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RECENT AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP ON SOVIET NATIONALITIES

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Özet

Sovyet Milliyetçiliği Üzerine Günümüz Amerikan Çalışmaları

Sovyetler Birliği'nin parçalanışı, Rusya ve Avrasya kürsülerinde görev yapan tarihçilerin Birliğin kuruluşuna yönelik ilgisini daha da arttırdı. Özellikle Amerikan üniversitelerinde son yıllarda yapılan çalışmalarda söz konusu ilgiyi hissetmek mümkün. 1991 yılından itibaren sayıları hızla artan yayınların odak noktası, eksende yer alan sosyalist cumhuriyetlere yönelik merkez Sovyet politikalarıydı. Diğer bir deyişle, bu çalışmalarda cevabı aranılan soru Sovyet rejimi'nin ulus-yıkıcı mı yoksa ulus-yapıcı bir nitelik taşıdığıdır. Bu yazıda incelenen dört yeni kitap da Bolşeviklerin nasıl bir siyaset izleyerek tarihin en karmaşık etnik grup kompozisyonuna sahip coğrafyasında etkinlik kurabildiğinin analizini yapıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Sovyetler Birliği'nde Milliyetçilik, Ulus İnşası, Amerika'da Eski Sovyet Araştırmaları, Sovyetler'de Merkez-Eksen İlişkileri.*

Abstract

The abrupt death of the Soviet Union has made its birth more interesting for scholars of Russian and Eurasian history. Since 1991 a stream of new publications on early Soviet policies towards the non-Russian territories of the Union began to rise exponentially. This popular surge of enthusiasm made itself clear especially in the American academe. Four recent monographs, which are being discussed in this paper, reveal the ways in which the Soviet regime managed to consolidate its power over the world's largest multi-ethnic realm.

Key Words: *Soviet Nationalism, Soviet Nationality Policies, Nation Building, Soviet Studies in the US, Core-Periphery Relations in the USSR.*

* Georgetown Üniversitesi, ABD, doktora öğrencisi, öğretim görevlisi.

The abrupt death of the Soviet Union has made its birth more interesting for scholars of Russian and Eurasian history. Since 1991, the number of new publications on early Soviet policies towards the non-Russian territories of the Union began to rise exponentially. The most apparent reason for this popular surge of enthusiasm was the opening of the previously closed Soviet archives. A significant portion of the publications that had previously appeared on Soviet nationalism were written during the Cold War by those who had very little or no access to the Soviet archives. The demise of the Soviet Union, thus, furnished historians with new archival references and enabled them to present their arguments with more evidence. Nevertheless, the revival of interest vis-à-vis the construction of a Bolshevik language within different parts of the Union cannot merely be attributed to the opening of archives.

Another, perhaps more relevant reason was the contemporary incredulity towards the ideological historicism intrinsic in the works of most Cold War historians. Hence, despite the already existing literature, to say that the rise of Soviet power in the lesser developed regions had been "*extensively studied*" prior to the radical turn from Soviet to post-Soviet Russian historiography would do violence to "*both the verb and the adverb.*"[1] The mutually excluding political realms of the Cold War evidently influenced the historical discourse employed by most Western scholars, who perceived the Soviet Union as a 'breaker' of nations. These biases necessitated an 'extensive' and 'deeper' approach to the study of Soviet nation-making processes, especially, within the Central Asian Soviet Socialist Republics.

Several new monographs confront conventional perceptions of the Soviet rule in Central Asia. As opposed to a 'breaker' of nations, these publications define the Soviet Union as a 'maker' of nations while recognizing the imperialist nature of its policies. As Yuri Slezkine puts it, "*the Soviet Union was an empire – in the sense of being big, bad, asymmetrical, hierarchical, heterogeneous and doomed. It was also Utopia in power and a prison of peoples (sentenced to life without parole or death through eventual fusion).*"[2] But the real question is, as Slezkine poses, was it a modern colonial empire? The four books being reviewed here seek to reveal this conundrum that puzzles most scholars in Soviet nationality studies today. In their different arguments, they reveal the ways in which the Soviet regime managed to consolidate its power over the world's largest multi-ethnic entity.

