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Water, environmental security and sustainable development: conflict and cooperation in Central Eurasia

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Themed issue book reviews

Water, environmental security and sustainable development: conflict and cooperation in Central Eurasia, edited by Murat Arsel and Max Spoor, London and New York: Routledge, 2010, xv + 284 pp., US\$135 (hardback), includes bibliographical references and index, ISBN 0415461618

This book makes a valuable contribution in the investigation of the role of water in political, economic and social processes. It is based on rigorous and empirically grounded cross-national analyses. In particular, the book provides analyses of the relation of water scarcity and environmental security in countries termed by the editors as Central Eurasia, which includes countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus, Iraq and Mongolia. The book's main goal is to explore the relationship between water, environmental security and sustainable rural development in this region. It does this through five parts and 13 chapters. The first part provides an introduction through discussion of sustainable rural development as the conceptual backdrop for the book and gives an overview of each section of the volume.

The second part gives an account of simultaneous changes of natural and social regimes of water distribution in Afghanistan, Iran and Mongolia, which have been undergoing extensive political and social changes, and Uzbekistan, where the decentralization of Soviet-era irrigation institutions is in progress. The discussions that are presented in this part of the book are important as they critically evaluate the design and implementation of the projects and reports by donors and the international community which fail to take account of the local conditions at the grassroots level. In addition, Vener and Campana (part 3) conclude that the overlap and contradiction of projects implemented by the international community is one of the main curbs on effective transboundary water allocation in the South Caucasus region.

The chapter on Mongolia by Caroline Upton, in part 2, demonstrates the importance of carefully designing projects and policies in rural areas that relate to common resources such as water. The author highlights the relation between natural and social scarcity of water drawn from the case studies of herder communities at three locations in the Gobi region. Although natural water scarcity is thought as one of the main problems facing livestock husbandry in Mongolia, the study exposes the human-induced side of water scarcity. Moreover, the study brings out the gaps in project and policy design and implementation by the state and various donors such as World Bank and UNDP that try to mediate and regulate water scarcity through introducing community-based water resource management without consideration of long-established social norms of reciprocity, and without understanding the concept of 'ownership' in rural communities. The author concludes that "while community-based models should by no means be rejected, they must not be viewed as a panacea for the failings of neo-liberal or state-centred solutions to water scarcity" (p. 96). The findings presented in this chapter potentially have a significant implication on policy and project design in relation to water resource management in rural areas in Mongolia.

The discourse analysis presented by Kai Wegerich in part 3, on inter-state cooperation in five Central Asian countries, shows that organizations such as Scientific Information Centre (SIC) are providing different information to different parties on the same subject. Also, the research by Krutov and Spoor argues that water management organizations in Central Asia have failed to develop beyond Soviet institutional arrangements.

Part 4 gives different accounts of water reforms in three Central Asian countries – the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which initially were under the same unified

management during Soviet times but now politically and economically are in three different contexts. Discussion of water reforms in individual states in Central Asia reveals how problems related to introducing and implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles in the water management of the Kyrgyz Republic have ultimately resulted in the neglect of environmental and social aspects.

Research in Uzbekistan by Max Spoor provides evidence that suggests that moving from cotton to wheat cultivation has led to no measurable environmental and poverty-alleviation improvements. Discussing Turkmenistan, Stanchin and Lerman argue that water is a strategic resource that determines economic development, and extensive investment in water systems is needed in order to make more efficient use of water resources.

The editors provide in part 5 a summary of the issues raised in the book emphasizing the central role of water in social and economic development in the region.

The book as a whole gives an excellent description of the current water and socio-economic situation in the region. In particular, the book highlights the differences in water management and the political processes surrounding it in countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the book reveals the diversity of livelihoods of people and their access to water through the inclusion of research on Mongolia. The chapters critically evaluate the approach taken by development agencies towards restructuring water institutions in the region. One significant contribution of the book is that it sheds light onto the grassroots level of water systems, revealing the diversity of social and water institutions. This book clearly demonstrates the importance of understanding traditional social institutions when implementing policy reforms. Also it shows that the reforms taking place at lower levels do not always reflect the decisions made at the higher national level of water management.

A notable absence in the book is Tajikistan. Here, studies have found that provision of water to farmers costs up to four times what it does in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (Gunchinmaa and Yakubov, 2010), contributing to the crippling indebtedness of many farmers. The inclusion of a discussion of these issues would have provided a more complete picture. Nonetheless, the book makes a significant contribution to two aspects of the scholarly literature on water reforms. The first is the IWRM approach, which has been widely used worldwide, and the second is the debate on wider economic reforms in countries in transition highlighting the interconnectedness of water with economic development, poverty and rural livelihoods.

Reference

Gunchinmaa, T. and Yakubov, M., 2010. *Water Policy*, 12 (2), 165–185.

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One homeland or two? The nationalization and transnationalization of Mongolia's Kazakhs, by Alexander Diener, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009, 408 pp., US\$60, ISBN 9780804761918

At the centre of this scholarly monograph is a careful engagement with debates on concepts of homeland and the extent to which they are necessarily coterminous with nationality. Diener not only does a fine job in repositioning the importance of place to a sense of belonging, but also excavates and analyses an instance that neatly refutes the binary boundaries of nation-states with their categories of 'us' and 'them', 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. In this he is following ideas of hybridity, Zygmunt Bauman's 'undecidables' and the place of the stranger betwixt and between, but presents instead the useful notion of a 'stretched homeland' that co-exists with and disrupts political state boundaries. The central proposition is that homelands are essential for a sense of ontological grounding. The book explores the scales at which different conceptions of homeland exist.

The case is that of the Kazakh population in Mongolia. In 1989 there were approximately 120,000 Kazakhs in Mongolia. In 1991, Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, issued an invitation for expatriate Kazakhs to return. Roughly half of Mongolia's population of Kazakhs did so, drawn either by instrumental reasons, hoping for better economic prospects, and/or what Diener calls an essentialized, mythic version of the ancestral motherland. Some later returned to Mongolia, dissatisfied with what they found.

While making no claims for this case to stand for other diasporas, Diener notes that the end of the Soviet Union produced many peoples who were not only living outside their national homeland but had never known their homeland, or had an idea that nationality and land necessarily co-existed. Long before the Soviet Union, Central Asia acted as a transcontinental corridor for migrants. After the 1861 Stolypin reforms, there were again large migrations east for settlement. Kazakhstan, in particular, also saw huge immigrations during the Soviet period as, for example, factories were relocated from the frontline, prisoners were sent to the gulag network, often followed by families, and volunteers were drawn in to man the Virgin Lands Campaign. In turn, the Kazakh diaspora is sizeable, covering 47 countries. Such multi-generational diasporas query the very idea of return.

Understanding motivations to stay or return also necessitates a comparison of the very different ways in which various constituencies in Mongolia and Kazakhstan have formulated and enacted policies of nationalization before, during and after the Soviet Union according to ideas of blood, land or what Diener usefully refers to here as shared technologies of living. The distinctions between places, and periods, are marked and illuminating.

