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BOOK REVIEWS

Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West, by Andrew Wilson, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2014, ix + 236 pages, $17.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-0300211597

Andrew Wilson's 2014 analysis on the Ukraine crisis focuses primarily on the impact the Euromaidan protests of 2013–2014 had on relations between Russia, Ukraine, and the EU. The Euromaidan protests, which precipitated the crisis, began in Kyiv on November 21, 2013, regarding the decision of Viktor Yanukovych's regime not to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. The agreement came at a time of crisis for the EU, as its values meant little to citizens of Western Europe. Eastern European states that had joined since 2004 were too absorbed in history and national identity issues. Russia was becoming more assertive in its foreign policy, boosted by rising revenues from oil and gas industries. Information wars by political technologists sustained its political system. The United States, after exhaustive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, had become less interventionist.

A more assertive Russian foreign policy compelled EU leaders to expand their influence to neighboring states like Ukraine. After Russia defeated Georgia in a short war in 2008, the EU launched an "Eastern Partnership" program to extend Associate Member status to former Soviet republics near it, such as Moldova and Ukraine, as well as Georgia itself. Russian foreign policy in turn became more aggressive toward the EU. With his reelection as President in 2012, Vladimir Putin promoted Russia as a bastion of conservative values at odds with those of the EU. Russia aligned with forces committed to undermining the EU and its relations with the United States so that Russia could again play its historic role as a "great power." It manipulated the Ukraine crisis to assert Russia's "great power" role.

The crisis broke out due to the Orange Revolution of 2004 failing to change Ukraine's political system or reign in the power of post-Soviet oligarchs. Yanukovych, who became president in 2010, drew the country closer to Russia while also promoting closer ties with the EU. His administration plunged the country into further theft, extortion, and bribery. It overturned Ukraine's constitution, fragmented the opposition, and even jailed Yanukovych's rival in the presidential elections, former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. Negotiations over an Association Agreement became a vehicle for blackmailing the EU into giving Ukraine more financial aid. Russia retaliated with a trade war with Ukraine in August 2013, significantly disrupting its economy. The Yanukovych administration's decision not to sign the Association Agreement caused the popular resentment against it, which had been building up for years, to boil over on November 21, 2013, when protests began on Kyiv's main square, the Maidan.

The Euromaidan protests, notes Wilson, may not have produced a successful revolution. Thus he refers to the protests' culmination, the overthrow of the Yanukovych regime in late February 2014, as "the uprising." The protests at the Kyiv Maidan evolved. They became more radical over time as the state used violence and intimidation to crack down on the protests and then outlaw them altogether in the so-called Dictatorship Laws of January 16, 2014. Increasingly, men from the provinces who had nothing to lose and who were the most militant dominated the Maidan by the time of the uprising. Wilson asserts that the Kremlin played a fundamental role in steering Yanukovych toward the idea of breaking up the Maidan with force. When the regime imploded after mass shooting on the Maidan on February 20, 2014, Russian leaders made half-hearted attempts at brokering a compromise between Yanukovych and the Maidan leaders, only to walk away from it and declare that a "Junta" had seized power in Kyiv illegally. Because their defense of Yanukovych had failed, Putin and his allies stirred up unrest, first in Crimea, then in the Donbas and other parts of southern and eastern Ukraine, in what became known as the "Russian Spring."

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Russia annexed Crimea through direct military intervention in March 2014. Russia aided local separatists, then Russian militants helped them, in the Donbas, leading to war with Ukraine. While able to seize Crimea, Putin failed to divide Ukraine in half. Instead, Russia supported and sustained a proxy war in the Donbas that, while semi-frozen by the time of Wilson's book, continues.

Wilson offers preliminary conclusions about the Ukraine crisis's impact on international politics. He stresses that events in Ukraine, while having minimal impact on world events, affected Russia greatly. Putin focused on containing dissent at home while promoting a more aggressive foreign policy aimed at extending Russian power over former Soviet republics. The crisis played a much larger role in escalating tensions between Russia and the West. NATO countries began spending more money on defense. The United States and the EU imposed sanctions on Russia after the annexation of Crimea. While Putin enjoyed approval ratings of well over 80 percent following the events in Crimea, economic sanctions, falling oil prices, and the failure of the "Russian Spring" in Ukraine posed serious problems. Later events have eclipsed these developments. The Donbas war faded from international attention even by the time Wilson had published his book. Russia's ability to sustain the impact of sanctions, its military involvement in Syria, its interference in the US 2016 elections, and rising oil prices have kept Russia afloat. Brexit, not the Ukraine crisis, has strengthened EU leaders' resolve to sustain their union. The unpredictable foreign policy of the Trump administration has brought them closer to Putin.

