

government than institutions. This means that personality, and loyalty to the centre of power, can generate an exceptional influence beyond the formal boundaries of the given institutional bureaucracy. This is why the fate of democracy in Russia remains vulnerable.

This is a very detailed book, exploring chronologically the role of media and television from 2000 to 2008 and demonstrating how Putin managed to right the distressed ship of the Russian Duma and presidential elections. Although Putin has been consistent in emphasizing democratic values and in fighting oligarchs, his deeds have been at odds with his words.

State power in 'Putin's Russia' is based on the preferences and behaviour of organizations as a function of their organizational culture. In other words, personality politics is used to consolidate power. In respect of this, then, where is Russia headed? Putin has a dream of making Russia powerful both internally and externally. The growth of authoritarianism in Russia is likely to continue and he may opt for a non-Western democratic model, preferring something similar to the Chinese model of liberal authoritarianism. This is the style of Putin's rule. Whether Putin is right for Russia will be demonstrated in the 2012 presidential elections. His personal qualities, thoughtfulness, intelligence, sobriety and popularity are in direct contrast with the archetype presented by his predecessor, Boris El'tsin. Pirani and Burrett insightfully address the fundamental ambiguities at the heart of Putin's effort to consolidate Russian state power.

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Rich, Paul B. (ed.) *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*. Routledge, Abingdon and New York, 2010. xxv + 246 pp. Maps. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliographies. Index. £80.00.

THE EU commission, under Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini, set up to investigate the August 2008 fighting in/around South Ossetia, stated in its report (30 September 2009): 'The Mission is not in a position to consider as sufficiently substantiated the Georgian claim concerning a large-scale Russian military incursion into South Ossetia before 8 August 2008.' Contrast this with the opening words of Rich's introduction: 'On August 7 2008 Russian troops invaded Georgia.' Is it worth reading further? Certainly the Introduction itself should be ignored, for it is so full of errors of every description that readers and contributors alike will surely feel insulted to be faced with such shoddiness and deserve an apology.

The first of only two chapters meriting serious attention is Shearman and

Sussex's 'The Roots of Russian Conduct' (pp. 1–25), which examines the question in terms of four factors: structural, geo-economic, political and cultural/perceptual. Pertinent observations include: criticism of the USA's and UK's precipitate support for Georgia before all facts were known; recognition that Russia was reacting to aggression and could hardly have failed to respond, given legitimate concerns over 'instability, threats and encroachments from potentially hostile forces on its periphery' (p. 21); the possible verdict: 'One could even argue that Moscow was relatively restrained' (p. 8); and the salutary warning: 'Expanding a military alliance from the Cold War when the threat that gave it a purpose is gone ignores current threats and risks creating new ones' (p. 20). They sensibly advocate deeper engagement with Russia and the creation of new multilateral forums.

Rich then offers those unfamiliar with Russian history a serviceable survey of 'Russia as Great Power' (pp. 26–49). With reference to the Caucasus, only part of Georgia was incorporated into Russia's empire in 1801 (p. 32), and not only the Chechens remained to be subdued after the Crimean War (p. 33). The mention (p. 35) of a [*sic*] 'Caucasian alphabet' based on Cyrillic, introduced in the nineteenth century, needs elaboration. Rich concludes with the suggestion that 'the mindset of Russian decision makers is still largely shaped by Cold War relations' (p. 45) but declines to comment on what has shaped Western policy-making since the USSR's collapse.

Sieca-Kozłowski's concern is the relationship between the military and media in Putin's Russia (pp. 50–68), whilst Stewart and Zhukov (pp. 69–93) attempt, with appropriate jargon and graphs, a textual analysis of an 8,000-piece corpus of statements from political and military leaders in order to identify the nature and influence of military thinking, concluding that the military are as hawkish as ever. German's domain is the popular theme of 'Pipeline Politics: Georgia and Energy Security' (pp. 94–112). She asserts, but cannot prove, the thesis: '[T]he conflict was merely the latest Russian attempt to destabilise Georgia and hinder its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, as well as stymie its economic development and prevent the development of further pipelines outside of its control' (p. 107), though no pipeline was actually targeted.

There follow two contributions from Georgian authors. In the book's other commendation-worthy chapter, Akhvlediani (pp. 113–40) examines the nature of the media-coverage of the 2008 war; the myriad commentators who think they know Georgia should carefully consider her final citation (from Georgia's ex-ombudsman for human rights, Sozar Subari): 'That Georgia is on the road to democracy and has a free press is the major myth created by Georgia that the West has believed in' (p. 137). Shatirashvili's short chapter (pp. 141–49), which needed closer editing, discusses the ways in which Georgians view themselves in terms of three 'narratives'. Pallin and Westerlund (pp. 151–74) consider the

lessons from the not entirely impressive performance in the war by the Russian military, but taint their piece by pandering to the Georgian line that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are 'occupied territories', a quite absurd claim to anyone familiar with them, by asserting (twice) that the main object of the operation for Russia was 'to take irreversible control' of these territories (pp. 150, 153), which were effectively lost to Georgia in the early 1990s.

