

Institution: University College London (School of Slavonic and East European Studies)		
Unit of Assessment: UoA25 – Area Studies		
Title of case study: Public Policy on Russia, Ukraine and Eastern Europe: The Global Impact of Russian 'Active Measures'		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Andrew Wilson	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Ukrainian Studies	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1996-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Research and advocacy by Professor Andrew Wilson helped underpin the development of policy planning towards Russia and the six countries of the Eastern Partnership by European Union (EU) Member States, the EU and other international institutions. Regular closed-door briefings at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Cabinet Office have informed new UK ambassadors to the region and helped with the drafting of in-house policy papers. Prof Wilson was asked to brief Prime Minister David Cameron after the revolutionary Maidan events in Ukraine in February 2014. Prof Wilson headed a team of Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) experts conducting a Needs Assessment Report for the deported peoples in Crimea in 2013-14. His research and briefings on the Azov Sea crisis were used by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 2018, including during their rotating membership of the UN Security Council, and this has carried forward to their chairing the OSCE. He has been in high demand for analysis and comment during the Belarus crisis in 2020-1 (by EU member-states' MFAs; UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; George Marshall Center for Security Studies).</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Prof Wilson's work focuses on the post-Soviet states, looking at both formal and informal politics (i.e. politics conducted outside the public, official sphere). There are few functioning democracies in the former USSR, and, contrary to the assumptions of many studies, the explanation lies not in mechanistic application of democratisation theories, but in the machinations of informal politics. His 2005 book, <i>Virtual Politics</i> [R1], was the first academic study of what Russians call 'political technology' – informal practices of political manipulation and media control. Since 2005 such technology has metastasised in Russia, spread to the rest of the former USSR, and above all captured the world's attention with the launch of 'hybrid war' against Ukraine in 2014 and Russian interference in the 2016 US elections and elsewhere in the West. Prof Wilson's research on Russian manipulation techniques allowed him to predict where problems were likely to arise in 2014 (Crimea and the Donbas), and to gauge correctly that most threats to Ukraine were of external Russian origin.</p> <p>In October 2014 he published the first major book on these issues [<i>Ukraine Crisis: What it Means for the West</i>, R2], based largely on interview evidence and local media sources, and rebutting the prevalent argument that this was a Ukrainian 'civil war'. These publications [R1, R2] helped inform the heated academic and policy debate around the Maidan Revolution, the annexation of Crimea, the war in east Ukraine, and sanctions against Russia, plus the impact on the broader region, especially neighbouring states like Belarus, and the spread of Russian 'political technology' techniques to the rest of the world.</p> <p>Prof Wilson has also worked on cultural politics, particularly identity issues in the former USSR. When working on Ukraine, he has therefore written frequently on issues of internal cohesion, nationalism and minority politics, all of which came to the fore in 2014. His 2014 article '<i>The Donbas in 2014: Explaining Civil Conflict Perhaps, but not Civil War</i>' [R4] based largely on</p>		

Ukrainian-language media, examined the interplay of these factors in eastern Ukraine, showing that the 'Donbas identity' and alienation from Kyiv were insufficient to account for the war, which arose as a result of Russian interference and its promotion of secessionist local elites.

Prof Wilson is one of the world's leading experts on Belarus. His 2011 book, *Belarus: The Last European Dictatorship* [R4], explored Belarus's complex history and evolving recent identity as an independent nation caught between Russia and the West. Aliaksandr Lukashenka has manipulated the political system to stay in power since 1994 (as analysed in [R1]) but an evolving nation has outgrown him. The second edition explains how the 2020 protests had their roots in Belarusians' growing attachment to sovereignty, national identity and democracy [R4].

Prof Wilson's body of research including, including [R1, R2, R3 and R4] has established his expertise on political technology and public policy throughout the region, contributing to his appointment and continuing role as a Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). The 2009 establishment of the EU Eastern Partnership policy for the 6 eastern European states of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan led to enhanced international interest in the region from policymakers, political commentators, and publics: Prof Wilson's research, in books [R1, R2 and R4] consolidated his reputation for expertise amongst these three groups and resulted in his being a recognised commentator on EU and EU Member State policy towards Eastern Europe.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World* (Yale University Press, 2005)

R2. *Ukraine Crisis: What it Means for the West* (Yale University Press, 2014)

R3. 'The Donbas in 2014: Explaining Civil Conflict Perhaps, but not Civil War', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 68, no. 4, 2016, pp. 631-652 doi:10.1080/09668136.2016.1176994

R4. *Belarus: The Last European Dictatorship* (Yale University Press, 2011) – updated second paperback edition to appear in 2021.

