Russian Colonial Warfare in the Caucasus and Central Asia

"Do not forget that in Asia he is the master who seizes the people pitilessly by the throat and imposes upon their imagination." C.A. Callwell quoting M.D. Skobelev in *Small Wars* (1899)

At least two difficulties arise when writing about Russian colonial warfare. The first is that while 'colonial violence' or 'small wars' are recognised topics of research in the history of the British, French and other western European empires, Russia is usually left out of this historiography – for western historians, whose unthinking assumption is that 'colonial' empires are always maritime, European campaigns of conquest somehow don't count when they are conducted overland.[1] In Russia itself, meanwhile, there is a longstanding allergy to using the language of colonialism at all to describe Russian conquest and rule over non-Russians.[2] Specialist military historians, meanwhile, tend to overlook Russia's colonial wars as of minor significance next to the Napoleonic or Crimean conflicts.[3] This in turn raises the second difficulty, which is one of definition – what is a 'colonial' war in the Russian context? The Russian empire fought many wars of territorial expansion between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, from the capture of Kazan' in 1552, to the Northern Wars which won the Baltic lands and Ukraine for the empire, or the Russo-Persian and Russo-Turkish wars which gained it territory in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Should all of these be defined as 'colonial'? Should we use cultural criteria, so that wars against Muslim, nomadic and Asian opponents count as 'colonial', while those against European opponents such as Sweden and Poland-Lithuania are not? While it is certainly true that the empire ruled European and Asian territories differently, with a distinct gradient of political rights that left most of Asia excluded from its fledgling civic structures and under military rule, this in itself did not determine the nature of the conflicts that secured these territories for the empire in the first place.[4] In some cases Russia fought an 'Asian' opponent – the Ottomans – on 'European' territory – the Black Sea Coast and the Balkans – and ultimately these distinctions are not hard geographical ones, but mutable and culturally contingent.

The solution to the first of these difficulties is, of course, more research and a better integration of Russia into wider histories of European colonialism, something which historians of the Russian empire have been doing for some time, even if the response from their

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[1] Note for instance the marginal role of Russia in Dierk Walter's otherwise comprehensive *Colonial Violence. European Empires and the Use of Force* trans. Peter Lewis (London: Hurst & Co., 2017), p.68 where the war in Caucasus is dealt with in three lines of text.

[2] Alexander Morrison 'Russia's Colonial Allergy', *eurasianet.org*, 19 December 2016. https://eurasianet.org/russias-colonial-allergy [Accessed 27 March 2024].

[3] Central Asia merits a single page in Bruce Menning's otherwise excellent *Bayonets before Bullets. The Imperial Russian Army 1861 – 1914* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1992), p.12.

[4] Alexander Morrison 'Metropole, Colony and Imperial Citizenship in the Russian Empire', *Kritika,* Volume 13, Number 2 (2012), pp.27-64.

counterparts working on Britain and France has often been lacklustre. Resolving the second of these difficulties requires careful attention to the nature of warfare itself, and the development of a set of criteria that are rooted in it. This essay will define colonial warfare as asymmetric – fought not between two states of comparable size, power and military organisation, but between a large imperial state (Russia) on the one hand, and much more dispersed, irregular and weaker forces on the other. If this carries echoes of Callwell's *Small Wars*, that is not a coincidence – not because Callwell should be treated as an unquestioned authority on such conflicts, but because the criteria he used to define 'Small Wars' were derived from study not just of British, but of French, Spanish and Russian colonial campaigns, and were widely accepted by his contemporaries.[5] Colonial warfare typically lacks clear strategic objectives, is often characterised by a wide technological gulf between the two sides, and is frequently punitive in nature and directed against people rather than armies. This in turn is because the forces resisting the colonial power often do not take the field as armies at all, and are instead near-indistinguishable from the general population. It thus shares many characteristics with modern counter-insurgency, and is frequently seen as its ancestor. Colonial warfare is, however, also marked by racial and cultural denigration of the enemy as 'savage', which produces punitive forms of violence very different from the modern counter-insurgent's pursuit of 'hearts and minds': as the opening quotation suggests, Callwell used the example of General M. D. Skobelev (1843-1882) in his advocacy of what he called the 'moral effect' of overwhelming force in the initial stages of a campaign.[6]

Accordingly, Muscovy's early wars of expansion against Kazan' or the Siberian Khanate will not be considered in this paper – they occurred well before Russia's ruling elites had developed a clear sense of European cultural superiority towards their Asian neighbours, and were conflicts fought between forces of roughly equal strength, type and technology, even if the Russians did have some advantage in the use of firearms.[7] Nor will Russia's many wars against the Ottoman Empire – an Asian, Muslim opponent which was often denigrated as 'savage' and 'backward' by Russia's rulers and soldiers, but which nevertheless fought with regular, organised armies and was part of the European 'great power' system – a peer competitor, if by the nineteenth century a weaker one.[8] Russian expansion in the Far East might be another contender

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[5] Alexander Morrison ' "The extraordinary successes which the Russians have achieved". The Conquest of Central Asia in Callwell's Small Wars', *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* Volume 30, Numbers.4-5 (2019),pp.913-936.
[6] C. E. Callwell *Small Wars, their Principle and Practice* (London: HMSO, 1899), p.50.
[7] Michael Paul 'The Military Revolution in Russia, 1550-1682',*The Journal of Military History,* Volume 68, Number 1 (2004), pp.9-45.
[8] On these conflicts see Brian L. Davies *The Russo-Turkish War, 1768-1774* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) and most recently Victor Taki *Russia's Turkish Wars. The Tsarist Army and the Balkan Peoples in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2024). See also John Steinberg's essay in this handbook, 'War in the Borderlands: The Crimean War and Russo-Turkish Wars of 1828-9 and 1877-1878'.

