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THE SOFT POWER OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE, By Ayse Dietrich*, Published by: Routledge, New York. Edited by Arto Mustajoki, Ekaterina Protassova and Maria Yelenevskaya, Year of Publishing: 2020. Subject Area: Russian Language. Book Type: Sociolinguistics. Total Number of Pages: 261. ISBN: 9780367183660, £120.00, Hardcover.

This collaborative work examines the socio-linguistic situations of the Russian language and its status outside the Russian Federation, or, as the authors put it, the Near and Far Abroad.^[1] The pluricentric trends that involve political, ideological and socio-economic power, and the intensified centrifugal tendencies in the development of Russian on the territory of ex-Soviet states are also analyzed.

The book consists of four chapters. Each chapter is composed of several articles (twenty-one) that complement one another.

Part I In “Russian as a Communicative Tool: lingua franca, intermediary or something else?”, the authors examine a number of issues. These range from concerns about increasing language contacts due to wide-scale migrations that have resulted in bilingual societies; language policies implemented according to the needs of a multilingual society; and the promotion of linguistic rights by interest groups and NGOs. The authors explain how the White Wave of Russian émigrés adjusted to their new lives, or lived like a strangers till the end of their lives, and the significant impact they left in many countries since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

This Chapter is completed by an historical analysis of the internalization of the Russian language during the Soviet Union and discusses how language policies differed from one territory to another; the process of alphabet change and the problem of alphabet choice which is directly connected to the political and cultural orientation of the state; how linguistic norms are determined by the authorities as top-down policies and whether they are democratic or antidemocratic; the radical changes witnessed in language practice; the massive influx of loanwords which threatens the vitality of Russian language; the expansion of brutal and colloquial lexicons; whether systematic

normalization measures are being taken by the former Soviet states and whether the former states have created an inherent natural norm; and, finally, whether the situation is different in the countries where Russian is heavily influenced by the surrounding society and languages.

Part 2 “The Russian-language legacy” examines the official language policies in the post-Soviet countries and the use and the status of the Russian language. These countries include the Caucasus states: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan; the Baltic states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania; the Slavic states: Belarus, Ukraine; and the Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan. After giving a short historical perspective, the authors discuss the current language policies in each country.

Part 3, “The Russian speaking diaspora” is concerned with the Russian-speaking diaspora living in European countries such as France, Germany, and Finland; Canada, South America and the USA. Each author deals with the history of Russian immigration, the attitudes toward Russian, the acquisition and maintenance of Russian and its use in education, the role of the internet and the role of the communication networks. This chapter also discusses the Russian dialects spoken by the Old Believers who were quite successful in preserving their language outside of Russia.

Part 4, “New trends in the functioning of the Russian language” talks about how *Russianness* was an effective tool to strengthen the cultural and linguistic bond between former Soviet citizens and hold the Russian-speaking diasporas around the world together. It focuses on the importance of family interactions for language maintenance and discusses how parents transmit their language to their children by providing a comparative analysis of the situation in Cyprus and Sweden. This chapter ends with an article that examines current Russian language teaching, problems and methods in Japanese high schools.

The book is a well-written and well-referenced collaborative work that presents a broad analysis of the historical developments of the socio-linguistic situations of the Russian language and its status outside the Russian Federation. The primary audience for this reference book are researchers who are interested in the field of Russian language history, and language teaching. This book complements previous studies written on language politics and policies towards Russian and the issues of diaspora communities.

^[1]Political terms *Near Abroad* describes the family of socialist states that are now independent and emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the term *Far Abroad* describes Central and Eastern European countries.

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