7

THE CAUCASUS IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

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Introduction: driving forces of Russian expansion

With the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan during the reign of Ivan the Terrible in the mid-sixteenth century, Muscovy both became an empire, in the sense of subordinating peoples of different cultures and religions to the centralised rule of a metropolis, and a viable player in the geopolitical and commercial competition in the regions that lay to the south. Astrakhan in particular lay at the crossroads of trade routes to Istanbul and the markets of Persia and Central Asia. In the same way that the Tsar established vassal relationships with local Tatar elites, Muscovite overtures to Kabardian princes in the northern Caucasus were received enthusiastically, as they offered advantages in conflicts with other local princes and protection from other regional powers such as the Ottomans and the Crimean Khanate. The Tsar and his subjects thus gained influence and position during the expansion through co-opting local elites into the Russian noble hierarchy, offering patronage, protection and rank, while at the same time being drawn into local politics and power struggles. To bolster his claims of suzerainty, Ivan married the daughter of his Kabardian vassal in 1561, and the descendants of his new father-in-law, the Cherkasskys, became scions of the Russian nobility (Khodarkovsky 2011: 9).

Russia's growing influence in the region by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century and Peter the Great's campaigns in Crimea and the Sea of Azov provoked conflict with the dominant great powers in a long series of Russo-Turkish and Russo-Persian wars. After defeat in such a war with the Ottomans in 1710, Russia began resettling Cossacks and building settlements (*stanitsas*) on the left bank of the Terek River. Following the end of the Northern War in 1721 and a period of turmoil and decline in Safavid Persia, and using as a pretext an attack on Russian traders by highlanders in the Persian-controlled territory of Shamakhi, Peter launched a campaign to seize Dagestan and the Caspian coastal region in 1722, capturing Derbent and moving on Baku (known as the Russo-Persian War of 1722–3). The campaign was cut short because of disease among the soldiers and the threat of conflict with the Ottomans, and the Russian seizure of these Persian territories precipitated a new war with the Turks, who seized the Georgian and Armenian lands south of the Caucasus range. Russia ultimately ceded back to Persia the territories that it had taken in treaties in the 1730s, yet the conquests signalled that Russia was now a major geopolitical actor in the region (see Chapter 6).

Aspirations to seize the Caucasus were revived in the 1760s under Catherine the Great. The establishment of a Russian fort at Mozdok in 1762 was one of the causes provoking a new war with the Ottomans (the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74), and Russia's victory in that conflict gave it de facto control of Crimea and the Black Sea coast and formal suzerainty over Kabarda and other territories in the northern Caucasus that had been vassals of the Kabardian princes. Thus gaining freedom of action in the region (a situation further solidified with victory in the Russo-Turkish War of 1787–91), the Russian state intensified the resettlement of Cossacks and other settlers from the Russian interior and the establishment of *stanitsas*, and began constructing a unified system of forts from the Black Sea to the Caspian linked together to form the Caucasian Fortified Line.

Russia's position in the northern Caucasus provided it the opportunity to expand its influence across the Caucasus range into the southern Caucasus. The monarch of the eastern Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, Erekle II, saw Russia, the newcomer to the geopolitical competition in the region and fellow Orthodox Christians, as a potential patron and counterbalance to his traditional Muslim Persian and Ottoman overlords. The Treaty of Georgievsk, concluded in 1783, guaranteed the Georgians protection from external enemies and full domestic sovereignty in return for becoming a formal vassal of the Russian Empire.

This relationship required the establishment of a communication and transportation link across the Caucasus range and the provision of security for that route. Thus began the construction of the Georgian Military Highway, starting with the aspirationally named fortress of Vladikavkaz, established in 1784, and winding down through the Darial Pass to the Georgian capital of Tiflis (present-day Tbilisi), as well as the imperative to secure and pacify the unruly mountainous territories surrounding it. As earlier, the imperial strategy was to co-opt local elites into state service, and like the Kabardian princes before them, various Dagestani and other mountain nobles swore allegiance to the Tsarina in return for recognition and privileges.

