

## The Caucasian Politics of Paul I: A Pragmatic Continuity

Tsvetelina Tsvetkova\*

### Abstract

*This article analyses Russian tsar Paul I's policies on the Caucasus during the complicated period of Napoleonic Wars. It is concerned with strategies he employed in the relations between Russia and North and South Caucasus, which can be considered as pragmatic and in tune with the international realities of the time. Additionally, the article indicates the continuity of the imperial policies on the Caucasus, in contrast to "the cliché" statement that Paul I opposed to everything his mother Catherine the Great had stood for.*

**Keywords:** Paul I, Caucasian politics, Persia, Muslim khanates, Kartli-Kakheti kingdom

### Çar I. Pavel'in Kafkasya Siyaseti: Pragmatik Süreklilik

### Özet

*Bu makale, Avrupa'da Napolyon savaşlarının sürdüğü karmaşık dönemde Rusya İmparatorluğu'nun başında olan Çar I. Pavel'in Kafkasya'ya yönelik siyasetini incelemektedir. Genellikle 'pragmatik' ve 'dönemin uluslararası siyasetinin koşullarına uygun' olarak değerlendirilebilecek olan I. Pavel'in stratejileri, Rusya'nın Kuzey ve Güney Kafkasya ile olan ilişkilerinin seyrini belirledi. I Pavel'in annesi Çariçe Katerina'nın yaptığı her şeyin tersini yaptığı şeklindeki klişe yorumların aksine, bu makale I. Pavel'in imparatorluk siyasetinde devamlılık arzeden uygulamalar yaptığını iddia etmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** I. Pavel, Kafkasya siyaseti, İran, Müslüman hanlıklar, Kartli-Kakheti Krallığı

---

\* Tsvetelina Tsvetkova, PhD in History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Department of Modern and Contemporary History, e-mail: tsvetie\_harlin@yahoo.com. (Makale gönderim tarihi: 12.01.2017, makale kabul tarihi: 23.03.2017)

After the death of Catherine the Great changes took place in Russia's policies in the Caucasus and in the plans for its role in the security strategy for the southern territories of the Empire. Reigned for a short time, Paul I remained in history as a complex figure to analyse – both as a private individual and a statesman, and assessments of his actions resulting from his internal and external policies do vary. This refers also to the Caucasian direction, which is generally considered as neglected at the expense of the matters in Europe that Russia was strongly involved with. However, there are also hypotheses which claim that Paul I's policies in regards to the Caucasus was prescient and based on the realities in the region at the time of his rule. It would be erroneous to perceive his policies being a consequence of Paul I's desire to oppose everything his mother had stood for during her reign or as his personal whims and psychical ability of his mental state (Ragsdale, 1988).

To issue an order for the cessation of Count Valerian Zubov's campaign and to exempt him from service were among the first actions of the new emperor. Shortly afterwards, in June, 1797, the new Shah of Persia Feth Ali Shah, who was crowned after the death of his predecessor and still had not consolidated his position, was inclined to peaceful relations with Russia. Paul I took advantage of this as he changed the tactics of conquest with peaceful means to strengthen his relations not only with Persia but also with the khanates in the Transcaucasus, thus guaranteeing the security of his possessions. Not only a "complete removal of any desire for conquest", but also his readiness "to keep the peace and good understanding with all countries" was declared, renouncing all military plans in the future (Shil'der, 1901: 339). But it soon became clear that these declarations were concerned more with Russia's Caucasian neighbours and were caused by the necessity to transfer military forces to the Balkans and European battlefields in fight against Napoleonic France.

### **Abolition of Caucasian Viceroyalty**

The shifting of the focus from the Caucasian to European affairs became obvious on the ascension of the new emperor, when with the Paul I's ukases from 12 and 31 December, 1796 (PSZRI. Pervoe sobranie. Vol. 24 (6 November 1796 - 1797), 1830, № 17634, №

17702), the Caucasus Viceroyalty ceased to exist and its territories became part of the Astrakhan Governorate. Gen. I.V. Gudovich was appointed the Military Governor of Astrakhan, in which capacity he was placed in charge of the Caucasian possessions of the empire. The abolition of the Viceroyalty did not mean that Paul I would neglect the Caucasian affairs or that he would underestimate their significance for the security of the empire. As a proof of this, one can cite an important document that outlined the Caucasian policies of the Russian emperor at the beginning of his rule; namely the rescript to General I. V. Gudovich dated 05.01.1797 (Dubrovin III, 1886: 199–201). The first issue that the rescript was concerned about was the security situation in the Caucasus, indicated by the necessity of maintaining order on the frontline along the rivers Terek and Kuban. The aim was not only to protect Russian possessions there but also to “restrain savages”, i.e. the mountain peoples who, lived in close proximity and had to be kept in “humility and obedience” so as not to be able to cause any troubles and hindrances to the Russian authorities. In order their loyalty to be assured, obtaining *amanats*<sup>1</sup> and keeping them in the towns nearby was recommended. *Pristavs*<sup>2</sup> were to be appointed for the mountaineers, who, by means of “flattery”, could maintain the loyalty to Russia of the latter. Up to this point, there really was not any serious deviation from the instructions given by Catherine II to Russian authorities in Caucasus, regarding the mountain peoples. Once again the necessity of sowing seeds among Caucasian tribes of a strong attachment to the Russian Empire was underlined in order to establish peaceful and rational relations between Russians and Caucasians, as well as to ascertain the least possible involvement of the latter with the affairs of the former, not to cause any antagonism between two parties. The traditional policies of keeping *amanats* and appointing *pristavs* were also retained.

