

***Prestige, Manipulation, and Coercion: Elite Power Struggles in the Soviet Union and China after Stalin and Mao.*** By Joseph Torigian. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022. xi, 296 pp. Notes. Chronology. Index. \$65.00, hard bound.

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The political scientist Joseph Torigian compares in his book the power struggle for political succession among Soviet and Chinese elites after the death of supreme leaders, Iosif Stalin and Mao Zedong. According to him, an out-dated narrative would have described these periods as struggles between “reformers and conservatives,” which resulted in an establishment of a new collective leadership in the Soviet Union around Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 and in China around Deng Xiaoping in late 1978. Torigian’s book is aimed to deconstruct this version of history and to develop new arguments regarding struggles for succession in authoritarian regimes. His research is partly based on Russian and Chinese language primary sources, and he uses the method of texting hypotheses in selected case studies.

For the Soviet case, Torigian re-examines the defeat of the powerful chief of the security apparatus, Lavrentii Beriia, in 1953. Beriia was one of the most promising candidates for Stalin’s succession, but was purged by a coalition of members of the Presidium of Central Committee and Marshal Georgii Zhukov. The Deputy Minister of Defence had enormous prestige as hero of World War Two. In the years following the execution of Beriia, Khrushchev allied with Zhukov, who controlled the armed forces as Minister of Defense. With his help and the threat of a military coup, Khrushchev purged his opponents in the leadership, such as Georgii Malenkov and Viacheslav Molotov in 1957 and labelled them as “Anti-Party Group.” Torigian argues that regarding political reforms, rehabilitation of cadres and foreign policies, the agenda of Khrushchev did not differ greatly from his opponents and he was not more popular. After seizing party leadership, Khrushchev was powerful enough to force Zhukov into retirement. In the following years, he did never establish a real collective leadership, Torigian argues.

For the Chinese case, Torigian makes a similar argument, that struggles between “reformers” and “radicals” played no important role due to the opponents’ quite similar agendas. His first case is the arrest of the so-called “Gang of Four,” led by Premier Hua Guofeng in 1976. Hua was supported by Marshall Ye Jianying, who was Minister of Defense and the most senior leader of the army at that time. Due to the threat of military violence, the “Gang of Four” (Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing, and Yao Wenyuan) could do little to resist the coup that removed them from the Politburo. They lacked support in the party and armed forces. Furthermore, due to their younger age and complicated biographies, the new leadership under Hua could destroy their prestige by publication of compromising documents. According to Torigian, Hua tried to build a truly collective leadership, including Deng Xiaoping, who was just rehabilitated in 1977. However, Deng used his prestige as an “old revolutionary” and his deep connections with the army, dating back to the 1930s, to purge Hua from the leading position. Many policies of reform and rehabilitation were actually launched by Hua, but Deng later portrayed him as a dogmatic Maoist in the official party history. Torigian argues that Deng never established a collective leadership and did little to institutionalize the procedures of the Communist Party.

Experts of these topics might wonder whether or not the narrative of Torigian is entirely new. For the Chinese case, Frederick Teiwes/Warren Sun, Han Gang, or Xiao Donglian already published studies that tried to “rehabilitate” Hua as a reformer who should get some credit for the success story of “Reform and Opening.” Several

political scientists also argued that the institutionalization of the Chinese system was quite limited in the 1980s, and tradition of “guerrilla style-politics” remained important.

Torigian believes that the “Gang of Four” lacked their own coherent political platform during the late Cultural Revolution. He argues that there were “no real political differences separating Hua and Deng” (138), but they would have been divided by their generations and differing roles during the Cultural Revolution as benefiter and victim. According to my view, these arguments are not fully convincing. One could argue that Shanghai was the only provincial jurisdiction in China, where the Cultural Revolutionary Left remained in power until the coup led by Hua. For example, in the Shanghai, the radical leadership built a workers’ militia beyond the control of the People’s Liberation Army. At the level of the central leadership, the “Gang” and conservative “old cadres” were forced to cooperate by Mao. Under these circumstances, both sides had to pay lip-service to party unity, some would “wait and see” and political differences could not be openly expressed. After Mao died, the “Gang” was immediately arrested. During the criminal investigation to prepare their trial, the members of the “Gang” had good reasons to downplay their past ambitions for power and desire to purge “old cadres.” During the power struggle with Hua, Deng would not outline his own political agenda too openly. After he became the de-facto supreme leader of the CCP, however, Deng supported market, enterprise, price and labor reforms in the 1980s that went far beyond Hua’s agenda of 1977. Furthermore, in 1981 the Central Committee of the CCP passed a resolution that fully denied the Cultural Revolution. My impression is that Torigian sometimes takes statements of actors in the power struggle or in memoirs too literally without out critical contextualization. Furthermore, one might ask whether or not the upgrading of Hua and downgrading of Deng in the Chinese literature is somehow related to Xi Jinping’s effort to rewrite the history of “Reform and Opening” in recent years.

*Prestige, Manipulation, and Coercion* is interesting to read for scholars and students of Soviet and Chinese politics and history. Comparison based on original language material for both cases is rare and therefore highly welcomed.

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***The Chronicle of Halych-Volhynia and Historical Collections in Medieval Rus’.***

By Adrian Jusupović. Trans. Miłka Stępień. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2022. xxiv, 244 pp. Plates. Chronological Table. Bibliography. Indexes. \$131.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.31

The *Halych-Volynian Chronicle (HVL)*, covering the years 1201–1292 and subject to extensive analysis for well over a century, has recently undergone republication in a magnificent critical edition employing all known manuscripts, appending A. A. Shakhmatov’s 1909 reconstruction of the original conclusion, plus a brief continuation from 1651 edited by Dariusz Dąbrowski and Adrian Jusupović, *Chronica Galiciana-Voliniana (Chronica Romanoviciana)*, Monumenta Historiae Polonica, New Series 16 (Cracow-Warsaw, 2017). Enriched with copious notes and a detailed introduction, this edition, fronted also with Ukrainian and Polish title pages, now constitutes a must-consult gold standard.

Jusupović followed with a splendid gap-filling monograph—*Kronika halicko-wołynska (Kronika Romanowiczow) w latopisarskiej kolekcji historycznej* (Warsaw-Cracow: Avalon, 2019)—on *HVL*’s sources, construction, chronological, and narrative