and be treated fairly, but increasingly is becoming a part of the popular consciousness and discourse of villagers.

Unlike the intellectuals, however, as O'Brien and Li point out, rightful resisters mainly deal with local issues. They seldom call for wider civil and political rights to assemble and express one's views; nor do they often question the legitimacy of existing laws and policies or demand the right to hold the Center accountable. Rather O'Brien and Li see citizenship as evolving through negotiations between representatives of the state and social groups, engaged in a prolonged struggle through pressure from the bottom up and extraction of concessions. Within existing limits, villagers through rightful resistance are asserting their rights and opening up channels of political participation that are slowly changing China's political scene at the grassroots. O'Brien and Li's path-breaking study reveals an aspect of Chinese political change that few have been aware of and few have foreseen.

–Merle Goldman

INFORMAL POLITICS

Kathleen Collins. *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xx, 376. $90.00.)

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Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia is a unique and ambitious attempt to reconceptualize and explain political development in the ex-Soviet Central Asian republics since independence. The book's original theoretical synthesis and massive amount of empirical material from the author's fieldwork in the region are a significant contribution to scholarship on the region and the politics of regime transitions. However, the lack of conceptual clarity and the major gap between the theoretical and empirical sections weaken the project.

Collins begins with the puzzle that three Central Asian states—Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan—initially diverged in their regime trajectories after independence, only to converge toward the mid-1990s. Her explanation focuses on informal politics, specifically the role of clans. Collins defines a clan as "an informal organization comprising a network of individuals linked by kin and fictive kin identities" (17). Clans are both networks and sources of identity. Each comprises 2,000 to 20,000 members and provides both horizontal and vertical ties. Behavior is constrained by the norms and identities that clan membership provides, to the extent that an individual "is not ... an autonomous agent, but a 'social self'" (33). Collins operationalizes clans to include relations based on "historic family alliances; a shared *mahalla* (local community), village, or regional network;

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and school and business colleagues who have been integrated into such a network" (26).

The empirical section of the book begins by highlighting the role of clans and tribes in pre-Russian Central Asia, then describing how the incomplete Soviet penetration of society allowed clans to persist. The heart of the book is a detailed account of regime development in the three countries from 1990 to 2004. Collins documents the events that marked the transition period—pacts between elites, the strategic use of state resources to maintain power, and the erosion of the formal institutions of governance—with detailed readings of secondary sources and numerous interviews with highly placed officials who were involved in this process. She traces Kyrgyzstan's slow decline from its early vaunted status as Central Asia's best hope for democracy, Uzbekistan's authoritarian consolidation and subsequent weakening, and Tajikistan's recovery from civil war but failure to consolidate an authoritarian regime.

The book makes several theoretical advances. One is to bridge the culturalist-rationalist divide. Collins cogently argues that cultural and rational motivations for membership in identity groups are inextricably linked. A second argument is that states and regimes should be separated analytically. As Collins points out, although the Soviet Union was labeled "totalitarian," in fact it lacked the capacity to reshape society. The Central Asian states are similarly afflicted by low state capacity today, but their authoritarianism is often mistaken for strength.

A third advance is to direct attention in transitions to (or from) democracy to the social organization of society, but to go beyond modernization theory. Specifically, Collins argues that to understand transitions and consolidation in Central Asia, as in many developing countries, it is necessary to study informal politics rather than the formal trappings of a regime such as ideology, political parties, or elections. While scholars have begun to pay attention to informality, it has yet to be fully incorporated into theories about transitions. Collins, rightly, is not satisfied to say *that* informality matters, but instead delves into *how* it matters.

The problem with *Clan Politics* lies in the limitations of the lens through which Collins examines informal politics—namely clans. She frames the puzzle as a false binary choice between formal institutions and clans: "Clan networks, not formal institutions and elected officials, hold and exercise real power" (3). But those are not the only alternatives. In fact, Collins herself admits that Central Asia contains a "multiplicity of identities and complexity of language and tribal origin . . ." (74). By attempting to reduce the complexity into a single all-encompassing concept, Collins, trying to explain everything, risks explaining nothing.

One problem arises in using the term "clan" to include family, regional affiliation, and business associates. As if these inclusions were not broad enough, later in the book, we learn that clan ties also developed within the KGB (26) and collective farms (216). Incorporating these diverse elements

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into a single concept creates confusion since it is used to describe both elite networks that compete for state resources and poor families centered on a village elder—actors with widely divergent interests whose actions have different implications for regime transitions.

