

Russian speakers the right to use their language. He sees the monist project as part of a backward-looking “restitutive nationalism” (21). He also stresses the pivotal role of oligarchs, who further distorted Ukraine’s political regime.

While Sakwa is right to stress the fragility of the Ukrainian state, in practice I see Ukrainian state building prior to 2014 as more pluralist than monist, since the Russian language continued to be used in the eastern provinces and there was only modest conflict over language policy, the sort one can find in any multilingual democracy.

Chapter 4 analyzes the Maidan protests that began in response to President Viktor Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement but turned into a full-blown revolution, one that was hijacked by radical nationalists. Chapter 5 covers the annexation of Crimea, which Sakwa describes as a “defensive reaction” by Moscow to the “putsch” in Kyiv (106). Though he concedes that the March 16 referendum was rigged, he goes to some lengths to defend the possible legality of Russia’s annexation. Chapter 6 tracks the formation of the new Ukrainian government.

In his account of the fighting in Donetsk and Luhans’k, in chapter 7, Sakwa argues that “this was not simply an ‘invasion’ but a genuine revolt against a particular type of statehood” (181), passing quickly over evidence of large-scale deployment of Russian regulars, especially in August 2014. He does not explain where the insurgents were getting their weapons, except for a brief mention of Moscow covertly supplying anti-aircraft missiles. The shooting down of MH17 is covered in less than a page, and he concludes by saying “broader culpability lay with all sides, reaching as far as Kiev, Moscow and Washington, who stoked the fires of war” (169). At least he leaves Brussels and Berlin off that list.

Sakwa does not spend a lot of time analyzing decision making in Moscow. He portrays Putin as a mere “regulator of factional and institutional conflict” and assures us that he is “not an ideologue . . . [but] rational and pragmatic” (213–14).

The book’s structural approach carries the risk of making things appear overdetermined. It downplays the role of contingency and the extent to which the outbreak of violence caught everybody by surprise. There was nothing inevitable about these developments. While Ukrainian nationalists played a key role in escalating the conflict, it is not as if Putin was a purely reactive bystander. But Sakwa downplays Putin’s agency, arguing that “developments in Ukraine represented a challenge that Putin felt he could not avoid” (119). He writes that “Russia was sucked into the Donbas conflict” (113), as if Russia’s invasion occurred against its will.

Sakwa’s account stands in contrast to the prevailing media narrative, which lays responsibility at Putin’s door. Arguably, Putin needed a show of force to boost his waning popularity with the Russian public and to prevent Ukraine from drifting into the EU’s economic orbit. Sakwa does not mention the telling fact that the annexation of Crimea led to a 20 percent boost in Putin’s popularity ratings. While he makes many important and nuanced points, the book could have given more space to this mainstream explanation of the outbreak of war.

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Ethno-Baroque: Materiality, Aesthetics, and Conflict in Modern-Day Macedonia.

By Rozita Dimova. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013. x, 165 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. \$85.00, hard bound.

This innovative and fascinating account of what has been happening over the past few decades in the Republic of Macedonia approaches its topic not through the usual lenses of ethnicity and nationalism but rather those of consumption and materiality.

Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, but also a deep historical engagement with the country and region, the Stanford-trained Macedonian anthropologist Rozita Dimova takes the notion of “the baroque” (locally, *barok*)—an aesthetic style connoting “wealth, the West, antiquity, taste” (2) and expressed in objects ranging from furniture to monumental architecture—as key to understanding transformations in Macedonian society, particularly since the fall of socialism. Paying attention to how citizens of this small country decorate their domestic interior spaces as well as examining the changing character of their public spaces, Dimova interrogates the conjunction of politics and aesthetics, aiming “to offer insight into how affect is produced, especially in the domains in which material objects and people’s identities constitute one another through the experience of loss and lack” (10).

In the process, Dimova offers new angles on relations between the majority ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians, who constitute the country’s most significant minority community. As she sets out in the first two chapters, the longstanding political and economic power of the Macedonians, the ex-Yugoslav republic’s dominant nationality, led many Albanians to emigrate, seeking a better life in Europe and North America. As Albanian emigrants prospered, they sent money to relatives back home, enabling the Albanian community to expand their economic power at the very moment when Macedonians began to experience the fall in living standards that came with socialism’s demise and the imposition of the new neoliberal economic order. Having lost previously enjoyed economic privileges, Macedonians have observed the upward mobility of many of their Albanian compatriots, expressing their chagrin in a discourse of rich Albanians “stealing” what “they” used to own.

