

many commentators were predicting the disappearance of nationalism under the solvent of globalization, rather Greenfeld argues that we have seen the “globalization of nationalism,” especially its pervasive diffusion to India and China.

As one can glimpse from the above summary, Greenfeld’s *Advanced Introduction to Nationalism* is an extremely rich text offering a consistent and compelling argument about the nature, rise, and consequences of nationalism. The breadth of the argument constitutes both the strength and the weakness of the book. It is its strength because of the breath-taking disciplinary and historical ground that it covers in only 137 pages. It is its weakness because such a wide perspective would need to be supported by much more detailed empirical evidence than that presented. Yet, as said above, the book provides a summary of Greenfeld’s previous works, and one can simply refer to these to access and evaluate such evidence.

Greenfeld’s approach to nationalism represents a minority in the field. This book, which is especially useful for both undergraduate and graduate students familiarizing themselves with the subject, promises to help move her work into the mainstream.

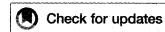
Emmanuel Dalle Mulle

Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland

emmanuel.dallemulle@graduateinstitute.ch

© 2018, Emmanuel Dalle Mulle

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1411344>



Pluralism by default: weak autocracy and the rise of competitive politics, by Lucan Way, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015, 274 pp., \$44.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4214-1812-4

There currently exists a received view that “democracy largely failed” in the former USSR with the notable exception of the three Baltic republics which joined the European Union. This failure is then ascribed to the weakness of democratizing forces (including assistance by the West), an insufficient local “understanding” of what democracy is, or an absence of democratic traditions. This book by Lucan Way is a timely antidote against this type of democratic wishful arguing. The central thesis of the book is that the key explanatory factor of the “fate of democracy” in the post-Soviet world is *not* the strength or weakness of democratic forces or of civil society, but those of the forces that tried to install a new authoritarian regime.

The implicit assumption that the Soviet regime was authoritarian is correct, but fails to address the fact that some of the post-Soviet countries, particularly Turkmenistan and, to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan, represent a continuation of a totalitarian rather than a simply authoritarian regime, and it that sense continued *more* of the Soviet legacy than other countries did, which chose either the liberal-democratic or the neo-patrimonial path. While Way does point to the exceptional continuity in the Uzbek and Turkmen cases, his use of the single notion of authoritarianism places Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan too quickly in the same category as the manifestly more liberal, though not more democratic, Kazakhstan.

Largely limiting himself, with good reason, to the Post-Soviet countries (minus the Baltic states), the author reaches the general conclusion that “among the three main cases in this book [Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus’], differences in national identity most

clearly account for divergent regime trajectories, while shifts in organizational capacity best explain changes within each case over time" (172), a conclusion which suggests a broader hypothesis regarding so-called democratic transition.

As the title suggests, the author claims, and indeed shows with a wealth of empirical material, that democratic pluralism, free elections, and alternation of government and opposition, are due to a weak or divided state apparatus, the absence of reliable party structures or functionally equivalent patronage networks, lack of control over the economy, and already existing national divisions that could be electorally exploited. Between Ukraine and Belarus', for example, there is little difference between the levels of support of democratic values (28) or between the strength – in both cases quite limited – of civil society, while the stark contrast between the two countries, with four democratic regime changes and three popular uprisings in the first (43), and a stable authoritarian regime with tight economic control in the second case, becomes understandable in light of the other factors mentioned: national division between west, central, and east Ukraine in particular serves to explain a power shift that depended on central Ukraine as the country's "swing region" (46).

Way's sobering attitude runs the risk, as the author himself is well aware, of appearing as "excessively cynical" (169). This matches the self-perception of many an actor in the region: "Political cynicism is not the exception but the rule in Ukraine," as one of the motto's in the book reads (57), and actors like Kravchuk were indeed not "essentially democratic" (52). Unsurprisingly, Way defends himself against the reproach of cynicism by claiming realism and explanatory force:

My point is not to deny that democrats existed but to say their presence cannot explain divergent regime outcomes in the region. After all, brave and democratic activists also existed in countries like Belarus and Russia, but they faced far more daunting structural conditions than did their counterparts in other countries. (169)

This suggests that, in the countries concerned, democratization may be a long-term process.

