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Ukraine and the End of Post-Cold War Europe

Book Review: Derek Averre & Kataryna Wolczuk (Eds.), *The Ukraine Conflict.
Security, Identity and Politics in the Wider Europe.* **Abingdon-New York: Routledge
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It is considered that Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis is a sign of a return to
the Cold War divisions in Europe. The conflict itself proves that the post-1991 model of
European politics is run-down and that new Russian imperialism poses a real threat to
the international order. International media portray it a new case of an 'old game' where
a clash between the West and the East is unavoidable (Ojala & Pantti, 2017). However, the
Ukrainian crises are not just a return to Cold War politics, its more about the recreation of
identities, a 'new game' of belonging and defining enemies (Rumelili & Todd, 2018) or an
inevitable result of national mobilisation in Ukraine and Russia (Todd, 2018). While me-
dia and politicians discuss the conflict in that simplified way, European societies see it far
more emotional and visual – the Ukrainian war is not an event, it has become a scene for
a collision of narratives (Pantti, 2017) and their multilevel performance by involved parties
(Faizullaev & Cornut, 2017).

    The Russia-sponsored disintegration of Ukraine shows how Vladimir Putin's administra-
tion utilises hybrid measures to strengthen its position as a global power, as well as to keep
its struggle against the international position of the United States and the European Union in
political peripheries. Russian objective is to maximise own gains and profits while minimis-
ing the risk of open conflict with the NATO (Gunneriusson & Bachmann, 2017). On the other
hand, after the Revolution of Dignity, Ukrainians emphasise their willingness to genuinely
reshape national identity and confront the vision of a nation with its communist past. As

a result, they implemented new decommunisation policy in 2015, which erases not an only Soviet legacy from the public space but also shows Russian dominance as colonialism-like practices with a core narrative on Holodomor (Kozyrska, 2016).

The annexation of Crimea has opened the political Pandora's box in Eastern Europe, even if the world witnessed similar scenario in Georgia in 2008. It is clear, that Russian unilateral actions created a deficit of justice in Ukrainian society, especially in the context of Euromaidan's demand for modernisation and Europeanisation of the country. This pressure resulted from a pragmatic decision to commit to a pro-Western policy, but also from a choice of values which have constituted the new ideological framework for transition (Krotoszyński, 2017). The political and cultural legacy of the Revolution of Dignity – in the broader context of Russian aggression and outburst of separatism in Eastern Ukraine – formed a deep association between new Ukrainian identity and transitional justice. In fact, the conflict seems to be impossible to resolve, as it requires from both sides either accepting own failure, or resignation form contents core for identity (Lachowski, 2017). Cross-cultural evidence shows that transitional reconstruction of political (national) identities requires the active involvement of a government in the process of dealing with past injustices (Marszałek-Kawa & Wawrzyński, 2016; Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2017). Unfortunately, for Ukraine and Russia coming to terms with the past means applying opposing strategies; and overcoming Ukrainian historical traumas requires opposing against Russian dominance, while Russians to deal with the collapse of Soviet Empire need to re-establish their position as a global superpower which can execute its dominance in the region.

The reasons for Russian-Ukrainian conflict prove a general observation shared by Derek Averre and Kataryna Wolczuk in their book, that the development of post-Euromaidan relations between these states is an example of 'Post-Post-Cold War' European politics. The authors investigate how it influenced security and identity politics in the region, while the publication, as described by the editors, "seeks to redress the gaps […] by offering a set of essays that, taken together, constitute a multifaceted, yet coherent, in-depth examination of the complex causes and consequences of the Ukrainian crisis for domestic developments in Ukraine, Ukraine's relations with Russia and Russia's relations with Europe in the context of their common neighbourhood" (Averre & Wolczuk, 2018, p. 2). The editors encouraged authors to focus on the shift in Ukrainian national identity after the Revolution of Dignity, a failure of the EU Eastern Neighbourhood programme, conflicting interests between Europe and Russia and their integration projects, as well as Russian drift towards authoritarianism and de-modernisation. As a result, *The Ukrainian Conflict* delivered a comprehensive collection of studies explaining why it was impossible to prevent the war without significant reorganisation of the European order.

The book includes papers initially published in the special issue of *Europe-Asia Studies* in 2016. The editors, Averre and Wolczuk, both, affiliated at the University of Birmingham, in this publication collected eleven chapters preceded by their introduction with a brief literature review. They divided papers into three complementary sections – the first con-

sidered Ukrainian internal policy after the Euromaidan, the second discussed the conflict in the international context, while the third one presented the crises through the lenses of political economy.

