Tsarist Responses to the Armenian Question in the South Caucasus between 1878 and 1903

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ABSTRACT

From the Tsarist assault on the Armenian parish schools in the beginning of the 1880s to the confiscation of the Armenian Church properties in 1903, the affairs between the Russian Empire and its Armenian subjects gradually deteriorated. The amicable bond and religious solidarity that portrayed the relationship between the Russians and Armenians until the last quarter of the nineteenth century faded in the age of nationalism. Ethnicity and politics rather than religion became a key defining factor in the Russian imperial encounter with its Armenian subjects in this period. The aim of this dissertation is to scrutinize this Russian imperial encounter with its Armenian subjects between these years. It argues that the Russian authorities reacted rather than acted against this perceived danger of Armenian nationalism and the growing Armenian Question in the South Caucasus as well as across the border in the Ottoman Empire.

Instead of presenting a traditional enumeration of repressions, this dissertation aims to provide a balanced historical examination of this complex interplay between the Russian authorities and its Armenian subjects in the age of nationalism. On one hand, the Russian authorities were searching the new ways and methods of maintaining the imperial unity and integration of its subjects into imperial order. On other hand, the Armenian religious and secular forces; i.e. the Armenian Church authorities and Armenian political parties, were endeavoring to determine their own future in a concerted action with their ethnic brethren across the borders in the Ottoman Empire.

The Tsarist assault on Armenian parish schools in 1884 to curb the indoctrination of breeding nationalist ideas flourishing among the Armenians at home and abroad turned into an uncompromising antagonism between the Russian authorities and Armenian Church leadership as well as Armenian political parties in the later decade. By 1903, this

deterioration reached its apex with the confiscation of the Armenian Church properties following the implementation of a series of policies to cripple the demographic, economic and political influence of its Armenian subjects in the South Caucasus.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKAK: Akty, Sobrannye Kavkazskoiu Arkheograficheskoiu Kommissieiu (Documents Collected by the Caucasus Archeographical Commission)

FO: Foreign Office

GARF: Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation)

NAG: National Archive of Georgia (Sakartvelos Erovnuli Arkiv)

RGIA: Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive)

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

For the transliteration of Russian-language words and names cited in Russian documents, I have adopted a simplified version of the Library of Congress system. For place names within the Russian Empire, I have used their official Russian names (e.g., Yerevan instead of Erivan, Tiflis instead of Tbilisi) to enhance reader comprehension. Despite 'Transcaucasus' being the term used in official documents, I have opted for 'South Caucasus,' as it is geographically accurate and politically neutral.

Regarding the calendar system, Russia used the Julian calendar until 1918, which lagged thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar in the twentieth century. In the dissertation, I present the date on the Russian primary documents as originally stated, followed by the corresponding Gregorian calendar date in brackets. For British archival materials, I provide the dates as documented. To understand the difference in dates, readers can refer to the specific Russian documents and their respective dates.

INTRODUCTION

South Caucasus was home to around a million individuals who identified/were categorized as Armenian. This group spoke Armenian, practiced Christian religion, and had distinct cultural practices. The South Caucasus was also home to diverse amalgam of peoples and cultures. Armenian people, with their rich cultural heritage and resilience, have historically formed vibrant communities not only in the Russian Empire but also in the Ottoman Empire and as far as India, exemplifying their transnational movement throughout the ages. In the period in question, Russian state authorities moved attitudes towards the Armenian population from benign approval (as a Christian, key ally, merchant, unlike Chechens) to open repression and hostility. This thesis seeks to explain the framework and explanations for this profound shift. The Armenian case provides a valuable exemplar for exploring Russia's nationalities policies in general. The Russian authorities offered Armenians many privileges before the 1880s, and the Armenians were their key allies against the Persian and Ottoman Empires for many decades. Firstly, considering the size of the Armenian population and potential 'threat' in a vast empire, less than 1 per cent in the Russian Empire, the policies implemented against Russian Armenians were extremely oppressive. Until 1880s they were not considered like Poles in the Western borderland, who were framed as a perpetual threat to the Russian Empire. However, beginning in the 1880s, Russian Armenians were gradually identified as a main 'threat' in the South Caucasus. This study will examine this radical turn on the affairs between the Russian Empire and its Armenian subjects in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

This dissertation analyzes the Russian Imperial encounter with its Armenian subjects who lived across Russia's southern borderlands in the South Caucasus. The dissertation centers on the nationalist ideas developing among Russian Armenians, which aimed at the formation of a new sense of collective identity, and the subsequent policies of the Russian Imperial authorities to tackle this developing challenge in the South Caucasus. This dissertation's chronology begins with the turbulent period from the beginning of the 1880s, when the Russian Armenians began to articulate their national ideas and aspirations, until the complete confiscation of Armenian Church properties in 1903. This period is often referred to as the 'era of reaction' or 'counter-reform' in the late Russian Imperial history, when the Russian conservative and Russo-centric nationalist thought became rampant in the imperial bureaucracy after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 and beginning of the implementation of aggressive policies to bring diverse imperial borderlands closer to the imperial center. Also, in order to explain the historical context, the study extends to major turning events in the earlier decades.

The main emphasis of this dissertation is on the policies and practices of the Russian bureaucracy towards Armenian affairs in this period. Focusing on mainly Russian provincial authorities and their gradual introduction of the Armenian question to the central bureaucracy, this dissertation aims to construct the way that Russian authorities discussed and formulated policies against 'real' or 'imagined' Armenian threats on its southern borderlands in the South Caucasus. Examining this Russian imperial policy-making process on the key aspects of its Armenian affairs, this dissertation argues that the Russian authorities reacted rather than acted against the perceived danger of Armenian threat. Policies aimed at constructing the "Russianness" of the region as a barrier against these Armenian aspirations were essentially reactive. Far from a one-sided, pre-planned, systematic and centrally formulated policies, the Russian imperial policies in the Armenian case began with the desire

to control Armenian educational institutions and gradually spilled over in different areas from Armenian Church affairs to Armenian political movements and self-administration in City Dumas in the South Caucasus. There are two main reasons for the evolution of Tsarist attitudes towards Russian Armenians as a seditious and criminal element. First, the Russian authorities were suspicious about the political aspect of the nascent Armenian Question and the political aspirations of the Ottoman Armenians at the European centers after the Berlin Congress. For the Russian authorities, any political development across the border could have serious consequences in the South Caucasus. Second, the Russian authorities came to regard growing economic, demographic and political influence of its Armenian subjects in the South Caucasus as impeding against the unification of the region and the assimilation of its 'unconscious' Armenian subjects with the rest of the Russian Empire.

The implementation of Russian nationality policies in the Armenian case developed into an uncompromising encounter between the Russian authorities and the Armenian representatives; i.e. the Armenian Church and Armenian political parties over the identity and loyalty of the future generations of these 'unconscious' Armenians. On one hand, as a cultural and unifying political force at the imperial borderland, the Armenian Church was subject to restrictive policies because the Russian provincial authorities identified Armenian Church as the main institutional obstacle against the unification of its Armenian subjects with the rest of the Empire. The lack of a conversion and missionary activities among the Russian Armenians indicates that the Russian authorities considered Armenian affairs in a purely ethnic and political sense. For the very same reason, they constantly endeavored to limit the activities of the Armenian clergy within religious spheres. The emergence of Armenian political parties and their subsequent cross border activities throughout the Russian-Ottoman borderland, which sought to carve out an autonomous 'Armenian homeland,' alarmed the Russian authorities and resulted in the exile of many Russian Armenians from the region and

expulsion of Armenians from the local self-government. The Russian authorities identified growing Armenian cultural nationalism and political separatism as a main obstacle for strengthening and maintaining of the imperial unity and order in the South Caucasus.

The aim of Russian imperial policy in the Armenian case after 1880s was to curb 'nationalizing efforts' of the Armenian clergy and Armenian political parties among their unconscious Russian brethren as well as to limit their concerted action with the Ottoman Armenians against the Ottoman Empire. To achieve this ultimate goal, the Russian authorities constantly sought to weaken the influence of these two main driving Armenian forces who pioneered Armenian nationalist aspirations; the members of the Armenian clergy and Armenian political parties. Armenian educational institutions (Armenian parish schools) under the supervision of the Armenian clergy were gradually transferred to the supervision of the Ministry of Education, and many Armenian revolutionaries and priests were exiled to the interior regions of the Empire due to their 'alleged' participation in the nationalist movement. Restrictions were applied to the socio- economic activities of the Armenian clergy and many other Russian Armenians were either excluded from the bureaucratic service or eliminated from the self-administration in the City Dumas.

Tsarist Nationalities Policy: Russification and Imperial Russia in Late 19th Century

Dating back to the era of Ivan the Terrible, Russia has been considered a multinational empire, which extended its giant jurisdiction from Central Asia in the south, Russian Far East, Siberia in the north to Polish territories in the west, and the Caucasus in the south east. The basic principles defining the affairs between imperial center and its periphery were the 'status quo' and 'autonomy' to the newly added territories in return for 'incorporation of nobility class into imperial bureaucracy' and 'the loyalty to the imperial center'. The imperial

definition of 'other' was mostly based on 'religion', and on 'ethnicity' to some extent. These traditional methods of controlling Imperial borderlands and its subjects changed in the century of nationalism.

Tsarist nationality policies and the idea of bringing diverse imperial borderlands closer to its center, which has been conceptualized as 'russification', has developed as a key question in the historiography on Imperial Russia. There is no consensus in contemporary late Imperial Russian historiography about the meaning and aim of this concept. One of the main problems behind this ambiguity and confusion is the Russian authorities' application of diverse vocabulary. Among these various terms, one might encounter with Russification (*obrusenie* or *russifikatsiia*), Christianization (*khristianizatsiia*), *sblizhenie* (rapprochement or drawing together), *sliianie* (fusion or merging), assimilation (*assimiliatsiia*), civilization (*tsivilizatsiia*) and enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*).

Theodore Weeks aptly noted that when someone is examining reports, correspondence and official documents in late Imperial Russia regarding nationalities policy, it might be striking to notice the infrequent application of the word 'russification' whether it refers to *obrusenie* or *russifikatsiia*. As he argued, Russian authorities' frequent choice of the words *sblizhenie* and *sliianie* over the terminology of *obrusenie* or *russifikatsiia* "…indicates a deep desire to emphasize unity and order over any kind of activist cultural offensive."[1] In his article, Ulrich Hofmeister offered a similar approach. While he was describing the term *russifikatsiia* as the most aggressive form to make someone Russian or to become Russian, he illustrated the terms of *sliianie* and *sblizhenie* as less repressive forms in which Russian authorities referred to bring native people closer to Russians. According to him, these widespread word choices of *sliianie* and *sblizhenie* over *russifikatsiia* did not require the

[1] Theodore R. Weeks, 'Russification: Word and Practice 1863-1914', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 148, no. 4 (2004): 477.

natives to change their identities, but their position against the Russians.[2] In order to show the complexity and vagueness of these terms, John Doyle Klier demonstrated that the terms of *sblizhenie* and *sliianie* could simply mean "the extension of equal rights to Jews" in the era of Great Reforms in 1860s.[3]

Other controversial and complex terms are acculturation and assimilation. Benjamin Nathans defined assimilation as a disappearance of a sizeable group within another dominant group. In this case, the former group cannot be wholly indistinguishable from the dominant group. However, acculturation refers to the gradual replacement of one's identity and culture with the surrounding group through adaptation. In this case, the differences are not altered but they gradually disappear.[4] Aleksei Miller also illustrated the difference between these two terms. According to him, acculturation is a transfer of 'new cultural models' through the interaction with dominant community while assimilation is a process of appropriation and adaptation of new emotions, traditions and cultures. Moreover, Miller notes that assimilation changes one's identity, but acculturation does not lead to change of one's identity.[5] By looking at Eastern minorities, Robert Geraci also found challenging to elucidate to what extent the Russian authorities advocated acculturation, assimilation or even toleration to the differences of Eastern minorities in the empire. He offered two model of empires; the empire which sought to integrate minorities in an undistinguishable way from other Russians and the empire which did not advocate changing the identity of its subjects. According to Geraci, widespread opinion among the Tsarist bureaucracy suited between these two extreme imperial models which advocated that "some cultural distinctions among the empire's

[2] Ulrich Hofmeister, 'Civilization and Russification in Tsarist Central Asia, 1860–1917', *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (2016): 411–12.
[3] John Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855-1881* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 76.
[4] Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2001), 11.
[5] Alexei Miller, *Romanov Empire and Nationalism* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2008), 48; Oxana Zemtsova, 'Russification and Educational Policies in the Middle Volga Region (1860-1914)' (Florence, European University Institute, 2014), 5–6.

subjects would be erased, and others would remain."[6] One can find the application of these diverse terms interchangeably used in different regions, for different ethnic or religious groups and in different time periods. The question of "who defined or applied?" these policies is another aspect of the complexity. The term could have different meanings for a teacher, clergy or state official. It could be perceived differently by a regional or a central authority.

There is a wide-range of academic literature on imperial nationalities policies exploring different time-range, region and people. One of the scholars interested in conceptualizing the term 'Russification' is Edward C. Thaden's work *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*. He objects the arguments that the Russian empire had followed a systematic and long-term russification policy, and describes three kinds of Russification: unplanned, administrative, and cultural. Unplanned Russification refers to the adaptation of Russian culture, language and customs as a result of marrying Russian or serving in the army, and without any active participation of state. Administrative Russification, on other hand, was the beginning of centralization efforts to unite the borderlands with the imperial center. As a conscious and deliberate policy, the imperial center introduced Russian institutions and law, and extended the use of Russian language in public and bureaucratic spheres. Cultural Russification was the final step to reach a modern national state because it aimed to integrate non-Russian people into empire by accepting Russian language, religious and cultural values. He also points out two important terms to better explain the Russification; *obruset* (to become Russian) and *obrusit* (to make Russian). While the first one is natural process, the latter one describes active participation of the state. Bringing their language skills together and using variety of materials in different areas,

[6] Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 9.

Thaden and the other co-authors of the work examine the complex nature of the interaction between imperial center and its western periphery in different case studies. They demonstrate the contradictions that affected the Baltic people such as Russian bureaucrats, administrative reforms as well as the response of the each Baltic nationalities to these russification efforts.[7] In his book *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic Histor*y, Andreas Kappeler provides a wider projection on 'Imperial nationalities policy' and 'russification' in late imperial history by examining different regions of the empire such as west, south, and east. He argues that the common views among historians about the existence of a consistent policy of russification aiming to eliminate administrative, social and cultural diversities among its people to create an ethnically nation state are inadequate to explain the complexities and contradictions of russification policies.[8] Kappeler furthers Thaden's concept of russification to the other regions of the empire and demonstrates that while the administrative policies were determinant in the south (Transcaucasia), the encounter with Tatars/Muslim and the conversion efforts under Ilminsky system played an important role in shaping the imperial policy in the east.[9] He categorizes four different factors that shaped the Imperial nationalities policy and russification; modernization of empire and the standardization of the governing, non-Russian national movements, increasing nationalist tendencies within the Russian society, and foreign policy issues.[10]

Theodore R. Weeks seeks to address the issue of 'Imperial nationalities policy' and 'russification' from a discursive point view of the imperial bureaucracy and Russian public on the western borderlands. Based on "the repeated complaints of Russian nationalists who denounced government inconsistency in its governing of the western borderlands", he objects

[7] Edward C. Thaden, 'Introduction', in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, ed. Edward C. Thaden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 8–10.
[8] Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (London: Routledge, 2014), 273.
[9] Kappeler, 261–67.
[10] Kappeler, 275–78.

to the idea of a systematic and conscious russification policy.[11] He argues that contrary to implementing consistent and systematic policies to russify non-Russian people by eliminating their language and culture based on nationalist tendencies, the intention of the imperial center and bureaucrats was "to preserve the unwieldy, utterly non-national empire", and he describes these policies as reactionary efforts arising from non-national character of the empire against nationalist movements. Weeks's investigation in the policies carried out after the 1863 Polish revolt on the imperial western borderlands shows that the aims of these policies were to protect local Russians and their interest as well as to protect Orthodoxy against Catholic church and mostly the Polonization of the region, and those policies were non-coordinated and inefficient.[12]

Andrejs Plakans's research findings in their collaborative work with Thaden (1981), provide similar results with Weeks's work. The efforts of the imperial bureaucrats such as bringing back Orthodoxy on reconverts to Lutheranism, adding Russian language into primary school curricula, converting German-speaking higher educational institutions into Russian-speaking ones and increasing the use of Russian language in judicial and provincial spheres of public reflect the reactionary precautions of the imperial bureaucrats against the Germanization of the region, and aim to decrease German influence in that region.[13]

In *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917,* Geoffrey Hosking describes russification as an alternative policy to the civic reforms of Alexander II, which aimed to create a civil society but failed. It was also a continuation of Nicholas I's policies of elimination of local privileges and administrative centralization. He claims that the main determinant in this new policy was "the attempt to inspire among all peoples of the empire a subjective sense of

[11] Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*, 1996 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 14.
[12] Weeks, 5–14. 92-109.
[13] Andrejs Plakans, 'The Latvians', in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, ed. Edward C. Thaden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 227.

belonging to Russia, whether through the habit of using the Russian language, through reverence for Russia's past, its culture and tradition, through conversion to the Orthodox faith."[14] Hosking points out that although the russification policies were followed after the period of Alexander II, first introduced after 1863 Polish revolt, the imperial center did not aim to eliminate local non-Russian identity and create a Russian nation, but rather it was to create a larger administrative unity to maintain the governance. In this kind of belonging Russian identity was described as overarching to other ethnic loyalties, rather than destroying them.[15] Weeks, Kappeler and Hosking underline the reactionary characteristic of the russification policy against the 'real' or 'imagined' national threat perceived by the imperial bureaucrats to the existence or continuity of the empire. They evaluate this interaction between imperial center and its periphery in a larger content, except for Weeks' work which is limited to the Western frontier, in order to show the complex, contradictory and inconsistent nature of the russification policy against previous arguments based on systemic and consistent russification policy.

The opening of Soviet archives has enabled historians to portray these complex and nuanced characteristics of Imperial policy and russification in in-depth analysis and from different angles, by focusing more on specific places, fields, ethnic groups and time periods. By analyzing annual reports of the Lithuanian provinces, official papers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and memoirs, in his article "Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905", Theodore R. Weeks examines the russification policy in a specific Lithuanian case and searches for an answer to the question of 'to what extent did the imperial bureaucrats aim to russify Lithuanian people?'. He asserts that even though the imperial bureaucrats depicted their desires to russify these people and to strengthen Russian culture, they never embarked

[14] Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 367.
[15] Hosking, 367–97.

on a policy of eliminating Lithuanians' native culture and language in practice because their culture or language had never challenged to Russian culture, but rather it was the Polish influence and cultural power challenged the existing Russian culture and language in that region which had been desired to reduce by russification policy.[16]

By combining Lithuanian and Russian archival materials and secret reports with contemporary printed sources, in his article "Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwest Region after the Uprising of 1863–64?", Darius Staliunas investigates the imperial nationality policy in the Northwestern region of the empire in a specific time period between 1863-1868 in which the historians mostly trace a systematic russification policy, refers the term russification as a 'cultural assimilation' and limits his study only to 'Poles' and 'Lithuanians'. He argues that the imperial authorities in this region did not pursue any systematic policies between these years to russify Lithuanians and Poles.[17] In his study, Staliunas agrees with Weeks's argument that the Russian authorities mostly expressed their desires to russify the province itself instead of russifying a specific ethnic group in the region.[18]

In a similar study, focusing on the same region, in his article "Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire's Northwestern Region in the 1860s", Mikhail Dolbilov analyzes the logic of Russian authorities and their efforts representing state administration as a russifying factor after 1860s, and the atmosphere that their attitudes, mechanics and prejudices shaped by their nationalist tendencies and traditional imperial approaches. He claims that the russification efforts were poorly coordinated and lacked of

[16] Theodore R. Weeks, 'Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905', *Slavic Review* 60, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 96–114.
[17] Darius Staliunas, 'Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwestern Region after the Uprising of 1863-64?', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 273–89.
[18] Weeks, 'Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905', 97.

pragmatic practices in this region.[19] On one hand, both Staliunas and Dolbilov reveal the erratic meaning of the terms 'Russification', 'Lithuanian', 'Pole' and 'Russian' in their studies. For instance, Staliunas points out that the most important determinant is 'religion' rather than ethnicity for national identity of the 'Poles' in the eyes of imperial bureaucrats.[20] Dolbilov also shows that due to inadequate definition on the concepts of the 'Polishness' and 'Russianness', the Polish people were mostly considered with religious terms rather than agents of a national group.[21] On other hand, they affirm Weeks's argument that instead of following assimilatory policies, the purpose of imperial bureaucrats was to defend Lithuanian culture against Polish domination in the region.[22]

In his article "The Ambiguities of Russification", Andreas Kappeler tackles the contradictions of 'modern nationalism' and 'traditional imperial policy of status quo' and 'loyalty', which are presented in their articles by Dolbilov and Staliunas. He claims that the previous identification of loyalty with social status was replaced with the ethnicity due to advent of nationalism and increasing interest on ethnic issues, and loyal people of the empire –Poles, Jews, Germans, and others- were identified as 'enemy nations'. This new ethnic based approach did not completely succeed the traditional methods and this imbalance caused contradictory and inconsistent policy until the last years of the empire.[23] Contrary to Staliunas's categorization of the historiography of russification study; the cultural assimilationist views among Central and East European historians and 'revisionist view'

[19] Mikhail Dolbilov, 'Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire's Northwestern Region in the 1860s', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 245–71.
[20] Staliunas, 'Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwestern Region after the Uprising of 1863-64?', 288.
[21] Dolbilov, 'Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire's Northwestern Region in the 1860s', 246.
[22] Weeks, 'Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905', 110–11.
[23] Andreas Kappeler, 'The Ambiguities of Russification', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 293–94.

among Western and Russian historians[24], Kappeler describes russification historiography in three categories; the idea of systematic cultural russification among Polish historians, de-polonization of Western borderlands (Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians) and the consideration of Western and Russian historians of russification as an inconsistent and unsystematic policy.[25]

Recent studies apart from works concentrating on imperial western borderlands are illustrative to better understand the imperial nationalities policy and russification, and to evaluate them in different places or in a comparative way to other regions. By studying a variety of Russian sources such as stories and overviews from the magazines, travel notes and books containing information about the Komi, a group of people living in the northern part of the empire, also known as Zyrians, in his article "The Komi, Ethnic Stereotypes, and Nationalities Policy in Late Imperial Russia", Indrek Jääts explores the Russian bureaucrats' perception of the Komi, and the factors that shaped their image of the Komi people in the nineteenth century in that region. Comparing the Komi people with Tatars or Poles, he argues that the Komi were never considered as a threat to the imperial integrity because they were not a 'historical nation' and they did not have their literary traditions and written history- a historical memory. Also, Orthodoxy and 'high Russian culture' did not have a rival in the region that might challenge its cultural dominance. For these reasons, Jääts describes the interaction between Imperial center and the Komi people as a natural process of russification; adaptation of Russian culture, language and religion.[26]

By using diaries, speeches, administrative documents and letters of colonial officials in Turkestan from Tashkent, Moscow and St. Petersburg archives, in his article "Civilization

[24] Staliunas, 'Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwestern Region after the Uprising of 1863-64?', 273–74.
[25] Kappeler, 'The Ambiguities of Russification', 296.
[26] Indrek Jääts, 'The Komi, Ethnic Stereotypes, and Nationalities Policy in Late Imperial Russia', *The Russian Review* 68, no. 2 (April 2009): 199–205.

and Russification in Tsarist Central Asia, 1860–1917", Ulrich Hofmeister analyzes the understanding of 'civilizing mission' of the historians, journalists, ethnographers and civil and military officials of Turkestan colonial administration in Central Asia, as he refers them 'imperial elite'. He points out that the imperial bureaucracy did not differentiate the terms 'civilization' and 'russification', and they consider their 'civilizing mission' as a way to forge the imperial control in the region rather than a limited intervention into the native life.[27] Similar to those aforementioned studies on imperial western borderlands, Hofmeister argues that imperial bureaucracy in Turkestan did not follow a systematic, forced russification policy or conversion efforts to Orthodoxy. For instance, imperial authorities did not implement Russian language courses into the native schools curricula and they forbade any missionary activities of the Orthodox Church.[28] On one hand, he demonstrates some historians' argument on russification in Central Asian case that the aim of the imperial authorities was to russify Central Asian lands rather than making its population into 'Russian' in a cultural sense[29], similar to those Weeks and Staliunas argument that the imperial authorities desired to russify Northwestern region rather than its ethnic groups.[30] On other hand, he shows that the imperial authorities in Turkestan colonial administration pursued a traditional policy of 'maintaining stability' and 'securing political loyalty of the non-Russians' with 'russification' and 'civilization'[31], which Kappeler defines as a reason for the inconsistent and contradictory policy of the imperial bureaucrats.[32]

Except for regional and ethnic approaches of russification, in her article "Linguistic Russification in the Russian Empire: Peasants into Russians?", Aneta Pavlenko investigates

[27] Hofmeister, 'Civilization and Russification in Tsarist Central Asia, 1860–1917', 411–12.
[28] Hofmeister, 413.
[29] Hofmeister, 414.
[30] Weeks, 'Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905', 97; Staliunas, 'Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwestern Region after the Uprising of 1863-64?', 277.
[31] Hofmeister, 'Civilization and Russification in Tsarist Central Asia, 1860–1917', 442.
[32] Kappeler, 'The Ambiguities of Russification', 294.

the language policy of imperial center and she argues that the imperial authorities did not follow a 'unified language policy', nor they formed a far-reaching 'primary education system'. Due to lack of systematic approach, imperial authorities failed to extend the use of Russian language to non-Russian peasants.[33] Her research findings are similar to Plakans, Kappeler, Weeks and Hosking arguments that the desire of the imperial authorities with the russification measures were to minimize German and Polish influence, to ensure the continuity and integrity of the empire and its governance, and to replace native languages with Russian.[34]

One of the key themes of these scholarly works is the 'space' of the empire and its meaning to the flexibility of the imperial nationalities policy and russification. This policy differentiated from one region to another. For instance, the imperial policy toward western borderlands had a reactionary characteristic against the Polish threat and its 'national influence' in the region, and the aim of the imperial policy was to counter this influence by russifying the 'region' itself.[35] On the northern borderlands, in the example of Komi people, the imperial bureaucrats did not pursue a policy because there was not a 'national threat' against the imperial integrity and these people already adopted Russian language, religion and culture in a natural process.[36] Considering imperial eastern borderlands, authorities had a 'civilizing mission' against this backward region and they mostly avoided to interfere in the local life.[37] Ethnically diverse southern borders of the empire (Transcausus) had been brought to the imperial center by the policy of administrative integration.[38]

[33] Aneta Pavlenko, 'Linguistic Russification in the Russian Empire: Peasants into Russians?', *Russian Linguistics* 35, no. 3 (2011): 332–49.
[34] Pavlenko, 349.
[35] Weeks, 'Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905', 97.
[36] Jääts, 'The Komi, Ethnic Stereotypes, and Nationalities Policy in Late Imperial Russia', 200.
[37] Hofmeister, 'Civilization and Russification in Tsarist Central Asia, 1860–1917', 413.
[38] Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*, 274.

Other key themes are 'religion', 'language' and 'ethnicity'. The demarcation of being 'Polish', 'Belarusian', 'Russian', 'Orthodoxy' and 'Catholic' was unclear in the minds of the imperial bureaucrats. These themes were the determinants of someone's identity and belonging to a group. Different tendencies of defining a group of people by their language, religion and/or ethnicity caused the contradictory nationalities policy and russification. The main question was based on the importance of the language or religion for defining someone's national identity. On one hand, the conversion to Orthodoxy was a precondition for someone to obtain the benefits of 'Russianness' in the western borderlands. As an example, under the period of strict control, conversion to Orthodoxy was the only way for a 'Catholic Polish' person to serve in the public or be a teacher.[39] In the minds of imperial authorities, the Poles were considered as 'an ideological subversive and religious fanatic' rather than as 'the representative of a unified national group'. This imagination of hostility against the 'Russian high culture' affected the ideas of 'Russianness' and 'Polonism'.[40] On other hand, the imperial authorities discussed the possibility of introducing Russian language in some Catholic churches in the northwestern region. These people were mostly Catholic Belarusians and they were considered as a 'branch of Russian nation' even though they were 'Catholic'. With this step, the imperial authorities attempted to prevent these "Catholic Russians" from the influence of Poles through the introduction of the Russian language.[41] While the imperial center introduced the Russian language in Belarusian Catholic churches to defend them against Polish influence, they allowed non-Russian people of the Volga-Kama

[39] Staliunas, 'Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwestern Region after the Uprising of 1863-64?', 280–81.
[40] Dolbilov, 'Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire's Northwestern Region in the 1860s', 246.
[41] Theodore R. Weeks, 'Religion and Russification: Russian Language in the Catholic Churches of the "Northwest Provinces" after 1863', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 94.

region to use their native languages against the influence of Tatars and Islam under Il'minskii's system.[42]

It is also important to bring debates on Russian colonialism and frontiers. This literature explores Russian expansion and transformation of Russian steppe, highlights the integration of different ethnic and religious groups, cultural exchanges and the establishment of Russian Imperial administration.[43]

These different approaches within and beyond the different regions of the empire show the flexible and inconsistent nature of the imperial nationalities policy and russification. Also, it should be mentioned that the main aim of the imperial center was to maintain the stability and integrity of the empire rather than russifying its non-Russian groups with these variety of methods.

In the past few decades there has been an increasing interest on Russian nationalities policy and russification, especially after the opening of Soviet archives. These new materials/sources have attracted the attention of the historians from different nationalities, and they followed a new path; that is, the emphasis on the unsystematic and inconsistent nature of the imperial russification policy. Imperial nationality policy and russification have been elaborated in the lights of these new archival materials, in a variety of cases from different angles; in an imperial context, on regional and ethnic approaches and in a specific period of time. However, a great majority of the literature has focused on the western borderlands of the empire in which the historians have mostly described russification with its interaction through western borderlands, its peoples and customs.

[42] Jääts, 'The Komi, Ethnic Stereotypes, and Nationalities Policy in Late Imperial Russia', 201.
[43] Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1995); M. Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); A. Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand, 1868-1910: A Comparison with British India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

The scholarship on imperial nationality policy and Russification has evolved from a narrow emphasis on assimilation strategies to a more comprehensive exploration of terminology, the classification of imperial practices, and the dynamics between the imperial center and its borderlands. Earlier research portrayed these practices as coercive and methodical attempts to enforce Russian culture, religion, and language on non-Russian populations. However, recent studies emphasize the complexity, inconsistency, and unsystematic nature of the interactions between the imperial center and its diverse peripheries across various case studies.

Russification Policies and Russian Armenians

The relationship between the Russian Empire and its Armenian subjects between 1878 and 1903 have been overlooked generally in the Armenian historiography and in particular in the Russian nationalities historiography. Contemporary Armenian historiography presents Russian-Armenian relations in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a narrative of 'oppression' of Russian Armenians by the Tsarist authorities. In almost all cases, they identify the policies of Russian authorities with 'assimilation' against its own subjects. Although the narratives mentioned the key incidents in these years, such as the transfer of Armenian schools, exile of Armenian clergy or confiscation of Armenian Church properties, they neglect the causality problem between these events and Tsarist actions.

Among these early works, Nalbandian pointed out these key incidents as an organized anti-Armenian campaigns.[44] While Hovannisian described the policies of the Russian

[44] Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1963), 149; Aleksandr Amfiteatrov, *Armianskii Vopros* (St. Petersburg: Pushkinskaia Ckoropechatnia, 1906); Luigi Villari, *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906).

authorities as an "intensified measures for assimilation",[45] Dadrian explained the motives of the Russian authorities as a "campaign against national minorities and russifying the border provinces."[46] Suny described three types of Russification probably inspired by Thaden's categorization; spontaneous, administrative, and cultural and linguistic Russification. Although the spontaneous and administrative Russification had emerged in Armenian life since the beginning of 1800s, as he noted, the Tsarist authorities applied actual assimilatory policies during the years of Alexander III (1881-1894).[47] This perspective is reinforced by other works. In his comprehensive work exploring Armenian history in depth, Panossian preferred to use 'forced Russification' for the growing anti-Armenian measures which lasted until the confiscation of Armenian Church properties.[48] Simon Payaslian's argument presents the most emphatic version of these approaches; he explained Russian state policy against Armenians as a Russification, and put *obrusenie* in parenthesis and noted that the Russian authorities aimed cultural Russification.[49]

With a key challenge for this Armenian historiography on Russian Armenians is that they do not draw on primary Russian archival materials. This can be explained with reference to their field of expertise, publication date of their works or availability of the Russian archival materials. This thesis complicates and nuances the conclusions of these work by drawing on Russian archival materials. In so doing, it provides comprehensive analyzes of

[45] Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 18; Richard G. Hovannisian, 'Russian Armenia. A Century of Tsarist Rule', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 19, no. 1 (1971): 31–48.
[46] Vahakn Dadrian, 'The 1984 Sassoun Massacre: A Juncture in the Escalation of the Turko-Armenian Conflict', *The Armenian Review* 47, no. 1–2 (Spring-Summer 2001): 27.
[47] Ronald G. Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule', in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Vol. 2*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 129.
[48] Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), 221.
[49] Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia: From the Origins to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 119–21.

complex interaction between the Russian authorities and its Armenians subjects in these years.

The Armenian Question and Russian Imperial Perspective

The Armenian Question has generated a rich historiography, and is one of the most controversial and deeply politicized subjects in Ottoman-Armenian historiography. Most of the researchers focus on the Armenians in late Ottoman imperial history. The split between the Turkish/Ottoman and Armenian/Christian/Western historians explicitly attracts attention. While the Western/Armenian line of historiography generally assumed that the violence against the Ottoman Armenians were organized and/or planned by the Ottoman Sultan and his auxiliaries, the Turkish/Ottoman line drew a rebellious image of Armenians.[50]

The Congress of Berlin held in 1878 was an important turning point for the Armenian Question. For the first time, the concerns of the Armenian people, and the notion of Armenian nationhood, was articulated and supported at the heart of European Power. According to Balakian, Armenian representatives sought to secure some governance reform and security of life and property. However, the Armenian delegation was ignored. One of the representatives of the Armenian delegation, Archbishop Khrimian compared the big nations to small nations with 'iron' and 'paper' ladles. Then, Krimian expressed his famous phrase "Dear Armenian people, could I have dipped my Paper ladle in the cauldron it would sog and

[50] See for the mainstream Turkish Historiography, Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 2, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Esat Uras and Cengiz Kürşat, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question* (Ankara: Documentary Publications, 1988); Justin McCarthy et al., *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006); Richard G. Hovannisian, 'The Historical Dimensions of the Armenian Question', in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick & Oxford: Transaction Books, 1987); Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

remain there! Where guns talk and sabers shine, what significance do appeals and petitions have?"[51]

Some Armenian historians tended to present these reform demands as the continuation of earlier modernization efforts in the Ottoman Empire. Hovannisian explained that the earlier efforts of the Ottoman authorities to introduce reforms (*Tanzimat-1856*) did not yield the results that were expected to improve the conditions of the non-Muslims and guarantee the principle of equality among them. Consequently, he further noted that the Armenian Question which was "The plight of the Armenian population and its struggle for civil rights and administrative reforms" entered into the international discussion after Berlin Congress.[52] Similarly, Moumdjian considered the beginning of Armenian reform demands in the Ottoman Empire in 1865 with the granted internal constitution to the Ottoman Armenians. Thus, the Berlin Congress only brought the reform issue to the international agenda.[53] Dadrian also noted that the demands of the Ottoman Armenians for the implementation of reforms was 'a byproduct of Ottoman reform movement' which aimed to reconstruct Ottoman society.[54]

Others described the demands of the Ottoman Armenians as a 'local autonomy.'[55] As Anahide Ter-Minassian elucidated the demands of the Ottoman Armenians from the Berlin Congress as a social and administrative autonomy, "…inside the Ottoman framework, for the

[51] Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (HarperCollinsPublisher, 2004), 44.
[52] Richard G. Hovannisian, 'The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1914', in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Vol. 2*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 203.
[53] Garabet K. Moumdjian, 'From Millet-i Sadıka to Millet-i Asiya: Abdülhamid II and Armenians, 1878-1909', in *War & Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and The Treaty of Berlin*, ed. Hakan M. Yavuz and Peter Sluglett (Utah: The University of Utah Press, 2011), 304–5.
[54] Vahakn N. Dadrian, 'The Armenian Question and the Wartime Fate of the Armenians as Documented by the Officials of the Ottoman Empire's World War I Allies: Germany and Austria-Hungary', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002): 59.
[55] Houri Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (California: University of California Press, 2019), 7.

vilayets in Turkish Armenia- dictated by a sincere attachment to the Ottoman Empire...."[56] If these Armenian reform demands were about equality, civil rights and administration, what was the problem of the Russian Empire with these reform demands? The historian Donald Bloxham partially replied this question. According to him, the Ottoman Armenians desired reform for security and equality, but also they desired 'national status.'[57] This national status envisaged to control a certain territory. As Suny demonstrated, the national discourse shaped and evolved to claim 'Armenian' territories after the Berlin Congress in 1878. According to Suny, this discourse of fatherland (*hayrenik*) appeared among Armenian intellectuals and they began to demonstrate distinction between love of nation (*azgasirutiun*) and love of fatherland (*hairenasirutiun*).[58] Even before the formation of Armenian political parties, the Armenian Church leadership visited European and Russian centers to petition for the formation of an autonomous 'Armenian' province during and after the Congress of Berlin.[59] This idea of territoriality in the Armenian nationalism popularized by the secular and religious leadership after the Berlin Congress such as Khrimian Hairik and Mkrtich Portukalian.[60]

Moving away from this Turkish/Armenian discussion, the Russian perspective brings an interesting aspect to this debate. The Russian perceptions of Armenian nationalism and its ultimate goal was in line with Ottoman perceptions. The main concern of the Russian authorities was what they perceived to be growing Armenian self-consciousness, and the

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[56] Anahide Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)* (Cambridge & Massachusetts: The Zoryan Institute, 1984), 4–5.
[57] Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 50.
[58] Ronald G. Suny, 'Religion, Ethnicity, and Nationalism: Armenians, Turks and the End of the Ottoman Empire', in *In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 37.
[59] British Foreign Office contains rich documents to demonstrate early Armenian claims for a possible autonomous 'Armenian Province' in the Ottoman Empire. See for example; In a letter addressed to the British Ambassador in Constantinople, the Armenian Patriarch Nerses described the possible borders of the 'Armenian Province'. FO 424/68, 346-347.
[60] Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, 2006, 175.

extension of Armenian political aspirations and territorial claims to the South Caucasus. The Congress of Berlin not only internationalized the Armenian Question, but also politicized and territorialized it.

The Russian authorities began to question the loyalty of its Armenian subjects to the Russian Empire after the Russian-Ottoman War and Berlin Congress in 1878. The unstable situation on the Russian-Ottoman borderland, increasing cross-border activities of Armenian revolutionaries and news of disorder, conflict and massacre in the Ottoman Empire raised Russian suspicion of their 'own' Armenian subjects who were living in the South Caucasus. To illustrate that nationalist ideas were developing among Russian Armenians, General Frankini reported from the newly annexed Kars *Oblast* that the movement of Armenians across the border had a political aspect. He reminded his higher authorities about the campaign of the Ottoman Armenians at the European centers after the Berlin Congress and noted the support of Armenian intelligentsia for these Armenian demands in the South Caucasus.[61] A few years later, the new Governor-General of the Caucasus, Dondukov Korsakov reported the Russian Armenians had begun to move to the newly annexed Kars Oblast "with the aim forming a continuous Armenian territory from Yerevan to Erzurum."[62]

The Russian stance was as firm in the Imperial center as at the Ottoman capital on its Armenian policy between the years of 1878 and 1903. In a conversation with the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, the Russian Foreign Minister, Lobanov overtly underlined the Russian stance about reform discussions in the Ottoman Empire in 1895;

> "… in no circumstances, however, will the Russian Government adopt coercive measures or consent to the creation in Asia Minor of a district in which the Armenians

[61] Candan Badem, 'Kars Vilayetine Ermeni Göçü (1878-1914)', *Kebikeç*, no. 35 (2013): 157.
[62] Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze (henceforth *zapiska*), Governor- General Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Dondukov-Korsakov-1882, RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, 1883 *zapiska*, RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 311.

should have exceptional privileges, and which would constitute the nucleus of an independent kingdom of Armenia, such being evidently the object of the Armenian Committees have in view."[63]

This is the story of the Russian imperial encounter with its own Armenian subjects between the years of 1878 and 1903. The growing Armenian national consciousness and political demands alerted the Russian authorities. What we framed as the 'Russification policies' were the reactionary steps of the Russian authorities who sought to curb their anxieties about Armenian political activism and national consciousness in the South Caucasus.

Tsarist Bureaucracy: Key Policy-Making Figures in the Imperial Bureaucracy and Armenian Case

This section examines the group of bureaucrats who were active on the Armenian Question between 1882 until 1903. We can categorize these bureaucrats into two groups; the central bureaucrats and the provincial bureaucrats who acted as agents of the central bureaucracy in the South Caucasus. A clear understanding of the bureaucratic mechanisms between these two categories enables us to explore the policy-making process in the Armenian case and helps us to explain why the provincial authorities' suggested more aggressive policies which almost always supported by the central bureaucracy in the Armenian case in these years.

There were debates within Russian governmental circles on the direction, character and content of the imperial policy in the term of counter-reform (1881-1904). The main stalemate was around the question of whether return to more traditional practices of autocracy or to continue the reform process that had begun in the 1860s. There were two

[63] FO 424/182, "Letter sent from Sir F. Lascelles to the Earl of Kimberley," St. Petersburg, June 4, 1895, 365.

competing groups in the bureaucracy. On one hand, there were the group of reformers who had framed the Great Reforms and who rejected the traditional rule of autocracy, privileging instead the importance of legality in imperial rule. On other hand, there were conservatives who sought to maintain traditional rule of absolute monarch and bureaucracy. This group mainly dominated ministries after the assassination of the Alexander II.[64] Among the names in this group, the most significant was of course Tsar Alexander III himself. Among other significant figures, the most notable was probably the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod and Tsar's mentor K. P. Pobedonostsev (1880-1905)[65], and late Minister of Interior V. K. V. Plehve.[66] These were the group of bureaucrats who "…set the tone of Russian internal policy. They believed that Russia had to be ruled with a firm hand and that her borderlands and national minorities had to be made a more integral part of the general political and cultural life of Russia."[67]

In the second category were the provincial bureaucrats who functioned as the agents of the imperial center. The South Caucasus became one of the borderlands where conservative thought manifested its desire of firm control. After the assassination of his father, Alexander III abolished the Viceroyalty of the Caucasus in 1881 and established the Office of the Caucasian High Commissioner (*Glavnonachal'stvuiushchii Grazhdanskoi Chastiiu na Kavkaz'e*). In this new administrative system, the Governor-General depended heavily on the ministries for decision-making process. In the previous system of Viceroyalty, they were directly responsible to the Tsar. The imperial agents in the South Caucasus in the

[64] Theodore Taranovski, 'Aleksander III and His Bureaucracy: The Limitations on Autocratic Power', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 26, no. 2/3 (September 1984): 207.
[65] A. Iu. Polunov, 'Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev—Man and Politician', *Russian Studies in History* 39, no. 4 (1 April 2001): 8–32.
[66] See, Edward H Judge, *Plehve: Repression and Reform in Imperial Russia, 1902-1904* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1983), 117–21; Tuomo Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1995), 103–13.
[67] Michael H. Haltzel et al., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 54–55.

years of 'counter-reform' were Prince A. M. Dondukov- Korsakov (1882-1890), Count S. A. Sheremetev (1890-1896) and Prince Grigorii Golitsyn (1896-1904).[68] In addition to these imperial agents in the region, one more personality who actively joined the process of shaping Armenian policy, especially in the school matters, was the Head (Curator) of the Caucasus Educational District, Kiril Petrovich Yanovsky (1878-1900).

Considering the distance of the South Caucasus from the Imperial center, the Russian authorities relied on the provincial authorities in the formulation of the policies. In the Armenian case, the central authorities approved the suggested Armenian policies of the governor-generals of the Caucasus in almost all cases. By using the term 'Concerted Confrontation', Badalyan explained that three things played key role in this policy formulation process; the personalities and policies of Russian regional and central bureaucracy, the Russian-Ottoman struggle and the plight of Ottoman Armenians, and the instability both in Saint Petersburg and in the Caucasus.[69]

The reasons why Russian Armenians were exposed to more aggressive policies from the Russian state in comparison with the other peoples of the region needs further explanation. The reports of these governor-generals make it clear that the real or perceived danger of Armenian nationalism and the nationalist activities of the Armenian clergy and revolutionaries across the borders caused great concern among the provincial bureaucracy. This does not necessarily mean that Armenian nationalism was really a challenged to Imperial unity or authority. Increasing news of violence across the border and constant flow of Armenian revolutionaries as well as refugees alerted Russian provincial authorities in the South Caucasus. The Armenian policies were master-minded by these regional bureaucrats

[68] Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 93–94.
[69] Stephen Badalyan Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 201–2.

and introduced to the Imperial center. Imperial concerns were heightened in the beginning of the 1890s, especially at a time when the Armenian political parties manifested their political claims, circulated their clandestine journals and illegally crossed into and out of the imperial borderlands.

The Armenian case was discussed with this core conservative Russian bureaucracy through the "Special Conference on Armenian Affairs (*Osoboe Soveshchani pa Armiyanskim Delam*) in the 1880s and at the beginning of the 1890s. In these meetings, the proposed measures were usually approved and rarely replaced with more moderate ones. The participants of these meetings were the Minister of Interior, Tolstoi, the Minister of Education, Deliyanov, the Governor-General of the Caucasus and either a representative from the foreign office or Minister of Foreign Affairs himself, Giers.[70] Even the participants' positions in the Tsarist bureaucracy show the areas of concern manifested in relation to Armenian affairs.

Among the three governor-generals in the South Caucasus during this period, the documents of the Grigorii Golitsyn indicate that his motivations and approaches were distinct and differentiated from the other governor-generals. While Dondukov-Korsakov and Sheremetev clearly struggled against the Armenian nationalist activities, Golitsyn had a more broadly Russo-centric nationalist approach not only against Armenians but other non-Russian groups as well. He constantly referred to the terms of 'Russian origin' and 'Russian cause' in his reports.

The presentation of perceived dangers presented by Armenian nationalism to the Imperial center and its subsequent discussion in conservative circles were the main reasons behind more aggressive policies against the Armenians in the South Caucasus in comparison

[70] Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*, 2017, 95–98.

with the other groups in the region. Due to the distance of the region to the Imperial center and the weight of the Armenian case in comparison with the other problems in the center, the Russian central bureaucracy left the management of the Armenian case to the hands of the provincial authorities.

