

agency and the nature of Schmidt's various political friendships delivers many perceptive insights into Schmidt's talents and his failings. Above all, she makes a convincing case for his important role in global affairs. She has succeeded in establishing the terms of future scholarly debate on his historical significance.

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Abrahams, Fred C. *Modern Albania: From Dictatorship to Democracy in Europe*. New York University Press, New York and London, 2015. xii + 345 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Sources. Index. £36.00.

THIS book is an overview of the turbulent politics of Albania since the end of World War Two. The immediate leader, Enver Hoxha, while flirting with the Yugoslav, Soviet and Chinese leaderships in order to secure a regular flow of aid, kept a tight control at home resulting in international isolation. As Abrahams describes, '[t]he people nearest to Hoxha felt most at risk [...] because he repeatedly purged and executed long-time comrades and friends' (p. 20). His successor, Ramiz Alia, understood the importance of initiating some reform, but nevertheless only allowed it to a certain extent so that his own power and position remained unaffected.

In 1990, Albania's students decided to take charge and confront the regime with a set of demands. The Democratic Party (DP) was established, with Sali Berisha as its leader — an achievement which had only limited success given the party's rather mild approach towards Alia. New rounds of student protests took place and, eventually, the government resigned. In March 1991, the Democrats lost in the parliamentary elections and Alia was re-elected, but he was then to lose a year later. However, in the new setting, '[a]s Berisha consolidated power, the DP and government struggled to run the state [...]. In the chaos, corruption boomed. Inexperienced officials at first accepted three-figure bribes, but they quickly learned the proper scale' (pp. 115, 116). In the years to come, Berisha's behaviour became problematic, generating external criticism and causing support to wane, especially in Washington D.C.

The 1996 parliamentary elections were characterized by numerous irregularities; once re-run, but without the opposition, the DP confirmed its troubled victory. At a local level, even though the elections went well and the Democrats won a majority, they struggled to regain international respect. Moreover, the economic situation was extremely unsettled, mostly due to a proliferation of pyramid schemes, rising inflation and the budget deficit. A large-scale revolt and violent confrontations across the country led to new

elections, fully supervised by OSCE observers. In 1997, the Socialists won and Berisha resigned. Albanian society felt betrayed. It was impoverished and heavily armed. As Abrahams describes, 'Albania had an entry in the atlas, a national hymn and a flag. It sat in the United Nations. But the country lacked a collective identity to hold it together. Politicians on all sides were looking to preserve or get power, rather than protect and promote the common good' (p. 219).

The new prime minister Fatos Nano had a lot of work to do. He focused on political order, economic stability and in 1998 passed a new constitution, all while managing to exercise strict control. However, the Socialists 'also knew how to line their pockets. Their education and knowledge of foreign languages facilitated corruption that quickly became systemic [...]. Socialist ministers quickly expanded their businesses and bodyguard teams' (p. 230). In the autumn, following the assassination of the DP's Azem Hajdari, a new confrontation between the Democrats and Socialists erupted. Nano described the accompanying violence as an attempted coup (staged by Berisha) and proclaimed a state of emergency. Although Berisha subsequently calmed down and, soon after, Nano departed, they did not disappear altogether from the political scene.

In the immediate region, before and during the Kosovo War (1998–99), Albania continually provided support (arms, training and intelligence) for the paramilitary Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in order to fight Serbian forces and civilians attacking the Kosovo Albanian population. Once the NATO air campaign was over, the KLA 'went after the remaining Roma and Serbs, and Albanians it viewed as political foes. Eager for stability in the region, the international community turned a blind eye' (p. 271).

In 2001 the Socialists won a majority in the parliamentary elections, with Nano advancing to secure his third term as prime minister. However, the 2005 elections, which were accompanied by different incidents, witnessed a different outcome. Now in power, 'Berisha worked nonstop. As before, he meddled in every ministry's work. He approved business deals and placed articles in newspapers' (p. 284). He won again in 2009, but finally lost in 2013, taking sole responsibility for his party's defeat. The new prime minister, socialist Edi Rama, inherited weak institutions which were heavily corrupt and dominated by criminal networks. Nevertheless, the following year, Albania secured EU candidate status and it is hoped that this membership ambition will incentivize necessary reforms.

Although Abrahams does not really deal with 'how' and 'why' dilemmas, his account is useful for a number of reasons. For example, it clearly encourages questions about external involvement, especially the West's decision 1) to tolerate corruption, authoritarian policies and monopolization of power for

the sake of regional short-term stability, and 2) to get rid of regimes once they stop serving their own interests. Also, the messy politics of Albania suggests (and this is found in other western Balkan states, as well) that whoever comes to power, s/he will rush to maximize their own personal wealth. In such a climate, concerns about state identity and common benefits are of secondary relevance, if at all. Finally, unstable states often make fertile ground for criminal networks and militant organizations, such as the KLA, which can always re-emerge, ready to fight, perhaps, for a greater Albanian state.

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Morozov, Viatcheslav. *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*. Central and Eastern European Perspectives on International Relations. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, 2015. viii + 209 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. £58.00.

*RUSSIA'S POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY* is a new book on the old subject of Russia's relations with the West. Viatcheslav Morozov finds a novel approach in postcolonial theory to analyse Russia as a subaltern empire dependent on the West's material and normative hegemony. He argues that Russia, while remaining a formally independent country and even colonizing its own periphery, was integrated into the capitalist world-system on unequal terms (p. 31). Drawing on A. Etkind's *Internal Colonization* (Cambridge, 2011), Morozov sees Russia colonizing its periphery on behalf of the global capitalist core.

The key question is the origin of Russia's ambiguous place in the Eurocentric global order. For Morozov, the answer lies in the inherent structural inequality of the capitalist world and Russia's peripheral role in it (p. 40). The fact that Russia's main identity discourses are similar to those of other aspiring powers such as China, India or Japan, represented by realist, nationalist and globalist camps, is due to their shared subaltern experiences, that is their internalization of a normative order whose nodal points are defined by the West (p. 65).

At the heart of its material dependency lies Russia's persistent resource-orientated economic development. This dependency, according to Morozov, stretches back to early-modern times when the equivalent of today's oil was furs. Even Stalinist industrialization followed the old peripheral model of capital accumulation by exchanging grain for technologies.

The key to understanding Russia's confrontational behaviour lies in its mix of subaltern and imperial identities which feeds its insecurity. For example, the anti-Western concept of 'sovereign democracy', which insists on each nation's