---

<sup>1</sup> Amanats (from Arabic) are family members of local rulers and princes held in captivity by Russian authorities during the Russo-Caucasian Wars to ensure the loyalty of the families and clans in question.

<sup>2</sup> Pristav – A Georgian word for administrators that Russia appointed for Caucasian peoples.

The civic office of “pristav-in-chief” was introduced in August 1800, with a view to facilitate General-Lieutenant K.F. Knorring’s activities in the region, who at the time was the Inspector of the Caucasian Corps, governor of Astrakhan and chief of the civil unit. The Collegium of Foreign Affairs appointed for this position the Collegiate Counsellor Makarov, whose responsibilities were connected with the “management of the affairs of the Kalmyks, Kabardians [Circassians of Kabarda], Turkmens, Nogais and other Asian peoples”. (PSZRI. *Pervoe sobranie*. Vol. 26 (1800–1801), SPb., 1830, № 19536). The St Petersburg’s desire to exercise “mild administrative impact” (Kobahidze, 2012: 23) over the local population, carefully adapted to the local circumstances, could be seen in the instructions given to the pristav-in-chief in September 1800. The Asian peoples [including the North-Caucasian tribes] were declared “subjects of the Russian Empire”, and as such, possessing equal rights as those of existing population of Russia, including an equal right to be protected in accordance with imperial laws. In the imperial decrees issued during the time of both Catherine II and her successors, the pristav-in-chief was instructed to be careful in his attitude to the natives and to be responsive towards them and their needs, making sure that his actions should not cause any offence, distress or aggression towards the natives. This was for the aim of “persuading them to behave diligently, to obey His Imperial Majesty, and to show unwavering loyalty to the Russian throne” which would be for their own benefit, and the tranquillity and prosperity of the hordes and people” (AKAK I, 1866: 728, Doc. № 1072).

There was also realisation in St Petersburg that non-intervention in social and economic lives of the Caucasian tribes was one of the means for gaining their trust, hence a degree of stability in the region. For instance, when Knorring informed the emperor in May 1800 of a hostility flared up between Kabardian Circassians and Ossetians, the emperor advised the inspector to interfere as little as possible in the affairs of the mountain peoples, for they were rather vassals than subjects of the empire (AKAK I, 1866: 581, Doc. № 764). However, the Caucasian people’s hostility was directed (Chechens, Kabardian Circassians, etc.) at Russians in the form of attacking their houses and plundering their property, then the pristav-in-chief was instructed to take measures at all costs, including addressing their

elders or leaders in order to prevent such acts in the future. If the intended outcome had not been achieved then the military governor should be informed for the plunders to be stopped (AKAK I, 1866: 730, Doc. № 1072). Regarding the attacks taking place in the frontier regions and the Caucasian fortification line, however, the emperor's decision was rather explicit – attack on the raiders with the necessary number of troops for successful fulfilment (AKAK I, 1866: 726, Doc. № 1066).

According to the imperial decrees of the time, another area in which the *pristav*-in-chief Makarov and the leaders and elders of the mountain peoples were supposed to collaborate was gathering of information about possible communication between North Caucasians and the Ottoman or Persian authorities. Makarov was to be informed if there was any agitation among the local population, as spies were sent into these populations to report such incidents to the Astrakhan military governor and to the Collegium of Foreign Affairs (AKAK I, 1866: 729, Doc. № 1072).

The *pristav*-in-chief was in charge of Caucasians not only in the Astrakhan Province, but also of those who resided beyond the confines of the Caucasian Line the so-called “*zalineinye*” (behind the Line). He oversaw the activities of the *pristavs* appointed for the Kabardian Circassians and nomad tribes in Ciscaucasia, who had previously been included within the administrative responsibilities of the commander of the Caucasian Line. To carry out the task at hand more effectively, the *pristav*-in-chief was granted the following sweeping powers: to oversee *pristavs*' nominations and to submit them to the Collegium of Foreign Affairs for approval; to regulate relations and disputes arising between native peoples and Russian settlers; to consider the most important complaints and conflicts between the mountaineers in accordance with their traditions and manners, and to bring criminal claims to the attention of the Military or Civil Governor, where trials would take place under the Russian legislation (AKAK I, 1866: 728, Doc. № 1072).