Contribution, Methodology and Sources

This dissertation aims to fill the existing gap in the study of Russian Imperial policies towards Armenians in the South Caucasus in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and draws on a diverse array of archival materials to do so. This thesis is an important contribution to the existing historiography in a number respects. First, there has been a growing body of literature exploring the relationship between Ottoman Armenians and Ottoman Imperial government. The last quarter of the nineteenth century of Armenian history became a field of fierce debate between the Ottoman and Armenian/Western historians. The Researchers have used many different archives in different countries from the USA to France, British and Ottoman archives in order to investigate the Armenian case in the Ottoman Empire. The case of Armenians in the Russian Empire has been neglected in these discussions, and this scholarship has not drawn on Russian archival materials. Secondly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the study of Russian Imperial history, and in particular the practice and experience of Russian nationality policies attracted significant scholarly attention. Again, the historiography of Russian nationality policies, understanding of the relationship between the Russian Empire and its diverse population in the borderlands at the end of the nineteenth century primarily focused on Empire's western borderlands. The relationship between Russian Armenians and the Russian Imperial bureaucracy was also neglected by the Russian historians.

This study draws on a rich array of sources to analyze the Armenian case in late Imperial Russian history. I use reports of the provincial authorities, correspondence between the center and regional authorities, petitions of key figures and variety of similar materials.

In St. Petersburg, I have visited Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), and national libraries in the city. RGIA holds mainly Russian Imperial materials. In fond 821, the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Interior Ministry has materials about many aspects of the communication between Russian and Armenian authorities. These files show the process of the involvement of Russian authorities in the Armenian school affairs. It contains materials about church affairs and special conferences to formulate Armenian policies. In fond 1263, 1287 and 1289, there materials about the administrative measures of the Russian authorities in Armenian affairs. Fond 1405 has the court reports and process in some cases and variety of punishments against the political activities of the Armenian nationalists available in these reports.

The State Archive of Russian Federation in Moscow contains records of secret police surveillance. These reports are very important for an understanding of Russian Imperial view of the activities of the Armenian nationalist movement across the Russo-Ottoman borders. In these reports, I seek to analyze the motivations and actions of the Armenian nationalists and the responses of the Tsarist authorities against the activities of the Armenian nationalists. This is the backbone of my research because the real or perceived danger of Armenian nationalism in the region was the key problem in the formulation of the Tsarist Armenian policies.

In addition to these materials, one set of documents was also useful to me. The Journal of the Ministry of Popular Education (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Obrazovaniia*), published officially between 1834 and 1917 contains statistical data about Armenian parish

schools as well as the data of Russian Imperial efforts in the educational spheres of the region. It is possible to collect data about the number of students and schools from this journal.

Apart from these Russian language materials, I have used British Foreign Office materials from the file number 424 (FO) to enrich my narrative. This file covers a variety of diplomatic reports from the eastern cities of the Ottoman Empire including the actions of the Armenian national movement across the border as well as interaction with the Russian consuls and their view about the Armenians.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation consists of a comprehensive introduction and five different and thematically arranged chapters. In the Introduction, I provide historical background of Russian Imperial involvement into the Caucasus and then I will explain the gap in historiography of the thesis, its methodology and sources after I discuss the historiography in the academia. While discussing historiography on Russification, I provide a snapshot of different cases at the other parts of the Imperial borderlands to provide a clear understanding of Armenian case in the Imperial nationalities policy.

The first chapter examines the emerging tensions over Armenian parish schools between the Imperial central/regional authorities and the Armenian clergy, headed by the Armenian Catholicos. Due to the Russian government's increasing centralization efforts and the political development in the life in the Caucasus, the Russian regional authorities began to identify 'loyal Armenian subjects' as 'suspect nationalists'. This identification caused policy changes and the Russian authorities searched a new course of action. As early as the 1880s,

they decided to take over the control of the education delivered in Armenian parish schools from the Armenian clergies' authority. By doing so, the Russian government aimed to secure future Armenian generations from the circulation of nationalist/separatist ideas and bring them closer to the empire. I will analyze the course of action that the Russian authorities followed in this new era and how these policies were resisted by the Armenian clergy. Russian policies at this time included assuming control over the appointment and removal of teachers as well as over the teaching curriculum in the Armenian parish schools.

In chapter two, the Russian authorities increasingly identified the Armenian clergy with the nationalist ideas and separatism and regarded the political engagement of the lower and upper level of the Armenian priests as a threat to the state interest. On other hand, they realized the decreasing influence of Armenian Church and the Catholicos among the Armenian communities within the Caucasus and abroad. I show this oscillation of Russian policies against the Armenian Clergy. On this matter, the meeting on Armenian affairs on 12 February 1891 was an important turning-point for the relationship between the Russian state and Armenian Church because the Russian authorities stressed that the concessions to the Armenian Church were no more needed in exchange for using the Armenian Church's influence on Armenian communities abroad.

Chapter three tackles the issue of emerging Armenian political parties as a new political power within the national community, as well as popular support and recruitment for the 'national' cause, and the funding and provision of guns, finance and transportation. I will examine the Russian central/regional authorities' understanding of the direction of these Armenian political parties. I will try to answer the question 'what did the Russian authorities think the Armenian political parties were aiming at with all these activities?'. I will also attempt to demonstrate what methods the Russian authorities implemented to cope with these Armenian political activities both in the empire and abroad.

Chapter four demonstrates the Russian state efforts to control and prevent the movement of Ottoman Armenians whether as emigrants or refugees to the South Caucasus. The aim of this policy was to prevent any demographic changes on behalf of Armenians because the Russian authorities concerned about the future complications of Armenian territorial aspirations.

In chapter five, especially beginning in the 1890s, the Russian authorities implemented strict measures to curb Armenian political activities. The direction and actions of the Armenian political parties and Armenian clergy caused great concern among the Russian authorities. By now the Russian authorities feared that their policy of raising loyal Armenian generation through controlling the Armenian parish schools had failed. The integrative policies in the 1880s turned into discriminative policies in the 1890s. As a result, the Russian authorities limited Armenians from public offices and local administration, closed charity organizations, transferred all parish schools to the subordination of the Ministry of Education and confiscated all church properties in 1903.

Chapter 1: Imperial Policies and the Assault on Armenian Parish Schools in 1880s-1890s

A series of events at the beginning of 1883 attracted the attention of the Russian authorities in the South Caucasus. In February 1883, during a night-time meeting of Russian society at the apartment of Brajnikov, the director of the local classical gymnasium in the city of Yerevan, a stone was thrown at his apartment's window. After this incident, the inspector of the Caucasus Educational District received an anonymous letter describing this incident and urging Brajnikov to stop deliberately insulting the national feelings of Armenians, their religion, and their language. Otherwise, it threatened to insult Brajnikov publicly.[1]

The next month, on 19 March 1883, a citizen of Armenian origin named Tomas Megerov attacked the ethnic Russian Brajnikov on a boulevard in the city of Yerevan. Tomas Megerov blamed Brajnikov for his insulting behaviour against the national values of Armenians. The Russian local authorities' further investigation of these incidents revealed that Tomas Megerov was acting on the orders of a secret Armenian organization in Yerevan. The thirty-eight members of this Yerevan-based secret circle called themselves "Patriots (*Aska-serami* or *Gaya-serami*)" and all the members of this circle were ethnically Armenian. According to the police report, this secret organization had a certain agenda to educate Armenian youth in the national spirit, teach them the love of Armenia, replace ethnically Russian local administrators with Armenians, and even change the surnames of Armenians from Russian 'ov' to Armenian 'ian.' The objective of the circle, as noted in the report, was to create an independent and united Armenia that covered the land of the historic Armenian

[1] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (hereafter RGIA), fond. 1405, opie. 521, delo. 417, list. 223.

kingdom. To achieve this long-term goal, their priority was to send arms and volunteers and financially support the Turkish Armenians' revolt against the Ottoman Empire.[2]

The court file of the Ministry of Justice in 1883 concluded that there was a direct connection between the members of the secret Armenian circle and the teachers at the existing Armenian secondary female parish school, namely the school of St. Gayane in Yerevan. At the head of this educational institution was an accused member of that circle, Gayane Ioannisiani, and the teachers were Gaik Matakians and Ivan Ter-Zaharov. The authorities were particularly concerned that the teachers were disseminating Armenian nationalist propaganda within Armenian parish schools.[3]

This episode highlights a key area of contestation between Russian bureaucracy and Armenian spiritual authorities from the mid-1870s till the end of the nineteenth century. While the tensions on the issue of schooling were low-key in the 1880s, the Russian authorities believed that the Armenian Church more broadly could still serve Russian Imperial interests and expand the Russian influence among neighbouring Armenian communities. From the 1890s, Russian authorities became increasingly hostile towards the Armenian Church, and Russian authorities implemented more radical policies than in the previous decade. As the Russian authorities sought ever more intensively to centralize the bureaucracy and to establish control in the South Caucasus, and as nascent Armenian nationalism developed, the question of Armenian parish schools emerged as a deeply politicalized space for both the Russian state and its Armenian subjects.

In this chapter, I argue firstly that the Russian bureaucrats strove for full and direct supervision of the Armenian parish schools in the South Caucasus to pre-empt the spread of nationalist indoctrination through Armenian parish schools and to raise loyal Armenian

[2] RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 417, ll. 225-227.
[3] RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 417, ll. 243- 245.

generations. Secondly, the Russian authorities sought to limit the autonomous behaviours of the Armenian spiritual authorities regarding the Caucasus educational administration because they perceived all levels of the Armenian clergy to be agents of nascent Armenian national agitation and responsible for educating the Armenian youth in a nationalist spirit. Lastly, the Armenian spiritual authorities' unremitting administrative difficulties, circumventing laws, and ignorance of the implementation of the governmental requirements worsened the relationship and caused radical policy changes in relation to the Armenian parish schools. The State's attempts backfired many times due to the resistance of the Armenian Church leadership and its supreme head, the Catholicos. The Armenian Church administration recognized the State's attempts to weaken the authority of the Armenian clergy over its communities and forced the Russian authorities to revise their policies on this matter. The question of the supervision and maintenance of these Armenian parish schools in the South Caucasus became a key battleground between the Russian bureaucracy and Armenian Catholicos until the early twentieth century.

Education became a critical area of contestation between Russian authorities and non-Russian subjects of the Empire in the nineteenth century. The key aspect of this debate was the instruction of language in these schools. As Dowler argued, the gradual intervention of the Russian Empire into schools and the introduction of the Russian language into these schools' curricula were motivated by political goals rather than pedagogical reasons. However, the Russian authorities rarely aimed at a complete replacement of native languages with the Russian language. The main problem was the extent to which the Russian language was introduced into these schools and what balance should be followed between the native languages and the Russian language.[4] Many historians agreed that the Imperial language

[4] Wayne Dowler, "The Politics of Language in Non-Russian Elementary Schools in the Eastern Empire, 1865-1914," *Russian Review* (1995): 517.

policy had never aimed to turn non-Russian groups into Russians. On other hand, they argued that the Russian authorities hoped that Russian language instruction would ensure 'political loyalty' of the non-Russian subjects to the Empire.[5]

Beginning in the 1860s, language became one of the key identity markers in the empire. The growing national literature in native languages and emerging nationalist movements coincided with the "age of reaction," which intensified after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. The problem of education in general and the place of native languages in particular, as well as state language in these non-Russian schools, became key contested areas in the Caucasus borderland of the Empire.[6] One of the scenes of this contestation in the South Caucasus was the question of Armenian parish schools which began to attract the attention of the Russian authorities in the 1870s. The Governor-General of the Caucasus, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, urged the Imperial centre in his 1882 report about the nascent Armenian nationalism and distribution of local and foreign Armenian literature. He noted that "the Government needs to ensure that such trends do not penetrate the mass younger generation through schools."[7] Similarly, the Minister of Interior requested the possible information to establish exact monitoring on Armenian parish schools from the Minister of Education and the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District "in order to protect the Armenian population of the region from the separatist propaganda spread by some ill-intentioned people."[8]

[5] See, for example, Mustafa Tuna, "Kazan Tatar Teacher School: The Global Entanglement of A Local Imperial Institution in The Late Russian Empire," *Past & Present* 245, no. 1 (2019)., Aneta Pavlenko, "Linguistic Russification in the Russian Empire: Peasants into Russians?," *Russian Linguistics* 35, no. 3 (2011)., Stephen D Corrsin, "Language Use in Cultural and Political Change in Pre-1914 Warsaw: Poles, Jews, and Russification," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 68, no. 1 (1990).

[6] Timothy K. Blauvelt and Anton Vacharadze, 'Pedagogy, Modernity and Nationalism in the Caucasus in the Age of Reaction, 1880–1905', *Caucasus Survey* 5, no. 2 (2017): 2–3.

[7] RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, ll. 4-5.

[8] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, l. 1.

1.1. Background Information on Armenian Parish Schools

After the annexation of the Caucasus at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russian authorities established two schools in the region. The *Polozhenie*, an official degree that was released for the regulation of affairs between the Russian Empire and the Armenian Church authorities in 1836, provided for extensive control to the Armenian Catholicos for the management of Armenian parish schools, censorship of Armenian publications, military service and tax exemptions. The Armenian Church had enjoyed great authority and extensive power over its community in religious matters. With the privileges of *Polozhenie*, the Armenian parish school numbers increased rapidly in the Caucasus in the next decades. Until the 1880s, the Armenian clergy was the sole authority in the Armenian parish school affairs. This phenomenon began to change with the growing intervention of the Russian state authorities in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[9]

To have a clear image of the role of the Armenian parish schools in the region, it should be noted that the South Caucasus had a complex picture of educational institutions. Due to the lack of sufficient elementary schools, the Russian authorities encouraged the spread of non-Russian educational institutions in the region. There were Armenian parish schools, Georgian parish schools, Muslim schools under mosques, and Jewish schools under Synagogues except for Russian Imperial schools. Until the 1870s, the Russian authorities encouraged these different non-Russian schools to share the burden of the state in spreading education and enlightenment in the South Caucasus.

[9] Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Also see, Richard G Hovannisian, *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times, Volume II: Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 (Macmillan, 2004).

Armenian parish schools were two-class elementary schools. They consisted of one-class schools with a three-year course and two-class schools with a two-year course that was completely under the supervision of the Armenian Church and its clergy. The most complex aspect of these Armenian schools was their numbers. Due to growing tension between the Russian authorities and the Armenian Church over these schools beginning in the 1880s, the Armenian clergy raised difficulties in sharing data about these schools. The lack of sufficient inspectors for these schools and the complete reliance of the authorities on the Armenian clergy prevented the Russian authorities from accessing reliable information. For example, due to this tension on school numbers, the Ministry of Education excluded the publication of the data of Armenian parish schools in its ministerial journal from the total number of elementary schools in the Caucasus.[10]

According to the available data from 1878, there were 583 Russian Imperial elementary schools in the Caucasus with a total number of 2,037 Armenian students in these state schools.[11] This number reached 876 Russian Imperial elementary schools with 4,855 Armenian students in 1889[12] and 911 Russian Imperial elementary schools with 5,536 Armenian students in 1893.[13] On the other hand, the Armenian parish school numbers reached 194 in 1883 with 10,517 Armenian students.[14] In 1895, the number of Armenian students increased to 16,066 with 223 Armenian parish schools.[15] The data is important in some ways; firstly, the Russian Imperial elementary schools were still appealing to the

[10] *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia*, chast' 271 (1889), 328.
[11] Vartan Gregorian, 'The Impact of Russia on the Armenians and Armenia', in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 194–95.
[12] *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia*, chast' 271 (1889), 328.
[13] *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia*, chast' 296 (1894), 782.
[14] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, l. 31. To note that there were two different data on the number of Armenian schools and students. The Caucasus Educational authorities provided different numbers: 264 Armenian parish schools with 13,625 Armenian students. Since the number of the Caucasus Educational authorities were controversial, I adhered to the numbers of the Armenian clergy.
[15] *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia*, chast' 309 (1896), 307.

Armenian children but it was not the same in the 1890s as in the 1880s. Most likely, they were the children of Armenians in urban centres. However, the registered number of Armenian students in the Russian elementary schools slowed down in the 1890s. Secondly, the Armenian parish schools were still the centre of the education of the Armenian children in the South Caucasus, especially in rural areas. The Russian efforts to control and limit the educational efforts of the Armenian clergy slowed them down but did not lead to stop them. Moreover, considering the increasing number of the Armenian students in the Armenian parish schools, the Tsarist efforts did not attract the Armenian students to the Russian Imperial schools.

Table 1

Russian State Elementary Schools in the Caucasus

Year	Russian State Schools in the Caucasus	Total Number of Armenian Students
1878	583	2,037
1889	876	4,855
1893	911	5,536

Source: *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia (1878, 1889, 1893)*

Table 2

Armenian Parish Schools in the Caucasus

Year	Number of Armenian Parish Schools	Number of Armenian Students
1883	194	10,517

1895	223	16,066

Source: *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia (1883, 1895)*

Russian state authorities' reliance on different non-Russian schools in the South Caucasus in the earlier decades can be explained by the Russian state school numbers in this region. According to the available data from 1893, there were 911 Russian Imperial elementary schools in the Caucasus. Among these schools, 545 were in the North Caucasus and 366 in the South Caucasus. In the South Caucasus, the distribution of the schools in provinces was as follows: Tiflis 114, Kutaisi 128, Elizavetpol 38, Yerevan 27, Baku 42, Daghestan 10, and Kars 7. Ethnic distribution of the students; Russian 2,946, Georgian 11,695, Armenian 5,536, Tatar 1,778, etc.[16] This data clearly demonstrates that the Russian Imperial elementary schools were most appealing to the Georgians and Armenians who were living in the urban centres like Tiflis. However, most of the education of Armenian youth, especially in the rural areas with the dominant peasant class remained in the hands of the Armenian clergy.[17] The data also demonstrates the weak areas of Russian state influence beyond the urban centres of the South Caucasus.

Table 3

Russian State Elementary Schools in the Caucasus/ Data from 1893

Total Elementary Schools	In the North Caucasus	In the South Caucasus
911	545	366

[16] *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia*, chast' 296 (1894), 782.
[17] Gregorian, 'The Impact of Russia on the Armenians and Armenia', 195–96.

Table 4

Ethnic Distribution of the Students in the South Caucasus in 1893

Russian	Georgian	Armenian	Tatar	Mountaineers	Jewish
2,946[18]	11,695	5,536	1,778	798	354

Table 5

The Distribution of Russian State Schools in the Provinces of the South Caucasus in 1893

Tiflis	Kutais	Elizavetpol	Yerevan	Baku	Dagestan	Kars
114	128	38	27	42	10	7

Source: *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnovo Prosveshcheniia*, chast' 296 (1894), 782.

The peculiar and autonomous status of the Armenian parish schools attracted the attention of the Russian administration in the 1870s. As an attempt to form a centralized educational system, the Russian State Council drew up a new set of rules for the Caucasus educational district which was finally approved on November 22, 1873. Among other general terms, article 8 indicated the establishment of a state inspection for parish schools that belonged to all confessions in the South Caucasus and the introduction of the Russian language as well as Russian history and geography. As one of the confessional groups which had a large parish

[18] This number shows only the total number of Russian students in the South Caucasus. The total number of Russian students in the North Caucasus: 32,037.

school network system in the region, the Armenian clergy refused to comply with these rules.[19]

The Minister of Internal Affairs framed special rules regarding specifically the Armenian parish schools that were approved on July 19, 1874. These aimed to define the mutual relations between the educational authorities of the Caucasus and the Armenian spiritual authorities.[20] Although they were vague and ambiguous in definition, this early set of rules is quite informative in explaining enduring conflict between the Russian imperial centre and regional authorities and the Armenian clergy. The Russian authorities' early efforts were both administrative and political in character. The rules set out an administrative mechanism to bring the educational activities of the Armenian spiritual authorities under the supervision of the Caucasus regional and educational authorities. These activities included the opening and closing of new parish schools, the appointment or removal of teachers from these schools, and the extent and content of the teaching plan as well as the introduction of the Russian language, Russian history, and geography.[21] This new framework did not exclude the teaching of Armenian history and geography courses from the teaching plan. Except for newly introduced courses on the Russian language, Russian history, and geography, the Armenian parish schools could continue teaching all the remaining courses in their native language.[22]

The abolition of the Caucasus Viceroyalty and the formation of the office of the Governor-General in 1881, which carried greater civil and military authority, was a sign of increasing Russian imperial control in the borderland areas. In his two most comprehensive

[19] A confidential telegram sent from the Ministry of Education to the Minister of Interior on November 26, 1883, RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, ll. 3-4.
[20] A Telegram sent from the Governor-General of Caucasus to the Minister of Interior on January 2, 1888. RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 100, ll. 5-6.
[21] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, ll. 8-9.
[22] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, ll. 9-10.

reports, prepared in 1882 and 1883, right after his appointment as the first Caucasus Governor-General, Prince Aleksander Mikhailovich Dondukov-Korsakov brought the issue of nascent Armenian nationalism in the South Caucasus to the attention of the Imperial centre. He pointed out that separatist tendencies among the Armenian intelligentsia who had the idea of creating ancient Hayastan (Armenia in the Armenian language) were appearing in local and foreign Armenian literature. He also noted that these ideas were still vague and did not cause any threat, but he urged the Imperial centre to prevent the penetration of these ideas through Armenian parish schools to the younger generation of Armenians, since the Armenian youth found these ideas more attractive.[23] The following year, in 1883, he touched on the same issue of a nascent Armenian nationalist movement and proposed changing the current separate status of Armenian parish schools and bringing them under the strict surveillance and monitoring of the authorities in the Caucasus educational district. Dondukov-Korsakov attached great political importance to the separate status of Armenian parish schools since they were completely and independently controlled by the Armenian Church administration. He considered this to be a danger to the Russian state interest in the South Caucasus.[24]

After the Governor-General of the Caucasus Dondukov-Korsakov brought this issue to the attention of the Imperial centre, the Minister of Interior Dimitri Tolstoy handled the subject. He sent a telegram to the Minister of Public Education Delianov on 27 March 1883 and asked for the available information about the existing Armenian parish schools in the Caucasus. At the request of the Minister of Public Education, the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District prepared a detailed report about these Armenian schools and submitted it

[23] Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze (henceforth *zapiska*), Governor- General Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Dondukov-Korsakov-1882, RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, ll. 4-5.

[24] Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze, Governor-General Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Dondukov-Korsakov-1883, RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 311, ll. 6-7.

to Delianov on 9 July 1883. Yanovski, the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District, proposed the total removal of Armenian parish schools from the supervision of the Armenian spiritual authorities and the transfer of these schools to the control of the Caucasus educational authorities. Finding this suggestion extreme, Delianov accepted the fact that a new set of rules and a radical change was necessary but he also emphasized that the Armenian parish schools should be under the supervision of the Armenian Church authorities. He believed that these schools were bringing their share of benefits, spreading education and knowledge of the Russian language in the region.[25]

After the Brajnikov incident involving the Russian local administrator and members of the clandestine Armenian political circle, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov began to closely monitor the ongoing political activities among the Armenians in the Caucasus. Considering the strong insistence of Dondukov-Korsakov on the urgency and settlement of this Armenian parish school question as a first preventative measure, a special meeting was held on 27 January 1884 with the participation of the Minister of Interior Count Dimitri Tolstoy, Governor-General of the Caucasus Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, and Minister of Public Education Ivan Delianov. During this meeting, the Minister of Public Education and Governor-General of the Caucasus proposed more moderate measures. They argued that the Armenian clergy and spiritual authorities would be angered by the total removal of Armenian parish schools from the administration of the Armenian Patriarch and proposed that these schools be placed under strict surveillance to oversee the teaching of the Russian language, Russian history, and geography in the Russian language as well as to monitor the general political leanings and activities of the teachers in these parish schools. In principle, the Minister of Interior stated that these parish schools were formed for the religious needs of the Armenian population and aimed to familiarize Armenian children with the principles of the

[25] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, ll. 1-5

Armenian faith. Therefore, any attempts to evade these religious limits of the teaching would not be accepted. However, he also pointed out that the closure of those schools was not desirable.[26]

The other issue that all the participants of this meeting agreed on was that the independent administrative decisions of the Armenian clergy, which were out-of-state control mechanisms on matters related to the Armenian parish schools, were decided to be unacceptable and illegal. The Armenian clergy could open schools without informing Caucasus educational district, organize the curriculum of the courses and class numbers, and appoint Armenian diocesans as the inspectors to these schools. These powers offered the Armenian clergy incredibly significant authority and potential for influence in the schools that they oversaw and sought to shut off these avenues for possible anti-Russian/proto-nationalist practices. The participants of the meeting stated that new rules needed to clearly demarcate the relationship between the Russian authorities and the Armenian clergy.[27]

The participants of the meeting issued twelve articles after their meeting. Article 3 stated that the Armenian parish schools would be opened with the permission of the Armenian spiritual authorities. However, the Armenian clergy was obliged to inform the Trustee of the Caucasian school district of the place, and source of funding as well as the weekly curriculum, particularly the teaching of the Russian language, history, and geography. In the same way, the Armenian spiritual authorities were also obliged to inform the Trustee of the Caucasus school district in each case of the closure of the Armenian parish schools.[28] Article 8 placed another important restriction on Armenian parish schools by stipulating that Armenian parish schools could only have two classes, which should be equal to the standard

[26] Special Meeting held on February 16, 1884, on Armenian Affairs, RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 135, l. 42.
[27] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 135, ll. 38-46.
[28] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 135, l. 47.

size of Russian elementary. Schools that exceeded this size would be considered private schools and would be subject to stricter supervision on the common basis of the private school.[29]

This new set of rules adopted in 1884 focused on two key issues. Firstly, the Russian administrators sought to implement strict supervision of the autonomous power of the Armenian Catholicos in the Armenian parish schools. To reach this goal, they created a new decision-making process related to the administrative decisions of the Armenian Catholicos, such as the opening and closure of the parish schools, and the appointment, and removal of the teachers to these schools. In this new process, the Armenian Catholicos had to ratify his administrative decisions through the Office of the Caucasus Educational District. Secondly, the Russian authorities aimed to control the curriculum of the Armenian parish schools. These included the organization of the course hours, weekly plans, introduction, and removal of courses, and checking the qualification of the teachers in these schools. The purpose of the strict supervision of the curriculum of the schools was to pre-empt indoctrination of any national aspirations and prevent the further influence of any separatist tendencies from the early years of the Armenian youth.

1.2. Conciliation Efforts to Resolve Armenian Parish School Question

Following his election to the head of the Armenian Church in Echmiadzin in 1885, the Armenian Patriarch Makarii demanded revision of the 1884 rules and petitioned for the re-opening of Armenian parish schools. The Governor-General of the Caucasus Dondukov Korsakov responded to Makarii's request positively since he attached political importance to the position of the newly elected patriarch. The Russian authorities' efforts to re-organize the

[29] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 135, l. 48.

position of the Armenian Church and its control over the parish schools turned into a fierce debate with the Catholicos. Both the status of Russian and Armenian languages as well as the extent of the administrative control of the Armenian spiritual authorities over the parish schools became the main topics of discussion. Through this process, the Russian authorities tried to find common ground on some of these issues and considered the expectations of Makarii rather than implementing rules in a top-down manner. The role of the Dondukov-Korsakov as Governor-General was important in managing this process because he supported Makarii's views against other ministers on some of the topics since Makarii was the state candidate. Dondukov-Korsakov was hoping to cooperate with the Armenian church against the increasingly secular and nationalist tendencies among Armenians in the South Caucasus. For that reason, he countered all attempts to diminish Makarii's position.

To discuss adjustments to the 1884 rules, the Minister of Interior, Minister of Education, and the Governor-General met on 16 January 1886. One of the important revisions of the previous rules that Makarii demanded was that the appointment and removal of teachers would depend entirely on the Armenian spiritual authorities, albeit 'with the knowledge of the Inspector of the Caucasus Educational District.' The Inspector, on other hand, insisted that the rules should require his 'consent' rather than 'knowledge' before the appointment or removal of a teacher from the Armenian parish schools. On this disagreement, the Governor-General sided with the Armenian Catholicos and pointed out that the Inspector already had the right to request the removal of a teacher. This would provide enough authority to monitor and preclude harmful activities by teachers. Dondukov-Korsakov tried not to diminish the position of Makarii by strengthening the control mechanism of the Inspectorate because this would damage Makarii's image among his flock.[30] Another revision demanded by Makarii was that the Armenian Patriarch would

[30] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 101, ll. 47-49.

continue to have the right to open and close a new school, needing only to 'inform' the Inspector.[31]

Except for these administrative adjustments, the Russian authorities rejected Makarii's demand that Armenian history and geography courses be taught as separate subjects. The Russian authorities, as the records of the 16 January meeting reveal, feared that these courses could serve to promote the cause of separatism in the minds of the Armenian youth, and therefore considered these courses against the state interest.[32] The Russian authorities had never intended to completely removal of the teaching of the Armenian language in the Armenian parish schools.

Following the approval of the new revision, the schools reopened again. However, this revision of the rules caused another set of problems and bickering between the Armenian Catholicos and the Inspector of the Caucasus Educational District. The request of the Inspector from the Ministry of Education to teach the Law of God in Russian in secondary state schools embittered the dispute. In turn, the Armenian Patriarch threatened to resign in protest at the Inspector's request. The dispute reached such an elevated level that a special envoy Privy Councilor Fedor Karlovich Giers was authorized by the Tsar "to explain the true meaning of laws" to the Catholicos.[33]

The Minister of Interior presented the preliminary results of the Privy Councilor Giers' efforts to settle down the bickering between the Caucasus Educational district and the Armenian Patriarchate. The Russian Tsar wrote on this report "a very comforting result" on 11 August 1888.[34]

[31] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 101, l. 50.
[32] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 101, l. 55.
[33] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 101, ll. 50-52.
[34] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 101, l. 57.

The Governor-General of the Caucasus, the Minister of Interior, and the Minister of Public Education held a meeting on 5 March 1889 to discuss these issues. The Ministers aimed to completely solve the crucial issues which had caused a decade-long debate between the local educational authorities and the Armenian spiritual authorities. These issues could be listed in four areas: The introduction of the Russian language in teaching 'the Law of God' course among Armenians in secondary state schools, educational qualifications of the teachers in Armenian parish schools, the process of appointment and removal of teachers to these schools and the teaching the 'Armenian History' and 'Armenian Geography' courses as separate subjects in these schools.[35]

To further the Russian Government's good relationship with the Armenian Catholicos, the Minister of Interior and the Governor-General conceded that the 'Law of God' would be taught in the Armenian language to Armenian students in secondary state schools as a temporary measure, despite open opposition from the Minister of Public Education. For the qualifications of teachers who could teach at these schools, again, despite the rejection of the Minister of Public Education, the Minister of Interior and the Governor General supported a five-year period for the Armenian Patriarch to replace the teachers with those who had legal status and necessary qualifications for teaching at these schools. The subject of appointment and removal of teachers to these schools was to be under the supervision of the Armenian Catholicos and spiritual authorities. The Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District was to make a request to remove a teacher from his/her position if he considered that person as a threat to the state interest. As for the teaching of 'Armenian History' and 'Armenian Geography" courses as separate subjects, the Ministers and the Governor-General unconditionally rejected this request.[36]

[35] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 101, ll. 57-70.
[36] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 101, ll. 27-30.

The Russian central and regional authorities sought to define the relationship of the Russian government to its Armenian subjects by designing the Armenian parish schools to show the complex nature of Imperial policies in the case of Armenians. The Russian authorities had to make concessions on some issues to support good relations with the Armenian spiritual authorities because the influence and benefit of the Armenian Catholicos for state interest still outweighed domestic policies. This tendency started to change in the 1890s, especially after the formation of the political parties which started acting on the ground and slowly replaced the authority of the Armenian Church in the Armenian society. Russian authorities were aware of this transformation and implemented stricter policies in Armenian Affairs in the 1890s.

1.3. The Armenian Parish School and its Curriculum

A few months after the new regulations of March 1889 on Armenian parish school affairs, the Armenian Catholicos transmitted a telegram to the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District including a few pamphlets in the Armenian language in September 1889.[37] These pamphlets contained information on the schedule and number of courses taught in these schools, the program of subjects, the catalogue of the textbooks and the list of holidays as well as the list of categories for the appointment of teachers to these schools.[38]

[37] This regulatory document is called 'kondak (*кондак*)'. The Armenian Patriarch has the right to make a legal arrangement on the schools under his jurisdiction and this administrative measure derives its legality from *Polozhenie* which was approved by Russian Tsar in 1836.
[38] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, ll. 51-66.

Table 6

	Male Program						Female Program					
Classes	1 (One-Class)			2 (Two-Class)		Total Hours	1 (One-Class)			2 (Two-Class)		Total
Year of Education	1st-Year	2nd-Year	3rd-Year	4th-Year	5th-Year		1st-Year	2nd-Year	3rd-Year	4th-Year	5th-Year	Hours
The Law of God	2	2	2	4	4	**14**	2	2	2	3	4	**13**
Armenian Language	6	6	6	5	5	**28**	6	6	6	5	5	**28**
Russian Language	6/SS	6	6	5	5	**6/SS (22)**	6/SS	6	6	5	5	**6/SS (22)**
Arithmetic	4	5	5	3	3	**20**	4	4	4	3	2	**17**
Armenian History and Geography of Armenia				3	3	**6**				3	3	**6**
Russian History and Geography of Russia				3	3	**6**				3	3	**6**
General Geography				2	2	**4**				2	2	**4**
Natural History				2	2	**4**				2	2	**4**
Singing	2	2	2	2	2	**10**	2	2	2			**6**
Handwriting	2	3	3	1	1	**10**	1	2	2	1	1	**7**
Drawing	2	2	2			**6**	1	2	2			**5**
Needlework							2	2	2	3	3	**12**
Total Hours	**6SS/18**	**26**	**26**	**30**	**30**	**6SS/130**	**6SS/18**	**26**	**26**	**30**	**30**	**6SS/130**

Source: *The Curricula of Armenian Parish Schools for both Male-Female Students (1889), RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 99, l. 65-66.*

**6/SS refers to the six-hour Russian language course which started in the second semester of the first year.*

Although Armenian parish schools were listed as church schools, they functioned as a national primary school for the education of Armenian youth, as their program and curriculum show. There were two classes for men and women. While class one was divided into three-year courses, class two was divided into two-year courses, five years in total. The courses taught in these schools were ‘Law of God,’ ‘Armenian language,’ ‘Russian language,’ ‘Arithmetic,’ ‘Armenian history and geography of Armenia,’ ‘Russian history and geography of Russia,’ ‘General geography,’ ‘Natural history,’ ‘Singing,’ ‘Handwriting’ and ‘Drawing,’ including ‘Needlework’ for the women classes. While the Russian history and geography courses, Armenian history and geography courses, natural history, and general

geography courses were added to teaching in the fourth- and fifth-year courses, the rest were taught in the first three years.[39]

Among these courses, Armenian history and geography courses require our special attention. The Armenian history course was defined as 'fatherland or homeland history (*otechestvennaia istoriia*).' The content of the course described a wide range of historical figures of the Armenians, going back to the 'legendary patriarch' and founder of the Armenian nation, Hayk and Tigran the Great who controlled the 'historic Armenian lands' and one of the first contemporary leading figures and patriots, Stephan Abovian who was educated in Dorpat. He was the pioneer of vernacular Armenian language. In addition, the course covered the Armenians of India, trade with Europe, and attacks of Tatars on Armenians. Not only ancient historical kings and/or priests, but also their geographical dispersion and territorial control were also taught. The Armenian geography course, as suggested in the program, should be taught on a map in conjunction with the teaching of national history. Students should know the space (*prostranstvo*) of Armenia and the teachers should tell the political events on the map where those events took place.[40]

As part of the Armenian history and geography courses, the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District brought the attention of the central authorities to an Armenian geography book used as a guide for teaching in the Armenian parish schools. This book was published by a geography teacher at the Nersesian Seminary in Tiflis, Ter- Akopyants in 1881 in Armenian with the title of "Physical, Social and Political Geography of Armenia, A Guide for the Armenian Male and Female Schools: Essays of Ter-Akopyants." He pointed out that the author of this book provided some inconsistent information and presented the ancient geography of Armenia as it exists today and Armenian culture as a 'high' culture that

[39] Rules on Armenian Parish Schools, RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 100, ll. 65-66.
[40] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 100, ll. 57-58.

Armenians both numerically and morally superior to all the surrounding nationalities. The author then connected the decline of Armenian culture to the consequences of enslavement. Moreover, he described the borders of Armenia from the Kura River in the north and the Caspian Sea in the east, the Zagros mountains and its branches to the Mediterranean Sea in the south, and the Aras River and the Black Sea in the west although as Trustee emphasized that the author did not mention when this geography belonged to Armenia.[41] In Russian history teaching meanwhile, the subjects of ancient Slavs, their religion, the conquest of Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia, the House of Romanovs, and the main events that happened in Russian history until that time were included. The geography teachers introduced the territory of Russia, its European and Asian parts with the cities, regions, and composition of its demography.[42]

Rather than referring to common ground, the content of the teaching program and courses focused on the separateness of the Armenian and Russian people, their territory, and history. This situation was visualized in the minds of Armenian children through maps. This was the Russian authorities' primary concern about the curriculum of Armenian parish schools. That was why the Russian authorities unconditionally rejected the teaching the Armenian history and geography courses in their concession on the regulations of 1886 and 1889 as well as on the basic rules of 1884. Contrary to all their efforts, the Armenian spiritual authorities added these courses to their school programs on July 1889, right after the approval of 1889 provisions in March.

[41] A copy of the letter sent from the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District to the Head of the Armenian Church, Catholicos Makarii on 3/7 December 1887, no: 7296. RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 100, ll. 48-50.
[42] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 100, ll. 57-58.

1.4. A Radical Turn on Imperial Policy on Armenian Parish Schools: Post-1890

The Russian authorities' efforts to intervene in Armenian educational affairs had never crossed the limits that defined by the Armenian spiritual authorities and did not obtain the expected results in the 1880s. The comprehensive regulations and rules of 1884 as well as the concessions of 1886 and 1889 did not settle down the debate between Russian and Armenian authorities. While the Armenian spiritual authorities continued their autonomous governance on the administration of the church schools, the Russian local authorities kept reporting the weak teaching of Russian language, history, and geography courses and inadequate control mechanisms on the church schools in general.

In terms of these irregularities and state approaches, the post-1890 period had distinctive characteristics. The Russian bureaucracy implemented a stricter policy on Armenian school affairs. In this new era, as a new policymaker and new Governor-General of the Caucasus, Sergei Sheremetev had an important effect on shaping the Imperial policy on Armenian parish schools between the years of 1890 and 1896. Sheremetev set the framework of this new approach in his report to the Tsar. According to Sheremetev, general and elementary education in a local region (*v zdeshnem krae*) should be in the hands of the Russian authorities so as to educate young generations with the requirements of the Russian state life. Moreover, he suggested to eliminate the participation of the Armenian clergy as well as other zealot natives from the management of local education since they were educating young generations exclusively with the spirit of separatist tendencies

(*obosoblennosti*).[43] The handwriting of the Russian Tsar on this note 'absolutely (*obiazatel'no)*' demonstrates that this view was absolute.[44]

This new era in the Caucasus has two important markers for the Armenian parish school question. Firstly, rather than discussing this question between certain ministries in a series of special meetings in the 1880s, Sergei Sheremetev gradually introduced this question into the Committee of Ministers which moved the discussion of Armenian parish school question to the Imperial centre. Secondly, the Russian authorities abandoned its earlier policy of solving this problem through mediation with the Armenian Catholicos. In this new era, the Russian authorities rejected the policy of making any concessions on Armenian school matters. Rather than leaving the administration of these schools at the hands of Armenian clergy through implementing stricter supervision, the proponents of the transfer of these schools to the Ministry of Education gradually increased. However, the Armenian clergy managed this process with rational tactical manoeuvres. They sometimes turned a deaf ear to the demands of the Russian authorities. At other times, they circumvented the law and re-opened all the schools whenever the Russian authorities attempted to close them.

Both Staliunas and Rodkiewicz use two concepts to explain the Russian nationality policy in the Western borderlands; 'an imperial view' and 'a nationalist view.' Although they use different terminology, they almost referred to the same meaning of the Imperial nationality policies in that region. In both cases, in the nationalist view, as they pointed out, the Russian bureaucracy refused to make any concessions in the affairs with the Imperial non-Russian subjects. Russian authorities perceived any policies to win the loyalty of non-

[43] Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze, Governor-General Sergei Sheremetev-1895, RGIA, f. 1284, op. 185, year 1897, d. 9, l. 35-35ob.
[44] Zapiska, Sergei Sheremetev-1895, RGIA, f. 1284, op. 185, year 1897, d. 9, l. 35-35ob.

Russians through discussions and concessions as futile and ineffective. Hence, the Russian bureaucracy acted as the protector of Russianness against these perceived dangers.[45]

Similarly, this nationalist view began to dominate Imperial policies in the South Caucasus after the arrival of the new Governor-general, Sergei Sheremetev as the head of the Caucasus administration. In a special meeting organized in 1891, article 5 demanded the exact implementation of the earlier regulations in 1884, 1886, and 1889 on Armenian schools and explicitly marked "not to allow any new concessions in this regard [school matters]."[46] The same article also established a new decision-making mechanism that authorized both the Governor-general and Caucasus educational authorities to close any Armenian parish schools in case of the violations of previously approved rules.[47]

Although the Russian authorities began to express their pedagogical concerns and the external conditions of Armenian parish schools after this meeting, their priority was to ensure the teaching of Russian language and literacy in these schools. At the very beginning of 1892, the idea of transferring the Armenian parish schools to state control was growing among the Russian authorities. A series of communication between the Minister of Education, the Curator of the Caucasus Educational District, and the Governor-General revealed that both Caucasus administrators agreed to transfer of these schools to the state control as an utmost solution for the "proper teaching of Russian language and literacy" in these schools.[48]

At the same time, Governor-General Sheremetev sent a circular about Armenian parish schools to the local authorities. In this circular, he emphasized the main goal of the

[45] Witold Rodkiewicz, *Russian Nationality Policy: In the Western Provinces of the Empire (1863-1905)* (Lublin: Scientific Society of Lublin, 1998), 13–16; Darius Staliunas, 'Challenges to Imperial Authorities' Nationality Policy in the Northwest Region, 1905-1915', in *The Tsar, The Empire and The Nation: Dilemmas of Nationalization in Russia's Western Borderlands, 1905-1915*, ed. Darius Staliunas and Aoshima Yoko (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2021), 33–66.
[46] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 104, l. 29.
[47] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 104, l. 29.
[48] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 193, ll. 81-82.

state as the actual knowledge of the state language, but it was not achieved because he further noted that the teaching of the Russian language was weak as well as "the students almost do not read Russian articles, they had a poor understanding of spoken language and writing in these schools was incorrect and extremely ugly." He demanded that local authorities report any attempts of evasion from the teaching of the Russian language and literacy in these schools.[49]

The most important support for the desire of transferring the Armenian parish schools to state control came from the centre of the Russian Armenians, the Governor of the Yerevan province. The Governor of Yerevan province, General Lieutenant Freze reported that: "parish schools foster a spirit of intolerance, exaggerated ideas about the Armenian nation and its future in the younger generations, a spirit of opposition to everything that aimed at uniting and strengthening Armenians; these schools are hotbeds of opposition to the unifying measures of the government."[50] He advised transferring these schools from the control of the Armenian clergy as the highest state importance. In the next year, in his most comprehensive report about the condition of Yerevan province in 1893, Freze suggested using all measures to develop the knowledge of the state language among the native population so that the population can communicate with the government officials and institutions without the help of the translator. To achieve this goal and put Russian language teaching in a proper place, he pointed out the necessity of the transfer of Armenian parish schools to the full subordination of the Ministry of Education.[51]

Freze prepared another report in 1895 in which he supported his earlier claims with his personal observations of an Armenian parish school in the Igdir district. According to his

[49] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 193, l. 99.
[50] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 222, ll. 55-56.
[51] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 193, ll. 138-138ob.

report, the Armenian clergy was teaching the Russian language poorly. Contrary to the submitted curriculum, the beginning of the teaching of Russian language started from the second grade until the fifth grade. Even though the Armenian students learned the Russian language for 4 years, they could not name the simple items such as hat (*shapka*) and stick (*palka*).[52]

Concerted action against the transfer of Armenian parish schools began in 1895. The demands of the Armenian Catholicos to replace teachers at the parish schools with the ones who had proper qualifications ended, but the Catholicos did not replace all of them. Also, Sheremetev claimed that most of these schools were not funded by the Armenian clergy and these schools were categorized as private schools, but not parish schools. Considering private funding in the parish schools contrary to the law, Sheremetev ordered to transfer of 168 Armenian parish schools to the Ministry of Education. He also urged the local authorities to close any schools if the Armenian clergy refused to obey the orders.[53]

Following the letter of the Caucasus authorities about the transfer of parish schools, Armenian Catholicos Mkrtich appealed to the Minister of Interior, Prince Goremykin to cancel Sheremetev's decision. Catholicos Mkrtich claimed that these were ordinary donations from the wealthy parents of the students in these schools rather than mandatory payment and he refused to abide by this order. He also instructed the head of the Armenian diocese of Astrakhan, Aristakes to arrive at St. Petersburg for personal explanations. However, Goremykin sided with the order of the Sheremetev against the Armenian Catholicos. He informed the Armenian Catholicos that "I did not find sufficient grounds to support Your Holiness's request to cancel the decision."[54]

[52] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, ll. 103-109.
[53] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 222, ll. 1-7. See also for school discussion, Stephen Badalyan Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 202–5.
[54] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 222, l. 12.

The closure of these Armenian parish schools was an opportunity "to end decade-long wrangling between the Russian authorities and the Armenian clergy and "to protect the Armenian population from the very harmful influence of these schools." Sheremetev suggested subordinating all these schools to state control and closing them in case of evasion to obey the order. However, the Minister of Interior, Goremykin rejected his desire to remove all these schools from the administration of the Armenian clergy. He noted that "I would recognize for my part, with the existing excitement of minds among the Armenian population, now it was not appropriate time to implement such an assumption, especially since these schools are few in numbers".[55]

Sheremetev received support directly from the Russian Tsar in the Armenian parish schools' case. While Tsar Nicholas II was reading Sheremetev's report, presented in 1895, he underlined the suggestion of Sheremetev "do not make any concessions to the [Armenian] Patriarch in school question" and noted "approve" near the passage of transferring Armenian schools to the administration of the Caucasus Educational authorities. In addition, the Tsar also approved Sheremetev's suggestion that in case of complications, to confiscate the immovable properties belonged to the Armenian churches and monasteries with the appointment of remuneration from the Government.[56] However, despite all the efforts and desires of the Russian authorities to implement strict control and subordinate these schools to the state authority, the Armenian clergy refused to obey the orders, they reopened these schools and circumvented the laws. From 1896, the question of the subordination of these schools to state control turned into the question of the confiscation of the Armenian church properties until 1903. I will explain this question in the next chapter as part of the Russian state's encounter with the Armenian clergy.

