Editor's Note

Welcome to the first issue of *SPSR* of 2020. This issue contains the final two articles of a two-part special issue (the first part of which appeared in *SPSR* 46.3 in 2019) entitled “Eastern and Southern Ukraine in Peace and War.” Guest edited by Serhy Yekelchuk of the University of Victoria (Canada), the special issue concludes with “From the ‘Russian Spring’ to the Armed Insurrection: Russia, Ukraine and Political Communities in the Donbas and Southern Ukraine” by Oleksandr Melnyk of the University of Alberta (Canada). Melnyk examines anti-government mobilization in the cities of southern and eastern Ukraine during the spring of 2014 and identifies various factors that precipitated the veritable collapse of the Ukrainian state in parts of the both the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. This article discusses the peculiar political and ethno-cultural profile of Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts* (regions) and, among other phenomena, the incremental collapse of the law enforcement apparatus which drastically reduced the capacity of Ukrainian authorities during the crisis.

The second and final article of the continued special issue is “European Dreams and European Nightmares in Prewar Donetsk” by William Jay Risch of Georgia College and State University (United States). Based on interviews and questionnaires completed in the city of Donetsk by the author in January 2014, Risch’s article reveals that the possibility existed for building a “European dream” (i.e. greater Ukrainian integration with Europe, specifically the European Union) that Euromaidan protesters in Kyiv had championed previously. Even for those skeptical of “European values,” Risch maintains that most Donetsk residents that he surveyed agreed that they belonged to one nation, albeit one with differing political objectives. However, escalating violence in January 2014 and the sudden implosion of the regime of then Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014 polarized public opinion in Donetsk. The ensuing geopolitical battle brought about greater Russian intervention, both politically and militarily, which made it impossible for civil society to resist the sudden emergence of separatist republics within eastern Ukraine.

This issue also contains two stand-alone articles. The first of these is “Liberation and Retribution: War Crimes and Collaboration in Smolensk Oblast” by Travis Gray of the University of Texas (United States). Gray’s

subjects are the Red Army soldiers who were the initial liberators of the city Smolensk (now located in Russia) in September 1943. Gray's primary objective is to understand the process of the rebuilding of Soviet state power in the area by examining reports of local war crime and treason investigations carried out by the Extraordinary State Commission of Smolensk Oblast (known by its Russian acronym ChGK). Using previously unused archival materials, Gray reveals that while the Soviet state did renew its political authority in Smolensk, its efforts were often constrained by the USSR's postwar reconstruction goals.

The final article of this issue, "Grafting Kazakh Shrines on the Yesevi Pilgrimage Path: Invented Traditions, Popular Islam and Kazakh Muslim National Identity," is authored by Hakkı Gürkaş of Kennesaw State University (United States). Professor Gürkaş argues that the post-Soviet states of Central Asia appropriated a nation-state legacy from the Soviet era as the populations of these newly-independent nations appropriated their traditional identities that had been suppressed during the Soviet era. Gürkaş examines the space between the state and society within the context of development and identifies changes in the religious material culture within the area of the Syr Darya River valley of contemporary southern Kazakhstan.

It is my hope that you will enjoy this first issue of 2020.

Christopher J. Ward
Editor-in-Chief