

Xun's chapters stand out in particular as important mirrors that clearly reflect the complicated politics of documents, archives, national memories, and Western scholarship.

Communism and Hunger: The Ukrainian, Kazakh, and Soviet Famines in Comparative Perspective is a new and refreshing analysis of famines in the context of socialist experiments. It points to the importance of studying political famines not only in the context of socialist food regimes and political economy broadly speaking, but also as case studies of mass state violence against governments' own citizens. It could be argued that the volume only whets the appetite, and that 158 pages are not enough to provide complete answers for an unfulfilled curiosity about this too often ignored subject. It would also not have been unfruitful for the editors to have incorporated the Ethiopian (1983–85) and North Korean (1994–98) cases into the analysis. Nonetheless, this valuable collection will certainly spur further analysis of political famines in their transnational contexts.

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Mikhail Minakov, *Development and Dystopia: Studies in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Eastern Europe*. Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2018. 280 pp.

With the pro-EU Revolution of Dignity in 2013, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its subsequent hybrid aggression in Eastern Ukraine and beyond, "Ukraine is likely to remain at the center of attention for all major geopolitical centers for the foreseeable future" (p. 243). Moreover, dealing with the opened Pandora's box of discontent and demodernization in CEE states and the Eastern Neighborhood, and safeguarding the future of the EU requires a reflection over the past twenty-five years of modernization efforts, revolutionary cycles, new hopes, and new traumas in post-Soviet space. In his new monograph, Ukrainian political philosopher and social analyst Mikhail Minakov seeks to consider (de)modernization dynamics in Ukrainian politics (also within the wider context of transition studies and

East European Politics), making a special effort to understand the human dimension thereof. Structurally, the book elaborates on four major themes: 1) political ontology and (de)modernization in new East European cultures; 2) the peculiarities and outcomes of Ukraine's revolutionary experiences; 3) the dynamics of Euromaidan and the political transformations it brought about; and 4) the regional perspective and respective worrying security trends.

A lot has been written about the transition experience of post-Soviet states, Ukrainian politics, and Euromaidan, as well as the relationships between the EU, Russia, and other post-Soviet states. However, there are at least five reasons why I would recommend *Development and Dystopia* to both experienced Eastern European and Ukrainian Studies specialists, and those seeking to capture political dynamics in Ukraine and beyond at a glance.

First and foremost, the author excellently conceptualizes a comprehensive set of political developments in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, drawing on critical theory by Jürgen Habermas and modernization theory. Applying to post-Soviet social reality insights into the multi-dimensional nature of modernity, and its temporal and spatial characteristics, Mikhail Minakov argues that there is “a growing tendency of demodernization in Eastern Europe” (p. 22). The author's understanding of the core of the demodernization process is rooted in the interplay between the System (public institutions, such as state, law and law enforcement) and the Lifeworld (private institutions, such as business, consumption patterns, or family life). An important feature of the Soviet “modernization project” was the “dominance of the System” that led to the colonization or “ghettoization” of the Lifeworld (p. 21). Subsequently, according to Minakov, the post-Soviet transition project resulted in “double colonization,” where the System continues to be excessively intrusive vis-à-vis the Lifeworld, and the Lifeworld damages the order of the System (p. 11). Thus, the author views the formation of “power verticals,” the prominent role of individual oligarchs and financial-political groups (FPGs) in political processes and systemic corruption as key symptoms of reverse tendencies in development in Ukraine and other post-Soviet societies.

This brings me to the second crucial strength of the book. *Development and Dystopia* is exceptionally good at linking the history of political phenomena to their present, as well as explaining the interplay between micro- and macro-level politics. The most striking examples of the former are, to my mind, the author's insights into Ukraine's revolutionary cycles and the history of the "Novorossiia" project. The latter can be exemplified by the author's detailed elaboration on the interlinkages between the micro-politics of FPGs and their macro-level political role, as well as the multi-level review of volunteers' role in the post-Euromaidan state. The above strengths have enabled the author to create a holistic vision of Ukraine and post-Soviet space as "a global historical laboratory for testing demodernization schemes" (p. 11), featuring complex networks of the Public and the Private, the Genuine and the Cosmetic, the Formal and the Informal, and the Soviet and the Post-Soviet.

Third, modern scholarship in transition and development studies tends to explore macro-level phenomena without highlighting human perceptions thereof. *Development and Dystopia* attempts to fill this lacuna by focusing on the human dimension of transition, collective pain, trauma, and *ressentiment* in post-Communist space. According to Minakov, "revenge, mutual punishment and *ressentiment* are all at the center of the dialectics in East European modernity" (p. 53). This statement makes a lot of sense with respect to the results of the author's empirical study of the Euromaidan and Anti-maidan activists' perceptions of the EU and Russia, and Ukrainians' perceptions of the "Novorossiia" project, as well as the author's reference to countless "moral panic" incidents in Ukraine (p. 69). The interplay of hope and pain represents the "human face" of the complex post-Soviet transition processes, and conditions the population's extreme vulnerability to news, reform projects, fake news and, consequently, antagonism, far-right nationalism, and hatred. That is why it is extremely important to consider the human perspective—such as traumatic experiences, acting as possible triggers of moral panic—in both scholarship and political decision-making.

It is noteworthy that *Development and Dystopia* distinguishes the far-reaching consequences that Russia's aggressive policy vis-à-

vis Ukraine has had for both the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the EU's Eastern Partnership project. According to Minakov, "before the Crimean and Donbas crises, the two integration projects were expected to support the process of integration between different macro-regions of Big Europe: the EU and the EAEU," with the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as a tool for creating "a soft regional integration project moving Eastward" (p. 294). However, Russia's aggression in Ukraine created "dynamic obstacles" to both the idea of "United Europe," and to the deepening of integration under the auspices of Eurasian Union and successful implementation of the Eastern partnership initiative. Distinguishing the "growing gap between two Neighbourhoods" as a security challenge capable of destroying the EU from within, Minakov calls for reforming the EU's strategic approach vis-à-vis the Eastern Neighborhood and Russia, and attempting to bring the "United Europe" idea back to the agenda (pp. 323, 327).

Last, but not least, based on the above mixture of insights and conceptualizations, the book offers three sets of recommendations on promoting modernization in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. The latter includes tackling the gap between the aims and tools of their achievement within the ENP, as well as the EU's developing a three-component approach towards Eastern Europe (general strategy vis-à-vis the post-Soviet countries; country-specific strategies and "a policy towards growing competition and possible cooperation with Russia in the region") (p. 324). Based on Kant's concept of "perpetual peace, Minakov emphasizes the need for "institutional and political infrastructure for peace in prevention of the state of war," putting greater value on people's creativity in the public policy domain, as well as launching a dialogue between intellectuals and political elites (p. 94). With respect to Ukraine, *Development and Dystopia* calls for stricter separation of powers, focus on the implementation of the parliamentary model, the development of SMEs, and revival of the "sobornist" idea of unity in plurality (pp. 238–39).

High-quality conceptual effort, multi-level analysis, first-hand empirical research, and emphases on the human and regional perspectives of post-Soviet transition make *Development and*

Dystopia exciting and useful reading for specialists in East European and Ukrainian studies, diplomats and development practitioners, as well as all those seeking to learn more about the political dynamics in the region.

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Sander Brouwer (ed.), *Contested Interpretations of the Past in Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian Film: Screen as Battlefield*. Leiden/Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016. 187 pp.

For a long time now film has been present in the academic debate as an important source for memory studies and as an identity shaping tool. Film is an appealing but also challenging object of study, especially when it comes to its capacity as visual representation of the past. *Contested Interpretations of the Past in Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian Film: Screen as Battlefield* is a notable collection of post-conference articles dedicated to complex issues related to representations of the past in the Polish–Russian–Ukrainian memory triangle. The conference “Suffering, Agency, and Memory in Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian Film,” held in March 2012 at the University of Groningen, was itself a part of the research project “Memory at War: Cultural Dynamics in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine,” led by Alexander Etkind in 2010–2013. The volume includes contributions by scholars from a number of disciplines. Film studies, cultural studies, and media studies researchers as well as Slavists and anthropologists apply different methodologies and provide findings. The volume is an intriguing example of work in progress in post-socialist studies and is an inspiration for the debate on cinema as a tool, agent, and source in memory studies.

Although all nine chapters are very different, we can spot some key notions and phenomena which the authors circle around. One of the core problems tackled in the volume is the postcolonial perspective on the Central and Eastern European region (Lars