A central aspect of the Russian approach to expansion, security and administration in the northern Caucasus for many decades, from the 1760s to the 1840s, was the Caucasus Line, newly constructed fortresses linked together by lines of communication and smaller settlements populated by Cossacks and colonists and cemented with vassalage agreements with the elites of local indigenous mountaineer communities. Much has been written in recent years about the ways in which the Line, while intended as a defensive perimeter from which to advance Russian influence ever deeper into the Caucasus, served in practice as a liminal zone between and among cultures: the boundaries were fluid and permeable, allowing Cossacks, settlers and mountaineers to interact and trade with one another, and gradually to exchange forms of social organisation, lifestyle, military equipment and tactics (see Barrett 1999; Khodarkovsky 2011; King 2008).

Early tsarist administration in the northern Caucasus

The goal from the start of the Russian incorporation of the Caucasus was to bring the region gradually under civilian administration, though the need for 'pacification' of unruly areas mandated that this be accomplished though indirect rule by the military. By decree of Catherine the Great in 1785 a Caucasus Viceroyalty (*namestnichestvo*) was established, combining the Astrakhan and Caucasus governorships and administered by a Governor General. On the local level territories were divided into prefectures (*pristavstvos*) administered by a local official (*pristavs*), either Russian military officers or co-opted mountaineer nobles or village elders.

From the start of imperial expansion, the Russians relied on alliances with receptive local elites. Although this was an effective mechanism for rapidly extending influence, it was not without problematic aspects. Choosing the most optimal candidates to co-opt was not always straightforward, and once a choice was made it meant investing in a particular tribe or faction to the detriment of others, creating animosities and drawing the Russians into local conflict. Another complication was that local elites and elders in the Caucasus often had very different understandings of concepts of legality and of oaths and pledges of loyalty, viewing the relationship as more flexible, conditional and provisional than the Russians assumed, and as agreements among more equal parties, as had been the case with traditional vassal relationships in the region in centuries past. Aside from these issues, the cooptation of local elites was most effective in territories and among ethnic groups that were hierarchically structured, such as the Kabardians and Kumyks that the Russians first encountered, and also to an extent in lower Dagestan in the northeast and among the Adygeis in the northwest. Among the mountaineers of upper Dagestan and in the highlands of Chechnya and Ingushetia the more egalitarian social structure meant that there were no hereditary elites to co-opt. Russian administrators referred to societies in which the population was subordinate to hereditary Muslim rulers as 'aristocratic', and to those in which decisions were taken by councils of 'democratic' elected elders as 'free societies'. Such 'democracy' was considered to be more primitive and further from modernity than the 'aristocratic' societies (Bobrovnikov and Babich 2007: 63).

Another crucial tool of Russian domination in the mountainous regions from the 1790s was the legal system. In the words of Tsarina Catherine, 'the rule of law was the best way to soften and win over [the highlanders'] hearts' (Khodarkovsky 2011: 18), while at the same time excluding the traditional Islamic judges and spiritual leaders from having a say in a range of civic issues. New kinds of courts were introduced that made use of traditional and customary law (called *'adat*) at the local level, with appeal to Russian courts and imperial administrators. Variations on such a system of controlled local courts, with differing degrees of autonomy but ultimately answering to Russian officials, continued in the mountainous regions of the Caucasus in one form or another until the end of tsarist rule (see Chapter 5).

The peoples of the southern Caucasus

In taking protection over and then annexing the southern Caucasus, or Transcaucasia, the Russians brought into the empire peoples with highly developed cultures and distinguished literary traditions, particularly the Orthodox Christian Georgians and the Grigorian Christian Armenians. In contradiction to the terms of the 1783 Treaty of Georgievsk, following the razing of Georgia by the Persians under Agha Muhammad Shah in 1795 and the renewed threat of invasion from the Ottomans, Alexander I had annexed Kartli-Kakheti in 1801. The other Georgian kingdoms and principalities were annexed in turn over the next few decades. While the Georgievsk Treaty gave Russia control over Kartli-Kakheti's foreign policy (anxiety over the treaty was one of the factors provoking the Persians) while leaving the monarchy in place, with annexation the ruling family was removed from power, Georgian Patriarchy was eliminated, and the Georgian Orthodox Church was subordinated to the Russian one. Following this, however, representatives of the bloated Georgian aristocracy were given recognition in the Russian table of ranks at the corresponding level and if they could produce documentation confirming their status. Although there were a series of rebellions in the first half of the nineteenth century, mostly led by members of the minor nobility, these were put down by a combination of police action and further concessions. Many of the former rebels would later make distinguished careers in the Russian civil and

military bureaucracies, and by the middle of the century Georgian elites would assimilate to Russian high culture and come to play a role in the Russian Empire similar to that of the lowland Scots in the British Empire.

