

(22–28) is especially evocative and a helpful example of how Adams weaves together personal accounts with larger political issues and theoretical perspectives to provide valuable insights on how those larger agendas are interpreted and internalized by individuals.

Steppe Dreams uses these various celebrations to tell important stories about Kazakhstan's complicated engagements with history and temporality. Chapter 2, "Airing Independence: Performing the Past and Future on December 16" discusses public Independence Day Celebrations and the state-sponsored project of imagining a national history. Chapter 3, "Same Time Next Year: Winter and Rhythmicity on Television," focuses on how individuals interact with nostalgic film and other media during New Year's celebrations. Chapter 4, "An Archaeology of Nauryz: The Ancient Past in Public Culture," treats memory and historical imagination in televised and concertized celebrations.

In Chapter 5, "Traveling Histories: Ethnicity, Mobility, and Religion in Spring Celebrations," Adams moves on from Nauryz and examines spring festivals in Uyghur, Ashkenazic Jewish, Evangelical Protestant, and Korean communities. This creates an especially thorough picture of the music, faith communities, and ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, since so much scholarship on the country focuses solely on the Kazakh and Russian populations.

Chapter 6, "Playing at War: Musical Commemorations of World War II on May 9," presents the continued prominence of World War II in Kazakh consciousness by examining musical celebrations marking Victory Day on May 9 (commemorating German surrender in 1945). The public celebrations and school performances and the interconnected temporalities of nostalgia and military commemoration Adams describes are helpful when considering how World War II persists in public memorials throughout the former Soviet Union, especially as the generation that personally experienced World War II is passing. This chapter also includes admirable breadth as it engages ethnically Kazakh and Russian experiences, as well as Jewish Kazakhstani commemoration.

Chapter 7, "The Precarious Present and the City of the Future," focuses primarily on religious shrines and pilgrimage and considers differing manifestations of Islamic practice and devotion as they connect to and create a sense of the ancient past that provides stability in the present. It then turns to the creation of the capital city, Astana, and President Nursultan Nazarbayev's vision for a future-oriented national project.

Steppe Dreams' scope is admirably broad, examining small private gatherings, large public festivities, and televised media. It addresses secular and religious activities in a variety of settings including public parks, private homes, schools, concert halls, and religious shrines, and includes those performed by ethnic minorities. The book is a pleasure to read and would be informative for scholars across Central Asian area studies, especially those interested in media, nostalgia, and temporality.

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Legal Change in Post-Communist States: Progress, Reversions, Explanations.

Eds. Peter H. Solomon, Jr. and Kaja Gadowska. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2020.

330 pp. \$46.00, paper.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2021.185

Despite being an essential building block to economic and political transitions, law is often left out of the story. In *Legal Change in Post-Communist States*, law

takes center stage. The authors seek to explain the ebb and flow in the role of law and legal institutions in countries emerging from Soviet-style communism. Among the institutions studied are the police, the courts, the civil service, and the law itself. The analysis focuses more on law in action than on law in the books, though the authors are careful to situate themselves in the appropriate statutory setting. Yet the writing is not mired in legalese; it ought to be accessible to all interested readers.

One of the most important questions tackled is how and why citizens mobilize the law. In the first chapter, Mihaela Șerban tracks the use of courts, both domestic and supranational, in the countries of central and eastern Europe. She argues for the emergence of a specific variant of adversarial legal culture in which litigation has grown more common; she effectively marshals caseload data to support her thesis. In her opinion, the remaking of the institutional environment to make legal entities more accessible combined with a “massive outpouring of resources from external sources, both the US and the EU” (27) have given rise to greater opportunities for citizens to use the law, and that they have taken advantage of them. In a later chapter, Elena Bogdanova picks up on this theme to track changes in citizens’ ability to hold officials accountable in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. She documents how the changes in constitutional and statutory language affected the potential for accountability. At the same time, she reminds the reader of the existence of multiple informal accountability mechanisms. Like Șerban, Bogdanova makes superb use of the available data to document the trends.

