neighboring powers launched repeated incursions into Safavid territory.

The Portuguese, having fortified their position in the port of Hormuz, blocked the Safavid state's access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Repeated attacks by the Shaybanids on Khorasan proved increasingly difficult to repel. The most serious threat, however, came from the Ottoman Empire. Between 1578 and 1585, the Ottoman army, supported by their ally - the Khan of Crimea - occupied much of Azerbaijan, including the crucial city of Tabriz.

These cumulative military, political, and territorial crises laid the groundwork for the eventual rise of Shah Abbas I, whose leadership would soon alter the course of Safavid history.

The weakening of central authority and the military-economic decline made it impossible for the Safavid state to continue the war successfully. Ongoing rivalries among various Qizilbash emirs further weakened an already fragile army. In this context, in 1581, the Ustajlu and Shamlu emirs in

Khorasan proclaimed Aliqulu Khan Shamlu as “*Khan of Khans*” and declared Abbas Mirza as *Shah* (Münşi, 2010, pp. 508-509; Süleymanov, VIII, 2023, p. 85).

However, their efforts were thwarted after a failed confrontation with Murshidqulu Khan Ustajlu, the governor of Mashhad. As Abbas Mirza was captured by Murshidqulu Khan, Aliqulu Khan was forced to retreat in disappointment back to Herat. Eventually, it was Murshidqulu Khan Ustajlu himself who enthroned Abbas Mirza on October 16, 1587, in the *Chehel Sotoun Palace* in Qazvin (Kempfer, 1350, p. 862; Quinn, 2020, p. 14).

The accession of Shah Abbas I occurred during an especially turbulent period. One of the primary reasons for the Safavid state's dire predicament was the ineffective and feeble leadership of Shah Mohammad Khudabanda, whose reign had left a power vacuum. The weakening of the Safavid dynasty, the authority of the monarchy, and the military apparatus had deepened the crisis.

Factional struggles among influential Qizilbash tribes, each vying for control, led to widespread unrest and dissonance within the realm. The Qizilbash were the principal support base of the Safavid regime and constituted the backbone of the army. Political and social discord severely diminished the army's effectiveness, leaving the Safavid state defenseless against major territorial incursions – by the Ottomans in the west and the Uzbeks in the east (Savory, 1987, p. 61).

Shah Abbas's rise to power thus marked the beginning of an effort to restore state authority, military strength, and territorial integrity amidst one of the most dangerous periods in Safavid history.

The first consultation held with the Qizilbash nobles revealed that in order to save the state from the threat of collapse, it was necessary to establish a powerful army and restore stability within the country. To achieve this, reforms had to be implemented, with special attention paid to the development of the economy. Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), seeking to gain time to address domestic problems, initiated negotiations with the Ottomans. The terms of the Peace of Istanbul, signed between the two parties in 1590, were extremely unfavorable for the Safavids: most of the territories of Azerbaijan and the Georgian lands under Safavid control were ceded to the Ottomans (Nəcəfli, 2014, pp. 265-266).

In 1593, Shah Abbas I made a ceremonial visit to Ardabil for the first time, where he visited the tomb of Sheikh Safi al-Din [Münşi, 2010, pp. 838–839]. The Azerbaijani provinces still under the control of the Qizilbash – Zanjan, Khalkhal, Ardabil, Qarajadagh, Kyzylagach, Lankaran, and the wide area between the Qiziluzen and Kura rivers – were unified into a single administrative unit, the Azerbaijan Beglerbeg. This beglerbeg was successively governed by the brothers Zulfiqar Khan and Farhad Khan Qaramanli. By 1595, the number of troops under the authority of the

beglerbeg had reached 10,000, and the force was referred to as the “Azerbaijan army” [Münşi, 2010, pp. 921–922]. Thus, Shah Abbas I preserved the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and safeguarded its “honorable name” in the Qizilbash-controlled territories, ensuring that its association with the Safavid state did not fade. Iskandar Beg Munshi even referred to Zulfiqar Khan Qaramanli as the “independent ruler of Azerbaijan” (Münşi, 2010, p. 830).

To rescue the Safavid state from its dire condition, Shah Abbas I had to address three major objectives: first, he had to suppress internal unrest and restore order and discipline within the country; second, he had to improve the financial situation and establish a strong regular army; and third, he had to reclaim the lost territories of the state.

In order to improve the financial condition of the state, Shah Abbas I demanded that all individuals appointed to high-ranking state positions make a payment to the royal treasury under the name of *pishkash* (tribute). Hatam Beg Ordubadi, who had been appointed *etimad al-dawla* (grand vizier) and later gained fame as a prominent statesman, began compiling a register of the state's revenues and expenditures. According to Iskandar Beg Munshi, this register was completed during the tenure of his successors and became the official administrative code of the supreme chancery (Münşi, 2014, pp. 1929-1930).

One of the sources of strength for the Safavid shahs was the unquestioned obedience and loyalty shown to them by the Qizilbash Sufis. Although many actions taken by the Qizilbash after the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 revealed that they no longer regarded their leaders as divine or semi-divine beings, the dynamic ideology that had fueled the early Safavid movement had not entirely disappeared. Theoretically, the shah was their *murshid-i kamil* (perfect spiritual guide), and they were his disciples. Shah Abbas I could not immediately reject the loyalty toward him that formed part of this Sufi ideological framework. Even if, by 1587, perhaps only a small segment of the Qizilbash sincerely believed in this ideology, he could not afford to ignore it. At that point, the real question was to whom Abbas would turn for support – support based on loyalty transcending sectarian or tribal interests.

To resolve this issue, Shah Abbas turned to a “third force”: the Circassians, Georgians, and “Armenians” who had been recruited into state service under Shah Tahmasp I. These individuals, known as *ghulams*, were trained for military or governmental service after converting to Islam (Quinn, 2020, p. 85). The implementation of the *ghulam* system enabled Shah Abbas to establish a new foundation that, by embracing the *agha-ghulam* paradigm, neutralized the threat of tribal solidarity. In Safavid political discourse, the designation *ghulam* (slave) implied absolute loyalty to the shah. This new *agha-ghulam* paradigm, consolidated by Shah Abbas, served as a countermeasure to tribal administration. To create fractures within the tribal structure, Abbas

offered patronage to individual tribal members in exchange for unconditional loyalty and affection toward the person of the shah –thus giving rise to the term *Shahsevan* (“those who love the shah”).

The *ghulam* system marked a decisive break with the past and proved to be the most effective means of protecting the Safavid dynasty, with the shah at its apex (Axworthy, 2007, p. 7). Although Shah Abbas was determined to punish the Qizilbash for their disloyalty to the state, he was forced to recognize that they still constituted the core of the military forces. For this reason, the Safavid shah's initial steps focused on consolidating central authority.

Together with Hatam Beg Ordubadi, Shah Abbas I developed a reform plan and began implementing it. As a result of these reforms, political stability was restored within the territory of the state. The establishment of internal stability made it possible to carry out socio-economic and administrative reforms. The administrative reforms of Shah Abbas I revitalized and strengthened the Safavid state. He laid such solid foundations for the administrative structure that, regardless of the foresight or incompetence of the monarchs who came after him, the state continued to function for a century after his death.

The financial measures undertaken enriched the royal treasury and invigorated the productive forces. The Safavid state was significantly strengthened both socio-economically and politically. Shah Abbas was determined to establish a standing army, but he now had to solve the problem of how to finance the salaries of these new troops.

Before Shah Abbas, the majority of the Safavid army was composed of Qizilbash warriors. Likewise, the administration of provinces was granted to Qizilbash emirs in the form of *tiyul* (land assignments). The *beylerbeys* (governors) had the right to receive and spend a large share of provincial revenues, on the condition that they would provide the shah with a certain number of troops when required. Only a small portion of the revenues from these provinces reached the shah, typically in the form of *pishkash* (tribute).

However, the limited funds collected in the royal treasury were insufficient to cover the salaries of the newly established regular army. The primary source of the shah's income came from his *khasseh* (crown) lands, from which taxes were collected directly by the shah's steward (*katkhoda*) and overseer (*mubashir*). To address the revenue issue, Shah Abbas converted certain state-owned (*mamālik*) provinces into *khasseh* provinces (Quinn, 2020, p. 88).

As a result of the military reforms implemented, a diverse army structure was formed, composed of Qizilbash, *ghulams*, musketeers (*tufangchis*), and artillerymen (*tupchis*). The resistance of the Qizilbash military-nomadic nobility was suppressed (Münşi, 2010, p. 708).

Cavalry units composed of Azerbaijani Turks – Qizilbash horsemen – were reconstituted. Ultimately, a powerful standing army of 116,000 troops equipped with firearms was created.

During the years when Shah Abbas I was striving to strengthen the central authority, the events unfolding in Gilan – particularly the separatist policies pursued by the province’s ruler Khan Ahmad against the Safavid state – highlighted the severe challenges facing the Qizilbash state and necessitated a farsighted and consistent policy from the new ruler. This was essential because the rulers of Gilan, who harbored separatist tendencies and opposed the Safavid central government, regularly sought support from foreign powers (Nəcəfli & Hüseyn, 2023, p. 103).

At the time of these events, Khan Ahmad, who held a pronounced separatist stance against the Safavid state, first appealed to the Ottoman Empire for support. Upon failing to secure this aid, he turned his hopes toward the Moscow state. It should also be noted that the rapprochement between the rulers of Gilan and the Moscow state during this period was not merely political but also driven by economic interests. As is well known, the Gilan province held a leading position within the Safavid state due to its production and export of raw silk, the main export commodity.

From the second half of the sixteenth century onward, the activation of the Volga-Caspian trade route further increased the role of the Gilan province in international commerce. Gilani merchants had established their trading houses in Astrakhan and had direct trade relations with the Moscow state, which provided them with significant opportunities for profit. However, following the outbreak of the Ottoman-Safavid war in 1578, the Ottomans, having consolidated their power in Shirvan, gained control over the northern trade routes. This control severely disrupted Safavid-Moscow trade relations and particularly hampered the activities of Gilan merchants operating along the western shores of the Caspian Sea.

In this context, it is clear that the subjugation of the Caspian coastal region under Moscow’s influence – and consequently, the direct and intermediary-free trade in silk with Moscow – economically served the interests of the Gilan ruling class. Furthermore, the political rapprochement with Moscow and seeking its protection aligned with the aspirations of the rebellious ruler of Gilan, Khan Ahmad (Бушев, 1976, p. 117; Nəcəfli & Hüseyn, 2023, p. 103).

Hadi Bey, acting as the Safavid court’s envoy in the Kremlin, voiced the wishes of the Gilan rulers by proposing the formation of an alliance against the Ottoman Empire in exchange for handing over the two Caspian coastal cities, Derbent and Baku, to the Moscow state. Russian sources provide substantial support for the plausibility of this claim. When the Russian delegation sent alongside Hadi Bey to the Safavid court was detained for a full two months by Khan Ahmad’s men in Gilan, and was repeatedly obstructed from returning to the capital Qazvin under various

pretexts, Vasilchikov, angered by these injustices – what he described as “great dishonors” [Tavernier, 2006, p. 85] – addressed Hadi Bey with words that corroborate our hypothesis: “*Your ruler, Khan Ahmad, does not desire the establishment of brotherhood, friendship, and love between our sovereign Tsar and the Shah... We thought you were directly from the land of the Qizilbash, but you are a man of Gilan... and now it seems you have come to our ruler the Tsar with nonsense*” (Tavernier, 2006, p. 44; Nəcəfli & Hüseyn, 2023, pp. 103-104).

The proposal to cede Azerbaijani cities to the Moscow state as a condition for an alliance against the Ottomans is considered a political bargaining tactic and does not reflect the true intentions of the Safavid administration. This is especially confirmed by subsequent events related to Gilan. In May 1592, Shah Abbas I personally led a military campaign to Gilan, restoring Safavid control there. Immediately thereafter, he sent an envoy named Haji Khosrow to the Kremlin, informing the authorities that “Gilan is a vassal, where the deputies of our ruler [Shah Abbas] reside, and until now, as our ruler’s deputy in Gilan sat Tsar Ahmad” [Олеарий, 1870, p. 187]. The envoy also reported that upon learning of Khan Ahmad’s connection with the Ottomans and his eventual defection to their side, Shah Abbas had appointed his close associate, Muhammadqulu Khan, to govern Gilan. Thus, the primary purpose of this diplomatic mission was to notify the northern neighbor of the restoration of Safavid sovereignty in Gilan (Nəcəfli & Hüseyn, 2023, p. 104).

