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***China's Energy Security and Relations with Petrostates* by Anna Kuteleva, Routledge Publishing, Taylor and Francis Group, 2021. ISBN 978-0367651329, Photographs. Notes. Sources cited. Index. Pp., 164. \$160.00.**

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Security depends on a state's culture, how they think, talk, and interact with others based on a particular issue, in this case, oil. In *China's Energy Security and Relations with Petrostates*, Dr. Kuteleva examines Chinese narratives, and how discourse drives interactions with other states. Beginning with a traditional petrostate (a state driven by oil resources), the book considers a constructivist approach to the internal and external narratives for China, Russia, and Kazakhstan. The discursive narrative works through the states' original language, to obtain a contextual understanding. These base understandings then allow comparing various regions, goals, and outcomes for those states. This book hits at the highest conceptual levels, diving deep into discursive narrative deconstruction with outstanding examples textually and graphically to support the conclusions. I recommend this book for specialists in the Pacific and Central Asian regions, as well as long-time security specialists.

The basic theoretical framework considers how different states understand oil and how those understandings influence their relations. The author starts with Chinese history since 1990 as they filled a role as the world's factory floor with correspondingly increasing rates of energy consumption. During this period, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states saw an average energy consumption rise of 13%, global consumption rose by 30% and Chinese consumption rose by 70%. Currently, China consumes at least 10% more than it produces in natural gas, oil, and coal, despite extracting oil in over 42 other nations, largely as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These foundations reveal how resources shape actions, and how discourse supports some interpretations while marginalizing others. The text applies the narrative deconstruction framework to the problem through four areas: defining the subject (oil), defining the self-actors ("we" compared to oil), defining the

other-actors (“they” compared to oil), and actions (what are we doing with oil). Each area provides an opportunity to construct a discourse framework about China, Kazakhstan, and Russia.

China’s oil relationships, like much of the communist discourse, goes back to the 1950s in modeling oil workers as state heroes at Daqing oilfield due to their perseverance and dedication. The production concept is diffused from merely capitalistic to focus on the idea of responsibility and Chinese heritage. The Museum of the Daqing oilfield offers cultural understanding through ideology rather than engineering accomplishments. During the 1980s, China was the world’s 4th largest producer of oil, but by 2002 they had become the world’s 2nd largest consumer. The Chinese oil narrative walks the line between being a developing nation that deserves the right to use energy and viewing energy as a non-traditional threat. The discourse portrays China as seeing energy availability as tied to distribution. This distribution appears as based on neither economics nor security, but politically motivated during state-to-state relationships. The underlying Chinese goal is to stand alone as an Asian power producing, but not relying, on oil.

Russia faces a similar challenge in appearing as an energy superpower rather than a raw material appendage. Internal imagery, supported by extensive graphics, shows Russians perceive energy as a matriarch, providing for need in an example where a cartoon shows a mother feeding her Russian baby (Putin) oil. The discussion in the other half shows the oil addiction through the word “Democracy” in Cyrillic and built out of canisters which fill with oil, postulating that the state is nothing more than a container for oil. Kuteleva references early writings of Victor Pelevin suggesting the entire Russian culture is just mold on a pipeline, existing because the pipe is heated while knowing the pipe is only heated to allow faster oil transport. Putin strives to portray Russia as a strong and independent, energy superpower. Russia wants merely to sell oil to China, while China views Russia as an important socialist partner and collaborator. These portrayals cause stress between each nation’s internal view from Xi’s “Energy Dream” to Putin’s “Energy Superpower.”

Kazakhstan becomes the odd spoke in this trio. Nursultan Nazarbayev the Prime Minister of the region under the Soviet Union, was elected President in 1990, and retired as “Elbasy” or leader for life in 2019. The

majority of Kazakhstan's policy and politics documents originate with Nazarbayev who authored 33 of 77 major political documents. He ensured all oil companies have ethnic Kazakh ownership while redirecting oil wealth into other funds. The nation's discourse shows oil as a blessing and a threat, offering wealth, but challenging outsiders who would abuse those resources. Oil was initially the primary regional development choice but Nazarbayev did not rely on short term boosts as he perceived an external threat from those exploiting resources to Kazakhstan's detriment. Kazakhstan sees its path as unique, not one of many developing Islamic petrostates, and not similar to other Central Asian states. Internal experts see partnerships with China to counter US and Russian ambitions but Chinese oil exploration and exploitation in Kazakhstan have contributed to some worker unrest including widespread strikes.

Kuteleva presented excellent dialogue and discussion. One of my challenges was a number of terms being presented in the original language. While each was carefully explained, I felt like I might be missing something in the translation. The Russian oil art was exceptional, but did not seem in tune with Chinese photographs featuring Daqing, or the Kazakhstani pictures of public buildings. The book focused on discourse, but the images drove home the oil narratives. The other challenge was length. Each chapter focused on an individual country and while it did cover interactions, more chapters covering the discursive interaction would have helped greatly.

Overall, *China's Energy Security and Relations with Petrostates*, offers an interesting look at a high-level theoretical analysis with the discursive deconstruction framed against the constructivist view. The easy part demonstrates that each state clearly views oil as part of its overall identity while the more challenging aspect shows how oil frames those identities. The conclusion addresses how each country views the other two in the triad, but falls short of demonstrating where those opinions then affect future security. I enjoyed this work, but it should only be a part of the overall references for security analysts focusing on Central Asia or oil issues as the specificity in analysis will likely work against the casual reader.