Kyiv-Mohyla
Humanities Journal
KYIV-MOHYLA SCHOLARLY PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

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Source: Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal 11 (2024): 260–265
Published by: National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

http://kmhj.ukma.edu.ua/

DOI: 10.18523/2313-4895.11.2024.260-265

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Reviewed by **Taras Kuzio**

Olga Onuch and Henry Hale have written the first English-language book about Volodymyr Zelenskyy which includes new information. They describe the landslide election of Zelenskyy in 2019 as heralding the arrival of a civic identity and building of a civic state in Ukraine. Ukraine is like all nation states which are composed of both civic and ethno-cultural factors as there are no fully civic states in the world. Onuch and Hale's confusion is evident when analyzing Western democracies. In 1991, Ukraine provided citizenship to all those who were resident in Ukraine, and it is wrong to claim Zelenskyy changed the meaning of identity in Ukraine (pp. 8, 10, 23). Estonia and Latvia adopted ethnic citizenship legislation like that used by Germany until its reunification; nevertheless, Ukraine was not, but Estonia and Latvia were, invited to join NATO and the EU.

Over-relying on surveys leads to Onuch and Hale seeking to show how Zelenskyy's ethno-cultural policies are different to earlier presidents when analyzing his policies would show they are the same. The authors ignore Zelenskyy's media career in Russia through to the Euromaidan Revolution and his presidency of the pro-Russian Inter TV channel in Ukraine and therefore do not explain the evolution of his identity.

Using Stephen Shulman's 2005 framework, only one of Ukraine's six presidents (Viktor Yanukovych) promoted an east Slavic identity while five supported ethnic Ukrainian (centrist Leonid Kravchuk [1991–1994], Leonid Kuchma [1994–2004), and Zelenskyy [2019–]), centre-right (Viktor Yushchenko [2004–2010], and Poroshenko [2014–2019]). Onuch and Hale exaggerate "civic" Zelenskyy's difference to his "ethnic" predecessor Petro Poroshenko and yet on examination there is little to differentiate them. Differences over ethno-cultural policies between Ukrainian centrists and centre-right are the same as those found between the liberal-centre-left and centre-right in Western democracies.

Onuch and Hale portray Ukrainian presidents as "civic" and "ethnic." Shulman's framework is better at understanding Ukraine as experiencing a cultural war between "ethnic Ukrainian" and "east Slavic" identities until 2014–2022. Centrists and national democrats, such as Zelenskyy and Poroshenko respectively, support only Ukrainian as

a state language, autocephaly (independence) for Ukrainian Orthodox from the Russian Orthodox Church, a Ukrainian history separate to that of Russia and the eastern Slavs, criticism of nationality policies undertaken by the Tsarist Empire and Soviet Union and integration into NATO and the EU. Yanukovych supported a common eastern Slavic history and future, Russians the leaders of eastern Slavs Ukraine with Ukraine having no agency to decide its domestic policies and foreign trajectory, nostalgia for the USSR, religious cult of the great patriotic war, Russian Orthodox Church as the dominant confession and the Russian language a second state language.

Zelenskyy's vision of Ukraine is "defined primarily by civic rather than ethnic criteria" and his vision is one "defined by civic rather than any ethnic litmus test" (p. 260). Zelenskyy did not reverse Poroshenko's ethno-cultural policies on education, media, language, and de-communization. In fact, Zelenskyy's ethno-cultural policies are more "ethnic" (using Onuch and Hale's definition) than Poroshenko's, such as closing five pro-Russian television channels, banning twelve pro-Russian parties, and investigating the Russian Orthodox Church.

Onuch and Hale (pp. 57, 145) emphasize growing attachment to the Ukrainian state as being "less about ancestry and ethnicity" and when thinking of what is a Ukrainian "they increasingly think of civic rather than ethnocultural criteria." Ukrainian opinion polls show the opposite to be the case with the language question important to both "ethnic Ukrainian" and "east Slavic" identities. It is wrong to write language is not a priority for most Ukrainians (p. 104).

Onuch and Hale credit Zelenskyy with changes in Ukrainian identity that are attributable to Russian military aggression since the 2014 crisis and Russia's invasion. The growth of Ukrainians upholding European values is part of a long-standing call to "return to Europe" and move away from Russia. While there was growth of "civic identity" from the 2014 crisis (p. 202) what also took place was the spread of "ethnic Ukrainian" identity to Ukraine's southeast. De-communization, introduced in 2015, played an important role in this but the topic is ignored by Onuch and Hale (de-russification since 2022, which is beyond the scope of the book, continue these processes). The language divide became less important (pp. 105–106) not because Zelenskyy was espousing a civic identity but because Russian speaking Ukrainians, appalled by Russia's military aggression, moved psychologically away from Russia and closer to Ukrainian speakers. Radical changes in the identity of Russian speakers in Ukraine's southeast undoubtedly impacted upon Zelenskyy.