At the outset of the transition from communism, constitutional courts were heralded as a critical piece of the puzzle thanks to their unprecedented power of judicial review. For a time, their promise was realized. With the return to authoritarianism, their relevance has dimmed. Kriszta Kovács and Kim Lane Scheppele analyze the devolution of these tribunals in Hungary and Poland. They do a superb job of tracking what happened in each country, never losing sight of the larger political context. They argue that both courts were eventually neutralized as a check on those in power, with the officials of the European Union unwilling or unable to stand up to political leaders. They conclude that “[j]udicial independence, once quite strong in both Poland and Hungary, is now a thing of the past” (57). In their chapter, Peter H. Solomon Jr. and Alexei Trochev focus on the Russian Constitutional Court. While conceding that this court has been “a vocal supporter of [the] Kremlin’s agenda” (116), they argue that the court has recast itself as a pragmatic political actor, allowing it to “[expand] judicial activism” (122) in cases without political resonance. Like other authors in this volume, they include multiple tables with caseload data that support their contentions.

The question of accountability is explored through the lens of corruption in two chapters. Marina Zaloznaya, William M. Reisinger, and Vicki Hesli Claypool challenge a foundational belief that civil society engagement is an essential prerequisite for success of anti-corruption programs. Through case studies in Russia and Ukraine, grounded in semi-structured interviews, they conclude that “a dysfunctional relationship between governmental and non-governmental actors may impede, rather than promote, efforts to eradicate corruption” (222). This intriguing finding deserves further investigation. Maria Popova and Vincent Post take a different tack. They are interested in the propensity of post-communist governments to investigate and prosecute official wrongdoing and, to that end, have constructed the East European Corruption Prosecution database that “systematically tracks the prosecution of cabinet ministers on corruption charges” (185). Their chapter explores the period from 2000 to 2012. They test a series of hypotheses through regression analyses in an

effort to explain why some countries are more aggressive than others. This database is an important contribution and will surely spur further research.

The quality of the chapters in this edited volume is consistently high. The authors ask important questions covering many countries and use a variety of methods in their analysis. The book deserves to be read by all serious students of post-communist transitions.

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The EU's Impact on Identity Formation in East-Central Europe between 2004 and 2013: Perceptions of the Nation and European Political Parties of the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. By Michal Vit. Soviet and Post Soviet Politics and Society, vol 206: Stuttgart: ibidem, Verlag, 2020. 248pp. Appendixes. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Figures. Tables. \$35.00, paper.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2021.186

This monograph seeks to analyze the impact of the European Union (EU) on national identity formation in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia during their early period of membership in the EU, 2004–13. It encompasses a political environment during which three national elections in each country were held and seeks to observe national identity formation through the prism of party politics and party systems. More particularly, it examines the manifestos of political parties in the period and consequently utilizes a methodology that codifies these manifestoes through content analysis to produce an intra-party and interstate comparison of the EU's influence on party policy towards identity formation.

The book consists of an overview and introduction, moving on to an explanation of the project's theoretical background and an outline of prior and current research. It then moves on to explain its methodology and research procedure before presenting a results analysis and a set of conclusions. Three appendices explain the nature and structure of the code analysis and its use through a "Grounded Theory"-based code book.

As such the monograph is based on a traditional social science post-graduate thesis format with around one-third of the content (excluding references) devoted to theoretical and methodological approaches and justification. In effect the work makes a time-limited, niche contribution to the role of parties in national identity formation with reference to the tensions that exist between state and EU perceptions of identity in east central Europe.

Its academic strength lies in a carefully constructed methodological approach and awareness of its associated limitations. The final analysis and findings are carefully constructed and begin to hint at several arenas of debate that are not developed within the thesis construction. It is within these areas that the thesis will need development for future research. This might include a much greater consideration of party interaction and its consequences, within what the author terms European political space; an examination of further externalities to the state identity formation other than EU member state theater, to include such issues as: global economic downturn and the growth of populism, Russia's influence as a close and powerful neighbor, and attention to the historic path dependency of domestic identity formation and its salience for party positioning within the political cultures of the states included in the analysis. Finally, Europeanization, which is presented as a conceptual tool, needs