Armenians in the Caucasus largely lacked a hereditary nobility, and while the majority were rural peasants (not unlike the Georgians), Armenians were highly represented among city and town dwellers, and among the merchant classes. Historically in the southern Caucasus, Georgians comprised the majority of the enserfed peasantry working for the rural estates of the Georgian landed nobility, while Armenian craftsmen and merchants became increasingly important in the towns. The Russian annexation of the Georgian kingdoms and the rest of the southern Caucasus further consolidated these social roles. The Russian authorities viewed both the Christian Georgians and Armenians as allies in the southern periphery, and the Armenians in particular as a small and vulnerable nation whose faith obliged them to be protected, either from Muslims or from the Georgian nobility that had historically borrowed money from them and at the same time denigrated them. Following the 1828–29 Russian-Turkish War, some 7,300 Armenian families, about 58,000 people, were resettled under Russian protection from Ottoman-controlled territories to Russian-controlled ones, while many Muslims went in the opposite direction (Blauvelt and Berglund 2016: 70–71). The Russians' protective attitude would change later in the nineteenth century, as Armenians in Russia began to become active in underground political agitation on behalf of their co-ethnics in the neighbouring Ottoman Empire. Yet in the first half of the century the Armenians in the southern Caucasus were viewed as industrious and beneficial for the development of the region, and they also eagerly assimilated into Russian culture and language, becoming one of the most pro-Russian constituencies. As one Russian bureaucrat later observed, 'Caucasia was Russified without Russification, and at the forefront of this national Russianising were, once again, the Armenians' (cit. in Suny 1993: 41). A number of Armenians, particularly from the Tiflis upper-middle class, would, like the Georgian elites, also make distinguished careers in Russian civil and military service, the most famous being Mikhail Tarielovich Loris-Melikov, who would eventually become Interior Minister, and Levon Ivanovich Melikov, for many years a military administrator in Dagestan.

The majority of the Muslim population in the southern Caucasus, who would eventually come to be called Azerbaijanis, were Shi'a and Turkic-speaking, inhabiting primarily the vassal khanates of the Persians, such as the khanates of Shirwan, Kuba, Shamakhi, Shaki, Karabakh, Irevan (Yerevan) and Nakhchivan (Nakhichevan), and they were kin to the vastly more numerous Turkic-speakers in the district of Azerbaijan in the north of Iran. These southern Caucasian Muslims were referred to variously by the Russians as Tatars, Shirwan Tatars, Russian Turks, Azerbaijani Turks, or just as Muslims, and were seen as largely passive but industrious. As with other Muslim groups, Azerbaijani elites were recruited into state and military service, but the regions of the former khanates, as most of the southern Caucasus were, unlike the more rebellion-prone Muslim populations in the mountainous regions, quickly and successfully subordinated to civil rather than to military administration.

Religion, Islamic revival and resistance in the northern Caucasus

Although one impetus for early Russian expansion to the south and east was the spread of European civilisation and Orthodox Christianity (and ultimately the restoration of Constantinople to Orthodoxy), the start of Russia's intensive involvement in the Caucasus during the reign of Catherine the Great coincided with a shift in state policy towards religion that

favoured 'tolerance' of existing indigenous religions over missionary zeal and conversion to Christianity. This policy meant not freedom of religion or of conscience generally, but rather state recognition of and support for established religions in their orthodox form. Conversion from one religion to another was not encouraged. Although attempts at Orthodox Christian proselytising emerged periodically, especially among groups that were seen as 'pagan' or as once having been Christian and in need of religious restoration, such as Ossetians, the administration regularly attempted to restrict missionary activities, viewing them as threatening to the status quo and a source of radicalisation. In the same way that the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church was subordinated to the Russian state through the office of the Holy Synod, so too official institutions should be created for the clerical hierarchies of other religions in order to monitor populations and prevent the emergence of dangerous ideas. The lack of a formal hierarchy in Islam complicated this approach, yet 'Mohammedan Ecclesiastical Assemblies' and muftiates were created for the newly acquired Muslim territories of the Empire to bring loyal Muslim spiritual elites into the administration and resources were devoted to the publication of religious texts that would allow the state to frame its demands and appeals in appropriate ways and preempt less favourable interpretations from Muslim authorities abroad or radicals at home (see Crews 2006, ch. 1, and also Werth 2014; Blauvelt 2010).[1]

