mies, is an important point often overlooked by those who prefer to wallow in the market economic triumphalism of the post-Cold War years. Savchenko expertly assesses how political oppositionists often took an instrumental view of “markets” largely because of the anti-Communist (i.e., command economy) utility of the idea, but notes that most had little real inclination to incorporate serious market strategies in their versions of post-Communist economy. Chapters 3 and 4 are helpful discussions of early “reform” and “privatization” efforts in the five countries, affected as they unavoidably were by the country-specific behaviors and attitudes of self-interested bureaucratic and social groups.

Savchenko’s analysis provides a useful comparative perspective, but the discussion needed to be improved in several ways. While relying on Poland as the principal example of a leading “reformist” state, Savchenko overlooks an important reality in that county that bears on the pace of and prospects for regional and country-specific changes in property rights: Poland had the advantage of a private, property-“owning” peasantry prior to the end of communism, whereas the other countries (all within the former USSR) did not (note the continuing problem of a new property regime in Russia and Belarus). As for money and convertibility, Poland also had much more, if also more problematical, experience with Western currency remittances and borrowing issues connected with the old regime. Savchenko’s research also relies extensively on secondary sources. One hopes that the author will enhance his valuable conceptual approach by deepening his work in the future with explicit primary research and a broader reading of secondary sources that have accumulated since 1995.

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Sherman W. Garnett and Robert Legvold tackle the international problem of the post-Soviet Republic of Belarus by bringing together authors from Belarus (Anatoly Rozanov) and four of its neighbors: Poland (Antoni Kaminski), Lithuania (Alghirdas Gricius), Ukraine (Hrihoriy Perepelitsa) and Russia (Vyacheslav Nikonov). This volume addresses the relations of Belarus with bordering countries (except Latvia) and appraises the challenge posed by Belarus to regional and European security. In addition, Legvold in a separate article evaluates US-Belarus relations and offers recommendations for US foreign policy. In introductory and concluding remarks, Garnett and Legvold highlight points made by the other authors and reiterate policy suggestions for neighboring countries, the EU, NATO, and the Unites States. The overarching theme is recognition of Belarus’ strategic importance and an argument for more active and constructive engagement with Belarus by the West. As a collection of articles from a diverse group of scholars, this volume makes a vital addition to the relatively small number of Western scholarly works devoted to this country.
The authors stress the international importance of Belarus by virtue of its geographic location at a strategic “crossroads” (hence the title) along two axes: one running East-West between Russia and Central Europe, with NATO’s (and soon the EU’s) new frontier in Poland, and the other going North-South between the Baltic and Black Sea regions. Given this geopolitical reality, the authors argue that Belarus cannot be treated as just another small country or be written off as a Russian dependency. Legvold in particular urges a more subtle US foreign policy that, while not embracing Belarus’ political regime, would engage it constructively.

Several themes lend the entire work its coherence. Belarus is identified as a source of regional instability and as a potential security threat because it is the only European country resisting European integration and post-Communist democratization. The authors establish a clear link between the authoritarian turn of Belarusian domestic politics under President Aleksandr Lukashenko and an anti-Western foreign policy. Moreover, the authors distinguish Belarus as the only post-Soviet state pressing for some sort of union with Russia. Each contributor examines these issues from his own country’s perspective. Because each author presents a version of background events in Belarus during the 1990s, a certain amount of repetition could not be avoided.

This book could be enhanced by a chapter on the historical problem of Belarusian national consciousness as well as its status under Lukashenko. The authors allude to the weakness or even absence of Belarusian national consciousness as a crucial political ingredient but do not provide the reader with a deeper analysis of the problem. Of the contributing authors, Kaminski and particularly Gricius do review the history of Belarus, but only suggest in broad terms how it affected the development of national identity. Others such as Rozanov and Nikonov remark without explanation on the cultural affinity between Belarusians and Russians and on popular support in Belarus for closer ties to Russia, leaving the reader with an uncritical impression of ethnic and cultural similarity. In particular, the authors neglect the recent history of the national movement during the late 1980s and early 1990s, cultural and educational policies in 1991-94 and cultural and language policy under Lukashenko. Much attention is given to Lukashenko as an authoritarian leader and suppressor of economic reform, but nothing is said of his preference for things Russian, his putting down of efforts to promote Belarusian language and culture, and his imposition of an official ideology that denationalizes his country’s past and present.

Another subject that deserves more attention is political culture. Legvold convincingly argues that the reality of Belarusian statehood is taking root among some segments of the population, although they are probably in the minority. On the other hand, Legvold and the others do not point out the political culture of the population as a factor reinforcing authoritarianism and, in the absence of a strong national identity, a reversion to Russia. The legacy of the Soviet system is not only a supranational Soviet identity, as suggested by Gricius. Just as important, it is the absence of civic consciousness. Lukashenko’s Belarus has embraced the Soviet political legacy more than any other European part of the former Soviet Union. It is much closer to being a state with subjects than a political nation of citizens.

The policy recommendations contained in this volume, and strongly argued by Legvold, are therefore extremely tenuous. Authoritarianism inside Belarus has pro-