

African decolonization did not necessarily overlap. Based on the available archival record, Cubans embraced a more interventionist approach, which sometimes blindsided their Soviet partners, who preferred an “African solution” to Africa’s problems. One is reminded of Fidel Castro’s behavior during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and his frustration at the time with Moscow’s conservative gradualism. His intervention in Angola may have been in part a payback to his allies in the Kremlin for past humiliation. Once again, the issue of agency looms large in the pages of Natalia Telepneva’s excellent new book.

Formally the book ends in 1976, following the MPLA triumph and the Cuban-Soviet intervention in Angola. Yet, as the author notes, the triumph descends into tragedy as the rival factions (both in Angola and Mozambique) proceed to do battle in the course of lengthy and bloody civil wars. And in some counterintuitive ways, the story of Soviet involvement in the liberation struggles of Portuguese Africa, just as the larger story of Soviet-African encounters, has found its continuation in the present. Telepneva appropriately ends her book with a nod to Russia’s more recent attempts to revive its rusty African ties. Much has been written and said lately about Russia’s “return” to Africa, most visibly manifested in the proliferation of state visits, the signing of new commercial agreements, multiple arms deals, and even two summit meetings with African heads of state, hosted by President Vladimir Putin in Sochi in 2019 and in St. Petersburg in 2023. Even more has been written about the alarming spread of Russian mercenaries throughout parts of the continent. It is tempting to conclude then that Russia’s engagement with the continent can be viewed as a gauge to measure the state of its relations with the west. In the early 2020s, just like in the late 1970s, the relationship between Russia, the self-appointed successor state to the Soviet Union, and the so-called “collective West” is at a particularly low point. Does this indicate that we are about to witness a dramatic expansion of Russia’s commitments in Africa? Natalia Telepneva’s book may contain some possible answers.

MAXIM MATUSEVICH
Seton Hall University

Kin Majorities: Identity and Citizenship in Crimea and Moldova. By Eleanor Knott. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022. vii, 356 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$120.00, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.179

Eleanor Knott’s book makes several important contributions to the fields of post-Soviet studies and studies of identity and nationalism. First and most important, it challenges the widespread perception of society as consisting of the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities and demonstrates a variety of identification patterns within the perceived majority, thus problematizing the very notion of an ethnic majority. Second, it examines diverse attitudes of putative majority members toward the foreign state claiming them as its ethnic kin and their diverse responses to that state’s offer of citizenship or benefits short of citizenship. Third, it productively compares two such “kin

majorities”: the Russians in Crimea and Moldovans in Moldova (labels that the variety of actual identifications makes problematic) and reveals the striking dissimilarity of their engagement with their respective kin states, Russia and Romania. Disproving the prevalent perception of Russia’s policy toward their “compatriots” in post-Soviet states as an important part of its soft power, Knott demonstrates that this policy was in fact much less successful in attracting the hearts and minds of Crimeans than was Romania’s straightforward offer of citizenship to most ethnic Moldovans as descendants of citizens of the interwar Romanian state.

The author aptly remarks that while kin-state policies are usually associated with kin *minorities*, groups that constitute the *majority* of the population in certain states or parts of states can provide stronger leverage in international relations, due to both their numerical strength and their power resources. In contrast to minorities that often suffer from severe discrimination, majorities can arguably protect their interests, at least in democracies where they effectively control government structures at the national or subnational levels. At the same time, by offering its citizenship or some more limited benefits to members of the majority in another state or one of its regions, the kin-state can establish a stronger link with that other state’s population and thus a greater influence on its policies. In fact, “[a]s functioning citizens of the states in which they reside, kin majorities need not acquire citizenship from a kin-state; yet many are doing so” (3). By comparing two majority groups and their engagement with their respective kin-states, Knott does a good job of explaining why some kin majorities are more willing than others to take citizenship of their putative kin-states. Having conducted more than a hundred interviews in the two countries, she was able to reach people with different views of their state of residence and the would-be kin-state (not all interviewees actually perceived it as such, particularly in Crimea). Based on their narratives, she divides the interviewees in each country into five different groups defined by their particular identities, each identity combining ethnic and civic elements. After discussing the nuances of their identities, she proceeds to examine each group’s views on the desirability and accessibility of the respective kin-state’s citizenship and other benefits for ethnic kin, such as scholarships for studies in the kin-state’s universities.

In Crimea, only a minority of the people Knott interviewed not long before Russia’s 2014 annexation of the peninsula felt attached to the Russian state and sought its citizenship, which they believed would give them stronger protection against perceived discrimination in Ukraine. However, Moscow was then only willing to grant citizenship to its post-Soviet “compatriots” if they relocated to faraway regions of Russia, while Crimeans were reluctant to leave their warm peninsula and did not want to reduce the Russian presence there. At the same time, most of Knott’s interviewees did not want Russian citizenship at all, not only because the Ukrainian state prohibited double citizenship but also because they primarily identified with Ukraine rather than Russia, their preference partly determined by the latter’s undemocratic regime. Moreover, not all of them even identified ethnically as Russians: some preferred a local identification as Crimeans, while others considered themselves Ukrainian in both civic and ethnic terms. As far as political implications of research

are concerned, Knott's most important finding on Crimea is that before 2014, the majority of the peninsula's residents did not want Russian citizenship or stronger ties with Russia, let alone a forcible incorporation of their region into the Russian state. But in terms of scholarly understanding, no less important is her demonstration of the variety of identification patterns that challenge the very notion of the Russian majority in Crimea, which most accounts of its identity and politics build on, including those strongly opposing annexation. An especially remarkable part of this variety is inter-generational differences within families, with Knott's interlocutors admitting to have less attachment to Russia and Russianness than their parents, thus further undermining the established view of ethnic identity as hereditary and unchangeable.

