

Overall, the essays are short and easy to read, filled with insightful information that could serve as a basis for further research. Essays are on average twenty pages complete with a full bibliography. Additionally the end of the book includes short descriptions about the contributors. Each author tries to reflect on the various existent perceptions but leaves readers to make their own conclusions. The anthology brings us closer to what lays behind statistical numbers often mentioned in the passing in historical texts; to illuminate individual stories and the fate of communities and families.

The book is a reflection of the need in today's society to address the growing tensions between the Roma and European communities. Rising xenophobia and discrimination in various forms from employment to legislation across the old continent shows that the situation requires careful attention. The authors express concern that the Roma situation may receive less attention as the CEE states enter the EU. The book in many ways hopes to push the Roma issue into public space to encourage discussions and dialogue on social integration and ease growing anxiety.

**Stephen Velychenko. *Ukraine, the EU and Russia. History, Culture and International Relations.* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).**

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In the last five years the European Union (EU) has established increasingly close relations with Ukraine thanks to the Action Plan in 2005 and the pro-European policy adopted by Yushenko. However, the EU is reluctant to include Ukraine as a member due to its weak and instable democracy. Alternatively, the Russian Federation (Russia) exerts considerable influence on Ukraine through the Single Economic Space, use of Sebastopol harbour, and gas pipelines. Thus, Ukraine appears to be a country caught between two highly dissimilar realms. *Ukraine, the EU and*

*Russia*, edited by Stephen Velychenko, endeavours to shed some light this multifaceted state of affairs.

For its complex situation Ukraine has aroused the interest of many scholars, who try to individuate the forces which govern it. However, little research gives such an inclusive picture of the Ukrainian case as *Ukraine, the EU and Russia* does. Most of them do not focus on Russian and European influence on Ukraine and provide mostly only a descriptive political perspective. On the contrary, *Ukraine, the EU and Russia* gives a comprehensive overview of the current relations of Ukraine between the EU and Russia. Velychenko's book not only focuses on Ukrainian endeavours to improve relations with its Western neighbours, but also describes the political impact of the cultural inheritance left by two centuries of Russian domination. Ukraine has trouble escaping the Russian legacy and the EU cannot easily welcome a country which is still so strictly bound to its past. Thus the book tries to outline Ukrainian international performance of the past eighteen years and indicates major future trends in foreign policy.

In the first chapter Martin Beisswenger tries to find the answer to the cultural dependence on Russia in the Neo-Eurasianist movement, which justifies Ukrainian subordination to Russia and its exclusion from the EU with the geopolitical weakness of Ukraine. However, Mykola Riabchuk strongly believes in the *Europeanness* of Ukraine. From his point of view, after two centuries of Russian control Ukraine finally can 'return to Europe' (73). The results of this "counter-migration" are revealed not only by literature, in which the 'geographical rhetoric' (p.104) is nowadays directed to Ukraine and Europe, but also by politics, where in 2004 the majority of the population voted for the pro-European candidate Viktor Yushenko. Nevertheless, Roman Serbyn states that Russian culture has yet to lose ground in Ukraine. One example of this is the celebration of the Day of Liberation, a holiday introduced in Soviet Ukraine to commemorate the German-Soviet war of 1941-1945.

The following chapters move from a cultural to an economic and political overview of the position of contemporary Ukraine between the EU and the CES. According to Oleksiy Semeni, since 1991 Ukraine has been promoting a successful EU policy, although it will not become a member in the near future. As stated by Iryna Solonenko, EU cooperation also means a deep democratic transformation. The 2004 presidential elections have not been considered free and fair, even though Ukraine participated in several partnership and cooperation agreements for the promotion of democracy. However, Solonenko underlines that the EU has yet to provide adequate tools to Ukraine as it did to Poland and Hungary. Additionally, the improvements towards democratisation made by Ukraine have been slowed down lately by a stronger Russia and weaker EU. John R. Gillingham finds the solution to this problem in NATO-membership for Ukraine. In the conclusive chapter James Sherr delineates the 'key asymmetries' (165) of Ukrainian policy and proposes a series of solutions to reduce their consequences following Gillingham's final considerations.

Throughout the book the authors manifest a strong support for the pro-European policy adopted by Yushenko and patriotically denounce the view of Ukraine being part of Russia. They believe in the necessity of creating an autonomous entity, less connected to Russia and more oriented westwards. The bulk of the book harshly criticises Putin's 'imperialist' presidency and Yanukovich's strategies. Velychenko openly accuses Russia of promoting a policy of economic, political and cultural domination on Ukraine. The anti-Russian sentiments of the book continue steadily in the following chapters, where Riabchuk and Semeni argue in favour of Yushenko's policy and in strong opposition to Yanukovich and those who support him. Sometimes this perspective is professed too strong and subtly mingles personal sentiments with objective analysis. The general tone of the book nonetheless remains of high scholarly value thanks to its richness of data and examples, and its interdisciplinary character.

Also, the argumentations are presented rather fluently, so that the chapters fit in with one another and represent a coherent description of the cultural, social, political, and economic situation of contemporary Ukraine. In addition, the book provides a balance between cultural aspects, such as the language question and Ukrainian literature, and aspects concerned with politics. Different fields of study are weaved together harmoniously in an encyclopaedic sort of matter.

Nonetheless, *Ukraine, the EU and Russia* lacks a thorough description of the gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine, which has strongly influenced Ukrainian foreign policy since 2006. However, the book does provide a thorough description of the Ukrainian attitude towards the EU and the subsequent European reaction. In several chapters the idea of joining the EU and NATO is regarded as the only sensible option for transforming Ukraine democratically and for assuring regional stability (introduction, chapter 6). In this sense, they follow the previous trends in studies on EU-Ukraine relations, while the first chapters are more original because they provide an overview of the Ukrainian stand and combine cultural and political aspects. However, the book does not adequately contemplate the reasons why the EU lately has become unwilling to include Ukraine. The authors limit their analysis to a description of the achievements in EU-Ukraine relations and the reasons why Ukraine belongs in the EU. *Ukraine, the EU and Russia* is written in order to define what the Ukrainian points of view are and to describe flaws and slip-ups in Ukrainian foreign policy. This becomes evident from the seventh chapter onwards, where the authors, not foreseeing membership in the EU in the near future, suggest to concentrate on NATO. Thus, the book has apparently been conceived as a support for policy makers who want to conduct an effective pro-European programme. For this reason, the book fulfils its aims rather well.

Despite the clearness and fluency of the language the complexity of the issue may render the comprehension of the Ukrainian question difficult. For this reason the book may be difficult for those who are not conversant with the subject.

However, the book is highly useful for students who are interested in exploring the question in a possible thesis. It allows the reader to fully comprehend the reasons for a strong Ukrainian propensity in joining the EU.