After restoring and consolidating Safavid rule in Gilan and consequently eliminating the threat from the north, there was no longer a need to continue the diplomatic game concerning the surrender of Azerbaijani cities to the Moscow state. As a farsighted and prudent statesman, Shah Abbas I – who earned and fully deserved the epithet “the Great” – was aware of Boris Godunov’s diplomatic maneuvers but was unwilling to abandon alliance with his northern neighbor. Therefore, the Shah sought to bypass the Russian Tsar and engage directly with Europeans to establish an anti-Ottoman coalition, attempting to conceal his actual position regarding the existing situation. To this end, while sending a mere 43-person embassy to Europe, he dispatched a delegation of 300 to Moscow and presented Boris Godunov with the golden throne of the Sasanian emperors as a gift (Гусейн, 2010, pp. 78-79; Nəcəfli, 2022, p. 115).

Following the overthrow of local dynasties, Gilan (1592) and Mazandaran (1596) were transformed into khassa (crown) lands. After suppressing separatism in these regions, Shah Abbas appointed new Qizilbash governors in Gilan, Mazandaran, Astrabad, and Kashan. Simultaneously, to prevent future tendencies toward regional autonomy, he was compelled to grant the aristocratic families in these areas partial participation in governance.

Remaining loyal to the foreign policy principles of his great ancestor Shah Ismail I, Shah Abbas actively pursued a foreign policy aimed at expanding trade relations with European countries and neighboring states, while strengthening military-political negotiations with Western powers to secure assistance for the restoration of lost territories. He initiated diplomatic communications with Venice, Germany, Spain, the Papacy of Rome, England, and the Principality of Moscow. The rulers of Germany and Spain pledged their support to the Safavids in the forthcoming war against the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the ongoing commercial conflicts among the Dutch, Portuguese, and English in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean facilitated Shah Abbas's diplomatic engagement with the West. A consummate pragmatist, Shah Abbas recognized that the tolerance he extended to Christian clerics would create an environment conducive to revitalizing trade with Europe. Likewise, by transforming Mashhad into one of the principal Shiite pilgrimage centers, he ensured that the funds which might otherwise have been spent in other sacred Shiite centers such as Karbala, Najaf, Kazimayn, and Samarra remained within the Safavid treasury (Quinn, 2020, pp. 106-107).

One of the key concerns in the political life of the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I was preserving and strengthening the prestige of the Turkish language. Azerbaijani Turkish was also Shah Abbas's native tongue, and official diplomatic negotiations with envoys from foreign countries at his court were conducted in this language. The Italian traveler Pietro della Valle provides clear evidence of this. In 1617, upon crossing the Safavid border, Pietro della Valle encountered a Qizilbash detachment led by Kazim Sultan, the governor of the Qasr-e Shirin district. He noted that as they traveled with the cavalry for some time, all of them spoke Turkish to each other. This language was more widely used than Persian in the Safavid state and functioned as the language of government and the military. Della Valle attributed this primarily to the fact that the army, nobility, and state officials were of Turkic origin and spoke this language among themselves; moreover, Turkish was the military language.

Regarding Shah Abbas, the traveler wrote that the subjects had great trust in him and swore oaths by his head. In Hamadan, when someone wished to convey a particular desire to another, they would say in Turkish, "May Shah Abbas grant your wish". He further explained that the Qizilbash soldiers were pure Turks, and the numerous ghulams (slave soldiers) of non-Turkic origin did not know any language other than Turkish. The Shah's commands and orders in the army were given in Turkish, which elevated the Turkish language to the level of state, court, and military language.

The traveler's account of Shah Abbas greeting him with the Turkish phrases "xoş gəldin" (welcome) and "şəfa gəldin" (may you come in health), the use of Turkish in divan (court) discussions, and the prominence of Turkish as the main language of communication in Shah Abbas's court all serve as authentic evidence of this linguistic reality. According to Pietro, Shah

Abbas himself took pride in his perfect command of his native Turkish language (Qumi, 1383, pp. 21, 25, 50, 72, 87, 229-230; Bayramlı, 2015, pp. 71-72).

The Spanish envoy Don García de Silva Figueroa recorded that during an official reception held by Shah Abbas I in 1618, envoys from the Ottoman Empire, Lahore, the Uzbeks, Venice, and England were present, and that the negotiations were conducted in Turkish, which was a commonly used language at the Safavid court (Fəlsəfi, 1332, p. 363; Bayramlı, 2015, p. 72). Adam Olearius noted that in Shirvan, Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Yerevan, children were primarily educated in Turkish. In particular, the Shah spoke Turkish enthusiastically, and it was only by chance that one could hear Persian in Isfahan's royal court. According to his observations, at official meetings in the divan hall and during banquets hosted for foreign envoys at the court, the prayer before the meal was recited in Turkish, and the state ministers also spoke Turkish, demonstrating that this language held the true status of the state language (see: Магилина, 2016, pp. 114, 554, 658, 813; Bayramlı, 2015, pp. 72-73). E.Kempfer similarly reported that Turkish was the active language in the Safavid court at Isfahan and that it was the native mother tongue of the Safavid dynasty. The Turkish language spread beyond the court to the homes of the state's nobility and prominent figures, and all those seeking the Shah's favor spoke it. Today, matters have reached such a state that "Whoever wishes to keep his head on his shoulders must know Turkish". Due to its gravity, harmony, and dignity, Turkish became the language of conversation in the court (Fəlsəfi, 1332, p. 167).

Just as Shah Abbas spoke Turkish during meetings with foreign diplomats at court, he also attached special importance to Turkish as a diplomatic language. The Turkish-language firman (edict) Shah Abbas sent in September 1622 to the voivode of Astrakhan (see: Рахмани, 1981, pp. 28-33; Nəcəfli, 2023, p. 110), as well as the Turkish letter he sent in 1624 to King Sigismund III of Poland (see: Tavernier, 1677, pp. 159-167; Nəcəfli, 2022, p. 120), confirm the significant role of Turkish as a diplomatic language at the Safavid court.

