

Currently, the Orbán-led mafia has no viable opponents. Attempts had been made to organize a democratic opposition, but they have all fizzled out. A group under the label of Politics Can Be Different (LMP) did surface to oppose Fidesz. It is made up of urban intellectuals and environmentalists, and they have been influenced by European Green Parties. This group has no cohesive program; its efforts have not appeared to effectively challenge the Orbán regime. The extreme right-wing, radical, nationalistic, anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi party Jobbik has been competing against Fidesz and has won twenty-four of the 199 parliamentary seats. Although in some instances the ideologies of Fidesz and Jobbik coincide, Fidesz has been claiming that it has been protecting the country from sliding into extremism.

The aims of these scholarly studies are clear; they are criticizing the mafia-like encroachment of the Orbán regime. However, they do not provide any alternatives or strategies on how to counter the Mafia State.

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***The Russian Empire: 1450–1801.*** Nancy Shields Kollmann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. viii, 497 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. \$110.00, hard bound.  
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Grounded upon an impressive list of renewed books and articles, Nancy Shields Kollmann offers here a wonderful synthesis of her long-standing contribution to the history of early modern Russia. The theoretical architecture of this book relies upon Jane Burbank's and Frederick Cooper's notion of "empire of difference," as well as on Charles Tilly's tension between coercion and capital to classify the multiple forms of states that emerged during the last five centuries (Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1990*, 1990). Quite interestingly, Kollmann translates this opposition into a space between accommodation and control, much better fitting with the interpretation of Russia as an empire of difference. The first chapter describes the topography and climate of the Russian empire, while the second traces how Moscow rose to regional power during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Chapters 3 to 5 explain how Moscow practiced a politics of difference during this period by maintaining regional cultures and institutions in exchange for loyalty and human (mostly military) and fiscal resources. Indeed, the Russians borrowed pragmatic imperial policies from the Mongols (Chapter 6), as expressed in their vocabulary, institutions, and practices in finance, the military, and politics. As such, Muscovite Russia hardly corresponds to the European cliché of despotism. Of course, this does not mean that coercion did not exist. Quite the contrary, the power of the knout, the army, and the bureaucracy was real (Chapter 7). Coerced mobility, recruitment, and the state monopoly of law contributed to this issue. Meanwhile, Russian trade also developed, production and taxation with it (Chapter 8). The result, Kollman argues, was that by the end of the seventeenth century, the Russian economy was modernizing on the European model. The state completed this process by co-opting important social groups to perform social service to the tsars (Chapter 9). The Russian nobility, however, unlike their European counterparts, had no legal protection of their privileges, including ownership. The same was true for the mass of the population, including the peasants and urban taxpayers, who were a steady source of income and labor services for the state (Chapters 10 and 11). Last but not least, the state accepted other religions but without pushing so far as a real policy of toleration (Chapter 12).

The following Chapters, 13 to 21, reproduce this same plan for the eighteenth century. Thus, new people were successfully integrated into the empire (Chapter 13), while the army and the administration were reformed (Chapter 14). Reforms were informed by enlightenment ideas, combining the German enlightenment's emphasis on orderliness and duty with the French preoccupation with rational thinking. Yet the state perpetuated a centralized bureaucratic network in order to accomplish the fundamental tasks of revenue collection, military recruitment, and local control (Chapter 15). Russia became more intentional and effective in exerting empire-wide control, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century. The main weakness of this system was the lack of any proper state budget and, thus, the increasing state deficit. In this context, surveillance and control intervened to counterbalance instability and economic difficulties (Chapter 16). Social mobility was certainly limited by the *soslovie* system, even if it was much more flexible than conventionally argued (Chapters 17 and 18). Again, Orthodoxy remained the state religion; even if the enlightenment encouraged Russian educated society to accept religious diversity: anxieties, in particular with Islam, were tangible (Chapters 19, 20). Despite its diversity, the Russian nobility also relied upon serfdom and was proud of the empire and their autocrat (Chapter 21).

Kollmann concludes that early modern Russia did not develop any sort of national consciousness comparable to that emerging in western Europe. Eighteenth-century attitudes towards the subject people were not perceived as Russification but as enlightenment. Only with rising nationalism in the nineteenth century did the imperial center attempted to impose the "Russian way" on the whole empire.

This otherwise excellent book has two minor drawbacks: first, the chronology adopted (1450–1801) is not justified and recalls Russian nationalistic approaches, putting the war against Kazan', for example, as the rise of the Russian power. The second concerns the bibliography: except for two to three titles among hundreds, exclusively Anglo-American texts are used, as if Germans, the French, and above all, Russians had never published on these topics. The politics of difference was eventually relevant in autocratic Russia, but it has not yet entered academia.

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***Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation from 1470 to the Present.*** By Serhii Plokhy. New York: Basic Books, 2017. xxvi, 398 pp.

Appendix. Notes. Index. Bibliography. Maps. \$32.00, hard bound.

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What kind of a nation is Russia? What does it mean to call it an "imperial nation"? Does it continue to have a hankering for empire, despite the break-up of the Soviet Union? What in particular is the significance of the legacy of the "lost kingdom" of Kyivan/Kievan Rus'—the adjoining territories of the East Slavs, including Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, which from the seventeenth century came to be designated as a tripartite unity of "Great," "Little," and "White" Russia (and including, on occasion, an additional component, the Ruthenians of Galicia, as "Red Rus'")? This is the grand subject of Serhii Plokhy's fascinating and constantly stimulating inquiry into the historical origins of what is still very much an ongoing issue, indeed a matter of life and death for many thousands. The book, he says, was inspired by the still-unresolved Russo-Ukrainian war of 2014, though it draws upon and continues the investigation begun in his earlier works, especially *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern*