'Inverse Ethnonationalism', he offers the case of a Serb who violently rejected his ethnicity and accepted all the worst stereotypes of his own people, yet another odd facet of the 'ethnic times' in which he lived.

Several particularly good essays leap from this volume. One entitled 'The Agony and Ecstasy of the Victim' deals with the strong tendency amongst Serbs and Croats to present themselves as long-suffering victims of the 'enemy'. These essays tie in with his previous book, reiterating one of his core theories – that national identity is often based on negative myths and hatred or fear of out-groups, with an aesthetic of victimisation becoming increasingly attractive for ethnic groups. Kečmanović, in contradistinction to Anthony Smith (and his 'Golden Age' myths) and Modernists (such as Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Tom Nairn, etc.), prioritises myths of threat and danger, seeing these as central to nation-building and ethnic violence. Equally important is differentiation – the 'narcissism of small differences', of which Michael Ignatieff has previously made much use. In his previous book, Kečmanović used terms such as 'pseudospeciation' and 'counteridentification' to come to terms with how ethnic antagonism and differentation occurs.

In asking the question 'why?', Kečmanović blames not only opportunistic leaders and psychopaths (who he argues naturally rise to the forefront during ethnic conflict), but casts the net wider – on professionals and the middle class – people who had little to gain by embracing xenophobia, but did it anyway. 'The Individual and the Collective in Ethnonationalism' isolates what sorts of people tend to be more susceptible to ethnonationalism, engaging with such theories as Theodore Adorno's 'authoritarian personality' and others. Another excellent essay focuses on the breakdown of professional ethics among both Serbian and Croatian psychiatrists. In the case of the Holocaust, Robert J. Lifton has carved out a name for himself in this department, with his analysis of Nazi doctors and subordination of science to national chauvinism. Kečmanović pursues a similar tack, having seen psychiatrists and other medical professionals on both sides of the divide abandon their impartiality and professionalism in favour of demonisation of the 'other'.

In short, this is an original and thought-provoking contribution to our under-standing of nationalism and ethnic identity in Yugoslavia. A plus (or minus depending on your opinion) about Kečmanović's work is that it stands apart from other nationalism theorists – he does not discuss or debate their conclusions, nor are they of interest to him. Quite independently, it seems, he has come at nationalism and ethnic identity from a new angle, one that is refreshing and thought-provoking. A negative comment: some may feel that this book is a bit expensive in hardback format – it is, after all, less than 200 pages. However, get a copy from your library or wait for the paperback release. It's well worth reading.

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Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 520 pp. £60.00 (hbk), £21.95 (pbk).

More than ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was once envisaged as a model for the whole world, the question of 'what happened?' is still worth asking. Attempts to provide answers are numerous, but the enigma still seems unsolved. What

was it that brought to its knees a system and a state that in the first half of the twentieth century was worshipped as an embodiment of revolutionary aspiration by Europe's leading intellectuals, and that not only survived the mortal threat of the Second World War but rose to the position of a leading world power, capable of posing a serious challenge to its American rival? Conventional wisdom, inspired by the insights of structuralism, usually points to the self-exhausting mode of domination which characterised a system successfully tackling the task of coercive modernisation, but failing to meet the much more complicated obligation of administering a modernised society. The dissolution of the Soviet State thus appears to be the inevitable outcome of a universal logic of development nobody can escape, as a delayed adjustment to the necessities of modernisation that presses for the emergence of analogous features of democracy and a market economy all over the world. Time and again this story has been retold by leading sovietologists, notwithstanding the uncountable evidence pointing to the absence of a unilateral trajectory of development and ignoring the debates on multiple modernities as initiated, among others, by Shmuel Eisenstadt.

Mark Beissinger's monograph, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* comes as a fresh-minded intervention into a discourse that was short of losing contact with current trends of sociological thinking. His declared aim is to cast doubt on the treacherous certainty produced by the above-cited teleological approaches. Unimpressed by previous findings, he dares to ask simple questions: How come the break-up of the Soviet Union, once thought as impossible, entered the mind not only of social scientists but of leading political actors as an inevitable event? Why was it that the chain of events which in the end tore apart the Soviet Union were set in motion in the Baltics and in the Caucasus and not – as assumed by those few specialists dealing with the Soviet nationality problem – in the Muslim regions of Central Asia? The results he arrived upon are outstanding for at least three reasons: They are rooted in a firm theoretical grounding, which combines structuralist with actor-centred perspectives. Theory is translated into a convincing methodology that focuses on the analysis of events as the place where structure meets action. And last but not least, methodological tools are applied to a wide range of empirical data.

