



# Russian Energy Strategy in the European Union, the Former Soviet Union Region, and China

By Stylianos A. Sotiriou

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This book places Eurasia in its entirety within a single explanatory framework and examines, for the first time to that extent, Russia as a Eurasian energy power in its affairs with the two main geopolitical players of the region, the EU and China. Part of this geopolitical space is the Former Soviet Union (FSU) region which shares deep historical-political ties with Russia and constitutes the necessary crossing for the latter's natural gas supplies en route to the EU market. In this way, an energy triangle is established, with Russia at the top angle, the EU in the left angle, China in the right angle and the FSU region the median. Following the scheme, three bipolar relationships emerge, Russia-FSU region, Russia-EU and Russia-China, with each of them representing a different type of bilateral cooperation. In the first case there is an *asymmetric* relationship with one actor being overly powerful, in terms of energy, to impose its conditions, economic and political, on the other. In the second case there is a *symmetric* relationship with both actors having equal means of pressure at their disposal. Finally, in the third case there is a *balanced* relationship with both actors trading on an equal basis. Within this framework, one of the dominant theoretical debates in the field of International Relations, that between Neorealism and Neoliberal Institutionalism (the so-called 'Neo-Neo' debate) seeks to shed light on the governing rationale beyond Putin's Russia foreign energy policy *vis-à-vis* the FSU region, the EU and China.

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- Rank: #3039482 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-12-11
- Released on: 2014-12-11
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

In this timely book on Russian energy strategy, Sotiriou outlines the approach taken to former Soviet states Ukraine and Belarus, the EU, and China. Theoretically, he analyzes Russia's three-pronged strategy from the perspective of neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and a hybrid institutional balancing model. A principal source of information is the archive of Gazprom, the state-owned energy giant that provides a large share of Russian tax revenues. Sotiriou concludes that the 2010 agreement between Ukraine and Russia that cut the export duty on natural gas by 30 percent in return for a 25-year guarantee of access to the Russian naval base at Sevastopol reflected old-fashioned power politics characteristic of neorealism. The same model explains Putin's reluctance to follow through on a customs union with Belarus that might hurt Russian economic interests. However, after the natural gas crisis of 2006, the EU pushed for an 'unbundling' of energy security from Russian supplies more characteristic of the institutional balancing model. Even though China has reached out to both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan for energy supplies, the author expects that China will end up relying heavily on Russian supplies and Russia's power politics approach. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above. (*CHOICE*)

In this book, Stylianos Sotiriou develops a framework that views energy-related issues as an essential part of Russian foreign policy. The book's focus is on energy policy in the Eurasian geopolitical space, an issue that is analysed here through an essentially Russian lens. The author provides valuable theoretical considerations and offers substantive empirical data on Russia's energy strategy and spectrum of tactics. By focusing on natural resources management during the 2000s, the book does actually succeed in providing an insight into Russia's profit maximisation strategy.... [T]he book's contribution to the rationale of Russian energy policy deepens our understanding of energy relations in the Eurasian region. The book is well grounded on a huge number of primary and secondary sources and a dataset consisting of official publications and documents, statistics from energy firms as well as policy papers. The book is recommended to anyone with an interest in Russia's energy-related issues. (*Europe-Asia Studies*)

The crisis in Ukraine has brought power politics back to the agenda of European thinking about international relations. The provision of energy is one of the most important Russian power instruments in the Eurasian arena. Stylianos Sotiriou's study provides for a comprehensive survey of Russia's foreign energy policy towards the European Union, China and the successor states of the Soviet Union during the 2000s. By doing so, he demonstrates very convincingly the limits of international institutions in this specific policy field. This wide-ranging book is recommended to all readers who seek a comprehensive and timely overview over Russian energy politics. (Andreas Nölke, University of Frankfurt)

The emergence of Russian energy power since the beginning of 2000s is widely considered as a key feature of the geopolitics of the entire *Eurasia* region ever since. This book provides a theoretically informed, thorough examination of the Russian energy policy toward the EU, the Former Soviet Union Region and China. It does so in an innovative way, namely by digging under the surface of current International Relations theory: a valuable contribution to our understanding of the complex geopolitics of the Eurasia region. (Christos Paraskevopoulos, University of Macedonia)

In this book, Stylianos A. Sotiriou analyzes Russia's energy strategy, its European, Eurasian, and Asian components, as well as their inter-connectedness. The reader will find it to be an ambitious, theoretically informed synthesis of various aspects of Russia's energy relations. (Andrei P. Tsygankov, San Francisco)

State University)

About the Author

Stylianos A. Sotiriou is lecturer at the International Hellenic University.

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