[55] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 222, ll. 13-16.
[56] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 222, ll. 40-41.

1.5. Chapter Overview

In the mid-1880s and especially 1890s, the Tsarist authorities intensified their policy towards the Armenian parish schools. The object of the Russian Imperial authorities was to curb the penetration of nascent Armenian nationalist ideas into the Armenian parish schools by shaping the curriculum, demanding compulsory teaching certificates for the Armenian teachers, and examining the finances of these schools. Among other things, the key instrument and identity marker for the Russian state authorities was the Russian language. However, the introduction of the Russian language into these schools did not aim to convert Armenians to Russian, they aimed at the political loyalty of Armenian generations to the Russian Empire.

The top-down regulations and orders of the Russian authorities did not yield the expected results. On one hand, as it is clear from the data of student numbers, there were not any abrupt changes in the number of Armenian students attending Russian state elementary schools through this period. On other hand, the Armenian clergy had wisely circumvented these orders and re-opened their schools. As the Minister of Interior Goremykin pointed out in a report in 1900 that "Arising almost 30 years ago and pursuing important state tasks of correctly setting the upbringing and education of Armenian youth based on rapprochement [*sblizenie*] of Armenians with the Russian population, this matter cannot be considered over to this day, even though the government has followed the final clear instructions on this. Set, by trust in the loyalty of Armenians to Russia."[57]

The main problem with the Russian Imperial policy in the case of Armenian parish schools was that the state authorities did not have enough financial and personal resources to

[57] RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, ll. 48-51

pursue strict policies. Neither had they created alternative elementary schools for the Armenian students or had educated Russian teachers who had knowledge of the Armenian language. Although it was a quite painful process for the Armenian clergy, the decades-long wrangling was nothing more than a bureaucratic discussion between the Armenian clergy and the Russian authorities. However, it further alienated the Armenian clergy from the Russian Empire, politicized them, and deepened the differences.

Chapter 2. Imperial Policies and Cultural Identities on the Periphery: Imperial Encounter with the Armenian National Church

Until the final decades of the nineteenth century, the Armenian Church occupied a preeminent representative role among the dispersed Armenian communities in the South Caucasus and beyond. This privileged position of the Armenian Church conferred significant advantages to the Russian Empire in terms of expanding its influence among these Armenian communities. In return for this service, the Armenian clergy enjoyed extensive privileges and autonomous administrative practices in their religious affairs, including the management of schools, performance of religious rites, and oversight of marital and divorce matters. However, the evolving political trends among Russian Armenians and other Armenian communities around the world gradually transformed the position of the Armenian Church from one that primarily spread Russian influence to one that represented Armenian political unity. Recognizing this shift away from traditional policies, the Russian authorities embarked on redefining their relationship with the Armenian Church and its spiritual authorities.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a gradual deterioration of relations between the Russian authorities and their Armenian subjects. Prior to a complete resolution of the Armenian parish school question that arose between the Russian authorities and the Armenian Church in the early 1880s, new fractures began to appear, particularly in the 1890s. The perceived danger of the Armenian Church as a national and political center against the unifying efforts of the Russian bureaucracy prompted the Russian authorities to formulate new policies aimed at recalibrating the position of the Armenian Church in line with Russian state interests. On the one hand, the absence of any direct restriction on purely religious matters and/or any efforts to convert Russian Armenians to Orthodoxy explain the

increasing perception of the Armenian Church as a national and political entity rather than purely a spiritual institution. On the other hand, because Armenians have their own distinct branch of Christianity and their own church, with the head of the Armenian Catholicos of all Armenians serving as the sole national, religious, and cultural center of Armenians, this process of defining what is religious and what is national became complicated as the Russian authorities formulated their policies.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is considered a national church, but unlike the cases of Polish/Catholicism or Muslim/Tatar, religion did not play a prominent role in driving Armenian nationalism and politics. While references to religious motifs can be found in Armenian nationalist discourse, they did not have the same impact as religious affiliation did in other nationalist movements.[1] According to Paul Werth, the Tsarist authorities abstained from any religious tolerance that included 'political' manifestations. Growing political aspirations among the Ottoman Armenians alarmed some Tsarist authorities who believed that "...the Catholicos, instead of serving as an instrument for the exertion of Russian influence abroad, had become a conduit for the transmission of dangerous ideas of Armenian independence from the Ottoman Empire into Russia."[2] The Russian authorities viewed with suspicion any activities by the Armenian clergy at both higher and lower levels that they perceived as 'political,' 'separatist,' and 'anti-governmental' during this period. To counter

[1] See for the discussion of 'Polish' and 'Catholicism,' Theodore R. Weeks, "'Religion, Nationality, or Politics: Catholicism in the Russian Empire, 1863–1905,'" *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 52–59; See for the Muslim/Tatar Question, Elena I. Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015). Also, see for the relationship between the Armenian nationalism and religion, Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Peter Rutland, "Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 5 (1994): 839–61; Gerard J. Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Transaction Publisher, 2004); Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006); Vartan Gregorian, "The Impact of Russia on the Armenians and Armenia," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 167–218.

[2] Paul Werth, 'Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad', in *Reconstruction and Interaction of Slavic Eurasia and Its Neighboring Worlds*, ed. Osamu Ieda and Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo: Slavonic Research Center, 2006), 217.

these perceived threats, they implemented new laws, strict surveillance, and various practical policies, including exiling lower and higher-level Armenian priests and interfering in the affairs of the Armenian Church. The Tsarist authorities saw the increasing political role of the Armenian Church as a significant hindrance to their efforts to bring Russian Armenians closer to the imperial center.

This chapter begins with a concise overview of the position of the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire during the late nineteenth century, followed by an analysis of the factors that led the Russian authorities to perceive the Armenian Church as a political unifying force rather than solely a religious institution. The chapter also delves into the Russian government's initial efforts to place a Russian subject at the helm of the Armenian Church in the South Caucasus. Moreover, the chapter discusses the measures implemented by the Russian imperial regime to suppress the political activities of both high and low-ranking Armenian clergies. Lastly, the chapter examines the issue of the Armenian language used for oaths in courts and military service, which arose due to the growing political divide and conflicting identities between the Russian authorities and the Armenian clergy.

2.1. Forging the Armenian Church on the New Russian Periphery

Russian advances toward the South Caucasus started in the late eighteenth century and resulted in the incorporation of another large non-Orthodox people into the empire. The increased number of Armenians in the Russian empire forced the Russian authorities to search for new policies and practices for integrating this new non-Orthodox group into the system of Russian Orthodox imperial governance. During these early decades, the Russian authorities pursued a policy of religious tolerance and provided a certain degree of autonomy in the religious, administrative and cultural spheres.

The most significant attempt to regulate the affairs of the Armenian Church with the Russian government was the Statute (*Polozhenie*) issued in 1836 by Nicholas I. This Statute created a system of religious administration for the Armenian people in the Russian Empire. Indeed, the Statute extended the traditional administrative practice of the Russian Empire, granting certain privileges to local non-Russian religious elites in exchange for their loyalty to the imperial government. This Statute helped the Armenian Church to preserve and bolster the Armenian cultural identities, which as Kappeler underlined, 'created important conditions for the national movements' in the late nineteenth century.[3] Walker indicated that the Statute encompassed two distinct aspects: on one hand, it granted a degree of autonomy to the Armenian Church regarding Armenian affairs, without seeking to merge it with the Russian Orthodox Church. On the other hand, the Statute refrained from interfering in the process of electing the Armenian Patriarch, with the sole exception of the ultimate endorsement from the Russian Tsar.[4] Following the examples of granting statues to Muslims of Crimea in 1831, Protestants in 1832 and Jews in 1835, the Russian authorities aimed to define "…clearly the hierarchical structure of the different confessions and specifying the rights and obligations of their servitors."[5] Thus, the Statute created a religious administrative system under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Catholicos, with certain Russian administrative supervision and control mechanism.

The Statute of 1836 had both domestic and foreign dimensions. On the one hand, it sought to secure the property rights of the Armenian clergy and guarantee their freedom of worship, while also granting them certain administrative privileges such as the right to administer parish schools and to censor Armenian books and church magazines. Moreover,

[3] Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*, 178.
[4] Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, Revised Second Edition (London: Routledge, 1991), 56.
[5] Werth, 'Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad', 209.

the Statute exempted the Armenian clergy from tax responsibilities and established an administrative structure for the Armenian Church, with the center of Etchmiadzin enjoying supremacy over the other six dioceses in the Russian Empire.[6] Furthermore, under the regulations, a national assembly composed of secular and religious representatives from all over the world would nominate two candidates for the position of Catholicos, which would then be submitted to the Russian Tsar for final approval. The selected Catholicos would then swear an oath of loyalty to the Russian Empire. To oversee the administration of the Armenian Church and attend meetings of the Church Synod, the Russian Tsar appointed a procurator as a representative of the Empire.[7] According to Suny, the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire was granted a degree of cultural and administrative autonomy under the auspices of a religious framework, as stipulated in the Statute. This framework of religious tolerance and collaboration defined the relationship between the Armenian Church and the Russian Empire until the final quarter of the nineteenth century.[8]

On the other hand, the Russian authorities exhibited a keen interest in the management of the Armenian Church, with particular focus on its foreign dimension. The presence of Armenian communities in neighboring rival Muslim empires prompted Russian officials to strengthen the Armenian Church's authority as the representative body of Armenians worldwide. In turn, the Russian authorities sought to leverage the Armenian Church's influence to shape the views and actions of Armenians residing outside of the Russian Empire. As a consequence, the Russian authorities explicitly recognized the patriarch of Armenian Church in the Russian Empire as "the Supreme Catholicos of the people of Haik

[6] Onur Önol, *The Tsar's Armenians: A Minority in Late Imperial Russia* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 5–6.
[7] Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, 58; Ronald G. Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule', in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Vol. 2*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 115.
[8] Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule', 2004, 115.

[Armenians]."[9] As part of this strategy, the Russian authorities sought to appoint candidates from among the Ottoman Armenians to the leadership of the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire. This was seen as a means of exerting influence over the Ottoman Armenian community through the actions of these church leaders. Consequently, in the 1850s and 1860s, two Ottoman Armenians, Mateos and Kevork, served as heads of the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire. A special ministerial meeting in 1865 confirmed that "…maintaining the significance and influence of the Catholicos and Etchmiadzin on the Armenians abroad remained a fundamental concern of the state."[10] However, at the onset of the 1880s, this imperial strategy began to undergo a shift.

2.2. Election of Armenian Catholicos: Changing Practices, Shaping Identities

Following the Berlin Congress, the status of the Armenian Church and the role of the Armenian Catholicos as its head in the Russian Empire emerged as a topic of discussion within imperial ruling circles. The Governor General of the Caucasus, Dondukov-Korsakov and the Russian Embassy in Constantinople both raised their concern about the Armenian Church's position and the role of the Armenian Catholicos in light of the evolving political landscape in the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, Tsarist authorities pursued a strategic objective of exerting influence over the Armenian identities by electing a Russian Armenian as a new Catholicos who would demonstrate loyalty to the Russian Empire, thereby bringing the Russian Armenians closer to the imperial center.

[9] Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia*, Oxford Studies in Modern European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 159.
[10] Werth, 'Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad', 214.

Given the significant role that Armenians played in both the Russian and Ottoman Empires, Dondukov-Korsakov recognized the importance of shaping future policies towards Armenian communities. In his comprehensive note to the Tsar in 1882, Dondukov-Korsakov reviewed the role of the Armenian Church in the South Caucasus, acknowledging the benefits of previous policies aimed at strengthening its authority to influence Armenians beyond the empire's borders. However, he also noted that the changing political climate in the Ottoman empire and the growing demands of Armenians for political autonomy and unification prompted a reevaluation of the role of the Armenian Catholicos. In particular, the perception of the Armenian Church as a political unity and center had become a source of concern for Dondukov-Korsakov. He further alleged that "many Armenians considered the Patriarch-Catholicos not only as a spiritual head of all Armenians, but also he became the representative of the idea of political unity in the eyes of these people."[11]

Dondukov-Korsakov was not the only administrator who expressed concerns regarding the perceived political dimension of the Armenian Church. Following the death of Patriarch Kevork in the Russian Empire in 1882, the Russian Embassy in Constantinople monitored the political developments and discussions taking place in the Ottoman Empire. They urged the Imperial center against the appointment of an Ottoman-Armenian as the head of the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire, asserting that such an appointment would transform Etchmiadzin into a hotbed of political intrigue.[12] In the eyes of the Tsarist authorities, the Armenian Church was gradually shifting from being primarily a cultural center to assuming a more prominent political role.

[11] Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze, 1882* (Hereafter: Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska,* 1882). Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive, hereafter: RGIA), fond. 932, opie. 1, delo. 296, list. 12.
[12] Werth, 'Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad', 220.

A year later, Dondukov-Korsakov submitted another comprehensive report to the Tsar that diverged from his previous note. This report primarily addressed the situation of Russian Armenians in the wake of the vacancy of the leadership position in the Armenian Church following Kevork's death. In addition, the Imperial concern doubled with the reveal of an Armenian political circle. Dondukov-Korsakov reported the emergence of an Armenian political circle in Yerevan advocating for political separatism and seeking joint action with Ottoman Armenians. He emphasized that the concept of political unity among Russian and Ottoman Armenians was gaining strength. In light of these developments, Dondukov-Korsakov urged the Tsar to carefully consider the selection of the next leader of the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire.[13]

To reposition the Armenian Church in the empire, Dondukov-Korsakov considered it crucial to restrict the trajectory of the Armenian Church to religious matters. Therefore, he recommended the implementation of the following measures: (1) strict monitoring of the actions of Armenian rulers at all levels; (2) reinstatement of the supremacy of the Armenian Patriarchate in Sis[14] to create a division and sever the political and spiritual ties between Russian and Ottoman Armenians; (3) replacement of the electoral system of the Armenian Patriarch to reduce the influence of foreign Armenians, particularly those from the Ottoman Empire, in the election process; and (4) appointment of a Russian Armenian as the head of the Armenian Church instead of the prior practice of selecting an Ottoman Armenian subject.[15]

[13] Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze, 1883* (Hereafter, Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska*, 1883). RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 311, ll. 5-8.
[14] For several centuries, an Armenian Patriarchate was based in Sis, which served as a critical religious hub for the Armenian community within the Ottoman Empire. See, Charles A. Frazee, 'Church and State in the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia, 1198-1375', *Byzantine Studies/Etudes Byzantines* 3, no. 2 (1976): 30–58.
[15] Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska*, 1883. RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 311, ll. 6-9.

In 1883, a special meeting was convened to discuss the imperial policy of the Armenian Church and its election process. The Tsarist authorities agreed to adopt several measures, including the appointment of a Russian subject Armenian to the head of the Armenian Church, and the implementation of strict supervision over the activities of the Armenian clergy. As Riegg opined, reformulation of Tsarist policy toward the election of Armenian Catholicos "explicitly prioritizing Russian state interests above all other considerations."[16] The Tsarist authorities aimed for domestic unity and stability and thus sought to limit the foreign influence of the Armenian Catholicos. However, they were cautious about creating a divide between Russian and Ottoman Armenians by bolstering the position of the Armenian Patriarchate in Sis, fearing that it might alienate the Ottoman Armenians from the Russian Empire. Moreover, due to insufficient information and the impracticality of controlling the electoral process, their proposal to change the electoral system went unimplemented.[17]

The process of electing a new Catholicos was marked by controversy and took place during a period of unrest following the closure of Armenian parish schools in 1884. The Russian authorities were determined to elect a Russian-Armenian to lead the Armenian Church who would prioritize the interests of the Russian state, rather than an Ottoman-Armenian as had occurred in the two previous elections. However, newly emerging Armenian political groups and some members of the Armenian clergy opposed the election of Archbishop Ter-Petrosian Makarii of Nakhichevan-Bessarabia to the head of the Armenian Church. The election took place in Etchmiadzin in April 1885, with the final candidates being

[16] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 186.
[17] Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska*, 1883. RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 311, ll. 10-11ob. See also, Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze, 1882-1890* (Hereafter, Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska*, 1882-1890). RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 319, l. 10.

Archbishop Melhisedek of Smyrna and Archbishop Ter-Petrosian Makarii. The chosen candidate was to be presented for approval to the Russian Tsar.[18]

Despite not receiving the majority of votes from the Armenian clergy and secular representatives, and lacking consent from newly emerging Armenian political circles, Archbishop Ter-Petrosian Makarii was confirmed as the head of the Armenian Church by the Russian Tsar in July 1885. This was a departure from the previous practice of electing Ottoman Armenians and marked the first time that a Russian-born and raised Armenian was elected as the head of Armenian Church in the Russian empire. However, Patriarch Makarii faced a crisis between the Armenian Synod and Russian authorities, which led him to visit Tiflis in October of the same year. During his visit, Makarii asserted full obedience of the Armenian flock to the new rules and requested a possible revision of the 1884 rules from the Governor-General of the Caucasus, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov. Makarii held the belief that modifying the regulations would enhance his position and reputation within the Russian Armenian community, serving as evidence of his unwavering support from the Russian rulers.[19]

The Russian authorities were successful in installing a Russian Armenian subject as the head of the Armenian Church, and their motive was two-fold. Firstly, they aimed to prevent the spread of emerging political ideas among the Ottoman Armenians in Constantinople by electing a non-Ottoman Armenian subject who would not carry these ideas to the Armenians in the Caucasus. Secondly, they sought to install a leader of the Armenian Church who would remain loyal to the state's interests both in the South Caucasus and beyond, and who would also support legal regulations that align with the expectations of the Russian Empire to spread Russianness among the Armenians.

[18] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 196, ll. 6-7.
[19] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 100, l. 6.

Makarii's term as the head of the Armenian Church showed that the Russian authorities and the Armenian Church could not come to a compromise, even though he was considered a "loyal" candidate by the Russian Empire. This tension between the two parties worsened over time. After serving in the Caucasus for almost a decade, Dondukov-Korsakov revised the imperial policy toward the Armenian Church in a final report he presented to the Tsar in 1890. In the report, he characterized any expectation that the Armenian Church would serve the state interest as 'unrealistic,' and suggested that the idea of the Armenian Church as a 'unifying center' for all Armenians should be reduced. He further proposed that the Armenian Church should be 'strictly subordinate to the government laws and orders, with no concessions made.'[20]

Tsarist efforts to restrict the influence of political ideas through the Armenian Catholicos and constrain the Armenian clergy to a religious sphere proved unsuccessful. Additionally, the expectation of a "loyal" Armenian Catholicos who would unquestionably carry out imperial orders did not materialize in the 1880s. Rather, issues such as the fate of Armenian parish schools and the election of a new Catholicos became highly contentious, exacerbating tensions and politicizing church-state relations further. These growing political concern prompted the Tsarist authorities to pursue legal regulations and adopt radical measures to address the problems.

2.3. Imperial Challenge to the Armenian Church: A New Framework

Starting from the 1890s, the Russian authorities initiated a new policy that involved strengthening state supervision over the actions of the Armenian clergy and regulating religious affairs through legislation. The new policy of forced administrative integration

[20] Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska*, 1882-1890. RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 319, ll. 9-10.

through the exact implementation of imperial laws aimed at, as the Ministers concluded, "gradually merging [sliianie] the Armenian people with the dominant people of the Empire."[21] The key difference from previous policies was that the Russian authorities implemented new laws for regulating Armenian religious affairs in a top-down manner, without engaging in any negotiations or concessions with the Armenian clergy. As a result, this approach faced strong opposition from both the upper and lower levels of the Armenian clergy, further exacerbating the conflict.

The resistance displayed by the Armenian clergy towards the new laws and regulations imposed by the Tsarist authorities, coupled with the emergence of separatist and anti-government sentiments among them, reinforced the distrust that Russian officials had towards the Armenian clergy. This marked a significant shift in the perception of the Armenians, which began in the 1890s.[22] Initially, the Tsarist authorities held an uncertain apprehension about the potential threat of Armenian separatism, but over time this concern became more concrete and convinced them that certain Armenian groups were indeed promoting separatist ideas. Furthermore, the Russian authorities came to view the Armenian Church as a part of this nationalist movement. They were skeptical about the possibility of reaching a political compromise with the Armenian clergy, and even before the actions of the clergy began, the Russian officialdom had already recognized the central role that the Armenian Church played in spreading national consciousness among the Russian Armenians.[23]

The Tsarist authorities were concerned that the cultural nationalism among Russian Armenians was transforming into action along the Russian-Ottoman borderland. This

[21] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 104, l. 26.
[22] Werth, 'Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad', 221; Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, 31–51.
[23] See the reports of the Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska*, 1882, RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, *Zapiska*, 1883, RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 311, and *Zapiska*, 1882-1890, RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 319.

included the collection of money, the circulation of clandestine literature, the transfer of guns, and the involvement of individual priests in mutinous bands. The lower clergy also formed relatively small mutinous bands, which were inspired by the existing Armenian political parties. In addition to these concerns, the legacy of the Armenian parish school question, the failure of earlier imperial strategies to manage Armenian Church affairs, and the advanced age of Armenian Catholicos Makariii brought the subject of a new imperial policy to the forefront.[24]

There was no direct rebellion against the Russian Empire, at least until the confiscation of Armenian Church properties in 1903. Instead, there was a strong reaction and resistance to the Russian bureaucratic intervention in Armenian affairs. The illegal and political activities of the Armenian clergy were primarily directed against the Ottoman Empire, and although they did not directly target the Russian Empire, the Russian officials still vigilantly monitored the activities of these Armenian clergy.

Reports of the activities of the Armenian political parties, Hunchak (1887) and Dashnak (1890), both in the Russian-Ottoman borderland and abroad, began to reach the Governor General of the Caucasus, and were subsequently transmitted to the Imperial center. As early as the 1890s, the Imperial center began to pay special attention to the growing danger of Armenian political activities in the South Caucasus. The radical shift in Russian imperial policies towards Armenian affairs began with the appointment of Sheremetev as a new Governor General of the Caucasus in 1890, as the Armenian nationalist forces began to act across the Russian-Ottoman border. Sheremetev's initial actions were aimed at redefining the framework of Armenian affairs.

[24] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 104, l. 23.

The Minister of Interior held a special meeting on Armenian affairs on February 12, 1891 under his Chairmanship with the participation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Public Education and the Governor General of the Caucasus –Sheremetev.[25] The primary objective of the special meeting held on February 12, 1891, under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Interior, was to chart a course of action for the Russian authorities regarding the changing political climate, the increasing political activities among Armenians, and the Russian government's relationship with the highest Armenian clergy. The participants in the meeting represented areas of disagreement between the Russian authorities and Russian Armenians. The Minister of Public Education brought up the question of Armenian parish schools, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs raised concern about the emergence of Armenian nationalist activities within the South Caucasus and its links to the Ottoman side.[26]

During this meeting, the Russian authorities emphasized that their government had already provided Armenian subjects with the necessary assurances of security and the right to establish parish schools. Nevertheless, the Russian Armenians had started to align themselves with newly emerging nationalist political parties, which caused conflict with Russian imperial interests. Thus, the Ministers present at the meeting determined that it was necessary to suppress the incipient political activities among the Armenians, particularly those of the lower-level Armenian clergy. To prevent such activities, punitive measures were to be implemented against any kind of clandestine action.[27] Furthermore, they discussed the possibility of revoking educational privileges from Armenian parish schools.[28] While the Russian authorities were following an array of preventative/oppressive measures, they also

[25] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 104, l. 23.
[26] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 104, ll. 11-20.
[27] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 104, l. 29.
[28] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 104, ll. 27-28.

sought to sustain the influence of the Armenian Patriarch among his congregations/followers.[29]

The Russian authorities continued to recognize the Armenian Church and its patriarch as the official and legal representative of the Armenian people, despite the growing influence of the new Armenian political parties. This was because, in the eyes of the Russian authorities, the Armenian Church still held significant role over its adherents, even if the political parties were gaining popularity and asserting their leadership among the Armenian population. Due to this dilemma and expectation, the Russian authorities' actions towards the Armenian Church were not entirely consistent, and they often vacillated between attempts to co-opt and suppress the institution.

The significance of the 1891 meeting lies in its reflection of the heightened concern of the Russian imperial authorities over the Armenian population and their political activities. The ministers had to redefine their course of action due to misunderstandings between the Russian officials and Armenian Catholicos about the Armenian parish schools, the emergence of Armenian political parties, and the discourse on establishing an independent Armenian state/kingdom, which posed a threat of separation of Armenians from the imperial system. This course of action would have far-reaching consequences in defining the relationship between the Armenian population and the Russian authorities in the subsequent years. Nevertheless, the Armenian clergy perceived these measures as oppressive policies and foretold that such actions would have adverse consequences, potentially straining their future relationship with the Russian empire.

Of particular significance in this meeting was the decision by Tsarist authorities not to impose the requirement of swearing an oath in Russian language for Armenian higher clergy.

[29] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 104, l. 24.

This measure was omitted at the request of the Minister of Education, Delyanov, who feared that it would further antagonize the Armenian people and create difficulties for the highest clergy. The Tsarist authorities also made no attempts to introduce the Russian language into the administrative structure of the Armenian Church affairs. Instead, a translation office was established within the Armenian Church to convert official Armenian documents into Russian. This may have been a result of the authorities' recognition of the strong resistance of the Armenian clergy towards language issues, particularly when it came to introducing the Russian language in Armenian parish schools, as well as their lack of interest in learning Russian.[30] Subsequent to the special meeting, the Russian authorities enacted a law on March 16, 1891 to address the political activities of the Armenian clergy. Under this new law, any political activities of the Armenian clergy, whether within the Russian Empire or in support of the Armenian political movement in Turkey, would be met with punishment by exile. For anti-government activities deemed harmful to the state or public order, and for resistance to the implementation of laws, members of the Armenian Church would be imprisoned at Armenian monasteries or other locations designated by the Governor General of the Caucasus or the Minister of Interior. Responsibility for enforcing this law within the Caucasus rested with the Governor General of the Caucasus, while the Minister of Interior oversaw its implementation against the political activities of the Armenian clergy beyond the Caucasus.[31] The regulations stipulated that Armenian clergy who were exiled would be placed under the

[30] It should be noted that the Russian language did eventually become a point of contention between the Russian authorities and the Armenian clergy, as previously demonstrated in the chapter on the Armenian parish school case, and as will be further explored in the later section on swearing an oath in the military service and court proceedings. Although the introduction of the Russian language did cause tension in some areas, the Russian authorities notably refrained from imposing the requirement of swearing an oath in the Russian language as a precondition for entering civil service, in order to avoid further antagonizing the Russian Armenians. See for the similar discussion, Elena I. Campbell, 'The Autocracy and the Muslim Clergy in the Russian Empire (1850s-1917)', *Russian Studies in History* 44, no. 2 (2014): 15.

[31] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 104, ll. 31-31ob.

supervision of local police, forbidden from performing any religious services, and required to obtain consent from local police in order to convene meetings.[32]

The Governor General of the Caucasus, Sheremetev, had two objectives in introducing these punitive measures. Firstly, this new decision-making process allowed for swift action against any illicit activities of the Armenian clergy, without requiring a protracted trial process. Removing these problematic individuals from society would help to prevent the dissemination of dangerous ideas. Secondly, this rapid response was intended to restrict potential publicity and propaganda among Armenians.[33] The significance of this new set of regulations was their aim to isolate any political and/or anti-governmental activities from the dominant Armenian community by exiling individuals to other regions of the empire or confining them within Armenian churches. The implementation of these new regulations to penalize members of the Armenian Church caused bitterness among the Armenian higher clergy, as the Church had previously held unquestioned authority in such matters. The increasing state intervention in Armenian Church affairs further polarized relations with the highest Armenian clergy.

2.4. Between Russification and Nationalism: Monitoring Armenian Clergy

The political and diplomatic initiatives of the Armenian clergy and church leadership to advocate for the liberation of Armenia have roots dating back to the sixteenth century. Armenian Catholicoi and their representatives visited several European centers on numerous occasions, seeking the support of Christian European countries. While these diplomatic

[32] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 188.
[33] As a result of the preference for "administrative measures" rather than legal proceedings, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Armenian priests who were either exiled or incarcerated in a church or monastery.

endeavors did not produce any concrete outcomes, they do reveal an awareness of national liberation even prior to the emergence of nationalism.[34] In addition, during the late nineteenth century, Armenian clergy living across the Russo-Ottoman borders offered substantial support to the advancement of Christian Russian armies against the Muslim Ottoman/Persian Empires for the purpose of liberating Armenian communities in those empires.[35] Later on, the Armenian Catholicos wrote a letter to the Russian Tsar in which he openly recognized the participation of the Armenian clergy in aiding the Russian army during the 1877-1878 War, which occurred while he was serving in the city of Van situated along the border between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires.[36]

In the age of nationalism, there was a significant shift in how the activities of the Armenian clergy were perceived. The Russian authorities no longer viewed them as Christian allies seeking collaboration, but instead, they began to see them as agents of political agitation with their own agenda. They perceived the unwavering clandestine support of the Russian Armenian clergy for their fellow Armenians in the Ottoman empire as a threat to the Russian interests.

In his report to a local governor regarding the implementation of the new laws aimed at punishing Armenian clergy in 1891, Minister of Interior Ivan Durnovo emphasized the need "to monitor the activities of lower-level Armenian clergy and hold them accountable administratively if they failed to comply with the laws."[37] He further claimed that these measures were necessary "due to the political agitation among Armenians in the Russian

[34] Fatma Müge Göçek, 'Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms', in *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 32; Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, 2006, 109–11.
[35] Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1963), 19–25.
[36] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 96, ll. 183-184.
[37] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 17.

Empire who were influenced by the political movement of their fellow Armenians in Turkey."[38]

The Russian archives contain various reports and correspondences that shed light on the motivations and actions of Armenian priests in the Armenian national movement, as well as the surveillance conducted by Russian officers on the illegal activities of the Armenian clergy in the South Caucasus and across the borders. These materials reveal that the participation of Armenian priests in the national movement ranged from collecting money and circulating nationalist newspapers to organizing volunteer groups and actively serving in the ranks of Armenian political parties. However, there was a fundamental disagreement between the Russian authorities and the Armenian political party members and clergy regarding the motives, actions, and loyalty of the latter. While the Russian authorities considered these activities as threats to social order and government authority, the Armenian political party members and clergy saw them as serving the Armenian nation and cause.

The first major conflict through the Russian-Ottoman borders in 1890 and 1891 particularly alerted the Russian authorities to the illegal political activities of the Armenian clergy. The local authorities in the border cities of the Ottoman Empire began reporting about the activities of the Armenian clergy, revealing the main areas of confrontation between the Tsarist authorities and the lower-level Armenian clergy.[39]

One significant aspect of the Armenian clergy's involvement in the broader Armenian national movement was the collection of funds. As influential figures in their communities, the priests were able to garner support and donations from fellow Armenians. However, the

[38] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 17.
[39] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 71, ll. 290ob-297ob. The Office of the Governor General of the Caucasus compiled short versions of these telegrams in a report entitled, "Participation of the Armenian clergy in the insurrection movement of the Turkish Armenians."

Russian authorities sought to monitor and control this flow of funds in order to prevent any potential financial backing of Armenian political agitation by the clergy.

According to a report dated October 31, 1890, Rogge Vladimir Petrovich, the Governor of the Baku city, stated that an Armenian priest named Ter-Mikirtichev had covertly collected money from the Balahano-Sabunchinski trade office in the village of Zanzar, located in the Jabrail district.[40] In the following year, the police brought charges against a prominent Armenian priest, Ter Vartan Vartanov, accusing him of collecting a total of 4,583 rubles from his congregation "to hire volunteers who wished to join the ranks of Armenian volunteers rebelling against the Turkish authorities."[41] Similarly, On April 9, 1891, Governor Mikhail Yakovlevich Shalkov of Yerevan reported that an Armenian priest named Ter-Krikor Ter-Nersesian in the village of Navruzlu in the Yerevan province was organizing the collection of money for Turkish Armenians and encouraging villagers to actively participate in the fight against the Ottoman government.[42] As the early reports show, the Armenian clergy were raising funds to support their fellow Ottoman Armenians for their action against the Ottoman government.

General Adjutant Sheremetev closely monitored the early activities of the Armenian revolutionary parties and the role of the Armenian clergy in this movement. He suspected that the Armenian clergy was collecting money for nationalist activities under the guise of collecting it for the needs of poor Armenians, monasteries, churches, and seminaries. In July 31, 1891, upon receiving reports from local authorities, Sheremetev sent a circular to all governors in the Caucasus, instructing them to closely monitor the Armenian clergy's fundraising. The Armenian clergy was only permitted to collect money for the needs of its

[40] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 3.
[41] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 27.
[42] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 4.

seminaries, monasteries, and churches.[43] The intention behind Sheremetev's circular was to prevent any unauthorized actions by the Armenian priests using the collected money, which could potentially be redirected to the support of the Armenian revolutionary movement.

The Russian officials kept a close eye on any unauthorized collection of money by the Armenian clergy. One such collection occurred in the Borjom district, which was reported by the Head of the Tiflis Provincial Gendarme Department. Armenians gathered in the Armenian school building to discuss "national issues," and among them were the Armenian priests Ter-Grikurov and Ter-Gazaryants, who were suspected of delivering the collected funds.[44]

However, despite the strict surveillance and regulations imposed by the Russian authorities, the collection of money by Armenian priests continued in later years. A report by the Yerevan Governor, sent to the Governor General on November 21, 1895, revealed the existence of two groups of Armenian priests in Erevan and Aleksandropol provinces who were involved in revolutionary-like activities. The report stated that “the ultimate goal of these committees was to establish an independent Armenian kingdom, and they aimed to achieve this goal by providing energetic assistance to Turkish Armenians, including families and orphans of the elderly during the riots (*bezporyadkah*) in Turkey.”[45] These Armenian committees had organized themselves in a revolutionary manner, with a clear program and following specific instructions. The committee in Aleksandropol was headed by Vicar Archimandrite Bagrat Kevork Tavakalian and included state officials, teachers, and church school inspectors. They collected money regularly from churches and households, with the involvement of priests, teachers, and elders in the villages. Although the Russian authorities

[43] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 132.
[44] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 5.
[45] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 96, l. 191.

became aware of this collection, the Armenian party members were able to quickly intervene and prevent any further discussion of the matter.[46] According to a telegram sent by the Tiflis Governor on 23 February 1896, the teacher of an Armenian parish school named Bagdasarov and the priest Ter-Galustyan were reported to have visited villages in Ahalkalakskaya uezda. During their visit, they allegedly tried to persuade the villagers that the Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire would soon achieve autonomy and freedom from the Ottoman government. However, to achieve this goal, they requested financial support from the villagers.[47]

The unauthorized collection of money and financial support by lower ranking Armenian clergy for political purposes raised concerns among Russian authorities, leading to hesitation in allowing higher ranking Armenian clergy to collect money and donations for humanitarian purposes. When Ottoman Armenians faced famine and appealed to the Armenian Catholicos in Russia for aid, Catholicos Khrimian requested permission from the Russian Minister of Interior to collect money and donations. However, Sheremetev opposed this appeal due to his fear that the Armenian clergy, secular intelligentsia, and parish school teachers would turn the process into an Armenian national agitation and propaganda.[48] The Tsarist authorities granted permission to the Armenian clergy to collect donations for aid, but with specific conditions. Donations were to be collected only in churches, and the distribution of the aid would be overseen by the Foreign Ministry, rather than the Armenian clergy.[49] This

[46] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 96, ll. 191-192.
[47] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 7.
[48] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 189.
[49] Riegg, 189. Also, see for example; the Armenian Catholicos gathered a sum of 2000 rubles intended for distribution among the Ottoman Armenians in Erzurum who had been severely affected by recent massacres. However, the Russian Consulate in Erzurum declined to distribute this monetary assistance to the Ottoman Armenians due to their apprehensions regarding the politically unsettled situation within the Ottoman Armenian community. (Formerly Public Record Office, PRO), Foreign Office (Hereafter FO), 424/186, From the British Consul in Batoum Consul Stevens to the Marquess of Salisbury, 23 January 1896. No. 232, p. 192.

was likely due to the authorities' concerns about the potential for the Armenian clergy to use the collection of aid as a means to promote nationalist sentiment.

In the aftermath of the 1894-1896 massacres in the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian Catholicos issued an appeal for the collection of funds and aid for the Ottoman Armenians who arrived at the Russian borders. On December 11, 1896, Goremykin, the Minister of Interior, announced that the Russian Tsar had authorized government officials and institutions to collect funds for humanitarian aid in support of these refugees. However, unlike previous efforts that had been conducted by the Armenian clergy, this permission was granted to local authorities who were responsible for collecting funds in their respective districts. These funds would then be delivered to the Governor General of the Caucasus, who would oversee the distribution of the aid to the affected populations.[50] The Russian authorities' decision to grant permission to local authorities rather than the Armenian clergy to collect humanitarian aid reflects their efforts to monitor and control the collection process due to concerns about the politicization of aid and the involvement of nationalist movements in such activities.

As early as July 1890, the Russian authorities were alerted to the activities of Armenian political parties, particularly the involvement of the Armenian clergy. A report by Pietr Ivanovich Tomich, former Military-Governor General of the Kars region, revealed a conflict in the district of Churuk between Armenian revolutionary groups and Kurds and border guards, wherein the Armenian clergy were alleged to have played a significant role. Officials captured a letter containing criminal content, which was handed to a detainee by an Armenian cleric from the Aleksandropol district. In September and October 1890, General Tomich submitted three additional reports, two of which contained information about the Armenian clergy hiding participants in the Churuk event, while the third report provided a

[50] RGIA, f. 1284, op. 241, d. 103, l. 250.

detailed account of the leading role played by Turkish citizen Hachatur Ter-Arutyunov, an Armenian cleric, in the Churuk event and the political movement. Tomich noted that "Ter-Arutyunov was an active leader of the movement and was suspected of concealing weapons for the purposes of the movement, resulting in his deportation by order of the chief Caucasian authorities due to lack of a passport."[51] In November 1890, Tomich confirmed his previous reports with another report that informed the Governor of Caucasus about Armenian Deacon Akopov's arrival from the Ottoman side in the South Caucasus for revolutionary agitation, who hailed from the city of Mush situated near the Russian Ottoman borders.[52]

In November 3, 1890, General Lieutenant Shebeko sent a report to General Adjutant Sheremetev which brought attention to one of the tactics employed by Armenian nationalists for agitation purposes. The report revealed that Armenian nationalists convinced teachers to provide education in villages and the Armenian clergy to preach in churches, emphasizing the imminent attainment of freedom for Armenia, and the need for material and physical sacrifices to achieve this goal. The report highlighted the vital role played by the Armenian clergy in the Armenian insurrectionist movement, with the emphasis that "in general, Armenian clergy plays a significant [*nemalovajnuyu*] role in the movement."[53]

On March 21, 1891, a confidential report was submitted by the Police department to the Affairs of Foreign Confessions, which provided detailed information on the search of an Armenian priest named Ter Petrosyan and a resident of Kars city. The two individuals were suspected to be associated with the Armenian revolutionary movement, and had received printed materials from Garibov Hovhannesian, whose son had been arrested for his involvement in the recent Armenian movement. The search yielded printed materials and an

[51] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 2.
[52] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 3.
[53] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 3.

Armenian map that illustrated the Caucasian region and Asiatic Turkey as a united Armenia. These materials were prohibited under the censorship of the Russian authorities. Ter-Petrosyan was found to be circulating these materials among the members of the movement.[54] On April 2nd, the Police department issued an additional telegram, revealing that Ter-Petrosyan was instructing ancient Armenian history and geography in violation of the 1885 law that prohibited such teachings in Armenian church schools. The authorities conducted a search of Ter-Petrosyan's residence, where they discovered a prominently displayed wall tablet (стенная таблица) that depicted the earlier Armenian kings in a chronological order dating back to the 5th century. Notably, the tablet omitted any reference to the Russian Tsar or Ter-Petrosyan's status as a Russian subject. Among the materials seized in Armenian language, there was a document indicating that Ter-Petrosyan had delivered a tendentious sermon on February 28th, in which he exhorted his flock to follow the example of past Armenian kings, such as 'Vartanam', 'Gevontiantsam', 'Mecropam' and 'Narsesam', who had given their lives to defend the Armenian kingdom. He then proclaimed "long live Armenians who follow these examples."[55]

The involvement of Armenian priests in political activities extended beyond the Russian-Ottoman borderlands. The head of the Trans Caspian oblast notified the police department in May 1891 that an Armenian church priest named Ter-Vaskanov had made a significant modification during the litany service in the city of Ashabad. Specifically, he had substituted the phrase "Our sovereign emperor Aleksandra Aleksandravicha" with "Russian Tsar" and further declared that "the Russian Emperor is not our tsar, but he is the Russian Tsar."[56] Following the report, Russian authorities initiated an investigation and searched Ter-Vaskanov's apartment on May 14, 1891. During the search, officials found two photographs

[54] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 30.
[55] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 31.
[56] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 58.

that were intended for distribution among Armenians to stir their nationalistic sentiments and desire for the restoration of Armenia. The first photograph depicted a woman standing on the ruins of an ancient Armenian city, with a crown, banner, and weapons lying among the stones, and the names of former Armenian kingdoms written on the stones. The second photograph showed another Armenian woman in traditional clothing standing on ruins, pointing to Etchmiadzin with her left hand, with weapons, a crown, and the names of Russian and Turkish cities inhabited by Armenians, and an inscription of "Berlin treaty article 61" on the ruins. Witnesses reported that Ter-Vaskanov emphasized the importance of serving the "Nation" and expressed his hope for the recovery of Armenia, stating that "one will live better at home and feel better in his own country, in Armenia with its own king instead of serving in a foreign country." Rumors circulated that Ter-Vaskanov had encouraged Armenian youth in Ashabad to go to Turkey, although this information was not confirmed. Nonetheless, the Minister of Justice found this information relevant, as Armenian groups in Russia had secretly traveled to Turkey in 1890 and 1891 to support the Armenian nationalist movement there and engage in armed conflicts with authorities and the Muslim population. Ter-Vaskanov was placed under police surveillance in Western Siberia for five years due to his illegal activities.[57]

In a letter addressed to State-Secretary Durnovo on December 12, 1894, General Adjutant Sheremetev requested that greater attention be given to the increasing activities of Armenian political parties.[58] As a result, on January 12, 1896, the Governor General of the Caucasus informed the Minister of Interior that he had taken measures to prevent such activities by placing Armenian priest Grigora Ter-Avakov under police surveillance for a period of two years in Kutais Gubernii.[59] Similarly, in a report dated January 4, 1896,

[57] RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 438, ll. 178-187.
[58] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 5.
[59] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 206.

Nakashidze, the head of the Yerevan region, identified priest Grigor Ter-Avakov as one of the primary instigators of the Armenian national movement in the city of Yerevan. It was reported that Ter-Avakov regularly visited villages in order to recruit young Armenians and form arm bands to send them to Turkey.[60]

On February 17, 1896, the Yerevan Governor provided a report which stated that an Armenian priest named Ter-Musheg was responsible for recruiting Armenian youth to join insurrectionist bands with the intention of sending them to the Ottoman side to fight against Ottoman authorities.[61] The Russian authorities became increasingly concerned as more and more reports surfaced regarding the involvement of Armenian clergy in revolutionary and anti-government endeavors. Consequently, they took measures to exile or confine these Armenian priests to specific churches or monasteries under administrative surveillance. This action was intended to deter them from engaging in any further illegal activities.

In addition to their role in agitating and collecting funds for nationalist causes, Armenian clergy also played an active part in procuring guns for their nationalist counterparts and hiding them during illicit activities or conflicts with government authorities across borders.

General Tomich's report dated September 13, 1890, indicated that after the clashes between Armenian nationalists, border guards, and Kurds in the Madur region, an Armenian nationalist sought refuge in an Armenian church in the Kagizman district with the assistance of the church priest.[62] On September 22, Tomich reported that the Armenian priest Hachatur Ter-Arutyunov, who played a significant role in the skirmishes, was also involved in hiding guns for the Armenian nationalist movement. Due to his unlawful activities, the Viceroy of

[60] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 7.
[61] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 7.
[62] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 2.

the Caucasus sent him abroad.[63] On October 12 of the same year, another report by Tomich revealed that an Armenian priest in the village of Begli-ahmed had hidden an Armenian nationalist who participated actively in the conflict in the Madur region of Kars city.[64]

Two separate reports were produced within a month regarding a weapon storage allegedly present in Etchmiadzin. The first report, dated January 24, 1891, was from the Foreign Minister of the Russian empire and stated that the Turkish Ambassador had informed him about the weapon storage in Etchmiadzin, from which guns were transported to Turkish territory through certain border points. The second report, dated February 24, 1891, was from the Military Governor of Kars and named Ter-Minas, Ter-Akop, and Armenian parish school teacher Garkemyants as members of the Armenian nationalist party of Kars committee. The report claimed that these individuals were recruiting fighters to form nationalist bands, and that the weapons for these Armenian fighting bands were allegedly being prepared in Etchmiadzin, according to rumors.[65]

On July 15, 1896, the governor of the Yerevan region reported that the Armenian Monastery of St. Stephana, located on the bank of the Arax River in Persia, was being used as a storage facility for weapons by Armenian revolutionaries. These revolutionaries were crossing the borders between Russia and the Ottoman Empire and engaging in activities in Turkey.[66] In a correspondence dated February 24, 1897, between the Erzurum Consulate and the authorities of Kars Oblast, it was revealed that a priest named Ter-Akop, who worked at a prominent Armenian church in Kars, was keeping a stash of weapons in his house. The report

[63] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 2.
[64] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 3.
[65] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 3.
[66] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 9.

also mentioned the existence of other weapon caches in the same city, as noted by the Active Privy Councillor Nelidov.[67]

This section highlights the involvement of the lower level of Armenian clergy in illegal political activities that were a source of concern and fear for the Tsarist authorities. The Armenian clergy's participation in these activities prompted the Tsarist authorities to take measures against them, resulting in legal regulations to prevent political agitation among the lower level of the Armenian clergy. As a result, many Armenian priests involved in these illegal activities were exiled or imprisoned.

2.5. Confronting the Higher Armenian Clergy

The Armenian Synod was a consultative body composed of seven members including the Catholicos and a secretary, serving as the highest Armenian spiritual authority in the South Caucasus. Its responsibilities were limited to administrative issues related to the Armenian Church and its affairs. The Catholicos held full control and authority in this sphere as the head of all Armenians. When the Patriarch was absent, one of the members took on the role of Chairman and oversaw the management of the church's affairs. The emergence of political activities among lower level Armenian clergy, coupled with reports from regional Russian authorities and the ongoing issue of Armenian parish schools, strained the relationship between the Russian bureaucracy and Armenian spiritual authorities. As a result, the Armenian Synod, an administrative body responsible for Armenian Church affairs, came under scrutiny from Russian authorities who were increasingly suspicious of potential anti-governmental and political activities among the Armenian clergy. This led to direct

[67] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 286, l. 8.

intervention by the Russian authorities in Synod affairs with the aim of shaping the institution for their own interest.