The geopolitical dimensions of the Ukraine crisis are the most insightful aspects of Wilson's book. It is extremely weak, though, when dealing with actual events in Ukraine. The two chapters on the Euromaidan protests and the fall of the Yanukovych regime suffer from a very confusing chronology. It discusses an "Action Plan" agreed on by Putin and Yanukovych in Moscow on December 17, 2013 (79), after addressing acts of violence and intimidation attributed to Yanukovych, which happened mostly after this date (76–78). While Wilson uses press materials, he overlooks press material that gave exhaustive coverage of events both in the provinces and in Kyiv itself. Thus the mass shootings at the Maidan on February 20, 2014, seem triggered entirely by security forces, when in fact *Levyi Bereg* late the next day indicated that demonstrators with guns had started the shooting and even killed some policemen (Koshkina 2014). He relies on activist Oleksandr Danylyuk as a source for the February uprising, even though he was in exile in Britain at the time. Wilson interviews politicians, but they are almost entirely those who at one time had been connected with the Orange Revolution of 2004 or who opposed the Party of Regions in 2013–2014. He passes off as an "inside source" for the Party of Regions a Western advisor to Rinat Akhmetov telling second-hand stories.

Wilson's book tends to be one-sided in its evaluation of events in Ukraine. Russia is stirring up trouble, advising Yanukovych officials to take radical steps. There is no mention of Western politicians influencing Ukraine events, such as US Senators Chris Murphy and John McCain addressing the Maidan in mid-December 2013 or Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and US Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, trying to put together a new coalition government for Ukraine at the beginning of February 2014. A whole list of politicians from EU countries and EU officials visited the Maidan as well to express solidarity and support, while close to half the country even in early February 2014 did not support the Maidan. Due to his limited circle of interview subjects, Wilson thus claims Maidan activists at the end of January 2014 were considering recent history in Eastern Europe when Yanukovych began negotiations over forming a coalition government: "Many opposition leaders and activists also feared a repeat of the Yugoslav scenario of 1996–97, when demonstrators first tried to topple Slobodan Milošević" (81). Yet press materials from the time indicate no mention of this scenario by Maidan politicians or activists.

Reliance on secondhand polemics blinds Wilson's treatment of the Euromaidan protests. Thus he repeats uncritically Timothy Snyder's sweeping generalization that "the Left" started the Maidan, ignoring press accounts and social media postings about leftist groups driven off the Maidan through force and intimidation by far right groups (Snyder 2014). Wilson, making reference to articles by Anton Shekhovtsov regarding far right activists as provocateurs, jumps to the conclusion that far right groups were purely the invention of Russian political technologists and propagandists

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(Shekhovtsov 2013). Thus, of the crowd that tried to storm the presidential administration on December 1, 2013, "Most were fake nationalists" (69). While some of them did collaborate with the police and were caught on video doing it, Wilson discounts the idea that most of them really wanted to overthrow the regime that day. Uncritical treatment of press materials, as well as interviews with politicians and activists, lead to him making unsubstantiated claims. He reports that Yanukovych thus met with Putin near Valdai, Russia, on January 8, 2014, just before the Dictatorship Laws were passed, though there is no corroborating evidence for this (81). The *Ukrains'ka Pravda* article claiming this, filed on March 11, 2014, only makes reference to a travel journal by Yanukovych's guard, which suggests that Yanukovych went there. It is not clear that the Dictatorship Laws were the subject of the conversation ("Yanukovych's Secret Diaries" 2014). When the conflict broke out in the Donbas, claims Wilson, Tymoshenko had tried, but failed, to set up her own private militia that was to be led by a former Berkut security forces officer (152). Wilson claims that since the conflict with Russia over Crimea and Donbas, Ukrainian politicians have argued "that a smaller Ukraine would be more manageable" (151). No Ukrainian politician said this in the press in 2014. Even former Yanukovych allies who were critical of Ukraine's military operations wanted to end what they called a "civil war," not give up the Donbas.

