The Expansion of Russia in the Caucasus and Georgia project offers the readers collection of scientific-popular articles which aims to cover the Georgian-Russian relations of the XVIII-XX centuries in a manner different from the widely propagated perspective of the official Russia.

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RUSSIA'S EXPANSION IN THE CAUCASUS AND GEORGIA

Beginning of the Russian Occupation of Georgia

Abolition of Kartl-Kakheti and Imereti Kingdoms

Khatuna Kokrashvili

BEGINNING OF THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF GEORGIA

ABOLITION OF KARTL-KAKHETI AND IMERETI KINGDOMS

The strengthening of the Russian Empire's interest towards the Georgian kingdoms was precipitated by the international situation created in the second half of the XVIII century. Russia emerged as a strong state and a formidable power on the world stage.

ABOLITION OF THE KINGDOM OF KARTL-KAKHETI BY RUSSIA

The consolidation of positions in Azov and the North Black Sea, the annexation of the Crimea khanate (1783) and the victory in the Russian-Ottoman wars of 1768-1774 and 1787-1791 enabled the Russian Empire to strengthen its influence in the South Caucasus and pursue an active policy of reinforcing it.

Russia took advantage of the Persian-Ottoman weakening and began expanding to the south. From the eighties of the XVIII century onwards, its establishment in the South Caucasus became a foreign policy and geostrategic task of the Russian Empire.

The treaty on alliance and protection of Kartl-Kakheti signed between the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti at Georgievsk in 1783 proved to be quite successful for Russia. Under the terms of the treaty, Russia was able to deploy military force in eastern Georgia and maintain an advantageous position in the region. A similar treaty was being prepared to be concluded with the Kingdom of Imereti but Russia refrained due to an Ottoman protest.

Unlike Russia, the Georgievsk Treaty proved fatal for the Georgian kingdom. Entry under the Russian protectorate and the appearance of Russian troops in the region antagonized the Persian-Ottoman and South Caucasian khanates against Kartl-Kakheti. The endless attacks greatly weakened its forces.

By the end of the XVIII century, Russia's interest in the Caucasus had increased even more as they were fueled by changes in international politics: from 1800, the Russian Emperor Paul I's (1796-1801) decision to withdraw from the anti-French coalition and become an ally of Napoleon Bonaparte marked a change in his Oriental policy priorities. Russia intended to weaken England's positions in the east and even planned an offensive on India.
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In such conditions, the geopolitical situation of the Georgian territories became attractive to Russia. Significant land and maritime routes were located across the South Caucasus - at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, giving the region a trade-transit function between the East and the West. Strategically, domination of the South Caucasus gave the Russian Empire the advantage of expanding its borders towards the eastern states. Georgia would be a reliable foothold for the occupation of the entire Caucasus and Western Asia as well as expanding trade to Persia and India. The country's natural resources, access to cheap raw materials and the labor market provided lucrative investment and revenue opportunities.

It is noteworthy that Graf Musin-Pushkin sent with a special mission to Georgia, delivered a secret report to the Russian Emperor Paul I: "... a rich and paradise-like climate country... by annexing it to Russia, the Empire would gain arable and plentiful lands; the Caucasian line would no longer have difficulty in subjugating the Transcaucasian peoples. ... in the case of disagreement with the Ottomans, Georgia will provide significant trading posts at Russia's disposal."

Thus, at the turn of the XVIII-XIX centuries, the idea of annexing Georgian kingdom-principalities into the Russian Empire was actively being deliberated in St. Petersburg at the royal court of the Emperor and among the ruling elite. Russia's political, military-strategic and economic interests no longer allowed the creation of vassal kingdoms in the South Caucasus. It slowly began to conquer and annex their territories. Russia's expansion into the South Caucasus was a long and complex process full of resistance, which practically started with the conquest of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti.

The Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti stepped into the turn of the XVIII-XIX centuries worn out by endless attacks, drained of its population and economically weakened. After the death of King Erekle II of Kartl-Kakheti (1762-1798), the political situation in the country became tense over the reign of the Erekle's son, George. Due to George's illness, in the battle for the throne, various branches of Barons clashed as they got divided between the supporters of Julon Erekle's son and David George's son.

