**Baudrillard Goes to Kyiv: Institutional Simulacra in Transition**

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ABSTRACT

The transition process in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union from 1989 onward has been focused on the reform of institutions in order to re-orient the economy. However, throughout the former Soviet space, “transition” has been merely a label for many countries, covering the reality of a fundamental lack of change in either political or economic institutions. Using the idea of simulacra and simulation, first posited by philosopher Jean Baudrillard in 1981, I show how institutional change in transition for some prominent “transition economies” has proceeded through stages in simulation. In particular, using examples from Central Asia and Ukraine, I examine how crucial institutions have changed from a perversion of reality into symbols that are divorced from any reality. Current events in Ukraine show that institutional simulacra can exposed when an exogenous reality forces its way through.

Keywords: Institutions, simulacra, transition, Ukraine

Suggested running head: Baudrillard Goes to Kyiv

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