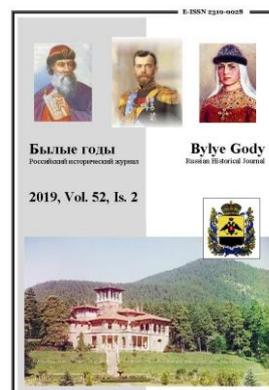


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The Russian-Turkish and Russian-Persian Front Line on the Eve of and During the Patriotic War of 1812

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Abstract

The research paper examines the attempts by the Ottoman and Persian Empires to destabilize the situation in the North-Western Caucasus and Transcaucasia on the eve and during the Patriotic War of 1812. It focuses on countermeasures against the Turkish plans, taken by peaceful Circassian princes and Russian regional administration. With the use of new archival documents, we were able to reconstruct the picture of Circassian raids on the Russian territory in 1812–1814. The paper also retraces the picture of the Kakheti uprising and its orchestrating process considering Napoleon's invasion of the Russian Empire.

The sources used to prepare the work include archival documents stored at the State Archives of the Krasnodar Krai, Krasnodar, Russia, and the Central State Historical Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia. A considerable part of the archival material has never been published before.

In conclusion, the authors note that both Persia and Turkey strove to widely leverage the war between Russia and France to their own advantage. The consolidated efforts of the Russian administration thwarted the attempt by Turkish intelligence agents in Circassia to use the anti-Russian Circassian militia in combat operations against Russia. At the same time, Persia achieved impressive progress in destabilizing the situation in Transcaucasia. The uprising was led by Georgian Tsarevich (An heir apparent of a tsar) Alexander, and the region of the uprising comprised Kakheti. In the area, Russian troops had small garrisons that were to protect Kakheti and central Georgia from Lezgin attacks. It was them who fell victim to insurgents. In terms of the number of casualties among the Russian army soldiers, the uprising in Kakheti in 1812 can be described as the deadliest incident in Transcaucasia in the 19th century. At the same time, the Treaty of Bucharest and Treaty of Gulistan, which ended the Russo-Turkish (1806–1812) and Russo-Persian (1804–1813) wars, were the first diplomatic acts that legally formalized a *fait accompli* – the annexation of a large part of Transcaucasia to Russia.

Keywords: Circassia, Georgia, Persia, Dagestan, Ottoman Empire, Black Sea Cossack Host, uprising, Patriotic War of 1812, Russian Empire.

1. Introduction

In the result of incorporation of Georgia by the Russian Empire, in 1801 the latter became a close neighbor of the Ottoman and Persian Empires in the Caucasus. Lately this fact led to the Russian-Persian (1804–1813) and Russian-Turkish (1806–1812) wars. While the Russian Empire got involved in these wars, it had to fight also against Napoleon's invasion into Russia, in 1812. So, in 1812, the Russian Empire went to the

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Patriotic War against Napoleon. The war which broke out seriously weakened the units of the Russian army in the Caucasus, including those stationed in the area of the Black Sea Cossack Host. It was believed for a long time that during the war and some time after it Circassians, who were under protectorate of the Ottoman Empire, virtually did not disturb the Russian territory. For example, F.A. Shcherbina wrote in his 2-volume "History of the Kuban Cossack Host" that active actions of Circassians were rather common in 1812, while complete calm settled in 1813 and 1814. (Shcherbina, 1913: 178-179). Moreover, the author in his fundamental research noted that the army archives registered only two cases regarding Circassian attacks over the entire 1814 (Shcherbina, 1913: 179). Nevertheless, recently discovered documents show the opposite, namely, in the facts related to the Ottoman Empire's preparation for active combat operations in 1811, to the disruption of these preparation activities by the Russian Empire and to the increased activity of Circassians in 1813-1814.

The Persian Empire also showed its activity, which financed the internal uprising in Georgia (the Tsarevich Alexander's uprising) and introduced its troops into the region (Markova, 1951). It should be noted that because of ideological attitudes, this topic has not received further study among the Soviet historians. The study has to show how the wars dramatically changed the front line on the background of Napoleon's invasion and the insurrection in Circassia and Kakheta regions, as well as what was the position of the Caucasian ethnic groups in these wars. Fundamentally, the study of these issues has not changed in the post-soviet period. Today there are only a few works with an occasional mention of our research topic. So, in 2008 the work of A.D. Panesh about the geopolitical position of Circassia in 1806-1812 (Panesh, 2008) released, in 1999 the work of O.N. Bortnikovoi appeared about the exiled participants in the Kakheta uprising in Siberia, as well as the work of N.S. Perepelitsina, A.V. Shipunova, A.Yu. Sergeeva about the little-known pages of the Russo-Persian war of 1804-1813 (Perepelitsin et al., 2018).

