

Soviet developments in Siberia; and the growing attention paid by German officials, national activists, and the press to the situation of ethnic German populations in the Soviet Union” (172–73). This main part of the book, entitled “Mapping ‘the East’ between the Wars” (89–170), is preceded by an almost equally long introductory part on “Nationhood and Imperial Rivalry through World War I” (17–88). Here the author goes well back into the nineteenth century and the early modern period and stresses the significance of what Klaus Zernack has termed Tsarist Russia’s and Prussia’s combined “negative policy towards Poland” (*negative Polenpolitik*) as the basis for the strategic partnership between St. Petersburg and Berlin in later decades. Here too, the interest in Siberia in the German Empire by agricultural experts like Otto Auhagen, social scientists like Max Weber, geographers like Friedrich Ratzel, politicizing historians like Otto Hoetzsch, and even novelists like Karl May, forms one of the focuses. Yet, in World War I, German expansionist policy was, of course, focused on Russia’s western parts—the Baltic lands and Ukraine—with the short-lived Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of March 1918 as a culmination point. Whereas the expertise of this cohort of German specialists on Russia was on demand in the Weimar Republic and its revisionist *Ostpolitik*, the Nazis relied on “experts” from their own ranks, among them dubious figures like the Russia-born ideologist Alfred Rosenberg or the Georgian agronomist Michael Achmeteli.

The author treats the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 23, 1939 as a mere intermezzo preceding June 22, 1941 as the actual turning point in a century-long special relationship. There is, however, also the alternative explanation of this pact as the apogee of a German-Russian *wahlverwandtschaft*, or as Susanne Schattenberg claims, that the pact was concluded not despite contradicting ideologies but because of the many structural commonalities of both dictatorships and due to the mutual admiration of the two leaders for each other (“Diplomatie der Diktatoren. Der Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pakt,” in *Osteuropa*, 2009). Likewise, in his book *The Devils’ Alliance. Hitler’s Pact with Stalin, 1939–1941*, Roger Moorhouse portrays the Nazi-Soviet cooperation of 1939 to 1941 as the fourth partition of Poland.

One would have expected that the author draw also on Walter Benjamin’s depressing *Moscow Diary* of his disillusioning stay in Moscow from December 1926 to January 1927, as he would have profited from reading Martin Schulze Wessel’s groundbreaking study on the other—Russian—side of the medal (*Russlands Blick auf Preussen: Die polnische Frage in der Diplomatie und der politischen Öffentlichkeit des Zarenreiches und des Sowjetstaates 1697–1947*).

Russia in the German Global Imagination is a well-written, knowledgeable, and insightful analysis of the Germans’ ambivalence toward the empire in the east—an ambivalence that in the beginning of the twenty-first century resembles what it was at the beginning of the twentieth, and which is currently much stronger felt than during the intervening Cold War decades.

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Governing Post-Imperial Siberia and Mongolia, 1911–1924: Buddhism, Socialism, and Nationalism in State and Autonomy Building. By Ivan Sablin. New York: Routledge, 2016. xii, 233 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. Maps. \$160.00, hard bound.

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Those who lived through the first few decades of the twentieth century in eastern Siberia experienced not just war, revolution, and foreign intervention, but also an

intense period of exploration and experimentation over how regional political and territorial units should be structured. People argued for, and at times attempted to implement, states organized by ethnicity, religion, the economy, political ideology, military hierarchies, and individual and international concerns. Some rejected empire and others called for its return. Some embraced the transnational nature of the region and others sought to delineate more homogenous spaces.

Ivan Sablin's detailed and well-researched study presents this complicated story from 1911 to 1924 with a focus on the Mongolian peoples (mainly Buryat and Khalkha), who straddled the lands of the Qing and Russian Empires. The decline and fall of these empires left the region stateless and created opportunities for Mongolians and others to fill the power vacuum left behind. As Sablin rightly explains, those who sought to do so relied on a variety of available discourses to them at the time, from contemporary pan-Turkish and pan-Islamic movements, to Woodrow Wilson's call for self-determination at the end of WWI, to Buddhism and the example of the theocratic state of Tibet, to Vladimir Lenin's ideas about socialism, to traditions of Cossack militarism.

For many Mongolians, the idea of achieving some form of autonomy from a more centralized Russian or Chinese state was primary. Much of Sablin's study then illustrates how Buryat and Khalkha intellectuals worked toward this, describing their various ideas, plans, and attempts—often in competition with one another—to do so. At the same time, Mongolians were forced to contend with the territorial and political goals of larger forces at work, such as the foreign interventionists (especially Japan) and those fighting the Russian Civil War. In addition, there were powerful local actors like Grigorii Semenov and Roman von Ungern-Sternberg, who sought to carve out new states in Inner Asia loosely based on the idea that all Mongols should be united under the borders of one territory. Although Semenov and Ungern-Sternberg's ideas attracted some Mongolian autonomy seekers, the violence and chaos produced by their regimes repelled many.