This management model proved to be rather problematic in the sense that it complicated administrative relations and, in some cases, caused overlapping of areas of responsibility between various departments and institution with thin Imperial structures in the region, resulting in considerable delays in decision-making process.

As a result, when Alexander I came into power, a various changes were initiated in the management of mountain peoples' affairs. However, during the initial period of the Caucasus region's integration into the Russian Imperial administration, it is especially noticeable during the rule of Paul I, the Russian-Caucasian relations were based in the main on the principle of vassalage, which, because of the strategy of non-intervention in the social life of the North-Caucasian tribes, which was supposed to guarantee the decrease of Caucasians' hostility towards the Russian authorities and to increase the level of security and stability in the region. For that reason, the governance and policing of the mountain people's affairs was predominantly conducted by the closest cordon commanders – the commandants of fortresses on the Caucasian Line, built either in the foothills or in the mountains close to the Georgian Military Road (Kobahidze, 2012: 25).

### **Paul I's Federative Projects**

Turning back to the rescript from 05.01.1797 to General Gudovich, the instructions concerning the Russian policies in Transcaucasus were also important. Here too were not any considerable differences with or deviations from Catherine the Great's politics, i.e. maintaining good relations with Georgian kingdoms on the basis of the historical traditions and standing agreements, as well as supporting them in their relations other pro-Russian oriented countries in the region. This was in order to unite their strengths if and when necessary, against Russia's foes without the need for Russia to send armed forces. In some aspects, this may seem as a move away from Catherine the Great's policies and some of these instructions can be interpreted as a retreat from her politics of conquest. But in fact, this was a far more farsighted approach and was with the aim of building up a coalition to repulse attacks against the Russian Empire without the latter having to mobilise forces.

Paul I went even further with his plans by his suggestion of establishment of a federative state (Dubrovin III, 1886: 200), made up of those countries that were benevolent towards Russia, would recognise its patronage, and obey its rulers while the Russian Emperor would not interfere in their internal affairs and that no taxes or duties would be demanded. The only thing that Paul I insisted on

would be their loyalty. This proposal can be considered as a continuation of Catherine II's plans for establishing of a Christian state in Transcaucasia, which would be fully under Russian influence. But Paul I developed it further by not putting any limitations regarding the religious identity of the states in question and focusing instead on creating a broader alliance, both territorial and political, with pro-Russian oriented countries. This federation would be an effective unification of entities totally different in religious and ethnical aspects, but it would grant them an internal independence, while simultaneously having the opportunity to have a say in the making of foreign policy.

Degoev takes the view that this proposal was indicative of Paul I's rejection of Catherine II's traditional doctrine to consider Heraclius II as a main Russian ally, and his Kartli-Kakheti kingdom as a main geopolitical "place d'armes" (Degoev, 2001: 48). Murel Atkin, on the other hand, is of the opinion that Paul I shares Catherine's concept of giving Georgia<sup>3</sup> a key role of in Russian policies in the Caucasus, which, to him, was demonstrated by the maintenance of Russian protectorate over Kartli-Kakheti, and the desire of several neighbouring Georgian kingdoms to join and cooperate with it in collective defence policies (Atkin, *Russia*, 1980: 52). However, any idea of a federation, in which Georgia was not assigned a leading place, should be considered as giving a new meaning to the opportunities for the expansion of the Russian influence and rejection of the restrictions, imposed by stereotypes. At a time when Agha Mohammad Khan was preparing for new military actions in Transcaucasia, Paul I quite reasonably assessed, that an action had to be taken to win over local Muslim rulers to Russia's side in order to deprive Persia of allies in the region for the Persian army to be more effective. At the same time, with the establishment of a federative country, albeit under Russian control, the security of Russia's southern territories would be guaranteed, without having to allocate

---

<sup>3</sup> From the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the present-day Georgia was not a single territorial and political unit, as it consisted of several small kingdoms. Kartli-Kakheti kingdom, which was situated in the middle course of Kura River, most often was called in historical literature and sources as "Georgia". Hence, it will be referred to as such throughout this paper.

any additional financial and human resources. The new entity would not only be able to take care of its own defence, but it would be also be a buffer in case of an attack on Russia while simultaneously guaranteeing Russia's positions in the region.

Within the framework of these plans, Gudovich was advised to ensure the loyalty of the Shamkhal of Tarki, the ruler of Dagestan (most probably it referred to the Avar khan – a.n.), the khans of Baku, Derbent as well as those of other khanates, situated in Western Pre-Caspian region with the purpose, when necessary, of them jointly resisting Shah's forces. That was precisely why the Shah had to be persuaded that the nature of Russian-Persian relations must be positive and mutually non-threatening, for if he had decided to threaten Georgia or the countries in the Western Pre-Caspian region, or the Russian trade in the area, It had to be made quite clear to the Shah, that he would be an enemy of Russia and that he would put himself in harm's way. This line of thinking sounds like a threat and did not correspond with the public announcements of a peaceful approach between the two countries. However, in the end, with Agha Mohammed Khan's death, Paul I decided to withdraw the Russian troops from Georgia in September 1797 completely, despite Heraclius's opposition to the idea. This action can be considered as part of the aspiration not only to establish real peaceful relations with the new Shah, but also as a part of the new politics toward the Ottoman Empire, with which Paul I had declared to maintain amity with, for "in any case we will restrain the suspicions of the Sublime Porte that we are looking for an occasion to quarrel with it." (Dubrovin III, 1886: 201). Later on, he became the initiator of signing an unprecedented treaty of alliance with the Ottoman Empire within the framework of second Anti-French Coalition.

