

# Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad

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Rarely have the geographical boundaries of religious communities coincided with the borders of states. As a result believers have often found themselves having to cross state frontiers in order to fulfill spiritual needs, while states have worked to manage the complications, and to exploit the opportunities, presented by the international dimensions of different religious traditions. In light of Russia's multi-confessional composition, such concerns occupied a significant place in the empire's history, one that scholars are only now beginning to appreciate fully. By taking believers beyond the borders of the empire—whether to Urga, Mecca, Jerusalem, or Rome—pilgrimage raised questions concerning border control, consular services, and contact between Russian and foreign subjects. Clerical vacancies in Russia sometimes forced religious communities to seek candidates from abroad, thus bringing issues of subjecthood, knowledge of the Russian language, and political reliability to the fore. The incorporation of Catholics into the Russian empire compelled St. Petersburg to conduct complex relations with the papacy, while the presence of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans and Palestine provided Russia with opportunities to pressure the Sublime Porte. In short, religious issues implicated the Russian empire in the affairs of adjacent states and thus served as an important foundation for the interaction of Slavic Eurasia with its neighboring worlds.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of recent research in these directions, see: Daniel Brower, 'Russian Roads to Mecca: Religious Tolerance and Muslim Pilgrimage in the Russian Empire', *Slavic Review* 55:3 (1996), pp. 567–584; B.F. Iamilinets, *Rossiia i Palestina: Ocherki politicheskikh i kul'turno-religioznykh otnoshenii (XIX – nachalo XX veka)* (Moscow, 2003); Eileen Kane, 'Pilgrims, Holy Places, and the Multi-Confessional Empire: Russian Policy towards the Ottoman Empire under Tsar Nicholas I, 1825–1855' (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2005); Larry Wolff, *The Vatican and Poland in the Age of the*

The present article explores the international dimension of Russia's confessional affairs by focusing on the spiritual head of the Armenian church: the Catholicos, or Supreme Patriarch of all Armenians. The annexation of eastern Armenia in 1828 placed the seat of the Catholicos, the monastery of Echmiadzin, within Russia's borders and thus rendered the Catholicos himself a subject of the Russian Emperor.<sup>2</sup> The imperial government thus acquired an unprecedented opportunity to influence Armenian communities in Persia and Turkey, since the Catholicos claimed spiritual authority over all adherents of the Armenian Apostolic (Gregorian) confession wherever they resided.<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the nineteenth century the Russian government accordingly made great efforts to uphold and enhance the prestige of the Catholicos in order to project imperial Russian power across the southern frontier and to maximise its leverage in manipulating neighboring states.

If the prospects for exploiting the Catholicos were substantial, the precise definition of his rights and status nonetheless proved exceedingly complex. For the Catholicos both to command allegiance abroad and to fulfill imperial administrative requirements at home, his power and authority needed simultaneously to be augmented and restricted. In practice, the promotion of the Catholicos' prestige among foreign Armenians required the imperial government to make substantial compromises with respect to the administration of religious affairs within the Russian empire itself. Even as the government struggled to ensure the spiritual subordination of foreign Armenians to Echmiadzin, the state of

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*Partitions: Diplomatic and Cultural Encounters at the Warsaw Nunciature* (Boulder, CO, 1988); E.S. Tokareva and A.V. Iudin (eds.), *Rossii i Vatikan v kontse XIX – pervoi treti XX vv.* (St. Petersburg, 2003). On inter-imperial entanglements more generally, see: Aleksei Miller, 'Between the Local and Inter-Imperial: Russian Imperial History in Search of Scope and Paradigm', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5:1 (2004), pp. 7–26, esp. pp. 18–20.

<sup>2</sup> On Echmiadzin itself and its early history, see: Ia. Arapetov, 'Echmiadzinskii monastyr', *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, chast' 6 (1844), pp. 208–243; 'Ob Armiano-Gregorianskoi tserkvi v Rossiiskoi imperii', *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, chast' 20 (1856), otdel 2, pp. 69–70.

<sup>3</sup> Armenians referred to their confession as 'Apostolic', whereas imperial Russian authorities referred to it as 'Gregorian', after the 'enlightener' of Armenia in the fourth century, Saint Gregory, apparently in order to deny that church's apostolicity. L.M. Melikset-Bekov, *Iuridicheskoe polozhenie verkhovnogo Patriarkha Armianskogo* (Odessa, 1911), p. 3.

Armenian religious affairs within Russia became ever more intolerable to St. Petersburg. By the end of the nineteenth century, imperial officials developed strong doubts about the wisdom of sacrificing the state's interests at home for the sake of the Catholicos' authority abroad. And yet officials remained reluctant to part entirely with the potential foreign-policy advantages that they saw deriving from Russia's energetic sponsorship of Echmiadzin. After 1905, while convinced of the need for the reform of Gregorian confessional affairs, the government remained divided about whether the benefits of such changes could actually compensate for the damage that they would inflict on Russia's prestige in the eyes of foreign Armenians.

By accentuating the trans-imperial implications of the Catholicosate and above all by emphasising the Ottoman factor in Russia's administration of the Armenian confession, this essay asserts that practices of imperial governance in Russia need to be placed in an international context, and that the conduct of foreign policy needs to be connected to processes occurring within Russia's borders. I conclude that in important respects the Armenian confessional question is most readily comparable to the problems that St. Petersburg encountered in dealing with Catholicism, which also involved extensive intertwining of internal and foreign affairs.

## **Incorporating and Promoting Echmiadzin**

Although Russia annexed Echmiadzin only in 1828, St. Petersburg had become directly involved in elections to the patriarchal throne already by the late eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Echmiadzin at this point remained under Persian rule, though the Ottoman Sultan also took great interest in the Catholicosate in light of the large Armenian population of Turkey. Typically, the monks of Echmiadzin and representatives of the larger Armenian community in Persia would select one or several candidates for the vacant throne. On behalf of the Armenian population of Turkey, Armenians in Constantinople would then select one of the proposed candidates, to whom the Sultan would provide a *berat* granting spiritual

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<sup>4</sup> On early involvement, see: G.A. Ezov, 'Nachalo snoshenii Echmiadzinskogo patriarshego prestola s russkim pravitel'stvom', appendix to *Kavkazskii vestnik*, no. 10 (1901).

jurisdiction over Turkish Armenians. Given the combined influence of the Porte and the Armenians of Constantinople, it was usually a Turkish subject, and often the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, who was selected.<sup>5</sup>

Russia's main concern initially was to establish greater influence over the process of selecting and confirming the Catholicos, and thereby to place, when possible, its own subjects on the patriarchal throne. In 1800 St. Petersburg succeeded in forcing the election of the Armenian Archbishop in Russia, Iosif Argutinskii (Hovsep Arghutian), an active participant in Russia's military campaign against Persia in 1796. Although Iosif died on his way to Echmiadzin and never occupied the throne, Russia had gained the Porte's recognition of its right to participate and—in St. Petersburg's eyes—to confirm the Catholicos in his position.<sup>6</sup> Russia asserted this prerogative immediately after Iosif's death, when two claimants emerged and—after a lengthy struggle—St. Petersburg's candidate (Daniel) finally occupied the patriarchal throne in 1807.<sup>7</sup> For a half-century thereafter Russia succeeded in monopolising the position for its own subjects, and the annexation of eastern Armenia in 1828 merely solidified its influence over Echmiadzin.

This success came at the price of diminished authority for Echmiadzin abroad, however. The patriarchal throne was now usually occupied by the subject of a state hostile to both Turkey and Persia, and Armenians in those countries were wary of acknowledging too openly their ecclesiastical subordination. Meanwhile wars with Turkey and Persia in 1826–1829 disrupted connections between Echmiadzin and Armenians

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<sup>5</sup> On the process of election before Russian influence, see: Ezov, 'Nachalo snoshenii', pp. 12–14; *Izbranie Verkhovnogo Patriarkha Katolikosa Armianskoi-Grigorianskoi Tserkvi* (St. Petersburg, 1843), pp. 6–7.

<sup>6</sup> Ezov, 'Nachalo snoshenii', pp. 41–53; Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv [RGIA], f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 6–7; Grigor Khachatorovich Arakelian, 'Dukhovnyi tsentr Echmiadzina v sfere protivoborstva Rossii i Irana v pervoi chertverti 19-go veka po persidskim i turetskim dokumentam Matenadarna' (Avtoreferat for cand. diss., Erevan, 1991). On Iosif, see: P. Iudin, 'Katolikos Iosif, Kniaz' Argutinskii-Dolgorukii: K istorii gaikanskago naroda v Rossii', *Russkii arkhiv* 9 (1914), pp. 58–96.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief overview of this complex struggle, see: George Bournoutian, 'Eastern Armenia from the Seventeenth Century to the Russian Annexation', in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2 (London, 1997), pp. 98–99; P. Agaian (ed.), *Prisoedinenie vostochnoi Armenii k Rossii: Sbornik dokumentov*, vol. 1 (Erevan, 1972), pp. 20–24.

to the south. Turkish Armenians were further alienated when Ioannes (Hovhannes) was elected in 1831 without their participation and in violation of several other established rules.<sup>8</sup>

The prospects for achieving full subordination of foreign Armenians to Echmiadzin were compromised still more by institutions in the Ottoman empire. A rival Catholicos at Sis was always prepared to extend his authority over those no longer willing to recognise Echmiadzin,<sup>9</sup> while the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, under the domination of Armenian notables (*amiras*) in the Ottoman capital, gradually encroached on Echmiadzin's prerogatives. The Ottoman government eventually recognised the Patriarch as the exclusive head of the empire's Armenian *millet*, endowing him with exclusive administrative and judicial powers.<sup>10</sup> In light of these circumstances—severed ties with Echmiadzin and competing ecclesiastical institutions—Russia needed to expend considerable effort to re-establish the foreign prestige of the Catholicos.

