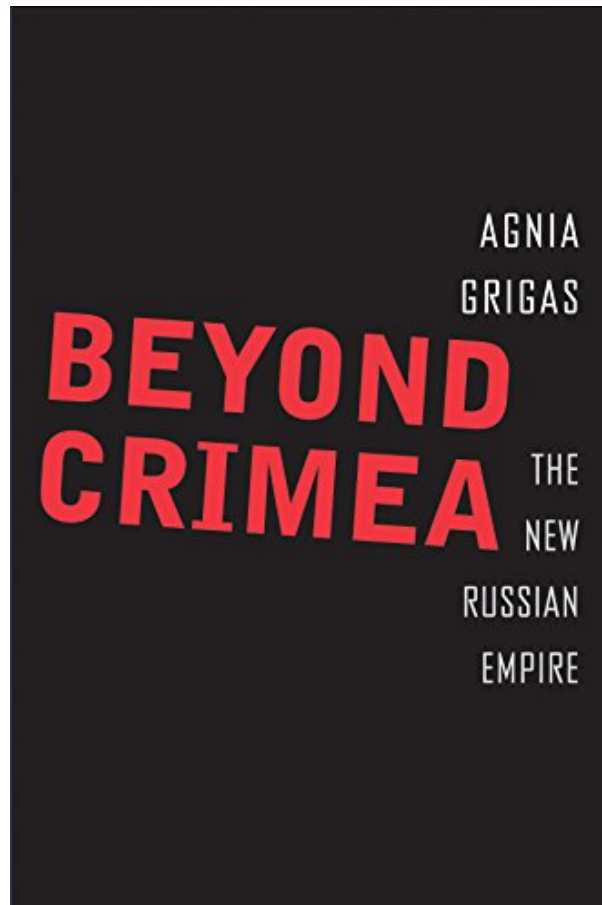
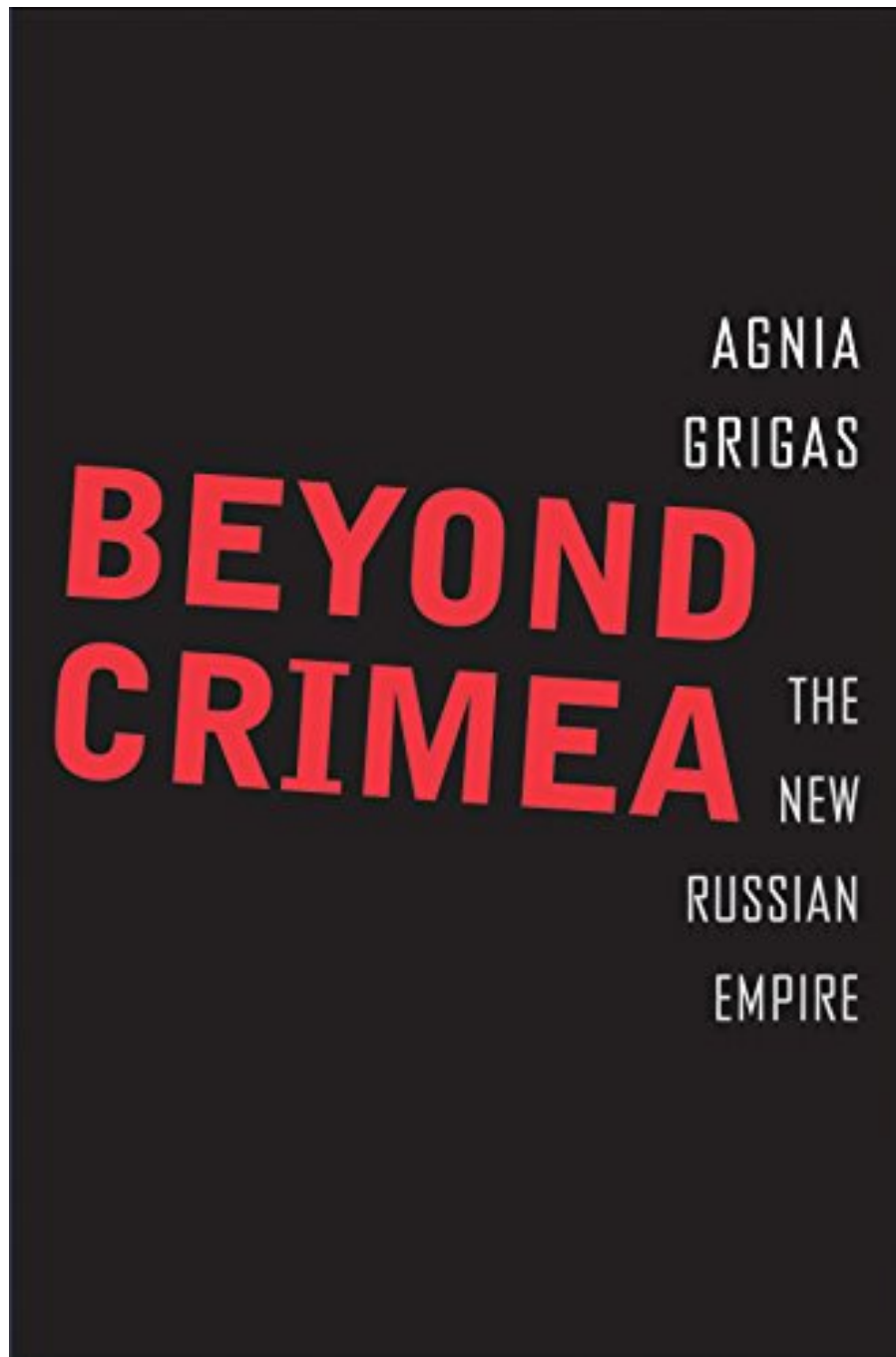


