

**Simon Geissbühler, ed. *Kiew—Revolution 3.0: Der Euromaidan 2013/14 und die Zukunftsperspektiven der Ukraine*. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society. Ed. Andreas Umland. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014. 160 pp.**

**T**he editor of this book brings together eleven contributions, one of which is co-authored (Ariel Cohen and Ivan Benovic). The contributors are quite diverse: Swiss, Ukrainian, German, Ukrainian-Canadian, German-Russian, Polish, Russian-American, and American. Furthermore, they come from a variety of professional backgrounds: seasoned journalists (Paul Flückiger, Rudolf Hermann, Gerhard Gnauck); well-known think-tank names and public intellectuals (Mykola Rjabtschuk [Riabchuk], Lilia Shevtsova, Taras Kuzio, Ariel Cohen); academics (Ludmila Lutz-Arias, Wojciech Konończuk); and graduate students (Jakob Mischke, Ivan Benovic). This slim volume went to press at the time of the removal of President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich on 22 February 2014. This is the “Revolution 3.0” of the title. The editor slips in a reference to the festering Crimea crisis, as does a contribution, which states as improbable that Russia would recognize the Crimean Declaration of Independence or annex the Crimea (Konończuk).

Most of the book deals with the question of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, which was to be signed in Vilnius in November 2013, but which Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign at the last minute. It is salutary to be reminded that experts believed it would be the EU that would refuse, having made the liberation of Yuliia Tymoshenko a condition of its signature (Geissbühler). Later events were to show that Tymoshenko’s political appeal had been much overrated, both by the EU and Yanukovich. The contributors differ over whether Yanukovich’s decision was “not entirely unexpected” (Konończuk 115) or “completely unexpected” (Cohen and Benovic 145), although the former contributor also notes that in an accelerated procedure, in September and October 2013, the Ukrainian Parliament passed the so-called “Europe Laws” to make signing of the accords possible. Ironically, as the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius neared, Yanukovich may have been hoping that the EU itself would put the agreements on ice so as to spare him a decision (Konończuk). Moreover, the European Parliament, dominated by the European People’s Party, which counted Tymoshenko’s *Bat’kivshchyna* Party as an observer, would have refused to ratify the accord (Kuzio). Kuzio, who believes that the EU should have imposed “red lines” involving Ukrainian democratization, may be closest to the truth. As he folksily puts it, the “Yanukovich regime wanted to dance at several weddings at the same time” (76), reaping some of the advantages of the accords and receiving more in return without meeting its conditions.

The contributors converge implicitly on the merits of the EU accords. Herrman puts it somewhat flippantly: “An easier life now or more prosperity in the future” (91). Geissbühler is blunter; Yanukovych needed a massive cash injection and the EU had no “carrots” to offer, but the question he poses is timid: “Was it wise to put a whole row of conditions upon Yanukovych without at the same time offering him immediate and proportionate financial and economic help?” (19). None of the contributors dissect the accords themselves, which were, in fact, not favourable to Ukraine, at least in the short run. Yanukovych had his 2015 election prospects in mind, so he chose the Russian offer of cheaper gas and a \$15 billion handout instead of the mere \$600 million offered by the EU. This was, indeed, a “new dose of drugs for an addict” (Geissbühler 23). But would any Western politician facing an election have chosen differently?

The EU comes in for the harshest criticism. It is considered spineless throughout, though for different reasons; but the most telling reproaches relate to its attitude around the time of the Vilnius summit. The Ukrainian refusal to sign provoked hyperventilation in Brussels. The president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, declared that the era of limited sovereignty is over (a strange affirmation, given that the EU is devoted to a future of limited sovereignty for its members). The president of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, protested that Russia’s behaviour (presumably in offering a juicier deal) was incompatible with present-day standards. The Swedish minister of foreign affairs, Carl Bildt, who, in answer to the question: What was offered to Ukraine, replied that the EU was giving Ukraine the chance to reform itself. Now, however, he complained about Russia’s massive disinformation campaign. Given that the accord with Ukraine was the linchpin of the EU “Eastern partnership,” it had overestimated its “soft power” and “attractivity” (Cohen and Benkovic 147) in a “self-satisfied” way (Shevtsova 134). The EU never imagined that a country would not rush toward closer association with it, even if this association precluded, as all of the contributors agree, eventual membership.

Several contributions deal with the state of Ukrainian public opinion. One poll found that 47% of those questioned considered the December accords with Russia—the substitute for the EU accords—to be positive, while only 27% saw them as negative (Rjabschuk 38). The same poll, however, found that 47% preferred the EU, whereas 36% preferred the Eurasian Customs Union (EACU), neither of which was the object of either of the accords. Other polls put preferences for the EU as against the EACU at 47% to 29%, or even 38% to 38% (Rjabschuk 38), whereas another contributor cites figures of 45% versus 14% (Konończuk 116-17). At the heart of the matter is the fact that for many Ukrainians, certainly for the Maidan demonstrators, “Europe is a mythical place of righteousness, a system

without corruption” (Flückiger 52). Who would not be in favour of such a place? Although Rjabtschuk insists that the Euromaidan was a revolution of values, the most frequent answer to the question of what one needs to be a European was “a certain material standard of living” (Rjabtschuk 39), and the most important desired result of a rapprochement with the EU would be the “freedom to travel” (Rjabtschuk 39). Defence of human rights and freedoms, as well as living in a Rechtsstaat, came far behind. These are opinion polls results, however, and, as we have seen above, polls can be made to say pretty much anything.

What a difference a year makes! Since the book was published we have seen Russia’s brazen annexation of the Crimea, the revolt in the East, and proof, in the summer of 2014, that the Kremlin was not going to allow the revolt to be crushed. In a classic case of Hegelian *Aufhebung*—in the sense of both lifting and suspending—the Ukrainian conflict has been transformed into a battle of wills between East and West. This is the crucial difference between Maidan 2.0 and the Orange Revolution of 2004-05, which remained a largely intra-Ukrainian crisis. The EU, NATO, and the US have now made support of the post-Maidan order a fundamental tenet of their policy, to the advantage of the Kyiv regime, which has benefited from strong diplomatic backing and previously unavailable Western financial largesse.

There may be some inkling of what was to come in two of the contributions to this volume. Shevtsova welcomes the Ukraine crisis as putting an end to an era of stagnation, during which the West has lacked a strategic vision in Syria and Iran, as well as in Ukraine. She appears to revel in the prospect (since realized) of a head-on confrontation with Moscow, chastising the “old lady” Europe (138) for seeing the Eastern Partnership as a bridge to Russia and for its reluctance to confront Russia. In contrast to most other Western observers, Shevtsova does not minimize the strength of the extremist Right Sector and urges interaction with it. Apparently, any allies against the Kremlin are to be welcomed. Cohen and Benovic, in turn, revive the rhetoric of “with us or against us.” Contrary to the advice of even such old cold warriors as Kissinger and Brzezinski, Cohen and Benkovic see no “Finnish solution” or neutral status for Ukraine, and they call for it to unambiguously join the West, meaning NATO and the EU (regardless of the fact that neither institution is likely to accept Ukraine). In an ironic reversal of the ill-fated choice that Ukraine faced in Vilnius in November 2013, the path of full steam advance toward Western integration may be attractive in the short run; but what does it bode for Ukraine in the long run?

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