

The Russian Project of Eurasian Integration: Geopolitical Prospects. By Nataliya A. Vasilyeva and Maria L. Lagutina. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. ix, 215 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$90.00, hard bound.
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Eurasian integration, which returned into the spotlight after the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), continues being an under-researched topic. Nataliya Vasilyeva and Maria Lagutina's book aims to remedy this phenomenon. It comprises three parts. The first looks at the predecessors of the EAEU, starting with discussing the notion of the "post-Soviet area" (Chapter 1); highlights the general trends of integration and disintegration in the post-Soviet world (Chapter 2); and lists main treaties and projects (Chapter 3). The second part reports how the discussion

on post-Soviet regionalism transformed into one on Eurasian regionalism: it outlines the concept of Eurasia (Chapter 4), its current political perception (Chapter 5), and the expert opinions about it (Chapter 6). The last part deals specifically with the EAEU: after summarizing its main features (Chapter 7) it looks at how the EAEU is perceived in individual countries (Chapter 8), how it fits the geopolitical interests of Russia (Chapter 9) and concludes with studying possible expansion of the EEU and its interaction with other regional organizations (Chapter 10).

Given the breadth of the topics touched upon in the book, it is probably important to start with what the book—contrary to its ambition—is *not* about. Readers interested in the empirical analysis of the development of Eurasian regionalism will be disappointed. The book offers only a very short and stylized summary of the main facts and not a careful tracing of the evolution of Eurasian organizations. The chapter devoted to the actual organization of the EAEU (Chapter 7) is only four pages long and provides no original analysis of how the institutions of the EAEU work or what the EAEU has achieved in reality. How does the practice of litigation in the EAEU Court or decision-making in the Eurasian Economic Commission function? How substantial is the compliance of member states with the Commission's decisions and the EAEU statute? The book does not discuss any evidence of the effects of Eurasian regionalism on trade flows, international conflicts, or economic growth, though it ascribes "historical significance" (128) to it. Furthermore, the analysis of the book is fundamentally a-theoretical and is lacking any sort of comparison to the experience of regional projects in other parts of the world, which is essential for understanding the Eurasian case.

What the book *does* is to provide an extensive account of different views, positions, and opinions on Eurasian regionalism. Thus, it is primarily an exercise in studying how Eurasian regionalism (and especially the EAEU) is perceived by epistemic communities rather than an exercise in studying Eurasian regionalism itself. This task certainly has a lot of value. Unfortunately, in terms of this objective, one should mention a number of shortcomings. First, the authors do not really differentiate between the expert opinions of researchers and policy analysts from the statements of politicians. They also seem to pay little attention to whether the claims they quote are the result of detailed scholarly analysis, practitioners' observations, or mere comments on current affairs. The underlying ideologies of the analysts are ignored as well. This results in paradoxical listings of "experts," where Hillary Clinton suddenly appears among academics and policy analysts (114). There is no information on the background of most individuals quoted in the book, nor do the authors critically examine the quotes they provide—in most cases, they simply list them without further discussion. Secondly, by analyzing political debate, the book seems to proceed from an assumption that it is always guided by a coherent set of theories—that one can find a "theoretical platform" (94) behind Putin's writing on the EAEU, for example. This assumption is questionable. A much more likely explanation, that politicians—both in making public statements and in decisions—are driven by power and rent-seeking interests or merely react to the short-term issues they face, is absent.

The book has to be commended for assembling a large array of statements and quotes on Eurasian regionalism, especially from the Russian-language sources, which will be unfamiliar to many readers. However, the value of the book in terms of both theory-driven empirical analysis of Eurasian regionalism and systematization of the existing debate on Eurasian regionalism is rather small.

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