

expressing popular dissatisfaction, ultimately contributing to the instability and violent outbreaks seen during this period.

While the author correctly acknowledges that the civil war in Tajikistan was not solely driven by local factors, a deeper analysis of regionalism, influenced by country's geography and the Soviet national delimitation project, would enrich the discussion. A significant aspect of the conflict in Tajikistan stemmed from perceptions among certain populations that the Central Party favored the northern region of Tajikistan. This bias manifested in the disproportionate representation of northerners in top positions of power, such as Emomali Makhkamov and Rahmon Nabiev. Residents of Kulyab, Garm, Pamir, and less developed regions held grievances regarding economic and infrastructure disparities between their areas compared to northern Tajikistan (now the Sugd region) and the capital city, Dushanbe.

To comprehensively analyze the causes of the conflict in Tajikistan, it is essential to trace how the Soviet government delineated the borders of the Central Asian countries and managed resource allocation. Furthermore, it's crucial to examine how these intertwined realities became unsustainable following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Drawing more extensive parallels with conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and other instances of violence in the former Soviet Union could further strengthen the author's arguments regarding the complexities of post-Soviet transitions and their impact on regional conflicts.

The book's examination of female political leaders, such as Gulrukhsor Savieva, adds another layer to our understanding of this period, particularly in a context where information about such figures is often scarce. While the book provides a wide-ranging account of the transition from Soviet Tajikistan to independence, there are areas where additional background information would enhance its effectiveness. For instance, a brief and somewhat misleading statement about Abdumalik Abdullajonov's reputation for corruption, juxtaposed with sparse information about his political career, left me desiring more context. As someone with limited knowledge about this politician beyond encountering him at a political rally in Khujand in the 1990s, such assertions demand further elaboration to provide a clearer understanding.

Moscow's Heavy Shadow is a thought-provoking and illuminating study that significantly contributes to our understanding of the relations between Russia and former Soviet Union countries. Scarborough's rigorous scholarship and nuanced analysis offer a rich exploration of the enduring influence of Moscow on Tajikistan's past, present, and future. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in present-day Central Asian geopolitics, post-Soviet transitions, and the dynamics of great power politics, including Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine and beyond.

Cathleen S. Lewis. *Cosmonaut: A Cultural History*.

Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2023. vii, 301 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. Photographs. Tables. \$38.00, hard bound.

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doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.478

Cosmonaut: A Cultural History immerses readers in a comprehensive exploration of the cultural history of Soviets/Russians in space. This compelling work pursues two central objectives. Firstly, it elucidates the constraints inherent in state-sanctioned representations, which

aimed to perpetuate an idealized image of the cosmonaut during the Soviet era. Secondly, it explores how Russians have reevaluated their past following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Comprising eight parts, including an Introduction and Epilogue, the book systematically examines the shifts in the cultural perception of cosmonauts.

The Introduction in Part 1 lays the groundwork by introducing the concept of “Red Stuff,” a unifying concept woven throughout the book. Red Stuff encapsulates the layered and shifting meanings associated with Soviets/Russians in space, spanning from the late nineteenth century to the present day, including pre-revolutionary Russia with its tradition of spaceflight-related ideas.

Part 2 contrasts the Soviet Union’s official narrative of Iurii Gagarin’s historic spaceflight with the complex reality obscured by the Soviet state and its propaganda. Despite the meticulously crafted image of Gagarin’s seamless journey, the flight encountered significant technical challenges, including the failure of the reentry module to separate from the service module, leading to Gagarin’s unplanned ejection from the spacecraft. Such critical details were deliberately omitted from the official proclamation to maintain the illusion of Soviet space supremacy. Furthermore, Gagarin’s personal life, marked by extramarital affairs, challenged the idealized image the Soviet state sought to uphold. This pattern of concealing technical failures and supposed character flaws persisted throughout the Soviet era, reflecting a concerted effort to present an idealized version of both the space program and its cosmonauts. Under Nikita Khrushchev’s leadership, the emphasis shifted from individual heroism to collective achievement, aligning success ideologically with the collaborative efforts of the Communist Party, engineers, scientists, and workers. Cosmonauts became not only pioneers in space but also symbols of a utopian future promised by communism, projecting an image of cultural fantasy that bolstered the Party’s narrative of progress.

