Book Discussion

Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw, *Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017)

Accepted version of a book review published in *Central Asian Affairs*:
Kassenova, Nargis. " Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw, Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017)", *Central Asian Affairs* 5, 3 (2018): 275-287.

A "Glocal" Lense on Today's Central Asia

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Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia is an excellent book with many merits. It offers a "glocal" frame of analysis connecting North and South, East and West that makes it of interest to scholars of Central Asia and beyond. It is thoroughly researched and exciting to read. The authors collected rich data and masterfully combined it into a puzzle that serves as an eye-opener even to those who closely follow regional affairs. Crucially, it gives us a "very modern story of Central Asia," breaking away from the traditional Orientalism-tinted views of its politics. As Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw state in the preface, they were not interested in "pre-modern themes" of clans, Islamism, and ethnic conflicts. Instead, what they set out to do was to show how quickly Central Asian elites learnt to use and abuse modern global systems, institutions and regimes, how connected and comfortable they are in the world of global high-tech finance, and how savvy some of them have become in the world of high politics.

This rapid learning has taken place within a span of one or two generations. If one compares the photos of Central Asian elites at the dawn of independence in the early 1990s with recent ones, it is impossible not to marvel at the speed and quality of the makeover. Exceptionally well-dressed and well- groomed, current elites are fine specimens of conspicuous consumption on a global scale. They know how to acquire top real estate in expensive parts of the world, where to move their money, and with whom to socialize.

What can explain this marvelous makeover and Central Asian elites' effective management of the riches they have amassed (in contrast to their apparently limited capacity to manage their respective countries)? *Dictators Without Borders* offers a compelling explanation and provides rich illustrations of the process. The West offers Central Asian elites a developed and well-oiled

doi 10.1163/22142290-00503005

infrastructure of international law firms, banks, and pr companies to support them in overseeing their fortunes and integrating with global elites. To borrow a lyric from the film *Cabaret*, "money makes the world go round" for them. Private interest is a powerful driver indeed.

For all its academic virtues, *Dictators Without Borders* is more than an academic book. It offers a harsh critique of current international practices and structures, even providing a set of concrete policy recommendations for how to confront "dictators without borders" and their enablers. Cooley and Heathershaw rightly see civil society as the key force in the battle. They recommend that civil society organizations and representatives be trained to confront new extraterritorial legal practices employed by states thorough international organizations such as Interpol and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. To keep up with their dictators, civil society groups and representatives need to become savvy and develop their understanding of the ways of the world.

As academics, developments in the knowledge production community re- main close to the authors' hearts. They advocate for more transparency on the part of universities and think tanks, pressing them to be open about their funding sources in order to increase the negative consequences of accepting money from authoritarian regimes in exchange for producing complimentary narratives about them. This is a fully valid recommendation. Of course, we should keep in mind the caveat that authoritarian governments are comfortable with the *status quo* of "who pays the piper, calls the tune," and they will need to be socialized into appreciating the value of independent research even when theyare paying for it.

Just as it is important for universities and think tanks to be open about their financial sources, it is equally—if not more—important for companies to be transparent and disclose their beneficiaries. Ideally, there should be government regulations compelling them to do so. Those markets that are particularly attractive to kleptocrats from around the world, such as Western luxury real estate, need to be particularly transparent and subject to monitoring. The same applies to Western financial services industries.

No-nonsense regulations aimed at greater transparency and accountability on the part of Western states are a much-needed component of a genuine attempt to improve global governance. Given the West's dominance in the global economy, these states' choices and policies have a special importance. However, other actors are on the rise, and this creates room for maneuver for Central Asian and non-Central Asian capitalist autocrats, who are increasingly able to invest, buy real estate, and launder money through non-Western channels. This brings us back to Central Asian elites, their motives and choices. It is important that Western governance be put in order, and it is equally important

that Central Asian elites master a new learning curve: overcoming personal greed and starting to see the promotion of the public interest as their ultimatemission.

A New Research Agenda for Central Asia

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In this fascinating new book, Cooley and Heathershaw explain how authoritarian regimes in Central Asia have learnt to use international mechanisms— from courts to offshore banking—to become rich and repress opponents. The book offers a new field of research for scholars on Central Asia, but also contributes—through its detailed case studies of authoritarian practices by Central Asian states—to emerging research on comparative authoritarianismand global order.

