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writing that: 'What the convention did by effectively ending the Great Game in Asia and hence shifting the balance of power in Europe in favor of the Franco-Russian-British entente, was to provide the combination that could defeat the Axis powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey in the First World War' (p. 475).

Overall, what does one make of Emerson's history? First, she should be commended for writing the book. As far as I can make out, hers is one of the few treatments of Anglo-Russian relations over such a long time-frame—and may indeed be the only such treatment. Second, her language skills enabled her to do some research in the Russian archives, although her research in the British archives was more substantial. However, this cannot make up for real problems with this book, which are twofold. On the one hand, Emerson never effectively illustrates the structural sources of Anglo-Russian animosity and tension. Were they the result of incompatible interests? Or was it the clash of ideologies between a liberal Britain and an autocratic Russia? At one point, Emerson contends that 'nationalists in the administration' scuppered Emperor Nicholas I's policy to improve relations with Great Britain (p. 184). However, she does not clarify who these nationalists were, nor how they managed to veto the policy of the autocratic emperor. On the other hand, there were numerous historical inaccuracies in the book. For example, 'Pitt the Younger' never became the 'Earl of Chatham' and there was no 'Lord Addington' who was prime minister after Pitt the Younger. Instead, Henry Addington only became the Viscount Sidmouth after he left 10 Downing Street in May 1804. In addition, William Ewart Gladstone was not chancellor of the exchequer at the time of the Don Pacifico affair (1850) and Emerson mistakes 'Igor Aksakov' for 'Ivan Aksakov'. Such a spate of errata tends to undermine the readers' confidence in the author's knowledge.

To conclude, a first-rate book needs to be written on the subject of Anglo-Russian relations in the nineteenth century. Keith Neilson made a start, dealing with the tail end of the Tsarist regime (see *Britain and the last Tsar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). What we now require is a book dealing with the entire period. Unfortunately, Barbara Emerson's history will not suffice.

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Caesarism in the 21st century: crisis and interregnum in world order. By **Eric Fattor**. Exeter: University of Exeter Press. 2024. 192pp. £85.00. ISBN 978 1 80413 070 4. Available as e-book.

How has the global rise of populist and authoritarian politics challenged international norms? To what extent can these shifts be attributed to new innovations in digital technology? What mode of world order could possibly replace the liberalism that has reigned since the end of the Second World War? Eric Fattor's *Caesarism in the 21st century* makes several important contributions for those considering these questions. For Fattor, when theorizing the end of the liberal international order, and the prospects for what might supersede it, the great figure of relevance is the early-twentieth-century Italian radical Antonio Gramsci.

Drawing carefully on Gramsci's works on hegemony and on how International Relations (IR) scholars have engaged with them, Fattor shows how the relevant unit of analysis is the broad amalgam of political, cultural and socio-economic forces that, in Gramscian parlance, forms a distinct historic bloc. To understand (in)stability in a given historic bloc, Gramsci's notion of crisis is essential. A crisis is deemed conjunctural if it is contained by the bloc's internal logic, but it becomes an organic crisis if it exceeds this logic. If a system-breaking crisis gains force, and no alternatively coherent bloc comes into being, the result is a tumultuous period of interregnum where, in the absence of a hegemonic elite, no single group is dominant. This situation creates conditions for 'Caesarism' whereby charismatic and opportunistic 'men of destiny' champion new ways of being, empower themselves or embark on a combination of both. According to Fattor, '[i]n Caesarism, the problem of the interregnum ... is temporarily solved by an individual deliverer who promises to restore order, smite the partisan political actors and return ... to a place of pride and stability' (p. 49). However, the operative quality of Caesarism is its temporary nature and, while perhaps a harbinger, it is not itself the embodiment of the coming of a new historic bloc.