Defining religious 'orthodoxy' often turned out to be more complicated in practice than in theory, and in religious policy towards the indigenous populations of the periphery as with political policies, co-optation led to inadvertent entanglement in local conflicts and power struggles, and gave local elites opportunities to pursue their own goals as the intermediaries and interpreters between the distant state and the local population (see Blauvelt 2010). How comprehensively this model could be implemented in the Caucasus also became a contentious question, giving rise to the emerging fear of radicalism (or fanaticism, as they called it) the Russian officers and administrators came to sense among the local mullahs as religion came to serve as a foundation of the growing resistance to Russian rule in the region.

The imposition of Russian power, culture and ideas soon also began to generate a backlash among the mountaineers that contributed to a form of Islamic revival that had already been underway in the region. Although Islam has been present in the Caucasus since the initial Arab conquests of the seventh century, particularly around Derbent on the Caspian Sea coast of Dagestan, its acceptance elsewhere in the region varied greatly in form and intensity. Islamisation in the region was encouraged by the Ottomans and Persians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with Sunni Islam dominant in the northern Caucasus and south-western Caucasus under the influence of the Ottomans, and Shi'a Islam dominant in the Azerbaijani khanates of the south-eastern Caucasus that had been vassals of the Persians. As with Orthodox Christianity in much of the Georgian territories, Islam competed with and often incorporated elements of local pagan religions, and there was a continuing rivalry of traditional law and practices, *'adat*, and Islamic law, *shari'ah*, as well as between secular hereditary elites and Muslim spiritual leaders.

A movement to 'purify' Islam and religious law, similar to the Reformation in Christianity that took place in Europe in the sixteenth century, began to emerge in the Caucasus in the early eighteenth century, most likely inspired by the growth of influence of the mystical Islamic Sufi orders. Although there were several such orders in the Caucasus, each with their own philosophies and spiritual path (*tariqah*), one of the largest and most influential in this Islamic revival was the Naqshbandiyya, founded in Bukhara in the fourteenth century. In addition to the goals of cleansing Islam and expanding its reach in the region, the Naqshbandis emphasised discipline, obedience, and the responsibility to use force if necessary in

the form of Holy War (jihad, though more usually called *ghazawat* in the Caucasus) either against improperly practising Muslims or against non-believers (Khodarkovsky 2011: 92–94). The clarification of this latter distinction remained a source of disagreement among Muslim spiritual leaders. As the Russian military, political and cultural presence increased by the end of the eighteenth century, the idea of holy war against the infidels became a unifying platform that spiritual leaders could use to appeal to dissatisfied local elites and to mobilise the population, with the goal of driving out the invaders and creating an Islamic state.

The Caucasus War

Despite all that has been written about the Caucasus War of the nineteenth century, undoubtedly the longest military conflict in Russian history, scholars differ over when it began. The first clear manifestation of resistance based on holy war with the aim of purifying Islam, expelling the Russians, and declaring an imamate was the uprising of Sheikh Mansur, a shepherd from Chechnya named Ushurma. Ushurma joined the Naqshbandi order and took on the mantle of sheikh in 1783, calling at first for his fellow countrymen to abandon traditional practices and adopt instead *shari'ah*, and declared holy war in order to unite the local clans, or *teips* (see Chapter 13). After defeating a Russian expeditionary force sent against him in 1785, he took on the name of Mansur ('Bringer of Victory') and mobilised Chechens, Dagestanis and Kabardians and launched a campaign against the Azov-Mozdok section of the Caucasus Line and against the Georgian Military Highway. In order to reinforce the Line, in 1786 the Russians withdrew their garrison from Georgia and abandoned for several years the fortress of Vladikavkaz. Mansur was defeated during an attempted seize of Kizliar in 1787, and fled to the Ottoman-held fort at Anapa, from where he continued to call for holy war to mobilise the Caucasian mountaineers to disrupt Russian operations during the Russo-Turkish War of 1787–91. Mansur was captured by Russian forces at Anapa in 1791, and although he proved a greater orator than field commander and the uprising was short-lived, it created a model for religiously based resistance to Russian rule in the region (Bobrovnikov and Babich 2007: 97).