Tensions between the Russian bureaucracy and the Armenian Synod escalated following the imposition of punitive measures against the activities of the Armenian clergy on March 16, 1891. The death of the Armenian Catholicos Makarii on April 16, 1891, resulted in the collection of his letters and effects for preservation by the Armenian Synod members. Among them, a letter addressed to the Minister of Interior Ivan Durnovo was discovered, which sparked a heated debate between the Russian authorities and the Synod members.[68] This incident exposed the deep-seated animosity and distrust between the higher ranking Armenian clergy and the Russian authorities.

Following the death of Armenian Catholicos Makarii on April 16, 1891, his papers and documents were collected for preservation in the presence of the Prosecutor and members of the Armenian Synod. While examining and organizing these materials, two letters addressed to the Minister of the Interior were discovered. These letters, which were written in response to punitive measures taken against Armenian clergy on March 21, 1891, contained complaints voiced by Catholicos Makarii. Prior to these measures, Armenian clergy were subject to the same civil and criminal laws as other individuals in the Empire; however, for certain offenses, they were tried under Armenian Church laws by Armenian spiritual authorities. Catholicos Makarii expressed disapproval of the imprisonment of Armenian clergymen in monasteries and their expulsion from the Caucasus by civil authorities without prior consultation with the highest spiritual authorities.[69]

[68] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 38.

[69] A letter sent from the Office of the Armenian Synod to the Minister of Interior Ivan Durnovo after the death of the Armenian Catholicos Makarii on 16 April 1891, No: 150. RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, ll. 39-45.

The members of the Armenian Synod refused to provide Sheremetev with a list of monasteries and churches suitable for the detention of Armenian clergymen considered to be "ill-intentioned" until the election of a new Catholicos, following the approval of new regulations. This resistance to state laws caused outrage against the Armenian clergy. In response, Sheremetev sought the same information from the Prosecutor of the Etchmiadzin Synod and the governors of Caucasus. He also made it clear to the Armenian Synod that "In light of the highest Armenian-Gregorian spiritual authorities' refusal to cooperate in the implementation of the aforementioned rules, I wish to inform the Etchmiadzin Synod that if these authorities do not incarcerate Armenian clergymen who have been subject to administrative penalties in a designated monastery chosen by the chief Caucasian Authorities, these individuals will be subjected to imprisonment for the specified period in the monastery."[70]

The Secretary of the Armenian Synod, Archimandrite Saak, claimed that the letter protesting the new measures had already been written and sent by Makarii to him for translation into Russian and submission to the Interior Minister on April 16, 1891. However, the Catholicos' sudden death on the same day left the letter unsigned. After informing the Synod members, Saak sent the unsigned letter to the Ministry on May 2. However, upon receiving the unsigned letter, the Interior Minister returned it to the Armenian Synod, alleging that it was a forgery by Saak. Moreover, the Minister reprimanded Saak in the presence of all members of the Synod on July 2, which surprised them.[71] Regardless of whether the letter was forged or written by Makarii, the Russian authorities were concerned that it vehemently protested against the new measures and rejected their implementation.[72]

[70] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, ll. 51-53.
[71] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 84, l. 13.
[72] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, ll. 39-45.

The situation worsened after four members of the Armenian Synod protested against the Ministry's reprimand by exceeding the authority of the Chairman, Jeremiah. The Governor General of the Caucasus, Sheremetev, deemed this protest to be an "indecent and audacious outburst against the government, in the person of the Interior Minister."[73]

In his extensive report dated 19 September 1891, the Minister of Interior recommended a different level of punishment for the four members of the Armenian Synod who had participated in the protest against Sheremetev. The subsequent controversial process culminated in the exile of two of the Synod members, Bishop Sukias Parzayants to Orel and Bishop Nerses Hudaverdiyants to Poltava, under police surveillance until the election of a new Patriarch. The remaining two Synod members who had joined the protest, Bishop Sarkis Ter-Gasparyants and Bishop Aristakes Davtyants, received a reprimand.[74]

Following the removal of the Armenian Synod members, the Government Senate issued a decree that changed the process for appointing officials to the Office of the Armenian Synod. Under this new decree adopted on 25 November 1891; "The Office of the Etchmiadzin Synod is under the supervision of the Prosecutor. The [candidate] to Secretary of the Office is presented by the Prosecutor and appointed and dismissed by the Minister of Internal Affairs, and the rest of the officials are appointed by the Governor General of the Caucasus."[75] Furthermore, the Collegiate Assessor, Sumbatyants, who was responsible for sealing documents, was also dismissed due to his unreliability.[76]

The incidents discussed here had significant implications. Firstly, the Russian authorities suspected that political and anti-governmental activities were not limited to lower-

[73] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 206, l. 15.
[74] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 84, l. 33.
[75] The Complete Collection of the Russian Imperial Laws (*Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*), 25 November 1891, No: 8100.
[76] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 84, l. 19.

level Armenian clergy, but also present in higher offices. As a result, they restructured the Office of the Armenian Synod and removed two members. Secondly, they aimed to rely on 'loyal' members in this office, and individuals who were deemed to be 'agitators' were exiled and closely monitored. It is worth noting that the removal of the members of the Armenian Synod was not a one-sided Tsarist action; Governor Freze of Yerevan reported in August 1895 that Bishop Aristakes, whom he considered to be the 'healthiest tooth' of the Armenian Synod, had been transferred to Astrakhan by order of the Armenian Catholicos.[77]

The Russian authorities' attempts to shape the Etchmiadzin Synod effectively reduced tensions, at least temporarily. When Sergei Grigori Golitsyn became the new Governor General of the Caucasus in December 1896, he closely monitored the affairs of the Armenian Synod. Golitsyn invited the Armenian Synod Prosecutor, Kancheli, to Tiflis to discuss these affairs. In a lengthy letter to the Minister of Interior on August 8, 1897, Golitsyn requested the removal of Archimandrite Nahapet Nahapetyants, the personal secretary of Armenian Patriarch Khrimian, and Archimandrite Vahan Ter-Grigoriyants, a member of the Armenian Synod, on the grounds of their alleged involvement in the Armenian nationalist movement and anti-governmental activities. These individuals were subsequently removed from their positions and exiled from the South Caucasus.[78] It is important to note that the appointment and removal of the Secretary of the Synod fell under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Interior. However, to circumvent this process, Patriarch Khrimian established a new office with the title of "Director of Patriarch Office" and appointed an individual as his personal secretary.[79] The Russian authorities viewed such actions as a violation of state laws and a form of anti-governmental activity.

[77] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 96, l. 166.
[78] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 84, ll. 152-157 and 163-165.
[79] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 84, l. 153.

However, Golitsyn's efforts to control the Armenian Synod were not always successful. In 1901, he demanded the removal of Bishop Makar and Archimandrite Ashot from their positions due to their supposed involvement in illegal activities, and the appointment of Bishop Aristakes Sedrakyan, whom he deemed "loyal" and "honest". However, the Minister of Interior, Dimitri Sipyagin, dismissed Golitsyn's allegations and did not see fit to punish these members by removing them from the Synod.[80]

In the late 19th century, there were tensions not only within the Armenian Synod but also towards the higher-ranking Armenian clergy in other parts of the Russian Empire. This was influenced by the growing patriotic feelings among Armenians in both the Russian and Ottoman Empires, as well as the upheaval, agitation, and news of massacres across the border. Within Russian bureaucratic circles, there was a dominant view that blamed Armenians for the ongoing troubles and conflicts on the Russian Ottoman borders. The Governor of Kars, Tomich, delivered a speech at a celebration meeting where he urged Armenian religious representatives not to deviate from loyalty, using the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as a reference. He pointed to the Dukhobors'[81] case, who filled prisons after disobedient actions against imperial rule, as an example. Tomich further potentiated his threatening language, reminding Armenians of what happened to those who showed disloyal attitudes against Ottoman rule. Tomich explicitly stated that “he had enough authorization to execute or exile Russian Armenians in Siberia if they deviated from the path of loyalty, and they would be sentenced tenfold more than they were punished in the Ottoman Empire.”[82]

[80] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 84, ll. 189-190.
[81] The Dukhobors were a Russian religious sect that was resettled in the South Caucasus as part of the Russian imperial policy of populating the borders with Russians.
[82] Gözde Yazıcı Cörüt, *Loyalty and Citizenship: Ottoman Perspectives on Its Russian Border Region (1878–1914)* (Germany: V&R Unipress, 2021), 152.

The journey of Armenian Catholicos Mkrtich Khrimian to St. Petersburg in 1895 serves as a striking example of the Russian imperial stance on the 'Armenian Question' and the relationship with the Armenian Church leadership amidst ongoing conflicts and massacres. Khrimian was a significant figure in nineteenth-century Armenian history, possessing extensive experience as a clergyman and having served in the Ottoman Empire for several decades. Hailing from the provincial Armenian society, Khrimian wielded enormous influence among Armenians in both empires and was regarded by some as a bearer of the radical message of national liberation, particularly after representing Armenian claims at the Berlin Congress in 1878.[83] His patriotic feelings and struggle for Armenians was well-known among others. During his visit in Etchmiadzin, a British traveler described him as a person in which "religion and patriotism are almost interchangeable terms."[84]

It is likely that the European diplomats advised that Russian support was necessary for any coercive action in favor of the Ottoman Armenians, and therefore Armenian Catholicos Mkrtich Khrimian travelled to St. Petersburg in May 1895 with high hopes. However, as noted by Foreign Minister Lobanoff, the reception of the Catholicos held "no political importance."[85] In addition, being aware of his patriotic feelings, the Russian authorities explicitly warned Khrimian to avoid political matters during his audience with the Emperor, despite Khrimian's mention of the grievances of Ottoman Armenians among other religious topics and his plea for the help of the Emperor for his fellow Ottoman Armenians.[86] Although the Tsar expressed his sympathy, the high-ranking bureaucracy in the capital remained largely unresponsive to Khrimian's demands.

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[83] Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, 2006, 167.
[84] H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies, The Russian Provinces*, vol. 1 (London: Green and Co, 1901), 237.
[85] FO, 424/182, From the British Consul in St. Petersburg Sir F. Lascelles to the Earl of Kimberley, 13 June 1895. No. 419, p. 431.
[86] FO, 424/182, From the British Consul in St. Petersburg Sir F. Lascelles to the Earl of Kimberley, 13 June 1895. No. 419, p. 431.

Khrimian's visit to St. Petersburg also garnered attention from the Russian conservative press. However, it was not his audience with the Tsar that drew their interest, but rather his sermon at the Armenian Church of St. Catherine's. In this sermon, Khrimian drew a parallel between the conditions of Armenians and the Jewish historical event of Babylonian captivity, portraying Armenians as if they were dispersed from or held captive in their homeland of Armenia:

> Father (*Hairik*), where did you come from? Tell us- is our mother Armenia healthy, are her children alive? I know that among you there are weak people in faith and lost their hope, saying that Armenia is lost or half-lost. However, I warn you that Armenia is still alive!... Armenia is alive and will stay alive while her neighboring great nations of Medes and Assyrians remained in history… You know well that Armenia divided between two neighboring states."[87]

Based on Khrimian's speech and the prevailing political climate, the authors of the aforementioned articles equated Khrimian's sermon to the famous Polish separatist slogan of 'Poland has not disappeared yet (*Eshche Pol'sha ne sginela*).' The authors portrayed the Armenian activities as 'British intrigues' aimed at creating a new Bulgaria on the Russian imperial borders.[88] This equation demonstrates how the nationalist movements influenced the thinking of the conservative press and bureaucracy, and helps explaining the implementation of severe measures against the Armenians in the South Caucasus.

The Tsarist authorities were not only troubled by Khrimian's nationalist discourse but also by his significant influence among the Armenians and his anti-governmental stance. After serving as the Governor of Yerevan for five years, Freze reported that Khrimian was arbitrarily using the term "our Emperor" and disregarding state laws. When asked to comply

[87] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 96, l. 159. See for the full version of Khrimian's speech, Kavkaz, No: 150, 1895.
[88] See for the excerpts of these newspapers; *Grajdanin*, 26 May 1895, No: 142, *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 23 June 1895, No: 170, *Novoe Vremia*, 13 September 1895, No: 7070. RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 96, ll. 123-123ob, 159-160ob, 161-162.

with state laws, Khrimian responded by claiming that he was unaware of them. Enraged by Khrimian's behavior, Freze asserted that "it is time for him to learn and stop calling them 'Yours' (*vashimi*) [laws]."[89] In Freze's view, Khrimian was the primary instigator and his activities should be restricted since his arrival had sparked Armenian unrest in the South Caucasus. Freze's concern was the escalating power and influence of the Armenian Patriarch and the potential ramifications it might have on the region. As Freze remarked, "I can anticipate all the difficulties that I will have to face with the Armenians who are already audacious, tenacious, and challenging to control following the Patriarch's strengthening."[90]

These incidents clearly demonstrated an unprecedented level of hostility, distrust, and unfavorable perception between the Russian authorities and the higher echelons of Armenian clergy, which was fueled by the growing national discord. The Russian government's ever-increasing interference in Armenian religious affairs with the aim of curbing the political activities of the Armenian clergy proved counterproductive. To suppress these activities and establish order in Armenian affairs, the authorities exiled members of the clergy, placed the Armenian Synod and its office under direct supervision of the Russian prosecutor, and enacted new laws to restrict the political activities of the Armenian spiritual authorities. However, the idea of bringing the Russian Armenians closer to the Empire's dominant population (*sliianie*) through strict adherence to laws only served to further alienate the Russian Armenians from the imperial government.

2.6. Resisting Russification, Protecting Identity: The Language of Oath

In the 1890s, the confrontation between Etchmiadzin and St. Petersburg reached its peak and manifested in various ways. One such instance was the issue of non-Orthodox witnesses'

[89] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 96, l. 167.
[90] RGIA, f. 821 op. 138 d. 96, l. 167.

swearing in court or soldiers' swearing to enter military service in a specific language, which became a point of contention between the Russian authorities and the Armenian clergy in the late 1880s. The Russian bureaucracy's attempts to promote the use of the Russian language in the Empire were evident in many studies. Witold Rodkiewicz identified two key motivations underlying the Russian authorities' objective of disseminating the Russian language in the nineteenth century. The first, pragmatic motivation was to facilitate communication and simplify administration by teaching the Russian language. The second, ideological motivation was to foster integration through the widespread use of the Russian language.[91]

The instances of individuals refusing to swear in the Russian language highlight the highly politicized nature of the relationship between the Russian and Armenian authorities. The discord between the two entities emerged in the early 1890s following the Russian imperial government's attempts to introduce the Russian language into Armenian parish schools. As a result, the Armenian Church leadership endeavored to protect the Armenian language and their cultural autonomy within the Empire. Prior to the 1890s, there were no issues concerning the language of oath among the Russian Armenians, and there were no instances where the Armenian clergy insisted on conducting the process exclusively in the Armenian language. However, cases of individuals refusing to swear in the Russian language began to be reported to the Minister of Interior from various ministries and departments.

One of the earlier cases occurred in May 1890 during a court proceeding for Lieutenant Kutlaev, who was of Armenian-Gregorian faith. An Armenian clergyman was invited to take the witness oath, but both he and the witness refused to take the oath in Russian, despite being proficient in the language. The Armenian priest had received orders from the Armenian Synod to conduct the oath in Armenian.[92] Another case from May 1890

[91] Rodkiewicz, *Russian Nationality Policy: In the Western Provinces of the Empire (1863-1905)*, 160.
[92] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, ll. 1-2.

involved Popov, the priest of the Armenian-*Uspenskaia* Cathedral in Astrakhan, who refused to conduct the oath for young soldiers of Armenian faith in Russian upon the request of the head of the Astrakhan reserve infantry battalion.[93] Similarly, on June 12, 1891, the Chairman of the Tiflis District court reported that the Armenian-Gregorian priest Gnuni refused to take the oath in Russian during a court session in Tiflis. The same priest swore in Georgian during a session on June 24, which the Chairman claimed that the rules of the Armenian Church did not require an oath in Armenian, but only forbade swearing in Russian.[94] These cases exemplify the resistance of the Armenian clergy to conduct oaths in Russian, reflecting the growing tensions between the Russian and Armenian authorities regarding language and cultural autonomy.

The Russian Minister of Interior, Durnovo, attempted to resolve the issue of refusal to swear in Russian by appealing to the Armenian Synod for cooperation and requesting that the Armenian Catholicos order Armenian priests to perform the oath in Russian. However, this request had the opposite effect. The Armenian Catholicos, Makarii, declared that the matter was solely a spiritual one and issued a kondak, a legal decree of the Armenian Church, to support his order. The kondak branded any Armenian priest who violated the Armenian Church law by not using the Armenian language during the oath as a 'violator' and subject to administrative penalties. Makarii ordered all heads of Armenian dioceses and priests to take the oath in Armenian and "warned them against administering the oath to Armenian children in Russian."[95]

The kondak of the Armenian Catholicos bewildered the Tsarist authorities as the Armenian Catholicos had precise authority in spiritual matters within the Armenian Church.

[93] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 8.
[94] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 23.
[95] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, ll. 13-14

According to the law, non-Russians were allowed to use their own languages in their religious matters, and it stated, "All peoples (*narody*) living in Russia praise the Almighty Lord in various languages according to the law and confession of their ancestors..."[96] Although the idea of the 'state language' did not appear until the 1906 Fundamental Laws, the latter discussion among different ministers shows steps taken to provide a legal basis for "the monopoly status of Russian as the only official language of the Empire."[97]

The Minister of Interior, recognizing that attempts to convince the Armenian Catholicos to abolish this 'wrong' order were hopeless, consulted with the Ministers of War and Justice to discuss possible scenarios for dealing with the situation. Durnovo suggested circumventing the law by excluding Armenian priests from the process of taking oaths in courts and military services. He consulted with the ministers about the practicality of having the Chairman of Military perform this process in courts, and military superiors perform it in the army. The Minister of War energetically supported the idea of having military superiors perform the process of taking oaths in the Russian language. The Minister of Justice reported that, in the absence of any legal restrictions, it was hardly wrong for witnesses of a non-Orthodox confession to take an oath in their native languages.[98]

In 1891, the issue of oath-taking sparked a heated public debate among the editors of several Armenian journals, including Cultivator (*Mshak*), New Review (*Novoe Obozrenie*), and the Governorship's journal, Caucasus (*Kavkaz*). The debate centered around two main points: whether Armenians should take oaths in Armenian or Russian, and whether oath-taking constituted a civil or religious act. The Armenian camp emphasized the crucial link between the Armenian language and its role in the Armenian Church. Meanwhile, the

[96] Rodkiewicz, *Russian Nationality Policy: In the Western Provinces of the Empire (1863-1905)*, 165.
[97] Rodkiewicz, 165.
[98] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, ll. 17-21.

Russian editors were disturbed by the stance taken by Armenian editors and clergy against swearing in Russian, and sought to shape public opinion in favor of state interests. They argued that oath-taking in courts constituted a civil act and therefore should be conducted in Russian.[99]

As a result, in 1892, the Minister of War, Semenovich, issued a circular to all the Chairmen of military district courts and military superiors directing them to conduct the oath-taking process for Armenian-Gregorian believers in the Russian language without the participation of an Armenian priest. This directive was implemented as a way to bypass the kondak of the Armenian Catholicos.[100]

In May 1893, the appointment of two Armenian civil officers, a clerk and a scribe, to the office of the Armenian Patriarchate brought to the fore the ongoing tensions between Russian authorities and Armenian clergy over the issue of taking oaths in the Russian language. The Prosecutor of the Armenian Church, Kancheli, argued that Armenians who held civil service positions in the Church should take their oaths in Russian. However, members of the Armenian Synod rejected Kancheli's demands. Consequently, Kancheli reported the matter to the Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions for further action.[101] Despite these disagreements, the Russian authorities made no attempts to introduce the use of the Russian language in religious matters and attempted to maintain a clear distinction between religious and civil matters.

Despite the earlier attempt to bypass the Patriarchal kondak, the issue of the language of oath remained unresolved in the military courts, service, and office of the Armenian Church in the following years. The matter also required the involvement of other departments

[99] Kavkaz, No: 184 (14 July 1891), Kavkaz, No: 191 (21 July 1981), Kavkaz, No: 198 (28 July 1891), Kavkaz, No: 205 (04 August 1891), Kavkaz, No: 207 (06 August 1891).
[100] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 29.
[101] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 67.

to reach a resolution, and the Armenian clergy persisted in their refusal to take the oath in the Russian language. As a result, in late 1895 and 1896, the Minister of Justice, Murav'ev, once again raised these cases to the attention of the Minister of Interior. Murav'ev reported that the Armenian clergy's persistent refusal to practice the demands of the Russian authorities "seems to be motivated by political reasons rather than religion and it is part of the manifestation of the Armenian movement which had recently been fomenting."[102] Due to the absence of any legal impediments or contradictions with existing laws, Murav'ev, in his capacity as Minister of Justice, recognized the impracticality of enacting legal regulations to alter the Armenian Catholicos' kondak. As a result, he suggested that only a powerful and effective intervention with the head of the Armenian Church could permit the revocation of Patriarch Makarii's kondak, which forbade the use of the Russian language for taking oaths. This intervention was necessary to reinstate the position of the Russian language in military courts and services for the Armenian-Gregorian faith, and to prevent continued resistance from the Armenian clergy.[103]

The Minister of Interior, Goremykin concurred with the Minister of Justice's perspective. He acknowledged the significance of the Armenian Catholicos' kondak, which was limited to religious boundaries, and stated that he lacked the legal basis to compel the Armenian Catholicos to revoke the order. Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior did not have enough authority to persuade the Armenian Catholicos to cancel the order. Therefore, Goremykin proposed an alternative solution to tackle this issue in a more moderate manner. He suggested using a translator to facilitate communication between individuals of the

[102] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 61.
[103] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 61ob.

Armenian-Gregorian faith who were not proficient in the Russian language and the Russian authorities in courts and military service for the swearing-in process.[104]

The lack of efficacy and influence on the part of the Tsarist ministers and bureaucrats is a noteworthy observation. They were unable to compel or sway the Armenian Catholicos to rescind the order. It is interesting to note that the power and authority wielded by the Armenian Catholicos was one of the main factors that prompted the Tsarist bureaucracy to propose increasingly drastic measures to curtail the Catholicos' authority. However, paradoxically, the very same Tsarist bureaucracy had, in previous decades, reinforced the Catholicos' authority and power for their foreign and domestic goals.

The previous attempts by lower level administration and ministerial circulars were unable to resolve the issue, and the new Governor General of Caucasus, Golitsyn, recognized the need to establish a legal framework for the exclusive use of the Russian language as the sole 'state language' of the Russian Empire. He differentiated between two types of oaths: A Church oath, which the Armenian clergy performed in Armenian for consecrating a Bishop, and a civil oath, which should be executed in the Russian language for matters outside the church.[105] By distinguishing between religious and civil oaths, Golitsyn argued that any acts in the public sphere fell under the category of civil oaths. This was part of the imperial efforts to define 'Russianness' of public life and limit other languages to their own confessional matters. According to Golitsyn, "civil law separates the Russian language from other church languages in the state, and therefore the oath must be practiced in the state language, which is mandatory for all Russian subjects."[106]

[104] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 64.
[105] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 68ob.
[106] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 69.

Golitsyn shared the common belief among the Tsarist officials that the resistance of the Armenian clergy against using the Russian language for oaths was politically motivated rather than religious. Calling the claims of the Armenian clergy as 'flimsy' and 'arbitrary,' Golitsyn supported a legal regulation to swear in the Russian language and demanded emergency measures in case the Armenian clergy refuses again.[107]

As a result, a Senate decree was released on February 17, 1899. The decree explicitly demonstrates that the Russian authorities followed the same process of interpretation that they accused the Armenian clergy of, i.e. interpreting the existing laws arbitrarily on behalf of the Armenian Church and Armenian language. While accepting the fact that "everyone swears according to their faith and law,"[108] the decree claims that the current law does not contain any special provisions as to which text the oath should be performed in. The decree acknowledged that: (1) there is only one state language, that is the Russian language that all state acts are performed in; (2) since the performance of the oath was part of civil law, people of foreign confession should swear in the Russian language, and in cases of the inefficient knowledge of the Russian language, they must use an interpreter.[109] While manifestly accepting the existing gap in the laws, the Tsarist authorities made a presupposed interpretation to accept the Russian as the only state language since it was the Russian Empire.

However, despite the Senate decree, the Imperial power was unable to fully overcome the authority of the Armenian Catholicos without resorting to forceful measures regarding the language of the oath. Golitsyn argued that there was no "solid basis for proper influence" in this case and that the Tsarist authorities did not receive any direct instructions to act.[110]

[107] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, ll. 69-69ob.
[108] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 71.
[109] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 71.
[110] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, l. 101.

Despite the Senate decree, the Armenian clergy persisted in their refusal to take the oath in the Russian language. The Minister of Interior hoped that the decree would compel the Armenian Catholicos to retract the kondak issued in 1891. To find a compromise solution to the language crisis, the Minister of Interior made another appeal to the Catholicos. However, the Catholicos rejected the Minister's request to revoke the Makarii kondak after the Senate decree was issued in March 1899. In October of the same year, Khrimian, the Catholicos, confirmed the previous kondak of Makarii with a new kondak and declined to announce the Senate decree to the Russian Armenians.[111] As a result, the issue remained unresolved in the following years.

The clash between the Armenian Church and the Tsarist authorities over the language of oath in military and legal contexts reveals a highly politicized relationship characterized by mounting tensions. The implementation of the Russian language in Armenian parish schools faced strong resistance and led to counter measures such as the rejection of swearing in Russian in the courts and military service by the Armenian clergy. This indicates that the confrontation between the Tsarist authorities and the Armenian Church was not merely a matter of political action, but also involved a clash of cultural identities. The Tsarist government's attempts to impose "Russianness" in public life through legal regulations, as an alternative to emerging non-Russian cultural identities, further reinforced these identities, including that of the Armenians.

2.7. Chapter Overview

This chapter highlights the changing nature of Armenian Church-Russia imperial relations in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. The Armenian Church transformed from being

[111] RGIA, f. 821 op. 10 d. 842, ll. 86-101ob.

solely a religious institution that spread Russian influence among Armenian communities in neighboring Muslim empires in the preceding decades, to a national stronghold that championed Armenian national culture and identity. In the era of nationalism, the once amicable bond and religious solidarity between the Armenian Church and Russian imperial authorities gave way to national discord.

The increasing identification of the Armenian Church as a national institution and political center in the South Caucasus prompted the Tsarist authorities to re-evaluate their relationship with the Armenian clergy. One facet of this interaction involved attempting to influence the Russian Armenians by shaping the highest ranks of the Armenian clergy. The Tsarist authorities believed that the election of a "Russian" subject as an Armenian Catholicos would spread a sense of "Russianness" among Russian Armenians, providing an alternative to the flourishing Armenian cultural identities and countering nationalist discourse among Ottoman Armenians. Another aspect of this interaction was the involvement of lower-level Armenian clergy in the Armenian national movement. This highlights the apex of politicized relations and the inability of the Tsarist authorities to effectively engage with the Armenian Church authorities.

The participation of the Armenian clergy in the Armenian national movement in various regions caused concern for the Tsarist authorities and led them to believe that the Armenian Church and its clergy were becoming the center of cultural and political separatism. As a result, the Tsarist authorities took a series of legal and practical measures, such as exiling lower-level Armenian clergy and increasing surveillance on higher-level Armenian clergy, to suppress these illegal political activities. However, these responses were met with resistance and further increased the polarization of relations between the Armenian Church and the Russian Empire. The incompetence of the Tsarist authorities in responding to this resistance led to anger and stricter measures against the Armenian Church. The

confiscation of Armenian Church properties, which will be discussed in the last chapter, was the result of this decade-long encounter, resistance, anger, and incompetency.

Chapter 3. Imperial Policies and the National Question on the Frontiers: The Confrontation with the Armenian Revolutionary Movement in the Late 1880s and Early 1890s.

In the middle of 1860s, the publication *Moskovskie Vedomosti* expressed concerns regarding the loyalty and ambiguous separatist tendencies observed among the Armenian people within the Russian Empire. These concerns were ubiquitous in the debates that took place during that time, particularly in response to articles published in *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* discussing the notion of 'Young Armenia.' Various individuals joined this debate, highlighting the potential political implications associated with 'Young Armenia' as a distinct political unit with a national character. One prominent figure in this debate was the renowned Russian nationalist writer, Mikhail Katkov. He drew attention to the potentially harmful 'political' implications of the Armenian nationality. According to Katkov, non-Russian and non-Orthodox elements could preserve their language, religion and culture within Russian society. However, this did not imply that 'they can become a political nationality and seek to have their own government.' These political claims, as he reiterated, 'were deceptive tools that have a more distant and more dangerous motive.'[1] Katkov specifically referenced a poem by the renowned Armenian writer Rafael Patkanian (using the pseudonym Kamar-Katiba) and emphasized the potential influence of Young Armenia and similar Armenian nationalist publications on the imagination of the Armenian youth.[2] The fear of separatism, heightened by the Polish rebellion in 1863, had a deep impact on the perception and policies of the Russian authorities. However, these concerns did not lead to any concrete steps against the Russian Armenians until the latter part of the nineteenth century.

[1] Mikhail N. Katkov, *Sobranie Peredovykh Statei Moskovskikh Vedomostei, 1865 God* (Moscow: Izdanie S.P. Katkovoi, 1897), 636.
[2] Katkov, 639.

During the last quarter of the 19th century, there was a resurgence of Katkov's concern. The international stage witnessed extensive debates on the issue known as 'the Armenian Question,' particularly in relation to the Ottoman Empire following the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877-1878. Concurrently, starting in the 1880s, Russian authorities at local and regional levels began submitting reports on the actions of clandestine Armenian circles on both sides of the Russian-Ottoman borders. These reports caused significant unease within the Russian bureaucracy because they contained detailed information about the collection of money and arms, the circulation of illegal pamphlets and literature, and the formation of volunteer armed groups intended to cross the Russian-Ottoman border. As a result, Russian authorities became convinced that Russian Armenians were actively involving the revolutionary activities of their Armenian brethren in the Ottoman Empire. This shifting perception of Armenians in the Russian bureaucratic mindset played a critical role in shaping the Russian Empire's subsequent policies towards the actions of Armenian revolutionaries and the Armenian population in general. As Theodore Weeks points out, rather than adopting a one-sided narrative of oppression from the perspective of the Russian Imperial subjects, a nuanced historical analysis of the complex interaction between the Russian bureaucracy and the Armenian political parties is necessary to fully comprehend the mechanisms of surveillance and control employed by the Empire.[3] This case study of Russian official attitudes and responses to Armenian revolutionary movement provides further evidence to support Weeks' assertion that the Russian imperial bureaucracy was primarily reactive rather than proactive in its response to Armenian revolutionary activities. The Russian authorities' actions were largely defined by their reaction to the escalating actions of Armenian

[3] Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*, 1996 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 5.

revolutionaries on the Russian-Ottoman borderland and ongoing state surveillance in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

In this chapter, my objective is to explore the changing perceptions of Russian Armenians within the Russian imperial bureaucracy in the late nineteenth century. More specifically, I will analyze the transition from perceiving Armenians as loyal subjects of the Tsar to regarding them as revolutionaries who were involved in revolutionary endeavors across the Russian-Ottoman borders, supporting revolutionary actions within both the Russian and Ottoman empires. I will examine how the Russian imperial authorities perceived and reacted to the escalating actions of Armenian revolutionaries on both sides of the imperial borders and what methods and practices they pursued to curb these revolutionary mobilizations. The primary focus of the first section of this chapter will be the intricate dynamics and perceptions between the Russian imperial bureaucracy and Armenian political parties. Subsequent sections will explore the preventative measures implemented by Russian authorities to curb the actions of Armenian revolutionaries on the shared border of the Russian and Ottoman Empires.

3.1. The Formation of Armenian Political Parties

The formation of Armenian political parties in the late 1880s played a crucial role in shaping the direction of the Armenian national movement, particularly in the eyes of the Russian imperial and central authorities. Between 1880 and 1887, there was a notable increase in the presence of Armenian circles in the Caucasian provinces as well as in Moscow and St. Petersburg in the Russian Empire. They had two primary goals. First, they aimed to educate Armenian youth to increase their national consciousness through distribution of national

literature. Their second objective was to provide all possible means of support including money, arms and man power.[4]

The Hunchak (the Bell) party, which was founded in Geneva in 1887, was a prominent socialist and nationalist organization that included a number of prominent Russian Armenians among its founders, including Avetis Nazarbekian, Maro Mardanian, Gabriel Kafian, Matheos Shahazizian, Kristapor Ohanian, Gevorg Gharachian, Ruben Han-Azad, and Boghos Afrikian. These individuals had become disillusioned with the reform promises made at the Congress of Berlin,[5] which they believed had failed to provide adequate protection for their fellow Armenians against attacks by Kurds, Circassians, and local authorities. As scions of wealthy Russian Armenian families, they had been born and educated in Russia and in various European universities.

The Hunchak party was a nationalist and socialist organization that pursued two primary goals: the establishment of an independent Armenian state in the Ottoman Empire and a socialist revolution. Some of its founding members maintained close ties with Russian revolutionaries and were influenced by their ideological and organizational principles, with the party's methods closely resembling those of the Russian group People's Will (*Narodnaia Volia*).[6] However, the party's ideology was beset by inherent contradictions between its aims, as it sought to unify all Armenians around the cause of national independence, while simultaneously striving to unite all oppressed social classes in a common struggle for socialism. This contradiction caused internal divisions within the party, with some members blaming socialism for the failure of the movement, as it alienated the bourgeoisie, Armenian

[4] Hratch Dasnapetean, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaktsutiun, 1890-1924*, Collection Muhrak (Milan/Italy: Oemme Edizioni, 1990), 23.
[5] Article 61 of the Congress of Berlin states necessary reforms and improvements to ensure security of the Armenians from Kurds and Circassians. See, Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 66–69.
[6] Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century*, 1963, 104–15; Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, 94–101.

Church, and European governments, thereby hampering the party's efforts towards national liberation.[7]

In 1890, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), also known as 'Hai Heghapoghagan Dashnaktzoutyoun', was established by Christopher Mikaelian, Simon Zavarian, and Stephan Zorian. These founders were similarly influenced by the Russian group *Narodnaia Volia*. The Tiflis-based Armenian youth group, Yeridasar Haiastan (Young Armenia), aimed to transform existing small cells in the Caucasus, as well as several small Armenian organizations like the 'Patriots Union,' which was active in Moscow and published Azadootyan Avedaper (Messenger of Liberty), into a nationwide organization. The Marxist Hunchaks also dispatched a delegation to the first Congress held in Tiflis in 1892 to explore the possibility of merging with these groups.[8] While non-socialist nationalist revolutionaries focused on liberating Ottoman Armenians, socialist Armenian revolutionaries insisted on incorporating socialism into their ideology. They believed that without this, the Armenian bourgeoisie would dominate the party, leading to national liberation without social class emancipation.

To reconcile these conflicting views, party members described their ideology in the manifesto as aiming for "the economic and political freedom of Turkish Armenia". However, this goal did not satisfy the Marxist Hunchaks, who withdrew from the unification process. Apart from disagreements over socialist principles, ARF leaders also supported decentralization over centralization, which was favored by the Hunchaks.[9]

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation declared that “it has entered the people's war against the Turkish government, with the sole aim of eventually achieving the political and

[7] Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State*, 93–94.
[8] Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, 101–2.
[9] Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century*, 1963, 151–54.

liberation of Turkish Armenia. The organization vowed to continue this fight for freedom until its last drop of blood, urging the people to unite and fearlessly carry on the noble task of national emancipation."[10] The essential purpose of the organization was to obtain 'the economic and political freedom of Turkish Armenia' through a long-lasting armed struggle against Turkish officials, usurers, and traitors, as they described their enemies.[11]

The rapid expansion of these Armenian revolutionary cells from Tiflis to Constantinople and their illicit actions straddling both sides of imperial borders alerted Tsarist authorities. In response, the Tsarist regime began to explore ways and methods to address and control this growing problem in the South Caucasus.

3.2. Armenian Revolutionary Challenge on the Porous Imperial Frontiers

The Armenian revolutionaries' key strategic decision was to focus its endeavors on the Ottoman Empire, while abstaining from any actions that might incite the Russian authorities. However, Imperial control over the frontiers with the Persian and Ottoman Empires came under surveillance due to increasing cross-border activities of Armenian revolutionaries on the Russo-Ottoman border, and the emergence of Armenian political parties. Rather than devising a systematic border control mechanism, the Russian authorities established a cordon line by means of military bases, relied on local collaboration, and pursued diplomatic engagement with the Ottoman Empire. Despite these efforts, the Russian authorities were unable to manage the increasing illegal activities of the Armenian political parties on the

[10] Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, 104.
[11] William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf., 1935), 155.

porous Russo-Ottoman border, owing to limited financial resources, personnel, and the formidable terrain.

Clarifying terminology is crucial for comprehending the context of the confrontation between the Russian authorities and Armenian revolutionaries. Khodorkovsky introduced a distinction between the concepts of frontier and border. He defined a border as a well-defined line of contact between sovereign states, while portraying a frontier as a region or basin that lies beyond the integrated part of the political body.[12] Empires, despite having clearly defined borders through bilateral or multilateral treaties, also have frontiers. These frontiers serve as transition zones where animals, goods, and people can legally or clandestinely cross from one border to another. Furthermore, frontiers are highly porous and ill-defined expanses, rather than rigid lines of demarcation. As such, managing these frontiers is an arduous task.[13]

[12] Michael Khodarkovsky, 'From Frontier To Empire: The Concept of the Frontier in Russia, Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries', *Russian History* 19, no. 1–4 (1992): 115.
[13] Ipek Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878-1908* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 80; Houri Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (California: University of California Press, 2019), 74; Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

Map 1: Administrative Map of the Caucasian cities between 1878-1914. Source: Richard G. Hovannisian, Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 12.

The South Caucasus has a long-standing legacy as a frontier zone between the Byzantine-Roman-Persian and Ottoman Empires. Even in earlier centuries, the region witnessed continuous conflict between Islamic states and Christian kingdoms, resulting in shifting boundaries, contested identities, and a heterogeneous population. Against this historical background, the South Caucasus exemplifies the characteristics of a complex frontier zone.[14] In the 19th century, the South Caucasus served as a frontier zone for the Russian army as they expanded their influence towards the neighboring Persian and Ottoman Empires through

[14] Alfred J. Rieber, 'The Comparative Ecology of Complex Frontiers', in *Imperial Rule*, ed. Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber, vol. I, Pasts Incorporated, CEU Studies in the Humanities (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 177–207.

military campaigns, always with the collaboration of local Armenians who were subsequently incorporated into the Russian imperial frontiers. During these military campaigns, the local Armenians living on the frontiers of these rival empires provided crucial support to Russian expansion, providing expertise in navigating the difficult terrain and geographical realities of the region.

In the late Imperial Russia, the rise of nationalism and reactionary sentiments gave rise to growing nationalist threats and the idea of unity. This led to a focus on controlling imperial borders and unifying the borderlands with the rest of the empire.[15] This issue became particularly relevant in the South Caucasus due to the incursion of Armenian revolutionaries in the last decades of the 19th century, which reverberated in the Ottoman Empire. In the South Caucasus, the Russian authorities in border cities adjacent to the Ottoman Empire started to express their unease regarding the Russian Empire's precarious and fragile control over its borderlands.

As the Viceroy of the Caucasus from 1862 to 1882, the Tsar's brother Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolayevich alerted the Imperial center concerning the illegal crossing the border of Armenian volunteer armed bands from the Caucasus into the Ottoman Empire on October 8, 1880.[16] Similarly, a local police officer within the Aleksandropol district reported the arrival of approximately 18 Armenian volunteers intending to cross the border into the Ottoman Empire from nearby villages. Although the precise number of the armed bands eluded the authorities, approximately 30 Armenian volunteers returned to the South Caucasus two weeks

[15] See discussions on Russification policies in late imperial Russia, Haltzel et al., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*; Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904*; Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*, 1996; Dolbilov, 'Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire's Northwestern Region in the 1860s'; Weeks, 'Russification: Word and Practice 1863-1914'; Darius Staliūnas, *Making Russians : Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam, 2007).

[16] Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 109, 3rd exped., 1880, op. 165, d. 707, l. 1.

later.[17] A few months later, in April 1881, the Yerevan police apprehended three armed Armenian students while attempting to cross the Ottoman border. Reports from Russian Imperial agents revealed similar rumors from Tiflis and Aleksandropol, indicating the organization of armed volunteer units among Russian Armenians, with financial support earmarked for their expedition to Turkey.[18] Nikolay reported to the Imperial center that "he urged local authorities to take strict measures to prevent clandestine border crossing of Armenian armed groups into the Ottoman Empire."[19]

During the 1890s, the proliferation of Russian Armenian armed bands intensified, associated with the emergence of Armenian revolutionary parties. The escalation of confrontations along the Russo-Ottoman border heightened apprehensions within the Tsarist administration, compelling them to implement stringent border control measures. Alexander Freze, the Governor of Yerevan, for instance, highlighted the growing issue of illegal mobility of Armenians across the border, which he noted as a " vivid confirmation of my ideas about the extreme weakness of the protection of our border."[20] Sheremetev was also concerned about the escalating tension on the Russian-Ottoman border and the inability of the Tsarist authorities to effectively monitor the borders. In his most comprehensive report in 1895, he drew attention to the increasing significance of imperial control over the Russian-Ottoman border and brought this matter to the Tsar's attention.[21] Apart from the regional authorities in the South Caucasus, the Russian Ambassador in the Ottoman capital, Nelidov, also expressed concern about the growing discontent among Armenians on both sides of the Russian-Ottoman border. He highlighted the strong sense of solidarity among Armenians and

[17] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGIA), f. 1405, op. 521, d. 417, ll. 235.
[18] Stephen B. Riegg, 'Imperial Challengers: Tsarist Responses to Armenian Raids into Anatolia, 1875–90', *Russian Review* 76, no. 2 (2017): 264.
[19] GARF, f. 109, 3rd exped., 1880, op. 165, d. 707, l. 1.
[20] RGIA, f.821, op. 7, d. 164, ll. 52-52ob.
[21] RGIA, f.1284, op. 185, d. 9, l. 22.

their agitation, which he believed had turned the Russian-Ottoman frontier into a state of turmoil.[22]

The borders of the South Caucasus, which were highly porous and challenging to control, drew the attention of British consuls stationed in the Ottoman Empire. After travelling through the Persian, Ottoman, and Russian borders, Captain Elliot, the British Vice Consul of Van city in the Ottoman Empire, provided his observations in a memorandum about 'the incursion of Armenians from Russia' in late 1898. In this memorandum, Captain Elliot underlined that "Russia has a very large open land frontier, and to keep small parties of individuals from slipping across this is exceedingly difficult."[23]

Despite the difficulties posed by the challenging geography of the Russian-Ottoman border, the Tsarist authorities implemented various diplomatic, military, and administrative measures to counteract the clandestine activities and incursions of Armenian revolutionaries both within and across the borders. Military measures included increasing the number of guards along the frontier, engaging directly with Armenian revolutionaries in border areas, deploying extra troops to deter Armenian revolutionaries from crossing the border, and preventing the smuggling of arms and ammunition across the border.

The Kukunian case serves as a noteworthy example of the direct engagement between Russian authorities and the Armenian armed bands attempting to cross the Russian Ottoman border. In September 1890, a group of approximately one hundred Armenian revolutionaries hailing from various cities of the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian Empires made an attempt to enter the Ottoman Empire through the Russian border. However, the timely intervention of Cossack border guards and infantry unit prevented their successful passage. The Russian

[22] Foreign Office (FO), 424/182, From Sir P. Currie to the Earl of Kimberly, 18 April 1895. No. 245, p. 125.
[23] FO 424/ 197, G. S. Elliot, Memorandum Respecting Correspondence Regarding Incursions of Armenians from Russia, 30 November 1898. Inc. 3, No. 82, p. 82.

guards and soldiers apprehended twenty-seven members of the group and confiscated a significant amount of military supplies. The confrontation resulted in fatalities on both sides.[24]

The establishment of Armenian political parties in the 1890s marked a turning point for the Tsarist authorities, who became increasingly concerned about the growing covert actions of the Armenian revolutionaries across the Russian-Ottoman border. In the mid-1890s, as increasing reports were received by the Governor General of the Caucasus about the clandestine activities of Armenian revolutionaries, Sheremetev directed the border authorities to impose strict supervision on border areas to prevent the transfer of "weapons, military supplies, and armed individuals from the Russian side into the Ottoman Empire."[25] Additionally, within the Russian border region, Sheremetev instructed the governors of the Caucasus to carefully investigate any Armenian-related incidents under their jurisdiction in collaboration with the local gendarmerie forces. They were also directed to prevent any illegal collaboration between Russian and Ottoman Armenians.[26] Lastly, to address the weakness in the composition of the border guards, Sheremetev issued orders to increase the number of Cossacks and infantry units at the border in order to provide support to the existing border guard and reinforce the security of the imperial border.[27]

The Russian authorities implemented military precautions, which included the presence of Russian troops on the Russian-Ottoman border. These troops were either part of military exercises or the ordinary replacement of existing cordon lines with fresh ones. However, their presence created ambiguous perceptions. While it deterred some Russian

[24] Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century*, 1963, 155–61; Dasnapetean, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaktsutiun, 1890-1924*, 29–31; Riegg, 'Imperial Challengers: Tsarist Responses to Armenian Raids into Anatolia, 1875–90', 267–68.
[25] RGIA, f.1284, op. 185, d. 9, l. 8.
[26] RGIA, f.1284, op. 185, d. 9, l. 8.
[27] RGIA, f.1284, op. 185, d. 9, l. 22.

