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Reviews

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Reviews

Svetlana Stephenson, *Crossing the Line: Vagrancy, Homelessness and Social Displacement in Russia*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, x + 189 pp., £50.00 h/b.

DR STEPHENSON'S NEW BOOK IS THAT RARE PHENOMENON: a serious work of sociological scholarship which, once opened, is practically impossible to put down. Through her intensive research and field work since 1993, she enables her readers to enter the lives of the *bomzhi*, the street people of Moscow. She provides a rigorously scientific yet compassionate understanding of how and why they have fallen outside the limits of society.

Her aim is not only to advance the understanding of homelessness in Russia, 'as an extreme case of social-territorial displacement' (p. 2), but to reveal its causes and its individual consequences in the larger social and political context. In this she complements the work of Alena Ledeneva, who has explored the persistent informal practices underlying and structuring Russian daily life.

First, a word on terminology. The modern Russian word *bomzh* has all the negative connotations of 'down-and-out', 'beggar', 'vagrant', 'tramp' or 'dosser'. However, it is an official term of denigration, originating in the 1970s. As so often in official Russian, it is an acronym—for the militia (police) phrase '*bez opredelennogo mesta zhitelstva*'—'without a definite place of abode'. That is, it is a phrase which defines the individual's relationship to, or rather exclusion from, the social world defined by the state.

Stephenson has already published a large number of journal articles in Russian and in English, and has made this previously neglected field her own. Her earlier article on street children in Moscow has already acquired classic status. The theoretical anchor for Stephenson's research is the work of the great French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who developed the conceptual tools for understanding social and symbolic space, social capital and social suffering. Some sociologists appear to mobilise theory in order to render their subject matter unintelligible to the non-specialist reader. Stephenson, on the contrary, writes with complete clarity and in such a way that the reader enjoys a sense of learning something new and unexpected, thanks to her insights, assisted by Bourdieu.

Throughout this book Stephenson presents individual *bomzhi* through their own words, bringing them and their plight to life. The book is divided into two parts. Part I is entitled 'The Homeless Experience in Russia Today'. The opening pages of Chapter 1, 'Homeless People and Urban Social Space', are especially striking: she introduces her reader to several of the typical inhabitants of the complex social world of a Moscow railway station—the street homeless people, human beings who are invisible or a source of disgust for most passers-by, but who 'tap into both mainstream and "alternative" channels of communication' (pp. 20–23). In Chapter 2, 'Street Society', she shows how homeless people are 'united by the street but divided by the degree of their despair' (p. 41). Chapter 3 explores the ways in which the homeless 'sink deeper and deeper'—the 'alternative career' of homelessness, in which the final stage is that of '... total displacement when people stop existing as social beings ... their social and economic capital is fully spent' (p. 69).

Part II of the book is entitled 'Pathways into Homelessness', and starts with a splendid analysis of the political and legal context of homelessness in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. At its

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centre is the extraordinary institution of *propiska*, or compulsory registration at place of residence. To this day any Russian feels absolutely naked and defenceless without an internal passport. The police and other law enforcement bodies can demand the production of this document at any time. Failure to do so will lead to detention and an administrative penalty. It is hard for British readers, who rarely carry any identification document on the streets, to understand the symbolic and legal importance of *propiska* for Russians. Without the passport, which is frequently lost or stolen in the case of homeless people, and the vital stamp confirming place of residence, a person becomes, with remorseless state logic, a *bomzh*.

