

Petersburg as soft but not wrong, and he gets the assessment of St. Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak right: “a brilliant orator and terrible manager” (89). In 1993, I attended an event with Sobchak, Kudrin and Putin in St. Petersburg. After having made an eloquent speech that floored the audience, the hapless Sobchak enjoyed his success so much that he made the same speech once again, receiving considerably less applause. Clearly Putin manipulated rather than obeyed Sobchak, which is clear in this book.

The weakest part of this book is the few pages devoted to Ukraine and Georgia. They reflect the persistent Moscow bias towards other former Soviet Republics. To dismiss Ukraine’s President Leonid Kuchma as a “kleptocrat” (259) does not quite do justice to him. But this is a small part of the book and the reader can just ignore them.

Readers highly critical of Putin might find the first parts of this volume soft but not incorrect. The last part of the book sets the record straight. Lee Myers has a devastating narrative of the Yukos confiscation, the Litvinenko murder, Putin’s cronies and the corruption. In his journalistic fashion, he notes that Russia’s Goebbels, “Dmitri Kiselyov compared [Putin] to Stalin and meant it as a compliment” (421). Using such citations, you can afford to be judicious and still make clear what kind of a character Putin is.

This is an outstanding account of what Putin’s rule in Russia is and it is likely to hold.

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Thomas W Simons, Jr (ed.) *Islam in Eurasia: A Policy Volume*. Cambridge MA: Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, 2015. 95 pp.

This collection presents four policy papers presented at a 2013 conference to discuss the implications of Islam in Eurasia for American foreign policy. As with most collected volumes, the overarching argument and the link between the chapters may not be as obvious as the editor might assume. In and by themselves,

however, three out of the four chapters offer thoughtful insight into their subject matter and manage to remain relevant, even with the delay in production. Brenda Shaffer presents a novel approach to Central Asia and Azerbaijan by comparing them with rent-seeking states in the Middle East. She argues that the same dynamic is at play in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, where the state relies on export revenues and is susceptible to “boom-or-bust” cycles as well as corruption and a distinct space between political incumbents and the societies they rule. This pattern, coupled with low human development levels, Shaffer argues, has allowed Islamic radicalism to rise in the Middle East and is showing signs of ascendancy in Central Asia and Azerbaijan. This is a compelling argument, one that the United States should take seriously if the appeal of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is to be averted.

Noah Tucker offers an insightful and, at times, entertaining account of Islam in Eurasia, starting with the contested concept of “real Islam.” As Tucker rightfully observes, the incumbent regimes only recognize the state-sanctioned version of Islam as real and authentic. Any other version that is not controlled by the state is a misrepresentation of Islam and “alien” or false. This dichotomy helps incumbent regimes suppress dissent in the name of protecting “real Islam.” This is a much researched area, but Tucker adds a new dimension to this question by challenging academic studies of Islam in Eurasia for looking at Islam in the region through the same lens. He faults such studies for ascribing a monolithic quality to Islam and treating the Arab experience “as normative and uniform” (48). Tucker lays the blame for this approach on the security approach to Islam, which sees Islam as a potential risk factor. In contrast, he argues that radical interpretations of Islam are a natural response to radical political challenges faced by Muslim citizens. Drawing on studies informed by anthropology, religious studies, and political ethnography, he makes a convincing case for the heterogeneity of Islam in Eurasia which is “real” in all its incarnations.

Roger Kangas offers a thoughtful conclusion to this collection and challenges some of the commonly held views in studies of Central Asia. He questions the significance of the region for the United States, especially noting the range of global issues that

demand Washington's attention. Given that the United States made a commitment to Central Asia in the wake of the September 11 attacks and the operation to topple the Taliban in Afghanistan, the US view of the region has been largely colored by security considerations. This Kangas calls the securitization of US policy towards Central Asia (83). With the subsiding security threat to US interests, Kangas wonders whether Washington can afford to stay committed to Central Asia. Furthermore, reflecting on the applicability of game theory to Central Asia, he contends that one should not assume the US step-back from Central Asia would automatically lead to Russian and Chinese advances in the region. Both maintain a range of regional and global interests and Central Asia may not be high on their agenda.

This collection offers interesting new ideas and points to exciting new areas of research. This should be inspiring for scholars of Central Asia.

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Ieva Astahovska et al. (eds) *Revisiting Footnotes. Footprints of the Recent Past in the Post-Socialist Region*. Riga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015.

The book *Revisiting Footnotes. Footprints of the Soviet Past in the Post-Socialist Region*, edited by art historians Ieva Astahovska and Inga Lāce from the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) in Riga, boasts a range of multidisciplinary voices from Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. In their introduction, the editors claim that the time has come to engage in a "culture-anthropological archaeology" (9) and in the book's press release they invite art historians, theorists, artists and researchers to contribute to an analysis of the "persistent Soviet era traces," to an "excavation" or "digging into [...] the past." Two years after the exhibitions *Revisiting Footnotes I* and *II*, as well as the accompanying symposium *Revisiting Footnotes* at the LCCA, the initiators have published a book encompassing all the