After Erekle II, newly enthroned George XII (1798-1800) informed the Russian emperor Paul I of his reign and with a special note requested the recognition of his son, David Batonishvili, as his heir. In doing so, he assigned Russia the role of arbitrator in the dispute between the senior and junior branches of the Bagrationi. In addition, King George sent a note to Paul I with a request to approve his hereditary right to the throne according to the Treaty of 1783 and also to renew the terms of this treaty.

Russian diplomacy skillfully used the situation in Georgia and the crisis within the dynasty for its own purposes in order to strengthen its influence over the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti. The Emperor Paul I granted the Georgian king the approval of his son David as the heir to the throne in early 1799. In Novem-
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General Ivan Lazarev
Representative of Emperor Paul I in the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti

Queen Darejan, Erekle II’s Wife

The country’s dire economic and political situation, domestic and foreign threats and the weakness of the throne forced George XII to think about closer relationships between Kartli-Kakheti and the Russian Empire. Russia, for its part, tried to prevent Kartli-Kakheti from getting help from other countries and also to improve relations with the Iran-Ottoman and Muslim Khanates of the region. Paul I’s diplomacy made it seem as if the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti voluntarily became a part of the Russian Empire.

The heavily weakened king of Kartli-Kakheti, who was already on the verge of death, addressed the Russian emperor with “Request Points.” This document was presented as a diplomatic note to the Imperial Court by the Georgian Ambassadors Garsevan Chavchavadze, Giorgi Avalishvili and Eliazar Palavandishvili.

To evoke the greater interest of the “protector,” the king of Kartli-Kakheti made adjustments to the terms of the Georgievsk Treaty (1783) and added some paragraphs that gave Russia more rights: Kartli-Kakheti requested subordination to Russia and the laws of the Russian Empire had to apply to it.

The historiography of Czarist Russia emphasized the voluntary transfer of the kingdom to Russia by George XII. However, the events and the content of the “Request Points” indicate that George XII did not intend to abandon the royal throne and deliver the country to the Russian Empire. In the “Request Points,” the dynastic royal rights and privileges of the Bagrationi remained untouched. George XII requested the preservation of the title of “king” and the proper material provision for him and his descendants. The document did not imply abandoning Kartli-Kakheti sovereignty, abolishing the throne and ending the Bagrationi dynasty.

After the Georgian ambassadors negotiated and edited the texts with the Imperial Court, Paul I shared the terms of the “Request Points.” The document, with the proper signature and approval, was sent to Tbilisi by means of Georgian Ambassadors Giorgi Avalishvili and Eliazar Palavandishvili.

In fact, Russia had already decided to conquer the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti. The Imperial Court concealed its real intention but controlled the situation through secret letters. In November
On January 8, 1801, the ambassadors of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti returned to Tbilisi and brought George XII’s “Request Points” signed by the Emperor. On the basis of the “Request Points,” David Bagrationi, the eldest son of the late King George XII, was proclaimed “heir and ruler of Georgia.” According to the “Request Points,” however, the Russian emperor had to approve David as the king of Kartl-Kakheti and so, therefore, the ambassadors returned to St. Petersburg with this request. On January 14, 1801, David declared himself governor of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti. Clearly, the political elites and the ambassadors of Kartl-Kakheti did not know that the fate of their kingdom had already been decided in St. Petersburg.

On January 18, 1801, a manifesto on the abolition of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti and its annexation to Russia was published in St. Petersburg. On January 20, 1801, all members of the Kartl-Kakheti royal family were summoned to Russia by an order of the Emperor. The Royal Crown and the Scepter of George XII were sent to St. Petersburg. On February 16-17, 1801, Paul I’s manifesto was read publicly in the cathedrals of Sion and Vank, surrounded by Russian troops, and people were forced to make an oath of loyalty to the King of Russia. In the case of resistance, Russia was ready to use military force. Erekle II’s Chancellor, Solomon Lionidze, advised David to declare himself king but the prince tried to proceed within the law and waited in vain for the Emperor’s approval to rule.

By the decision of the Senate of the Russian Empire on March 6, 1801, the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti became a province of Russia. Russian authorities approved the provincial governing decree of Kartl-Kakheti. According to the Emperor’s wish, the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti was to be called the “Province of Georgia.” A Governor-General was to be appointed as the ruler of the “Province of Georgia” with residence in Tbilisi.
On March 11, 1801, Karl Knorring was appointed the Governor-General of the “Province of Georgia” by the Senate’s decision and Dimitri Orbeliani, who was raised in Russia and became a Russian General, was appointed as the Civil Governor.

