

Ukraine in Transformation

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Editors

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From Soviet Republic to European
Society

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Preface

For decades since its independence, Ukrainian society has been going through a process of reluctant transformations, seemingly unsure about which vector of development to adopt in order to modernize its institutions and economic infrastructure: the Western European or the Eurasian model. The apparent immutable state of ambivalence displayed by Ukrainian society concerning political attitudes, values and geopolitical orientations combined with events like the Orange and the Euromaidan Revolutions constitute, thus, a very rich and challenging field for sociological research.

Recent events, like the Russian annexation of Crimea followed by the hybrid war in the Donbas region have brought Ukraine to the forefront of the Western media. This aggression towards Ukrainian territorial integrity seems to have accelerated processes already underway, questioning some of the widely accepted clichés about this country, well established in the Western academic world. This book aims to provide the international academic community with a perspective of the Ukrainian reality based on empirical analyses made mainly by Ukrainian sociologists living in Ukraine and relying on data produced by Ukrainian institutions.

The analyses contained in this book cover the historical period following Ukrainian independence and comprise a wide variety of issues like the transformation of the class structure, education reform after legalization of the private sector and changes of attitudes towards privatization and trust of the newly created democratic institutions. The strength (or lack of strength) of its civil society is discussed and the religious revivals described, highlighting the characteristics that differentiate Ukrainian reality from that observed in other post-Soviet countries. Changes in the media landscape are explained and the relevance of new internet media depicted. Insight into the origins and causes of the Donbas conflict, often misinterpreted in the Western media, is provided, and measures to overcome it are suggested. The effects of military conflict with neighbouring Russia on Ukrainian national identity are investigated and its role as a catalyser of national unity is discussed. Last but not least, the book provides a very insightful theoretical approach developed by Evgenii Golovakha for interpreting the type of transformation Ukrainian society is going through in order to overcome its Soviet legacy, which is significantly different from those observed in neighbouring countries.

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