– certainly Russian rule in Manchuria assumed colonial characteristics and was described as such by contemporaries – but the Russo-Japanese war highlights the problem of using purely cultural arguments ('Asian' vs. 'European') to define a conflict as 'colonial', as of course it was far more notable as the first example of a full-scale war between two industrialised powers.[9] Instead this paper will focus on the two incontrovertible examples of Russian colonial warfare which fit the criteria listed above – namely the long war in the North Caucasus (ca.1800 – 1864) and the conquest of Central Asia (ca.1839 – 1900). Not coincidentally these are the two examples Callwell also drew upon in *Small Wars*, as the family resemblance between them and British and French colonial campaigns was obvious to him. Narrative accounts of these campaigns can be found in longer, specialised works in both English and Russian, and I will not attempt to reproduce those in compressed form here.[10] Instead I will seek to answer the following questions. Did the Russian army evolve its own 'Small Wars' doctrine for fighting in a colonial setting? Would this type of warfare produce specialised units in the Russian army, as it clearly did in the forces of its main peer comparators, Britain and France? What kinds of tactics predominated, and how were they adapted to the particular human and geographical terrain of the Caucasus and Central Asia? To what extent were its legacies carried through into the Soviet period, most obviously in the Red Army's campaigns 1920s campaigns against the Central Asia 'Basmachi', and later the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan?

I – Russian 'Small Wars' doctrine

Russian guerrilla or 'small wars' doctrine is usually traced back to Denis Davydov (1784-1839), a romantic poet and partisan leader who features in *War and Peace* as 'Denisov', and plays a crucial role in Tolstoy's celebration of patriotic warfare against the French, which drew in turn on the exaggerated accounts of the success of this form of *malaia voina* by Davydov and other officers.[11] As this suggests, Davydov's writings focused on the successful prosecution of guerrilla

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[9] John W. Steinberg 'Was the Russo-Japanese War World War Zero?' *The Russian Review,* Volume 67, Number 1 (2008), pp. 1-7.

[10] On the North Caucasus see in particular V. A. Potto, *Kavkazskaia voina v otdel'nykh ocherkakh, epizodakh, legendakh i biografiiakh* (St Petersburg: V. A. Berezovskii, 1887) Vol.II; John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans, 1908), pp.230-482; Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar. Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (London: Frank Cass, 1994); Michael Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices. Loyalty and Betrayal in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Jeronim Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation. The North Caucasus under Russian rule* (London: Hurst, 2018), pp.39-102. On Central Asia see M. A. Terent'ev, *Istoriia Zavoevaniia Srednei Azii* (St Petersburg: A. V. Komarov, 1906) 3 vols & Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia. A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[11] Bruce Menning 'A. I. Chernyshev: A Russian Lycurgus', *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes*, Volume 30, Number 2 (1988) p.198. An entertaining but semi-fictionalised account of his life can be found in Nikolai Zadonskii, *Denis Davydov: istoricheskaia khronika* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1959). On '*malaia voina*' see Alexander Hill's essay in this handbook on 'Russian and Soviet Partisan Warfare'.

warfare by Russia itself rather than its suppression through 'small wars', though he did later serve in the Caucasus in the wars against Persia, apparently at the personal invitation of the then Viceroy A. P. Yermolov (1777 – 1861), who as we will see became notorious for the indiscriminate violence of his campaigns.[12] In his best-known essay on partisan warfare, Davydov waxed lyrical about the military potential of the 'half-savage and warlike peoples, who inhabit that whole portion of the empire lying between the Dnieper, the Don, the Kuban, the Terek and the upper Ural rivers', by which he meant the Nogais, Circassians, Bashkirs and Qazaqs, whom he wanted to see mobilised into irregular cavalry units. He seems to have taken their loyalty to the empire for granted, and not to have contemplated the possibility that, far from arming them for war, the Russian army might instead have to suppress resistance and insurgencies amongst them.[13] His longer historical survey of partisan warfare since the Thirty Years' war concentrated exclusively on European examples, and once again only explored Russia's supposed natural advantages in organising partisan campaigns rather than how they could be defeated by regular forces.[14] These sentiments seem to have been reliably parroted by subsequent writers, such that as late as 1859 – after twenty-four years of successful 'partisan' warfare waged by the Caucasian mountaineers *against* Russia, General Nikolai Golitsyn (1809-1892) could still remark:

> 'As for the irregular forces, living on the great open spaces of Russia from the Prut to Kamchatka, *face to Asia* (which in itself demonstrates without a doubt the role our Fatherland will play in the fate of the Asiatic east in the future, maybe not that far off!), I cannot sufficiently express the superior advantages Russia enjoys in this regard over other governments of the new and old world.'[15]

Accordingly, Davydov's writings are not, in fact, particularly relevant for understanding how the Russian imperial army fought its colonial wars, although there is some evidence that they would be read 'in reverse' by a later generation of theorists.[16] Instead a body of colonial military doctrine was forged on the ground, initially in the course of the long conflict in the North Caucasus, and subsequently in Central Asia, and recorded in campaign memoirs and works of

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[12] Roman Osharov 'Is Russian and Soviet conduct of counterinsurgency fundamentally different from Western conduct of counterinsurgency?' (Master's Thesis, King's College London, 2017), pp.9-19; A. E. Savinkin & I. E. Domnin (eds.) *Groznoe oruzhie. Malaia voina, partizanstvo i drugie vidy asimmetricheskogo voevaniia v svete naslediia russkikh voennykh myslitelei* (Moscow: Russkii put', 2007), pp.38-9.
[13] D. V. Davydov 'O partizanskoi voine' (1836) *Voennye Zapiski* (Moscow: Veche, 2023), p.390.
[14] D. V. Davydov 'Opyt teorii partizanskogo deistviia' (1822) in Savinkin (ed.) *Groznoe oruzhie*, pp.111 – 155.
[15] N. S. Golitsyn 'O partizanskikh deistviiakh v bol'shikh razmerakh' (1859) in Savinkin (ed.) *Groznoe oruzhie*, p.231.
[16] See e.g. F. Gershel'man 'Partizanskaia voina' (1885) in Savinkin (ed.) *Groznoe oruzhie*, pp.287 – 293, though even he, bizarrely, uses examples from the American Civil War rather than Russia's own wars in the North Caucasus or Central Asia. See also Alexander Statiev's essay in this handbook, 'Soviet Counter-Insurgency – from the Civil War to Afghanistan'.

