due to his various xenophobic remarks, but as Condee asks, “what kind of nationalism is founded on the recurrent desire to ‘make only negative things’?” (218). Traces of empire can be found in most of his work, but most insistently in *Brat* (Brother, 1997), *Brat 2* (Brother 2, 2000), and *War*, given their obsessions with Chechnia and its aftermath. “In *War*, as in *Brother 2*, the geopolitical conflict is played out across global expanses . . . in a permanent war to fend off vulnerabilities left from imperial collapse” (226). Unlike the other directors, perhaps because he is the only one whose entire oeuvre is post-Soviet, he is alone in directly challenging Hollywood’s hegemony, in part by adopting the tropes of the Hollywood action film to convey a very different message. Condee sees in Balabanov’s cinema, “a kind of provocative crypto-imperialism,” with his “disdain for ethnic minorities” and “pugnacious appetite for cultural dominance” (242).

But Condee’s theories about the vestiges of empire in recent Russian cinema do not apply only to the films of popular directors. As she shows, they apply equally well to Sokurov. In his work, “the figure of the empire . . . serves as a recurring interpretative frame” (160). His celebrated *Russkii kovcheg* (Russian ark, 2002), with its unbroken tour through imperial Russian history and culture, is perhaps the best example. Also key to Condee’s interpretation of his work are the three finished films in his “tetralogy of power”: *Molokh* (1999), *Taurus* (2000), and *Solntse* (The sun, 2004), about Adolf Hitler, Lenin, and Hirohito, respectively. In all these works, but especially in *Russian Ark*, we can see Sokurov’s belief in “historical continuity over rupture, empire over federation, elite culture over mass culture” (174–75). What has survived the “Soviet deluge” in his cinema is “gilt and marble Russia” (177), not the Russia of wood churches, sour cabbage, and baste slippers.

In sum, *The Imperial Trace* is hands down the most thought-provoking book that I have read in quite some time. It is as well (and wittily) written as it is thoroughly researched and skillfully argued, no mean feat given the complexity of the ideas therein. This superb book is essential reading for anyone interested in nations and empire and their cultural manifestations, in Russian cultural politics, and in late Soviet and contemporary Russian film.

**Denise J. Youngblood**

*University of Vermont*

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Some twenty years after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there is still no definitive understanding of the post-Soviet states’ international behavior. Some scholars have emphasized their historical experience and national identity; others have focused on the domestic regimes’ characteristics; and still others have highlighted the impact of the region’s international environment. Nor is there a consensus on the post-Soviet trajectories themselves. The debate ranges from those who believe that the newly independent states are increasingly becoming part of the western world to those who tend to view their independence as a temporary phenomenon resulting from Russia’s weakness. Given the economic, political, and geostrategic significance of the region, it is critical that we continue to strive to gain a better understanding of the states and nations that populate it.
This book by Keith A. Darden is important as a systematic effort to respond to this range of views using evidence gathered in most of the former Soviet states over the first decade of their existence. It is not the first such effort, yet it differs from others in several important respects. First, it is more ambitious than others in terms of geographic coverage and the depth of empirical research. The author conducted some two hundred interviews with policymakers in eight critically important countries of the region to gain insight into the formation of policy beliefs. Case narratives cover all fifteen states. In addition, Darden applied a number of statistical tests to verify his ideas-based explanation of the post-Soviet trajectories relative to likely rivals, such as state interests, identity, and the drive for greater security. Second, the book focuses on international economic institutions emerging out of the Soviet Union, rather than state economic policies or patterns of regional alignments. If they take root, institutions structure state activities for years to come, serving as reliable predictors of the post-Soviet nations' future behavior.

Darden's central claim is that the former Soviet republics have followed three distinct trajectories and institutional choices. The first group, exemplified by the Baltic states, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan, has opted for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The second group, which includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, formed the Customs Union by adopting the common external tariff. Finally, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan joined neither of these organizations, thereby pursuing an autarchic path.

Unlike the previously posited explanations of post-Soviet behavior that emphasized national identity and international threats, Darden places at the center of his analysis policymakers' economic ideas in each state since 1991. Darden adopts a basic assumption of social constructivism according to which people act on ideas, rather than on an objective understanding of reality. When political elites among several countries share a set of economic ideas, they create an intellectual basis for developing a particular form of international institution. The book identifies three types of economic thinking—liberal, Soviet integralist, and mercantilist. The liberals believed in rational competition and open markets and therefore opposed any exclusive arrangements, such as the Customs Union, or autarchic paths. By contrast, the integralists advocated joint solutions to the post-Soviet economic crisis and argued that forming an economic union would be in the best interests of the formerly Soviet states. Finally, the mercantilists rejected regional institutions as a threat to their interests but also felt uncomfortable with the liberal idea of free-market competition. The mercantilist policymakers therefore advanced protectionist barriers, specialization schemes, and, in general, maintained a high degree of state intervention in the economy.

