

CAUCASUS UNDER REVIEW

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS

While the Caucasus is a region of enormous diversity and potential, it is also a region about which relatively little is known. However, during the last decade, numerous publications on the region have expanded both regional and international understanding of this diversity and potential. This overview of recent publications provides an up-to-date reading list for anyone interested in the region. This issue presents recently published books which delve into a range of issues, from the Cold War to new geopolitics; Russian geopolitics to the Sasanian Empire; the Cultural Revolution to new media; from Azerbaijan's foreign policy and the EU's role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to East-West transportation corridor.



The book of **The Cold War: A World History** is written by **Odd Arne Westad**, the S. T. Lee Professor of US-Asia Relations at Harvard University. Professor Westad challenges the idea that the Cold War began after 1945. Rather, he sees its origins in the late 1800s, when industrialization started and European workers became radicalized, and argues that the Cold War made the world what it is today. With his book, Westad aims to get attention away from Russia, Germany, and the US. His ambitious book wrests attention away from the classic arenas of Moscow, Berlin and Washington, and looks instead at Indonesia, Chile, Angola, China and Korea, showing how the Cold War affected the globe and how it was, in turn, shaped by events in seemingly distant lands.

Dimitar Bechev's book *Rival Power: Russia in Southeast Europe* identifies three areas in which Russia wields influence in southeast Europe: military capabilities, energy politics, and soft power. The author gives the reader some historical background, highlighting the close cultural and military links between Russia and the Balkan states in the first part, while part two looks at the different levers Russia uses in the region. This is a thoroughly researched book, well referenced with evidence-backed assertions. The author himself describes the book as an account of Russia's engagement with Southeast Europe since the early 1990s. In this sense, the book addresses two sets of questions. First, what has been driving Moscow's policy in the region? What are the strategic goals and objective that policymakers, both before and after Putin's ascent to power in 1999-2000, have been pursuing? Second, what explains the attitude and responses of local states to Russia? Why have they engaged and carried favor with Moscow?

Another book of *The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas*, is written by **Agnia Grigas**. The book deals not only with the economic and environmental effects of natural gas, but also its geopolitical consequences. The boom in shale gas production in the United States, the growth of global LNG trade, and the buildup of gas transport infrastructure worldwide have transformed the traditional markets, and natural gas appears to be on the verge of becoming a true global commodity. Traditional suppliers like Russia, whose energy-poor neighbors were dependent upon its gas exports and pipelines, are feeling the foundations of the old

order shifting beneath their feet. Grigas examines how this new reality is rewriting the conventional rules of intercontinental gas trade and realigning strategic relations among the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, and beyond.

Mark Bassin (Baltic Sea professor of the history of ideas in the Center for Baltic and East European Studies at Södertörn University in Stockholm) and Mikhail Suslov (Marie Curie post-doctoral researcher at the Uppsala Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University) argue in their book *Eurasia 2.0: Russian Geopolitics in the Age of New Media* that the Soviet Union's phantom presence continues to exert considerable cultural and political force. This collection explores the new possibilities and threats associated with the digitalization of geopolitical knowledge and practice. The authors consider new spatial sensibilities and new identities of global as well as local selves, the emergence of which is facilitated by the Internet. They explore recent reconfigurations of the traditional imperial conundrum of center versus periphery.

The book of *Everyday Energy Politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus Citizens' Needs, Entitlements and Struggles for Access*, is edited by **David Gullette** and **Jeanne Féaux de la Croix**. This collection brings together anthropologists, economists, geographers and political scientists to examine the role of all forms of energy and their products in people's daily lives throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus. The contributors ask how energy is understood as an everyday resource, as a necessity and a source of opportunity, a challenge or even as an indicator of exclusionary practices. They enquire into the role and views of energy sector workers, rural consumers and urban communities, and their experiences of energy companies' and national policies. They further examine the legacy of Soviet and more recent domestic energy policies, the environmental of energy use as well as the political impact of citizens' energy grievances.

The book of *Trapped between War and Peace: The case of Nagorno-Karabakh (Selected papers: 2011-2017)* is jointly edited by **Gulshan Pashayeva**, Deputy Director of the Center, Center for Strategic Studies (SAM) under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and **Fuad Chiragov**, Principal Research Fellow of Foreign Policy Analysis Department. In the book,

26 articles were collected reflecting the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict objectively, were selected which were previously published in peer-reviewed academic journals, prominent magazines, and global think-tanks, and are accompanied by op-eds posted in international electronic media. The aim of this book is to provide an overview about the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Its broad coverage includes legal aspects, mediation efforts, gender and human rights issues among internally displaced persons (IDPs), a comparative analysis of the conflict against minority issues in other parts of the world, the geopolitical positions of global and regional powers, and the current status of the region. The book further highlights regional political, economic, and social developments from the perspectives of prominent authors from diverse backgrounds and a variety of institutions and organizations situated on different continents. Dozens of scholarly publications and op-eds that have been produced in recent years were carefully processed and reviewed by editors.

