

scher Perspektive (S.117-142). Das abschließende Kapitel beinhaltet zu guter Letzt eine Diskussionsrunde zwischen den Autoren, moderiert von Kim Sung-hae (S.143-168).

Zu den Formalia: die Romanisierung des Koreanischen erfolgt nach der revidierten Umschrift der koreanischen Regierung aus dem Jahre 2000. Teils willkürlich werden den transkribierten Begriffen allerdings die korrespondierenden chinesischen Schriftzeichen oder hie und da die koreanische Schreibweise nachgestellt. Der wissenschaftliche Apparat ist je nach Beitrag kaum bis gar nicht vorhanden, weiterführende Literaturangaben fallen ebenfalls sehr spärlich aus.

Inhaltlich sind die Aufsätze von sehr unterschiedlicher Ausrichtung respektive Qualität: von religionswissenschaftlich sachlich-neutral (Ro Kil-myung) bis theologisch blasiert (Kim Sung-hae), wie anschaulich in folgender Diagnose zu sehen: „We discussed whether the established religions should continue their relationships with these new religions, whose identities were yet to be defined. The conclusion we had after a long discussion was that it would be better and more desirable to continue communication in order to help the new religions move in a more humane and healthier direction“ (S.27). Die jeweils doktrinspezifischen Beiträge fallen – da aus der Binnenperspektive heraus verfasst – merklich kontextgebunden im Rahmen eigener weltanschaulicher Maßgaben aus, stellen in dieser Weise aber eine gelungene Abwechslung dar, auch wenn ich keineswegs mit Ro Kil-myung übereinstimmen möchte, der diesbezüglich pauschalisierend meint: „The history or the ideas of a religion should be explained by the scholars of the religion itself and not by outsiders“ (S.117). Was der Sammelband nicht bietet ist eine religionswissenschaftlich adäquate Zusammenschau koreanischer Neureligiosität. Zudem wird er auch seinem Titel nicht gerecht, da nicht – wie erwartet – die Beziehungen neureligiöser Gruppierungen zu christlichen Traditionen im Vorder-

grund stehen, sondern der Schwerpunkt vielmehr auf eine recht bunte Darstellung der jeweiligen doktrinen und praktischen Dimension samt kurzem historischen Abriss gesetzt wird. Zwar wird der akademische Leser mitunter zum Zielklientel gezählt (S.VI), doch wird dieser – sofern nicht zumindest mit Grundsätzlichem vertraut – ob der inhaltlichen und formalen Kürzen recht wenig Profit aus der Lektüre schlagen.

Fazit: flüssig zu lesender, summarischer Überblick zu drei in Korea heimischen, neureligiösen Traditionen, der nicht durch besondere Innovation, Tiefe und Formalität besticht, sich aber durchaus als „Appetitanreger“ eignet.

Lukas Pokorny

### **David Lewis. The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia**

New York/London: Columbia University Press/C. Hurst, 2008, 256 S., USD 29,50/GBP 16,95

This slim and well written volume amply proves that twenty years after its reappearance on the world stage Central Asia still offers plenty of intellectual discoveries even to the initiated. David Lewis, previously with the International Crisis Group in Central Asia and now with Bradford University, knows the region well, perhaps all too well by the standards of gullible Western policy makers, and he does not pull his well aimed punches. His book covers the despotic autocracies of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan whose evil and incompetent regimes appear as even worse than post-Stalinist Soviet rule, as well as the largely failed impoverished mountain states of Kyrgystan with its betrayed Tulip revolt and neo-feudal Tajikistan, still suffering from its cruelly fought civil war. Western initiatives in the region, well intentioned as they mostly were, appear as under-informed, hooked to wishful thinking and ultimately failed, whilst more successful cynical Russian and Chinese

strategies are effective only in their short-term obsession to curtail Western influences. Their remedies for the region's untreated and worsening economic, ecological and governance problems, its demographic explosion and militant Islamist underground, are invisible, except for perfecting repressive tactics. Indeed neither in Beijing nor in Moscow there appears much awareness of the long term implications of their recently established dual hegemony over the troubled region and the problems they inherited.

Though one could argue that already the Clinton administration with its BTC pipeline pursued energy interests in the region, according to Lewis it was September 11 which generated strategic US interest. US air bases were secured in Manas (Kyrgystan) and in Khanabad in Uzbekistan, which soon found itself promoted to "anchor state" status. Putin was simply presented with a fait accompli in his erstwhile backyard. US objectives in the region were to implement Western values and a permanent presence, which was to project US power into Afghanistan, and towards the Iran, Russia and China. These expectations were soon to be disappointed (p. 8).

