

## Baltics: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Helsinki, Stockholm and Copenhagen

### Reading List

#### **A History of the Baltic States**

by Andres Kasekamp

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania experienced a sequence of foreign regimes, including Nazism and communism, before recovering their independence and joining the European Union. Clearly and accessibly written, this book is one of the first to provide a general overview of their histories from the stone age to the present using a comparative approach.

'Winner of the Baltic Assembly Prize in Literature, 2011, Kasekamp has produced a detailed but readable synthesis of the most current literature, which all scholars venturing into the field should consult as a point of departure. An educated general reading public - with some familiarity with European history - should also find this book of value, as an introduction to a strategically important region with a complex history. As a textbook, it supersedes most others, though its meticulous style and content makes it more suitable for advanced undergraduates and beyond.' - The English Historical Review

'Kasekamp's book is an innovative, comprehensive and balanced treatment of the history of all three Baltic States. Starting from the earliest times and taking the narrative up to the present day, it shows how developments in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia both diverge and intertwine. There is no better book to introduce the student to the fascinating story of the Baltic region.' - Professor James White, University of Glasgow, UK

'Required reading for all persons interested in Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian history. Kasekamp's command of the scholarly literature is unsurpassed.' - Guntis Smidchens, Assistant Professor of Baltic Studies, University of Washington, USA

'A History of the Baltic States is an excellent publication opening the history of the eastern Baltics to the English-speaking audience. It is concise, well-written, and made with professionalism and competence.' - ERR News

'Andres Kasekamp's graceful history of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia is an excellent guide to the history of the three Baltic States.' - Russiaprofile.org '...an excellent up-to-date summary of the main issues and the accompanying secondary literature that will be an invaluable resource for teaching...The book can be highly recommended as an accessible historical introduction for anyone wishing to visit the region.' - David J. Smith, University of Glasgow, Europe-Asia Studies Read an interview with the author [here](#)

## **The Baltic: A New History of the Region and its People**

by Alan Palmer

In this long-needed history of the peoples and nations surrounding the Baltic Sea, we pass through the legendary castles of Elsinore and Helsingborg to enter a unique landscape and culture. Alan Palmer traces the history of the Baltic region from its early Viking days and its time under the Byzantine Empire through its medieval prime when the Baltic Sea served as one of Europe's central trading grounds. Palmer addresses both the strong nationalist sentiments that have driven Baltic culture and the early attempts at Baltic unification by Sweden and Russia. The Baltic also dissects the politics and culture of the region in the twentieth century, when it played multiple historic roles: it was the Eastern Front in the First World War; the setting of early uprisings in the Russian Revolution; a land occupied by the Nazis during the Second World War; and, until very recently, a region dominated by the Soviets. In the twenty-first century, increasing attention has been focused on the Baltic states as they grow into their own in spite of growing neo-imperialist pressure from post-Soviet Russia. In *The Baltic*, Alan Palmer provides readers with a detailed history of the nations and peoples that are now poised to emerge as some of Europe's most vital democracies.

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## **The Baltic: A History**

by Michael North

In this overview of the Baltic region from the Vikings to the European Union, Michael North presents the sea and the lands that surround it as a Nordic Mediterranean, a maritime zone of shared influence, with its own distinct patterns of trade, cultural exchange, and conflict. Covering over a thousand years in a part of the world where seas have been much more connective than land, *The Baltic: A History* transforms the way we think about a body of water too often ignored in studies of the world's major waterways.

The Baltic lands have been populated since prehistory by diverse linguistic groups: Balts, Slavs, Germans, and Finns. North traces how the various tribes, peoples, and states of the region have lived in peace and at war, as both global powers and pawns of foreign regimes, and as exceptionally creative interpreters of cultural movements from Christianity to Romanticism and Modernism. He examines the golden age of the Vikings, the Hanseatic League, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, and Peter the Great, and looks at the hard choices people had to make in the twentieth century as fascists, communists, and liberal democrats played out their ambitions on the region's doorstep.

With its vigorous trade in furs, fish, timber, amber, and grain and its strategic position as a thruway for oil and natural gas, the Baltic has been—and remains—one of the great economic and cultural

crossroads of the world.

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### **Latvia: A Short History**

by Mara Klanins

The history of the Latvian people begins some four and a half millennia ago with the arrival of the proto-Baltic Indo-Europeans to northern Europe. One branch of these migrants coalesced into a community which evolved a distinctive and remarkably robust culture and language, and which eventually developed into a loose federation of tribal kingdoms that stretched from the shores of the Baltic sea to the upper Dniepr river. But these small independent kingdoms were unable to resist the later invasion of the Teutonic Knights in 1201, an invasion that initiated nearly eight hundred years of helotry for the Latvians in their own domains.

In the centuries of domination by successive European powers that followed, the inhabitants nonetheless preserved a powerful sense of identity, fostered by their ancient language, oral literature, songs and customs. These in turn informed and gave impetus to the rise of national consciousness in the nineteenth century and the political activities of the twentieth which brought the modern nation-state of Latvia into being. This book traces the genesis and growth of that nation, its endurance over centuries of conquest and oppression, the process by which it achieved its independence, and its status as a member of the European community in the twenty-first century.

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### **Baltic Facades: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania since 1945**

by Aldis Purs

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are often grouped together as the Baltic States, but these three Eastern European countries, tied together historically, are quite different. Although each is struggling to find its place within Europe and fighting to preserve its own identity, the idea of the Baltic States is a façade. In this book, Aldis Purs dispels the myth of a single, coherent Baltic identity, presenting a radical new view of the region.

Baltic Façades illuminates the uniqueness of these three countries and locates them within the larger context of European history, also revealing the similarities they share with the rest of the continent. He also examines the anxiety the people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania feel about their own identities and how others see them. Giving equal weight to developments in politics, economics, and social and cultural trends, he places contemporary events in a longer perspective than traditional Cold War-inspired views of the region, tracing the countries under Soviet rule after the end of World War II through their declarations of independence in the early 1990s and their admission to the European Union in 2004. Baltic Façades is an enlightening look at these three separate, though

related, Eastern European countries.

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### **The Edge of the World: A Cultural History of the North Sea and the Transformation of Europe** by Michael Pye

Saints and spies, pirates and philosophers, artists and intellectuals: they all criss-crossed the grey North Sea in the so-called "dark ages," the years between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of Europe's mastery over the oceans. Now the critically acclaimed Michael Pye reveals the cultural transformation sparked by those men and women: the ideas, technology, science, law, and moral codes that helped create our modern world.

This is the magnificent lost history of a thousand years. It was on the shores of the North Sea where experimental science was born, where women first had the right to choose whom they married; there was the beginning of contemporary business transactions and the advent of the printed book. In *The Edge of the World*, Michael Pye draws on an astounding breadth of original source material to illuminate this fascinating region during a pivotal era in world history.

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### **Baltic Lenin: A journey into Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania's Soviet past** by Keith Ruffles

The fall of the Soviet Union marked a new era of independence for the Baltic states. But what remains of the former Soviet Union in this tiny corner of northeastern Europe?

With humor and compassion, travel writer Keith Ruffles tells his story of visiting the little-known countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. On his quest, he discovers how Soviet rule impacted the infrastructures, environments, and cultures of these areas.

Travel highlights include the medieval capital of Tallinn, Lithuania's baroque-style capital of Vilnius, the Estonian island of Saaremaa, and the cities of Narva and Nida, which border Russia.

Along the way, Ruffles meets quirky characters—from academics to alcoholics—and truly discovers what life is like in the region today. Perhaps, most importantly, he discovers the legacy of the Soviet Union. What does it mean for the future of this region, as tensions reminiscent of the Cold War increase between Russia and the West?

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### **Concise History of the Baltic States** by Andrejs Plakans

The Baltic region is frequently neglected in broader histories of Europe and its international significance can be obscured by separate treatments of the various Baltic states. With this wide-ranging survey, Andrejs Plakans presents the first integrated history of three Baltic peoples - Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians - and draws out the common threads to show how it has been shaped by their location in a strategically desirable corner of Europe. Subordinated in turn by Baltic German landholders, the Polish nobility and gentry, and then by Russian and Soviet administrators, the three nations have nevertheless kept a their distinctive identities - significantly retaining three separate languages in an ethnically diverse region. The book traces the countries' evolution from their ninth-century tribal beginnings to their present status as three thriving and separate nation states, focusing particularly on the region's complex twentieth-century history, which culminated in the eventual re-establishment of national sovereignty after 1991.

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### **St Petersburg: Three Centuries of Murderous Desire**

by Jonathan Miles

This extraordinary book brings to life an astonishing place. Beautiful prose renders brutality vivid' The Times - BOOK OF THE WEEK

From Peter the Great to Putin, this is the unforgettable story of St Petersburg – one of the most magical, menacing and influential cities in the world.

St Petersburg has always felt like an impossible metropolis, risen from the freezing mists and flooded marshland of the River Neva on the western edge of Russia. It was a new capital in an old country. Established in 1703 by the sheer will of its charismatic founder, the homicidal megalomaniac Peter-the-Great, its dazzling yet unhinged reputation was quickly fashioned by the sadistic dominion of its early rulers.

This city, in its successive incarnations – St Petersburg; Petrograd; Leningrad and, once again, St Petersburg – has always been a place of perpetual contradiction. It was a window on to Europe and the Enlightenment, but so much of the glory of Russia was created here: its literature, music, dance and, for a time, its political vision. It gave birth to the artistic genius of Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, Pavlova and Nureyev. Yet, for all its glittering palaces, fairytale balls and enchanting gardens, the blood of thousands has been spilt on its snow-filled streets. It has been a hotbed of war and revolution, a place of siege and starvation, and the crucible for Lenin and Stalin's power-hungry brutality.

In St Petersburg, Jonathan Miles recreates the drama of three hundred years in this absurd and brilliant city, bringing us up to the present day, when – once more – its fate hangs in the balance. This is an epic tale of murder, massacre and madness played out against squalor and splendour. It is an unforgettable portrait of a city and its people.

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## **The Last of the Tsars: Nicholas II and the Russian Revolution**

by Robert Service

In March 1917, Nicholas II, the last Tsar of All the Russias, abdicated and the dynasty that had ruled an empire for three hundred years was forced from power by revolution. Now, on the hundredth anniversary of that revolution, Robert Service, the eminent historian of Russia, examines Nicholas's reign in the year before his abdication and the months between that momentous date and his death, with his family, in Ekaterinburg in July 1918.

The story has been told many times, but Service's profound understanding of the period and his forensic examination of hitherto untapped sources, including the Tsar's diaries and recorded conversations, shed remarkable new light on his reign, also revealing the kind of ruler Nicholas believed himself to have been, contrary to the disastrous reality.

The Last of the Tsars is a masterful study of a man who was almost entirely out of his depth, perhaps even willfully so. It is also a compelling account of the social, economic and political foment in Russia in the aftermath of Alexander Kerensky's February Revolution, the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 and the beginnings of Lenin's Soviet republic.

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## **The Russian Revolution: A New History**

by Sean McMeekin

At the turn of the century, the Russian economy was growing by about 10% annually and its population had reached 150 million. By 1920 the country was in desperate financial straits and more than 20 million Russians had died. And by 1950, a third of the globe had embraced communism.

The triumph of Communism sets a profound puzzle. How did the Bolsheviks win power and then cling to it amid the chaos they had created? Traditional histories remain a captive to Marxist ideas about class struggle. Analysing never before used files from the Tsarist military archives, McMeekin argues that war is the answer. The revolutionaries were aided at nearly every step by Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland who sought to benefit - politically and economically - from the changes overtaking the country. To make sense of Russia's careening path the essential question is not Lenin's "who, whom?", but who benefits?

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## **The Almost Nearly Perfect People: Behind the Myth of the Scandinavian Utopia**

by Michael Booth

The Danes are the happiest people in the world, and pay the highest taxes.

'Neutral' Sweden is one of the biggest arms manufacturers in the world.

Finns have the largest per capita gun ownership after the US and Yemen.

54 per cent of Icelanders believe in elves.

Norway is the richest country on earth.

Michael Booth has lived among the Scandinavians, on and off, for over ten years, perplexed by their many strange paradoxes and character traits and equally bemused by the unquestioning enthusiasm for all things Nordic and *hygge* that has engulfed the rest of the world.

He leaves his adopted home of Denmark and embarks on a journey through all five of the Nordic countries to discover who these curious tribes are, the secrets of their success and, most intriguing of all, what they think of each other. Along the way a more nuanced, often darker picture emerges of a region plagued by taboos, characterised by suffocating parochialism and populated by extremists of various shades.

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## **A History of Denmark**

by Knud J. V. Jespersen

From the Reformation to present day, this book guides the reader through 500 years of wars, territorial losses, domestic upheavals, and changes in thought in Denmark's history. Looking carefully at the development of Danish identity, the author explores whether Danes can be most aptly described as a tribe or a nation. Using new research and original theories, it's the perfect introduction to the fascinating and relatively unknown history of this Scandinavian country.

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## **Letters written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (Oxford World's Classics)**

by Mary Wollstonecraft

This engaging volume was pioneering feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's most popular book during her lifetime. Difficult to categorize, it is both an arresting travel book and a moving exploration of her personal and political selves. Wollstonecraft set out for Scandinavia just two weeks after her first suicide attempt, on a mission from the lover whose affections she doubted, to recover his silver on a ship that had gone missing. With her baby daughter and a nursemaid, she traveled across the dramatic landscape and wrote sublime descriptions of the natural world, and the events and people she encountered. Fascinating appendices include Imlay's commission to recover his lost silver, Wollstonecraft's recently discovered letter to the Danish Prime Minister asking for assistance, the private letters she wrote to Imlay during her travels in Scandinavia, a chapter from Godwin's memoir

of Wollstonecraft, and a selection of contemporary reviews.

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