



## From Conquest to Deportation. The North Caucasus under Russian Rule

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To cite this article: Vassily A. Klimentov (2019) From Conquest to Deportation. The North Caucasus under Russian Rule, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 71:8, 1434-1435, DOI: [10.1080/09668136.2019.1664155](https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1664155)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1664155>



Published online: 16 Oct 2019.



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(pp. 179–202). Simon Schegel’s approach to minority identities in Southern Bessarabia and the role of ethnic associations and utility in local politics is based on clientelism (pp. 203–23). Lastly, Veronika Borysenko, Mascha Brammer and Jonas Eichhorn’s study focuses on the ideological roots and transnational ties of East Ukrainian separatism (pp. 225–48).

These diverse empirical case studies allow the reader to understand the ambiguous and controversial developments in modern Ukraine. The country, although embedded in a transnational web of power struggles, interactions, relations, meanings and interpretations, has yet to deal with the problems of nation- and state-building.

Undoubtedly, transnationalism is a useful model, but it has limitations. The complex reality of Ukraine cannot be understood by a single theory. The editors accept this risk knowingly. The transnational approach opposes but, at the same time, complements the nation-building paradigm and surpasses methodological nationalism. Another risk, which this anthology faces, is to combine conflictual or even hostile narratives encompassing the ‘heroic rhetoric’ of Maidan (Revolution of Dignity, civil society) and the ‘villain rhetoric’ of Anti-Maidan (separatist movement, ‘dark’ civil society), or Russophone Odessa Ukraine nationalism and Ukrainophone *Halychyna* nationalism. It may, however, serve as an additional platform for a dialogue in regard to ‘taking sides’ and for ‘involved parties’.

The edited volume will be of great interest to scholars, practitioners, policymakers and students engaging with Europe, Ukraine and border studies. This anthology is also of relevance for individuals who are interested in making sense of the Euromaidan aftermath, East Ukrainian separatism, the ambivalent processes of post-Soviet transformations and modern Ukraine in general.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1664154>

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Jeronim Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation. The North Caucasus under Russian Rule*. London: Hurst & Company, 2018, xxiv + 466pp., £65.00 h/b.

ENDURING INSTABILITY IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS AFTER THE END OF the Soviet Union has been an additional factor in motivating scholars to investigate the history of that region under Russian rule. In light of the first (1994–1996) and then of the second Chechen wars (1999–2009), historians have examined the narrative—also promoted by the Chechen insurgents—that presented the Caucasus as having always been at war with the ‘Russian colonisers’. In that history, the same three milestones are invariably evoked: the Caucasian War (1817–1864), which witnessed a ruthless campaign of annexation of the region by the Russian Empire; the Russian Civil War (1917–1921), which was marked by the establishment of the short-lived Mountain Republic that was crushed by the Bolsheviks; and, finally, World War II (1941–1945), which saw resistance to the Soviet Union by the Caucasian people and their collaboration with the German invaders, followed by the inhumane Soviet policy of mass deportation of entire ethnic groups from the Caucasus to Central Asia. Whether one accepts the vision of an everlasting war between the Caucasus and the Russian centre, there is no way of avoiding a discussion of these three pivotal moments in Caucasian history. It is thus no surprise that they feature in Jeronim Perović’s *From Conquest to Deportation*.

The historiography of the North Caucasus under Russian rule is one of seemingly unending controversies. It is a history that has been written and rewritten countless times. Each new generation of scholars in Russia and the Caucasus needed to adjust the narratives, creating and rearranging the facts in a way that suited the prevailing ideology. In Russia today, the authorities are making great

efforts to recreate a grand (multi) national myth spanning from the days of the Kievan Rus' to the present. Thus, the bloody history of the Caucasus remains eminently politicised. In this context, downplaying the conflictual elements to emphasise the modernising role of Russia in transforming the region remains a fashionable approach in many historical circles in Moscow (pp. 46–51; 101–2). Yet, such narratives do not sit well with people in the Caucasus. In that region, one manifestation of these tensions is the debate over monuments and celebrations. Pro-Russian local authorities have to—almost schizophrenically—find a way to celebrate both the heroes of the resistance to Russian rule and the figureheads of the imperial project, such as General Aleksey Yermolov. Given these circumstances, the contribution of Western historians is valuable in presenting an impartial look at events, especially as new archives available, among other places, in the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow, and unpublished eyewitness accounts shed new light on key moments in the history of the Caucasus.

In his remarkably well-documented work, Perović's objective is to deconstruct a history that shows the Caucasian people as a homogenous group always at war with Russia. The author thus argues that it would 'be a mistake to see all unrest and disturbances in the North Caucasus as directly linked to central state policy' (pp. 325–26). Violence was not only the result of the steadfast struggle of the Caucasians for their freedom against Russian domination but also, in some cases, an 'intra-Caucasian phenomenon, rooted in the societal structures and traditions of the regions', as well as in opposition to local power and administrative structures (pp. 325–26). As the author shows, by examining their biographies in great detail, the paths of leading figures in the resistance to Russian rule were far from straightforward, marked by conflicting loyalties, evolutions in ideology and shifts in political alignment over time.

Hence, Musa Kundukhov, who in the mid-1860s emigrated together with fellow Caucasians to the Ottoman Empire after the Russian conquest, had behind him a long and distinguished career in the Russian Imperial military and administration of the Caucasus (pp. 61–74). During the Civil War and its aftermath, Ali Mitaev, a Chechen Sheikh, had opposed the Whites and been initially allied with the Bolsheviks before his execution in 1925 as the Soviet power decided to launch an aggressive 're-modelling' of the North Caucasus (pp. 145–84). In the 1930s and 1940s, Khasan Israilov, a man who led one of the biggest anti-Soviet armed groups in the Caucasus during World War II and sought the support of Germany, had ironically held various positions in the communist apparatus in the previous two decades and, more generally, had a criminal history that, for the most part, had little to do with opposition to Soviet rule (pp. 289–314). These life stories show the fluidity of allegiances at times of great conflict and the importance for the historian of looking into the 'specific historical circumstances' and the 'objectives and motivations' of the people (p. 16) to assess what shaped their resistance to Russia in the North Caucasus.

Without doubt, Perović's *From Conquest to Deportation* contributes greatly to our knowledge of the Caucasus, including in the late imperial period, which has been poorly covered in the literature up to now (pp. 75–103). While arguing for a history that reinserts individual life narratives into the grand canvas of battles and conquests, the author is also careful not to downplay the often inhumane features of Russian and Soviet domination in the Caucasus, writing that the deportation of Caucasians in 1944 had 'some unmistakable characteristic of genocide' (p. 284). If one were to reproach the author for anything, it would be for sometimes detracting from the readability of the text by overloading it with information that could have gone into an appendix, including transliterations of minor administrative bodies and words in place or in addition to English equivalents, and the dates of birth and death for every new person introduced.

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