Thus, Paul I ignored international law, violated the Russian-Georgian Treaties (Treaty of 1783, Revised Treaty of 1799) and arbitrarily abolished the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti. It was an aggression against the Georgian state and a violation of its sovereignty.

Paul I did not live long enough to establish a new system of governance in Kartl-Kakheti. He became the victim of a conspiracy on March 11, 1801. Russia’s new Emperor Alexander I, who largely disagreed with his predecessor’s domestic and foreign policy, did not express a radically different stance on the Kartl-Kakheti issue. He approached the problem more wisely and prudently. Unlike his father, Alexander I sought to disguise the true purpose of the Russian Empire and portray the incorporation of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti in the eyes of European nations as Russia’s caring about the Georgian people who shared a common faith. He did not abolish Paul I’s manifesto but temporarily suspended the establishment of Russian rule in the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, invoking respect for liberal beliefs and international law as the reason.

Alexander I needed a firm and well-founded justification to occupy the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti. Therefore, he instructed his advisory body, the Permanent Council, to examine the question of the political feasibility of annexing the kingdom.

The annexation of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti to Russia became the subject of discussion from the early days of the establishment of the Permanent Council. In April 1801, the Kartl-Kakheti issue was discussed twice at council meetings. Opposite views were expressed; however, the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti was considered favorable for protecting both its own population and the borders of the Russian Empire by a majority vote. At this stage, the Council’s decision was not approved by the Russian Emperor Alexander I and he created a special commission to study the Kartl-Kakheti problem. The commission was tasked to submit a conclusion to the Russian Permanent Council.

General Knorring was ordered to investigate the situation on site. By the highest edict of Alexander I of April 19, 1801, the general had to find out: whether the Kartl-Kakheti state could exist independently, did the population of this country want to be subordinate to the Russian Empire and did they think that “bringing Georgia within the Russian Empire was the only way to survive.” As a result of population surveys, Knorring was expected to present the situation in such a way that the country was annexed not for “Russian interests” but for the “peace and security of the Georgian people.”

In practice, Knorring was instructed to present Russia’s political will to abolish the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti as the desire of Georgian society.

General Knorring arrived in Georgia in May 1801 and was immediately involved in the management of Kartl-Kakheti. Upon his arrival, he relieved David George’s son Bagrationi from the position of governor of Kartl-Kakheti. At the beginning of July 1801, the “Provisional Government” of Kartl-Kakheti was established, headed by General Ivan Lazarev and with judges from the Georgian Supreme Court - Zaal Baratashvili, Egnate and Sulkhan Tumanishvili, Ivane Cholokashvili and former head of Tbilisi, Darcho Bebutashvili - as members.

Provisional rule lasted about a year. This was a transitional stage in the establishment of Russian rule in Kartl-Kakheti when attempts were made to abolish the existing institutions of government in Georgia and replace it with the Russian model. During this period, a large number of Russian military units entered Kartl-Kakheti. The Provisional Government provided the basis for the complete occupation and annexation of Kartl-Kakheti, the establishment of the Russian system of government and the final transfer of power to Russia.

Knorring spent 22 days in Kartl-Kakheti. According to the testimonies of the persons with Russian orientation selected by General Lazarev, this brief visit was enough to fulfill the Emperor’s assignment and prepare a conclusion for submission to the Permanent Council on the expediency of annexing Kartl-Kakheti to Russia.

On June 24, 1801, in the presence of the Emperor and with the participation of the Secret Committee, the issue of Kartl-Ka-
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Kartl-Kakheti was discussed in the Permanent Council. Count Valerian Zubov was particularly active in demanding the annexation of Kartl-Kakheti. He was the commander of the last Persian conquest (1796) and was considered to be a good expert on the political and economic situation in the South Caucasus. Zubov argued that Georgia's entry under Russian "subordination" was a unanimous desire of Georgians. He added that a province rich in natural wealth would bring revenue to the empire and that Russia's refusal to occupy Kartl-Kakheti would mean that Russia would endanger its dominions in the Caucasus.

