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**The Formation of a New Model of Governance in the Caucasus: The Caucasian Viceroyalty and the Role of Mikhail Vorontsov (1844–1845)**

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**Keywords:** Mikhail Vorontsov, Russian Empire, Administrative Reforms, Caucasus, Center–Periphery Relations, Imperial Governance, Caucasian Viceroyalty.

*1845 played a pivotal role in the history of the Caucasian region, marking the beginning of a new stage of development. This stage was closely associated with Prince Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov, who was appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus and Commander-in-Chief of the Separate Caucasian Corps in 1844. The decisions adopted and measures implemented during 1844–1845 laid the foundations for the formation of a new model of governance in the southern borderlands of the empire. In this context, the establishment of the Caucasian Viceroyalty can be viewed as the administrative mechanism through which the Russian Empire succeeded in overcoming the crisis of regional governance and ensuring the final integration of the Caucasus into the imperial system.*

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**Էդուարդ Զոհրաբյան**

Երևանի պետական համալսարան, Պատմության ֆակուլտետ, Հայաստանի հարակից երկրների պատմության ամբիոնի վարիչ, պ.գ.թ, դոցենտ

**Հայկ Մխոյան**

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**Իրինա Բադալյան**

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**Հիմնաբառեր՝** Միխայիլ Վորոնցով, Ռուսական կայսրություն, Կովկասյան փոխարքայություն, վարչական բարեփոխումներ, Կովկաս, կենտրոն-ծայրամաս հարաբերություններ, կայսերական կառավարում:

*1845 թ. առանձնահատուկ դեր խաղաց Կովկասյան տարածաշրջանի պատմության մեջ՝ բացելով զարգացման նոր փուլ: Այդ շրջափուլը սերտորեն կապված էր իշխան Միխայիլ Սեմյոնովիչ Վորոնցովի անվան հետ, որը 1844 թ. նշանակվեց Կովկասի փոխարքա և Առանձին կովկասյան կորպուսի գլխավոր հրամանատար: 1844–1845 թթ. ընթացքում ընդունված որոշումներն ու իրականացված միջոցառումները հիմք դրեցին կայսրության հարավային ծայրամասերում կառավարման նոր մոդելի ձևավորմանը: Այս համատեքստում Կովկասյան փոխարքայության ստեղծումը կարելի է դիտարկել որպես այն վարչական մեխանիզմը, որի միջոցով Ռուսական կայսրությանը հաջողվեց հաղթահարել տարածաշրջանի կառավարման ճգնաժամը և ապահովել Կովկասի վերջնական ինտեգրումը կայսերական համակարգին:*

**Формирование новой модели управления на Кавказе: Кавказское наместничество и роль Михаила Воронцова (1844–1845 гг.)**

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**Ключевые слова:** Кавказское наместничество, Михаил Воронцов, Российская империя, административный, Кавказ, отношения центр–периферия, имперское управление.

*1845 год сыграл особую роль в истории Кавказского региона, ознаменовав начало нового этапа его развития. Этот этап был тесно связан с именем князя Михаила Семёновича Воронцова, назначенного в 1844 г. наместником Кавказа и главнокомандующим Отдельным Кавказским корпусом. Принятые решения, и меры, осуществлённые в 1844–1845 гг., заложили основы формирования новой модели управления на южных окраинах империи. В этом контексте создание Кавказского наместничества можно рассматривать как административный механизм, посредством которого Российской империи удалось преодолеть кризис управления регионом и обеспечить окончательную интеграцию Кавказа в имперскую систему.*

\* \* \*

**Introduction:** In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the appointment of Mikhail Vorontsov in the Caucasus was linked to a series of political events at the beginning of the century and revealed the necessity of reorganizing the imperial administrative apparatus. On September 12, 1801, the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was officially annexed, negotiations for which had begun as early as 1799 during the reign of Paul I. The following year, Mikhail Vorontsov was appointed as a lieutenant in Saint Petersburg, while Alexander I appointed Pavel Tsitsianov, a Russian general of Georgian origin, to the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus. Tsitsianov replaced General Karl Knorring, who had been appointed by Paul I but was considered ineffective by Alexander I's advisors.

At the very beginning of the century, Vorontsov played an important role in subjugating Imereti - the largest province of western Georgia - and its king, Solomon, to the Russian Empire. In May 1804, Vorontsov accompanied his commander, Tsitsianov, toward Yerevan with the aim of suppressing Persian dominance, after which he was awarded the Order of Saint George of the Fourth Class and promoted to the rank of captain [Rhineland A., a) 1990, pp. 15-17].

