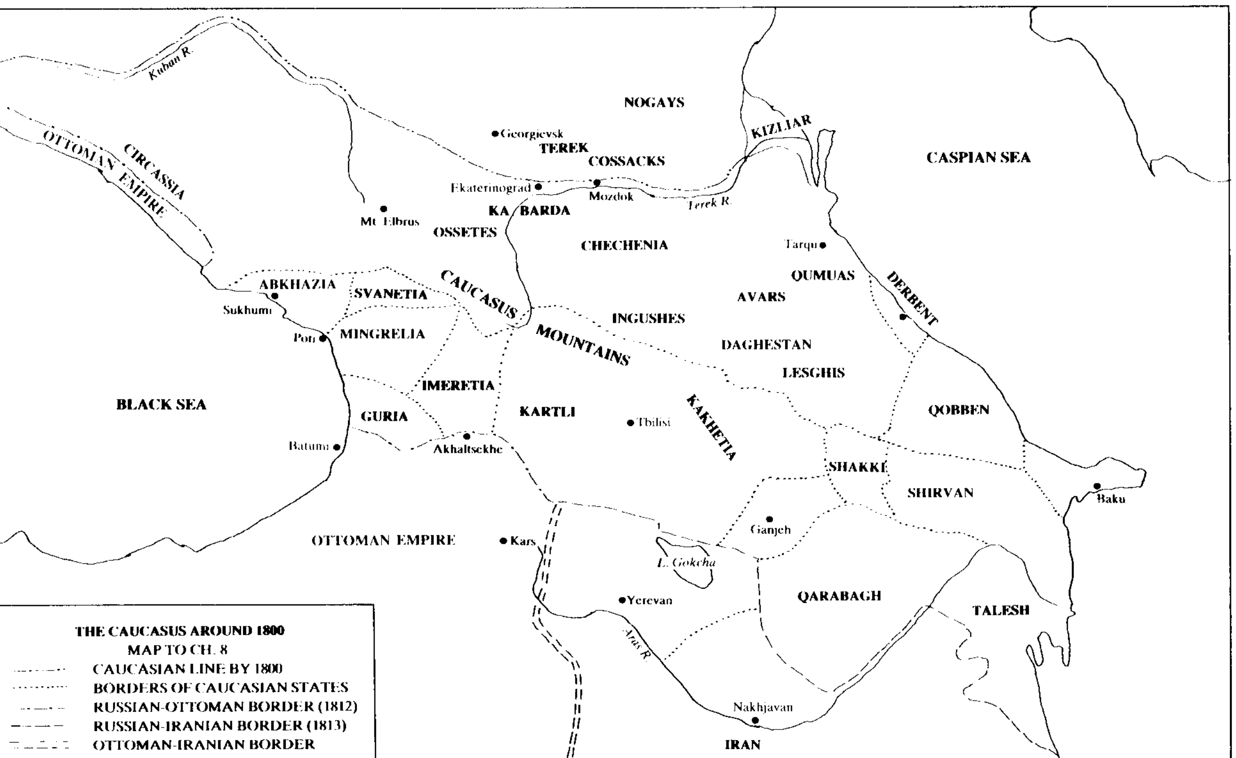
VIII
Russian Expansion in the Caucasus to 1813

Muriel Atkin

Russian involvement in Caucasian affairs began in the mid-sixteenth century, when a few north Caucasian chiefs sought Moscow's support against local rivals. At the same time, Muscovite conquest of the Tatar lands along the Volga River as far as the Caspian Sea brought Moscow's frontier close to the northern Caucasus. The arrangement between the tsar and a few powerful individuals was conflated into a Muscovite claim to suzerainty over the north-central Caucasus. Yet the claim remained little more than a rhetorical flourish until the eighteenth century, when Russia, partly by design, partly by chance, engaged intermittently in negotiations and military operations aimed at increasing its authority over the Caucasus.

From the start, Russian expansion into the Caucasus took place in a setting which was politically fluid and therefore volatile. The growth of Muscovy to the southeast was part of the restructuring of power that followed the collapse of the Mongol and Timurid empires. In the sixteenth century, three empires, the Muscovite, Ottoman, and Safavi (which ruled Iran from 1501 to 1722), all expanded rapidly by reassembling fragments of the Turco-Mongol empires of the later Middle Ages. The place where all three of these expansionist drives met was the Caucasus. The extension of Muscovy's border to the northeastern fringe of the Caucasus antagonized the Ottomans and was one of the causes of the unsuccessful attempt by the Ottomans and their Crimean vassals to conquer Astrakhan in 1569. However, until the eighteenth century the more heated rivalry in the Caucasus was between the Ottomans and the Safavis. Both empires claimed parts of the Caucasus, mostly as vassal states, with the



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THE CAUCASUS AROUND 1800
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BORDERS OF CAUCASIAN STATES
RUSSIAN-OTTOMAN BORDER (1812)
RUSSIAN-IRANIAN BORDER (1813)
OTTOMAN-IRANIAN BORDER

Ottomans' strength based in the western principalities and the Safavis' in the center and east. The two empires, for political, religious, and economic reasons, perceived the other's existence as a threat. Thus the Caucasus was important not only for its intrinsic value as a source of slaves, raw materials, and handicrafts but, more importantly, as a weapon to be used against the enemy. The Ottomans staged seven campaigns against their archenemies in the Caucasus from the start of the sixteenth century until the breakup of the Safavi state early in the eighteenth, although many of the Ottomans' gains were reversed soon after a campaign ended. Two hundred years of sporadic warfare for control of this region left much of it depopulated and impoverished. Despite repeated Ottoman efforts to dominate the Caucasus the general pattern remained one of Safavi strength in the center and east and Ottoman strength in the west. During much of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, various rulers who attempted to build a new kingdom on the wreckage of Safavi Iran sought also to reclaim the Safavi domains in the Caucasus. At the same time, a weakened Ottoman Empire and an invigorated Russia tried to make themselves masters of the region.

While large states fought for control of the Caucasus, local rulers tried to profit from the political instability. The region was so difficult to subdue that many principalities retained a considerable measure of autonomy even when part of some larger empire. The frequent shifts in imperial fortunes from the sixteenth century on created opportunities for alliances among various ambitious rulers so that locally powerful chiefs could expand their domains at their neighbors' expense and weaker rulers could at least retain local authority. To the Caucasian rulers, Russia was one of several potentially useful allies. However there was a fundamental difference between Russia and the other states that endeavored to dominate this area: from the start of this era, Russia was more centralized than its rivals and became even more so from the eighteenth century on, thus reducing a Caucasian chief's leeway to preserve his autonomy within the context of an alliance.

The Caucasian Lands and Peoples

Although various parts of the Caucasus were repeatedly subjected to rule by states based outside the region, the Caucasus

posed formidable geographic, political, and cultural obstacles to the consolidation of authority. The mountains themselves constituted a daunting barrier. Rising south of the Eurasian steppe, the main range, the Greater Caucasus, stretches more than seven hundred miles from the Taman Peninsula, between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, in the northwest to the coast of the Caspian Sea in the southeast. The chain includes Europe's highest mountain, Mount Elburz, nearly 18,500 feet high, as well as many peaks above 13,000 feet. During the period of Russian expansion in the region there were two main routes across this barrier, the high gorge cut by the Terek River through the center of the chain and the narrow strip of land along the Caspian coast. The first was often blocked by rockslides, floods, and heavy snows, and both could be held by comparatively small numbers of armed men. The part of the Caucasus over which Russia initially claimed authority was so located as to raise the possibility of Russia's blocking Ottoman access to either of these routes across the mountains towards Iran. The mountains, with their narrow valleys, dense forests, and periodically flooded streams, could render an invading army powerless, as the Russians discovered on many occasions. This inhospitable environment also made difficult the agricultural and pastoral activities necessary to support life. That in turn encouraged the inhabitants' fragmentation into fiercely hostile groups that frequently raided each other and fought over what good land there was. South of the main range, the mountains extend through the center of the Caucasian isthmus (with river valleys to either side) and then spread out again to the east and west in the Lesser Caucasus, which borders the Anatolian highlands and the rolling hills of southern Azerbaijan. Here the land was better suited to agriculture and animal husbandry; trade and handicrafts were also more developed. Yet the mountains south of the high range could also on occasion provide shelter for those who tried to escape hostile armies or unwelcome political authority.

Not surprisingly, this area was one in which a remarkable profusion of ethnic groups survived. In linguistic terms, they belonged to three major groups: speakers of Caucasian languages (including Georgians of the central and western Caucasus, Kabardans of the north center, Chechens and Ingushes of the center, and Lesghis of the northeast); speakers of Turkic languages (including Azeris of the southeast and Qumuqs of the

northeast); and speakers of Indo-European languages (including Armenians, widespread throughout the region, Iranians of the southeast, and Ossetes of the center). These linguistic distinctions did not necessarily connote a sense of ethnic or national identity.

A more important focus of loyalty was religion, which had political as well as spiritual significance. For a Georgian or Armenian to convert to Islam indicated political affiliation with the Ottoman Empire or Iran. The majority of the region's population was Muslim, although there was a large Christian minority (and a small number of Jews and others). However, to categorize the inhabitants so broadly is to imply a simplicity that did not exist. The Christian community was divided principally between the Monophysite Armenians and the Orthodox Georgians. The Muslims were even more divided. Most of the Muslims of the Greater Caucasus were not converted until some time between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, although in the northeastern zone some had converted much earlier. They adhered for the most part to Sunni Islam, the majority sect championed by the Ottoman Empire. The largest group of dissenters were the "Twelver" Shiites, who lived primarily in the southeast and along the Caspian coast. In several principalities the Shiites held political power over a Sunni populace. This was a source of recurrent political turmoil in the region, including during the era of the Russian takeover. Even these broad religious affiliations only occasionally proved strong enough to rally support from various groups in pursuit of some common goal. Under most circumstances political loyalty was atomized into groups centered around a tribe or a powerful family. For example, the Kabardans belonged to the larger Circassian (or Adyghe) group that inhabited the northwestern Caucasus. Sometime around the thirteenth century, a faction broke away and moved along the northern side of the Greater Caucasus to the area west of the Terek River. They eventually became known as Kabardans from the name of one of their chiefs. A couple of centuries later, part of this group broke off and moved east of the Terek. These two groups not only fought each other but also were divided internally into warring factions that followed several powerful families, some of whom sought Russian backing while others sought Ottoman support. The kingdom of Georgia, which in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries had dominated much of the Caucasus and adjoining

territories, began to break up in the mid-fifteenth century. By the eighteenth century, as Russia began to take a serious interest in Georgian affairs, the kingdom had split into seven principalities. (The two eastern principalities were reunited in the middle of the century and became known as the Kingdom of Georgia.)

From the point of view of Russian expansion, the Caucasus could be divided into seven zones:

The north-central slopes of the Greater Caucasus, including Kabarda (the focus of much of Russia's early involvement in the region), Chechenia, and northern Ossetia. Most inhabitants of this region were Sunni Muslims except for the Ossetes, who adhered to their own distinctive variety of Orthodox Christianity.

The northeast, Daghestan (the "Land of Mountains"), inhabited by Qumuqs, Lesghis, and a great number of other, smaller groups. Sunni Muslims formed the majority but there were also Shiite and Jewish minorities. (Russia claimed sovereignty over most of these peoples by the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries but could not enforce the claim until well into the nineteenth.)

The northwest, between the Black Sea coast and the Kuban River, inhabited by the Circassians and others, all at least nominally Sunni Muslims. (This area remained under the control of the Ottoman Empire or its allies into the 1820s and was not effectively controlled by Russia until much later.)

The kingdom of Georgia, in the south-central zone. The Georgian Orthodox Church was the state religion; Armenians and Muslims formed significant minorities. (This kingdom was annexed by Russia in 1801, the first formal integration of Caucasian territory into the Russian Empire.)