This leaves two American contributions. It is good to read in Blank's somewhat self-contradictory paper, 'America and the Russo-Georgian War' (pp. 175–201), such critical remarks of the Georgian regime that it 'still lives in the glass house of its own self-generated delusions', is 'increasingly undemocratic' (p. 186), and that 'arguably Saakashvili and possibly even the US government [...] have not fully learned the lesson that first of all Georgia is by no means a democracy or necessarily moving that way, and second, that it cannot let Saakashvili and similarly inclined Georgian politicians lead the US and Georgia into an interpretation of their bilateral relationship that tends toward grandiosity and inflated hopes' (pp. 192–93). Simultaneously, however, he castigates 'the tepid Western and US response' to Russia's 'incoherent aggression' as well as Washington's 'misconceived policy towards Georgia that lost control over Georgian policy and may have contributed to Tbilisi's recklessness' (p. 175). Note that the Lachin Corridor links Armenia with Nagorno-Karabagh, not Nakhichevan (p. 180).

Hamilton, Chief of the US Office of Defence Cooperation in Georgia (July 2006 to July 2008), scrutinizes the course of the military campaign from a Georgian perspective in his 'The Bear Came through the Tunnel' (pp. 202–34), though, had Russian troops moved west from Gori, they would have been heading towards the Black Sea, not Tbilisi, as stated on page 218. Hamilton's Georgian sympathies are well known from postings on the Net, and my own sparring with him after the 2008 war can be found at <<http://www.abkhazworld.com/articles/conflict/117-reply-to-hamiltons-reply-from-george-hewitt.html>>. Hamilton is critical of the chaotic nature of Georgia's campaign, including incompetent interventions from politicians — well, this IS Georgia, after all! He also warns: 'Politically, the U.S. needs to pick its partners carefully' (p. 229), a proposition heartily to be welcomed. He then concludes: 'To survive as an independent entity Georgia does not have to be capable of independently defeating Russia in a war. It does, however, require armed forces that can deter a Russian attack and if deterrence fails buy time for the international community to mobilize itself' (p. 230). But the question raised by this assertion and by the thrust of Blank's paper is: 'Why should the West be expected to extricate Georgia from its own misguided adventures?'

The problem with the whole tenor of this book, and indeed of so much of the debate amongst the commentariat, is that, if one is truly interested in

north-western Transcaucasia, the focus should not be on Russo-Georgian relations but on Georgia's relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Abkhazian and South Ossetian voices are totally absent from this work, just as they are generally ignored elsewhere. The West's efforts should rather be directed towards persuading Georgians that it is in their interests to reach accommodation with their Abkhazian and Ossetian neighbours. They will then be able to divert their spending on weaponry (or the president's various self-aggrandizing projects) to such critical issues as relief of poverty, rural renewal and overcoming such harmful Soviet legacies as environmental pollution from the extraction of arsenic and other substances. Resolving the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts, coupled with the normalization by Tbilisi of relations with Russia, is the key to a brighter future for all players, though one would hardly guess it from such books as this.

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Steinberg, Mark and Wanner, Catherine (eds). *Religion, Morality and Community in Post-Soviet Societies*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Indiana University Press, Washington, D.C. and Bloomington, IN, 2008. xii + 350 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Further reading. Index. \$24.95 (paperback).

MARK STEINBERG and Catherine Wanner's edited volume deals with the way in which religious beliefs shape individual and group identities and create moral communities in the former Soviet Union. Five out of its nine research chapters deal with Russian Orthodoxy in one way or another, including Old Belief, while the others focus on Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan, Protestants and their soup kitchens in Moscow, shamanism in Buryatia and Islam in Uzbekistan respectively. These essays have informative and well structured introductions as well as clearly formulated hypotheses. This makes them accessible for non-experts, but the originality of the argument and/or the methodology identifies this volume as one that is written by and for experts.

In his historical analysis of Russian Orthodox monasticism and charity, Scott Kenworthy persuasively challenges the widely held belief that members of the Moscow Patriarchate have always preferred to isolate themselves from the secular world rather than carrying out missions or charity in it. His chapter shows that there were exceptions to this trend and thus contributes to a more differentiated understanding of this issue. Kenworthy's paper is complemented by Melissa Caldwell's insightful investigation into the various reasons why Protestants from various cultural backgrounds volunteer in a Moscow soup