Already in 1823, Emperor Alexander I appointed General-Count Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov as the Governor-General of Novorossiya. It was during this time that Vorontsov realized the imperial administration was not uniform throughout the entire empire; for instance, the Russian administration established in Siberia differed significantly from the administration in Bashkiria. The latter, in turn, differed from the administrations in the Caucasus, Finland, or Poland [Ibid., p. 87].

One of the main goals of Alexander I's (1801–1825) foreign policy - to ensure Russia's complete hegemony in the Caucasus, a process initiated by Peter I and continued by Catherine II - was also adopted by Nicholas I (1825–1855). The difficult military-political situation that had arisen in the Caucasus demanded specific measures aimed at transforming the governance system by concentrating both military and civil power in a single hand. Georgia, which had been part of the Russian Empire for over four decades and served as its main stronghold in the region, was in a dire state as a consequence of the failed

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administrative reforms carried out by Senator P. Hahn. Public discontent had spread across Kakheti, Guria, Imereti, and several other regions of Transcaucasia. On the other hand, there was the Caucasian War and Shamil's theocratic state in the Northeast Caucasus, which, having reached the peak of its military and political power, aimed to launch raids into Eastern Georgia and Kabarda. During this period, in the Black Sea region, the Adyghe managed to deal a series of devastating blows to the Russian army units stationed along the Black Sea coast. In fact, the fragmented administration of the Caucasus was in a critical condition due to a total lack of resources, personnel, authority, and trust. Nicholas I understood that certain changes in governance were necessary to control this strategically significant region and to win the local population over to the side of the Russian authorities.

During his visit to the Caucasus in 1837, the Emperor personally witnessed the extremely deplorable state of the region. Later, in one of his private conversations with S. Safonov, a member of Nicholas I's inner circle, he confessed: "After my journey to the Caucasus in 1837, I saw that other measures had to be taken to govern the region. The situation was deteriorating. ... Mikhail Semyonovich was the only person I had for the Caucasus." [Archive of Prince Vorontsov, 1892, b. XXXVIII, p. 385].

In 1840, the Emperor established a temporary supreme governing body, the Committee for the Affairs of the Transcaucasian Oblast (which was the successor to the Committee for the Organization of the Transcaucasian Region established in 1837), to govern the Caucasus and oversee the administration. The Committee became the highest executive and legislative body for the Caucasus. In the same year, the "Institution for the Administration of the Transcaucasian Oblast" was approved, according to which the Chief Administration of the Transcaucasian Oblast was established. Pursuant to this very document, the region was divided into the Georgia-Imeretia Governorate and the Caspian Oblast [Munaev V., 2010, N 10, p. 105]. Thus, the general imperial principle of governance was extended to the Caucasus, which, however, had a negative impact on the Russian administration since many laws were practically inapplicable in the region. Due to the unique characteristics of these territories, the autocracy was forced to search for appropriate methods of governance to ensure the unity of the empire. To this end, special institutions were created for certain peripheries, isolated from the system of supreme national institutions - the State Council and the Committee of Ministers - giving a distinct character to the administration of these territories. The national peripheries also possessed independent institutions of local administration in the form of a Governor-General or a Viceroy. It was during this period that the core competencies of the Caucasian Viceroy were defined and consolidated. In fact, for Nicholas I, the creation of the Viceroyalty in the Caucasus signified the strengthening of state centralization.

The idea of introducing a viceroyalty belonged to Privy Councillor and State Secretary Mikhail Pozen, the manager of the Temporary Sixth Section of His Imperial Majesty's Chancellery, which had been created to develop legislative proposals for the administration of Transcaucasia. Pozen found himself at the helm of the Caucasus administration, while Minister of War Aleksandr Chernyshev officially held dominance within the committee. All proposals for organizing the region's administration in the capital received the support of Emperor Nicholas I and were consolidated by a decree addressed to the Senate on