The argument is compelling, yet not without problems. One important issue is how one defines institutional choices in the region. For example, can liberalism, integralism, and mercantilism be meaningfully separated from one another and studied as independent phenomena, or does post-Soviet behavior show us some combination of these patterns? For example, a number of Russian liberals are hardly alien to integralist thinking in their advocacy of the so-called liberal empire in post-Soviet Eurasia. Anatolii Chubais, a key architect of privatization

1. For others, see, for example, Rawi Abdelal, National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet Cases in Comparative Perspective (Ithaca, 2001); Andrei P. Tsygankov, Pathways after Empire: National Identity and Foreign Economic Policy in the Post-Soviet World (Lanham, Md., 2001); Eric A. Miller, To Balance or Not to Balance: Alignment Theory and the Commonwealth of Independent States (Burlington, Vt., 2006).
reform and a prominent leader of Russia’s Union of Right Forces, believes in exercising Russian market-based domination in the region, an idea that is just as liberal as it is hegemonic and is akin to the theory of hegemonic stability developed by realist scholars of international political economy. Similarly, can integralism be fully separated from mercantilism when both are involved in discriminatory practices against free-market environment? Furthermore, the so-called liberal choices that were most consistently adopted by the Baltic states bear a significant nationalist imprint. Opting out of regional financial and commercial arrangements with Russia was hardly a liberal choice on the part of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. It came with a high price for their Russia-dependent domestic producers and required a considerable degree of state intervention in the economy. The underlying idea behind this intervention was a desire to minimize security risks from trading with the former metropole. As Latvia’s Foreign Minister Valdis Birkavs summarized his thinking in terms of relative gains and security risks involved: “Let the volume of trade with Russia increase, but let the relative share of Russia in our total trade decrease.” Finally, how do you conceptualize those who, like Ukraine, followed more than one international trajectory by first pursuing a seemingly autarchic path under President Leonid Kravchuk, but then reversing course in favor of a mixture of liberalism and integralism under Leonid Kuchma?

Second, can one separate policymakers’ ideas from ideas of a nation or national identities? Darden argues that “the causes of ideational selection are contingent and idiosyncratic rather than systematic” (17), criticizing the so-called holistic or “bottom-up” constructivist approaches that seek to identify the social sources of individual policymakers’ ideas. Although the strong version of holistic constructivism discounts variations in individual beliefs held by policymakers, the problem with the individualistic account Darden defends is that it offers no clear theory of ideas’ origins. These ideas’ sources may be idiosyncratic, but is it merely a coincidence that the “liberal” thinkers in the Baltics, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan emerged in the context of trying to liberate their nations from potential and historically perceived security threats presented by Russia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan? As independent as economic ideas might be, they are formed in specific social and international contexts.

Third, does it make sense to study the behavior of the fifteen states in the region without placing Russia in a special category—as a regionally constitutive state given its historical status, economic significance, and military power? The author devotes a mere six pages to describing Russia’s institutional choice—the same space devoted to Belarus and only half the space given to Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Yet it is Russia that will largely shape the future of the region, not Belarus or even Ukraine. The Customs Union may survive only if Russia chooses to continue developing the arrangement, and only to the extent it does not interfere with Russia’s plans to join the WTO. The special case of Russia calls for greater attention to economic power-based explanations of the post-Soviet institutional choices. Darden’s analysis is largely based on developments during the 1990s when the weak and fragmented Russia was in no position to pursue a coherent state strategy of consolidating its hard and soft power in the region. The situation began to change under Vladimir Putin when his “liberal” decision to erode the economic foundations of the Commonwealth of Independent States by raising energy prices was mainly informed by economic power and security

considerations. That Russia thinks in liberal hegemonic, rather than merely liberal, terms may have far-reaching consequences for the region and its members' future institutional choices.

The questions raised are not intended to detract from Darden's impressive scholarship, which greatly enhances our understanding of the Eurasian region and international economic institutions in general. Although the book does not provide a definitive judgment of the post-Soviet trajectories, it adds to our knowledge in a meaningful and profound way. The book teaches us not to overlook individual ideas and their role in economic policymaking and encourages us to deepen our investigation of the international decisions made by Russia and the other former Soviet states.

Andrei Tsygankov
San Francisco State University


The contemporary literature on civil war is reminiscent of the pre-1991 field of Soviet and eastern European studies when outsiders accused scholars of producing merely area studies and insiders criticized them for applying theories developed elsewhere that ran roughshod over the characteristics and theoretical import of the region. Serious scholarship is emerging through case studies, but the interpretive frameworks and research questions that get the most attention come from the policy world and its generalized templates for intervention.

In the past decade, the most popular of these frameworks has been civil war as crime—caused by the opportunity for illicit gain; prolonged through criminalized war economies of looting, trafficking, and smuggling; and perpetuated by a postwar trajectory obstructed by “warlords,” organized crime and corruption, and a criminalized state. The stimulus for what is now a policy preoccupation at the United Nations and among donors such as USAID was surely the World Bank research project on the Economics of Crime, Violence, and Civil War led by Paul Collier from 1996 to 2006 and the World Bank’s anticorruption office (still going strong under the current president, Robert Zoellick, and complemented by a new Rule of Law division at the United Nations peacekeeping department). Behind those initiatives, however, one can see a particular European and American literature from the 1990s on the African state (as “criminalized” or even run by warlords), a British literature on war economies, and another on the contribution (“famine crimes”) of humanitarian organizations, also concerned with Africa.

The popularity of Blue Helmets and Black Markets is thus easy to explain. The distant relation between its research question and framing, on the one hand, and the accumulated knowledge about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992–1995, on the other, also illustrates the tension with which this review begins. Reading Peter Andreas’s story is an additional journey of nostalgia for those of us who lived through the first year and a half of the Bosnian war and the international intervention that are its subject. The stereotype of the evil Serbs laying siege to Sarajevo, the anger at the United Nations for imposing an arms embargo and then only sending humanitarian aid (“sending peacekeepers where there was no peace to keep” was the common refrain in the “lift and strike” campaign—lift the arms embargo and bomb the Serbs), the heroism of the criminals whom