


**PARTICIPATION OF NATIONS OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR  
(QUANTITATIVE COMPARATIVE MILITARY ANALYSIS)**

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The author considers the aspect of participation of people of the South Caucasus in the Russian Army and in the World War I. The following questions were considered: representatives of what nations took part in this war; number of people involved in the war in certain periods of time; number of people drafted during the war. The author described the troops into which the South Caucasus was divided before the First World War.

**Keywords:** World War I, South Caucasus nations, Russian Army.

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In 1914 the World War started. It was unprecedented in its scale and brought consequences for the entire period of human history.

Never seen before machines and devices were used in land and sea combat operations. As a result of mobilization of all countries around 74 000 000 people were affected by the conflict. 10 000 000 of them did not return from war, while 26 000 000 were injured in various fronts [1].

Being a part of the multinational empire, the South Caucasus nations also participated in the war. The Armenians and Georgians for the first time fought against the enemy with large forces not only in the Caucasus, but also in European fronts. The war in the South Caucasus became an arena for the manifestation of talent, quality and features of military forces. Many of those involved in the conflict obtained higher ranks and were awarded various medals and awards.

The interest to the number of problematic issues related to the First World War has not vanished even today. There is huge volume of various vocational literature in this sphere, even though the war has ended 100 years ago. One of these topics is the issue of participation of South Caucasus nations in the First World War. The question is problematic because since the First World War the Russian Army participating in combat operations involved different numbers of the non-Russian soldiers. Approaches to determination of such quantitative composition and to dating the information are often conflicting.

In case of Armenians, the figures vary from 200 000 [2] to 300 000 [3]. As for Georgians the figures vary from 130 000 to 200 000 [4], and participation of the Caucasian Tatars (now Azerbaijani) is within the range of 5 000 to 10 000 etc.

In our opinion, the most reliable way to assess the data is to first analyze the last years before the First World War. The Tsarist army soldiers were serving in the quantitative composition based on the new memorandum of mutual induction of the militaries, creating the recruitment problem.

On January 1, 1914, the South Caucasus was divided into Baku, Elisabethpol, Kutaisi, Tbilisi, Chernomoryan, into the provinces of Yerevan, Kars, and the provinces of Dagestan and Batumi, as well as Sukhum and Zaqatala districts, which together covered 214 693 1 sq. versts [5]. Before the war around 7 600 000 people lived in the South Caucasus. 40.6% of them or 3 087 537 belonged to different ethnic Tatar Muslims and mountaineers, 22.6 % or 1 721 717 were kartvelner people (Georgians), 22.2 % or 1 685 935 of them were Armenians, 7.7 % or 588 604 of them were Russians, 1.1 % or 85 593 persons were representatives of various nations (Germans, Poles, etc.). 5.5% or 423 366 – other nationalities: Jews, Abkhaz, Ossetians, Beam, Kurds, Yezidis, etc. [6].

The largest share of the population – the South Tatar Muslims and mountaineers (despite the fact that we are in a group) in turn were divided into many tribes. Many of them shared only religion.

Muslims did not serve [7] the Imperial armed forces on a regular basis, while the Christian population is generally the basic military service member (obliged to serve) of the armed forces of the Russian Empire. Christians were paid on an annual basis since 1887 [8].

The call-up began each year on October 1. On October 1 the 21 years

old newcomers joined and stayed in the army for 20 years. The young Russian conscripts shared Christianity on equal terms. In the 20th century conscripts from the South Caucasus were to serve in the Tsarist Russian Armed Forces, so the region had some representation.

According to the yearly published document (the army-statistical directory published in 1912), at the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century share of the Caucasian peoples in the Tsarist army (“Caucases nations”) was 2.16% [9], as for 1912. Taking into account the size of the Russian army (1 377 278) [10], it turns out that in 1912 around 30 000 Caucasians were serving in the Russian army. The universal manifesto of 1912 made changes in these figures by adding more conscripts. In 1914 (May 1 and 24) the laws related to [11] of the Russian Armed Forces introduced the ascending trend (definitely seen from 1912 to 1914). The number Caucasian peoples in the quantitative composition of the Tsarist army has also increased by July 1914, and by 19th reached about 50 000. More than 26 000 of them were Armenians [12]; Georgians – around 20,000, while the rest 4,000 – other Caucasian Christians.

Now let's look at the quantitative composition of the soldiers who participated in the war.

The general mobilization took place on July 18, 1914. It was declared along with the creation of the Caucasus Military District teams for a number of areas: 14 areas of the South Caucasus (Tbilisi, Gori, Telavi, Dushetii, Akhaltsikhe, Kutaisi, Senaki, Elisabethpol, Baku, Shusha, Batumi – Yerevan, War, Kars) [13] were created smoothly, but later it became clear that many deficiencies

have occurred in this process (improper calculation of conscripts, filing false documents, etc.), mentioned during the last attempt to correct the Caucasus military District command. According to the District commander on January 13, 1917 in Tbilisi the local brigade was responsible for the information presented from July 18, 1914 till January 1, 1917 including the induction of Caucasian nationalities [14].

