

CAUCASUS UNDER REVIEW - RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS

The Caucasus is a region of both great diversity and potential; it is also a region about which much remains to be discovered. However, during the last decade, numerous publications on the region have enabled us to better comprehend this diversity and potential. In this sense, this section aims to introduce a number of these publications in order to keep our readers up-to-date with the available literature.



* Report prepared by S. Humbatova, former editor of Caucasus International

This issue of *Caucasus International* presents six books on the Caucasus and its relations with its immediate neighbors. In this regard, the first book, “The Fight for Influence: Russia in Central Asia” by Alexey Malashenko, scrutinizes Russia’s determination to preserve its dominance in Eurasia. The author argues that by establishing organizations like Customs Union and the Eurasian Union, Russia is aiming to strengthen its presence in the region. In the book he offers recommendations on how to Moscow might expand its influence over Central Asian countries. Malashenko concludes that Russia should define its national security interests in the region in a clearer manner and identify opportunities that will support the realization of those aims. Given the existing distrust between Russia and some Central Asian countries, Malashenko suggests that Russia should avoid treating Eurasia as merely an extended zone of influence, identify potential sources of instability in the region, and actively participate in eliminating those sources.

The second book, “Conflict, Crime, and the State in Postcommunist Eurasia”, edited by Svante Cornell and Michael Jonnson, emerged as a result of the increasing academic focus on armed conflicts and terrorism. Alongside an examination of the link between ideologically motivated insurgency and profit motivated crime, the book provides an overview of the major obstacles that peacekeeping missions may face in conflict zones in Eurasia. By examining eight countries that have experienced armed conflict, the book’s contributors analyze the causes and implications of the various conflicts in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, the North Caucasus, Georgia, Moldova, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The publication provides a new platform for academic debate on armed conflicts.

Zeynel Abidin Besleney’s “The Circassian Diaspora in Turkey: A Political History” is a historical account of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey from 1864 to 2011, following the Russian-Circassian war. One of the author’s major aims is to introduce a theoretical framework to improve understanding of the concept of “diaspora”, looking at its definition and types. Besleney also examines the early experiences of the Circassians – a North Caucasian ethnic group - and the social changes that they faced in Ottoman lands, together with their integration into Ottoman soci-

ety. The dominant ideologies of the Circassian diaspora are also investigated and analyzed in terms of historical pedigree. The author also covers the main political groupings that emerged within the Circassian diaspora after 1999, and their various trajectories.

Stephen F. Jones’ “The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors” compares Georgia’s first republic (established in 1918) with modern Georgia. The contributors take the readers on a journey from the Democratic Republic of Georgia through to the current system, assessing the political, economical and military security challenges faced by Georgia in both 1918 and 1991. Georgia’s struggle to withstand Russian pressure and its pro-Western strategy in both periods is carefully analyzed. The book is a useful source for those who are interested in state building processes in Georgia and how historical experience has influenced modern Georgia.

Janusz Bugajski’s new book focuses on the conflicts in the North Caucasus and Western Balkans. “Conflict Zones: North Caucasus and Western Balkans Compared” provides a comparative analysis of two fragile regions, the North Caucasus and the Western Balkans, and suggests that proactive Western policies should be pursued in dealing with the impacts of the conflicts in North Caucasus. The author believes that the North Caucasus can usefully be compared to the Western Balkans before and during the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1990’s. To substantiate this claim of resemblance, Bugajski investigates Russia’s federal structure and the relations of the republics with the center, with special focus on ethno-national factors and Islamic radicalism. Together with his assessment of international involvement in conflict zones both in the North Caucasus and the Western Balkans, he also discusses the impact that the conflicts in the North Caucasus have had on South Caucasian and Western interests, and presents recommendations for the U.S. policy in the North Caucasus.

The final book introduced in this issue brings our attention to the Middle East. “Turkey and the Arab Spring: Leadership in the Middle East”, by Graham Fuller, evaluates changing dynamics and ideologies in the Middle East. Fuller provides a detailed study of the current situation in Turkey, its role in the Middle East, and the future of the region. He focuses on the rapid changes that the region has undergone and

attempts to provide a better understanding of the hidden politics and realities in the Middle East. The book provides fresh and thoughtful insights into the future of the Middle East.

The Fight for Influence: Russia in Central Asia

By Alexey Malashenko

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

December 2013, 284 pp.

Russian influence in Central Asia is waning. Since attaining independence, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have forged their own paths—building relationships with outside powers and throwing off the last vestiges of Soviet domination. But in many ways, Moscow still sees Central Asia through the lens of the Soviet Union, and it struggles to redefine Russian relations with the region.

In *The Fight for Influence*, Alexey Malashenko offers a comprehensive analysis of Russian policies and prospects in Central Asia. It is clear that Russian policy in the formerly Soviet-controlled region is entering uncharted territory. But does Moscow understand the fundamental shifts under way? Malashenko argues that it is time for Russia to rethink its approach to Central Asia.



Conflict, Crime, and the State in Postcommunist Eurasia

Edited by Svante Cornell and Michael Jonsson

University of Pennsylvania Press

January 2014, 296 pp.