2. Materials and methods

The sources used to prepare the work include archival documents stored at the State Archives of the Krasnodar Krai, Krasnodar, Russia, and the Central State Historical Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia. A considerable part of the archival material has never been published before.

The methodology of the research was based on the traditional historiographical principles – historicism, objectivity and a systematic analysis. As we worked with the material, we used a range of general historical methods, such as a problematic/chronological approach that enabled us to study individual facts in their chronological order; a historical and genetic approach that helped re-trace the history of Russia's counteraction in the North-Western Caucasus and Transcaucasia; a historical and comparative approach that made it possible to compare the goals and nature of individual centers of anti-Russian resistance in the overall picture of global confrontation.

3. Discussion and results

1. Russian-Turkish front line

It is known that already at the end of 1810, the European diplomatic community started vigorously discussing the topic of the war between Russia and Napoleonic France. It was obvious as early as in 1811 that Paris and St. Petersburg could not agree on key political issues. In the autumn of 1811, the Russian ambassador in Paris, Prince Kurakin, reported to St. Petersburg that there were signs of an inevitable war (Tarle, 1959: 454). At the time, Russia was at war with the Ottoman Empire (the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812). From the very beginning, Turkey had no success in the war. After a short peace in 1807–1809, military operations were resumed, but Turkey wanted to capitulate already by 1810, but the events were influenced by intervening France and Austria that persuaded Turkey to continue the war. As a result, in addition to the Balkan battlefield, the Ottoman Empire embarked on the creation of a large zone of anti-Russian resistance in Circassia.

For example, in the autumn of 1811, the Russian administration began to receive reports that the former Anapa Pasha had started to form militia beyond the Kuban by engaging Natukhais, Shapsugs and Abadzekhs to mount combat operations against Russia. In November, the size of the militia reached 10 thousand people that were a serious force. However, the Turkish attempt to destabilize the situation did not succeed, as part of Circassian princes (Alkas, Khanuk, Akhmetuk and Misheost) refused to act against Russia and informed the Russian side of these plans and asked for military support to repel a potential attack. The command of the Black Sea Cossack Host sent a 1 thousand-strong detachment of Cossacks with 3 cannons to assist the peaceful Circassian princes. The peaceful princes strengthened the Russian detachment with 8 thousand of their subjects. This resulted into the creation of two highland militia groups. They began peace talks that continued until December 7. After that, the warring parties made their way homeward, and the Cossack detachment returned to the border line (Shcherbina, 1913: 177-178). As a result, the agents of the Ottoman Empire not only failed to establish a single Circassian front against the Russian Empire, but over 1812, no major incursions into the territory of the Black Sea Cossack Host could be seen. We believe that the causes for this were peace agreements (between the two Circassian camps) that were reached in early December 1811. In total, Russian troops lost 126 people killed, wounded and captured in the clashes on the Caucasus Line in 1812 (Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 13; Cherkasov et al., 2017).

For comparison, the army's casualties in 1811 amounted to 69 people on the Caucasus Line ([Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 13](#)). The casualty figure did not include the service personnel of the Black Sea Cossack Host.

An important fact is that in January 1811 – on the eve of the war of 1812 – the Russian troops mounted an expedition against Shapsugs, intended to return Russian captives and give back the cannon gun to Shapsugs seized at the Olginsky outpost the day before ([Shcherbina, 1913: 177](#)). Almost simultaneously with these events, Circassians crossed the Kuban River and attacked the Kopanskaya postal station, where they took prisoner two people and wounded another two. Alerted Cossacks succeeded in blocking the retreat path of the attacking party and the battle the killed and wounded up to 35 Circassians, while the Cossack losses were 5 people killed and 7 wounded. At the same time, the Russian side experienced another clash with Circassians between the Olginsky and Slavyansky cordons. This attack killed 30 Circassians and made another 7 prisoner, while Cossack losses amounted to 7 people wounded ([Shcherbina, 1913: 177](#)). The January expedition beyond the Kuban, launched by Russian troops, stabilized the situation among Circassians, and the summer passed almost without incidents.

However, in addition to military measures, continuous stability on the border should be contributed to by other steps as well. In the same January 1811, the authorities began to consider the possibility of setting up a barter yard in the Ust-Labinsk fortress to carry on duty-free salt barter ([AKAK, 5: 836](#)). Additionally, January 5, 1811, the commander of the Russian troops in Georgia and the Caucasus Line, General Tormasov, issued an appeal to the Zakubantsy (those across the Kuban) peoples. In this appeal, the general called on highlanders to maintain peace and prosperity ([AKAK, 5: 889-890](#)). The news of the appeal by the Russian general reached Constantinople. As a consequence, according to the information from Major General Sultan Mengli-Giray, as early as April numerous gifts and a firman¹ of the Turkish Sultan were delivered to the Zakubantsy peoples, which insisted that they should not choose good-neighborly relations with Russians, and promised to dispatch 70,000-strong auxiliary force in May ([AKAK, 5: 890](#)). It is important to note that similar firmans were also sent to the regions of Imereti, Abkhazia, Mingrelia, Guria ([AKAK, 6: 189](#)).