military history, much of which was published in the specialist 'thick' journals *Voennyi Sbornik* and *Kavkazskii Sbornik*.[17]

In many ways the nature of warfare in the two regions was very different – the North Caucasus was heavily wooded, mountainous, and saw much more prolonged and bitter resistance to Russian expansion than any region of Central Asia, despite being a fraction of its size. This was reflected in a cumulative figure for Russian casualties there between 1801 and 1864 of over 800 officers and 24,000 soldiers killed and over 3,000 officers and 62,000 men wounded, while the equivalent figures for Central Asia between 1853 and 1881 were just 677 killed and 2,282 wounded.[18] While Central Asia did see mountain campaigns, notably in the Pamirs, the main field of warfare was steppe and desert, where the camel was the all-important means of transport.[19] Nevertheless, there was considerable exchange of both information and personnel between these two main fields of Russian colonial warfare, which does give them a certain unity. Many of the officers most closely identified with the conquest of Central Asia – M. G. Cherniaev, K. P. von Kaufman, Skobelev – also served in the Caucasus, whilst the campaigns against Khiva and the Turkmen were largely conducted by Caucasian troops. It is significant that one of the best-known and most extensive texts on the peculiarities of steppe campaigns in Central Asia was written by the Caucasian officer V. A. Potto, best-known as the author of the standard Tsarist-era account of the Caucasus wars.[20] At the risk of over-simplification, the body of doctrine this produced could be broadly divided into two approaches – 'fortress-building' and 'expeditionary' - with the former proving significantly more successful.

In the Caucasus the fortress approach was identified above all with General A. A. Veliaminov (1785 – 1838), Commander of the Caucasian armies under Yermolov during the latter's tenure as Viceroy (1816 – 1827), who famously wrote that:

'The Caucasus may be likened to a mighty fortress, marvellously strong by nature, artificially protected by military works, and defended by a numerous garrison. Only a thoughtless man would attempt to scale such a stronghold. A wise commander would see the necessity of having recourse to military art; would lay his parallels; advance by gap and mine, and so master the place.'[21]

This 'siege' was to be maintained by the construction of Russian fortresses along the Terek line to control the movement of the 'highlanders' (*gortsy*) – Groznaia, Vnezapnaia, Burnaia

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[17] On the development of military history writing on Central Asia see Alexander Morrison 'The Turkestan Generals and Russian Military History' *War in History* Volume 26 Number 2 (2019) pp.153-184.
[18] Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation*, p.39; A. Grebner, *Osady i shturmy Sredne-Aziatskikh krepostei i naselennykh punktov* (St Pb.: Inzhenernyi Zhurnal, 1897), p.33.
[19] Alexander Morrison 'Camels and Colonial Armies. The Logistics of warfare in Central Asia in the early nineteenth century', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* Volume 57, Number4 (2014), pp.443-485.
[20] V. A. Potto 'O stepnykh pokhodakh', *Voennyi Sbornik* (1873) Numbers 4 – 7, pp.5-36, 33-62, 209-236, 229-266.
[21] Quoted in Baddeley *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, p.112.

– and by engaging in scorched earth attacks on lowland areas to hem them into the mountains and effectively starve them out.[22] This led to a regime of brutal collective punishment that did not spare women and children. As Yermolov himself is widely quoted as having said:

'I desire that the terror of my name should guard our frontiers more potently than chains or fortresses, that my word should be for the natives a law more inevitable than death. Condescension in the eyes of the Asiatics is a sign of weakness, and out of pure humanity I am inexorably severe. One execution saves hundreds of Russians from destruction and thousands of Mussulmans from treason.'[23]

In purely tactical terms Veliaminov's patient fortress-building saw considerable success, and it is perhaps significant that both he and Yermolov seem to have earned Davydov's admiration during his brief period of Caucasian service.[24] When combined with Yermolov's largely indiscriminate brutality, however, it provoked a widespread uprising in Chechnya and Daghestan in 1825, which would not be fully suppressed until 1864.[25] Though widely believed by the Russians to have been motivated by the 'fanaticism' of the Naqshbandi Sufi order,[26] modern scholarship has shown that the rebellion's most famous leader, Imam Shamil, was in fact seeking to create a state based on a very prescriptive form of *Shari'a*, and that what the Russians invariably called 'Muridism' was not its main motivating ideology.[27] This assumption of the unreasoning and savage nature of their Muslim foes nevertheless had a major influence on the way the Russians fought in the North Caucasus, and would later spill over into Central Asia, where many Caucasian officers later served.

Fortresses would also play a key role in the Russian conquest of the steppe. In 1860 the military geographer Mikhail Veniukov (1832-1901) published an article analysing the challenges of steppe warfare since the 1840s, which bore a remarkable resemblance to the Veliaminov-Yermolov system. Veniukov noted that when fighting nomadic opponents such as the Qazaqs or Turkmen decisive victories were well-nigh impossible to achieve, as even if you found the enemy they would flee as soon as artillery was brought to bear. Instead, the path to the control of the steppe was the punitive destruction of nomadic *aul*s and, above all, the construction of

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[22] Moshe Gammer 'Russian Strategies in the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan 1825-1859', in Marie Bennigsen Broxup (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier. The Russian advance towards the Muslim World* (London: Hurst & Co, 1992), pp.45-61.
[23] Potto *Kavkavskaia voina*, II, 15 – translation in Baddeley, *Russian Conquest*, 97.
[24] Davydov to A. A. Zakrevskii 31/08/1827 in Savinkin (Ed.), *Groznoe Oruzhie*, p.87.
[25] Moshe Gammer, 'Proconsul of the Caucasus': a Re-examination of Yermolov', *Social Evolution & History*, Volume 2, Number 1 (March 2003) pp.177 – 194.
[26] N. A. Volkonskii 'Voina na vostochnom Kavkaze c 1824 po 1834 godu v sviazi s miuridizmom', *Kavkazskii Sbornik,* Vol.X (Tiflis, 1886), pp.1-224; see further Anna Zelkina *In Quest for God and Freedom: Sufi Responses to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus* (New York: NYU Press, 2000).
[27] Alexander Knysh 'Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm: The Issue of the Motivations of Sufi Movements in Russian and Western Historiography', *Die Welt des Islams,* Volume 42 Number 2 (2002), pp.139 -173; Michael Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan: von den Khanaten und Gemeindebünden zum ǧihād-Staat*. (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2005).

