Book Discussion

Lawrence Markowitz, State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013)

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State Erosion Grounded in Impressive Field Research

Eric McGlinchey, George Mason University

Lawrence Markowtiz's *State Erosion* is an extraordinary book. It is exemplary in the richness of its field research, particularly given the challenges of studying Central Asia's autocracies. We develop an immediate appreciation of these challenges in *State Erosion's* preface. Here Markowitz describes a chilling encounter with Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya police, an encounter that allows the reader to witness the pervasive reach of the Uzbek security apparatus. I was once again reminded of these challenges when, in response to an audience member's query during a panel devoted to *State Erosion* at the 2014 Association for the Study of Nationalities annual conference, Markowitz candidly noted that the bureaucrats with whom he spoke more often than not responded to his questions with fantastic yarns rather than speaking the difficult truth about the patronage systems in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Despite dissembling bureaucrats and predatory police, Markowitz's extensive field research in Central Asia has yielded a book that offers an explanation for the diverging outcomes of state fragmentation in Tajikistan and state cohesion in Uzbekistan. The explanation Markowitz advances, moreover, is applicable not just to Central Asia, but to autocratic countries more broadly. *State Erosion* is a book that productively informs two literatures: the post-Soviet Central Asia politics literature and the larger comparative politics literature on autocratic regime change. As such, *State Erosion* will find eager audiences among area specialists and comparative politics theorists alike.

Markowitz's central finding, concisely stated, is that resources matter; they matter both in their kind and in their concentration. Agriculture-based economies that require state involvement to bring goods to market—that is, economies that require considerable infrastructure and investment, such as Uzbekistan's and Tajikistan's cotton industries—generate extensive patron– client rent-seeking opportunities. In Uzbekistan, where cotton cultivation is spread widely across the country, these patron–client rent-seeking opportunities bind local elites and local security forces to the central government. In

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Tajikistan, in contrast, where cotton cultivation is concentrated only in a few regions, local elites in cotton-poor areas have been locked out of the state's patron–client rent-seeking apparatus and, as a result, have had little incentive to follow central government directives. These elites instead have turned to their local security forces to, in Markowitz's words, "pursue alternative political orders that open up new avenues for rent seeking" (p. 6).

While diverging patterns in the kind and concentration of resources and the resulting rent structures associated with these diverging patterns can help us understand why Tajikistan devolved into civil war in the 1990s whereas Uzbekistan has remained stable since the Soviet collapse, Markowitz's story is not merely one of structural endowments and constraints. Tajikistan has become increasingly stable over the past 15 years, while Uzbekistan has seen notable convulsions of instability. To explain these developments, Markowitz rightly notes the role of elite agency. President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, faced with the task of rebuilding the state following the United Nations– brokered end to the civil war in 1997, strategically mixed patronage and coercion to coopt where possible—and silence when necessary—former civil war opponents. This strategy has not always worked, as the 2010 Rasht Valley and 2012 Gorno Badakhshan violent protests against the central government demonstrate. Nevertheless, Rahmon's carefully calibrated strategy of coercion and cooption has proven sufficient to prevent a repeat of the state collapse and civil war that plagued Tajikistan in the 1990s.

Across the border, actor agency at the local level presented a challenge to Uzbekistan's otherwise stable autocratic rule. This agency was most visibly on display in the 2005 Andijan uprising. From 1993 to 2005, Andijan was led by one man, Governor Kobiljon Obidov. Thanks to his long tenure in office, Obidov was able to cultivate and privilege his own group of local economic elites. These elites, the leaders of large enterprises, in turn commanded loyal followings from their many employees. This cultivation of Andijan's economic elite, Markowitz demonstrates, led to situation in which, "by the mid-2000s, Obidov's influence in Andijan was unparalleled and posed a threat to the central government" (p. 121). In late 2004 and early 2005, President Islam Karimov purged the Andijan elite, dismissing Obidov from office and jailing the region's prominent businessmen. The purge elicited large-scale public protests that Karimov's security forces ruthlessly repressed.