From the turn of the nineteenth century, Russia continued its incorporation of territories in the northern and southern Caucasus. The Astrakhan and Caucasus Viceroyalty was eliminated under Pavel I in 1796, and reorganised under Alexander I in 1801 and 1802. Those territories under civil administration were separated from Astrakhan and assigned to the Caucasus Governorship, with a capital in Georgievsk, while those under military administration assigned to the Administrator-in-Chief in Georgia and Commander of the Separate Caucasian Corps (*Glavnoupravliaiushchii v Gruzii i Komanduiushchii Otdel'nym Kavkazskim Korpusom*) based in Tiflis. Pavel Tsitsianov, an assimilated Georgian noble and one of the first in a series of strong Russian commanders in the Caucasus, suppressed the resistance of the Georgian nobles and former ruling family following the annexation, and began a campaign to seize the Azerbaijani khanates from Persia, subordinating Ganja, Echmiadzin, and the Karabakh, Shaki and Shirwan khanates to Russian rule in the context of the Russo-Persian War of 1804–13 (Tsitsianov himself was famously killed in an ambush outside the walls of Baku in 1806). Russian victory in this war, as well as that in the nearly simultaneous Russo-Turkish War of 1806–12 (both during the peak of the Napoleonic Wars and the French invasion of Russia) and the treaties that concluded them (the Treaty of Bucharest with the Ottomans in 1812 and the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813 with the Persians) allowed Russia to further consolidate its southern borders in the Caucasus, from Poti, Anapa and Akhaltsikhe in the west to Baku and Kuba (Quba) in the east.

Yermolov

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars and a temporary stalemate in the ongoing conflicts with the Ottomans and Persians, the Russian leadership took up the pacification of the northern Caucasus in order to bring under control the anarchy and brigandage that continued along the Caucasus Line and to secure Russian control and supply of the southern Caucasus regions. Although Russia now formally controlled the entire territory, this control remained only nominal in the higher mountain regions of the north-eastern and north-western Caucasus. The next of the legendary Russian commanders in the Caucasus, Aleksei Petrovich Yermolov, assumed command in May 1816 and immediately set about subordinating to direct Russian administration a number of territories that until then had continued to maintain indirect vassal relationships. A firm believer in the 'civilising mission' of Russian conquest of the backwards and savage periphery, Yermolov continued the earlier policy of co-opting the elites among friendly mountaineers and giving them positions in his administration while at the same time building roads and clearing forests in order to open lines of communication and rapid movement to put pressure on the less sympathetic mountaineers. First and foremost, Yermolov believed that the mountaineers respected raw power, and therefore that systematised violence, intimidation and fear were the key to pacification. Rather than maintaining the elements of the Caucasus Line as defensive positions, Yermolov advocated an approach to suppressing insurgency through disproportional punitive missions in response to the smallest incursion, raising villages thought to give aid to insurgents, constructing heavily armed fortifications to reinforce the line (Groznaia ('Threatening') in 1818, Vnezapnaia ('Surprising') in 1819, and Burnaia ('Stormy') in 1821), and taking the fight to the enemy. He summed up his policy in a famous line in a letter to Alexander I: 'I desire that the terror of my name shall guard our frontiers more potently than chains or fortresses'(cit. in Baumann 1993: 8). Under Yermolov the Russians aspired for the first time to assert full military and political control over all of the territory of the northern Caucasus, attempting to cut off the insubordinate tribes and to settle the freed up lands with Cossacks and settlers from the Russian interior. Yet while Yermolov was convinced that his uncompromising approach was the only way to assure peace and security in the region, it paradoxically produced animosities that fed rather than undercut the growing local resistance. By the end of his tenure, a general rebellion had broken out among the Chechen mountaineers and then spread to northern Dagestan, and a resumption of the wars with Persia and Turkey was eminent.