Place is central to the discussion of homeland. Refuting Appadurai's notion that a nation is deterritorialized if it lacks a state, Diener suggests rather that diasporic peoples find new places to call their own, 'reconstituting homeland conceptions'. What is of particular importance here are the sub-national affiliations of *zhuz*, tribe and clan that span the political boundaries of Kazakhstan and Mongolia. The Kazakhs in Mongolia are largely members of the middle *zhuz* and the Naiman or Kereit clans, each of which is linked to a stretch of territory that does not neatly align with contemporary political borders. Moreover, the Mongolian Kazakhs are largely clustered in one region, Bayan Olgi, which has taken on the character of a small-scale homeland. Since it is spatially isolated and economically under-developed, the pastoral features of Kazakh life have been retained.

A comparison between the projects of nation building in Mongolia and Kazakhstan is instructive. In terms of legitimating a supra-clan group, Chingiz Khan provided a point of identification for Mongol tribes in 1206. By contrast, the idea of a Kazakh nation only came into being

in the twentieth century, with Kazakhstan formed according to Stalin's criteria for national groups: a common language and territory.

Although far from the whole story, the dominant Mongolian nationalization policy suggests an inclusive dynamic, recognizing the long duration of the Kazakh presence. Shared land and a common nomadic heritage appear to be stronger indicators of commonality than blood: Outer Mongolians reject Inner Mongolians as being part of the Han Chinese 'geobody' and of corrupted ethnic purity, and therefore outsiders. Both inclusive and exclusive variants, however, appear to cleave to a binary structure. The former rejects the idea of a dual homeland.

Kazakhstan's trajectory has been significantly different. As a result of its long history of immigration settlement, coupled with the high death toll and emigration of Kazakhs from civil war, famines and repression in the twentieth century, less than 50% of the population belonged to the titular group in 1991 when it declared its independence. Moreover, much of the urban Kazakh population had been educated in Russian, spoke Kazakh poorly and was acculturated from a rural or nomadic existence. This was, and is, far from the essentialized, static, ethnically homogeneous view of Kazakhstan that many repatriates thought they were coming back to. One response has been to re-settle in compact groups of kin and other repatriates, reproducing a localized, place-based sense of belonging.

In 1991, expatriate Kazakhs began to return to Kazakhstan in response to the President's invitation. Realizing that both the administration and supporting infrastructure were ill-prepared for the unexpectedly high numbers, a quota system was rapidly introduced. Technically, the quota system was directed towards *oralmandar*, repatriates whose ancestors had left for countries outside the former Soviet Union as a result of repressions. Most Mongolian Kazakhs do not fit these criteria. In fact, all repatriates came to be known demotically as '*oralmandar*' and far exceeded quota numbers. By 1999, 90% of repatriates had not received citizenship. Since many do not speak Russian, integration and finding work has been difficult and local resentment has sometimes been exacerbated by the belief that all *oralmandar* received state privileges. '*Oralman*' has become a local term of abuse, indicating a country hick.

There is a fascinating distinction between how questions of ethnic purity, territory and civic rights have played out in Mongolia and Kazakhstan. The Kazakh constitution emphasizes the primordial rights of the Kazakhs to the land. Meanwhile official discourse preaches internationalism, but with a Kazakh face in practice. However, in many cases, repatriate Kazakhs, such as those from Bayan Olgi, appear to have stronger claims to embody traditional Kazakh culture. While Mongolian belonging seems to be realized through sharing ways and places of living, the pastoralists of Bayan Olgi assert a kind of purity in exile precisely through not having shared the recent trajectory of most Kazakhs in Kazakhstan.

This is a highly complex case of shifting affiliations and claims to legitimacy through ethnic, civic, territorial or what might be termed practice-based frameworks. Diener presents it lucidly. The book is also suggestive of further research avenues. In the appendix on methodology, the author notes that the richest data came from interviews and focus groups. Indeed it was often in accounts of individuals or interview excerpts that the multifaceted experience of homeland was most powerfully conveyed. The intricate background delineated here would be well complemented by research that fore-grounded individuals and families living through these hybrid identities and lands. Again, an account of Kazakh repatriates from other non-Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries such as China, where families often left a good standard of living to return to ancestral lands, would further enrich this study. The only small queries here are whether or not the Soviet system can be called totalitarian and whether the 1986 protest in

Alma-Ata against the imposition of a non-Kazakh First Secretary was really a riot in support of national independence.

This is an excellent example of ‘reterritorialization’, a corrective to an over-emphasis on flows and movement that can obscure people’s bonds to place and the action of making place. Quite apart from anything else, Diener’s simple point that communication and mobility is harder here than in Europe or the United States means that one cannot make straightforward parallels of global ethnic communities, or transnational experiences. This Central Asian case study is therefore an important intervention in what is often a Western-centric debate.

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Archaeology and landscape in the Mongolian Altai: an atlas, by Esther Jacobson-Tepfer and James E. Meacham with photography by Gary Tepfer, Redlands, California, ESRI Press, 2009, 225 pp., colour with b/w plates, £62.95 (hardback) ISBN 9781589482326

This coffee-table volume published by ESRI Press presents the results of detailed archaeological and topographical surveys conducted within the Bayan Ölgii *aimag* (province) of northwestern Mongolia. The American art historian Esther Jacobson-Tepfer has overseen a project in collaboration with colleagues from Mongolia and Russia that has surveyed this region of the Mongolian Altai Mountains over a period of 15 years. She is assisted by her husband, Gary Tepfer, who has produced the photographs. James E. Meacham is the geographic information systems (GIS) expert from the University of Oregon, who oversaw the processing of the digital survey data that is presented in detail through numerous colour maps. The book roughly divides into three parts starting with two introductory chapters on the region and its archaeology followed by a series of chapters devoted to closer examination of individual areas and concludes with a chapter of reference materials.

Chapter 1 is composed of several sections that introduce various features of Bayan Ölgii and the extents of the survey project. The project was conducted by surveying smaller regions based around river basins such as the Sogoo Gol and Tsagaan Gol and they are plotted upon a large map that illustrates the topographic contours of the mountains. There is, however, no indication of any boundaries relating to the Mongolian administrative districts of the region. Thus, it is not clear if the study area lies strictly within the borders of Bayan Ölgii nor is there any indication of the boundaries of neighbouring *aimags*.

This is followed by a brief historical overview of the mapping of northwestern Mongolia. It provides excerpts from only five maps ranging from the *Carte de l’Asie* (1832) and *Harper’s Gazetteer of Asia* (1855) to the *National Geographic Magazine* (1921, 1942) and US War and Navy Department of 1942. This section would have benefited from the author conducting more research on the topic as well as considering other sources, such as the *Stielers Hand-Atlas* (1891) and the Soviet maps of Mongolia. Moreover, we are told in the inside flap of the book jacket that ‘until 1994, the Mongolian Altai was terra incognita to the outside world’ – the time when the authors embarked on their project of surveying the Mongolian Altai. Fortunately for the reader, the section on early explorers that immediately follows the historical map discussion contradicts this statement. The first sentence clearly states the US Army was

in fact indebted to the research by the Russian geographer V.V. Sapozhnikov of Tomsk University, who explored the Mongolian Altai c. 1905–1909. Additionally, there is also a large map on page 11 which reconstructs his journeys through this region.

