



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

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Author(s)	Nakai, Ryo
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Una Bergmane, *Politics of Uncertainty: The United States, the Baltic Question, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 256 pp.

The most comprehensive and exciting book on world politics regarding the Baltic independence movement was published more than thirty years after the restoration of independence with the power of archival materials.

This book discusses how the independence movement of the Baltic States has been handled in the context of international relations among the major powers—the United States, the Soviet Union, and Europe (mainly France and Germany)—by combining archival and press materials from these countries in addition to extensive archival materials from the three Baltic republics. In the context of many concurrent events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf War, this work examines the rise of movements for autonomy and independence in the Baltic States; how local politicians interacted with politicians of major powers such as the United States, the Soviet Union, Germany, and France over the 1980–1990s events; and how negotiations took place within and among political decision-makers.

After completing this book, readers will understand that Western support (particularly from the United States and Western Europe) for the Baltic independence movement was not guaranteed at the time but rather uncertain, as it was balanced against the reformist Gorbachev administration. Even within the United States—traditionally a supporter of Baltic independence through its non-recognition policy—archival materials reveal the Bush administration’s hesitancy as well as a Congressional push for a hardline stance on Baltic independence (influenced by efforts from Baltic Americans lobbying members of Congress). As the title of the book suggests, Baltic independence is far from assured.

A significant contribution of this book is its comprehensive and robust multi-archival research approach. From multiple archival surveys, the book reveals how the same events and actions are interpreted differently by states and actors and how those discrepancies have formed history. Such episodes and analyses—not necessarily commonly known—are deployed throughout the book, making it a first-class contribution to political-historical research. The main archival materials come from three Baltic archives: official American documents, Congressional records, newspapers, Russian materials, and French materials (the author, Dr. Bergmane, completed her PhD in France).

This book is poised to become a foundational book for the next generation of scholars in Baltic studies as it comprehensively summarizes the history of the Baltic States before and after the restoration of their independence. It is similar to the comprehensively updated version of Anatol Lieven’s *The Baltic Revolution* (Yale UP, 1993), which includes many updated academic findings based on a quarter of a century of accumulated research and archival material since its publication. In addition, the reviewer recommends this book for those studying Soviet Russia’s foreign policy toward the United States and Western Europe.

In addition to its academic contributions, this book is distinguished by its engaging writing style. It can be interpreted as a first-class political drama. Even readers who know how a story will unfold may find themselves turning pages in anticipation of what will happen next.

While the strength of this book lies in its combined perspective and use of archives, it does not cover all aspects of the relationship between independent Baltic states and Western powers from every available archival source. For example, British perspectives are relatively scarce, but Thatcher's actions have important implications.

ASI's readership is also likely to be interested in its relationship with Asia. For example, did Moscow's diplomatic normalization with its long-time rival China in 1989, along with Gorbachev's visit to China just before the Tiananmen crackdown (and his exchange of views with Chinese leaders on the anti-government movement)¹ have any impact on Moscow's stance on the Baltic question? These points are not clarified in this book.

Of course, such points are beyond the scope of this book from the outset (Dr. Bergmane is, in fact, a scholar who understands the importance of considering Asia when thinking about this issue).² Therefore, this limitation should not be viewed as a shortcoming, but as a potential avenue for future research inspired by this book. Perhaps, further research can be conducted with the release of archives in other countries (e.g., Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada), especially those with close ties to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Russia.

For example, the reviewer was inspired by this book to examine the Japanese diplomatic archive and found a recently published (in 2021) joint press statement by Baker-Nakayama on January 14, 1991. While this was initially prepared in the context of the Gulf War, it was released immediately after the bloody Sunday on January 13 in Vilnius. Documents reveal that the US Department of State had initially expressed "concern" over Moscow's "repressive measures," but it was updated to clearly describe the "violence" as "deeply disturbing" after exchanges with the Japanese side.³ This reflects the Bush administration's hesitation to balance Baltic recognition with Russian diplomacy, a recurring theme of this book.

Considering that many countries are beginning to open their archival documents from events around 1990, the study of international relations surrounding the Baltic states' independence may be entering a peak period. This book represents a prominent sunflower that is poised to play a central role in the flourishing landscape of this emerging field of research.

RYO NAKAI

1 Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday 1996), chapter 39.

2 Kristina Spohr, "Post Wall Post Square: How Bush, Gorbachev, Kohl, and Deng Shaped the World after 1989," in Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse, eds., *H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXIII-1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019) [<https://hdiplo.org/to/RT23-1>].

3 Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, 2021-0536, 1, No. 003421-001, P02, "Joint Press Statement: Baker-Nakayama Ministerial (Draft 1-14-91 10:30 am)."