## ***2. Formation of the Regular Army and Liberation of Lost Territories***

Shah Abbas I's decision to transfer the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan reflected the contradictions arising from the newly established socio-military system that could no longer coexist within the framework dominated by the Qizilbash. Isfahan under Shah Abbas served as a new physical and cultural center where the ruler and his ghulam (slave soldier) family expanded their power throughout the empire (Axworthy, 2007, p. 8). In 1598, the Safavid shah relocated the state capital from Qazvin, which was close to the frontline, to Isfahan. Shah Abbas literally rebuilt the city of Isfahan with his own hands, making it his chosen capital. As noted by R. Savory, since the construction of Baghdad by Caliph Mansur in the 8th century, no other Islamic city had undergone such a comprehensive urban planning. Particularly, the city center's design and layout possessed all

the features befitting an imperial capital. The heart of the city was Naqsh-e Jahan Square, seven times larger than St. Mark's Square. The Ali Qapu Palace, the extensive Qeysarieh Bazaar, and two legendary masterpieces of Safavid architecture – the Shah Mosque and the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque – enclosed the square. To the south, the wide, three-lane Chahar Bagh Street extended into the city; terraced gardens and elegant mansions, belonging to the palace elite and other notables, divided a large royal palace into two halves. Beyond this, the street crossed the Zayandeh River via the Allahverdi Khan Bridge and became the busiest commercial and social center of the city (Quinn, 2020, p. 105).

The relocation of the capital to Isfahan in 1598 created the conditions for the development of the central provinces of the state. That same year, Shah Abbas led the newly formed regular army on a campaign to Khorasan. Near Herat, at the Battle of Pul-i Salar, the Shaybanid forces were defeated, and Khorasan and the surrounding territories were reintegrated into the Safavid state (Münşi, 2010, p. 701).

In 1601–1602, Shah Abbas also launched military operations against the Portuguese, capturing fortresses controlling access to the Persian Gulf as well as the islands of Bahrain (Münşi, 2014, pp. 1121-1122).

Shah Abbas I undertook serious preparations for war to restore the historical borders of his state, particularly aiming to liberate the economically vital territory of Azerbaijan from Ottoman occupation. All of his reforms were closely linked to the policy of defeating the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the victories the Safavids achieved over the Ottoman army during the 1603–1607 Safavid-Ottoman war, the Azerbaijani territory was completely freed from occupation. The new campaigns initiated by Ottoman sultans Ahmed I and Mustafa I to reclaim the lost lands from the Safavid state ended in failure. Shah Abbas succeeded in retaining the territories liberated from Ottoman occupation within the Safavid Empire. According to the peace treaties signed with the Ottoman Empire – the Treaty of Istanbul (1612) and the Treaty of Marand (1618) – the Ottoman sultan agreed to restore the terms of the Treaty of Amasya (1555) (Памятники дипломатических ..., 1890, p. 82; Nəcəfli, 2014, p. 312).

In 1622, under Shah Abbas I, the Kandahar region was recaptured from the Mughals, and Hormuz was taken back from the Portuguese. With the capture of Baghdad by the Qizilbash army in 1624, the former borders of the Safavid Empire were restored. In the war with the Ottoman Empire between 1624 and 1626, Shah Abbas achieved a significant victory, maintaining control over Arab Iraq (see: Nəcəfli, 2014, pp. 316-320).

### ***3. Main Features of Shah Abbas I's Political Portrait***

Shah Abbas I, a prominent military commander and statesman of his time, is remembered by the people not only for his reforms and successful military campaigns but also for the extensive construction works he carried out alongside his relocation policy. During his reign, the economy of the regions devastated by war was quickly restored, the population was exempted from certain taxes, and ruined cities were rebuilt (Münşi, 2014, pp. 1302-1303, 1323). Iskandar Beg Munshi writes that “the welfare of the subjects was deeply rooted in his enlightened heart. His righteous intent was dedicated to ensuring that God's creations and servants live in peace and security during his eternal reign, and that the hands of oppression causing anxiety and unrest be kept away from the country. He granted the populace significant relief from the divan taxes. First, the ‘sargelle’ tax of about fifteen thousand Iraqi tomans imposed on the population of the province of Persian Iraq was remitted... Moreover, during Ramadan, all Shiites in the provinces were exempted from divan obligations, and the entire revenue and property tax of nearly twenty thousand tomans, caused by the officials’ actions, was forgiven to the people as charity” (Münşi, 2009, pp. 708-709).

Most Persian-language sources confirm that Shah Abbas I, a man of strong will, was the most just, intelligent, decisive ruler of his era and a skilled political statesman capable of masterful maneuvers. He saved the Safavid state both from internal turmoil and from the danger of collapse due to foreign threats, while also ushering it into its most brilliant and powerful period. For this reason, historians have compared his long and successful reign to that of Suleiman the Magnificent (Sümer, 1990, p. 19; Süleymanov, 2023, VIII, p. 278).

Throughout his life, Shah Abbas sought to expand the borders of his state. Even shortly before his death, he assigned the governor of Fars, Imam Quli Khan, and the ruler of Khuzestan the task of capturing Basra (Sümer, 1990, p. 19; Süleymanov, 2023, VIII, p. 278).

It should be noted that the historians of his era regarded Shah Abbas I as a courageous, prudent, just, logical, farsighted political figure with a broad worldview.

With his phenomenal qualities that astonish human intellect, Shah Abbas I is not only one of the most eminent personalities produced by the Azerbaijani people but also a distinguished figure in the entirety of human history. European historians have remembered Shah Abbas I – renowned for his wise state administration, constructive works, and patronage of science and arts – by the epithet “the Great” (Quinn, 2020, p. 110; Aydoğmuşoğlu, 2013, p. 17). The peoples of Asia, who regard his name as a symbol of justice and wisdom, have almost deified him. Shah Abbas raised so many public buildings that no ruler of the East can be compared to him in this regard. His prestige among

the people is so high that he became a hero of Azerbaijani tales and epics (Khalily, 2012, pp. 118-119).

According to R. Savory, Shah Abbas I possessed many qualities that entitled him to receive the epithet “the Great.” His main characteristic was prudence; he was a sharp-witted strategist and tactician. He preferred diplomacy over war to achieve his goals and showed great patience in pursuing them. He was a charismatic leader. While ruthless in punishing disloyal officials, he was equally passionate and sincere in his love for trusted followers. He demanded immediate reports on those who displayed valor in battle and duly rewarded their heroism. Shah Abbas I granted wide authority to those who earned his trust. He was a figure who touched the hearts of his people and was loved by his subjects. Frequently disguising himself, he would mingle among the people to learn about their living conditions, roam the streets and bazaars of Isfahan, and converse with people in teahouses. He dressed modestly and simply (Syros, 2021, p. 203; Sümer, 1990, pp. 515-516; Quinn, 2020, pp. 110-111).