August 30, 1842. In the same year, the powers of the Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus were significantly expanded. Between August and October 1842, Pozen laid the groundwork for the “Instruction Directed to the Chief Administration of the Transcaucasian Oblast,” which was approved by the Emperor in November of the same year. According to the “Instruction,” the Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus became the practically sole ruler of the region: “All parts of the administration, without exception, are entrusted to him; he is granted full authority to oversee and resolve all matters that do not require a new law; he is authorized to appoint and dismiss all officials, even those of the highest rank, and to expel harmful individuals from the oblast.” Following the unsuccessful campaigns of Andrey Grabbe, the Emperor sent the following instructions to the main military and civil commander of the region, Adjutant General Neidhardt: “I do not want any conquests, and I consider the thought of them criminal. I want to consolidate our dominance over the region, where I deem it extremely unstable and, for now, uncertain.” Thus, during the years 1842–1844, a unique triumvirate was formed in the governance system of the Caucasus, consisting of Minister of War Chernyshev, the head of the temporary section of His Imperial Majesty’s Chancellery Pozen, and Commander-in-Chief Neidhardt. All three figures were endowed with broad powers and enjoyed the trust of Nicholas I, who, on one hand, stood outside this triumvirate, but on the other hand, served as the main linking element of this arrangement of forces [Urushadze A., 2025, N 4, pp. 152-153].

In 1844, Pozen proposed creating a new, special form of governance in the Caucasus. His plan envisioned a structure similar to the one existing in the Kingdom of Poland, with the creation of the position of State Secretary for Caucasian Affairs. The project was approved by the Emperor, and its implementation was entrusted to M. Pozen [Blieva M., 2003, N 9, p. 39]. The defeats of the Russian troops on the Caucasian front and the failures in the sphere of administrative governance forced the government to act with particular caution regarding the choice of a viceroy. The Emperor’s choice fell upon the Governor-General of Novorossiia, Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov, whose candidacy had been proposed by A. Orlov, one of the Emperor’s close associates. The appointment of Count Vorontsov as the successor to General Neidhardt was received with joy both in Russia and in the Caucasus.

However, it should be noted that according to the memoirs of the official A. Kharitonov, Nicholas I initially offered Neidhardt’s position to General D. Gerstenzweig, but he declined, citing illness. Subsequently, Minister of War Chernyshev proposed the candidacies of Generals D. Osten-Sacken and N. Dolgorukov, but neither of them satisfied Nicholas I. Only after this was the candidacy of M. Vorontsov put forward [Urushadze A. 2025, p.153]. Having chosen Count Vorontsov, Emperor Nicholas I, in a rescript addressed to him dated November 17–29, 1844, wrote, among other things: “I consider it necessary to choose as the executor of my absolute will a person who is entrusted with my complete, unrestricted confidence and who, along with certain military virtues, combines civil experience, which is equally important for this task. Knowing your zeal for the welfare of the state, I am convinced that you, as the Commander-in-Chief of the forces in the Caucasus and as my representative with unrestricted political authority, will not refuse to fulfill my expectation” [AKAK, Vol. X].

By a tsarist decree dated December 24, 1844, M. Vorontsov was appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus and Commander-in-Chief of the Separate Caucasian Corps, after which he arrived in Saint Petersburg on January 2, 1845, to define the scope of his powers [Blieva M, 2003, N 9, p. 40]. For comparison, it is worth

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noting that in 1844, there was only one other viceroy active in the Russian Empire: I. Paskevich, the Viceroy of the Kingdom of Poland. In fact, the position of the Caucasian Viceroy implied almost unlimited powers. Furthermore, Vorontsov simultaneously retained his former position as the Governor-General of Novorossiya, which was a unique phenomenon in the history of the administrative governance of the Russian Empire.

The draft rescript addressed to the Viceroy of the Caucasus received His Imperial Majesty's signature on January 30, 1845. Confirming his confidence in Mikhail Vorontsov regarding the command of the troops in the Caucasian region as well as the administration of the civil branch, the Emperor noted: "...regional authorities as well, on all matters beyond their competence, shall approach you with their submitted petitions without applying to the ministries. Subsequently, at your own discretion upon your arrival at the site, you shall examine and present for my confirmation whether to completely eliminate the influence of the Commander of the forces on the Caucasian Line over the civil administration of the region, or to restrict this influence within certain limits. All those matters which, according to the current order, have been presented by the Chief Administration of the Transcaucasian Krai to the ministries for resolution, are left to you to resolve on the spot. Furthermore, you are authorized to take all measures arising from the circumstances on the spot, reporting immediately to me both your actions and the reasons prompting you to take them." [AKAK, Vol. X, No. 18679]. It should be noted that as a result of a conflict that arose during the discussion of the draft rescript, Pozen was dismissed from his post because he emphasized a close connection between the office of the Viceroy and that of a Governor-General, a view that Vorontsov, however, did not share [Blieva M., 2003, N 9, p. 40].