Another difficulty arises in applying the term "clan" across all three states. For example, whereas in Kyrgyzstan, ordinary people possess a clan identity based on the name of their historic tribe (215) (though how socially relevant it is for most people is debatable), in Uzbekistan clans are synonymous with provinces, which are centered around "particular strongmen or notables," but do not include "the majority of people within those large territories" (254). It might have been useful to apply different concepts that reflect stark variations between these states in terms of

(1) the correlation between contemporary identity and pre-Russian tribal identity,
(2) the varying bases of group attachment, and
(3) the extent to which social networks cut across class lines.

Ultimately, the utility of a theory is borne out by how well it explains reality. The evidence Collins presents does not bear out her claims of clans as a relevant social organization, much less as a causal force in politics. To prove her argument, she would need to provide evidence that clans are self-aware and cohesive social organizations that compete for resources, provide a source of affective attachments for both elites and ordinary people, constitute people's primary source of identity, and redistribute resources internally. Unfortunately, Collins spends only 12 pages (213–24) discussing how clans are experienced on the mass level—and the evidence is scant. Besides the fact that Uzbek and Kyrgyz respondents "take pride in their lineage" and that 68.3 percent of Tajiks identify themselves as members of a clan (*avlod*) (217), other findings—that people borrow money from family members, that they value tradition, that they are attached to their villages, that informal procedures substitute for the rule of law, and that local ties have provided a social safety net—are interesting in and of themselves, but serve only to show that informal social networks and practices prevail (as they do in much of the developing world), rather than demonstrating the primacy of clans.

The majority of the book deals with the elite level. This section is a fascinating view of informal politics in Central Asia, but while the status of state elites as "clan elders" is asserted, no evidence is shown that they act in ways consistent with their imputed role. It might have been more useful in this section to disaggregate "clan" in this section to explain when regime elites use corruption and patronage to favor different types of relations, such as immediate family, coworkers, former associates from the Communist Party structure or army, or people from one's region or village.

The book's major contribution is its detailed political history of Central Asia since independence, which should be a useful reference to students of the

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region. It also makes persuasive arguments for how to study regimes and transitions. However, in its theoretical approach and efforts to shed light on the dynamics of Central Asian politics, it falls short.

–Scott Radnitz

FATAL ERRORS

John Roosa: *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. Pp. xii, 329.)

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The murder in 1965 of six Indonesian generals and the subsequent mass murder of half a million supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) changed the course of Indonesia's political history and also triggered much debate. There is no question that the assassination of the generals became the "pretext for mass murder," but consensus is yet to be reached among scholars on the origins and goals of the movement that carried out the initial assassinations. John Roosa's reexamination of these events is based on new evidence not available to earlier participants in the debate. These data include a written analysis of the movement's failure by one of its leaders, the author's interviews with former PKI officials released after President Suharto's fall in 1998, and declassified U.S. State Department documents (recalled immediately after release but too late to retrieve all the copies).

The earlier versions of the origins of the so-called coup attempt covered a range of incompatible explanations: a PKI bid for power; a movement of "leftist" officers to protect President Sukarno from a "rightist" military plot; a joint operation by "leftist" officers and the PKI to foil the same military plot; a scheme masterminded by General Suharto to provoke the PKI into action that would give the military the pretext to eliminate the communist threat. While each interpretation has some merit, Roosa argues that all contain unexplained anomalies.

Roosa rejects the military's claim that the PKI as an institution carried out the "attempted coup" but argues, on the basis of his interviews with released PKI prisoners, that the movement was initiated by the PKI leader, Aidit, through the party's secret "Special Bureau," which had long cultivated sympathetic "Sukarnoist" military officers. Aidit's preemptive strike was motivated by a real concern that the military itself was planning its own strike against the PKI. That Aidit had cause for concern is confirmed by communications between the U.S. embassy in Jakarta and Washington as revealed in the State Department documents. The embassy reported signs that the military was thinking about a coup and indicated that the U.S. would welcome it.

Roosa's interviews with PKI members yield a fascinating picture of Aidit's secret agent, the mysterious Syam who headed the Special Bureau. According to the military, Syam was a communist who infiltrated the military, but others

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