

economy perspectives makes for a compelling and multidimensional account. However, as with any edited volume, the coherence of the contributions varies. While some chapters provide deep empirical analysis, others remain more theoretical and speculative, leaving certain case studies underexplored.

Another limitation is the book's relative neglect of grassroots resistance and contestation. While the volume acknowledges the asymmetries in China–Global South relations, it could have further examined how local actors resist, negotiate, or subvert Chinese influence. For instance, indigenous and environmental movements in Latin America have mounted significant opposition to Chinese-backed extractive projects, a dimension that could have been more fully integrated into the analysis.

New World Orderings is an essential contribution to the study of China's role in the contemporary global order. Its interdisciplinary approach, historical depth, and critical engagement with dominant geopolitical frameworks make it a valuable resource for scholars of social anthropology, history, political economy, and international relations. For researchers looking at China's presence in the different corners of the Global South, the book provides a compelling account of how economic, political, and cultural dynamics are reshaping interregional ties in ways that defy simplistic narratives of dominance or solidarity. While the volume does not offer definitive answers about the ultimate trajectory of China's engagement with the Global South, it does provide a sophisticated analytical framework for understanding the ongoing transformations of global power.

Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Ukraine: Biographie einer bedrängten Nation* (C. H. Beck, 2024), 480 pp.

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Yaroslav Hrytsak's history of Ukraine, published in Ukrainian shortly before Russia's full-scale invasion of the country in early 2022, is the result of years of work on a synthetic narrative—in the best, i.e. chemical, sense of the word. As is well known, synthesis in chemistry does not mean the mere stringing together of elements, but rather the combination of simple substances (educts) to form a new, more complex structure (product). Intellectually, the novelty of Hrytsak's book lies in its global perspective, politically in its approach to applied history, and stylistically in its use of metaphor.

On the example of Ukraine, Hrytsak shows how national history can be intertwined with global history, surprising the reader with new connections, unexpected convergences, and eye-opening comparisons. One of Hrytsak's main theses is that Ukraine emerged as a “result of globalisation and the rise of the West, which began with the discovery of America in 1492” (p. 7).[1] This argument, which at first sight seems counterintuitive, is plausibly substantiated in the following chapters: “Ukraine emerged from the encounter between two worlds: the world of Columbus and the world of the Cossacks” (p. 89). The assertion that most Ukrainian cities in the

long nineteenth century were more like New York than Prague or Tallinn (p. 180), or the statement that the birth of the Ukrainian state dates back to 1914 (p. 207), also sound surprising and yet plausible. The author takes the outbreak of the First World War as a starting point to tell the story of mass violence in the years and decades that followed. At the same time, Hrytsak's book is interspersed with brief introductions to complex historical processes: the transition from the early modern to the modern world, the history of nation-building, and the relationship between modernization and violence. The history of Ukraine is thus neither isolated nor exoticized, but embedded in larger developments, with great attention to difference and detail.

One of the aims of the book is to bring Ukrainian history out of the shadow of Russian and Soviet history and—against the backdrop of the Russian attack on Ukraine in 2014—to discover the roots of Ukrainian resilience. This political edge of Hrytsak's narrative draws on the "Applied History Manifesto" formulated by Graham T. Allison and Niall Ferguson in 2016:

"Applied history is the explicit attempt to illuminate current challenges and choices by analyzing historical precedents and analogues. Mainstream historians begin with a past event or era and attempt to provide an account of what happened and why. Applied historians begin with a current choice or predicament and attempt to analyse the historical record to provide perspective, stimulate imagination, find clues about what is likely to happen, suggest possible policy interventions, and assess probable consequences. It might be said that applied history is to mainstream history as medical

practice is to biochemistry, or engineering to physics." [2]

Hrytsak's book is an attempt to put this theoretical program into practice. It consists of 450 pages: six chapters, five interludes, and an outlook. In the chapters focusing on the social and cultural history of Ukraine, Hrytsak follows the chronology; in the interludes, he interweaves different sediments of time to tell the story of bread, song, the borderland, violence and language; and in the outlook, despite the gloomy present, he ventures a hopeful look at the future of his country: "Ultimately, we depend on the stories we tell each other. I hope this story of Ukrainian history will strengthen your faith that although progress is impossible without catastrophes, progress is also possible despite catastrophe" (p. 427).

This motivation may explain why Hrytsak seeks to appeal to the historical imagination of the reader. He succeeds in doing so by summarizing complex developments with metaphors that effectively clarify the meaning of certain events and processes. Moreover, thanks to the metaphors, Hrytsak's narrative works for long stretches without names and dates. Instead, the author introduces the Cossack way of life and the moral economy of the peasants, explains the difference between the realists and the nationalists in exile, shows how generational differences have shaped the political culture of Ukraine, and explores the question of why Ukraine is still a rich country of poor people.

Every synthesis depends on the courage to leave gaps—this one too. Some readers may wonder what actually happened to the Cossacks after the dissolution of the Cossack state by Catherine II in 1764, where

Johann Gottfried Herder's enthusiasm for Ukraine came from, why the author devotes so little space to the transatlantic emigration of Ukrainians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or what it meant in practice for Ukraine to become a communist showcase project for the so-called Third World. The annotated bibliography is a treasure trove of further reading on these and other topics.

Hrytsak's intellectually, politically, and stylistically stimulating book was a huge success in Ukraine. It has since been translated into Italian, Polish, and English, and from English into German. Further translations are in preparation. It remains a mystery why the Beck publishing house has done the book a double disservice. The global dimension of Hrytsak's history of Ukraine is mentioned in one sentence of the blurb, but on the cover, dominated by the Ukrainian national colors of blue and yellow, there is no hint of its central importance in the book. Even less fortunate is the German title *Ukraine. Biographie einer bedrängten Nation* (literally: Ukraine: Biography of a Beleaguered Nation) because the martyrological alliteration stands in striking contrast to Hrytsak's global perspective on Ukrainian history. Moreover, a biography is determined not only by birth, but also by death. Using the word "biography" to describe the history of a nation in a struggle for survival is therefore misleading at best. It remains to be hoped that Hrytsak's book will find as many readers as it deserves, despite the unfavorable marketing.

Notes

[1] All quotations and references come from the English edition of the book: Yaroslav Hrytsak, Ukraine: *The Forging of a Nation*, trans. Dominique Hoffman (Sphere, 2023).

[2] Graham T. Allison and Niall Ferguson, "Applied History Manifesto," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, October 2016. Hrytsak referred to the "Applied History Manifesto," among other things, at a book launch organized on October 21 as part of the "Lunch Talks with Lviv," a joint series of events co-curated by Bielefeld University and the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv.

Kenneth Harrow, *African Cinema in a Global Age* (Routledge, 2024), 291 pp.

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What is African cinema? This question many scholars and practitioners have been wrestling with as far back as the 1960s when breakaway movements such as Fernando Solanas and Octavia Gentino's Third Cinema sought to disengage from the infrastructure of global cinema aesthetics. This movement prioritized ideological detachment alongside the aesthetics of non-conformity to the then cinemas of the first and second worlds, which were deemed pro-colonial at a time when anti-colonial struggles were peaking. The quest for Third Cinema as an autonomous cinema infrastructure was also the larger inspiration to contribute to the decolonization efforts that were underway in many parts of the developing world, including Africa. The underlying proposition was that the camera should be used as a fighting tool against colonial powers.