Armenians from incursions into the Ottoman Empire, it also heightened anxiety across the border. Armenian revolutionaries spread rumors about the imminent Russian advance into the Ottoman Empire to assist Ottoman Armenians, further exacerbating tensions.[28]

The Tsarist government also took significant action by launching diplomatic initiatives aimed at negotiating the issue of securing and monitoring the borderland between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Sheremetev instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to engage in communication with the Ottoman authorities to explore the possibility of a joint effort "to ensure the protection of the integrity of the state border."[29] Following Sheremetev's initiative in 1894, the Russian Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Nelidov, communicated with Ottoman authorities to address the question of border security. The Ottomans welcomed this proposal, as the unsettled border was a major concern for them, particularly at a time when news of Armenian massacres was spreading across Europe. According to Nelidov's report, the Ottoman Sultan took a personal interest in the matter and ordered the creation of a new office to head the border guards. Sheremetev and Nelidov both suggested the establishment of a similar institution and the appointment of a corresponding officer to work with the Ottomans to monitor the border and address any issues that arise.[30]

It is unclear from the available sources whether the negotiations between the Russian and Ottoman authorities regarding the establishment of a joint office for monitoring the border took place. However, it is known that the Russian side did not create a similar office until 1897, when Golitsyn became Governor General of the Caucasus. Upon his arrival, Golitsyn conducted a personal investigation into the Armenian revolutionary activities on the borderland and called for the establishment of a border commissioner's office with the

[28] FO 424/189, From Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie, 03 October 1896. No. 101, p. 93. See also, FO 424/182, From Sir P. Currie to the Earl of Kimberley, 27 June 1895. No. 270, p. 455.
[29] RGIA, f.1284, op. 185, d. 9, l. 8.
[30] RGIA, f.1284, op. 185, d. 9, ll. 28-28ob

Ottoman Empire. However, correspondence between different departments under the Ministry of Interior revealed disagreements over the location of the office, the duties of the commissioner, and the responsibility for its establishment, based on different practices on other border areas of the Russian Empire.[31] The bureaucratic procedures within the Tsarist administration impeded the implementation of a joint action with the Ottoman authorities to effectively monitor the Russian-Ottoman border.

In 1901, the Tsarist authorities established a consulate in the city of Kharput and a vice-consulate in the district of Bayezid inside the borders of the Ottoman Empire with the aim of monitoring cross-border activities. The vice-consulate in Bayezid was particularly significant due to its location on the triangulated borders of the Ottoman, Russian, and Persian empires and its proximity to one of the main routes used by Armenian revolutionaries to cross the frontiers and operate in these three empires. The appointment of an experienced Russian consul who had worked in various parts of the Ottoman Empire demonstrated the importance attached to the establishment of this diplomatic mission by the Tsarist authorities.[32]

As part of these diplomatic efforts, British diplomats also urged the Russian authorities in both the Ottoman and Russian Empires to take necessary measures to secure tranquility on the frontier. However, these efforts proved to be in vain. For instance, the British Ambassador in Constantinople demanded that the Russian Ambassador, Nelidov, support the idea of pressing the Ottoman authorities to implement a reform agenda in 1895, believing that it could alleviate discontent on the frontier. Nelidov expressed his desire to join any action that improved the conditions on the frontier but noted that Russia was only willing "to join in pressing reforms, so long as their objectives are humanitarian, and do not involve

[31] RGIA, f. 1284, op. 185, d. 45, ll. 1-2.
[32] FO, 424/202, From Consul Lamb to Sir N. O' Connor, 01 May 1901. Inc. in No. 26, pp. 23-24.

any political changes."[33] The fear of any political changes on the frontier became a dilemma for the Tsarist authorities, and they abstained from any collaboration with the European powers to ease discontent on the frontier.

At times, British diplomats in the Ottoman Empire aimed to collaborate with Russian authorities in neighboring areas to hinder the infiltration of armed Armenian groups into the Ottoman Empire. According to the report of the British Vice-Consul in Van, Kurdish groups on the frontier were incited by the presence of Armenian revolutionary agents across the Iranian border in November 1896. In order to calm the situation, the British consul proposed that Russian troops be dispatched to the Iranian city of Salmas, where these Armenian revolutionaries were hiding. The Russian military was expected to take essential measures to prevent the spread of Armenian revolutionary action across the frontier.[34] Similarly, news of a hiding Armenian revolutionary band of about three hundred members on the Russian-Ottoman frontiers prompted the British Ambassador in Constantinople to urge his Embassy in St. Petersburg to work with the Russian authorities preventing the cross-border activities of the Armenian revolutionaries. In response, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, M. Swetchine, drew Golitsyn's attention to the ongoing passage of Armenian bands into the Ottoman Empire. However, like his predecessors, Golitsyn expressed his frustration with the challenges posed by the porous and lengthy frontier and informed the British Embassy that "the frontier was long and difficult to guard, and that he was doing all he could do to prevent insurgents."[35]

The Tsarist efforts to control and manage the lengthy porous border did not yield the expected results. These diplomatic, military and political maneuvers did not curb the

[33] FO, 424/182, From Sir P. Currie to the Earl of Kimberly, 18 April 1895. No. 245, pp. 124-125.
[34] FO, 424/189, From The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir M. Durand, 28 November 1896. No. 236, p. 212.
[35] FO, 424/206, From Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne, 28 June 1904. No. 517, p. 100; FO, 424/206, From Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne, 05 July 1904. No. 123, p. 107.

mobilization of the Armenian revolutionaries through these frontiers. The relatively weak control and authority of the empires provided significant opportunities for the revolutionary activities on the frontiers. As a result, Armenian revolutionaries turned these frontiers into a crucial space to articulate their nationalist ideas, transfer guns, collect money or join clashes across the border.

3.3. Securing Border Communication; Purging Armenians from Post and Telegraph Offices

Late Imperial Russia relied on telegraph and post offices as vital components of its communication network. The telegraph was used for transmitting instructions and disseminating news, while the post was frequently employed for circulating longer letters, books, and newspapers. The Armenian revolutionaries effectively employed various communication techniques to give instructions to their members, propagate their ideas, circulate materials, and organize their actions.[36] However, these actions did not escape the attention of the Russian imperial agents in the South Caucasus, particularly in neighboring areas of the Russian-Ottoman borders where members of the Armenian revolutionary parties were actively engaged in actions on both sides.

On May 26th, 1893, the Governor General of the Caucasus, Sergei Aleksandrovich Sheremetev, sent a confidential letter to Nikolai Aleksandrovich Bezak, the Head of the Post and Telegraph Office, drawing his attention to the ongoing activities of the Armenian revolutionary movement in the region. Sheremetev noted the particularities of opening and resealing received posts at the post and telegraph offices, particularly in Armenian-dominated

[36] Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds*, 2019, 66.

cities such as Yerevan and Aleksandropol. The heads of these offices were allegedly involved in the Armenian movement and used their positions to circulate illegal foreign publications across the borders of the South Caucasus, promoting communication between Armenian political figures living in different cities and localities of Russia and abroad. According to Sheremetev's letter, the heads of these offices were utilizing a method similar to one previously revealed in Ethcmiadzin, where an Armenian officer received anonymous packages labeled as 'on demand.' Following the removal of this Armenian from the head of the Ethcmiadzin office and the appointment of an Orthodox Russian, namely Suprovich, the circulation of banned materials through this method ceased. However, this removal angered some local Armenians; Suprovich was later beaten up in the street.[37]

Sheremetev also detailed another incident where the head of the Yerevan Post Office, Konkoshev, and the head of a post office branch in the village of Akgulisi, Petrosyan, were allegedly acting on behalf of the Armenian revolutionaries. Increasing suspicions and rumors suggested that these officers were collecting funds and sending them to support the Armenian movement in the Ottoman Empire. In response to their illicit activities, Sheremetev requested that Konkoshev and Petrosyan be transferred to provinces without a significant Armenian population. Additionally, he urged that Suprovich should continue serving as the head of the Ethcmiadzin post and telegraph office. Finally, Sheremetev mandated that Armenians should not be appointed as heads of post and telegraph offices in the border provinces of Yerevan, Elisavetpol, and Kars in the future, where a large Armenian population existed.[38] Following Sheremetev's request, on 8 July 1893, Bezak, the head of the post and telegraph office, confirmed that Konkoshev and Petrosyan had been transferred to the post and telegraph

[37] A telegram sent from the Governor General of the Caucasus Sheremetev to the Head of the Post and Telegraph Office Bezak on 26 May 1893. RGIA, f. 1289, op. 2, d. 2667, ll. 1-3.
[38] RGIA, f. 1289, op. 2, d. 2667, l. 4.

office in the Kutaisi province. Suprovich, the head of the Ethcmiadzin office, was promoted to the Aleksandropol post office and replaced with another Orthodox Russian.[39]

The Military Governor of the Kars region, General Lieutenant Tomich, also made a request for the removal of ethnic Armenian heads of the post and telegraph offices and their assistants in a 'top secret' letter to the Head of the Tiflis Post and Telegram Office on 12 October 1895, Tomich pointed out the escalating activities of Armenian revolutionaries along the Russian and Ottoman borders and underlined the enhanced interaction between Armenian populations on both sides. These factors facilitated the dissemination of illegal pamphlets, letters, and journals aimed at articulating the idea of the reunification of historic Armenia and the restoration of its political autonomy. These materials sought to rally Armenian youth to support the movement. Due to the strategic location of the Kars region bordering the Ottoman Empire, Tomich considered this measure essential to deter the activities of Armenian revolutionary members. [40]

Upon assuming the position of Governor General of the Caucasus, Prince Golitsyn prioritized measures to address the Armenian question due to the persistent conflicts and massacres occurring between Armenians and local Muslims, Turks, and Kurds on both sides of the imperial border. He took proactive measures by personally visiting the Russian-Ottoman border areas and holding discussions with Mkrtich Khrimian, the head of the Armenian Church, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the ongoing turmoil. Based on his observations and discussions with local authorities, officials and border forces, Prince Golitsyn identified the actions of Armenian revolutionaries and the broader Armenian question as significant threats in the region.[41]

[39] RGIA, f. 1289, op. 2, d. 2667, l. 9.
[40] RGIA, f. 1289, op. 2, d. 2667, ll. 6-7.
[41] RGIA, f. 1282, op. 3, d. 239, l. 21. The Most Comprehensive Report of the Governor General of the Caucasus, Prince Sergei Golitsyn (1897-1902).

Due to the South Caucasus's strategic location on the frontiers of two rival empires and its designation as a military district, Prince Golitsyn regarded the ethnic composition of post and telegraph office workers in border areas as a potential security concern. As a result, on March 3, 1898, he requested information regarding the ethnic makeup of workers in the South Caucasus. The data collected indicated that out of a total of 499 workers in Tiflis, 101 were Russian Armenians. The largest group of workers was Russian, comprising 169 employees, followed closely by Georgians with 164 workers. Furthermore, there were 27 German workers, 27 Polish workers, 5 Tatars, 3 Jewish workers who had converted to Christianity, and 1 worker each from Britain, France, and Greece. At the Tiflis station, out of 159 workers, there were 37 Russian Armenian employees. The largest group of workers comprised Russians, totaling 58 employees, followed by Georgians with 41 workers. Additionally, there were 11 German workers, 9 Polish workers, along with 1 worker each of Tatar, Greek, and Jewish origin who had converted to Christianity.[42]

Prince Golitsyn became increasingly concerned about the presence of Russian Armenians in the post and telegraph offices in the border region. He believed that they could be involved in activities that could threaten the security and stability of the region, especially given the ongoing Armenian revolutionary activities in the region. He ordered the replacement of Russian Armenian workers in the post and telegraph offices with non-Armenian workers. This move was part of a broader policy of Russification that aimed to strengthen the position of the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus.

Upon receiving information about the ethnic makeup of post and telegraph workers, Prince Golitsyn promptly took action by sending a telegram to the Minister of Interior, Goremykin, on July 21, 1898. The telegram urged the replacement of Russian Armenian

[42] RGIA, f 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, ll. 1-3.

workers with Russians hailing from the inner provinces of the empire. To facilitate this process, the head of the Tiflis Post and Telegraph Office compiled a detailed list of Russian Armenian workers, outlining their names, ranks, and stations on September 6, 1898.[43]

The Minister of Interior, Goremykin, declined Prince Golitsyn's request to replace Russian Armenian post and telegraph workers with Russians from inner provinces of the empire in a telegram dated December 18, 1898. The reasons for this decision included potential complications of attracting Russian officers to the South Caucasus, the high cost of replacement, limited funding for travel allowances, and "the need to work with the existing workforce comprising individuals from different nationalities."[44] However, the Interior Minister informed Golitsyn that "in the future, the vacancies of the heads of postal and telegraph offices and departments in the Tiflis Postal and Telegraph Offices will not be filled by persons of the Armenian origin, and those [Armenians] who are in such positions at the time of promotion will, if possible, be moved to the offices of less sensitive geographic regions."[45] On the same date, the head of the Main department of the Post and Telegraph Office advised the head of the Tiflis post and telegraph district "to limit as much as possible the movement of persons of Armenian origin to the service in the district entrusted to him, in order to reduce the number of them both in the higher and lower level of the positions in their stations."[46]

The reason for the perception of Russian Armenian workers as a security threat, despite the higher number of Georgian workers in the post and telegraph service, can be attributed to the increasing activities of Armenian revolutionaries in the region from 1890. This correlation can be seen in the policies of the Governor Generals of the Caucasus. While

[43] RGIA, f 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, ll. 7-11.
[44] RGIA, f 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, l. 17.
[45] RGIA, f 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, l. 17.
[46] RGIA, f 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, l. 14.

Sheremetev and Tomich sought to remove Russian Armenian workers from adjacent areas of the Russian-Ottoman borders, such as Yerevan, Elisavetpol, and Kars, Prince Golitsyn wanted to transfer all Russian Armenian workers out of the South Caucasus. This difference in policy was due to Golitsyn's perception that all Russian Armenians were part of the revolutionary movement. During his tenure, the term "Armenian" was synonymous with a revolutionary person. Additionally, Golitsyn sought to counteract these activities by demonstrating state authority and power. Therefore, the removal of Russian Armenian workers from the post and telegraph service was seen as a means of strengthening the position of the Russian Empire in the region. Despite the higher percentage of Georgian workers in the service, they were not perceived as a threat due to their lesser involvement in revolutionary activities.

In April 1899, Governor Ivan Petrovich Kireev of Elisavetpol conveyed to Prince Golitsyn that the town of Susha had emerged as a hotbed for propagating the Armenian revolutionary movement within the Ottoman Empire. The report detailed that local Armenians, harboring anti-Russian sentiments, displayed animosity towards Russian government officials and exhibited contempt for all things Russian. In response to this report, Prince Golitsyn requested that the Minister of Interior replace all Armenian public servants in Susha with Russian officials. This move was aimed at countering the revolutionary activities of the local Armenians and maintaining Russian state authority in the region.[47] While the exact number of Russian Armenians removed from their positions in Susha was not explicitly stated in the available records, documents from the post and telegraph office reveal that 17 Armenian workers from the Susha station were reassigned to different stations in cities such as Saratov, Merv, Baku, Ashkhabad, and Penza. Simultaneously, Russian workers were

[47] RGIA, f. 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, l. 24.

transferred to take the place of the Armenian workers at the Susha station.[48] Indeed, it is conceivable that the removal of Armenian public servants from the post and telegraph stations in Susha might have been part of a larger policy aimed at replacing Armenian officials across various services within the same city.

On April 26, 1899, the head of the main department of the post and telegraph office issued a telegram to the head of the post and telegraph department in the Baku district. The telegram instructed that individuals of Armenian descent were not to be appointed to positions within the post and telegraph department in Susha city.[49]

The requests made by Russian authorities to remove Armenians from government posts in post and telegraph offices situated on the border between the Russian and Ottoman empires underscored the Russian state's concerns regarding Armenians holding government positions and potentially collaborating with members of the Armenian national movement. These requests also reiterated the importance of post and telegraph offices as critical communication channels for Armenian revolutionaries operating on the frontier. Furthermore, they suggest shifting perceptions of Armenians within various segments of the Russian imperial institutions. The increasing association of Armenians with revolutionary activities during the 1890s led to a generalization of this association against Russian Armenians in various public spheres and services. The perceptions and images of Armenian revolutionary figures and the desires of the Governor Generals, particularly during Golitsyn's tenure, mutually influenced each other.

[48] RGIA, f. 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, ll. 25-55.
[49] RGIA, f. 1289, op. 3, d. 1383, l. 28.

3.4. Censoring the Armenian Press, Curbing the Armenian Nationalist Discourse

Armenian revolutionaries and the Tsarist authorities engaged in conflicts related to the circulation of clandestine printed materials and the Imperial censorship policy. The press played a significant role in the history of the Armenian nationalist movement. For a people who were divided and already in the process of diasporization, the press served a distinct purpose beyond its usual functions. As Ter Minassian noted, the primary role of the Armenian press 'was to unite and organize the diverse Armenian communities scattered across different regions.'[50] Confronted by censorship in the Russian, Ottoman and Persian empires, the revolutionary parties tried to set up clandestine press and articulate their socialist and revolutionary ideologies.[51]

During the 1880s, the Russian authorities took steps to control the Armenian press in order to quell anti-government sentiments and revolutionary/separatist ideas. These measures gradually escalated, leading to the closure of almost all local Armenian press outlets by the end of the nineteenth century. The shift in the Tsarist authorities' approach to Armenian press affairs was significant for several reasons. Firstly, the tenures of Governors-General Dondukov-Korsakov and Sheremetev coincided with the emergence of Armenian nationalism in the early 1880s and 1890s. They directed their attention primarily towards revolutionary publications that were imported from European centers and the Ottoman Empire, employing a selective strategy that targeted only nationalist and revolutionary materials rather than imposing a total ban on all Armenian press. In some cases, they even supported publications that were seen as aligning with Russian state interests.[52] During their tenures, they

[50] Anahide Ter Minassian, 'The Role of the Armenian Community in the Foundation and Development of the Socialist Movement in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey: 1876-1923', in *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1923*, ed. Erik Jan Zürcher and M. Tunçay (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 121.
[51] Ter Minassian, 122.
[52] In 1868, the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, Kevork, sought permission from His Imperial Majesty, the Grand Duke Viceroy, to publish a monthly magazine titled "Ararat" in Etchmiadzin. This request was made with

emphasized the importance of effective censorship practices to prevent the further growth of Armenian nationalism. However, Prince Golitsyn implemented a more stringent policy against Armenian publications and press. He not only increased supervision of imported materials but also closed local Armenian newspapers on the grounds of subversion and revolutionary activities.[53] Secondly, this process reflected the Tsarist authorities' growing association of Russian Armenians with nationalist and revolutionary activities as a whole. Thirdly, it demonstrated the authorities' increasing intolerance towards all forms of dissent, without making any distinction within a particular society. Lastly, the policy of censorship and closure of local Armenian periodicals was in line with the tightening of censorship practices throughout the entire Russian Empire.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs oversaw all printed materials and publications in the Russian Empire through the Main Department for Press Affairs (*Glavnoe upravlenie po delam pechati*). This institution wielded the authority to permit or deny any domestic or imported publications in individual cases, examining "books of all kinds in all languages, prints, drawings, and other representations with text or without, designs, plans, cards, and musical compositions with words appended."[54] To manage this extensive supervision process, the Russian authorities established Special Censorship Committees in Moscow, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, and Tiflis under the jurisdiction of the Main Department of Press Affairs. Individual censorship offices were also set up in Tallinn, Kiev, Vilnius, Kazan, Odessa, Riga, Tartu, and Mitau to ensure efficient censorship. The vice-governors and their

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the condition that the magazine would not be subject to prior review by the Censorship Committee. Instead, the Patriarch offered to accept responsibility for censoring the magazine himself, with the understanding that this responsibility would be passed on to successive Etchmiadzin Patriarchs. The aim of this permission was that the Ararat journal could have fostered closer ties between the Armenians and Russian people. See, The Most Comprehensive Report of the Governor-General of the Caucasus, Grigorii Sergeyevich Golitsyn (1897), RGIA, f. 1282, op. 3, d. 239, ll. 23-23ob.

[53] RGIA, f. 1282, op. 3, d. 239, l. 20.

[54] Benjamin Rigberg, 'The Efficacy of Tsarist Censorship Operations, 1894—1917', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 3, no. 14 (September 1966): 3.

subordinates were responsible for overseeing the supervision process in provincial centers where there were no censorship committees or offices.[55]

On 3 November 1874, the Caucasus Censorship Committee was established, and the Viceroy of the Caucasus assumed the responsibilities of the Main Department for Press Affairs with regard to the Caucasian Censorship in the North Caucasus and South Caucasus provinces. Lev Nikolayevich Modzalevskii was appointed as the Chairman of the Caucasus Censorship Committee, which predominantly scrutinized materials in Russian, Georgian, and Armenian, as well as small amounts of Persian, Arabic, and Tatar languages. In addition to reviewing domestic materials, the Committee also conducted foreign censorship duties, assessing imported books in foreign languages, such as French, Polish, English, and German. For materials imported to the South Caucasus for the first time, the Foreign Censorship Committee in St. Petersburg was notified for approval.[56]

On 24 November 1881, the Caucasus Viceroyalty was dismantled and replaced with the Office of Commander-in-chief of the Civil and Military Units. Subsequently, the status of the Caucasus Censorship Committee was deliberated upon by a commission following this administrative restructuring. In 1882, the Commission brought the Caucasus Censorship Committee directly under the jurisdiction of the Main Department for Press Affairs, marking a significant move towards a more centralized system. General R. A. Fadeev, representing the Ministry of Internal Affairs, proposed the creation of a special position in the Main Department for Press Affairs to oversee the inspection of the Caucasus press. He nominated Melik-Megrabov for the post. Both Fadeev and Melik-Megrabov considered the existing supervision system in the Caucasus inadequate and aimed to extend it to the capitals. They

[55] Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904*, 191.
[56] Natalia G. Patrusheva, *Tsenzurnoe Vedomstvo v Gosudarstvennoi Sisteme Rossiiskoi Imperii vo Vtoroi Polovine XIX- Nachale XX Veka* (Sankt-Peterburg: Severnaya Zvezda, 2013), 219.

believed that "due to strict supervision, the Armenian and Georgian press, unable to disseminate their political ideas to the masses, sought permission to publish their works in the capitals."[57] However, the Minister of Finance rejected this proposal, stating that there were already sufficient inspectors for printing houses.

Lev Modzalevskii, the Chairman of the Caucasus Censorship Committee, expressed his dissatisfaction with the inadequate supervision process in the Caucasus. He observed that the number of printed materials in native languages exceeded those in Russian language by 1882. Additionally, private publications, particularly in Armenian, began to emerge in most provinces and districts toward the end of the same year. While the censorship committee was responsible for the overall supervision of these publications, the local provincial censorship oversaw the supervision of materials in different languages beyond Tiflis. However, the increasing number of publications in different languages and the limited number of censors made the activities of the Committee extremely challenging. To address this demand, the Russian authorities issued a decree on 31 January 1884, which strengthened the Caucasus Censorship Committee by providing new positions and censors.[58]

The establishment of a more efficient censorship office in the Caucasus by the Russian authorities was not simply an administrative decision, but carried political implications as well. Particularly from the 1880s onwards, the authorities displayed a growing desire to exercise greater control over both Russian and non-Russian printed materials and publications in the Caucasus. The authorities were particularly concerned about the rising expression of nationalist sentiments, mainly in the Armenian press. They perceived this expression of nationalism in the press as a threat to the unity of the empire and the

[57] Patrusheva, 220.
[58] Patrusheva, 221–22.

autocratic regime.[59] The Governor-General's suggestion highlights the Russian authorities' concern regarding the spread of nationalist ideas among the Armenian population in the Caucasus. The authorities saw this as a threat to the stability and unity of the Russian Empire, and they believed that tighter press censorship was necessary to prevent the articulation of nationalist discourse. Governor- General Dondukov Korsakov suggested a tighter press censorship "… to ensure the political reliability not only of internally printed Armenian publications but also of those imported from abroad."[60] He further noted that these expressions did not pose a serious threat yet but the Russian authorities needed to control that these ideas do not penetrate into the Russian Armenian society.[61] This example demonstrates how the Russian authorities used censorship as a tool to maintain political control and surveillance over the diverse populations of the empire and prevent the emergence of potentially destabilizing nationalist movements.

In response to the growing nationalist discourse among Russian Armenians, the Russian authorities prohibited certain foreign publications, which were predominantly printed in the Ottoman Empire. The Russian authorities perceived these publications as highly revolutionary and potentially harmful to Russian Armenians. Notable examples of banned publications include Arevelek (*Orient/East*) in 1885, Hayastan (*Armenia*) in 1890, Masis (*Ararat*) in 1891, and Hunchak party journal in 1893.[62]

In 1894, when the Armenian press started reporting on local conflicts and massacres in the Ottoman Empire, Governor-General Sheremetev instructed the Caucasus Censorship Committee to restrict the reporting of such news and revolutionary propaganda in Armenian

[59] Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, 44.
[60] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 191.
[61] The Most Comprehensive Report of the Governor-General of the Caucasus, Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov (1882-1890), RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, l. 7.
[62] RGIA, f. 776, op. 20, d. 138, l. 128. For more details on Armenian Press see, Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 154–60; Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century*, 1963, 52–65.

publications in the South Caucasus.[63] On June 22, 1894, the Saint Petersburg Foreign Censorship Committee alerted the Main Department for Press Affairs about the journal *Droshak*, which served as the official organ of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). The journal's eighth issue contained an editorial piece that celebrated an assassination attempt on Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, Khoren Ashekian, and 'advocated the use of violence against tyrants and traitors in the future.' The censor's reviewer, Nikolai Marr, recommended the unconditional ban of not only the specific issue but also the entire publication due to its explicit endorsement of terrorism.[64]

The Police Department reported to the Main Department of the Press Affairs that despite the Russian authorities' ban on certain publications, including *Hunchak*, *Masis* (Ararat), *Arevelk* (Orient/East), *Hayastan* (Armenia), *Droshak* (Banner), and *Pundj* (Bouquet), Armenians in the Caucasus were still receiving these publications. In July 1894, the Main Department for Press Affairs requested information from the Head of the Caucasus Censorship Committee, Mihail Pavlovich Gakkel, about the current situation of these publications.[65] In response, Gakkel provided a confidential report stating that the Armenian newspapers published in the Ottoman Empire no longer posed a concern since they had shifted their focus in recent years. However, he recommended in the same report that the authorities should continue banning the foreign newspapers of *Droshak* and *Hunchak* in which the Armenian revolutionary parties "claimed the political and national revival of Armenia through revolution. Comparing the historical greatness of the Armenian people with

[63] The Most Comprehensive Report of the Governor-General of the Caucasus, Sergei Sheremetev (1890-1896), National Archive of Georgia (NAG), f. 12, op. 1, book 1, d. 1633, l. 8. For the same report, see also, NAG, f. 12, op. 1, book 2, d. 3132.

[64] RGIA, f. 776, op. 20, d. 138, l. 122. See also for this attempt on the life of the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, Khoren Ashekian; Varak Ketsemanian, "The Hunchakian Revolutionary Party and the Assassination Attempts against Patriarch Khoren Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon Bey in 1894," *Middle East Studies*, no. 50 (2018): 735–55.

[65] A confidential telegram sent from the Head of the Main Department for Press Affairs to the Head of the Caucasus Censorship Committee (22 June 1894), RGIA, f. 776, op. 20, d. 138, l. 123.

their present hopeless situation under the yoke of the Turkish rule, '*Droshak*' calls on all Armenians to overthrow the hated Turkish yoke."[66]

Two of the aforementioned Ottoman-Armenian publications, namely the *Arevelk* (Orient/East) and *Masis* (Ararat) newspapers, are significant in terms of the early responses of the Russian authorities towards foreign Armenian publications being imported into the South Caucasus. While *Arevelk* was banned in 1885 due to its revolutionary nature, the Russian authorities later allowed its circulation in the region as the newspaper had altered its direction away from its revolutionary stance. In fact, the Russian ambassador in the Ottoman Empire even recommended that the newspaper be circulated in the South Caucasus, as "it had a wide readership and could have a moderate impact on the Armenian community."[67] The case of the other newspaper, *Masis* (Ararat), is noteworthy because this newspaper was actually banned due to a misunderstanding and confusion with another Armenian newspaper called '*The Ararat*', which was published in New York. According to the report of the Main Department of the Press Affairs, the Armenian newspaper *Masis* (Ararat) did not present any concern and could be re-admitted for circulation. On the contrary, the Russian authorities banned the New York-based Armenian newspaper, *the Ararat*, due to its "extremely harmful direction."[68]

The Caucasus Censorship Committee prepared a list of books and pamphlets in the Armenian language which were mainly published at the editorial office of the newspaper "*Armenia*" in Marseille, as well as in Athens, London, and New York between 1887 and 1894. These publications aimed to disseminate revolutionary, socialist, and nationalist ideas among the broader masses of Russian Armenians and arouse their sympathy for the

[66] A confidential telegram sent from the Head of the Caucasus Censorship Committee to the Head of the Main Department for Press Affairs (8 July 1894), RGIA, f. 776, op. 20, d. 138, l. 147.
[67] RGIA, f. 776, op. 20, d. 138, ll. 192-200.
[68] RGIA, f. 776, op. 20, d. 138, l. 291.

revolutionary cause. The publication of these materials was timely. Among these materials, two concerned Bulgaria: "Freedom of Bulgaria" and "Bulgarian Patriot," both published in Marseille in 1888. There were also materials on Turkish Armenians, including "Turkish Armenians and Their Neighbors," "Unhappy People in Armenia," "Musa Bey and His Terrible Crime," and "The Law of Lynching in Turkey." Additionally, there were materials translated into Armenian from Plekhanov and Karl Marx.[69]

The early efforts of the Russian authorities indicate that they tended to categorize the Armenian press as either 'useful' or 'harmful' to state interests. They sought to prevent the entrance of any 'harmful' or 'dangerous' foreign Armenian publications into the South Caucasus, which could eventually serve to arouse revolutionary and nationalist feelings among Russian Armenians. During their initial encounter with these materials, the Russian authorities acted selectively, sometimes even encouraging Armenian materials that were judged to be 'useful.' They mostly focused on foreign materials published in European centers. However, this method of confrontation with the clandestine Armenian press began to change after the arrival of the new Governor-General of the Caucasus, Prince Grigorii Sergeyevich Golitsyn, in December 1896.

Golitsyn was not only concerned about Armenian political separatism; his main concern was the cultural unification of the South Caucasus with the rest of the Russian people. The existence of a local press in Tiflis, mainly Armenian, which he saw as spreading separatist and anti-Russian expression, was one of the main obstacles to his unification project for the region with the rest of the Empire. Following his arrival in the Caucasus, Golitsyn noted how widely the local press and periodicals circulated, both in Russian and native languages. From the imperial point of view, permission was granted for these local

[69] RGIA, f. 776, op. 20, d. 138, l. 170.

periodicals "to provide a larger range of native readers with acquaintance with the conditions of Russian life and to promote convergence (*sblizenie*) towards unification with the Russian people."[70] However, according to Golitsyn, the local periodicals "denied the significance of the cultural-historical mission of Russia in the Caucasus, only contributed to the possible preservation of their separateness (*obosoblennosti*), neglected anything positive about Russian life while portraying its negative sides, propagated exclusively Armenian trends, and were devoid of unity with the Russian people."[71]

Consequently, Golitsyn stopped the publication of two prominent local Armenian newspapers, *Ardzagank* (Echo) and *Novoe Obozrenie* (The New Review), for eight months and then completely terminated their circulation in 1898 and 1899. Moreover, in order to increase state control over the local press and bring them more in line with state interests, he instructed the Caucasus Censorship Committee to review the programs of all private periodicals published in the region.[72] Except for these local Armenian periodicals, the official monthly magazine of the Armenian Church, *Ararat*, did not escape the attention of Golitsyn. This magazine was first published in 1868 at the request of the Armenian Catholicos and with the highest permission of the Russian Tsar. The magazine had an exclusive position in the Russian Empire and was uncensored. Both the Russian authorities and the Armenian Catholicos aimed to influence Ottoman and Russian Armenians through this publication. However, Golitsyn noted that the magazine not only did not help to bring the Armenians closer to the Russian people, but sometimes became the center of opposition against Russian policies concerning Armenians. Therefore, he ordered that the official Armenian Church

[70] RGIA, f. 1282, op. 3, d. 239, l. 24.
[71] RGIA, f. 1282, op. 3, d. 239, l. 24.
[72] Georgii M. Tumanov, *Kharakteristiki i Vospominaniia. Zametki Kavkazskovo Khronikera*, vol. III (Tiflis: Trud., 1907), 184–86. See also vol II, 101.

magazine be subjected to the proper censorship process in the same way as any other spiritual journal of a foreign confession.[73]

Golitsyn's efforts also had wider implications for Russian imperial censorship policy. There were attempts to codify circulars on the press in 1897 and 1899 in the Imperial center. These circulars were addressed to Provincial Governors, asking them to pursue regulations on press censorship. A wide range of topics that might potentially agitate the Russian people were either prohibited or required special permission. Among these topics were news on armed services, typhus, or epidemic diseases. These regulations were indicative of the concern and desire of the authorities in the center for strict control over the press and increasing pressure on the periphery of the Empire.[74]

The Russian authorities' response to Armenian revolutionary activities in the realm of press affairs evolved over time. Initially, their efforts were aimed at suppressing revolutionary publications. However, this approach gradually gave way to the closure of major Armenian local periodicals in the South Caucasus, and the imposition of strict supervision on the Armenian Church's official magazine. This shift in policy reveals both the changing perception of Armenians as well as the increased identification of Armenian society with revolutionary and separatist tendencies, which in turn led to further discriminatory policies against them. Additionally, it sheds light on the growing intolerance within the Imperial center and its impact on the periphery of the Empire, particularly in the years leading up to the 1905 Revolution.

[73] RGIA, f. 1282, op. 3, d. 239, ll. 23-24.
[74] Benjamin Rigberg, 'The Tsarist Press Law, 1894—1905', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 3, no. 13 (September 1965): 337–39; Benjamin Rigberg, 'Tsarist Censorship Performance, 1894-1905', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 1, no. 17 (March 1969): 59–76.

3.5. Armenian Revolutionaries Under Scrutiny: Exile and Surveillance

Among other practices, the most effective strategy for the Tsarist authorities to counter revolutionary agitation was to arrest and exile suspected members of these groups. Beginning in the 1870s, Tsarist authorities adopted a new practice of avoiding political trials in the empire. The newly adopted administrative practice aimed to avoid the negative consequences of public trials, as members of dissent or revolutionary groups were exploiting these trials for their propaganda and agitation objectives.

Two forms of administrative exile existed: *vyssylka* and *ssylka*. *Vyssylka*, the milder punishment, was also the more arbitrary of the two. Individuals subjected to *vyssylka* were barred from residing within specified areas of the empire. Typically, those subjected to this punishment were individuals suspected of being 'politically unreliable,' a term often employed to condemn individuals not for their past actions but for potential future actions. *Ssylka*, or deportation to a specific location, represented a much harsher penalty. It mandated the exile to a particular residence, commonly in Siberia, for up to five years, a duration extended to ten years in 1897 for hardened political offenders. Provincial and local representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, such as governors, instigated *ssylka* proceedings against individuals who had committed political offenses or citizens deemed excessively critical of the government's policies.[75]

The practice of exile, whether *vyssylka* or *ssylka*, was accompanied by 'open surveillance,' a method of harassment intended to serve as a constant reminder to the suspect that even the slightest deviation from normal behavior would attract the attention of the authorities. The Ministry of Internal Affairs enforced 'open surveillance' over those already

[75] Fredric S. Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police in Russian Society, 1880-1917* (Macmillan, 1996), 14–15; See also, Fredric S. Zuckerman, "Political Police and Revolution: The Impact of the 1905 Revolution on the Tsarist Secret Police," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 2 (1992).

deemed guilty by administrative justice of posing a threat to the state's tranquility. It was also imposed on individuals sentenced to exile as part of their punishment, as well as on minor offenders in their regular place of residence as their entire sentence. Suspects under 'open surveillance' experienced severe limitations on their freedom of movement, occupation, action, and correspondence. The Ministry of Interior authorized local forces to enter and search suspects' places at any time and control their belongings.[76] The administrative practice had two primary motivations. Firstly, the Tsarist authorities sought to swiftly resolve political cases to suppress the articulation of anti-governmental or nationalist sentiments. Secondly, they aimed to isolate suspects or criminals from the rest of society to sever their communication channels.

Based on archival data, from 1880 to 1903, Tsarist authorities investigated numerous Armenians for their alleged involvement in anti-governmental and political actions along the Russian-Ottoman border. The primary focus of the Tsarist authorities in these investigations revolved around the concerted efforts of Russian Armenians to provide material support, facilitate the transfer of firearms, and organize armed bands that clandestinely crossed the border to join their fellow Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Russian authorities perceived such activities as potential sources of regional destabilization, posing a significant risk of rendering imperial frontiers into vulnerable and precarious positions in the long term. The Tsarist regime imposed various punishments, including release on bail after investigations, several months of solitary confinement, isolation, and exile from areas predominantly inhabited by Armenians with subsequent police monitoring, on those found guilty.

In February 1883, during a night-time meeting of a Russian society at the apartment of Brajnikov, who was the director of the local classical gymnasium in the city of Yerevan, a

[76] Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police in Russian Society, 1880-1917*, 14–15.

stone was thrown at his apartment's window. After this incident, the inspector of the Caucasus Educational District received an anonymous letter describing this incident and urging Brajnikov to stop deliberately insulting the national feelings of Armenians, their religion and language. Otherwise, it threatened to insult Brajnikov publicly.[77] The next month, on 19 March 1883, a citizen of Armenian origin named Tomas Megerov attacked the Brajnikov on a boulevard in the city of Yerevan. Tomas Megerov accused Brajnikov of behaving in ways that insulted Armenian national values. The Russian local authorities' further inquiries on these incidents revealed that Tomas Megerov was acting on the orders of a secret Armenian organization in Yerevan.[78]

The police investigation implicated 38 Armenians for their purported involvement in the clandestine activities of the aforementioned organization. Instead of pursuing a judicial trial, the Russian authorities opted for an administrative resolution, resulting in Thomas Megerov's three-month imprisonment. Subsequently, Megerov was placed under police surveillance for three years outside the Caucasus. Additionally, the ruling stipulated a prohibition on Levon Tigranian, Ruben Jalalov, Gaik Matakian, and Ivan Ter-Zakharov from residing in areas within the Caucasus characterized by a predominant Armenian population for three years. Gayane Ionisiani faced a similar restriction for two years, while Serapion Ter-Grigoryants was subject to it for one year.[79]

In the 1890s, the escalating frequency of border skirmishes between Armenian revolutionaries and Russian and Ottoman border patrols, alongside local Kurdish forces, prompted the Russian authorities to focus their attention on border regions. Police documentation revealed various attempts by Armenian revolutionaries to illegally cross the

[77] RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 417, l. 223.
[78] RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 417, ll. 225-226.
[79] RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 417, ll. 252-253.

border, particularly in the cities of Kars and Yerevan in 1891. According to these reports, local authorities apprehended and convicted 25 Armenians for their alleged involvement in armed groups attempting to cross the border. Subsequently, they were subjected to solitary confinement ranging from one to four months, followed by exile from the South Caucasus for police surveillance lasting between one to three years.[80]

While vigilantly monitoring and responding to Armenian revolutionary activities along the border, the Tsarist authorities also closely observed developments concerning Armenian-Ottoman interactions within the Ottoman Empire. The dissemination of pamphlets in several Ottoman cities in 1893,[81] coupled with subsequent reports of Armenian massacres in the Sasun region[82], echoed across European centers in 1894, intensifying the apprehensions of the Russian authorities. During the pamphleteering incident in the city of Merzifon in 1893, Ottoman authorities arrested Gabriel Kafian, one of the founders of the Hunchak Party, and handed him over to the Russian authorities due to his Russian citizenship.[83]

This incident precipitated a series of arrests and searches across various cities in the South Caucasus in the Russian Empire between 1894 and 1897. Subsequent to Kafian's arrest, another prominent figure in the Hunchak party, Ruben Han-Azadov, along with another leading member Ruben Berberian, were also apprehended in 1895 in the Caucasus.[84] These arrests specifically targeted members of the Hunchak party, with the object of

[80] RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 436, ll. 265-268, RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 438, ll. 178-187, RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 439, ll. 293-307, GARF, f. 124, op. 2, d. 45, ll. 104-128, GARF, f. 124, op. 2, d. 45, ll. 3-6.
[81] See for the Merzifon incident, Toygun Altıntaş, 'Armenians, Muslims, Citizens: Hnchak Pamphleteering in Central Anatolia', in *The Armenian Social Democrat Hnchakian Party: Politics, Ideology and Transnational History*, ed. B. Der Matossian (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 87–107; Toygun Altıntaş, 'The Placard Affair and the Ankara Trial: The Hnchak Party and the Hamidian Regime in Central Anatolia, 1892–93', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 4, no. 2 (2017): 309–37.
[82] See for the Sasun incident, J. McCarthy, mer Turan, and C. Taşkıran, *Sasun: The History of an 1890s Armenian Revolt* (University of Utah Press, 2014); Toygun Altıntaş, 'The Abode of Sedition: Resistance, Repression and Revolution in Sasun, 1891–1904', in *Rebels, Revolutionaries and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires*, ed. Ramazan Öztan and Alp Yenen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 178–207, https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/9781474462648-010.
[83] GARF, f. 124, op. 3, d. 44, l. 29.
[84] GARF, f. 124. op. 4, d. 77, l. 2.

undermining their illicit activities in the Caucasus and curtailing their support network extending across the Russian-Ottoman border. In addition to the founders of the party, the representative of the Hunchakian Central Committee in the Caucasus, Sarkis Agamirzov as well the heads of the Hunchak branches in Tiflis and Kars, Gazaros Agayants Kazar and Kazaryants were among the names.[85]

In December 1897, the case was concluded through an administrative decision rather than a formal trial process. The Russian authorities passed judgment on 117 Armenians accused of involvement in Hunchakian party activities. While 30 Armenians were released due to insufficient evidence, the authorities separated 20 individuals from the case pending their apprehension. Additionally, 38 Armenians benefited from the Imperial Manifesto issued on May 14, 1896, while 26 received various forms of punishment ranging from exiling to Vyatkaiia Guberniia, then to put a police surveillance outside the cities of the South Caucasus, without a predominantly Armenian population, for periods ranging from 1 to 3 years.[86]

[85] GARF, f. 124. op. 4, d. 77, l. 430.
[86] GARF, f. 124. op. 4, d. 77, ll. 432-436.

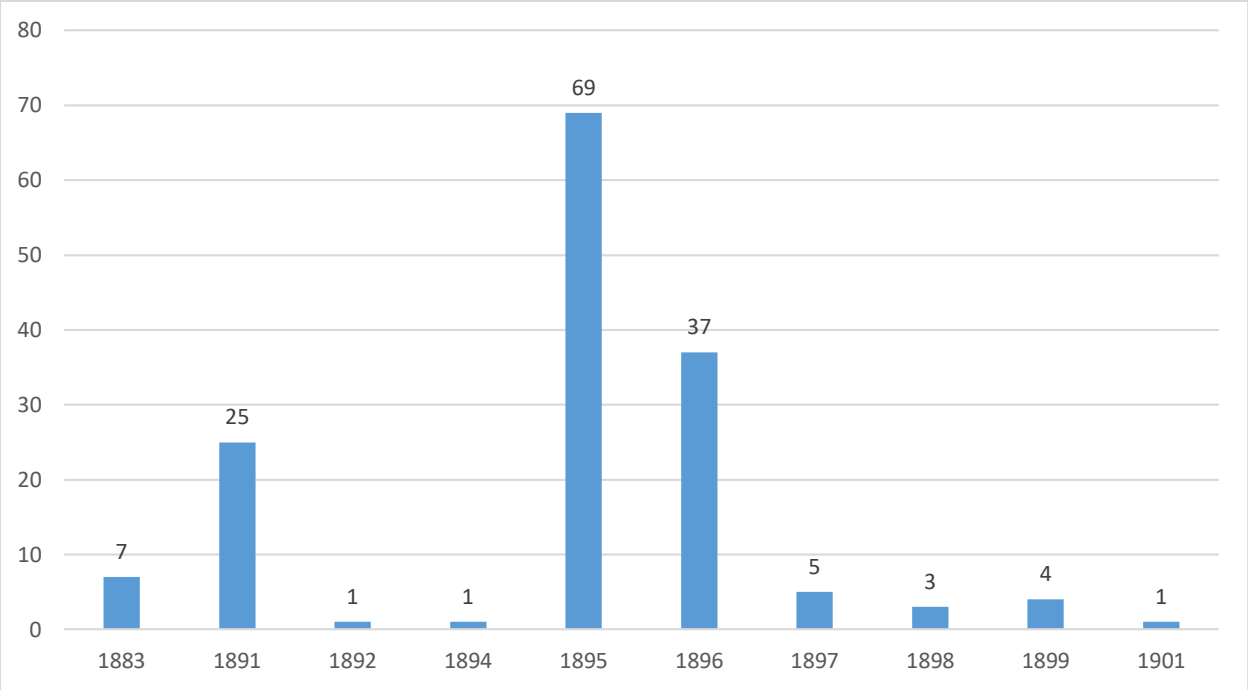

Table 7: The Number of Arrest of Armenian Revolutionaries 1882-1902.

The table illustrates two significant points. Firstly, it highlights the response of the Russian authorities during critical periods concerning the Armenian question. The years 1890-1892 marked the initial emergence of Armenian political parties, while the period from 1894 to 1897 witnessed heightened activity by these parties, particularly within the Ottoman Empire, coinciding with reports of Armenian massacres across Europe. Secondly, it indicates that the exposure and subsequent arrest of key leadership figures among the Armenian revolutionaries facilitated the actions of these groups in subsequent years.

In conclusion, the Tsarist authorities employed a diverse approach to counter revolutionary agitation, with the arrest and exile of suspected members of the Armenian revolutionary movements. Adopting administrative practices such as *vssylka* and *ssylka*, they aimed to avoid the propagandistic effects of public trials and isolate Russian Armenians who allegedly involved in the actions of these movements. These measures, coupled with the

imposition of 'open surveillance,' severely restricted activities of suspects in their exiled places. Through archival evidence, we observe the meticulous monitoring of Armenian revolutionary activities, particularly along the Russian-Ottoman border, and the use of administrative resolutions rather than judicial trials to address alleged involvement in clandestine organizations. The case of the Hunchakian party exemplifies this approach, with administrative decisions in 1897 culminating in various forms of punishment, including exile and police surveillance, reflecting the Tsarist regime's efforts to suppress revolutionary actions and maintain control over border regions.

3.6. Chapter Overview

This chapter illustrates the growing anxiety of the Russian authorities regarding the cross border actions of the Armenian revolutionaries into the Ottoman Empire. The measures undertaken by the Russian Empire to control cross-border Armenian revolutionary activities into the Ottoman Empire during the late 19th century were multifaceted and indicative of the perception of the Russian authorities. The removal of unreliable Russian Armenians from key government positions located on the border areas, the suppression of revolutionary literature and press to curb the articulation of nationalist and socialist propaganda, border surveillance through patrols on the imperial frontiers, and the trial and arrest of Armenian revolutionaries all played significant roles in the Empire's efforts to quell unrest along its borders.

While some measures, such as controlling the border, proved less effective due to the vast and porous nature of the frontier, others, notably the arrest of leading figures within the Armenian revolutionary movement, yielded tangible results. The decrease in cross-border actions following the arrest of these figures in the aftermath of the turbulent years of 1894–1897 underscores the impact of targeted interventions on mitigating unrest and maintaining

stability within the Empire's territories. Ultimately, the chapter sheds light on the intricate strategies employed by imperial powers and practices to navigate and manage cross border revolutionary activities along their borders during a period of profound political upheaval and transition.