M. Axworthy wrote: “*Abbas’s achievements as a shah ranged widely – from military successes to institutional reforms and the construction of magnificent architectural monuments—for which he is commonly remembered as ‘Abbas the Great.’ He was a talented ruler and military leader but also a ruthless autocrat. His reign represents the remarkable creative era of the Safavid period. However, the civil wars and problems of his childhood (in which many of his relatives were killed) left a dark veil of suspicion and cruelty at the center of his personality*” (Axworthy, 2007, p. 134).

According to Iskandar Beg Munshi, “*His Majesty (i.e., Shah Abbas – editor’s note) possesses abundant understanding, insight, profound intellect, elevated nature, and perfect knowledge, and holds clear and bright opinions on matters of the world known to all. After he ascended the throne, he renewed the art of governance, the rules of warfare, troop mobilization, and military organization, as well as the codes of justice and generosity among the sultans of the age. His pleasing decrees became the standard for the administration of worldly affairs and the code of conduct of prosperous and fortunate kings*” (Münşi, 2009, pp. 703-704). Although he led many skilled and experienced commanders, in every military campaign his judgment, strategic insight, and foresight were always superior to theirs. Likewise, some of his proposals, initially regarded by his advisers as ill-considered, were ultimately proven correct. Shah Abbas I raised the standards in conducting military operations, organizing and commanding the army, and implementing justice. Thus, he laid the foundation for the flourishing policy of the empire and gained admiration worldwide (Axworthy, 2007, p. 595; Savory, 1987, p. 65).

Iskandar Beg Munshi also notes that one of Shah Abbas I's most important traits was his compassion and mercy toward his subjects, his respect for the rights of honest and devoted servants, and his ability to win their hearts and show them honor. If someone died from natural causes or on the battlefield, the shah was generous toward their family members and those under his protection. Regarding state officials, he appointed the deceased's sons to their father's posts, even if they were young, to support their families and show his generosity and benevolence. Since Shah Abbas had little interest in material wealth, he never attempted to arrogantly appropriate the property of the deceased but fairly distributed it among the rightful heirs (Münşi, 2009, pp. 713-714).

A.A. Bakukhanov, who highly appreciated these positive qualities of the Safavid shah, wrote: *“Shah Abbas is famous worldwide for developing the country and ensuring the public order of his subjects. Many civil and military laws he established became a model for the kings of Iran. Even European historians, who define the dignity of sultans based on their special merits, gave this science-loving monarch the title ‘The Great.’ He is still recognized among the people by the attribute of justice. In the Islamic period, no shah in Iran matched him in constructing public buildings and charitable institutions. Mosques, madrasahs, qanats in remote steppes, and numerous caravanserais throughout Iran, including the Shirvan region, are clear evidence of this claim. Many virtuous individuals, thanks to his upbringing, became leading figures in science and knowledge of their time and gained great fame worldwide. Despite his heavy workload and involvement in resolving many difficult issues, he was inclined to meet with accomplished people and possessed a refined poetic nature”* (Bakixanov, 1951, pp. 143-144).

As a prominent representative of the Safavid shah dynasty, who restored a great empire and revived it, leaving indelible marks on the history of the East, the Islamic world, and the world at large, Shah Abbas I has been, for almost four centuries, the subject of numerous annals, research works, studies, scientific and literary works and continues to be so today. By stepping onto a broad field of activity, he opened a completely new chapter in the military and political history of the region. Illuminating the general picture of history created by his genius and comprehending its essence has always attracted interest not only among scholars and intellectuals but also among the masses themselves. The emergence of numerous folk creative works about him and the creation of many sources related to his life path stem from this interest.

Shah Abbas I's political intelligence and organizational ability are among the most important qualities that can confirm his historical value. As a military strategist, Shah Abbas would not hasten to start a war if the conflict could be resolved diplomatically; he preferred to solve problems by peaceful means. However, if war began, as a perfect commander and strategist, he led his army on

the battlefield and did not hesitate to risk his own life as a brave warrior. Shah Abbas, who sought to fully reveal the abilities of his soldiers, even undertook military campaigns in the winter season.

He would mingle with the people in Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan and engage in conversations with individuals from various social strata. Shah Abbas I's primary objective was to ensure order and public security throughout the state. He consistently emphasized that for effective governance, the ruler must be strong and the implementation of royal decrees must be timely. He was resolute and uncompromising in the execution of his orders, and everyone endeavored to carry them out without delay (Pinkerton, 1811, pp. 32, 35).

To closely observe the condition of his people, Shah Abbas I would often wander among them in disguise – either alone or accompanied by his viziers. On one such occasion, while walking through Naqsh-e Jahan Square, he bought bread from a baker and meat from a butcher and returned to the palace. Upon discovering that the weights were incorrect, he punished both the baker and the butcher. Even during military campaigns, he would appear among the local population in the cities where he stayed, investigating how local officials treated the people, and if he encountered complaints, he would replace the city governor (Syros, 2021, p. 203; Sümer, 1988, pp. 515-516).

As magnificent as Shah Abbas I's political and military achievements were, they represent only one side of his reign. His rule also marked the zenith of Safavid art. Under his patronage, carpet weaving evolved from a simple household craft to the level of fine visual art. The textiles produced in the main weaving centers of the country during this period were unparalleled in terms of color and design. The primary raw materials – silk and brocade – were equally renowned. Shah Abbas monopolized the production and trade of silk.

Illumination – i.e., the decoration of manuscripts with intricate patterns and illustrations – along with fine calligraphy and bookbinding, reached their height during the reign of Shah Abbas I. Safavid ceramics began to compete with Chinese porcelain on European markets. Safavid mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums, and other buildings were distinguished by their unique beauty.

When Jean Chardin attended the coronation ceremony of Suleiman in 1666, he looked back forty years to the reign of Shah Abbas I and perceived it as a golden age. He believed that the death of Shah Abbas had marked the beginning of a decline in the fortunes of the Safavid dynasty. Rudi Matthee rightly noted that the Safavid state, which had been fundamentally rebuilt by the hand of Shah Abbas I, still possessed a grandeur in the second half of the 17th century that concealed the growing internal corruption and decline.