Chapter 1 also has a section on Bayan Ölgii's climate and vegetation which gives statistics on average precipitation, annual temperatures and vegetation zones (desert, forest, tundra, and so on). There is also a brief summary of the contemporary populations which are dominated by the Kazakhs as Tuvans, Altaians and Mongols are in the minority.

An introduction to the archaeology of Bayan Ölgii *aimag* is provided in chapter 2. It begins with a brief discussion of the chronology of archaeological cultures and presents a summary time chart featuring 12,000 years of ancient history and palaeo-environmental data. There is, however, no outline of the history of the development of Mongolian archaeology and the chapter would have benefited from the acknowledgement of the work of pioneers and previous scholars who contributed to the field. Additionally, there is no discussion on the methods of how archaeologists are able to determine the actual age of the monuments and the precision of these dating methods. The chronology is followed by sections which discuss the archaeological features which are studied in detail throughout the rest of book including rock art, *khirigsuurs*, burial mounds, standing stones and Early Turkic *balbals* (statues). Amongst these the Bronze Age *khirigsuurs* are the most enigmatic of Mongolian archaeological monuments as they are complex stone structures with a central stone mound that were made by unidentified peoples of the past.

Chapter 2 concludes with a brief discussion of the relationship of archaeological monuments to the landscape. The authors follow the general trend which has developed in landscape archaeology over the decades that recognizes natural features can play an important role in spatial relationships to monuments. In particular, they address this by outlining a technique that graphically illustrates the monument's 'view shed': the area of view visible to the human eye of from a fixed vantage point which extends over valley terrains. There is evidence for monuments, such as standing stones, being situated in locations that follow directional orientations with commanding views of the natural landscape. These are diagrammatically represented as two-dimensional projections over contour maps which detail the landscape features connected with the monument. These view-shed projections, however, are used quite sparingly throughout the remainder of the book and one wonders if these could have been demonstrated on a few more occasions.

Chapters 3 to 9 present summaries of the archaeological features in the smaller survey regions based around river basins. Each chapter starts with a brief overview of the natural landscape and then progresses to illustrate the distribution of known archaeological features on maps. These features are accompanied by numerous colour photographs and discussions of significant burials, *khirigsuurs*, rock art sites and others. Sometimes these are supplemented by aerial photographs and panoramic shots of valleys. Additionally, GIS is used to plot site locations upon some aerial images and contour simulations which make clear the relationships of topography to the archaeology.

The main body of text concludes in chapter 10 with a consideration of the archaeological significance of the Mongolian Altai within the context of the greater geographical region. The Bayan Ölgii *aimag* neighbours Russia and China and archaeological monuments of similar types are found across large distances over these areas. The *khirigsuurs*, for example, spread during the Bronze Age from northeast Mongolia and continued westward into the Altai Republic. Additionally, Chapter 10 ends with a brief essay on the growing impact of economic development in Bayan Ölgii. Construction projects such as roads and ditches cut through archaeology sites and are damaging the cultural heritage of the region for future generations. The expanding human populations are also putting strains on the fragile mountainous environs through such activities as deforestation and the diversion of watercourses. Furthermore, the growth of tourism is also slowly impacting upon the region as well.

The final part of the book is the reference material section (chapter 11) that provides supplementary maps of the Bayan Ölgii region and tables of place names together with their descriptions. After this there is a selected image inventory of photographs documenting various archaeological monuments, but it is not clear why these were printed in black and white while the rest of the book is in full colour. Though there are many photographs of stone structures and rock art, it is not a complete survey of all findings as it is only a supplementary gallery of images.

Overall, this volume is a beautifully presented coffee-table book which features numerous colour photographs and professionally designed maps. Despite some inconsistencies the volume provides a general overview of archaeology and landscape in the Mongolian Altai and is a suitable introduction for English speakers to the prehistory of Mongolia.

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The horse-head fiddle and the cosmopolitan reimagination of tradition in Mongolia, by Peter K. Marsh, in the series Current Research in Ethnomusicology, edited by Jennifer C. Post, New York & London, Routledge, 2009, 188 pp., £57 (hardback) ISBN 10 041597156X, ISBN 13 9780415971560

In this fascinating book, Peter Marsh retraces the history of the horse-head fiddle (*moriin huur*), from its inception as an instrument associated with a rural and nomadic society to its current place as a key symbol of an urban and cosmopolitan Mongolian identity. Given the relative paucity of ethnographic information concerning Mongolian musical traditions, this book addresses an important gap. At the same time, it seeks to go beyond the story of the instrument itself to act as a cipher for understanding the profound cultural changes that were witnessed in Mongolia during the twentieth century.

Using material published in Mongolian by local musicologists and ethnographers, supplemented by numerous interviews, the book follows a chronological approach. The first chapter introduces the origins and place of the horse-head fiddle in the pre-revolutionary period, chapters 2 to 4 focus on its development throughout the socialist period, while the last chapter examines the multiple practices and 'reimaginings' that have emerged since 1990. The central and most important part of the book thus concerns the socialist period: chapter 2 provides an overview of the development of the instrument during the period, chapter 3 looks at the development of a specific form of cosmopolitan nationalism, while chapter 4 focuses on the life and career of Mongolian composer N. Jantsannorov, a figure central to the history of the horse-head fiddle during the socialist period (1921–90).

Marsh notes that the socialist period was one of complete transformation but, he contends, the prevalent view that the socialist period was coterminous with a complete suppression of traditional culture is simplistic and does not reflect the situation of the ground. He argues that the drive to follow a Western model of development was accompanied by a genuine desire to retain and develop existing traditions. As he illustrates with various examples, the Mongolian Communist Party was filled with a diversity of voices that reflected this tension between socialist cosmopolitanism and Mongolian nationalism. Drawing on an interpretation put forward by Ginsburg (1999), Marsh argues that both grew and developed together

throughout the socialist period. When in 1990 socialism was rejected, nationalism emerged as dominant, but, Marsh argues, its existence far preceded Mongolian independence from the Soviet Union.

The particular trajectory of the horse-head fiddle demonstrates in fact that some Mongolian traditions flowered to an unprecedented degree during the socialist period and that the Western model, far from replacing existing traditions, was often vehicular of development. While it is commonly imagined by Mongols to be thousands of years old, the horse-head fiddle as it currently exists was largely shaped and transformed by the national institutions, cultural centres and schools of the socialist period. Inextricably linked to a national form of musical tradition, it is to some extent an ‘invented tradition’ since, in its current incarnation, the horse-head fiddle is a syncretic melding of multiple local traditions and Western practices.

The argument made by the author is compelling and his approach is commendable insofar as he seeks to present facets of the socialist period that tend to be overlooked and suppressed. Since the book retraces the ‘official’ development of the instrument, the narratives tend to focus essentially on the elites as well as on artists working with the state. This imbalance is rectified in the final chapter in which grassroots movements and less centralized practices are examined; however the data presented there appears to contradict some of the arguments developed in the main body of the text, namely that the socialist period saw the horse-head fiddle blossom and flourish. As Marsh points out (p. 14), this development took place within the framework of a ‘national music’ (*ardyn högjiim*) which replaced a multiplicity of traditional practices. This national music, while Mongolian in sound, is no longer traceable to a specific place, region or ethnic group, and constitutes a modern syncretic product suited to the new ‘Europeanized’ instruments, ensembles and performance spaces. While the prominence and symbolic significance of the instrument has undeniably increased during the socialist period and has now indeed become central to ideas of Mongolian identity, the artists presented in the last chapter appear to be quite critical of the ways in which this development was shaped and co-opted. According to several of them, the new techniques are too Russian (p. 156) and do not elicit the same emotionality (p. 148) as the traditional ones. These voices suggest that the development of the instrument during the socialist period has not necessarily been assessed by all stakeholders as something positive and that its co-option may have been accompanied by considerable resistance.