On the ceremonial front, the Russian imperial government invested the installation of Ioannes as Catholicos in 1831 with particular solemnity and pomp. Speeches at the ceremony contrasted the degrading status of the Armenian church under Persian khans with its new freedom under Russian patronage. In order 'to confer greater splendor and magnificence

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<sup>8</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [GARF], f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, ll. 6–8ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 15–15ob.; 'Izbranie Verkhovnogo Patriarkha', pp. 13–14; Kane, 'Pilgrims, Holy Places', pp. 130–133. According to one account, Ioannes was essentially foisted on the Armenians against their will by the Caucasus administration. See: A.D. Eritsov, *Patriarkh vsekh armian Nerses V-i i kniaz' Mikhail Semeonovich i kniaginia Elisaveta Ksaverievna Vorontsovy, v ikh chastnoi perezpiske* (Tiflis, 1898), p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Originally established at Echmiadzin, the seat of the Catholicos had prereginated from one place to another until, in 1292, it settled at Sis, the capital of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia. When the seat returned to Echmiadzin in 1441, Sis refused to relinquish its claim and created a separate Catholicosate in 1446. There was also a second rival Catholicosate at Akhtamar (1116–1895).

<sup>10</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 16–16ob.; GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, l. 5; Kevork B. Bardakjian, 'The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople', in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1 (New York, 1982), pp. 89–100; Hagop Barsoumian, 'The Dual Role of the Armenian *Amira* Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian *Millet* (1750–1850)', *ibid.*, pp. 171–184; Gerard Jirair Libaridian, 'The Ideology of Armenian Liberation: The Development of Armenian Political Thought before the Revolutionary Movement (1639–1885)', (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1987), pp. 92–102.

on that celebration', local authorities brought an infantry battalion and artillery to Echmiadzin so that the ritual anointment of the new Catholicos could be followed not only by choirs and church bells, but also by loud shouts of 'Long live the Patriarch!', extensive gunfire, and 101 cannon shots. As an official account related, 'All of this, repeated many times by the echo of church's vaults, conferred on that moment something so solemn, so majestic, that it is difficult to express in words'. The festivities were topped off with a generous feast and fireworks in the evening.<sup>11</sup> In this way, V. G. Vartanian has recently concluded, 'the government wished to show all Armenians, and especially those across the border, how highly the head of the church was honored in Russia'.<sup>12</sup> In 1837, Emperor Nicholas I visited Echmiadzin, thus reinforcing the image of strong imperial patronage.<sup>13</sup>

Still, such demonstrations were hardly sufficient to guarantee the subordination of the community in Constantinople. Fearful of arousing the Porte's suspicions, Armenian patriarchs in Constantinople and Jerusalem resisted Ioannes' plans to send a delegation to Constantinople with an official deed proclaiming his election as Catholicos. In response, Ioannes requested the aid of the Russian government in securing the agreement of the Turkish Armenians to a series of demands, including the placement of a permanent nuncio in Constantinople. The Russian ambassador negotiated on behalf of Echmiadzin for seven years, finally reaching a compromise in 1838 that included recognition of the preeminence of Echmiadzin but not the maintenance of a nuncio in the Ottoman capital.<sup>14</sup>

St. Petersburg also recognised that the authority of the Catholicos abroad depended on the participation of foreign Armenians in his election. Initially the government had been wary of such participation but soon recognised that the exclusion of foreign Armenians would violate a long

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<sup>11</sup> 'Opisanie torzhestvennogo pomazaniia Tiflisskogo Arkhiepiskopa Ioannesa Karprinskogo v Patriarkhi vseh Armian', *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, chast' 6, kniga 1 (1832), pp. 67–86, citations at pp. 73, 81.

<sup>12</sup> V.G. Vartanian, *Armiansko-Grigorianskaia tserkov' v politike Imperatora Nikolaia I* (Rostov-na-Donu, 1999), p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> On Nicholas' visit, see: *Vysochaishie Ukazy i Akty, otnosiashchiesia do tserkvi Armiانو-Gregorianskogo ispovedaniia v Rossii* (Moscow, 1842), pp. 324–328; 'Prebyvanie Imperatora Nikolaia I v Echmiadzine i v Tiflise po dannym armianskogo arkeologa', *Russkaia starina* 7 (1909), pp. 63–80.

<sup>14</sup> GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, ll. 7–8ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 18–21ob.; Kane, 'Pilgrims, Holy Places', pp. 133–141.

historical tradition. Moreover, while insisting on the election of a Russian subject in 1831, the government emphasised that in the future it ‘by no means intends to eliminate the most worthy Armenian prelates residing in Turkey from occupying the throne of Echmiadzin’.<sup>15</sup> The temporary system adopted in 1831 was indeed replaced in 1836 when the government published a statute for the ‘Armeno-Gregorian’ confession that allowed for more substantial foreign participation in the elections. By that statute each Armenian diocese, ‘both within Russia and those located beyond its borders’, would send two delegates to Echmiadzin, where together with members of the monastery and the Synod they would elect two candidates for the position of Catholicos. The Russian Emperor would then select and confirm one of the two candidates. Foreign subjects were eligible, but were required to become Russian subjects before occupying the position. It bears emphasising that the number of foreign dioceses far exceeded the number in Russia, thus giving foreign subjects considerable influence on the election, at least formally.<sup>16</sup>

## **Balancing Domestic and Foreign Concerns**

While the statute of 1836 had important implications for the external prestige of the Catholicos, it needs also to be understood in terms of the internal administrative requirements of the Russian empire. Building on the experience of earlier enactments for Orthodoxy and Catholicism, the state produced statutes for the Muslims of Crimea (1831), Protestantism (1832), Jews (1835), and Karaites (1837) with the goal of defining more clearly the hierarchical structure of the different confessions and specifying the rights and obligations of their servitors. While conferring legal sanction on the spiritual functions indispensable to each confession, the state also ensured that canonical requirements remained subordinate to

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<sup>15</sup> Vartanian, *Armiansko-Grigorianskaia tserkov'*, pp. 15–21, citations at pp. 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> For the appropriate sections of the 1836 statute, see: *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, vol. 11, part 1 (1857), arts. 916–923, citation from art. 916. For a description of the process of election, see: *Izbranie Verkhovnogo Patriarkha*, pp. 15–48. Detailed rules governing the election process were established in 1843, at the time of the first election after the statute’s publication. RGIA, f. 1276, op. 4, d. 830, ll. 14–18.

its own needs and interests. The various confessional hierarchies now became state institutions while their members became state servitors.<sup>17</sup>

In this regard the Armenian statute of 1836 was a typical creation. To a degree, in fact, it entailed the imposition of institutions and forms taken from the state's experience in regulating Orthodoxy. The position of the Catholicos was of course retained, whereas the Orthodox patriarch had been replaced by a Holy Synod in 1721. But in many other respects the Armenian confession was made to look, in institutional terms at least, very much like the Orthodox. By conferring vastly expanded powers on a Synod created in 1807, the statute imposed the collegial principle as a check on the power of the Catholicos. The statute also established a lay Over-Procurator to oversee the administration of the church, and at the diocesan level introduced consistories and spiritual boards.<sup>18</sup>

In principle, perhaps, the statute of 1836 struck a reasonable balance between the internal and external requirements of the Russian empire with respect to the Armenian confession. In practice, however, the government often found itself having to choose between one imperative or the other, since submission to the state's formal requirements tended to weaken the foreign prestige of the Catholicos. For the government the issue became one of determining how much 'arbitrariness' it was willing to tolerate in the actions of the Catholicos in exchange for the prospect of greater influence among foreign Armenians. Closely connected to this issue was the question of whether a Russian subject or a Turkish subject would be best able to establish the ideal balance between the two sets of imperatives. On the whole, precisely because Armenians in Constantinople continued to resist full ecclesiastical subordination to Echmiadzin, the government felt compelled to give preference to the external dimension, eventually even promoting Ottoman candidates for the post of Catholicos at the expense of its own subjects.

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of some of the larger principles behind this legislative activity, see: Robert Crews, 'Empire and the Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia', *American Historical Review* 108:1 (2003), pp. 50–83.

<sup>18</sup> A good overview of the statute's creation and content is in Vartanian, *Armiansko-Grigorianskaia tserkov*, pp. 10–15, 23–45, which includes the statute itself (pp. 46–70). The statute is also in: *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, vol. 11, part 1, arts. 905–1059; in *Vysochaishie Ukazy*, pp. 12–117; and (in English translation) in George A. Bournoutian (ed.), *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia, 1789–1889: A Documentary Record* (Costa Mesa, CA, 1998), pp. 350–368.