Applying this framework to current world politics, Fattor details how the 'digital revolution' undermined the very historic bloc of liberal international order despite post-Cold War globalization and its promised horizons of nigh unlimited individual empowerment. Instead, it prompted new anxieties, new divisions and a new raft of would-be Caesars eager to exploit them. Paradoxically, 'those authoritarian actors, who digital technologies were to have a hand in slaying, appeared to have a keener understanding of what such technologies were capable of and how to harness their power' (p. 77). From this premise, Fattor presents a typology of twenty-first-century Caesars that divides individuals according to those largely reliant on coercive state power (such as Vladimir Putin); the vastly empowered tech billionaires with elaborate visions of the human future (such as Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg); the religious radicals seeking to sow devastation aligned with millenarian visions (such as the leaders of Al-Qaeda); and those populist leaders who thrive on dramatized social division (such as Donald Trump). Fattor dismisses these forces' potential to provide sustainable models for a new world order and contemplates the nature of the next global historic bloc that will emerge in their wake. The possible candidates include an integrated deterritorialized global regime; a multi-actor hierarchical neo-feudalism; a China-centred international order (Xi Jinping is not deemed a Caesar); or a post-capitalist system premised on environmentalism, guaranteed sustenance and human rights (though not necessarily a socialist or communist system). Ending on a dire note, Fattor makes it clear that any future speculation must account for the potential apocalypse that environmental destruction poses. According to the author it is possible that '[t]he end of the current interregnum arrives not with the beginning of a new order, but [with] the end of a civilisation and possibly even human life on this planet' (p. 140).

Overall, Fattor must be commended for encapsulating so many grand ideas in such a slim and accessible volume. However, one must ask whether by centring

Caesars, his focus on leaders and their agency might overlook the more complex social processes that ultimately empowered said Caesars and which will persist once they become memories. When addressing these questions, especially as they concern which post-interregnum order is most likely to emerge, there are ample grounds for deploying the historical sociological IR approaches that, in broadly focusing on bottom-up social relations across time and space, have productively complicated IR's leader-centric presumptions embodied in its pivotal concepts of sovereignty and anarchy. Although IR theory is not Fattor's main focus, his many reframings provide a grand array of perspectives through which a historical sociology of IR approach might be deployed. Beginning in Gramsci's own time, the mass social dislocation that accompanied the shift from agrarian to industrial social relations was no less jarring than the recent digital upheaval that so many are prone to declare unprecedented. After all, 'the period between the two world wars, when the classical liberal assembly of power was in crisis' amid fascist and socialist competitors provides an essential backdrop to Gramsci's ideas and it cannot be decoupled from a broader agrarian-industrial transition (p. 4).

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Governance, law and ethics

Autocracy, Inc.: the dictators who want to run the world. By Anne Applebaum. London: Allen Lane. 2024. 240pp. £20.00. ISBN 978 0 24162 789 1. Available as e-book.

In Anne Applebaum's well-researched book, there are two main groups of villains. The first group includes the obvious suspects: the autocratic leaders who control China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Venezuela and perhaps 20 or 30 more states. The second comprises the small army of western enablers, such as lawyers, bankers, accountants, real-estate agents and media sympathizers, who profit enormously from their money-laundering activities. Noting a benign tolerance of kleptocracy, Applebaum observes that one in five condominiums in Trump-owned buildings in the United States are owned by shell companies (p. 37).

Applebaum is critical of western politicians such as Bill Clinton and Angela Merkel who assumed that, after the end of the Cold War, greater trade would automatically lead to more democracy in Russia and China. She notes that virtually no one suggested that the opposite could happen and that autocracy and illiberalism could spread to the democratic world instead (p. 27). Applebaum makes clear that this is an immediate challenge. Western democracies are not facing an alliance as such, but a group of like-minded countries with shared characteristics and common aims, notably regime survival and self-enrichment. They do not share any political, ideological or religious views, but they do share surveillance technology and security techniques to ensure a quiescent population. They also support each other through a murky web of financial and trading arrangements. Autocratic leaders also share an antithesis of western concepts of democracy, human rights and the