The western zone, comprising three Georgian principalities at least nominally subject to the Ottoman Empire—Mingrelia, Imeretia, Guria—and Abkhazia. (Russia claimed this area in the early years of the nineteenth century; the Ottoman Empire formally recognized that claim in 1812.)

The southwest, especially the Ottoman *pashaliks* (provinces) of Akhaltsekhe and Kars, which had significant Georgian and Armenian populations. (Part of this zone was taken by Russia in the 1820s or later.)

The southeastern Caucasus (northern Azerbaijan), the Muslim-ruled khanates north of the Aras River between Georgia and the Caspian Sea. (Most of these khanates—Ganjeh,

Qarabagh, Shirvan, Shakki, Baku, Derbent, and Talesh—were acquired by Russia in 1813 but the two westernmost khanates, Yerevan and Nakhjavan, were not taken until 1828.)

All of the territory from the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus up to and including the Lesser Caucasus was known to the Russians as Transcaucasia.

Early Russian Contacts with the Caucasus

Russia's first attempt at playing a major role in Caucasian affairs took the form of a short-lived protectorate over the eastern Georgian kingdom of Kakheti. As happened so many times during the Russian takeover of the Caucasus, the initiative did not lie with the Russians themselves. Kakheti had already opened diplomatic contacts with Moscow at the end of the fifteenth century. In the middle of the sixteenth century, its king sought and obtained an assurance of protection from Ivan the Terrible. The tsar sent a Cossack retinue to the king but the Safavi government protested, so the Cossacks were quickly recalled and the protectorate forgotten.

Far more important because of the significance Russia ascribed to it was the relationship established with Kabarda at about the same time. Again Moscow responded to an outside initiative. The Kabardans were under pressure from the Ottomans' vassal, the khan of the Crimea, who strove to extend his authority over the northern Caucasus while the Ottomans themselves took control of the area south of the high mountains. The Kabardans were also at odds with the ruler (the shamkhal) of Tarqu, a Qumuq principality that dominated northern Daghestan. Like many Caucasian factions, these chieftains were accustomed to look for support from powerful outside rulers. Some of the Kabardan chiefs sided with the Crimeans, while their rivals, as well as the shamkhal of Tarqu, asked for Moscow's support. Although Moscow rebuffed the shamkhal (on the grounds that he was too friendly with the Ottomans), it received several embassies from different Kabardan factions beginning in 1552. The attraction for Moscow was that the Kabardans could prove useful against the Crimean Khanate, which was also Moscow's enemy. The chiefs who negotiated with Moscow claimed they were speaking for all Kabardans. Muscovite authorities coupled this information with their own view of the new military alliance

and concluded that all Kabarda was now subject to Moscow. By the early 1560s, Moscow had established a fort on the Terek River, the approximate northeastern frontier of the Caucasus, and provided military aid to its allies in Kabarda. A Russian presence developed spontaneously along the Terek in the late sixteenth century. Free Cossacks gradually began to settle north of the river and raided Crimean and Caucasian territory from their new camps. They became known as the Grebenskii Host and stayed in the region while the official Russian military presence came and went. In the same period, Ivan the Terrible married the daughter of one of the allied Kabardan chiefs.

Before long the tsar was forced to reconsider the wisdom of his Kabardan alliance as the Crimeans raided into the heart of Muscovy and with their Ottoman overlords staged an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Astrakhan. Moscow decided that it would be more prudent to avoid provoking the sultan and therefore abandoned the fort on the Terek in the early 1570s. At the same time the Ottomans and Crimeans extended their authority over much of the Caucasus, including Kabarda, where the power of the pro-Moscow faction was broken. From this time until the end of the 1580s there were further contacts between the Muscovites and some Kabardans as well as another brief attempt to establish a fort on the Terek, once again abandoned in response to Ottoman complaints. The first Muscovite–Kabardan accord for which the text has survived was made in 1588. (Only the Russian version survives; there are no Kabardan records of any of the transactions.) Once again, an individual Kabardan chief was represented as speaking for all Kabardans. The two powers agreed to provide military assistance against each other's enemies. The Kabardan chief recognized Tsar Fedor as his suzerain and the tsar recognized the chief and his heirs as the hereditary grand princes of all Kabarda.[1] (The title of "grand prince" was a Muscovite invention, reflecting that state's ideas of political centralization, not the fragmented nature of Kabardan authority.) At about the same time, Moscow established a new fort on the Terek. Military action against Tarqu initially went well for the Muscovites but soon turned into a rout. Then the pro-Russian Kabardan chief died and another episode of heated internecine warfare broke out. The anti-Muscovite faction prevailed; some pro-Muscovite chiefs were able to preserve enclaves of power and cooperate occasionally with Moscow but

the scope of relations remained limited. On the local level, Kabardans, other mountaineers, and Armenians traded with Russians at the Terek fort and settled in the village that grew up around it. Some Kabardans settled in Muscovy, where a number of magnates converted to Christianity, entered state service, and were assimilated into the Russian élite (including the princes Cherkaskii).

During the seventeenth century there were a few brief contacts between Muscovy and the rulers of several Georgian principalities about the possibility of a military alliance but all this came to nought since Moscow was not in a position to render any military assistance. Throughout the century the steppeland between the Caucasus and Muscovy's Don and Volga frontier was controlled by Crimeans, their allies, and other tribes, thus hindering Muscovite expansion to the south.

Peter the Great's Empire Building

During the reign of Peter the Great, Russia's involvement in Caucasian affairs reached an unprecedented level. This was partly the result of coincidences that worked to Russia's advantage, such as the collapse of the Safavi Empire and the willingness of some Kabardans, Georgians, and Armenians to cooperate with Russia against common foes. However, a crucial factor was the character of Peter himself, which led him to capitalize on these opportunities as he pursued ambitious goals. His drive to make Russia a major European military power and the belief he shared with many of his contemporaries that a state is strengthened by expansion led him to war against Russia's archenemies, the Ottoman Empire and the Crimea. Consequently he sought the cooperation of Caucasian rulers in fighting these powerful adversaries. Moreover, his interest in the keys to western Europe's strength and prosperity led him to admire Europe's commercial empires in Asia. For this reason he sought to fashion a Russian equivalent to those overseas colonies out of the Caucasian and Caspian provinces of the moribund Safavi Empire. He expected such an achievement to have the further salutary effect of preventing an Ottoman advance into the same region.

Peter began to act on his Caucasian ambitions in 1711, while his troops battled Ottoman allies along the lower Kuban River

(and he fought the main Ottoman army in the Pruth campaign). That year he sent an emissary to the Kabardans and declared Kabarda under Russian protection, its inhabitants Russian subjects. The following year some Kabardans went to Moscow and essentially accepted Peter's claim. (They were particularly interested in Russian military aid against the Ottomans and Crimeans.) Peter would have liked to send troops to Kabarda but was unable at any point in his reign to exert effective authority there. A devastating Crimean raid on Kabarda in 1720 was conducted with impunity. All the Russian border commanders could do was to intervene weakly in the continuing internal power struggles, take oaths of loyalty from some chiefs, and keep at the Terek hostages the chiefs provided. (The taking of hostages as a pledge of good faith was a widespread practice in the Caucasus. It was extremely rare for a hostage to be harmed in the event of disloyalty by the person who sent him. A more likely course was for the hostage to be used as a competitor for the ruler's position.) In any event, Russia's concessions to the Ottoman Empire, notably the surrender of Azov and the promise not to meddle in Ottoman affairs, made by Peter in the peace settlement of 1711, reduced his ability as well as his inclination to provoke the Ottomans by further involvement in the parts of the Caucasus where Ottoman interests were strong.

Peter's attention shifted eastward to the Safavi Empire and its Caucasian borderlands at a time when developments there seemed to bode well for his success. Peter hoped to make Russia the dominant intermediary in East–West trade, expanding on the role Muscovy had once played before several European countries established direct sea routes to the markets of India and points east. His goal was to create a trading colony on the western and southern shores of the Caspian Sea and thus give Russia its own version of the western Europeans' various East India Companies. In 1717 Peter's governor of Astrakhan negotiated a commercial treaty with the Safavi government. The Russian ambassador also brought back information on the sharp decline in Safavi strength. This encouraged Peter to think in terms of military intervention in Iran's northern provinces with or without the shah's assent.

Such measures were not possible until Russia was finally rid of the burdens of the Great Northern War, which was concluded in 1721. By then events were under way which would prompt Peter to launch one last war. That year Daghestani tribesmen staged a

destructive raid on the khanate of Shirvan in northern Azerbaijan. The motive for the attack was the Sunni mountaineers' opposition to the Safavis' militantly Shiite policies but in the process some Russian merchants living in Shirvan were killed and much Russian property carried off. Peter now organized a campaign aimed at subduing the territories along the Caspian coast from the Terek River in the northwest to Astarabad in the extreme southeast. He also hoped to gain control of territory further inland in the Caucasus through joint action with local leaders. Several Georgians and Armenians had proposed military cooperation to the Russians. Foremost among these prospective allies was King Vakhtang of the east Georgian state of Kartli. Though regarded by the Safavis as governor of an imperial province, he had tried to minimize Iranian authority over his realm ever since he came to the throne in 1711. In 1721 he proposed a military alliance to Russia. Peter responded favorably and recommended that their two armies join forces in Shirvan. The Georgians and Armenians marshaled their troops and waited for the Russians to arrive.

Late in the summer of 1722, a Russian force of more than 100,000 men sailed from Astrakhan to the mouth of the Terek. Iran was in no position to oppose this threat from the north because the country had already been invaded by a powerful Afghan tribe. The capital was besieged and in October fell to the invaders, who killed the shah. Iran quickly slipped into chaos. As Peter led his troops south through Daghestan, the shamkhal of Tarqu and some Lesghi chiefs adapted to the changing situation by putting themselves under Russian protection. Peter established new fortifications along the route, including Fort Holy Cross on the border of Tarqu. A village subject to Russian authority grew up around this fort as Cossacks, merchants, and nomadic tribesmen from the mountains and steppes settled in the area. By the end of September Peter had reached Derbent, which surrendered to the Russians and was occupied by them. Now Peter decided to interrupt the campaign and return to Russia. He had encountered great difficulty in obtaining supplies, large numbers of his soldiers were falling ill, and the Ottomans threatened war unless the Russians withdrew. Leaving behind a small garrison in Derbent, Peter led the rest of his men back to Russia. He never returned to the Caucasus, although Russian troops were sent within the year to garrison Baku on the west

coast of the Caspian and part of Gilan on the south coast. Russians were assisted in the administration of the occupied territories by locally powerful figures. Thus in Derbent the khan surrendered to the Russians and continued in office, while in Baku the former commander of the Safavi garrison reached an accommodation with his new masters. Peter talked of sending troops to aid Vakhtang, whose situation had become desperate, but in fact there was no attempt to join forces with the Georgians and Armenians.

In the meantime the Ottomans also profited from the Safavi collapse by sending troops into eastern Georgia and Azerbaijan. King Vakhtang lost power to a relative who opportunely sought Ottoman backing. Vakhtang, several of his kin, and more than a thousand other Georgians fled to Russia. Many entered Russian service and were accepted into the Russian élite. Some of the Armenians who had looked forward to the coming of the Russians took shelter in the mountains. The Russian authorities encouraged the emigration of Georgians and Armenians from the Caucasus to Gilan. In 1730, with Russian power on the wane in Gilan, the settlers were transferred to Russian-held territory on the west coast of the Caspian.