[R1, R2, R3 and R4] are peer-reviewed academic books/journals. [R2] was partly based on research from the EUR596,100 ERC Horizon 2020 research project: ANTICORRP - Anticorruption Policies Revisited: Global Trends and European Responses to the Challenge of Corruption (Grant No. 290529).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Prof Wilson's widely-recognised expertise in the politics of Ukraine, Belarus and the post-Soviet region more generally (evidenced in outputs [R1, R2, R3 and R4]) enables him to contribute to policy-making within foreign policy circles. He has pursued an active engagement strategy with influential decision-makers across Europe, both independently and as a Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). Prof Wilson has a longstanding relationship with the ECFR, plugging in to policy-making structures at the national European, EU, Eastern European and transatlantic levels.

Informing the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO)

Prof Wilson advises the FCO several times a year at private briefings. The FCO uses these meetings to help shape internal policy papers or brief new officials, such as incoming ambassadors for Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, or officials in London who are briefing ministers. Prof Wilson has frequently been invited to private briefings at the British embassy in Kyiv. In 2017-19, Prof Wilson was involved in top-level strategy sessions for the Cabinet Office and FCO on the UK's policy in Eastern Europe after Brexit.

A Deputy Head of Eastern Research Group at the FCO, organises such meetings. He writes that 'Professor Wilson has had significant impact on HMG policy formation on Eastern Partnership countries and Russia over a number of years', confirming that he has contributed regularly to 'briefings, roundtables and brainstormings at senior level with the FCO (over the last year alone, a roundtable with HMA's Moscow and Kyiv, a briefing seminar for our HMA-designate Kyiv and a

brainstorming with senior officials on the Eastern Partnership)' (A). Wilson's 'insight' and 'expertise' add 'good value' while, 'more broadly [his] books are required background reading for officials new to the region' and his publications 'are "go to" readings of the highest quality that help to inform HMG. The events that he organises, such as the Annual Conference of Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century [at UCL SSEES], are always informative and excellent opportunities to network. We are lucky to have him!' (A)

In February 2014 Prof Wilson was in Kyiv at the climax of the Maidan protests. He was asked to write a briefing note for Prime Minister David Cameron for 'his weekend reading' box, according to a No. 10 Downing St official (B), and subsequently gave a private briefing inside No. 10. The UK has been a leading actor in providing diplomatic and security assistance to Ukraine since 2014.

Providing access to research-led expertise for leading EU policymakers

Prof Wilson also works regularly with EU MFAs and has written briefing papers for the European Parliament. In 2017 Prof Wilson gave a private briefing to the French MFA, just after the election of President Macron, on the Normandy Process (peace negotiations over Ukraine), and, again, after the Paris Summit with Ukraine in December 2019.

Because of his expertise in 'political technology' and Russian techniques for manipulating elections [detailed in R1], Prof Wilson was part of a private working group advising the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. In 2013 he was asked by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to head a research team preparing a Needs Assessment Report on 'deported peoples' in Crimea – mainly the Crimean Tatars. The Report was published just before Russia's annexation of Crimea, and Prof Wilson has continued to brief on human rights abuses under Russian occupation.

Prof Wilson has given advice to the United Nations (UN), notably when they were considering whether and how to become involved as a mediator in the Ukraine protests in 2013-14.

Eastern Partnership policy

Prof Wilson helped influence the design of the EU's Eastern Partnership policy in 2008-09. He then helped shape the debate when the Policy was twice reviewed and upgraded in 2015 and 2018. From 2014, he made the case for bringing forward the EU's Association Agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, as Russia pressured all three states following the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Prof Wilson has continued to make the case for Western support for Ukraine, given substantial, if patchy, reform progress. The EU and USA have given 20 Billion Euros (EUR 20,000,000,000) since 2014, testifying to an upscaling of commitment to Ukraine.

Another example is the run-up to the Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels in November 2017. In connection with this, Prof Wilson was the lead researcher in a FCO-sponsored project to make the case for continued EU engagement, published on the European Council on Foreign Relations website as 'Partners for life: Europe's unanswered 'Eastern Question'. He toured Europe to discuss it at high-profile events organised by Member State MFAs and think-tanks in Paris, Berlin, Madrid (Esglobal), Warsaw and Kyiv. The paper was translated into Ukrainian, to encourage dialogue with Ukrainian policy-makers. The summit (partly as a result of Wilson's efforts) resulted in a renewed EU commitment to Ukraine. Prof Wilson continued to contribute to reviews of the Eastern Partnership policy, focused on its tenth anniversary in 2019. He was invited to Kyiv in June 2020 by the EU Advisory Mission (a Kyiv-based group advising on security sector reform) to review their progress. He has regularly briefed EU Member State MFAs on Ukrainian policy, including France on upgrading its role in the Normandy Format and Minsk Process, and diplomatic dialogue on the war in east Ukraine (as confirmed in correspondence C).

Belarus

Belarus has faced increased Russian pressure on its sovereignty since 2014. Prof Wilson made the case for selective engagement with Belarus to support its foreign policy diversification

strategies, while maintaining a firm line on human rights. Prof Wilson is involved in the new Minsk Dialogue process, a now annual gathering of scholars and experts in Minsk which promotes the visibility of Belarus in international foreign policy discourse.