This system was created by Stalin in 1932, based on the internal passport and compulsory *propiska* at militia stations. Stephenson reveals how 'the state . . . acquired all the instruments necessary for control of the population's mobility and residence' (p. 78). Homelessness and vagrancy were criminalised. As late as 1960, new offences were created of 'persistent vagrancy or begging' (Art. 209—up to two years prison) and 'violation of passport rules' (Art. 198—up to one year) (p. 83). In 1970 the crime of 'parasitism' (Art. 209–91—up to one year) was created, and refined in 1975 (p. 84). This was the obverse of the Soviet constitutional 'right to work'. Chapter 5 explores the world of 'Soviet Outcasts: Displacement, Expulsion and Self-Expulsion'—there were as many as six million of them. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 analyse 'Homelessness in Post-Soviet Russia', 'Displacement and Paths into Homelessness', and 'Homelessness and Regulation of Social Space'. Stephenson shows how, in contemporary Russia, '. . . the category of a vagrant is constructed essentially as an embodiment of total displacement' (p. 152).

There is now more provision for the homeless than previously, but in her conclusion, Stephenson relates her visit in 2005 to the Moscow municipal centre for persons without fixed abode: 'I felt as if I had travelled into a war zone' (p. 168). This is an important book, and should be read by anyone with an interest in Russia, or the problems of homelessness.

Birckbeck, University of London BILL BOWRING

Paul J. D'Anieri, *Understanding Ukrainian Politics: Power, Politics, and Institutional Design*. Armonk, NY & London: M. E. Sharpe, 2007, x + 299 pp., £48.50 h/b, £19.95 p/b.

CAN UKRAINE—WILL UKRAINE—BECOME A DEMOCRACY? Posing such a question two years *after* Ukraine's widely celebrated Orange Revolution should appear almost blasphemous to a lot of people within and outside Ukraine. After all, one might argue, Freedom House—the world's self-declared leading advocate of young democracies—has been reporting that Ukraine has firmly progressed from its earlier 'partly free' to the current 'free' political designation. The vast amount of academic publications (including the one under review) which utilise the ubiquitous 'democracy scores' generated every year by Freedom House signifies the high level of credence attached to that US-based and financed advocacy group by very many social scientists. Notwithstanding, the seemingly provocative question this review starts with is indeed the main question asked by Paul D'Anieri in his new book. And he does not consider the question a rhetorical one either.

Advertised modestly as an 'introduction to Ukrainian politics', this book has a much more ambitious agenda and is intended for the knowledgeable audience of academics and post-graduate students of comparative government, post-communist transformation, constitutional law, and international relations. The book's purpose is not only to show 'how politics in Ukraine actually "works"' but also to explain '*why* Ukrainian politics works this way' (p. 6). The author's basic aspiration is to see 'Ukraine becoming a vibrant democracy, integrated with Europe, and thriving economically' (p. 4). Yet he believes—unlike many—that even after the victory of

Viktor Yushchenko in the presidential campaign of 2004 the country has not been realising her Westernisation-cum-development potential; or, to be precise, he suggests that for the time being 'we should probably withhold a definitive judgement' on the subject (p. 5).

D'Anieri's cautious stance *vis-à-vis* Ukraine's recent political trajectory contrasts sharply with the jubilation expressed by many political observers, who have already heralded the Orange Revolution as the twenty-first century's most spectacular democratic breakthrough. The major reason for this disagreement seems to be related to the specific method of scientific inquiry applied. As this book very justly points out, most authors focus nearly exclusively on individual politicians and 'day-to-day goings on' in Ukraine—an approach deemed by D'Anieri 'dangerous, for it deflects attention from underlying problems that will remain in place regardless of who is president' (p. 7). By contrast, his book's overarching thesis is that most, if not all, of the blame for Ukraine's transition failures should be assigned to 'endemic dysfunctions and pathologies' of contemporary Ukrainian politics—pathologies deeply rooted not in the country's particular politicians but in her inherently authoritarian political system.