Members of the secret committee expressed a completely different view. Their position was also shared by Alexander Vorontsov, representative of the Permanent Council. Alexander Vorontsov and Viktor Kochubey in their reports questioned the objectivity of Knorrings research and deemed its conclusions to be unfounded. However, as was expected, the majority of the Permanent Council supported the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti and stated in the concluding document of August 8, 1801: "... Due to the newly created situation, the Council does not even notice the slightest injustice in the annexation of Georgia. On the contrary, it sees this as the salvation of this region and also the essential benefit for Russia in terms of the reliable protection of its borders."

The final decision had to be made by Alexander I. On September 12, 1801, a manifesto was published in St. Petersburg in which the Russian Empire affirmed the accession of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti to Russia, declaring it an act of service to the welfare of the Georgian people. The manifesto of the Russian Emperor Alexander I abolished the statehood of Kartl-Kakheti, it was completely annexed and its territory was occupied by Russian troops.

Alexander I's manifesto marked the beginning of a new phase in the political course of the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus. If, by the end of the XVIII century, Russia refrained from an aggressive policy in the South Caucasus and was mainly playing the role of "liberator" towards the region's population, the picture changed radically at the verge of the XVIII-XIX centuries. After the abolition of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, the movement of Tsarism towards the South Caucasus, its expansionist policy and the conquest and annexation of territories could no longer be stopped.

A country, whose historical glory was a remnant of the past, could not exist without Russian help and 4. Its salvation was only possible through the strong and just Russian government. It is noteworthy that Georgia, as seen from the point of view of Alexander's manifesto, had existed for the entire first half of the nineteenth century in the imagination of Russian officials. This perception of Georgia as being weakened by both internal and external calamities was, to some extent, a moral justification for its incorporation into Russia.

Georgian Ambassadors to the Russian Imperial Court, Garsevan Chavchavadze, Eliazar Palavandishvili and Giorgi Avalishvili, learned of the abolition of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti only after the publication of the manifesto. The ambassadors immediately protested: "We see that the Kartl-Kakheti annexation has been announced, the manifesto has been published and approved. But we knew nothing about either the annexation of Kartl-Kakheti or the drafting of the manifesto... we are devastated... thanks to such a union ... we found ourselves deceived and insulted," they wrote to the Russian Vice-Chancellor Kurakin. The Georgian ambassadors tried to improve the situation. In a note dated January 27, 1802 and presented to the Russian Emperor, they demanded the recall of Russian officials from the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti and the restoration of local government. On February 6, 1802, the State Council, of course, denied this request. The ambassadors were reminded that their terms in St. Petersburg had expired. Garsevan Chavchavadze, insulted by this, stated in a letter sent to his homeland: "The Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti was abolished, we were not accepted even as subordinates, no one is as humiliated as the Georgian people." He demanded that his credentials be extended, advised the Georgian nobles not to comply with the orders sent from Russia and to demand compliance with the terms of the 1783 treaty.

The Russian authorities deliberately delayed and waited for a favorable moment for the publication of the manifesto text in the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti. Meanwhile, the deployment of additional Russian military units and the mobilization of occupation forces on the territory continued.

Alexander I's manifesto on the abolition of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti and its annexation to Russia was declared in Tbilisi seven months after on April 12, 1802.

Representatives of the Bagrationi royal family and nobles of Kartl-Kakheti were invited to the Sioni Cathedral to get acquainted with the manifesto. Some Russian troops were deployed around the church and the surrounding streets to prevent public outcry or possible disturbances.

The manifesto was read to the political elites and nobles of Kartl-Kakheti in the Sioni Cathedral, surrounded by Russian troops, who were requested to take an oath of loyalty to the
The name "Georgia" was established only to refer to the political-administrative unit created in place of the former Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti. Imereti, Samegrelo, Guria, Abkhazia and Svaneti were no longer included. Thus, its significance has been narrowed and the actual content and significance of the geographical-political term "Georgia," as a unified expression of historical, political or ethnocultural ties of the various Georgian provinces, was violated. It is noteworthy that in the 1840s, after the administrative-territorial reform, Russian authorities removed the term "Georgia" from the political dictionary altogether.

