

In contrast, the Putin era has been one of greater realism and increasing self-confidence. The revived prosperity that has come from oil revenues has facilitated the emergence of a resource-based nationalism. In the 1990s those in Russia who advocated a greater involvement of Russia with the Asia Pacific tended to stress the benefits of being linked with the economic dynamism to be found there, but this meant making Russian industry competitive with Japanese industry. Instead Russian industry has largely fallen further behind. Under Putin there is a much stronger sense that Russia can ensure prosperity on its own terms.

In recent years a number of works have appeared in English on Russia's relations with China. Relations with Japan have attracted less attention, so this is one of the strengths of this book. Kuhrt shows in detail how and why the optimism of leaderships in both Moscow and Tokyo about the opportunity for improved relations in 1991–2 fairly quickly evaporated. Past grievances and mutual suspicions stretching back to the Russo–Japanese War of 1905 rapidly stifled attempts at a new beginning. This is further confirmation of the power of identity-based constructivism in international relations, although Kuhrt does not make that point.

By and large, Kuhrt views the relations from the perspective of the national capitals, which means that she largely ignores subnational actors. When they do figure, it is generally as disruptive elements, especially Russian far eastern provincial governors who whipped up anti-Chinese fears. In fact some local governments, especially in Japan, have been very active in trying to build links with Russian counterparts. And more recently there has been increasing cross-border cooperation between local Chinese and Russian authorities. So the picture is becoming more complex.

This book is a valuable addition for students of Russian postcommunist external relations and of international relations in NE Asia.

PETER FERDINAND, *Politics, Warwick University, Coventry, UK*

James LEIBOLD, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and Its Indigenous Became Chinese*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. xi + 271 pp., with notes and index. ISBN: 978-1-4039-7479-2 (hc). Price: £42.50.

Here is the puzzle: given its tumultuous history in the past century (and longer), how has China managed to stay relatively intact while other 19th-century agrarian empires—Ottoman and Russian, for example—have failed to do so in their transformation into nation-states? This puzzle is obvi-

ously important not only because it requires us to reflect on issues concerning historical continuities and contingencies but also because the answers to the question have significant policy implications. But the puzzle remains as tantalizing as ever, in part because any satisfactory answer would have to take into account a whole range of factors, including continuities and contingencies, as well as structure and agency.

What makes James Leibold's book an important contribution to scholarship is not that it provides a grand narrative of how China transitioned from an empire to a modern nation-state; rather, what it offers is an original and sensitive discussion of "how the vast Qing empire became 'Chinese'"—that is, how, following the collapse of the Qing dynasty (1636–1911), the political and intellectual elites of the Republican period sought to create, both politically and discursively, a "national imaginary" that was simultaneously inclusive, unitary, and autonomous. As Leibold explains, his is "not a book about nation and state building in modern China per se" (p. 7); instead, its aim is "to place the frontier and its indigenous inhabitants at the center of the state and nation-building process" as well as to shed light "on the important role of the periphery in shaping the modern sense of 'Chineseness'" (p. 2).

A major strength of Leibold's study is its conceptual clarity. Though one may on occasions wish for a more nuanced or detailed treatment (such as in the case of the author's underproblematized distinction between "Guomintang-affiliated scholars," on the one hand, and "Communist historians," on the other), I have found Leibold's attention to several analytical binaries—the "frontier question" (边疆问题) and the "national question" (民族问题), national space (geography) and national time (history), political intervention and cultural innovation, for example—to be highly illuminating. By examining the political strategies employed by leaders of both the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) "to incorporate the Qing frontier and its peoples into the Republican state" (chs 2 and 3) as well as the intellectual efforts by scholars of different political persuasions to affirm the unity of the Chinese race/nation (中华民族) (chs 4 and 5), Leibold is able to show that even though the KMT and the CCP were ultimately ideological rivals, on matters concerning the unity and diversity of the Chinese race/nation, the two political parties did share much common ground.

In fact, one of the most important contributions of *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism* is laying to rest the conventional wisdom that the KMT was far less willing than the CCP to accommodate the Mongols, the Tibetans, and other borderland populations. As Leibold demonstrates, just as the KMT

lacked both the resolve and resources to impose its will on China's border regions, the CCP—notwithstanding its official position—was far from ready to put into practice the Leninist position of according the various peoples within China the right to self-determination.

Although Leibold's book, along with Frank Dikötter's *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (London: Hurst, 1992), should now be the starting point for those of us who are interested in the history of the idea of *minzu* (民族), there are at least two areas, I think, that would have benefited from further consideration. First, since one of the objectives of the book is "to place the frontier . . . at the center of the state and nation-building process" (p. 2), the inclusion of a more comprehensive and systematic discussion of the challenges (administrative, economic, etc.) faced by both the KMT and the CCP in extending control to China's border regions would have been immensely helpful. Second, although I am sympathetic to Leibold's decision to focus on elite narratives and on "the nature of the Chinese state's *claims* over the frontier and its people" (original emphasis; p. 7), I cannot help but wonder whether the book would have been even stronger if Leibold could find a way to incorporate into his discussion what he is clearly aware of as "the dynamics of minority agency."

In conclusion, even though *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism* might not have provided the last words on how China has managed to stay largely intact while other agrarian empires failed, it has succeeded in helping us better understand the efforts and legacies on the part of Republican-era elites in the construction of "China" and "Chineseness."

LEO K. SHIN, *History and Asian Studies,*
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

Richard MADSEN, *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007. xxvi + 191 pp., with notes, glossary, and index. ISBN: 978-0520252288 (pbk). Price: US\$12.95.

New religious organizations in Taiwan with millions of followers are said to be hugely influential in society and to have helped stabilize the somewhat confused situation in the country as it underwent the process of democratization. However, to say that these religions represent a kind of religious renaissance in Taiwan—that they are not only compatible with democracy but have also facilitated democratization—is novel and striking. Challenging the Anglo-