The US strategic partnership with Uzbekistan, which barely lasted four years from 2001 to 2005, reads like a case study in mutual misconception. Karimov, the local president for life, hoped for US aid to get rid of his Islamist threat at home and abroad, to benefit from US funds and to be treated "like Israel" (p. 16), with political and human rights commitments being handled as a mere formality by the US. The US and the rest of the West then sent many consultants on governance issues, with funds going into unwanted civil society projects. The Uzbek regime however was neither interested in national development nor in free advice on good governance, let alone having its local oppositionists encouraged. International seminars, conferences and police training against torture turned out useless against the well established practice to short-cut investi-

gations by extracting quick confessions or denunciations of political suspects. The fall out with the West occurred after fairly toothless delayed protests over Interior Ministry troops' massacre of demonstrators in Andijan in the impoverished and misruled Fergana valley in May 2005. China and Russia declared their support for Karimov as conditional on his eviction of the US. He promptly complied and followed up with the expulsion of Western NGOs and a new round of arrests of their domestic sympathizers (p. 66).

The international media tended to treat the despotic rule of Niyazov and personality cult of the "Turkmenbashi" in neighboring Turkmenistan more as a joke. Lewis is right to state that his rule was not a joke, but a disaster for the country with an entire generation indoctrinated in a flimsy education based on the dictator's whimsical ethnocentric "Ruhnama" bible (p. 89). Western training of anti-narcotics officers only led to a larger number of smaller fish being caught. Regime connected traders could continue with their Afghan trade unhindered. After Niyazov's timely demise in December 2006 some absurdities and the international isolation of the regime have been removed. His successor Berdimuhamedov in the meantime has consolidated his power and begun to play Russian, Chinese and Western interests over gas supplies against each other, a favourite past-time in the region. Western criticism of his dictatorship remains inaudible (p. 117).

Lewis then proceeds to shatter common misperceptions about the "Tulip revolution" of 2005 in Kyrgystan. The overthrow of post-Soviet dictators may have suited the US geopolitical agenda, but president Akaev was not toppled by the handful of Western NGOs, their local followers and the tiny independent media which were living in their subsidized virtual world in Bishkek. Rather Akaev had managed to antagonize powerful regional bosses by promoting his own family's political and economic inte-

rests too forcefully at their expense. Regional protests triggered an implosion of government authority as police and governors ran away. As local bosses – many of them linked to drug cartels – and their followers converged upon the unsuspecting capital, most of Akaev's followers changed sides. After a period of turmoil a new regime under Bakiev is firmly in power, less despotic than its neighbors to be sure, but as authoritarian, corrupt and self-serving, this time for his Southern clans, as the previous one (p. 153).

The civil war of Tajikistan drove out the Russians and the educated Tajiks and left much of the infrastructure in ruins. The country now lives on international aid, drug money and remittances, and shows all signs of a failed state. As Tajikistan is seen as a post-conflict environment and international staffers continue to be judged by their disbursement rates, not many questions are asked about aid money lining the pockets of the presidential palace or the miserably paid officialdom, thus propping up the regime of Rahmonov (p. 172), the winner of the war. In Tajikistan as elsewhere in Central Asia democracy programs have failed as did the war on drugs, Lewis sadly and rightly concludes (p. 180). Western counterterrorism training and electronic surveillance devices are being used against domestic opponents of the regimes (p. 184).

While traditionally Islam in Central Asia has shown little signs of radicalization and religious fervour, first signs of religious fundamentalism – partly violent like the IMU, partly radical, but still non-violent, like Hizb-ut-Tahrir – have been ruthlessly repressed in the region. Lewis now fears that the embittered victims of this repression – be they in prison camps or relatives outside – might further radicalize and spread their message among the half educated underemployed offspring of impoverished former middle class families, who might be receptive to fighting for a mythical caliphate in Central Asia (p. 201).

Although Russian economic influence dwindled, its export industries remaining uncompetitive and its cultural influence declined, Russia remains by far the most important regional partner: for the ruling elites for political support, for ordinary people as a source of jobs through migration, and for intellectuals as a cultural window to the world. China's economic penetration is seen as inevitable. Yet her aggressive resource diplomacy, her tough stance on border changes and repression of the Uighurs has fuelled traditional fears which Soviet propaganda had kept alive (pp. 218).

Western disengagement would leave Moscow to deal with migration, Islamic violence and a massive drugs trade alone. With its often patronizing arrogance and governance problems of its own it looks ill-equipped to do so and risks to be drawn into domestic and regional conflicts of its old/new client states (p. 232). Yet the Siloviki in power in Russia in their single minded pursuit of Cold War objectives remain content in their anti-western paranoia (p. 217). Yet even without Russian antagonism the Western strategies for Central Asia never had a chance: There were premised on power elites interested in modernizing transition countries, modelled after the EU's largely successful experience in Central Eastern Europe. In Central Asia this proved to be a costly illusion which still awaits rectification.

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