Part 3 delves into the selection of Valentina Tereshkova as the first Soviet female cosmonaut, contrasting her experience with that of her female counterparts who returned to ordinary life after being released from the space program. Tereshkova’s mission transcended mere space exploration; she became a potent propaganda symbol both within and outside the Soviet Union. Her flight sparked interpretations among feminist circles in the west, challenging stereotypes of Soviet women and showcasing the reliability and accessibility of Soviet technology. Within the Soviet Union, Tereshkova’s flight raised expectations for increased opportunities for women in space exploration. However, it took nearly two decades for another woman, Svetlana Savitskaia, to follow in her footsteps in 1982, preempting Sally Ride’s historic American flight. Savitskaia’s mission served as a direct challenge to the Americans, underscoring the competitive nature of the Space Race entangled with geopolitics and superpower rivalry.

Part 4 discusses the role of films, collectibles such as pins and stamps, museums, and monuments in promoting the Soviet state’s message during the 1960s. Following Stalin’s ban on science fiction, the genre experienced a resurgence in the Soviet Union during this period. Some filmmakers pushed boundaries, influenced perhaps by Khrushchev’s Thaw. However, deviations from the expected decorum, such as portraying multinational space crews, including Americans, and depicting a Soviet Komsomolka member crying in one of Pavel Klushantsev’s films, led to his downfall and ultimately ended his career in theatrical filmmaking. In the absence of systematic exhibitions to promote the space program, *znachki* (pins) emerged as a significant means of propaganda and storytelling. Unlike other aspects of the highly centralized Soviet state, there was no central authority dictating the content and message of all *znachki*. This lack of central control resulted in a proliferation of pins not only within the Soviet Union but also beyond its borders. In contrast, postage stamps were centrally controlled by the Ministry of Post, leading to over 200 different stamps issued during this period, compared to thousands of individual space *znachki*.

Part 5 examines the period from 1964 to 1968, marked by profound losses that deeply impacted the public perception of the Red Stuff. The removal from power of Khrushchev,

a political patron of the space program, the passing of Sergei Korolev, the administrative genius behind the space program, and the tragic death of Gagarin, a beloved public hero, all dealt significant blows to the program and its image. Despite continuing operations, the program experienced a noticeable decline in public enthusiasm, confidence, and success compared to the beginning of the decade. Part 6 explores the final decade of Leonid Brezhnev's leadership through the collapse of the Soviet Union. This period witnessed a gradual but perceptible loosening of state control over the Red Stuff, reflecting broader political and social changes within the country. Additionally, it saw the emergence of independent initiatives reshaping the Red Stuff, led by diverse actors including artists, designers, writers, and film directors. Part 7 delves into why the Red Stuff escaped harsh scrutiny following the Soviet regime's downfall despite widespread criticism of the system. The public discourse, literature, and cinema dissociated party ideology from the Soviet space program's history. Consequently, cosmonauts retained their revered status as symbols of a past era filled with utopian aspirations tied to space exploration. Today, nostalgia for spaceflight's optimism is separate from nostalgia for communism. The book concludes with a thought-provoking Epilogue.

The book's primary strength lies in its meticulous analysis of previously overlooked sources, including visual and material culture, films, and literature, which are rich with intriguing and captivating details. Its main arguments are compelling and significantly contribute to the cultural history of the Soviet/Russian space program, as well as broader Soviet and Russian studies.

While the book briefly touches upon cosmonaut rituals and superstitions, a deeper exploration into this hidden aspect and the mystical undercurrents overshadowed by the official narrative and practices would have enriched the text. This includes delving into the movement of Russian cosmism, suppressed by Iosif Stalin, which encompassed themes such as cosmic energies and utopian fantasy about humanity's role in reshaping the cosmos.

By pioneering a detailed examination of the cultural history of cosmonauts, the book provides invaluable insights into the complexities of image construction, maintenance, and negotiations within the Soviet Union and Russia. It is a persuasive resource not only for scholars but also for anyone interested in the cultural history of the Soviet/Russian space program and its cosmonauts, as well as the broader history of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia.

Samuel Ramani. *Russia in Africa: Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender?*

London: Hurst Publishers, 2023. v, 445 pp., Notes. Index. £45.00, hard bound.

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doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.479

One of the many puzzles about Russia today is whether it is a great power resurging or in terminal decline. If it is indeed once again on the rise, then we should see its influence spreading beyond its immediate neighborhood and furthering Russian interests much farther abroad. But too often, power and influence are assessed in international