On the whole, this well-structured volume provides a very compelling set of answers based on convincing evidence to explain the erosion of Ukrainian democracy and the nation's gradual slide under President Kuchma to what D'Anieri labels 'electoral authoritarianism'. The three central themes of contemporary Ukrainian politics revealed in the book in great and persuasive detail are the (societal) fragmentation and ineffectiveness of the parliament, the (constitutional) design of Ukraine's political institutions, and 'power politics', namely 'the ability of actors to pursue their goals by going outside the established rules' (p. 11). The book's most significant argument is that the underlying source of Ukraine's failure to consolidate democracy—exemplified by 'the more immediate problems in Ukrainian government, such as weak parties, selective law enforcement, and a fragmented parliament'—has been 'the fundamental imbalance in raw political power . . . disproportionately controlled by the executive branch of the government' (p. 12). It is further contended that the root of this problem lies in the political and institutional legacy of the Soviet Union, in its potent combination of political and economic power held by a narrow set of elites.

Understanding Ukrainian Politics is one of the very best books published on the subject. It is, undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable examples of first-class political science research on East European and post-communist transformations. Given its unique perspective and analytical style, this book will be found on many bookshelves and remain on the reading list of various political science classes for many years. And the book does not stop there. The author evidently wants to reach out to the international as well as Ukrainian policy establishment, for he fills the concluding chapter with an ambitious agenda for further institutional, political, normative, and even cultural reforms aimed at fostering liberal democracy in the country. Yet what is the urgency?

D'Anieri senses that even after the revolutionary changes of the past few years Ukraine's movement towards liberal democracy is not at all irreversible. And the book's urgency comes from the author's implicit yet perceptible assumption that it is problems with Ukraine's protracted political transformation that constitute the key, most fundamental barrier to the nation's progress in (all) other spheres. It is at this point I, for one, can hardly agree with the author. It could be argued that having liberal democratic credentials might ostensibly improve Ukraine's chances of European integration. Though, I hope D'Anieri, as an International Relations specialist, would agree that there are many other powerful factors involved in such an adventure, and a lot of them are totally exogenous and independent of Ukraine's political performance. Yet my major point is different. For those who, like D'Anieri, wish to see Ukraine (or indeed any other transitional or developing country) thriving economically, the intellectual quest for a set of sensible, growth-conducive institutions is far from over. At the moment one can only state that the link between democracy and economic development is very dubious.

A growing body of critical development literature suggests that even the most basic democratic institutions like regular elections and universal suffrage have historically emerged in the now developed countries as a consequence of economic development rather than a prerequisite thereof.

In 1990, on the eve of Ukraine's independence, the country's per capita gross national income was five times (508% exactly) higher than its Chinese equivalent. However, in 2006, the gross national income per capita in China was already 3% above that in Ukraine. It seems quite reasonable to say, even if one is not to trust various 'governance metrics', that the democratic quality of Ukraine's political institutions is, and has been far superior to those of the People's Republic during the period concerned. Yet to prosper—as China's developmental trajectory clearly indicates—lower-middle income countries including Ukraine might want to concentrate their prime policies and pour all of their very scarce resources into the economy, long before engaging in a very costly and lengthy exercise of institutional elaboration and political fine-tuning. When *Understanding Ukrainian Politics* reaches Ukraine's politicians, for it undoubtedly should, they will find themselves in the difficult dilemma of having to choose between getting the democracy or the economy right first. The consequences of their eventual choice will be felt for a long time to come.

University of Glasgow VLAD MYKHNENKO

Adam Swain (ed.), *Re-constructing the Post-Soviet Industrial Region: The Donbas in Transition*. London: Routledge, 2007, xv + 192 pp., £75.00 h/b.

THIS BOOK BRINGS TOGETHER CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RESEARCHERS based in the UK and Ukraine on the economic development of the Donbas region. Its importance is clear for the study of post-communist transition. This region has experienced considerable economic growth without following the increasingly standard road of opening to inward investment by multinational companies. Moreover, the economic strength of the region gives its political representatives substantial influence: they were identified with opposition to the 'Orange Revolution', with reorientation towards the West and with seeking early EU membership as the core economic strategy.