Only slowly did Turkish Armenians re-establish full contact with Echmiadzin and begin to participate fully in the election of the Catholicos. Many foreign Armenians were unhappy with the statute of 1836, which had been formulated without their participation and, in their view, placed excessive constraints on the power of the Catholicos, above all by investing so much authority in the Synod.<sup>19</sup> In the first election after the publication of the statute, in 1843, the Russian government sought to enlist the participation of foreign Armenians and was even prepared to accept the election of a Turkish subject as long as he was ‘well-disposed’ to Russia. The community in Constantinople thought it best not to send a delegation, but merely a written deed, and the community under the patriarch of Jerusalem followed suit. In the end, written opinions were submitted from India and Persia, and a single representative of the Patriarch of Constantinople was the only foreign subject actually present at Echmiadzin. Nonetheless, that representative was empowered to speak and vote on behalf of the numerous Turkish delegates, and foreign participation in the election was thereby re-established. The winning candidate, Nerses, seems to have had the support of the Turkish Armenians.<sup>20</sup>

As much as any other Catholicos, Nerses (Ashtareketsi) demonstrated the dilemmas that the imperial government faced in reconciling its interests at home and abroad. On the one hand, Nerses was an experienced and, in the view of some, effective administrator. He had established an academy in Tiflis and in 1830 became the first Archbishop of a new diocese within Russia. Mikhail Vorontsov, viceroy of the Caucasus, wrote that Nerses’ appointment as Catholicos ‘has had a most beneficial effect on the organisation of the Armenian Church and the bringing of its affairs into order’. The influence of Nerses abroad was even more significant. With some hyperbole—and no doubt to justify his selection in 1843—an official account proclaimed that when news of a forthcoming election appeared, ‘Nerses’ name came forth from the lips of everyone

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<sup>19</sup> On this dissatisfaction, see: RGIA, f. 1276, op. 4, d. 830, l. 41; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 15ob., 63–65, 76; Bardakjian, ‘The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate’, p. 100; V.S. Diakin, *Natsional’nyi vopros vo vnutrennei politike tsarizma (XIX – nachalo XX vv.)* (St. Petersburg, 1998), pp. 701–711. Turkish Armenians had expressed opposition to the Synod from its very creation in 1807. See: Vartanian, *Armiansko-Grigorianskaia tserkov’*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Izbranie Verkhovnogo Patriarkha*, pp. 15–48; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 31, ll. 117–141; GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, ll. 8ob.–9; Eritsov, *Patriarkh vsekh armian*, p. 14.

everywhere: from the banks of the Ganges to the banks of the Neva, from the Carpathians to the Imaus [Himalayas].’ The interior ministry credited Nerses with compelling the Patriarch of Constantinople to recognise his authority fully and increasing contributions to the monastery from believers abroad. In part due to his efforts, the Porte allowed the re-establishment of direct relations with Echmiadzin once again in 1844. The community in Constantinople agreed to proclaim Nerses’ name and on the eve of the Crimean War even expressed its willingness to have a permanent nuncio of Echmiadzin in the city.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, many regarded Nerses as a power-seeker disinclined to respect the statute of 1836. Having become Catholicos in 1843, Nerses vigorously resisted the constraints imposed by the statute, which he regarded as being inconsistent with the dignity of his position and the prerogatives of his predecessors. Denying the Synod any canonical foundation, he reduced its significance almost to nil by leaving its vacancies unfilled. He also refused to appoint new bishops, leaving sees vacant, running them directly through his own confidants, and disposing of their income unilaterally. The archbishop of Nakhichevan complained bitterly to St. Petersburg that the Catholicos, guided by ‘the dark perspective of Asiatic despotism’, was running roughshod over the statute: ‘The Patriarch’s disobedience of the laws is the source of all the disorders and misfortunes both in my diocese, in particular, and among the Armenian clergy of Russia as a whole.’ Taking up the archbishop’s position, the interior minister concurred that ‘the unlimited despotism of Patriarch Nerses is manifest in all of his actions.’<sup>22</sup> From this perspective the state had acquired a Catholicos with an authoritative voice abroad only at the expense of ‘despotism’ at home. To state the matter more neutrally, Nerses—and, experience would show, most of his successors—simply

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<sup>21</sup> *Izbranie Verkhovnogo Patriarkha*, p. 48 (citation); GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, ll. 9–10; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 28ob.–29, 32; Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington, IN, 1993), p. 40. As of 1844 the Patriarch of Constantinople himself had been acknowledged as the ‘permanent nuncio’ of the Catholicos. See: Bardakjian, ‘The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate’, p. 96. On Nerses’ earlier career, see: Bournoutian, ‘Eastern Armenia’, pp. 103–106.

<sup>22</sup> Eritsov, *Patriarkh vsekh armian*, pp. 5–8; Vartanian, *Armiansko-Grigorianskaia tserkov’*, pp. 8, 17; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 12ob.–14ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 31, ll. 1–102ob., citations at ll. 26, 27ob., 43; Diakin, *Natsional’nyi vopros*, p. 102. This bitter conflict was never actually resolved and ended only when Nerses died in 1856.

maintained a conception of the Catholicos at odds with the autocracy's view of a state servitor constrained by law and the collegial form of rule.<sup>23</sup>

If these many difficulties gave St. Petersburg good reason to shift its priorities back to the internal dimension of the Armenian church, other developments compelled it to intensify its focus on the external aspects. By the time Nerses died in 1856, ties between Constantinople and Echmiadzin had once again been severed as a result of the Crimean War, while the Porte was even more suspicious of Russian interference. Moreover, the western powers, enjoying considerable influence in the Ottoman empire after the war, actively sought to draw the Armenian population into their sphere of influence, in part so as to block further Russian expansion to the south. And western missionaries began to appear even in far eastern Anatolia and Persia, converting Armenians to Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>24</sup> Writing in 1874, Russian ambassador N. P. Ignat'ev described how, under the direction of France and Britain, Protestants and Catholics had done everything possible in the 1850s and 60s to instill dissatisfaction with the statute of 1836, to break the ties of Ottoman Armenians with Echmiadzin, and to encourage the transfer of Armenian ecclesiastical subordination to Sis, within Turkey.<sup>25</sup> Writing in 1857, viceroy Bariatsinskii declared, '[E]ither the (Turkish) Armenians will throw themselves into our embrace or they will direct their desires and sympathy to some other power'.<sup>26</sup>

In this context, Russia had to deploy extensive political and cultural capital simply to prevent a complete loss of Echmiadzin's authority in Turkey. Most notably, imperial officials now began to see great advantage in promoting the election of an Ottoman subject to the patriarchal throne in order to guarantee the satisfaction of Armenians in Constantinople.

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<sup>23</sup> This discrepancy was clearly inscribed in the conflict between the Archbishop of Nakhichevan and Nerses. See: RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 31.

<sup>24</sup> On missionaries, see: Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878–1896* (London, 1993); Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London, 1998), chapter 5.

<sup>25</sup> 'Zapiska Grafa N.P. Ignat'eva (1864–1874)' [in French], *Izvestiia Ministerstva inostrannykh del* 3.1 (1914), pp. 125–126.

<sup>26</sup> Eritsov, *Patriarkh vsekh arman*, pp. 95–96 (citation). My account of the changed situation in Constantinople and its significance for Russia is based on: RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 32ob.–37ob.; GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, ll. 10–11; GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 1177, ll. 4ob., 22ob.–24; *Akty, sobrannye Kavkazskoiu Arkheograficheskoiu Kommissieiu [AKAK]*, vol. 12 (Tiflis, 1904), pp. 532–536.

When that community came out in favor of Mateos, previously Patriarch of Constantinople, St. Petersburg made certain that he was elected when delegates convened in Echimadzin, despite even a negative assessment of the proposed candidate from its embassy in the Ottoman capital.<sup>27</sup> Thus in 1857, for the first time in half a century, an Ottoman subject became Catholicos.

From the state's perspective Mateos' reign as Catholicos turned out to be even more 'arbitrary' than the previous. Like Nerses, Mateos rejected the principle of collegial rule and appointed bishops without the approval of the government. His denigration of the statute of 1836 emerged with full clarity when he proposed new rules that would have made the Catholicos entirely independent of secular authority and would have eliminated the Synod in favor of a purely consultative patriarchal council. The monks of Echmiadzin itself also complained about Mateos' violations of ecclesiastical rules, and the struggle between the Catholicos and the bishop of Nakhichevan continued.<sup>28</sup> Now the contradiction between internal and external priorities became especially sharp: the influence of Echmiadzin in Constantinople depended directly on the willingness of the imperial government to disregard its own laws and to allow the Catholicos to rule on the basis of canon alone.

Yet even so, a special government conference convened to address these problems in 1865 concluded that maintaining 'the significance and influence of the Catholicos and Echmiadzin on Armenians abroad' remained a fundamental concern of the state. And when Mateos died shortly thereafter (in 1865), even the interior ministry agreed that a candidate from Turkey was as desirable now as it had been at the time of the last election in 1857.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, the imperial government began to pay more attention to the specific forms of Turkish-Armenian participation in the elections, especially in light of substantial changes to the organisation of the Armenian community in Turkey after the Crimean War. Already before the war, a new generation of Armenians

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<sup>27</sup> GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, l. 11; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 37ob.-38; *AKAK*, vol. 12, p. 531. I have little information on the specific circumstances of Mateos' election, which are covered in: RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 38 (I was unable to consult this file in my research).