In 2018 he was one of the candidates to be the next UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Belarus (see invitation letter, **D**). The outgoing Rapporteur attested that Wilson's 'outstanding oeuvre' would make him 'eminently qualified' for the position, and to the research-informed basis of Wilson's expertise when commenting that UCL could 'proudly support [Wilson] which is an added benefit both for you and them.' (**D**)

In 2019-20 Prof Wilson wrote papers on Belarus for the US Jamestown Foundation (**E**), presented at a workshop for US foreign policy officials in Washington. His paper on the future of the Eastern Neighbourhood for the EU Institute for Security Studies (**E**) predicted election fraud and protest in Belarus, as indeed transpired in 2020. Prof Wilson was asked to help draft a strategy paper for the Cabinet Office on Belarus in August 2019. The paper will have gone to the Europe Minister. The Cabinet Office asked Prof Wilson to analyse 'the trajectory of the relationship' between Belarus and Russia (**F**), and the implications for the UK's security, trade and business interests in Eastern Europe as a whole.

Prof Wilson has briefed the last two UK ambassadors to Minsk, who have played a more active role in opening up trade and political links. Sweden plans more engagement with Belarus during their time as Chair of the OSCE in 2021 and has asked Prof Wilson to provide advice to them in this role. When crisis erupted after the fraudulent elections in August 2020, Prof Wilson did private briefing calls for EU MFAs and the Marshall Center. He spoke at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (**FCDO**) 'Belarus Seminar - The Way Ahead' on 25 September 2020, leading up to the UK's first sanction package outside the EU. (An email from the FCDO (**G**) expresses gratitude for Wilson's 'insights'.) Three online public events were arranged through SSEES. Prof Wilson was widely quoted in UK and world media, including *BBC 4*, *Deutsche Welle*, *Bild*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Le Monde*, and the *New York Times* (the article 'Belarus Protests Test Limits of Lukashenko's Brutal, One-Man Rule', published August 24, 2020; circulation of 6,500,000 [print and digital subscribers]) includes reference to [**R4**]: (**H**)

The Azov Sea Crisis

Prof Wilson's paper on the Azov Sea crisis (**I**) was published before Russia's blockade created a major international incident in November 2018. It became the third most-downloaded piece at ECFR that year, and was used as a briefing paper for the meeting of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defence (**SEDE**) in Brussels in October. Prof Wilson briefed members of the Swedish MFA, when Sweden was then a rotating member of the United Nations Security Council (**UNSC**), and held the Presidency in July. According to Prof Wilson's contact (**J**), from the Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the Swedish MFA, 'We put your report on the Kerch Strait situation in the minister's folder for the October EaP Ministerial. It was read by our senior management who then asked us to brief them further and follow up. We then began warning about the Sea of Azov in i.a. the UNSC (30 October) as well as in various EU meetings. We were also planning a dedicated UNSC Arria meeting on the subject before we were overtaken by events on 25/11'. Sweden will raise the issues of free passage through the Kerch Straits and Russia's violations of international law again as Chair of the OSCE in 2021.

Prof Wilson has continued to speak on the issue, for example at the Annual Conference on Western Responses to Russia in Tartu, Estonia in 2019 and 2020. The issue is far from solved, but when there was a flurry of diplomatic activity in 2018 and the US and EU raised the issue of sanctions against Russia's North Stream 2 project, there was a noticeable decline in harassment of shipping in the Sea of Azov. The EU Mission to Ukraine has increased its activity, and promised infrastructure investment, in the threatened Azov port city Mariupol. Once again, Prof Wilson is one of a number of influential voices which have helped shape these more interventionist policies.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. Deputy Head of Eastern Research Groups Analysts at the FCO, email 21 October 2019.
- B. Emails from No.10 Downing St official, 21 February 2014.
- C. Policy Planning Staff, French MFA, emails June 2017.
- D. Outgoing UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus, emails 2018.
- E. Should the West be Wary of an Imminent 'Union' of Russia and Belarus?. *US Jamestown Foundation*. Pub. December 20, 2019. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3rNxZxi> and *Institute for Security Studies: Russian Futures 2030*. Available at: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/russian-futures-2030>.
- F. Senior Analyst, Cabinet Office, email September 2019.
- G. FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) email, 25 September 2020.
- H. Media: *New York Times*: 'Belarus Protests Test Limits of Lukashenko's Brutal, One-Man Rule' published August 24, 2020; circulation of 6,500,000 [print and digital subscribers]). [Further cited media articles available on request to UCL]
- I. 'Strait to war? Russia and Ukraine clash in the Sea of Azov', ECFR , 2 October 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3vt01AD>
- J. Official from the Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the Swedish MFA, email 19 December 2018.