

**Olga Bertelsen, editor. *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenge of Change*. *ibidem*-Verlag, 2016. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society 161, general editor, Andreas Umland. 430 pp. Index. EUR 45,90, paper.**

**T**his is a welcome addition to the still small collection of published books on the Euromaidan and Russia's war against Ukraine. The book includes a detailed introduction by its editor, Olga Bertelsen, and is divided into twelve chapters, over six sections, dealing with a diverse range of topics. These six sections could have been reduced to a more digestible three, encompassing the Euromaidan, Russian-Ukrainian war, and postrevolutionary reforms.

As with all edited volumes, the quality of the chapters varies. Igor Torbakov and Myroslav Shkandrij do a masterful job of discussing highly charged Russian narratives against Ukraine. Laada Bilaniuk provides an in-depth analysis of the language question in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict—a question that is very often presented in a biased and Russocentric manner by Russian experts in Russia and the West, who believe that they understand Ukraine (but, generally, do not). Andrii Krawchuk similarly investigates the little-discussed topic of the impact of Russian and Russian-proxy rule on Muslims, Jews, and Baptist communities in the Crimea and Donbas. Nedin Useinov dissects Russia's invasion and annexation of the Crimea; and Peter N. Tanchak analyzes Russia's information, cyber, and hacking warfare. Two final chapters, by Oksana Huss and Bohdan Harasymiw, together, give a new and detailed analysis of corruption, the rule of law, and police reforms in post-Euromaidan Ukraine.

Torbakov analyzes competition between Russia and Ukraine with the former inheriting a mixed Russian-Soviet-Eurasian identity and the latter seeking to escape its colonial past by integrating into Europe. The majority of Russians viewed the USSR as "theirs" because they were the "imperial glue" holding it together (102). But this, Torbakov points out, is where the problem just begins as to whether one defines *Russians* as ethnic Russians or eastern Slavs. Vladimir Putin has reverted to the "archaic" formula of viewing *Russians* as encompassing Ukrainians and Belarusians (107), which shows the persistence of a hegemonic imperial identity within Russian elites. Pan-Russian ideas include Ukraine within the Russian World (*Russkii Mir*)—a notion that, together with a broad definition of *Russians*, "cast[s] serious doubts on Ukraine's political subjectivity and sovereignty" (111). Although Putin's pan-Russianism is normally understood as a throwback to the Tsarist era, it was also reflected in Joseph Stalin's friendship of peoples myth, which was formulated in the second half of the 1930s.

Tanchak investigates the relatively new phenomenon of Russian *siloviki* using cyber warfare, hacking, and trolling as military and foreign-policy tools. Although active measures, such as “wet operations” (assassinations) and disinformation (i.e., what we call, today, fake news), were practised by the USSR, computer and internet-related warfare only became possible in the post-Soviet era. Russia, unlike the USSR, is not propagating a single narrative but sending multiple narratives that sow seeds of doubt about, and mistrust of, Western institutions and crowd out legitimate debate. Russia promotes these narratives through trolls, fake-news sites, and repeat postings of an alternative reality via networks of sympathetic officials, journalists, and activists.

Bilaniuk discusses the two extremes: “language does not matter” (i.e., that bilingualism is not a bad thing) versus “language matters” (i.e., support for Ukrainianization). This question has become especially pertinent during Russia’s war against Ukraine, which “has politicized language choice, making the possibility of neutrality of language choice more elusive” (157). Bilaniuk writes that the “aggressive policy of Russification” undertaken by Russian occupiers and proxies in the Crimea and Donbas “underscore[s] the central role that language plays in the current conflicts” (150).

There is a long legacy of disdain for the Ukrainian language as unrefined and spoken by peasants. Bilaniuk points out that it is not the question of language per se that is important but how language is intertwined with power relationships and status. “Russian speakers were a prominent part of the Euromaidan protests” (142) and have continued to be present in large numbers among Ukrainian soldiers on the front line. In the Crimea and two Russian-proxy enclaves, Ukrainian media, religious, and education facilities have been closed, Ukrainian web sources on the Internet are blocked, and Ukrainian books have been burned. In the Crimea, “[a]ctivists and supporters of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages have been intimidated, kidnapped, beaten, and tortured” (149).

Useinov debunks Russian myths of the Crimea as a “native Russian land,” which suggest that the Crimea had no history before the 1780s, although it had it spent the prior four centuries under Tatar rule. In fact, ethnic Russians only became a majority there after 1917. In the twentieth century, the Crimea was an autonomous republic within the Russian SFSR from 1922-44; and from 1954, it was part of Soviet and independent Ukraine. Ottoman Turkey, Russia, and Ukraine have all ruled the Crimea. Useinov presents a clear-cut chronology of Crimean overtures to Russia and Russian reciprocity during, and immediately after, the Euromaidan. This shows two factors. The first is that there was massive treason in the Crimea on the part of politicians

(including the dominant Party of Regions) and *siloviki*. The second is that Putin had plans in place for the annexation of the Crimea and did not intervene there on a whim, as his Western apologists claim, in response to a “Ukrainian fascist junta” taking power in Kyiv.

Krawchuk surveys the tragedy of the formerly fifteen-thousand-strong Jewish community in the Donbas, which is now decimated after its members left there in droves and tens of thousands of Tatars fled to Ukraine. In April 2014, Donetsk Russian proxies demanded that all Jews sixteen years of age and older register with the “commissar for nationality affairs” (294).

With his deep knowledge of nationalism and post-colonialism, Shkandrij masterfully analyzes seven contradictory and false myths underlying Russia’s information warfare: (1) that nationalists are in power in Ukraine and, at the same time, there is no Ukrainian nation; (2) that Ukraine has no history separate to an all-Russian one and, at the same time, Ukrainians were always disloyal and treacherous—a contradiction that Shkandrij compares to post-colonial narratives, where natives are loved as long as they remain “subservient” (125); (3) that Russian-speakers are persecuted—even when the Russian language is dominant in electronic and print media; (4) that Euromaidan leaders are anti-Semitic, but Jews in Ukraine are Ukrainian nationalists; (5) that Ukrainian nationalists are “Banderites” and “fascists” against whom the USSR had struggled from the 1930s, except during the Nazi-Soviet pact; and, more recently, against whom Russia is struggling as well—as Russia backs the anti-EU nationalist and fascist right; (6) that the Euromaidan was one aspect of the West’s aggression against a persecuted Russia that believes itself to be a victim; (7) that nationalism, expansionism, and an aggressive masculinity counters a weak, gay, and spiritually decadent Europe with pro-European Ukrainians and Russians defined as unpatriotic agents of Western secret services. Shkandrij could have traced much in these seven myths to Soviet and post-Soviet Russian history, where Ukrainians in disagreement with a Little Russian subservience within the Tsarist Empire, USSR, and post-Soviet Russian World were denounced as agents of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, “Nazi collaborators,” and “CIA stooges.”

Harasymiw is the first scholar to undertake a thorough analysis of the transition of police in Ukraine from an overmanned, corrupt, and distrusted Soviet-era *militsiia* to a European-style police force. Harasymiw sees police reform going together with decentralization, demilitarization, depoliticization, and democratization. But he cautions against expecting quick results: “What can be anticipated in Ukraine, therefore, is neither sudden success nor abject failure, but a continuing struggle” (369).

Bertelsen has enriched contemporary Ukrainian studies with this outstanding collection of new and original research.

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