

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.



* The Book Review was prepared by Dr. Özgür Tüfekçi Ph.D., Senior Editor of Caucasus International

In this issue, seven books will be presented to understand better foreign policy and oil politics in the South Caucasus, politics in post-Soviet states, the European Union's approach towards the Black Sea and other key issues. The first book is *Foreign policy: Realities and a Look into the Future* authored by *Novruz Mammadov*, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan, and head of the Foreign Relations Department. The author provides an overview of the geopolitical understanding of the 20th century, and examines the foreign policy vision of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev in the context of global and regional changes. Novruz Mammadov explores the main directions and priorities of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in the new world order. The transformation of Baku's foreign policy is presented in connection with Azerbaijan's modernization process. Based on this overview, Novruz Mammadov analyzes the pro-active foreign policy understanding demonstrated by Azerbaijan in recent years.

The second book, *China, the United States, and the Future of Central Asia: US-China Relations* is timely collection of high quality essays, edited by *David B. H. Denoon*, Professor of Politics and Economics at New York University. The book analyzes the role of Central Asia in US-China relations, addressing the governance, security and economic challenges that Central Asia poses for both the US and China.

Jesse Driscoll's Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States combines rich comparative data with formal modeling, treating the post-Soviet space as an extraordinary laboratory to observe the limits of great powers' efforts to shape domestic institutions in weak states. This book presents an account of conflict settlement in Georgia and Tajikistan as local actors maneuvered in the shadow of a Russian-led military intervention. Combining ethnography and game theory and quantitative and qualitative methods, this book presents a revisionist account of the two post-Soviet wars and their resolution.

The Caucasus 1942-43: Kleist's Race for Oil, by *Robert Forczyk*, a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the US Army Reserves, provides an overview of a Hitler's attempt to take control of the Caucasus oil fields between 1942 and 1943. Though not an in-depth analysis of the period, it sheds light on the 1942 German campaign in Southern Russia and provides valuable insights into USSR-Germany rivalry. As well as discussing the details of the campaign, Forczyk also places it in the context of the attack of

Army Group B on Stalingrad, which took place at the same time.

Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War by Marvin Kalb, a former journalist and Harvard professor is published by Brookings Institution Press. In his book, Kalb argues for the importance of history in understanding the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia. *Imperial Gamble* journeys deep into Russian and Ukrainian history to explain what keeps them together, and yet at the same time drives them apart. In this sense, he contextualizes the Ukrainian crisis and weaves Russian history into Vladimir Putin's policies.

In *Tuğba Evrim Maden's Weaponization of Water: The Case of Sarsang Reservoir*, the author emphasizes that increasing carbon emission are causing important changes to the global climate. These changes threaten water resources and the survival of all living creatures. From this perspective, Maden focuses on the management of water resources in Azerbaijan, transboundary waters and the current situation of Sarsang reservoir. In doing so, she analyzes Armenia's transboundary waters and its occupation of Sarsang reservoir as a means of environmental sabotage against Azerbaijan, noting that the United Nations has criticized this act as a violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The seventh book, ***The European Union and the Black Sea: The State of Play*** deals with the European Union's policies towards the Black Sea region. It is an edited volume by *Sinem Akgul Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou*, both of whom are academics at Kadir Has University, Istanbul. Originally published as a special issue of the *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, this book is a collection of articles that focuses on specific issues of EU–Black Sea cooperation.

Foreign Policy: Realities and a Look into the Future

Novruz Mammadov

The book examines the key priorities and characteristics of foreign policy of Azerbaijan in the modern World. The notions such as balanced foreign policy, nation building and regional leaderships are thoroughly analyzed and transformation of Azerbaijan's foreign policy is presented in connection with the stages of modernization of Azerbaijani statehood. It also sheds light on the process of the emergence of the soft power of the country. In light of this process it evaluates on the mechanisms of the shift from passive posture to pro-active foreign policy in international relations of Azerbaijan.

Marking the 90th anniversary of national leader Heydar Aliyev, this book starts with the year 1993, when Azerbaijan took its first steps on the path of independent development, and concludes in the present day, when the country has international and regional influence and an independent foreign policy. How and under what condition has Azerbaijan's foreign policy course been determined? How has it evolved? The author responds to these questions by analyzing the dramatic political dynamics of the era, and considers the outcome of Baku's foreign policy in the context of modern geopolitical theory.



China, the United States, and the Future of Central Asia: U.S.-China Relations, Volume I

Edited by David B.H. Denoon

The first of a three-volume series on the interaction of the US and China in different regions of the world, ***China, the United States, and the Future of Central Asia*** explores the delicate balance of competing foreign interests in this resource-rich and politically tumultuous region. Editor David Denoon and his internationally renowned set of contributors assess the different objectives and strategies the US and China deploy in the region and examine how the two world powers are indirectly competitive with one another for influence in Central Asia. While the US is focused on maintaining and supporting its military forces in neighboring states, China has its sights on procuring natural resources for its fast-growing economy and preventing the expansion of fundamentalist Islam inside its borders.

