

for a discussion on the region's relationship with them and the factors that formed those relationships is needed. Despite these, I strongly recommend the book as a must-read for those interested in US foreign policy in general and for students and scholars of Central Asian studies.

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Russia's Muslim Heartlands. By Rubin, Dominic. London: Hurst & Company, 2018. 352 pp. (ISBN-13: 978-1-84904-896-5) doi: 10.22679/avs.2022.7.1.008

The author of this book, Dominic Rubin, is a British philosopher and cultural historian who has spent many years in Russia and has become fluent in the language. He is a professor of philosophy at the Higher School of Economics (HSE), a university in Moscow and St. Petersburg modeled after Western universities. He has been able to catch the nuances of the lives of people in post-Soviet space, some of which might be of interest to both Western and Russian readers.

Book as a Source about Russian Muslims

The book is loosely organized yet it has several well-defined large parts. Each deals with a particular region of the USSR. The first parts deals with Moscow Muslims, both native Muscovites as well as numerous newcomers, mostly from the Caucasus and Central Asia. The author shows how the collapse of the USSR and sociopolitical and ideological systems of the past had led to confusion among many Muscovite Muslims, both native to the city and newcomers. The second big chapter deals with Central Asia, mostly with Uzbekistan. Rubin visited the country several years ago and, at that time, Uzbekistan was ruled by the harsh Karimov regime. Islam hardly fit into the nationalistic ideology of Karimov's Uzbekistan, where Timur, the brutal medieval ruler who created an enormous empire with its center in Samarkand, was proclaimed the forefather of the country. Consequently, Karimov's Uzbekistan and Islam were at loggerheads and the local population tried to downplay their interest in Islam.

Another chapter deals with Tatarstan. Here, the author deals with local Tatar interlocutors who make it clear that Islam was not actually essential for Tatar identity and that Volga Bulgars, Tatar ancestors, flourished long before the appearance of Islam in the region. It was the national or ethnic identity that was much more important than the Islamic identity. Other chapters deal with Chechnya and, in the view of the reviewer, is one of the more interesting parts of the book, for it provides insight and facts which might not be known to either Western or Russian observers. The author provides a brief, but useful for the non-specialist,

recent history of Chechnya and, particularly, Ramzan Kadyrov's clan relationship with Moscow and its transformation from the enemy of the Kremlin to its alleged alliance with the Kremlin. Rubin notes here the peculiar and convoluted relationship between Kadyrov, the Russian state, and the Chechen population.

He presents Kadyrov as a shrewd politician who has aptly taken advantage of the Kremlin's fear of new waves of violence. It is clear from the narrative that Chechnya has received an enormous amount of money from Moscow, which made it possible for Kadyrov to spread funds among his protégés and loyalists in the form of almost institutionalized corruption. This system has worked and many former fighters were eagerly engaged in shady deals and seem to have lost interest in the struggle for Chechnya's formal independence. According to Rubin, Kadyrov's relationship with Islamists was not one-dimensional. On one hand, Kadyrov deals with Islamists from the "Emirate," which is why Putin provided such extraordinary concessions to Kadyrov's Chechnya. At the same time, Rubin implies, Kadyrov clearly flirted with Islamists as well as Chechen nationalists and that it could easily unleash both of them against Moscow in the case of excessive pressure or, plainly, Moscow's attempt to remove him.

The most interesting and engaging part of the book is the last one. It deals with the leading – or at least the most exotic – Muslim intellectuals in Russia. As with most of the other chapters of the book, this part of the book lacks cohesive analysis. Still, it could be quite interesting for both Russian and Western readers, for it provides information about Russian Islamic leaders about whom one cannot easily find information. Some of them are really fascinating individuals. For example, Rubin deals with Sergei Marcus, a man with Jewish blood who, after a convoluted intellectual journey, converted to Islam, seeing in it a guiding light for salvation, both for him and for the entire world. Even more interesting is Rubin's interview with the late Geidar Dzhemal', the most elaborate and "politically incorrect" Islamic intellectual in Russia. The very fact that Dzhemal' was an ideologist of violent Islamism – he openly supported ISIS as a revolutionary state despite its shortcomings – precludes Western and even Russian readers from knowing much about him. Rubin's extensive interview with Dzhemal' is a fascinating window into the mind of Russian and, in a way, global Islamists.

To sum up, Rubin's travelogue does not provide much analysis of the Islamic umma in the former USSR. The lack of a framework and explanation of crucial terms would clearly complicate the reading of the book by those in the West who have only the most general knowledge of Islam and post-Soviet realities. Still, some of the segments of the narrative are quite informative and insightful and this makes the book useful to the specialist in post-Soviet studies.

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