### **Paul I's politics toward the Muslim Khans**

Paul I changed Russia's attitude toward the Muslim khanates in Transcaucasia, preferring "persuasion and reconciliation" over "aggression and threats" (Atkin, *The Pragmatic*, 1979: 61). He encouraged closer relations with them and showed respect and concern about their interests. For instance, in contrast to his mother, he received a delegation from the Karabakh Khanate – the most important local ally of Georgia in the region, which was assured of



the Russian ruler's goodwill and his wish for cooperation. Later on, when the khans of Nakhchivan and Shaki expressed willingness to request Russian protectorate, they were encouraged by Russian officials and informed that Paul I probably would accept their requests (Atkin, *The Pragmatic*, 1979: 63; *Russia*, 1980: 54). Even though the emperor was inclined to support Georgia in its territorial claims, he, at the same time, considered that the Georgian king had to be restrained from arrogant behaviour and unjustified aggression toward his neighbours (AKAK I, 1866: 94, Doc. № 1). In order to achieve his political and economic aims in the region, Paul I preferred the establishment of regional alliances and cooperation to imposing aggressive methods aimed at acquiring new subjects, which often led to short-term loyalty and perfunctory vassality. As he himself wrote in January 1801, "it is better to have allies interested in alliance, than unreliable subjects." (AKAK I, 1866: 414, Doc. № 522). The thing that Paul I wanted in return for this 'benevolent' attitude, as previously mentioned, was military support and the building of a regional coalition in order to repel potential attacks by Persia or the Ottoman Empire. This would guarantee the security of Russia's southern territories while releasing a lot of resources needed by Paul in Europe. At the same time, the lack of direct intervention of the Russian army in an eventual conflict would contribute to the maintenance of peaceful relations with the two main rivals for power in Caucasus, and also would allow Russia to offer its good offices as a mediator in future negotiations. Thus, not only would it secure political influence, but it would also have its mechanisms to exert pressure in the fight for control over the Caucasian region through establishment of a coalition or a federal entity.

While Paul I was striving to gain the good will of the Muslim khans, he did not give up on collaboration with the Armenians. On the return of Zubov's army, 500 Armenians moved to the Caucasian Line (Butkov III, 1869: 299). Meanwhile their settlement in Georgia was stimulated by the purpose of contributing to its stabilisation and to defend it better. Armenian *meliks*<sup>4</sup> and their subjects from the

---

<sup>4</sup> Melik (from Arabic – "tsar", "ruler") is the title of a feudal ruler, a descendant of old local Muslim and Christian noble families in the territory of today's Republic of Armenia and Republic of Azerbaijan. In the Armenian

Muslim khanates or from Persia were urged to settle in Kartli-Kakheti as land, internal autonomy, and financial recourses were guaranteed for them. The Georgian king had to be convinced of how beneficial for his country was the settlement of a Christian population, which would put up resistance to Muslim attacks ravaging Christian peoples (AKAK I, 1866: 94-95, Doc. № 1). In summary, not all and old prejudices had been overcome and the trust towards and cooperation with the Christian populations residing on the territory of Russia's enemies continued to be part of the political schemes of Russian authorities despite Paul I's aspiration for establishing enduring and reliable alliance with the Muslim rulers of the Caucasus.

### **The Incorporation of Georgia within the Russian Empire**

The situation in Caucasus as well as in Europe was very dynamic during the period analysed in this paper and the nature of relations were shifting continuously, concerning the positions of the main actors of the region; Russia, the Ottomans, Persia, and Georgia. This prompted Paul I to rethink parts of his plans. In the beginning the dealings with the new Shah, Feth Ali, were in the framework of politics of peace, as declared by the Russian emperor, though this in no way meant that Paul I was prepared to compromise the two main questions in the Russian-Persian relationships: the security of Georgia and the free Russian trading through Persian territory (AKAK II, 1868: 1145-1147, Doc. № 22; Dubrovin III, 1886: 290-291). In the formal correspondence the Shah was addressed by his name and title prior to his inauguration— Serdar Baba Khan, which obviously showed not only the following of some traditions from the time of Agha Mohammad Khan, who used to call his nephew by this name (AKAK I, 1866: 113, Doc. № 34), but also his equal positioning amongst other leaders. Moreover, during this initial period Feth Ali seemed like a

