

In conclusion, the book fills a key missing link in the analysis of the malign Russian influence in Europe. It does so by disentangling how Russian actors capitalize on the governance deficits in the different countries—an approach that could be applied to assessing the Russian economic footprint in Western Europe too.

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Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw, *Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017. 312 pp.

A landlocked region at the crossroads of the interests of a range of different international actors, Central Asia is most often portrayed as an autocratic region, lacking true agency, and generally closed off from globalization. In this book, Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw set out to challenge this conventional view through an exploration of the impact of the global market on the economic development of the five republics and their leadership.

Political scientists focusing on political and economic developments in the former Soviet Union, Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw take an unprecedented step here in presenting raw data about offshore dynamics in Central Asia. Building upon the publicly available data and on their experiences in the field, the authors aim to decipher the connections between state-owned companies, Central Asian presidents and their families, well-established Western banks, offshore accounts, and investments.

Published five years after Alexander Cooley's *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2012), *Dictators without Borders* describes the impact of the opening of Central Asia to the world, which has determined not only political and security dynamics in the region, but also the creation of transnational economic links, both onshore and offshore. The goal of the book, as stated in the introduction, is

three-fold. First, it sets out to promote a better knowledge of the cross-border mechanisms used by the Central Asian leadership to launder money and exert political influence over dissidents. Second, the book indicates what changes in the regulatory and enforcement system are necessary in order to tackle transnational corruption. Finally, the authors try to shed light on how the domestic policy of Central Asia affects its foreign policy, especially concerning the regime's opponents, a topic that is the subject of John Heathershaw's ongoing research.

In the first chapter, "Inside-Outside, Onshore-Offshore: How Central Asia Went Global," the authors analyze the transition dynamics in Central Asia, both regionally and nationally. As a unitary region, Central Asia has some common characteristics, which contribute to the perpetuation of a series of longstanding myths, whose influence extends to regional political systems, public opinion, and academia (including Western academia). For example, the conventional image of Central Asia as a geographically isolated region, and thus ignorant of and immune to global dynamics, has fostered the widespread belief that the failure of economic liberalization and political evolution in Central Asia was determined mainly by the local and cultural conditions. The book debunks these myths through detailed case studies of the money laundering and political opposition practices in each of the five republics.

The case studies also focus on the national legal instruments put in place by the Central Asian authorities for handling political dissidents, while preserving the appearance of respect for international law and promoting a positive image for their governments. On one hand, the Central Asian republics were involved in multilateral processes of promoting democracy and human rights, while, on the other hand, their leadership consolidated their political position, including by targeting political defectors abroad through their national security services and portraying them as threats to national security.

Each of the following four chapters deals with a particular Central Asian country, exploring the national political set-up and the most prominent cases of embezzlement. The case of Mukhtar Ablyazov in Kazakhstan is discussed in the second chapter. This case

study gives an account of the measures undertaken by the Astana leadership to seize the media outlets and the business shares of Ablyazov, a vocal member of the Kazakh political and economic elite. The case of Ablyazov is very interesting and controversial, showing the difficulties of understanding all the nuances of Central Asian politics. Despite his protestations, Ablyazov was not acting in good faith and for the benefit of a democratic society when he financially supported opposition media in Kazakhstan. He established himself as a banker and real-estate tycoon in Eurasia, attracting the envy of the Kazakh government and later triggering a highly publicized and costly hearing in London. The Kazakh authorities made lengthy efforts to bring Ablyazov to justice in his home country for embezzlement, fraud, and support of violent protests against the state, even by using his family as leverage. The use of Interpol's Red Notice system which allowed for the possible extradition of Ablyazov to Russia was later dismissed as politically motivated by numerous Western states where Ablyazov and his associates resided. In July 2017 Interpol canceled the Red Notices against the names of Ablyazov and several of his partners.

The next chapter focuses on Tajikistan and the state-owned Talco enterprise, an aluminium producer benefiting from state-subsidized electricity, and perhaps the greatest economic asset of the economically impoverished country. Talco followed a complicated pathway to secure offshore accounts and became subject to a London litigation between 2004 and 2008, with the aim of consolidating President Rahmon's control over it. The importance of the case resides in the silent approval of the Western partners, such as Norway's Hydro Aluminium, part of Norsk Hydro, whose majority shareholder is the Norwegian government, as well as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Talco's history of changing owners reveals the continuity of corruption and lack of transparency, which took place at the expense of the Tajik citizen, with the naïve and even complicit participation of Western entities. The reinvestment of Talco's offshore profits was directed to the building of private properties, a hotel, and lobbying in the US Congress. Using the funds provided by Talco, Fabiani & Company lobbies for a favorable position in the

building of Rogun Dam, a 42-year project for the tallest hydropower dam in the world, which was until recently opposed by Uzbekistan and the US for environmental reasons. In November 2018 however, President Rahmon inaugurated the dam's first turbine, built with an Italian-based company, while the second unit is scheduled to be launched in 2019.