But it is not the coherence of theory and methodology that makes Beissinger's book fascinating reading. Sometimes one wonders whether it would not benefited from less diligence. From time to time, the overwhelming abundance of detail evokes a certain feeling of intellectual inadequacy. What really impresses even the well-informed reader is the sophisticated combination of normally mutually exclusive narratives.

In his quest for the reasons behind the success or failure of national mobilisation, Beissinger opens up three different horizons, each dealing with another category of contributing factors. He thus retells the same story from three different viewpoints. Adhering to a quite conventional line of argument and referring to cross-regional statistical data, the first perspective probes the weight of structural preconditions. It thus comes up with the less than surprising finding that successful national mobilisation turns out to be more likely the higher the degree of urbanisation, the lower the level of linguistic assimilation, the higher the status in the multi-layered federal hierarchy and the bigger the population size. But already the second line of thought, drawing on six case studies, adds more differentiated features to this somehow simple picture. Reconstructing the chronology of events in a number of republics ranging from the Baltics to the Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine, it attributes the intensity, scope and sequence of demonstrations, pressing for a national agenda, to more accidental factors such as institutional responses to secessionist activity. But it is the third angle of vision

that constitutes the cornerstone in Beissinger's analysis. When he asks for the impact that successful mobilisation in the most action-prone republics exercises on structurally more disadvantaged late-comers to national revival, he displays utmost originality of thought. In the end, it is the combination of these three narratives that makes Beissinger's analysis so convincing, enabling him to present the dynamics that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a process that is explainable in terms of general social laws but preserves an element of contingency at the same time.

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Meir Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood, 1926–1939*. London: I B Tauris, 1997. 328 pp. £45.00 (hbk), £14.95 (pbk).

Lebanon's Quest is the second book in Meir Zamir's Lebanese trilogy, focusing on the creation of Greater Lebanon under the French Mandate and culminating in the country's independence in 1943. In much the same style as Kamal Salibi's *A House of Many Mansions*, Zamir attempts to refute many of the historical myths and illusions that cloud any view of Lebanese political history. With the same unsentimental sword, he cuts through the agendas and smokescreens that fabricate many of the misconceptions that are common in Lebanese politics. Zamir achieves this with a thorough analysis of hitherto unused archival sources – mostly dug up in France – and disentangles the webs of intrigue that both shaped and stunted Lebanese political development in the 1920s and 1930s.

Lebanon's Quest delves under the surface of every aspect of political life under the mandate, unravelling layer after layer of the inter- and intra-confessional machinations that saw Lebanon torn in so many different directions between 1926 and 1939. Zamir focuses on the interplay between the ideological struggle over Lebanese, Syrian and Pan-Arab nationalism/identity, whilst analysing the dynamics of the inter- and intra-communal elite rivalries that defined Lebanon's political system. All this against a backdrop of French attempts to carve out from their mandated territories a long-term base in Lebanon, whilst opposing Syrian designs on that territory.

Zamir details how the different nationalist positions developed. He illustrates how these struggles went a long way in defining the 1943 National Pact through the compromises they entailed. In the Christian camp, he identifies two schools of thought regarding the nature of Lebanon's national identity. Beshara al-Khoury and Emile Edde, the two key Maronite politicians of the day, led rival counter movements: Khoury arguing for the present territorial integrity of Lebanon to be kept and independence from France achieved, whilst Edde fought for the revision of Lebanon's borders, arguing for a demographically stronger Christian Lebanon under French post-colonial protection.

On the Sunnite Muslim side, Arab Nationalist opinion was split three ways between Riad Solh, Abd al-Hamid Karame and Muhammad al-Jisr, arguing for independence from France with the severance of Maronite/French ties, immediate union with Syria and integration into the Lebanese state on the basis of equality, respectively. Zamir reveals that it was Solh's pragmatism and experience that paved the way for a Christian/Muslim power-sharing agreement by realising Lebanese compromise and conciliation could lead to independence. He emerges as the nationalist leader who, as prime minister,