Marsh makes his central argument on the assumption that musical instruments, as cultural artefacts, are bound to politics and society, and as a result, can index the tension between the cosmopolitan and the national. While it is an interesting idea, it is not clear whether one single instrument suffices to demonstrate the validity of the argument. After all, the position of the horse-head fiddle was relatively unproblematic – in comparison to religious rituals or to cultural practices that were linked to troublesome neighbours such as China, the horse-head fiddle was perceived as somewhat idiosyncratic and not particularly dangerous. Its continued existence never threatened to destabilize socialist values. As a fiddle maker notes in an interview with the author, the horse-head fiddle, like folk music in general, was considered to be a ‘side dish’, never the main meal in the socialist musical culture (p. 69). Further, if the development of the horse-head fiddle is certainly indicative of a drive to retain a national culture, the fact that this instrument gained prominence during the socialist period does not necessarily mean, as the author claims, that Mongols were in a position to take some distance from Soviet norms. This interpretation is not supported for example in the case of the violent suppression of Buddhism and Shamanism. A comparison with how other practices have fared could have fleshed out and supported the overall argument better.

Another issue, a notably thorny one in Mongolian studies, concerns transliteration. As two different writing systems are currently in existence – the traditional vertical script (*mongol bichig*) used in Inner Mongolia, and the Cyrillic alphabet used in Mongolia since the 1940s

– the same word will be transliterated differently in English depending on the source text. This problem is compounded by the absence of a recognized, standardized system for transliterating Cyrillic Mongolian which leads to phonemes such as [x] being rendered as ‘x’, ‘kh’ or ‘h’ and [tʃ] as ‘ch’ or ‘č’. Any of these systems is generally acceptable as long as it is consistent, unfortunately this is not the case here and the same words appear with different spellings in the text, occasionally on the same page. This is likely to generate considerable confusion for readers not familiar with Mongolian and could easily have been averted.

These issues aside, the overall argument put forward by Marsh is convincing and does much to dispel the prevalent notion that the socialist period was defined solely by repression. Further, as one of the relatively few scholars focusing on urban Mongols, Marsh challenges the resistant portrayals of Mongols as simple folk living on the steppe, and offers valuable ethnographic information about the horse-head fiddle as a key symbol of contemporary, cosmopolitan Mongolianness.

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General book reviews

The guns of August 2008: Russia's war in Georgia, edited by Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, in the series *Studies of Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 2009, xiv + 279 pp. + maps, photographs and index, US\$68.95 (hard-cover) ISBN 9780765625076, US\$24.95 (paperback) ISBN 9780765625083

This is a book that brooks few doubts with respect to the theses it defends. As John McCain and lesser luminaries put it on the book's back cover, what took place in August 2008 was the 'Russian invasion of Georgia' and this book seeks to refute the 'urban legend that Georgia started the war'. The book's ten contributors develop these theses in detail, focusing on the background and the events of the war, with little overlap and with only occasional divergence among each other on the basic facts under discussion.

So certain are the authors of their position that they do not feel the need to back up many of their statements. Thornike Gordadze refers to an attack on Shevardnadze 'which all agreed had been initiated from Moscow' (p. 39) without any source. He continues by citing then President Shevardnadze *verbatim* alluding to 'some obscure forces in Russia' with a reference consisting of 'Shevardnadze, TV interview, 29 August 1995'. Without identification of the TV channel, programme and time this is impossible to locate and verify, thus failing at the essential purpose of a reference. 'Russian accusations went to ludicrous extremes', he writes on page 42 with regard to accusations of terrorist activities in the Pankrisi gorge, but the accompanying footnote (p. 227, n. 21) consists of an anecdote without any source. Andrei Illarianov deems an oral account by Georgia's President Saakashvili to be a reliable and accurate source for a direct quote from Putin (p. 55 and p. 229, n. 19) and another direct (and equally unflattering) quote from Russian President Medvedev (p. 76) is referenced only as 'Information provided by the Office of the Georgian President' (p. 235, n. 114). Stephen Blank claims that in a Council of Foreign Relations speech Medvedev 'heaped ridicule on what Sarkozy and the EU had so laboriously fashioned' (p. 112). In fact, Medvedev's mention of Sarkozy was in response to a question about the missile defence shield and Medvedev's personal remarks about Sarkozy were, at most, mild banter. Johanna Popjanevski refers to 'several articles in authoritative international media' (p. 156) but cites only one, in the *Washington Post* (p. 254, n. 50). When references are not absent, incorrect or inadequate, they are sometimes self-referential. Popjanevski also affirms that 'numerous experts' believe the 'war was the central element in the Kremlin's well-planned project to remove President Saakashvili from power' (p. 154). Who are these 'numerous experts'? They are identified as 'several researchers contributing to this volume', (p. 254, n. 47) two of whom are named, as well as a think-tank analyst whose encomium for the book is featured on the back cover.

Why publish a book if the facts of the war are so self-evident? The editors believe that '[T]he media coverage of the war during the crucial first few days largely reflected Russia's line' (p. 3). This will surprise many readers of the Western press which, presumably, is the media coverage the authors are referring to. In any case, the argument is not made more persuasive by careless figures. The editors write that: 'the Russian government had flown some 50 Russian reporters to Tskhinvali days before the war began' (p. 3). In fact, according to the nominal list compiled by Illarianov (p. 84) there were only 36 media people there, fewer than half of whom were more or less vaguely identified as correspondents, and the others being technical personnel. The real target of the book's ire, however, is those feckless Europeans whose reservations or whose questions about the sort of account of events given in this book prove that they have swallowed the Russian line. Stephen Blank sternly advises that 'no longer can the West indulge in the kind of fatuous complacency and self satisfaction that the EU has demonstrated in Georgia' (p. 116). We hear of 'Munich' (p. 112) and of Europe's passivity during the wars in former Yugoslavia in

the 1990s, and, worse, the 1930s' (p. 114). Considering that European troops were on the ground in Yugoslavia during the Bosnian war as the United States confined itself to safe air strikes, and that most of Europe had fought and been occupied before the United States reluctantly entered World War II, such analogies are inappropriate. They do little to back up the sententious injunction that 'Europe still has not learned what is at stake when it attempts to opt out of international security challenges, whether in Afghanistan or in connection with Turkey's EU candidacy' (p. 104). Europeans are not doing their bit 'to adequately exploit the strategic victory it [the West] won in 1989–91' (p. 120). In short, they are not toeing the line.

