

## BOOK REVIEWS

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***Splitting Europe: The EU, Russia, and the West.*** By Jens Stilhoff Sørensen. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021. xiv, 228 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$115.00, hard bound.

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Jens Sørensen addresses two key questions in regard to the past and future of the Europe: “How did the post-war vision of peace and prosperity through European integration get lost to increasing intra-European tension and fragmentation? Second, how did the visionary moment that ended the Cold War result in a new Cold War only thirty years later?” (ix).

Published in 2021, Sørensen’s analysis of the frayed relationship between the United States and its European allies, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, was confirmed by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s attack on Ukraine in 2022, indeed ushering in tensions unseen since President Ronald Reagan’s first term in office in the early 1980s. The war in Ukraine, however, undermines Sørensen’s dire predictions about the future of the European Union (EU). Although disagreements within the EU persist, Russia’s aggression in Ukraine has in fact solidified the European community and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Sørensen thoroughly examines the challenges to the EU posed by Brexit and undemocratic, nationalist parties in Europe. The EU’s elitist, neo-liberal policies emanating from Brussels are easy targets for populist, nativist politicians, a trend happening in the United States as well. Curiously, Sørensen uses strong language to blame the EU for expanding into the eastern Europe as a form of economic exploitation, and even “political slavery”: “The EU, and especially its eastward expansion, can be understood in the same framework as imperial extension and a hierarchy between member states . . .” (65). The likes of Hungarian strongman Viktor Orbán might agree; in 2022, on the anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, he paralleled the EU’s sanctions on his country with the Red Army’s violent suppression of the uprising.

Sørensen correctly points out that the parties based on national identity have gained in strength, expressing the anger among marginalized working classes that feel no allegiance to Brussels or to the neo-liberalists who have prioritized globalization over national interests. Nonetheless, in the last decade, the EU has met the challenges of an influx of Syrian refugees, the Greek debt crisis, Brexit, and the Covid pandemic.

In the last half of the book Sørensen turns to the deteriorating relations between Russia and the west. He shows how western policy toward Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union contributed to Putin’s sharp turn to dictatorship and a neo-Cold War with the west.

After Al Qaeda’s attack on the United States in 2001, Putin and the west saw eye to eye on the dangers of Islamic extremism, and he expressed support for the US war in Afghanistan to root out Osama Bin Laden. When George W. Bush invaded Iraq, however, Putin thought that the United States was using the so called “war on terror” to further American hegemony in the Middle East, and revealed Washington’s “norm-based order” (154) as a cover for unchecked US military action. Putin’s support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is a counter to US power in the region.

NATO’s bombing of Belgrade in 1999 to stop the ethnic cleansing of Albanians from Kosovo, and the west’s recognition in 2008 of the independence of Kosovo

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from Serbia, Russia's old compatriot, added to Putin's anger. He felt "betrayal and humiliation" (99) from broken promises that NATO would not expand eastward, even including former Soviet republics. Georgia and Ukraine wanting to join NATO, and the west's support of Ukrainian democracy, which Putin sees as having anti-Russian implications, was the last straw. In 2014 he annexed Crimea. His attack on Ukraine was the boldest move, and has taken the neo-Cold War to more dangerous level.

Sörensen offers solutions to the problems confronting the EU, although it is not clear how the EU would devolve power back to its member states, especially in terms of economic ties. As for relations with Russia, nostalgia creeps into his analysis when he calls for a nineteenth-century-style security conference, as though the lesser powers like Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine are inclined to allow the great powers to decide about them without them. Sörensen is willing to overlook Putin's culpability in assassinations and poisonings of his political rivals, and one wonders what price Sörensen would pay to normalize relations with Russia now that Putin has proved his murderous side in a brutal war on Ukraine. The Russian dictator has taken his country out of the community of nations by blatantly flouting acceptable norms of international behavior.

SHELDON ANDERSON  
Miami University  
anderss@miamioh.edu

***Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang. Revised and Updated.*** By James A. Millward. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. xxvi, 494 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. \$140.00, hard bound; \$35.00, paper.  
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This revised and updated edition of James Millward's 2007 history of Xinjiang is a highly accessible and welcome addition to the growing body of excellent scholarship on this deeply troubled region. Beginning in 2014, the government of China began to implement a series of harsh and repressive policies targeting the Turkic-Muslim Uyghurs, among others in the region. Human rights violations include religious repression, the destruction of the region's centuries-old religious infrastructure, the forced internment of well over one million Uyghurs in a growing network of prison camps, reports of torture, separation of children from their parents, forced sterilization, and much more. In this new edition, Millward has added a chapter that addresses events that unfolded in Xinjiang during the fifteen years that elapsed since 2007.

That final chapter is preceded by seven others. The first chapter makes the case for titling the book *Eurasian Crossroads*. Beginning even before the Bronze Age, readers learn about the ancient Tarim mummies and other archeological evidence that indicates an impressive level of human movement through the region, and settlement in it. By the Classical Period, the Indo-European Tokharians were the principal inhabitants of Xinjiang, living for some time under the rule of the nomadic Xiongnu, and then the Han Chinese. Moving forward to the sixth and seventh centuries, we find this Eurasian crossroads at the intersection of the Tang Empire, Tibetans, the nomadic Turks, the Iranian Soghdians, and then their Arab Muslim conquerors.

Chapter 2, "Central Eurasia Ascendant (9<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries)," begins with the migration of one segment of the earlier Turks Qaghanate, the historical Uyghurs, southward from the steppe into the Turfan Basin in what is now northern Xinjiang.