On February 9, 1917 the local brigade commander in the Soviet Caucasus Military District headquarters [15] carried out an investigation and revealed that in July 19, 1914 - January 1, 1917 in Baku, Elisabethopol, Kutaisi, Tbilisi, and Yerevan states, in provinces of Kars and Batumi, Sukhumi and in Zaqatala district there were 396 204 people in the military, but among them only 304 164 were fitting for the military service. Eligible for the army: 42 712 Russians, 121 921 Armenians, 121 113 Georgians, 2 413 Germans, 3 221 Jews, 1 314 Tatars, and 11 470 representatives of other nationalities [16]. During the same period in the Chernomoryan province and in the region of Dagestan the following number of people have been recognized as good for the military service: 15 937 Russians, 677 Armenians, 983 Georgians, 139 Germans, 1 273 Jews, 150 Tatars, and 744 representatives of other nationalities [17]. Summing up the results above, it turns out that from July 19, 1914 to January 1, 1917 there were around 58 649 Russians prepared for the military service in the South Caucasus, 122 598 Armenians, 122 096 Georgians, 2 552 Germans, 4 494 Jews, 1 464 Tatars, and 12 214 representatives of other nationalities .

Obviously the soldiers were conscripted and served among the three ethnic groups: Armenians, Georgians and Russians.

If we add Armenian military conscription after the mobilization, the above mentioned figure (122 958) will increase. It turns out that on July 19, 1914 – the ethnic composition of the Russian troops in the service participating in the First World War was 26 000 people; around 174 000 ethnic Armenian soldiers were drafted exclusively in the South Caucasus [18] (the figures do not include voluntary movement of Armenian

soldiers involved in the war, as well as the Armenian military recruits, to other areas of the Russian Empire).

As for the ethnic Georgian military, it should be noted that the above mentioned number increases and exceeds 122 096 people in 1917. In our opinion, as the result of the mobilization of 20 000 Georgian military conscripts by July 19, 1914 to the Russian troops, and at least 20 000 ethnic Georgians, the minimum number of the Georgian military recruits participating in the First World War in the South Caucasus will be 161 000.

In our opinion the number of Caucasian Tatars has increased from about 1 500 members to about 3 000. It is worth noting that the Caucasian Tatars were mostly used in military and non-military action works [19]. Of course, a certain amount of Caucasian Tatars in the Russian Armed Forces engaged in the military operations were the first of the Tatar elite representatives – 200 persons with aristocratic backgrounds, officers from various units of the regular army (mostly cavalry) participating in the military operations [20]. However, Tatars took part in the military operations within units of soldiers known as “Division of wildlife”. Tatars of these units had a separate formation. According to some sources the maximum number of the regiment reached 2 000.

As a result, it turns out that more than 5 000 Caucasian Tatar soldiers took part in the war.

We should also note an interesting fact, that at the beginning of the First World War, in 1911 Armenians serving in the Russian army distinguished themselves as the South Caucasus peoples prepared to war. Number of Armenian drafted conscripts was 13 758, which was 99.2 % of all nationalities, and this is the primary indicator of recruits if we compare July 19, 1914 and January 1, 1917. In 1917 among 147 344 decent soldiers gathered 121 921 have been declared fit for the military service (82.7%). At the same time speaking about Georgians, 177 787 of Georgians soldiers were drafted and 121 113 have been recognized unfit for the military service (68.1 %) [21].

Unlike Georgians the soldiers were much more prepared in terms of the military service comparing to the figures

of 1914. Just in Elisabethopol, Tbilisi, and Kutaisi provinces, Zaqatala and Sukhumi districts of Tbilisi and Kars provinces from 7 768 of newcomers 7 224 (92.9 %) were fit for the military service, while of 10 828 Georgians 7 571 recruits (69.9%) fitted, Jews – about 280 from 318 (88%), the other nations of the South – from 1 141 newcomers - 921 (80.7%) were fit in 1915. In 1916 this index was 7 601 to 7 158 (94.1%) for the Armenians, 10 536 to 7 033 (66.7%) for Georgians, 239 to 188 (78.6%) for Jews, 1 065 to 872 (81.8%) for the other Caucasian nationalities. In 1917 these figures were respectively: 8 659 to 8 366 (96.6%), 13 111 to 10 128 (77.2%), 503 to 437 (86.8%), 1 317 to 1 136 (86.2%). In 1918: 14 638 to 11 030 (75.3%), 14 949 to 10 391 (69.5%), 403 to 259 (64.2%), 1 269 to 1 053 (82.9%). In 1919: 13 295 to 9 866 (74.2%), 13 376 to 7 652 (57.2%), 398 to 284 (71.3%), 1 245 to 979 (78.6%) It should be noted that in 1915-1918 military enrollments were carried out ahead of time [22].

Summarizing the above said, we come to the conclusion that during the World War I about 450 000 soldiers from South Caucasus served in the Russian regular army. Among those drafted into the military at least 174 000 were Armenians, 161 000 – Georgians, 60 000 – Russians, 5 000 – Tatars, 4 500 – Jews, and over 45 000 of representatives of other Southern nationalities.

More than 450 000 active workers were taken from the economy of the South and appeared in various episodes of the First World War, thus endangering the survival of their families.

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