On May 8, 1802, the establishment of Russian rule in the country was publicly celebrated. General Karl Knorring was appointed as Georgia’s first “Governor General” and Peter Kovalensky was appointed as the First Governor of Georgia. At an early stage, the Commander-in-Chief of Georgia lived mainly in Georgievsk and rarely arrived in Tbilisi. From 1803, the head of the government moved to Tbilisi as Georgia had a special place in Russia’s Caucasian policy.

The “Governor General” of Georgia, Pavel Tsitsianov, who arrived in Tbilisi on February 1, 1803, set as his main political task regulating the Russian governance and overcoming anti-Russian sentiment in Kartli-Kakheti. The authorities considered the members of the Bagrationi royal family to be the cause of the turmoil in Kartli-Kakheti and so one of Tsitsianov’s first measures was to deport members of the royal family of Kartli-Kakheti to Russia. First of all, they forced Erekle II’s widow, Queen Darejan, and George XII’s widow, Mary, to leave the homeland.

According to the emperor’s orders, the exile of the nobles to Russia had to be voluntary and the authorities would have resorted to force only in extreme cases. Members of the royal family were to be given high pensions and presented with land and serfs. Queens and most of the noblemen did not want to leave their homeland which meant that the procedure was not painless nor was it without force and casualty. It is known that the exile of George XII’s widow, the Queen Mary, is linked to the murder of General Lazarev who was tasked with solving this problem. In 1803-1805, almost all members of the Kartl-Kakhetian royal family were exiled to Russia. Most of them were settled in St. Petersburg, Moscow and central Russia.

The Russian authorities gave the surname “Gruzinsky” to all noblemen exiled from eastern Georgia while the members of the royal family of western Georgia were dubbed “Imeretinsky” or “Bagration-Imeretinsky.” Representatives of the first generation of members of the royal family who were exiled to Russia
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were referred to as "Georgian Noblemen" (Tsarevichs) and held the honorary title of "extremely literate."

The princely estates of the royal house, according to Alexander I’s rescript, were declared to be treasury estates and the serfs belonging to the royal house were declared to be treasury peasants. Revenues from these lands were transferred to the Treasury Income Fund of Georgia.

After the conquest of Kartl-Kakheti, the Empire's strategy towards Caucasian peoples changed. If Russia had previously favored a peaceful negotiation with the Caucasian Khanates or various political entities, now aggressive policies of military pressure and struggle prevailed. Such a strategy of relations with Caucasian peoples was introduced by Pavel Tsitsianov and continued by the Governor General Ermolov (1816-1827) and Paskevich (1827-1831). In his dealings with the Caucasians, Tsitsianov often created conflicts artificially in order to have an excuse to conquer their territories with force. Governor generals who could not uphold this strategy properly were soon to resign. To some extent, this explains the rather frequent shift of Georgian governor generals in the first half of the XIX century.

The government presumed that taking into account local people's "rights, customs and aspirations" would help facilitate the adaptation to the new system of government. However, the opposite actually happened. The Georgian language was excluded from judicial and administrative institutions. The language of management and court proceedings became Russian. The law of Vakhtang VI temporarily remained in force and it was determined that civil law cases should be decided according to local customs and Vakhtang VI’s laws while others, including criminal cases, had to be resolved by Russian law. More or less important civil and criminal cases would be referred to military courts.

Business and bureaucratic governance conducted in the Russian language, which was incomprehensible for the people, greatly aggravated the situation for the population and made it difficult for authorities to engage with them.

It is interesting how the Russian political elite conceived Georgia and Georgians of the first half of the XIX century.

In the correspondence and documents of Russian officers and officials, as well as in memoir literature, it is clear that Georgia and its population were perceived as part of an oriental Asian world. In many cases, Georgian "Orientalism," however, gave Russian officers a sense of political, mental and intellectual superiority. In many cases, this was also reflected in a disrespectful attitude towards Georgians. The sources contain numerous references to the ruthless, arrogant and abusive treatment of the Russian military political elite (Kovalensky, Lazarev, Tsitsianov, etc.), not only toward ordinary people but also for members of the royal Bagrationi house.

Russian military and political officials saw the Georgians as unreliable allies and considered them as untrustworthy partners in the peace-building mission in the Caucasus. Governor General of Georgia Ermolov noted: "These people were not created for Alexander's harmless rule, they only deserve an iron rod." In the eyes of Russian officials, Georgians had
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a strong negative connotation of an Asian people: backwardness, barbarism, illiteracy, laziness, lacking initiative, lacking energy, wildness, unreliability and so on.