This book came out before publication of the Tagliavini Report, commissioned by the European Union, which states: 'the Russian invasion itself did not occur prior to the Georgian operation and therefore did not constitute an armed attack in the sense of Art. 51. The mere Georgian expectation that Russia might plan an invasion did not justify Georgian self-defence either' (Council of the European Union 2009, p. 256). The Report as a whole is anything but a whitewash of Russian behaviour but on this matter it is very clear. To a very limited extent, the editors and some of the contributors to this book anticipate Tagliavini's rebuttal of their thesis concerning Russian initiation of hostilities. The editors write: 'At the very least, it will be all but impossible for anyone to deny that Russia had engaged in detailed planning for precisely the war that occurred, and that this planning had been underway for months, even years, prior to August 2008. Did Saakashvili fall into a trap? Maybe so, but Felgenhauer and Illarionov both suggest that even if he had not, a pretext would have been found to proceed with the campaign as it had been planned' (p. 9).

Discrepancies in accounts by contributors suggest that the outbreak of the war may not be as clear-cut a matter as originally stated. Niklas Nilsson refers to Tbilisi's successive threats to use military force (pp. 93, 94) to recover its breakaway provinces although, as he sees it, such behaviour is not aggressive but merely 'ambiguous' (p. 94) or 'assertive' (p. 93). His account does bring out the irony that, notwithstanding Saakashvili's 'harsh and uncompromising rhetoric condemning Russia's role' (p. 101) from the beginning of his presidency, his only success, the recovery of Adjara, took place thanks to Russian mediation. Surprisingly, Pavel Felgenhauer describes the August 2008 war as one 'which the Georgians did not predict or expect' (p. 162) whereas his fellow contributors have gone to great lengths to demonstrate that there had long been numerous and persistent signs of acute Russian aggressive intentions. In fact, Felgenhauer contradicts himself by citing testimony of the chief of Georgian foreign intelligence that '[o]ur information suggested Russia was planning a military intervention. A decision was made in principle to carry out aggression against Georgia in the second half of 2007' (p. 164). Several contributors, notably David J. Smith, evoke Kosovo but skirt the analogy, as seen from Moscow.

This book makes a sustained case for the prosecution, as it were, with Russia in the dock. Its value is thus in presenting a clearly partisan reading of the conflict: it may thus be useful in teaching, placed alongside equally partisan Russian pro-accounts or more nuanced scholarly analyses. Ultimately, however, it is of interest for the insight it offers into the minds of those in the West who see the South Caucasus as a pawn in great power *realpolitik*, precisely the vision that this book attributes to Russia (pp. xiv, 224). One contributor cites a 2007 book of the same editors: 'this region has already begun functioning as a rear area or staging ground in terms of projecting Western power and values along with security into Central Asia and the Greater Middle East. This function is likely to increase in significance as part of U.S. and NATO strategic initiatives. For all the above reasons, security threats to the South Caucasus countries and the undermining of their sovereignty run counter to major Euro-Atlantic interests' (p. 110). Here lies the importance of the 2008 war from the Western, but also from the Russian, perspective.

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The making of a musical canon in Chinese Central Asia: the Uyghur Twelve Muqam, by Rachel Harris, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate, SOAS musicology series, 2008, xvii + 157 pp., illustrations, 1 map, appendix, index, 1 sound disc, £27.50 (hardback), ISBN 9780754663829

Central Asian traditions feature prominently among the 90 *Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity*, proclaimed by the United Nations Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) until 2005. Along with *Kyrgyz Akyns* and the *Uzbek Boysun District* the list includes two closely related musical repertoires: *Shashmaqom Music* from Tajikistan/Uzbekistan and *The Uyghur Muqam of Xinjiang* in China. As complex sets of vocal-instrumental suites, they are, in turn, part of a wider corpus of similar genres, linking the Islamic world musically from Morocco in the west to Xinjiang in the east.

With this publication, Rachel Harris extends her previous research on the musics of Xinjiang (2004) by turning to one of the easternmost representatives of these suite forms: the Uyghur *Twelve Muqam*. Made up of around 360 pieces, this collection not only constitutes the most elaborate of the diverse Uyghur *Muqams*, but also the most prestigious. Decades of cultural policy in the People's Republic of China have moulded the *Twelve Muqam* into an illustrious symbol of Uyghur identity. It is precisely these processes of modifying, standardizing and institutionalizing the musical repertoire that Harris aims to explore in her book. To conceive of music as being deeply implicated in governmental thinking and political manoeuvring presents a noteworthy perspective from ethnomusicology, which still too often depicts musical traditions as self-evolving entities. Harris' take on the topic is all the more important for a decidedly transnational approach, which references, but transcends the common post-soviet Central Asia–Caucasus nexus.

The introduction establishes a wide angle of perception. After touching on musicological research into canon formation, the author sketches the origins and effects of China's policy on minority musics, which promoted the *Twelve Muqam* as the Uyghur candidate for the project of disciplining musical diversity into ethnic emblems. Harris then changes to a broad comparative frame, delineating the canonization of various other suite forms in the Islamic world.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to Uyghur music culture in a condensed version of a classical musical ethnography, followed by a chronological account of attempts to preserve, systematize and codify the *Twelve Muqam* since the beginning of the twentieth century in Chapter 2. Harris demonstrates that the project of canonizing the repertoire successfully survived changing political systems and successively imbued it with an aura of historicity, completeness and

national representativity. She also convincingly points to the important role of Uyghur immigrants in the Soviet Union in these processes.

Embedded in general reflections on musicianship, Chapter 3 highlights personal agency in the sphere of the *Twelve Muqam* by portraying one particular musician. Accounts of Abdulla Mäjnun's status as respected artist but challenging personality give some impressions of the inner workings of the Ürümchi-based *Xinjiang Muqam Ensemble*, which, combining research with practice, seems to be one of the central institutions involved in canonizing the *Twelve Muqam* over the past decades.

Music as sound and text is at the centre of Chapter 4, where Harris uses primarily musical analysis to track the audible results of canon formation since the 1950s. Juxtaposing recordings and transcriptions she examines issues like fixation and variation, instrumentation and aesthetics. In what is one of her main theses, the author contradicts Uyghur musicology, which interprets the *Twelve Muqam* as the decayed remnant of a formerly full tradition, rooted in the sixteenth or even the fourth century and in need of restoration. Harris dates the formative period of the *Twelve Muqam* to the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century and proposes 'that [they] have existed less as an actual body of music and more as a kind of idealised framework surrounding a much more fluid oral tradition, from which individual musicians would learn and perform different parts, and into which musicians might slot their own local repertoires and compositions' (p. 78). The author largely attributes the current contour of the repertoire to Turdi Akhun, a musician, who was a central figure in safeguarding attempts of the early 1950s.

Chapter 5 resumes the wide perspective of the beginning by locating the *Twelve Muqam* into the broader Islamic musical world and more specifically by comparing terminology and structure with that of other Central Asian suite forms. The fact that in 2005 UNESCO recognized the Uyghur Muqam traditions jointly as a 'masterpiece' has levelled the prominent position of the *Twelve Muqam*. With its focus on grassroots practice the UNESCO initiative has particularly deflected attention away from their institutionalized version. The author follows this track in Chapter 6 in recounting the rise of the so-called *Dolan Muqam* and investigating the place of the *Twelve Muqam* in local musical life outside of Ürümchi. Augmenting the main text with an endnote, Harris enriches her summary by granting glimpses into current debates over the *Twelve Muqam* in Xinjiang.