The formation of a standing army – composed of so-called “third force” elements – initially served the purpose of counterbalancing the proud military strength of the Qizilbash. However, in

the long run, this decision led to the erosion of the state's military capabilities. At the same time, the transformation of “state” lands into *khassa* (privately held) lands provided a source of funding for the newly organized army. Yet, in the long term, this measure, along with other contributing factors, resulted in a decline in the effectiveness of provincial administration and imposed excessively burdensome taxes on the population.

Moreover, the confinement of royal princes to the harem may have protected the ruler in the short term from plots and intrigues. However, it soon became apparent that this practice turned into a major source of dysfunction within the dynasty. In addition, this change allowed harem women, court officials, and other figures associated with the harem to interfere improperly in political affairs and succession issues (Quinn, 2020, pp. 250-251).

According to H.R. Roemer, alongside his accomplishments as a prominent statesman, military commander, and farsighted politician, the achievements of Shah Abbas I as a city-builder, architect, and philanthropist must also be acknowledged. Industriousness, energy, intelligence, and – remarkably for his time – tolerance were combined in Abbas with a keen intellectual curiosity. This is evidenced by his interest in discussions with both Islamic and Christian theologians, Western diplomats, and merchants, as well as his refined sensitivity and informed appreciation of art (Babaie, Babayan, Baghdiantz-McCabe, Farhad, 2004, p. 376).

Shah Abbas I's political portrait is characterized by his identity as a great reformer and military leader. He implemented comprehensive administrative, political, military, and economic reforms, fundamentally transformed the state structure, created a standing army, successfully waged wars against the Ottomans and Uzbeks, and reclaimed previously lost territories. In essence, he restored the virtually disintegrated Safavid state he had inherited, transforming it into a centralized absolute monarchy.

In a report sent to the Venetian Senate on February 16, 1596, Alessandro Malipiero, the Venetian ambassador in Syria, wrote the following about Shah Abbas I: *“This monarch is of average height, with a well-proportioned and harmonious physique. He has a dark complexion. His appearance is noble and lively, with very intelligent eyes. He has a friendly nature, is highly humane, and engages sincerely with people of all social classes; he is free from the pompous habits typical of the Turks. He is especially generous to soldiers, attracting their loyalty with lavish rewards, which allows him to gather supporters from all sides. But above all, he stands out for his just intellect, sharp and clever mind, decisiveness, and energetic demeanor. He harbors grand ambitions and is committed to restoring the former glory and honor of the Iranian (Safavid) state. The only thing he lacks is a power base truly matching his generous spirit”* (Sarname-ye don Qarsiya Silva Fiqueroa, 1363, p. 42).

European travelers who visited the court of Shah Abbas I provide valuable information regarding his physical appearance, character, and personality. In 1603, the Englishman John Cartwright, who saw Shah Abbas I in Isfahan, described him as follows: *“This young shah is a model of absolute perfection, both physically and intellectually. He is of medium height, with a dignified face and sharp, penetrating eyes. His complexion is dark, and he wears a long mustache while keeping his beard shaved. His appearance reflects a warrior’s spirit and a stern temperament. At first glance, one might assume he is nothing but cruel and harsh. Yet, in reality, he possesses such a modest and compassionate nature that it is quite easy to approach and speak with him. His manner is such that he sits informally at the dining table among the elder statesmen and commanders of the court and enjoys going hunting and falconry in the company of courtiers, elders, and ambassadors from foreign lands”* (Babaie, Babayan, Baghdiantz-McCabe, Farhad, 2004, p. 75; *The Relations of the Polish.*, p. 736).

The Italian traveler Pietro Della Valle, upon seeing the shah for the first time in the city of Ashraf, described him as “a young man with an aquiline nose, long mustache, clean-shaven face, and dark eyebrows.” He was of medium stature, with green, expressive eyes, a short forehead, and a slender chin. Generally, he dressed simply, favoring green, red, and black clothing. He avoided wearing jewelry, with the only ornament being the golden hilt of his sword (Süleymanov, 2023, *Səfəvilər VIII*, p. 278).

Della Valle wrote:

*“Shah Abbas I is not merely a ruler, but also a father, a teacher, and the savior of his people. He would not hesitate to grant them land, herds, or to distribute money in order to meet their needs”* (Malcolm, 1815, p. 51; Süleymanov, 2023, *VIII*, p. 282).

According to Della Valle, even at the age of forty-nine, Shah Abbas still had black hair, eyebrows, and mustache. Despite his complexion being darkened from many campaigns and wars, the beauty of his face outweighed any ruggedness. In general, he had a noble, expressive, and charismatic appearance. His hands were short, thick, and dark, resembling those of a peasant, and, in keeping with the customs of the time, he stained them with henna (Qumi, 1383, pp. 319-320; Quinn, 2020, p. 125).

Iskandar Beg Munshi, one of the most prominent court historians of the Safavid period, wrote the following about Shah Abbas I:

*“...He combined in his person an extremely fiery temperament and passionate nature with strength, grandeur, magnificence, splendor, and royal dignity. At the same time, he possessed a remarkable gentleness, softness, dervish-like character, and simplicity. In his moments of calm and*

*kindness, he would interact with courtiers, attendants, and companions with such humility and intimacy that it seemed as though he were their friend or brother. However, when in a different mood... such signs of wrath would blaze across his noble forehead that those same individuals – who had just been treated by him with warmth, friendship, and humility – would not dare to utter even a single inappropriate word, lest it be perceived as boldness, insolence, or disrespect”* (Münşi, 2009, pp. 712-713).

Iskandar Beg further praised Shah Abbas for his honesty and his firm commitment to fulfilling promises, upholding justice, and delivering punishment without bias. He also highlighted the shah’s interpersonal skills, sharp intuition, and emotional intelligence in choosing his confidants and advisors, as well as in appointing individuals to administrative, judicial, and military positions.

As confirmed by primary sources, Shah Abbas I, in order to transform the chaotic state he inherited into a disciplined and centralized monarchy, had to act with determination and at times with merciless severity. Reports of his harsh punishments had a profound effect on those under his authority, particularly oppressors, ensuring that his commands were executed without delay. It is said that if a father was ordered to kill his son and hesitated, the son would be ordered to kill the father instead. If both failed or hesitated to carry out the order, a third party would be dispatched to execute them both. This inflexible policy elevated the authority of the shah’s command to an almost sacred level. No one dared to deviate from his decrees, which were perceived as inviolable, like fate itself (Münşi, 2009, pp. 709-710).

