

**The Bridge: Natural Gas in a Redivided Europe.** By *Thane Gustafson*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020. Pp. xii+506. \$39.95.

In *The Bridge*, Thane Gustafson recounts the fascinating history of the rise of the Russian and European gas industries and the emergence of the Russian-European gas trade from its beginnings in the early cold war to the troubled present day. The strength of this book lies in its narrative: Gustafson weaves together three main stories that are essential to understand the history behind the Russian-European gas trade. The first story line deals with the development and evolution of the Russian gas industry from its beginnings in the western part of Soviet Ukraine after the Second World War to the development of the gigantic natural gas reserves of the Tyumen region in the northern part of Western Siberia in the Brezhnev era. As Gustafson demonstrates, while the question of importing Soviet gas to Western Europe stood at the center of heated controversies during the cold war, gas was not meant as a geopolitical tool of dominance over the West. The Soviet leadership decided to develop Western Siberian gas out of the need to secure the country's energy base. From a Soviet perspective, the story of gas was mainly a story of gasification. Not only did gas replace coal as the primary energy source, but natural gas also allowed the Soviet Union to free more oil for export and sell it on the lucrative Western market. Of the gas produced, only one-fifth was reserved for export, while four-fifths was to be used for internal consumption.

That the Soviet Union considered exporting natural gas at all had to do with the characteristics of the natural gas industry. In contrast to oil, which, once produced, could be filled up in barrels and sold on the global market, natural gas was dependent on a physical infrastructure, a network of pipelines linking producer and consumer together. Western Siberia's remoteness and extreme climatic conditions required laying thousands of kilometers of high-quality steel pipes, which the Soviet Union was unable to produce in sufficient quantity. In return for the import of Western (primarily German) large-diameter steel pipes, energy technology, and credits, the Soviet Union agreed to export gas to Europe, thereby establishing a partnership of convenience, economically beneficial to both sides. Europe saw gas as a welcome substitute for oil, and the Soviet Union's imports as a means to reduce Europe's massive dependence on Middle East oil. The gas bridge was also meant as a symbol of détente: Europeans, and West German politicians and businessmen in the first place, propagated the idea that increased trade through the extension of a transnational network of pipelines would enhance trust across the Iron Curtain and eventually translate into political changes.

Gustafson's second story is about the evolution and expansion of the European Union (EU) since the early 1980s and its attempts to form a common European energy policy guided by liberal market principles. These reforms have had, and continue to have, not only a massive impact on the European gas market, but have also affected relations with Europe's most important gas importer—Russia. Traditionally, the terms of trade and prices were negotiated between producer and consumer countries for long-term periods of twenty to thirty years. New EU regulations as well as increased liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipped by tanker have broken up these traditional relationships and are also slowly transforming a once exclusively regional (pipeline) market into a more globalized market, where prices are increasingly regulated on spot markets dictated by changing demand and supply. The growing interconnectedness of Europe's gas network, as well as legislation on “unbundling” ownership of production and transmission, means that today the buyer has most of the leverage. According to Gustafson, if the Russians want to sell their gas to Europe, they have to do so by European rules and into a market that is now completely different from the one that began half a century ago. Seen in this light, the

building of the politically controversial Nord Stream II pipeline under the Baltic Sea, which Washington seeks to prevent with economic sanctions, will undoubtedly increase European dependency on Russian gas, but is unlikely to give Russia more leverage over European affairs.

The book's third story mostly concerns Ukraine. Ukraine has been involved in the history of Russian gas and the Russian-European gas trade in various ways, from its role as the cradle of the Soviet Union's gas industry in the 1950s to becoming a major importer of Russian gas and the key transit route for Russian gas to Europe. The very first Soviet export pipeline was built through Ukrainian territory in the early 1980s, and Ukraine has retained a critical role for Russian gas exports to Europe ever since. Given the difficult relations between Russia and Ukraine, however, Russia has by now built or is in the process of building several alternative export pipelines, reducing the share of gas flowing through Ukrainian pipelines from around 90 percent in the mid-1990s to around 40 percent in 2018. By the time Nord Stream II comes into operation, Ukraine will have lost its relevance as part of the Russian-European gas bridge. For Ukraine, this sounds like bad news, since income from transit fees makes up for a substantial part of state revenues. Overall, however, Gustafson is convinced that this will have a stabilizing effect on East-West energy relations, which have seen disruptions in the past due to Russian-Ukraine friction over gas prices, and will ultimately be positive for both Russia and Ukraine, removing the most contentious issue in their bilateral economic relations.

In light of increased political tensions between the West and Russia, as well as drama over the Nord Stream II pipeline, Gustafson's sober analysis is soothing. Looking over half a century of Russian-European relations, the gas trade has had a moderating influence at times of geopolitical conflict. And even if the rules have changed over recent years, the basic logic, according to Gustafson, remains the same as during the cold war: "Since Russia has gas, and Europe needs gas, the gas trade serves both sides profitably" (414). Therefore, neither Russia nor Europe is essentially interested in endangering this mutually beneficial partnership. This is the logic upon which the foundations of the gas bridge were built in the first place, and as long as gas remains important in Europe's energy calculations, the bridge is likely to hold.

With his seminal works on the history of Soviet and Russian oil and gas, Gustafson has long established himself as the doyen in his field. *The Bridge* is yet another essential addition for all those interested in the modern history of fossil fuels, Russian-European economic relations, and the intriguing mechanisms underlying the Soviet/Russian decision-making process in the area of energy. Most important, Gustafson reminds us that the history of economic globalization and technical progress is not driven by abstract forces, but by concrete people; he therefore devotes much space to the role of those personalities on both sides of the Iron Curtain who, through commitment and vision, made the gas bridge possible.

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**How the Old World Ended: The Anglo-Dutch-American Revolution, 1500–1800.**

By *Jonathan Scott*.

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019. Pp. xvi+392. \$35.00.

In many ways this is exactly the sort of book that historians should be writing. It addresses a large theme, attempting to explain how Britain led the world in industrialization, and so