For the Russian officials, Georgian traditions, customs, the peculiarities of their governance and social structure, which Tsitsianov called complete “disorder,” were entirely incomprehensible.

Georgian nobility was seen as an indispensable, at the same time, useless, part of the political and socio-cultural landscape of the common Caucasian space which was incapable of public service. Further, the mental contrast between the Russian and Georgian/Caucasian people in the representation of Russian officials exacerbated the self-perception of Europeanism, modernity and civility of Russia and Russians.

It is noteworthy that the perception of the importance of a similar faith emphasized in the manifesto was also different between Georgian and Russian political elites. The Russian officials considered that a common religion was not at all the main basis for the unity of Russians and Georgians. At the same time, the issue of faith in Georgian society was often a major determinant of political orientation.

Such a view of the Georgians among the Russian political elite changed only after the second half of the XIX century.

With the abolition of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, the Russian Empire laid a solid foundation for the occupation of the South Caucasus.

The centuries-old tradition of state governance of the Georgian monarchy has come to an end, the institutions of government in the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti were dissolved and the Russian military-occupational regime was established. This system of governance was completely alien for the Georgian people. Top government positions were allocated to military officials, they were actively involved in the resolution of civil cases and the functions of civil and military officials were not separated. In fact, the country was ruled by the military and the administrative units, the mazras, were also ruled by the so-called “Captain Ispravniks” militaries.

The government relied on the support of the Russian armed forces and the main guarantor of order was the Russian army. Representatives of the royal house were forcibly expelled from the homeland and exiled to Russia.

The kingdom, which had requested foreign security guarantees and protection from external enemies from Russia, was abolished and turned into a province of the empire.

With the abolition of Kartli-Kakheti and the formation of Russian rule, the process of establishing the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus began. The independence of the political entities in the region was seriously threatened. Naturally, after the conquest of eastern Georgia, the kingdoms of western Georgia also faced a great ordeal.

ABOLITION OF THE KINGDOM OF IMERETI BY RUSSIA

Solomon II
King of Imereti in 1789—1810

King Solomon II of Imereti (1789-1810), who clearly understood the current situation and the aims of Russian policy, began an active struggle to preserve Georgian statehood. Along with strengthening and consolidating his kingdom, he also sought to protect the rights of the Bagrationi royal government in Kartli-Kakheti. On August 4, 1802, Solomon II addressed the Russian Emperor: “… The overthrow of the Kingdom’s family and their utmost grief I consider a personal calamity. The most tolerant of all Kings, show mercy for the house of King Irakli, his descendants and sons… so Julon the heir of Georgia could ascend the throne.” The King of Imereti sheltered the noblemen dissatisfied with the Russian rule in Kartli-Kakheti, Parnaoz and Julon, as well as the prominent statesman, Solomon Lionidze, and others and together with them began a struggle to restore Georgian statehood.

Russia incited the princes of Samegrelo and Guria against the King of Imereti. Empire officials immediately responded to the protection request of the Samegrelo prince. In 1803, the principality of Samegrelo, with the right to self-governance in domestic matters and maintaining some “autonomy,” became a subordinate of Russia. Russian troops entered Samegrelo. The Russian government consolidated previously recalcitrant counts around the prince of Samegrelo, Grigol Dadiani, and
turned him into a considerable force against Imereti. With the leader of Samegrelo, Russia gained a solid foothold to strengthen its influence over the Kingdom of Imereti and other principalities and eventually annex them.

As Governor General of Georgia, Pavel Tsitsianov could not obtain King of Imereti's consent on protectorate and the Russian government could no longer tolerate Solomon II being on the royal throne. Therefore, Governor Tsitsianov used the pretext of King Solomon oppressing Dadiani, the ruler of Samegrelo, thus advising the emperor to conquer Imereti.