In 1811, the troops of the Ottoman Empire faced a series of defeats on the southern bank of the Danube (in Bulgaria), and by October, Turkey had been forced to concede to peace. Later, May 16 (28), 1812, witnessed the Treaty of Bucharest concluded ([Petrov, 1887](#)). The Treaty of Bucharest² ensured the security of the Empire's south-western borders virtually on the eve (one month before) of the invasion of Napoleon I into Russia. The Russian Danube Army was moved to reinforce troops on the Russian western border.

Nevertheless, in 1812-1814, considerable Circassian activity was recorded in the adjoining Russian territory. At that time, 93 people were brought into captivity alone. Almost all of them belonged to the Cossack population, and 37 of them were under 17 ([Table 1](#)).

Table 1. A list of Russians captured by Circassians between 1812 and 1814 ([GAKK. F. 249. Op. 1. D. 681. L. 160b.-240b.](#))

N o.	Full name of captive	Gender	Age	When and under what circumstances	Subsequent fate
1812					
1	Petr Gusarenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured February 1 in the Ivonivsky village, Poltava Kuren	Ransomed
2	Nataliya Zhitnaya, Cossack	F	-	Captured February 1 in the Ivonivsky Kuren	-
3	Efim Naumenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 13 in an attack on a mounted patrol	-
4	Grigorii Sirota, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 25 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	Ransomed
5	Kirill Titenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 30 in the range of the Novoekaterinovskiy cordon	-
6	Nikolai Maloi, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 30 in the Vedmedovskiy Kuren	-

¹ Firman (ferman) – a mandate or decree issued by sultans, shahs and other sovereigns in certain Islamic states in the Near and Middle East.

² Under the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest, Russia received Bessarabia, which relocated the border with European Turkey – from the Dniester to the Prut. In Asia, Russia returned to the Sublime Porte all possessions and fortresses, conquered by Russian troops, holding all the regions in Transcaucasia up to Arpaçay, Adzhar Mountains and the Black Sea.

1813					
7	Afanasii Chernyi, Cossack	M	-	Captured February 10 in the range of the Ekaterinodarsky cordon	Ransomed
8	Maksim Kasyan, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 31 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	-
9	Ivan Seleski, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 31 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon when felling of firewood	Ransomed
10	Stepan Zagina, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 31 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon when felling of firewood	Escaped
11	Osip	M	10	Captured May 31 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon when felling of firewood	Ransomed
12	Yakim Tarasenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 31 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon when felling of firewood	-
13	Ivan Suchka, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 31 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon when felling of firewood	-
14	Ivan Partezh, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 31 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon when felling of firewood	-
15	Ulyana Trukhlyanova, Cossack	F	5	Captured May 31 in the range of the Aleksandrovsy cordon	-
16	Petr Vasilchenko	M	-	Captured June 8 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	Ransomed
17	Semen Gvozdy	M	-	Captured June 6	Ransomed
18	Martin Naboka	M	-	Captured June 6	-
19	Stepan Drugalya	M	Age unknown ¹	Captured June 17	Escaped
20	Fedor Khurda, Cossack	M	-	Captured June 20	Escaped
21	Vasilii Serdyuk	M	-	Captured July 3 in a khutor of the Ivonivsky Kuren	-
22	Matvei Serdyuk	M	16	Captured July 3 in a khutor of the Ivonivsky Kuren	-
23	Karp Serdyuk	M	9	Captured July 3 in a khutor of the Ivonivsky Kuren	-
24	Danila Serdyuk	M	7	Captured July 3 in a khutor of the Ivonivsky Kuren	-
25	Evdokiya Serdyuk	F	4	Captured July 3 in a khutor of the Ivonivsky Kuren	-
26	Stepan Kravchenko	M	-	Captured July 12 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon	-
27	Maksim Kuks	M	-	Captured July 12 in the range of the Novoekaterinovsky cordon	-
28	Pavel Mishchenko	M	-	Captured July 13 in the range of the Andreevsky cordon	Ransomed
29	Marko Gorbenko	M	-	Captured July 18 in the range of the Voronezhsky cordon	-
30	Andrei Povstyanyi	M	-	Captured July 18 in the range of the Voronezhsky cordon	-

¹ The age is unknown. A son of a Cossack.