Oscillating between the general and the particular, the geographically broad and the spatially intimate, the historically far and the recent present, Harris has crafted a truly kaleidoscopic panorama with the *Twelve Muqam* at its centre. The diversity of content is matched by plurality of style. Cast in vignette-like subsections, descriptions of events, biographical anecdotes and theoretical considerations alternate with musical analyses, discussions of texts and historical accounts. This variety and a steady flow of narration make the book a lively read, although academic readers might miss more disruptions in the form of further references, quotations and footnotes. Some chapters may be read separately, especially the ones based on already-published material, and they will differ in their appeal to different audiences. The accompanying CD plus liner notes in the appendix complements the book with performances by Abdulla Mäjnun. As masterful as they are, for aural illustration a broader range of artists would have been more useful.

The multitude of perspectives on the *Twelve Muqam*, which Harris unfolds in her study, is truly impressive. Nonetheless, this approach comes with a downside – it distracts from the main topic of the book: how the *Twelve Muqam* were and are made into a musical canon. Harris offers a wealth of details around these processes, but strangely keeps their centre out of focus. The reader learns a lot about the *Twelve Muqam*, but little about the canon's place in Ürümchi musical life, about core institutions and their working routines, about power structures and cultural policies, about decision making and public reception. This is unfortunate – and surprising.

For Harris, with her long-term involvement in Xinjiang and her multi-sited research for this book, surely could have accessed these fields as Nathan Light (2008) has done for his study on the canonization of the *Twelve Muqam* texts.

The book is not as diligently edited as it deserves. Unpacking the acronym 'USSR' as 'United Soviet Socialist Republics' (p. xiii), the incorrect naming of institutions (dust jacket, p. 141), and idiosyncratic transliterations from the Cyrillic (pp. 150–151) are unfortunate errors that convey an impression of hastiness.

Despite its limitations, *The making of a musical canon* is a relevant contribution to the study of Central Asian musics and musicians, their interrelatedness and political involvement. It also enhances the growing number of investigations into the strategies and impact of international cultural institutions like UNESCO. Harris rightfully points to the need for cross-border studies with regard to the Central Asian suite traditions. Future research will hopefully take up this lead and leave the issue of canonization on its agenda.

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Central Eurasia: national currencies, edited by Eldar M. Ismailov, Stockholm, CA&CC Press AB, 2008, US\$50, ISBN 9789197775120

When Communism collapsed, the countries of Central Eurasia (the former Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia and Kazakhstan, plus Afghanistan) faced more daunting challenges than those of Central and Eastern Europe. Following decades or even centuries of Russian dominance, national identities and institutions had to be established. Yet, even though the Soviet Union no longer existed there remained the awkward relationship with Russia, which given its proximity, relative wealth and the legacy of Soviet planning, would remain the key player in the region for some time. While redefining their relationship with Russia, these countries had also to become integrated into the global economy and also refine the relationships amongst themselves and with other near neighbours, such as Iran and Turkey.

National currencies played a dual role in this story. Firstly, currency can symbolize the sovereignty of the state. Secondly, money had to play the functions required by a market economy: the means of payment, store of value and unit of account. The success of the authorities may to some extent be measured by the extent to which the domestic currency does in fact play these roles, as opposed to the dollar, euro, rouble or even non-monetary exchange. This comes down to technical issues such as controlling inflation and exchange rate management, and institutional issues such as trust in the banks, the financial sector and the state.

Chapter 1 provides a broad overview of the currencies of the region. The first part provides a historic perspective covering both the Imperial and Soviet eras. This is essentially the story of

how Russia, in both its Tsarist and Soviet forms, imposed the rouble as the official currency. This section finishes with a brief summary of the characteristics of the monetary and banking system that supported the command economy. There then follows an account of the collapse of the Soviet rouble zone, which is followed by a brief comparative account of the restoration or establishment of the national currencies.

The second part of the chapter considers the development and integration of the region's monetary and banking systems into the global financial architecture. Consideration of the low level of intra-regional trade, financial flows and factor movements leads the author to conclude that the case for a common currency in the region is weak. The author presents data on the direction of trade for the region. It would be interesting to know how these figures compare with those predicted by a gravity model on the basis of size of partner's economy and distance between partners. This would give some indication of whether a common currency is desirable in the long run as a means to enhance regional development.

There is also a potentially interesting comparison that could have been made with the countries of Eastern Europe. A number of these also had to establish national currencies in the 1990s, and yet two have already sacrificed their currency for the euro, and eight more must do so at an unspecified future date. Clearly the difference is that they had to commit to the euro, subject only to being sufficiently prepared, to be able to join the European Union. No such carrot exists in central Eurasia for countries to jettison monetary independence.

Two chapters are then devoted to each country (namely Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). The coverage of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is somewhat briefer. The themes of each chapter are, by necessity, very similar (though nuanced in the case of Afghanistan, which was never a part of the Soviet Union but suffered Soviet occupation from 1979). Common themes include: money in the country's pre-history and in the medieval era; the extension of Russian monetary authority in the Tsarist era; monetary arrangements during the revolution; Soviet monetary arrangements; and the collapse of the rouble zone. Many also discuss the structure of the monetary and financial systems that have emerged since independence.

The discussions consider the establishment of the national currency, including the debates regarding the design of notes and coins. This highlights the symbolic importance of monetary autonomy to newly independent states. For each country images are provided of notes and coins.

To an economist most interesting of all are the accounts of the challenges of managing the new currencies. Each had in common very high inflation and collapsing output at the start of the 1990s. Hence the first dilemma facing the newly established monetary authorities concerned the trade-off between speed of stabilization and the risk of worsening recession. With inflation moderating and some recovery in production, the next common challenge occurred in 1998 as Russia entered financial crisis. Despite political independence from Russia, the crisis of 1998 highlighted the region's economic dependency on Russia.

As the economies began to recover from the 1998 shock, the next challenges regarded further integration. First, it would be desirable to increase the degree of integration within the region. Second, the economies should become more globalized. To differing degrees for each country there is a discussion of financial policies and institutions, along with discussions of indicators of financial development and integration. For example, deposit insurance; level of monetization; credit to gross domestic product ratio; dollarization; and degree of foreign bank penetration.

The economic crisis of 2008–09 emphasizes once more the significance of Russia to the region as the incomes of countries little integrated into the global economy have declined due to falling remittances from migrants to Russia. Though it could be argued that limited integration has protected Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan from the sort of severe output falls

experienced by Armenia and Georgia, will such low levels of integration remain desirable as the global economy recovers?

The broad comparative perspective of the first chapter is very interesting. The following chapters can seem very repetitive, but some would be useful for additional information. As is often the case with edited volumes, the quality of these chapters is highly variable.