The book of *The South Caucasus Transport Center: Crossing East-West and North-South Corridors* is a joint result of the collaboration of the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary. **Mahir Humbatov**, Research Fellow at the SAM's Economic Analysis and Global Affairs department and PhD candidate at SOAS University of London is a scientific editor of the book. The book is consisted of different chapters shedding light on Azerbaijan's advantageous geographical position at a crossroads of East-West and North-South corridors which leads the country to effectively using its geographical privilege in its natural resources, commercial relations, investment environment and governance capacities. The newly-published book also examines the trade relations between Europe and China, China's transportation routes from China to Europe and vice versa as well as their financial and security advantages. Moreover, implementation of economic and structural reforms targeting to reinforce competitive capabilities of the transport corridors conducted Azerbaijan with a range of decrees and orders signed by the President Ilham Aliyev is among the stunning topics of the book.

This book of *The South Caucasus – Security, Energy and Europeanization* edited by **Meliha B. Altunışık** and **Oktay F. Tanrisever**, explores developments in the countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – since the EU included the region in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003. It considers issues related to energy, ethnic conflict, steps towards regional integration, and, above all, security – including the involvement of Russia, Iran, Turkey and the United States. It assesses the key importance of energy, argues that the prospects for regional integration are weak, and contends that while the approach of Europe and the United States has been confused and weak, not holding out great hope of EU or NATO membership, Russia’s interest and involvement in the region is strong, and growing.

The Cold War: A World History

By Odd Arne Westad

We tend to think of the Cold War as a bounded conflict: a clash of two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, born out of the ashes of World War II and coming to a dramatic end with the collapse of the Soviet Union. But in this major new work, Bancroft Prize-winning scholar Odd Arne Westad argues that the Cold War must be understood as a global ideological confrontation, with early roots in the Industrial Revolution and ongoing repercussions around the world.

Westad offers a new perspective on a century when great power rivalry and ideological battle transformed every corner of our globe. From Soweto to Hollywood, Hanoi, and Hamburg, young men and women felt they were fighting for the future of the world. The Cold War may have begun on the perimeters of Europe, but it had its deepest reverberations in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, where nearly every community had to choose sides. And these choices continue to define economies and regimes across the world.

Today, many regions are plagued with environmental threats, social divides, and ethnic conflicts that stem from this era. Its ideologies influence China, Russia, and the United States; Iraq and Afghanistan have been destroyed by the faith in purely military solutions that emerged from the Cold War. Stunning in

its breadth and revelatory in its perspective, this book expands our understanding of the Cold War both geographically and chronologically, and offers an engaging new history of how today's world was created.

Rival Power: Russia in Southeast Europe

By Dimitar Bechev

Is Russia threatening to disrupt more than two decades of EU and US efforts to promote stability in post-communist Southeast Europe? Politicians and commentators in the West say, “yes”. With rising global anxiety over Russia's political policies and objectives, Dimitar Bechev provides a crucial in-depth look at this volatile region.

Deftly unpacking the nature and extent of Russian influence in the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey, Bechev argues that both sides are driven by pragmatism and opportunism rather than historical loyalties. Russia is seeking to assert its role in Europe's security architecture, establish alternative routes for its gas exports—including the contested Southern Gas Corridor—and score points against the West. Yet, leaders in these areas are allowing Russia to reinsert itself to serve their own goals. This urgently needed guide analyzes the responses of regional NATO members, particularly regarding the annexation of Crimea and the Putin-Erdogan rift over Syria.

The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas

By Agnia Grigas

We are in the midst of an energy revolution, led by the United States. As the world's greatest producer of natural gas moves aggressively to expand its exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), America stands poised to become an energy superpower—an unanticipated development with far-reaching implications for the international order. Agnia Grigas drills deep into today's gas markets to uncover the forces and trends transforming the geopolitics of gas.

In the near term, Moscow's political influence will erode as the Russian gas giant Gazprom loses share in its traditional markets

while its efforts to pivot eastward to meet China's voracious energy needs will largely depend on Beijing's terms. In this new geopolitics of gas, the United States will enjoy opportunities but also face challenges in leveraging its newfound energy clout to reshape relations with both European states and rising Asian powers.

Eurasia 2.0: Russian Geopolitics in the Age of New Media

Edited by Mikhail Suslov and Mark Bassin

This book discusses the return of geopolitical ideas and doctrines to the post-Soviet space with special focus on the new phenomenon of digital geopolitics, an overarching term that encompasses different political practices, including the dissemination of geopolitical ideas online, use of online tools by political figures and diplomats for legitimation and outreach, and the viral spread of geopolitical memes. Different chapters explore the new possibilities and threats associated with this digitalization of geopolitical knowledge and practice. Our authors consider new spatial sensibilities and new identities of global as well as local selves, the emergence of which is facilitated by the Internet.

