

in talks with Indonesia to develop the island of Sabang, near the western mouth of the Malacca Strait, to accommodate Indian warships and submarines. In 2017, India and Singapore signed the India-Singapore Bilateral Agreement for Navy Cooperation. Indian military cooperation with Vietnam is also increasing, including training her submariners on how to use Russian *Kilo*-class submarines. As Gresh correctly predicted in early 2020, India did indeed resuscitate the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with the United States, Japan, and Australia, with the avowed aim to uphold “a rules-based order for Asia, ensure freedom of navigation and overflight rights in the maritime global commons, and promote maritime security” (p. 155).

Russia comes in third place behind the vastly richer China and the far more populated India. It is in the Arctic where the Russian future lies, significantly altering the “global equilibrium of power,” and where Russia might again become a “polar great power” (pp. 245–47). Russia claims 1.2 million square kilometers of territory running to the North Pole. Changes in ice thickness by 43 percent between the 1970s and 1990s gives Russia the greatest opportunity to exploit the Arctic. But, Moscow rightly fears that China will dominate the Russian Far East, with over 50 percent of Vladivostok’s foreign trade already in Chinese hands even while the Russian population in northern Siberia has dropped 15 percent from 1993–2009.

One way to judge these three Eurasian powers is connectivity, with 829 million Chinese, 560 million Indian, and only 109 million Russian internet users. About 200 fiber-optic submarine cables now carry 95 percent of the world’s voice and data traffic, with the entire country of Russia only having two cable landing stations, while tiny Djibouti alone has “seven cables, divided across two landing stations ... signifying geostrategic significance” (p. 119).

To Rule Eurasia’s Waves is extremely thought-provoking and well-researched, but there are some flaws. For example, the first two letters of Eurasia are “EU” or “European Union,” which does not even appear in the Index. Yet all of the NATO countries together, including the United States and Canada, make up almost a quarter of the World’s GDP. Furthermore, the U.S. military still has 514 bases in 45 foreign countries, with 121 in Japan alone, compared to China’s 4. If, as the author predicts, China’s debt burden doubles from 2008 to 2022—increasing to over 300 percent of GDP—what happens when all of its BRI debtors simultaneously refuse to repay? Especially since Beijing allows no independent insurers for its overseas’ projects, thus putting all financial losses directly onto the Chinese government? Will the BRI then also collapse?

By minimizing the historical dominance of Western Europe and the United States—both politically and especially economically—over the Eurasian continent, Gresh is suggesting they lack the will or capability to fight back. History suggests these great powers should not be written off so quickly.

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Magyar, Bálint, and Bálint Madlovics. *The Anatomy of Post-Communist Regimes: A Conceptual Framework*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2020. xxvi + 808 pages. \$125.00. ISBN 978-963-386-371-8.

This thought-provoking and comprehensive volume comes at a propitious time. Thirty years following the Soviet Union’s collapse, it asks fundamental questions about the nature of the post-communist transition, the quality of governance in the post-Soviet world (and beyond), and the sources of regime variation. With the benefit of hindsight, Bálint Magyar and Bálint Madlovics reflect on an extensive literature in a context of some abject democratic failure and increasingly consolidated corrupt networks in select countries, alongside more positive developments, including, variously, sustained economic growth (including in China—a perhaps surprising case for inclusion in the study) and/or increased freedoms in particular regions.

The argument, in essence, is that much of the early literature on transition and democratization failed to fully appreciate the underlying structural differences between Western and Eastern societies. Drawing on Claus Offe’s idea of discrete spheres of action in which the political, the economic, and

the communal can be manifest, Magyar and Madlovics argue such separation was peculiarly Western. Hewing more closely to Jenő Szűcs than (mostly Western) “hybridologists,” they argue that much existing literature was too sanguine about the capacity of newly-configured institutions to radically change the conduct and expectations of actors who were thoroughly socialized within communist apparatuses. Using a “stubborn structures” framework, Magyar and Madlovics point out that the *lack* of separation in spheres in the East, which certainly predated state-socialism, was compounded, rather than upended, by the communist experience.

For such an extensive investigation, the authors do an admirable job of sustaining the argument. For example, in chapter 5, which focuses on economic trajectories, they introduce the idea of “relational economics,” distinguishing it from Institutional and Behavioral economics, and positioning it as a challenge to the neo-classical synthesis. In particular, they argue that politicians governing the economy are self-interested and guided in their policy-design and decision-making by their relational positions in the public and private spheres. Magyar and Madlovics’ investigation of the economy shows how relationships, networks, and histories intermingle to create variable forms of collusion, corruption and criminality. And here and elsewhere they point out where and how scholarship became “trapped” within a rigid framework that presented the West as the norm by which Eastern regimes were measured in terms of “deviance.” They argue that this was as true of democratic governance as it was for corruption, but that Western frames are ultimately confining rather than explanatory. Indeed, these authors do not assume “the supremacy of the formal over the informal” or that “illegal abuses of power may happen only secondarily” (p. 401). Their arguments about the incommensurability of East and West raise significant questions not only about past work on post-communist transition, but also on emerging scholarship that increasingly draws cases from the two regions, particularly within the European Union.

Like all great studies, this one tries to answer some key questions while also provoking pressing new ones. In a period marked by Brexit, the rise of exclusionary (overtly racist) politics in countries as diverse as India, Brazil and the United States, as well as recent revelations about mass graves of Indigenous children at Canadian boarding schools, one wonders about the wisdom of having ever turned to “established” democracies (including in the West) as a reference point for democratic development in the post-socialist world. The question that Magyar and Madlovics raise, without explicitly acknowledging it, is not just whether the East is fundamentally different from the West because of the purported separation of spheres of action in the latter (and the accompanying rationality, meritocracy and guard against corruption such separation implies) but whether the West ever fulfilled that standard. At a minimum, scholars of democratic governance in the West and elsewhere have become alert to institutional and norm fluidity everywhere in the context of evident democratic erosion—including in countries that ostensibly support the diffusion of democratic governance world-wide. In this sense, Magyar and Madlovics’ critique of the existing transition literature does not go far enough. It is not just that the West was an inapt comparator. In many ways, Western models of democracy were inadequate as a reference point all along, not least for the degree to which they depended on racial and gender exclusion for their smooth functioning.

A second question the study raises is whether relational economics helps us gain a more comprehensive understanding of post-communist development in an area that is so critical to human welfare. The authors say the concept is a branch of political economy that is “concerned with political analysis of economic processes” (p. 367). Yet this is nearly identical to the definition I (and many others) have used for years in my own international political economy work—which is to unearth the politics underpinning international economic arrangements, including the underlying interests, beliefs, and myriad forms of power that structure economic outcomes. Moreover, given the openness of many of the post-socialist countries to the regional and global economies, as well as the impressive growth that many (but certainly not all) of them have experienced over the last three decades, the authors might reflect more on additional sources of variation.

Finally, these authors raise the important question of linguistic closure and the extent to which we become limited in our analysis by the confines of our language. In the authors’ words, “we dissolved the axioms of the Western civilization to expand our linguistic scope to be able to reflect

on the reality of post-communism” (p. 733). Given this admirable and mind-opening enterprise, it is surprising and alienating to read that they use “he” for the generic third person singular throughout the study because “the vast majority of leaders and important political and economic actors” in the post-communist world “have been male” (p. 23). One wonders what this unimaginative choice of language does to upend that very unfortunate and unjust state of affairs, particularly in the context of a study that along so many other dimensions strives to be emancipatory in its aims.

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