fortresses. To this Veniukov added that these fortifications should not be considered mere passive defensive positions, but supply-bases for constant punitive expeditions into the steppe. In cases where the garrison was besieged, fortifications gave Russian troops an overwhelming advantage, and he cited in evidence the assault by 13,000 Khoqandis on a Russian garrison of just 700 in Fort Perovskii in 1854, which led to the enemy suffering enormous casualties and losing most of their artillery. Like most contemporaries he dated the shift in Russian strategy towards the building of fortifications in the steppe to the tenure as Orenburg Governor (1842 – 51), of General V. A. Obruchev (1795-1866). Veniukov concluded that mobile forces based in fixed fortifications were the most effective means of controlling the steppe.[28] Both in the North Caucasus and in Central Asia the Russians built small-scale artillery fortresses, with low earthwork fortifications, and garrisons of no more than 500-1,000 men. These proved more than sufficient to keep much larger attacking forces at bay, though in the steppe supplying them and maintaining garrison morale proved very challenging.[29]

The other main approach identifiable in the Russian empire's Caucasian and Central Asian campaigns was the long-distance punitive expedition, for which two examples, both disastrous, will suffice. In the Caucasus this was the 1845 Dargo campaign, led by Yermolov's eventual successor as Viceroy of the Caucasus, Prince Mikhail Vorontsov (1782-1856). In attempting to capture Shamil, who had established himself in this remote *aul* in a thickly-forested area, Vorontsov blundered into a trap – Shamil allowed him to reach his objective, only to find it abandoned, whereupon harassing fire and attacks rapidly eroded Vorontsov's force as it tried to retreat, with almost 4,000 casualties including 195 officers and the loss of all its baggage.[30] It was a classic example of the problem identified by Callwell – that in 'small wars' the foe often presents no clear strategic objective, so the temptation is to invent one. As Yermolov wrote to Vorontsov in the immediate aftermath of the disaster (and probably with deliberate tactlessness):

'For some time now in order to excuse our own unsuccessful actions against Shamil, we have presented him as a remarkable individual, as a genius, against whom extraordinary means are needed! Dargo is the same, just a bandits' lair, in reality an insignificant hamlet, of the kind one encounters at every step in the mountain regions, whose hardness lies only in the impassability of the forest roads, but it has been glorified as his residence, giving birth to the idea that we must absolutely conquer Dargo! I am sure that you yourself were never under such a delusion, and I am sure that Dargo would not have been your goal. What would the destruction of this residence lead to? Shamil will just give instructions to select a place that is less threatened […] don't let's climb into every robbers' hole! What was taken at Dargo? Not even

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[28] M. Veniukov 'Zametki o stepnykh pokhodakh v Srednei Azii', *Voennyi Sbornik,* Number 12 (1860), pp.294-6.
[29] Morrison *Russian Conquest*, pp.124-154.
[30] N. Gorchakov 'Ekspeditsiya v Dargo (1845g.)', *Kavkazskii Sbornik*, Vol.II (Tiflis, 1877), pp.117 -142; Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar,* pp.149-161 and Alexander Statiev *At War's Summit. The Red Army and the Struggle for the Caucasus Mountains in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018), pp.14-16.

a single cast-iron cannon! Forgive please these awkward thoughts, sincerely expressed by an old comrade…'.[31]

For the Russian army Dargo became a byword for military disaster and humiliation at the hands of a 'savage' opponent that was almost as potent as the retreat from Kabul in 1842 had been for the British. It would contribute to a shift in strategy in the 1850s back towards using fortresses to restrict the movement of the *gortsy*, collective punishment and attempts to sow division within the ruling elite of Shamil's state, which famously bore fruit in the defection of Hajji Murad in 1852. It was not, however, until the appointment of Prince A. P. Bariatinskii as Caucasian Viceroy in 1856 that the Russians fully returned to Veliaminov's 'siege' strategy, which saw Shamil's surrender in 1859, and an end to organised resistance in 1864 – though the Chechens would rebel again during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8.[32]

In Central Asia the attempted invasion of the khanate of Khiva in 1839-40 acted as a similar object-lesson in the failure of long-distance expeditions, though for somewhat different reasons. Led by Orenburg Governor-General V. A. Perovskii (1795 – 1857), it was notionally intended to punish 'insolent' Khiva for harbouring Russian slaves, with the goal of placing a puppet khan on the throne. The logistical difficulties it faced were even greater than those at Dargo five years later – over 1,000 miles to cover across the steppe and the Ust-Yurt plateau, with no local sources of food or fodder, and water only available if the expedition marched in winter when there was snow on the ground, something which ultimately proved its downfall. Almost all of Perovskii's 10,000 camels died of cold and exposure, while a fifth of his 5,000 men died from the effects of scurvy and frostbite. While this defeat was inflicted by the weather rather than the Khivan enemy (whose attacks on the column were largely ineffectual), Perovskii made things far worse by refusing to retreat when advised to by his Qazaq drivers, and pressing on when it was clear his camels were already failing.[33] As Veniukov's article suggests, it was this disaster which prompted the switch towards a strategy of fortress-building under Perovskii's successor, Obruchev, and the author of the standard Tsarist-era history of the conquest, Terent'ev, also presented it as a significant turning-point.[34] The subsequent creeping of Russian forts towards the Syr-Darya – Irgiz, Turgai, Raim, Kazalinsk and Aq-Masjid (Perovsk) – and beyond the Ili – Lepsinsk, Kapal and Vernyi – created de-facto territorial annexations in the

