

in photographs, people ... sign, by their own free will, a pact of friendship and equality" (74). This is, no doubt, a dramatic exaggeration and simplification of the nature of the snapshot, but it does its interpretative work, helping Skopin to bridge otherwise completely disconnected realms. Because the group portrait is a sign of an emotionally bonded union, then any fragmentation of this union—any defacement of its members, that is—would inevitably incur some emotional harm. Correspondingly, when done successfully, such “cleansing drained the individual of all political beliefs and emotional attachments and filled the person’s inner self with new content. The state with its ideology occupied the inside of the individual” (102). Not unlike today’s visual editors, the state seemed to perform some sort of photo-shopping by cutting and pasting ontologies inside of its subjects.

The last chapter, “*The Photographs of ‘Former People’ in the NKVD Card Indexes and Edited Photographs of Secret Police Officers,*” brings the narrative to a logical closure by showing how the Soviet police system (the NKVD), which was largely responsible for the emergence of the genre of the mutilated photo documents, turned onto itself and subjected its archive of secret police officers to the same operations of removal and obfuscation.

Drawing on archival materials, memoirs, and already existing scholarship, *Photography and Political Repressions* does a very important job of exploring epistemological dimensions of the visual archive of the Stalinist period. This is still a field that remains seriously underexplored, and Skopin’s contribution suggests several productive paths to follow, which is not to say that the book does not raise questions and doubts. Carried away by his militarist version of Soviet modernity, Skopin is clearly interested more in the political life of images than in images themselves. It is not by chance that Nikolai Yezhov (the head of the NKVD) is mentioned in his book 49 times while such theorists of early Soviet photography as Sergei Tretiakov, Osip Brik, or Leonid Volkov-Lannit (to name just a few) are not mentioned at all. Crucial debates about photographic practices in *LEF* and *Sovetskoe foto* are completely (and inexplicably) ignored. These (and other) lacunae have their effect. For instance, I find rather naïve the book’s emphatic treatment of group photographs as “a visual demonstration of a ‘mental coincidence’ of represented persons,” or as material manifestations of (if not as substitutes for) “an affective-emotional community” (118). The medium (photography), the message (collectivity), the referent (group), and the actual experience (affect) are unproblematically collapsed in this approach, being denied any specificity and distinction. In his search for an effective explanatory framework, Skopin sometimes abandons his analytical objects too hastily; the logic of the discourse tends at times to dominate the logic of the material. Important as they are, these drawbacks, however, do not diminish the significance and originality of Skopin’s creative reassessment of photography and political repression in early Soviet Russia. No doubt, his conceptual interventions would be of interests to scholars of Stalinism, and the visual material perceptively curated by the author could provide a fascinating resource for undergraduate students’ independent work.

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The Zelensky Effect, by Olga Onuch and Henry E. Hale, Hurst Publishers, 2022, 424pp., \$24.95 (hardcover), ISBN 9781787388635.

For well more than a decade, scholarly work on Ukraine has pointed to a notable increase in attachment to a more civic form of national identity in the country. Implications of this trend include a growing sense of distance from Russia by many Ukrainian citizens, which increased

notably following Russia's invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. In *The Zelensky Effect*, Olga Onuch and Henry Hale place this shift in Ukrainian national identity at the center of their explanation of Volodymyr Zelensky's (and Ukraine's) resistance to Russia's invasion in early 2022.

There is a lot to like in this book. Its strengths include everything from the big-picture usefulness of the authors' argument—tying Zelensky's success as a war-time leader to the context of Ukrainian national identity—to less central but effective approaches in the book like using highlighted quotations (many from Zelensky) throughout to emphasize the point being made at the time. The book offers a valuable way to understand Ukraine before, during, and after Russia's invasion in 2022, and it will have a broad appeal. One reason that multiple audiences will enjoy the book is simple. The writing is very good. There is a lot of information in the book, but it never feels overly dense.