The keynote chapter, by Adam Swain and Vlad Mykhnenko, discusses the alternative approaches to understanding trends in the Donbas's development. Points from this chapter are then expanded in individual contributions on the energy complex, on regional politics, on the evolving industrial structure, on self-identification of the Donbas region, on restructuring the mining industry and its consequences, and on the attempt to transfer thinking on that restructuring from UK experience to Ukraine.

There is useful discussion on 'clans' and FIGs (financial–industrial groups), but the different accounts do not point to a single, overall assessment. One view sees the vertical integration of industries leading to a new model of organisation that can allow for accumulation and hence economic growth. 'Informal marketisation' has led to an indigenous and distinctive regional capitalism with the potential to adapt to external economic pressures. Others, however, point to the re-emergence of 'neo-patrimonial' organisational forms that are rooted in the Soviet, or even tsarist, past. The Donbas is seen as a region 'locked in' to an outdated and inappropriate structure from which it will be extremely difficult to emerge. The differences in perspective have important implications. Swain and Mykhnenko pose, but deliberately refrain from answering, the question of whether it is right to view apparently successful local capitalists as 'oligarchs' with questionable backgrounds and dubious motives. An alternative view might see them as laying a basis for successful economic development while ensuring that the region's wealth

remains in local hands rather than in those of predatory Western companies. The question, then, is whether a national or local capitalism is possible in this region and whether economic development is laying the basis for it.

The bulk of the contributions point towards the more negative interpretation. Hans van Zon reports on how reforms in the energy sector left the 'clans' with monopoly power and hence the ability to siphon off profits. Elena Kovaleva argues that the clans' economic wealth led to local political power. There was no scope for opposition or for press freedom and no interest in developing civil society. Kerstin Zimmer links this with the population's strong attachment to the region, understood as continuing in its traditional shape, or in other words, with the dominance of established heavy industries. Oleg Bogatov shows how the domestic elites use state support to their financial advantage, build their profits by expanding output rather than efficiency and then channel profits out to offshore companies. Indeed, in so far as inward investment has been recorded, it appears to reflect the return of funds that business groups had previously taken out to Cyprus or the Virgin Islands.

Swain and Mykhnenko describe this as an 'ambiguous transition', perhaps with better results than in countries with no 'lock in' or 'neo-patrimonialism'. The chapters in this book raise many questions, but do not provide definite answers. One possible assessment would be that the FIGs and clans are a barrier to development. That is not obviously the case—in view of recent economic growth—and substantiating such a view would require more information on exactly what these organisational forms are and how they constrict other forms of economic development. Similarly, any assessment that they can be the core of future successful growth would require evidence that they are flexible enough to encourage, and enable the financing of, new kinds of activities. Coal and steel may still have a future for some time to come in the Donbas, but cannot ensure lasting prosperity alone. Moreover, the integrated business organisations that dominate heavy industry have depended on links to political power. Perhaps the question will be whether there is a basis for a national (or regional) capitalism that can develop without that 'neo-patrimonialist' environment or whether, as in much of East Central Europe, the road ahead will lead via foreign ownership of major businesses and banks.

University of the West of Scotland MARTIN MYANT

Ellen Carnaghan, *Out of Order: Russian Political Values in an Imperfect World*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007, xiii + 330 pp., $55.00 h/b.

'... I DROPPED BY ... TO BUY BREAD FOR DINNER. AS THERE WAS NO BREAD, I bought cookies ... I returned to the hotel ... the elevator was not working. I walked up ten flights of stairs ..., and the electricity went out' (p. ix). This quote from Ellen Carnaghan's book accurately depicts post-communist transitions as they were, unattractive and gloomy, and evoked memories of my personal experience of the crumbling Soviet Union and how I lived through its painful and somewhat regrettable demise. The still vivid impression of the time is that of long and gravely silent queues, hurried people, hungry or miserably drunk faces immersed into the grim reality of barely lit streets and a pervasive deficit of light, literal and metaphorical. The examination of people's emotions, experiences and explanations undertaken by the author is so powerful and appealing to the subliminal that it continues to haunt the reader long after completing the book. Reading the book constantly raises one particular question—'why do Russians, despite their stamina and adaptability, skills and intellectualism, remain such imperfect democrats?' Voluminous scholarship addressing this question suggests that it may be related to Russians' emotive loyalty to their autocratic past, so deeply rooted in their minds that it leaves little chance to enjoy the fruits of good governance and better living.