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Muslim-Christian relations in Central Asia, by A. Christian van Gorder, London and New York, Routledge, 2008, 200 + xii pp., £90, ISBN 9780415776080

Muslim–Christian relations have received increasing attention since 11 September 2001, but little has been written about the topic in Central Asia, a fact this book attempts to remedy. An introductory chapter is followed by an overview of Central Asian geography, ethnography and history (Chapters 2–4). The core of the book is made up of a history of Christianity in Central Asia up to the modern era (Chapter 5), a description of Central Asian encounters with the Russians under the Tsarist and Communist regimes (Chapter 6) and the post-Soviet phenomena of Islamization (Chapter 7) and Protestant missions in Central Asia (Chapter 8). The book concludes with discussions of ‘the new Great Game’ (Chapter 9), ‘Central Asia tomorrow’ (Chapter 10) and the future of Muslim–Christian relations in Central Asia (Epilogue), followed by a list of resources, glossary and endnotes.

According to the inside cover, the book endeavours to explore ‘issues of cultural tension that affect Muslim and Christian interaction’ in Central Asia, to examine ‘ways that Christians have interacted with Central Asian Muslims in the past’ and to discuss ways ‘to improve Muslim-Christian relations in the region’. As such it is presented as ‘a valuable introduction to Muslim and Christian interactions’ in Central Asia. Regrettably, however, the book does not achieve these lofty aims.

A basic problem is the book’s attempt to be both an introduction to Central Asia and a discussion of Muslim–Christian relations; there is too much focus on the former and not enough on the latter. Rather than providing basic information on the area that is better covered in existing works on Central Asia, the author should have included more background information on Muslim–Christian relations in general (not just in Central Asia) and the status of Christianity in the Soviet Union, both topics important for understanding the current situation. In particular, Chapter 3 on ‘Central Asia’s ethnic mosaic’ suffers from trying to encompass too much information, embracing religious issues that are covered in later chapters (especially Chapter 7), in addition to the basic ethnic information about Central Asian peoples which is Chapter 3’s stated focus. Throughout, the intended purpose and audience of the book remain unclear.

The writing style is also problematic. Although the author complains that ‘Orientalist generalities easily morph into a series of exotic details’ (p. 11), his writing style too often emulates this very approach. Thus, he describes Central Asian history as ‘an extraordinary narrative of turmoil and transition’ in which ‘the tide of years has risen against the people, driving them into a relative cultural isolation’ (p. 8) or ‘the ethnically proud Kyrgyz [who] share a passionate devotion for a life of independence and nomadic freedom’ (p. 31).

There is also a tendency to repeat overblown rhetoric, such as describing the Ferghana Valley as ‘the most active and belligerent Islamist area in Uzbekistan’ and its inhabitants as fuelled by ‘passionate Islamic resolve’ (p. 16) or referring to Central Asia as ‘an area of Islamist threat’ (p. 74) or ‘a chaotic breeding ground for terrorist zealotry and despotic aggressors’... ‘a boiling cauldron of chaos, confusion and possibility’ (pp. 112–113). Is this not the very ‘fear-mongering threats warning of an impending tsunami of Islamist radicalism’ that the author denounces elsewhere (p. 123)?

Furthermore, throughout the book, references to the key term ‘Christians’ are often rather vague. It is sometimes unclear from the context whether the author means Russian Orthodox, German Mennonites, former Muslims who have converted to Christianity or foreign Christians living in Central Asia. For example, who exactly are ‘the Christians in the north ... gaining increasing political and economic control’ of Kyrgyzstan (p. 34)?

A vague thread of idealism, lacking in practical application, runs throughout the volume. The author speaks of ‘regional networks, which foster intercultural stability, interfaith tolerance, and mutual respect’ (p. 5), but what does this mean in practical terms and how might these be established? Again, when Christians and Muslims are encouraged to ‘unite to work in Central Asia as positive agents for changes that are desired’ (pp. 92–93) how exactly is this to be done? What exactly are the ‘new ways of thinking [that] need to replace stale, confrontative assertions’ (p. 140)? An elaboration of this argument beyond vague generalities would have helped to fulfil the stated intention of the book, but no details are given. Likewise, the exhortation for Europe and North America to ‘promote educational and cultural programs that foster self-esteem, possibility and capability’ (p. 123) ignores the fact that many Western governments and NGOs have been attempting just that throughout Central Asia over the past two decades, often with limited success due to the vested interests and entrenched positions of local officials resistant to such initiatives. How exactly are Western governments to cultivate ‘genuine opposition groups, independent elections, and a free press’ (p. 133) in a region where most governments oppose these things?

Chapter 8, which seems to be largely aimed at Protestant missionaries themselves, is central to the topic of the book and includes some potentially helpful observations and suggestions. The author discusses the involvement of foreign Protestant missionaries in medical, commercial and educational work, and their methods of missionary outreach, including the use of radio, TV, literature and Bible translation, short-term missions, and cultural exchange festivals. He addresses both the potential benefit that foreign Christian missionaries can bring to Central Asia and the complications in this work, such as competition between missionary organizations and the various problems faced by Muslims who convert to Christianity. The chapter also discusses the need for partnership between foreign Christians and local Central Asian Christians, the importance of foreign missionaries adopting Central Asian values, and opportunities for cooperation and peacemaking between Christians and Muslims in Central Asia.

This chapter is arguably the most important contribution of the book. However, its rather vague and general tone, along with an argument that is not always easy to follow, reduces its overall impact. Again, both the purpose of and intended audience for this chapter is unclear. The author alternates between addressing Christians involved in missions in Central Asia, exhorting them to change their practice, and appealing more broadly to Christians, Muslims and even Jews to be involved in interfaith activities.

Protestant missionaries are accused in the chapter of ‘brusque assertive arrogance’ (p. 94), but a lack of concrete examples makes it difficult to evaluate this charge. Criticism of their lack of ‘working relationships with ... Russian Orthodox Christians’ (p. 94) overlooks the fact that the Orthodox Church in Central Asia has traditionally been hostile to Protestants. Furthermore, many Russian Christian communities in Central Asia are intent largely on survival

and thus uninterested in outreach to Muslim Central Asians; hence they do not share the goals of Protestant missionaries. With few concrete examples, the frequent criticisms of cultural insensitivity, factionalism or lack of practical help on the part of foreign missionaries are both hard to verify and of questionable relevance to anyone other than the very missionaries the author critiques. Perhaps they would have been better addressed to the Christian groups he lists in the chapter who are involved in Central Asia.

Furthermore, a number of crucial issues which cannot be ignored are not adequately dealt with in this chapter. Theologically, how does interfaith co-operation work when both Islam and Christianity view themselves as final revelations? Culturally, how does it operate when Muslim converts to Christianity are commonly seen as traitors and apostates and are thus frequently persecuted? Does history really teach that 'Islam, Judaism and Christianity are committed to the cause of advancing peace' (p. 107) or is this an unhelpful generalization that sounds nice but does not address very real issues of conflict between adherents of these three religions?

There are also dozens of factual inaccuracies and questionable statements throughout the book. For example, it is claimed that Christians have 'been present in Central Asia from almost the inception of Church history' (p. 7, cf. p. 49). This ignores the crucial hiatus between the end of medieval Syriac Christianity in the fourteenth century and the arrival of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christians in the nineteenth century. Contrary to the assertion of the author, Azerbaijan does not border on the Aral Sea (p. 36) and it was Cyrus, not Xerxes, who invaded Central Asia (p. 38). Can the episcopal structure of the ('Nestorian') Church of the East (with patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops, priests and deacons) really be described as 'without any extensive organization or administration' (p. 50)? Does the *dhimmi* status of Christians in a Muslim polity have any relevance to the Tsarist, Communist or post-Communist eras in Central Asia (pp. 135, 137–138), since Islamic law has not been practiced by any of the states concerned?

