

BOOK REVIEW:

Ostap Kushnir. (2020). *Business, Values, and EU's Response to Protests in Ukraine. Cases from 2003-04, 2010, and 2013–14.* Warsaw: Lazarski University Press

Iryna Polets

PhD, Graduate School for Social Research
ORCID: [0000-0002-9160-7048](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9160-7048)

The dramatic changes which the country has undergone in the 21st century have meant that Ukraine has regularly been the object of foreign and international scholarly attention. The country is a close neighbor to the European Union, a land in continuous transformations, which reshape its' identity in time when it is surviving the ongoing conflict with Russia. One such scholars is Ostap Kushnir, who has just published his book on the European Union's foreign policy towards Its eastern neighbors, particularly Ukraine. The author pays special attention to the different interest groups that have the EU's tactics and actions towards Ukraine. These groups include distinguished individual politicians, political parties of the EU Parliament, the EU member states, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and business sector representatives.

The book consists of three parts. The first chapter assesses the cooperation between the EU and Ukraine; the second defines the obstacles to this cooperation; and the third reflects on the EU's responses to the Orange Revolution, Tax Maidan, and Euromaidan (also known as 'Revolution of Dignity'). Overall, the book outlines both institutional and non-official mechanisms within the EU's foreign policy decision-making. The author also devotes significant attention to Russia's Influence on the EU, and Includes analysis of the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine in the years in question.

The author draws his conclusions from earlier publications, case studies materials, as well as foreign policy documents, agreements, and treatises of the EU towards its Eastern neighbors The author's focus on the insights and rationale behind actions of individual stakeholders, is, however, problematic. Socio-cultural research methodology would have allowed for a more nuanced analysis of this complex issue.

The first chapter examines human rights and their value in the EU's policies towards its Eastern partners. Kushnir examines the existing scholarly contribution and their assessment of human rights' role as a guiding principle for EU's cooperation with external states. The author probes the leading concept that human rights and democratic values are the foundation of EU foreign policy towards Its Eastern partners. The question here is to which degree it works between the EU and Ukraine? Kushnir puts forward the hypothesis that the violation of political rights in Ukraine, especially, the rights to freedom of assembly, triggered the reactivation of the EU's foreign policy towards Ukraine. The author analyzes the cooperation agreements between the two players and concludes that more than human rights and democratic values, it was economic factors that compelled the European Union to seek more harmonious relations with Ukraine.

The second chapter covers the obstacles, and lack of coherent, straightforward EU policy towards Ukraine and wider ENP region. It is important to note that Ostap Kushnir refers to both internal and external unfavorable situations, whether these be political, economic, or social. The beginning of the chapter describes the involvement of Russia in the domestic and foreign policies of its neighbor. The author defines the areas in which the two countries established a strong cooperation: Gas extraction and transportation fields, research and development in civil aviation, and space and atomic energy development. These spheres regularly violate the rules of Free Market and open competition, which would go against the guiding principles of EU economic relations. The attempt of Yanukovych's government to join Eurasian Custom Union represented the worst of such violations, putting on hold further cooperation with the EU.

A highlight of the chapter is the analysis of Putin's foreign policy towards Ukraine, mainly his criticism of Euromaidan and claims that it was fueled by the EU and the USA, resulting in annexation of Crimea and invasion of Donbass. The author analyses and traces the steps of the fulfillment of Military Doctrines of Russia towards Ukraine (2000–2014), where Putin tries to regain power in Eastern European space, reacting upon the EU's Security Doctrine, thus, trying to reestablish his position in the area. To lose Ukraine, would be a too big of the cost, since other Russian neighbors could be inspired by the example of seeking more harmonious relations with the EU.

Beyond external obstacles, Kushnir points out two internal ones. The first is the Ukrainian oligarchs who obstruct Ukraine's international cooperation due to their business interests. The other domestic obstacle is a weak and disorganized civic activism, and its over estimation of the importance of human rights and democracy in the EU's foreign policy. According to the author democratic values are not the guiding force of EU policy regarding its Eastern neighbors.