Many of the thoroughly researched case studies that make up the bulk of the book will be familiar to scholars of Central Asian politics: the account of Gulnara Karimova's dealings with European telecoms companies or the Kazakhstani authorities' obsessive international pursuit of Mukhtyar Ablyazov and his associates. However, all readers will find something new in the pains- taking research that Cooley and Heathershaw have compiled, which is based on a rich array of court documents, media reporting, and interviews. It is also an entertaining read, offering fascinating vignettes of the lives of Central Asia's rich and (in)famous.

For Central Asian studies, the book lays out a new research agenda. Cooley and Heathershaw argue that "Central Asia is best understood by focusing on the sprawling, informal transnational links between elites from Astana to London and Bishkek to Beijing" (p. 23). Investigating the extraterritorial spaces of London, Geneva, and New York offers new ways to analyze the often-opaque internal politics of closed authoritarian states. This transnational perspective provides fresh data—international arbitration proceedings, court documents, and interviews with exiles—to researchers who find access to countries such as Turkmenistan or Tajikistan increasingly difficult.

The work also contributes to growing research on comparative authoritarianism. Central Asian states are not the only contemporary authoritarian regimes to engage in these extraterritorial security practices. Russia has pursued dozens of former officials and businesspeople through Interpol and

extradition procedures overseas. After the attempted coup in Turkey in 2016, the government sought to arrest thousands of alleged "Gulenists" around the world, using the familiar practices of political and diplomatic pressure, rendition, and extradition.[1] China, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and other authoritarian states have all pursued their opponents abroad, fomenting a crisis in international policing mechanisms.

While the importance of the transnational in understanding contemporary authoritarianism is clear, we should nevertheless caution against too sharp a swing away from studying the local and the national. The Karimova affair opens a window onto the workings of the Uzbekistani system of governance, but it offers only limited insights into the complex reality of domestic politics in Uzbekistan. The Ablyazov case certainly provides valuable snapshots of high-level decision-making in Astana, but—as with all exile politics—life in Kazakhstan has already moved on to a very different set of intra-elite dynamics. A focus on elite-level informal institutions explains much about Central Asia, but state institutions and local and national government still matter.

The ways in which Central Asia's authoritarian states navigate this globalized world are brilliantly described, but the book leaves some deeper questions hanging in the air. The authors argue that Central Asian states "used the new opportunities, institutions and legal tools offered by globalisation to pursue their private economic agendas on a more global scale" (p. 32). This suggests that these regimes are essentially "kleptocracies," in which power is used primarily for the self-enrichment of elites.[2] Such an understanding of high-level corruption threatens to obscure more complex arguments about the state and political order. Douglass North argues that rent-seeking can be an important part of maintaining order in what he terms "Limited Access Orders."[3] Cooley and Heathershaw hint at this in other parts of the book, arguing that "no one can imagine the Tajik regime holding together without … payments from clients to patrons and the receiving of favours in return" (p. 24). The "national slush fund" created from the profits of the Tajik Aluminium Company (Talco) was reinvested in an array of projects in Tajikistan, from a hotel to airlines, in which members of the ruling family usually had some financial interest

1 Nate Schenkkan, "The Remarkable Scale of Turkey's 'Global Purge,'" *Foreign Affairs*, January 29, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2018-01-29/remarkable-scale-turkeys-global-purge.

2 Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

3 Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, Steven B. Webb, and Barry R. Weingast, *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

(p. 103). Similar extra-budgetary funds have long been rumored to exist in Russia, Armenia, and elsewhere in post-Soviet space, suggesting that they play an important role in the survival of non-democratic regimes.

These funds no doubt also fuel much private consumption, though this seems distinct from other types of transnational corruption detailed here, such as that of Gulnara Karimova. It was not simply that Karimova was too oBVIous (p. 24), but that her practices were seen by other Uzbekistani elites (equally, if not more, involved in transnational corruption) as antithetical to maintaining the existing political order. In short, while elites may consider some patterns of transnational corruption to be order-producing, others are clearly viewed as highly destabilizing.

This point raises further questions about the relationship between globalization and authoritarianism. The work offers a strong critique of many institutions in the West, chiefly the financial and regulatory structures that have permitted such blatant transnational money laundering and corruption. Yet the authors also argue that Central Asia's proximity to Russia and China has intensified authoritarianism and promoted illiberal norms, in contrast to the democratization that has taken place in Eastern Europe. In the latter, they claim, "the international environment mostly promoted reforms, while in Central Asia it reinforced global authoritarianism" (p. 29).