Markowitz is right to stress the role of actor agency in Rahmon's rebuilding Tajik statehood following the 1992–1997 civil war. He is also correct to highlight Governor Obidov's growing challenge to President Karimov's otherwise stable autocratic rule in the early 2000s. Importantly, however, in raising the role of elite agency, Markowitz leaves his reader wondering when and where

structural variables—the kinds and concentration of resources—are salient and when these variables are likely to be overshadowed by elite agency. Yes, Markowitz is on firm ground in his characterization of the structurally induced limitations to Tajik patronage politics and, equally, in his characterization of the structurally induced strengths of Uzbek patronage politics. Critically, however, his analysis would benefit from some discussion of when and how, under elite pressure, actor agency might prevail over these structural variables.

This is a minor quibble for what otherwise is a superb book. Markowitz's *State Erosion* is an impressive demonstration of how case-based, inductively derived hypotheses can inform not only our understanding of specific autocratic regimes, but of autocracy more broadly. The manuscript is certain to be well-received by Central Asia scholars as well as by students and policy practitioners seeking to understand coercion-intensive regimes' diverging patterns of state consolidation and collapse. Theoretically sophisticated yet clearly written, Markowitz's book is essential reading for advanced undergraduate comparative politics and Central Asia courses, as well as for graduate comparative politics and political economy seminars.

Elites, Rents, and the State in Central Asia

Shairbek Juraev, OSCE Academy

Critical discussions of the state and prospects of Central Asian studies often point to two major issues. First, many complain that the countries of the region remain very much closed to researchers. Political regimes make it hard—if not impossible—for researchers to talk to people and gather data. Second, the scholars of the region are often seen, even by themselves, as area specialists, whose otherwise excellent works contribute little to mainstream discussions in the relevant disciplines.

State Erosion by Lawrence Markowitz aims at both targets by offering extensive insider-level knowledge on the post-Soviet political economy of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and calibrating his discussion of these two countries to arrive at a parsimonious theory of state failure. Though this is never an easy task, the effort is well done and the book will likely become a valuable asset for readers seeking a sophisticated and theory-informed understanding of the region.

The book kicks off with a puzzle: how to explain the contrasting evolution of state institutions in two very similar former Soviet republics of Central Asia: Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Why did Tajikistan collapse into civil war in 1990s while Uzbekistan developed into a repressive police state? Why did the

security institutions in Uzbekistan become an essential part of the state's extorting hand while their Tajik counterparts divided into factions fighting each other?

To start, Markowitz proposes a theoretical model that would explain the contrasting outcomes (cohesion and fragmentation) of security institutions in weak states with low capital mobility, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The key variables are the spatial concentration of resources and the nature of local elites' access to political patronage. Coercive rent-seeking states emerge where resources are evenly and densely distributed across the country and existing system of political patronage allow local elites to safely incorporate into the feeder of the ruling regime. Conversely, the state risks failing where resources are distributed sparsely, political patronage is vertically broken, and local elites lack opportunities to extract rents out of the resources at hand (p. 24). The model applies to countries with "unlootable" resources, such as cotton, where rent-seeking for local elites is possible only with the complicity of the state.

The evidence to support these propositions is drawn from the Soviet and post-Soviet political economies of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The Bolsheviks sowed the seeds of difference by developing Uzbekistan's economy relatively evenly across provinces, while singling out the provinces of Leninabad and, to a lesser extent, Kurgan-Teppe for economic development over the rest part in Tajikistan. Thus, the top three provinces of Tajikistan (Kurgan-Teppe, Leninabad, and Kulyab) provided 80% of the total gross income of collective farms in 1966, compared with 38% for the three largest in Uzbekistan in 1965 (p. 42).

Similar differences are observed in the distribution of political power. The leadership of the Uzbek SSR represented all parts of the country, even though some regions featured more prominently than others, with local elites having "roughly equivalent access to state rents within the republic" (pp. 45–47). In contrast, political power in Tajikistan during the Soviet period was monopolized by the Leninabadi elite. Little effort was done to incorporate other provinces into the top leadership. Rather, the Leninabad elite established strong political and economic oversight over other regions, including the cotton economy of southern provinces. Dushanbe's political patronage was limited to one group, while the rest (Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, Gharm, and others) were forced to seek the patronage of central authorities via the Leninabadi elite.