The imamate and holy war: Ghazi Muhammad and Shamil

As during the earlier round of Russo-Persian and Russo-Turkish wars, the Russians were fortunate not to face a major insurrection in the Caucasus during the fighting of 1826–28. Despite the efforts of Russia's opponents to mobilise support behind the lines, this proved ineffective, and Russia was again victorious, further securing the delimitation of its southern borders. However, the enmity that had been building up among the mountaineers in reaction to Yermolov's harsh policies began to combine with the newly heightened Sufi-led Islamic movement. The sparks finally burst into flame with the emergence of a new Naqshbandi leader, Ghazi Muhammad, who was elected imam by Avar village councils in 1828. Like Sheikh Mansur before him, Ghazi Muhammad preached holy war against the Russians and demanded the implementation of Islamic law and rejection of *'adat*. He also led his followers to target local secular elites who had cooperated with the Russians. In 1830 he organised a series of surprise raids, seizing several Avar and Kumyk villages, though failing

to take Khunzakh, the capital of the Russian-supporting Avar Khanate. In 1831 his forces sacked Kizliar, and in 1832 they besieged Derbent and moved on Vladikavkaz and Nazran. Ghazi Muhammad was killed in the Russian storm of his base at Gimrah in October of 1832, yet the insurgency did not end there.

After the brief and violent ascension of the second imam, Hamza Bek, in 1833–34, which culminated with the murder of the Avar ruling family in the summer of 1834 and Hamza Bek's subsequent death in a resulting blood feud, the stage was set for the emergence of the third, and most significant, of the Caucasian imams, Shamil. A disciple of Ghazi Muhammad whose reputation was heightened by his miraculous escape from the storm of Gimrah, Shamil was able to maintain the insurgency for nearly a quarter of a century, and in the process to construct an imamate with sophisticated state structures. Shamil forged alliances among disaffected secular elites and sidelined or eliminated those who refused to cooperate. Using guerilla tactics, and a deeper understanding of the geography and terrain of the region than their opponents, Shamil and his followers were able to subordinate a significant part of upper Dagestan and the north-eastern Caucasus and to harass Russia's Caucasus Line and fortifications throughout the later 1830s. In 1839 Shamil was forced to flee Dagestan after the Russians successfully seized his base at the Battle of Akhalgo (after another miraculous escape). He relocated his insurgency to Chechnya and the north-central Caucasus, this time basing his approach on continual movement and shifting fronts rather than attempting to maintain a central base. Shamil's successes in Chechnya allowed his insurgency to regain support in Dagestan surprisingly rapidly following the defeat at Akhalgo.

Although they never attempted to fundamentally change the existing political order, the previous imams, Ghazi Muhammad and Hamza Bek, had assigned deputies on the local level, called *naibs*. Shamil institutionalised this approach, creating permanent *naibs* ('governors') controlling defined regions (called *wilayats, or naibstvos* in Russian sources) that served as the basis of a military and administrative apparatus. *Naibs* were responsible for maintaining order, collecting taxes, and implementing the decisions of *shari'ah* courts in their territory.[2] Over the course of the 1840s Shamil fundamentally transformed the social and political order in the areas under the control of his imamate, developing a complex administrative structure with a central legislative council (*divan-khaneh*), regional heads (called *mudirs*), overseeing the *naibs*, local district heads under the *naibs* (*dibirs, ma'zuns*, or *turqkhs*) that coordinated the councils of village elders on the local level, and also a roaming inspector-general, called a *muhtasib*.[3] Shamil also promulgated a constitution-like legal code, called *Nizam*, which clarified elements of Islamic law and local customary law. As Bobrobnikov and Babich have argued (2007: 123), the unification of the legal and administrative structures under Shamil's reforms and the removal of the older, hereditary local elites, ultimately later helped the Russians to establish suzerainty in the north-east Caucasus, as they preserved many of the territorial divisions of the *wilayats* (and often even returned Shamil's *naibs* to their positions).[4]

Facing this unexpectedly potent and organised insurgency, Russian military officials in the 1830s and 1840s gave thought to the reasons for Russia's vulnerabilities and strategies for eventual victory. In his time, Yermolov had emphasised the importance of roads and of clearing lines of fire to prevent ambushes, though he lacked the resources to implement this on a large scale. General Vel'iaminov in a commentary in 1832 argued that the Caucasus Line and the Cossack settlements should be gradually extended deep into enemy territory, but that even then success would require decades of sustained pressure on insurgent sanctuaries and economic bases of support. The Russian analyst Captain I. Mochulsky concluded in 1840 that Russian failures resulted in part because of a lack of training among officers, understanding of local culture and terrain, and because of poor equipment and a dependence on a meagre road system, and more generally from a lack of

a coherent policy. Dmitry Miliutin, who would later become the Russian Minister for War, agreed with this conclusion, while also arguing for more effective tactics for movement of personnel and equipment and 'force protection', as well as for a less antagonistic 'public diplomacy' approach to the local population, emphasising the promotion of trade, industry, and the economic benefits of Russian rule, while at the same time guaranteeing physical security for those willing to cooperate (Baumann 1993: 19–20).