---

tradition, the title “melik” corresponds to “knyaz” (ishhan) in that of Russian. In Georgia this was a title mainly for heads of towns (Tbilisi and other cities) or villages (*starshina*). It was used mainly among the Armenian population. The same title was borne by the governors of Somhiti province (historical region in Georgia in the southern part of Kartli; it also can be found as a historical region in Transcaucasian Armenia, conquered by Georgia in XII century).

weak ruler whose attention for a long period of time was distracted by internal conflicts. Despite this, Paul I treated the Shah in the same way as he did the local khans - he accepted that the Shah had his own legitimate interests and tried to find a middle ground for mutually beneficial bilateral relationship. By employing different moves and actions to ease the tensions in the relationship with Persia, such as the freeing of Persian traders from prison etc., Paul I tried to win the benevolence of the Shah (Atkin, *The Pragmatic*, 1979: 65). Despite the measures taken to regulate the relations, soon the tensions rose again, caused by the endless demands of the Shah towards the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom, where the internal political situation worsened to such extent that every external threat could put the existence of the Georgian state under question.

After the death of Heraclius II in January 1798, his son George XII inherited the Georgian throne - "a man not without merits, yet being not subject of any comparison to his father." (Degoev, 2001: 49). The country was bankrupt and serious feudal wars and infighting for the inheritance of the throne began. Brothers of the new king challenged his royal entitlement and sought help from Georgia's neighbouring countries, allowing, in the process, for external intervention in the internal affairs and adding to the growing chaos, insecurity and destabilization of the state<sup>5</sup>. George XII himself had neither the authority nor the strength to fight his enemies. The internal situation deteriorated even further because of the incessant external threat caused by raids staged from Daghestan. The Ottoman Empire continued to maintain relationships with some of the Dagestani khans through the pasha of Akhaltsikhe and by doing so, forced Georgia to become dependent.

In 1798 a direct threat came from the Shah to "go to Georgia with his glorious flags, to ruin the country for second time and to show his rage to its people" (Dubrovin III, 1886: 287) if George had not recognised him as his ruler. Russia was in danger of losing its influence in the region and of allowing her rivals to occupy the growing power vacuum caused by the deepening crisis and helplessness of the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom. This forced Paul I to

---

<sup>5</sup> See also: Lang, D. *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy, 1658–1832*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1957.

review his own ideas on non-intervention and minimal participation of the Russian resources for the defence of Russia's position in the Transcaucasia. George XII's letter to Paul I dated July 1798 clearly demonstrated this danger, as in addition to asking for the recognition of his right to rule and his son David to be the heir to the throne after him, the Georgian king wanted to know categorically if he would receive support and help from Russia, because in the case of negative answer he would have to turn towards another country (Dubrovin III, 1886: 238-239). The response from the Russian emperor was swift as he issued a decree on 23 February 1799 to send a Jaeger regiment under the command of general lieutenant Lazarev, which arrived in Tiflis in November same year. On 18 April 1799, Paul I issued an emperor's charter (AKAK II, 1868: 1147, Doc. № 24) and established George XII as king of Kartli-Kakheti and recognised his son David as heir to the throne by referring to the Article II of the Treaty of Georgievsk from 1783. By the same charter, the state advisor P I Kovalenskiy was sent to Georgia as the new Russian representative, whose powers surpassed those of a typical diplomat. He was made an advisor to King George XII to observe Russian interests in Georgia, and keep an eye on Persian deeds (Hachapuridze, 1950: 48; AKAK I, 1866: 93-96, Doc. № 1; "O roli Rossii v podderzhanii politicheskogo ravnesiya v Evrope"). Dubrovin wrote of him as someone who was obsessed with power and his self-importance that "he went to Tiflis not like mediator, but like a governor or a master." (Dubrovin, *Georgiy XII*, 1867: 89). Such a personality and a desire to control entire Georgia, while obeying only the Russian emperor, got him involved in many intrigues, but also led to the deterioration of his relationship with General Lazarev, obstructing the stabilization of the political situation in Georgia. In addition, the recognition of David as heir to the throne escalated the animosity in the royal family and led to the escape of Prince Alexander (Heraclius's younger son) to Persia where he was very well accepted by the Shah, who seized a perfect opportunity to use the this claimant to the Kartli-Kakheti throne as a weapon to fight against Russia and her intervention in the internal affairs of Georgia (Hachapuridze, 1950: 49).

