

Book Review

Stefan Gänzle, Guido Müntel and Evgeny Vinokurov, eds (2009)

Adapting to European Integration? Kaliningrad, Russia and the European Union

Manchester: Manchester University Press

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In a time where everybody talks about the current situation and is trying to find some answers and even solutions in past similar situations, the volume edited by Stefan Gänzle, Guido Müntel and Evgeny Vinokurov with the title *Adapting to European Integration? Kaliningrad, Russia and the European Union* tries to find a new way to look at possible future developments in Europe. This book, that is better defined as a collection of good and very well documented articles, themselves an indispensable part, wants to be an analysis of a phenomenon that we expect to find only inside the boundaries of the European Union and the states that want to become part of it: Europeanization. In order for this intention to become a reality, the authors choose to study the singular case of oblast Kaliningrad. Kaliningrad, also known in the past as the city of Königsberg and a part of East Prussia, is a small territory, part of the Russian Federation as an exclave, because it is not within the boundaries of Russia, but it is situated more than 500 km from it, having as neighbours Lithuania and Poland. From this situation the authors see the region of Kaliningrad as an enclave of the European Union even if it is not part of the Union, but Poland and Lithuania are.

The situation of this particular and singular region in Europe in this position is not simple and easy to understand and the authors of this interesting book have tried to describe and analyse it from a different perspective, making use of a vast methodology based on a main question and analysing some particular and well selected case studies. The main questions of the book and the central themes are: how do EU-Russia relations 'feed back' into Kaliningrad's domestic arena? Is Kaliningrad becoming 'Europeanised' –at least to some extent? In particular, do EU standards and norms impact on the exclave and in what ways? As we can deduce from this interrogatives, the issue analysed in this book is not simple and not of little interest for the future of Europe.

The concept of Europeanization especially vis-à-vis third countries is studied and reviewed with the help of Kaliningrad's situation and development of the relations between the European Union and its biggest neighbour: the Russian Federation. The framework conditions are analysed from three different perspectives: A. as a set of exogenous variables that are paramount and that are referring to forms, content and the conduct of interaction between the European and Russian partners; B. as a number of endogenous

variables: the domestic constraints imposed by post-Soviet transformation and the relations with the federal centre; and C. as an exclave-related factors: region's economic dependency on neighbouring countries, its social identity that is relevant for the development and externally-induced changes. But, in any case, the authors have not examined the Europeanization impact on Russia in general. The oblast of Kaliningrad is just a test case, and from its analyses the authors came out with a sum of insights and explanations that can be of help for the Europeanization process in the future and for the European Union policies outside its frontiers.

First of all, it was necessary to give some space for the Kaliningrad background. Generally, the people do not know this region and its particular characteristics, and only few of us, the direct involved in the process, have an idea of what importance it has in the European context. Therefore, the author's explanations and the impartiality with which these are given are welcome. Further more, the 'double peripherality' of the oblast is well described and explained in the first chapters of the book. The region's enclave and exclave status derives from the fact that the Kaliningrad has been peculiar in its geo-political situation. We can discover when we go deeper in the subject of the book, the cross-regional comparison that appears like a must in this particular situation.

The methodological framework reveals us that the chapters of this volume are divided in three parts, each part having a scientific motivation for the whole book. This volume offers a new approach and additional insights: a thorough analysis of the region's institutional structures, actors' interaction and decision making and the resulting policy-output within the selected fields; it draws conclusions on the general situation and the character of institutional structures and decision making process; a specific and detailed enquiry into the conduct of foreign partners and the implementation of projects; the overlap and linkages between the domestic developments and international context. All of these have there crucial importance. The influence of external factors on regional governance is the analytical lens of 'Europeanization' research, in the opinion of the authors.

The assumption in the beginning of the book is that the Europeanization processes are the result of processes of integration in Europe, but in this particular case it is not relevant and neither true. In this situation occur some innovations in the analysing of the issue: sub-national units of third countries have not yet been studied independently from their national context, so this is the first analysis of adaptation in a (part of) post-communist transitional country that has not acceded to the EU nor is preparing for accession. In this intent, the authors seek to answer these questions and to this peculiar situation by analysing and comparing several policy areas (economic policy, higher education, environmental policy, social policy, public health policy, integrated border management and economic policy) of the Kaliningrad region with the institutional structures, processes of decision-making (politics) as well as policy-outputs (policy) therein. In the second and third part of this volume this work is well documented and clearly synthesised.

The Europeanization 'à la carte' or 'selected adaptation' as the authors call this phenomenon, demonstrated that over time the European Union has got tired of exerting influence on Russia through bargaining about conditions and rewards and through the promotion of a strategy of persuasion and limited conditionality.