In early 1804, after conquering Ganja, Tsitsianov turned his whole attention towards Imereti. By the order of the Governor General, the Russian army invaded Imereti and began to force the population to take an oath of allegiance to the emperor. On April 25, Solomon II was forced to sign the "Request Points" (Treaty of Elaznaur) and acknowledge Russia's "eternal" subordination. He kept the king's authority with the eternal right for his heirs to assert the throne. In the case of no son, Solomon II's nephew Constantine was considered the heir. The king vowed to obey the Governor General of Georgia appointed by Emperor. Solomon refused the right over Samegrelo principality. Guria remained in the possession of the King of Imereti and entered under Russian rule together with Imereti but was later segregated and became a separate principality in 1810. The country's administration and law remained at the disposal of Solomon II but he had to be guided by Russian law in criminal matters. The issue of Lechkhumi, which was disputed between Imereti and Samegrelo, remained open at this point but Tsitsianov promised the king to return this region as well. The King of Imereti was awarded the Alexander Nevsky Order covered with diamonds.

On July 4, 1804, the treaties on the accession of the Kingdom of Imereti and the Samegrelo Principality into the Russian Empire were confirmed by the seal of Alexander I. The emperor decided the issue of Lechkhumi in favor of Samegrelo which caused great dissatisfaction of Solomon II. Soon, Russian troops were stationed in western Georgia and local authorities were ordered to sustain them.

Russia's positions on the Black Sea were further strengthened: control of the Imereti and Samegrelo territories ensured the uninterrupted traffic between Baku and western Georgia, linking the Black and Caspian Seas and opening up a new arena for Russian trade.

In May 1804, Peter Litvinov was appointed as the Russian representative in Imereti. Tsitsianov called him "Ruler of Imereti and Samegrelo." The number of Russian troops in Imereti gradually increased. Litvinov acted in the kingdom as if he were a full-fledged ruler. On August 30, 1805, Solomon II wrote to Tsitsianov: "Litvinov calls me, a Christian king, illegitimate and declares me as the old king and he says he is the new king."

The King of Imereti tried to renew the Russia-Imereti Treaty in 1806. He introduced a new draft of requests to Governor General Goodovich (1806-1809) which sought to expand the king's rights and improve the terms of the coerced treaty, but the Russian authorities left him without answer.

Afterwards, the King of Imereti, with the help of the Akhalsikhe Pasha and the Ottoman Sultan, sought to restore Imereti's complete independence. Gudovich was ordered to overthrow Solomon II from the throne, but he failed.

In 1809, the new Governor General of Georgia, General Tormasov (1809-1811), tried to resolve the Imereti problem through peaceful negotiations. As a condition for reconciliation with the Russian authorities, the king demanded the return of Lechkhumi, the withdrawal of troops from Kutaisi and the renewal of the Treaty of Elaznaur. Most of the Imereti population supported Solomon but Russia did not intend to comply with these demands.

It was decided long before in St. Petersburg to abolish the Kingdom of Imereti. Alexander Tormasov used military force to carry out the task. The king's capture was entrusted to Colonel Simonovich. He was assisted by the leaders of Guria and Samegrelo who blocked Solomon II from leaving Imereti.

In February 1810 the Russian army invaded Imereti. Occupation of the castles and the whole kingdom began. The government offered the King of Imereti safety and the guarantee of maintaining the kingdom. Solomon II agreed to negotiate on such terms but the Russian side broke the promise as soon as they met with Solomon. The king was taken to Tbilisi as a prisoner and offered exile to Russia.

Extremely pleased with Solomon's capture, Tormasov informed the Russian emperor: "Solomon the rebellious vassal is captured. Congratulations on this great gain – direct accession of Imereti into the Empire. I consider myself fortunate that God has enabled me to perform such a difficult task for the Emperor." However, the King of Imereti managed to escape from captivity and did not stop fighting for the rest of his life for the revival of the kingdom.
Proclamations on the overthrow of Solomon II were published in Kutaisi. The population of the city was forced to take an oath of loyalty to the Russian Emperor. The Military Command addressed the population of Imereti with a long statement: “King Solomon is permanently banished from Imereti... Now, for the welfare of Imereti and in line of the people’s interests and customs, a tolerant provisional Russian government will be established, composed of honorary members of the Imereti noblemen and headed by a Russian military official.”

Very soon the Georgian population had a painful experience with this “tolerance.”

**As soon as the Kingdom of Imereti was abolished, it was renamed as the "District of Imereti" and subordinated to the Russian administration.**

A “provisional governance” was formed, called the “Provisional Government.” It was headed by the Governor of Imereti, a Russian military official, who was a civilian and military authority in the district and a commander of Russian troops stationed in western Georgia. He was appointed by the Governor General of Georgia and authorized by the Russian Emperor. The power of the Imereti ruler extended over almost all of western Georgia. The First Governor of the District of Imereti, Colonel Simonovich, was called the “Governor of Imereti, Samegrelo, Guria and Abkhazia.”

