

Timm Beichelt and Susann Worschech, editors. *Transnational Ukraine? Networks and Ties That Influence(d) Contemporary Ukraine*. ibidem-Verlag, 2017. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society 159, edited by Andreas Umland. 278 pp. Tables. Illustrations. Bibliographies. €29.90, paper.

This book brings together nine chapters and an introduction (consisting of two chapters), with a conclusion by the two editors, all over five sections. Transnational networks have never been systematically covered by scholarly work on Ukraine; thus, this book represents a welcome addition to the growing academic literature on Russia's military aggression against Ukraine.

Veronika Borysenko, Mascha Brammer, and Jonas Eichhorn analyze the deep background of the 2014 crisis—a tinderbox that had its roots in Russia's counter-revolutionary strategies, which the authors describe as neo-Eurasian transnational advocacy networks that were formulated after the 2004 Orange Revolution. This counter-revolutionary movement was developed through Eurasianist imperialists, such as Aleksandr Dugin, and took the form of anti-Western xenophobia, deep hostility toward Ukrainian statehood, and opposition to Western liberalism; and it included the permissive use of violence. Key actors in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), such as Andrei Purgin, founded the Donetsk Republic (DR) organization in 2005, which called for a referendum on the independence of the Donbas; the organization was banned in 2007. These were integrated into Dugin's International Eurasian Movement (IEM); Young Russia (Rossiia molodaia); Young Guard (Molodaia gvardiia); and others, which provided extremists from Ukraine with ideological and paramilitary training. Indeed, half of the IEM members were located in Ukraine, where they co-operated with extreme left-wing groups; unfortunately, the authors ignore the evidence of ties between the Party of Regions and these groups.

Mikhail Minakov investigates non-ethnic suprainperial and Soviet nostalgia for a mythical "New Russia" (Novorossiia); and he analyzes the bitterness felt by Russian nationalists for Russian president Vladimir Putin's "betrayal" of them when, in reality, the "New Russia" project received no backing from the population of eastern and southern Ukraine. The book mistakenly contains a map of "New Russia" that includes Kharkiv (Härtel 51) when the Slobidska Ukraine gubernia was never part of this region. Soviet nostalgia is a better indicator than language spoken in whether Russian speakers in the so-called "New Russia" supported the Russian Spring of 2014. They were united by historical, regional, and ideological solidarity, anti-Western and antiglobalist xenophobia, and a hostility toward European values; they believed that Russian speakers were treated as second-class citizens and excluded from national life, and they sought historical justice.

“Russian Imperial and Soviet history provide unrecognized nations and pro-separatist activists with the ‘historical foundation’ for new polities in the region. This historical argument is employed to oppose belonging to Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova” (78).

Although these were marginal groups, they had the assistance of Russian “little green men,” power vacuums, and Russian arms and intelligence services, and they could cause havoc and come to power. The DR was a marginal and banned group in Ukraine, and it is in power in the so-called DNR. “*Revanchist* neo-sovietism is thus an important part of the Novorossiyan myth” (Minakov 81), which has been successful owing to Russian troops. Russian chauvinism, although little understood in the West, has revived under Putin; the majority of Russian citizens view eastern and southern Ukraine as wrongly included inside of Ukraine, and they also consider Russian speakers as “Russians.” Russians and often Western journalists and scholars view Ukraine as a divided nation and an artificial construct, which they have predicted would disintegrate; and they wrongly construe Russia’s aggression as a civil war between Ukrainian and Russian speakers. As André Härtel points out, Russian and Western images of Ukraine as a divided nation did not constitute reality, as the majority of Russian speakers backed Ukraine, not “New Russia,” and even in the Donbas, support for separatism was limited.

Simon Schlegel discusses how national minorities can act as transnational influences that challenge loyalties to national states. Investing in an ethnic identity—for example, in a Bulgarian one in southern Bessarabia—can be profitable as it opens up avenues of employment and education abroad. National-minority entrepreneurs do not necessarily have to be ideologists; they can also be calculating and self-seeking.

Susanne Spahn discusses information warfare as an integral part of Russia’s tool chest of hybrid warfare; and she conveys the major role that it played in preparing the ground for Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine through its justification of intervention and its portrayal of pro-Euromaidan Ukrainians as the Russophobic enemy. These themes, which continue to be spread by Putin, include the ideas that the Euromaidan was a Western-backed “illegal coup” that brought “fascists” to power; that there are no Russian troops in eastern Ukraine; that the Crimea was always Russian; that Russian speakers were repressed, threatened by ethnic cleansing, and needed protection; that Ukrainians and Russians are one people; and that Ukraine is an artificial state.