Onuch and Hale credit Ukrainians with fighting against the Russian invasion because they believe Ukraine is a free country in contrast to Russia. While democratic freedom is an important factor, it is mistaken to exclude ethno-culturally driven nationalism as an additional driver. Ukrainians hold both a civic attachment to their democratic state *and* a commitment to protecting their culture, language, and history which 89 percent see as being subjected to genocide by Russia.

Onuch and Hale ignore Zelenskyy's Jewish roots, but they explain how injustice is an important driver as he has a tragic family history with four family members

murdered during the Holocaust. His home region of Dnipropetrovsk experienced the biggest Jewish revival in Europe since 1991 and its Russian speaking Jewish community has no nostalgia for the Soviet regime and is staunchly anti-Russian.

Zelenskyy's support for EU and NATO membership continues that by four earlier presidents, including Russian speaking Kuchma (pp. 222, 233). The "critical mass" of Ukrainians uniting around a democratic, civic, and pro-European identity (p. 271) is attributable to Vladimir Putin's military aggression. The book emphasizes EU while ignoring NATO membership; yet Ukraine has always supported joining both organizations. Ukrainian popular support for integration into the EU rested on reforms implemented after 2014 by a president that Zelenskyy sought to imprison using one hundred bogus criminal cases against Poroshenko. These were suspended (not closed) after the invasion while Poroshenko's bank accounts continue to be frozen. Zelenskyy follows Yanukovych in the pursuit of selective use of justice against his political opponents; in this case because Zelenskyy feared Poroshenko who had caught up to him in the polls just prior to the invasion. Attributing Zelenskyy with greater "civic" policies is also not evident in him pressuring the media during the state of emergency to join a national televised marathon.

Onuch and Hale define Zelenskyy as the first Ukrainian leader who represents the "independence generation" who came of age in independent Ukraine. The authors exaggerate influences on Zelensky from the Ukrainian dissident movement as reinforcing his civic identity (p. 44). There is no evidence Zelenskyy was involved in Ukraine's dissident movement which was weak in his hometown of Kryvyy Rih whose regional center of Dnipropetrovsk was a closed city in the USSR due to its large military industrial complex. Zelenskyy was not elected because he embodied a "civic, and not ethnolinguistic and conservative image of a good Ukrainian" (p. 183) but because the "independence generation" were fed up with the old guard and wanted "new faces." This demand long preceded the 2019 elections which Zelenskyy won as a protest vote. Zelenskyy's election was supported by oligarchs, in his case Igor Kolomoysky, like earlier presidents.

Dominique Arel and Jesse Driscoll write "Our book provides clear answers" (p. 19) but the 2013–2014 Euromaidan Revolution, 2014 annexation of Crimea, and 2014–2021 war in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine are already covered by countless academic articles and books and they bring little new to the subjects in a book that was overtaken by events (hence the strange title). Arel and Driscoll's major pitfalls are a major disconnect between the theoretical and empirical sections, lack of field research, and contradictory denials of Russian intervention. Arel and Driscoe are an example of the pitfalls of first developing a theoretical model and then assembling only the facts that accord with the model while rejecting those that do not. Their book does not use polls by the Levada Centre, Russia's last remaining independent pollster, and uses no Democratic Initiatives polls and only two Razumkov Centre polls from Ukraine. This leads to mistaken claims in the book, such as Ukrainians continued to be divided over memory politics after 2014 (p. 54).

Arel and Driscoll's core argument is the Donbas conflict in 2014–2021 was a "civil war" (p. 7) whose root causes was language and regional divisions. After Euromaidan Revolutionaries came to power Russian speakers lost their bargaining power and rebelled (p. 45). Although they accept pro-Russian forces were only successful in the Donbas they do not explain why if language is so important a determining factor, they failed in other Russian speaking regions of south-east Ukraine. They write that separatism was unpopular (p. 43) without explaining how protestors transitioned into insurgents without Russian support (p. 151). Their description of the Donbas as an intra Russian World "civil war" is wrong as most Ukrainians never viewed themselves as belonging to Putin's Russian World. Their book does not include Shulman article which provided a better framework to understand Ukraine's cultural war between ethnic Ukrainian and east Slavic identities. Arel and Driscoll ignore Russia's long-standing support for an east Slavic identity in Ukraine.

