

I know little about pre-Soviet Russian constitutionalism, and was interested to read just how regularly political elites pursued constitutional projects and how enthusiastic the writers of new constitutions were in responding (and how often they paid the price of producing a proposal that did need meet with the approval of the tsar). Given that parenthetical comment, it is perhaps not surprising they were rather timid in pandering to Russia's 'special', that is, authoritarian characteristics. Despite the interest in the constitutions of other nations, the perceived need to acknowledge the uniqueness of Russia was very strong among both those ordering and those writing the new constitutions. While this was interesting to a non-specialist in the period, I was frustrated by how little was actually said about the constitutional drafts the author mentioned or the historical context in which they were prepared.

As for the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, of which the reviewer did have some pre-existing knowledge and understanding, this book did not add to either. The coverage of the post-Soviet period brought home to me just how lightly referenced, particularly to the secondary literature, the book is. Although, for example, the author appears to be aware of the debate over parliamentarism versus presidentialism, especially semi-presidentialism, he cites none of the literature. (He does occasionally mention names in the text, but there are rarely citations of their actual work.)

The relatively small number of people working directly in area covered by the book might feel the need to read it and might extract some value from it, but I cannot recommend it to a more general reader wanting to learn about Russian political development and the role of constitutions and constitutionally determined structures within it.

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Atsushi Ogushi, *The Demise of the Soviet Communist Party* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 218 pp.

Atsushi Ogushi's *The Demise of the Soviet Communist Party* is the latest work published by Routledge on behalf of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), and as such presents another highly-focused,

research-based analysis. The BASEES/Routledge series has produced some fine works which combine original research, careful analysis, and clear prose. Unfortunately, *The Demise of the Soviet Communist Party* is not one of them.

*The Demise of the Soviet Communist Party* analyses the workings and failings of the CPSU party apparatus, and its part in the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ogushi investigates the reasons behind the need for party reform and whether the possibility of party reform existed. His study is presented as an institutional analysis reminiscent of Graeme Gill's *The Collapse of a Single-Party System*, albeit with a focus on the CPSU party apparatus rather than the political system as a whole, and relying on new archival research rather than old print media. Ogushi's primary contribution is his use of party budgets to assist in identifying reasons for the decline and 'implosion' of the CPSU.

This is not a book for novices to the field of Soviet political science. A self-described 'dry' study filled with voluminous archival data and highly-detailed analysis, this book was clearly derived from a dissertation. Ogushi devotes little space to the ramifications of his argument, and even less to the broader significance of his subject matter. Of greater concern to the reader than the arid subject matter will be the inarticulate prose. This book should not have been published in its present form. This author understands that Ogushi's text has been transliterated from Japanese using the Hepburn system. Whether due to flaws in this system or the unreliability of transliteration in general, *The Demise of the Soviet Communist Party* is remarkable for its lack of clarity. The prose is distinguished by the insertion of unnecessary, incorrect, or misplaced articles and prepositions, and misuse of tenses. Worse, Ogushi consistently confuses the opinions of others with his own, presents highly contestable statements as matters of fact, and many of his lines of argument are ambiguous if not bizarre and occasionally nonsensical. For example, although it is clear from the outset that Ogushi is not a Marxist-Leninist, in his introduction he describes the 'Marxist and Leninist doctrine' as being 'the only legitimate ideology'. The reader can only assume that Ogushi means to say that *within the USSR* Marxist and Leninist doctrine was *widely considered to be* the only legitimate ideology.

These flaws are not fatal during the detailed analysis of party structure, but the broader implications of Ogushi's research are poorly argued and far from convincing. This is, unsurprisingly, nowhere more evident than in the conclusion, where in his penultimate paragraph Ogushi argues that 'theorists, therefore, consistently

attempt to broaden the validity of their theories. It turns into a large N syndrome now.' Sadly, Ogushi never explains what either 'it' or 'a large N syndrome' are, how and why one turns into the other, and why this change is happening now instead of some other time. We may, as Ogushi finally states, be 'standing at the ideal point for understanding what the Soviet system was, and why and how it collapsed,' but we will certainly not make any progress by trying to make sense out of large portions of Ogushi's analysis.

The study is structured around the temporal sequence of political change as employed by Juan Linz and formulated by Karl Dietrich Bracher. Bracher's four-part sequence comprises crisis, loss of power, power vacuum, and power takeover. Ogushi makes a reasonable case in depicting the 'implosion' of the CPSU under this sequence, and his argument that the collapse was engendered by the party's inability to maintain both its own monolithic unity and its monopolistic control over society is interesting if somewhat unclear.

The book also contains brief evaluations of various theories of political structure and political change. Ogushi concisely summarises and applies 'international explanations', transitology, civil society theory, modernisation theory, new institutionalism, and Marxism to the Soviet case, yet too often these analyses are confusingly brief and highly questionable.

The great strength of this work is the research. Ogushi has accumulated a vast array of material, some of it original, to support his analysis. Much of this material will be of great use to subsequent scholars who analyse the intricate details of the Soviet collapse. This book is useful as a repository for archival evidence which would otherwise remain beyond the ken of readers unable or unwilling to conduct their own archival research. *The Demise of the Soviet Communist Party* will be of interest only to those political scientists who are prepared to sift through the scrappy prose for skerricks of lucid analysis.

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Serhii Plokhyy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xx + 391 pp.