In the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its zone of influence, few insurgent groups had the resources necessary to confront regular armies. At the same time, state-sponsored financial support for insurgencies dramatically decreased. The pressing need to raise funds for war and the weakness of law enforcement in conflict zones create fertile conditions for organized crime; indeed, there is a mounting body of evidence correlating armed conflict and illicit economy, though the nature of this link and its impact on regional politics has not been well understood.

Conflict, Crime, and the State in Postcommunist Eurasia explores the relationship between ideologically motivated insurgents, profit-motivated crime, and state institutions in eight

conflict zones. Through detailed case studies, the contributors demonstrate how the operations and incentives of insurgents may emerge and shift over time: for some armed groups, crime can become an end in itself beyond a financial means, but not all armed groups equally adapt to illicit commerce. They also show how the criminalization of state institutions is a lingering concern even after armed conflicts end. *Conflict, Crime, and the State in Postcommunist Eurasia* places the case studies along a continuum of political and criminal behavior, examining the factors that motivate insurgents to seek out criminal alliance, how this connection affects the dynamics of conflict, and what risks remain during post conflict transition.



***The Circassian Diaspora in Turkey:
A Political History***

By Zeynel Abidin Besleney
Routledge
March 2014, 224 pp.

A North Caucasian ethnic group that has been largely obscured in world history as a result of their expulsion from their homeland by Tsarist Russia in the 1860s, Circassians now comprise significant communities not only in the Northwest Caucasus but also in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Europe and the US. *The Circassian Diaspora* investigates how a community of impoverished migrants has evolved into a well-connected and politically active diaspora.

This book explores the prominent role Circassians played during the Turco-Greek War or the “Turkish National Liberation War of 1919-1922”, and examines the changing nature of Circassians’ relations with the Turkish and Russian states, as well as the new actors of Caucasian politics such as the US, the EU, and Georgia.

Suggesting that the Circassian case should be studied alongside those of the Jews and other diasporas whose formation is fundamentally tied up to a violent detachment from their homeland, and arguing that Circassian diaspora politics is not a post-Soviet phenomenon but has a history dating back to early 20th Century,

this book will be of interest to scholars and researchers of Diaspora Studies, History, and Politics.



***The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012:
The First Georgian Republic and its Successors***

Stephen F. Jones
Routledge
March 2014, 394 pp.

When most of Eastern Europe was struggling with dictatorships of one kind or another, the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921) established a constitution, a parliamentary system with national elections, an active opposition, and a free press. Like the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918, its successors emerged after 1991 from a bankrupt empire, and faced, yet again, the task of establishing a new economic, political and social system from scratch. In both 1918 and 1991, Georgia was confronted with a hostile Russia and followed a pro-Western and pro-democratic course. The top regional experts in this book explore the domestic and external parallels between the Georgian post-colonial governments of the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries. How did the inexperienced Georgian leaders in both eras deal with the challenge of secessionism, what were their state building strategies and what did democracy mean to them? What did their electoral systems look like, why were their economic strategies so different, and how did they negotiate with the international community neighboring threats. These are the central challenges of transitional governments around the world today. Georgia’s experience over one hundred years suggests that both history and contemporary political analysis offer the best (and most interesting) explanation of the often ambivalent outcomes.

***Conflict Zones:
North Caucasus and Western Balkans Compared***

By Janusz Bugajsk
Jamestown Foundation
March 2014, 100 pp.

In *Conflict Zones*, Janusz Bugajski enhances our understanding of the causes and consequences of the current conflicts in the North Caucasus and extrapolates likely scenarios in the region's development. He compares and contrasts conditions in the North Caucasus with the former Yugoslav federation in the Western Balkans, a multi-ethnic state structure that could not contain internally generated political and ethnic disputes.

The book examines five major dimensions of the conflict: relations between the central federal government and the constituent republics, the importance of ethnic identity in intercommunal relations, the significance and impact of religious allegiance and radicalism, the destabilizing regional potential of emerging states, the role of outside powers in dampening or exacerbating conflicts. The study concludes with a number of recommendations for U.S. policymakers.



***Turkey and the Arab Spring:
Leadership in the Middle East***

By Graham Fuller
Bozorg Press
May 2014, 408 pp

Over the course of the 21st century the Middle East has witnessed a game-changing rollercoaster ride that has transformed relationships. Turkey has undergone the most dramatic changes of its democratic history, propelling it into the role of major regional actor. The Arab Spring threw the region into political and social turmoil. U.S.-led wars devastated the lands and peoples of several countries with widespread, rippling repercussions. The balance of global power shifted dramatically, breaking America's long-standing geopolitical dominance in the Middle East.

The politics of the Middle East are now up for grabs but what are the sources of its future leadership? The Arab world is still adrift. Yet there are grounds for optimism that Iran may at last be re-emerging onto the world scene as a legitimate and influential actor. And above all, Turkey's experience, despite messy partisan politics, still offers the only convincing Muslim model of dynamic and effective governance. Neither Turks, Arabs, nor Iranians will ever be the same again nor will they interact with the West again in the old familiar ways. The author breaks with conventional U.S. centric analyses of the region to capture the deeper political and human forces that reflect the Middle East's own history and culture.