This book covers key issues such as the construction of international gas pipelines, the challenges of building crucial trans-continental roadways that must pass through countries facing insurgencies, the efforts of the US and China to encourage and provide better security in the region, and how the Central Asian countries view their role in international politics and the global economy. The book also considers the role of the key external powers; Russia, with its historical ties to the former Soviet republics in Central Asia, is perhaps the biggest international presence in the area, but other countries on the region's periphery like Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and India also have a stake in the fortunes and future of Central Asia. A comprehensive, original, and up-to-date collection, this book is a wide-ranging look from noted scholars at a vital part of the world which is likely to receive more attention and face greater instability as NATO forces withdraw from Afghanistan.



Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States

By Jesse Driscoll

The breakup of the USSR was unexpected and unexpectedly peaceful. Though a third of the new states fell prey to violent civil conflict, anarchy on the post-Soviet periphery, when it occurred, was quickly cauterized. This book argues that this outcome had nothing to do with security guarantees by Russia or the United Nations and everything to do with local innovation by ruthless warlords, who competed and colluded in a high-risk coalition formation game. Drawing on a structured comparison of Georgian and Tajik militia members, the book combines rich comparative data with formal modeling, treating the post-Soviet space as an extraordinary laboratory to observe the limits of great powers' efforts to shape domestic institutions in these states.



The Caucasus 1942-43: Kleist's Race for Oil

By Robert Forczyk

Much has been written of the titanic clashes between the Wehrmacht and the Red Army at Stalingrad, but this volume tells

the other, equally important half of the story of Fall Blau (Case Blue). Learning from their experiences during the sweeping advances of Operation Barbarossa a year before, Wehrmacht commanders knew that Nazi Germany's lack of oil was a huge strategic problem. Seizure of the Caucasus oilfields, particularly that of Baku, which were responsible for 82% of the Soviet Union's crude oil, would simultaneously alleviate the German army's oil shortages whilst denying vital fuel resources to the Red Army. While Army Group B advanced along the Volga towards Stalingrad, Army Group A, spearheaded by Ewald von Kleist's elite Panzerarmee was to advance into the Caucasus to seize the oilfields of Maikop, Grozny and Baku. Featuring full-color artwork, archival photos and detailed analysis, this book follows the vicious, intense fighting that characterized one of the most important campaigns of World War II.



Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War

By Marvin Kalb

Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 stunned the world. Shortly thereafter, the Russians threw their support behind secessionist rebels in neighboring Ukraine, pitching the country into a brutal and continuing civil war. An ominous and sharp deterioration in East-West relations followed.

In *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War*, Marvin Kalb brings to life the geography, power politics, and history of Ukraine—once known as Kievan Rus, or the 'First Russia.' He takes a critical look at the tortured history of post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine, and journeys deep into the Russian past to uncover the roots of Russian and Ukrainian nationalism.

Kalb maintains that world order hangs on the resolution of the Ukraine crisis, and he makes the provocative argument that the only sensible solution lies in both Russia and Ukraine recognizing that their futures are irrevocably intertwined. Any realistic solution must take into account the national interests of both nations. The West can approve or disapprove, but the two countries must reach their own *modus vivendi*. This is a time for *realpolitik*, and if the West continues to intrude into this delicate game of diplomatic shadow-boxing, the effort will very likely collapse.

Weaponization of Water: The Case of Sarsang Reservoir

Tugba Evrim Maden

The book has been a result of extensive research that is based on comprehensive factual materials. It is dedicated to the problems of global water shortage and common efforts directed at protecting water resources in different parts of the world; existing as well as future conflicts over control of water resources; preventive measures and the water strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan; and Armenia's transboundary waters and its occupation of Sarsang reservoir as a means of environmental sabotage against Azerbaijan. Based on international legal practice, the author provides an extensive analysis of official Yerevan's use of water resources for military purposes, similar to activities of the terrorist groups operating in North Africa and Middle East.



The European Union and the Black Sea: The State of Play

Edited by Sinem Akgul Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou

The idea for this book is derived from the paucity of literature on the European Union's policies towards the Black Sea, relative to this region's officially stated significance for the EU. Despite the fact that the EU plays a vital role in Black Sea political agendas, the EU's cooperation with the region is not extensively covered in academic discussions and literature. This is largely due to the fact that the EU's focus on foreign affairs is primarily associated with the Balkans, as part the current and potential expansion, and the Middle East, as a consequence of the Arab Spring. The Black Sea region is crucial for the EU because of the opportunities and challenges that the region presents, in both political and socio-economic terms.

Contributions to this book focus mainly on specific issues of EU-Black Sea cooperation, from conflict to the environment to democracy. The authors look at how these particular relationships are perceived within the region as well as through the lenses of stakeholders such as Russia, Turkey, and the USA. Overall, the collection focuses on projecting a more efficient role and a holistic strategy for the EU in its approach towards the Black Sea region, arguing for a strong EU presence. For this reason, the Black Sea area remains 'the neighborhood too close to, yet still far from, the European Union'. This book was originally

published as a special issue of the Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies.