Race and Racism in Russia. By Nikolay Zakharov. Mapping Global Racism. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. vii, 233 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $100.00, hard bound.

This book is the reworked version of the monograph *Attaining Whiteness: A Sociological Study of Race and Racialization in Russia*, which in its turn grew from Zakharov's PhD dissertation in sociology. In spite of this "double refinement," the book is still not an easy read, and at times it gives an impression that the author juggles with too many balls at once. However, it does offer some tantalizing conceptualizations of identity making in present day Russia, and as a valuable bonus, a well-developed summary of critical race theory. It could be especially enlightening for the Russian audience, because it confronts *rasologiia*, the positivistic "race science," so popular in Russian academia, with a thorough critical analysis. Both adaptation of the book for a university classroom and its translation into Russian are highly commendable.

Lacking an extensive original empirical substantiation, this work presents a rich theoretical superstructure for multiplying ethnographic studies of racism in Russia. Indeed, post-Soviet Russia has speedily entered the top of the list of the countries, whose people hate the idea of having a neighbor of "another race." Perhaps even more importantly, as the author aptly brings to light, west European intellectuals tend to see today's Russia as the exemplary racist country (166). This sudden development of racist ideologies and practices contrasts with the Soviet ideological legacy of militant anti-racism and pre-revolutionary imperial accommodation of cultural difference.

Building on this paradox, Nikolai Zakharov purports to improve on the sociological theory of racialization by relocating it into the context of the post-"Second World." This helps him to fine-tune the theory of race to the analysis of a society, which strives for catch-up modernization and at the same time hopes for a rediscovery of its "true self." The author aptly argues that race lies at the intersection of both processes, so that its assertion of "whiteness" allows Russia to see itself as a part of the "civilized" (read: "modernized and racially superior") west and simultaneously to reclaim Russia's cultural authenticity, and to overcome imaginary "self-colonialism" (13). Even more so, race could be recycled for the Messianic visions of Russia as a "better Europe" than Europe proper, which nowadays indulges into self-destructive political correctness and racial mixture. Thus, with a tinge of exaggeration, the author posits the question whether ". . . the idea of race provide[s] a new ideology of social cohesion in post-Soviet Russia" (7), and apparently answers it positively (194).

Approaching this question, Zakharov tailors his methodology in a way that grasps racism neither as an exceptional case nor a state-sponsored misanthropic ideology, but as an everyday performative practice of ascribing racial meanings to observable or imaginary differences. He calls for a historical study of the concept of race, surveying racial issues debated in late imperial and especially Soviet Russia. This allows him to develop an argument that Soviet anti-racist rhetoric paradoxically fertilized the ideational soil for implanting racism, because it cultivated academic discourses about race as an objective "reality," promoted an essentialist reading of nationality (notorious "5th line"), and staged the project of breeding a "new man." He also draws our attention to the occasional mentioning of race in the liberal narrative of the 1990s, which, in order to distance itself from the past, represented the Soviet people (derogatively called *sovki*) as people of inferior biological and genetic qualities (77). Following this, the author discusses scholarly discourse on the issues of race in today's Russian universities. Then he moves on to explicate practices of grassroots' racist activism by the examples of recent anti-immigrant pogroms in Moscow on Manezhnaia square and in Biriulevo district, integrating this examination with the study of racist articulations of demands for social justice, corporeal security, and geopolitical significance on the world arena.

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This book does not cover the most recent articulations of racism in Russia after the Ukrainian crisis. We can surmise that phenotypic differences have become less pertinent when framed by the ideology of the "Russian World," whereas "racially impeccable" Ukrainians have been "Othered" in a non-racist way. The book, nevertheless, can serve as a good theoretical launch pad for such research.

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Reexamining Economic and Political Reforms in Russia, 1985–2000: Generations, Ideas, and Changes. By Vladimir Gel'man, Otar Marganiya and Dmitry Travin. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014. x, 180 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $80.00, hard bound.

Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet Regime Changes. By Vladimir Gel'man. Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2015. xvi, 208 pp. Notes. Index. $25.95, soft bound.

Twenty-five years after the foundation of the Russian Federation in December 1991 seems an apt juncture at which to consider the nature of the Russian state and the kind of regime that has begun to cement itself. The books under review constitute two such efforts, both taking the development of the Russian state since *perestroika* as their primary subject matter, yet employing somewhat different approaches to the factors that are shaping the political system. While the authors of both books consider domestic elites to be the primary political agents in Russia, *Reexamining Economic and Political Reforms in Russia* presents a broad-brush, historical account of changes in Russian elite thinking and *Authoritarian Russia* takes steps towards building a theory of authoritarianism, using the Russian case as its focus. Thus, for a thorough understanding of the type of regime that currently exists in Russia and its historical foundations, the two books make excellent accompaniment for one another.

Reexamining Economic and Political Reforms in Russia explores the role of ideas and generational change in the evolution of Russian politics, arguing that the shift from the optimistic "60er" generation to the cynical "70er" generation "was one of the most important factors that had a direct influence on the agenda of modernization transformations of the late twentieth century" (18). The 60ers, or "reformers," came of age during the Stalin era, whose "ideological programme . . . was inevitably limited to criticism of Soviet reality" (47) due to the highly censored and ideologically orthodox nature of the Soviet public sphere. As such, during *perestroika*, this generation, many of whom had then come to power, initially wanted to reform socialism rather than abandon it. The 70ers, by contrast, grew up during Leonid Brezhnev's stagnation and are characterized by an "ideology-deprived pragmatic rationalism" (134), seeking to improve their own status and material well-being rather than contribute to the improvement of society. Promoted to leadership positions by Boris Yeltsin, 70ers have remained in place under Putin and, unlike the 60ers, have adopted the view that "the economic problems had undoubted priority over the reforming of the political system of the country" (70). One of the central arguments of the book is that neither the democratic reforms of the 60ers nor the economic reforms of the 70ers were implemented in their entirety, a fact that paved the way for the regime that has consolidated under Putin, which the authors characterize as "unfree market under autocracy' (122). The treatment of policy change through the lens of generational difference is a unique one and greatly adds to our understanding of contemporary Russian political history.

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