Dimova is alert to the gendered dimensions of these narratives and performances of power and status, both within the two communities and “between” them, explored in depth in the third chapter. The dilemmas are particularly striking. The Albanian community takes pride in its well-educated women as evidence of its emergence from “backwardness.” Yet at the same time, Albanian men fear the sexual and economic emancipation that education brings to women, and many prefer their own wives to be less-educated homemakers. Dimova’s analysis, with its focus on Albanian masculinities but also including the voices of variously positioned Albanian women—students, homemakers, feminists—extends feminists’ theoretical work on the links between gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationalism.

Two final substantive chapters explore the built environment. The first outlines the changing visibility and invisibility of socialism and Islam in public urban space in Kumanovo, culminating in an architectural approach that in its eclectic “ugliness” both confirms and denies earlier forms. The second of these focuses on the monumentalization of Skopje’s public space since 2006, as the ruling nationalist party, VMRO-DPMNE, has commissioned, at huge public expense, enormous classical structures and sculptures representing ancient themes which now visually dominate the city’s historical center. Dimova reads the project of “revival” as the government’s defiant response to its political, economic, and diplomatic marginalization since its independence in 1991 within “European” institutional structures, as Greece blocked the country’s international recognition due to the name issue and as neoliberal policies were relentlessly imposed and pursued.

Ethno-Baroque is a highly original contribution to the anthropology of the Balkans and of postsocialism; more widely, it engages with debates on the intersections of gender, ethnicity, nationalism, politics, aesthetics, affect, consumption, and materiality. Its freshness of perspective owes much to Dimova’s sophisticated grasp of a number of theorists whose insights she applies to the Macedonian case with a lightness of touch and a sense of humor that makes the text a pleasure to read. Rarely are Walter Benjamin, Slavoj Žižek, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, and other high

theorists brought to bear with such perspicacity on an ethnographic case study. Significantly, this is achieved as a result not merely of Dimova's theoretical astuteness but also of her rich and perceptive descriptions of Macedonian realities profoundly shaped by the regional and international contexts within which they are embedded. *Ethno-Baroque* thus stands as an outstanding example of how well-chosen theory and careful ethnography can be combined to produce powerful new understandings of the ways in which global transformations play out in a specific, located lifeworld.

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Reassessing Lukashenka: Belarus in Cultural and Geopolitical Context. By Grigory Ioffe. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. xii, 305 pp. Appendix. Notes. Index. Figures. Tables. \$105.00, hard bound.

There are few books on Belarus. Fewer still endeavor to delve into the inner world of Aliaksandar Lukashenka, the man who for more than twenty years has personified modern, post-Soviet Belarus. Grigory Ioffe has done a great service to the students of Belarus's political system by going where no western scholar has gone before—to the office building in downtown Minsk that used to house the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus and, since 1994, has accommodated Belarus's first and only president and his administration.

The author had the opportunity to conduct long and detailed interviews with Belarus's authoritarian leader. The result is a unique insight into the ideas, values, and aspirations that have been driving Lukashenka throughout his time in office. As Ioffe clearly states that he regards Lukashenka as the creator of independent post-Soviet Belarus, the interview transcripts, although relegated to the addendum, are central to the book. The timing of the interviews makes them particularly interesting—they took place months after the 2010 presidential polls, in which Lukashenka was reported to have won by a large margin and which were followed by the imprisonment of two opposition politicians who had run against him.

Ioffe conducted the interviews in an informal, relaxed manner, yet the foci of his questions are clear—he wanted to know the interviewee's attitude to the institutions of a modern, well-developed society. So, what does Lukashenka think about democracy, civil society, political pluralism, and a self-regulating market?

Democracy is Lukashenka's *bête noir*. In a hearty, earthy style, he expresses his dislike for democratic procedure. His logic is simple: if he knows what is good for the country (and, of course, he thinks he does), then one can only argue about the methods with which to achieve the goals, not the goals themselves. That argument can be left to the government ministers. As for those who oppose the goals he endorses, they deserve nothing less than being labeled the fifth column. Yes, Lukashenka repeatedly applies this term to the parties of the democratic opposition.

The economy is simple for Lukashenka—he knows that all Soviet-era factories should work and produce tangible goods. If the output is not sold, he can always tell his government ministers to promote sales of Belarusian products with greater dedication. As for financial and monetary policy, he does not trust the experts who tell him to follow certain rules of monetary circulation or face the consequences. He would order the central bank to print as much money as needed to support the real sector. Unfortunately, his subordinates sometimes print too much money (when he is distracted by other, more pressing matters), and then the national currency has to be devalued. The free market is not a bad idea if it is confined to small businesses. Large