<sup>28</sup> GARF, f. 730, op. 1., d. 1177, ll. 6ob.-8ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 36ob.-40ob., 63ob.-64.

<sup>29</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 41-45ob.

educated in France became more active in communal affairs and began to challenge the power of the traditionalist *amiras*. Under the provisions of the *Hatt-i Hümayun* reform decree of 1856, the liberal ‘Young Armenians’ succeeded in attaining a new ‘constitution’ [*Sahmandrutium*] for the administration of Armenian affairs in Turkey, thereby breaking the clerical control—and thus *amira* domination—of the *millet*. While the constitution consolidated the power of the community in Constantinople over Armenian affairs for the entire empire, that community itself was now more westernised and increasingly nationalist in its orientation than it had been under the exclusive control of the notables.<sup>30</sup> Through patience and tenacity, ambassador Ignat’ev had helped to prevent the community’s break from Echmiadzin, but in the wake of that success, there appeared a new danger that the community in Constantinople, exploiting the advantage provided by the large number of Armenian dioceses in the Ottoman empire, would seek to promote its new ideological orientation among Russian Armenians.

For this reason, the Russian government began to seek ways of augmenting the participation of the more Russophilic Ottoman Armenians residing *outside* of Constantinople.<sup>31</sup> Typically, a preliminary conference of Ottoman Armenians had met in Constantinople in order to determine their preference in the election of the next Catholicos. The community in Constantinople had historically maintained almost complete control over the process, and the *Sahmandrutium* of 1863 reinforced this monopoly. The one or two deputies whom the Turkish Armenians actually sent to Echmiadzin were entitled to vote on behalf of all of the Armenian dioceses in the Ottoman empire. Given that the Russian emperor was reluctant not to confirm the candidate who received most votes, one may say that the election of the Catholicos happened as much in

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<sup>30</sup> On these processes, see: Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1863* (Istanbul, 1988), at pp. 51–91; Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (2nd edn., New York, 1973), pp. 60–62, 114–135; Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of the Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA, 1963), pp. 42–48; Hagop Barsoumian, ‘The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era’, in Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People*, pp. 195–198; RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, ll. 40ob.–41. For an account that stresses the limitations of constitution (especially on the matter of representation from the provinces), see: Libaridian, ‘The Ideology of Armenian Liberation’, pp. 102–122.

<sup>31</sup> An official in the Russian embassy in Constantinople, N. Ivanov, drew attention to this contrast in: GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 1177, ll. 5, 15, 18.

Constantinople as it did in Echmiadzin, with Armenians outside the Ottoman capital playing a limited role at most.<sup>32</sup>

St. Petersburg recognised this fact and therefore greatly valued the ability of its embassy in Constantinople to generate a strong consensus around the most desirable candidate. In 1866, for example, Ignat'ev exerted 'colossal efforts' to neutralise the Francophile party and to secure the unanimous endorsement of Russia's preferred candidate, Kevork, who was later dutifully elected at Echmiadzin.<sup>33</sup> But from the 1860s St. Petersburg sought also to broaden the base of Turkish-Armenian participation in order to break Constantinople's monopoly, which became ever more dangerous as western influence there increased. In 1865, for example, the foreign ministry declared it necessary that the government 'guarantee access to the elections to Echmiadzin of deputies from all the Armenian dioceses in Turkey through our embassy in Constantinople, so that the will of the people will be expressed not by the Constantinople party alone, but by the nation's majority'. Still, it was only in 1884 that the government began to insist on this principle by declaring that any delegate or written opinion from Constantinople would be construed as representing the will merely of the diocese of Constantinople, and not of all Ottoman Armenians.<sup>34</sup>

With the election in 1866 of Kevork, formerly a bishop in Turkey, the preference that St. Petersburg had given to Ottoman candidates in two successive elections began to take its toll on Russian Armenians, and especially on the clergy of Echmiadzin.<sup>35</sup> Decidedly unhappy with Mateos, some of the clergy became embittered at the prospect of yet another Turkish candidate, especially when state officials began to put pressure on them in order to secure Kevork's unanimous election. The 'arrogance' of the Ottoman delegation only intensified this aggravation. The interior

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<sup>32</sup> The election of Ioannes in 1831 was of course a major exception. It bears emphasis that in many respects every election was different and because of the complications involved with the transfer of Echmiadzin from Persia to Russia (as discussed above) it becomes extremely difficult to identify a truly 'typical' election.

<sup>33</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 49ob.–50. 'Zapiska Ignat'eva', pp. 125–126. As concerns Kevork, the embassy reported the view of French newspapers 'qu'il est vendu corps et âme à la Russie'. GARF, f. 730, op. 1, d. 687, l. 12.

<sup>34</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 44–45ob., 48ob.–51, 55–57, citation at l. 45ob.; RGIA, f. 1276, op. 4, d. 830, l. 39; Diakin, *Natsional'nyi vopros*, p. 474.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, the statements to this effect in RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 31, ll. 125ob.–126.

ministry's observer at the election concluded that the government's attempt to maintain unity among the dioceses rendered it dependent 'on the insolent demands of the *Sahmandrutian*' and antagonised the 'obedient' clergy and laypeople of the Russian dioceses, 'who, speaking truthfully, see in our patronage of the Turkish majority simply our weakness'.<sup>36</sup> It should be stressed that one of the principal functions of the clergy at Echmiadzin—and in particular the members of the Synod—was to run the affairs of the Armenian church collegially with the Catholicos. They represented a crucial check on the power of the Catholicos, and the government could scarcely afford to alienate them.

## Confrontation and Reorientation

The proposition that Echmiadzin could serve as a useful instrument of Russian foreign policy never disappeared entirely from the government's assessment of Armenian confessional issues. But by the 1890s St. Petersburg rejected its traditional policy of bolstering the authority of the Catholicos and embarked on a conflictual course that culminated in a disastrous attempt to secularise the property of the Armenian church in 1903–1905. Aside from the state's adoption of Russification as a general policy in the 1880s, there were two principal factors behind this reorientation. Firstly, most of the administrative difficulties discussed earlier continued and even intensified. While the Catholicos struggled to assert his full authority over foreign Armenians, the administration of Armenian confessional affairs within Russia became, at least in the eyes of St. Petersburg, ever more chaotic and lawless. Secondly, the rise of Armenian nationalism cast a dark shadow on the state's traditional patronage of Echmiadzin, and some began to argue that the Catholicos, rather than serving as an instrument for the exertion of Russian influence abroad, had become a conduit for the transmission of dangerous ideas of Armenian independence from the Ottoman empire into Russia. The state's confrontation with the Armenian church beginning in the 1890s was understood by St. Petersburg, at least in part, as a battle with Armenian

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<sup>36</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, l. 55. These words were not directly quoted as those of the observer, but the construction of the text suggests that this was the case.

‘separatism’ that eventually required drastic measures in order to purge the Armenian clergy of ‘political’ accretions.

Leading the way as in so many other cases, the energetic editor of *Moskovskie vedomosti*, Mikhail Katkov, was among the first openly to question the wisdom of Russia’s commitment to Echmiadzin. Aside from highlighting the broad autonomy that the Armenian church enjoyed in comparison to other confessions, Katkov noted in 1866, ‘A national church cannot but have a political character, and in the present case one cannot deny that this political character is not entirely compatible with the obligations of Russian subjecthood’. Thus, Katkov recounted, Nerses had continued to ordain bishops for the Turkish dioceses during the Crimean war, conducted relations with the Turks secretly through Persian intermediaries, and after the war had even threatened the interior ministry that he might seek a patron for the Armenians among other European powers. Russia’s interests, Katkov concluded, did not allow ‘the presence within Russia of a Russian subject who simultaneously considers himself to be a kind of international force’. On this basis Katkov questioned even the desirability of having the seat of the Catholicos within Russia’s borders, contending that this was ‘a double-edged sword’. In his view only one thing was desirable of the Catholicos: that he refrain from interference in ‘political matters and reject having any political influence on his flock, considering himself not the representative of the people of Haik, but of the Gregorian confession, and sternly limiting himself to religious affairs’.<sup>37</sup> In short, wishing to eliminate ‘politics’ from the Armenian church, Katkov declared that Russia had no abiding interest in the ecclesiastical subordination of Turkish Armenians to Echmiadzin.<sup>38</sup>

If at this point few senior officials were prepared to accept Katkov’s argument, evidence of his mode of thinking is clear already from the mid-

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<sup>37</sup> Tracing their lineage back to Haik, supposedly the grandson of Japhet and thus great grandson of Noah, Armenians regarded the Catholicos as the leader of the entire ‘people of Haik’. This formulation was included in the 1836 statute, which referred to ‘the Supreme Catholicos of the people of Haik’ and specified that he was to be elected ‘by the entire people of Haik of the Armeno-Gregorian confession’. (See: *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, vol. 11, part 1 [1857 edn.], arts. 914–915; ‘Armiano-Grigorianskaia tserkov’, *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, part 3 [1843], pp. 187–188). Despite these universalistic claims, not all Armenians were of the Apostolic or Gregorian confession, as some had converted to Catholicism or Protestantism.