Chapter 4. Imperial Policies and the Question of Armenian Refugees on the Frontiers in the late 1890s

From the early nineteenth century onwards, wars between the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian Empires created devastating upheaval in the South Caucasus. These wars resulted in extensive population movements between these three adjacent empires. Like the Greek and Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire who inhabited the borders of the Black Sea coast and Anatolia, Muslim subjects within the Russian Empire crossed the frontiers of their respective empires. In many cases, these empires employed deliberate demographic designs aimed at encouraging and motivating the emigration and settlement of specific 'loyal' populations along their frontiers for their own policy objectives and strategic interests.

The Armenians constituted a major group of Christian allies who actively supported the advancement of Russian army in their campaigns against neighbouring Muslim empires. As part of this cooperation, Russian authorities actively encouraged Armenians to settle in frontier areas until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However, Russian policies towards the population movements in the South Caucasus began to shift abruptly after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 and the resulting Berlin Treaty. Three primary reasons underlie this radical shift in Russian imperial policy. Firstly, the Russian authorities perceived the increasing political activity and agitation among Armenians on both sides of the Russo-Ottoman borders as a "threat." This perception altered previous Russian policies of cooperating with and settling Christian Armenians in the South Caucasus. As a result, the settlement of Armenians from neighbouring Muslim empires was no longer desirable. Secondly, the Russian authorities sought to populate these border regions with loyal ethnic

and Orthodox Russians, namely Molokans and Dukhobors.[1] After the Treaty of Berlin, the Russian authorities' categorization of loyalty began to shift. Rather than 'Christianity', the criteria of one's loyalty to the empire became the knowledge of Russian language, loyalty to the Tsar and adherence to Orthodoxy.[2] Armenians were no longer seen as Christian allies who could assist Russian forces in defending imperial borders against neighbouring Ottoman and Persian Empires; instead, they were perceived as a "disloyal" ethno-religious group with their own political agendas and aspirations in the Caucasus and Anatolia.[3] Lastly, the Russian Empire prioritized the territory of the Caucasus itself, which was a strategically significant area that could not be left to any "foreign" elements aside from ethnic Russians. These three factors set the framework for the Russian Empire's new settlement policy towards Armenians in the Caucasus borderlands.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate the comprehensive and all-encompassing approach adopted by Russian authorities in regard to Armenians, labelling them as "disloyal" and "undesirable" groups in the region in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Even in the most critical times of humanitarian crisis, such as the Ottoman Armenians' emigration to the South Caucasus to escape drought or the tumultuous years of 1894-1896, Russian authorities responded to Armenian emigration negatively due to their apprehension about Armenian political agitation and as part of a wider imperial policy of colonization in the area. In her

[1] See, Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus*.
[2] Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia*, Oxford Studies in Modern European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 47; Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky, 'Becoming Armenian: Religious Conversions in the Late Imperial South Caucasus', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 63, no. 1 (January 2021): 255; Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky, *Empire of Refugees: North Caucasian Muslims and the Late Ottoman State* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2024), 37–38.
[3] Nicholas B. Breyfogle provides similar evidence in the case of the Lenkoran Duma election. The Governor's selection of Molokans "rested consciously on their Russian ethnicity and their classification as loyal subjects." The Governor preferred to balance Muslims not with the Christian Armenians but ethnic Russian-Molokans because "…Armenians –who, as Christians, had been Russia's traditional support in eastern Transcaucasia- had taken a negative turn because of the rise of Armenians nationalist-separatist groups.", see Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus*, 157.

work, Gözde Yazıcı Cörüt delves into the Ottoman central authorities' efforts to control the movement of Ottoman Armenians through Russo-Ottoman borders, drawing upon Erich Lohr's "filtering state" metaphor. As she argues, "…the border was made into a citizenship boundary. Ottoman Armenians who crossed the border were treated separately from other Ottoman subjects, refused entry to the country and thus, either legally or practically, deprived of Ottoman citizenship as a function of state boundary-making."[4]

This chapter adopts a similar approach to the Ottoman management of Armenian mobility across the Russo-Ottoman border. However, it focuses on the legal policies and practices of the Russian authorities to obstruct the further mobility and settlement of Ottoman Armenians into the South Caucasus during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Russian Imperial policy towards Armenians, which portrayed the empire as the 'savior of Christian people under Ottoman rule,' was an exceptional case. Understanding the radical shift in Russian policy towards impeding further Armenian emigration along its borders is important for comprehending both Russo-Ottoman nationality policies and their perceptions of Armenians. Eric Lohr rightly opined in the nineteenth-century Russian context that "the regime used citizenship policy as a filter, blocking unwanted nationalities, religions, and character types from entering while setting the outgoing filter to hold in the nationalities it wanted, allowing others to slip out."[5] In the Russian case, the Russian authorities used 'citizenship' as a barrier to managing this alleged aspect of the 'threat' of Armenian refugees.

This chapter begins with historical context on the motivations and impulses of the Russian authorities to settle Christian Armenians in massive numbers from the adjacent Ottoman and Persian Empires on newly occupied borderland territories in the early

[4] Cörüt, *Loyalty and Citizenship: Ottoman Perspectives on Its Russian Border Region (1878–1914)*, 145–87.
[5] Eric Lohr, *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 8.

nineteenth century. It then explores the perceived danger of Armenian emigration into the Caucasus and the radical shift in Russian policy toward Armenian emigration after the signing of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. The following section examines diplomatic efforts between the Russia and Ottoman Empires to address ongoing Armenian emigration and refugee crises in their border regions. The final part discusses Russian Imperial policies aimed at setting a legal framework to impede further Armenian emigration into and expulsion from the cities of the Caucasus.

In this chapter, I employed the terms emigration, immigration, migration, settlement, and refugee with distinct connotations in specific situations. Emigration refers to Armenians leaving the Russian Empire, while immigration describes their entry into new regions. Migration encompasses both movements, capturing the constant, uncontrolled, and complex cross-border activities of Armenians. Settlement refers to establishing new communities, and refugee applies to those forcibly displaced. I prefer the term migration to reflect the multifaceted and dynamic nature of these movements during this tumultuous period in general situations.

4.1. Historical Context of Armenian Settlement in the Russian Empire from the Persian and Ottoman Empires until 1878

A major turning point in the fate of the Caucasus began with the Russian advance toward the adjacent Ottoman and Persian Empires at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The existing Christian groups, mainly Georgians and Armenians, in the region facilitated the Russian advance. The three-decade-long wars between the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian forces ended with the signing of the Turkmenchai Treaty between the Russian and Persian Empires in 1828 and the Adrianople Treaty between the Russian and Ottoman Empires in 1829. Through these two treaties, the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian Empires sponsored the

exchange of populations, resulting in a massive population transfer between these empires. While the Russian Empire attracted Christian Armenians from the Ottoman and Persian Empires, a substantial number of Muslims were fleeing the Russian Empire to settle in neighbouring Muslim empires.[6] These agreements had a significant influence on the social, economic, and cultural aspects of the Caucasus and a long-lasting impact on the region's demographics.

Eric Lohr elucidates this early policy of Russian authorities with the principles of "separate deals" and "attract and hold" in order to formulate its naturalization policy in these newly occupied territories. According to this formulation, "…the regime generally applied automatic and universal naturalization to everyone present or residing on the territory at the time of annexation."[7] This imperial practice, in turn, helped to increase the number of Russian subjects. Moreover, as part of this inclusive principle of naturalization, the Russian authorities secured their old privileges and, in some cases exempt these newly naturalized people from taxes and military services. This 'separate deals' paradigm, as Eric Lohr notes, "was a defining feature of old regime subjecthood, and one of the most successful tools of Russian empire builders" because it was applied differently to each region, social and religious group in the Russian Empire.[8]

Eric Lohr's analogies elucidate the foundational principles underpinning the early policies of the Russian authorities. Nonetheless, in the context of Armenians, the authorities occasionally employed coercive measures to secure a Christian majority along their borders. While journeying along the Russian-Ottoman borders, British traveller Robert Curzon documented the aspirations and calls for the return of Ottoman Armenians who had been

[6] Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 41.
[7] Lohr, *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union*, 42.
[8] Lohr, 42.

forcibly dispersed by Russian authorities.[9] Firouzed Mostashari also provides evidence of Russian General Paskevich using force to relocate Armenians from Ottoman and Persian territories to the Russian borders.[10]

The Russian authorities had multiple reasons for their policy of attracting Armenians to the newly occupied territories in the South Caucasus. One primary objective was to create a 'Christian buffer zone' against the neighboring Muslim counterparts, considering the strategic location of the region. This step was intended to prevent any contact between the Muslims residing in the Caucasus and the adjacent Ottoman and Persian Empires and to thwart any future attempts at political or geographical unification of these regions.[11] For instance, in his letter sent to General Knorring in 1801, Tsar Alexander asked Knorring to inquire about the desirability of attracting Armenians to the Russian border regions, as he noted, this was "one of the most reliable methods of increasing "the strength of people" and "affirmation of Christian superiority" on the Russian borders.[12] The second motivation behind the policy of attracting Armenians to the newly occupied territories was to benefit from their economic skills and capabilities in order to revive the economy of the region that had been severely damaged during the long-lasting wars. General Paskevich of Russia was particularly supportive of the Armenian settlers due to their perceived qualities such as hard work, obedience, and loyalty to the Russian Empire through their religious beliefs.[13] Whether it was strategic and/or economic reasons, the key marker of identity and loyalty was religion. This fits into Suny's categorization of the image of Armenians in the Russian Empire. Suny

[9] Robert Curzon, *Armenia: A Year at Erzeroom, and on the Frontiers of Russia, Turkey and Persia* (New York: Harper&Brothers, 1854), 188; Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 90.
[10] Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*, 2017, 41–42.
[11] Kamala Imranli-Lowe, 'Reconstruction of the "Armenian Homeland" Notion', *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 4 (2015): 548.
[12] *Akty Sobrannye Kavkazskoyu Arkheograficheskoyu Kommissieyu (AKAK).*, vol. I (Tiflis: Tipografiya Glavnago Upravleniya Namestnika Kavkazskago, 1866), 436.
[13] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 69–70.

suggested that the 'Christian image' of Armenians defined the early encounter of Russian authorities with the Armenians living in the newly annexed territories.[14]

To manage this process of the transfer and attraction of the Ottoman and Persian Armenians to the Russian borders, the Russian authorities established a special committee (Committee for the Resettlement of Christians) in Tiflis in 1828. The Committee was assigned 50.000 silver Rubles for this task. Russian officers began to visit Armenian villages and convince residents to resettle. All Christians who decided to resettle within the Russian borders were guaranteed enough lands for farming and they were exempted from the tax payment for a six-year period. Moreover, the Russian officers paid 10 silver rubles for travel allowance and provided security escorts to guarantee the safe passage of Armenians/Christians to their newly assigned places and avoid any clashes with the Muslim groups in the region.[15]

The figures for Ottoman and Persian Armenians who settled within Russian borders are controversial, as it is difficult to provide exact information about the numbers due to the lack of complete archival records and the ongoing flow of Armenians in later decades. While the number of Persian Armenians who emigrated to Russia was estimated to be somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000, the number of Ottoman Armenian emigrants was estimated as high as 100,000.[16] However, Stephen Riegg noted that the number of emigrants from the

[14] Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, 31–32.
[15] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 70–71.
[16] See for the figures, Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*, 2017, 41; Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 9; George A. Bournoutian, 'The Ethnic Composition and the Socio-Economic Condition of Eastern Armenia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 77–79.

Ottoman Empire was probably exaggerated. Based on his archival findings, he estimated the number of Ottoman Armenians who moved to Russia to be far less than 100,000.[17]

Although precise demographic data is not available for the border cities of the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian Empires, the Russian authorities were successful in establishing a visible Christian/Armenian presence in their border territories, particularly in Yerevan, Nakhichevan, and Karabakh. These Armenian settlers, perceived as 'loyal' and 'reliable,' played a pivotal role in the Russian military's advancement into neighbouring imperial borderlands in subsequent decades. Their contributions ranged from providing critical supply lines for advancing troops to serving as scout forces with specialized knowledge of the region's topography. They also actively participated in Russian engagements with Ottoman and Persian forces in the region.

4.2. The Russian Empire's Change of Policy Regarding Armenian Settlement on the Imperial Frontiers after 1878

From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the last decades of that century, the Russian government and the public regarded the Armenian people as their Christian ally. The ecumenical bond was strong, and the Armenians welcomed each Russian advance as the saviours of the Eastern Christians. The Russian-Armenian cooperation during these decades was rooted in their shared religious affiliation. However, this relationship underwent a dramatic shift following the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. The growing influence of nationalistic ideas and diverse interests among Russians and Armenians eroded the ecumenical bond,

[17] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 74; Farid Shafiyev, *Resettling the Borderlands: State Relocations and Ethnic Conflict in the South Caucasus* (Montreal; Kingston; London; Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 51–95; George Bournoutian, *Armenia and Imperial Decline: The Yerevan Province, 1900-1914.* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 19–23.

leading to a reconceptualization of the relationship between the two peoples in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[18]

The Russian-Ottoman War in 1877-1878 and the subsequent Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin brought about significant changes in the region. As a result of this war, the Russian Empire gained control of additional territories, thus pushing the existing Russian-Ottoman border further into the Caucasus. The Treaty of San Stefano transferred the control of three border cities - Ardahan, Kars, and Batum - and the small counties of Alashkert and Bayazit to the Russian Empire. It also stipulated the evacuation of existing Russian forces and guaranteed Armenian reforms in the region only after the Ottoman Empire had implemented the necessary regulations. However, a few months later, the Treaty of Berlin revised this agreement, mandating the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces and transferring control of the small counties of Alashkert and Bayazit back to the Ottoman Empire. It did, however, approve the Russian Empire's control over the remaining three cities of Batum, Kars, and Ardahan. Additionally, the Treaty of Berlin assigned collective responsibility to other European powers for the implementation of Armenian reforms, in addition to the Russian Empire.[19]

The negotiations and treaties that occurred during this time period did not only result in border changes, but they also had a significant impact on perceptions and beliefs. According to Michael Reynolds, the impact of the negotiations and treaties reached beyond mere border changes, and resulted in the emergence of the national idea within the international system. The establishment of independent states such as Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro, as well as the formation of an autonomous Bulgaria, acknowledged the

[18] Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*, 2017, 43.
[19] Richard G. Hovannisian, 'Russian Armenia. A Century of Tsarist Rule', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 19, no. 1 (1971): 36–37; Hakan M. Yavuz, 'The Transformation of "Empire" through Wars and Reforms: Integration vs. Oppression', in *War & Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and The Treaty of Berlin*, ed. Hakan M. Yavuz and Peter Sluglett (Utah: The University of Utah Press, 2011), 17–50.

importance of ethnicity as a key factor in political claims. This recognition of political claims based on ethnicity set an example for other groups to demand their distinct identity and rights. As he further noted; "Ethnicity had acquired political significance and became a key category in map making and census taking."[20] Armenians were no exception to these claims.

Although both Suny and Mostashari argue that the image of Armenians as 'revolutionary' or 'conspirators' influenced the perception and actions of the Russian authorities in the late nineteenth century[21], the main factor that defined the shift in Russian policy towards preventing further Armenian settlement in the Caucasus was the overarching concept of 'ethnicity' and its political significance. The rationale behind this perception was that the continued movement of Armenians to the South Caucasus could lead to Armenian demographic dominance, which would potentially bolster Armenian political aspirations while impeding the colonization efforts of the Russian authorities with ethnic and Orthodox Russians in the South Caucasus. This new framework and totalizing approach, which labelled all Armenians as 'disloyal' and 'undesirable,' defined the policies and practices of the Russian authorities in the following decades.

Numerous factors motivated Ottoman Armenians to settle in the Caucasus during this period. These included concerns about potential reprisals from Muslims due to their perceived support for the Russian advance during the 1877-1878 war, reported oppression by Ottoman authorities, Kurdish depredations, and environmental issues, such as drought and famine in Anatolia. However, the largest movement of Armenians arrived in the Caucasus following inter-communal violence and massacres between 1894 and 1896 in the Ottoman

[20] Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 14–15.
[21] Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*, 2017, 43; Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, 31–51.

Empire.[22] While some Ottoman Armenians sought relocation to the Caucasus through official channels by petitioning Russian consuls in the Ottoman Empire, others crossed the Russian-Ottoman border clandestinely, lacking proper permissions or legal documentations.[23]

After many centuries under Muslim rule, the Ottoman Armenians welcomed the Russian army in Anatolia and showed great hospitality for their arrival. They were considered the 'saviour of Christians' from the centuries-old 'Muslim/Ottoman yoke.' Following the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin, however, the Armenians showed great anxiety about the Muslim/Kurdish retaliation. As early as March 1878, the General of the Russian Caucasus Army, Armenian descendant Loris-Melikov reported the fear of Ottoman Armenians who welcomed the Russian army in the recent war. Due to fear of Kurdish and Muslim retaliation, the families of Ottoman Armenians petitioned the Russian authorities to settle in the newly annexed Kars oblast. The Russian authorities permitted the settlement of approximately 200 families of Armenians in this city on a temporary basis.[24] A month later, Tsarist authorities urged their superiors regarding the desire of Armenian families, sometimes entire communities within specific districts to embrace Russian subjecthood. These Armenians claimed that following their cooperation and compromise with the Russian army, no article or provision in any international treaty could prevent potential Muslim/Kurdish retaliation. To demonstrate their determination to migrate from the Ottoman Empire to the Russian Empire, these Ottoman Armenians refrained from sowing their crops in their lands.[25]

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[22] See Robert Melson, 'A Theoretical Inquiry into the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 3 (1982): 481–509; Richard G. Hovannisian, 'The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1914', in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Vol. 2*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004); McCarthy, Turan, and Taşkıran, *Sasun: The History of an 1890s Armenian Revolt*; Altıntaş, 'The Abode of Sedition: Resistance, Repression and Revolution in Sasun, 1891–1904'; Altıntaş, 'Armenians, Muslims, Citizens: Hnchak Pamphleteering in Central Anatolia'.

[23] Robert Mirak, *Torn between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 45–46, 57-59.

[24] Candan Badem, 'Kars Vilayetine Ermeni Göçü (1878-1914)', *Kebikeç*, no. 35 (2013): 154–56.

[25] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 151.

Except for the fear of retaliation, the war conditions created many hardships for the Ottoman Armenians. Fleeing their homes during the war, leaving behind their animals and farms, and being unable to cultivate their lands led to misery and poverty among many Armenians in Anatolia. The drought in 1879 exacerbated these conditions. The first military governor of the Kars oblast, General Frankini, reported that a total of 450 Ottoman Armenian families had escaped these conditions and relocated to the Kars oblast.[26] Similarly, the Governor of Yerevan, General Freze, reported to the Governor-General of the Caucasus that approximately 500 Armenian families, totalling no fewer than 1500 people had moved illegally to the Caucasus without passports due to recent crop failures in their lands in December 1893.[27]

The Ottoman Armenians also pursued legal proceedings by submitting petitions to the Russian consulates operating in their residential cities. They explained their grievances about the alleged arbitrariness of the Ottoman authorities and Kurdish depredations. Due to this growing anxiety, Ottoman Armenians sought to relocate to the cities of the Caucasus, whether in small numbers or en masse, sometimes including a whole district. As Candan Badem illustrated, Ottoman Armenians continued to petition the Russian authorities in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Not only did the Ottoman Armenians who lived in the border region, but also the Ottoman Armenians (72 families) from the city of Sivas, located in interior Anatolia, petition to be relocated to the Kars oblast in the South Caucasus. The Russian Consul in Samsun inquired about this petition and reported to his superiors that the Ottoman Armenians wanted to move to the South Caucasus due to "the corruption and arbitrariness of the Turkish authorities and recently settled Muslims emigrants."[28] An

[26] Badem, 'Kars Vilayetine Ermeni Göçü (1878-1914)', 2013, 155–56.
[27] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive, hereafter: RGIA), fond 821, opie 7, delo 164, lists 51-56.
[28] Badem, 'Kars Vilayetine Ermeni Göçü (1878-1914)', 2013, 158.

additional instance involved a petition by Ottoman Armenians residing in Erzurum city. In 1888, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giers, presented the Ottoman Armenians' petition to the Russian Emperor, which claimed that the Ottoman authorities were failing to fulfil their obligations regarding Armenian reforms and enumerated the alleged ongoing abuses, including Kurdish raids and oppressive Ottoman policies. This petition captured the attention of senior Russian authorities due to its demand for the relocation of the sizable Armenian population and their conversion to Orthodoxy.[29]

Rather than a minority of Ottoman Armenians seeking to relocate to the Caucasus, the period of unrest and violence spanning from 1894-1896 in the Ottoman Empire, and the accompanying Armenian massacres, resulted in the flow of a vast number of Ottoman Armenians into cities such as Kars, Yerevan, Baku, and Elisavetpol in the Caucasus. The movement of a sizable group of Armenian refugees created complications in the region, prompting Russian authorities to urgently seek solutions to the ongoing refugee crisis.[30]

Understanding why the Russian authorities pursued a policy of preventing further Armenian settlement in the South Caucasus is an important aspect of the Russian encounter with the Armenian people following the Berlin Congress. Some historians have occasionally explicated these Russian efforts to limit Armenian cross border relocation, particularly in the case of immigration to the Kars oblast. Specifically, Garabet Moumdjian pointed out that "Russia was keen not to let the number of Armenians in its newly enlarged Armenian Guberniia increase."[31] Likewise, A. Melkonyan demonstrated that "the Tsarist authorities did

[29] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 164, ll. 22-32.
[30] İlkay Yılmaz, 'Governing the Armenian Question through Passports in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1908)', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 32, no. 4 (2019): 394–95.
[31] Garabet K. Moumdjian, 'From Millet-i Sadıka to Millet-i Asiya: Abdülhamid II and Armenians, 1878-1909', in *War & Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and The Treaty of Berlin*, ed. Hakan M. Yavuz and Peter Sluglett (Utah: The University of Utah Press, 2011), 306.

not encourage the immigration of the Western Armenians to Transcaucasia and the Kars Oblast."[32]

However, a comprehensive and broader explanation of the shift in the Russian trajectory regarding Armenian settlement is required. This new policy is characterized by several common features. First, the policy change was not confined to the city of Kars; rather, the Russian stance aimed to prevent Armenian settlement in all cities of the South Caucasus, particularly the border areas with the Ottoman and Persian empires. Second, this policy shift was not the initiative of a few Russian authorities alone; rather, the administration of the South Caucasus reached a consensus on the necessity of preventing further emigration of Ottoman Armenians toward the Russian borders. Last, while the political implications of Armenian settlement were important to the Russian authorities, they also recognized that every potential "unreliable" Armenian settlement represented an obstacle to the possible colonization of the Caucasus with "reliable" ethnic and Orthodox Russian settlement.

In his annual report on the general state of Kars oblast, General Frankini remarked on the political implications of the relocation and emigration of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. Despite being a local official in Russia, General Frankini closely monitored political developments in Europe. He noted the Armenian demand for autonomy at the Berlin Congress and reiterated that Armenians in the South Caucasus were sympathetic to the political movements regarding Ottoman Armenians in Europe. He also described the Armenian campaign in European centres advocating for Armenian autonomy. General Frankini underlined that the Russian Empire had two choices: either to support Armenian demands and allow the relocation of Ottoman Armenians to the South Caucasus, or to prevent further Armenian settlement in the region. Frankini stated that he rejected appeals

[32] A. A. Melkonyan, '"The Kars Oblast", 1878-1918', in *Armenian Kars and Ani*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2011), 230.

from Armenians to settle in Kars city until the senior policymakers clarified their stance on Armenian settlement.[33] Likewise, in a comprehensive report intended for the governance of Kars City in 1879, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirskii asserted that the Russian authorities aimed to avoid obstructing the migration of Muslims from Kars to the Ottoman Empire. To prevent foreign acquisition of these lands, he recommended that necessary measures be taken to ensure complete government control. Furthermore, he criticized the Imperial government's policy of settling Armenians and Greeks from the Ottoman Empire in the border regions of Gyumri and Akhaltsikhe from 1828-1829, describing it as a mistake. Sviatopolk-Mirskii also warned that the resettlement of the Ottoman Armenians would merely replicate the same error. Despite the crucial assistance provided by Armenians to the Russian forces in the 1877-1878 war, Sviatopolk-Mirskii viewed Armenian relocation to the Caucasus as a problematic move since he believed that Armenians intended to establish an autonomous Armenia.[34]

The British consuls stationed in the border cities between the Ottoman Empire and Russia closely monitored the inward and outward emigration of Christian and Muslim subjects on both sides of the empires. These officials provided reports on the different treatments received by Ottoman Greeks and Armenians seeking to settle in the Russian Empire. During a conversation with British Consul Major Trotter in late 1879, the Russian Consul-General of Erzeroum conveyed that "the Governor of the Caucasus will welcome Greeks, although it sets its face dead against receiving Armenian immigrants from Turkey."[35] Despite the expressed enthusiasm of Ottoman Armenians to relocate to the Russian Empire, Major Trotter observed that the Russian authorities were hesitant to permit Armenian

[33] *Godovoy Otchet Voennogo Gubernatora Karsskoy Oblasti o Sostoyanii Vverennoy Yemu Oblasti za 1879 god* (Hereafter: Otchet), (Kars: Iyun 1880), ll. 56-59.
[34] Candan Badem, 'Forty Years of Black Days? The Russian Administration of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, 1878-1918', in *Russian-Ottoman Borderland: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*, ed. Lucien J. Frary and Mara Kozelsky (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, n.d.), 234.
[35] (Formerly Public Record Office, PRO), Foreign Office (Hereafter FO), 424/91, From the British Consul in Erzeroum Major Trotter to Marquis of Salisbury, 07 October 1879. No. 20, p. 21.

emigration and raised various obstacles to their cross-border mobility.[36] In certain instances, Armenian immigrants who arrived in the Caucasus were compelled to return to the Ottoman Empire as a result of the apathy and opposition of the Russian authorities. According to British Consul Biliotti, forty Ottoman Armenian families who had recently migrated to the South Caucasus were forced to return because they were allocated infertile lands in 1881. He reported many more instances of returning Ottoman Armenians after a short residence in the South Caucasus.[37]

British consuls continued to report in the next decade about the Russian consuls' efforts to curb and deter Ottoman-Armenian emigration into the South Caucasus. In 1894, British Consul Graves reported that the Russian Consulate-General in Erzurum began to furnish passports only for those Ottoman Armenians who possessed property in the Ottoman Empire and intended to visit Russia for temporary business or family reasons.[38]

The local Russian authorities, along with regional and central authorities, expressed concerns about the settlement of Armenians in newly occupied territories and other cities of the Caucasus. This sentiment was echoed by Dondukov-Korsakov in his report to the Russian Emperor, where he noted similar objections to the settlement of Ottoman Armenians during his tenure as Governor-general of the Caucasus from 1882 to 1890. Based on his observation, Armenian immigration and settlement 'aimed to create a compact region to unite imagined Armenian territory.' As he noted, "Following the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty, an Armenian movement began towards the newly united provinces in the region with the aim of

[36] FO, 424/91, From the British Consul in Erzeroum Major Trotter to Marquis of Salisbury, 07 October 1879. No. 20, p. 21.
[37] FO, 424/123, From the British Consul in Trebizond Alfred Billioti to the Earl of Dufferin, 06 August 1881. No. 43, p. 114.
[38] FO, 424/178, From the British Consul in Erzurum Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie, 09 March 1894. Inclosure, No. 69, pp. 84-85. See also, FO, 424/188, From the British Consul in Erzurum Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie, 12 September 1896. Inclosure, No. 264, pp. 228-229.

forming a continuous Armenian territory from Yerevan to Erzurum."[39] Upon his arrival to the region with the approval of the Russian Emperor, Dondukov-Korsakov indicated as a first measure "to prevent the realization of this political aspiration by restricting the further settlement of Armenians into the Kars region."[40] He justified this measure as necessary for the settlement of ethnic Russians, specifically Dukhobors and Molokans, in the newly available areas. Dondukov-Korsakov believed that this approach was of vital importance for political, military, and economic reasons.[41]

In 1888, the Minister of Foreign Affairs delivered an elaborate report to the Russian Emperor, in which he presented a comprehensive response to the Armenian settlement issue, shedding light on the broader Russian policy towards the Armenians. The report addressed various facets of the Armenian settlement problem and elucidated the Imperial stance on the matter. Drawing on the Russian consul's reports from the Ottoman cities, the Minister highlighted Armenian grievances over the Kurdish raids and the arbitrary conduct of the Ottoman authorities.[42] Moreover, the report documented the aspiration of Ottoman Armenians residing in the city of Erzurum and adjacent regions along the Russian border to convert to Orthodoxy, which could have potentially led to conflict and alienation from the Armenian Church. The Minister ultimately dismissed the conversion plan of the Ottoman Armenians, recognizing the adverse implications it could have on religious affairs. In addition, the report rejected the humanitarian aspect of the Armenian appeals.[43]

Giers' denial of the Armenian petition to relocate to the Caucasus had significant implications for imperial policy. He believed that the immigration of any "foreign elements"

[39] Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze, 1882* (Hereafter: Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska,* 1882). RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, l. 12.
[40] Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska* 1882. RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, l. 12ob.
[41] Dondukov-Korsakov, *Zapiska,* 1882. RGIA, f. 932, op. 1, d. 296, l. 12.
[42] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 164, l. 28.
[43] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 164, ll. 30-32.

to the South Caucasus was ‘undesirable.’ Furthermore, Giers contended that the resettlement of Armenians from the border regions of the Turkish provinces would undermine the strength of the Christian/Armenian population, which had always supported Russian military advances. As he noted, "the Turkish government will not fail to ensure in the abandoned places the settlement of Muslims who are hostile to us" upon settlement of these Armenians.[44]

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the priorities and realities of the state took precedence over the humanitarian aspect of the issue. As Giers described the Imperial position “the consent to relocate Turkish Armenians in our region can be expressed by a sense of humanitarianism. However, considering state interests, such matters can only have a secondary influence.”[45]

In the final decade of the nineteenth century, the Russian authorities became increasingly concerned about the movement of Armenians into the Caucasus and took measures to limit their emigration. This was due to the authorities' perception of the Armenians as "unreliable, foreign elements" who had their own political aspirations. In an attempt to address this issue, the Russian authorities aimed to relocate "reliable" ethnic Russians to these lands instead. However, achieving both objectives simultaneously proved difficult. Despite their efforts to prevent the "illicit" settlement of Armenians, the Russian authorities were unable to establish a dominant ethnic Russian presence in the South Caucasus during the same period.[46] As a result, the increasing apprehension of the Russian authorities regarding the movement of Armenian emigrants and refugees into the South

[44] Cited in, Riegg, *Russia’s Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 195. See also, RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 164, ll. 31-32.
[45] RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 164, l. 32.
[46] See for the failed Russian colonization efforts in the Caucasus in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia’s Empire in the South Caucasus*; Badem, ‘Forty Years of Black Days? The Russian Administration of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, 1878-1918’; Riegg, *Russia’s Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020.

Caucasus prompted the Imperial centre to explore radical approaches in order to restrain and discourage Ottoman Armenians from migrating.

4.3. The Expulsion of Armenian Migrants and Refugees: An Alternative Practice

The Russian authorities were particularly concerned with the increasing and uncontrollable movement of Ottoman Armenians to the South Caucasus. Despite their attempts to curb this movement, they were unable to achieve their desired outcomes. This situation compelled the Russian authorities to alter their policies. Particularly in the 1890s, the Russian authorities abandoned their previous preventive measures and explored other options for relocating these Ottoman Armenians back to the Ottoman Empire.

The reason for the critical and acute nature of the question in the 1890s was the mass movement of Ottoman Armenians between 1894 and 1896. The Armenian massacres and inter-communal violence forced the Ottoman Armenians to flee to the border cities of the Caucasus. Although the exact numbers are difficult to determine, both the Ottoman and Russian authorities estimated that around 30,000 people were affected.[47] The Russian authorities perceived that the movement of approximately 30,000 Ottoman Armenians into the Caucasus would 'strengthen a foreign element' on the Russian borders.

Prior to 1898, the Russian authorities lacked a coherent strategy for managing the crisis in the South Caucasus. Nevertheless, there was a consensus that resettlement was necessary for addressing the situation. In 1894, Major-General Piotr Ivanovich Tomich, the Governor of Kars, emphasized in his annual report the need to implement appropriate

[47] Yılmaz, 'Governing the Armenian Question through Passports in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1908)', 396. The British Consul in Batoum reported that there were approximately 50,000 Armenian refugees in the Russian Empire. See, FO, 424/191, From the British Consul in Batum Stevens to the Marques of Salisbury, 28 May 1897. No. 371, pp. 296-299.

measures to repatriate the Ottoman Armenians from Kars. In the event that repatriation was unfeasible, Tomich indicated the possibility of "relocating them to other areas of the Empire beyond the Caucasus."[48]

Russian border guards and local authorities along the frontiers intensified their monitoring to curb the illegal border crossings of Ottoman Armenians. According to an August 1894 report, Russian border guards apprehended 30 Armenians attempting to cross the border without authorization and returned them to Ottoman authorities. However, the Ottoman authorities declined to accept these Armenians and sent them back to the Russian authorities. In the same year, 25 Ottoman Armenians residing in the Russian Empire expressed a desire to return to the Ottoman Empire. Their request was denied by the Ottoman authorities, and they were subsequently handed over to the Russian authorities. Following the Russian authorities' refusal to accept them, these Armenians sought refuge in border villages within the Russian Empire.[49]

The local Russian authorities were becoming increasingly concerned as the number of the Ottoman Armenians were seeking refugee over the following years, and the consequences of the inter-communal violence in the Ottoman Empire became more evident in the South Caucasus. Two years later, in an another annual report of 1896, Major-General Tomich emphasized the critical nature of the ongoing crisis and urged the prompt implementation of strict measures to resolve the issue.[50] Similarly, in his 1896 annual report, Governor Alexander Freze of Yerevan conveyed to his superiors the imperative need to remove Armenian emigrants from the city. Although he refrained from indicating whether relocation

[48] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 81ob.
[49] Selim Hilmi Özkan, 'Osmanlı Devleti'nden İran'a Ermeni Göçü ve Sonuçları (1878 -1915)', in *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler*, vol. 7 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 266–67; Selim Hilmi Özkan, 'Osmanlı Devleti'nden Gürcistan'a Ermeni Göçü ve Tiflis'de Ermeni Faaliyetleri (1878-1915)', *Yeni Türkiye Dergisi* 3, no. 62 (Eylül-Aralık 2014): 1806.
[50] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 81ob.

to other regions of the Empire or repatriation to the Ottoman Empire was preferable, he cautioned that "inaction posed a perilous threat, as Ottoman emigrants were assimilating with the local populace, thereby undermining the latter's interests."[51]

The primary concern of the Russian administration in the Caucasus was the demographic change in favour of Armenians in the region. While Armenian immigrants were deemed acceptable in other areas of the Empire, they were considered undesirable in the borderlands. The Governor-General of the Caucasus, Sheremetev took the first decisive action in response to this situation. After receiving local reports on the matter, Sheremetev instructed the Governors of Kars and Yerevan to inform these Armenian emigrants that "they could not expect to obtain Russian citizenship or acquire land [in the South Caucasus]. Moreover, he granted them time to obtain legal documentation through their consuls, provided they did not possess passports."[52] Sheremetev reported to the Russian Tsar that the settlement of Ottoman emigrants constituted an undesirable "strengthening of the foreign element on the border parts of the province." He corresponded with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs to orchestrate the resettlement of these Ottoman emigrants from the South Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire.[53] This demonstrates that Armenians, once Christian allies, were now identified as 'foreigners.'

In late 1896, the Tsar replaced Sheremetev with Golitsyn as the official in charge of the administration of the Caucasus due to Sheremetev's health problems. Despite Golitsyn's expertise in the Caucasus, the urgency to solve the problem remained unchanged. Golitsyn proposed possible solutions to the Minister of the Interior and the Tsar, and his efforts eventually caught the attention of the Emperor. As a result, the State Council discussed and

[51] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 81ob.
[52] Sergei Sheremetev, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska glavnonachal'stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chast'iu na Kavkaze* (Hereafter: Sheremetev, *Zapiska,* 1895*).* National Archives of Georgia (Hereafter: NAG), fond. 12, opie. 1-2, delo. 3132, list. 17.
[53] Sheremetev, *Zapiska,* 1895. NAG, f. 12, op. 1-2, d. 3132, l. 17ob.

approved a new framework for resettling Ottoman Armenians on March 26, 1898, granting extensive rights to Golitsyn. This framework consisted of three phases. The first phase allowed Armenian migrants to return to Turkey from the borders of the Caucasus with a local police certificate and without requiring customs processing. This phase had a predicted duration of one year. In the second phase, Armenian emigrants who did not voluntarily express a desire to return to Turkey would be forcefully expelled after the one-year period, with travel allowances issued. The final phase involved informing Ottoman authorities of the return of these Ottoman emigrants from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire.[54]

After the Russian Tsar approved the resettlement framework, it was disseminated in local newspapers and the resettlement process was announced. In addition, Golitsyn made practical preparations for the resettlement, such as convening a meeting with governors from other cities in the Caucasus to discuss details and instructing them to educate local officials in their respective cities about the process. He also reached out to the Armenian Patriarch to request his cooperation during the resettlement process. The Patriarch responded by sending correspondence to spiritual authorities to seek their cooperation with the local imperial authorities in the process.[55]

Additionally, Golitsyn issued a Proclamation on April 6, 1898, which mandated that "all immigrants of Armenian descent and Turkish nationality residing in the Baku, Kutais, Tiflis, and Yerevan governments, as well as in the Province of Kars, must leave the country within one year from the date of the Proclamation's issuance."[56] The police authorities in the city of Batoum informed Ottoman Armenian emigrants to abide by the order to leave Batoum for Turkey by June 27th, or they would be forcibly expelled from the city.[57] Similar orders

[54] NAG, f. 12, op. 3, d. 269, ll. 1-2.
[55] NAG, f. 12, op. 3, d. 269, l. 2.
[56] FO, 65/1564, From the British Consul in Batum P. Stevens to the Foreign Office, 25 May 1898. No. 15, p. 137.
[57] FO, 65/1564, From the British Consul in Batum P. Stevens to the Foreign Office, 25 May 1898. No. 15, p. 137.

were issued in the city of Kars. The Kars authorities notified the Ottoman Consul General about the Imperial decree to voluntarily repatriate Armenians from the cities of Kutais, Baku, Yerevan, and Kars for a one-year period and to expel those who do not comply with the decree.[58]

The voluntary resettlement process commenced in May 1898 but came to a halt in June of the same year. Initially, the process was effective as Ottoman Armenians began to move in groups towards the Ottoman border from different parts of the Empire. Both Russian and Ottoman border guards escorted these groups without requiring any customary procedures at the border. For instance, two groups of Armenian emigrants returned to the Ottoman Empire from the city of Baku.[59] Based on available data, it is estimated that around 4,000 Ottoman Armenians returned to Turkey during this brief period out of a total of 30,000. However, Golitsyn's efforts were impeded by the Ottoman Empire's refusal to accept these Ottoman Armenians who had previously crossed the border illegally and without passports. Following the Ottoman authorities' petitions, the Tsar ordered the resettlement process of these Armenians to the Ottoman Empire to be halted. The Ottoman authorities cited security concerns and created obstacles for the return of these Armenians.[60]

To resolve this diplomatic stalemate, Golitsyn drafted a detailed and extensive report on the resettlement of Armenian emigrants to the Ottoman Empire. He submitted this report to the Russian Tsar on 24 January 1899 and reiterated the pressing nature of the settlement problem. Consequently, he implored the Tsar to intervene with the Ottoman authorities and persuade them to accept the return of these Armenian emigrants.[61]

[58] Badem, 'Kars Vilayetine Ermeni Göçü (1878-1914)', 2013.
[59] NAG, f. 12, op. 3, d. 269, l. 3.
[60] NAG, f. 12, op. 3, d. 269, l. 3.
[61] NAG, f. 12, op. 3, d. 269, ll. 1-6.

The efforts made by local Russian authorities to resettle the Ottoman emigrants were ultimately thwarted by imperial rivalries between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. Both empires cited security concerns as reasons for their opposition to the resettlement process. As a result, they engaged in diplomatic negotiations to reach a compromise solution to the problem.

4.4. In Search of Joint Action: Russian-Ottoman Mediation and the Question of Armenian Refugees

Armenian cross border mobility continued in the last decade of the nineteenth century despite all the efforts and desires of the Russian authorities. Porous borders enabled Armenians to cross the Russian-Ottoman border legally or illegally and settle in the Caucasus. The mass relocations created significant tension between the Russian and Ottoman authorities in the final decade of the nineteenth century. The growing Armenian movement into the South Caucasus compelled Russian authorities to revise their earlier policy of preventing Armenian resettlement. In an attempt to find a mutual understanding, the Russian authorities engaged in mediation with the Ottoman Government, aiming to facilitate the voluntary return or forceful expulsion of Ottoman Armenians who had legally or illegally settled in the South Caucasus. Indeed, understanding the mediation process is crucial as it highlights the imperial concerns and positions regarding the uncontrolled Armenian cross border mobility on both sides of the border. The fact that the Russian authorities engaged in mediation with the Ottoman Government showcases their recognition of finding a common ground for a possible resettlement.[62]

[62] See for the Ottoman side, Sinan Dinçer, 'An Exclusionary Border Regime: The Ottoman Case, 1890–1914', in *Borders and Mobility Control in and between Empires and Nation-States*, ed. Annemarie Steidl, Leo Lucassen, and Josef Ehmer, vol. 46, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2023).

Both the Russian and Ottoman Empires engaged in negotiations in the late nineteenth century with the shared objective of finding suitable populations to settle in their respective frontier regions. The guiding principle for the distribution of these populations along the borders was the degree of "reliability" that they were perceived to possess. Interestingly, however, neither empire regarded the Armenian population as "reliable" in terms of ensuring the security of their respective border areas.[63]

During the initial stage of the negotiations between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, there was a shared effort to determine whether the Armenian emigrants were law-abiding citizens or criminals. The Russian authorities, in March 1898, reported to the Ottoman Sultan that the Armenians residing in the Caucasus were experiencing harsh living conditions and needed to be relocated to their homeland. However, the Ottoman authorities alleged that these Armenians were troublemakers and could pose a security threat if allowed to return to the Ottoman Empire. In April 1898, the Ottoman Ambassador Hüsnü Pasha reiterated these concerns to the Russian Foreign Minister, citing the involvement of Armenians in violent incidents that occurred between 1894 and 1896. The Russian Foreign Minister argued that these Armenian migrants were primarily farmers, villagers, and landowners, and even if some were involved in past conflicts, enough time had passed, and they should be allowed to return to their previous homes.[64]

The Ottoman authorities sought to convince their Russian counterparts to recognize the settlement of Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Empire as a priority during negotiations. Both sides presented interesting proposals, with the Ottomans offering 100,000 Ottoman lira to cover travel and settlement expenses of these Armenians to Siberia. The Ottoman authorities believed that settling these Armenians in Siberia would serve the interests of both

[63] Cörüt, *Loyalty and Citizenship: Ottoman Perspectives on Its Russian Border Region (1878–1914)*, 145.
[64] Badem, 'Kars Vilayetine Ermeni Göçü (1878-1914)', 2013, 163.

empires. Furthermore, the Ottomans proposed not to settle Muslim immigrants, such as Circassians and Tatars, who were fleeing from the Caucasus into the Ottoman Empire. The Russians had consistently objected to the settlement of Muslims along their borders, and the Ottoman proposal represented a significant concession from their previous border policy.[65]

The subject of Armenian emigrants was repeatedly discussed by the Russian and Ottoman authorities, with various proposals and suggestions put forward during negotiations. In one meeting between the Ottoman envoy Turhan Paşa and the Russian envoy in Crimea, the possibility of preventing Armenian settlement in border regions and resettling them in Siberia was proposed.[66] The Ottoman Minister of Affairs even suggested an exchange of population, offering to accept Russian Muslims in exchange for the Armenian emigrants in the Caucasus.[67] Meanwhile, the Ottoman authorities were also dealing with a continuing movement of Caucasian Muslims and sought to use this to their advantage, countering Russian demands for the repatriation of the Armenian emigrants.

The negotiation process concerning the repatriation of Ottoman Armenian refugees drew the attention of British diplomats, who discussed it privately with the Russian Foreign Minister Murayev in April 1899. The British Ambassador in Saint Petersburg reported on this conversation, which revealed that Count Murayev deemed it impossible to allow "this large body of foreign refugees" to reside in Russian provinces. However, he also stated that the forced expulsion of these refugees had been suspended pending positive developments in communication between the Russian and Ottoman Empires.[68]

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[65] Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Rus İlişkileri (Hereafter OBERI) (1899-1906), Vol II, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri, 2006), Document no. 3, a letter sent to the Russian Consulate, 18 March 1899, p. 7

[66] Selim Deringil, "The Ottoman Empire and Russian Muslims: Brothers or Rivals?," *Central Asian Survey* 13, no. 3, 410.

[67] Yılmaz, 'Governing the Armenian Question through Passports in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1908)', 396.

[68] FO, 424/198, From the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg to the Marquess of Salisbury, 3 April 1899. No. 97, p. 73.

In 1900, a final agreement was reached between the Ottoman and Russian Empires. The agreement entailed the Ottoman Empire's acceptance of concessions for constructing future railway projects in the northern regions of Asia Minor, while the Russian authorities agreed not to repatriate the Ottoman Armenian refugees. Additionally, the Russian Tsar was granted the right to refuse any proposed railway projects in the neighboring regions of the Caucasus. The British diplomats who closely followed the negotiation process noted that "He [the Ottoman Sultan] seems, however, to be in reality more afraid of a recrudescence, of Armenian disturbances than of the unpopularity which will be caused by his yielding to the Russian demands…."[69]

The diplomatic process and mediation between the Russian and Ottoman Empires reveal their respective priorities. Given the regional disturbances they had witnessed, the Ottoman authorities made a significant strategic concession by allowing Armenian emigrants to naturalize as Russian citizens in the Caucasus. The risk of these migrants causing "former troubles" if they were repatriated to Ottoman territory was considered more significant than the Russian Tsar's right to reject railway projects around the Caucasus borders. Conversely, the Russian authorities sought to resolve the settlement issue within their imperial borders. The Ottoman side perceived a higher degree of danger than the Russian side due to the turbulent years of 1894-1896 and the fear of the return of Armenian revolutionaries with the returning refugees.

[69] FO, 424/ 200, From the British Ambassador in Constantinople to the Marquess of Salisbury, 22 March 1900. No. 104, Confidential, pp. 26-27.