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[31] Yermolov to Vorontsov 31/08/1845, *Kavkazskie pis'ma A. P. Ermolova M. S. Vorontsovu* (St Petersburg, "Zvezda", 2011), pp.94-5.
[32] V. O. Bobrovnikov, *Musul'mane severnogo Kavkaza. Obychai, pravo, nasilie* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 2002), pp.79-81.
[33] Alexander Morrison 'Twin Imperial Disasters. The Invasions of Khiva and Afghanistan in the Russian and British Official Mind, 1838 – 1842', *Modern Asian Studies,* Volume 48, Number 1 (2014), pp. 253 – 300, and Morrison *Russian Conquest*, pp.83-113.
[34] Terent'ev, *Istoriya Zavoevaniya*, I, p.203.

steppe and set the stage for the fall of Tashkent in 1865. However, while fortifications remained important for some subsequent stages of the conquest of Central Asia – notably the construction of the 'Pamirskii post' in the Murghab valley in 1895 – the 1870s and 1880s saw a revival of the long-distance expedition, with mixed results. As Alex Marshall and Robert Baumann have shown, these small expeditionary columns (rarely more than 3,000 – 5,000 men) would move with a small advance guard that remained in sight of the main column, flanked by pickets of infantry or cavalry. This was designed to protect both the column and its enormous baggage train from surprise attack. At night they created temporary defensive positions (*Wagenburg*) using their wagons if they had any, or else simply the bodies of their camels.[35] As before, however, the main challenges remained logistical rather than enemy attack. While Khiva was successfully subdued in 1873, one of the invading columns from the Caspian was forced to turn back because of heat and lack of water, while the main Turkestan column almost perished of thirst in the Qizil-Qum desert before its Qazaq scouts managed to find a well. In 1879, the first attempt by Caucasian troops to take the Turkmen fortress of Gök-Tepe was humiliatingly defeated, and M. D. Skobelev's successful storming in January 1881 was only possible owing to unprecedentedly elaborate and expensive logistical preparations, including the construction of Central Asia's first railway.[36] It was the notorious massacre which followed the fall of Gök-Tepe, where 14,000 Teke Turkmen were killed, which prompted the sentiments from Skobelev which opened this chapter.

As this suggests, there is another factor beyond that of fortresses vs. punitive expeditions which we must consider in relation to Russian colonial military doctrine, which is the role of exemplary violence beyond that needed simply to defeat the enemy. Linked with this, is the question of whether there were forms of violence which it was considered acceptable to inflict on a 'savage' enemy that would not have been used on a European opponent.[37] Yermolov's 'system' clearly relied on terror and collective punishment, and attracted significant criticism from his fellow-officers and even from the Tsar himself because of it.[38] While we have accurate figures for Russian casualties in both the Caucasus and Central Asia, working out how many non-combatants were killed as a result of the Russian army's campaigns is largely guesswork, but it certainly ran into the tens if not hundreds of thousands. From Yermolov's arrival in 1816 the Caucasus war seems to have been notable for its brutality even alongside contemporary

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[35] Alex Marshall, *The Russian General Staff and Asia, 1800-1917* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp.53-55; Robert F. Baumann 'The Conquest of Central Asia', *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan,* Leavenworth papers No.20 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1993), pp.60-1.
[36] Morrison *Russian Conquest*, pp.335-6, 342-5, 452.
[37] Kim A Wagner, 'Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency', *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 85, (2018), pp.217–237.
[38] Baddeley *Russian Conquest*, pp.96-99.

European campaigns such as the slow and bloody French conquest of Algeria in the 1830s, 40s and 50s, with which it was often compared.[39] In Central Asia the use of violence as punishment seems to have come later – while Cossack raiding of Qazaqs for livestock and hostages was frequent in the first half of the nineteenth century, this was part of a common economy of frontier raiding, and was in large part reciprocal.[40] The first clearly attested massacre of non-combatants in Central Asia seems to have come in a village near Samarkand in 1868, in retaliation for a surprise attack on a Russian force. Subsequent campaigns saw the notorious massacre of the Yomud Turkmen after the fall of Khiva in 1873, the systematic targeting of non-combatants, women and children by the sadistic Skobelev and Baron A. N. Meller-Zakomelskii in Ferghana in 1875-6, and of course the massacre at Gök-Tepe, once again by Skobelev.[41]

As the quotations from Yermolov and Skobelev suggest, Russian colonial campaigns were certainly no less violent than those of their British and French counterparts, and as in North Africa or the North-West frontier it was a violence that regularly spilled over from the battlefield into forms of collective punishment. What is less clear is whether these were forms of violence that were specifically reserved for 'Asiatic' or 'savage' peoples – there is on the face of it little to choose between what the Russian army did in Poland in 1830 and 1863, Hungary in 1849 or indeed to its own people in 1905, and what it did in Central Asia (the same might be said of the French army and the destruction of the Paris Commune, which certainly paralleled its actions in Algeria).[42] In the Caucasus however Russian victory led to the forced expulsion of an entire people – over 300,000 Circassians who left for the Ottoman Empire – and also of 125,000 Chechens.[43] While often presented as voluntary, these movements occurred in the shadow of Russian reprisals and fear of what Russian rule would mean. It is hard to think of any parallels elsewhere in the empire, though they are of course a sinister foreshadowing of what would become a standard Stalinist practice.[44]

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[39] Vladimir Bobrovnikov 'Russkii Kavkaz i Frantsuzskii Alzhir: sluchainoe skhodstvo ili obmen opytom kolonial'nogo stroitelstvo?' in Martin Aust , Ricarda Vulpius & Alexei Miller (eds.), *Imperium inter pares: rol' transferov v istorii Rossiiskoi Imperii 1700-1917* , (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2010), pp.182-209.
[40] Jeff Eden *Slavery and Empire in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018), pp.17-19, 38-47, 55.
[41] Morrison *Russian Conquest*, pp.291, 362-371, 397-9, 458-462.
[42] Norman Davies *God's Playground. A History of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp.II, 321-333, 356-8; Christopher Clark *Revolutionary Spring. Fighting for a New World 1848-1849* (London: Allen Lane, 2023), pp.674-5; Robert Tombs *The War against Paris 1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
[43] Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation*, pp.53-61.
[44] Peter Holquist "To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate. Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial Russia" in Ronald Suny & Terry Martin (eds.), *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.116-7.