<sup>38</sup> M.N. Katkov, *Sobranie peredovykh statei Moskovskikh vedomostei, 1866 god* (Moscow, 1897), pp. 449–451.

1860s. The Polish insurrection of 1863 substantially reordered the priorities of the autocracy towards the task of strengthening ties between borderland and center, and also helped to reframe imperial politics in a decidedly more nationalist light—a reorientation to which Katkov himself made a central contribution.<sup>39</sup> At a special conference on the Catholicos in 1865, Viceroy Bariatsinskii, contending that the ‘merging’ of Armenians with the empire’s Russian population represented a central state goal, claimed that enhancing the political significance of Echmiadzin would unavoidably promote ‘separatism’. Interior minister Peter Valuev likewise emphasised the need to avoid anything that could promote, even indirectly, aspirations for national autonomy among either Russian or foreign Armenians.<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, through the late 1870s the government’s attitude towards the Catholicos remained ambivalent. Addressing the question once again in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878, the interior ministry emphasised the undesirability of forcing the Catholicos into open confrontation, and remarked that it was better to eliminate the causes of Armenian aspirations for autonomy than to resist those aspirations directly. ‘The Patriarch cannot fail to sense that the government is not completely satisfied with his mode of action. In light of the importance of the interests that bind him to Russia and the throne of Echmiadzin, this consciousness will always restrain him from extremes, as long as he is not placed in a position with no way out’. Not surprisingly, the foreign ministry was even more indulgent. Acknowledging that the statute of 1836 truly *had* deprived the Catholicos of certain prerogatives, and that it was unrealistic to expect an aged person, raised in the ‘despotic’ atmosphere of Turkey, to conform suddenly to the laws of his newly-adopted country, the ministry admitted ‘by the order of things we are compelled to make the Armenians’ spiritual prelate necessary concession.’ Russia was sufficiently strong not to fear such concessions, and ‘by indulgence and toleration she can only further strengthen her authority and her influence among [the Catholicos’] flock.’ In short, buoyed by the military victory over Turkey and the moderating effect that

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<sup>39</sup> On Katkov’s central contribution to the nationalisation of Russian politics, see: Andreas Renner, ‘Defining a Russian Nation: Mikhail Katkov and the ‘Invention’ of National Politics’, *Slavonic and East European Review* 81:4 (2003): pp. 659–682.

<sup>40</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 41–43; Diakin, *Natsional’nyi vopros*, pp. 706–708.

this had produced in Kevork, the government decided to eschew any open confrontation.<sup>41</sup>

For all this, the pendulum swung back in favor of placing a Russian subject in Echmiadzin when Kevork died in December 1882. The Russian embassy in Constantinople opined that appointment of a Turkish candidate would make Echmiadzin a breeding-ground of political ‘intrigues’, while the clergy of Echmiadzin, apparently exasperated with the complications stemming from the two previous Turkish candidates, called for the election of the Archbishop of Nakhichevan, Makarii (i.e., a Russian subject). Presumably on this basis, a special government conference in 1883 decided to give preference to Russian candidates in the future. Indeed, so great was the desire to ensure the placement of a Russian subject that for the first time the Emperor confirmed the candidate who had received *fewer* votes in the election at Echmiadzin.<sup>42</sup> Makarii (Ter Petrosian) thus officially became Catholicos in July 1885.

Makarii’s tenure nicely illustrates the almost impossible contradictions that had by now developed in imperial policy on the Catholicos. One of the principal reasons for insisting on a Russian subject in 1883 was to install a figure who would unquestionably submit to imperial law. Yet it was precisely observance of the statute of 1836 that was most likely to compromise Makarii’s standing in the eyes of Armenians abroad, in light of both the unpopularity of that statute and the circumstances of his confirmation. Makarii accordingly requested certain concessions in administering the church, and the government, conscious of his weak position, had no choice but to comply. Makarii was granted special privileges in the matter of running Armenian schools, which the government otherwise sought to subject to state control. And yet for all that there was no improvement in the administration of Armenian religious affairs. On the contrary, concluded a later government report, ‘having obtained privileges from the government, the Catholicos related to its justified demands with great equivocation, not infrequently rejecting

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<sup>41</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 70ob.–77, citations at ll. 72ob., 75.

<sup>42</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, l. 42; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, ll. 77ob.–79; ‘Materialy, izvlechennye iz del MVD’, RGIA, pechatnye zapiski, folder 2715, p. 22; Melikset-Bekov, *Iuridicheskoe polozenie*, p. 16. This decision had also to do with a very negative Russian view of the alternative candidate. See: Diakin, *Natsional’nyi vopros*, p. 747. On the very complicated circumstances surrounding this set of elections, see: V. G. Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii vopros v politike Rossii, 1873–1903 gg.* (Erevan, 2002), pp. 47–55.

them even in an insolent fashion and complicating the work of the civil authorities to an extreme'. Moreover, when judicial instances in the Caucasus instructed Armenian clergy to administer the oath to witnesses in Russian, Makarii issued a decree to his bishops prohibiting the Armenian clergy from doing so.<sup>43</sup> Thus despite the fact that he was a Russian subject, Makarii raised, if anything, even more complications for the imperial administration than his predecessor.

By the late 1880s, imperial views of Armenians in general had changed substantially for the worse. Above all, the vague concerns about 'separatism' had solidified into a conviction that a segment of the Armenian intelligentsia was seeking the resurrection of the Armenian Kingdom and that the church had been subordinated to this nationalist program.<sup>44</sup> As the Viceroy wrote already in 1882, after Kevork's death, '[T]hanks to the privileged position in Russia of the Patriarch of Echmiadzin and his uncontrolled influence on Armenian educational institutions, the basis for the development of the idea about 'great Armenia' is, to a certain degree, being prepared'.<sup>45</sup> St. Petersburg accordingly embarked on an attempt, beginning in the 1870s, to submit Armenian schools to state control. Year after year, these efforts met with stiff resistance, and in this case Armenians could invoke the statute of 1836, which clearly placed control of schools exclusively in the hands of the church. Ominously, by this time even the Synod supported the Catholicos in defying the government's demands.<sup>46</sup>

This constellation of circumstances—Makarii's position on oaths, the struggle over schools, and the generally repressive atmosphere under Alexander III—combined finally to produce a reorientation of the state's position on Echmiadzin. Indeed, the imperial government came close to adopting Katkov's propositions articulated a quarter-century earlier. Just

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<sup>43</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, ll. 42–43ob., citation at l. 42ob.; RGIA, 'Materialy, izvlechennye iz del MVD', pechatnye zapiski, folder 2715, pp. 22–23.

<sup>44</sup> On the rise of conspiratorial images of Armenians and on nationalist elements in the emergent Armenian parties, see: Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, pp. 42–51, 68–78.

<sup>45</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, l. 79ob. The relationship between Armenian revolutionary parties and the church was more complex and ambiguous than such statements allow, but Nalbandian does note that whereas in the 1860s the intellectual tendency had been towards atheism, by the 1870s the church came to be recognised as the focus of Armenian life and as the embodiment of the nation (p. 57).

<sup>46</sup> On schools, see: RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, ll. 48ob.–51; Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, pp. 44–47, 69.

two months before Makarii's death in April 1891, yet another special conference in St. Petersburg sought to address persistent 'misunderstandings' in its dealings with Echmiadzin.<sup>47</sup> The conference acknowledged that in the first half of the century the Catholicos had enjoyed 'absolutely unique influence' among Armenians, and for this reason the imperial government had been correct to uphold his status and to grant the Armenian church extensive privileges. Yet with the appearance of the National Assembly in Constantinople, Armenians had acquired another political center, which undermined 'the previous charm of the Echmiadzin patriarchal throne.' Indeed, the unique status of the Catholicos 'has been irretrievably lost', and there were no privileges that St. Petersburg could grant to restore it. Without denying some political significance to the throne, 'one must unconditionally acknowledge that the government does not have at its disposal the manners and means to convert the Catholicos into an obedient tool [for the attainment] of our political goals.' The conference accordingly concluded that the government should demand strict observance of the law and the complete subordination of Armenian church schools to the ministry of education. St. Petersburg should simply refuse to take any active part in Echmiadzin's relations with Armenians abroad and should adopt 'the position of an observer' with regard to elections, while of course retaining the right not to confirm any candidate openly hostile to Russia. For the first time, then, the government clearly advocated the subordination of external considerations to those of internal administration. Even the foreign ministry—traditionally the defender of the Catholicos—did not object to this reorientation.<sup>48</sup>

The death of Makarii shortly after the conference gave the government an immediate opportunity to exercise its indifference in the election of 1892. The role of the government in the election is not clear from the sources I have consulted, but the selection of an Ottoman subject suggests that the government may indeed have maintained a certain

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<sup>47</sup> As most other 'special conferences' on the issue, this one involved the ministers of the interior, education, and foreign affairs, as well as the head of the administration in the Caucasus (the Viceroy for the years 1845–1881 and 1905–1917; and the *Glavnonachal'stvuiushchii* for 1881–1905).

