The book is relatively slim and appears to be written in the style of an ethnographic case study that can be adopted for the purposes of teaching. Consisting of nine chapters, it progresses from the discussion of the overall geopolitical context of the war in the Donbas to the discussion of how people intimately affected by the war interacted with friends, partners, lovers, family members, caregivers, and volunteers in a variety of settings across and beyond real and symbolic frontlines. Each chapter begins with a brief overview of what is going to be discussed and then ends with a summary of what the chapter was about. Subsequent chapters add an overview of what was covered in the previous chapter, and the book ends with a brief summary of what the author aimed to achieve with her project. This strategy, repetitive for a conventional book reader, is possibly helpful to readers wanting only to access select chapters online.

This ethnographic study is carefully and ethically narrated, with the identities of those who shared their personal stories with the researcher properly protected. Uehling's own narrative is nuanced, attentive, theoretically informed, and even poetic, though the topics addressed and discussed here are broad and diverse, making the book's overall argument perhaps less focused. In her discussion of the opposing views on the war shared with her by her informants, the author attempts to be balanced and representative as anthropologists ought to be when writing about other people's lives. Thus, throughout the book, describing the events in Donbas, the author carefully alternates between politically charged vocabulary, at times labelling the events as a war, and at other times as a conflict. Profiling the pro-Ukrainian moods or positionalities of her interlocutors, we read about their aspirations as being nationalist or patriotic. While some readers may find this terminology alternation odd, this care in narrative crafting is most likely rooted in the author's professional training, which dictates as close to emic representation of all positions encountered in the field as possible when translating their experiences to outside audiences. Written for external audiences, the book would have benefited from further detail on Ukraine's overall efforts (or lack of those) to support the IDPs in the early years of the war, on why the Ukrainian army needed so much volunteer assistance and other relevant details that would help readers to better contextualize the ethnographic material presented in the book.

An ethnographically rich intellectual exercise in making sense of the war's grey zones, this book is a welcome contribution to the study of the Russo-Ukrainian unfinished war. As it offers a solid conceptual framework and vocabulary to examine and analyze how the wars affect ordinary people, the book will be of interest to students and scholars of Ukraine, as well as those interested in learning more about the war's toll on Ukrainians.

Stefan Hedlund. *Ukraine, Russia, and the West: When Value Promotion Met Hard Power.*

London: Routledge, 2023. vii, 284 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $160.00, hard bound; $44.95, paper.

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Stefan Hedlund's monograph sets an ambitious task of investigating how Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine "could arrive as such a shocking surprise" to the west (ix). Hedlund argues that in the preceding decades Russia and the west "had simply not been playing the same game" (x): while the west had pursued the game of soft power seeking to shape the democratic and pro-western transformation of neighboring states, Russia had pursued the game of hard power seeking to secure its sphere of interests. This, in Hedlund's view, led to a lack of mutual understanding. Hedlund further argues that Ukraine is "the victim not only of Russian aggression but also of an ill-founded Western belief in the prospects for soft power to achieve fundamental institutional transformations, and of failure to realize that soft power not backed by a readiness to deploy serious hard power will not get you far" (101).

The main focus of the monograph is the critique of western preoccupation with soft power—"the urge to intervene" (8) that Hedlund links to western ethnocentricity. The monograph begins by surveying a vast literature on institutions to make a case for more attention to informal institutions in any analysis of political systems. Focusing on the slow and gradual evolution of institutions in the west over several centuries, Hedlund questions the role of agency by concluding that "those informal norms that are essential to functioning democracy and successful market economy cannot be introduced by direct action" (65–66). He then employs this institutional framework to reflect on the role of western actors in color revolutions, with a particular focus on the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan in Ukraine and the "abortive Snow revolution" (126) in Russia. In Hedlund's view, the subsequent evolution of political systems in the states that experienced color revolutions point at "failed ambitions to achieve fundamental institutional change by way of outside agency" (77). In the remaining monograph, Hedlund goes back to a wider discussion on the importance of informal institutions, moving from the critique of value promotion to chastising the western academia for complicity in the "formulation of policies that risk producing . . . seriously adverse outcomes" (178), and to reflecting on the rejection of "universal" values beyond the west. The monograph concludes by suggesting that the inability of the west to foresee and to find an appropriate response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to other ongoing geopolitical crises signals "the end of policies of value promotion and a return to a more traditional focus on hard power" (252).

The monograph raises some important questions about the ways in which western governments and analysts may have underestimated Russia's preoccupation with hard power. The strongest feature of the study is its focus on informal institutions and its reflections on the (in)ability of external actors to shape political processes in other states when existing informal institutions resist such a change. For those less familiar with the theoretical literature, the monograph provides a very useful overview of relevant studies and points at convincing empirical evidence. However, the main argument is overdetermined by the author's choice of the theoretical framework. Yet, what about other major factors—apart from western preoccupation with soft power—that are likely to have contributed to the "shocking surprise" of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion as seen from the west? For example, what about economic links and financial benefits of engaging with Putin's Russia for many among western elites before 2022?

Furthermore, the monograph ultimately tries to cover too much ground without tying its reflections in a sufficiently coherent argument. Instead of retaining its focus on external agency and informal institutions, it wanders off to reflect on the causes of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine or the changing international order—the areas that would require engaging with other literatures and developing more appropriate theoretical frameworks. For example, while critiquing the west for its reluctance to resort to hard power following Russia's 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea, the monograph does not ground this critique in any relevant debates on responding to military aggression. Finally, the monograph pays only limited attention to the agency of Ukraine and Ukrainians, or the agency of other states and peoples that experienced post-communist transition or color revolutions, in navigating their relationships with western actors or Russia. Although this lack of attention likely stems from the monograph's focus on external agency, it risks reproducing a vision of the world order where only the agency of major powers matters.