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# Review of: Liberalization Challenges in Hungary: Elitism, Progressivism, and Populism by Umut Korkut

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***Liberalization Challenges in Hungary: Elitism, Progressivism, and Populism*** by Umut Korkut  
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economically and ideologically in the post-Soviet era, and their often much wealthier students.

Scholars of the region will find much here to engage them. Much more than a classroom ethnography, Fournier's book reaches beyond her case to engage many of the most lively debates among scholars of the region: the post-Soviet focus on subjectivity and subject formation; the resonance or compatibility between Soviet and (neo)liberal forms; discussions of the redrawing of citizenship and state power; the anthropology of democracy promotion. Although at times I yearned for more of the ethnographic data these discussions displaced (these pivots caused the author to depart from her data a little too frequently for my taste), they are insightful and deftly handled and *Slavic Review* readers will find much to contemplate. The book will appeal to those engaged in the study of youth, civil society, and democracy promotion both within the region and beyond.

JULIE HEMMENT

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***Liberalization Challenges in Hungary: Elitism, Progressivism, and Populism.*** By Umut Korkut. *Europe in Transition: The NYU European Studies Series*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. x, 243 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$85.00, hard bound.

Some observers might assume that this is a work concerned primarily with economic reform, which is what the term *liberalization* often connotes. While economic change is central to the author's argument, this book deals primarily with the institutionalization of liberal democracy, more specifically the challenges that Hungary has faced since the end of communist rule. Umut Korkut's work is a welcome contribution in this regard. Hungary is truly a puzzle: why is it that this country, viewed in 1989 as a "front runner" in the transition to liberal democracy in 1989, has over time become increasingly illiberal in its politics? This question is important not only in understanding this case, but also in other examples where liberal democracy has failed to institutionalize or, if you will, become "unstuck" as a result of political or economic pressures.

Korkut does a thorough job guiding us through Hungary's tumultuous politics of the 1990s, to demonstrate his argument that Hungary's "liberalization troubles" were a function of "elite led" institutional changes that were largely imposed "at the expense of the public" (3). In particular, the author shows how liberalization came to define the major political cleavage between left and right in Hungary. To do this he draws on the historical context for liberalism in precommunist Hungary, the actual process of political liberalization after 1989, and the conservative response. This last chapter includes the rise of populism, most notably in the currently ruling party FIDESZ (though populism never neatly fits on the left or right, helping in part to explain why parties like FIDESZ have seen such a dramatic shift in their ideology over time).

For scholars, this book will prove to be a tremendous resource on Hungarian politics over the past twenty years—probably the best book to date. That said, scholars not focused on Hungary, and especially those not focused on the region, will find the work much harder to access, for several reasons. While the book is laudably organized around particular questions and facets of liberalization and reaction, the result is that important theoretical and historical discussions are located throughout the text. A historical discussion of liberal thought in Hungary does not occur until chapter 4; the historical context for conservatism and populism is not given until chapter 6

(the penultimate chapter). As a result, a reader looking for an integrated discussion of the ideological forces at work must piece this together while attending to the details of particular political battles and crises that unfolded in Hungary up to 2010.

In addition, although Korkut draws on the scholarship on liberalization and democratization, these could be discussed in a more systematic way—especially given the fact that there is a large component that deals directly with his focus on elite-led, “pacted” transitions (such as in southern Europe and Latin America). There is also relatively little reference to the scholarship on populism, which has a long pedigree in Europe and Latin America. The result is a kind of tension in the book between the desire to cover political events up to the present and the ambition to provide a broader causal framework. The author might have reached a wider audience if he had laid out the social science literature more widely, earlier, and in a more integrated manner. This literature could have then been linked to a more narrowly constructed analysis of liberalism and liberalization in Hungary. He could have finally concluded with a comparison to other countries to show how his argument concerning elite politics can explain variations in political liberalization. The paucity of the concluding chapter (7 pages) leaves the reader wondering how the Hungarian case can help us better explain political change in the region and beyond.

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***The Risk of War: Everyday Sociality in the Republic of Macedonia.*** By Vasiliki P. Neofotistos. *The Ethnography of Political Violence*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. 205 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Photographs. Maps. \$55.00, hard bound.

This intriguing ethnography aspires to bridge political history and anthropology in an innovative and fascinating way. Many a time, political scientists have found the work of anthropologists politically naive. Historians also feel an absence of historical depth in ethnographic works. This short, succinct, lucid, and fascinating ethnographic account of everyday life in an ethnically mixed Skopje neighborhood during the 2001 conflict may as well serve as an example of how anthropologists can offer alternative discourses to ethnic conflict and their resolution.

The setting is the neighborhood of Cair, the time is February 2001 when the Albanian National Liberation Army (ANLA) was waging an armed insurgency against the Macedonian government. While the ANLA claimed they were fighting for greater political and educational rights for Albanians in Macedonia, the Macedonian government labeled them a terrorist organization engaged in undermining the country's stability by, among other things, flying the Albanian flag. A “peaceful” resolution in Macedonia was a big concern for the North Atlantic Treaty Association and the European Union, but what this ethnography reveals is that no matter what international agencies do and what treaties they sign, peace and conflict resolution emanate also from the desires of the people.

Vasiliki P. Neofotistos offers an ethnographic study of how middle- and working-class Muslim Albanians and Orthodox Macedonians managed to continue with their daily lives despite the widespread fear that the escalation of the conflict was imminent. The conflict lasted six months and claimed a few hundred lives from both sides. The Ohrid Agreement managed to curtail this fear, but according to this ethnography, it was the interpersonal dynamics of everyday life that kept peace going. The ethnographer lucidly portrays how social actors responded with resilience to everyday op-