However, as recent political developments in Eastern Europe suggest, EU members are not immune to the allure of authoritarianism. Viktor Orban's Hungary—which Bálint Magyar dubbed a "mafia state"4—demonstrates remarkable affinities with the authoritarian patronage economies the authors analyze here. In this light, arguments about distance from Europe and the malign impact of Russia and China appear less significant. Instead, this work prompts difficult questions about whether it is the liberal international order itself that is increasingly responsible for producing a variety of forms of authoritarianism around the world.

Rethinking Central Asia's Corruption and Repression in an International Liberal Order: Persuasive Evidence and Potential Implications

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4 Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary* (Budapest: ceu Press, 2016).

Cooley and Heathershaw's *Dictators Without Borders* is a commanding, path-breaking investigation into the international linkages within and beyond Central Asia that empowers the region's autocratic regimes and enriches its ruling elites. Even for observers of Central Asia, who have long assumed that some of the region's ill-gotten wealth flows beyond Central Asia's borders, the book opens up a hidden world of offshore banking practices, shell companies, real estate schemes, and money laundering that is shockingly extensive. Indeed, the sheer scale of national wealth diverted into personal coffers puts to rest any doubts about the predatory practices of Central Asia's rulers, who are unconstrained by the weak institutions of their governments. As Cooley and Heathershaw reveal, however, this illicit political economy may be fueled by leaders' venality but it is made possible by the architecture of our liberal international order. This architecture enables insider elites to skirt unenforced anti-money laundering rules, use diplomatic immunity, and leverage investor- residency programs. At the same time, Interpol Red Notices and claims of political asylum are key instruments used by and against elites who fall out of favor (and other persons identified as regime opponents). Liberal democracies such as Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom are willing participants in this transnational underworld, protecting its beneficiaries and accepting its wealth as "investment," while their multinational corporations use it to hide their massive pay-to-play bribes for access to Central Asian economies. Me- ticulously documented yet easily accessible, this book unearths and traces these intersecting practices through case studies of individual elites (and their assets) who are among the region's leading figures.

The book begins by contending that the international dimension of Central Asia's politics and economics has been overlooked. Through an overview of recent scholarship on Central Asia peppered with interesting insights, the introduction juxtaposes the "informal transnational links between elites from Astana to London and Bishkek to Beijing" (p. 23) with common approaches to the region. Scholars and policymakers have tended to view post-Soviet states as either embedded in global markets and democratic reform or politically and economically detached from these processes. Instead, Central Asian elites exemplify a curious new type of actor in our international political economy: globally connected, deeply corrupt, and highly autocratic. Chapter 1 elaborates a three-part analytical framework for understanding this particular global elite:
(1) their use of legal institutions in the global economy, such as offshore registered companies, banks, and tax havens in locations such as the British Virgin Islands (BVI), and foreign or international courts; (2) their use of citizenship and residency regimes (mostly in Western Europe)—including diplomatic status, political asylum, and the opportunity to gain residency by making large

investments—to protect themselves and their assets; and (3) their use of international security arrangements (such as Interpol) to evade or extend abroad the repressive measures used by Central Asian regimes.

This framework is an excellent heuristic tool for rethinking Central Asia's corruption and repression. Yet some social scientists may find it limiting as they attempt to use it to explain precisely how *today's* international liberal order enables dictators to operate without borders any more than their twentieth-century counterparts could. Mobutu had channeled vast amounts of wealth out of Zaire by the 1990s; royal families of the Middle East have long leveraged diplomatic status and investor residency to avoid international investigation; and Latin American dictators were known to pursue their opponents across borders (e.g., Operation Condor). In fact, later portions of the book—examining the illicit relationships underpinning China and the United States' engagement in the region (Chapter 6) and Central Asian regimes' extraterritorial tactics of repression (Chapter 7)—are quite reminiscent of state-centric strategies before the era of globalization.

Nonetheless, Chapters 2–5 successfully apply the framework to the region, marshaling an impressive body of evidence from court decisions, legal documents, policy reports, congressional investigations, and secondary sources to show how Central Asia's leaders exploit their global linkages. Each case study, moreover, provides different insights into how this illicit economy impacts Central Asian regimes. The example of Kazakhstan in Chapter 2, for instance, shows that a regime promoting a favorable reputation to the international community while engaging in offshore politics must distract attention from its own activities while highlighting the criminality of those same activities when undertaken by opposition figures (who were often previously part of the inner elite). The shifting fortunes of erstwhile regime insider Mukhtar Ablyazov capture this tension: his efforts to define himself as an asylum seeker and opposition figure, while simultaneously using European legal systems to protect his assets and associates and evading an international manhunt, and working with- in byzantine financial arrangements to offshore his wealth. This Juxtaposition clearly frustrates Kazakhstan's leadership.