This is further illustrated by a report in the diary of Safar Muratovich, a merchant and envoy sent by the Polish King Sigismund III to the Safavid court in 1601. According to his notes, the "great embassy" that Shah Abbas had dispatched to Western Europe in 1599 never reached the Polish court, and the royal letter and gifts remained undelivered. During his audience with Shah Abbas, Muratovich learned that Pirqulu Beg, who had traveled to Moscow at the same time as the embassy, had provided the shah with false information about events there. As a result, Shah Abbas ordered that Pirqulu Beg's tongue be cut out and his eyes gouged – an act emblematic of the shah’s zero tolerance for dishonesty or failure in diplomatic service (see: Nəcəfli, 2022, pp. 113-116).

One of Shah Abbas I’s notable virtues was his compassion and kindness toward all loyal servants. He was particularly attentive to the rights of sincere and devoted retainers, showing respect and affection toward them, and maintaining their goodwill (Münşi, 2009, p. 713). Shah Abbas was well-informed not only about the internal affairs of his realm but also about the external political landscape. He had an efficient intelligence network that provided him with detailed information about Muslim and non-Muslim rulers, the size and composition of their armies, transportation routes, and general geopolitical conditions.

Shah Abbas also succeeded in establishing diplomatic relations with most rulers of his time. He maintained friendly ties with numerous European countries, the Muscovite state, and the Mughal Empire. Foreign envoys and ambassadors frequently visited his court, and his diplomatic achievements surpassed those of his predecessors (Münşi, 2009, p. 715).

The best physical description of Shah Abbas was provided by J. Malcolm: “Abbas had a pleasant face and an upturned nose. He looked around with an intense and penetrating gaze. He had no beard but wore thick, long mustaches. Though of short stature, he was exceptionally resilient and agile. He was known throughout his life for his tirelessness and his great enthusiasm for hunting” (Cambridge History of Iran, 1986, p. 565; Quinn, 2020, p. 111).

Shah Abbas was a patron of scholars and poets, offering them protection and support. He himself wrote poetry. However, alongside these virtues, he did not hesitate to blind two of his sons and order the execution of another. For this reason, the final years of his reign were marked by sorrow and melancholy (Süleymanov, 2023, VIII, p. 281).

The illustrious Safavid ruler passed away on January 19, 1629, in Farahabad and was buried in Kashan.

### ***Conclusion***

There is no doubt that one of the most significant periods in the history of Safavid statehood is the reign of Shah Abbas I. The restoration of the Safavid state, which had plunged into a deep political crisis during the reign of Shah Mohammad Khudabanda, and the reestablishment of its former power are closely linked to the name and actions of Shah Abbas. In this regard, the study and analysis of Shah Abbas I’s reign holds scientific and historical importance for understanding the broader history of the Safavid dynasty.

It is for this reason that the figure of Shah Abbas I has remained a central subject of interest for generations of historians writing in various languages. He is such an influential and captivating historical personality that even general works on the Safavid dynasty often dedicate a substantial portion of their content to him. Over the past two decades alone, a large number of scholarly works have been written about his reign, covering a wide range of topics – from diplomatic relations with different parts of the world to religious and philosophical movements.

From the moment he ascended the throne, Shah Abbas I strove throughout his life to elevate the Safavid state to a prominent position on the global stage. He employed every available means to achieve this goal and attained remarkable success.

One of his most critical achievements was the curbing of the Qizilbash aristocracy’s power and the establishment of a new, centralized standing army. Since the creation of such a military

force was a gradual process, Shah Abbas initially faced serious threats from opposing Qizilbash emirs before the army was fully formed. Nevertheless, he responded decisively and without hesitation, neutralizing those who challenged his rule, and thus succeeded in consolidating the central authority and suppressing internal threats.

Possessing profound intellect, sharp reasoning, and remarkable foresight, Shah Abbas demonstrated unwavering determination in maintaining control over the evolving political landscape. He ordered the execution of a group of Qizilbash emirs who had plotted to assassinate Ustajlu Murshidqulu Khan – the man who had helped him ascend the throne – and later did not hesitate to have Murshidqulu Khan executed as well.

Based on the information provided in primary sources regarding the political portrait of Shah Abbas I, the following defining characteristics can be highlighted: he was a great reformer and military commander who implemented far-reaching reforms in administrative, political, military, and economic spheres; he fundamentally restructured the state apparatus; created a disciplined standing army; waged successful campaigns against the Ottomans and Uzbeks, thereby reclaiming lost territories; and restored the Safavid state, which was on the verge of collapse, transforming it into a powerful centralized state.

These achievements were made possible thanks to the political acumen, military leadership, and visionary statesmanship of Shah Abbas I - a remarkable ruler and master strategist of his time.

### **Bibliography / References**

- Axworthy, M. (2007). *Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran*. London: C.Hurst and Co.
- Aydoğmuşoğlu, C. (2013). *Şah Abbas ve zamanı, (1587-1629)*. Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi.
- Babaie, S., Babayan, K., Baghdiantz-McCabe, I., & Farhad, M. (2004). *Slaves of the shah. New elites of Safavid Iran*. London-New York: I.B.Tauris Co Ltd.
- Bakıxanov, A. A. (1951). *Gülüstani-İrəm*. Bakı: Azərbaycan SSR EA-nın nəşriyyatı.
- Bayramlı Z.H. (2015). *Azərbaycan Səfəvi dövlətinin quruluşu və idarə olunmasında türk-qızılbaş tayfalarının rolu*. Bakı: Avropa.
- Berchet G. (1865). *Relazioni dei consolati di Alessandria e di Soria*. Torino: Tipografia G.B.Paravia e Comp.
- Blow, D. (2009). *Shah Abbas: The Ruthless King Who Became an Iranian Legend*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Bushev P.P. (1976). *Istoriya posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnosheniy Russkogo i Iranskogo gosudarstv v 1586-1612 gg. (po russkim arkhivam)*, Moskva, Izd. "Nauka" (Бушев П.П. (1976).

*История посольств и дипломатических отношений Русского и Иранского государств в 1586-1612 гг. (по русским архивам)*, Москва, Изд. «Наука»).