31	Stepan Taranenko	M	-	Captured July 9 in the range of the Elinsky cordon	Ransomed
32	Wife of Cossack Mikhail Khil	F	-	Captured August 12	-
33	Son of Cossack Mikhail Khil	M	5	Captured August 12	-
34	Daughter of Cossack Mikhail Khil	F	7	Captured August 12	-
35	Potap Dezhkalo	M	7	Captured August 18	Ransomed in 1815
36	Fedor Dezhkalo	M	5	Captured August 18	-
37	Irina Dezhkalo	F	3	Captured August 18	-
38	Ustinya	F	12	Captured August 18	Ransomed
39	Paraskeva Chudnaya	F	-	Captured August 18	Ransomed
40	Widow of the sotnik	F	-	Captured August 18	-
41	Darya Zavalnaya	F	-	Captured August 16	Ransomed
42	Yakov Zavalnyi	M	Inf. ¹	Captured August 16	-
43	Petr, a son of a Cossack	M	Inf.	Captured August 26	-
44	Petr Seletinsky	M	Inf.	Captured August 26	-
45	Matrona Kalyuzhnaya	F	-	Captured September 8 in a khutor	Ransomed
46	Maksim Kalyuzhnyi	M	2	Captured September 8 in a khutor	-
47	Agafya Veselaya, Cossack	F	4	Captured September 8 in the Pashkovskoe village	-
48	Vasilii Veselyi, Cossack	M	6	Captured September 8 in the Pashkovskoe village	-
49	Semen, Cossack	M	13	Captured October 4 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	-
50	Petr Pergatenko, Cossack	M	16	Captured October 10 near Ekaterinodar	-
51	Vasilii Zhuravlenko, Cossack	M	9	Captured October 10 near Ekaterinodar	-
52	Dmitrii Sharmikha, Cossack	M	15	Captured October 10 near Ekaterinodar	-
53	Mikhail Sokolenko, Cossack	M	11	Captured October 10 near Ekaterinodar	-
54	Gerasim, worker	M	16	Captured October 10 near Ekaterinodar	-
55	Yakim Shamka, Cossack	M	12	Captured October 10 near Ekaterinodar	-
56	Demid Timoshenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured October 17 in the range of the Staroredutsky cordon	-
57	Grigorii Makukha, Cossack	M	-	Captured October 17 in the range of the Staroredutsky cordon	-
58	Ignat Vasilchenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured October 17 in the range of the Staroredutsky cordon	-
59	Grigorii Denisenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured October 17 in the Davydovka village	-
60	Grigorii Brizha, Cossack	M	-	Captured November 16	Ransomed
61	Aleksei Ogol, Cossack	M	-	Captured November 28	-
62	Larion Konovalenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured November 28	Returned ²
63	Ivan Kapustyan, Cossack	M	-	Captured December 30	Ransomed
64	Efrosiniya Kapustyan, wife	F	-	Captured December 30	Ransomed
65	Ivan Kapustyan, son	M	Age unknown	Captured December 30	Ransomed

¹ Infant.

² Returned by peaceful Circassian prince Khanuk.

66	Emelyan Kapustyan, son	M	Age unknown	Captured December 30	Ransomed
67	Yakov Chernenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured December 30	Ransomed
68	Petr Solokha, Cossack	M	-	Captured December 30	Ransomed
1814					
69	Tatyana Shved, Cossack, daughter of Cossack Naum Shved	F	Age unknown	Captured April 7	-
70	Gapon Lazka, Cossack	M	-	Captured April 16	Ransomed
71	Semen Belokur, Cossack	M	-	Captured April 16	Ransomed
72	Marya Gladchenko, Cossack girl	F	13	Captured May 12 in the range of the Smolyanoy cordon	-
73	Andrei Polulyakh, Cossack	M	15	Captured May 12 in the range of the Smolyanoy cordon	-
74	Lavrentii Ivanov, Private	M	-	Captured May 23 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	-
75	Ivan Tabanets, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 27 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	Ransomed
76	Ivan Maloi, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 27 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	-
77	Mikhail Bei, Cossack	M	-	Captured May 29 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	Ransomed
78	Nikita Chernyi, Cossack, son of Vasiliï Chernyi	M	Age unknown	Captured June 4 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	-
79	Ivan Bychenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured June 4 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	Ransomed
80	Stepan Gadechka, Cossack	M	-	Captured June 13 in the range of the Olginsky cordon	Ransomed
81	Samoil Torenin, Cossack	M	-	Captured June 29	Ransomed
82	Mikhail Kravchenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured June 29 in the range of the Velikolagerny cordon	Ransomed
83	Ivan Gots, Cossack 4th mounted regiment	M	-	Captured August 1 in the range of the Elinsky cordon	Escaped
84	Anisiya, worker	F	12	Captured September 5 in the khutor of Army Colonel Barabash near the Ponurka	-
85	Nataliya, orphan	F	13	Captured September 5 in the khutor of Army Colonel Barabash near the Ponurka	-
86	Nataliya Naidenikha	F	-	Captured September 5 in the khutor of Army Colonel Barabash near the Ponurka	Ransomed
87	Osip Torinenko, Cossack	M	-	Captured September 5 in the khutor of Army Colonel Barabash near the Ponurka	-
88	Mikhail Iskra, son of Cossack Iskra	M	6	Captured September 5 in the khutor of Army Colonel Barabash near the Ponurka	-
89	Ilya Iskra, son of Cossack Iskra	M	4	Captured September 5 in the khutor of Army Colonel Barabash near the Ponurka	-
90	Sofiya Iskra, daughter of Cossack Iskra	F	10	Captured September 5 in the khutor of Army Colonel Barabash near the Ponurka	-
91	Ivan Yakubovich, Cossack	M	-	Captured July 27 during a mounted patrol	Ransomed
92	Fedor Gladkii, Cossack	M	-	Captured July 27 during a mounted patrol	Ransomed
93	Petr Khmel'nitskii, Cossack	M	-	Captured July 27 during a mounted patrol	Ransomed