<sup>48</sup> RGIA, 'Materialy, izvlechennye iz del MVD', folder 2715, pp. 19–25. The conference's position is also recounted in RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, ll. 43ob.–44 ob. The foreign minister at the time was Nikolai Giers, and I have no indication of his dissent.

distance from the process. The new Catholicos, Mkrtych (Khrimian) had previously served as the Archbishop of Van and Patriarch of Constantinople, and had also represented Armenian interests at the Congress of Berlin.<sup>49</sup> It was during his tenure that confrontation between St. Petersburg and Echmiadzin reached its climax. Troubles began almost immediately, as the Sultan initially refused to release him from Ottoman subjecthood so that he could take up his position in Russia, presumably because of his advocacy at Berlin.<sup>50</sup> Otherwise, Mkrtych followed his predecessors in defying the statute of 1836 and refusing to revoke Makarii's ruling on oaths. Mkrtych openly violated provisions calling for the collegial resolution of Armenians' marital affairs, and he marginalised the one remaining member of the Synod that St. Petersburg regard as reliable. The interior ministry soon became convinced that Mkrtych was aspiring to 'the establishment of complete independence of ecclesiastical authority from secular [authority]'.<sup>51</sup>

The impotence of imperial officials in this matter is striking, as they manifestly lacked any mechanism by which to enforce the submission of the Catholicos or even simply to remove him from office. Accordingly a number of officials began to advocate the extreme measure of confiscating the property of the Armenian church, so as to gain leverage over the clergy and to ensure that church funds were not being used to support the revolutionary movement. This was an extremely controversial measure, and many in the government contended that it would be both ineffective and an intolerable violation of property rights. When the issue came up for discussion in the Committee of Ministers, a clear majority of 12 against 5, led by finance minister Sergei Witte, came out against the measure. The minority, however, contended that the state's attempt to take control of Armenian primary schools had floundered on the clergy's claims that the schools were the property of the parish churches. The prospect of extensive litigation convinced the minority that it would be

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<sup>49</sup> Libaridian, 'The Ideology of Armenian Liberation', pp. 160–169; Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, pp. 53–55; Richard G. Hovannisian, 'The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire 1876 to 1914', in Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People*, pp. 209–211. The Treaty of Berlin (article 61) obligated the Porte to undertake reforms under the oversight of the Great Powers, designed to ameliorate the position of the Armenians. It was at this point that Armenian question was internationalised.

<sup>50</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, ll. 45–45ob.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 45–48, citation at l. 48.

most expedient for the state simply to confiscate the church's property, thus undermining the clergy's defense. Without providing any concrete justification, and despite all the reservations of the majority, Nicholas II accepted the minority's position, and the confiscation of Armenian church property began later in 1903.<sup>52</sup>

Greeted with the determined and unified resistance of the Armenian people under the guidance of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (the Dashnaks), the confiscation turned out to be a complete disaster.<sup>53</sup> Catholicos Mkrtich himself refused to implement the law, arguing that it had been introduced entirely without his participation. Extensive unrest in Transcaucasia as well as the general crisis of autocracy by early 1905 forced the government to appoint the liberal Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov to a re-established vice-royalty of the Caucasus in February, and one of his first acts was to terminate the confiscation as a way of neutralising the Dashnaks.<sup>54</sup> The policy of confrontation thus proved no more effective at controlling the Catholicos than the earlier policy of indulgence.

## Indecision after 1905

The decision to abandon the confiscation of Armenian church property did not resolve the fundamental tensions between internal and external priorities with respect to the Catholicos. The new viceroy and the foreign

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<sup>52</sup> Some of the discussion leading to this measure is in RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474; 'Vysochaishe utverzhdennogo 12 iiunia 1903 polozhenie Komiteta Ministrov', RGIA, pechatnye zapiski, folder 745. See also: Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii vopros*, pp. 155–203.

<sup>53</sup> Indeed, if the Armenian revolutionary federation (the Dashnaks) had previously been ambivalent about the church, then the confiscation served to unite these two forces, to strengthen the national character of the Federation, and to convince its members that revolutionary struggle should be expanded beyond the Ottoman empire to include Russia as well. See: Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, pp. 48–49; Anahide Ter Minassian, 'Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887–1912)', in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, (2nd edn., Ann Arbor, MI, 1996), pp. 166–168; Gerard J. Libaridian, 'Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaktsutiun', *ibid.*, pp. 194–196.

<sup>54</sup> 'Ob ispolnenii Vysoch. utv. 12 iiunia 1903 Polozheniia Komiteta Ministrov', and 'Otnoshenie Ministra Zemledeliia i Gosudarstvennykh Imushchestv Sergeiu Iu. Vitte 24 fevralia 1905', both in RGIA, pechatnye zapiski, folder 745; RGIA, f. 821, op. 10, d. 18; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 283; Diakin, *Natsional'nyi vopros*, pp. 45–50, 473–482.

ministry began once again to emphasise the international significance of Echmiadzin. Such a renewed emphasis was the logical consequence, in part, of the reorientation of Russia's foreign policy priorities after the disastrous war with Japan, particularly under the tenure of foreign minister A. P. Izvol'skii (1906–1910). While Russia sought to prevent 'premature' Ottoman disintegration and partition in the context of mounting instability in the Balkans and the rapid development of German interests in Turkey, the government became increasingly concerned about the possibility of a third power gaining control over the Straits and thereby upsetting the status quo. It was crucial to Izvol'skii that Russia be able to act decisively in the Eastern Question if the need arose. Political revolution in Persia (1906–1911) and the Ottoman empire (1908–1909) only rendered the situation even more unstable, and also had direct, if still unclear implications for non-Russian Armenians. In this context tsarist officials concerned with foreign policy endeavored not to antagonise Armenians with new assaults on the prerogatives of their church. By 1912, St. Petersburg even attempted to reactivate the Armenian question, which was essentially impossible without the cooperation of the Catholicos. Thus a combination of factors—shifting foreign-policy priorities, political change in Turkey and Persia, and the appointment of Vorontsov-Dashkov—all drove St. Petersburg to retreat from the policy of confrontation of the previous two decades or so.<sup>55</sup>

This is not to say that the government—and in particular the interior ministry—made its peace with the traditional order of things. With the death of Mkrtych in October 1907, the government was compelled to review its position in light of all that had happened since his confirmation in 1893. At this point, interior minister P. A. Stolypin raised a proposal originally made by prince Grigorii Golitsyn before his departure as head of the Caucasus administration in 1905: that the status of the Catholicos be reduced to that of a 'regular spiritual leader', with his jurisdiction confined to territories within the Russian empire. Non-recognition of the Catholicos' 'ecumenical significance' would deprive him of his

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<sup>55</sup> On these developments, see: Hovannisian, *The Armenian People*, pp. 233–238; David MacLaren McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 101–111; Alan Bodger, 'Russia and the End of the Ottoman Empire', in Marian Kent (ed.), *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1984), pp. 76–110, esp. pp. 78–82; Roderic H. Davison, 'The Armenian Crisis, 1912–1914', *American Historical Review* 53:3 (1948), pp. 481–505, esp. pp. 489–490.

‘privileged position’ and allow the government to relate to him properly as a subordinate. Stolypin also expressed concern about the Catholicos’ convening of an assembly of Armenians at Echmiadzin in 1906 to discuss popular participation in church affairs—an assembly in which Dashnak members and sympathisers predominated. ‘[B]y artificially restoring the spiritual and political center of the Armenian people in Echmiadzin, we have silently recognised, if not legalised, the factual possibility for the Catholicos to unite around himself various Armenian parties of local and foreign origins, and Echmiadzin has therefore become to a certain degree a center for the revolutionary movement among Russian Armenians’.<sup>56</sup> The result was an extensive discussion in 1908 of the Catholicos’ privileges and the relationship of the imperial Russian state to his ecumenical status.

The most ardent proponent of the Catholicos and of the state’s original orientation as enshrined in the 1836 statute was viceroy Vorontsov-Dashkov, who protested ‘in a categorical fashion’ against the renewal of Golitsyn’s proposal. Coming on the heels of the attempted confiscation, such a measure could not possibly be introduced without a nasty struggle and it was in any event unlikely that Armenians would cease regarding the Catholicos as head of all Armenians simply because of a proclamation by the Russian government. The principal goal at present was to convince Armenians that they were Russian subjects first and foremost, whereas changing the status of the Catholicos would only make them ‘once again enemies of the Russian state’. It was true that, unlike the heads of other Christian confessions, the Catholicos received special forms of recognition from the Emperor, but this practice had been established in its time ‘with full consciousness, since the Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos represents the head of an entire independent church, whereas all the higher dignitaries of the other Christian confessions in Russia, not excluding the Orthodox, are merely the heads of individual dioceses’. In general the viceroy praised the profound wisdom behind the state’s legislative recognition of the Catholicos as head of all Armenians and its significance for protecting Russian interests in Transcaucasia and the Near East, and he concluded that any goals that remained unfulfilled

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<sup>56</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7. d. 306, l. 76; Diakin, *Natsional’nyi vopros*, pp. 722–725, 751–752. Mkrtich apparently agreed to convene this assembly under Dashnak pressure. See: Libaridian, ‘Revolution and Liberation’, p. 196.

in this regard were best explained by the government's repressive measures against the Armenian clergy. The viceroy's only major suggestion for change was the introduction of secret ballot at the election for the Catholicos, so as to protect delegates from the influence of 'extreme parties' and 'terror'.<sup>57</sup>

