Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society (SPPS) Vol. 226

ISSN 1614-3515

General Editor: Andreas Umland,
Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, Kyiv, umland@stanfordalumni.org

Commissioning Editor: Max Jakob Horstmann,
London, mjh@ibidem.eu

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE*

DOMESTIC & COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Prof. **Ellen Bos**, *Andrássy University of Budapest*
Dr. **Gergana Dimova**, *University of Winchester*
Dr. **Andrey Kazantsev**, *MGIMO (U) MID RF, Moscow*
Prof. **Heiko Pleines**, *University of Bremen*
Prof. **Richard Sakwa**, *University of Kent at Canterbury*
Dr. **Sarah Whitmore**, *Oxford Brookes University*
Dr. **Harald Wydra**, *University of Cambridge*
SOCIETY, CLASS & ETHNICITY
Col. **David Glantz**, *"Journal of Slavic Military Studies"*
Dr. **Marlène Laruelle**, *George Washington University*
Dr. **Stephen Shulman**, *Southern Illinois University*
Prof. **Stefan Troebst**, *University of Leipzig*
POLITICAL ECONOMY & PUBLIC POLICY
Dr. **Andreas Goldthau**, *Central European University*
Dr. **Robert Kravchuk**, *University of North Carolina*
Dr. **David Lane**, *University of Cambridge*
Dr. **Carol Leonard**, *Higher School of Economics, Moscow*
Dr. **Maria Popova**, *McGill University, Montreal*
FOREIGN POLICY & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Dr. **Peter Duncan**, *University College London*
Prof. **Andreas Heinemann-Grüder**, *University of Bonn*
Prof. **Gerhard Mangott**, *University of Innsbruck*
Dr. **Diana Schmidt-Pfister**, *University of Konstanz*
Dr. **Lisbeth Tarlow**, *Harvard University, Cambridge*
Dr. **Christian Wipperfürth**, *N-Ost Network, Berlin*
Dr. **William Zimmerman**, *University of Michigan*
HISTORY, CULTURE & THOUGHT
Dr. **Catherine Andreyev**, *University of Oxford*
Prof. **Mark Bassin**, *Södertörn University*
Prof. **Karsten Brüggemann**, *Tallinn University*
Dr. **Alexander Etkind**, *University of Cambridge*
Dr. **Gasan Gusejnov**, *Moscow State University*
Prof. **Leonid Luks**, *Catholic University of Eichstaett*
Dr. **Olga Malinova**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Dr. **Richard Mole**, *University College London*
Prof. **Andrei Rogatchevski**, *University of Tromsø*
Dr. **Mark Tauger**, *West Virginia University*

ADVISORY BOARD*

Prof. **Dominique Arel**, *University of Ottawa*
Prof. **Jörg Baberowski**, *Humboldt University of Berlin*
Prof. **Margarita Balmaceda**, *Seton Hall University*
Dr. **John Barber**, *University of Cambridge*
Prof. **Timm Beichelt**, *European University Viadrina*
Dr. **Katrin Boeckh**, *University of Munich*
Prof. em. **Archie Brown**, *University of Oxford*
Dr. **Vyacheslav Bryukhovetsky**, *Kyiv-Mohyla Academy*
Prof. **Timothy Colton**, *Harvard University, Cambridge*
Prof. **Paul D'Anieri**, *University of Florida*
Dr. **Heike Dörrenbächer**, *Friedrich Naumann Foundation*
Dr. **John Dunlop**, *Hoover Institution, Stanford, California*
Dr. **Sabine Fischer**, *SWP, Berlin*
Dr. **Geir Flikke**, *NUPI, Oslo*
Prof. **David Galbreath**, *University of Aberdeen*
Prof. **Alexander Galkin**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Prof. **Frank Golczewski**, *University of Hamburg*
Dr. **Nikolas Gvosdev**, *Naval War College, Newport, RI*
Prof. **Mark von Hagen**, *Arizona State University*
Dr. **Guido Hausmann**, *University of Munich*
Prof. **Dale Herspring**, *Kansas State University*
Dr. **Stefani Hoffman**, *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*
Prof. **Mikhail Ilyin**, *MGIMO (U) MID RF, Moscow*
Prof. **Vladimir Kantor**, *Higher School of Economics*
Dr. **Ivan Katchanovski**, *University of Ottawa*
Prof. em. **Andrzej Korbonski**, *University of California*
Dr. **Iris Kempe**, *"Caucasus Analytical Digest"*
Prof. **Herbert Küpper**, *Institut für Ostrecht Regensburg*
Dr. **Rainer Lindner**, *CEEER, Berlin*
Dr. **Vladimir Malakhov**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Dr. **Luke March**, *University of Edinburgh*
Prof. **Michael McFaul**, *Stanford University, Palo Alto*
Prof. **Birgit Menzel**, *University of Mainz-Germersheim*
Prof. **Valery Mikhailenko**, *The Urals State University*
Prof. **Emil Pain**, *Higher School of Economics, Moscow*
Dr. **Oleg Podvintsev**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Prof. **Olga Popova**, *St. Petersburg State University*
Dr. **Alex Pravda**, *University of Oxford*
Dr. **Erik van Ree**, *University of Amsterdam*
Dr. **Joachim Rogall**, *Robert Bosch Foundation Stuttgart*
Prof. **Peter Rutland**, *Wesleyan University, Middletown*
Prof. **Marat Salikov**, *The Urals State Law Academy*
Dr. **Gwendolyn Sasse**, *University of Oxford*
Prof. **Jutta Scherrer**, *EHESS, Paris*
Prof. **Robert Service**, *University of Oxford*
Mr. **James Sherr**, *RIIA Chatham House London*
Dr. **Oxana Shevel**, *Tufts University, Medford*
Prof. **Eberhard Schneider**, *University of Siegen*
Prof. **Olexander Shnyrkov**, *Shevchenko University, Kyiv*
Prof. **Hans-Henning Schröder**, *SWP, Berlin*
Prof. **Yuri Shapoval**, *Ukrainian Academy of Sciences*
Prof. **Viktor Shnirelman**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Dr. **Lisa Sundstrom**, *University of British Columbia*
Dr. **Philip Walters**, *"Religion, State and Society", Oxford*
Prof. **Zenon Wasyliw**, *Ithaca College, New York State*
Dr. **Lucan Way**, *University of Toronto*
Dr. **Markus Wehner**, *"Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung"*
Dr. **Andrew Wilson**, *University College London*
Prof. **Jan Zielonka**, *University of Oxford*
Prof. **Andrei Zorin**, *University of Oxford*

---

* While the Editorial Committee and Advisory Board support the General Editor in the choice and improvement of manuscripts for publication, responsibility for remaining errors and misinterpretations in the series' volumes lies with the books' authors.

Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society (SPPS)

ISSN 1614-3515

Founded in 2004 and refereed since 2007, SPPS makes available affordable English-, German-, and Russian-language studies on the history of the countries of the former Soviet bloc from the late Tsarist period to today. It publishes between 5 and 20 volumes per year and focuses on issues in transitions to and from democracy such as economic crisis, identity formation, civil society development, and constitutional reform in CEE and the NIS. SPPS also aims to highlight so far understudied themes in East European studies such as right-wing radicalism, religious life, higher education, or human rights protection. The authors and titles of all previously published volumes are listed at the end of this book. For a full description of the series and reviews of its books, see www.ibidem-verlag.de/red/spps.

Editorial correspondence & manuscripts should be sent to: Dr. Andreas Umland, Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, vul. Volodymyrska 42, off. 21, UA-01030 Kyiv, Ukraine

Business correspondence & review copy requests should be sent to: ***ibidem*** Press, Leuschnerstr. 40, 30457 Hannover, Germany; tel.: +49 511 2622200; fax: +49 511 2622201; spps@ibidem.eu.

Authors, reviewers, referees, and editors for (as well as all other persons sympathetic to) SPPS are invited to join its networks at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=52638198614
www.linkedin.com/groups?about=&gid=103012
www.xing.com/net/spps-ibidem-verlag/

Recent Volumes

217 *Jakob Mischke, Oleksandr Zabirko (Hgg.)*
Protestbewegungen im langen Schatten des Kreml
Aufbruch und Resignation in Russland und der Ukraine
ISBN 978-3-8382-0926-5

218 *Oksana Huss*
How Corruption and Anti-Corruption Policies Sustain Hybrid Regimes
Strategies of Political Domination under Ukraine's Presidents in 1994-2014
With a foreword by Tobias Debiel and Andrea Gawrich
ISBN 978-3-8382-1430-6

219 *Dmitry Travin, Vladimir Gel'man, Otar Marganiya*
The Russian Path
Ideas, Interests, Institutions, Illusions
With a foreword by Vladimir Ryzhkov
ISBN 978-3-8382-1421-4

220 *Gergana Dimova*
Political Uncertainty
A Comparative Exploration
With a foreword by Todor Yalamov and Rumena Filipova
ISBN 978-3-8382-1385-9

221 *Torben Waschke*
Russland in Transition
Geopolitik zwischen Raum, Identität und Machtinteressen
Mit einem Vorwort von Andreas Dittmann
ISBN 978-3-8382-1480-1

222 *Steven Jobbitt, Zsolt Bottlik, Marton Berki (Eds.)*
Power and Identity in the Post-Soviet Realm
Geographies of Ethnicity and Nationality after 1991
ISBN 978-3-8382-1399-6

223 *Daria Buteiko*
Erinnerungsort: Ort des Gedenkens, der Erholung oder der Einkehr?
Kommunismus-Erinnerung an einem historischen Ort am Beispiel der Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer sowie des Soloveckij-Klosters und -Museumsparks
Mit einem Vorwort von Sigrit Jacobeit
ISBN 978-3-8382-1367-5

224 *Olga Bertelsen (Ed.)*
Russian Active Measures
Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
With a foreword by Jan Goldman
ISBN 978-3-8382-1529-7

225 *David Mandel*
"Optimizing" Higher Education in Russia
University Teachers and Their Union "Universitetskaya solidarnost'"
ISBN 978-3-8382-1519-8

Mikhail Minakov, Gwendolyn Sasse,
Daria Isachenko (Eds.)

POST-SOVIET SECESSIONISM

Nation-Building and State-Failure after Communism

ibidem
Verlag

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

Cover picture: © copyright 2020 by Mikhail Minakov. Printed with kind permission

ISBN-13: 978-3-8382-1538-9
© ***ibidem***-Verlag, Stuttgart 2021
Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und elektronische Speicherformen sowie die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronical, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

Printed in the EU

Contents

Mikhail Minakov, Gwendolyn Sasse and Daria Isachenko
Post-Soviet Secessionism: Introductory Remarks 7

Bruno Coppieters
Abkhazia, Transnistria and North Cyprus: Recognition and Non-Recognition in Ceasefire and Trade Agreements.................. 15

Mikhail Minakov
The World-System and Post-Soviet *De Facto* States........................ 59

Petra Colmorgen
Small State or Big Bargainer? Azerbaijan's and Georgia's Agency in Russia's and Turkey's Near Abroad 113

Gwendolyn Sasse and Alice Lackner
War and State-Making in Ukraine: Forging a Civic Identity from Below?.. 161

Nataliia Kasianenko
Internal Legitimacy and Governance in the Absence of Recognition: The Cases of the Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics" 191

Jan Claas Behrends
Post-Soviet Separatism in Historical Perspective......................... 213

Our Authors 243

Index.. 247

Post-Soviet Secessionism
Introductory Remarks

Mikhail Minakov, Gwendolyn Sasse and Daria Isachenko

In spite of development of international and global institutions, the modern state remains a powerful construct as the legitimate means of political organization and the exclusive location of political authority. Contemporary states went through a long process of institutionalization marked by the milestones like the Westphalian peace, age of the world imperial system, The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, decolonization, Helsinki treaty, and globalization. Despite this long history, the modern state system does not fully deliver on its promise of order and security, and often leads to contestation of territorial integrity and alternative claims to sovereignty. Such claims occur within existing recognized states from groups which feel themselves excluded and prefer to aspire to their own statehood and international status. By implication, competing claims to statehood can turn into seemingly ‘frozen conflicts’, as local authorities embark upon their state-building projects in the absence of international recognition, while still participating in peace talks.

Contemporary Europe has evolved into a complex and contradictory set of states within an international order at risk. In the last three decades, the political geography of the European continent has been shaped by two simultaneous, yet contradictory processes. On the one hand, West European countries have undergone a deep, peaceful and comprehensive integration, which has resulted in the creation of a political centre in the form of the European Union (EU) and a more balanced redistribution of power between the Union and national and local governments. (As Brexit, Scotland’s referendum attempts, and Catalonian separatism show, EU did not solve all center-periphery issues, however it created legal and political frameworks for peaceful resolution of any secession attempt). On the other hand, Eastern European countries have witnessed the disintegration of complex state and regional unions, such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the USSR. In the former Eastern Bloc, the collapse of the old political institutions has stimulated an upsurge of nationalism and conservatism, resulting in the creation of newly independent, recognised states. Moreover, it has ignited irredentist and secessionist movements, which in some cases have led to the creation of de facto states.

The USSR is a good case in point here. Its dissolution resulted in the creation of fifteen new recognised states and four non-recognized statelets (Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria). These polities comprise a stable network with state-like elements that have been contesting the territorial integrity of the parental states (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova) since the early 1990ies. Each of these state-like entities has its peculiar forms of legitimacy and political economy and demonstrates systemic dependence on their sponsor states (Russia and Armenia).

Even though the post-Soviet state-like entities were long regarded as a security threat limited to Caucasus and Eastern Europe, they have developed into a source of secessionist practices and ideologies that have proliferated across parts of the continent, eventually becoming a factor of attraction for secessionist movements in Ukraine and other European countries. For example, before 2008, the population of Nagorni Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria was approximately one million while their governments were under international sanctions and were not recognised by other states. After the Russian-Georgian War in 2008, South Ossetia and Abkhazia enlarged their territories while obtaining partial recognition from states such as Russia, Nicaragua and Syria. In 2014, the outburst of Russian-backed secessionist movements in Donbas led to the creation of two more parastates, the Donetsk People Republic (DNR) and Luhansk People Republic (LNR), whose leadership used the state- and nation-building experience of the 'older' de facto states to institutionalise their own secessionist endeavours. As of today, this growing network of de facto states counts a population of over 4 million people. Furthermore, horizontal ties between the six de facto post-Soviet nations are growing at the level of government, trade unions and local communities while Western European secessionist movements and their activists are ardently involved in the political and military processes in Donbas.

How can we explain the evolution of post-Soviet secessionism from a phenomenon of regional importance to one that may have a bigger impact on EU member-states and their stability?

So far, studies of post-Soviet and post-communist secessionism have adopted either a macro- or micro-political approach. A group of scholars considered post-Soviet secessionism to be a part of the bigger process of transition from the Soviet Union to post-Soviet states, suggesting that smaller ethnic groups managed to secede from their mother states by using the contradictions between bigger national players. Moving from a traditional nation-state perspective, V. Tishkov (1997), N. Bougai (1996), R. Sunny and T. Martin (2001), and R. Brubaker (2011) posited that contemporary interethnic conflicts and secessionism in the region have their roots in Soviet nationality policies. However, others, such as T. De Waal (2003), D. Aphraidze & D. Siroky (2011), C. Ciobanu (2008), Ch. Zürcher (2007) and J. Hughes and G. Sasse (2011), paid more attention to the mistakes made by the elites of the new independent states, which led to interethnic clashes, secessions and frozen conflicts.

Another group of scholars focused on the internal dynamics among the populations living in the de facto states, seeking to understand how individuals, communities and economies manage to survive under the combined pressure of external sanctions and internal autocratic or warlordist regimes. V. Kolossov & J. O'Loughlin (2011), P. Kolstø (2006) and S. Fischer (2016) suggest that after almost thirty years of existence, the Eastern European de facto states evolved into a specific political reality that has its own shared political culture, model of development and peculiar role in the pan-European political environment.

There is also a tendency in secessionism studies to endorse a narrative that characterises post-Soviet secessionism as a uniquely Eastern European phenomenon. Similarly, scholars of Western European secessionist movements, such as L. Hooghe (1995), A. Bourne (2014), D. Muro and M. Vlaskamp (2016) underestimate the growing linkages between Eastern and Western European separatists.

To address this issue and to draw attention to different dimensions of secessionism in Eastern European—as well as larger Europe's—contexts, the Ideology and Politics Journal published a special multilingual issue in 2019 (Minakov, Sasse and Isachenko 2019). The issue focused on the analysis of the complex relationships between parental states and sponsor states with unrecognized statelets in the East and West of Europe as well as the internal state-building challenges in the paternal states.

After the publication of the issue, the academic discussion continued and evolved into this volume. This book consists of papers from the published IPJ issue, some of them updated, as well as new contributions that jointly address a number of important questions. How do post-Soviet de facto states survive and continue to grow? Is there anything specific about the political ecology of Eastern Europe that provides secessionism with the possibility to launch state-making processes in spite of international sanctions and counteractions of their parental states? How are these secessionist movements embedded in a wider network of separatism in Eastern and Western Europe? And what is the impact of secessionism and war on the parental states?

This book starts with the article written by Bruno Coppieters. The author argues that seceded authorities and parental states countering secession may enter into negotiations with regard to a ceasefire or some trade agreements without implying the recognition of statehood. Coppieters shows how such processes of communication regarding the non-use of force and trade lead to the de-escalation of conflicts, but do not suspend political contestation. Which means that policies of recognition and non-recognition provide the conflicting parties with tools to defend their statuses and identities, as well as to preserve or to strengthen international security. In his article, Coppieters refers to the cases of recognition- and non-recognition-policies regarding Abkhazia, North Cyprus and Transdniestria.

In the second chapter, Mikhail Minakov applies a world-system analysis to define the status of post-Soviet non-recognised states. The author argues that these non-recognised states constitute an 'extreme periphery' in relation to 'the global centre.' In the decades after the dissolution of the USSR, these breakaway territories or communities turned into a fairly stable network of polities that oppose international law and the global order. This opposition creates a state model that has proved to be sustainable in spite of conflicts and sanctions, and that proliferates across Europe. Minakov also shows how the establishment of the two non-recognised statelets of the so-called 'Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Lugansk People's Republic' was affected not only by the political, military and economic sponsorship of Russia, but also benefitted from cooperation with the 'governments' and societies of Transnistria and Abkhazia. This leads the author to the conclusion that the states on the 'extreme periphery' tend to cooperate and proliferate regardless of international law and order.

In the third chapter, Petra Colmorgen analyses the parental states facing challenges to their sovereignty. The chapters focuses on Azerbaijan and Georgia in their entangled relations to the de facto statelets and communities living in the non-controlled territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and in neighbouring Russia and Turkey. Both parental states share fundamental similarities as peripheral states whose sovereignty has been compromised. But, at the same time, their foreign policy objectives in their relations with Russia and Turkey differ significantly. Emphasizing the ability to exert influence instead of focusing solely on the weakness of smaller states, Colmorgen demonstrates Azerbaijan's and Georgia's agency in dealing with their powerful neighbours.

In the fourth chapter, Gwendolyn Sasse and Alice Lackner revisit the famous dictum of Charles Tilly about the link between war-making and state-making. Based on original survey data from 2017 and 2018, Sasse and Lackner analyse Ukrainian society amidst the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine, a case of secessionism encouraged and supported by neighbouring Russia. The authors identify a significant shift towards a civic identity centered on the Ukrainian polity, which contradicts the official Ukrainian state rhetoric at the time which focused on a narrower ethno-linguistic definition of the Ukrainian nation and its state. Thus, war does not necessarily increase polarization but can instead encourage a civic sense of belonging.

In the fifth chapter of this book, Nataliia Kasianenko contributes to an examination of the strategies used by the self-proclaimed governments of the 'Donetsk People's Republic' and the 'Luhansk People's Republic' for achieving internal legitimacy. The author reviews how the two regimes use direct democracy for their purposes in the eastern Ukraine. Kasianenko argues that it is possible to attain legitimacy in the absence of external recognition and sovereignty. She shows that the two de facto authorities managed to gain some level of internal legitimacy due to the provision of basic public goods and services for the residents of the non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine.

In a concluding essay Jan Claas Behrends argues that the key to understanding post-Soviet separatism lies in the 20th century history of international and civil conflicts that shaped the unstable geopolitical order in Eastern Europe. The long-term driving force of this underlying instability is the dialectical relationship between nationalist and imperial politics. This dialectic helps to contrast post-Soviet secessionism with examples from Europe and other post-colonial settings.

We hope that our book with its discussion of secessionism challenges will encourage a wider research community to develop more nuanced perspectives on state-dissolving and -building processes in Eastern Europe and to see Europe as one region where macro- and meso-political processes are interconnected rather than being clearly separated into "east" and "west".

Bibliography

Aphrasidze, D., & Siroky, D. (2011). Frozen Transitions and Unfrozen Conflicts, or What went Wrong in Georgia. *Yale Journal of International Affairs* 5: 120–129.

Bougai, N. (1996). *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union*. NY: Nova Publishers.

Bourne, A. K. (2014). Europeanization and secession: The cases of Catalonia and Scotland. *JEMIE* 13: 94–120.