Table 1 shows the data only related to the attacks in which Black Sea Cossacks were captured. Besides it, there were still a considerable number of attacks in which either Circassians seized only property or they were repelled. For example, on the night of July 7-8, 1812, Circassians launched another attack on the Ivanovskoye village. Around 100 Circassians participated in the raid. The attackers already seized several

heads of cattle when Cossacks arrived in the village upon alarm. The clash killed 18 Circassians, and the rest retreated. At the crossing over the Kuban River, the attackers were overtaken by another Cossack detachment, and this resulted in further losses by Circassians – 20 more were killed and 2 taken prisoner ([Shcherbina, 1913: 178-179](#)).

Of the 93 people captured, 19 were women, and 74 were men. Six were captured in 1812, 62 – in 1813 and 25 – in 1814. 33 people were subsequently ransomed, 4 escaped without help and 1 was returned by peaceful princes.

The increased activity of Circassians in 1813 can be explained by propaganda efforts made by Turkish emissaries. For example, according to Russian intelligence, in the summer of 1813, Turkish nazyr Seid-efendi, who lived with Zakubantsy ethnic groups, stirred up the local population using various false documents from the Turkish Sultan and Anapa Pasha to such a great extent that the Zakubantsy started gathering into large groups, threatening to invade Russia ([AKAK, 6: 872](#)). To prevent the invasion, the Narva Dragoon Regiment and the Don Cossack Regiment, commanded by Sychev the 3rd, were deployed on the Caucasus Line.

Thus, during the Russo-French War of 1812, the Ottoman Empire tried to incite some of Circassians into waging a war against Russia (pursuing their own interests). However, with the preventive measures timely taken – the pro-Russian militia created in Circassia, this attempt was foiled. As a result, 1812 saw very low raiding activity. Nevertheless, in addition to units of the Black Sea Cossack Host, the Russian Empire had to keep other regular units on its borders with the Caucasus, distracting these troops from combat operations against Napoleon.

2. Russian-Persian front line

At the time of the Patriotic War of 1812, the Russian Empire was also at war with the Persian Empire (the Russo-Persian War of 1804–1813). In May 1807, Persia entered into an anti-Russian alliance with Napoleon I, but it broke off the treaty with France in 1809 and restored an alliance with Great Britain that initiated the conclusion of a Persian-Turkish agreement on joint operations on the Caucasus front line. In May 1810, the army commanded by Abbas Mirza invaded Karabakh, but a small battalion of the 17th Jager Regiment led by Colonel Kotlyarevsky defeated it at the Migri fortress in June and on the Aras River in July. In September 1810, Persians suffered a defeat at Akhalkalaki, and this allowed Russian troops to prevent Persians from joining forces with Turks.

In late January 1811, Abbas Mirza, the Persian Heir Apparent and Governor of Azarbaijan province of Persia, sent an appeal to Dagestan tribes, inviting them to unanimously take part in the war against Russians, and at the same time he promised to support by the Persian troops ([Petrov, 1887: 410](#)). However, while Persians were engaged in deploying troops in November 1811, two clashes outside the Ziakhur village November 6 and outside the Rustov village November 22 inflicted two defeats to Dagestanis. For Russian troops, casualties amounted to 38 people killed and 262 wounded ([Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 141](#)). In addition, December 8, 1811, Russian troops, consisting of two battalions of the Georgian Grenadier Regiment and one hundred Cossacks and having no artillery, unexpectedly stormed and seized the Turkish fortress of Akhalkalaki considered unassailable ([Petrov, 1887: 415](#)). This attack killed 1 Russian and wounded 29 ([Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 141](#)). Of 200 people in the garrison, only 47 were taken prisoner, the rest were killed in the 1.5 hour battle. As trophies, Russian troops seized 16 guns and 40 poods of gunpowder ([Petrov, 1887: 415](#)).