[1] Poe 2003, 123.
[2] Slezkine 2000, 227.

On the jacket of Martin's *The Affirmative Action Empire,* Mark Beissinger of the University of Wisconsin claims that it is "*one of the most important books on Soviet nationalities policies ever published.*" To what extent Beissinger is accurate in his appraisal about Martin's monograph might be debatable. But as far as Martin's meticulous archival research is concerned, this book is certainly an instant classic in the field. Through choosing and bridging the appropriate documents from a gargantuan amount of archival sources, Martin constructs a fluent narrative of more than 400 pages and scrutinizes the complex nature of early Soviet policies towards its populace.

Martin starts out by defining the logic and content of the affirmative action empire and outlines how the party apparatus functioned along side the local authorities within the Soviet nationalities scheme. He argues that, in the Soviet case, the affirmative action model did not correspond to certain policies for members of a certain ethnic group but instead represented a state support for the national territories and identities of all ethnic groups. The author is possibly aware that some readers would find the term 'affirmative action' problematic, since he spares a large portion of his introduction seeking to justify his reasoning. In Martin's words, the Soviet affirmative action program had "[represented] *an attempt to capture the paradoxical nature of the multiethnic Soviet state.*"[3] Yet, he also defines the Soviet Union as an exceptionally "invasive, centralized, and violent" state, which first consolidated its power over its former national borderlands and then "set out to systematically build and strengthen its non-Russian nations, even when they barely existed.[4] For Martin, Affirmative Action in the Soviet context symbolizes a 'national constitution,' which distinguishes the Soviet Union as a 'national entity' from other alternative models, such as nation-state, federation or empire.

Martin's Soviet nationalities model is strictly confined to the Soviets' indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) program. As early as the 1920s, the Soviet Union embarked on a massive project of promoting *korenizatsiia* to achieve the formidable task of unifying the territories they inherited from the Tsarist Empire. In an age of nationalism, as Martin frequently reiterates, the party apparatus sought to eschew separatism and isolation concurrently through

[3] Martin 2001, 18.
[4] Martin 2001, 19.

prophylactic methods. Through promoting the right of nations to self determination, Martin suggests that the Soviets convinced their formerly colonized peoples that they did not have imperial ambitions.

Martin's narrative follows the conventional periodization of Soviet history; namely, New Economic Policy (1923-1928), Socialist Cultural Revolution (1928-1932) and, finally, what Martin calls the "Great Retreat" (1933-1938) periods. The ways in which the party apparatus sought to curb 'bourgeois nationalism,' while creating new nations, promoting linguistic *korenizatsiia*, and local leadership are discussed in great detail in the first five chapters (200 pages). Martin draws a clear distinction between hard and soft line Soviet policies, suggesting that the party leadership did not place their nationalities policy into a Bolshevik non-Bolshevik framework, but rather one of hard-line and soft-line. Unlike industrialization or collectivization, *korenizatsiia* was "*a quintessential soft-line policy, local efforts were occasionally made to upgrade its status.*"[5] He seeks to convince the readers that despite their retreat on the eve of the Second World War, the Soviets were sincere in their attempt to promote and implement 'indigenization' within both sides of the 'empire;' namely Ukraine and Belarus (the Soviet West) and the Caucasus and Central Asia (the Soviet East).

Martin's work is best in exposing the sharp distinction between the ramifications of *korenizatsiia* in the Soviet East and West. Although *korenizatsiia* was a single coherent policy, as Martin suggests, "*the Soviet Government did divide its population into two broad and traditional categories: eastern and western nationalities.*"[6] The dichotomized treatment of these nationalities was not so much based on geographic factors as it did on cultural distinctions. As the implementation of 'affirmative action' policies became problematic in the 'culturally backward' regions (especially achieving linguistic *korenizatsiia*) the Soviets sought to create indigenous elites.[7] The Soviet efforts, however, proved to be futile and further exacerbated ethnic conflicts. The Soviets overlooked the peculiar characteristics of the East and simply focused on class structures as a substitute for family, depending on their relative success in the West. As Yuri Slezkine puts it in his *Imperialism as the Highest Stage of*

[5] Martin 2001, 21. See also 27 and 87.
[6] Martin 2001, 23.
[7] Martin 2001, 177.