Perhaps Way is ascribing too much responsibility to Mikhail Gorbachev, who in his view "single-handedly dismantled this vast, complex, and stunningly successful system of social and political control" that was the Soviet Union (34). While this view does correspond to the widespread view, in the region itself, that it was Gorbachev who "sold out" the USSR, I would rather suggest, first, that it is impossible generally to "single-handedly dismantle a system" and, secondly, that we should perhaps rather say that Gorbachev acknowledged what everybody who visited the late USSR already knew: that the system was in a state of irreparable stagnation, corruption, and mismanagement, barely disguised by the hollow rhetoric of official, Marxist-Leninist ideology – if any, his mistake was to try and retain the power of the CPSU.

Also, Way overlooks too easily, to my mind, the fact that the falling apart of the USSR was not least of all a matter of property settlement by actors in the gray zone between the official command economy and the black market. The later oligarchs that started to compete for political power had their background in the party and/or the informal economy, and were not without justification disqualified, by the post-Soviet population, as a *mafia* (lacking as an entry in the index) engaging in *prikhvatizatsiia* [a word-play on *privatizatsiia* suggesting "grabbing for oneself"]. Privatization was, in many cases, not a matter of handing over property, but of retaining it under a different entitlement. This could also serve to explain part of the difference between Ukraine, with its heavy industrial complex in places like Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk, and Belarus', where Lukashenka used his power base in the huge agricultural sector to retain control over the economy and to even survive a period of hyperinflation. This said, Way is certainly right that "Lukashenka possessed significant coercive and economic power that (with a weakly divided

national identity) would contribute to the consolidation of his rule in the 2000s" (123), significantly more coercive and economic power than any of the subsequent Ukrainian (88f) or Moldovan (112f) presidents ever possessed.

While this sobering book is highly relevant reading for any scholar in the field of post-Soviet studies, including scholars from the region itself, it is also valuable reading for political theorists generally, as well as for political philosophers like myself. In particular, the following points deserve attention: (i) the role and impact of "democratizing forces" may be less significant, and thus may have less explanatory value, than is often assumed, not least by those democratizing forces themselves; (ii) party pluralism, or something equivalent, may be crucial in staging societal antagonisms in such a way that they can enter a political arena, and it may be an effect of democratization, but this does not imply that the mere existence of a plurality of political parties signals a democratic constellation; (iii) most importantly, however, we may have to start to consider the possibility that such a democratic constellation generally, and not only in post-totalitarian societies, is an effect not of democratizing forces or of democratically minded citizens or politicians, but rather, at least genetically, the outcome of a situation in which none of the actors concerned is capable, for whatever reason, of establishing hegemonic power.

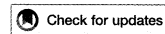
Evert van der Zweerde

Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands

e.vanderzweerde@ftr.ru.nl

© 2018, Evert van der Zweerde

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2018.1425253>



Stalin and the struggle for supremacy in Eurasia, by Alfred J. Rieber, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, \$86.45 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1107074491; \$34.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1107426443

Alfred J. Rieber's *Stalin and the Struggle for Supremacy in Eurasia* is a masterful history of the Soviet Union and its borderlands. Rieber has drawn upon a wealth of primary sources in his effort to identify and analyze the role of persistent and idiosyncratic factors during what was the definitive struggle of the first half of the twentieth century. The importance of this struggle lay in the fact that without the reassertion of Russian ascendancy in its Soviet incarnation and the restoration of an empire encompassing much of the Eurasian heartland, the USSR could not have become a superpower, thereby setting the stage for the Cold War struggle for global supremacy. At the same time as Soviet expansion brought territory and resources into this empire, the demography and geography of the borderlands were a source of perpetual tension for the Soviet leadership. This meant that Soviet foreign and domestic policies were driven to a large extent by the fears and opportunities that existed on the USSR's borderlands. At its core, the book under review is a profound examination of Soviet-state mentality, the momentum of history, the gravitational pull of geography, and the immense human tragedy that unfolded between 1914 and 1950 on account of demographic complexity and ideological politics.

Rieber notes the presence of four persistent factors that provide the thematic underpinning for *Stalin and the Struggle for Supremacy in Eurasia*. The first was imperial Russia's and the Soviet Union's multinational and multi-ethnic social structure, which caused the