In late January 1812, deployed Persian troops, under the command of Abbas Murza, again invaded Karabakh. Here, they took prisoner the battalion of the Troitsky Infantry Regiment in Sultan-Buda village February 1 ([Petrov, 1887: 417](#)). Before surrendering, Russian troops took part in clashes that killed 52 soldiers and one officer, and made 518 people prisoner ([Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 142](#)). There is information that the battalion's surrender was sanctioned by Colonel of the Russian Army Jafar-Quli-Aga, the eldest son of the heir of the Karabakh region. In all probability, later Jafar-Quli-Aga was acquitted for surrendering the battalion and continued to serve in the Russian army. However, the capture of the battalion of the Troitsky Infantry Regiment acted as a catalyst for social unrest in the region.

The so-called Kakhethi uprising ensued. To destabilize the situation, Persians used Georgian Tsarevich Alexander. In the initial phase of the uprising, Tsarevich Alexander sent numerous letters to members of the local aristocracy, both Georgians and Lezgins, in which he called for the overthrow of the Russian control over Transcaucasia ([TsGIAG. F. 16. Op. 1. D. 1282. L. 1-3](#)). The uprising continued from January to November 1812 ([AKAK, 6: 362-364](#)) and affected Kakhethi. The insurrection broke out unexpectedly and destroyed few Russian garrisons stationed in the region. Based on its scope and number of casualties, the uprising in Kakhethi was the most severe uprising in Transcaucasia in the 19th century ([Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901](#)) ([Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Losses of the Russian army in the Kakheti uprising in 1812
(*Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 11-13*)

Stages of the uprising	Officers			Lower ranks		
	the killed	the wounded	captives	the killed	the wounded	captives
First stage (January 31 – March 10)	16	9	-	408	189	61
Second stage (May)	1	3	-	12	23	-
Third stage (September 20 – November 30)	6	16	-	96	273	23
Total	23	28	-	516	485	84
Total	1,136					

Hence, the data in [Table 2](#) indicate that the Russian army suffered the greatest losses in the first stage of the uprising. The total losses of the Russian army amounted to 1,136 people killed, wounded and taken prisoner (*Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 11-13*). However, the figures showing losses can be viewed as debatable. O.P. Markova noted that the losses should have been much heavier than those reported in official documents. According to commanding officers of expeditionary forces, the uprising killed 636 people (151 in Telavi, 212 in Bodbiskhevi, 109 in Signakhi), made 510 people prisoner and wounded 206 – the total losses were to be 1,352 (*Markova, 1951: 83*). Another important factor is that the Russian units in Kakheti were deployed there to protect the local population from the Lezgin incursion, who in the region engaged in capturing people and selling them in coastal port cities to Turks and Persians long before the arrival of Russians (*Bronevskii, 1823: 314*).

The uprising sparked off in Telavi and Khevsureti in the north-east part of the former Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom, on the borders with Dagestan. Lezgin mercenaries started to appear among insurgents already in the middle of February. For example, a detachment of 1,000 Avar Lezgins arrived February 20 (*Markova, 1951: 69*).

In May, in Kakheti, Persian agents widely distributed the letters by Tsarevich Alexander, the reports by Georgian aristocrats evidenced (*TsGIAG. F. 16. Op. 1. D. 1446. L. 1-10*). In some cases even priests served as distributors of Tsarevich Alexander's letters. For example, May 2, 1812, priest Shukhashvili was defrocked and exiled to the Kherson governorate for reading out the letters which called for the insurrection in the church (*TsGIAG. F. 16. Op. 1. D. 1448*). We should understand that Tsarevich Alexander was bolstered by a part of the Georgian aristocracy, which led its subjects to fight with Russians. For example, in July, Georgian princes, Joseph, Osman and Garsevan Cholokashvili fled to Tsarevich Alexander (*TsGIAG. F. 16. Op. 1. D. 1286. L. 1-3*). And these were not the only cases – at the time, Alexander was joined by princes Amilakhvarov and Avalov (*TsGIAG. F. 16. Op. 1. D. 1288. L. 1-75*). The Russian administration gave 15 days the princes to return to their home lands, and after the period expires, princely estates became property of the state (*TsGIAG. F. 16. Op. 1. D. 1286. L. 1-3*). This became a compelling reason for the princes to return to their lands.

It was mentioned above that in May 1812, Tsarevich Alexander sent letters not only in Georgia and Ossetia, but also in Dagestan, striving to orchestrate an uprising. The letters confirm the fact that Tsarevich Alexander, Persia and Turkey carried out a coordinated campaign against Russia. For example, in his letter dated May 12, 1812, Tsarevich Alexander wrote that "... I am informing you of the circumstances here, which, I am sure, you would like to know.... The Shah-Zade (Crown Prince; here the author means Abbas Mirza) arrived with a large force and funding to Goncha (may be Gokcha?); we intend to march to the Qazakh mountains with 12,000 infantry sarbазs (regular soldiers), cannons and 30,000 units of other troops; from the other side, from the Turkish side, a seraskir with great provision, artillery and 60,000 troops, of which half already penetrated the Akhaltsikhe land. Another Shah-Zade is to move from Persia to the Elisavetpol direction with 30,000 troops" (*AKAK, 5: 358*). In addition to Tsarevich Alexander, an active role in the uprising was also played by Georgian Tsarevich George (*Markova, 1951: 76*).

