

Rival Power Russia in Southeast Europe

Dimitar Bechev

A nuanced and comprehensive study of the political dynamics between Russia and key countries in Southeast Europe

Is Russia threatening to disrupt more than two decades' of E.U. and U.S. efforts to promote stability in post-communist Southeast Europe? Politicians and commentators in the West say, 'yes.' With rising global anxiety over Russia's political policies and objectives, Dimitar Bechev provides the only in-depth look at this volatile region.

Deftly unpacking the nature and extent of Russian influence in the Balkans, Greece and

Turkey, Bechev argues that both sides are driven by pragmatism and opportunism rather than historical loyalties. Russia is seeking to assert its role in Europe's security architecture, establish alternative routes for its gas exports – including the contested Southern Gas Corridor – and score points against the West. Yet, leaders in these areas are allowing Russia to reinsert itself to serve their own goals. This urgently needed guide analyses the responses of regional NATO members, particularly regarding the annexation of Crimea and the Putin-Erdogan rift over Syria.

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