These Soviet legacies in resource distribution and political patronage shaped the different nature of relations between Tajik and Uzbek local elites with their respective central authorities. In this context, the corruption scandals of the 1980s, purges, and the spirit of *perestroika* came to have different implications for the two republics. In Uzbekistan, the purges during late Soviet

years targeted the elites of nearly all provinces, without creating losing and winning regions. Moreover, a brief but bloody ethnic clash in the Fergana Valley in 1989 helped consolidate the status of law-enforcement force, and also made the new leader, Islam Karimov, more willing to "expand local elites' avenues for converting their resources into rents" (p. 59). In Tajikistan, due to already existing regional imbalances, the political purges quickly took the form of a struggle between the power-holding Leninabadi elite and challengers from various resource-poor regions, particularly Gharm and Gorno Badakhshan. State security institutions began to fragment, starting in resource- poor regions far away from the capital. The logic of competition then led other regions follow, quickly leading to the complete fragmentation of security institutions along regional lines.

Markowitz's book will be an excellent addition to the growing, but yet limited, body of literature on the recent history of Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan. His account of the relationship among resources, rent-seeking, corruption, and patronage benefits from extensive field research and provides much needed sophistication to understanding these phenomena and their mutual interconnectedness in Central Asian states. While the two cases, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, are contrasted throughout the book, readers will appreciate that the book is not simply about successful and unsuccessful state- building. Rather, it is about two similarly corrupt and weak states, where elites, local and national, have eventually begun looting the "unlootable" resources of the state, but with differing outcomes for state security institutions.

Markowitz is very keen to demonstrate that his theoretical model is not constructed to fit the cases of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan only. In a separate chap- ter, the author provides very insightful discussion of several paired countries from various regions of the world that share similarly weak state but differing rent-seeking environments for the local elites. Particularly interesting for the scholars of Central Asia/Eurasia may be the section juxtaposing Belarus and Kyrgyzstan.

Weaknesses are usually found where strengths are. Because the book aims at developing a relatively parsimonious theory, readers seeking rich, nuanced empirical information may not be satisfied. Thus, one will not find illuminating stories of how exactly the local elites convert resources into rents in various parts of Uzbekistan, or how the policies and personalities of (in)famous presidents shape, if at all, the state-local elites relationship. Readers would benefit from a more detailed discussion of the context. For instance, to what extent do the propositions of "unlootable resources" apply equally to these countries? At one point author says "cotton-producing regions constituted only half of the republic's localities" in Tajikistan (p. 85), but it remains unclear

whether or not this has any implications for the utility of the proposed theory.

In somewhat similar manner, one may ask, where is the average Uzbek or Tajik in the book? The author certainly sees the events and processes through an elite prism. But his account would certainly benefit from opening up this black box of the "local elite" and its context within the community. How do the local elites relate to people? Who shapes what "people" think about rents, corruption, elites and power? How, in what context, did people develop perceptions and expectations of others at the point of taking up arms, in the case of Tajikistan? The book does not discuss whether and how resource distribution and access to patronage, the two main independent variables, relate to each other. The model explicitly requires the dense resource distribution to come in a package along with the availability of political patronage and vice-versa. Do these shape each other or represent independent phenomena? The example of Kulyab province in Tajikistan suggests resource-rich regions may lack political patronage, or the contrary in the case of Karakalpakistan or Jizzax. How would a country with scarce resource distribution but relatively accessible political patronage, such as Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s, fit the model?

Making a case to explain why civil war erupted in one country but not in another is a challenge. So is the task of walking in parts of Central Asia to gather knowledge, especially about corruption, resources, struggle, and politics. Lawrence P. Markowitz has produced a laudable work tackling both challenges to present us with this succinct and persuasive interpretation of post-Soviet developments in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The book will certainly contribute to more sophisticated understanding of processes in this amazingly interesting part of the world, and it will also hopefully encourage further studies of Central Asia in the context of larger groupings of polities around the world.

