

**GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE TURKESTAN GOVERNOR-GENERALS -  
STATUS, POWERS, DUTIES, FEATURES OF OFFICIAL ACTIVITY (1867-1917)**

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**Abstract :** *In this article, an attempt was made to analyze the legal status, powers, official activities, and personal characteristics of the Governor-Generals, who were considered representatives of the Russian Empire's trust in the Turkestan region and implementers of colonial policy for 50 years, through sources of the period and modern historical research.*

**Keywords:** *Governor-General, military-people's administration, military ministry, General Staff, Asian part, Charter, interim Governor-General.*

In the second half of the 19th century, after the Russian Empire conquered the khanates of Central Asia, the system of organizing imperial power in Turkestan, like in the Transcaucasian region, was called "military-people's administration." The organization of the political, socio-economic, and cultural administration of the Turkestan Krai requires consideration of the issue of the Governor-General, who is considered the leader of the region, and his status. In the essence of the colonial system of the Russian Empire, the status of Governor-General was reflected in the "General Instructions for Governors-Generals" of May 29, 1853[9].

This legislative act reflected only the general directions of the activities of the Governor-Generals, and since it was drawn up without taking into account the diversity of regional conditions arising in the administration of colonies in remote areas, this circumstance led to the ambiguity and unclarity of many definitions in the law [11, p.90].

The "defenders" of the interests of the Russian Empire in the Turkestan Krai and the "supporters" conducting political, economic, social, and cultural policy in the region within the framework of these interests were the Governor-Generals. According to the general imperial laws, the Governor-General was made "the chief guardian of the rights of the Tsarist government, the inviolability of state interests, and the precise implementation of laws" [2, p.47]. Thus, the Governor-General had his own legally unlimited power.

The upper circles of the Russian Empire granted broad powers to the Governor-Generals, who were initially appointed to manage the colonized territories, to fully establish the interests of the empire on the ground. For example, the Governor-General of Turkestan had enormous powers, such as carrying out, at his discretion, any actions, including military ones, against the khanates that were not subordinate, but were in fact subordinate to him; carrying out administration taking into account modern obligations; spending income at his discretion; maintaining diplomatic relations with neighboring states; imposing taxes on the population at his discretion; spending funds according to the budget; approving or pardoning sentences on the death penalty for representatives of the local population [5, C. 48].

However, after several years of experience in establishing colonial policy in the conquered territories, the status of governors-generals and the privileges granted to them began to be limited. According to the "Regulations on the Military Ministry" of 1869, the General Staff was part of the military administration. The Asian part, which was a structural subdivision of the General Staff, played an important role in reducing the status of the Turkestan Governor-Generals. In accordance with the "Regulations on the Asian Part," approved in 1886 by the Chief of the General Staff, General N. N. Obruchev [1], his authority, in addition to military directions, included military-administrative and military-people's administration within the framework of the Caucasus, both Siberian, Orenburg, and Turkestan Military Districts [10, P.138-142]. All reports of the Turkestan Governor-Generals were sent not directly to the emperor, but specifically to the Asian part, and all reports of the provincial military governors also arrived there. All economic issues arising in the process of governing the Turkestan Krai were also discussed and subsequently approved in the Asian part, and on the basis of materials received from the authorities of the Turkestan Krai, officials of the Asian part of the Military Ministry prepared documents for the General Staff, which subsequently served as the basis for the report prepared for the Minister of War [11, p. 92].

Thus, by the beginning of the 20th century, the following hierarchical chain was formed: Emperor - Minister of War - General Staff - Asian part - Governor-General of Turkestan. This system did not allow the Governor-General to exercise his special powers, which undermined the authority of the Governor-Generalship.

It should be noted that a number of researchers pay more attention to the personal rather than legal nature of the governor-general's power. Indeed, it cannot be denied that much in the region depended on the general-governor's attitude to a particular problem, his relationship with the central authority (especially the emperor). A striking example of this is the "conqueror and organizer of the Turkestan Krai," General-Adjutant K.P. von Kaufman. None of the Turkestan Governor-Generals possessed such extraordinary powers granted to him. He personally received instructions from the emperor and reported to him[6]. His orders and directives became the first legislative acts in the territory entrusted to him and were approved by the first legislative acts in the territory entrusted to him.

During his career, K.P. Kaufman, taking advantage of the Emperor's personal favor towards him, assumed the functions of the highest cassation instance. He changed the jurisdiction of cases, suspended criminal cases, and overturned the decisions of people's courts. He made many decisions without consulting official Petersburg. At the same time, the Governor-General of Turkestan did not allow the intervention of ministries other than the Ministry of War in the administration of the region [11, p. 92].

In fact, due to the difficult political situation in Turkestan at that time, the power of the Governor-General was not limited by anything. The general assessment of the activities of the Turkestan Governor-Generals of the senatorial audit conducted in 1908 is interesting. As K.K. Palen notes [7, C.100], after General K.P. Kaufman, not a single Governor-General of Turkestan could use all the power of his authority to effectively manage the region.

After the Russian Empire, in a certain sense, consolidated its power in the territory of Turkestan, they legally attempted to regulate the privileges and powers granted to the leaders

of the region, but the Turkestan Governor-Generals did not accept the certain restrictions on their rights. The Governor-Generals who came to power after the 1980s, like the first leader of the Turkestan region, K.P. Kaufman, wanted to have unlimited powers.

The 1886 Statute on the Administration of Turkestan legally formalized the relations between the local bodies of various ministries and the Governor-General of Turkestan. From the control of the Turkestan Governor-General were removed: judicial, financial, control, educational, and postal-telegraph offices [8].

However, as noted in K.K. Palen's senatorial investigation, the agencies exercised their right to "direct contact with Petersburg" and pursued their own independent policy [7, p.100]. Nevertheless, the Charter of 1886 limited the authority and rights of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship to a certain extent compared to the initial period of its existence and forced it to adapt to the new conditions.

Several Turkestan Governor-Generals adopted the 1886 Charter as a document that restricted their rights and sought to acquire broader powers in the subsequent period. The Governor-General of Turkestan, A.B. Vrevskiy, wrote in 1895 that the former authority of the Russians in the region had weakened over the 8 years since the introduction of the 1886 Charter, which had an extremely negative impact on the administrative process. In his thoughts on the local judicial system, Governor-General N. I. Grodekov clearly described this situation with the words: "the population still doesn't know who to consider a leader"[4]. As Turkestan Governor-General A.V. Samsonov also noted at the beginning of the 20th century, the Governor-General had lost the opportunity to independently solve a number of pressing problems of the region, was often subordinate to the opinion of the majority of officials who were not responsible for the results of decisions made, and, due to his official position, considered it necessary to protect narrow departmental interests [3, p.54].

Half of the Governor-Generals who changed their positions in Turkestan over 50 years worked in their positions for more than two years. Such rapid renewal was especially characteristic of the beginning of the 20th century. During the last 17 years of the colonial regime of the Russian Empire, there were 7 governor-generals, and during the First World War (until the appointment of "the last master of the colony," A. N. Kuropatkin, from the front to suppress the 1916 national liberation movement in the region) three governor-generals were exchanged [12, p.56].

Internal instability in the region, serious revolutionary uprisings occurred primarily due to the frequent change of Turkestan Governor-Generals, who held power in the region for a short period, resigned before fully entering official activity, did not have complete information about the region, its features, their views and changes in the system caused chaos in the general administration. In addition, this can be explained by the fact that a large part of the Turkestan Governor-Generals were not sufficiently competent in matters of administrative administration of the region, and often the position held did not correspond to the role assigned to them.

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