Eventually the Russians and Ottomans resolved their differences by partitioning western and northern Iran. The Ottomans recognized Russia's claim to the western and southern coasts to the Caspian. In return the Russians recognized Ottoman authority over the rest of Azerbaijan, all of the Georgian states, and much of the remainder of western Iran as well. There was no mention of Russia's claim to suzerainty over Kabarda; therefore the Ottomans did not regard the claim as legally binding.[2]

The Decline of Russian Influence

After the death of Peter the Great early in 1725 Russia's interest and authority in the Caucasus declined. Some more posts were established along the western and southern coasts of the Caspian but the plan to occupy the rest of the southern coast was never fulfilled. Russian troops occasionally fought in Daghestan and obtained the temporary submission of a few chiefs but these gains were all short-lived. When a powerful Daghestani chief, the khan of the Avars, volunteered his submission, his offer was rejected on the grounds that his homeland was too remote and of too little

use to the Russians.[3] With increasing frequency Daghestanis cut Russian communications along the coast. In areas occupied by Russia the situation was not particularly encouraging. The hoped-for commercial boom had not developed; the cost of maintaining the Russian colonies vastly exceeded the revenue they produced. Moreover the Russians suffered terribly from illnesses, which were rampant in the Caspian lowlands. More than 100,000 Russians died, the vast majority from disease, between the start of Peter's campaign in 1722 and the withdrawal of the last Russian troops south of the Terek in 1735.

The most serious threat to the survival of Russia's Caspian outposts was the revival of the Iranian state under the son of the former shah and a powerful tribal chief. By the end of the 1720s most of Iran south of the Caucasus had been reunited under a centralized authority. Russian authorities entered into negotiations with the shah's representatives and formulated the Treaty of Rasht (ratified in 1732), according to which Russia waived its claim to any territory south of the Kura River. This included the cession of outposts in the southeastern Caucasus that Russia had hoped to develop into fishing and trading centers.[4] Empress Anna's government entertained elaborate dreams of expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and Iran. In connection with these, the refugee king, Vakhtang, was sent to Astrakhan in 1734 to plan Russian conquests in Azerbaijan, but the undertaking was a mere pipedream. All the while, Iranian forces were at work reestablishing authority over the parts of the Caucasus traditionally claimed by the Safavis. With most of the Russian troops already withdrawn from the Caucasian ports, a new treaty, the Treaty of Ganjeh, was negotiated. Its ratification in 1735 marked the end of the Russian presence south of the Terek River.[5] As a consequence of this pullback, the Terek frontier, which had already been buttressed by Peter's relocation of some Don Cossacks to its banks, was now further strengthened by the establishment of a new fort, Kizliar, which served henceforth as the base for Russia's dealings with the eastern Caucasus.

Russia ceased to play an active role in the affairs of the southern or eastern Caucasus until the reign of Catherine the Great. In the 1740s a few short-lived vassalage agreements with Daghestani chiefs were concluded but Russia's position in Daghestan remained extremely weak. Pleas for Russian military aid from the kings of the west Georgian principality of Imeretia

and the east Georgian principality of Kartli in the 1730s, 1750s, and early 1760s were rebuffed, primarily because of the concern that such intervention might provoke a greater degree of Ottoman activity in the southern Caucasus.

Russia's position in the northern Caucasus also suffered in the period between the reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. Ottomans, Crimeans, and their local allies in the mountains and the steppes to the north raided across the northern Caucasus many times in the late 1720s and the 1730s and engaged in a few small clashes with Russian forces in the process. The power struggle within Kabarda was especially acute. Chiefs who looked to Russia for support were hard pressed and could obtain from St. Petersburg no more than modest financial aid and ineffective diplomatic protests to the Ottomans for encouraging other chiefs. By the early 1730s the Ottomans were particularly insistent about their Caucasian claims because they were concerned about the revival of Iranian strength, in the Caucasus and elsewhere. The waning Russian presence there could not possibly check the Iranians yet might still be an obstacle to an Ottoman campaign against Iran by the traditional route across the northern Caucasus (including Kabarda) to the Caspian coast. The Ottomans also believed Russia was encouraging the Iranians and Georgians to undermine Ottoman authority in the southern Caucasus. (The two empires were also at odds over Poland.)

War between Russia and the Ottoman Empire broke out in 1735, when Anna's ambitious favorite, Count Münnich, invaded the Crimea. The most important battles were staged outside the Caucasus; within the region, Russian strategy concentrated on preventing the opposition from advancing east of the Kuban River. The war was eventually fought to a draw. The Treaty of Belgrade, which ended the conflict in 1739, contained an article that dealt with the status of Kabarda. In the face of unrelenting Ottoman opposition, Russia had already dropped its insistence on suzerainty over Kabarda (based on the sixteenth-century agreements). Instead the two empires agreed on a formula Russia had devised before the start of the war: the independence of Kabarda from Russia and the Ottoman Empire alike. Neither the Porte nor Russia could intervene in Kabarda's internal affairs, although both could take hostages as a guarantee against hostile actions and could punish offenses.[6] The treaty also referred to

"Greater" and "Lesser" Kabarda because by the eighteenth century Russia assumed that the region was divided into two distinct entities: Lesser Kabarda, more pro-Russian, to the east of the Terek, and Greater Kabarda to the west. However, this arbitrary distinction had nothing to do with Kabardan realities. Within a decade Russia violated the agreement by repeated efforts to mediate Kabarda's internal wars, which did indeed abate until the late 1750s.

Catherine the Great and the Intensification of Russia's Involvement in the Caucasus

The accession of Catherine the Great returned Russia to an aggressively expansionist policy towards the Caucasus. Although her approach was reminiscent of Peter the Great's, his activities influenced her only in the general sense of encouraging an interest in the region and demonstrating the possibility of successful operations there. Certainly Peter's treaty with the Ottoman Empire, by which he recognized Ottoman authority over all the Caucasus except the eastern coast, was a precedent best forgotten from St. Petersburg's point of view. The resemblance between the policies of Catherine and Peter resulted from the similarity of some of their central beliefs. Both rulers shared the widespread assumption that territorial expansion was an important component of a nation's greatness. They saw the Ottoman Empire as Russia's political and economic nemesis. They admired western Europe's overseas colonies and hoped to use the Caucasus in a similar fashion. Catherine, the avid reader of Enlightenment authors, further justified the extension of Russian authority in the Caucasus on the grounds that this would introduce the benefits of civilization to a region that had known only Asian barbarism. At least as important as the two rulers' predisposition to follow an expansionist course in this region was the fact that many of their undertakings were responses to developments over which they had little control.

Catherine's policy towards the Caucasus in the early years of her reign was a more energetic continuation of her predecessors' actions in the north-central zone. Until the 1780s, she continued to regard the eastern zones as subject to Iran and was ambivalent about the usefulness of the Georgian states to her ambitions. The end of Elizabeth's reign and the brief reign of Peter III saw the

gradual development of a line of forts, known as the Caucasian Line, extending westward along the Terek River from Kizliar. Catherine continued the project and allocated additional funds. She also encouraged the settlement along the Line of mountaineers (especially those willing to convert to Christianity) as well as Armenians. The settlers were allowed autonomy in administering their internal affairs with oversight by commanders of the Russian posts along the line. Many Kabardan chiefs were unhappy about the fort construction because the westernmost outpost, Mozdok (about 150 miles upstream from Kizliar), symbolized a claim to valuable Kabardan pastureland. Kabardan and Ottoman protests about the buildup of the Line stimulated the declaration of an aggressive policy by the College of Foreign Affairs, which argued that Mozdok was "far from the natural borders of Kabarda" and that since Kabarda lay between the Russian and Ottoman Empires its borders had to coincide with the interests of those two major powers.[7]

Russia sought to strengthen its position in the north-central zone by other means as well. The government encouraged the Christianization of the Ossetes and Ingushes through the activities of Georgian and, to a lesser degree, Russian missionaries. The conversions proceeded at a slow rate, though fast enough to alarm Kabardan chiefs, who saw their considerable influence in Ossetia being undercut by the proselytization and also by the emigration of converted Ossetes and Ingushes to the Caucasian Line. The growth of the Line also attracted Kabardan peasants and slaves, whose masters repeatedly asked for the fugitives' return, to no avail. Russia was interested in winning over the Kabardan élite, welcoming conversions and also emigration to the Line. Moreover Catherine favored the conversion and Russification of Kabardan, Ossete, and other Caucasian hostages held at the Line, on the grounds that this would civilize them. In 1765 a government school designed to teach mountaineers the Russian language and Russian values was founded. The experiment evoked a weak response and was soon abandoned. A similar effort was made in 1777.

Just at this time, when Kabardan opposition to Russia reached new heights, with Kabardans attacking Russian settlements, outside developments strengthened Russia's position there. In 1768 the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia. Emboldened by early victories, Catherine decided in 1771 to press Russia's

claim to Kabarda. She argued that the region had been Russia's vassal since the sixteenth century—the notion of Kabardan independence being a recent aberration. In 1772 Russia installed its candidate as khan of Crimea. He obliged Russia by signing a treaty that included the cession of Kabarda to Russia. When Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed the peace treaty of Küçük Kainarca two years later, the Russians insisted on a provision leaving the status of Kabarda up to the Crimea because of the proximity of those two territories. The Porte objected and also denied the validity of the Russo-Crimean treaty but had no alternative save yielding to Russia's demands. Thus Catherine viewed Russia's suzerainty over Kabarda as sanctioned by international law. She informed the Kabardans that they were now Russian subjects but that she would not interfere in their internal affairs unless they provoked her. The Kabardans were not mollified. Continued settlement along the Caucasian Line drove increasing numbers of Kabardan leaders to oppose Russia. They raided the Line repeatedly and for a few years limited Russian troops to modest defensive measures.

The outbreak of war with the Ottoman Empire also encouraged Russian interest in the Georgian states. Overtures by King Solomon I of Imeretia shortly before the outbreak of the war evoked no enthusiasm from Russia but after the war began the College of Foreign Affairs saw that the strong anti-Ottoman sentiments of that king as well as King Erekle of Georgia might be useful. Russian troops, aided by Solomon and Erekle, attacked Ottoman positions on the western coast of the Caucasus. Unfortunately for the Russians and Georgians, the campaign was a disaster. Communications between Russia and the front were difficult because the only available route was the narrow path through the center of the Greater Caucasus. Military operations were commanded by the unstable and incompetent General von Todtleben, who behaved badly towards Solomon and Erekle and led his troops to decisive defeat against the Ottomans. Catherine rewarded with medals the two kings for their cooperation but had renewed doubts about the value of the southern Caucasus to Russia. She particularly suspected Erekle of trying to exploit Russia to expand his own realm. Erekle's request that Georgia be taken under Russian protection was denied during the war, as was a later request that Russia send him troops. The Treaty of Küçük Kainarca contained a vague

statement that territory which had not formerly been part of the Ottoman Empire would not become part of it in the wake of this treaty. Russia had in mind parts of western Georgia but the wording was so unclear that nothing was resolved. In any case, Russia still recognized the Ottoman Empire's right to maintain forts on the coast of the west Georgian principalities. For the rest of her reign, even during her second war with the Porte (1787–1792), Catherine forbade Russian initiatives in the southern Caucasus in order to avoid antagonizing the Ottomans.

Catherine's wariness of expansion in the Caucasus was demonstrated by events in Daghestan in 1775. She wanted to avenge the death of a German explorer who had been held captive by a Daghestani khan. Accordingly the commandant of Kizliar decided to make war on the khan. The fighting went badly for the Russians, who advanced to Derbent but were surrounded there and caught short of troops. Catherine was furious with her general for behaving much more aggressively than she had intended. She argued that long efforts to win the goodwill of the Daghestanis could be sabotaged by his actions and that the expedition raised the threat of war not only with the local tribes but also with Iran and the Ottoman Empire. In any event, she believed Russia had no claim to Derbent or Daghestan since the whole area was rightfully subject to Iran. Catherine ordered the expedition's immediate return to Kizliar.