Socialism, "some of the reasons for the difference between the 'East' and the non-East may be of a general description. The greater the perceived underdevelopment of a society, and thus the role of kinship and gender in its social and symbolic organization, the greater the importance of family in an attempt to civilize it."[8]

Likewise, as Martin points out, the organization of national soviets was regarded as a prerequisite for overcoming ethnic hostility but the outcome turned out to be just the opposite of the Soviet policy makers' intentions. Regionalization based on ethnicity (*raionirovanie)* became the main pillar of the Soviet nationality policy. The center sought to create overlapping territorial and administrative structures, which "*extended downward into smaller and smaller national territories (national districts, village soviets, collective farms) until the system merged seamlessly with the personal identity of each Soviet citizen.*"[9] The proliferation of ethnic conflict, however, became even more violent in the eastern *raions,* where large-scale colonization took place in the 19th century, such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, than other places, such as Tataristan, Crimea and Chuvashia.[10]

Although in its early phase *korenizatsiia* managed to promote local leadership in the periphery, it failed to address the question of representation at the federal center, which, for Martin, constituted the main reason why this policy faded into oblivion. Martin' monograph offers solid evidence suggesting that the party indeed advertised guidelines for progression and nationalism with a socialist content in its borderlands. Nevertheless, this contradicted the fact that industrial and technical elite in the republics remained mostly Russian, who were also aggravated by the loss of their privileges.

Martin asserts that when the Soviets were confronted with the reversal of indigenization they toned down its radical aspects. With the emergence of a second world war, all attempts to emphasize local identities were denounced and the Russian identity reemerged in the periphery. For Martin, this was a point when the *korenizatsiia* became 'a hole in the middle.' Martin's conceptualization of the 'Great Retreat' provides a fresh insight about the impact of Stalin's Great Terror on nationalities, which constituted one fifth of all executions and 800000 people of all deportations.

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[8] Slezkine 2000, 227.
[9] Martin 2001, 10.
[10] Martin 2001, 31-72.

One of the strengths in Martin's work is the counter-argument he convincingly presents to challenge the conventional assumption that Stalin's support for *korenizatsiia* was either soft or did not exist at all. Martin repeatedly suggests that Stalin actually backed it vigorously and never attempted to create a *homo-sovietcus*.[11] In his argument, what happened during the 1930s was simply a transition from Lenin's 'brotherhood of nations' to Stalin's 'friendship of nations,' wherein the Russian identity had become 'the first among equals.'[12]

Overall, Terry Martin's *The Affirmative Action Empire* is a valuable contribution to Soviet history. Obviously, Martin prefers Rankean means of greedy data gathering over using secondary sources in his historical research. This is partly due to his willingness to create an original work. His confinement to Moscow lenses, however, makes it impossible for the reader to really understand the ways in which peripheral authorities responded to the core's impositions. Ultimately, Martin's work cannot be fully understood without a sound knowledge in Soviet and Central Asian history.

Although he acknowledges the fact that governmental decisions were not imposed from above but were being made at the local level "*based on the judgments of the republican leaderships, and were only subsequently ratified by the center*," Martin constructs his thesis mostly on the state archives of the core.[13] How the indigenous peoples identified themselves within the Soviet system or socialist terminology therefore remains obscure. More importantly, by defining *korenizatsiia* as a soft-line policy, at least from the party perspective, Martin suggests that the Soviets had more serious concerns regarding their peripheral policies – oil and cotton production, collectivization, and massive industrialization. Had the Soviet Union been an empire, as Martin suggests, they could have simply pursued *korenizatsiia* as a closet colonial policy to achieve their hard-line goals and not as a genuine attempt to create nations with socialist content. This seems to be a point, where his idealization of Stalin's nationality policies diminishes its own rationale.

Likewise, by defining the Soviets as an empire, Martin reveals his perception of the party apparatus in Moscow as the sole governing authority in the periphery. Why would an imperialist state refrain from homogenizing its territories or creating a 'homo-Sovietcus,' as Martin suggests, remain unanswered. The transition from 'brotherhood of the peoples' to 'friendship of

[11] Martin 2001, 232. See also 248, 460, and 461.
[12] Martin 2001, 307. See also 308, 393 and 431.
[13] Martin 2001, 177.

the peoples' is yet another vague argument, since the great terror can neither be attributed to Stalin's re-conceptualization of *korenizatsiia* nor the Soviets' idealization of their nationalities. The readers would also find it difficult to locate the culturally backward Soviet East in, what Martin calls, the friendship of nations, since the East in this book is overwhelmed by Martin's lengthy analyses on Soviet Ukrainization.[14]

Francine Hirsch, in her *Empire of Nations,* spares a substantial amount of space addressing these conceptual ambiguities in Martin's book. Like Martin, Hirsch seeks to explain how the Bolsheviks constructed their administrative policies commensurate with the multitude of languages, ethnicities and cultures they inherited from the predecessor Tsarist Empire. As opposed to Martin, however, Hirsch offers solid bibliographic information based on secondary sources, which gives her the chance to elaborate on certain definitions that are usually taken for granted in Martin's work; such as what narod or natsiia meant for the party appratus. Hirsch successfully points out the continuities between Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union vis-à-vis practices and knowledge about the "Imagined Communities," their dichotomized rhetoric notwithstanding.[15]

In Hirsch's words, "eschewing the 'prison of peoples' view of the Soviet Union, this book treats the 'Sovietization' of all of the peoples within the Soviet borders (non-Russians and Russians alike) as an interactive and participatory process."[16] Since Bolsheviks denounced both Tsarist colonization and bourgeois nationalism, they embarked on a policy of what Hirsch calls *state sponsored evolutionism*. In Hirsch's definition state sponsored evolutionism was "premised on the belief that 'primordial' ethnic groups were the building blocks of nationalities *and* on the assumption that the state could intervene in the natural process of development and 'construct' modern nations."[17]

While Martin makes a distinction between hard and soft line policies, Hirsch believes that the proper distinction would be the one between short term and long term goals. Although the Soviets initially sought to assist the 'potential victims' of Soviet collectivization and modernization, in the long run their goal was to usher the entire population the Marxist timeline of historical progression. Hence, Hirsch rejects Martin's Affirmative Action model and argues that from

[14] Martin 2001, 211 to 260. See also 273 to 307.
[15] Imagined Communities is a phrase Hirsch borrows from Bennedict Anderson's *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Naionalism.* Hirsch 2005, 13. See also 169.
[16] Hirsch 2005, 15.
[17] Hirsch 2005, 8.

the very outset the Soviet Union sought to 'amalgamate each ethnohistorical group,' and that the 1930s was an 'acceleration' of this process 'not a retreat from it.' Hirsh also rejects Martin's idealization of the Soviet approach to the nationality question. In her argument the Soviet Union appears both 'high-minded and vicious' at the same time, "*combining its more beneficent policies with the use of violence and terror.*"[18] As Hirsch goes on to argue, while creating new nations, the Soviet Union also attacked traditional culture and religion, destroyed local communities and executed those who inhibit progression.

The epistemological arguments in this book would give the readers a better insight as to how the Soviet System functioned from inside and how important ideology was for the decision makers. In Hirsch's words, "*to be sure, the party-state was the locus of political power. But the party state did not have a monopoly on knowledge; on the contrary it depended to a significant degree on the information about the population that experts and local elites provided.*"[19] Hirsch suggests that one major advantage of the Bolsheviks was to inherit historians and ethnographers of the old regime, who shaped the party policies on nationalities based on earlier premises. For instance, the Commission for the Study of the Tribal Composition of the Population of Russia (*Komissiia po izucheniiu plemennogo sostava naseleniia Rossii)* [KIPS] was a significant group of such experts, who helped the party state determine policy actions through providing ethnographic knowledge. Yet, as Hirsch further suggests, the alliance between the ethnographers and the party was 'revolutionary,' not because it was based on "*a shared faith in Marxist ideology or socialism*," but because both parties sought to transform Russia into a modern state through a "*shared appreciation for scientific role.*"[20] Despite the revolutionary nature of their alliance, it was therefore a tenuous collaboration from the very outset.

For Hirsch, the Soviet Union in the 1920s was "a work in progress;" the newly recruited former Tsarist ethnographers, who were now working for the party state, made use of Census (pp.101-144), Border Making (pp.145-186), and Ethnographic Exhibits (pp.187-227) as the 'new' Bolshevik instruments of acquiring information. Census, map and museum, "all facilitated a process [Hirsch calls] *double assimilation*: the assimilation of a diverse population into nationality categories and simultaneously, the assimilation of those nationally

[18] Hirsch 2005, 9.
[19] Hirsch 2005, 11.
[20] Hirsch 2005, 60.

categorized groups into the Soviet state and society."[21] The author emphasizes the fact that *double assimilation* was an interactive process, wherein the party functioned commensurate with the local authority participation.

Here, it becomes clear why Hirsch – like Martin – employs the empire terminology to define the party-state. Although she believes that the Soviet Union was a unique form of empire (due to the mutual interaction between the core and periphery) it was an empire nevertheless. In Hirsch's words, like the European empires, the Soviets defined census-taking and border-making as "*cultural technologies of rule, which facilitated and sustained centralized rule as much as the more obvious and brutal modes of conquest.*"[22] This being said, Hirsch, recognizes the fact that promoting ethnographic exhibits was an anomaly as far as conventional characteristics of European empires are concerned. Hirsch claims that *Empire of Nations,* thus, "provides a venue for exploring the production, dissemination and reception of official narratives of a new type of multinational state that shared some similarities with the European Empires but defined itself in anti-imperial terms."[23]

Unlike Martin's conventional periodization, Hirsch follows a different chronology to emphasize the continuities between the two 'empires.' The first part, "Empire, Nation and the Scientific State," takes 1905-1924 as a single episode and scrutinizes the making of incipient Bolshevik policies towards nationalities. In the second part, "Cultural Technologies of Rule and the Nature of Soviet Power," Hirsch explores the decade from 1924 to 1934 from the viewpoint of 'Sovietization' throughout the whole country. Finally, in Part III, "The Nazi Threat and the Acceleration of the Bolshevik Revolution," is scrutinized. Like Martin, however, in her argumentation Hirsch relies heavily on the core's perception. Hence she fails to "focus exclusively" on the relationship between the party-state and local elites, and simply portrays that interaction's shadow in Moscow.

As Hirsch suggests, despite their anti-capitalist anti-colonialist discourse, the Bolsheviks soon realized the urgent need to achieve a self-sustaining economy (cotton and oil supplies etc.) hence they realized their dependency on controlling larger territories. Unlike their tsarist predecessors, however, the proper dyad between the Soviets and their Central Asian subjects was 'dependency.' Historians of the modernist paradigm often suggest that

[21] Hirsch 2005, 14.
[22] Hirsch 2005, 146.
[23] Hirsch 2005, 188.

realpolitik calls for *survival*, when the state possesses limited financial and political remedies and yet for *dominance*, when it has substantial resources. Hirsch convincingly challenges this supposition, arguing that it downplays the role of ideology, especially in the Soviet case. The real contribution of Hirsch's work is to provide a comprehensive framework to understand the importance of motives and ideology in the party-state.

Unlike Terry Martin or Francine Hirsch, Adrienne Edgar's *Tribal Nation* provides the readers with a bottom-up perception of the Soviet nationality policies in Central Asia. As Ronald Suny puts it in his appraisal for Edgar, the author does not simply look out from Moscow, but successfully traces the roots of nation-making at the local level. *The Tribal Nation* explores the ways in which nationalities of the Soviet Union took shape and argues that this was a reciprocal process. Local involvement, as Edgar suggests, is as important as Moscow's directions in making socialist nations. For Edgar, Turkmenistan is created because the Soviet regime had to protect the Turkmen tribes from their "Uzbek oppressors" just as it supported the rights of non-Russians against great Russian chauvinism.[24] In her succinct account (267 pages), Edgar explains the factors that brought about "*the remarkable transformation [of Turkmenistan] from a stateless conglomeration of tribes into an independent, apparently unified nation-state.*"[25] Hence, *The Tribal Nation* is a major contribution to the Soviet historiography, which exposes all aspects of the Turkmenistan S.S.R.'s formation throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Similar to the arguments presented in Martin's and Hirsch's works, Edgar suggests that the Soviet regime was 'a maker of nations' instead of a 'breaker.' Edgar's theoretical framework seems to be influenced by Benedict Anderson as well. In Edgar's words, "as a vast literature on nations and nationalism has argued over the past several decades, *all* nations are 'artificial' or constructed; the nation is not a primordial, organic entity, but an 'imagined community' that is transferred in a continual process of invention and negotiation."[26] As Edgar further suggests, what is striking about Turkmenistan (as well as other Central Asian republics for that matter) is not that it was constructed from above but that their "architect" was a socialist state, which did a great deal "to transform the regions under its tutelage."[27]

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[24] Edgar 2004, 47.
[25] Edgar 2004, 2.
[26] Edgar 2004, 3.
[27] Edgar 2004, 4.

Despite the similarities between the three, however, Edgar's confinement to Turkmenistan – a relatively smaller region for research in comparison to that of Martin or Hirsch – enables her to omit overarching arguments and to achieve a better overall coherence. Hence, while Martin focuses on the party-state or Hirsch on the ethnographers, Edgar manages to concentrate on the local authorities as an agent of transformation. In the first part of her book, the author seeks to explain "*the interaction between the transformative policies of the Soviet state and Turkmen conceptions of identity and community.*"[28] The sense of Turkmen-ness had been deeply rooted in genealogy, as Edgar suggests, hence the existing conceptions of self-identity helped the Soviet policy of accelerating historical development in Turkmenistan. The party quickly established local elites, who concomitantly learned how to speak 'the Bolshevik language of nationhood.'[29] These points bear a strong resemblance to Francine Hirsh's *Empire of Nations*, although Hirsch was actually looking out from Moscow.

In the second half of her book, Edgar seeks to explain why Turkmen nationalism was incompatible with *korenizatsiia* albeit the Turkmens swift adaptation to the Bolshevik language. She first explores how the Socialist attempts to modernize the Turkmen society – through eradicating tribalism – conflicted with the historical basis of Turkmen identity. Then she goes on to argue that collectivization and compulsory planting of cotton had become the two major violations of earlier Bolshevik promises of autonomy and equal development for all national republics.

Chapter 6, *A Nation Divided: Class Struggle and the Assault on Tribalism,* is perhaps the best in the second half of the book. Here, Edgar's thorough analysis reflects upon both the reasons why Soviets perceived nation-making as inevitable for the construction of socialism as well as why they failed in the Turkmen case. As Edgar suggests, the Soviet officials in Turkmenistan were confronted with a population, who defined themselves in terms of genealogic categorizations of groups (tribes), instead of classes or nations. Hence, "*the persistence of genealogical identities*," in Edgar's words, "*inhibited the emergence of a broader sense of nationhood within the Turkmen republic.*"[30] Edgar further suggests that the Soviets were well aware of their need to pursue a successful tribal policy to unify Turkmenistan as a nation. This transition, however, could not be done overnight; they first needed to eliminate the archaic affiliations within various tribes.

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[28] Edgar 2004, 5.
[29] The Bolshevik language is a phrase Edgar borrows from Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain*..
[30] Edgar 2004, 167.

Despite the ambiguous nature of Soviet policies in Turkmenistan throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Edgar suggests that the Soviets knew what had to be done; on the one hand, the local republican authorities sought to formulate an "appeasement policy," which would provide an equitable treatment for each different clan or tribe. On the other hand, they labored hard to "*undermine the economic basis of descent group affiliation by dismantling the existing system of collective land tenure and creating a class of poor peasants dependent on the Soviet regime.*"[31] Edgar claims that the rationale behind this "tribal parity" bears a close resemblance to that of Soviet nationality policies; "*just as all Soviet nationalities were to be treated with scrupulous fairness, so that they would have no reason to nurse nationalist grievances, the regime would win support and suppress 'tribal-clan conflict' by refusing to favor one descent to another.*"[32]

As Adeeb Khalid puts it, Edgar's *Tribal Nation* "*tackles a big topic with great finesse and she does so in very accessible prose that conveys complex ideas without any jargon*" (back cover). Edgar's fluent writing style may indeed reach a larger audience within the academe, if not the public sphere. Despite the current restrictions on using Turkmen archives by foreigners, Edgar manages to provide the readers with an insider's view on a multitude of questions; stretching from self-identification to the underlying reasons behind the failure of the Soviet's "war on backwardness."[33]

In a similar vein, Douglas Northrop seeks to explain the ways in which the Bolsheviks advertised progression and national unity in the 'culturally backward' Soviet East. Focusing on the Uzbek Cultural Reform in Stalinist Central Asia, Northrop's *Veiled Empire* takes on an ambitious project, which Adeeb Khalid sought to accomplish for the Imperial period. Northtrop reveals the reasons and ramifications of the state sponsored Soviet campaign against veil and suggests that despite Stalin's rigidly anti-colonialist Bolshevik discourse, he had a similar imperial agenda behind *hujum*. From this perspective, Northrop further suggests, the 'veiled' nature of Stalin's *hujum* was different than Ataturk's Turkey, Shah's Iran, or Han's Afghanistan. Indeed, a new gendered construction of identities through forced modernization was taking place elsewhere in this period. Yet, as Northrop successfully reveals, Stalin's assault on *paranji* and *chachvon* did more than penetrating and reshaping the private sphere of Muslim societal structure. It caused deep

[31] Edgar 2004, 168.
[32] Edgar 2004, 168.
[33] Edgar 2004, 263.

nationalistic resentments among the Uzbeks since veil had become to symbolize what were Uzbek rather than Muslim.

In Northrop's words, *Veiled Empire* "seeks to offer a historicized interpretation of how contemporary Central Asia's complex hybrid of social and cultural identities came into being."[34] Like Edgar, Northrop argues that the Soviet authorities, no less than their Uzbek subjects, were going through a constant phase of transition and that it was this ongoing interaction between the two parties, "unstable, permeable and in penetrated as they were," that in the end "defined what it meant to be both "Bolshevik and Uzbek."[35] Hence, similar to Edgar, Martin and Hirsch, Northrop too claims that the Soviet power in Central Asia was a work in progress. Unlike Martin, however, Northrop suggests that Stalin's massive campaigns through rapid industrialization and forced collectivization aimed to create a "New Soviet Man (and, albeit usually less prominently, Women)."[36] For Northrop, this was a complex civilization project in the new colonial age. The author, thus, defines Muslim Central Asia as the subject of a wider European colonial context.

In Northrop's account, although the Soviets initially sought to transform the Uzbek S.S.R. by force and campaigns against the religious authorities, they finally realized that "*revolution in the colonial 'East' henceforth [had] to be reshaped to address the area's specific needs and peculiar dynamics.*"[37] The author suggests that the party's perception and policies were for the most part shaped by the reports submitted by the colonial Soviet authorities in Uzbekistan. Hence, they began to see the Uzbek women not as mere victims of Russian imperial rule but also of the indigenous men. Northrop further claims that within this highly patriarchal society, gendered conflicts coexisted with colonial ones. Stalin, therefore, embarked on a liberationist movement to set the Uzbek women free from patriarchal oppression. The Uzbek woman had become to be seen as a potential agent of socialist progression and functioned as a "surrogate proletariat." [38]

Northrop claims that the Uzbek opposition to the unveiling campaign was a point when the *korenizatsiia* system stopped functioning. The Soviet colonial

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[34] Northrop 2004, 7.
[35] Northrop 2004, 7.
[36] Northrop 2004, 9.
[37] Northrop 2004, 11.
[38] Northrop borrows this Marxist terminology from Gregory Massell – a political scientist who studied the Soviet presence in Uzbekistan and published a book called *The Surrogate Proletariat* in 1974. Northrop 2004, 12.

power in Uzbekistan concentrated more on gender relations as a substitute for class, hoping that this approach would lead them to an all-out revolutionary transformation. Yet, the more the local Soviets denounced veil as a symbol of backwardness the more it became intrinsic to Uzbek national culture. The author claims that "*under Soviet power, conflict over local cultural issues, ad especially over gender politics, and ultimately reshaped Uzbek culture in ways that the tsarist colonial state never attempted or even contemplated.*"[39] The resistance against unveiling, however, cannot simply be attributed to Northrop's equation. Northtrop seeks to deconstruct the Soviet regime's policies towards nationalities and explain the problems in the Soviet East through lenses of mere nationalism. Harmonization of Islamic values with the newly emerging national identities remains as an enduring myth of the Soviet history. The first part of this inexplicable phenomenon (Islam) often seems to be replaced by a socialist one. The political aspects of the Islamic doctrine are often underestimated, partly because deconstructing Islamized identities is indeed a puzzling task.

Northrop carries Adeeb Khalid's arguments a step further and claims that although the *jadids* were quite an influential faction throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, by the 1930s they had been "*popularly discredited because of their personal affiliations and associations with Bolshevism and the Bolsheviks' adoption of many of their programs.*"[40] This suggestion, however, seems problematic since the author fails to clarify how the *jadids* perceived their alliance with Bolshevism in the post-1917 period. Indeed, the *jadids* allied with the Bolsheviks during the revolutionary years as a means to survival and progression. Even if the Uzbeks despised Bolshevism due to its secular enforcements on societal or gender structures, however, why would they discredit an indigenous movement, which - albeit their attempted reforms – in essence had its roots in revisionist Islam? In other words, did all jadids really become agents of Bolshevik rule in Central Asia and shared all aspects of secular Soviet reforms? This problem is due partly to Northrop's confinement to subaltern tools. While Northrop believes that neo-colonialist theories are applicable to the Soviet case, neither the social and cultural setting of the colonized nor the political motives of the colonizer bear a resemblance to the British colonial rule in India. Hence, the agents of local support that the Soviets had found in the Uzbek S.S.R. are not necessarily well defined.

Despite their flaws, all four monographs reviewed in this paper help bring a critical treatment of the study of nationalism in the Soviet East. While some

[39] Northrop 2004, 345.
[40] Northrop 2004, 349.

suggest that the national-territorial delimitation of Central Asia should be perceived as a closet Soviet policy of divide-and-rule, others' arguments seem to take this as a proof for the Soviet regime's ethophilia. Likewise, some suggest that the Soviet regime had a presumably non-imperialist character, whereas others define the party as in colonial terms. Nonetheless, there seems to be a consensus among scholars of Soviet history about the unique nature of the Soviet presence in Central Asia. With the exception of Northrop, all three authors seek to define the underlying factors behind the Soviet nation-making process within the boundaries of Soviet history. Their confinement to Sovietology is partly due to the anomalies they find when comparing Soviet nationalism with other European examples.

Perhaps a second consensus could be found vis-à-vis the ramifications of decentralization in the post-1991 era. All four authors seem to agree on the outcomes of the Soviet regime's decision to use nationality as a basic rubric of state organization. As Hirsch puts it, "*after 1991 the titular nationalities argued that they were entitled to 'national rights' and began to 'diassimilate' from the all-union whole. The titular nationalities did not, however, diassimilate from the component nations.*"[41] In the end, their goal is the same: Looking at the birth of nations in the Soviet realm, they seek to formulate the reasons behind the fall of the Union as well as those behind the rise of post-Soviet successor states.

[41] Hirsch 2000, 226.

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