While the stories of Ungern-Sternberg or Japanese intervention in eastern Siberia are more familiar, Sablin adds to our knowledge of these events by bringing in the actions of the region's Mongolian peoples. For example, he recounts the activities of Buryat political organizations that sought at various times to work with the Bolsheviks or people like Semenov. He introduces lesser-known figures, such as Lubсан Samdan Cydenov (also rendered in English as Samdan Tsydenov or Sandan Tsyden), who attempted to create a non-violent, Buddhist, theocratic, liberal state. Sablin explains how such organizations and people gained followers and built institutions of self-government. This contribution adds to our understanding of nationalist, state-building, and autonomy agendas during the Russian Civil War and demonstrates how diverse these agendas could be within the same ethnic group. All Mongolians did not simply agree on one type of political, economic, and social structure for their region.

As the Russian Civil War wound down in the west and Japanese forces retreated, the Bolsheviks began to support the creation of a newly independent state in Mongolia and the implementation of federalism in eastern Siberia. Sablin examines the formation of the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR), the temporary Far Eastern Republic (FER), and various Buryat autonomous units. When the Red Army fully gained control in 1922, the Bolsheviks liquidated the FER and created the Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. They supported the separation of the Mongols (the Buryats in an autonomous unit in Siberia and the Khalkha in the new MPR) and a federal structure for the new Soviet Union. Sablin argues that this Soviet federalism was not the result of one specific policy, but instead came about because of various internal and external forces, contemporary foreign policy goals, and the influence of many actors.

The period from 1911 to 1924 in eastern Siberia is unique because of the explosion there of so many state-building and autonomy projects. Sablin's study provides not only a guide to these projects, but analysis of the ideas and theories behind them. His research demonstrates how complicated governance can be in a transcultural space. The book offers 15 useful maps that outline the geography, economy, ethnicity, and religion of the region. A bibliography at the end of the book would have been helpful.

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Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire.

By Erik R. Scott. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xii, 333 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Maps. Photographs. \$74.00, hard bound.
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As Yuri Slezkine adroitly once argued in "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," perennial descriptions of the Soviet Union as workers' paradise or prison house of nations never did justice to the variety of ethnic policies and outcomes under socialist rule. Some peoples suffered dramatically, others were promoted, some even thrived. The rest is left to the historians. Erik Scott's excellent book, *Familiar Strangers*, takes up this national paradox with a finely tuned study of Georgians in the Soviet landscape. Drawing on the work of Georg Simmel and others, Scott makes the case for how Georgians became "familiar strangers," the most legible among non-Russian peoples across the spectrum of Soviet life given their prominent place in politics, market stalls, on the theater stage, and perhaps most enduringly, at restaurant tables. Not entirely unlike Italians in the United States, Scott argues, familiar strangers could be "ethnically distinctive but accessible to the masses" (25).

Two premises guide this work: first, that the Soviet Union was never as clearly dominated by Russians as today's rapidly nationalizing republics like to recall; and second, that far from being a closed space, the USSR was a flexible mesh of internal diasporas. "The Soviet Union was a state where the periphery may have been defined ethnically," Scott writes, "but the national core was ambiguous and poorly articulated. At its center was not a single nation, but rather a mixture of diasporas" (12). One result was a spirit of what Scott calls "domestic internationalism" (29), with variously configured communities leaning on each other less through the bonds of kinship than through the now classically demonstrated circuits and networks that socialism cultivated so widely.

Scott builds his argument from the early days of Russian conquest of the Caucasus at the outset of the nineteenth century when elite Georgians were accorded a relatively ready acceptance into St. Petersburg circles given their longstanding aristocratic codes and shared Orthodox faith. We then meet many of the figures that dominated early Soviet life, from Sergo Ordzhonikidze to Lavrentii Beria to, most prominently, Iosif Stalin. Reading at times like a detective novel, *Familiar Strangers* offers us a world of Kremlin intrigue through perilously fine dining: from the lading of Stalin's table with staples of the south, to the work of private food tasters, to the struggles of non-Caucasians to keep up with the marathon flow of food and drink around the Great Leader. Later chapters track the significant profile of Georgians in the performing arts, as well as high drama criminal trials that showcased the ties that dominated trade networks across the later years of the USSR. Scott's case is all the more persuasive when he reminds us how disproportionately Georgians figured on the Soviet scene relative to the small size of their population.