From the late 1770s on, the scope of Russia's involvement in the Caucasus increased. Catherine herself became more favorably disposed to such a course. Direction of Russia's Caucasian affairs was entrusted to an even more ardent proponent of expansion, Prince Gregory Potemkin. Potemkin was an extremely ambitious man who had risen from the ranks of the minor provincial nobility to become Catherine's favorite for a few years and one of the most powerful people in all of Russia. The ambition that encouraged him to expand his viceroyalty in southern Russia at the expense of Russia's Muslim neighbors further south was also stimulated by his early theological studies, which taught him to abhor the subjugation of Christians to Muslim rule. He looked forward to the creation of Georgian and Armenian states under Russian tutelage. (This was different from his dream of creating an independent Christian kingdom of "Dacia," with himself as king, out of the Ottoman provinces around the lower Danube. Dacia was to be his own power base, not contingent upon the

favor of his aging sovereign. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire was perceived as a far more formidable opponent than the small states of the south-central Caucasus.) Yet for all their solicitousness towards the Caucasian Christians, Catherine and Potemkin guided Russian policy along the lines of their own country's best interests, defined in purely secular terms as political and economic gains at the expense of the Ottomans and Iranians. The substitution of Russian for Muslim hegemony over Christians was relevant only to the extent that this coincided with existing policy.[8]

Potemkin's first major undertaking in the Caucasus was to build up the defenses of the Caucasian Line to increase security against the Ottomans on the northeastern coast of the Black Sea and the Muslim tribesmen living on the steppe between the Caucasus and the lower Don and Volga. Therefore in 1777 he ordered the construction of more forts along the Caucasian Line and extended it much further westward towards Azov. Several new forts were located on the northern edge of pasturelands claimed by the Kabardans. In addition to the settlements that developed spontaneously around the new forts, Potemkin initiated a policy of state-directed transfers to establish impoverished nobles, state peasants, retired soldiers, Volga Germans, and others in the vicinity of the Line. He also had Catherine grant estates there to nobles in her favor. Among the recipients was Prince Alexander Bezborodko, Catherine's secretary and political adviser.

The increased development of the Line, in addition to the existing disputes, drove many Kabardan chiefs, including some who had formerly been pro-Russian, into open hostility. Some of the chiefs protested that although they had been under Russian protection since the reign of Ivan the Terrible, they had never been and should not now be Russian subjects.[9] The Kabardans' reaction took the form of mass migrations to more remote mountain areas, especially to Ottoman territory west of the Kuban River, and raids on the Caucasian Line. There was nothing Russia could do to stop the raids, which occasionally resulted in serious casualties and loss of property, until reinforcements reached the Line in 1779. Russia's punitive expedition in Kabarda did not make a strong impression by itself, but the massing of Russian troops at the Kabardan frontier convinced a number of chiefs to sue for peace.

Catherine and her subordinates wanted to punish the Kabardans and therefore imposed terms designed to break the power of the Kabardan leadership, while giving Russia a say in the area's internal affairs. All Kabardan chiefs were required to take an oath of loyalty to Russia and provide Russia with tribute in cash, thousands of head of livestock, and food for Russian soldiers. St. Petersburg redefined the Kabardan border, giving parts of northern Kabarda to Russia. The chiefs were prohibited from preventing their subjects' voluntary conversion to Christianity. Ordinary Kabardans were allowed to settle on the Russian side of the border even if their masters objected; Russia encouraged the migration particularly of those whose chiefs were anti-Russian. (Prince Potemkin hoped this settlement policy would increase the population of the Line and bolster its security.) The chiefs of "Lesser Kabarda" were made to promise further not to oppress their bondsmen or punish them for voicing just complaints. (This measure was aimed at weakening the power of the élite, not protecting the Kabardan bondsmen, as can be seen from the fact that this policy was inaugurated thirteen years after Catherine had decreed an end to the Russian serfs' right of petition.) In effect Russian authorities made themselves the judges of chiefs' actions.

Over the next few years Russia continued to build forts ringed by new settlements along the Line as well as deeper into Kabardan and Chechen territory along the road across the mountains to Georgia. Kabardan chiefs protested the continued emigration of their subjects to the Line but took no action when their protests brought no results. Also in the early 1780s a number of Chechen leaders put themselves under Russian protection and sent hostages to the Line.

Russian attempts to win over the north Caucasians continued during the 1780s. Prince Potemkin arranged to have a dozen Kabardan nobles as salaried members of his entourage. He also tried to organize militias composed of separate Kabardan, Ossete, and Ingush units. Local chiefs serving in the militia were to receive Russian military ranks and salaries. Only the Kabardan unit was ever organized and it fell apart at the outset of the next Russo-Ottoman war in 1787.

Russia's annexation of the Crimea, engineered by Potemkin in 1783, netted Russia the steppelands north of the western Caucasus. Russia now claimed direct authority over all lands up

to the Kuban River. With the growth of Russia's holdings north of the Caucasus some administrative reforms were needed. The old *guberniia* of the Caucasus, administered from Astrakhan, had been designed to handle the modest Russian presence on the northeastern edge of the mountains. That system had already been rendered obsolete by the extension of the Line and the growth of settlements along it. Earlier in Catherine's reign additional administrative centers had been established at posts along the Line. Now Potemkin transformed the old *guberniia* into the Viceroyalty of the Caucasus, with his relative, Paul Potemkin, as the first viceroy. Russia's subsequent territorial gains in the Caucasus were put under the jurisdiction of the viceroyalty. Its capital was initially at the Line, first at Ekaterinograd, then at Georgievsk, both west of Mozdok. In the early nineteenth century the capital was moved to the Georgian city of Tbilisi.

The Russian Protectorate over Georgia

In the early 1780s Prince Potemkin led Russia to a much greater degree of involvement in the affairs of the southern Caucasus. The situation seemed favorable for Russia, especially since the kings of Imeretia and Georgia still hoped to find allies to help them handle their perennial difficulties. Prince Potemkin offered no more than expressions of goodwill in response to King Solomon's requests for protection out of concern to avoid provoking the Porte. There was less need for caution in dealing with King Erekle since Iran was preoccupied by internal disorders and therefore was unlikely to be able to oppose changes on its northwestern frontier. Erekle had already tried unsuccessfully to obtain the support of France and Austria when Prince Potemkin began encouraging him to seek Russian protection. Negotiations soon produced the Treaty of Georgievsk (1783). By its terms Russia promised to protect Georgia (as well as establish a garrison there) and also recognized Erekle and his heirs as the country's legitimate rulers. Erekle disavowed the sovereignty of any other monarch and agreed to conduct his foreign relations under Russian tutelage. Domestic matters remained under the king's jurisdiction although the Georgian Orthodox Church was incorporated into the Russian church administrative system (the Holy Synod). Russia named Erekle's fourth son, who was already

a monk, head of the Georgian Church and also backed Erekle's claim to adjoining Azerbaijani and Ottoman territories. Erekle reported to Prince Potemkin that Caucasian Christians and Muslims, too, hoped Russia would take control of the whole region.[10]

Encouraged by this success Prince Potemkin conceived a plan to make Georgian and Armenian principalities subject to Russia. He intended to take the Azerbaijani khanates with large Armenian minorities (Ganjeh, Qarabagh, Yerevan, and Nakhjavan), remove the Muslims rulers, and then from this enlarged Russian foothold in the Caucasus conquer the Ottoman Empire's Armenian provinces as well. Prince Gregory was already in communication with the head of the Armenian Church, the catholicos of Echmiadzin, and expected the Russian economy to benefit from acquiring so many new Armenian subjects with their international commercial ties.

The Prince might have made at least some progress towards his goal had it not been for the arrogance toward Caucasian Muslims that was a characteristic of Russia's policies in the region throughout the takeover. Erekle encouraged his ally and neighbor to the southeast, the khan of Qarabagh, to contact Paul Potemkin in order to make an agreement similar to the Treaty of Georgievsk. However, Paul Potemkin's response (endorsed by Prince Gregory) to the khan's overtures was to demand submission without negotiation and to threaten to conquer the khanate. Catherine would have preferred a less hostile approach. She believed that an agreement similar in spirit to the one made with Erekle would have served Russia's interests admirably by demonstrating the benefits of Russian suzerainty to the peoples of the whole region. In any event, her advice arrived too late to undo the damage; the khan was no longer interested in a *rapprochement* with Russia. Moreover Prince Potemkin had to postpone his plans for a military campaign to realize his Caucasian ambitions because the annexation of the Crimea raised the danger of war with the Ottoman Empire.

Russia established a garrison in Georgia in accordance with the Treaty of Georgievsk but the Russian presence created more problems than it solved. Erekle, reassured by the new garrison, stopped paying protection money to some powerful Daghestanis. As a result the offended tribesmen conducted devastating raids in Georgia between 1785 and 1787. The small Russian garrison

could not control the situation nor could reinforcements be sent from the Line because inhabitants of the northern Caucasus had cut the road across the mountains. Between the devastation of Georgia and the interruption of communications with the Line, the two Russian battalions in Georgia were reduced not only to ineffectiveness but also to near starvation. In 1787 Russia decided the garrison in Georgia served the interests of neither country and recalled the troops. Paul Potemkin did carry out improvements on the road across the Caucasus, which became known as the Georgian Military Highway. Yet the route remained as hazard-prone as before.

The Russians learned an important lesson which guided their Caucasian policy henceforth: if Russia was to play any role in the affairs of the southern Caucasus it would have to ensure communications with that area by taking control of all the territory between Georgia and the Caspian Sea. (The Black Sea and western Caucasus did not constitute an acceptable alternate route because of the danger posed by Ottoman military strength there.)

Holy War against Russia

The fighting that had severed communications between Georgia and the Line was by far the most serious opposition the Russians had yet faced in the northern Caucasus—the holy war of Sheykh Mansur. Not only were more tribes rallied around a single objective than ever before but also more people at all levels within the tribes were involved. Unlike many of the Caucasian wars, this was not simply a rivalry among élites. Under the sheykh's leadership, most of the peoples throughout the Caucasus made common cause in defense of Islam and against the Russians. The defense of Islam was more than a theological issue to the holy warriors, some of whom were only recently and superficially converted. Islam represented a whole way of life that was threatened by the growth of Russian power in the northern Caucasus. The Russians themselves used religion in a political sense by attempting to extend Russian influence by spreading Christianity among the mountaineers. The political significance of religion was intensified further by Russian policy since the Treaty of Küçük Kainarca, in which Russia laid the basis for its claim to be the protector of the Ottoman Empire's Christian subjects. The

sultan responded by new assertions of his role as protector of all Sunni Muslims. Most Islamic religious leaders in the northern Caucasus came from the Ottoman Empire and were inclined to spread this view of Muslim–Christian rivalry, linked to opposing Russian imperial expansion. The more Russian strength in the Caucasus grew, the more hostile many mountaineers became. In addition to the loss of territory to the Russians and Russian involvement in the mountaineers' internal affairs, tensions were raised by frequent raiding by inhabitants on both sides of the border. Raids by Russian subjects on mountaineers went unpunished by authorities of the Line but raids by mountaineers on Russian subjects led to punitive expeditions in which homes were destroyed and flocks driven off. Moreover the Russian authorities did not bother to aim such expeditions at the individuals responsible; any "native" was fair game.

Sheykh Mansur first came to note in Chechenia in 1785, calling on all Caucasian Muslims to follow him in a holy war (*jihad*) against the "lawless" Russians. The Avars soon joined the fighting, as did the Kabardans, Qumuqs, and Nogays later in the year. Both sides used the style of warfare to which they were accustomed. The Russians fought in contemporary European style, emphasizing the use of infantry, formal battles, and superior fire-power. They also employed scorched-earth tactics, though it is arguable that these did as much to drive mountaineers into Mansur's camp as to intimidate them into submitting. The mountaineers used cavalry and hit-and-run raids. They were no match for the Russian forts. While Mansur had the support of most of the northern mountain tribes from the Black Sea to the Caspian, their participation came at different times, not in one great concerted effort. Thus both sides had the ability to inflict considerable damage on their opponents without being able to achieve a quick and decisive victory. Under such conditions time was on the Russians' side. The failure to achieve a speedy victory and the reemergence of intertribal rivalries led to a waning of support among the Chechens and Daghestanis by the later part of 1785. In the second year of the war Mansur's strength was centered in Kabarda. After Russian victories there, he fled to Ottoman territory west of the Kuban, which served as his base of operations for the following two years.