The third chapter analyses the EU's response towards the Orange Revolution, Tax Maidan, and Euromaidan. The author argues that the EU's initial enthusiasm regarding its Ukraine policy waned due to the domestic political environment in Ukraine. What is missing here, however, is an analysis of how internal factors might have distracted the EU from more involved policies regarding its neighboring states. Still, it is evident that, due to the politics of Yanukovych's government in 2014, Ukraine was drifting away from the international organizations, thus, becoming more unpredictable and unstable. The Euromaidan, during which tens of protesters were killed by government-backed units on the streets of Kyiv, represented a turning point. Furthermore, the annexation of Crimea forced the EU to respond with sanctions on strategic sectors of Russia.

The third chapter is, arguably, the core of the entire book since it provides a thorough analysis of the evolution of EU- Ukrainian relations. The author makes clear why the violation of human rights and freedoms triggered the mass protests and active support by the EU. It is surprising that that the author did not make it the first chapter of his book given that it provides the introductory context for the other aspects discussed in his work.

The book's primary shortfalls are the organization of the material and the author's formulation of hypothesis. The latter emphasizes the value of human rights as the guiding

principle of the EU's cooperation with the neighboring states. Quite contradictory to this seems the conclusions to the chapter one, which suggests that economic values are the EU's guiding principle. Throughout the book, one can see that there were more reasons for the EU to transform and change its relations with Ukraine apart from human rights aspect. The book also omits a more thorough analysis of internal reforms in Ukraine, which would have shown more vividly why there were moments when Ukraine and the EU drifted apart. What would also have added to the understanding of the issue is a distinction of the regions within Ukraine and their attitudes towards contemporary internal and external policies and politics. The lack of socio-cultural context contributes to some of the author's oversimplifications. This was particularly noticeable when was the author discusses the ability of Ukrainian society to organize itself for pursuing democratic values.

The form and the sequence of chapters make the book accessible mainly to a readership familiar with the topic. The work describes the events, focuses on cooperation agreements and problems, which will resonate to the scholars and researchers immersed in the topic of contemporary international and internal affairs of Ukraine and the European Neighborhood Policy. Still, this does not undermine the fact that the book offers a valuable contribution on the current scholarly discourse. The style of the author is fresh and quite innovative. The selected cases and examples illustrating Russian presence in Ukraine's domestic and foreign policies, as well as cases dedicated to EU's political and economic involvement in the country during the Orange Revolution, Tax Maidan and Euromaidan reflect on the complexity of the issue and the difficult conditions in which the country had to shape its' vectors of internal and external relations with the neighbors. Solid contribution to the study is the assessment of the Partnership and Co-operational Agreement between the EU and Ukraine 1998 - 2008), EU's Action Plan towards Ukraine (2005), and the discussion of the Association Agenda (2009 - 2017).

It is worthwhile to note that Kushnir is not trying to take sides between the actors he describes. What he genuinely tries to do, is to provide the historical, economic and theoretical framework in order to discuss possible scenarios which could have shaped the relations between the EU and Ukraine from 2003 until 2014. What is more, the author is quite critical to Ukrainian internal policies and politics as well as its' internal social movements, which started as a promising incentive to popularize Western democratic values but turned to be chaotic and incapable to result in-depth transformation within Ukrainian society. The author explains that the fault lays on the both sides - the EU as well as Ukraine, whereas the former is more concerned on effective and transparent market mechanism rather than popularizing democratic values; and the latter is overestimating the democratic values rather than working on the internal judicial, economic and political institutions to ensure the transparency, eliminate the corruption and foster its' International position as trustworthy neighbor to the EU. Despite the fact that this dimension of the research was explored the least, it still makes a valuable contribution to the current research. Finally, It is quite evident is that the current text is a result of a long lasting study made by Ostap Kushnir, and it will be no surprise that other scholars will take a note of it in the future.

Bibliography:

Kushnir, O. (2020). *Business, Values, and EU's Response to Protests in Ukraine. Cases from 2003-04, 2010, and 2013–14*. Warsaw: Lazarski University Press.