Having consulted the embassy in Constantinople, the foreign ministry also expressed opposition to the interior ministry's proposals, especially with respect to the 'ecumenical significance' of the Catholicos.<sup>58</sup> Izvol'skii noted that such significance 'by no means rests exclusively on the statutes of our law digest', but was instead rooted in the canons of the Armenian church. Thus even if the statute of 1836 did play a certain role in 'artificially' bolstering Armenian consciousness of that status, 'there are no grounds to suppose that with the alteration of a few articles of the digest this consciousness will disappear'. Izvol'skii was also not fully convinced of the causal connection between the Catholicos' ecumenical status and the Armenian revolutionary movement. He insisted on the continued significance of the Catholicos for Russia's foreign policy, noting the tremendous efforts that had been made after the Crimean War to ensure the continued ecclesiastical subordination of Ottoman Armenians to Echmiadzin. Even if the status of the Catholicos brought no immediate benefits, the policy orientation contained in the 1836 statute 'is unquestionably capable of bearing fruit', since it was obviously most desirable that Armenians in the border regions of Turkey 'are not hostile towards us but instead are raised in the consciousness that they are obligated to Russia alone for the safe-keeping of the dearest ideals of the Armenian people.' In light of these circumstances, and also because of the complex nature of Russia's relations with Turkey at the moment, Izvol'skii argued for extreme care in introducing any reforms, above all to prevent the impression among Armenians that the government was embarking once again on the persecution of their church.<sup>59</sup>

The interior ministry was still not convinced, however. Recounting the unfortunate history of the affair since the election of the first Turkish subject in 1857, the director of the Department of Foreign Confessions,

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<sup>57</sup> RGIA, f. 1276, op. 4, d. 830, ll. 51–56; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 306, ll. 43–45.

<sup>58</sup> The foreign ministry had also requested an opinion from Tehran, but this had not yet been received when it drew up its response to the interior ministry.

<sup>59</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 306, ll. 74–79, citations at ll. 75ob., 78ob., 78.

Vsevolod Vladimirov,<sup>60</sup> argued that the church's 'disorganisation' had reached a critical state and that the vacancy of the throne offered an opportunity to discuss, if not the statute of 1836 itself, then at least the status of the Catholicos. The various special rights of the Catholicos and his factual immunity to removal from office should be terminated, and his relationship to the Synod should be clarified in the interests of upholding collegial rule. Vladimirov furthermore doubted that the state's recognition of the Catholicos' ecumenical character had brought many actual benefits, and in light of the much greater significance of the Catholicos for Armenians *within* Russia as opposed to their foreign counterparts, the government should work to equalise the voting power of the two contingents. With respect to citizenship, the experience with Mateos, Kevork, and especially Mkrtych had demonstrated 'that these persons, born and raised in Turkey, were not in a position to understand the justified demands of our government and tried constantly to apply in Russia those despotic methods, to which they were accustomed in their homeland, as a result of which they could not nourish the respect for law that a well-organised government has the right to demand'. Apparently forgetting Makarii's tenure (1885–1891), Vladimirov concluded that many difficulties would be alleviated once the throne was occupied by a person familiar with the requirements 'of a civilised state' and knowledgeable of the Russian language. Returning to the logic of 1883, he thus advocated the confirmation only of Russian subjects knowing the Russian language.

Nonetheless, taking stock of the viceroy's arguments, Vladimirov proved willing to modify his demands somewhat. He acknowledged that the deprivation of the external attributes of the Catholicos's power would be interpreted by Armenians as an act of persecution. He was even prepared to abandon the requirement that the Catholicos be elected from among Russian subjects for as long as his ecumenical status was officially recognised. But whereas Vorontsov-Dashkov blamed his predecessor for 'revolutionising' the Armenian population, Vladimirov countered that the government's extreme measures had been necessary only because the clergy had been 'infected with dreams' about 'political independence for

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<sup>60</sup> This document was apparently a draft prepared by Vladimirov for submission to the Council of Ministers by his superior, interior minister P.A. Stolypin. Presumably the document reflects the position of the latter as much as that of the former.

the Armenian people'. He rejected the viceroy's implication that the issues of schools and oaths represented 'minor' affairs of the church in which the government should not have interfered. Vladimirov accordingly proposed three crucial reforms, convinced that they could be introduced without Armenians' further radicalisation: 1) the demand that any candidate for Catholicos know the Russian language; 2) the equalisation of the number of votes for Russian and foreign Armenians in elections; 3) and the clarification of the relationship between Catholicos and Synod.<sup>61</sup>

Even these more limited reforms were contested by the viceroy and the foreign minister, however. Most significantly, the two officials noted that requiring that the Catholicos know Russian would factually eliminate foreign candidates from contention, thereby reducing the position's ecumenical significance to mere formality. Compelled to vote not for the most worthy candidate, but rather for the one who happened to know Russian, foreign Armenians would scarcely regard such a Catholicos as fully legitimate. The two also contended that any changes to the voting structure—another matter that was closely connected to the question of ecumenicity—could not legitimately be introduced in the interim, between two patriarchs. In principle, the foreign minister agreed, the equalisation of voting power was desirable, but he cited the Roman Catholic principle *sede vacante nihil innovatur*—no innovations when the throne is vacant—with which he presumed Armenians to be familiar.<sup>62</sup>

Most of these arguments were repeated in one form or another when the issue came up for discussion in the Council of Ministers in August 1908. The council's conclusion was to postpone any new measures and to place its hope in the careful selection of a new Catholicos, who could be expected to work with the viceroy to make the necessary changes to the statute of 1836. The interior ministry's main achievement was to gain the council's recognition that foreign policy considerations could not be allowed completely to override those of internal policy. The only concrete change that the council authorised at the present moment was the introduction of secret ballot into the election process.<sup>63</sup> In essence, then,

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<sup>61</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 306, ll. 2–60ob., citations at ll. 30, 49.

<sup>62</sup> RGIA, f. 1276, op. 4, d. 830, ll. 58–62ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 306, ll. 80–82ob. Foreign minister Izvol'skii had previously served as head of the Russian mission to the Vatican and was thus well-versed in Catholic principles.

<sup>63</sup> RGIA, f. 1276, op. 4, d. 830, ll. 2–9ob., citation at l. 8ob. The rules regulating the election process itself were separate from the statute of 1836 and were therefore more

the interior ministry's demands were blocked in exchange for a vague promise to undertake reform when the conditions were more appropriate.

If the Council's conclusion reflected the tensions long embedded in the state's relations with the Catholicos, it should also be understood in terms of broader conflicts between Stolypin, Izvol'skii, and Vorontsov-Dashkov. On the one hand, the viceroy's liberalism had already drawn the ire of conservatives, who saw in his 'flaccid' administration dangerous sympathy for nationalism and revolutionary aims. On the whole, the Petersburg bureaucracy was unhappy with the restoration of the vicerealty, which removed Transcaucasian affairs from its purview. Committed to the principles of 'united government' and critical of Vorontsov-Dashkov's leniency towards Armenians, Stolypin essentially shared this view.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, the discussion of the Catholicos unfolded against the backdrop of a fundamental dispute between Stolypin and Izvol'skii over the making of foreign policy. As chairman of the Council of Ministers, Stolypin was determined to subordinate the conduct of foreign affairs to cabinet rule and to eliminate the possibility of foreign entanglement while Russia's post-1905 reconstruction remained incomplete. For his part Izvol'skii, seeking to resolve the Straits Question and to ensure Russia's ability to act decisively in the Near East, unilaterally embarked on a dynamic policy fundamentally at odds with Stolypin's vision of restraint. When the scope of Izvol'skii's aspirations became apparent in January 1908, Stolypin moved energetically to assert the prerogatives of the Council in formulating foreign policy, enjoining the foreign minister to rely exclusively on diplomatic skill. But Izvol'skii's role in the appearance of the Bosnian crisis later in 1908 shows that he had not entirely accepted Stolypin's vision, and he was no doubt eager to defend any instrument he possessed for exerting influence on Turkey. Thus the particular constellation of forces in 1908 and Izvol'skii's desire to proceed with an active policy in the Near East regardless of Stolypin's injunctions were undoubtedly crucial bases for

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easily altered. Secret ballot was indeed introduced in 1908. See: Melikset-Bekov, *Iuridicheskoe polozenie*, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example: 'Kavkazskie dela', *Kolokol*, no. 685 (6 June 1908); Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, pp. 49–50; Diakin, *Natsional'nyi vopros*, pp. 48–49, 481–482, 499–504; D.I. Ismail-Zade, 'Illarion Ivanovich Vorontsov-Dashkov', in S.V. Tiutiukin (ed.), *Istoricheskie siluety* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 48–52.

the foreign ministry's active support for the authority of the Catholicos. Likewise, when Stolypin highlighted the intolerability of a state servitor who had 'extraterritorial power' but was unwilling to submit to 'the demands of the law', he simultaneously reasserted the connection between internal and external policy that served as the cornerstone for the Council's claim to authority in the conduct of foreign affairs.<sup>65</sup>

By all indications there were otherwise few, if any, fundamental changes to either the election process or to state policy on the Catholicos. Apparently without great controversy, Patriarch of Constantinople Matevos (Izmirlian) was elected to the throne and confirmed by St. Petersburg in September 1909.<sup>66</sup> In a break with tradition, however, Stolypin insisted that Matevos travel to St. Petersburg and meet the Emperor *before* taking up his position, in order to make clear to him from the very beginning his obligation to observe imperial law as well as church canon.<sup>67</sup> The elections of 1911 (after Matevos' death at the end of 1910) proved to be far more complicated, as twenty-eight delegates—including those of the Synod and monastery at Echmiadzin—boycotted participation in the proceedings after complaining that they had been pressured by the National Assembly in Constantinople and the Dashnaks to exclude the former Patriarch of Constantinople from contention. In the event, Kevork (Surenian), a Russian subject and member of the Echmiadzin Synod was elected and confirmed. But there are indications that the circumstances of his election substantially weakened his legitimacy.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> On these complex issues, see the penetrating discussion in McDonald, *United Government*, esp. pp. 111–126, 136–151; as well as Bodger, 'Russia and the End', pp. 92–93. Citation from RGIA, f. 1276, op. 4, d. 830, l. 8ob.