Russian troops had to fight on two fronts: on the interior front – quelling the uprising and on the exterior front – against regular Persian troops. Following the tragic fate of the battalion of the Troitsky Infantry Regiment, it was vital to urgently re-build the reputation of the Russian troops. This task was entrusted to Major General Kotlyarevsky, who moved in March to meet Persians with 1.25 thousand infantry and 200 Cossacks (*Petrov, 1887: 418*). Nevertheless, Persians, after they plundered Karabakh and took many people prisoner, began to withdraw. Russians set off on a forced march in pursuit and managed to retake about 15,000 heads of cattle and liberated about 400 families captured by Persians.

In June 1812, British General Malcolm arrived in Persia and brought 350 English soldiers who were to serve as instructors in the Persian army. In addition, the British transported 30 thousand rifles and 12 guns to the region (*Kuznetsov, 2013: 150-151*). The second incursion in 1812 was mounted by Abbas Mirza after he had received intelligence data about Napoleon's invasion of Russia (*Beskrovnui, 1974: 17*) and seized

the Lankoran area. In the first half of September, Tsarevich Alexander with a 100-strong retinue left Yerevan and arrived in Kakheti (AKAK, 5: 365). Thus began the next active phase of the uprising.

The situation was critical. As Russia consolidated almost all its resources in the war with Napoleon, it practically had nothing to fight with in the Caucasus. It made an attempt to agree on a truce with Persians, but the latter required the return of Georgia as a condition for a truce. Meanwhile, October 10, 1812, the Persian army approached the Aras River near the Aslanduz ford. According to various estimates, it numbered from 14 to 30 thousand people. The Russian army was able to counteract Persians with a combined squad of 2,221 people with 6 guns under the command of Major General Kotlyarevsky. As the squad mounted a surprise night attack on the Persian camp, it victoriously routed Persians in the 2-day battle (October 19 and October 20). It took 12 English guns out of 14, 36 falconets and property (Potto, 1887: 528). 537 people were taken prisoner. Russians lost 28 people killed and 99 wounded (Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 142). Following this defeat, Persia no longer posed any danger to the Russian Empire – the latter actually won the war. In January 1813, a 1.5-thousand-strong squad of Lieutenant General Kotlyarevsky victoriously stormed Lankoran (with 950 soldiers and officers killed and wounded) (Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 142), and in the spring of 1813, Colonel Pestel with two battalions of the Tiflis Musketeer Regiment inflicted a defeat against the khan of Yerevan (Fadeev, 1960: 166-167). Seeing the situation that developed in the summer of 1813, Persia initiated peace talks with Russia. Having no France and Great Britain as its supporters, the state could not continue the war. The outcome was the Treaty of Gulistan that was concluded between the Russian and Persian Empires October 12 (24), 1813 in the village of Gulistan near the Zeiva River. The document stipulated that the significant part of Transcaucasia should be de jure added to Russia.¹

We should note that parallel to the events, there were combat operations conducted in Kakheti. Importantly, in the reign of Tsarevich Alexander, the leading role was given to Lezgins. Lezgins were a driver behind the uprising at all three stages of the hostilities. There are illustrations of the statement. For example, at the beginning of the uprising, after attacks on Russian military units in the Signakhi area, surviving soldiers alone and in groups began coming up to the fortress of Karagadzhi, a stronghold of the Russian army. The insurgents surrounded the fortress, but delayed assault as they waited for Lezgin reinforcements that were summoned by the princes (Markova, 1951: 59). October 10, 1812, in the development near the Shilda village, the Tsarevich's group numbered 6,000 people, of whom 2,000 were Lezgins (AKAK, 5: 362). As a matter of fact, Lezgins accounted for 1/3 among the insurgents, and the rest were Georgians and other ethnic groups (for example, Ossetians, Circassians, etc.). The insurgents were brought down in the battle near the Shilda² village and scattered as a result. By October 13, another 2 thousand Lezgins joined the Tsarevich (AKAK, 5: 363). The Tsarevich's overall force included 3 thousand Lezgins plus 2 thousand Georgians and members of other ethnic groups. So, by October 13, Lezgins were the majority of the insurgents. October 13, the insurgents suffered another defeat. It is also interesting that October 18-21, the insurgents, supported by Lezgins, laid siege to the Signakhi town, while Georgians, who took part in the uprising, more and more often came with resignation and said that they were frightened into playing a role in the uprising (AKAK, 5: 367). There are strong reasons to believe that a significant portion of the insurgents were not involved voluntarily, but were scared into submission by reprisals from Lezgins. It is known that Lezgins plundered the Kdesi village in Imereti in May. Several houses were burned, and 16 people were taken prisoner (Markova, 1951: 95). In addition to Lezgins, the tsarevich's troops also used Circassians as mercenaries. Moreover, we can suggest that this explained the low activity of Circassians in the Kuban region in 1812, because the most active group of Circassians were involved in the Kakheti uprising. After the Kakheti uprising was quelled, in the autumn of 1812, Circassians returned to the Kuban, and 1813 marked a multiple increase in raids on the Russian territory.

