

Book Review

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THE POLITICS OF ENERGY AND MEMORY BETWEEN THE BALTIC STATES AND RUSSIA

Author: Agnia Grigas

The starting point of the volume is the diversity of contemporary relations between the Baltic States and Russia and most specifically the foreign policies of the three states in respect of energy policy and memory. The question of diversity is crucial for this research as the similarities in the structural factors of these relatively small countries facilitate a meaningful comparison of policies and reactions. Namely, Grigas offers a significant contribution to understanding the foreign policies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania towards Russia by challenging the structural realist assumption of similarity in foreign policies as a result of similar resources, geopolitical positions, as well as constraints and opportunities. Grigas's overarching aim, which she achieves successfully, is to discover which factors most influence the development of the foreign policy of the three countries towards Russia and, in light of the similar contexts, to consider what makes them so diverse. The main claim of the volume is that the differences between the foreign policies can be explained by a variety of domestic policy factors in each of these states.

The book is composed of eight chapters. It starts with offering a useful overall insight into the domestic and energy policies of the three Baltic States and the state of their relations with Russia, which gives the necessary background knowledge for readers not familiar with the situation in the region. The larger part of the volume is devoted to specific case studies, reflecting the individual situation in each of the countries. On the one hand, the cases are related to energy policy – gas pipeline politics and Gazprom politics. On the other hand, they refer to the role of memory in relations between the Baltic states and Russia - the Soviet Victory Celebration and damages in relation to the Soviet occupation. The informative case studies and analysis are complemented by well-structured background information on the energy sector as well as that historical background information relevant for understanding relations between Russia and the Baltic states. Interestingly, the case studies in the book are placed on two axes characterising the manner of relationship-building that lies between cooperative and adversarial foreign policy, and pragmatic and principled foreign policy. Grigas persuasively points out the complexity of the factors influencing the various foreign policies, and accordingly those factors that tend to be underestimated when analysing these relations. The spectrum includes domestic policies and situations, and external pressures from the EU and NATO, as well as from Russia itself, as well as the often under-estimated role of business interests.

By selecting the often discussed and differently interpreted cases of energy and memory politics, Grigas has the ambitious aim of contradicting a variety of general assumptions about the relationships of the Baltics to Russia. While pointing out that on the one hand the policies of the three countries are un-coordinated, the book is also successful in showing the role of the small Baltic States in regards to Energy policy with Russia, which Grigas refers to as a regional hegemon. Thus this work is a significant contribution to in-depth understanding of the energy politics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. While aiming also at outlining the unique foreign policies of the three countries in the face of historical tensions, the memory policy analysis, although informative, did not receive

as much attention as energy policy in the wider study. A broader examination of this aspect would have been welcome and further strengthened the book in respect of contributing to the understanding of the situation in the region.

Grigas's background as an advisor to the Foreign Ministry of Lithuania and to investors of the EU and USA in the region, as well as her academic background, results in a particularly insightful account of the situation in the Baltics and their relations with Russia. A significant strength of the research is the range of interviews with diplomats, practitioners and representatives of business from the region that underpins the analysis. Thus, overall the volume offers a sound account of the liberal approach to international relations through an in-depth depiction of the domestic aspects of foreign politics. The comparative approach that the author has chosen assures a useful overview of the situation in the Baltic States and their foreign policies.

In summary, this book is a welcome addition to the literature on energy policy and relations between Russia and the Baltic states, as it provides an up-to-date examination of this topic. With its extensive background information and its empirical abundance, the book has much to offer students, as well as those scholars who are particularly interested in the relations between Russia and Estonia, Latvia Lithuania, as well as the energy relations between these states.



BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

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