FURTHER READING

The editors have deemed the following titles to be of special interest for their important contributions to the academic literature on international affairs.

The New Cold War: The Future of Russia and the Threat to the West

Edward Lucas
(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 215 pages.

The murder of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya and the state seizure of Mikhail Khodorkovsky's petroleum company Yukos were but a few signals for Edward Lucas that Putin's Russia was backsliding into an authoritarian state. His book examines how accusations of human rights violations leveled against Putin's government and its presumed threat to its citizens is of more than a normative concern to the West. Rather, these developments, characterized as the *New Cold War*, are an indication that Russia also become a peril to the West.

Lucas argues that Putin's Russia has used a strategy of divide and rule to promote an overarching ideology of democratic sovereignty, or the belief that international norms do not apply to Russia. Examples of such a strategy include Russia's fanning of discontent over the U.S.-planned missile defense installation and selling arms to the usual group of anti-western states. Lucas also cites Putin's consistent intervention via aerial probes or intelligence infiltration in Eastern European states, effectively illustrating the powerlessness of NATO against Russia.

According to Lucas, Russia is gaining political clout through the dependence of European states on its gas supply, creating powerful, pro-Russia business lobbies along the way. His advice for the West is to admit that Russia will never be a strategic partner, to diversify its energy supplies, and to defend the values of democratic governance. Unless it takes these actions, the West should expect more Russian forays into Eastern Europe and beyond.

At times, Lucas' work reads like an extended *Economist* article, with its sprinkling of world leader political psychology. Although the breadth and scope of the book reflect what the author set out to accomplish, readers may sadly view the totality of his argument

as two separate, unrelated arguments. First, there is a laundry list of Putin's human rights abuses and, second, its perceived threat to the West. What is missing is a weighted analysis of their connection. Lucas also fails to allow for the possibility that the West can neutralize Russia without needing to address its internal abuses. Ultimately, and as Lucas himself suspected, readers will view the *New Cold War* as alarmist unless, of course, history proves him correct.

Setti-Semhal Petros

Putin's Labyrinth: Spies, Murder, and the Dark Heart of the New Russia

Steve LeVine
(New York: Random House, 2008), 194 pages.

In 1991, Boris Yeltsin, then president of the Russian SSR, appealed to his countrymen to resist the military coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, warning that "storm clouds of terror and dictatorship are gathering all over the country. They must not be allowed to bring eternal night." This grim forecast could just as easily apply to the Russia portrayed in Steve Levine's *Putin's Labyrinth: Spies, Murder, and the Dark Heart of the New Russia*. Since Putin's victory in Russia's second democratic election in the spring of 2000, Russia has experienced not only a tremendous economic expansion, but an alarming number of high-profile murders and attacks by Chechen separatists.

Terrorist attacks, kidnappings and unsolved murders might be expected in any country beset by the kind of political turmoil, corruption, and insurgency that has engulfed Russia since the breakup of the USSR, but Levine alleges that Russia suffers from more than a post-communist hangover. Far from actively pursuing justice, he says, Putin has consciously worked to create an atmosphere of *bespredel* ("anything goes") in which organized criminals, businessmen, and politicians are free to use violence to pursue their ends without fear of government interference. Levine uses extensive interviews with first-hand sources to present lengthy descriptions of the assassinations (both attempted and successful) of Nikolai Khokhlov, Alexander Litvinenko, Paul Klebnikov, and Anna Politkovskaya.

These accusations, while provocative, are hardly beyond the imagination of most readers. After all, Litvinenko's agonizing death played out on the cover of the *New York Times*, replete with photographs from his hospital bed and the bar where his cocktail was allegedly spiked with polonium. But Levine goes further, suggesting that the government may have planned and carried out supposed terrorist attacks, such as the 1999 apartment bombings, in order to intensify public support for military action against Chechnya. While some of his claims may be impossible to verify, and several meandering chapters difficult to follow, Levine uses a wide-ranging list of sources to credibly piece together a far

more disturbing and pessimistic view of Putin and Russia than the one depicted in the pages of American newspapers.

Christopher Jenkins

The Post-Soviet Russian Media: Conflicting Signals

Edited by Birgit Beumers, Stephen Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova
(New York and Oxon, Canada: Routledge, 2009), 245 pages.

In twelve separate contributions, *The Post-Soviet Russian Media* surveys how Russian media in its various forms interact with society. During Soviet times, television served as the "means of communication whereby the political centre (Moscow) could reach the entire country effectively and immediately." This has not changed. The supply of content on television is thriving in quality and quantity—as long as it is not political. Radio continues to fill the airwaves, and programs teaching purer forms of Russian are increasingly popular. The Internet, too, is a growing force with the potential to mobilize youth, since it is the sole bastion where plurality is still unhindered.

The strength of this book lies in its ability to present a variety of insightful cases, even though they differ considerably in their level of analysis, theme and approach. The book's limitations are elsewhere. In one of the most interesting chapters, Samuel A. Greene notes the importance of seeing the Russian media as an independent variable instead of merely a dependent one. His chapter, however, is an exception in its analysis of Russian media through their own agency. The question as to what extent self-censorship determines what Russians see, read, and hear remains unanswered. Although power relations figure prominently, the volume does not deal with how far journalists' freedom reach, and how limitations might affect their work. This is remarkable for a volume focusing on media in a country that now ranks among the bottom few on issues of press freedom and journalist security.

The *Post-Soviet Russian Media* excels in unearthing and explaining various trends and phenomena in Russian media that often elude the outsider. It features worthy analyses of a wide array of topics in the Russian media landscape from the last two decades. The volume's lack of cohesion and comprehensiveness, however, makes it questionable whether its title's definite article is warranted.

Allon Bar

Federalism and Local Politics in Russia

eds. Cameron Ross and Adrian Campbell
(London: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 312 pages

Federalism and Local Politics in Russia, a volume of essays edited by Cameron Ross and Adrian Campbell, analyzes the dizzying array of reforms introduced to Russia's electoral and federalist systems under the presidency of Vladimir Putin. The authors argue con-

vincingly that election law reforms and changes in the distribution of powers among central, regional, and local governments advanced authoritarianism in Russia and strengthened Putin's top-down vertical structure of power.

Amid the chaos of the 1990s, Boris Yeltsin's invitation to Russia's regions to "take as much sovereignty as you can handle" led to a significant devolution of federal power and weakened the ability of governments at every level to effectively manage public affairs. When Putin came to power in 1999 against a backdrop of economic decline, corruption and a crisis of governance, he espoused a commitment to a "dictatorship of the law" and a "strong state." Over the next eight years, the Putin administration instituted dozens of reforms to streamline government rule, which usurped power from the regions and localities in favor of the center.

One such reform—a 2003 amendment to the law regulating local government—greatly integrated local bodies into the state apparatus, contributing to the "fairly bleak picture of the present state of local government in Putin's Russia" described by Hellmut Wollman and Elena Gritsenko. Oksana Oracheva writes that local rule was further eroded by Moscow's campaign to merge Russia's eighty-plus regions, as that effort led to a diminution of local political power and delivered few of the promised social and economic improvements.

The changes analyzed in the volume do not unambiguously benefit Putin's vertical power structure and, as John Young suggests, it may be too early to determine their final impact. Despite such reservations, the authors craft a compelling argument that the federal government under Putin has tightened control over Russia's regions at the expense of federalism, local rule, and democracy.

Matthew Schaaf

Putin and the Rise of Russia

Michael Stuermer
(New York: Pegasus Books, 2009), 228 pages.

Over a decade ago, Boris Yeltsin introduced a man to the world whose name was only recognizable to St. Petersburg bureaucrats. The man with the penetrating stare, the Judo moves and, one day, the presidency: Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. A visiting professor at Harvard University, Michael Stuermer tells the story of modern Russia through the prism of Putin's leadership in the post-Cold War period.

Stuermer argues that the West is no longer the major enemy of Russia. Instead, a rapidly expanding China and the northern expansion of Muslim extremism from the Middle East and Central Asia are what worry Kremlin planners today. The chief nightmare for Russia would be if terrorists obtained nuclear weapons. In addition to these external threats, Russia is suffering from a declining population. Ethnic Russian and Slavic populations are declining annually, while ethnic Arabs are multiplying exponentially. Finally, the state of

the Russian military is in shambles with aging equipment, inadequate training and planning, and an overall lack of discipline. Russia's saving grace is its natural resources, though even these have been more of a curse, Russia's economic dependence on oil seems to preclude investment elsewhere.

Although Stuermer was given unfettered access to Putin himself, much of the information presented is already known. Nevertheless, the book contributes to a more complex picture of Putin than usually seen. Indeed, Putin is portrayed as a perfectionist, not a power-hungry bureaucrat vying for the top post of a country stretching from Europe to the eastern coast of Asia.

To a Russophile or someone with a linguistic background in Russian, the mis-translations and incorrect transliterations can be something of an eyesore at times. Even so, *Putin and The Rise of Russia* is an essential quick read for anyone interested in expanding their knowledge of a major world player and his influence on the world.

Kelsey L. Campbell

Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics

Bobo Lo
(Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 277 pages.

In *Axis of Convenience*, Bobo Lo connects contemporary Sino-Russian relations to the history and cultures of the two countries. He describes how Sinophobia, which developed from border tensions as early as the 13th century, continues to plague politics in the Russian Far East. The "yellow peril" is still part of the cultural vernacular in Russia, and the asymmetry of trade relations between the two countries exacerbates fears of a rising China encroaching on Russia's territory. Lo describes how Russia views its energy resources and hegemonic influence in Central Asia as a source of political power to be wielded against the West, potentially in cooperation with China, as they come to depend on Russian resources. China, in turn, sees Russia as only one of several energy suppliers. Beijing does not see Russia as a reliable and capable ally, and has no aspirations to intentionally undermine the West. Russia's "notion of [being] an 'energy superpower' is delusional," Lo writes. Having failed to move much beyond its Cold War worldview, it is likely to remain an outsider.

Lo argues that good relations with the U.S., EU, and Asian regional powers are more important for Beijing than its relations with Russia. Russia, for its part, prioritizes its relationship with the U.S. and retains its "multivectorial" foreign policy in East Asia by maintaining conflicting negotiations with both Japan and China, while remaining hesitant to commit to either. Such mutual second-best status has produced the fundamentally insecure, "interest-driven partnership" detailed by Lo.

The book's strengths lie in the author's lucid interpretation of the para-

doxes and complexities that lurk beneath the lofty promises of strategic solidarity issued by Russian and Chinese leaders. While Lo's analysis of Russia seems more accomplished at times than his analysis of China, he has displayed impressive knowledge and readability for a book of such scope.

Emily Ingram

Dismantling the West: Russia's Atlantic Agenda

Janusz Bugajski
(Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2009), 256 pages.

Janusz Bugajski's *Dismantling the West* provides thorough, detailed, and well-organized research illuminating Russia's Atlantic agenda. His research, however, is best appreciated separate from his plausible but occasionally reductionist conclusions. Whereas most experts balance their views by acknowledging what they do not know, separating hypotheses from facts, and addressing the limitations of their argument, Bugajski ignores his blinds spots. His claims—that Russia intends to dismantle NATO, cleave the European Union, undercut U.S. powers and damage Europe's relationship with the United States—may be well-founded, but are often undermined by ties to self-referenced evidence and a stiff tone of certainty.

To be sure, Bugajski's substantial expertise is an asset to his case. The integrity of his work, however, would have been better served with more equitable treatment of the Russian perspective. Even if correct, Bugajski seems to bring a degree of personal bias. Most states do and should be expected to pursue what they believe to be in their rational self-interest. We accept these premises in analyzing western states. Bugajski, however, argues that Russia is a far different, nefarious, and calculating entity, shrewdly quartering its subversive intentions behind a veil of plausible deniability. Indeed, we see little consideration of the Russian perspectives such as perceived threats to self-interest in U.S. "aggressions" in nearby Iraq and Afghanistan, the blows to the Russian psyche following superpower demotion, and the historic suspicions generated in the Second World War and the Cold War. Bugajski makes a cogent case for a coherent, comprehensive and, if necessary, neo-containment U.S. strategy. Such efforts, however, are fated to be counterproductive if they fail to take into consideration the view from the other side.

Rob Grabow

Petrostate

Marshall I. Goldman
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 244 pages.

Today, less than ten years after its Central Bank went bankrupt, Russia finds itself once again sitting on top of a comfortable cushion of foreign reserves with nearly all of its foreign debt paid. How a country can lose and accumulate wealth so quickly is explained by

the extent to which Russia's economy is intertwined with energy markets. Goldman's book de-mystifies the complex relationships between Russia's dynamic political leaders, its natural resources, and its foreign and domestic energy policy; all of which have shaped Russia into the Petrostate it is today.

Goldman lucidly recounts how Russia's oil production has been highly correlated to its GDP throughout modern history. With such an economic reliance on oil and gas production, the tendency to resist foreign ownership of Russia's natural resources is strong. Seeing oligarchs in post-communist Russia sell off asset after asset of domestic oil companies, President Vladimir Putin was determined to consolidate and re-nationalize Russia's energy sector—creating what he called "national champions"—to remake Russia into an energy superpower. Along the way, rising energy demand in India and China caused prices to increase, allowing Russia to rapidly accumulate wealth and regain confidence. Putin and his associates successfully reclaimed most of Russia's oil companies, albeit using questionable business tactics and even throwing powerful oligarchs in jail when necessary. He also replaced the head of Gazprom, Russia's natural gas champion, and strong-armed former Soviet countries into selling stakes in their domestic distribution and pipeline companies to Gazprom. Goldman notes that by summer 2006, Gazprom had become the world's third largest corporation as measured by the value of its corporate stock. It has so much control over the gas market in Europe that western consortiums are scrambling to build alternate pipeline routes to check Gazprom's ominous power.

While many of these details are well known, Goldman's first-hand research sheds new light on the political maneuvers that enabled Gazprom's ascension. In a colorful tone, Goldman uses academic research while writing in a way that reaches a broad audience. Although he leaves open-ended the question of Russia's longevity as an energy superpower, Goldman debates the breadth of its newfound power and questions whether it will withstand another drop in energy prices.

Karin Bennett

Russia and the Balkans: Foreign policy from Yeltsin to Putin

James Headley
(London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 552 pages.

James Headley's *Russia and the Balkans* is an analysis of the changing nature of Russia's foreign policy in the Balkan region, especially following the violent break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

To many Russians, the partition of Yugoslavia mirrored the Soviet Union's own disintegration. In addition to the similarities that captured Russians' attention, the conflict also affected Slavs and Orthodox Christians throughout the region. Headley notes that while

Russia has always maintained interests in the region, the violence in Yugoslavia intensified debates regarding the direction Russian foreign policy should take. These pressures led to the redefinition of Russia as a new nation-state. In sum, the conflict in Yugoslavia served as a turning point in Russia's own state-building process.

In tracing the historical relationship between Russia and the Balkans, Headley's book serves as a valuable resource for understanding the evolving foreign policy of Russia and goes far to explain the connection between the two.

Aiko Shimizu

Russia: A Journey to the Heart of a Land and Its People

By Jonathan Dimbleby
(United Kingdom: BBC Books, 2008), 564 pages.

An eighteen-week journey across Russia, to examine the very essence of the country itself, from Murmansk in the northwest all the way to Vladivostok in the southeast; this is the opportunity presented by the BBC to British journalist Jonathan Dimbleby. *Russia: A Journey to the Heart of a Land and Its People*, is Dimbleby's record of that trip.

His book, using casual conversations, formal interviews, and an exploration of Russian literature, de-mystifies the everyday life of the Russians he encounters. Dimbleby's greatest strength is his ability to illustrate the diverse spectrum of life in Russia, from the mountain settlement of the Altai people to the war stories of those in Dagestan to the glamorous lifestyle of business owners in Moscow. Though he never finds a common answer to the question of Russia's future, Dimbleby discovers a sense of the issues faced by every strata of life in Russia. He gauges how Russians feel about democracy, with responses varying from those longing for the days of communism to those believing that Russia is gradually implementing democratic ideals.

Unfortunately, Dimbleby's descriptions of modern Russia are often distracted by his own self-examination. From being homesick to hating travel, to a new marriage Dimbleby never stops reflecting on his own life. This often feels superfluous instead of adding value to his story. Still, providing the reader a sense of excitement about Dimbleby's encounters as he slowly moves along the Trans-Siberian Railway, the book gives an entertaining and informative glance at Russia today.

James Wesley Jeffers

Russia's Capitalist Revolution: Why Market Reform Succeeded and Democracy Failed

Anders Aslund
(Annapolis: Peterson Institute, 2007), 356 pages.

Nearly two decades after the Soviet Union's collapse, Anders Aslund's *Russia's Capitalist Revolution* explores the

failure of democracy in Russia in light of a successful movement toward capitalism. Despite the jubilant claims of Francis Fukuyama and others who heralded the victory of liberal democracy in 1991, the tectonic shifts in Russian politics since *perestroika* have not led to a blossoming of democracy. In contrast, Aslund's work alludes to a lineage of scholars who have pondered why Russia remains an anomaly within Europe, failing to liberalize at the critical historical moments that transformed the rest of the continent.

By Aslund's account, capitalism succeeded because Yelstin acted decisively to privatize industry and establish market institutions. Political reform, however, was delayed until after 1993, by which time the revolutionary euphoria had subsided. This was the crucial mistake that enabled Putin and others to re-centralize political authority. Successful revolutions are more often characterized by broad, fast strokes than detailed brushwork, and Yeltsin missed his chance for rapid political reform.

In addition to his central hypothesis, Aslund provides a thorough analysis of the turbulent period. As an interesting aside he argues that Gorbachev failed to match the success of his Chinese counterpart, Deng Xiaoping, not because of ideological stubbornness, but rather because of structural differences between Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies. Whereas the Chinese bureaucracy was wiped out by the Cultural Revolution, Gorbachev had to contend with an entrenched bureaucratic class vested with institutional powers and a material interest in stemming reform.

Aslund provides a clear and compelling account of the dynamic politics of transitional economies. His final assertion that Russia is simply too educated, too open and too rich to remain under the throes of authoritarianism, however, remains debatable. Just as it was too early for democrats to celebrate in February 1917, or for Fukuyaka in the 1990s, it may still be premature to predict the future democratization of Russia.

Matthew Rae