It should be noted that the inclusion of Imereti in the overall system of Russian governance faced some complications. Fearing the uproar and revolt of the people, the government failed to formally proclaim a new “provisional governance” and introduced a rule different from Kartli-Kakheti which maintained elements of the independent governance for the Kingdom of Imereti.

Thus, in 1810 the Russian Empire dissolved the Kingdom of Imereti and occupied its territories with the Russian troops. However, official Russian documents and historiography often point out that the Kingdom of Imereti, like the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, “voluntarily” joined Russia, something which is absolutely false. After Kartli-Kakheti, Russia violated the sovereignty of yet another Georgian kingdom by military force and incorporated it within its own borders. With the conquest and dissolution of the Kingdom of Imereti, the occupation of all western Georgia and the establishment of Russian rule began.

**RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARDS THE PRINCIPALITIES OF WESTERN GEORGIA**

As mentioned above, among the western Georgian Princes, Prince Grigol Dadiani of Samegrelo (Odishi) (1803) was the first to embrace Russian subordination.

The new government also did not neglect the Guria principality and Mamia V Gureli, Prince of Guria, was awarded an independent treaty of subordination for the assistance provided against the struggle with the Imeretian King Solomon II on June 19, 1810. In October of the same year, Russia’s subordination and patronage was embraced by the Prince of Abkhazia, Giorgi (Sepher Bey) Shervashidze. In 1833, the Russian Emperor approved the “Request Points” of the upper Svaneti Princes, Tsiok and Tatarkan Dadeshkeliani, and both were recognized as the “owners” of the Svaneti (Sاداتکه‌لیان) principality which also was incorporated under Russian subordination. In 1840, free Svaneti was declared an administrative unit headed by a bailiff (Sabokaulo). However, due to the resistance of the local population, the government was forced to suspend it in several years. It is noteworthy that for a period of time, the Russian army was not able to enter Svaneti nor could anyone restrict the rights of the local princes.

The rulers of Samegrelo, Guria and Abkhazia maintained some “autonomy” but were in fact under the control of the Imereti Governor appointed by Russian authorities. They were obliged to accommodate Russian troops in the principalities and supply them with food and, in the event of war, mobilize military force to assist the empire. Russian officials could actively intervene in the internal affairs of the principalities. The Russian authorities hoped that in this way they would be able to easily subdue the western Georgian principalities and use them for their own interests.

The process of the abolition of the principalities began in 1829. Initially, the Guria principality was abolished. In 1830, David Gurieli was deprived of the rights of Prince and under the leadership of a Russian military officer, a provisional administration of Guria was created which was in fact under the temporary administration of Imereti and constituted its sub-division.

Breaking the treaty with the Principality of Abkhazia, Russia directly subordinated Abkhasian Tsebelda in 1837. In 1840, Samurzakano along with the Black Sea coast was confiscated from Dadiani.

Russia managed to abolish the principalities of Samegrelo, Svaneti and Abkhazia in the second half of the XIX century after the Crimean War. Provisional Russian rule was introduced in Samegrelo in 1857, thus effectively abolishing Samegrelo’s principality. It formally ceased to exist in 1867 when Niko Dadi-
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ani, the official successor of Samegrelo’s Prince, was forced to abdicate. In 1857 and 1859, Russia one by one abolished both principalities of Svaneti and together with free Svaneti created a joint administrative unit headed by a bailiff (Sabukaulo). In 1864, the Abkhazian principality ceased to exist as well.

Thus, with the abolition of the Kingdom of Imereti, Russia began the process of conquering all of western Georgia. The acceptance of the principalities under Russian subordination eventually ended with the abolition of their sovereignty. With such a policy, along with eastern Georgia, Russia was able to influence, control and then direct the rule of the whole of western Georgia. The termination-conquest and the abolition of the sovereignty of the Kingdoms of Kartl-Kakheti and Imereti by the Russians in the early XIX century was a major national tragedy for the Georgian people. The dramatic process of the struggle for freedom begins - the National Movement in Georgia and anti-Russian gatherings to restore Georgian kingdoms and statehood.

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