Operating without borders can, however, bring resources that greatly aid unstable autocrats. Chapter 3 shows how global rules and illicit wealth helped cement the power of Tajikistan's ruling family. The battle to gain control over Talco, the aluminum smelter that is the country's largest single economic asset, with its foreign ties to Norway (its primary supplier and market) and BVI (used for money laundering and offshore banking), found its way into UK courts, exposing over $1 billion in lost assets that likely fuel a presidential slush fund. By contrast, the spectacular fall of the daughter of Uzbekistan's late president,

Gulnara Karimova, suggests that international linkages can also threaten a regime's hold on power. Chapter 4 illustrates how Karimova, the beneficiary of a decade of diplomatic postings that shielded her from prosecution, was able to exercise control over multi-industry conglomerate Zeromax and the Uzbekistan operations of Sweden telecommunications giant Teliasonera using elaborate money laundering schemes, global real estate investments, and complex pay-to-play arrangements. In the face of investigations by Swiss and U.S. authorities, Karimova's offshore activities became embroiled in Uzbekistan's palace intrigues, threatening the country's aging (and ailing) president and bringing her fortune to an inglorious end. Chapter 5 showcases the maneuvers of then-President of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiev and his family as they gained control over mineral resources, transferring assets overseas (to the BVI, London's real estate market, and elsewhere) through shell companies. As this chapter demonstrates, even after elites fall from power, the global lineages of their illicit economic wealth can remain intact. Bakievs living abroad, their offshore holdings, and their continued activities remain beyond Kyrgyzstan's reach.

In short, the evidence that Central Asia's transnational elite engage in a set of common practices is quite persuasive, even if underlying variation in these trajectories remains somewhat unexplained. In fact, it is the book's surprisingly strong evidentiary base and its lucid, convincing analysis that may leave readers seeking to draw larger conclusions. Specifically, some may question the authors' contention (p. 22) that selection bias prohibited generalization. The fact that the book implicitly establishes its scope (ruling elites in post-Cold War autocratic regimes with weak domestic institutional constraints) and explicitly notes the pervasive nature of these practices (as indicated in the *Pan- ama Papers*) suggests that the authors might have been justified in outlining some broader implications. More attention to case study methodology might have been useful in this endeavor, to help identify whether these cases are typical, diverse, pathway, most similar, or otherwise.5 The authors' hesitancy to draw broader conclusions may also leave some with lingering questions about the book's theoretical contribution. If today's liberal international order truly enables dictators to operate more extensively without borders, then what does this tell us about the comparative study of authoritarianism, democracy pro- motion, or governing the illicit global economy? These questions only come to mind, however, because the authors have crafted a careful and grounded analysis of Central Asia's leaderships that opens up new areas of inquiry. If ex- tended beyond Central Asia, moreover, *Dictators Without Borders* constitutes

5 John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

a powerful indictment of autocrats and the international system that sustains and enriches them.

Theorizing Global Authoritarianism: A Response

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It is an honor and a privilege to receive three insightful reviews of our book and to have the opportunity to respond to the constructive and critical comments they raise. *Dictators without Borders* aimed to recast the policy debate about politics in Central Asia, as well as to make a distinct contribution to the academic literature. We sought to achieve the latter by highlighting new Central Asian political spaces that lie beyond the territory of the region and beginning to build theory which incorporates the institutions and contestations that transpire within these spaces into our analysis. As such, our aims were practical, conceptual, and geographical as much as they were to make a theoretical contribution to the political science study of post-Soviet Eurasia. Nevertheless, as we move forward in a research agenda which began for both of us several years ago, we are excited by the prospect of achieving greater clarity in our theory of dictatorship without borders, better specifying that which distinguishes the contemporary Central Asian context from other times and places and engaging in difficult debates about method and ethics in the study of authoritarianism.

