

Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia, by Alexander A. Cooley and John Heathershaw, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2017, \$25.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9780300208443

Why are the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union less developed than the other successor states which emerged from the collapse of the USSR in 1991? A common explanation centers around their geography: because the five Central Asian states are physically isolated and landlocked in the heart of Eurasia, they stand apart from the globalization trends that have allowed others to prosper, in which connectivity to external networks is necessary for political and economic development.

In *Dictators Without Borders*, Alexander A. Cooley and John Heathershaw reject this explanation. As they deftly show, not only are these counties well-connected to the wider world, but it is precisely *because* of these connections that their political and economic development has been stunted. They tell a sometimes harrowing tale of how international finance and trade has facilitated corruption on an industrial scale, in which the wealth of these countries has been stolen by its leaders through an elaborate system of shell companies, off-shore accounts, and shady corporations. At the same time, these governments have been able to utilize legitimate international institutions, such as Interpol, for their own ends to attack opponents abroad and strengthen their rule at home. Rather than being isolated, these regimes have turned the positive benefits of globalization on their head to protect both their ill-gotten gains and their autocracies. As Cooley and Heathershaw argue, the nexus between authoritarianism, globalization, and corruption is the key to understanding the region. Instead of explaining the region's politics through the lens of purely domestic events and institutions, on the one hand, or the geopolitical interests of external great powers, on the other, as most accounts of the region do, "Central Asia is best understood by focusing on the sprawling, informal transnational links between elites from Astana to London and Bishkek to Beijing" (23).

It begins with an introductory chapter in which Cooley and Heathershaw seek to dispel a number of "myths" about the region, such as its isolation from transnational networks, its lack of economic and financial liberalization, and these countries' absence of agency on the world stage. The next chapter takes this a step further by laying the groundwork for the rest of the book, outlining the concepts which recur in subsequent chapters, as well as delving deeper into their arguments. There are five main issues that are examined here. First, they contrast the European states of the former Communist world with those of Central Asia, discussing how these states not only discarded Communism in a different fashion than their European cousins, but also integrated themselves into the global community in a fundamentally different and ultimately authoritarian manner. Second, they provide an overview of the (often complicated) world of how shell corporations, "round-tripping," and money laundering operate. It is precisely these financial mechanisms which have allowed the Central Asian regimes to effectively "level up" their kleptocracies into something that is only possible in the global financial system. Third, they show how legal jurisdictions do not stop at state borders, but are instead quite porous and able to be manipulated by these governments to suit their domestic purposes. Fourth, they consider the notion of a "transnational 'uncivil society,'" in which the region's internationalized elites are able to exploit diplomatic immunity, real estate markets, investor residencies, and asylum to move freely in the Western world (42). Unlike what we normally think about in terms of the liberal aspects of transnational civil society, this particular Central Asian variant mixes cosmopolitanism with a commitment to illiberalism. Finally, they explore the legal institutions and procedures through which these regime can hunt their exiled oppositions and former regime members under the cover of law, as well as to recover stolen state assets so that they can be handed over to regime loyalists who, in turn, steal it for themselves.

The next four chapters show these concepts in action through detailed case studies in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Each chapter is dense, full of information about the underbelly of international finance, and how those within and close to these regimes have been able to appropriate the wealth of their countries. Although these chapters are written in a clear, concise, and

accessible manner, they are quite complicated, with the reader sometimes struggling to keep things straight. This is not the fault of the authors, but rather because of the complexity of the finances, shell corporations, and sprawling cast of characters that they involve. There are a lot of villains from the region itself within each of these tales—some of which would make great dramas fit for a television series—but the key to each of these chapters is how Western institutions, governments, and corporations have looked the other way, failed in their oversight/enforcement duties, or actively contributed to the nexus between authoritarianism, globalization, and corruption. While these governments and other actors are corrupt to their core, the authors make a solid case that the scale of the exploitation outlined here could only exist in a truly globalized world, because these countries are so integrated into the global economy and, most importantly, because of Western acquiescence.

Following these four case studies are two topical chapters. The first examines how the geopolitical interests of the US and China have helped to intensify these negative inclinations and will prove to do so in the future, through the global war on terrorism and the Silk Road Project, respectively. The second focuses specifically how these countries seek to repress political opponents outside of their borders through the use of corruption charges, the utilization of Interpol Red Notices, extradition, rendition, and extrajudicial killings.

In the conclusion, they address some of the things the West should do to break this nexus—primarily by enforcing the laws and rules that already exist to fight corruption and combat money laundering.

Although this is a book about Central Asia, its ultimate value, like the reach of the region's dictators and ruling families, does not stop there. Its findings also challenge the conventional wisdom of a number of other academic literatures. In particular, they reinforce the fact that the boundaries between the fields of international relations, comparative politics, and global finance and trade are quite porous. They also raise serious questions about assumptions which hold that economic liberalization and globalization are good for developing countries. While these have already been questioned by dependency theorists, Cooley and Heathershaw add a new layer of critique to this, demonstrating that it is precisely economic liberalization and globalization that have led to this level of theft. Finally, they show that examining autocratic neopatrimonialism from a domestic perspective only reveals half of the story. Instead, we need to see it as embedded in global networks which go far beyond a state's borders.

One issue they do not sufficiently address, however, is the counterfactual inherent in their argument: that is, whether there would have been substantive economic development in these countries absent this nexus between authoritarianism, globalization, and corruption. Nonetheless, this is a minor quibble. For those looking for a well-researched and new perspective on Central Asia, this book will be valuable for academics and lay-persons alike.

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Mass Religious Ritual and Intergroup Tolerance: The Muslim Pilgrims' Paradox, by Mikhail A. Alexseev and Sufian N. Zhemukhov, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, \$99.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9781108123716

In *Mass Religious Ritual and Intergroup Tolerance: The Muslim Pilgrims' Paradox*, Mikhail A. Alexseev and Sufian N. Zhemukhov explore the question of how an intense religious experience can translate