Wilson's book suffers from certain biases that skewer meaningful understanding of the Ukraine crisis. It neglects political developments in Ukraine's regions. Thus it ignores sociological data from the time that consistently showed a lack of support for the Euromaidan protesters in Ukraine's southern and eastern regions. By the end of January 2014, fatal shootings and clashes with police in Kyiv, as well as the seizure of administrative buildings in western and central Ukraine, did not change this trend. These other parts of Ukraine continued to express opposition to the Euromaidan protests; support for Yanukovych did not decline at all ("Dani zahal'noukrains'koho sotsiolohichnoho doslidzhennia monitoringu 'Ukraina i ukraintsi'" 2014; "Suspil'no-politychna sytuatsiia v Ukraini hruden' 2013" 2013). Wilson takes at face value the idea that the collapse of the Yanukovych regime did not have any real impact on Donbas and Crimea until Russian forces intervened. Thus Wilson treats the pro-Russian demonstrations during Russian Spring as orchestrated events paid by Yanukovych and his allies and supported by forces from Russia, rather than as legitimate protests against both local elites and the new regime in Kyiv.

Wilson has done commendable work addressing why the Euromaidan protests broke out in Ukraine and why Russia, the United States, and the EU had an interest in them. The outcome, the overthrow of the Yanukovych regime, at least for a while transformed Russia's relations with its neighbors and the EU. Yet Wilson's treatment of Ukrainian politics and society in 2013–2014 is too partisan and too reliant on questionable sources for his book to withstand the test of time.

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20 Questions and Answers on Black Europe, by Stephen Small, Amrit Publishers, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2018, $28.00 (paperback), ISBN 9789074897891

Books like *20 Questions and Answers on Black Europe* are not usually reviewed in *Nationalities Papers*. This book is short, footnote-free, and has a 21-item bibliography. But it is nonetheless a very important new publication for scholars, students, activists, and professionals interested in Black Studies, Racism Studies, Race and Ethnic Relations, Decolonial Studies, and European Studies. It is a pioneering work in Europeanizing Black Studies (ironically, just as Europe seems to be falling apart), it is written for use inside and outside academia, and it is based on extensive ethnography. The author, a sociologist at Berkeley, has lived, taught, researched, and worked with Black community organizations in Liverpool, Berkeley, Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Madrid, and Rio de Janeiro, among other cities.

20 Questions and Answers on Black Europe is the most recent addition to Amrit Publishers' "Decolonizing the Mind" series. A small, independent publisher based in the Netherlands, Amrit's mission is to print manuscripts on Black and Decolonial Studies that are rejected as too radical by mainstream publishing houses. Each of the 20 chapters of this book responds to a question about Black Europe: its history, demography, dimensions, and politics, among other characteristics. The first ten chapters define, describe, and locate Black Europe and its problems. Chapters 10 to 20 elaborate strategies and initiatives to support Black Europe, to decolonize minds, and to promote social justice. Using this question and answer format, Small outlines his vision for Black Europe, which he defines as "an interlocking system of mutually supportive nations, that shared a great deal in common and advocated for their collective colonial enterprise, despite their obvious differences" (10). And he explores some of the important issues and choices facing Black Europe today.

The book starts with a two-point "framework" that summarizes its message to non-Black Europeans: "There's no you without me" and "we are here because you were there" (11). It then lists and addresses four dimensions of Black Europe: (1) race thinking and racist thinking; (2) the institutional pillars of racialization; (3) the Black cultural presence; and (4) the Black human presence in Europe. On the basis of his definition and these dimensions, Small argues for shifting the scholarly approach to Blacks in Europe from local and country-based studies, which, until now, have constituted the academic literature, to a Europe-wide view. And he focuses on Blacks in Europe, not as immigrant and refugee add-ons to European society, but as citizens and as people whose exploitation has formed the basis for Europe's prosperity and many of its central institutions.

20 Questions and Answers on Black Europe points to some major differences between the experiences and social locations of Blacks in Europe and in the USA; these include Europe's smaller Black population, Black Europeans' linguistic and religious diversity, higher proportion of immigrants, and lower proportion of descendants of people who were enslaved. These differences have convinced him that the US-based analyses and strategies provide inspiration, but not necessarily solutions, for Black communities in Europe.

As strategies to improve the situation of Blacks in Europe, Small foregrounds mobilizing and forming alliances with non-Black groups that promote social justice within and outside the academy. He advocates campaigning for reparations (payments to descendants of enslaved people), for the return of stolen artifacts, and for the rewriting of European history within a decolonial framework. He prioritizes challenging stereotypes and promoting access to citizenship, getting Black people's problems on the political agenda of each European state, and rejecting the perception of Blacks in Europe as immigrants who need to adapt to European society.

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