State Failure: What, Where, When, Why? John Heathershaw, University of Exeter

After years of neglect by political scientists, Tajikistan has finally begun to receive the attention it deserves with three excellent research monographs published within a year that address its Soviet formation, its immediate failure as an independent state, and subsequent consolidation.[1] Lawrence Markowitz

1 In addition to this book, see Jesse Driscoll, *Liquidation Lotteries* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming) and Kiril Nourzhanov and Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2013).

has written a very good book that addresses this second question of failure and identifies longer-term trends that began in its Soviet economic development and continue to this day. *State Erosion* includes both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and extends much further to a sample of 40 cases of states with "unlootable resources" that suffer from an inversion of the resource curse. By focusing on the formation of patron-client relations at the subnational level, Markowitz provides a persuasive and empirically rich analysis of why some states seem to suffer from persistent center-periphery struggles. However, in claiming the preeminence of this structural variable as the determining factor for political instability and "state failure," he over-extends and reveals the theoretical flaws of his and similar economistic analyses of the state.

There are many great merits to this book, but I will focus my comments on four areas of questions with respect to theory and the empirics of the concept of state failure. My concerns can be summarized briefly as relating to the what, where, when, and—most important—why of state failure. The first and last concerns address conceptual and theoretical overreach; the middle two address faulty interpretations of the empirical cases in light of the theory. I will spend more time on the Tajik case, as that is what I know best, and the one which is least well-explained by the theory.

What state failure?

"State failure" as deployed by Markowitz—as so often is the case—works as a very broad conceptualization of political order. As such, its very usefulness as a concept will forever be questioned. It is hard to determine whether it is the state that fails or a particular regime of power. Some of the state almost always remains when a regime collapses, but how much is enough for regime collapse to be distinguished from state failure? Beyond the failure to meet the crude Weberian standard of the "monopoly of force" (p. 9), perhaps this question can only be answered empirically. The historical analysis of what occurred in Tajikistan immediately prior to the civil war suggests that it was the break- down of the republican regime of power rather than state failure per se,2 which is a much more complicated process that occurred across the Soviet empire- state and in many cases did not lead to civil war. This is not Tajikistani *state* failure, as the purported state was not formed prior to its collapse.

There are also questions of what extent of state crisis qualifies as state failure. Markowitz's model equates state failure with civil war (p. 9, 17). *State Erosion* compares Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with Lebanon and Somalia as cases of state failure. Yet the fracture of Kyrgyzstan has been far less dramatic

2 Nourzhanov and Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History*.

than that of Lebanon, while the recovery of Tajikistan has been far more significant than Somalia. Are these just matters of degree that differ by context—the post-Soviet being slightly more favorable—or do these dramatic differences in effect signal intervening variables that Markowitz ignores? I would argue that equating state failure to civil war is a move that conceals a much more prevalent empirical phenomenon: weak state order. True, 1980s Lebanon and 1990s Somalia are cases of state failure, but this phenomenon is actually very rare. Contemporary Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan simply do not demonstrate the requisite level of systemic disorder to count. In many respects, they remain relatively strong states compared with other postcolonial polities. Even Tajikistan in the 1990s was not a failed state in and of itself—for reasons I willnow explore.

Where state failure?

Markowitz is very persuasive in his claim that state failure occurs as an out- side-in process, beginning in the peripheries and spreading to the center. It is not at the Leviathan's heart where the rot sets in but at its limbs. However, there is a prior question of where the state is that is putatively failing. Very often, state failure occurs in the aftermath of empire, and this is once again the case in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In such cases, diagnosing state failures presents empirical and geographical challenges.

