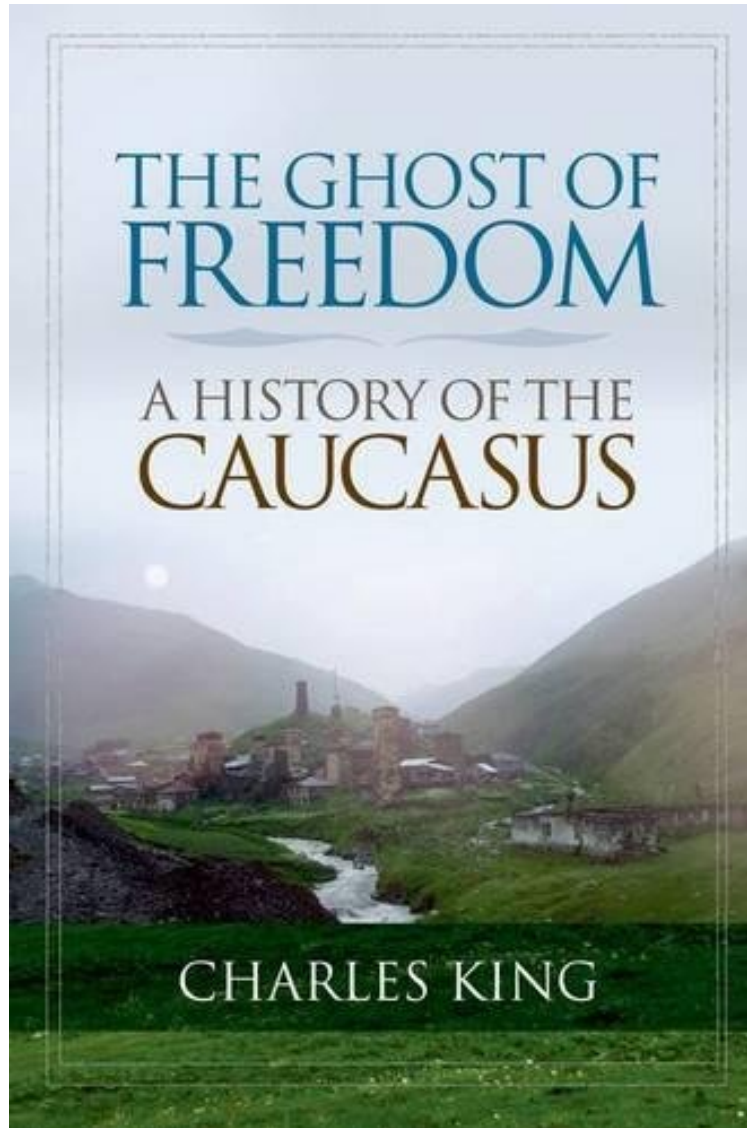


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## The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus

*Charles King*

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**Charles King : The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. History At Its Best By Bruce E. McLeod Jr. This remarkable book lays out the history of the Caucasus that is compelling, interesting and complex. It delves into the tensions between the republics in the Russian Federation and the independent countries. The overarching issue of religion and ethnicity plagued the relationship between these countries, for many centuries, with the Russian hegemony influencing the geopolitical dynamics of the region. The outcome may have grave consequences for the rest of the world. How can

peace prevail in the Caucasus when the area is constantly embroiled with internecine wars, border disputes and ethnic cleansing. My introduction to this area reminds me of the Middle East with its fractured societies and tribal warfares. Maps are provided to give the scale and scope of the borders of these regions from past centuries. The caucasus consist of multicultural, linguistic, and ethnic enclaves that are divided into north and south regions. There are independent sovereign countries with unrecognized ethnic republics within their borders. This leads to a volatile and explosive environment that is constantly in a state of unrest and tension. The book expounds on all of these areas, in a detailed fashion, that is important and somewhat difficult to comprehend, given this diversity. What is apparent, in Charles King's view, is that smaller countries are at the mercy of goliath. Even with this, they were undeterred and doggedly resistant to being colonized until completely overwhelmed. Detailed descriptions of clan leaders in highland and lowland countries are discussed with a thorough analysis of conditions within the different republics. Additionally, the confluence of Islam and christianity and their impact on the region, reveals some underlying issues of conversions, pogroms and religious laws. This is a great book; a book that will provide answers to many questions regarding the caucasus, its peoples and their lives. Bruce E. McLeod, Jr. Las Vegas, Nevada 29 May 2013 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. very good reading about that part of the world and the ... By GHASSAN N. very good reading about that part of the world and the people quest for freedom and independence. It also shed a light on why so many Chechen and Daghistani are fighting with the terrorists in Syria. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great overarching book to get started By wasian206 A classic and rather comprehensive overview of the region. Absolutely fascinating.