A number of fairly serious anachronistic references call into question the author's knowledge of Middle Eastern and Central Asian history, including references to Christianity amongst the Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Uyghur at times when these groups were not living in their modern-day locations (pp. 26, 32–33, 36, 51). Central Asian Christians in Late Antiquity and the Medieval period were rather Sogdians, Qarluqs and other early Turks. Moreover, the referencing system frequently deviates from standard conventions. Numerous assertions are not backed up with references, and other references are incomplete or not listed in the bibliography. Notable also is a tendency at times to consult Internet websites such as the CIA Fact Book or Wikipedia, rather than standard academic works.

In sum, although the issue of Muslim–Christian relations in Central Asia is a crucially important matter that deserves in-depth discussion, this book fails to deliver the 'valuable introduction to Muslim and Christian interactions' in the region that it promises.

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China's war on terrorism: counter-insurgency, politics and internal security, by Martin I. Wayne, New York, Routledge, 2008, 196 pp., \$39.95 (paperback), ISBN 9780415545181

Havoc in Xinjiang in the summer of 2009 and the area's uncomfortable proximity to Afghanistan and Pakistan have renewed the importance of studying China's counterinsurgency (COIN) activities in the Uyghur Autonomous Region. These strategies are a sizeable element of the country's present Central Asian strategy. Its aim to draw lessons for the United States from the Chinese experience makes Martin Wayne's book a timely contribution.

Its main argument aims to demonstrate that in spite of recurrent accusations of human rights abuses, and the difficulty of distinguishing actions undertaken against the insurgency from the mere repression of dissent, China's counterinsurgency campaign is a success story. Its distinguishing characteristic is an 'overwhelmingly bottom-up approach' (p. 71), which is '*proactive, dynamic, and comprehensive*' (p. 141). Though a perhaps overly succinct reconstruction acknowledges that force has indeed been employed, China pursues what the author terms 'society-centric warfare' (p. 99).

Chapter 1 lays out a brief theoretical outline of COIN, which the author understands as the deliberate and rival effort to 'manipulate political will' (p. 19) by two opposing parties, distinguishing between top-down and bottom-up approaches. The former is the targeted annihilation of the insurgency through assassinations and the isolation or capture of rebels through forceful military means. The latter refers to an ongoing nonviolent process, managed by the state, of cutting off the insurgents' political will, by secluding them from society, and co-opting its potential allies into the state's project. Chapter 2 casts the Xinjiang insurgency in the wider context of the global contentious politics of Islamic radicalism, and usefully retraces its historical milestones and deep roots in the Soviet–Afghan conflict, while also usefully listing the various active groups. Chapter 3 provides an account of China's political will – the key enabling condition for successful COIN – and its sources in state, party and society. However, this chapter is somewhat of a weak link, mainly because the fuzzy definition of political will as a 'dynamic process of essentializing society's political core, society's political center of gravity' (p. 57) leaves it a rather elusive concept.

Chapter 4 illustrates the roles of the three main players in China's COIN campaign: the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Air Force (PLAF); the People's Armed Police (PAP); and the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. The chapter continues with a descriptive account of the progression in China's strategy, which has evolved from forceful repression and policing in the early 1990s (the classical top-down approach), to a more targeted deployment of police and paramilitary forces in the mid-1990s, through a synergistic use of the PLA and PAP, to a more symbolic and spectacle-like show of force between 2001 and 2006. Chapter 5 explains the Chinese authorities' shift away from a top-down approach by reference to the attempts by insurgents to capture local institutions and drive a wedge between local society and the state. It further depicts the learning process undertaken by PRC elites, and the resulting effort to rebuild local institutions and reshape society, through a four-pronged strategy: the reinterpretation of central decisions to tailor them to the local and current situation; effective covert ('shadowy') policing; the co-option of social groups and institutions by pressuring their leadership to take responsibility for the actions of their members; lastly, soft-power tools aimed at reshaping society and undercutting the breeding ground for insurgents to find support. This latter facet, more fully expounded in chapter 6, relies on education and schooling to forge loyal mindsets, with particular attention to the interpretation of history; religion and culture, to purge any political content, by controlling the practice of faith, and the doctrine being preached on one hand, and by tightening the grip on the production of cultural forms,

including the performing arts and music. Additional soft-power tools are economic development and institutional governance. However, the author argues that, if the two former areas have achieved success, economic development and governance remain critical aspects as Chinese authorities have failed to address discrimination in the redistribution of wealth and access to political and bureaucratic offices. Chapters 7 (Conclusion) and 8 (Epilogue) both, somewhat redundantly, summarize the argument.

This pioneering study has the significant merit of adopting an encompassing and judicious look on counterinsurgency which avoids jargon. Another plus is the sensible advice to proactively engage with the dynamic processes of learning and adaptation, stemming from the view of COIN as a strategy for the construction of shared meaning within society. A further important merit is to alert us of the unintended effects – ‘feedbacks and blowbacks’ – which COIN, like all policies, can generate over the long run. In particular, blowbacks are defined as a ‘subcategory of feedbacks referring to consequences of a kind that ‘undercut other national interests’. Examples presented include the US Government’s casualty aversion after the Vietnam conflict, or an invigorated military contesting civilian leadership as in France in the aftermath of the Algerian war (p. 149).

However, prospective readers should also be aware of a number of weaknesses. The book offers a broad-brush depiction of an overall ‘approach’ to COIN, but remains rather descriptive. As such, for instance, it lacks a deeper understanding of the specific measures and public policies adopted by China, and their distinctive effects. This, by the way, would have been possible in light of the extensive fieldwork and open sources cited in the methodological note. Hence, this reviewer finds that the research question could have been more thoroughly opened up and disentangled. For instance, a commendable endeavour would have been to include firstly a typology of policy measures and how they causally relate to the situation on the ground, and secondly a timeline delineating the way these measures were phased, something different and more specific from the broad chronological account provided in chapter 4. These would have been significant to the goal of gauging effectiveness of China’s approach (pursued in the conclusion), and key to draw lessons for American policymakers struggling to achieve a sustainable success in Afghanistan (the asserted objective of the volume). Also, the empirical data on which the author ultimately grounds his evaluation of China’s COIN is not openly accessible for the reader to assess independently. Furthermore, the argument is perhaps overly tilted in favour of the bottom-up argument, losing sight of the fact that violent actions as targeted killings and arbitrary detentions still play a great role.

Lastly, omission of any reference to China’s ‘Great Western Development’ initiative is surprising, as this is acknowledged to serve counterinsurgency purposes. On another note, a more detailed and explicit treatment of the politics of Xinjiang oil, and how it interacts with the patterns of insurgency and counterinsurgency, if at all, would have also contributed to making the volume more complete.

All being said, the book is overall a very good read which has the unquestionable merit of being probably the first monographic work dealing with the issue of China’s counterinsurgency approach.

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