Another central theme in Russian information warfare is the notion that the West provoked the crisis and Russia is a victim. This weak argument is also promoted by pro-Putin Western academics (such as Stephen F. Cohen and Richard Sakwa), European neo-fascist politicians (such as Marine Le

Pen), and right-wing realists (such as John J. Mearsheimer, Rajan Menon, and Eugene Rumer). Putin's information warfare and its myriad of Western backers hoped that United States president Donald Trump and Putin would reach a grand bargain, with sanctions lifted against Russia and the territory of the former USSR recognized as legitimately within Russia's sphere of influence.

Yuliya Yurchuk discusses the charged memory politics regarding World War II and how Ukraine has moved away from the myth of the "Great Patriotic War" by commemorating World War II on 8 (not 9) May and by linking the victory over the Nazis to the impending victory over contemporary Russian aggressors. Soviet veterans and veterans of Russia's aggression against Ukraine are united in defending Ukraine in video and television advertisements. Putin's aggression has served to speed up Ukraine's refutation of Soviet historiography and the integration of Ukraine's World War II experiences with those of Europe and North America. Although some of this is new, one should not ignore the fact that even under President Leonid Kuchma, textbooks and history writing included Ukrainian combatants in Soviet, Polish, and North American military formations as well as Ukrainian and Soviet partisans.

I would only take issue with a few statements made by the book's contributors. Härtel incorrectly argues that Kuchma promoted an amorphous identity and "flexible" nation-building and that Kyiv "refrained from constructing a dedicated national Ukrainian view of history" (47). Härtel, thus, blames Kyiv for some of the ensuing conflict in 2014 because the new "national Ukrainian narrative" had allegedly been badly prepared and "was not well thought through" (49). School textbooks and research published by academics since 1991 show that post-Soviet Ukrainian history is dominated by Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's historiography and is influenced by Ukrainian diaspora historians, such as Orest Subtelny and Paul Robert Magocsi. The key areas of this historiography have remained consistent and focused on national liberation struggles, Tsarist Russian and Soviet repression of Ukrainian culture and language, Ukraine's distinctiveness from Russia, and Stalinism and Soviet crimes (especially the Holodomor). Ukraine declared its objectives of joining NATO and the European Union under Kuchma, not under President Viktor Iushchenko.

Another widely held myth related to this misconception is that only Iushchenko (presumably because he was a "nationalist") promoted the "politics of memory." In fact, there was greater Ukrainianization of education under the centrist Kuchma than under Iushchenko. It was under Kuchma that the first monuments to Hrushevs'kyi, the Holodomor, and others were erected, while Ukrainian-nationalist and national-liberation movements were included in school textbooks long before Iushchenko. Thus, there has

been long-term consistency regarding the “politics of memory,” under Presidents Kuchma, Iushchenko, and Petro Poroshenko. Another problem with linking the “politics of memory” to purported “nationalists” is that this ignores the fact that anti-nationalists, such as Viktor Ianukovych, could also promote “politics of memory” by adhering to the Russian line on the 1933 famine and the myth of the “Great Patriotic War.”

Alexander Clarkson analyzes how the Ukrainian diaspora in the 1990s found it difficult to accept Russian-speaking émigrés and how it was turned off by the domination of Ukraine by Russian-speaking oligarchs who were disinterested in Ukrainian culture and language. In addition, as Heiko Pleines conclusively shows, these ruling elites were involved in massive corruption and the export of billions of dollars of capital to foreign tax havens. The Panama papers, which were leaked in 2016, revealed 150,000 Ukrainians with offshore accounts. After Putin’s aggression, the Ukrainian diaspora had to evolve its attitudes toward Ukraine when it began to understand that the majority of Russian speakers in Ukraine were patriots. In 2014, Russian speakers who were willing to fight and die in volunteer battalions “represented a fundamental challenge to ethno-nationalist assumptions underpinning diaspora identity in North America” (126). A second edition of the book should include a chapter comparing the transnational influences of the Russian and Ukrainian diasporas on Ukraine.

The book under review incorporates an innovative new approach. It provides a detailed analytic background for the study of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

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