

Soviet Union: “The *Broom*, with its criticism of Soviet everyday life, contributed to making the revolution imaginable” (224). I would welcome more extensive and critical research on audience reception and the potentially immanently subversive effects of *Broom* to make this claim more convincing, since *Broom* was, after all, a pro-Soviet propaganda magazine.

By analyzing the Soviet media and censorship through the voices of the participants, their support for the Soviet Union’s cultural policies and their “banal opposition” to the Soviet Union, Klumbytė presents the complex working life of the cultural elite in Soviet Lithuania, who lived very differently from the dissidents and the majority of Soviet Lithuanian citizens. They remained silent on the systematic criticism of Soviet socialism, but occasionally published messages of Aesopian opposition, undertook their own investigations of readers’ complaints, and developed innovative aesthetic formats. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this impressively researched and written book and recommend it not only to scholars of Soviet history and politics, but also to cultural historians, (media) anthropologists and anyone interested in the complex ethnographically researched history of eastern Europe.

## **David Dalton. *The Ukrainian Oligarchy after the Euromaidan: How Ukraine’s Political Economy Regime Survived the Crisis.***

**Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society, Vol. 260. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2023. 314 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Figures. Tables. \$40.00, paper.**

Nataliya Kibita

University of Glasgow

Email: [nataliya.kibita@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:nataliya.kibita@glasgow.ac.uk)

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.339

In today’s context of the Russia-Ukraine war, David Dalton’s book could not have been timed better. Conferences on Ukraine’s post-war recovery held in 2022–23 revealed that there is no shortage of ideas for policies and reforms that Ukraine needs to address. However, there is no clear understanding of how the proposed reforms would target the oligarchic system, the political economic system that has been preventing Ukraine’s economic growth and handicapping Ukraine’s statehood for the past thirty years. Arguably, because there is no clear understanding of what the oligarchic system is. Dalton’s book fills the gap.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach and based on a variety of sources, Dalton investigates the mechanisms and practices that bring various state and private actors into a coherent oligarchic system. He examines the institutional connection between the oligarchs’ wealth and the failure of market reforms in Ukraine under two presidents, Viktor Yanukovich (2010–14) and Petro Poroshenko (2014–19), and assesses the effect of the Euromaidan (2013–14), which separated the two presidencies and caused political and economic shock to the Ukrainian system. Dalton treats the resilience of the oligarchy as an institution and Ukraine’s poor post-Soviet economic performance as “two sides of the same research problem” (27).

In his first three chapters, Dalton explains the theoretical framework chosen for this study and sets the context for the case-studies which discussed in the following chapters. In Ch. 3 Dalton shows that although after 1994 Ukraine switched between single-dominant and multiple-dominant “pyramids” of economic and political power, each “pendulum” movement had little effect on the oligarchic system. He also argues that the Euromaidan, too, had little effect on the attitude of Ukraine’s oligarchs toward market reforms and the rule of law. This chapter introduces a “foreign”

factor in the reproduction of the oligarchic system. “Offshoreization,” as Dalton explains in Ch. 4, is a key mechanism in the reproduction of the Ukrainian oligarchy as an institution.

Chap. 4 examines the mechanisms of wealth concentration in the hands of few since the 1990s, and the changes in wealth of the richest Ukrainians in international comparison and relative to Ukrainian society. Ch. 5 discusses the centrality of the practice of buying votes in the Verkhovna Rada in the oligarchic system as one of the main institutions that blocked market reforms. Ch. 6 scrutinizes rent-extracting schemes in the energy sector, the “holy grail” for enrichment since the early days of Ukraine’s independence. Based on his findings, Dalton offers a “currency flow” diagram of wealth and power, in which the capacities, practices, and processes of Ukraine’s political economic regime are interconnected in a broad framework with feed-ins and outflows at the regional, national, and international levels that incorporates patronal networks into one system.

By design, the monograph does not offer recommendations as to how to transform the oligarchy from a system that prioritizes the interests of a few into one that values the interests of the populace. But the author offers important insights on the system that provoke questions and thoughts. For example, the author argues that Ukraine’s problem is not corrupt individuals in state offices and the Verkhovna Rada, or rich people *per se*, but the mechanisms and incentives that allow the oligarchic system to regenerate after political shocks against it. Founded on extreme economic inequality, the system perpetuates inequality by all available formal and informal means, with wealth being both a facilitator and the end-goal of its self-reproduction. Still, insists Dalton, the oligarchic system demonstrated obedience to formal rules. For him, the “lack of political will” is not *the* explanation for Ukraine’s economic failures, which lies rather in the habits and cultural norms, or “a specific kind of institutional logic” that conditioned the actors, including the presidents, to reproduce behavioral norms through their actions (97), ultimately detrimental to Ukraine’s economy. The question that arises from the monograph is then if the “political will” is weaker than “institutional” factors, how can Ukraine break with the cultural norms and practices that prevent Ukraine from developing its economic potential? Can targeting inequality and offshoreization by formal rules break the closed circuit of wealth and power? This monograph leaves these and other questions outside of its discussion.

Overall, this monograph offers a most detailed and up-to-date picture of the political economic system that dominated in Ukraine until Russia’s invasion in February 2022, which is currently being subjected to yet another shock. It will be of interest to academic scholars, as well as to policymakers in Ukraine and Ukraine’s donors.

## **Nadieszda Kizenko. *Good for the Souls. A History of Confession in the Russian Empire.***

**Studies in Modern European History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xvi, 327 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Table. \$100.00, hard bound.**

J. Eugene Clay 

Arizona State University  
Email: [Eugene.Clay@asu.edu](mailto:Eugene.Clay@asu.edu)

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.335

In this path-breaking monograph, Nadieszda Kizenko, professor of history at the University at Albany, explores the history of the sacrament of confession in Russia from the seventeenth