Simultaneously with the creation of the viceroyalty in the region, the supreme specialized institutions of the imperial capital were also centralized. In February 1845, the temporary office of His Imperial Majesty headed by Pozen was closed [Khlynina T., Krinko E., Urushadze A., 2012, p. 57]. By a Senate decree dated February 3, 1845, it was established that concurrently with the viceroyalty, a supreme body - the Caucasian Committee - would be opened in the capital under the leadership of Minister of War A. Chernyshev, which was tasked with discussing all matters relating to Transcaucasia and the Caucasian region. To handle matters relating to the Caucasian Committee, a special office was established, which was also to manage the correspondence concerning the most subordinate reports addressed to the Viceroy of the Caucasus [PSZ RI, 1845, Vol. 20, Sec. I, No 18702]. The jurisdiction of the Caucasian Committee included matters of administrative governance, judicial proceedings, finance, trade, industry, land ownership, agriculture, resettlement, education, and other issues. Matters of a military-political nature remained outside the competence of the Caucasian Committee and were considered the purview of the Tsar and the Minister of War [Blieva M., 2003, N 9, p. 40].

Following the issuance of rescript No. 18679, Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov arrived in the Caucasus on March 24, 1845. Two days later, on March 26, he announced in a report dispatched from Tiflis: "After obtaining all possible information from General Neidhardt regarding all the specific details of this region, I accepted command of the Separate Caucasian Corps and assumed the office of Viceroy of the Caucasus"

[AKAK, Vol. X, No. 300]. Tiflis became the center of the viceroyalty, having served as the center of the Russian administration in Transcaucasia since the annexation of Eastern Georgia (the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti) to the Russian Empire at the beginning of the century, namely in 1801. Despite the fact that the head of the imperial administration held the title of “Commander-in-Chief of Georgia” and the supreme administrative body bore the name “Georgian Supreme Government,” the authority of the Tiflis administration extended to all territories of Transcaucasia subject to the Russian Empire. Nonetheless, with the establishment of the viceroyalty in the region, the importance of Tiflis as an administrative, economic, and cultural center grew steadily [Khlynina T., Krinko E., Urushadze A., 2012, 60].

Even after the creation of the viceroyalty, Nicholas I noted during a dialogue regarding the region with S. Safonov: “Listen to me and remember well what I am about to say. Do not judge the Caucasian region as a separate kingdom. I desire and must strive to unite it with Russia by all possible means, so that everything forms a single whole. The local inhabitants must know and feel that they depend on the North, that the rays of the local sun fall upon them, and that they receive their life and well-being from a single luminary on an equal basis, just like the other parts of the vast Russian Kingdom. You, however, by wanting to grant free trade to the Transcaucasian region, wish to make its inhabitants confident that they receive all benefits not from Russia, but from abroad; and instead of uniting the region, you are striving for disunion”[Arkhip knyazy Vorontsova, 1892, Bo. XXXVIII, pp. 387-388.]. Subsequent developments, however, demonstrated that for the Caucasian region and its inhabitants (including the military and officials), the creation of the viceroyalty fostered a sense of autonomy, the visible manifestation of which was the consolidation of the region’s special status within the imperial territory of Russia.

In his memoirs, Prince Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov, who witnessed the events in Tiflis during the winter of 1845–1846, remarked on the existing society and Vorontsov’s activities: “After the patriarchal, almost bourgeois and bureaucratic atmosphere of Tiflis society under the command of General Neidhardt, the arrival of Prince Vorontsov was bound to impart a different character and structure to this society. The mass of new elements that arrived with the Viceroy brought new concepts, views, and aspirations to Tiflis society” [Dondukov-Korsakov A., P. II, Ch. VII, Bo. 6, 1908]. This observation demonstrates that Vorontsov’s appointment was not merely an administrative change but also had a significant impact on the transformation of Tiflis’s social and cultural life. It should be noted that, for the officials who preceded Vorontsov in the Caucasus, particularly those who approached the region from a broader imperial strategic perspective, the importance of the Caucasus was primarily determined by strategic considerations. At the same time, the Caucasus was not yet an integrated region; its population was characterized by considerable linguistic, ethnic, religious, social, economic, and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, Vorontsov demonstrated that even under such complex conditions, it was possible to pursue a rational and effective regional policy aimed at stabilizing administrative governance and strengthening imperial authority.