<sup>66</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 302, l. 24. By several accounts, Matevos' selection was a foregone conclusion. See: Diakin, *Natsional'nyi vopros*, p. 764; 'K vyboram', *Zakavkaz'e*, no. 269 (1 December 1911).

<sup>67</sup> Diakin, *Natsional'nyi vopros*, p. 766; 'K priezdu patriarkha katolikosa vsekh Armian Matteosa II-go Izmerliania', *Novoe vremia*, no. 11923 (24 May 1909), p. 3; 'Vysochaishie ukazaniia Armianskomu katolikosu', *Moskovskie vedomost*, no. 125 (3 June 1909), p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Diakin, *Natsional'nyi vopros*, p. 766–771. On the 1911 elections, see the series of articles in *Zakavkaz'e*, nos. 269, 281, 282, and 288 (1, 15, 16, and 23 December 1911); GARF, f. 102, sek. chast' O. O. (1911), d. 114, citation at ll. 121–121ob.

## Conclusion

St. Petersburg's attitude towards the Armenian Catholicos was deeply conditioned by processes within the Ottoman empire and indeed by the perceived viability of the Ottoman state itself. The *amira* class performed essential functions for the Ottoman state, especially in finance and industry, and through them Russia could hope to influence the Porte. Frequent warfare with the Ottoman empire simultaneously made it crucial to cultivate good relations with the population that resided in a central theater of any Russo-Turkish military conflict. Finally, the prospect of the Ottoman empire's eventual partition, and the need for Russia to position itself for the aftermath, occupied a central place in official Russian thinking. The growing western influence in Constantinople and even Anatolia made St. Petersburg extremely reluctant to compromise the one clear institutional advantage that it enjoyed over its imperial rivals. Only extreme disorder and outright insubordination in Echmiadzin finally drove St. Petersburg to abandon its policy of indulgence. Aside from this temporary deviation from 1891 to 1905, the external importance of the Catholicos almost always outweighed the internal.

The nature of Armenian politics and communal organisation in the Ottoman empire was likewise central to St. Petersburg's dealings with the Catholicos. On the one hand, the consolidation of the power of the community in Constantinople over the entire *millet*, especially after the appearance of the 1863 'constitution', compelled St. Petersburg to indulge that community by advancing Ottoman subjects to the throne of Echmiadzin. Moreover, despite the talk after 1905 of the equalisation of Russian and Ottoman voting strength, for the entire nineteenth century St. Petersburg tolerated a voting structure that—even taking account of the larger Armenian population in Turkey—was disproportionately advantageous to Ottoman Armenians.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, the predominance of the Constantinople community drove St. Petersburg to promote more direct participation in the elections of Armenians in Anatolia, thus drawing Russia deeper into Armenian politics in Turkey. Armenian politics were also central in the reorientation of 1891–1905. The perception that the 'separatist' goals of the Armenian revolutionary

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<sup>69</sup> That is, the imbalance in the number of dioceses between Russia and Turkey—the basis for the voting structure—was even greater than the imbalance in actual population.

movement had been transferred from Ottoman lands to Russia exacerbated St. Petersburg's negative view of the Catholicos and greatly reduced its willingness to tolerate deviations from the statute of 1836.

On the whole the case of the Catholicos reveals very significant limitations on imperial Russian power. St. Petersburg's striking inability to compel the Catholicos to submit to its dictates and its rather desperate recourse to a crude (and ultimately ineffective) mode of action in 1903 expose the tremendous constraints on the state's ability to act. Opportunities and dangers on Russia's southern flank similarly restricted options for administration of the Gregorian confession in Russia, making internal policy almost always a prisoner to foreign-policy concerns. Reform of the statute of 1836 could never be undertaken without reference to the consequences for Armenians abroad, while the participation of foreigners in the formulation of Russian imperial statutes was inconsistent with the prestige of the state. However much it came to appear as a liability rather than an advantage, the 'ecumenical status' of the Catholicos could simply not be abrogated unilaterally by St. Petersburg.

The particular character of Armenians' confessional affairs emerges most clearly when viewed against the situation that prevailed for their Georgian neighbors. The tsarist regime institutionalised the empire's cultural diversity by specifically confessional criteria, so that Georgians, as Orthodox Christians, were simply incorporated into the empire's 'predominant' church, with ecclesiastical subordination to the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg. Although there was a special 'Exarch of Georgia' with some authority over Orthodox spiritual affairs in the Caucasus, this figure was nonetheless an agent of the Synod and almost always a Russian, and therefore represented only a faint echo of the ecclesiastical independence that Georgians had enjoyed earlier. Inspired by Vorontsov-Dashkov's lenient treatment of Armenians as well as by the very existence of the Armenian Catholicos, Georgian clergy mobilised energetically in 1905 to restore the autocephaly of their church and to resurrect the position of the Georgian Orthodox Catholicos, which had been terminated with the creation of the exarchate 1811. Yet until the collapse of the tsarist regime, these efforts were rebuffed. The empire's Orthodox hierarchy, consisting primarily of Russians, was generally opposed to such ethnic fragmentation on both canonical and (one may conclude) political grounds. The Georgian experience thus demonstrates that belonging to the empire's

‘predominant’ faith was ironically accompanied by certain distinct liabilities. The fact that there were few of their brethren—whether ethnic Georgians or Orthodox believers of any ethnicity—on the other side of Russia’s southern border served only to weaken Georgians’ position further, as the state could deal with them almost exclusively as an *internal* matter.<sup>70</sup> In short, confessionally Orthodox and lacking international significance, Georgians did not receive the same concessions that Armenians did.

In some respects the confession most akin to the Armenian was Catholicism. Here, too, ecumenical factors beyond Russia’s control played a crucial role in St. Petersburg’s dealings with both the clerical hierarchy and the laity. Numerous issues, including the resolution of certain marital questions and the appointment of bishops, required the participation of the Holy See, thus compelling Russia to engage in complicated and frustrating relations with Rome.<sup>71</sup> In this case, too, the distinction between internal and external affairs was far from clear, as the Pope made several claims to authority in areas that St. Petersburg regarded as being fundamentally internal and therefore not subject to the prerogatives a ‘foreign power’. As with Armenians, the relationship between canonical provisions and imperial law was extraordinarily complex, while the influence of foreign concerns on the formation of imperial law pertaining to Catholics was considerable.<sup>72</sup> As viewed from St. Petersburg, the case of Catholicism essentially represented the reverse of the situation that pertained with respect to Armenian religious affairs. Whereas in the Armenian case Russia could hope to exploit the authority of an ecumenical church head for its foreign-policy interests, in the Catholic case the church’s head resided abroad and was not a subject of the empire. The Vatican accordingly sought to influence Russian policy—at least with respect to Catholics—from without, taking into account the

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<sup>70</sup> I have addressed the controversy over the Georgian autocephalist movement in: Paul Werth, ‘Georgian Autocephaly and the Ethnic Fragmentation of Orthodoxy’, *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 23 (2006), pp. 74–100.

<sup>71</sup> Not incidentally, it was precisely Izvol’skii who, after almost six years of effort, established permanent representation for Russia at the Holy See in 1894. See: Z.P. Iakhimovich, ‘Rossiia i Vatikan: Problemy diplomaticheskikh vzaimootnoshenii v kontse XIX – nachale XX vv.’, in Tokareva and Iudin (eds.), *Rossiia i Vatikan*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>72</sup> For example, provisions agreed to in a Concordant between Rome and St. Petersburg in 1847 were incorporated into the Law Digest (*Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*) of 1857.

interests of the tsarist regime only to the extent that they coincided with its own.<sup>73</sup> One may only hope that scholars attempt a more detailed comparison between Catholicism and the Armenian confession, in light of the potentially powerful insights into the multi-confessional character of the Russian empire and its implication in larger systems of international relations and religious communities.

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<sup>73</sup> On the international dimensions of Catholicism, see the illuminating articles in Tokareva and Iudin (eds.), *Rossia i Vatikan*, as well as E. Vinter [Eduard Winter], *Papstvo i tsarizm*, tr. R.A. Krest'ianinov and S.M. Raskina (Moscow, 1964); and the numerous documents in Marian Radwan (ed.), *Katolicheskaia tserkov' nakanune revoliutsii 1917 goda: Sbornik dokumentov* (Lublin, 2003), especially nos. 14 and 15.