The first and foremost task is theoretical and addresses those "lingering questions" raised by Markowitz. Our framework of analysis in the book is conceptual and descriptive: it identifies the practices of dictators without borders and how they emerged in Central Asia. However, a greater contribution would be properly theoretical and explanatory. It would provide a means to explain variation in processes and outcomes, it would illuminate conditional relationships, and it would have the potential to be applied globally. Our current framework is thoroughly transnational, incorporating formal and informal, licit and illicit, and covering social, financial, and security affairs. Our main priority was to uncover the range of institutionalized practices and relationships tying autocracies to the liberal international order that have been missed by

scholars and policymakers working on the region. In our public discussions of the book and subsequent publications, we have begun to tease out what this might mean both for the architecture of international politics and for the important question of regime stability in dictatorships.

Regarding regime stability, we should consider how these global ties might interact with leading political science models of authoritarian dynamics.6 In very basic terms, we agree that autocracy is not static, but is embedded in a dynamic and often cyclical process where rents, reputations, and security all serve to protect and reproduce the regime. These rents, reputations, and security arrangements have a transnational dimension, but how far does this global aspect determine patterns of regime stability? Of course, specific geographies of power vary from one case to another. However, as both Markowitz and Lewis suggest, the book may over-emphasize the importance of the transnational, to the detriment of the national. We agree that this is a risk and one whose only solution is theoretical specification and empirical rigor. We concur with Markowitz that by being clearer in our case study method and the causal mechanisms we wished to trace, we might have been able to achieve some small-n generalizations, but the central constraint we faced, even at the qualitative level, is that the data is highly selective, with only confirmed and revealed cases of corruption available for scrutiny and analysis.

Nevertheless, even within this small set of cases, important distinctions emerge regarding the weight of the national versus transnational dimensions. In our Tajikistani case, the Nazarov-Ermatov-Mirzoev partnership, which took control of the state's revenue-generating aluminum industry and its transnational financial and commercial relations in the 1990s, made a bargain with the Rahmon regime, which was securing its rule during and after the civil war (p. 84). In 2004, Mirzoev, never a trusted ally, was ousted and then jailed; the Rahmon family and inner circle successfully seized control of the company and its offshore entities. National regime security thereby proceeded *concomitantly* with transnational modes of control and has helped entrench and con- solidate the authoritarian regime. At the other extreme is Kyrgyzstan, where the global connections and predatory ambitions of the Bakievs and their allies in banking outpaced the regime's capacity to guard against local and national rivals. The short life and rapid fall of the Bakiev regime in 2010 was, in part, precipitated by the Bakievs' leveraging of these global ties to take control of the national economy by creating the Central Agency on Development,

6 Dan Slater, *Ordering Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Henry Hale, *Patronal Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Investments and Innovations and greenlighting the aggressive global outreach of AsiaUniversalBank (p. 151). And, as we have written elsewhere,7 this was consistent with the Bakiev regime's efforts to extort rents from great powers like the United States and Russia that were interested in security cooperation, ensuring military access, and overseas basing rights.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, then, are most similar cases with different outcomes. As such, they may serve to illustrate a possible hypothesis on the role of the transnational in regime stability outcomes. Why was the Rahmon regime successful in its offshore activity while the global financial dealings of the Bakievs appear to have been an important factor in their downfall? One response to these two contrasting cases is to infer that the local always trumps the transnational in questions of regime stability. But our findings suggest that trying to extricate the transnational from the national may be a fool's errand. In both the Nazarbayev and Karimov regimes, "internal" battles with rebellious insiders had "external" dimensions from the outset, as these rebels sought to accrue greater power within the country via their offshore connections and the capital flight and rent-seeking opportunities that these enabled. Indeed, these political opponents could only establish their opposition networks and court media coverage from abroad. This makes it very difficult to tell a causal story with respect to regime stability across our four cases. As such, our study has the more modest ambition of revealing that power is dispersed across national territories and transnational spaces and that the contemporary Central Asia autocracy does not govern without this scalar extension of its power beyond its borders. If a regime is unable to repress exiles and control offshore vehicles, then the ambitions of potential rebels may rise.

In making this last point, we assume that political order is constructed and perceived as being composed of personal networks of resource extraction. In this, we recognize Lewis' point that our book risks over-emphasizing "kleptocracy" and rentierism over the primacy of politics for these post-Soviet elites. But we do not see kleptocracy and autocracy as mutually exclusive forms of rule. The state socialist regimes of the twentieth century—which were typically autocracies, not kleptocracies—have long since died away, along with the ideological and geopolitical contexts of communism and the Cold War that produced them. Today's dictatorships are invariably both autocratic and kleptocratic; bluntly, strong rulers *are* rich rulers. In this sense, Lewis is absolutely correct to note that this is not a specifically Central Asian phenomenon, although kleptocracy is particularly acute in the post-Soviet world in that it

7 Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: the New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

contrasts sharply with the ideals and actual practices of the Soviet system. Per- haps even more importantly, post-Soviet state-building and regime consolidation has taken place during an era of rapid globalization, unregulated financial liberalization, and the rise of the offshore legal world.