As already hinted, it was not the state of Tajikistan that failed in 1991–1992, but the Soviet state. Elsewhere, I have characterized this process as a "complex crisis of decolonization,"3 reflecting that the Union was an empire-state. The security forces that fractured in 1991–1992—due, according to Markowitz, to the fact that they were not encompassed within patronage networks connected to the center—were *both* Dushanbe's *and* Moscow's. While the defection of the police was a post-Soviet republican failure, the ineffectiveness of the military was due to the fact that the entity that had demanded its loyalty (the USSR itself) now ceased to exist. The disorder and selling of weapons that characterized the chaotic early stages of the Tajik civil war, if it is state failure at all, must be seen as state failure at two levels. The outside-in approach is even more complex than Markowitz proposes, as it requires some theorization of the relationship between state disintegration in the Soviet Union and very early state formation in Tajikistan (and Uzbekistan). The riposte that the failure of the Union is a constant (for all 15 republics) that cannot explain a variable (state failure in some) only applies if we consider our task as social

3 John Heathershaw, *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order* (London: Routledge, 2009).

scientists to be the identification of a single predominant factor rather than the interactions of many.

When state failure?

This leads to a third question of the when of state failure. As an explanation of this early post-Soviet period—where Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, for all their similarities, ultimately vary a great deal in their early 1990s "outcomes"—*State Erosion* offers a persuasive analysis. In many ways it is the mirror image to Jesse Driscoll's excellent and forthcoming book on Tajikistan and Georgia, *Liquidation Lotteries*, that explains the incorporation of warlords into the state.4 But this comparison highlights the importance of identifying the period or periods of one's theory. Driscoll explains a particular post conflict period. Markowitz, by contrast seeks to explain the period before, during, and after; he presents a model both of the kind of state failure seen in civil war and how a still-failing state somehow recovers.

The model is very good at explaining how post-Soviet states are born or still- born (in Tajikistan's case). It is when this early pattern of patron-client relations is posited as the harbinger of longer-term state consolidation or failure that the analysis becomes less persuasive. Events dictate that Markowitz offers an explanation for why consolidation in Uzbekistan is threatened by the Andijan uprising, and why civil war in Tajikistan gives way to a new statist order. Uzbekistan is presented as having far more "stationary" rent-seeking across its provinces, whereas, we are told that Tajikistan is beset by destabilizing "roving" rent-seekers. The government suppression of the Andijan uprising (2005) by national security forces locked into stable patronage networks is presented as being indicative of a strong state's ability to defeat rebels; whereas, the Rasht violence (2010) and Khorog conflict (2012) are presented as demonstrable state weakness. But this difference in trajectories is overstated and highly stylized. To take just one example, the expulsion of the renegade war- lord Mahmud Khudoiberdiev from Tajikistan in 1998 by the newly "reintegrated" forces of Suhrob Kosimov and Mirzo Ziyoev followed a similar pattern of state strength to that observed in Andijan. This suggests two things. First, that different patterns of rent-seeking are emerging in Tajikistan from the mid-1990s, questioning Markowitz's argument that Tajikistan is locked into "roving" and destabilization. Second, it suggests that "roving" and "stationary" as ideal types of rent-seeking—and Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as states—may not be as distinct from one another as Markowitz purports. A model that works

4 Driscoll, *Liquidation Lotteries*.

well to explain divergence in the early 1990s loses its explanatory power five years later.

Why state failure?

Following on from this point we reach the question of the overall value of the model. In the conclusion, Markowitz claims that the prediction of patterns of state failure in resource-poor states is possible. This is a big claim. *State Erosion* is a structuralist account of state failure that posits certain outcomes due to preexisting conditions of the concentration and distribution of resources. In emphasizing the structural economic conditions of state failure, Markowitz obscures the role of individuals, interpretations, and externalities. Of course, the downplaying of individuals is inevitable. Despite the importance of leader- ship in explaining the Tajik republic's decline in 1991 (particularly the cata- strophic roles played by Kakhar Makhamov, Kadriddin Aslonov, and Rahmon Nabiev), this is a forgivable omission—a by-product of the disciplinary preferences of political science. However, it is the extent of the structuralism and economism that makes the model blind to intervening (and interpretational) variables and externalities. If states are merely national economic structures, perhaps this analysis would be justifiable, but they are also composed of wider social forms and transnational assemblages.