Vorontsov’s approach to governance played an important role in the broader policy of incorporating the Caucasus into the Russian Empire and gradually integrating the region into the imperial system. He sought to ensure that Russian officials earned the respect of the local population, while those who were unable to command such respect were removed from office. Vorontsov considered it important that representatives of the imperial administration, through their conduct and activities, convey to the local population an impression of the advantages of Russian civilization [Rhineland A., b) 1975, p. 232]. However, during the

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initial period, relations between the local population and the newly arrived administrative and military circles were often tense. Nevertheless, the complex military and political situation prevailing in the region gradually compelled both sides to restrain their differences and relegate minor disagreements to the background.

In his memoirs, the Russian statesman Sergei Witte notes that he does not personally remember the period of Prince Mikhail Vorontsov's tenure as viceroy, as he was born during the final years of Vorontsov's administration. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that Vorontsov was highly respected in the Caucasus and, in his activities, primarily distinguished himself as a skilled civil administrator [Vitte S., 1991, p. 8]. At the same time, Vorontsov was also compelled to combat abuses committed by officers of the Separate Caucasus Corps, as well as by officials responsible for affairs relating to the Caucasus and Transcaucasia. While still in St. Petersburg, having familiarized himself with the situation in the region, he had "become firmly convinced that arbitrariness prevailed in the Caucasus and that everyone, without exception, was protecting unlawful actions." In order to receive information about unlawful actions committed by his subordinates, Vorontsov ordered a yellow box to be placed near his office so that anyone could submit anonymous complaints. Many such cases were personally investigated by the prince, and some of his decisions at times even contradicted the laws then in force. When he was once reminded of this, he replied: "If it were necessary here merely to apply the laws, the Emperor would have sent here not me, but the entire collection of laws" [Savelev A., 2011, No. 1 (33), 26]. Vorontsov understood that the legislation of the Russian Empire at the time was often imperfect and sometimes contradictory. Consequently, in certain cases, he relied not so much on the law as on his own understanding of justice. Of course, the yellow box also received false denunciations, and the viceroy was not always infallible in his decisions. Nevertheless, this initiative had a positive effect, forcing embezzlers and corrupt officials to be wary of being exposed. Moreover, in the course of his administrative reforms, Vorontsov took into account the region's national and social characteristics, convinced that each problem required thorough and comprehensive examination.

At the theoretical level, Vorontsov argued that the Russian Empire would not suffer from tolerating and preserving local particularities. In practice, he supported those local traditions which, although they might differ from Russian customs, did not contradict fundamental Russian notions of justice. His willingness to contribute to the gradual formation of a new national-imperial society within the broader Russian social framework was apparently one of the most important features of Vorontsov's policy of governance [Rhineland A., b) 1975, p. 233]. Rhineland further emphasizes the significance of Vorontsov's activities, arguing in his study of the prince that during Vorontsov's years in office, Russian imperialism transformed the southern part of the Russian Empire from a relatively empty frontier region into the Empire's "garden," "breadbasket," and "health resort." As a result of this process, the Caucasus was gradually incorporated into the economic and cultural exchanges of the modern Western world [Rhineland A., a) 1990, p. 3].

The civilizational development of Tiflis is also addressed by the contemporary researcher Olga Zakharova, who, in her study devoted to Vorontsov, analyzes the city's development under the influence of Russia and notes that, during these years, a multilayered cultural environment had emerged in Tiflis. In her characterization, “the frock coat and the chokha, the European hat and the chador, the caravan and the carriage, the Italian aria and the distinctly Georgian polyphonic song, the polonaise and the lezginka, European shops and the Oriental bazaar” coexisted and intertwined in the city, imparting a distinctive diversity and character to local life [Zakharova O., 2001, p. 339].

Of particular interest is Vorontsov's right of direct appeal to the Chairman of the Caucasian Committee, Chernyshev, and to Emperor Nicholas I, as well as the Viceroy's decisive and consistent defense of his prerogatives. He attempted in every possible way to prevent the intervention of ministers located in distant Saint Petersburg into Caucasian affairs, as a result of which he very often found himself in constant conflict with the ministers over administrative rights, privileges, and various issues.