Until the death of Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan was one of the most closed and repressive of the five Central Asian states. However, the connections of Gulnara Karimova, first daughter of the leader, with the global financial world, her diplomatic activity, and her allure as a Central Asian pop star dismantled the myth of the anti-Westernism of Central Asia, as the book's third case study shows. Illustrative for Uzbekistan's endemic corruption are the schemes through which Gulnara Karimova and her associates dealt with the licenses for access to the Uzbek telecommunication market for foreign companies. Despite her success and contribution to her father's authority, Karimova's growing dissension with the chief of the National Security Service, a close advisor of her father, led to her disgrace and house arrest. The President agreed to bring his daughter to justice in order to be absolved of any responsibility and knowledge of her schemes.

The final case study sheds light on Maxim Bakiyev's activities to centralize the control of Kyrgyzstan's assets in the hands of his family, during the five years of the Bakiyev regime (2005–2010). The local and international business aiming to gain access to "the Switzerland of the East" (as Kyrgyzstan came to be known during the 1990s) was not vetted by democratic institutions, but by the omnipresent and omnipotent hands of "Prince Maxim," as Bakiyev was nicknamed. The process was complete when powerful international banks became part of the scheme to launder money for Maxim, but it backfired when the Bakiyev regime was ousted. Nevertheless, Maxim currently enjoys political asylum in a luxurious London apartment.

In the sixth chapter, "The New Offshore Silk Roads," Cooley and Heathershaw summarize the story of an insufficiently regulated global financial world, in which corrupt Central Asian elites use the backdoors for their personal interests, with the help and blessing of

Western companies. Moreover, the authors point out that all these offshore transnational routes are commonly exploited by the US for military and strategic purposes and by the Chinese for their energy interests.

A chapter entitled “Political Exiles and Extraterritorial Repression,” is dedicated to the categories of political exiles, including former regime insiders, secular activists, and banned clerics. The chapter also explores the threat that these dissidents face of being brought back to their countries, through the politically motivated misuse of legitimate international instruments. The chapter builds upon the work done by John Heathershaw’s team in the Exeter Central Asian Studies Network, which has pulled together publicly available information into a database of Central Asian Political Exiles (CAPE).

One of the book’s drawbacks is that it does not deal with the case of Turkmenistan, presently the most closed country of the five in the region. Although the book’s initial argument focuses on the privileged position of Deutsche Bank and other German and French companies in the Turkmen economic system, these relations are not scrutinized in a thorough case study similar to the other four Central Asian states. Such analysis would have provided a context for the Turkmenistan’s recent preoccupation with illegal economic activities, as shown by the October 2017 OSCE seminar focused on preventing money laundering through offshore zones and designed for Turkmen governmental experts and representatives of the business community. Additionally, according to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), there are Turkmen connections to offshore accounts belonging to various branches of Russian (Exxon, Kamaz) and American companies (Unocal, USA International).

The “pay-to-play” formula exposed in *Dictators without Borders*, whereby US government agencies bribe and compromise in order to maintain their military presence in the Central Asian countries, is not new and was discussed by Alexander Cooley in his previous work *Great Games, Local Rules*. However, the novelty of *Dictators without Borders* is that it provides detailed raw data for

activities that cannot be justifiable, even under the motivation of the global war on terror or the interests of US national security.

The authors base their research on data that has been made public because of legal proceedings, government investigations, and leaked information. In doing so, they have synthesized and connected the dots of a huge volume of sources, with the aim of producing a largely empirical work that can serve as a basis for further research on the region. As the authors themselves note, there are currently insufficient instruments for validating the accuracy of data provided in courtrooms or even in politically motivated leaks. This may prove to be a challenge for parsimonious research, yet the data merely point to another dimension that confirms the characterization of the Central Asian states as patrimonial and autocratic regimes, with leaders interested above all else in their own survival.

Nevertheless, *Dictators without Borders* is mandatory reading for those wishing to understand the power dynamics in the region, without falling into the trap of erroneously viewing Central Asia as a region that is closed off from the rest of the world. *Dictators without Borders* represents a laudable attempt to present a clearer and more accurate image based on the most recent data, as a basis for future in-depth analysis regarding the role and place of Central Asian states in the world order.

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Irene Kacandes and Yuliya Komska (eds.), *Eastern Europe Unmapped: Beyond Borders and Peripheries*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018. 300 pp.

Intrigued by the promise of an “unmapping” of Eastern Europe, I was excited to review this edited collection. The book begins with a substantial introduction by *Yuliya Komska*, discussing Eastern Europe under the notion of being “discontiguous.” The introduction and the critique of “mapping” opens with an anecdote about the