Ellen Carnaghan, however, is not persuaded by this determinist argument, so much so that she poses an alternative contention, inferring that perhaps it is less about Russians 'dragging behind them, if not a thousand-year legacy of serfdom, at least a heavy cultural tradition of autocratic and paternalistic government' (p. 2). Instead, the author contends that it is actually people's daily lives and personal experiences in a chaotic and highly dysfunctional environment that may have a more lasting imprint on their attitudes and behaviour. Living insecure lives and learning to manage them may have taught Russians to be both 'allegiant to existing institutions—in that they do not want to change them—and alienated from those same institutions, insofar as those institutions fail to serve popular needs' (p. 11). This may be why Russians seem to tolerate the imperfect institutions that they have created and that now govern their daily lives: institutions that act as testimony to people's own imperfection and insecure existence.

The book enjoys an elegantly presented and well-developed three-fold argument: first, that public political values are determined by people's daily experiences, and not necessarily by a century of specific—autocratic in the Russian case—traditions; second, that popular values and behaviour are both the cause and the product of political institutions; and third, that personal insecurity when living in a highly risky and uncertain environment—'it is the disorderly nature of social life—not inherited authoritarianism' (p. 39)—serves best here to explain the nature of Russian social and political attitudes. The conclusion the author has drawn is that Russians, governed by their chaotic existence, have adapted to malfunctioning institutions and are now somewhat unwilling to make them better, fearing the worst and thus remaining 'imperfect democrats' in a highly insecure world.

The structure of the book encourages the argument to flow easily and makes the overall reading of the monograph relaxed and enjoyable. It begins by depicting the harsh and gloomy reality of the Russian lack of order reflected in popular feelings of anxiety and insecurity, and an almost subliminal disinclination to alter the pervasive institutional imperfection. Thereafter the book offers an even more complex conceptual setting by which the argument is reinforced. In the next four chapters, the author brings in her empirical findings to seek an explanation for Russians' 'out-of-order' experiences, and to hypothesise what 'Russians really want' and are likely to achieve. This analytical rigour is further reflected in the flow of individual chapters, whereby each one opens with a dedicated discussion of a theoretical foundation and then examines collected evidence, also facilitating further intellectual dialogue.

Although offering a relatively novel perspective on how to explain 'why democracy fails to take root in Russia', the book is not devoid of some conceptual and methodological problems. Theoretically, the book offers a myriad of thought-provoking questions, some of which are well developed and form an excellent base for building an alternative explanation to 'how culture matters'. In Chapter 2, for example, the author convincingly explores the origins of popular attitudes and how institutions, in opposition to conventional thinking, may influence specific, agnostic behaviour so often attributed to Russians. The book further raises an even more interesting question: whether values coincide with the incumbent regime or whether they are manifestations of past loyalty or harbingers of change? In other words, the whole web of culture and institutional reality is unleashed in the book, but understandably not all of the questions receive due attention. For example, the book affords a brief but intellectual debate on the virtues of democracy and inequality, order and personal insecurity. However, it unexpectedly avoids some basic discussion of measures and definitions of democracy, as well as circumventing an essential debate about legitimacy, even though these are central to the author's underlying thesis on regime construction.

What proved rather disappointing was the actual methodology deployed by the author to evince her findings. Although well substantiated as a method, intensive interviews cannot be used to make generalisations about the roots of failure of democracy in Russia. At the very best, interviews with 60 people in Russia between 1998 and 2003—and not longitudinal, but

random—can only provide grounds for speculation and is by no means a serious test of theory. It may serve as a pioneering study of the relationship between culture and political regime, but unfortunately it cannot afford to offer any definitive conclusions and even suppositions, in either statistical or graphical form.