In one of M. Vorontsov's letters, the Viceroy's categorical position is expressed: “The proposal from Saint Petersburg regarding participation in the reform of the current order of civil affairs here frightens me greatly; they will create confusion.” The Viceroy did not accept ministerial tutelage even in cases where it had been approved by the Emperor. Decisively repelling the direct “service-hierarchical” attacks of the ministers and chief administrators, the Viceroy left them with only one means to exert pressure and exercise control over him—the Caucasian Committee [Urushadze A., 2011, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 98]. The creation of the Committee definitively demarcated civil and military authority in the Caucasian region. V. Butkov, a protégé scribe of A. Chernyshev who had experience in governing the Caucasus, was appointed as the new head of the Committee's affairs in place of Pozen. The Committee's functions began to include the resolution of questions in the civil sphere that fell outside the Viceroy's powers. Military authority now belonged to the Viceroy, the Minister of War, and the Emperor [Munaev V., 2010, p. 108.]. Nevertheless, the Caucasian Committee never did become a special regional government for the Caucasus. During Vorontsov's administration, the Committee played the role of the Caucasian Viceroy's St. Petersburg representation. One of the most important functions of the manager of Caucasian affairs was the presentation of the ministers' opinions and positions during the sessions of the Caucasian Committee. In fact, if the manager possessed certain skills, he could present a minister's opinion on a given issue in a light that was either favorable or, conversely, unfavorable to the Viceroy.

Sometimes, the Caucasian Committee voluntarily surrendered certain spheres of governance entirely to the Viceroy. In particular, educational issues presented to the Caucasian Committee were referred to the Viceroy for resolution [Khlynina T., Krinko E., Urushadze A., op. cit., p. 59]. For example, in a report addressed to Chernyshev dated April 20, 1848, Vorontsov noted: “Following the 1840 reform of the civil administration in the Caucasus, the educational administration has remained in its imperfect state due to meager and insignificant resources, as well as a lack of supervision. ... At your request, a supreme order was issued to entrust the management of education to one of the members of the Council of the Chief Administration and to draft a new statute for Transcaucasian schools that would better correspond to the needs of the region and its future. The committee was established under the chairmanship of the former Civil Governor of Georgia-Imeretia, Major General Sotnikov, who, upon my arrival in Tiflis in 1845, presented the draft statute, which I sent to the Council of the Chief Administration for review, and from

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there to Council Member Semyonov. However, due to its failure to directly correspond to the interests of the region, the project was inadequate; therefore, Semyonov was instructed to develop a new project, taking the example of the empire's educational districts as a basis. ... My assumptions in this matter are clear. The educational department must be organized in Georgia so that the unification of this region with the main motherland is successful. Georgia is not yet ready to have a university. It is necessary to implement the dissemination of the Russian language everywhere and mandatory instruction in at least one native language for all students"[AKAK, Vol. X, No. 540. pp., 125-126.]. Vorontsov considered this a matter of primary importance, as it would not only bind the different classes of local inhabitants together but would also provide an opportunity to have reliable translators. In addition, it would create the opportunity to secure officials from among the natives and avoid spending significant funds to bring in officials from Russia.

Thus, the Caucasian Viceroyalty constituted a unique administrative-territorial entity within the Russian Empire, headed by a viceroy endowed with exceptionally broad powers, while his administrative apparatus was staffed with locals. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Caucasian Corps (renamed the Caucasian Army in 1857) had become so distinctive that it was no longer merely a standard imperial military division; rather, it effectively functioned as the armed forces of the Caucasian Viceroyalty. In fact, the empire achieved success in annexing the Caucasus by subordinating the entire region to the Caucasian Viceroyalty. Its establishment led to the administrative and territorial centralization of the southern regions, bringing the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia under a single authority - the jurisdiction of the Viceroy of the Caucasus. Consequently, the viceroyalty became an effective instrument for the centralization of imperial power and armed forces in the region.

**Conclusion:** The formation and development of the Russian Empire's administrative policy in the Caucasus during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were driven not only by the necessity of establishing military dominance but also by the search for an effective model of governance on the imperial periphery. Following the 1801 annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, the Caucasus gradually transformed into one of the key strategic directions of Russian imperial policy, where military, administrative, and political factors were closely intertwined. The chronic crisis of the governance system in the Caucasus, administrative fragmentation, and the intensification of the Caucasian War forced the autocracy to abandon attempts at applying standard imperial administrative practices and instead transition to creating special administrative institutions tailored to the region. The logical culmination of this process was the creation of the Caucasian Viceroyalty under the leadership of Mikhail Vorontsov. Vorontsov's broad and virtually unlimited powers, combined with his direct connection to Emperor Nicholas I and the Chairman of the Caucasian Committee, transformed the viceroyalty into the true epicenter of imperial policy in the Caucasus. This, in turn, facilitated the progressive integration of the Caucasus into the political, administrative, and socio-cultural space of the Russian Empire. Ultimately, the creation of the Caucasian Viceroyalty can be viewed as the precise administrative mechanism through which the Russian Empire

succeeded in overcoming its regional governance crisis and securing the final consolidation of the Caucasus within the imperial system.

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