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Review

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How will Russia redraw post-Soviet borders? In the wake of recent Russian expansionism, political risk expert Agnia Grigas illustrates how—for more than two decades—Moscow has consistently used its compatriots in bordering nations for its territorial ambitions. Demonstrating how this policy has been implemented in Ukraine and Georgia, Grigas provides cutting-edge analysis of the nature of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy and compatriot protection to warn that Moldova, Kazakhstan, the Baltic States, and others are also at risk.

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Expansionism, Russification, Colonization and the Sowing of Ethnic Strife

By Lost John

Agnia Grigas, a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington DC, describes herself as an energy and political risk expert, specializing in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the post-Soviet space. This book concentrates primarily on political risk (although gas and oil have their place, especially in as much as they are exported by Russia and some other post-Soviet states), and the book's area of interest takes in the entire area formerly occupied by the Soviet Union.

As the title suggests, Grigas's starting point is Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014. She works backwards from there to examine how Russia was in a position to so quickly and effectively take over what was, and in international law remains, the autonomous Ukrainian republic. She identifies a 'Russian reimperialization policy trajectory' that starts with 1) soft power and continues to 2) humanitarian policies, 3) compatriot policies, 4) information warfare, 5) passportization, 6) protection, and finally 7) annexation. Each of these is fully examined, not only with respect to Crimea but to a number of other former Soviet areas. Separate chapters consider Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; and Belarus and Armenia.

There are of course important differences between all of these states, and their current relationship with Russia ranges from outright hostility to almost comfortable accommodation, but all are seen to have been subjected, to a greater or lesser extent, to the earlier stages at least of the reimperialization trajectory.

Crimea is so far the only territory that has been annexed, but the situation in Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia is of frozen conflict and the conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine is sadly not even frozen. Grigas comments: 'For Moscow, creating frozen conflicts and breakaway territories is a low-cost, high-return strategy that makes life difficult for its recalcitrant neighbor states and for the EU and NATO.'

Her central argument is that since the 1990s, and particularly since the 2000s, there has been an increasing tendency in Russian foreign policy toward reimperialization of the post-Soviet space. In this, she writes, the Russian Federation is in many respects following in the footsteps of its historical predecessors and will continue to do so, because of the similar ideological, cultural, security and geopolitical drivers that have been rooted in the centuries-long imperial experience of the three empires that have occupied the same Russian political space and territories – the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

She finds threads of historical continuity in policy between Putin's era and those of his predecessors going back to the tsarist times of expansionism, Russification, colonization and the sowing of ethnic strife.

The book's text appears to have been completed in mid-2015. Grigas's analysis of the current situation with regard to the various countries is of great interest and has not so far been overtaken by events in any important respect. Grigas may be regarded as a Cold Warrior (or a new Cold Warrior), but much of her analysis is difficult to refute. My only criticism is that she pays too little attention to increasing competition for Russia from China (on similar trade, economic support and soft power lines), especially in the Central Asian States.

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