The book indeed provokes some deeply controversial questions and challenges conventional analyses of Russian imperfect democracy. If this were to be supported by a more substantive methodological apparatus, the conclusions that the author suggests may be truly illuminating and informative: 'For Russians sensitive to the social disorder, democratic procedures do not seem to be solutions, and indeed they may even contribute to the problem' (p. 270).

University of Wales Aberystwyth ELENA KOROSTELEVA-POLGLASE

Eugene Rumer, Dmitri Trenin & Huasheng Zhao, *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow and Beijing*. Armonk & London: ME Sharpe, 2007,vii + 223 pp., $32.95 p/b.

THE BOOK UNDER REVIEW IS A PRODUCT OF THE THREE AUTHORS' COLLABORATION on a project funded by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Each chapter provides an account of developments in Central Asia from US, Russian and Chinese perspectives, discusses the evolution of those countries' policies towards the region and concludes with recommendations for policy makers for a future strategy.

Rumer explores the history of American involvement in Central Asia and claims that US policy was ambivalent before 11 September 2001. This period of 'a policy in search of a rationale' (p. 28) was based on a rejection of the Great Game approach, but the US failed to convince Russia and China of the seriousness of its intent to seek a 'new cooperation' with these two powers in Central Asia. At the same time developments on the ground proved disappointing as successive Central Asian states failed to pursue democratic reforms and reneged on economic liberalisation.

When Central Asia rose to prominence in 2001, democratisation and market reform became an integral part of the campaign in the war on terror. US policy makers concluded that without reform and change near-term partners would become long-term adversaries. This agenda found no rapport with the Central Asian leaderships. Moreover, the US's eviction from Uzbekistan represented a challenge to the strategy of promoting democracy as a way of building stability in countries threatened by poor governance and terrorist movements. Instead, Rumer recommends cooperating with the ruling regimes, seeking incremental change and basing this approach on continuity and gradualism. Aggressive promotion of democracy, he argues, will produce destabilisation, not democratisation and economic reform may have to take precedence over political reform. Rumer believes that concentrating aid on economic liberalisation and large infrastructure projects may yield more tangible results.

Geopolitical and idealistic constituencies in the US have clashed over how far democracy-promotion should go when it undermines national security interests, but both agree on the need to offset Russia's influence. Renewed US interest has prompted other players into action: Russia, as the regional security manager, and China, with its economic might, shifted the balance away from the US. Rather than engage in geopolitical competition, Rumer advises US policy makers to find ways of constructive engagement with Russia, China and regional elites to promote stability, which is in their shared interest. Afghanistan, he suggests, is a key issue and could become a focal point for such dialogue. Offering Central Asian states the prospect of NATO membership, by contrast, could be counterproductive. The chapter contains a persuasive analysis of US foreign policy. The only regret is that it lacks an account of the different policy actors' perspectives, their degrees of influence and the tactics they employ.

Trenin starts with an overview of Russia's advances in the region before concentrating on an analysis of its current strategic interests. He argues that Russia's most important strategic interest is stability in Central Asia. His coverage, however, leaps across countries and topics in an effort to swathe a huge territory rather than to concentrate on key issues. Rich on events, it can serve as a useful reference for scholars of Central Asia, but its nuanced observations are drowned in a mass of details. There is a useful section on the little-explored topic of 'humanitarian interests' which includes Russian minorities, labour migration and the significance of Russian language, information and pop-culture for the region.

Trenin's last section on policy making and actors outlines a succession of 'Leave and Forget', 'Outposts as Placeholders' and '*Reconquista*' policies. It describes Russia not as an outside power, but as the metropolis of a former empire, which implies both a great intimacy and a heavy legacy. This last section concludes on a pessimistic note, which is extremely critical of Russia and argues that Russia will bear a moral responsibility for what happens in Uzbekistan. Moreover, it claims that Russia has no idea of how to deal with socio-political or succession crises, and exports its own handicaps to Central Asia, where Russia plays the role of a reactionary agent. Russia's policies lack dynamism, vision and a strategic approach while its inter-agency coordination is insufficient and its foreign policy has become 'de-intellectualised'. Trenin argues that Russian officials are arrogant and paternalistic; and the Russian government's support for its businessmen, with the exception of the energy sector, is scant, as is its support for Russian language and culture. He goes on to argue that Russia does not set the agenda in Central Asia and cannot find the right balance in terms of forming alliances within the international community to pursue its interests in the region. Trenin believes that Russia is bound to lose its influence *vis-à-vis* China and the US, and has been unable to engage with the US in any sort of productive collaboration. He asserts that Russia's appeal to Central Asia is limited. The section ends with 19 bullet-pointed recommendations, covering each and every aspect of Russia's engagement in the region which, given Russia's more or less successful record, comes as a surprise for the reader.

Huasheng Zhao's contribution on China provides a refreshing contrast. It describes Chinese policy in Central Asia as one which emphasises friendship, moderation and cooperation, and which serves to bolster bilateral relations. He argues that China's flexible, pragmatic approach has been a hallmark of traditional Chinese diplomacy. Despite understandable restraints, the chapter provides interesting insights into the Chinese worldview and its foreign policy making. Beijing regards the current phase in Central Asia as a transition, adopts a wait-and-see attitude and awaits change and the finalisation of various relations rather than being proactive in promoting change. Chinese interests, in order of priority, consist of terrorism and energy; economy and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO); and geopolitics and border security. However, the guiding ideology for external relations does not always translate into a clear-cut policy. Zhao describes the Chinese strategy as cautious and risk-averse, but argues that China is beginning to diversify its policy instruments.

Although non-interference has been a cornerstone of Chinese diplomacy, the uniqueness of Central Asia may give rise to new issues and challenges. Should China station troops in the region or intervene in the event of major destabilisation? How much strategic investment should be put into energy and infrastructure as opposed to trade in manufactured goods, which benefits the less developed western provinces most? In terms of geopolitics, Beijing regards Russia, rather than the US, as the crucial actor in Central Asia, and Sino–Russian relations will significantly impact upon its policy. In this equation, the SCO is both a challenge and an opportunity: it can advance China's role in the region, but its failure would reflect negatively on China more than on any other SCO member. Zhao concludes that the significance of Central Asia for China will only grow.

Unfortunately, the volume does not ground the research project in conceptual and theoretical frameworks which would integrate the themes and questions raised by the case studies into an overarching interpretative paradigm. As such, it is a primarily empirical publication, aimed to inform and influence great power policies. An explanation on how the authors' recommendations to the governments came about—do they have a real audience?—would have been helpful in understanding the purpose of the volume. The book would have benefited considerably from peer review and thorough editing to avoid repetitions and overlap between chapters and to facilitate the smooth incorporation of updates into the main text. This would have made it more enjoyable to read.

London School of Economics ANNA MATVEEVA

Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, *Making Common Cause: German–Soviet Secret Relations, 1919–1922*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, vi + 200 pp., £45.00 h/b.

THE TREATY OF RAPALLO THAT BROUGHT GERMANY AND SOVIET RUSSIA together after the First World War is well known. Rapallo was a crucial development in post-war international affairs, as it allowed for the re-establishment of diplomatic and commercial ties between Germany and Soviet Russia. But secret military agreements gave the Red Army access to German military experts while German military training took place on Soviet soil. Specifically, the Luftwaffe trained pilots and developed its technology, thus breaking the condition of the Treaty of Versailles which stipulated that Germany was not allowed an air force.

The details of the highly secretive negotiations that took place between the two post-war 'pariah states' are less well known than the finer points of the treaty itself. It is these details that make Vasilis Vourkoutiotis' book an informative addition to the existing literature on post-First World War German–Soviet relations, especially with its use of newly released documents from the Soviet archives (such as RGASPI and RGVA) in Russia. This work fills a gap in the existing literature as it deals less with the details of the Treaty of Rapallo (although these are obviously covered) and more with the secret negotiations that laid the basis for the treaty. It successfully achieves what it sets out to do, that is to demonstrate that secret and significant contacts between Germany and Soviet Russia occurred before 1920 (the date previously assumed to be the starting point for these negotiations).

What is of particular interest is just how secret the secret relations were. Not only were they understandably kept under wraps to keep negotiations safe from prying foreign eyes (as is usual when governments talk with one another), but Vourkoutiotis notes on a number of occasions that the German military entered into diplomatic talks with the Soviet government without informing the German Foreign Office itself. The German military did not trust the civilian branches of government (this was a 'Prussian tradition rather than a new development' according to Vourkoutiotis) and this was accentuated during the war years through the 'increasing role played by the army in formulating government policy' (p. 60). The desire for an independent and secret foreign policy where Soviet Russia was concerned continued into the post-war years, and this resulted in the German Foreign Office often having 'no idea what the army was doing, with whom it was meeting, and why' (p. 60). Similar points are made concerning the defence ministry's secret contact with Karl Radek, and about how the Foreign Office was 'uninformed of the activities of unofficial diplomacy conducted by the army' (p. 63). The German military needed to relinquish power so that the country could successfully move towards a democratic political structure, and a significant change in this aspect of German–Soviet relations was evident by the time of the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922. Civilians in the Foreign

Office became 'more assertive over their rights to control all aspects of relations with Soviet Russia' (p. 137).

Vourkoutiotis draws out the developing relationships between certain German military leaders and Bolsheviks such as Karl Radek, described here as 'one of the most important foreign prisoners in Germany' (p. 60), and offers a detailed account of these important dealings. The thoughts of other key figures such as Von Seeckt also add to the intrigue. Much of this relationship—for the Germans at least—was based on the concerns that people like Von Seeckt had about the emergence of Poland. An alliance with Bolshevik Russia was seen as necessary to ensure Germany's safety. There was then, more than a hint of pragmatism involved for both sides, especially since there were few ideological links. This is demonstrated by Victor Kopp's view of Von Seeckt, whom he saw as a 'typical reactionary', although one that led the pro-Russians in the military (p. 104), while Von Seeckt was worried that 'the ideas of the Russian revolution might prove strongly attractive for the German people ...' (p. 76). Pragmatism often ruled Soviet minds when negotiating trade deals and the exchange of ambassadors with liberal democracies during the Stalinist era, and this came at the expense of the *Comintern*'s internationalism. Perhaps the origins of this approach can be found in Vourkoutiotis' claim that the Soviet administration realised as early as 1920 that it would possibly 'have to abandon the *Comintern* impulse for exporting revolution to Germany, if it wished to be able to accrue the greater benefits of military–economic arrangements' (p. 106).

Overall, this is a well written book that offers much detail about a fascinating period in European history. It is well argued and questions some of the more usual assumptions made about the Treaty of Rapallo, particularly that it was a 'precursor to 1939, and hence the Second World War' (p. 4). Vourkoutiotis concludes that there is 'no case to be made that the ultimate results in the Second World War were intended by the architects of the initial relationship' although he does suggest that 'the historical fact remains that it had an impact on the later events' (p. 169). While this is true in so far that both sides benefited militarily from the relationship, it should not lead to the conclusion that the Second World War was somehow more likely because of Soviet–German relations between 1919 and 1922. But Vourkoutiotis is correct to argue that 'the secret military agreements ... allowed for the development of the Luftwaffe and the principles of Blitzkrieg' for the Germans and gave the Red Army 'expert military training and financial benefits ...' (p. 4). As such, if the Second World War was not any more likely because of the outcomes of the secret negotiations, it may have been a lot more dangerous.

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