Arel has always stressed the influence of language and regionalism in Ukrainian politics and divided Ukraine into linguistic groups. Arel and Driscoll's use of the term "language of preference" to denote the loyalty of Ukrainians ignores extensive bilingualism in Ukraine and high levels of Ukrainian patriotism among Russian speakers. If Arel and Driscoll had undertaken field work, they would have found there is no Russian speaking group in Ukraine. Their framework cannot explain President Zelenskyy, a Jewish-Ukrainian Russian speaker from eastern Ukraine who is representative of Russian speaking Jews in Ukraine who are not nostalgic for the USSR and are not pro-Russian.

A Russian speaking community proved to be mythical in 2014 when most Russian speakers supported Ukraine. Arel and Discoll attempt to explain this by moving the goalposts and having it both ways; Ukraine had a Russian speaking community but at the same time the southeast did not speak with one voice. Arel and Driscoll write that claims of "Russian infiltrators" responsible for the violence is "plainly false" (p. 144) while later writing weapons and people "had probably been smuggled since the early weeks of the conflict" (p. 164), an admission that undermines the first statement and their main thesis of a "civil war." Arel and Driscoll deny the importance of Russian intervention while admitting the importance of Russian information warfare and GRU (military intelligence) agents (pp. 3, 6). Arel and Driscoll write that Russia was responsive to the crisis and Moscow did not know the faces of the rebel leaders (p. 146), which is impossible as until August 2014 they were all Russian citizens.

The book provides little understanding of the profound changes in Ukrainian identity that took place after 2014 and therefore does not prepare the reader for even greater transformations that are taking place since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Their discussion of Putin's July 2021 essay, which set the stage for Russia's invasion, ignores transformations in Russian nationalism and de-humanization of Ukraine and Ukrainians in the Russian media and political discourse that had been taking place since the mid-2000s.

Arel and Driscoll's core argument of a "civil war" ignoring widespread evidence of Russian intervention (pp. 3–4) and fails to show an understanding of hybrid warfare (p.14). Arel and Driscoll do not find "compelling evidence" of Russian actors until August 2014 because they are not looking for it; for example, they ignore detailed investigations of which Russian units fired the BUK missile that shot down MH17 in July 2014 that killed 298 civilians (p. 165). Claiming there is no "convincing evidence" (p. 123) of Russian support for protests ignores numerous evidence of Russian "political tourists" bused into eastern Ukraine from Belgorod and into Odesa from the Moldovan region of Transdniestr (pp. 134–135). Claiming there was no "carefully constructed plan" (p. 124) for a Russian Spring ignores numerous published intercepts of Russian agents and political technologists.

Russian intervention did not just take place in one city (Slovyansk), while an understanding of Russian politics undermines the claim Igor Girkin was a freelancer (p. 4). Evidence of Russia's intervention should not be confined to only Russian boots on the ground in August 2014. Prior to then, Russia sent small and heavy weapons and forces loyal to pro-Russian Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and undertook artillery attacks from Russia into Ukraine.

Russia has been conducting hybrid warfare against Ukraine since the 2004 Orange Revolution and took control of Ukrainian security forces during Viktor Yanukovych's presidency in 2020–2014. Russia's hybrid warfare included intelligence operations, information warfare (pp. 53, 55), covert funding to pro-Russian parties and groups, trade embargoes, and weaponization of corruption. Nearly all these facets of Russian intervention are ignored.

Arel and Driscoll make three factual mistakes. *Rukh* (abbreviated for Ukrainian Popular Movement for Restructuring) was not a "nationalist movement" (p. 56), Girkin was a former FSB (Federal Security Service) not GRU agent (p. 147) while the Opposition Platform party did not participate in the 2014 elections as it was launched in 2018 (p. 188).

Both books are weakened by their terminological confusions. Onuch and Hale misunderstand the nature of nation-states and Ukrainian politics as not constituting a competition between "civic" and "ethnic" presidents but a cultural war between "ethnic Ukrainian" and "east Slavic" presidents and thereby seeing Zelenskyy as different from his predecessors when he is not. Arel and Driscoll portray the Donbas as experiencing a "civil war" by ignoring (at times in a contradictory manner) evidence of Russian interference that does not fit their theoretical model. Arel and Driscoll's absence of field work produces a book that is out of touch with realities on the ground in 2014–2021 and even more so since the 2022 invasion.