II – Colonial Troops and Tactics

The earliest Russian 'colonial' troops were the Cossacks, although one has to unpeel many layers of myth-making to understand who and what they really were, and how they were transformed over time from ethnically and culturally hybrid communities into a supposed embodiment of 'Russianness'. The earliest Cossack hosts – along the Don and the Dnieper - emerged beyond the empire's borders from the mingling and intermarriage of escaped serfs with steppe nomads in what is now Ukraine. It was the defeat of the Swedes at Poltava in 1709 which saw their subordination to Russian rule and gradual incorporation into the imperial hierarchy as a distinct *soslovie*, granted land and tax privileges in return for military service.[45] In the Asian borderlands this was also true of the Terek, Siberian and Yaiq (Ural) Cossacks, who combined Slavic, Turkic, Orthodox, Old Believer and Muslim elements, and often had an ambivalent or even hostile relationship to the imperial state.[46] Although Emel'ian Pugachev himself was a Don Cossack, the revolt he led from 1773 began among the Yaiq Cossacks, who combined with Tatars, Bashkirs, Qalmyqs and Qazaqs in rebellion. The aftermath of the *Pugachevshchina* saw the imposition of much stronger control over the existing Cossack hosts, and the creation of new Cossack units to defend the Steppe frontier in Orenburg and Western Siberia, to be followed in 1867 by the Semirech'e Cossacks.[47]

In the North Caucasus the role of the Terek Cossacks in guarding the frontier was unforgettably portrayed by Tolstoy in his eponymous novella *Kazaki*, in which he emphasised the respect of the Greben Cossacks for their Chechen and Ingush opponents, and their corresponding hostility to Russian peasants outside the Cossack *soslovie*. As Thomas Barrett and Michael Khodarkovsky have shown, this 'Middle Ground' of hybrid identities and cultural exchange – memorably exemplified by a Cossack Officer of mixed Kumyk, Nogai and Chechen origin, Semen Atarshchikov - was placed under increasing tension and finally shattered by increasing Russian military aggression and intolerance from the 1820s onwards under Yermolov's viceroyalty and thereafter.[48] It was thus the supersession of the Terek Cossacks by more regular Russian army units which really marked the beginning of colonial warfare in the Caucasus. In Central Asia also the role of Cossack units in combat was rarely central, although

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[45] Shane O'Rourke, *The Cossacks* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp.32-56; Paul Bushkovitch 'Poltava's Consequences: Local Autonomy in the Russian Empire during the Reign of Peter I', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies,* Volume 31, Number.1/4 (2009), pp. 135–58.
[46] Christoph Witzenrath, *Cossacks and the Russian Empire 1598 - 1725: Manipulation, Rebellion and Expansion into Siberia* (London: Routledge, 2007).
[47] O'Rourke *The Cossacks*, pp.150-154.
[48] Thomas Barrett, 'Lines of Uncertainty. The Frontiers of the Northern Caucasus' *Slavic Review,* Volume 54, Number 3 (1995), pp. 578-601; Khodarkovsky *Bitter Choices*, pp.122-132.

for slightly different reasons. Even in the late 19th century the Ural (formerly Yaiq) Cossacks had retained elements of their old hybrid identity, with one aristocratic officer on the 1873 Khiva expedition contrasting their shaggy appearance with that of the Orenburg Cossacks, who looked like regular troops.[49] Many of them were Old Believers, who in 1871 mounted another rebellion against the imperial power which saw them exiled to the region of the Aral Sea.[50] The close resemblance of Cossacks to the irregular cavalry that made up the bulk of their opponents' forces in Central Asia was not coincidental, and meant that they fought in similar ways. While the figure of the Cossack was important to the romantic imaginary of the Russian conquest of Central Asia, in battle their role when mounted was limited to scouting, skirmishing and pursuing the defeated enemy, though they sometimes fought as infantry on foot, most memorably at the battle of Iqan in 1864. In his discussion of the Khiva campaign of 1873, Terent'ev repeated what he claimed was the common 'native' view of the relative strength and importance of the infantry and cavalry arms in Central Asia:

'The local asiatics do not rate Cossacks at all, if they are not accompanied by rockets or cannon; they regard the infantry with great respect. A platoon of Russian sharpshooters is far more alarming to them than three *sotnia*s of Cossacks […] the native says "The Cossack is a rich man, everything he has is his own; because of this values his life. The *aq-gemlek* – white shirt (as they call the infantryman) – is a *baigush*, i.e. a pauper, he has nothing but his weapon, and even this is not his, but the treasury's; because of this he has nothing to lose and does not value his life.'[51]

This was a reference to the distinctive uniform of the Turkestan soldier, immortalised in Vasilii Vereshchagin's paintings of the conquest – 'a gymnast's white shirt of Flemish linen with epaulettes […] the back of the head and neck protected by a white sunshade attached to the *kepi*.'[52] This was a contrast to the Caucasus, where troops wore the standard dark green uniform of the Russian army. As Terent'ev also suggests here, the key units for the Russians in Central Asia were ordinary infantry line and sharpshooter battalions - initially from Orenburg and Western Siberia, later renamed Turkestan Line Battalions, which from the 1860s were armed with rifled muzzle-loaders, and from 1871 with the famed breech-loading *Berdanka*, which gave them a powerful advantage over opponents armed at best with matchlocks and flintlocks. Cossack units were important mainly for their associated batteries of horse artillery. Both Russian and Central Asian sources attest that infantry volley fire and artillery (especially canister shot) was what conferred a decisive advantage on Russian forces. The expeditionary forces sent into Central Asia between the 1840s and 1870s were generally equipped with light field batteries

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[49] Shuvalov to Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich Letter 4 24/05/1873 BL Add. MS. 47841 f.81*ob*.
[50] E. Kalbanova 'Les Cosaques de l'Oural au Karakalpakistan' *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* Volume 10 (2002), pp.239-247.
[51] Terent'ev, *Istoriya Zavoevaniya*, II, 177.
[52] V. N. Zaitsev, *Istoriya 4-ogo Turkestanskogo Lineinogo Batal'ona za period s 1771 do 1882 god kak material k dvizheniiu russkikh v Sredniuiu Aziiu* (Tashkent: n.p., 1882), p.31.

consisting of 6lb cannon with a range of 1,200 yards, 9lb (quarter-*pood*) howitzers with a range of 900 yards firing explosive shells, and lighter weapons such as *edinorogy* (unicorns) firing a 3 or 4lb ball.[53] These were sometimes supplemented with heavier artillery – 12lb cannon and 4½ *pood* howitzers – for attacking fortresses, but heavy siege trains were both impossible to move and unnecessary in Central Asian campaigns.[54] Even a small force of Russian infantry – rarely more than two or three battalions – acting in close formation with field artillery was more than a match for the large but mostly undisciplined forces of irregular cavalry fielded by the Central Asian khanates, although Bukhara and Khoqand also had small forces of *sarbaz* musketeers.