Vorontsov, Bariatinsky and the final phase of the war

The essence of such analyses were taken up with the appointment in 1844 of Prince Mikhail Semenovich Vorontsov to the re-established position of Viceroy of the Caucasus, with the expanded powers to oversee both the military and civilian regions of the northern and southern Caucasus and answerable directly to the Tsar. By 1846 Vorontsov combined the earlier 'hard line' tactics of forward operations to take the battle to the enemy, forced resettlement of uncooperative villages, cutting down forests and clearing the approaches to transit routes with softer 'hearts and minds' approaches, such as incorporating local officials into his administration and making overtures to native elites who felt sidelined by Shamil, combined with a much greater allocation of resources than had been committed to the region in the past (one sixth of the entire budget of the Empire by the 1840s) (Khodarkovsky 2011: 12). Vorontsov was able to redirect the animosities among the co-opted local tribes and groupings and convince them that only Russia could guarantee security and stability.

Ultimate victory in the war would come with the appointment to the Viceroyalty in 1856 of Aleksandr Ivanovich Bariatinsky, who had served as commander in Chechnya and Dagestan (the 'Left Flank') under Vorontsov. Bariatinsky brought to fruition the policies of reshaping the geography of the region through population resettlement, mass deforestation and clearing the approaches to the mountains, concentrating forces and systematically preventing territory falling to the insurgents, denying them the initiative and forcing them to fight on the Russians' terms, and at the same time guaranteeing loyalty and protection from retribution to locals who turned against the insurgency. Ultimately Shamil was forced to capitulate in the summer of 1859 after his defeat at Gunib. The Russians were able both to isolate Shamil in the ravines of northern Dagestan, and at the same time to turn his narrative of miraculous victory against him, into one of inevitable decline and to undermine his supposedly divine authority. As the American military analyst Robert F. Baumann pointed out, Shamil's authority was based on belief in the infallibility of his leadership, and 'when events shattered that confidence and Shamil lost the physical means to enforce his will, his moral authority evaporated' (1993: 34). Resistance continued in the north-western Caucasus until 1864, but gradually, and by the same methods, the Russians were able to subdue the insurgency there as well, bringing the war to an ultimately successful close.

While part of this victory was the result of innovative military tactics, advances in equipment (especially rifles), and improved field command, certainly political initiatives played an important part as well. Under the leadership of Vorontsov and then Bariatinsky, the Russians eventually found an effective mix of coercion and concessions to the local elites and population, a patient development of relationships enabling the emergence of trust in the capacity of Russian governance and institutions to provide both security and, in time, economic improvement. Another was the long-term reshaping of the physical and human geography of the region in order to facilitate communication among Russian forces, to block the insurgents' access to potentially sympathetic local populations, and to deny them shelter and sanctuary. Another of the long-term successes of the Russian strategy, and the failure of Shamil's, was in preventing coordination between the resistance in the north-western and north-eastern parts of the Caucasus.

Map 7.1 Tsarist Russian administrative map of the Caucasus, 1904–14. Reproduced by courtesy of Arsène Saparov, all rights reserved

forced to adapt to greatly changing economic circumstances (see Suny 1994, ch. 5). As in Russia, emancipation led to great social change, but also to dissatisfaction over traditional privileges and the question of land ownership. All of these changes led by the end of the nineteenth century to the emergence of new kinds of ethnic identification and social and political activism based around nationalism, as people moved to urban areas and found themselves in competition for jobs and resources with people who seemed very alien, and they sought solace and support from people like them: from similar areas, with familiar customs, and speaking the same language.