In the meantime war had broken out between Russia and the Ottoman Empire over the issues of Russia's annexation of the

Crimea and growing involvement in the Caucasus and Danubian provinces. Once again the most important battles were fought outside the Caucasus. Sheykh Mansur joined forces with the Ottoman undertaking on this front, the drive across the northern Caucasus in 1790. The drive was stopped short at the border of Kabarda by a big Russian victory (in which some Kabardans fought on the Russian side). The following year the Russians took the key Ottoman fortress of Anapa on the northeastern coast of the Black Sea. Sheykh Mansur was captured and sent to Russia, where he was imprisoned until his death three years later. The Treaty of Jassy, which ended the Russo-Ottoman war, brought Russia no territorial gains in the Caucasus. Both sides agreed that all territory south and west of the Kuban (including Anapa) should revert to the Ottomans.[12]

Attempts to Consolidate Russia's Position

After the war Russia set about strengthening its position in the northern Caucasus. The new commander of the Caucasian Line, Ivan Gudovich, built a series of forts close to the Kuban and, in the face of considerable opposition, forcibly resettled a few thousand Don Cossacks there. Extensive grants of land near the Caucasian Line were made to Russian notables. However, the government was unwilling to incur the expense of resettling peasants in the viceroyalty, preferring to let voluntary movement supply the needed settlers. Nonetheless the rate of privately organized settlement was slow. There were about 24,000 adult male serfs and state peasants in the province at the beginning of the 1790s. By the early nineteenth century there were only about 4,000 more and the Russian authorities were concerned with blocking the emigration of peasants from the viceroyalty to Siberia.[13]

Gudovich also wanted to stabilize Kabarda by establishing Russian-directed law and order. Catherine, following Gudovich's recommendations, authorized a new Kabardan policy in 1792. Her orders restated themes that were characteristic of her overall Caucasian policy: her belief in the beneficial impact of well-ordered Russian justice and her confidence that the example of Russia's benevolent presence would win the loyalty of the Caucasians. On a more specific level she ordered Gudovich to end the Cossack raids that so antagonized the Kabardans, and

authorized him to carry out his proposed legal reforms. Kabarda was to have a new court system composed of several panels of chiefs and lesser notables elected by their peers and rendering verdicts in accordance with their own laws. However, all major crimes as well as appeals from the Kabardan courts would come under the jurisdiction of a new Supreme Frontier Court at Mozdok. This court included Kabardans as well as Georgian, Armenia, and Tatar representatives but had a Russian officer as president, participation by additional Russian officials, and followed Russian law. The Kabardans rejected the new court system and in 1794 began fighting the Russians once more. Gudovich tried to force acceptance of the judicial reforms by staging harsh punitive expeditions. Some Kabardan chiefs were held prisoner at the Line; the rest were made to swear loyalty to Russia again and to promise not to oppress their subjects. Any chief who withdrew into the high mountains (to be further from Russian authority) would lose his peasants and slaves, who would be taken under direct Russian authority. Despite this attempt to increase Russian control over Kabarda, skirmishes between the mountaineers and the forces at the Line continued over the coming years. Russian influence over Kabarda's internal affairs remained weak.

While Russians thought they had gained the upper hand in Kabarda, events in the southern Caucasus forced St. Petersburg to reexamine its commitment to the whole region. Catherine did not want Russia to be dragged into the common local feuds or any project that was not clearly beneficial to Russia, but she did want Gudovich to protect Georgia in the event of a serious threat. In 1795 Georgia was truly in danger from the man who had made himself master of the greater part of Iran. The separate enclaves into which Iran had been divided since the mid-century had been conquered by the ruthless leader of the Qajar tribe, Aqa Mohammad Khan. He was determined to add Georgia and northern Azerbaijan to his domains since these had been economically valuable and symbolically prestigious parts of the Safavi Empire. King Erekle knew that a large army was directed against Georgia and asked Gudovich for help, but the general sneered at Erekle's supposed alarmism and refused to take action unless Catherine gave him a specific order to do so. Erekle in desperation agreed to accept help from the Ottoman Empire, with which he was generally on poor terms, but no aid was

actually provided. In October 1795 the Georgian army abandoned its unequal though valiant struggle against Aqa Mohammad. Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, and much of the surrounding area was plundered and devastated. Some Georgian civilians were killed and perhaps as many as 15,000 were carried off into slavery by the departing Iranian army. (Many parts of northern Azerbaijan were also occupied at the same time.) Now Gudovich talked blood and thunder, describing the campaign as the equivalent of an attack on Russia and calling for war with Iran. Catherine took a similar view, although she disappointed Gudovich by giving command of the expedition to Valerian Zubov, the younger brother of her current favorite. The far more gifted Alexander Suvorov had been offered the command first but had turned it down, a reflection of the low opinion that many Russians held of service in the Caucasus.

Catherine justified the forthcoming war as serving the interests not only of Russia but also of the inhabitants of the areas to be conquered. She expected Russia to obtain preeminence in East–West trade by establishing the most direct trade route via Iran. She also believed Russian conquest would save the people of Iran and the Caucasus from the brutal oppression of Aqa Mohammad. To oppose the establishment of benign Russian rule was, in the tsaritsa's eyes, a great moral evil.[14]

The 1796 campaign was designed to do even more than the one left unfinished by Peter the Great. Young Zubov was to proceed along the Caspian coast through Daghestan and northern Azerbaijan while additional Russian forces in Georgia strengthened defenses there and provided support to pro-Russian khans and Armenian leaders in the adjoining principalities. All territories from Georgia east were to be brought under Russian suzerainty either by consent or force. The khanate of Yerevan, the historical and religious heart of Armenia, was to be left along because its proximity to the Ottoman border raised the danger of war with the Porte. Moreover the elimination of Muslim rule over Armenians in Azerbaijan would have to be postponed indefinitely, because Russia did not want to commit the many additional resources that would be required to overthrow khans who might otherwise accept Russian suzerainty. After settling matters in the Caucasus, Zubov was to proceed to the heart of Iran, overthrow Aqa Mohammad, and place a docile client of Russia on the throne.

Zubov was full of optimism as he began the campaign in April 1796. He boasted that he would reach Esfahan by September. (Apparently he did not know that this was no longer the Iranian capital, which the Qajars had moved to Tehran.) In fact he never advanced beyond the Caucasus and was lucky to escape major troubles. The campaign was mishandled from the start. The collection and delivery of supplies of all sorts were bungled. Too few troops were allocated even for the first stage of the campaign. Gudovich was piqued at being denied command of the operation and therefore did as little as he dared to help Zubov. (Gudovich was recalled from the Caucasus later in the year.) The Russians had great difficulty maneuvering and fighting in the rough Caucasian terrain. Their situation was made still more difficult by the hit-and-run attacks of inhabitants opposed to the Russian presence.

Zubov's major achievement was obtaining the submission of most of the rulers of Daghestan and northern Azerbaijan. This was accomplished for the most part without the use of force. In fact there was fighting only in three khanates and Russian troops occupied but a fraction of the territory in question. Elsewhere the khans submitted voluntarily for a combination of motives, principally opposition to Aqa Mohammad or the absence of alternative courses of action: Aqa Mohammad could not protect his supporters in the Caucasus because he was engaged in battle at the other end of Iran; Ottoman help was not forthcoming; and the anti-Russian alliances among local rulers had proven ineffectual. Zubov made no significant alterations in the internal administrations of the khanates. In the few places where khans were deposed (Derbent, Qobbeh, and Shirvan), Zubov recognized the authority of other local notables.

The 1796 campaign was halted abruptly after Catherine's death in November of that year. Her son, Paul, canceled the undertaking, not only because he took pleasure in countermanding his mother's orders but also because he perceived the grave problems underlying the bold rhetoric. Zubov's men were out of the region by the spring of 1797. The Russians' departure left many Armenians in an awkward position with their enthusiasm for a Russian takeover revealed. As a result there was a wave of Armenian emigration to Russia. With the return of Aqa Mohammad later in the year, many of the rulers who had lately submitted to Russia now either submitted to the shah or were

ousted. Yet this did not resolve the struggle for the south-central and southeastern Caucasus because Aqa Mohammad was assassinated during the campaign, which then collapsed. His successor spent the next few years consolidating his position and did not make substantial efforts to enforce his claim to Caucasian lands until 1804.

Paul never doubted the underlying assumptions on which his mother's Caucasian policy was based but he did question her methods with far more perspicacity and probity than he has traditionally been given credit for. His primary objection was that Catherine's tactics were too aggressive, overemphasizing force and intervention in internal affairs while not trying hard enough to win the Caucasians' loyalty by conciliation. The most unusual aspect of Paul's attitude was his conviction that the Caucasian peoples, Muslim as well as Christian, had their own legitimate interests and did not exist only to serve Russia's ends. He saw himself as the benefactor of the Georgians and Armenians but did not want his officials to give those peoples unfair advantage over their Muslim neighbors. He was strongly opposed to the recent judicial reforms in Kabarda on the grounds that the Kabardans were vassals, not subjects, and therefore Russia should not interfere in their internal affairs. He believed that to coerce vassals into becoming subjects would only increase Russia's problems by driving the new subjects to hostility.

The Annexation of Georgia

For all Paul's moderation with regard to the Caucasus, he was the one who in 1800 transformed Russia's presence there by annexing the kingdom of Georgia, replacing the ancient Bagration monarchy with direct Russian rule. This major step was not the result of some long-standing policy but rather a hasty improvisation in reaction to developments outside Russia's control. Georgia's situation looked extremely perilous. The danger of further devastation by Iranians and Daghestanis was all too clear. Moreover Erekle had died in 1798 and his heir, Giorgi, was a weak ruler in declining health. His imminent death was expected to touch off a violent power struggle among Erekle's many sons and grandsons. There was reason to expect that some of the pretenders would follow common practice and call for outside assistance from the Iranians, Ottomans, or Daghestanis. While

Giorgi's emissaries and Russian officials painted a picture of Georgia's desperate condition, they also encouraged Paul to believe that greater Russian involvement in Georgia would be profitable rather than burdensome because of the widespread Georgian support for such a move and the natural resources the kingdom would put at Russia's disposal. The detailed plan Giorgi urged on Russia in the spring of 1800 was aimed at preserving the monarchy within the context of an imperial system, reminiscent of the arrangement between earlier Georgian kinds and their Safavi suzerains, with the king of Georgia serving as governor of what was simultaneously an imperial province. However this proposal did not go far enough to suit Paul. Part of his concern was based on his conviction that after Giorgi's death the appointment of any member of the royal family as imperial governor/king would cause rival members of the family to start a civil war, the very development annexation was supposed to prevent. There was another problem as well. Continued Bagration authority in Georgia meant the availability of leadership for those dissatisfied with Russian rule. Even Giorgi, when displeased by what he considered insufficient Russian military aid, had made overtures to Iran.[15]

At the end of December 1800 Paul decreed the annexation of Georgia without specifying the form the new administration would take or the Bagrations' role in it. The situation was complicated by Giorgi's death soon after and the time lag in communications between Georgia and St. Petersburg. Paul weighed the possibility of making Giorgi's son governor but did not make a firm decision, so imperial officials improvised, creating a caretaker government of Russian and Georgian officials. Within Georgia there was much dissatisfaction with the apparent elimination of Bagration rule, while members of the royal family quickly began fighting amongst themselves. Then Paul was assassinated in March 1801 and the Georgian troubles were foisted upon the new emperor, Alexander.