The regular long-service infantry line battalions of the Russian army were a formidable opponent for largely irregular Central Asian forces, partly because of their discipline and training, but also because they were bound by extremely strong ties of internal solidarity, something reflected in the few regimental histories which were penned of these humble units. To take one example, the 6th Turkestan sharpshooter battalion was founded as an Orenburg line battalion in 1771, and first saw action during the suppression of the Pugachev rebellion. It was renamed as a 'Turkestan' battalion in 1867, at the same time as it moved its headquarters from Troitsk to Tashkent. It won battle honours against the Emirate of Bukhara at Jizzakh and Irjar in 1866, and in the subsequent campaign in which Samarkand was taken in 1868. Written forty years after these events in 1904, the short regimental history's accuracy is less important than the fact that it was clearly based on oral accounts that still circulated among veterans of that time – for instance, recalling a Bukharan night attack on Russian siege-works before Jizzakh in 1866:

'The platoon staunchly resisted the desperate attacks of the Bukharans, who were trying to break through to the battery, when all of a sudden corporal Bystrov grabbed his weapon and charged forward, crying "Ura brothers!" "Ura" cried the comrades who stood near him, "Ura" cried the platoon and flung themselves into a bayonet charge; the Bukharans could not stand this brilliant attack and after a confused half-hour fight retreated to the fortress.'[55]

The emphasis here on the use of the bayonet and on the leading role and camaraderie of ordinary soldiers is telling. Equally revealing is the emphasis which the regimental history of the 4th Turkestan Line battalion places not so much on weaponry – though it did note the preference of officers for Caucasian-style sabres - but on the shifts and techniques soldiers used to combat thirst and heat, which it characterised as a greater threat than the Central Asian enemy. Water bottles were originally covered in felt or cloth to ensure that they were not broken - the soldier's greatest fear – but they then discovered that this also helped to keep the water cool. Tea was

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[53] John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Army under Nicholas I 1825 – 1855* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1965), p.148.
[54] Baumann 'The Conquest of Central Asia', p.61.
[55] Anon, *Kratkaya Istoriya 6-ogo Turkestanskogo Strelkovago Batal'ona* (Samarkand: Tip. "Trud", 1904), p.5.

always carried, along with raisins instead of sugar.[56] As with the 6th battalion, the 4th had originally been created on the Orenburg line in 1771, and had begun its Central Asian career in 1839 with the disastrous expedition to Khiva, before serving in every major campaign of conquest up to and including the invasion and annexation of Ferghana in 1875-6.

While the identity of these obscure but important units of the Russian army was thus deeply rooted in the geography and history of the conquest of Central Asia, an obvious contrast with the British Indian army was that with rare exceptions the Russians did not recruit from the local Muslim population. The one unit where this was true was the Turkmen cavalry regiment (*Turkmenskii konnyi polk*). First established in 1885 following the Russian conquest of Transcaspia, this reflected the exceptional 'martial' qualities the Russians saw in the Turkmen, analogous to the 'martial race theory' applied by the British to the Sikhs or Gurkhas.[57] Otherwise though the entire peacetime garrison of 30,000 men in Turkestan was recruited from European Russia – mostly from Saratov, Samara, Orenburg and Tobolsk provinces, meaning that some soldiers were indeed Muslim Tatars or Bashkirs. The Semirech'e Cossacks were established in 1867 as an offshoot of the West Siberian Cossacks, and used very explicitly as agents of ethnic Russian colonization in Semirech'e.[58] Russia's colonial troops in Central Asia thus bore a closer resemblance to those of the French in Algeria, where *Zouave* regiments and the *Chasseurs D'Afrique*, despite their exotic uniforms, were also largely manned by Europeans, while the Foreign Legion, though obviously not particular about the background of its soldiers in other respects, also did not recruit from the local Muslim population. This would of course change during the First World War, when colonial troops recruited or conscripted in Algeria or West Africa played a crucial role on the Western Front.[59]

The Russian unwillingness to recruit Turkestani Muslims – which was rooted in distrust of them as 'fanatics' – is thus something of an outlier among colonial forces. This was less true in the Caucasus, however, where the presence of Christian groups – Georgians and Armenians – meant that local recruitment into distinctively Caucasian units was much more widespread - the Yerevan and Mingrelian regiments were largely recruited among Armenians and Georgians respectively, while some units even recruited from the Muslim population. The Shirvan regiment,

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[56] Zaitsev *Istoriya 4-ogo Turkestanskogo Lineinogo Batal'ona*, pp.34-7.
[57] T. V. Kotiukova *Okraina na osobom polozhenii. Turkestan v preddverii dramy* (Moscow: NPK, 2016), pp.352-64; Heather Streets-Salter, *Martial Races: The Military, Race, and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004).
[58] Morrison *Russian Conquest*, pp.180-182; N. Ledenev *Istoriia Semirechenskogo Kazach'iago voiska* (Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo Oblastnogo Pravleniia, 1909).
[59] Douglas Porch, *The March to the Marne. The French Army, 1871-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.166-7.

