

Trevor Erlacher, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Age of Extremes: An Intellectual Biography of Dmytro Dontsov*, Harvard University Press, 2022, 654 pps. Hardback, \$84.00.

The recent civil war in Ukraine garnered international attention to the unstable region reaffirming an interest in the continued conflict regarding Ukraine's government and national identity. Although many people are not adequately acquainted with the history of geopolitics, Europe has witnessed a surge in Ukrainian émigrés filtering through their borders seeking to resettle. Such aspects of en masse immigration leads any casual observer to wonder whether Ukraine can ever become a fully stable, independent, and viable state when its political conflict appear to be a resurgence of what political philosophers examined years ago.

Trevor Erlacher, Academic Advisor for Center for Russian East European, and Eurasian Studies ("REES") at the University of Pittsburgh and the Program Coordinator and Editor for the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, provides a detailed analysis of Ukrainian integral nationalism. He begins his focus on World War I and World War II, then backtracks the timeline earlier to the turn of the twentieth century. Though the broader subject is the basis for his analysis, Erlacher filters the Ukrainian nationalism movement through a pivotal historical figure, Dmytry Dontsov. The author first states that the creed of the Ukrainian Nationalists was " ...an authoritarian, far right doctrine that held that survival and glory of the 'national organisms' embodied the state eclipsed all social, individual, and universal values" (p. 2). A recurring theme that helps define Ukrainian nationalism is the colonizing overreach often referred to as Russian imperialism. Had it not been for the authoritarian regime of Russia, the situation would not have necessitated an assertive response for a more defined and stronger form of Ukrainian nationalism. The author briefly describes social communism, yet his definition appears to be the purest representation of the concept, unlike the representation that the latter decades of the Cold War seemed to transform the meaning of during McCarthyism in the United States.

Erlacher then discusses the Ukrainian plight for independence specifically during the 1930s-1940s. The need for Ukrainian independence supported the evolution of Ukrainian identity becomes a circular theme in Ukrainian integral thought. Erlacher refers to Dontsov as a primary contributor to this ideal through his writing. Dontsov's major written works filters his experiences, training, education, and travels into an evolving theme. Thus, this political thinker and other nationalists evolve parallel to the ideal of Ukrainian integral nationalism making their cause transnational. Dontsov extolled Ukrainian separatism reinforcing independent ethnic and political identity through tradition, culture, and values that exemplified their ethnic origin, appealing to be accepted by the rest of Europe. Now it has become a difficult social balancing act for Ukrainians to integrate into European societies, which seems to be one of the failures of the Russian empire.

An irony exists throughout Dontsov's personal life juxtaposed to his political views throughout his multi-dimensional experiences. He extolled his Ukrainian comrades to live insular from the rest of Europe due to outward hostility towards this state. He believed his social recommendation, influenced by his own eclectic experiences beyond Ukraine, reflected the elements necessary to project and uphold Ukrainian identity. However, regional events paused European acceptance of Ukraine as part of the broader modern, continental landscape. Erlacher presents counterarguments against Dontsov's political views on Ukrainian integral nationalism, thus elevating what the regional discourse could achieve from the ideal. Today's modern literature of international relations refers to a 'nation state,' assuming that the formation of a state occurs before becoming an independent nation. The author reiterates Ukraine's cyclical struggle with social autonomy and political independence, including post-Soviet Union, which was only one of many of those pivotal times. From the criticism of other thinkers to comparative literature that analyzes and compares Dontsov's views, the author references the span of Dontsov's writings reflecting his evolving attitudes

towards Ukrainian nationalism. His biased perception of Russia muddles the equilibrium necessary to produce a palatable world view.

Integral to recent events, Ukraine and China have developed amenable relations since the Cold War ended. This strategic and political relationship became a beacon of hope for trade development since the overcast of Russian's dominance of Ukraine. China supported Ukraine's independence which allowed for Ukraine to strategically cultivate further relationships as a liaison between China and Europe once Ukraine restored political and civil stability. However, according to one recent news article, China now "...respects Russia's interests..."¹ thus taking a neutral stance. More evidence seems to point to the idea that China now seeks to conquer a geopolitical balancing act to solidify its place within the European continent, leaving Ukraine at the center between China and Europe. Further, the United States' current precarious, economic, and political position places itself further away from the intimate diplomatic juxtaposition necessary to have a respectable stake in European political and economic discourse. In a 2023 *Wall Street Journal* news article,² the U.S. government stated that it predicts a war with China. However, one commonality that the United States and China share is its support of Ukraine's independence. The U.S. government owes money to China for loans it uses to secure weapons *from* China. Ukraine's instability invites China to recruit military support in exchange for either humanitarian aid or infrastructure loans. Europe believes that Ukraine should have its autonomy. If Ukraine becomes economically dependent upon China and China engages in war with the U.S., then Ukraine's stability is further threatened both in Europe and abroad. Such military conflict would not only weaken Ukraine's independence but also undermine Europe's stability.

Ukrainian Nationalism summarizes Ukrainian integral nationalism through the wide spectrum of Ukraine's pivotal figure Dmytry Dontsov and other political thinkers. Trevor Elracher provides meticulous insight into the biographical and political life of one of Eastern

Europe's most prolific and controversial political figures. *Ukrainian Nationalism* is most appropriate for graduate students of Eastern European history, Russian studies, transnational political thought and theory and international relations.

Patricia M. Muhammad, B.Sc., J.D.
Attorney/Consultant (International Law, Human Rights, Civil Rights)
Researcher (Legal History)

¹ See James T. Areddy and Charles Hutzler, "U.S., China Plunge Further Into a Spiral of Hostility," *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-china-plunge-further-into-a-spiral-of-hostilities-b9e539c0?mod=Searchresults_pos9&page=1

² Ibid.