Around the same time, a growing number of reports about a possible Persian attack on Georgia, led Russia to take a few preventative measures in the spirit of Paul I's politics i.e. to reach a

peaceful agreement or to exercise diplomatic pressure on Persia to quit its plans but without ending in military collision. In February 1800, by deploying a special mission, the true intentions of Baba Khan were to be determined, while he also had to be “convinced” that hostile actions toward Georgia and insults toward Russia would have negative consequences for Persia, and that even the Ottoman Empire, which at the time was in alliance with the Russians, would not remain neutral in an adverse development (Dubrovin III, 1886: 291). In July the same year, with Lieutenant-General Knorring commanding the Caucasian Army, orders were given to prepare for the Georgian defence. At the same time Paul I was hoping that the rumours for military preparations would put the Shah off his intentions and would create an opportunity for negotiations between the Georgian King and Shah to determine the latter’s exact demands, for there was a suspicion whether the actual object of the Shah’s conquest was Georgia or just a neighbouring state, because in the case of the latter everything could be agreed without military actions. Furthermore, flanks of the Caucasian Line were strengthened to prevent attacks from the mountaineers (AKAK I, 1866: 106–107, Doc. № 22). In the end, there was not any direct Russian-Persian confrontation but with the help of the Russian forces, Georgian forces repelled the attack by the Avar khan, Omar Khan, in November 1800, which brought an end to another Lezgin attempt to devastate Georgian lands.

The incapability of Georgia to govern its own defence and political life, weakness of its government, and on-going internal conflicts led to the decision made by George XII to join its country with the Russian empire. On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1799 he authorised Giorgi Avalov (Avalishvili) and Eleasar Palavandov (Palavandishvili) to depart for Petersburg and together with the permanent representative of Georgia for the Russian court Garsevan Chavchavdze they presented a plan to unite Kartli-Kakheti kingdom with Russia as „ ...the kingdom of Kartlians is to be accepted as belonging to the Russian state with same rights as other regions situated in Russia...” and „ ...not to break in the dynasty the line of my royal title, but to be handed down the generations as it was at the time of my ancestors.” (Tsagareli II, Part II (1762–1801), 1902: 287, Doc. № 277). Evidently, George XII wanted some sort of internal autonomy or that his kingdom to be

accepted as a governorate to keep the nominal status of the Bagratid dynasty.

Russia was put in a position where it didn't have many options for reaction. Rejection of the Georgian king's request would have meant another of her regional rivals to finally conquer the bankrupt and crisis-ridden state, causing a real danger for the security of the Russian territories in the area. For Paul I and for his closest aides, it was evident that offering only protection could not guarantee stability of Georgia and Russian interests. One Russian statesman who strongly supported the increased participation of Russia in Georgian affairs and later the absorption of the kingdom into the Russian empire, was Chancellor Feodor Rostopchin. He saw Georgia not only as "place d'armes" to attack the Ottoman Empire but also as an opportunity to become a trading centre with India (Atkin, *Russia*, 1980: 47). In 1800, it was Rostopchin who was chosen by Paul I to negotiate the conditions for accession of the Georgian kingdom to Russia. Another key person who also influenced the important decision-making process was the Lord Chamberlain, Count Apolos Musin-Pushkin, who with the permission of the Russian Emperor carried out a research into the natural resources of Georgia. To facilitate the transfer of the mines in Georgia to Russian control, the Count met King George XII and the later shared his thoughts about a union with Russia. In his reports dated 1800, Musin-Pushkin counted the potential benefits of the incorporation of Georgia into Russia, some of which were: the abundance of its natural resources and its favourable climate; strengthening of the Caucasian Line and keeping the peace with Caucasian mountaineers who would find themselves pressed from both sides; possibilities for developing trade with Persia and India, and using the Georgian territories as a military "place d'armes" against the Sultan or the Shah in the event of a possible breakdown of relations with either the Ottomans or Persia (Butkov II, 1869: 464-465). Musin-Pushkin also joined the delegation negotiating with Georgian representatives.

On 24<sup>th</sup> June 1800, George XII sent a note to Petersburg via his ambassadors Chavchavadze, Avalov and Palavandov, in which he stated six "begging" points to the Russian emperor. Three of these were the most important as they stated the desire of the Georgian king for his country to become part of the Russian Empire, to

preserve its dynasty as a ruling dynasty of the Georgian territories within the boundaries of the empire, and additional army forces to be sent to protect his country from the neighbouring hostile states, including Persia (Tsagareli, II, Part II (1762–1801), 1902: 292-294, Doc.№ 283). In Petersburg, probably with the help of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs, these six points, which were to be used to form the framework of the new contract between the two states, were broadened to sixteen. On 17<sup>th</sup> November, they were submitted to Paul I on behalf of George XII and were approved by the Russian emperor in two days. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November, a charter (with the additional points) was sent to the Georgian king declaring that his application was officially approved by the Emperor (AKAK I, 1866: 179–181, Doc. № 121). In summary, through the additions to the new document the Georgian king surrendered to the Emperor his legislative powers and gave up any involvement in the income of the kingdom. All subjects of the Georgian king including peasants, clergy, traders and craftsmen were to receive equal rights and to follow the same laws as the Russian subjects, i.e. full incorporation of Georgia in the legislative frame of the Empire (Volhonskiy, 2011: 52). The only things that George XII was asking for was to be left in charge and his heir's right to the Georgian throne with the title king to be recognised, which would mean that the Georgian territories would have a special status and be ruled by a representative of the Emperor contrary to the presence of the members of the dynasty of the Bagratids. Besides the maintenance of the royal family, the Georgian king asked for a 6.000-strong army to be sent to protect Georgian territories. Article 11 was also of interest, as it stated that if the Georgian territories were to be attacked by hostile neighbours, the act of their defence would be carried out by clarifying in detail as to which territories the borders of the Georgian kingdom extended in ancient times (AKAK I, 1866: 180, Doc. № 121). Here Heraclius' ambitions for expansion transpires, which George XII didn't have the power to realise, but he, like his father, hoped that they could be achieved with the help of the Russian empire, and under Russia' rule Georgia might even restore its own territorial superiority. In fact this matter of "heritage" could stimulate Russian aspirations for further expansion in Transcaucasia. The remaining points were related to rebuilding the fortification system and the construction of a new one