Alexander formulated his policy towards Georgia and the eastern Caucasus during the first year of his reign. One of the legacies of Catherine's involvement in the area was the conviction that Russian interests in Georgia were inextricably linked, for reasons of security and economics, to affairs in the eastern Caucasus generally. A forward policy in one sector necessitated a forward policy throughout; even the few opponents of expansion

shared this assumption. Thus the decision about Georgia was a momentous turning-point in Russia's takeover of the Caucasus.

At first Alexander doubted the wisdom of so extreme a measure as annexation but he was soon won over by the arguments that had influenced his father and grandmother about the ease and benefits to Russia of an assertive policy in Georgia. He was also deeply affected by the argument that the suffering Georgian people looked to him as their savior. On this as on subsequent occasions Alexander revealed a great reluctance to moderate aggressive policies in the Caucasus lest moderation be interpreted as weakness. Several of Alexander's closest advisers in this period, including the members of his Secret Committee, challenged the expansionist arguments on the grounds that Russia would take on a greater burden than the expansionists admitted at a time when the government needed to concentrate on domestic reforms and that Georgian and Russian interests would best be served by continuing the protectorate established in 1783. Alexander ignored all unwelcome arguments and cut the moderates out of the decision. He went ahead with the annexation of Georgia and the acquisition of all of central and eastern Transcaucasia.[16]

With Georgia now an integral part of the Russian empire, Alexander ordered that the new province be given an administrative system that turned out to owe far more to Russian practices than to Georgian traditions. Georgia's new administration was centralized, staffed mostly by Russians, conducted its business in Russian, and followed Russian law. The new system was supposed to be a Russo-Georgian hybrid but the Georgian component was largely illusory. Some Georgians held positions in the administration, in a few cases quite high-ranking ones, but had no real power. Most traditional administrative positions were abolished and their occupants not absorbed into the new system. The Russians saw themselves as Georgia's benefactors and expected grateful, unquestioning obedience from the local population. The fact that few Georgians or Russians understood each other's language (and translators were scarce) increased the distance between the Georgians and their new government. Although Alexander intended that the Georgian law code be followed where possible, Russian officials made no serious effort to remedy their ignorance of the subject and followed Russian laws instead. Many Russian officials at all levels executed their

responsibilities poorly and treated the Georgians with contempt. These factors and the inadequacy of the Russians' pay stimulated widespread corruption. All the while fighting by members of the royal family as well as Daghestani raids continued and Ossetes closed the road linking Georgia and the Caucasian Line. There was a short-lived uprising against the new regime in one of Georgia's provinces in 1802.

The Tsitsianov Regime

Dissatisfied by the state of affairs in Georgia, Alexander made some personnel changes in 1802, the most important being the appointment of General Paul Tsitsianov to overall command in the Caucasus, concentrating all the most important offices of that region in his hands. Tsitsianov was the most admired (by the Russians) of all the men who served in the Caucasus in the early nineteenth century. He established at least nominal Russian suzerainty over most of Transcaucasia, waged war on many fronts, made some administrative reforms, and achieved martyrdom by his assassination at Baku in 1806. Many of the high-ranking officials in the Caucasus enjoyed some degree of success in manipulating St. Petersburg's understanding of Caucasian affairs and in convincing the central government to endorse their actions but Tsitsianov was the most successful of them all. Alexander relied on him as an expert on Caucasian affairs, since the general was not only the ranking official on the scene but also a veteran of the 1796 campaign and the descendant of a Georgian prince who had accompanied King Vakhtang into exile. When Alexander made an early attempt to give Tsitsianov detailed instructions (on how to reorganize the administration of newly acquired Mingrelia), Tsitsianov sent him a cutting reply to the effect that he, Tsitsianov, should not be made to clear his moves in advance with distant St. Petersburg and ought not to be given inappropriate instructions. Alexander gave the general his way, asking his approval of policies proposed by the central government and requiring only that Tsitsianov send word after any important action had been taken.[17]

Tsitsianov launched bold initiatives at a time when Russia was preparing for the next phase of the Napoleonic wars. He persuaded his superiors to regard Caucasian Muslims as savages who had to be handled by stern measures and denied direct

contact with St. Petersburg. He tried to prevent Georgians from influencing authorities in the capital as well, but this was more difficult because of the number of Georgian nobles already living there. When his plans went awry, he shunted the blame onto other people. His martyrdom added to the luster of his reputation and stifled the attempts of a few people to conduct a reevaluation of his methods.

Tsitsianov was also a bitter, ambitious man, who felt he had not advanced as rapidly as he deserved, therefore he was determined to use his tour of duty in the Caucasus to impress St. Petersburg. To do that, he had to obtain the submission of as much Caucasian territory as possible, including the western Georgian principalities, where Alexander would have preferred restraint to avoid damaging relations with the Porte. The same consideration drove Tsitsianov to prefer force as the method of expansion because that gave him the chance to win showy victories. He did not make a serious effort to conciliate local rulers—negotiations were not permissible, only humiliating subjection or war. All of the khans of northern Azerbaijan (except the khan of Ganjeh), as well as King Solomon II of Imeretia, were genuinely willing at least to consider becoming Russian vassals to gain backing against local rivals or to prevent the enforcement of Iranian claims of suzerainty. However, the Russian officials', especially Tsitsianov's, harsh ways of dealing with the local rulers convinced the latter that the Russian presence merely posed a new problem rather than offering a solution to old ones.

Since Tsitsianov was not nearly as good a military leader as he thought he was, his policies greatly compounded the difficulties of Russia's conquest of the Caucasus. The application of his bellicose methods to northern Azerbaijan and his threatening, insulting correspondence with the Iranian court did much to spark a war between Russia and Iran. The potential for conflict was there in any case, given the two countries' determination to uphold their Caucasian claims, but the form the war actually took owed much to Tsitsianov's pugnaciousness. Once the war had begun in 1804, Tsitsianov successfully prevented St. Petersburg from making an early compromise settlement, even though this costly war came at a time when Russia was engaged in major conflicts in Europe. By claiming so much territory in the rapid and aggressive way he did, he spread Russia's military resources

thinly over an area where his tactics had intensified anti-Russian sentiments. Moreover his military operations against the Iranians and Lesghis were often poorly conceived and executed and therefore failed to bring Russia any lasting advantage, while further depleting her modest armed strength in the region.

Fundamentally Tsitsianov liked having power over others, bending others to his will. He was openly contemptuous of the relatively conciliatory style of Russia's officials in the Caucasus during Paul's reign. When things went wrong he was quick to denounce the treachery and cowardice of his subordinates. For the Caucasians he had only contempt. "Asiatic treachery" and "Persian scum" were expressions which came readily to him. As he told Foreign Minister Adam Czartoryski, "among the Asians, nothing works like fear as the natural consequence of force."[18]

St. Petersburg gave Tsitsianov few specific directives about how to strengthen Russia's position in the Caucasus except that Alexander wanted him to avoid antagonizing the Porte and was willing to have the Caucasian principalities brought into the empire as vassal states still under the authority of their rulers. Tsitsianov did not have a detailed plan either. In broad terms he knew that he wanted to regather the Georgian principalities and restore his ancestral homeland to its dimensions at the height of its medieval strength. He also wanted to punish certain Azerbaijani khans and mountain tribes for their anti-Georgian or anti-Russian activities. Like most Russian commanders in the Caucasus during Alexander's reign, Tsitsianov found that the extension of Russian authority in one locale became of itself a strong argument for further expansion to secure what had already been taken. Apart from these considerations, Tsitsianov responded to opportunities as they arose to the extent that his means permitted.

Tsitsianov began his "reign" by focusing on affairs in the Georgian states and immediately surrounding territories. Within the kingdom of Georgia he increased the size of the Russian bureaucracy and decreased the number of Georgian administrative positions held over from the Bagration era. He also deported to Russia as many Bagrations as he could (some were engaged in rebellion and thus beyond his reach). Only Erekle's fourth son, Anthony, catholicos of the Georgian Church, was allowed to remain. Tsitsianov attempted to bolster Georgia's defenses by making improvements to the Georgian Military Highway. To

stop the persistent raids from Daghestan he sent troops against some Lesghi enclaves on the northeastern border of Georgia in 1803 and obtained the nominal submission of the tribal elders. However, the Lesghi threat to Georgia remained as serious as ever.

That same year developments in the western Caucasus were favorable to Russian expansion. The prince of Mingrelia, Gregory Dadiani, was interested in obtaining Russian protection. He had lately profited from disorders in neighboring Imeretia to take some territory, thus continuing an established Mingrelian practice of seeking gains at Imeretia's expense. However, King Solomon II of Imeretia had strengthened his domestic position and counterattacked with considerable success. Therefore Gregory asked for Russian protection and Tsitsianov obliged. Mingrelia was a useful acquisition. It controlled a strategically valuable section of the Black Sea coast, and its submission also gave Tsitsianov a way to increase the pressure on King Solomon II, who was cool to the Russians because he saw the fate of Georgia as an ominous portent of Russia's intentions toward all Caucasian states. In any case Mingrelia would have been difficult for Tsitsianov to conquer because of its distance from Russian-occupied territory and the roughness of its terrain. Therefore Tsitsianov and Gregory signed an agreement in 1803 by which the prince became a vassal of the tsar and accepted a Russian garrison in his domain. Gregory and his successor, who owed his throne to Russian intervention, were the most consistently pro-Russian of the Caucasian rulers and enjoyed more internal autonomy than Russia's other vassals in the region. Solomon II, now under Russian pressure on his eastern and western borders, sought to make a similar agreement. Tsitsianov would have preferred to oust him but settled for his submission because the khanates of northern Azerbaijan were more important targets. In addition, the general did not want to divert some of his already meager funds from planned military operations to the establishment of a Russian administration in Imeretia. Solomon and Tsitsianov signed an agreement early in 1804. However, Russia's refusal to back the king's territorial claims against Mingrelia made him an unreliable vassal. With the submission of Imeretia, Tsitsianov claimed that the principality of Guria had automatically become subject to Russia since Imeretia claimed (but could not enforce) sovereignty over this small principality. However, Tsitsianov's claim had no force behind it.

Tsitsianov did not intend to remove all the khans of northern Azerbaijan, but there were two he wanted to eliminate as quickly as possible. These were Javad Khan of Ganjeh and Mohammad Khan of Yerevan. Both ruled territories bordering Georgia and had been dominated by Erekle in the 1780s. The Ganjevis took revenge by playing an active role in the Iranian attack on Georgia in 1795. Mohammad Khan was in a more ambiguous position, under pressure from Iran as well as Georgia (and then Russia) and suspecting that many of his Armenian subjects favored a Russian takeover. Tsitsianov began token negotiations with both khans, but his threats and insults were aimed at blocking any agreement, thus justifying his use of force. Ganjeh was conquered at the start of 1804. The khan, some of his relatives, and many inhabitants of the capital city were massacred. Ganjeh was renamed Elizavetpol' in honor of Alexander's wife and transformed into a district of Georgia. Tsitsianov was pleased with the results. He used the conquest to frighten other khans into submission and also to win Alexander's praise. The tsar promoted him to general of the infantry, and all those who served in the operation were rewarded. In the summer of the same year Tsitsianov tried to repeat this success in Yerevan. However, his poor leadership of the operation, unexpectedly strong opposition from the Iranian army in the start of what became a nine-year war, and anti-Russian uprisings in Georgia, Kabarda, and Ossetia forced Tsitsianov to give up the campaign. Another unsuccessful attempt to conquer Yerevan was made by Tsitsianov's successor in 1808. The khanate remained part of Iran for twenty more years.