I would make two brief points here. First, what distinguishes Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus from Syria, Lebanon, Somalia, and Zimbabwe—all cases that are covered in *State Erosion*—is the historical and social construction of the state over the Soviet period. The former four are all well-insulated against state failure by discourses and practices of statehood that have been much more difficult to establish and instantiate elsewhere, both in a strong case like Syria and a weak case like Somalia. In short, there is a great deal of popular demand for the state in Central Asia even when the state fails to deliver. Second, the focus on national economies is entirely neglectful of the fact that so much of the real economy of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan does not lie within their territorial boundaries, but in Russia and elsewhere from these two most remittance-dependent states in the world. Labor migration is also an affair of state, as it is a matter of international relations that has a pro- found effect on the foreign policy choices of these two states.

In conclusion, Lawrence Markowitz has identified an important structural and economic factor in late-modern state formation that has wider political implications for patterns of center-periphery relations. However, he overplays the significance of "unlootable resources" by suggesting that their volume and distribution determine long-term patterns of either state failure or consolidation. The cause of the collapse or survival of national polities is not

preordained by this or any other single factor. State failure is rare, time limited, and caused by a multiplicity of factors. When defined in security terms it is effectively equivalent to civil war and no less difficult to theorize. A parsimonious approach—even one as variegated as that of this very good book—conceals as much as it reveals regarding the causes of the collapse and survival ofcontemporary states.

Studying the State in Central Asia
Response by Lawrence P. Markowitz, Rowan University

Central Asia's states are regularly listed among the world's weak states, but there is very little understanding of what this designation means. There is little in-depth discussion, for instance, about why some weak states can remain stable for decades while in others the central government suddenly loses its authority to impose order. This lapse in the scholarly literature on weak and failing states is surprising, given the significant human and fiscal resources that many governments devote to shoring up weak states. I felt that the study of Central Asia's weak states could shed some light on this issue. Through comparative analysis of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, *State Erosion* attempts to do just that by developing an argument focused on unlootable resources, rent seeking, and unruly elites—advancing a theory of state failure that is intended to apply to 40 or so of the world's weak states with cash crop economies.

At the same time, the book addresses two concrete questions on Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Why did the former's state security apparatus fragment, pulling it into state failure and civil war in the 1990s, while the latter has con- structed one of the largest, most cohesive state security apparatuses in post-Soviet Eurasia? And why have both states continued to defy predictions of imminent collapse since the 1990s, despite their extremely high levels of corruption, very weak state institutions, and enormous wealth disparities? Utilizing a trove of qualitative and quantitative data drawn from both countries—district and provincial newspapers, various print materials, over 100 interviews, an in-depth survey of 100 experts, and several original databases— the book examines how state security apparatuses in districts and provinces fragmented or cohered around rent-seeking opportunities made available to local elites.

In seeking to accomplish both these tasks, however, the book was pulled in two directions. On one hand, it seeks to inductively derive a generalizable theory that is simple, parsimonious, and advances the debate (if even a little) on weak and failed states. It explicitly highlights a few causal factors—local

concentrations of resources, local elites' open or closed rent-seeking opportunities, and patterns of cooptation and competition among local elites—from the complex political and social milieu of Central Asian localities. On the other hand, it attempts to provide an empirically rich depiction of developments in both countries. To do so, it used in-depth regional case studies of Andijan, Navoii, and Samarkand in Uzbekistan and of Hatlon province and the Rasht Valley in Tajikistan—in addition to detailed analyses of national-level developments in both countries. This classic challenge of integrating the empirical and theoretical is largely at the root of the criticisms raised by the reviewers above. Given that we study a region that is extraordinarily complex, relatively isolated, and grossly understudied, I frame my response around three broad questions that will hopefully be relevant to others embarking on a study of Central Asia.