In addition, the balance between a clear, anchoring theme (civic national identity development) and an embrace of context and complexity makes the book suitable for both members of the general public and scholars and students of Ukraine. The nuances are many and include the generational story that Onuch and Hale offer. They concentrate on the part of the population they label the Independence Generation: those who have political memories of the late Soviet period but whose lives mostly span the independence period after 1991. The Independence Generation's experiences have made them the cornerstone of Ukraine's civic national identity shift. Like Zelensky himself, however, they are also old enough to be politically influential. Although Zelensky is undoubtedly the most important member of the Independence Generation, its existence beyond him also gives some reason for optimism for the post-Zelensky period of Ukrainian politics, whenever that may be.

The authors also effectively present the complex causal relationship involving civic national identity and Zelensky. Their story of the development of a more civic Ukrainian national identity is full of details about Ukrainian history and culture as well as a sense of the importance of individuals like Zelensky. They make clear how he benefited from the nascent Ukrainian civic identity already in place when he became president. They also illustrate how he has bolstered this identity through his words and, importantly, his successes as a war-time leader. Indeed, on the list of failures of Putin's 2022 invasion to achieve its goals, an underappreciated one is how the all-out war it unleashed has strengthened nearly every component of Ukrainian national identity.

An additional example of nuance is found in Onuch and Hale's discussion of the rally around the leader effect in Ukraine. Early in the book, and in more detail in Chapter 7 ("The Zelensky Effect at War"), they point out how this form of rallying is part of a broader trend of coming together. This process involves increases in the acceptance of an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously inclusive view of the Ukrainian nation; in attachment to Ukrainian citizenship; and in the use of the Ukrainian language in people's private lives. The authors also explain how different people were triggered to "rally" for different reasons. For many, rallying around Zelensky was driven in part by their connection to civic national identity. For others, including those who had opposed Zelensky in the run-off round of the presidential election ("the 25-percenters"), their anti-Russianness and desire to defend Ukraine led them to rally not around Zelensky himself but rather around his efforts as a war-time leader.


As with any book that ambitiously employs history, geography, demography, and leadership to explain a major political outcome, the reader can be left wanting more. One such area concerns the book's central concept of civic national identity. Here, it would benefit from more nuance. The book does not pay as much attention as it could, for example, to the complicated role of the Ukrainian and Russian languages in national identity development. More conspicuous still is the absence of a focus on citizenship of Ukraine as a crucial component in Ukrainian civic national identity. Early on (p. 57), the authors discuss a shift in attachment to "the newly independent state" without highlighting the way that citizenship—the official membership in the state—existed as a ready-made bridge between a shared Ukrainian identity and the independent Ukrainian state.

The book's conclusion raises questions about the possibility of finding an end to Russia's war on Ukraine and about the future of Ukrainian democracy. Each question is only partially answered.

Onuch and Hale ask if Zelensky is “ready” to use his popularity to sell a peace deal to the Ukrainian people. But a significant challenge for Zelensky is that he is constrained by the same civic national identity he has drawn on and helped deepen. Survey data continue to show that an overwhelming portion of the population outside the occupied areas want Ukraine to control *all* the Ukrainian territory, even Crimea, at the end of the war. This is the case not just because Zelensky has convinced the population it is possible. When territorial boundaries become a defining part of the membership boundaries of the nation, the territory is not disposable. As a result, what is arguably the quickest road to peace (territorial concessions by the Ukrainian government) is also likely to be the most politically difficult.

In examining the implications for democracy in Ukraine, the concluding chapter asks the reader to “fast forward to 2049.” Yet, 2029 (or even 2024) might be a more appropriate year to consider. Being a heroic, anticorruption crusader with deep emotional ties to the broader population can be consistent with democracy ... but also with something very different from democracy. Do we know if Zelensky will defend democracy as strongly as he has defended Ukraine’s territory and people? Do we know if the “Independence Generation” is also a “Democracy Generation”? Will those in Ukraine who continue to self-identify as ethnic Russians be welcomed into the postwar Ukrainian national identity?

These are some of the questions that Onuch and Hale’s thought-provoking book leaves the reader to ponder. They are also questions that scholars of Ukraine must grapple with in their future work. Fortunately for them, *The Zelensky Effect* shows them where to look, offering a superb blueprint of the foundational processes that, along with the actions of individuals like Zelensky, will continue to shape Ukraine in the years ahead.

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