The 1804 uprising in Georgia was a reflection of the widespread disillusionment with Russian rule. Tsitsianov had made some administrative reforms, firing officials suspected of corruption, abolishing some nuisance taxes, and permitting the use of Georgian in legal appeals, but the basic problems remained unchanged. Since his early battles with the Lesghis produced no lasting benefits and he siphoned off so many troops for his Yerevan campaign, Georgia's security remained a source of grave concern to its inhabitants. The construction of improvements to the Georgian Military Highway led to the draft of Georgian peasants living nearby to provide much of the labor. They were antagonized at being taken away from their farms, the physical danger of their assigned work, and the brutality of the

Russian overseers. Tsitsianov's policies also encouraged unrest in Kabarda, where the inhabitants were especially provoked by his attempt to force compliance with the hated judicial reforms. He sent troops from the Line to burn Kabardan villages and subjected the chiefs to characteristic threats like "My blood boils, as in a cauldron, and all my limbs tremble from eagerness to water your land with the blood of criminals. Await, I tell you, my rule by bayonet, grapeshot, and the flowing of your blood in rivers . . ."[19]

From spring until autumn 1804 anti-Russian violence flared in Georgia, Kabarda, Ossetia, Chechenia, and adjoining mountain districts. At the same time Lesghi raiders plundered Georgia and attacked Russian troops. Enthusiasm for the restoration of the Bagrations found support at all levels of Georgian society, from royal princes, who sought to lead the insurrection, to ordinary peasants. Iran and the Porte encouraged the Bagration princes and mountain tribesmen. As usual the tactics of raid and ambush often worked well for the Caucasians, while the Russians gained victories in formal battles. The uprising quieted for the time being, once Russians mounted punitive expeditions and cold weather brought an end to the traditional fighting season. The Ossetes living on the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus were the ones who suffered most in the suppression of the uprising. Tsitsianov led a sweep through the area on his return from Yerevan, burning villages and capturing Ossete families, although the leaders of the uprising escaped to remote parts of the mountains. The captives were imprisoned in Georgia where most of them died of neglect.

In the wake of the uprising Tsitsianov took measures to increase the Russification of Kabarda. He began to employ the term "Kabardan district" in place of "Kabardan nation" in order to increase the inhabitants' awareness of being subjects of the Russian Empire. He also tried to force the Kabardans to make more visits to the Line in order to expose them to Russian influence by prohibiting Armenian merchants based at the Line from journeying into Kabarda to trade. He had other plans, including the establishment of a school at the Line to teach Kabardan children Russian and Tatar as well as the use of Kabardans in military units in Russia, but these were left unrealized at his death.

In 1805 Tsitsianov used verbal and military threats to obtain

the submission of three more Azerbaijani khanates (Qarabagh, Shirvan, and Shakki) and fought Iranian attackers with mediocre results. The subjection of the khanates along the Caspian coast was his next priority. There was at least a possibility that he could achieve this without incurring the burdens of another campaign. The khan of Baku, a city-state that was the commercial center of the Caspian's western coast, was seriously interested in obtaining Russian support against the revived power of neighboring Derbent and Qobbeh. He tried to negotiate a vassalage agreement with Tsitsianov, but the general insisted on taking a share of the khan's major sources of revenue and establishing a thousand-man garrison in Baku's citadel. This convinced the khan that he would be reduced to a Russian puppet. Therefore he rejected the proposed agreement, increased his contacts with Iran, and patched up his relations with his neighbors. When the Russian army invaded Baku the khan seemed to yield and arranged a meeting with Tsitsianov outside the city walls in February 1806. The khan did not surrender; instead a member of his entourage shot Tsitsianov dead and the Russian expedition dissolved in confusion.

During the Tsitsianov era several Daghestani rulers became Russian vassals, but this had little practical meaning. Some, like the khans of Tarqu and Tabasaran, were weak figures with little ability to control their own subjects, who were often anti-Russian. Others agreed to submit rather than declare their hostility but then continued to fight the Russians. One of the most powerful Daghestanis, Surkhai Khan of the Ghazi Qumuqs, did not even feign submission. He expressed the attitude of many Daghestanis in a defiant letter to one of Tsitsianov's successors,

> We, the people of Daghestan . . . are free people; where it pleases us more, we go; we live as we wish, not under strict commands so that all orders be carried out swiftly. We are not your people![20]

Daghestan's terrain was too mountainous for the Russians even to attempt to subdue it by force at this time.

Further Russian Expansion; Wars with Iran and the Ottoman Empire

This phase of active Russian expansion in the Caucasus continued after Tsitsianov's death until the end of the war with Iran in 1813

(the war with the Ottoman Empire having ended the previous year). The weaknesses of Russia's position in the region became increasingly clear. The soldiers' morale was low and the army's leadership sometimes querulous or lackluster, only occasionally effective. Much of the territory that Russia wanted to acquire remained either outside its control altogether or only tenuously subject.

Russia's first objective after Tsitsianov's death was the completion of his planned acquisition of the western coast of the Caspian: the khanates of Derbent, Qobbeh, and Baku. Russian troops conquered all three within a few months of Tsitsianov's death. Baku and Qobbeh were put under direct Russian rule. In Derbent the real power was in Russian hands but the shamkhal of Tarqu was made nominal ruler as a reward for having sent agents into the capital city to frighten the populace with stories of the slaughter the Russians would conduct unless the inhabitants surrendered. The ousted khans fled to areas outside Russian control. The Russians also had to conquer Qarabagh and Shakki, two khanates that had submitted the previous year, because of the widespread antagonism in both places towards the harshness of Russian methods and the ineffectiveness of Russian protection. Both khans were removed from office. The khan of Shakki fled into the high mountains. Gudovich, who returned to the Caucasus as Tsitsianov's replacement, appointed a new khan, the chief of a Kurdish tribe from southern Azerbaijan who had fled to Transcaucasia after opposing the establishment of the Qajar monarchy. Gudovich did not think that the new khan's Shiite beliefs would be more important than the fact that he and his militantly Sunni subjects were all Muslims, but the inhabitants of Shakki saw matters differently and fought the new regime. In Qarabagh the aged khan was killed not because he was a serious military opponent but because he became the target of Russian soldiers' accumulated frustrations and humiliations. He was replaced by his eldest surviving son.

There were many uprisings against Russian authority throughout the region, with much verbal and some military and financial support from Iran and the Ottoman Empire. However, the various anti-Russian activities were rarely coordinated either among the Caucasians or with the neighboring Muslim empires. The ability of the Caucasians to oppose the Russians was further reduced by the natural and man-made misfortunes that befell the

area in the early nineteenth century. The battles in the region and the accompanying food requisitions, raiding, and scorched-earth tactics disrupted the region's ability to support its inhabitants. In addition epidemics and crop failures leading to famines took a heavy toll in lives and weakened survivors, many of whom fled to remote areas.

Solomon II of Imeretia was able, with strong support from many of his subjects and some Ottoman help as well, to fight the Russians from 1806 to 1810. At times Solomon and his subjects caused the Russians considerable distress, but eventually Russia was able to spare enough troops to conquer the kingdom, which was then put under direct Russian rule. Sheykh Ali, the ousted khan of Derbent and Qobbeh, escaped to Daghestan. With the support of some local tribes, many of his former subjects, and Iran, he was long able to raid Qobbeh and prevent Russia from exercising effective authority there. This situation set the stage for further Russian territorial conquest in reprisal. In 1811 Russian troops campaigned in southern Daghestan against Sheykh Ali and his ally, Surkhai Khan of the Ghazi Qumuqs. The Russians burned several villages on the edge of Ghazi Qumuq territory but could not win a decisive victory. To punish Surkhai, the Russians seized the southernmost part of his domains and turned it into a new khanate, Kiura, ruled by Surkhai's rebel nephew. Kiura was occupied by a Russian garrison; its khan was given the rank of colonel in the Russian army and agreed to provide hostages and tribute. Russian authorities decided not to establish direct rule because there were not enough officials in the viceroyalty for some to be spared for the administration of Kiura. Sheykh Ali's struggle to regain power lasted until 1813, when the end of the Russo-Iranian war undercut his position. Several Bagration princes also continued the fight to oust the Russians. The most vigorous and persistent of the monarchists was one of Erekle's sons, Prince Alexander, who had Iranian support. Kabardans and other mountaineers raided the Line frequently, with particularly intense fighting occurring in 1810. The biggest anti-Russian outburst came in 1812, when Georgians, Armenians, and most of the inhabitants of the central and eastern Caucasus attempted to drive the Russians from the region in ill-coordinated bursts of fighting at various times during the year. Iran proclaimed Prince Alexander Bagration king of Georgia and sent troops to his aid, which

helped to a degree to focus the efforts of the Georgian insurgents. For a time the Russian position was perilous, with many small garrisons around the region cut off and subject to attack by superior numbers. Eventually Russian counterattacks, including the burning of villages and imposition of fines, coupled with victories over the Iranians and Ottomans enabled the tsarist forces to put down the scattered rebellions.

During this phase of active Russian expansion, from the Tsitsianov era until 1813, Russia was also at war with Iran (1804–1813) and the Ottoman Empire (1806–1812), a situation that both complicated the problem of subduing the Caucasus and set the stage for additional territorial gains. For the Ottomans the war in the Caucasus was secondary to the fighting in the Balkans. The war effort was further hampered by internal disputes among officials on the Caucasian front. Russian troops were able eventually to take many key Ottoman fortresses in the western Caucasus, even though the process was often an arduous one. The war in the Caucasus was of more central importance to the Iranians, who were able to continue raiding northern Azerbaijan despite Russian defensive efforts. Both sides possessed the differing kinds of strengths and weaknesses that enabled them to continue fighting without being able to win a decisive victory. Only on the few occasions when the Russians were able to fight formal battles under favorable circumstances were they able to win handily. Ultimately Russia's wars with the Ottoman Empire and Iran ended because of developments in the broader setting of the Napoleonic wars.

The war with the Porte removed the few remaining restraints on Russian activities in the western Caucasus. In fact St. Petersburg encouraged the generals there to take the offensive in order to divert some of the Ottoman forces from the Balkan theater. In addition to conquering important Ottoman fortresses, in 1810 the Russians took the Turco-Georgian *pashalik* (province) of Akhaltsekhe, which had served as a base of support for various opponents of the Russians, including King Solomon II of Imeretia and the Lesghis. Russian victories over the Ottomans convinced the ruler of the small western Georgian principality of Guria to agree in 1810 to become a vassal of the tsar. The formal submission agreement was signed the following year. Russian authorities also intervened in the factional rivalry in Abkhazia. The strongest attraction of this western Georgian principality was

the coastal fortress of Sukhumi, an important link in the Porte's communications with the tribes of the high mountains. In 1809 one of the two brothers engaged in a struggle for the throne sought and received Russia's endorsement. Russia now claimed Abkhazia as a vassal state, but the pro-Russian prince was in a very weak position and received no effective assistance. Therefore he had to flee to Russian-occupied territory and remained there until 1810, when the Russians took Sukhumi and put their client in power. Russia's final territorial gain in this phase of expansion was at the southeastern edge of the Caucasus, the khanate of Talesh, a poor, thinly populated area on the Caspian coast south of the Kura River. Alexander was uncertain whether it had any value to Russia, but after it had been taken from Iranian troops in an especially bloody battle at the beginning of 1813 he decided to keep it. Local administration was confided to the current khan, who years earlier had sought Russian backing against the Qajar dynasty but had lost most of his authority because of ineffective Russian protection.

The end of Russia's wars with the Porte and Iran closed the first phase of Russia's conquest of the Caucasus. By the Treaty of Bucharest, which ended the war with the Ottoman Empire in 1812, Russia kept the western Georgian principalities but restored to the Ottomans the *pashalik* of Akhaltsekhe and the other captured Ottoman positions.[21] Sukhumi was supposed to be returned to the Ottomans as part of this agreement, but the Russians chose not to yield it because of its strategic importance. Russia's war with Iran was ended in 1813 by the Treaty of Golestan, by which Iran recognized all Russia's territorial claims in the Caucasus.[22] There were some hints at the time of the negotiations that Russia might make some minor territorial concessions as a gesture of goodwill but Alexander was eventually persuaded by his officers on the scene not to do so.