First, how should we apply social science concepts to the region? Not all analytical categories are relevant to Central Asia, and some may confuse rather than clarify our understanding of the region. But many concepts, such as authoritarianism, are being disaggregated and stretched across contexts with- out undermining their validity. Heathershaw is absolutely right to question the usefulness of state failure and its relevance to Central Asia. The introduction and conclusion of my book also critique the concept, but I also seek to pare down and sharpen the concept in light of the Central Asian cases. In fact, most of the book's analysis focuses not on state failure (as Heathershaw contends), but on two local level state security outcomes—fragmentation and cohesion—that were observable and specific. The empirical analysis demonstrates quite clearly that I do address the what, where, when, and why of state security fragmentation in Tajikistan: that from May to December 1992 state security fragmentation (incidences in which law enforcement and security services armed, joined, or otherwise assisted non-state militias) emerged and spread across localities; that it was related to but separate from regime change in Dushanbe; that it was not caused by and largely preceded the outbreaks of large-scale violence that characterized Tajikistan's civil war; and that it was produced by a complex interaction structured by local resources, rent-seeking opportunities, and competition among local elites. Nor is there a doubt that state security fragmentation led to state failure (a brief period during which the central government could not impose order across most of the country).

The question is not whether state failure occurred, but whether an analysis of state security fragmentation—in Tajikistan or elsewhere—should use the concept of state failure despite its inherent flaws and potential misapplications. I decided to use it, both to illuminate and frame empirical processes in Tajikistan and to compare those processes to state security fragmentation in

other countries. As scholars of Central Asia, we should aspire to gain the level of sophisticated empirical and theoretical knowledge that Heathershaw commands, but be more forgiving in the inexact science of applying social science concepts to the region. Strategies for doing so abound (such as Giovanni Sartori's ladder of generality) and, through a grounded study of the Central Asia, we may even improve on those analytical categories as I have sought to do with state failure.

Second, what is gained and what is lost making an unambiguous structural argument to explain politics in region? The book has a structural tilt, leading McGlinchey to question whether local elite agency is being overlooked and prompting Heathershaw to point to the limited attention given to individuals (especially leaders). These concerns are indeed valid. Underlying the book's thesis is the idea of immobile capital, which places constraints on local elite agency. But as a region, Central Asia is burdened with a number of structural challenges (some Soviet legacies, some post-Soviet)—durable authoritarian rule, geographic isolation, cash crop economies, low foreign direct investment, and weak state infrastructures to name a few. Given their number and importance, structural constraints in the region should receive more attention so we can better understand if and how they might be overcome.

Moreover, many cash crop economies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are saddled with similar problems that my explicitly structural focus make more visible. This raises a number of fascinating questions. Is Central Asia likely to experience more or less incidents of local violence in the coming years? Cross-national datasets from Uppsala Conflict Data Program suggest that, from 1989 to 2012, cash crop economies generated more incidents of local violence (small-scale outbreaks of intergroup violence) than economies with highly mobile resources such tin, tungsten, and alluvial diamonds. And local violence in cash crop economies is on the rise. Are domestic or international actors best suited to carry out post-conflict state building? Security-sector reform often tackles big questions such as demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of armed groups after conflict. As part of those endeavors, attention might be paid to the structural foundations of cash crop economies, where state-run, labor-repressive landholding systems reinforce local elite control over police, prosecutors and other security services.

Third, how should evidence be utilized to both serve theory and contribute to a fuller picture of Central Asia? In retrospect, there are several parts of the book that might have been elaborated along the lines that Juraev and Heathershaw suggest. The analysis would have benefited by providing more anecdotes that illustrate how local elites work, by disaggregating "local elites" both analytically and empirically, and by discussing the implications of elite

rent-seeking on everyday Central Asians. But there is also a tradeoff between breadth and depth. Expanding the breadth of the book to include other elements of Central Asia's political economies, such as migrant labor remittances or legacies of state socialism, would certainly provide a more complete assessment—but at the cost of diverting the reader from the central arguments on local resources, rent seeking, and territorial infrastructures of the state. Moreover, many of these elements are not germane to how cash crop economies work elsewhere, and to include them into my explanatory account would impose limits on the scope of the book's argument to such a degree as to render its propositions impossible to verify. Weighing both theory and evidence is, then, a complex task. *State Erosion* engages in a broad empirical analysis of historical and contemporary developments in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but it does so to highlight the profound consequences that local rent-seeking can have in many of the world's major cotton, cocoa, and coffee producers. When viewed through a comparative lens, such as cash crop economies, Central Asia has much to contribute to the study of the state.