The Caucasus mountains rise at the intersection of Europe, Russia, and the Middle East. A land of astonishing natural beauty and a dizzying array of ancient cultures, the Caucasus for most of the twentieth century lay inside the Soviet Union, before movements of national liberation created newly independent countries and sparked the devastating war in Chechnya. Combining riveting storytelling with insightful analysis, *The Ghost of Freedom* is the first general history of the modern Caucasus, stretching from the beginning of Russian imperial expansion up to the rise of new countries after the Soviet Union's collapse. In evocative and accessible prose, Charles King reveals how tsars, highlanders, revolutionaries, and adventurers have contributed to the fascinating history of this borderland, providing an indispensable guide to the complicated histories, politics, and cultures of this intriguing frontier. Based on new research in multiple languages, the book shows how the struggle for freedom in the mountains, hills, and plains of the Caucasus has been a perennial theme over the last two hundred years--a struggle which has led to liberation as well as to new forms of captivity. The book sheds valuable light on the origins of modern disputes, including the ongoing war in Chechnya, conflicts in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and debates over oil from the Caspian Sea and its impact on world markets. Ranging from the salons of Russian writers to the circus sideshows of America, from the offices of European diplomats to the villages of Muslim mountaineers, *The Ghost of Freedom* paints a rich portrait of one of the world's most turbulent and least understood regions.

"In this first general history of the modern Caucasus to appear in the West... King sheds light on modern tribulations and disputes, including the ongoing war in Chechnya, the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian conflicts."--CHOICE "It is a bold historian who writes a history of the Caucasus.... Some forty mutually unintelligible languages are spoken. Worse for anyone trying to present a coherent narrative, these disparate peoples have very different histories, and only two, the Georgians and Armenians (some would add the Azeris), have a history of statehood consistent enough to be retold as one would retell the history of a West European country."--Donald Rayfield, *The Times Literary Supplement* "King picks and chooses events and themes seemingly designed to give proper depth to an understanding of the fiery, violent decade and a half since the collapse of the Soviet Union."--*Foreign Affairs* "Recently, a few books have been published about the Caucasus... but King's is the most comprehensive, weaving in the history of all the events from the past two centuries that shaped czarist, Soviet, and Russian relations with the region."--*Library Journal* "Charles King has produced a work that is at once informative, eclectic, and immensely satisfying."--Alex van Oss, *Eurasianet.org* "Charles King's *Ghost of Freedom* is a work that's gripping and important, scholarly and wonderfully readable. It not only explains and analyzes one of our world's most strategic regions but also delivers all the exotic and romantic turbulence of these flamboyant warriors and poets and the extraordinary peoples of the Caucasus."--Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of *Young Stalin* "In a single volume, King manages to pull off the seemingly impossible task of presenting a portrait of the region as a whole, and one that is wonderfully written as it simultaneously informs, entertains, challenges, and stimulates."--*Middle East Strategy at Harvard* "This vividly written and impressively researched history is an excellent introduction to a much discussed but little understood region."--Anatol Lieven, *King's College London* "The *Ghost of Freedom* is a brilliant tour through the past and present of a critical borderland between East and West. Enlivened by compelling anecdotes, colorful characters, and first-hand reportage that bring the Caucasus to life, this remarkable book is a highly original and beautifully written analysis of the forces that have shaped the region, from a whirlwind of imperial conquest and nation-building to Soviet engineering, mass deportations, and the bitter consequences of imperial collapse: ethnic

wars, banditry, refugees, and misrule. It is an indispensable guide to the Caucasus--and to contemporary global affairs."--Robert D. Crews, author of *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*"This is a rare work with something for all readers...King's ability to tease out the broader historical patterns in all their complexities and subtleties is remarkable. At the same time, he possesses the sort of keen eye for detail and telling stories that bring the region truly to life in all its vibrant color."--*Europe: Early Modern and Modern*"King has produced a work that is remarkable for its breadth of coverage, the depth of the author's insights, and the eloquence of the text. It is hard to imagine how the goal King set himself could have been better achieved."--*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*About the AuthorCharles King is Ion Ratiu Professor of Romanian Studies, Professor of International Affairs, and Professor of Government at Georgetown University. He is the author of *The Black Sea: A History and The Moldovans*, and his writing has appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* and *Foreign Affairs*.