They explore recent reconfigurations of the traditional imperial conundrum of center versus periphery. Developing Manuel Castells' argument that social activism in the digital era is organized around cultural values, the essays discuss new geopolitical ideologies which aim to reinforce Russia's spiritual sovereignty as a unique civilization, while at the same time seeking to rebrand Russia as a greater soft power by utilizing the Russian-speaking diaspora or employing traditionalist rhetoric. Great Power imagery, enemy-making, and visual mappings of Russia's future territorial expansion are traditional means for the manipulation of imperial pleasures and geopolitical fears. In the age of new media, however, this is being done with greater subtlety by mobilizing the grassroots, contracting private information channels, and de-politicizing geopolitics. Given the political events of recent years, it is logical that the Ukrainian crisis should provide the thematic backdrop for most of the authors.

Everyday Energy Politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus Citizens' Needs, Entitlements and Struggles for Access

Edited by David Gullette and Jeanne Féaux de la Croix

The perception of Central Asia and its place in the world has come to be shaped by its large oil and gas reserves. Literature on energy in the region has thus largely focused on related geopolitical issues and national policies. However, little is known about citizens' needs within this broader context of commodities that connect the energy networks of China, Russia and the West. This multidisciplinary special issue brings together anthropologists, economists, geographers and political scientists to examine the role of all forms of energy (here: oil, gas, hydropower and solar power) and their products (especially electricity) in people's daily lives throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus. The papers in this issue ask how energy is understood as an everyday resource, as a necessity and a source of opportunity, a challenge or even as an indicator of exclusionary practices. We enquire into the role and views of energy sector workers, rural consumers and urban communities, and their experiences of energy companies' and national policies. We further examine the legacy of Soviet and more recent domestic energy policies, the environmental impact of energy use as well as the political impact of citizens' energy grievances.

Trapped between war and peace: The case of Nagorno-Karabakh [Selected papers, 2011-2017]

Edited by Gulshan Pashayeva and Fuad Chiragov

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is now a relatively old, almost forgotten, ethno-territorial conflict located on the southeastern edge of Europe. Commonly perceived as "frozen" conflict and not a "high priority" issue, it has, as a result, not received the appropriate attention from external powers, global media, or international mediators. Yet it remains the longest-running conflict in the territory of the former Soviet Union. When Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh started to demand the right of self-determination and secession from Azerbaijan. Consequently, this conflict spilled over into open military confrontation between the newly independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thus,

there is a perception that the West has applied a double standard when it comes to the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Large-scale armed clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops in early April 2016 drew the international spotlight back to this conflict. Due to the successful counter-attack of the Azerbaijani armed forces, a few strategic heights were retaken for the first time since 1994. These events also contributed to Russia stepping up mediation efforts to reach an agreement on a ceasefire between the two sides, which came into effect on April 5. Whether or not 2018 will bring any progress in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process is subject to a great deal of doubt at present.

“The South Caucasus–Security, Energy and Europeanization”

Edited by Meliha B. Altunışık, Oktay F. Tanrisever

This book explores developments in the countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – since the EU included the region in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003. It considers issues related to energy, ethnic conflict, steps towards regional integration, and, above all, security – including the involvement of Russia, Iran, Turkey and the United States. It assesses the key importance of energy, argues that the prospects for regional integration are weak, and contends that while the approach of Europe and the United States has been confused and weak, not holding out great hope of EU or NATO membership, Russia’s interest and involvement in the region is strong, and growing.

Moreover, the book highlights the European Union’s region building in the South Caucasus region, and touches upon the identity issues in the Georgia’s foreign policy and policy of “Euro-Atlantic Integration”; foreign policy orientations and priorities of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Other sections of the book focus on the role of the EU and other regional powers on the Ethno-territorial conflicts and the formulation of the security environment, as well as regional cooperation initiatives in the South Caucasus. The book also underscored the importance of pipeline projects and energy cooperation in the South Caucasus region for the EU’s energy security. The final part of the book focused on the roles

of Russia and the U.S. in the the South Caucasus region and the EU's neighbourhood policy.

“The South Caucasus Transport Center: Crossing East-West and North-South Corridors”

Edited by Mahir Humbatov

Countries situated mainly between China and the European Union are currently participating in a race to develop their transport, trade and logistics infrastructure to attract at least one of the threads of Silk Road that will carry goods and people across Eurasia. It is believed that development of the Europe-South Caucasus-Asia transport, trade and logistics infrastructure will reduce the cost of production and services, which are important to raise competitiveness and social well-being. Although the Europe-South Caucasus-Asia transport route is a shortcut way between the two continents, the soft and hard infrastructure along this way is not enough developed to meet the emerging demand for goods and passenger turnover.

However, it is clear that any type of old Silk Road revival initiative will drive many countries to develop their infrastructure as well as superstructure and coordinate this with other participating countries, which as a result will be beneficial for all of them. It is also believed that every single country may benefit and generate revenues from old Silk Road revival process in case of possible collaboration with its neighbouring countries. Azerbaijan enjoys an advantageous geographical position at a crossroads of East-West and North-South corridors, which leads the country to become a regional transport, production, and trade and logistics hub. The country makes huge investments into its own infrastructure as well as supports certain other neighbouring countries. Within this framework, common will based on the reciprocity and mutual benefit can foster enhanced cooperation along with the Great Silk Road and International North-South Transportation Corridor projects.