in the Georgian territories, and also the running of the mines. It concerned the question of defence from potential attacks from Persia or the Ottoman Empire, as well the relations with the khans of the Erevan and Ganja, which were loyal to the Georgian king.

This document as a whole or its wording in respect of the future status of the Georgian territories did not really make it very clear whether some autonomy would be preserved for Georgia or if the country would be completely incorporated in the Russian empire. The only thing that hinted that the Georgian kingdom would have a special status was the preservation of the royal title and the possibility that the king and his heirs to rule the Georgian territories in some form within the boundaries of the empire. Because, after the incorporation of Georgia into Russia, the only person that could make such a decision in this direction would be the Russian Emperor – a self-ruling monarch, the future of Georgia and its royal dynasty would depend on him.

After signing the “begging” points on behalf of George XII, a bilateral contract had to be signed between Russia and Georgia to strengthen the incorporation. However this didn’t happen because the Georgian king was very ill and died on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1800 without being able to witness the return of his ambassadors from Petersburg. Paul I had understood the delicacy of the situation long before this event and was seriously worried about finalising the last points for the incorporation. On 15<sup>th</sup> November he sent an inquiry to Knorring asking how big an army could be sent to take over Georgia and required to be stationed there without compromising the safety of the Caucasian Line and weakening the defence against the attacks by the North Caucasian mountaineers. He was also worried about George XII’s health and foresaw his imminent death, and ordered Knorring to announce in Georgia that there would not be a new heir to the throne without the Russian Emperor’s approval (AKAK I, 1866: 178, Doc. № 116; 181-183)<sup>6</sup>.

Volhonskyi writes that if taken out of the historical context of the events in question, this document could be viewed almost like an

---

<sup>6</sup> After the death of General Lazarev, King George XII issued a circular to the inhabitants of Kartli-Kakheti kingdom, announcing the emperor’s will. – See: Tsagareli, II, Part II (1762–1801), 1902: 296–297, Doc. № 286.



order to occupy Georgia, and Paul I's instruction not to appoint a new heir to the throne without his approval could similarly be seen as direct intervention in the internal affairs of the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom. But in this case the situation was different, George XII himself created a precedent with the recognition of the Georgian king by the Russian Emperor, and secondly it was him who asked for Russian armies to be sent for he was facing a real threat of an attack on his country (Volhonskiy, 2011: 54-55). Whichever way Paul I's intentions are interpreted, his worries were understandable within the framework of the instability of the internal political affairs in Georgia that could suddenly change in a direction, which would be unfavourable for Russia. Because of this, the Russian Emperor wanted to be assured that the process of the incorporation of the Georgian kingdom would end successfully. As a result of this it was likely that as early as 18<sup>th</sup> December 1800 a decree was issued for the incorporation of Georgia into the Russian Empire and but it was not announced until George XII signed the 16 articles, which, as mentioned earlier, did never happen. On 18<sup>th</sup> January 1801, the decree (PSZRI. Pervoe sobranie. Vol. 26 (1800–1801), 1830, № 19721) was officially published, and only then did it transpire that this was not a bilateral agreement but simply a document that announced the immediate acceptance of Georgia “into subordination”; deployment of the Russian army to protect law and order, and defend its territories from external attacks; when the kingdom was incorporated all legal rights would be preserved, and the advantages of this development for all new subjects of the Empire. The process of incorporation could possibly be derailed by the heir to the Georgian throne, David, if Paul I had not been assassinated before accepting legally authorised Georgian representatives. Hence the process had to be completed by the new Russian Emperor, Alexander I.

