

Book Review

Dellecker, A. and Gomart, T., eds
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Russian Energy Security and Foreign Policy

London: Routledge

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A fine attempt at tackling the issue of the relationship between energy security and foreign policy, the volume edited by Dellecker and Gomart is easily one among the most important pieces of literature on the matter. In recent years, Stulberg (2007), Baev (2008), Perovic, Orttung, et al. (2009), Overland and Orttung (2011), and Sorbello (2011), have all attempted to address this link in a scientific manner. Currently, various dissertations are being written on the topic, regarding case studies chiefly of Russia and the Former Soviet Union (FSU). The approach taken by the editors is innovative. Their near-exhaustive consideration of the relevant variables and their success in gathering leading experts of the geographic area and subject matter should be noted. The diversity among the contributors is most welcomed as well: European, American, and Russian academics and businessmen were involved in the project, which culminated in this book after a series of conferences and roundtables. The subdivision of the book into three main parts helps fulfill the promise of approaching the theme from all perspectives.

The first part serves as the backbone of the analysis. Umbach considers the diverging interests in the area; Tompson addresses the interplay between economics, law, and politics in the hydrocarbon markets; Guillet stresses the distorted method that political actors follow when envisioning the construction of a pipeline; Crandall reverses the lenses and focuses on the export options for Central Asian gas.

The second part aims to explain the dynamics in each bilateral relationship between Russia and those among its southern neighbours that are net exporters of energy. Milov puts the Russo-Turkmen relation into perspective, emphasising the double-edged dependency of each country on the other's transportation system. The other two Central Asian energy exporters, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, are analysed by Brill Olcott and Monaghan, granting the reader an in-depth account of their relations with Russia. Baev considers Azerbaijan, a key state in the Caucasus both for energy relations with Europe and the Middle East, and for the security implications of its role south of the Caucasian range.

The third part considers a broad scope of issues that can be summarised as the implications of Russia's behavior in the Central Asia and Caucasus Region (CACR). Grigoriev highlights the role of Gazprom in the formation of Russian foreign energy policy and the possible divergence between the two; Roberts takes into account the Russo-

Georgian war in 2008 as a game-changer for the political and business dialogue on the pipelines to be built along the Southern Corridor; Garbe, Hett, and Lindner focus on the weight of Belarus as an energy-thirsty neighbour and transit country in Russia's relation with its Western markets.

This publication provides a deep analysis of the most important issues that have shaped the relations between Russia and the CACR. Additionally, the approach used offers a fresh set of insights for students and scholars that are interested in the subject. Including Guillet's business mindset and Roberts' 'concreteness' is surely beneficial, as it serves to bring in the voice of the private sector.

The environment to which earlier works have contributed was one filled with political and economic analyses not rooted in solid 'real world' grounds. This bias has accompanied many well-researched academic efforts that ultimately have resorted to one or another theory of International Relations to answer a research question for which not all relevant variables were considered (Myers Jaffe *et al.* 2002; Hadfield 2007; Schaffer 2009). The lack of a multidisciplinary approach to understand "the link between Russia's foreign and energy policies" (p. 1) is addressed by Tompson and Grigoriev. Their chapters are preceded by a well-rounded introductory chapter by Umbach, who defines the expression "energy security" and set forth the principle of the bi-directional dependency: Russia is regarded as a threat by importing countries, but regards itself threatened by possible cut-offs in their market request. Supply and demand are tightly connected, as is their security.

A few drawbacks may leave the reader unsettled, perhaps indicating the need for perfecting the research method and compilation effort. First, the editors and some of the authors put a marked emphasis on energy prices as the engine for the aforementioned connection between energy and foreign policy. It is possible that the role of prices is more influential on the "security" side, however one should take into account that Russia is not a price-setter and that energy prices have fluctuated since 2000 more than they have in the previous 50 years, as opposed to Russian foreign policy. Second, timing is problematic. The editors' preface serves as an early warning (roundtables were held in late 2006 and 2007) of the possible obsolescence of data used to justify pieces of the analyses. Although it is clear that the effort by Dellecker and Gomart has entailed two rounds of processing for the chapters, it ultimately comes down to the publisher to send the book to print in a timely fashion. Lacking deep and solid academic grounds, chapters with old data become less appealing to readers, who are always in search for the latest take on the issue. Third, as in many collective volumes, the disadvantage of reiterating the same concepts throughout the chapters is present; however, the editors avoided the pitfall of a lack of coherence by accurately organising the parts of the volume.

It is remarkable that the editors avoided addressing European energy security, Russo-Ukrainian crises, and the Russo-Georgian war directly with a chapter of their own. Instead these well-documented and contingency-related issues were used as the background for the explanation of a few prominent energy/foreign policy actions. Moreover, many among the contributors attribute deserved relevance to the role of China. Nevertheless, such auspicious premises did not eventually lead to a step forward in the construction of the research question: it is possible that energy is not just a foreign policy 'weapon' (which is one of the two main conclusions of the book). Perhaps a slightly more academic approach to the matter would describe energy policy as a trigger, channeling foreign policy formation in a direction that favours its implementation. Interestingly, the incorporation of the time factor helps the contextualising effort and allows Dellecker and Gomart to foresee energy (particularly its military dimension) as "the bonding agent that maintains the notion of the FSU for years to come" (p. 208).

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