

be gaining momentum. The second set of encouraging developments, he says, is in the international system itself, where the incentives for harmful external involvement in Africa's conflicts has declined sharply. While Africa will probably continue to suffer wars for a long time to come, says the author, these favorable trends should be nurtured.

Finally, Copson concludes with a rather stark assumption: external actors, who are crucial to easing Africa's burden of war, will remain interested in Africa to a significant degree. These actors, then, could contribute in a variety of ways: providing additional support for African political reform, providing economic aid, placing pressure on combatants, encouraging adherence to international law, supporting regional conflict resolution efforts, restraining arms supplies and pursuing programs of humanitarian diplomacy and intervention.

While optimistic, Copson is in no way blind to the arguments which completely undercut his thesis. It is conceivable that crucial external actors will turn their back on Africa. Certainly it is arguable that Western Europe is preoccupied with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Perhaps the United States will turn more slowly toward a new isolationism. Yet recent activities in both Rwanda and Haiti seem to point to a new activism, an activism which, as Copson notes, could bode well for a continent which has been wracked with poverty and violence.

Major Donald Jordan
Office of the Secretary of Defense

Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993.

John Lewis Gaddis divides historians into "lumpers" and "splitters," distinguishing those whose primary concern is breadth of vision from those concentrating on in-depth examination. In this impressive little volume, Ronald Suny sets out emphatically to be a "lumper," presenting a panoramic view of the development of the nationalities of the old Russian empire over the course of a century, from the waning decades of that empire to the collapse of its successor, the Soviet Union.

Suny's primary goal, which he undeniably achieves, is to show that the development of nationality-based politics (nationalism) and of class-based politics (socialism) are intimately bound up with each other, and that the particular shape nationalist or socialist politics takes in a given area is historically contingent. (p. 18) He further contends that nations and classes are formed largely by people talking about nationality and class. Among the key historical forces shaping such politics, therefore, are the political parties, newspapers, and intellectuals who carry on the discussion (p. 10), along with the states whose policies shape national consciousness.

The heart of the book — and, apparently, of the author — lies in the second chapter, which surveys the development of nationalism in the pre-Soviet period, especially from the 1870s through the Russian Civil War. His focus is on nine nations of the old Russian Empire: the Baltic nations including Finland, the three Transcaucasian nations, the Ukraine and Belarus. Suny sets out to examine not so much intellectuals' ideas, but the degree to which the masses followed those ideas — a topic he rightly considers understudied.

What Suny finds is five different patterns of relations between the class principle and the national principle in different countries. He argues that in some countries (Georgia, Latvia) socialism was a more potent force than nationalism, while in others (Armenia) the reverse was true. The more peasant-based societies (Belarus) were not terribly moved by either idea, while some partially urbanized ones (Finland, Estonia, Ukraine) were torn between them in different ways.

While his analysis is a true tour-de-force, Suny leaves the reader asking for more. For example, he argues (in agreement with Eric Hobsbawm and others) that socialism and nationalism were most powerful when combined into a single socialist nationalist movement (pp. 55, 81), and he explicitly applies that argument to Georgia in 1917-21. (p. 55) But elsewhere he says that for “the Georgians, class-based socialist movements were far more potent than political nationalism.” (p. 81) So was the nationalist infusion into Georgian socialism significant or not? The book would have been improved if he had further explained these apparent contradictions.

The rest of the book tells the more familiar story of nationalities policy in the Soviet era, and of the collapse of the Soviet Union largely due to Gorbachev's mishandling of that problem. Still, Suny does an effective job of using that story to support his main point about the importance of historical experience in the development of nationalism. This argument leads him to make some wise points about the difficulty of Gorbachev's task: the contradictory nature of Soviet nationalities policy had created something of a nationalities time bomb in the USSR, which required little encouragement from Gorbachev to explode.

Overall, the book stands as a telling critique of the old Sovietology. Suny's charges about the errors of Moscow-centered political analysis are wholly justified, and it is hard to quarrel with his snubs of those members of the Washington elite who were still insisting in 1989 that Gorbachev was not “for real.” More subtly but perhaps more powerfully, the book also exposes the fallacy of those analysts who try to explain complex phenomena with monocausal theories. Neither nation-based nor class-based analysis alone is enough, Suny is telling us. Rather, most of the story is in the interaction between the two. This is a message well worth heeding.

Stuart Kaufman
University of Kentucky