In contrast, most Moldovan interviewees wanted Romanian citizenship for themselves and/or recognized its value for fellow Moldovans. Their identification patterns were no less diverse than in Crimea, from the perception of Moldovan identity as nested within a Romanian one ("all Moldovans are Romanians but not all Romanians are Moldovans;" 155) to the separation of the two peoples not only on political but also linguistic grounds, with the rejection of the prevalent view of the Moldovans' language as identical to that of Romanians. But this diversity of identifications did not translate into diversity of attitudes toward the acquisition of Romanian citizenship, or rather reacquisition since Romanian law presented the current link between Moldovans and the Romanian state as the restoration of a link that had existed in the interwar period when most of the territory of today's Moldova belonged to Romania. Most people Knott interviewed seemed happy to accept Romania's offer of citizenship as a manifestation of restorative justice, correcting the wrongdoing allegedly done to their grandparents by the Romanian state in 1940 when it failed to protect them from Soviet annexation. Such an interpretation added a noble flavor to mostly pragmatic perceptions of the "reacquisition" as enabling free travel across Europe and diverted most people's attention from the potentially negative consequences of this "freedom to leave" for Moldovan society. Romania was thus much more successful in establishing a citizenship link with its perceived kin in the neighboring state than was Russia in Crimea, a rather surprising outcome given that "[a]lthough Crimea is a pearl of the Russian national imaginary, as a symbol of both greatness and tragedy, Moldova holds no such mythic status for Romania" (50). Even in terms of providing other benefits such as scholarships for studies in the kin-state, Romania was much more willing and able to engage its perceived kin in Moldova than Russia was in Crimea.

In addition to valuable empirical findings, the book is remarkable for its sensitive methodological approach, which the author presents in the first chapter and then in a special appendix. With more detail and care than in other similar books, she explains how she chose her two cases, conducted, processed, and interpreted data, and protected anonymity of her interviewees. She justifies her preference for interviews over a survey by the former's better suitability for examining nuances of identifications and attitudes, although she exaggerates the latter's reliance on exclusive identity categories such as used in censuses (at least in Ukraine, many surveys have employed more complex categories). Not all her explanations are quite convincing,

and some of the choices she made are left unexplained. Given her conceptualization of identities as not just revealed but constructed in the context of interviews, it does not seem appropriate to limit the pool of potential interviewees to members of the respective ethnic majorities, thus excluding Crimean Tatars and Moldova's people of Slavic origin whose identity thus seems as already established. Equally regrettable is the author's failure to problematize her Moldovan interviewees' discussion of their country's foreign and security policies in terms of relations with Romania and Russia only, without ever mentioning another big neighbor, Ukraine. Perhaps the latter omission can be corrected in the author's future research, thus contributing to the exploration of less-studied influences in still under-researched societies, such as Moldova and, by extension, to the decentralization and decolonization of post-Soviet and east European studies. But then Knott herself presents an extensive program for future studies in this field that calls for further examination of fractured identities and, at the same time, the removal of the "blinkers" of identity politics (257) diverting scholars' attention from other phenomena, such as corruption and democratic backsliding. Her suggestions should be taken into account in a future change of topical priorities and methodological approaches in the field, the need for which was laid bare by Russia's full-blown invasion of Ukraine.

VOLODYMYR KULYK

National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

Das deutsch-russische Jahrhundert. Geschichte einer besonderen Beziehung. By

Stefan Kreuzberger. Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 2022; 670 pp. Appendix. Notes.

Bibliography. Index. Plates. \$46.01, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.180

In the last sentence of his book, Stefan Kreuzberger expresses the hope that, despite Moscow's increasingly aggressive actions since 2014, the political actors in Germany and Russia will revive "the positive traditions of German-Russian relations in the not too distant future" (562). These "positive traditions" will be very restrained in Germany for the foreseeable future: while Kreuzberger's book was being printed, Vladimir Putin was deploying his troops to subjugate Ukraine—and many observers see the German-Russian relations of the past decades as a major factor in the Russian president's daring empowerment to wage this war of conquest and annihilation.

To publish a book exactly at the time when a new era begins, with which many assessments on the subject are put to the test, is undoubtedly a great challenge for the author. For the readers, on the other hand, it is very enlightening, as it enables them to view the historical events described from two perspectives—the quasi-historicized one in the book and the present one of the current readers.

Adopting a diversity of perspectives is also Kreuzberger's stated goal: in view of the polarized debate on German-Russian relations, he wants to provide the "authoritative historical points of reference" (17), because this would