4.5. A New Life for the Ottoman Armenian Refugees and Immigrants to the Caucasus? Naturalization vs. Expulsion

Having obtained a strategic railway concession from the Ottoman Empire in exchange for granting Russian citizenship to the Armenian migrants and refugees in the South Caucasus, the Russian authorities shifted their focus to resolving this issue within their own borders. The authorities presented the Armenian migrants and refugees two options: to choose Russian citizenship and renounce their Ottoman citizenship permanently, or to face expulsion from the South Caucasus either to a third country or back to the Ottoman Empire.

After the negotiation process with the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Tsar entrusted Prince Golitsyn, the Governor-General of the Caucasus, to reassess imperial policy regarding the settlement of approximately 26,000 remaining Ottoman-Armenian emigrants in the region. With this authority, Prince Golitsyn convened a special meeting on July 14, 1900, in Saint Petersburg to discuss the framework of new steps. The decisions taken during this meeting marked a turning point in the management of this problem in the South Caucasus. Firstly, the Russian authorities banned the settlement of Ottoman Armenian emigrants and refugees in two border cities of Yerevan and Kars.[70] In fact, the Russian authorities did not want to settle these people in the border areas, even after granting them Russian citizenship, because the Armenians were still perceived as an "unreliable" element in the region. The authorities believed that their dominance in the borderland could jeopardize state interests.

Secondly, the meeting considered the date of the approval of these assumptions by the Russian Tsar as the last date for eligibility for Russian citizenship.[71] Considering the ongoing cross-border movement of Ottoman Armenians, the Russian authorities sought to prevent further complications. They feared that granting Russian citizenship to constantly arriving

[70] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 17.
[71] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 17.

Ottoman Armenians could encourage even more Ottoman Armenians to emigrate from the Ottoman side into the South Caucasus. Furthermore, the special meeting fully authorized the Governor-general of the Caucasus to study and assess the daily life and local conditions of these Ottoman Armenians in various parts of the South Caucasus and issue appropriate orders for their settlement. On February 1, 1901, the Russian Tsar approved the decisions of this special meeting, which also marked the date of eligibility for Russian citizenship or 'naturalization.'[72]

One month after the special meeting in Saint Petersburg, Prince Golitsyn implemented the framework by launching a mission to explore the local conditions of Ottoman Armenian emigrants in the South Caucasus. He instructed his assistant, Lieutenant-general Freze, who had extensive experience working in different parts of the region and was a former governor of Yerevan, to visit various cities for the same purpose. Additionally, Prince Golitsyn organized another special meeting with local authorities of the Caucasus cities in Tiflis. The meeting aimed to gather their opinions on the current crisis and discuss potential solutions to the issue at hand.[73]

After a series of special meetings and consultations with different representatives from other parts of the Caucasus and his personal observations, Golitsyn proposed three steps to resolve the issue. First, during his personal trip and observations, he was surprised by the level of integration of the Ottoman Armenian emigrants with the local population in the South Caucasus. As a result, he emphasized the need to allow these people to stay wherever they had settled, including the border cities of Kars and Yerevan.[74] Prince Golitsyn reversed his earlier proposal to prohibit the settlement of Ottoman Armenian emigrants in the border

[72] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 17ob.
[73] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 17ob.
[74] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 17ob.

cities of Kars and Yerevan. The reason behind his decision was based on his first hand observations during the trip, where he witnessed the successful integration of the Armenian migrants into the local community. Due to concerns about potential consequences, he harboured fears that implementing drastic measures against these individuals would result in adverse reactions. As he noted, "forceful expulsion of these people from their places of residence would cause serious difficulties for the local authorities."[75] As a second step, he proposed implementing the prohibition of settlement in the Kuban region and the Black Sea coasts, recognizing the need to separate the North and South Caucasus. These two steps indicate that while Golitsyn could not prevent the settlement of Armenian emigrants in the border cities of the South Caucasus, he aimed to curb further emigration of Armenians towards the Northern Caucasus and the Black Sea coasts, where Russian colonization was thriving. As a third step, Ottoman Armenians were deprived of the right to serve in the military.[76]

The Russian Tsar approved these suggestions on July 26, 1901, allowing Armenian emigrants who arrived at the Russian borders before February 1, 1901, to decide whether they wanted to accept Russian citizenship or return to the Ottoman Empire. The proposal stipulated a one-year period for Ottoman Armenian emigrants to make their decision, which ended on June 27, 1902. However, there is a lack of clear evidence in Russian archives about the documentation or registration of these Armenian emigrants, making it unclear how the Russian authorities determined whether an Armenian arrived at the Russian border before or after February 1st.

The registration process for Ottoman Armenian emigrants who arrived at the Russian borders before February 1st, 1901 continued for a year, during which the local authorities

[75] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 17ob.
[76] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 18.

managed the process of registration for Russian citizenship. According to the report of the British Consul from Batoum, the Governor of Tiflis issued an order to the head of district authorities and police heads in the towns where Ottoman Armenian emigrants resided, to call these emigrants to present themselves to local police offices by March 5th, 1902, and express their intention to either accept Russian citizenship or to emigrate back to the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, the local authorities released a list of Armenians who sought to accept Russian subjecthood on April 6th, 1902. Those who accepted Russian citizenship took an oath of allegiance on April 15th, 1902, which was administered in the Cathedral of Van for the Ottoman Armenian emigrants residing in Tiflis. After accepting Russian citizenship, Ottoman Armenians were allowed to either continue living in their previous residences or move freely inland provinces, except for the Kuban region and the Black Sea coasts.[77]

Throughout the registration process, it is estimated that around 20,000 Armenian emigrants accepted Russian citizenship, according to various sources. Candan Badem's research provides similar figures, reporting that during the one-year period, 9,906 males and 8,185 females were accepted for Russian citizenship. However, the number of remaining Armenian emigrants is uncertain and fluctuating. Golitsyn claimed that approximately 6,000 Armenians rejected for Russian citizenship and preferred to return to the Ottoman Empire. In contrast, Candan Badem reported that 10,785 temporary Armenian residents were registered in Kars alone.[78] The discrepancies in the numbers are due to the continuous migration of Ottoman Armenians and the lack of a control and pre-registration process for newly arriving emigrants at the Russian borders. Despite the official numbers, the actual number of registered Armenian emigrants was likely higher.

[77] FO, 424/203, From British Consul P. Stevens in Batoum to the Marquess of Lansdowne, 24 March 1902, No. 55, p. 69.
[78] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 18; Badem, 'Kars Vilayetine Ermeni Göçü (1878-1914)', 2013, 165.

The fate of the Armenian migrants who were not accepted for Russian citizenship, as well as those who arrived after February 1st, 1901, is another issue that needs consideration. On one hand, Golitsyn ordered all governors and local authorities to immediately expel these remaining 'illegal' Armenian emigrants from the Caucasus, either to the Ottoman Empire or to any other places outside the Russian Empire. He also requested the Tsar to increase diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman authorities to prevent the return of these Armenian emigrants and to ensure the prevention of new arrivals at the Russian border. On the other hand, the Ottoman authorities continued to resist and did not allow the return of these emigrants.[79] Golitsyn recognized that the remaining Armenian emigrants were unwilling to return to the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, on May 8th, 1903, he was granted permission to exile those Armenians who were not naturalized and who were not willing to resettle voluntarily in the Ottoman Empire to Siberia.[80] However, there is no record of any exiles in the Russian archives regarding the implementation of this order.

Subsequently, some Armenian refugees who had fled the Ottoman Empire during the tumultuous years of 1894-1896 due to the 'threat of violence' and 'suffering,' expressed their wish to return voluntarily. These individuals, who identified themselves as representatives of the Ottoman Armenian refugees on the Russo-Ottoman border, submitted a petition to the Marquess of Lansdowne, the British representative. Writing from the Russian-Ottoman border, they appealed for British diplomatic intervention with the Ottoman authorities to facilitate their resettlement to the Ottoman Empire. According to their account, their application for Russian citizenship was turned down as they wished to bring their families to the Russian Empire upon obtaining citizenship. It is important to note that Russian citizenship was only granted to those who were present in the Russian Empire between 1901 and 1902.

[79] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 18ob.
[80] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, l. 271.

As a result of these complications, they expressed their desire to return to the Ottoman Empire.[81]

The Decree which granted Russian citizenship to Ottoman Armenian migrants provided temporary relief to the uncertain status of these emigrants in the Caucasus. However, the movement of Armenian migrants across the border continued to be a source of difficulty for the Russian authorities in the following years. The Russian government clarified that they did not support granting Russian citizenship to any Armenian migrants who arrived in the Caucasus after February 1, 1901. Both Ministers of Foreign and Internal Affairs reported in 1903 that "the Armenian migrants who arrived at the Caucasus after February 1, 1901, should be immediately evicted to the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the further admission of Armenian migrants to the Caucasus should be undoubtedly prohibited."[82]

The Tsarist authorities had two primary motivations for taking legal measures. Firstly, they aimed to address the precarious situation of Ottoman Armenians by granting them Russian citizenship in the Caucasus. While this step provided relief to many Armenian refugees and emigrants in the region, it also resulted in the exclusion of some Armenians, leaving them in destitution and compelling them to leave the Caucasus. Secondly, by imposing a time-limited naturalization period of one year, the Tsarist authorities sought to discourage further cross-border migration of Ottoman Armenians into the Caucasus. However, neither of these measures proved effective in fully resolving the ongoing question in the region.

[81] FO, 424/203, From Armenian Refugees in Russia to the Marquess of Lansdowne, 8 October 1902, No. 134, p. 131. The original petition is in French language and delivered by the Armenian Refugees in Russia to the British Consuls on 23 September 1902.
[82] RGIA, f. 560, op. 26, d. 399, ll. 231-232.

4.6. Chapter Overview

This chapter examines three key areas related to the Russian Empire's encounter with Armenian emigrants and refugees from the Ottoman Empire. The first area explores the Russian government's efforts to attract and settle Armenian populations on its southern frontiers in order to counter the competing Muslim empires of Ottomans and Persians until the late nineteenth century. The second area discusses the changing perception of Armenians as an "unreliable" population and the increasing resentment of the Russian authorities towards further Armenian settlement in the Caucasus, particularly after the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. The last area examines the policies and practices of the Russian authorities to manage this growing problem on their borderlands, including efforts to negotiate with the Ottoman Empire.

This chapter demonstrates that the Russian authorities shifted from their previous policy of settling Armenians on the imperial frontiers due to the perceived danger of Armenian political aspirations in the South Caucasus. As the Russian authorities reasoned, while the existence of a dominant ethnic Armenian population could endanger the Russian frontiers, it could also hamper the efforts of ethnic Russian colonization in the Caucasus. This totalizing approach of perceiving Armenians as a "disloyal" and "undesirable" element on the frontiers did not separate those destitute Armenians who arrived in the region after the 1894-1896 massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. As Foreign Minister Giers noted in 1888, the Armenian question was a state matter, not a humanitarian question, for the Russian Empire in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Local authorities' appeals for the settlement of the continuous issue of Armenian emigration from the Ottoman Empire prompted the Russian central authorities to devise comprehensive policies. The most rational and pragmatic approach was to engage in

diplomatic negotiations with the Ottoman authorities. Nevertheless, the inflexible stance adopted by the Ottoman side during these negotiations failed to produce the desired outcome for the Russian authorities.

The Russian authorities faced a dilemma regarding the fate of Armenian migrants who had arrived at their borders. There were two options for the Russian authorities. Either these Armenian emigrants would be expelled forcibly to the Ottoman Empire, or they would be granted Russian citizenship. However, both practices had their own challenges. On one hand, the negotiation process with the Ottoman authorities proved the difficulties of returning these Armenians to the Ottoman Empire either forcibly or voluntarily. On other hand, the Russian authorities recognized that the forcible expulsion could cause administrative complications in the region, as well as the naturalization, would encourage the further movement of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. The final practice was somewhere between these two options. Considering the prominent level of integration of these emigrants with the local conditions, the Russian authorities decided to grant Russian citizenship to Ottoman Armenian emigrants who arrived at the Russian borders before February 1, 1901.

Eric Lohr contends that the Russian authorities' decision to grant Russian citizenship to a limited number of Ottoman Armenian emigrants was a way to exclude undesirable nationalities or religious groups from the Russian Empire.[83] This 'one-time offer' was aimed at separating integrated Armenian emigrants from new arrivals. The Russian authorities recognized that their long, porous, and uncontrollable borders made it impossible to prevent further Armenian movement. Therefore, they sought to deter additional settlement by using 'citizenship' as a barrier. This practice demonstrates that, despite granting Russian citizenship

[83] Lohr, *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union*, 8.

to a select group of Armenians, the perception of Armenians as an ‘undesirable’ element persisted in the Imperial mindset.

The insufficiency of officers and institutional capacity to manage the settlement of Armenian emigrants and refugees from the Ottoman Empire present another perspective from the Russian authorities. Despite the objections of both local and central authorities, there is little information available on the registration and documentation process of these illegal refugees and emigrants. It is unclear how the Russian authorities determined whether an Ottoman Armenian arrived at the border before or after February 1, 1901, especially if they did not present themselves to police stations. Therefore, the figures on Ottoman Armenian emigrants are controversial, with an approximate figure of 20,000 granted Russian citizenship. The issue of mobility also adds to the difficulty of estimating these figures, as Ottoman Armenians continued to cross the border clandestinely despite the efforts of the Russian authorities to prevent these illegal crossings. The lack of information on official figures and the registration and documentation process underscores the need for further research.

Chapter 5. Imperial Policies and the Question of Power on the Imperial Frontiers

The appointment of Grigori Sergeevich Golitsyn to the South Caucasus as Governor-General in the last week of 1896 markedly altered the dynamics of the region. During the years between 1897 and 1904, Golitsyn's tenure saw the culmination of strained relations between the Russian authorities and their Armenian subjects. As a fervent nationalist, conservative and dedicated imperialist with a genuine faith in Russian high culture and its historical mission, Golitsyn was astonished by the Armenian dominance and power in local self-government, economy and urban affairs in the South Caucasus. In Golitsyn's perspective, Russians high culture and authority ought to have been the predominant forces throughout the empire, particularly in sensitive borderland areas.

In the first week of 1897, shortly after Golitsyn's appointment, the chauvinist and Slavophile writer, Vasilii Lvovich Velichko also arrived in the South Caucasus to assume the role of editor of the semi-official publication of the Caucasian administration, the journal *Kavkaz* (Caucasus). Velichko arrived in the South Caucasus with a specific agenda in mind. According to Vladimir Petrovich Mesherskii, the editor of the Russian Newspaper *Grajdanin* (Citizen), the arrival of Velichko as an editor of the *Kavkaz* journal aimed to transform this semi-official newspaper "an honest and persistent organ of the Russian people and Russian state interest" as well as "to repel *Armiyanizma* (Armenianism) which already began to grow bolder."[1] Deeply committed to the Slavophile thought and viewing cultural foundations as a basis for the unification with Russians, Velichko identified Georgians as a 'friend' and Armenians as a 'stranger' or 'other' to Russians. He articulated his stance by stating, "I

[1] Georgii Kuzmich Dorofeeva, *Pamiati V. L. Velichko: Doklad G. K. Dorofeeva v 'Russkom Kruzhke' Varshave, 14 Ianvaria 1904 g.* (Spb: V. V. Komarova, 1904), 5–6.

followed the footsteps of the Slavophiles, I agree with the ideas of people such as Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov and Rostislav Fadeev, who did not consider the people as a stranger who united with us in our historical mission and glorious feats in the past, and in community of faith, Tsar and fatherland in the present."[2] Velichko did not conceal his anti-Armenian sentiments in his writings, frequently referring to Armenians as "a people whose origin is unknown." He tried to devalue their historical past and called their religion as "a fake Christianity without Christian morality."[3]

Since both Golitsyn and Velichko arrived in the region almost simultaneously, there is probably connection in their arrival. While Golitsyn was shaping anti-Armenian policies in the bureaucratic circles, Velichko was using the semi-official press to sway public opinion against Armenians. Their combined efforts served to mold a 'separatist', 'disloyal' and 'revolutionary' image of Armenian in both bureaucratic and public spheres. Their belief in Russian high culture and position regarding between Armenians and Georgians provide insights into future imperial policies in the region.

In this chapter, I will explore Golitsyn's administrative practices aimed at curtailing Armenian political and economic dominance in various areas, ranging from composition of city dumas in local administration to the confiscation of Armenian Church properties in 1903. By examining these different cases, I aim to elucidate the mechanisms of imperial practices used to limit the influence of dominant non-Russian subjects in the borderlands, highlighting how systematic and personal factors overlapped and became decisive in the policy-making process regarding Armenian affairs in the Russian state.

[2] M. D. Muretovoi, *Polnoe Sobranie Publitsisticheskikh Sochinenii V. L. Velichko*, vol. I (Spb: Arteli Pechatnago Delo, 1904), 56–57.
[3] Muretovoi, I:57–121.

As Uyama pointed out, "the personality of individual bureaucrats often influences the actual handling of administrative matters."[4] This was true for the Russian Empire. Personal factors in the governance of the borderland regions were strong and effective because the regional governors or highest authorities held strong judicial and administrative powers and represented the will of the emperor in their respective borderland areas. Moreover, they frequently masterminded certain policies and brought them to the attention of the central bureaucracy and the Tsar.[5] Robbins states that due to underdeveloped bureaucratic mechanism and weak institutions, the governorship became a charismatic office. Rather than institutional office itself, the governance of the Russian imperial borderlands depended mostly on a governor's administrative competence, his style and personality. Finding an appropriate and competent person for these offices became an important matter in an environment where social and political tensions were growing in the last decades of the Russian Empire.[6]

After Polish uprising in 1863, Mikhail Muravev was appointed to the administrative center of the Northwestern region, Vilna city in order to repress this uprising. Many historians associate his policies with the most intensive policy of russification and assimilation between 1863-1868. Muravev was replaced with Aleksandr Potapov in 1868. Historians regarded Aleksandr Potapov as a Governor-General who tried to negate Muravev's policies in the region.[7] Similarly, the first Governor-General of Turkestan Konstantin von Kaufman, known as half-tsar by the local population, followed authoritarian

[4] Tomohiko Uyama, 'Repression of Kazakh Intellectuals As a Sign of Weakness of Russian Imperial Rule: The Paradoxical Impact of Governor A.N. Troinitskii on the Kazakh National Movement', *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 56, no. 4 (2015): 681–83.
[5] Uyama, 683.
[6] Richard G. Robbins, *The Tsar's Viceroys: Russian Provincial Governors in the Last Years of the Empire* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 19.
[7] Staliunas, 'Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwestern Region after the Uprising of 1863-64?', 277.

policies in the region between 1867-1882. The new Governor-General Mihail Cherniaev rejected Kaufman's principles and policies.[8] We can diversify these examples; the appointment of the Aleksandr Troinitskii and his principles and policies of the repression of Kazakh intellectuals was considered excessive in comparison with the general standards in the Empire.[9]

In the administration of the South Caucasus, during the tenure of the three successive Governor-Generals, Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov (1882–90), Sergei Sheremetev (1890–96), and Grigorii Golitsyn (1896–1904), there was a gradual deterioration in the relationship between the Armenian representatives and Russian local governors. Riegg identified one of the reasons for this worsening of relations as partly the personalities and policies of the Russian regional and Imperial authorities. However, in the case of Caucasus regional governance, the personalities and policies of the Russian regional authorities only exacerbated relations during their respective tenures. Dondukov-Korsakov masterminded imperial policies in the region, Sheremetev established the legal framework for these policies, and Golitsyn sought to limit Armenian administrative and economic power in various areas to bring Armenian people as well the Caucasian borderland to the imperial center.[10]

The previous Governor-Generals of the Caucasus, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov and Sheremetev pursued reactive policies against the activities of the Armenian national movements. They strove to limit their policies against the actions of the Armenian revolutionaries. However, during Golitsyn's tenure, the word 'Armenian' became equal to 'revolutionary'. Distinct from his predecessors, Golitsyn identified Armenian power and dominance in the local administration and economy as the main obstacle in his efforts to

[8] David Mackenzie, 'Kaufman of Turkestan: An Assessment of His Administration, 1867-1881', *Slavic Review* 26, no. 2 (1967): 265–85.
[9] Uyama, 'Repression of Kazakh Intellectuals As a Sign of Weakness of Russian Imperial Rule: The Paradoxical Impact of Governor A.N. Troinitskii on the Kazakh National Movement', 681–703.
[10] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 201–2.

bring the Russian element and its culture in the region closer to the imperial center, a process described as Russification. The more resistance Golitsyn encountered from Armenian power, the more repressive were the policies that he pursued. He pursued these policies with full authority from the Imperial center, direct consent from the Emperor, and in some contested instances, approval from the State Council.[11] Ironically, Golitsyn's efforts to curb Armenian nationalism and power only served to consolidate Armenian identity and unified all Armenian groups under the banner of Armenian political parties.

How can we explain this increasingly adversarial relationship of Russian authorities with its Armenian subjects roughly between the years of 1895-1905? Firstly, the oscillation of Russian policy between preserving the influence of Armenian Catholicos and controlling the Armenian parish schools created ten years of continual tension. Secondly, the activities of the Armenian political parties across the Russian-Ottoman borderland were closely followed by the Russian authorities. The perceived danger of Armenian separatism became the main concern of Russian regional authorities during these decades. They consistently reported on the activities of the Armenian revolutionaries. It is important to note that the key policy-makers concerning state policy in Armenian affairs were the Governor-Generals in the South Caucasus. They engineered imperial policies and the central authorities relied heavily on the suggestions of these regional authorities. Lastly, increasing Russian conservative and nationalist thought aggravated adversarial relationship, especially with arrival of Golitsyn and his policies.

[11] See Vitte's memoir for his remarks on Golitsyn's characteristics and his perceived incompetence in managing the South Caucasus, *Graf S. Iu. Vitte: Vospominaniia Tsarstvovanie Nikolaia II*, 2nd ed., vol. II (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1924), 86–87.

5.1. The Legal Provisions of Municipal Reform and Composition of City Dumas in the South Caucasus

Before examining Golitsyn's efforts to limit Armenians from local self-government positions in city councils, it is essential to review the legal provisions that formed the basis of the administrative system in Russian cities. The administrative reform originated during the era of the Alexander II and his Great Reforms in 1870.[12] The Municipal law marked a significant turning point from earlier administrative practices in towns, as it granted the local population a voice in local administration.

The 1870 Municipal Law was initially applied to over 400 cities, primarily in European Russia. A few years later, it was extended to borderland areas, including the Baltic region, the Caucasus, and Siberia, starting with the major cities of the Empire. The law established an administrative *uprava* (board) and a policy-making body called the *gorodskaia duma* (city council) in each municipality. The city council members elected the members of the administrative board and the mayor, each serving a four-year term. The primary factor determining the number of city council members was the size of the city's population, while the size of the administrative board was decided by the city council itself.[13] The law introduced tax and property qualifications for voters. Only men aged twenty-five and older who paid city taxes and/or owned real estate had the right to vote for the formation of the city council. Based on these qualifications, the new law established three curiae, with each curia responsible for electing one-third of the city council members. The wealthiest group elected the first third of the city council, the next wealthiest group elected the second third, and the

[12] Theodore R. Weeks, 'Nationality and Municipality: Reforming City Government in the Kingdom of Poland, 1904-1915', *Russian History* 21, no. 1 (1994): 23–24.
[13] Walter Hanchett, 'Tsarist Statutory Regulation of Municipal Government in the Nineteenth Century', in *The City in Russian History*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 98–99.

least wealthy group elected the final third, even though the size of each group varied.[14] The elected self-government bodies were responsible for managing education, health, sanitation, and the economy of the local communities in their respective cities.[15]

The new Municipal Law introduced two significant provisions for the formation of city councils in the Russian Empire, which became key determinants for the composition of city councils in the Caucasus. The first provision established an *soslovie* (estate-based) categorization for the urban population, emphasizing property and wealth over ethnic categorization and representation. Consequently, voting rights were granted only to the upper and wealthy strata of local communities. The second provision restricted the participation of non-Christians in city councils, ensuring the predominance of Christians in local administration. According to this limitation, the number of non-Christians could not exceed one-third of the total members of both the city council and the executive board.[16]

The application of this law and restriction on the participation of non-Christians in local administration contradicted the multi-confessional character of the empire. For example, the population of the city of the *Bachisarae uezd* (Bachisarae)in the *Tavricheskaia gubernia*[17] (Tauride Province) was exclusively Muslim Tatars, making it impossible to apply this law there. Due to the difficulty of finding two-thirds of the city council members to be Christians in Bachisarae, the State Council of the Empire modified the law for the cities facing similar challenges. According to the amendment of 22 November 1873, in the cities where the non-

[14] Ronald G. Suny, 'The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia', in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (Ann-Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 118.
[15] Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15.
[16] Audrey Altstadt, 'The Baku City Duma –Arena for Elite Conflict', *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3–4 (1986): 50–51.
[17] The Tauride Governorate was historically a region within the Russian Empire, encompassing the modern-day Crimean Peninsula and the mainland area bordered by the Azov Sea, Black Sea coasts, and the lower Dnieper River.

Christian population overwhelmingly exceeded the Christian population, the Minister of Interior was granted the right to make arrangements based on suggestions from the local administration. However, this 1873 modification of the Municipal Law was not extended to cities in the Caucasus, where the population of non-Christians—mainly Muslims—mostly exceeded the Christian population—mainly Armenians. The same resolution indicated that the number of Christians (Armenians) provided enough candidates to constitute two-thirds of the city councils. Consequently, Russian authorities reaffirmed the preponderance of Armenians over Muslims (Azeri-Tatars) in the city councils of the Caucasus.[18]

The early efforts of the Russian authorities to introduce the Urban Reform of 1870 and the subsequent modification in 1873 yielded two significant outcomes for the city councils in the South Caucasus. Firstly, the estate-based categorization indirectly resulted in Armenian dominance in Tiflis city council over Georgians and Russians. This occurred because the Armenian bourgeoisie held a leading role in the city's economy and possessed the majority of its wealth and property. Secondly, the discriminatory policy against local Muslims in other major cities such as Yerevan and Baku directly led to Armenian authority and power in the local administration of those cities. Consequently, the Urban Reform of 1870 and its provisions and privileges predominantly facilitated the composition of ethnically dominated Armenian city councils in the South Caucasus. The Armenian wealthy class enjoyed significant power and authority in local self-government in the following decades until the end of the nineteenth century. The underrepresentation of other ethnic groups in city councils became the primary source of discord between the Russian authorities, Russian Armenians, and other ethnic groups in the South Caucasus.

[18] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGIA), f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, l. 264.

In 1888, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, the Governor-General of the Caucasus, brought this issue to the attention of the Minister of Interior in response to the growing demands of local Muslims and complaints from imperial agents in the provinces. He highlighted that "the conditions and restrictions imposed by the 1870 Municipal Reform only exacerbated tribal conflicts among local Muslims and Armenians."[19] Furthermore, Dondukov-Korsakov observed that merely equalizing the numbers of Muslims with Christian Armenians in city councils would not result in similar economic conditions for Muslims, unlike the economic situation between Jews and Christians in the Western region of the Empire. He cautioned the Imperial center that intolerance and discrimination against local Muslims would only lead to their isolation and hinder the state's efforts to integrate this region more closely with the rest of the Empire.[20] Indeed, Dondukov-Korsakov's report demonstrates the primary concern of the imperial center to maintain Christian predominance over non-Christians in the Empire. His observations also underscore the impracticality of implementing such a policy in the predominantly Muslim cities of the South Caucasus, given their unique demographic and social composition. Moreover, the comparison with the Jewish case suggests that Imperial authorities were wary of facing similar conditions and challenges with Muslims, indicating broader concerns about social and economic dynamics within the Empire.

Following the request of the Governor-General of the Caucasus, the State Council convened to address the issue of equalizing the rights of Muslims with Armenians in self-administration. In a meeting dated October 24, 1888, which was approved by the Russian Tsar on December 27, 1888, the State Council exempted cities in the Caucasus from the rules limiting the number of non-Christians to one-third of the city councils and executive boards. According to the new regulation, “the composition of the city councils in the South Caucasus

[19] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, l. 264.
[20] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, l. 265.

is allowed *po blizhaishemu* (at the closest), each time at the discretion of the Governor-General of the Caucasus."[21]

Dissatisfaction with the newly adopted Municipal system extended beyond the South Caucasus. Both local and central Russian authorities consistently reported flaws in this system, though they cited different reasons for their concerns. Some local bureaucrats lamented the economic and administrative burdens imposed by the system, while others protested against the chaotic situations in council elections across various regions of the Empire. Additionally, there were bureaucrats, such as the reform-minded M. S. Kakhanov in the central government, who advocated for the distribution of more power to self-governments.[22]

In response to the growing concerns and demands of Russian bureaucrats in the decades following the 1870 Municipal Reform, the Minister of Interior prepared a new municipal statute, which was adopted in 1892. This counter-reform introduced significant alterations to several previous provisions and extended its application to many more cities than its predecessor. Firstly, the new regulation abolished the previous tax-payers' curia system, which divided voters into three categories. Instead, property qualification became the sole criterion for eligibility to vote in city councils, leading to the formation of a single body for all electors. Under this system, electors used white or black ballots, with candidates requiring a majority of white votes for successful election. Secondly, the self-government regulation of 1892 further restricted the participation of non-Christians in administration.[23] According to this regulation, the number of non-Christians could not exceed one-fifth of

[21] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, l. 266.
[22] Hanchett, 'Tsarist Statutory Regulation of Municipal Government in the Nineteenth Century', 107–8.
[23] Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Tiflis: Crucible of Ethnic Politics, 1860-1905', in *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 271–72; Ronald Grigor Suny, 'The Mother of Cities: Tbilisi/Tiflis in the Twilight of Empire', in *City Culture and City Planning in Tbilisi: Where Europe and Asia Meet*, ed. K. Van Assche, J. Salukvadze, and N. Shavishvili (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 44–45.

Duma seats. In cities where non-Christians constituted the overwhelming majority of the population and Christians could not fill four-fifths of the city council seats, the Minister of Interior was authorized to adjust the application of this article in favor of non-Christians until they comprised one-half of the council seats. For Jews, the restrictions were even more stringent—they could not exceed one-tenth of council seats, with specific restrictions within the borders of the Pale of Settlement. Furthermore, they were prohibited from holding positions as heads of executive boards and city councils.[24]

The new Municipal Reform of 1892 had two significant consequences for the composition of self-government in the cities of the South Caucasus. Firstly, the restriction of voting rights based on property qualifications in self-government served to strengthen the position of Armenians in city councils, leading to almost complete control of the Tiflis city council by Armenians. Secondly, the restriction on non-Christians in self-government showed disregard for the previous rearrangement of 1888, further limiting non-Christian participation to one-fifth in 1892. This restriction primarily affected Muslims in the Caucasus, favoring Christians—specifically Armenians—and leaving the decision of equalizing the number of council members to the discretion of the Minister of Interior. This cemented Armenian preponderance in other city councils of the Caucasus, leading to increased antagonism and prejudice against Russian Armenians.

[24] Altstadt, 'The Baku City Duma –Arena for Elite Conflict', 51–52. In his article, Audrey Altstadt provided the proportion of 1892 Reform on Non-Christians as one-third in Baku although it was one-fifth in the article. This clearly proves the different application of rule depending on the will of the Minister of Interior. For more details about this proportional regulation and 1892 reform see, RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, ll. 294-295.

5.2. Council Politics and Ethnic Polarization in the South Caucasus City Dumas

When the Municipal Reform was first applied to the major cities of the Caucasus in late 1870s and throughout the 1880s, there was no ethnic struggle in the elections of the city councils because participation in the elections was quite low. Due to growing national consciousness and emerging ethnic concerns among the different groups in the Caucasus, however, the ethnic polarization found its way into council politics beginning in the 1890s.

The favorable conditions that the Municipal Reform created for the Russian Armenians in city dumas of the South Caucasus was reflected in the data. For example, the Armenians won fifty-four seats of the Tiflis city council out of seventy seats in total for the election period of 1887-1890. The remaining seats were shared by the Russians and Georgians -each had eight seats in the city council.[25] Against this Armenian dominance in the Tiflis city council, for the first time a Georgian opposition party was formed to participate in the election of 1890. The famous Georgian nationalist figure, Illa Chavchavadze, held the first chair. The mobilization of Georgian voters yielded the desired results. For the first time, the Georgian party won twenty-two seats, Russian eleven and Germans one, against thirty-eight Armenian seats in the 1890 election. In comparison with the previous election period, this was an important breakthrough for the formation of a strong opposition in Tiflis City Duma. It is important to note that the mobilization of Georgian voters and formation of a strong Georgian party against the Armenian bourgeoisie reduced the power struggle to national stereotypes in the council politics.[26]

At this critical moment, the legal provisions of the 1892 Municipal reform eliminated all of the administrative achievements of the Georgians. As mentioned earlier, the removal of

[25] Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 191.
[26] Oliver Reisner, 'Ethnos and Demos in Tiflis (Tbilisi)- Armenians, Georgians and Russian in the City Duma Campaigns between 1890 and 1897', *Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region* 6 (2015): 5–34.

curia system and property qualification for voting only helped to strengthen the position of the Armenians in the city councils. This new legal maneuver of Tsarist bureaucracy showed its effects in the next election in 1893. Among the seventy-seven seats, the Armenians won fifty-eight seats and rest were shared by Russians, Georgians and Germans, respectively ten, seven and two. The Georgian efforts did not alter the ethnic representation in the Tiflis city council in 1897. Due to this legal obstacle and under representation, the elected members of Georgians both in 1893 and 1897 refused to take their seats in protest.[27]

The ethnic polarization in municipal politics reached its apex in 1897 when the editor of the semi-official newspaper of the Caucasus Governorate, Vasilii Lvovich Velichko agitated for the formation of a Georgian opposition against Armenian dominance in the city council. The political campaign was directed forcefully against the Russian Armenians and found explicit expression in the local press. The result of this political campaign, however, was another defeat for Russian-Georgian opposition party against the administrative dominance of Armenians in the city councils.[28] The result of 1897 election of Tiflis City Duma was as follows; the Russian Armenians received 55 seats, Russians 19 seats, Georgians 10 seats and Germans 2 seats out of 86 seats in total. Velichko expressed his disappointment with his own words and noted that "Needless to say about the small participation of the Russian element in this matter, this is just a monstrous fact in itself, everything that bears the stamp of civilization, created by Russian money, Russian initiative or charity of the Russian government, under the protection of the Russian sword, and suddenly, for many years, the Russian element in the self-government of Tiflis has been such a strange, such an inexplicable minority! This is a mockery...".[29]

[27] Ronald G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (California: Hoover Institution Press, 1988), 141–42.
[28] Suny, 142.
[29] Samvel Karapetian, *Mery Tiflisa* (Erevan: Gitutiun NAN RA, n.d.), 19.

From the Russian-Georgian opposition point of view, the Georgians and Russians should have been represented with higher numbers because Tiflis was the former capital of the Georgian Kingdom and the Russian Empire brought civilization to this region. According to their ideal composition of Tiflis Duma, they offered 22 seats for Armenians, 23 seats for Russians and 28 seats for Georgians.[30] Since the Russian-Georgian opposition party could not alter the composition of city duma, they supported the ethnic representation of each groups.

Complaints about the 1892 Municipal reform and its consequences for the composition of the city councils was not limited to Tiflis and Georgians. In other major cities of the Caucasus, Muslims also reported their dissatisfaction about the administrative problems in their cities. For example, in an anonymous letter in 1896, the Muslims residents of Baku complained about the disregard of Muslim religious and social customs by the Baku City Duma. The Governor of Baku supported Muslims for their concern about the self-administration and reported that the Armenian members in the Baku city council only pursued their own goals by closely uniting and separating themselves from the other groups in the city councils. Consequently, the Governor-General Sheremetev reported to the Imperial center that there were possibilities of forming an equal representation between the Muslims and Armenians in the Baku city council.[31] In another case in November 1896, Sheremetev enquired about the possibility of election of Muslims as city elders since the 1892 reform did not mention anything about it. His concern was that if they did not allow Muslims, then the Baku Armenians would fill the vacancies which he reported as 'undesirable' for the city administration.[32]

[30] Karapetian, 19.
[31] On the Introduction of the City Regulation on June 11, 1892, see RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 2665, ll. 236-237.
[32] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 2665, ll. 252-253.

One might argue that the reason for Armenian dominance in Baku city council derived from their economic power similar to those Armenians in Tiflis, rather than from legal restrictions. However, according to Altstadt's figures, Muslims constituted 85 percent of the electorate in the city. That meant the legal restriction was the main reason for their participation.[33]

Similarly, in the city of Elizavetpol, out of a total of 817 votes, Christians held 445 votes while the remainder were held by non-Christians. Despite the Muslim population surpassing that of the Christians, predominantly Armenians, they were limited to one-fifth of the city council seats. This was because Christians easily constituted four-fifths of the council. The report highlighted that the disproportionate representation of Muslims compared to Armenians in Elizavetpol fostered ethnic antagonism and conflict.[34] Following the enactment of the 1892 Municipal Law, Muslim residents of the Susha district in Elizavetpol submitted a petition to local authorities in 1896, requesting the removal of restrictions on the election of Muslims to the Susha council. The Minister of Interior acknowledged the objection raised by the Muslim community and ruled that Muslims could constitute up to half of the council. This decision provoked a strong reaction from the Armenian community, prompting the case to be escalated to the State Council. Subsequently, the State Council overturned the Minister of Interior's decision and reinstated the limitations on Muslim representation. In 1900, the dissatisfaction among Muslim residents resurfaced, and they presented a new petition to the newly appointed Governor General, this time with hundreds of additional signatures.[35]

[33] Altstadt, 'The Baku City Duma –Arena for Elite Conflict', 51.
[34] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, l. 294.
[35] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 2665, ll. 224-226.

The 1892 Municipal reform created anger and dissatisfaction among Georgians and Muslims against the Russian Armenians in the city councils of the Caucasus. Neither the legal provisions or readjustments nor the political efforts curbed the Armenian dominance in these city councils. When the new Governor-General Golitsyn arrived to the region, he gradually relied on autocratic power to limit Armenian dominance in the city councils.

5.3. From Dominance to Disenfranchisement: The De-Armenization of City Councils in the South Caucasus

The efforts of Georgian and Russian opposition in Tiflis, along with the protests by Muslims in other major cities against Armenian dominance in the city dumas, drew the attention of the new Governor-General, Golitsyn. When Golitsyn examined the issue of representation in the city dumas, he identified several problems. Firstly, the 1892 Municipal Law made it impossible to counterbalance Armenian dominance in the dumas through elections, as Golitsyn personally observed the substantial Armenian economic influence in Tiflis and the restrictions on non-Christians. Secondly, even if Golitsyn proposed amendments to the 1892 Municipal law to limit Armenian representation in favor of other ethnic groups, he believed that the desired outcome would still not be achieved. This is because he categorized Georgians as a people who were unable to handle economic affairs against Armenians and Muslims with their religious fanaticism. Consequently, Golitsyn sought direct control and power on the election and the removal of people from their positions in the city dumas. Golitsyn envisioned a city duma where the ethnic groups, including Russians, were represented proportionately to their population in the city, under strict state control to prevent any harmful individuals or policies.[36]

[36] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, ll. 125-134.

The foundation of the de-Armenization policy was laid when Golitsyn submitted a comprehensive report highlighting the perceived drawbacks of the 1892 Municipal Law. Golitsyn's comprehensive analysis pinpointed the Armenian dominance in local self-government as a significant issue. His report suggested that the existing municipal framework allowed Armenians to exercise disproportionate control over city councils, which he believed was detrimental to the interests of the Russian state. The Tsar's endorsement of Golitsyn's views was pivotal, as he expressed his "unhappiness with the City Status" and highlighted that appointing city duma heads through state authorities "desirable," albeit with a call "to scrutinize these measures first."[37] This initial support set the stage for a series of legislative and administrative modifications aimed at curbing Armenian influence.

On January 27, 1899, Golitsyn communicated his concerns and proposed modifications to the Minister of Interior. He articulated three primary reasons for altering the 1892 Municipal Law. First, he claimed that the native populations, especially Armenians, lacked the necessary culture and civic consciousness for self-governance. This was a subjective assessment, steeped in prejudicial views of Armenians as incapable of fulfilling civic duties responsibly. Secondly, Golitsyn argued that the dominance of Armenians in local administration did not align with state interests. He viewed their control as a catalyst for economic dominance and separatist tendencies, which he deemed anti-state. Thirdly, Golitsyn posited that Armenian dominance bred resentment among other ethnic groups, particularly Muslims and Georgians, thus fostering discontent and potential instability.[38]

In his telegram, Golitsyn suggested two key modifications to the 1892 Municipal Law. The first was to grant the Chief of the civil division in the Caucasus the authority to determine the composition of city dumas, including the number of representatives from each

[37] RGIA, f. 1282, op. 3, d. 239, ll. 139-140.
[38] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, ll. 130-131.

ethnic group. The second proposed modification was the appointment of city heads or prefects by the government, ensuring state control over these crucial positions.[39]

Given the urgency of implementing these modifications before upcoming city duma elections, the Minister of Interior requested immediate, albeit temporary, measures.[40] On March 15, 1899, Golitsyn proposed four measures primarily targeting Armenians. These included excluding Armenians from city election meetings, creating special lists of eligible Armenian candidates who could not exceed one-fifth of the total city duma members, appointing city heads without elections, and applying these rules selectively, especially in Tiflis.[41]

Golitsyn's March 15 telegram is a stark illustration of the administrative strategies employed to disenfranchise the Armenian population. The exclusion of Armenians from election meetings aimed to suppress their political mobilization, effectively sidelining them from crucial decision-making processes. By restricting their eligibility to predefined lists and capping their representation, the state ensured that Armenian influence was systematically curtailed. Moreover, the appointment of city heads without elections represented a significant shift towards autocratic control, undermining the principles of self-governance. This move was not just about limiting Armenian power but also about reinforcing the state's authority over municipal affairs. The selective application of these rules, especially in Tiflis, underscores the strategic targeting of regions where Armenian influence was perceived as most threatening.

These measures clearly reflected Golitsyn's anti-Armenian policies, his desire to control the political activities of Armenians in elections and even the control of every single

[39] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, l. 134.
[40] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, ll. 174-175.
[41] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, ll. 179-180.

member of Armenian origin with the certain numbers in their participation. The Committee of Minister made two important revisions on this draft when they discussed it on 6 April 1899. Although they left the all power to the hands of Golitsyn, they removed the anti-Armenian tone and certain limitation on their participation from the initial draft. According to the revised version, Governor-General was allowed to remove anyone from their positions. If the total numbers became less than two-third of the total composition of city duma after such elimination, the Governor-General was empowered to appoint new members without an election from the elected candidates during the last four years. The Governor-General was also allowed to replace mayors of the provinces. The introduction of these rules was completely left to the will of Governor-General. The Tsar approved these measures on 22 May 1899.[42]

Simultaneously, when Golitsyn introduced his first draft on the revision of the 1892 City Status and self-administration at the beginning of 1899, the editors of the semi-official organ of the Caucasus governorship office, Velichko and Nikoladze released a series of articles in the journal of Caucasus (*Kavkaz)* titled as "the Organic Flaws of City Self-Administration" and brought this issue to the local public.[43] In these articles, they fiercely supported the ethnic representation of each group in line with their ratio of population in the city dumas. By using the motto of 'to each his own' (*kajdoe svoe*), they argued that the proportionality was the only solution to the ongoing problem of self-government in the city dumas of the region. They constantly used the negative words such as 'abusers' or 'unscrupulous exploiters' against Armenians and called their administrative power as a 'plutocratic power' in Tiflis.[44] The editor of the Armenian local newspaper 'the New Review'

[42] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, ll. 203-211.
[43] For more discussion, See Caucasus (*Kavkaz*) No: 18 (20 January 1899), No: 19 (21 January 1899), No: 32 (4 February 1899) and No: 33 (5 February 1899).
[44] Caucasus (*Kavkaz*) No: 18 (20 January 1899), 2-3.

(*Novoe Obozrenie*), Tumanov tried to counter these arguments and argued that ethnic representation of each group only served to fuel ethnic antagonism in city dumas. However, he was unsuccessful in his efforts.[45]

At the beginning of 1900, there were two complementary revisions to the composition of city dumas which further strengthened the authority and power of Golitsyn. These provisions were intended to be implemented in other major cities of the Caucasus to support Non-Christians (Muslims) against Christians (Armenians). Indeed, the Minister of Interior Sipiagin, through his most comprehensive report, directly granted the Governor-general the right to increase the number of the city duma members. The reason is that it was the end of the self-administration in some cities and they granted this power to Golitsyn before the election of new members. They avoided bureaucratic process which could take longer time to process this provision. The second revision was to frame a practical application of 1892 City Status article and expanded its scope to the all cities of the Caucasus. According to the article, the Minister of Interior was allowed to increase the number of Non-Christian members of city dumas in some city dumas of the Caucasus where the locals could not form the four-fifth of the city dumas. However, this caused some controversies and disputes, especially in the cities with Muslim majorities. According to the new revision, "the number of Non-Christians cannot exceed one-fifth of the members of the city dumas, but it is the half of the members of the city dumas in the Caucasus."[46] Through these two revisions, Golitsyn was granted to play the number of the members of city dumas in order to control Armenian dominance in other major cities. He also solved the problems of practical application of limits on Muslims against the Armenians.

[45] Caucasus (*Kavkaz*) No: 32 (4 February 1899), 2.
[46] RGIA, f. 1287, op. 38, d. 3471, ll. 227-229.

Both Golitsyn and Velichko advocated for ethnic representation in the city dumas, emphasizing the inclusion of a strong Russian element. Their efforts, however, only fueled anti-Armenian sentiments and tarnished their own reputations. Golitsyn's aim to exert strict control over Russian Armenians manifested in self-administration policies. In 1902, he expelled Armenians from the Tiflis Duma on allegations of corruption, but the court ultimately dismissed the case.[47]

It is important to note that the entire policy-making process concerning self-administration was initiated and structured by Golitsyn, with full backing from the central authorities in the imperial center. It is probable that the central authorities also favored direct and stringent control over local administration, viewing these regulations as purely administrative matters and part of centralization. As demonstrated in the following section, the issue of confiscating Armenian Church properties became a contentious topic among ministers, with the majority ultimately rejecting its implementation.

5.4. Imperial Authority and Religious Defiance: The Clash Over Armenian Church Property in 1903

In the early 1900s, the Russian Empire grappled with growing unrest in the Caucasus, exacerbated by the determined resistance of the Armenian Church to tsarist policies. Central to this conflict was the proposal to confiscate Armenian Church properties, a measure fervently advocated by Governor-General of the Caucasus, Prince Golitsyn, and Minister of Interior, Viacheslav von Plehve. Golitsyn envisioned an Armenian clergy that was economically and administratively dependent on the Russian Empire, believing that such dependence would suppress nationalist and anti-state activities, and facilitate the colonization

[47] Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 142.

of the Caucasus by Russians. Despite substantial opposition from other ministers, including Economy Minister Sergei Witte and Foreign Minister Vladimir Lamsdorf, who highlighted the potential for increased anti-government sentiment and adverse foreign policy implications, Nicholas II ultimately approved the decree. This decision, grounded in Golitsyn's desire to harness Armenian properties for colonization and reduce the influence of the Armenian Church, led to widespread resistance and further complicated the administration's efforts to control the region.