In works since *Dictators without Borders*, we have begun to draw comparisons between Central Asian states and regimes in the Philippines, Haiti, and Zaire during the Soviet period and Angola, Egypt, and Libya today.8 Nargis Kassenova rightly notes that Central Asian elites have learnt over time. In the 1990s, the offshore connections set up for the Tajikistani aluminum industry and the Kazakhstani oil and gas industry were ad hoc and relied heavily on key individuals, both local and expatriate, such as Azaz Nazarov and James Giffen. In the 2010s, a shadow of globalization has emerged in global financial centers to serve oligarchs and kleptocrats with financial secrecy, private intelligence, and legal services that they can deploy against their rivals. We should be wary of giving too much credit to the autocratic regimes themselves when they are so reliant on service providers in liberal democracies.

Intriguingly, Kassenova alludes to the fact that it is not just the politics of autocracies that have gone global, but also the academic study of them. This is a wonderful insight. Indeed, the research on the book was aided by a variety of transnational connections with journalists and academics all over the world, including Central Asia. Our stance, and that of our colleagues, was and remains critical of global authoritarianism. We have the space and privilege to undertake such research due to the academic freedom afforded to us by our tenured employment at elite universities in the US and UK. Researchers and journalists in Central Asia do not have such privileges. For example, at the time of writing, the talented Tajikistani journalist and satirist Khayrullo Mirsaidov sits in jail, having been arrested in December 2017 on charges of incitement after accusing the authorities in Sughd, northern Tajikistan, of corruption.9 Such cases of repression of journalists and academics are increasing across much of Central Asia, and transnational partnerships that monitor and critically interrogate the global mechanisms of repression remain essential to the advancement of this research agenda. But we should also be mindful that research and journalism is not always independent, transparent, and accountable even in Western liberal democracies. Our book considers the reputation management

8 Alexander Cooley, John Heathershaw, and J.C. Sharman, "Laundering Cash, Whitewashing Reputations," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 1 (2018): 39–53.

9 "Tajikistan: Independent Journalist Detained," *Human Rights Watch*, December 11, 2017,last accessed March 7, 2018, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/11/tajikistan-independent -journalist-detained.

industry in the West, including journalistic "puff pieces," quasi-academic projects, think tanks, and even university chairs funded by dictatorships. This industry—with its unaccountable and non-transparent practices—presents one avenue for further research.

Going forward, we identify three research agendas that grow out of our book's exploration of offshore finance, money laundering into real estate, and extraterritorial security measures deployed against exiles overseas. Firstly, we note that uncovering the hidden transnational networks of Central Asian elites can play a critical role in advancing the emerging study of kleptocracy and its enabling of Western intermediaries and service professionals, particularly by examining how features of the liberal international order facilitate kleptocracy and the commingling of legal and illegal activities and funds. We are especially excited by the prospect of comparing the Central Asian cases with other Eurasian cases (Ukraine, Moldova), as well as with regions like sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia.

Secondly, we think it is critical to continue to research and develop the distinction we formulate in the book between transnational civil and uncivil society. Although much of the IR literature on transnational networks focuses on the principled actions of NGOs and their activist allies, the Central Asian cases suggest that Central Asian elites are—through their international charitable and cultural activities—enmeshed in far more robust transnational networks that enable them to recast their own international reputations as respected philanthropists and global citizens rather than as kleptocratic and repressive elites. Indeed, given the legal and political hurdles that NGOs currently con- front throughout Central Asia, these networks of transnational uncivil society are now more influential and powerful than their civil society counterparts.

Thirdly, the question of how authoritarians wield the institutions of international law and global governance strategically, for their own political purposes, is a critical issue at the intersection of international law and comparative authoritarianism. Autocrats have weaponized private and international law. Their use of foreign courts, arbitration proceedings, and appeals to overseas regulators to investigate exiles for money laundering and/or other alleged crimes is now central to the global authoritarian playbook. Here, we are in pressing need of more comprehensive and public data on the frequency of these proceedings, their duration, and the parties involved, as well as better estimates of the national resources that litigants are expending.