First four chapters investigated domestic outcomes of the Revolution of Dignity. Olga Onuch and Gwendolyn Sasse described a dynamic model of social protests in Ukraine, discussing a role of ethnolinguistic diversities. Volodymyr Kulyk examined the impact of the Euromaidan and the war on national identity in Ukraine, and notices: "on the one hand, national identity has become more salient *vis-à-vis* other territorial and non-territorial identities than it was before, […] so now its only match is the self-designation it terms of gender. On the other hand, the very meaning of belonging to the Ukrainian nation has changed, a change most vividly manifested in the increased alienation from Russia and the greater embrace of Ukrainian nationalism as a worldview and, accordingly, as a historical narrative" (Kulyk, 2018, pp. 56–57). In the next chapter, Konstantyn Fedorenko, Olena Rybiy and Andreas Umland offered their analysis of Ukrainian party system before and after transformation, remembering political hopes activated during the 2004 Orange Revolution (and their rough verification). Then, Andrew Wilson focused his attention on a character of the conflict in Donbas, presenting Russian efforts to 'indigenise' the struggle and prevent describing it as an external military intervention.

The editors planned next five chapters as a general overview of international aspects of the Ukrainian crisis. It started with a short essay evaluating strengths and weaknesses of the EU's policy towards Kiev by Hiski Haukkala. Finnish scholar argued that European leaders failed to establish a joint strategy to prevent Russian expansion and were not able to create a mechanism which could incorporate Russia into EU-centric order in Europe. The study proves how the week was the Eastern Neighbourhood project and how ineffectively EU administration ran it. Then, Marco Siddi considered new German *Ostpolitik* which consolidates diplomatic measures, economic engagement and a focus on norms and values – however, as the author emphasised there is not a complete picture of German relations with Russia and Ukraine without a context of Nord Stream-2 (and its impact on European security). Next three chapters focus on the Russian side of the 'equation'. Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk presented its relations with Ukraine and the unique pivotal role of this country in Putin's foreign policy and new imperialism. Derek Averre considered Russia's engagement in the conflict as a challenge to European security and the possible future role of the OSCE as a platform for reconciliation and dialogue. Finally, Lance Davies explored Russian involvement in Donbas as a result of the transformation of its security logic, and as an attempt to redefine framework of the European order. He concluded that "Russia's behaviour in the Donbas has both adopted and rejected certain features central to a govern-ance approach, reflecting an uneven policy shaped not only by political expediency but also by a genuine desire for stability in its neighbourhood. Russia's behaviour has demonstrated inherent contradictions […] which stem from the complex array of interests shaping its policy formulation" (Davies, 2018, p. 193). This observation is particularly valuable finding

showing that Putin's administration is not evil machinery of imperialism, but a structure influenced by different factors and various political actors.

The last part of Averre and Wolczuk's book discussed two aspects of political economy. In his chapter on an impact economic sanctions imposed after the annexation of Crimea on Russia, Richard Connolly presented weakening the performance of Russian economy and countermeasures adopted by the Kremlin to prevent further recession, including targeting the agricultural sector as a weak spot of the EU. He argued that the crisis in European-Russian exchange will result in rapid development of economic ties between Moscow and Beijing, which seems to be a premature statement considering the harsh Chinese-Russian rivalry in Central Asia. In the last piece, Tatiana Romanova asked about the future impact of the post-2014 measures on economic relations between the EU and Russia. She discussed different aspects of the 'divorce' – thematic, structural and institutional – and presented that it was not just a consequence of imperial intervention in Ukraine, but an outcome of conceptual contradictions and two visions of regional order which are impossible to reconcile.

The Ukraine Conflict edited by Averre and Wolczuk is a fascinating academic journey into complexities of the Russian-Ukrainian clash of identities and interests. The authors presented the crises from various perspectives and angles – from internal and external positions, through its impact on domestic and international politics. It is a collection of well-structured and complementary essays which provide the reader with an understanding why without reconstruction of the European order it was not possible to prevent Russian-sponsored deconstruction of post-Euromaidan Ukraine. Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk were only stages where Ukrainian elites, Putin's administration and European leaders played their parts in a drama of Post-Post-Cold War political order. The book is apparently a valuable contribution to security studies and international relations, but it also will be an informative lecture for political and social scientists interested in identity politics and conflict management. Finally, it is an obligatory lecture for researchers of Ukrainian transformation and Russian reemergence of imperialism – it delivers them relevant evidence from the conflict and its impact on European politics.

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