Cambridge History of Iran. (1986). Vol. 6. *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*. Edited by P. Jackson & L. Lockhart. London: Cambridge University Press.

Fəlsəfi, N. (1332). *Zindeqi-i Şah Abbas-ı əvvəl* (Vol. 1). Tehran: İntişarat-ı Danişgah-ı Tehran.

Khalily, R. (2012). Azərbaycan masallarında Şah Abbas'ın tebdil-i kiyafetləri. *Acta Turcica*, IV(2-1), 118–139.

Kempfer, E. (1350). *Dər dərbare şahənşahə İran* (Tərc. K. Cahandari). Tehran.

Guseyn F.A. (2010). «К вопросу об обещании шаха Аббаса I уступить Московскому государству Дербент, Баку и Шемаху», *Voprosy istorii*, 2010, № 9, с. 113-124 (Гусейн Ф.А. (2010). «К вопросу об обещании шаха Аббаса I уступить Московскому государству Дербент, Баку и Шемаху», *Вопросы истории*, 2010, № 9, с. 113-124).

Magilina I.V. (2016). *Rossiya i proyekt antiosmanskoj ligi v kontse XVI- nachale XVII vv. (1604-1612 gg.)*. Volgograd (Магилина И.В. (2016). *Россия и проект антиосманской лиги в конце XVI- начале XVII вв. (1604-1612 гг.)*. Волгоград).

Malcolm, J. (1815). *History of Persia, from the Most Early Period to the Present Time* (Vol. I). London: John Murray & Longman & Co.

Münşi, İ. B. (2009). *Tarix-i aləmara-yi Abbasi*. Bakı: Təhsil.

Münşi, İ. B. (2010). *Dünyanı bəzəyən Abbasın tarixi* (Vol. I). Bakı: Şərq-Qərb.

Münşi, İ. B. (2014). *Dünyanı bəzəyən Abbasın tarixi* (Vol. II). Bakı: Şərq-Qərb.

Nəcəfli, T. H. (2014). *Səfəvi-Osmanlı münasibətləri*. Bakı: Turxan NPB.

Nəcəfli, T. H. (2022). XVII əsrin I yarısı Səfəvi-Polşa əlaqələri tarixindən. *AMEA Sosial Elmlər*, (1), 112–126.

Nəcəfli, T. H., & Hüseyin, F. A. (2023). I Şah Abbas dövründə Səfəvi dövlətinin Böyük Moskva knyazlığı ilə əlaqələri. *AMEA Sosial Elmlər*, (2), 98-114.

Oleariy A. (1870). *Podrobnoye opisaniye puteshestviya Golshhtinskogo posol'stva v Moskvuyu i Persiyu v 1633, 1636 i 1639 godakh*. Per. s nemets. P.Barsova, Moskva: Universitetskaya tipografiya (Олеарий А. (1870). *Подробное описание путешествия Голиштинского посольства в Москву и Персию в 1633, 1636 и 1639 годах*. Пер. с немец. П.Барсова, Москва: Университетская типография).

*Pamyatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snosheniy Moskovskoy Rusi s Persiyey. (1890)*, Spb.-Peterburg: Izdany pod redaktsiyey N.I.Veselovskogo, tom I (*Памятники дипломатических и торговых сношений Московской Руси с Персией. (1890)*, Спб.-Петербург: Изданы под редакцией Н.И.Веселовского, том I).

Pinkerton, J. (1811). *A general collection of the best and most interesting Voyages and travels* (Vol. 9). London.

Pyetro della Valle. (1370). *Səfərname-ye Pyetro della Valle*. Tərcome-ye əz mətne əsli-ye italiyayi doktor Şücaaddin Şəfa, Tehran: Elmi-Fərhəngi.

Quinn, S. (2020). *Şah Abbas: İrani yeniden şekillendiren hükümdar* (Z. Yılmaz, Trans.). İstanbul: VakıfBank Kültür Yayınları.

Qumi Qazi Əhməd. (1383). *Xülasət ət-təvarix*, c. 2. Bekuşeşe İhsan İşraqi, Tehran: İntişarat-1 Danişgah-ı Tehran.

Rakhmani A.A. (1981). *Azerbaydzhan v kontse XVI i v – XVII veka*. Baku: Elm (Рахмани А.А. (1981). *Азербайджан в конце XVI и в – XVII века*. Баку: ЭЛМ).

Savory, R. (1987). Very dull and arduous reading: A reappraisal of the history of Shah Abbas the Great by Iskandar beg Munshi. *Studies on the history of Safawid Iran*, 19–37. London: Variorum.

Savory, R. (2022). *İran Safeviler Devrinde* (Ö. Kolçak, Trans.). İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat. *Sərname-ye don Qarsiya Silva Fiqueroa*. (1363). Tərcome-ye Qulamırza Səmia, Tehran: Çapxaneye Kətibe.

Süleymanov, M. S. (2023). *Səfəvilər VII. I Şah Abbas*. Bakı: Maarif.

Süleymanov, M. S. (2023). *Səfəvilər VIII. I Şah Abbas*. Bakı: Maarif.

Sümer F. (1990). “Safevi tarihi ile ilgili incelemeler: I. ve II. Abbas devirleri”, *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, sayı 69, s. 10-32.

Sümer F. (1990). “Abbas I Safevi hökmdarı (1587-1629)”, *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, TDV, 1 Cilt, İstanbul: 1988, s. 17-19.

Syros, V. (2021). The Safavid Machiavelli: Shāh ‘Abbās I and the “Great Man” theory revisited. *Comparative Political Theory*, 1, 57–79. Leiden: Brill.

Shorokhov A.V., Slesarev A.T. (2019). «Firman persidskogo shakha Abbasa I astrakhanskomu voyevode iz fondov Rossiyskogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva drevnikh aktov». *Istochnikovedeniye*, Klio № 4(148), s. 28-33 (Шорохов А.В., Слесарев А.Т. (2019). «Фирман персидского шаха Аббаса I астраханскому воеводе из фондов Российского государственного архива древних актов». *Источниковедение*, Клио № 4(148), с. 28-33).

Tavernier, J. B. (1677). *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier* (Book V). London: William Godbid.

Tavernier J.B. (2006). *Tavernier Seyahatnamesi*, Çeviren Teoman Tunçdoğan. İstanbul, Kitab Yayınevi.

*The Relations of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth with Safavid Iran and the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin*. (2017). Varshava: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych.