

Book reviews

underlying issues. The second part provides evidence from the review on the single market; sectoral, economic, monetary and social policies; justice; home affairs; education; research; culture; as well as external relations, including foreign and security policy, development cooperation, humanitarian aid and enlargement. The second part concludes with analyses of general issues including voting, consular services, statistics, and subsidiarity and proportionality.

The contributors conclude that the UK has key interests in extending the single market, as well as in other European policy areas including research, education and health care. Furthermore, although the British are rather unhappy about the 2004 EU enlargement, which has made immigration a sensitive topic, the free movement of people has been beneficial to British employers and many Britons who have worked abroad in the EU. Lastly, the UK has opted out of policies not in its interest, including the eurozone and Schengen. Equally important, the book concludes that gradual reform is the most practical solution for addressing British concerns, provided that the UK becomes one of the more active drivers of change. All things considered, although exit from the EU is legally practical, it would risk the loss of guaranteed access to the single market and is not politically in the UK's best interest.

As both the review and the book were published prior to the 2015 general election, they don't fully reflect the gravity of the situation in the run-up to the referendum or recent developments such as the rise of the Scottish National Party and the possible effects of the Panama Papers.

In conclusion, although the book under review addresses the British question, its content and extensive analyses are pertinent for other member states facing Euroscepticism at home. The book can be highly recommended to all those who are interested in questions around European integration.

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Russia and Eurasia

Russia's Far East: new dynamics in Asia Pacific and beyond. By Rensselaer Lee and Artyom Lukin. London: Lynne Rienner. 2015. 276pp. £66.50. ISBN 978 162637 389 1.

Since the collapse of relations with the West in 2014, Russia has escalated its engagement with Asia. Analyses of the prospects for this pivot have focused on Russia's capacity to meet Asian interests, the resources and instruments that support this policy, and Russia's credibility as an Asian power given its historic Eurocentrism. Less discussed is the fact of Russia's enormous territorial presence in Asia. While Russia now seeks to project influence across the continent, it has long comprised a major part of it. What role do Russia's Asian possessions play in its Asia policy? Conversely, what influence could Asian powers' engagement with these lands have on Russia?

Rensselaer Lee and Artyom Lukin's excellent primer on Russia's Far East will inform and enrich these debates. A welcome collaboration of two leading American and Russian scholars, the book explores the history, economics, international relations and possible futures of the Far Eastern Federal District. This vast territory, comprising 36 per cent of Russian's territory but only 4 per cent of its population and GDP, is, they argue, both an asset and a liability, combining great promise with chronic underdevelopment.

The liabilities are obvious. Of Russia's eight federal districts, the Far East faces the harshest climate and the lowest level of development, and has the worst life expectancy. Since 1990 the population has fallen by 23 per cent, a consequence not only of national

demographic decline but of out-migration—disproportionately of the younger and more skilled—to western Russian. Crime rates are also high by national standards. This is, the authors conclude, a ‘region of troubles’.

The assets are no less clear. Great energy and mineral wealth lies under this sparse and difficult terrain close to the rapidly growing markets of east Asia. The Sakhalin energy projects, which include Russia’s first liquid natural gas facility, show what can be achieved when foreign capital and technology are granted the conditions to work effectively. More typically, though, the difficult bureaucratic environment compounds the natural one. Governance is Moscow-centric: the tsar may be far away, but his *vertikal* has embedded dysfunctions that hinder development: a ‘neo-feudalism’ that prizes loyalty over competence; entrenched corruption; and a deep ambivalence towards opening the Far East to wider regional cooperation.

China is inevitably the focus of such cooperation and its attendant anxieties. Yet while China is now its dominant trading partner, Europe was until very recently the principal investor. Even now, Chinese investments in the region remain trivial compared with those of the EU and Japan. One major reason has been Russia’s reluctance to support them; nor has any Russian oligarch conducted significant business with China. This is now changing. Russia has signalled its willingness to allow Chinese companies to acquire major stakes in projects, including in the energy sector. The growth of planned cooperation in other sectors has created what the authors note is now ‘the most extensive intergovernmental dialogue mechanism that Russia maintains with any major country’. How far these plans will be delivered remains to be seen. One litmus test is the Zarubino port complex which, if successful, will grant China long-coveted access to the Sea of Japan.

But local attitudes remain deeply ambivalent, seeing China both as the most significant partner and the greatest threat. Strikingly, there have been no champions of closer ties with China among the region’s political elite, which has, if anything, played up Chinese designs on Russian territory. The border between the two countries was not stabilized until the mid-nineteenth century, and some Chinese and Manchu place-names were only Russified in the early 1970s following Sino-Soviet border clashes. The authors, though, discount the prospect of Chinese migratory, let alone more overt, expansion, noting that China’s demographic dynamics are likely to ease such pressures over time. Less remote is the prospect that a closer economic relationship could deepen Chinese influence. The Russian Far East as ‘Outer Manchuria’ is one of the scenarios discussed at the end of the book. Alternatives include ‘perpetual backwater’ and ‘an area of international economic cooperation and integration’. This last scenario, optimistic in the shorter term, recognizes that China is not the only important external actor. America’s role in Asia, and its own evolving relationship with China, are an inevitable part of the context. Post-Crimea relations have damaged US–Russian cooperation in the Pacific, while sanctions have hurt investment. Japan’s territorial dispute with Russia also remains a hindrance to closer ties.

This book is a clear, compact and comprehensive introduction to the Russian Far East and its position in the international system. The many perspectives it offers will give both western and Russian readers alike much to ponder. Two larger conclusions emerge. First, the Russian Far East remains a blank spot in the Pacific Rim economy. In defiance of economic geography in a globalized era, it contributes to and benefits little from the emerging epicentre of global business activity. Second, and despite growing official support for regional development, there is currently little real political will to overcome domestic obstacles and suspicions.

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