Domestic Affairs

The internal affairs of the Caucasian territories Russia acquired by 1813 received much less attention than the military emergencies in the region. Indeed Russia viewed this area primarily in military terms and entrusted the most important positions there to soldiers who occasionally carried out civilian responsibilities as well. Yet some attention had to be given to internal administra-

tion since parts of the region were incorporated directly into the empire and Russia was dissatisfied with some conditions in the vassal states.

Administrative problems were compounded by the poor quality and low morale of the Russians serving there. Service in the Caucasus was generally regarded as a low-status posting for men who were either of little talent or in disfavor with the imperial court. Any position other than the highest military commands was the dead end of an undistinguished career. The obvious unpopularity of the Russian presence frustrated and embittered the officials, who had expected to be welcomed as the bearers of security and progress. Moreover, the Russians were incapable of playing as assertive a role as they would have liked. The need to protect the Line and garrison the territories that came under Russian protection or direct rule as well as fight wars on many fronts spread the Russian military forces thin. Many of the soldiers were barely trained recruits who were of little use. Russia's military strength was reduced further by the recall of some units for service against Napoleon's armies in Europe and by the increasingly serious problem of desertion. Civilian officials, who had the option of resigning at will, did so in alarming numbers. Russia's financial situation in the Caucasus was at least as bad. While the costs of the Napoleonic wars curtailed the amount of money the central government could allocate to the Caucasus, the taxes and tribute collected there were too little to cover expenses. These factors prevented officers from annexing outright as much territory as they would have liked.

Life in the Caucasus was very unpleasant for the Russians in a number of ways. They were exposed to unfamiliar diseases, including the plague. Despite occasional food requisitions, the Russians suffered the effects of periodic famines along with the rest of the population. Distance from familiar settings created awkward social problems and Georgians especially complained of Russian sexual misconduct with female inhabitants. Officials' salaries were inadequate, especially in light of the famines and the overall inflation resulting from the increased demand created by the Russian presence. Bribe-taking, looting, and embezzlement of public funds remained serious problems among the Russians in the Caucasus throughout the early nineteenth century.

The territories Russia acquired in the Caucasus up to 1813 fell into two broad categories: vassal states and those under direct Russian rule. The areas annexed outright became provinces (except for Ganjeh, which became a district of Georgia), while the vassal states retained some measure of their autonomy under incumbent rulers or replacements chosen by Russia. Although some Russian policies were aimed only at one of the categories, many policy features affected the region as a whole.

Throughout the Caucasus, Russia attempted to strengthen its position by gradually Russifying the local élite. Rulers who became vassals and usually their elder sons as well were given Russian military ranks and yearly salaries. The specifics varied with the principality's importance to the Russians, but the rank of major-general was the one commonly given to rulers. Rulers were also given patents of office, swords, and other presents considered symbols of authority. Russia declared itself the guarantor of the succession, usually in accordance with primogeniture. Thus St. Petersburg saw itself as legitimizing the position of new rulers by the grant of the symbolic gifts. However only in Mingrelia did Russia intervene successfully in a disputed succession to ensure the throne for the pretender it favored. Elsewhere tsarist officials were occasionally faced with locally popular rulers whom Russia considered usurpers because it had not sanctioned their accession to power.

In the areas under direct Russian rule a wide variety of local officials were absorbed into the new administration. The Russian authorities did eliminate many traditional administrative positions in Georgia, but there and throughout the area Russia had no choice but to employ a goodly proportion of the local officials. In some cases anti-Russian officials were replaced by people of known pro-Russian sentiments from outside the traditional élite. The Russian authorities then accorded the new appointees the privileges of the élite, although the parvenus were not well regarded by many inhabitants. Eligibility for noble status was defined differently in Russia and the newly annexed territories. Similarly, claims to land were often difficult to substantiate to Russian satisfaction because of the paucity of written records. Russia did not grapple with the problem until the 1820s. The highest stratum of the Georgian nobility made the smoothest transition overall: they were recognized as having all the rights and privileges of the Russian nobility by the Treaty of

Georgievsk (1783). Russia also transformed the armies of the annexed and vassal states into militias that were used as auxiliaries to the Russian troops.

Education was another way to speed the assimilation of the Caucasus notables. Tsitsianov established a school for children of the nobility in Tbilisi at which a German academic taught Russian and a few other subjects. The small student body was predominantly Russian but with a sizable minority of Georgians and Armenians. There were also a few Muslim students, including the son of the new khan of Shakki.

In the vassal states Russia took a number of steps that put sharp limits on the local rulers' authority. Control of foreign relations was naturally transferred to Russia. Traditional legal systems were allowed to remain in operation, except that vassals were denied the authority to impose the death penalty or deprive a subject of noble status, since both practices were at variance with Russian law. Vassals were required to pay tribute, which constituted a serious economic burden in a region ravaged by so many recent disasters. By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century the vassal states were unable to pay tribute at all. Russia also intervened in the economic affairs of some vassal states, as when it revised the tax rolls in Qarabagh. The strongest curb on the vassals' autonomy was the presence of a Russian garrison in the capital of each vassal state.

In the annexed provinces Russia followed the precedent set in Georgia of creating administrations that were supposed to be hybrids of Russian and local practices but were heavily weighted in favor of the Russian.[23] Beginning in 1810 Russian authorities modified their approach slightly in an effort to give the Caucasian élite more influence in provincial government. Thus when Imeretia was annexed in 1810 the existing administration was left virtually intact except for the very highest positions, which were entrusted to Russians. In Georgia from 1812 the process of whittling down the number of administrative positions held by local notables was reversed and the Georgian role in civil and legal administration increased. There was a similar effort to give greater weight to local legal traditions in the annexed khanates on the Caspian coast. Nonetheless all political offenses and major nonpolitical crimes were subject exclusively to Russian law in all the new provinces.

Russia's religious policy in the annexed territories was modeled

on practices in the heart of the empire, where religious institutions were regarded as part of the state administrative system. The Georgian Church was the most prone to Russification since it too was Orthodox and the catholicos lived in territory annexed by Russia. In the first few years after the annexation of Georgia its Church preserved some autonomy while under the administration of the Russian Holy Synod. Still, Russian authorities made a number of changes, most important of which was the transfer of all Church lands to the state (as was the case in Russia). In 1811 the Georgian Church lost the remainder of its autonomy, including its own patriarchate. Russia attempted much less with regard to the Armenian Church. Although St. Petersburg was on good terms with a number of Armenian clerics living in Russia and sought to ensure that the Armenian catholicos was pro-Russian, the headquarters of the Armenian Church was in the khanate of Yerevan, which remained outside Russian control until 1828.

Russian treatment of Muslims in the Caucasus could be quite hostile but was only intermittently so. Still, many local Muslims believed they would be persecuted. In the annexed Muslim territories most but not all land grants used to support religious institutions were taken over by the state. The jurisdiction of Islamic law was drastically reduced to a few family matters. Some Islamic religious leaders received modest salaries from the Russian government and were expected to encourage loyalty to the new regime. Others now had great difficulty in earning a living at all. Some mosques and other religious buildings were seized by the Russians for their own secular or religious use. However, there was no attempt to encourage conversion in Transcaucasia. Public religious observances were not interfered with, nor were Muslim women required to give up the veil (as Georgian and Armenian women were compelled to do).

Economic policy in the annexed territories reflected both the Russians' high hopes and their serious problems. Many officials were advocates of tariff reductions as an economic stimulus. However, they were unable to institute such a policy because of the dire financial straits of the Russian administration in the Caucasus. There were import and export duties on trade within Russia's Caucasian holdings as well as with the Ottoman Empire and Iran and even with the rest of Russia. Yet Russia's tariff revenues were slight, since trade suffered in the early nineteenth

century because of the wars and natural disasters in the region. In addition smuggling was widespread. Russia also derived revenue from keeping most of the existing taxes in the annexed areas and imposing some very unpopular new ones, including one on water used to irrigate farm lands. Before the Russian takeover many important economic activities had been exploited by governments through the use of "concessions," the grant of a monopoly in some field in return for the payment of a fee to the government. Russia continued this practice in the annexed areas, except for tax collection, which was assigned to government officials, and created some new concessions. Many of the concessions were sold to Armenians living in the region or in Russia. There were also long-range plans to improve the Caucasian economy. The settlement of Armenians, Greeks, and Roman Catholics as state peasants on lands confiscated by the government was encouraged. There were attempts to develop areas of the Caucasian economy, notably copper mining, weaving, sericulture, and wine production, but the results were unimpressive during the early years of the nineteenth century.

Conclusions

Russia had gradually become committed to a course of expansion in the Caucasus from which it could not back down without tarnishing the empire's dignity. Certain axioms encouraged St. Petersburg officials to involve Russia in Caucasian affairs. The most important were that the region would be a useful base of operations against the Ottoman Empire, provide Russia with easy access to the markets of Asia, and that Russia had an important civilizing duty to perform there. Yet Russia's growing role in the Caucasus up to 1813 was not the product of any coherent plan of long standing. Most important steps were taken in response to outside stimuli, especially requests for aid from local rulers and armed challenges to Russian authority. Moreover the Russians entered into their ambitious undertakings with little knowledge and somewhat more misinformation about the Caucasus. They did not appreciate the difficulties posed by the terrain and climate, but most of all they misunderstood the inhabitants' attitudes. Russia's efforts to assimilate the local élite and make "civilizing" reforms did not evoke the expected enthusiasm. In part this resulted from the fact that the measures,

however benevolent their original intent, had often changed character by the time they were executed by officials on the scene. The most important part of the problem, however, lay in the Caucasians' and Russians' fundamentally different notions of what Russian sovereignty entailed. The local rulers had a long tradition of striving to preserve and if possible extend their authority by making agreements with other rulers, both local ones and heads of empires. However, the Caucasian leaders and their subjects were intent on preserving as much autonomy as possible within the context of such agreements. They looked to Russia as one more element in a complex balance of power. The problem was that the Russians expected to exercise a much greater degree of control over their Caucasian vassals than any state had ever done before. Thus Russia was compelled to rely heavily on armed force to maintain its position in the region. By 1813 Russia had conquered a large part of the Caucasus. However, to convert that superficial authority into secure and effective power required many more decades of struggle.

Notes

1. S.A. Belokurov, *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom* (Moscow, 1889) vol. I, pp. 45–53.
2. 1724 treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, J.C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Affairs*, second edition (2 vols. New Haven, Conn., 1975), vol. I, pp. 65–69.
3. P.G. Butkov, *Materialy dlia novoi istorii Kavkaza s 1722 po 1803* (3 vols., St. Petersburg, 1869), vol. I, p. 83, n. 1.
4. Treaty of Rasht, Hurewitz, *The Middle East*, vol. I, pp. 69–71.
5. Treaty of Ganjeh, T. Iuzefovich, *Dogovory Rossii s Vostokom* (St. Petersburg, 1869), pp. 202–207.
6. Treaty of Belgrade, Hurewitz, *The Middle East*, vol. I, p. 73.
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Starting from a tiny core, the Principality of Moscow eventually developed into a Russian-dominated empire which has now become the Soviet Union. It is the third-largest empire that has ever existed, ranking after the British and Mongol empires but having far outlasted them both. This book charts the story of Russian colonial growth up to the 1917 Revolution — much, though not all, of it at the expense of Muslim lands and the Islamic way of life.

And colonial features do persist, even today. Although various degrees of autonomy have been granted since 1917 to the conquered areas, and socio-economic assistance programmes have succeeded in raising living standards, Russian political control remains essentially intact. Thus a knowledge of how Tsarist Russia expanded across the endless steppes, forests and taigas is an indispensable background for the understanding of contemporary Moscow policies towards non-Russian nationalities conquered during the process of empire building.

Russian colonial expansion to 1917 is the work of ten different authors, each a specialist in his or her field. It will make thought-provoking reading for all those interested in Russian history, and for those concerned for the survival of the Muslim spirit in a vast empire with little sympathy for religion.

ISBN 0 7201 1867 0
Mansell Publishing Limited, 6 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, England