Administrative reform and consolidation continued apace in the last decades of the tsarist period. The quilt-like variety of different territorial arrangements throughout the Caucasus – former khanates, principalities, districts, and *naibstvos* – were incorporated into governerships (*gubernii*as) and *oblast*s like those elsewhere in the empire (see Map 7.1), and local laws and customs were brought into conformity with Russian imperial law. While most of Transcaucasia and the urban centres of the northern Caucasus remained firmly under civil administration, most of the mountainous territory in the northern Caucasus and some in Transcaucasia (such as Zakataly and Abkhazia) was kept under a form of indirect military administration. Pioneered in Chechnya under Bariatinsky during the 1850s was a system that came to be called 'military-popular' administration (*voenno-narodnoe upravlenie*), in which territories were divided up into districts headed by a local chief, often a native officer in Russian military service, and each district divided into village communities overseen by elected or appointed councils of elders and an Islamic judge and who ruled according to both *'adat* and *shari'ah* (see Chapter 5). The districts were overseen by a small number of Russian military officers, with a centralised office (first called the Caucasus Mountain Administration, and later the Caucasus Military-Popular Administration) based in Tiflis (see Blauvelt 2010: 226–9). The ultimate goal of this structure was to gradually prepare these areas for the implementation of civil administration. Part of this involved reducing the influence of Muslim religious leaders by emphasising *'adat* over *shari'ah*, as the former was viewed as more changeable and thus could be gradually adapted to or replaced by civil law. Another aspect was the breaking up of earlier elite structures by appointing and empowering new and more accommodating local officials. The Terek and Kuban *oblast*s in the northern Caucasus were moved from this military administration to civil administration in 1872, but after a wave of uprisings shook the region during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, they were returned to military administration, and ultimately the Caucasus Military-Popular Administration remained the system for governing these regions up until the revolutions of 1917.

Map 7.1 Tsarist Russian administrative map of the Caucasus, 1904–14. Reproduced by courtesy of Arsène Saparov, all rights reserved

Notes

1 Official individual muftis had been appointed in the Caucasus since the 1840s, and in 1862 formal instructions were issued confirming the offices of a Sunni mufti and a Shi'ite *sheikh-ul-Islam*, both based in Tiflis. It was on the basis of these offices that the Transcaucasian Ecclesiastical Assembly was formed in 1872. See Georgian National Historical Archive [sakartvelos sakhelmtsipo saistorio arkivi (SSSA)], f. 4 ('Kantseliariia Namestnika Kavkazskogo') op. 3, d. 127, 'Po Predlozheniiu g. Namesntnika Kavkazskogo o Izbranii Mustafu Efendi Muftiem Omarovoi Sekty v Zakavkazskom Krae', and f. 8 ('Departament Obshchikh Del Glavnogo Upravleniia Namestnika Kavkazskogo'), op. 1 d. 3629 'Raport Zakavkazskogo Muftiia Omarova Ucheniia i Perepiska o Snabzhenii ego Instruktsiei dlia Upravleniia im Dukhoventsvom' and d. 3621, 'Perepiska s Zakavkazskim Sheikh-ul'-Islamom ob Utverzhdenii Instruktsii Kaziiam Alieva Ucheniia'.

2 In 1847 Shamil issued a decree to separate military and judicial authority in the *wilayat*s, transferring responsibility for all judicial matters to appointed muftis, to whom *qadi*s, local *shari'ah* judges, answered. Both the muftis and *qadi*s were elected by the local communities. In practice the *naib*

attempted to maintain their authority in judicial affairs, which was facilitated by the fact they had the final say in the nominations and elections of mufti and *qadi* candidates. See Zelkina (2000):205–6.

3 Zelkina refers to the *muhtasibs* as the Imam's 'secret policemen', since they often carried out their inspections incognito (Zelkina 2000: 207).

4 For further discussion of Shamil's imamate see Zelkina (2000), ch. 22.

5 Another such officer was the Chechen Major Saadulla Ospanov, the *naib* of Malaia Chechnya (Dzagurov 1925: 71).

6 SSSA, f. 8, o. 1, d. 5201, 'O Razreshenii Zhiteliam Kraia Pereselyat'sia v Turtsiiu'; SSSA, f. 545, o.1, d. 1264, ll. 3–24, 'Tsirkuliary o Vospreshchenii V'ezda Musul'man Zagranitsu, v Sviazi s Razvivaiushchimisia Sobytiiami na Vostoke'.

7 Although earlier, in 1863, Loris-Melikov had been in favour of the limited resettlement of Muslims from the Terek *oblast'*, and especially from Chechnya and Ingushetia (Dzagurov 1925: 32).

8 SSSA, f. 8, o. 1, d. 3632, ll. 16–18, 'Po Zapiske Uchitelia Musul'manskogo Zakona Stavropol'skoi Gimnazii Murguzali Efendi Ali Zade o Naznachenii Dukhovnykh Lits dlia Magometan Kubanskoi Oblasti'.

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