In January 1813, Tsarevich Alexander was in Shatili, the inner Khevsureti. The Tsarevich had about 80,000 mercenary troops from Dagestan, Circassia and Tagaur-Kurtauli. At the same time, he had no financial resources. He wrote about his position to Persian Mirza Bozorg, the Persian Grand Vizier: "There are military preparations everywhere, we are also massively consolidating our forces so that with God's help, at the end of the this moon, we and Russians will meet in a battle. But what should I do, a man without means? I should give (money) to people of honor; whether they bring a prisoner or present me with a severed head – everyone should be paid, and we do not have a single para³" (AKAK, 5: 370).

What are the root causes that lie in Lezgins' participation in the Kakheti uprising? There are several factors behind this. The first one is the counter efforts by Russian troops to stop Lezgin raids on Georgia. The traditional method of earning money by capturing captives in the Georgian territory and selling them was checked by Russian troops. As a reminder, before Russians established their presence in the area, it was Kakheti that suffered the greatest harm from Lezgin raids. The second reason was that Lezgins were

¹ According to the Treaty of Gulistan, Russia ultimately obtained the Qarabagh, Ganja, Sheki, Shirvan, Derbend, Quba, Baku and part of Talysh Khanates, as well as Dagestan, Georgia, Imereti, Guria, Mingrelia, Abkhazia and gained the exclusive right to have the Navy in the Caspian Sea.

² The Shilda village was located on the Lezgin border.

³ A Turkish coin.

recruited as mercenaries to whom becoming part of the uprising was a dashing affair that created possibilities of getting rich. One example can illustrate this. In the early summer of 1813, a development took place when Tsarevich Alexander stayed in Dagestan in the Koisubuli estate. The Tsarevich invited Lezgins to help him seize Tiflis and entire Georgia, promising each soldier to pay 50 rubles in silver after the seizure of Georgia. However, in addition to this, Lezgins set out a condition – in case of failure to take Tiflis, they demanded the right to plunder and loot everything in the Georgian territory during their withdrawal movement to satisfy themselves for participating in the campaign. The Tsarevich willingly agreed to this (AKAK, 5: 376). One can imagine the situation of the Georgian population, if the tsarevich emerged victorious, Georgians would be obliged to pay considerable sums¹ to the mercenaries. On the other hand, if the Tsarevich lost, Lezgins would plunder north-eastern Georgia under the agreement with him. However, while Alexander mobilized forces for the invasion, Russian troops entered Khevsureti² and inflicted the complete defeat on the Tsarevich. The expedition led by Major General Simonovich routed the insurgents in the period from May 23 to June 7, 1813, incurring casualties of 45 killed and 82 wounded (Sbornik svedenii o poteryakh, 1901: 13).

4. Conclusion

Summarizing the consequences, we have to conclude that both Persia and Turkey strove to widely leverage the war between Russia and France to their own advantage. The efforts taken by the Russian administration thwarted the attempt by Turkish intelligence agents in Circassia to use the anti-Russian Circassian militia in combat operations against Russia. At the same time, Persia achieved impressive progress in destabilizing the situation in Transcaucasia. The uprising was led by Georgian Tsarevich Alexander, and the region of the uprising comprised Kakheti. In the area, Russian troops had small garrisons that were to protect Kakheti and central Georgia from Lezgin attacks. It was them who fell victim to insurgents. In terms of the number of casualties among the Russian army soldiers, the uprising in Kakheti in 1812 can be described as the deadliest incident in Transcaucasia in the 19th century. At the same time, the Treaty of Bucharest and Treaty of Gulistan, which ended the Russo-Turkish (1806–1812) and Russo-Persian (1804–1813) wars, were the first diplomatic acts that legally formalized a fait accompli – the annexation of a large part of Transcaucasia to Russia.

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¹ If we suggest that the campaign was to engage 80 thousand people, and this is the figure that was indicated in 1813, it means that Alexander was to return at least 4 million rubles to the mercenaries. Another important fact was that by the time the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom was merged in Russia, Georgia had been no longer able to defend itself against Lezgin raids (Ter-Oganov, 2018: 55).

² Highland areas in north-eastern Georgia formed the hotbed that triggered the uprising in Kakheti.

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