for instance, which fought against Shamil in Daghestan throughout the 1830s and 40s and would participate in the first, unsuccessful assault on Gök-Tepe in 1879, originally recruited mainly among the Kabardians.[60] This does not seem to have been true of the much grander Apsheron regiment, which had a longer pedigree than any other Caucasian unit, having been founded during Peter the Great's Persian wars in the 1720s, and which in the 18th century served in many campaigns well beyond the region, such as the occupation of Königsberg in 1758 and the Khotin expedition of 1769. Although from the 1820s it fought almost exclusively in the Caucasus, and later in Central Asia on the 1873 Khiva expedition, all the soldiers cited for decorations after these actions had Slavic names.[61] Locally recruited units seem to have stood considerably lower in the regimental hierarchy of the Russian army. The most prominent Caucasian Muslim unit - the Daghestan irregular horse – was originally formed in 1851 from families of Avars who had fled from Shamil to the Russians, and was thus an early example of what would later be called a 'counter-gang'. Apart from fighting Shamil in the latter stages of the Caucasus mountain war, some *sotnia*s also served on the 1873 Khiva expedition, and the unit would later become part of General Lavr Kornilov's notorious *Dikaia Divizija* during the First World War.[62] In the 1880s the regiment was commanded by Prince D. A. Chavchavadze, reflecting the fact that the officers of all these locally-recruited units were overwhelmingly Russian, Baltic German or Georgian, with the occasional Armenian, though there were some prominent Muslim officers such as Colonel Mahsud Alikhanov-Avarskii, a Lezgin from Daghestan who played an important role in the conquest and administration of Transcaspia.[63]

The parallels between the Russian armies of the Caucasus and Central Asia and the colonial armies of the British and French empires are not exact, but nevertheless illuminating. There was no direct Russian equivalent of the separate Indian Army, or of later separate colonial units such as the King's African Rifles. Military structures were closer to the French model, where Algerian units were notionally at least part of a single command, although in principle less specialised than the *Chasseurs d'Afrique* or the Foreign Legion, let alone units such as the desert camel corps. In practice however the Russian army also had units that were permanently stationed in colonial frontier areas, and which had developed distinctive styles of combat,

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[60] V. Potto, *Boevaia khronika polkov 24-i polkovoi divizii* (Tiflis: Tip. Shtaba Kavkazskogo voennogo okruga, 1888), IV, pp.1-26.
[61] The high status of the regiment is reflected in the enormous length of its official history, dedicated to its then commander, Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich: L. Boguslavskii *Istoriia Apsheronskogo polka 1700 – 1892* (Saint Petersburg: Tip. Ministerstva Putei Soobshcheniia, 1892) 3 Vols.
[62] Potto, *Boevaia khronika*, V, pp.2, 17; E. I. Kozubskii *Istoriia Dagestanskogo konnogo polka* (Petrovsk: Izd. A. M. Mikhailova, 1909).
[63] Morrison, *Russian Conquest*, pp.346-9, 466-70.

uniform and equipment. Local recruitment was almost unknown in Turkestan, but quite widespread in the Caucasus, though such units seem to have been less prestigious. Meanwhile the officer corps, as in British India, was overwhelmingly drawn from what we might call the 'ruling nationalities' of the empire – Slavs, Baltic Germans, and Georgians.

Conclusion

This chapter has hopefully demonstrated clearly that the Russian empire fought distinctively 'colonial' wars in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the same sense as these are understood for its western European counterparts – asymmetric, against opponents stigmatised as 'savage', making use of specialised units and tactics, and characterised by human, climatic and logistical as much as purely military challenges. In the course of these wars a distinctive body of doctrine emerged, but through practice rather than theory – it is noteworthy that an obscure text produced in the periphery such as the history of the 4th Turkestan Line regiment has more to say about the tactics and challenges of fighting a 'small war' *against* local resistance than all the works of Davydov and his successors combined.[64] This also seems to have limited the legacy of these wars for similar conflicts which the USSR and Russia fought in the 20th century – against the Central Asian *Basmachi*, in Afghanistan or in Chechnya. The Tsarist-era worship of Davydov and the myths of 1812, and later the still more potent mythology of the partisan war against the Nazi invasion from 1941-5, meant that for ideological reasons Soviet military theorists were far more comfortable in the role of plucky underdog *organising* partisan warfare against a powerful enemy, than as counterinsurgents seeking to crush it.[65] Comparisons between the wars of 'liberation' the Red Army was supposedly fighting in Asia and 19th-century campaigns in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which early Soviet historians at least were not afraid to describe as 'colonial' conquests, would have been unwise.[66] One early Soviet work on partisan warfare devoted no more than a single paragraph to how it should be combatted, though this did at least make a brief reference to Enver Pasha's leadership of the *Basmachi* in Central Asia, in which he was criticised for having abandoned the most fundamental principle of partisan warfare in offering open battle to his Soviet opponents, for which he paid with his life.[67] Russian colonial warfare never produced an equivalent of Callwell's *Small Wars*, though the British author made extensive use of those Caucasian and Central Asian examples he was familiar with. They remain largely

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[64] Zaitsev *Istoriya 4-ogo Turkestanskogo Lineinogo Batal'ona*, pp.30-7.
[65] See both Alexander Hill's essay in this handbook on 'Russian and Soviet Partisan Warfare' and Alex Statiev's essay 'Soviet Counter-Insurgency – from the Civil War to Afghanistan'.
[66] M. N. Pokrovskii, 'Iaponskaia Voina' in *1905* Vol.1 *predposylki revoliutsii* ed. M. N. Pokrovskii (Moscow-Leningrad: gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1925), p.509.
[67] Ya. Slashchev 'Osobennosti partizanskikh boev' (1929). in Savinkin (ed.) *Groznoe oruzhie*, p.448.

overlooked within Russian military history – and yet their legacies in the present day are of an importance that far outweighs the scale on which they were fought. The Central Asian states, while independent, remain in a deep but unequal cultural, economic and political relationship with Russia. The North Caucasus remains a deeply troubled part of the Russian Federation, and there at least the legacies of 19th-century and later wars have not been forgotten. The Islamic 'fanaticism' the Russians identified in both the Caucasus and Central Asia in the 19th century, while largely illusory at the time and still not widespread, has today become a real threat to the Russian metropole.

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