### **Conclusion**

The Caucasian policies of Paul I were aimed at a new approach towards relations between the countries in the region. Although this may not have been the primary concern, he did not entirely neglect this new direction he wanted to follow. It was more likely that Paul I was trying in a very pragmatic way to secure the defence of his home

front by using less of his resources while dealing with the important European affairs. In respect of the North Caucasian peoples, he undertook the only possible resolution that would guarantee peace and calm in the region at the time: non-intervention in the internal affairs of and relationships between and within the peoples and tribes, giving consideration to the local traditions and customs. The aspiration for cooperation and his attempts at establishing devotion to the Russian throne in the Northern Caucasus led to mistrust in the communication and restricted Russian administrative intervention, but the main purpose was more to do with monitoring and reconciliation. Paul I's plan to create a federal state in Transcaucasia, which would repel attacks from Russia's rivals and strengthen the defence of southern Russian territories, proved impossible to implement, as the differences between separate state formations appeared to be insurmountable and embedded in old traditions. And as history shows us countries with very different political, cultural and religious traditions brought together in a political union, do not tend to last long. In the case of Georgia and Russia. Paul I's plans changed because of factors independent of him and his policies. Suggestions that Georgia's incorporation into Russia occurred because of the Russian Emperor's desire to compensate for the loss of Malta (Butkov II, 1869: 463), or of the French-Russian plans to realize the Indian quest (Bezotosniy, 2008: 45-51; Anderson, 1966: 28-52), or of the understanding that Georgia was the place where a united Russian-French army could have been set up (Atkin, *The Pragmatic*, 1979: 70), can only be taken into consideration as additional arguments, for these possibilities had no real significance for the decision made.

However, we can certainly say that the question of the security of Russia and possible threats from regional rivals were of great importance. Undergoing a period of deep internal political and economic crisis, the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, was an easy target for attacks and occupation by its neighbours. Russia would simply not allow one of its longstanding ally in the Caucasus to be overrun or controlled by a rival, for that would not only be a direct threat to the Russian borderland, but it would also lead to a serious damage to the prestige and reputation of the empire and its pretensions for having political influence in the Caucasian region. To my mind, these were

the reasons that should be considered to be the main reasons as to why Paul I accepted George XII's demands for his country Georgia to be incorporated into the Russian Empire. As for the entire Caucasian policy of Russia, this action certainly became a starting point for new conquests in the region to come. Despite not having sufficient amount of time to develop his future strategy on the Caucasus in this direction, it can be said that Paul I did not take a step back from the policies of his mother Catherine II and that he did not reduce the significance of the Caucasus in Russia's political and economic plans. The difference between their approaches was that while he did not underestimate threats and benefits of the new strategies, Paul I preferred to refrain from the idea of using force and military expansion as a weapon to strengthen Russia's position in the region.

### **Bibliography**

*Akty, sobrannye Kavkazskoy arheograficheskoy komissiey.* Vol. 1–12. Tiflis, 1886–1904.

Anderson, M., *The Eastern Question*, N.Y., 1966.

Atkin, M., *The Pragmatic Diplomacy of Paul I: Russia's Relations with Asia, 1796-1801*, IN: *Slavic Review*, Vol. 38, № 1 (Mar., 1979).

Atkin, M., *Russia and Iran 1780–1828*, Univ. Of Minnesota Press, 1980.

Bezotosniy, B., *Napoleonovskie plany Pavla Petrovicha. Nesostoyavshiysya geopoliticheskiy proekt veka*, V: *Rodina*, 2008, № 7, 45–51.

Butkov, P.G., *Materialy dlya novoy istorii Kavkaza s 1722 po 1803 god*, Chast' 1–3. SPb., 1869.

Degoev, V., *Bol'shaya igra na Kavkaze: istoriya i sovremennost'*, M., 2001.

Dubrovin, N., *Georgiy XII posledniy tsar' Gruzii i prisoedinenie ee k Rossii*, SPb., 1867.

Dubrovin, N., *Istoriya voyny i vladychestva russkih na Kavkaze*, Vol. 1–6, SPb., 1871–1888.

Hachapuridze, G., *K istorii Gruzii pervoy poloviny XIX veka*, Tb., 1950.

Kobahidze, E. (sost.), "Administrativnaya praktika rossiyskoy imperii na Central'nom Kavkaze s kontsa XVIII v. do 1870 g. (Na materiale Osetii)", *Sbornik dokumentov*, Vladikavkaz, 2012.

Lang, D., *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy, 1658–1832*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1957.

“O roli Rossii v podderzhanii politicheskogo ravnovesiya v Evrope. Rossiya i Evropa v XVIII veke”, *Diplomatiya Rossii: ot posol'skogo prikaza do nashih dney*, Istoriko-dokumental'niy departament MID Rossii, [http://www.idd.mid.ru/inf/inf\\_49.html](http://www.idd.mid.ru/inf/inf_49.html) (15.06.2014)

*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii (PSZRI)*. Sobranie 1-3. SPb., 1830-1916.

Ragsdale, H., *Tsar Paul and the Question of Madness: An Essay in History and Psychology*, Greenwood Press, 1988.

Shil'der, N., *Imperator Pavel Perviy*, SPb., 1901.

Tsagareli, A., *Gramoty i drugie istoricheskie dokumenty XVIII stoletiya, odnosyaschiesya do Gruzii*, SPb., 1902.

Volhonskiy, M., “Princip real-politik v rossiysko-gruzinskih otnosheniyah XVI – nachala XIX vv.: zametki na polyah odnoy izvestnoy knigi”, *Kavkazskiy sbornik*, M., 2011, Vol. 7 (39), pp. 38–59.