

Book Reviews

Rajan Menon and Eugene Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine: The Unwinding of the Post-Cold War Order* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015). 240 pp. \$24.95 Hardback.

Rajan Menon and Eugene Rumer's book is not really about Ukraine but about the West's great power relations with Russia; indeed, the conclusions do not once mention Ukraine. Menon and Rumer, as is true of all International Relations (IR) realists, are in awe with the relationship between power and politics where "small" nations such as Ukraine are mere pawns. The conclusions ignore Ukraine because they believe the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will prioritise resuming normal relations with Russia over enlargement to Ukraine.

Russia's continuous infringement of the Minsk-2 Peace Accords and annexation of the Crimea rule out business as usual and the dropping of sanctions and Menon and Rumer ignore the possibility if the accords were to collapse of their being Iranian-style sanctions and the flow of arms to Ukraine. As Prime Minister Stephen Harper said at the June 2015 G7 summit, Canada will never agree to drop sanctions as long as the Crimea remains occupied (which will continue as long as Vladimir Putin remains Russian president, which is likely to be for life).

Realists are also always submitting to and warning of Russia's Weimar problem, Moscow's resentment at NATO and EU enlargement into an area of "traditional Russian interests and domination" (71). Menon and Rumer's pointing out of Russia's resentment at not being invited to join NATO and the EU is facetious as Moscow never asked to become a member. Realists ascribe limited sovereignty to smaller countries such as Ukraine who are assigned roles of buffers to appease the alleged sensitivities of great powers that complain of being marginalized (it is presumably okay to marginalise Ukraine) and in the case of Russia demand the West recognize the former USSR as its zone of "privileged interests" (73). Menon and Rumer never deem it important to ask Ukrainians if they wish to be included within Russia's sphere of influence and fail to grasp that Russia had sought such a sphere since the early 1990s – long before NATO and EU enlarged. Moscow sees not only the NATO military alliance as a threat but even the EU whose integration into by Ukraine could not in any way be viewed as a security threat. Just because Russia complains about democracy promotion, which Canada undertakes as well as the US and EU member states, it does not mean that Russia's objectives are justified.

The mistakes in the book are often a product of Menon and Rumer looking at Ukraine through Russian eyes. The Crimea can only be described as “an indisputably Russian territory” (98) by denying its history prior to the late eighteenth century – a racist misconception as mistaken as saying that North America had no history prior to the arrival of Europeans. Such a view of Russia ignores far longer history of the Crimea within Turkic-Tatar history from the thirteenth century.

Menon and Rumer dwell on the likelihood of the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine becoming a frozen conflict after ruling out the ability of Ukrainian forces to regain the territory. Western arms flowing to Ukraine that could change the battlefield balance of power is never discussed as is the fact that a Democratic or Republic successor to President Barack Obama will support the US Congress in sending arms (with Canada, UK, Poland and some other countries following).

Another scenario the authors ignore is Kyiv-supported referendum allowing the Donbas region to join Russia, as the separatists wish to do but Putin does not because he wishes the region to remain inside Ukraine with a veto over Kyiv’s policies. As throughout the book, Menon and Rumer assume Ukraine should play by Russia’s rules.

Menon and Rumer, in the manner of all newcomers to contemporary Ukrainian affairs, fail to appreciate the radically changing internal dynamics in the country (in the mid 1990s Rumer wrongly predicted Ukraine would disintegrate into two parts and now claim Ukraine is “fragmenting” [XI]). They adopt a primordial Moscow-centric view of Eastern-Southern Ukraine where language, culture and identity allegedly are fixed in stone. In the course of my seven research visits to the region since the Euromaidan what is clear is that language has little bearing on attitudes to Russia; after all, if language were a marker of identity then Canadians, Irish and Austrians would be Americans, English and Germans respectively. Putin’s “New Russia” strategy to detach Eastern-Southern Ukraine utterly failed. Russian-speaking soldiers, military and women civilian volunteers rallied to Ukrainian patriotism throughout the region. Menon and Rumer exaggerate the influence of oligarchs and Kyiv’s inability to control “private armies” (149) when all of the volunteer battalions, which sprung up spontaneously with many coming from Euromaidan self defence units, have been integrated into the army and National Guard.

Menon and Rumer’s weak understanding of Ukraine’s internal dynamics is also present in two other areas. They wrongly claim that Jews, Crimean Tatars and Russians were “skittish” about Ukrainianisation (23), a statement that is only true for the latter. Ukraine’s Jews and Tatars supported the Euromaidan and today support the war against Russia. Also, domestic sources of foreign orientations that have undertaken a radical transformation. Putin’s annexation of the

Crimea and hybrid war in Eastern Ukraine have reduced the pro-Russian constituency and today Ukrainian support for NATO and EU membership stands at a record high of nearly 50 and 60 per cent respectively.

Menon and Rumer repeatedly point to how the West did not see the crisis coming or anticipate Russia's moves "which at every step exceeded Western expectations" (159). Towards this end, they argue for Western strategy to be "built on a realistic understanding of Russia rather than on what the West would like it to be and hopes it will one day become" (162). Menon and Rumer are right to question the naivety of the "Russia reset" by the Obama administration and the cozying up of Germany, France, Italy, and other EU members to a Russia transforming into an authoritarian and xenophobic anti-Western regime.

At the same time, if Western leaders were to accept the advice offered by Menon and Rumer it would amount to an appeasement of Russia's interests and a turn away from their core values. The seeds of the Ukraine crisis are not just in big power politics but also in Russian chauvinism towards its neighbours that has always existed and which evolved into a coherent set of aggressive policies over the last decade. Putin told President George W. Bush in 2008 "You know George, Ukraine isn't even a country" – a view that rules out any Ukrainian leader agreeing to his country becoming a Russian buffer as this would not be "Finlandization" but a vassal state. Therefore, unsurprisingly Menon and Rumer fail to grasp how pro-Russian presidents of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovich (63) also had difficult relations with Moscow, even when in the latter case they agreed to all Russian demands and nevertheless, Ukraine was charged the highest gas price in Europe.

With an over-focus on big power politics Menon and Rumer miss the bigger domestic picture and therefore their book fails to understand the sources of Ukraine's conflict.

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James M. Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013). 308 pp. \$95.00 Hardback.

This well written, sprightly book offers a serious revision of the role the Ku Klux Klan played in Saskatchewan during the 1920s. It is dissociated from its United States roots and quite thoroughly placed into mainstream Saskatchewan history. It infers that its image as a fanatical group – that hooded, violent and anti-Semitic group of the US Klan – was the result of campaign caricaturing by the James Gardiner government. The KKK in Saskatchewan is by no means rendered as an open and liberal group, but it is rendered nevertheless as a typically