In 1895, the Governor-General of the Caucasus, Sheremetev, issued a comprehensive report to the Tsar, highlighting concerns about increasing Armenian separatist sentiments and recommending measures to counteract this. Sheremetev proposed transferring Armenian parish schools to the Ministry of Public Education, arguing that this would help mitigate their separatist tendencies and control the Armenian question. If this measure proved ineffective, he suggested confiscating all Armenian Church properties. These recommendations received the approval of the Russian Tsar, and, following the Ministry of Internal Affairs' advice, the State Council also supported this approach.[48] Consequently, on June 2, 1897, the Tsar approved the subordination of all Armenian-Gregorian church schools, with the exception of Theological Academies and Seminaries, to the Ministry of Public Education, placing them on the same footing as other church schools of foreign Christian confessions.[49]

The implementation of this measure soon led to disputes between the Armenian-Gregorian clergy and the educational authorities regarding whether the properties belonging to the schools should also be transferred to the education department. The Committee of Ministers addressed this issue, and on March 26, 1898, the Tsar approved a regulation clarifying that the properties associated with these schools, as legal entities, should indeed be

[48] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 1.
[49] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, ll. 1-1ob.

transferred to the educational department.[50] The regulation mandated that local educational authorities in the Caucasus take all necessary steps to assume control over the properties of the Armenian-Gregorian ecclesiastical and monastic schools and stipulated that any civil disputes over property ownership initiated by individuals or Armenian-Gregorian clergy representatives should be resolved through the established judicial process.[51]

Despite these legal clarifications, the Armenian-Gregorian clergy steadfastly asserted their ownership of the church school properties, striving to counteract the government's efforts to remove primary education from their jurisdiction. They sought to retain control over these properties, arguing that they belonged to the churches and monasteries by right of ownership. Following the Tsar's decree, the clergy initiated lawsuits to reclaim ownership of the properties, under the direction of the Patriarch-Catholicos, often valuing their claims modestly to ensure resolution in lower judicial instances. The outcome of a notable case in Temir Khan-Shura indicated that these disputes might not favor the educational department, prompting the educational authorities to initiate their own legal actions to establish ownership of the contested properties.[52]

Amidst this legal stalemate, Adjutant General Prince Golitsyn proposed the immediate confiscation of Armenian Church properties as the most effective solution to the ongoing conflict. Golitsyn argued that seizing these properties and placing their maintenance under the treasury would economically undermine the Armenian clergy, making them dependent on the government and thereby facilitating governmental influence.[53] He communicated his plan to the Ministry of Interior at the beginning of 1899, outlining steps for the complete transfer of Armenian Church properties, including monasteries, schools, and

[50] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 1ob.
[51] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 1ob.
[52] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 2.
[53] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 2.

financial assets, while also seeking control over all expenditures necessary for the Armenian Church. Golitsyn believed that "such economic and administrative dependence would compel the Armenian clergy to demonstrate loyalty to the Russian government."[54]

While the Minister of Interior, Goremykin, largely supported Golitsyn's plan, he rejected its most extreme aspects and made some revisions, such as confiscating priests' personal homes.[55] Given the sensitivity and significance of the proposed measures, the Russian Tsar, on May 13, 1899, commanded that the matter be considered by a Special Committee, chaired by the State Secretary and real Privy Councilor Pobedonostsev. This committee, including the Ministers of Finance, Agriculture and State Property, Justice, Internal Affairs, and the Commander-in-Chief of the civil part in the Caucasus, was tasked with developing the proposal and presenting their conclusions to the Tsar for his final decision.[56]

After receiving the order from the Russian Tsar, the Minister of Interior, Goremykin, initiated communications with relevant ministries to gather their preliminary ideas before the actual meeting. Among these, the strongest stand came from the Minister of Finance, Sergei Witte. In a telegram dated November 20, 1899, Witte conveyed his concerns about the proposed confiscation of Armenian Church properties, highlighting financial, political, and international issues.[57]

Witte's primary concern was financial. He emphasized the lack of precise information about the Armenian Church's properties, incomes, and expenses, which would complicate the management of these assets and the economic aspects of the confiscation. Politically, Witte, drawing on his experience as a Caucasian, argued that this measure would exacerbate discord

[54] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 3.
[55] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 6ob.
[56] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 8.
[57] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, l. 135.

and enmity among the diverse populations of the Caucasus. He noted that the opposition from the Armenian clergy against the transfer of Armenian schools and properties to the Ministry of Public Education indicated that the confiscation would probably provoke widespread and persistent discontent, leading to undesirable complications.[58]

Internationally, Witte warned that secularizing the properties of the Armenian-Gregorian Church would likely create negative impressions outside the Empire. Such a measure "could destruct the existing discord among the local population and damage the rapprochement of foreign tribes with the Russian nationality, who viewed Russia as a protector of Eastern Christians."[59] Agreeing with Goremykin on avoiding unnecessary radical measures, Witte suggested a gradual approach, emphasizing that immediate confiscation was unnecessary. He reiterated that "there is hardly a real need to confiscate the property of the Armenian clergy since the projected goals could be achieved in other, milder ways with some gradualness."[60]

Witte proposed creating a special commission, similar to one previously established for managing the waqf properties of the Mohammedan clergy in Crimea. This commission would include representatives from the Russian authorities and the Armenian clergy. Witte believed that involving the Armenian-Gregorian clergy in this process would mitigate negative impacts on the Armenian population and clarify that the government's measures were aimed at streamlining property management, not persecuting the Armenian Church. The commission would document the church properties, establish management procedures, prevent misuse of funds, resolve property disputes with the educational department, subject

[58] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, ll. 135-136.
[59] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, l. 137.
[60] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, l. 139.

private donations to financial oversight, and protect the rural Armenian population from the clergy's influence.[61]

Additionally, the commission would facilitate Russian colonization efforts by managing church lands for the benefit of Russian settlers. Witte argued that this approach would allow the authorities to develop further reforms and prepare for the secularization of the Armenian-Gregorian Church's real estate and capital under favorable conditions. To bolster his argument, Witte invited the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Committee meeting, aiming to discuss the political and international aspects of the issue and garner support to prevent the confiscation.[62]

In response to Witte's comments, the new Minister of Interior, Sipiagin, forwarded them to Golitsyn for his final conclusion before the Committee Meeting. Golitsyn, in a telegram dated December 29, 1899, reiterated his support for the confiscation, arguing that it would eliminate difficulties in the Caucasus by reducing the political influence of the Armenian clergy. He claimed that material dependence on the government would direct the clergy's actions toward legal order and compliance with government requirements. Golitsyn dismissed Witte's proposed commission, arguing that it would create new difficulties, lead to endless claims and wrangling from the clergy, and confuse the population, thereby inciting agitation. He also contended that the commission could not address the colonization task effectively, as full government control over the lands was necessary for successful settlement by Russian settlers.[63]

Golitsyn's stance highlighted the government's aim to curb the political power of the Armenian clergy and streamline the administration of church properties. Despite Witte's

[61] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, ll. 140-141.
[62] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, ll. 141ob-142.
[63] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 71, ll. 152-157.

detailed concerns and alternative proposals, Golitsyn maintained that the direct confiscation and government control of church properties were essential for achieving the desired outcomes in the South Caucasus.

In two telegrams dated March 7 and April 21, 1900, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Murav'ev, expressed his reservations about the proposed confiscation of Armenian Church properties ahead of a special meeting of ministers. Murav'ev shared concerns similar to those of Witte, emphasizing that such a project could provoke the Armenian clergy to support the Armenian national movement, thereby further straining the already tense relationship between the Armenian clergy and the Russian government. Additionally, Murav'ev warned that the confiscation would negatively affect Russia's relations with Armenians abroad, particularly those in the Ottoman Empire. The project risked losing the sympathy of Ottoman and Persian Armenians, whose support had been strategically important for the Russian army in previous conflicts.[64] In his April 21 telegram, Murav'ev also pointed out that the Russian government's actions could set a precedent for the Ottoman authorities, who might then justify similar confiscations of Armenian Church properties within their own territories, referencing the Russian example in response to protests from Great Powers.[65]

Following this exchange of preliminary ideas among different ministries, a Special Committee convened on May 8, 1900, to deliberate on the confiscation project. The Committee acknowledged that the illegal activities of the Armenian clergy introduced disorder within the Armenian-Gregorian Church and negatively impacted the Armenian population, fostering a spirit of national isolation and resistance to Russian unification efforts.

[64] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 45, ll. 6-6ob.
[65] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 45, ll. 7-8.

The Committee recognized the need for measures to curtail the clergy's actions but also had to consider the broader implications.[66]

The Committee, guided by the Tsar's instructions, "debated not only the grounds for the proposed measure and its expediency but also its urgency given the current state of affairs."[67] They noted a discordance between the immediate causes of the proposed measure and its potential negative consequences for Russian interests in the Near East. Echoing Murav'ev's concerns, the Committee acknowledged that even a moderated form of the measure would be seen as a significant blow to the Armenian Church. This action would resonate deeply among Armenians within the Empire and in neighboring countries like Turkey and Persia, potentially severing Russia's longstanding ties with the Armenian communities abroad.[68] The Committee underscored that these Armenian populations, living on Russia's doorstep, were crucial in extending Russian influence in Asian Turkey and Persia, regions where Armenian communities played a significant role in international relations. Political opponents could exploit the policy shift, creating future difficulties for Russia.[69]

The Committee also feared that depriving the Armenian-Gregorian churches and monasteries of their property rights might prompt the Turkish government to raise similar issues regarding Armenian Church properties in Turkey. This could lead to uncomfortable diplomatic situations if the Turkish government justified its actions by citing the Russian precedent.[70] Moreover, the proposed measure seemed excessive, targeting the higher clergy and Armenian intelligentsia while also affecting the broader Armenian population's sentiments. The Committee argued that the real strength of the Armenians lay in their diligence, commercial acumen, and the wealth of the intelligentsia, not merely in the church's

[66] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 35.
[67] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 36.
[68] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 36.
[69] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 36ob.
[70] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 37

assets. The church funds, while significant, were not decisive for agitation purposes, as substantial private funds would remain in the hands of the Armenian intelligentsia, who could use them to support nationalist agitation.[71]

The Committee suggested that "proper supervision over the income and expenses of the highest Armenian-Gregorian clergy could prevent the misuse of church funds."[72] They highlighted the lack of accurate information about church property and capital, necessitating first the establishment of control over these assets. This control, either non-existent or poorly implemented, needed to be improved. Additionally, the issue of transferring Armenian-Gregorian church school properties to the educational department could be addressed separately, as it was not directly connected to the broader confiscation proposal. The Committee believed that the complications encountered in transferring school property could be resolved independently of the broader church property confiscation, suggesting a more measured approach to address specific issues.[73]

The Ministry of Internal Affairs had already formulated several recommendations aimed at reforming the administration of the Armenian-Gregorian Church, particularly focusing on the withdrawal of church property from the jurisdiction of spiritual institutions. The Special Committee noted that achieving the desired outcomes might be possible through a series of incremental measures, without necessarily removing estates from clerical control. Central to this approach was the establishment of constant and vigilant oversight.[74] Consequently, the Committee concluded that the proposed measure of transferring property management away from spiritual institutions was prejdevremennuiu (premature).[75]

[71] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 38.
[72] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 38.
[73] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 38ob.
[74] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 39.
[75] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 39.

Minister of Internal Affairs Sipyagin, acknowledging his recent involvement with the issue, expressed a view aligned with the Commander-in-Chief's opinion that no other measure would be as significant as the withdrawal of church property from spiritual jurisdiction. However, recognizing the Committee's stance that the proposal was premature, he agreed to reconsider other potential measures first. If these measures proved inadequate, he suggested revisiting the initial proposal.[76] Contrarily, Adjutant-General Prince Golitsyn insisted on the urgency of the proposed measure.[77]

When the journal of the Special Committee was presented to the Russian Tsar, he returned it to the Minister of Interior on February 1, 1901, with a handwritten note:

> "Prior to the approval of this journal, I want to know exactly what measures, in addition to the proposed, could be taken to stop illegal activities in the issue under consideration by the Armenian-Gregor. the spiritual authorities. I instruct the Minister of Internal Affairs to present his views on relations with the Commander-in-Chief in the Caucasus."[78]

The Tsar requested precise details on alternative measures to curb the illegal activities of the Armenian-Gregorian spiritual authorities. The Tsar instructed the Minister of Internal Affairs to collaborate with the Commander-in-Chief in the Caucasus to present these views.

Following the Tsar's directive, the Minister of Interior communicated with Golitsyn to discuss actionable and cost-effective measures that could yield significant benefits without necessitating extensive legislative work. One measure involved coordinating with the Minister of Public Education to seek the highest approval for resolving disputes over the property of Armenian-Gregorian church schools. These schools, along with their properties, should be transferred from the clergy's jurisdiction to the direct management of the Ministry

[76] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, ll. 40-40ob.
[77] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, ll. 41-42.
[78] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 91.

of Public Education. Another measure proposed establishing a rule requiring that candidates for positions within the Armenian-Gregorian diocesan hierarchy and members of the Echmiadzin Synod be fluent in Russian. The Tsar's will on this matter was to be communicated to the Patriarch upon the announcement of such appointments. This aimed to ensure that church leaders were proficient in the language of the state, facilitating better governance and integration.[79]

Lastly, temporary rules were suggested pending legal revisions for the Armenian-Gregorian clergy. These included requiring local provincial authority consent for appointments to various positions within the spiritual hierarchy, including members of spiritual consistories, abbots, and heads of spiritual educational institutions. Additionally, from January 1, 1902, all clerical work within the Echmiadzin Synod, diocesan consistories, spiritual boards, and spiritual educational institutions was to be conducted exclusively in Russian. This encompassed maintaining metric books, issuing extracts and certificates, and all official communications.[80] These measures reflected a strategic effort to establish control and oversight while addressing immediate concerns without the drastic step of confiscating church properties outright.

On May 31, 1901, Golitsyn replied to the telegram from Minister of Interior Sipyagin. In this telegram, Golitsyn pointed out that he did not see any obstacles to the implementation of the first of the measures proposed by Your Excellency concerning the procedure for the final resolution of disputed cases on the property of former Armenian-Gregorian parochial schools. He emphasized the necessity of implementing this measure as soon as possible. These measures seemed very desirable and, in Golitsyn's opinion, should have been adopted

[79] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, ll. 92-92ob.
[80] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 93.

long ago as mandatory for the clergy, irrespective of the issue currently under consideration.[81]

However, the projected requirement to submit candidates exclusively who were fluent in Russian to higher ecclesiastical positions "would undoubtedly face passive opposition from the Patriarch."[82] The Patriarch might claim a lack of such candidates, thereby not submitting any candidates for approval at all. This would result in vacant diocesan positions being temporarily filled by persons appointed at the Patriarch's discretion, as had been the usual practice. Similarly, vacant Synod positions would remain unfilled. As for the measure requiring spiritual consistories and boards, abbots of monasteries and parish churches, superiors, inspectors, and teachers of spiritual educational institutions to be appointed by their superiors only with the prior consent of local provincial authorities, Golitsyn noted that this could have practical benefits only if accompanied by other measures aimed at a radical transformation of these institutions. This need for transformation had been detailed by the Chief Caucasian Authorities in drafts submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1896 and 1897.[83]

Regarding the requirement that metrication and clerical work in the Armenian-Gregorian ecclesiastical department be conducted exclusively in Russian, Golitsyn anticipated both fictitious and real difficulties due to the low prevalence of Russian language knowledge among the Armenian clergy. The impracticality of introducing Russian for metrication was compounded by the unsatisfactory handling of metric books by not only the Armenian clergy but also other foreign confessions in Transcaucasia. Golitsyn proposed removing this responsibility from the clergy and assigning it to rural and urban public

[81] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, ll. 94-95.
[82] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 95ob.
[83] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 96.

administrations under strict supervision. Although clerical work in the Echmiadzin Synod and Armenian-Gregorian consistories could be conducted in Russian, this requirement might face objections about the lack of funds to attract sufficiently educated Russian-speaking personnel.[84]

In addressing the illegal activities of the Armenian-Gregorian clergy, Golitsyn asserted that the only effective measure was the withdrawal of property management from spiritual institutions and its transfer to state administration. This material dependence on the government would curtail the clergy's anti-state activities and enforce strict law and order. It was especially important for relations with the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, whose arrogance towards the government was increasing.[85]

On July 6, 1901, the Minister of Interior, Sipyagin, presented the results of his discussions with Governor-General of the Caucasus, Golitsyn, on measures to stop the illegal activities of the Armenian clergy.[86] Among all the measures, Sipyagin agreed with Golitsyn that transferring the management of Armenian-Gregorian church and monastery properties from spiritual institutions was the only effective measure. Sipyagin requested the Tsar's approval to submit this measure for final approval through the Committee of Ministers.[87]

On July 26, 1901, the Russian Tsar approved the suggestion to discuss the measure in a Special Committee. To strengthen his claims, Golitsyn prepared another telegram on August 2, 1901, detailing alleged irregularities in the higher educational institutions of the Armenian Church.[88] Golitsyn cited data indicating that from 1898 to 1900, many secular Armenians without any formal education were ordained, while only a few graduates from

[84] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 97ob.
[85] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 98.
[86] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, ll.103-109.
[87] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 109.
[88] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 111.

theological institutions were ordained. He questioned why the Patriarch-Catholicos preferred ordaining uneducated individuals and suggested that theological institutions were being used for nationalist propaganda rather than religious education.[89]

Despite their efforts, the Minister of Interior, Sipyagin, was assassinated in April 1902 by a Socialist Revolutionary, and Vyacheslav von Plehve became the new Minister of Interior. Plehve, a staunch supporter of the Romanov dynasty and a former police director, was known for his harsh measures against revolutionary movements and national minorities. His tenure saw increased oppression and was marked by notable indifference towards the Jewish pogroms of April 1903 in Kishinev.[90]

Golitsyn seized the opportunity provided by Plehve's appointment as Minister of Interior, seeing him as a crucial ally in his campaign for the confiscation of Armenian Church properties. After Plehve's appointment, Golitsyn traveled to St. Petersburg to personally acquaint Plehve with the project. Upon returning to the Caucasus, Golitsyn sent a detailed telegram on May 18, 1902, reiterating that the only effective measure to halt the activities of the Armenian clergy was the removal of church and monastery property from their jurisdiction.[91] He referred to a report by the former Minister of March 23, 1900, and a reply from July 30, 1901, where Sipyagin had also supported this view. Golitsyn emphasized that material dependence on the government would curb the clergy's anti-state activities and enforce strict law and order. He lamented the lack of response to these recommendations, noting that the delay was detrimental to governance in the Caucasus and urgently requested Plehve's assistance in resolving these issues.[92]

[89] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, ll. 111ob-112.
[90] Önol, *The Tsar's Armenians: A Minority in Late Imperial Russia*, 17.
[91] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 114.
[92] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 115.

In 1903, when various ministers and Golitsyn reconvened to reconsider the confiscation proposal, Golitsyn found a significant ally in Plehve. Plehve's immediate approval was critical for securing the Tsar's support. Backed by Plehve and other ministers, Golitsyn's proposal aimed at confiscating both the immovable properties and cash holdings of the Armenian Church and transferring its educational rights to the Ministry of Education. Despite knowing the potential discontent this would cause among Armenians, they pressed forward, viewing the Armenians as the primary adversary in the region. Golitsyn argued that, amid student and worker unrest, the Armenians were an 'irreconcilable and malicious enemy.'[93]

Plehve agreed with reports highlighting issues stemming from the Armenian Church's status and advocated stripping it of its autonomy and privileges, similar to the Georgian Church. This radical measure was seen as necessary to curb the separatist tendencies of the Armenian clergy. The proponents also targeted the Armenian schools run by the Church, which they believed fostered Armenian nationalism. By confiscating the Church's properties and transferring school administration to the state, they aimed to eliminate this influence and replace it with Russian state schools funded by the income from these properties.[94]

Plehve and Golitsyn dismissed concerns about the foreign-policy implications of the confiscation act. They argued that Russia had not benefited from the Catholicos' influence on Ottoman Armenians and suggested that it might be time for Russia to cease supporting them, especially if their revolutionary aspirations for a 'Great Armenia' would ultimately oppose Russian interests. They believed the domestic benefits of the act would outweigh any negative foreign-policy consequences.[95]

[93] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 72, l. 115ob.
[94] Önol, *The Tsar's Armenians: A Minority in Late Imperial Russia*, 19.
[95] Önol, 19.

Publicly, Plehve and other supporters claimed the act would benefit Armenians and the Armenian Church by allowing the central government to manage the Church's vast, poorly managed properties more efficiently. Additionally, by relieving the Armenian Church of its educational responsibilities, the clergy could focus solely on religious matters, which Golitsyn and Plehve considered the ideal scenario.[96]

The proposal put forward by Golitsyn and Plehve encountered significant opposition from other participants at the meeting. Premier Sergei Witte, aware of the deep importance Armenians attached to their church, described it as "the soul of Armenian life." Witte, along with other ministers, including the arch-reactionary Konstantin Pobedonostsev, argued that the proposed measures would only fuel more anti-government sentiment among Armenians and the Armenian clergy. They feared that this would potentially radicalize even those Armenians who had previously complied with governmental orders.[97]

The opposition to the confiscation act also had a critical foreign-policy dimension. Contrary to Plehve's dismissal of the Catholicosate's potential benefits for Russian foreign-policy interests, Russian Foreign Minister Lamsdorf emphasized that alienating the Catholicos could jeopardize Russia's influence over Armenians in the Ottoman and Persian empires. He argued that enacting confiscation would diminish Echmiadzin's ecumenical significance and international influence, thereby weakening a vital asset for Russian foreign policy in these regions. At the meeting's conclusion, the majority (12 against 5) opposed the confiscation.[98]

Despite the majority's opposition, Nicholas II, trusting his like-minded Minister of Internal Affairs and the High Commissioner of the Caucasus, approved the decree in June

[96] Judge, *Plehve: Repression and Reform in Imperial Russia, 1902-1904*, 117–18.
[97] Judge, 119.
[98] Önol, *The Tsar's Armenians: A Minority in Late Imperial Russia*, 20.

1903. One opponent, Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, implored the Tsar to reconsider, but his efforts were in vain. The decree transferred the administration of Armenian Church properties and capital to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture. Although the Armenian Church retained ownership of its holdings, it was prohibited from managing the income derived from them. Additionally, the Church lost its supervisory rights over parish schools, which were handed over to the Ministry of Education. The Church's jurisdiction was limited to properties essential for basic religious services, with funding provided by the government. This decree marked the end of an era in Russian-Armenian relations, effectively repealing the Statute of 1836. Contrary to Golitsyn and Plehve's expectations, this decision triggered widespread Armenian resistance to the tsarist regime, exacerbating the already volatile situation in the Caucasus.[99]

The Catholicos responded swiftly to the approval of the confiscation act with a petition to the Tsar, demanding an audience. Upon learning of the decree's approval, he immediately instructed the Echmiadzin Synod and the Armenian clergy to defy the order. In two *kondaks* dated August 4 and 21, 1903, he emphasized that the provision had been approved without prior consultation with the Armenian Catholicos, a significant departure from past practices under their Viceroys. The Catholicos highlighted that the new order failed to consider many essential circumstances, which he believed should be brought to the Tsar's merciful attention. Consequently, he directed the Synod not to comply with any orders from the Committee of Ministers' new management of Church and Monastery properties and capital, which was approved on June 12.[100]

By September 1903, Catholicos Khrimian was still hopeful for an audience with the Tsar. However, upon the denial of his request, he received orders from St. Petersburg to

[99] Önol, 20–21.
[100] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 43.

comply, under threat of more severe measures. Golitsyn, in a telegram to the Minister of the Interior, reported on the Catholicos's anti-government actions. He alleged that the Catholicos's words to a crowd from Yerevan in Etchmiadzin on August 3, suggesting that the fulfillment of the June 12 command was "a matter of the future" and that the directive could be "reconsidered," showed his reluctance to obey the new law and his role in inciting unrest among the populace.[101] This defiant stance was imitated by the Armenian clergy, who had a vested interest in maintaining control over church property and capital.

To thwart the implementation of the law, the clergy spread false rumours that church property seizures would lead to the sealing of Armenian churches, suspension of divine services, and forced conversion of all Armenians to Orthodoxy. When it came to actual implementation, the clergy not only refused to comply but actively obstructed clerks by hiding financial records, documents, and keys, and concealing cash amounts. In Shusha, for instance, they justified such evasion by citing the "will of the people" and the necessity to obey "their Armenian king."[102]

Golitsyn suggested drastic measures to counter the Catholicos's anti-government actions. He recommended stripping the Catholicos of his political prerogatives as the "head of the Haykan people," confining him strictly to his role as the spiritual leader of the Armenian Church in Russia.[103] Golitsyn argued that a radical reform in the management of the Armenian Church was urgently needed to curb the rising national-political separatism among Armenians, which was being fueled by the weak dependence of the Echmiadzin See and its clergy on the Government.[104]

[101] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 61.
[102] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 61ob.
[103] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 62-63.
[104] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 64.

In response to the alleged anti-government actions and resistance of the Armenian Catholicos to the imperial decree of confiscating Armenian Church properties, the Minister of Interior, Plehve, and Governor-General of the Caucasus, Golitsyn, prepared punitive measures that were approved on October 18, 1903.[105] According to a detailed report by Plehve, the Patriarch not only issued a written protest but also distributed it across dioceses, summoned diocesan chiefs, and forbade them from releasing property documents. He even subjected compliant clergy to ecclesiastical punishments. These actions, Plehve noted, were illegal and constituted an overreach of the Patriarch's authority, which ordinarily would warrant prosecution. However, considering the difficulty of prosecuting an 84-year-old clergyman and the potential for increased Armenian unrest, Plehve suggested that the punishment should be directly decided by the Tsar.[106]

Plehve recommended informing the Catholicos that the Tsar's decision regarding the new management of Armenian church properties was irrevocable and that his petition to cancel the regulations had been denied. Additionally, he proposed several measures to streamline and control the Armenian-Gregorian spiritual educational institutions, the Synod, and Consistories. These measures included expressing the Tsar's displeasure to the Catholicos for his unauthorized actions and declaring his kondaks invalid, confirming the finality of the decision on the new management order, requiring consent from relevant authorities for appointments to spiritual positions, and granting the Minister of Internal Affairs, in agreement with other officials, the authority to propose changes in the position of the Patriarch-Catholicos.[107]

[105] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 170.
[106] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, ll. 170-171.
[107] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, ll. 173-173ob.

Golitsyn, infuriated by the reaction of the Armenian clergy, suggested relocating the clergy from Echmiadzin and Tiflis to reduce their influence. One proposed location for exile was Kutaisi, a predominantly Georgian region, and several clergymen were indeed banished there.[108] Despite the backlash and increased troubles for the tsarist administration, Golitsyn remained steadfast in his stance, continuing to view the Catholicosate as the center of the Armenian revolutionary movement. In correspondence with Plehve in May 1904, he reiterated his belief in the revolutionary threat posed by the Armenian Church.

5.5. Chapter Overview

The push for the confiscation of Armenian Church properties in the early 1900s illustrates the Russian Empire's strategic manoeuvring to consolidate control over the volatile South Caucasus. Governor-General Golitsyn's persistent advocacy for this measure underscores his belief in the necessity of rendering the Armenian clergy economically and administratively dependent on the Russian state. By stripping the Armenian Church of its properties and transferring its educational responsibilities to the Ministry of Education, Golitsyn and Minister of Interior Plehve aimed to curb the Church's influence, which they perceived as a breeding ground for separatist sentiments and anti-state activities.

Despite strong opposition from key ministers like Sergei Witte and Vladimir Lamsdorf, who foresaw the detrimental impact on both domestic stability and foreign relations, Nicholas II sided with Golitsyn and Plehve. The approval of the confiscation decree marked a significant shift in Russian-Armenian relations, effectively nullifying the Statute of 1836 and igniting widespread resistance among Armenians. The Armenian Catholicos, in particular, emerged as a central figure of defiance, issuing directives against compliance and galvanizing the Armenian clergy and populace.

[108] Önol, *The Tsar's Armenians: A Minority in Late Imperial Russia*, 22.

Golitsyn's approach extended beyond mere confiscation; it was part of a broader strategy to weaken the Armenian Church's socio-political power and facilitate the colonization of the Caucasus by Russians. The proposed measures to reassign Armenian clergy to less influential regions and to reform the management of spiritual affairs reflect this intent. However, the execution of these policies, rather than quelling unrest, exacerbated tensions and resistance, further destabilizing the region.

In conclusion, the campaign to confiscate Armenian Church properties reveals the complexities and unintended consequences of imperial policies aimed at national consolidation. Golitsyn's unwavering commitment to subjugating the Armenian clergy and utilizing church properties for colonization clashed with the deeply ingrained religious and cultural identity of the Armenian people. This clash not only intensified anti-government sentiment but also highlighted the broader challenges faced by the Russian Empire in its efforts to impose control over diverse and resistant populations in the Caucasus. The episode underscores the intricate interplay between state power, religious authority, and national identity in the imperial periphery.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has made a series of significant interventions and advancements in our understanding of the Armenian Question in the last quarter of the nineteenth century within the Russian Empire. By engaging with the Tsarist nationalities policies and borderland literature, it has illuminated the experiences of frontier people and the complex dynamics of these regions. The investigation into the human cost has provided a profound understanding of the suffering and resilience of the Armenian population during this turbulent period. Moreover, the examination of the Russian imperial decision-making process and internal discussions has uncovered the complex mechanisms of governance and policy formulation.

The Russian authorities' specific fear of Armenian nationalism played a central role in shaping their approach to the Armenian Question, especially in the broader context of a potentially collapsing Ottoman Empire. That is to say, Russian imperial perceptions, attitudes and responses in the Armenian case were largely moulded by regional factors, rather than being the direct function of a wider 'russification' strategy which, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, in fact took complex, diverse, inconsistent and unsystematic forms across the imperial peripheries. Russian officials were deeply concerned that the emergence of an Armenian national entity across the border in Ottoman territory could threaten imperial stability along the Russian-Ottoman frontier. These fears were further exacerbated by the activities of Armenian revolutionaries, whose cross-border actions, facilitated by porous and difficult-to-control boundaries of the Caucasus, posed a direct challenge to Russian authority in the region. Compounding this anxiety was the involvement of Western powers, whose diplomatic interventions and public discussions elevated the Armenian Question to an international issue. Another interesting aspect of this shift in perception was the extent to which the Russians had ceased to view the Armenians as Christian allies, instead seeing them

as enemy "others." This transformation reflected a broader process in which religion became politicized, leading to ethnic and political identities beginning to overshadow religious affiliations in the way Armenians were viewed by the Russian authorities. This shift only deepened the empire’s anxieties about the loyalties of its Armenian subjects, further complicating Russia’s response to the Armenian Question.

In borderland regions where nationalist movements were strong or where rival empires exerted influence, the Russian Empire often implemented harsher policies. The variations in imperial policies towards different ethnic and religious groups illustrate the Russian Empire's wide range of imperial practice. Their levels of harshness or leniency was often calibrated based on the perceived danger to the empire's integrity and the strategic importance of the region. This multifaceted approach to managing diversity within the empire highlights the complex and often precarious balance between maintaining imperial authority and addressing the aspirations of diverse subject populations. Understanding these dynamics is crucial if we are to comprehend the broader historical processes that shaped modern Russian identity and the empire's legacy.

After being divided among different empires for centuries, the Armenians under Russian rule began to experience a gradual resurgence. The protection provided by the Russian Empire created a safe ground for Armenians to flourish economically and culturally in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Economic stability, increased modes of communication among Armenians, and the introduction of Western education for the Armenian noble elites all contributed to the formation of a "nationality in itself" by the end of the second third of the nineteenth century. An ethnic presence existed that would not be eroded by the efforts of chauvinist administrators or the barely visible but discernible effects of capitalist development.

However, from the 1870s to 1890s, additional pressures from the government, combined with the new forces of the post-emancipation economic environment, encouraged a sense of nationality, a national consciousness, and the first manifestations of political ideologies. By the last decade of the century, Armenia had developed into a "nationality for itself," complete with a national leadership and an incipient mass movement for liberation. For many Armenians, the sense of national identity had become their primary loyalty, replacing older allegiances to religion and traditional lords. For many others, that national sensibility was intimately tied to an overtly socialist worldview.[1]

During the first century of Russian rule in Armenia, the Russian governors' attempts to eradicate social and cultural distinctions in the South Caucasus unexpectedly led not to the assimilation of the local peoples but to the transformation of people. The centralized Russian administration and the expansion of trade and industry facilitated basis for the enrichment of Armenian people which in turn supported their political articulation. Efforts to enforce bureaucratic authority on the traditionally decentralized and adaptable civil order met with resistance from Armenian clergy who opposed the loss of their longstanding privileges. While many members of the traditional Armenian elite became denationalized servants of tsarism, dissenting voices grew louder.

Stephen Riegg insight that: “The nineteenth-century encounter between Armenians and the Russian state yielded a complex interplay of national and imperial identities” is explored and complicated in this thesis. The struggle over these identities was not limited to the central Russian identity but was a dynamic and often contentious issue involving the various ethnic and religious groups within the empire.[2] Growing Armenian ethnic

[1] Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 114–15.
[2] Riegg, *Russia’s Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914*, 2020, 5.

consciousness increasingly confronted the Tsarist authorities' efforts to bring the Russian Armenians closer to the Imperial center. This was most evident in the Tsarist policies of controlling Armenian parish schools, introducing Russian language, history, and geography courses, and tightening the control of teaching anything non-Russian. The national formation of the Armenian people and their sense of their own ethnicity were shaped by contacts and repeated confrontations with other nationalities. Increased contact with Muslims, who had long dominated Armenia’s urban centers, was a prime stimulant to Armenian self-definition.

The 1890s witnessed a significant escalation in tensions between the Tsarist authorities and the Armenian clergy. The Armenian Church, historically a central pillar of Armenian cultural and national identity, found itself increasingly at odds with the Tsarist regime. As nationalism surged across the region, the Tsarist authorities began to view the Armenian Church not merely as a religious institution but as a potent political entity capable of galvanizing Armenian nationalistic sentiments. This era of heightened nationalism prompted the Tsarist authorities to perceive the Armenian Church as a direct challenge to their control. The church's influential position within Armenian society, coupled with its potential to unify and mobilize Armenians, made it a target for repression. The Tsarist regime sought to undermine the church's authority and curtail its influence, fearing that it could become a nucleus for anti-Tsarist activities and Armenian resistance.

In the multi-ethnic context of Tiflis, the boundaries between ethnicities had to be defined and redefined. The traditional relationships of Armenians and Georgians shifted rapidly after 1860. As the agrarian economy increasingly involved the commercial economy of towns, and peasants and lords migrated to the cities, the new proximity with Georgians raised the likelihood of bitter confrontation. Armenians of various classes came face to face with a well-entrenched, financially secure, urban middle class whose members spoke a

different language, went to a different church, and held very different values. Social distinctions between classes were reinforced by cultural and linguistic differences.

This dissertation contributes to the developing scholarship around borderland literature. The South Caucasus exemplifies the sensitive nature of borderlands for the empire, being frontiers that are hard to control. The borderland of the Caucasus was particularly important because it was located adjacent to the two rival Muslim empires, the Ottoman and Persian Empires. This strategic position made the region a focal point of imperial interests and interventions, further complicating the ethnic and national dynamics within it. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the volatile borderlands between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire became a hotbed of revolutionary activity, particularly involving Armenian revolutionaries. These revolutionaries, motivated by a desire for national autonomy and in response to oppressive policies from both empires, engaged in a variety of actions aimed at destabilizing the authority of both Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Their activities included smuggling arms, organizing uprisings, and disseminating revolutionary propaganda, which posed a significant threat to the stability of the border regions.

Both the Tsarist and Ottoman authorities viewed the Armenian revolutionaries with great suspicion and concern, as they recognized the potential for these activities to incite broader unrest among their Armenian populations. This shared anxiety led to a rare convergence of interests between the two empires, who typically were rivals. To counteract the revolutionary threat, both the Russian and Ottoman authorities increased their surveillance and military presence along the border. They established stricter border controls, enhanced military patrols, and suppress revolutionary activities. The heightened security measures included deploying additional troops to key border areas, conducting frequent raids to capture suspected revolutionaries, and establishing fortified positions to prevent cross-

border movement of insurgents and contraband. Despite these efforts, encounters between imperial troops and Armenian revolutionaries were not uncommon. These clashes often resulted in skirmishes that highlighted the persistent determination of the revolutionaries and the challenges faced by the imperial authorities in maintaining control over the restless borderlands.

In several instances, separate operations were conducted by Russian and Ottoman forces to capture or neutralize revolutionary groups. These operations, however, were complicated by the rugged terrain and the local support that the revolutionaries often enjoyed. The shared endeavor to curb Armenian revolutionary activity underscored the deep-rooted fears of both empires regarding the potential for nationalist movements to undermine their territorial integrity and political stability. Despite their efforts, the revolutionary fervor among the Armenian population continued to simmer, contributing to the broader context of ethnic and nationalist strife in the region.

Another important contribution that this dissertation makes to the scholarship is its exploration human stories, the lived experiences of lay Armenian people who were caught between the interplay of the Russian authorities, Armenian clergy, and Armenian political parties. In the late 1880s, the struggle between the Russian Imperial authorities, the Armenian clergy, and Armenian political parties profoundly impacted lay Armenians, particularly in the realm of education. The Tsarist authorities' efforts to control and eventually close Armenian parish schools were driven by a broader agenda of Russification, aiming to suppress non-Russian cultural and religious identities within the empire as well as curbing the infiltration of nationalist ideas into parish schools. This incited considerable concern among Armenian communities, especially affecting schoolchildren and their families who relied on these institutions for education and cultural preservation. In response, the Armenian clergy took

significant risks to maintain educational services clandestinely, conducting secret classes in churches and private homes. This underground educational network became a symbol of resistance, intertwining with the activities of emerging Armenian political parties that sought to counteract Tsarist repression. Consequently, the lay Armenian population found itself in a precarious position, navigating the dual pressures of political oppression and the imperative to sustain their cultural and educational traditions. This period marked a critical juncture in Armenian history, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of the community in the face of systematic efforts to undermine their cultural identity.

Between 1894 and 1897, thousands of Ottoman Armenian refugees who fled to the borders of the Russian Empire endured significant hardships following the intercommunal conflicts and massacres involving Ottoman Armenians, Ottoman authorities, and Armenian revolutionaries. The Hamidian massacres led to widespread violence and destruction, forcing thousands of Armenians to seek refuge in neighboring regions. However, the persistent refusal of both the Russian and Ottoman authorities to accept these refugee families left them in a state of profound destitution. Stranded in border areas, these refugees faced severe shortages of food, shelter, and medical care. Their plight was exacerbated by the harsh climate and lack of resources in these borderlands, leading to widespread suffering. The political reluctance to provide asylum was rooted in the complex dynamics of Russo-Ottoman relations and a mutual desire to avoid exacerbating tensions or encouraging further migration. Consequently, the Ottoman Armenian refugees found themselves trapped in a liminal space, unable to return to their homes or find security and stability in their new, precarious circumstances. This period underscored the broader regional unwillingness to address the humanitarian needs of displaced populations, reflecting a tragic intersection of political maneuvering and human suffering.

The suffering of the Armenian clergy intensified with the Tsarist authorities' decree in 1903 to confiscate Armenian Church properties, schools, and capital. This imperial mandate was met with fierce resistance from the Armenian clergy, who viewed it as an existential threat to their religious and cultural institutions. In numerous locations, the Tsarist authorities resorted to forcefully entering church buildings to seize their assets, often leading to violent confrontations. The clergy, along with their congregations, organized protests and formed human barricades in attempts to protect their sacred and educational establishments. These acts of defiance frequently escalated into local conflicts, necessitating police intervention and resulting in further violence and arrests. The confiscation efforts not only stripped the Armenian Church of its material wealth but also deprived the clergy of their primary source of funding and salaries, leaving many priests and religious workers in financial ruin. This systematic dispossession aimed to undermine the socio-cultural fabric of Armenian communities, as the Church played a crucial role in maintaining Armenian identity and education. The Tsarist authorities' aggressive measures thus inflicted profound economic and psychological trauma on the Armenian clergy and laity, exacerbating the broader struggle for cultural and religious survival under imperial rule.

These interwoven narratives of suffering and resilience highlight the multifaceted challenges faced by Armenian communities at the turn of the century. The Tsarist policies aimed at suppressing Armenian cultural and educational institutions directly impacted the daily lives of lay Armenians, disrupting their educational routines and eroding their sense of security. The clandestine efforts by the Armenian clergy to continue educational activities despite the crackdown on parish schools underscore the community's commitment to preserving their heritage. Simultaneously, the plight of the Ottoman Armenian refugees during the Hamidian massacres illustrates the broader regional instability and the dire humanitarian consequences of political conflicts. The refusal of both Russian and Ottoman

authorities to accommodate these refugees further exacerbated their suffering, leaving them in a vulnerable and precarious position. Lastly, the confiscation of Armenian Church properties by the Tsarist regime not only targeted the economic foundations of the Armenian clergy but also struck at the heart of Armenian cultural and religious life. The determined resistance by the clergy and the ensuing local conflicts highlight the profound impact of these policies on the Armenian community's social fabric. Together, these accounts provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex and often tragic experiences of lay Armenians during this tumultuous period, emphasizing the interplay of political power, cultural identity, and community resilience.

This dissertation illustrates lively discussion between different ministries and governor-generals of the Caucasus on Armenian Affairs throughout the examined years. In his work examining the years between 1903-1914, Onur Onal argues that "the key Russian policies regarding the Russian Armenians were mainly the results of a rational decision-making process based on the deliberations between St Petersburg and Tiflis rather than on personal inclinations of the key individuals."[3] This dissertation highlights instances where the governor-generals in Tiflis proposed policies that generally garnered support from the imperial center, albeit often with modifications towards more moderate measures. This reflects a collaborative but hierarchical relationship where local initiatives were subject to review and adjustment by the central authority in St. Petersburg.

A striking exception to this pattern is evident in the contentious issue of the confiscation of Armenian Church properties in 1903. During discussions on this matter, participants—contrary to the personal efforts and inclinations of Golitsyn—expressed objections to such a drastic step. However, despite this dissent, the decision was ultimately

[3] Önol, *The Tsar's Armenians: A Minority in Late Imperial Russia*, 10.

approved by the Tsar himself, overriding the objections raised during the deliberative process. This episode underscores the centralized nature of imperial decision-making, where even significant objections at lower levels could be overridden by the highest authority in the empire.

The dissertation argues that these dynamics illustrate a nuanced interplay between regional governance and centralized control within the Russian Empire. While governor-generals in Tiflis had substantial influence in formulating policies regarding Armenian affairs, especially in less contentious matters or where their proposals aligned with broader imperial objectives, ultimate authority lay with the Tsar and the imperial bureaucracy in St. Petersburg. This hierarchical structure not only shaped policies affecting Armenian communities but also reflected broader patterns of imperial governance and the exercise of authority across diverse regions of the empire. By analysing these interactions, the dissertation contributes to our understanding of how imperial policies were formulated and implemented in a multi-ethnic context, highlighting the complexities of governance and decision-making within the Russian Empire during a pivotal period for Armenian affairs.

The historical trajectory from 1880s to 1903, culminating in the age of ‘complex questions’ and revolutionary- nationalist struggles, underscores the persistent volatility in the South Caucasus. The political upheaval and cycle of violence, as noted by many Armenians and Russian authorities, continued to plague the region, preluding deep-seated national conflicts and reflecting the legacy of imperial policies. This thesis also contributes to a deeper understanding of the fading and intricate relations between the Russian administration and its Armenian subjects, providing a foundation for further research on the region's tumultuous history and its enduring impact on contemporary studies.

By attempting to curb nationalist manifestations and redefine the roles and influence of the Armenian clergy, the Tsarist government inadvertently triggered a significant backlash, culminating in the controversial project to confiscate Armenian Church properties in 1903. Contrary to the expectations of its proponents within the Tsarist administration, the decision to confiscate Armenian Church properties had far-reaching consequences. Instead of quelling nationalist sentiments among Armenians, it had the unintended effect of galvanizing broad segments of the Armenian population across the empire. The Armenian Catholicos played a pivotal role in this resistance by publicly denouncing collaboration with the Tsarist authorities and rejecting any financial benefits offered as a result of the property confiscation.

The Catholicos's call resonated deeply within Armenian communities, leading to the formation of the Armenian Central Committee for self-defense. This organization rallied Armenians "not to accept a single penny from the Russian government," and "unconditionally obey the decision of the Catholicos and abandon any benefit offered by the government." Otherwise, they would be labelled as "complicit in violence and a traitor to the fatherland."[4]

This episode illustrates how attempts by the Tsarist regime to assert control over Armenian political and religious institutions backfired spectacularly, fuelling rather than suppressing nationalist sentiment and resistance among Armenians. It underscores the importance of religious leadership and community solidarity in shaping responses to imperial policies, highlighting the complexities of governance in a multi-ethnic empire like Russia.

The post-1903 period, though outside the focus of this thesis, saw a continuation of the complex dynamics between Russia and its Armenian subjects. The appointment of Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov as Governor-General of the Caucasus in 1904 marked a shift in

[4] RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 108, l. 273.

policy, aimed at easing tensions in the region. Vorontsov-Dashkov's efforts to return confiscated Armenian Church properties and improve the empire's image in the South Caucasus briefly alleviated the strain. However, the 1905 Revolution and the Armenian-Tatar (Azeri) conflict underscored ongoing national animosities, reflecting the deep-rooted tensions from the political developments of the late 19th century. At the same time, Armenian revolutionary parties, especially the Dashnaktsutyun, remained active, focusing their efforts on the Ottoman Empire, while the Russian authorities, wary of these revolutionary circles, responded with arrests and mass trials between 1909 and 1912.

By the early 1910s, Russian policy toward Armenians shifted as the empire's foreign policy concerns regarding the Ottoman Empire became more urgent. In 1912, Russia began advocating for reforms in the Ottoman Empire, positioning itself as a protector of Ottoman Armenians. This led to a reconciliation with Russian Armenians, who now saw the empire as a potential ally. The Armenian bourgeoisie and Church, previously viewed with suspicion by Tsarist authorities, became aligned with Russian interests in the region. By 1914, many Armenians supported the Russian war effort, hoping for the liberation of Ottoman Armenians. However, the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution brought an abrupt end to this cooperation, casting uncertainty over the future of Russian-Armenian relations.

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