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Jack L. Schwartzwald. *The Rise of the Nation-State in Europe: Absolutism, Enlightenment and Revolution, 1603-1815.*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2017. 275 pp. $65.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-4766-6547-4.

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Jack L. Schwartzwald has written a book that promises to "chart the maturation of the nation-state from its infancy as a virtual dynastic possession through its modern incarnation as the embodiment of the sovereign popular will" (p. 1). Despite these claims, it falls short of meeting its promised goals without a robust analytical framework. Schwartzwald admits that it is "a concise survey of a transformative era in European history," but it never demonstrates these transformations at a substantive level, nor does it explain adequately how the described events changed the nature of the nation-state, which itself is never defined (p. 2). The book is, in essence, an uneven collection of political and military histories driven almost exclusively by great men. ***The Rise of the Nation-State in Europe*** is nevertheless a remarkably engaging and entertainingly written book directed at nonspecialists. To get beyond that audience, the book would have benefited from the inclusion of scholarship from the last several decades.

Most of the text is a traditional narrative of high politics, foreign affairs, and war with great men the primary actors. Each section ends with a short subsection called "Societal Achievements" that briefly describes major scientific, cultural, and intellectual moments from the period just covered. The first section, "Monarchy Absolute," focuses on the usual suspects of England and France. Schwartzwald traces the failures and successes of England's and France's monarchs, respectively, in their attempts to transform their states into absolute monarchies from the Peace of Westphalia through the wars of Louis XIV. Section 2, "Monarchy Enlightened," expands the cast of states. It charts the rise of the enlightened despots of eastern Europe until the French Revolution, beginning with Russia and folding in Austria and Prussia as they come up during the eighteenth century's wars. Despite the book's ostensible focus on the post-Westphalian period, the survey of Russian history begins in the eighth century. Section 3, "Monarchy Overthrown," covers over 40 percent of the book's pages. This section is almost exclusively devoted to the French Revolution and Napoleonic periods, with other states appearing as France's enemies. This imbalance leaves the reader wondering why so much space is devoted to the political histories of England, Russia, and other states if the important action happened in France.

The book's primary failings are its outdated historical and teleological assumptions. Out of 247 bibliographic entries, only 87, or 35 percent, are from after 1970; only 5 are from this century. It refers to Tsarina Elizabeth's death as "divine intervention," paving the way for Frederick II's political survival: "The lord ... by this lone act, changed the course of Prussian history" (p. 99). Whole classes

and nations think and act in unison. The people of England might applaud a decision or might be distressed by an event. Under "absolutism," a term the author accepts uncritically, "the church and aristocracy ... are now the crown's tame (and largely ornamental) supporters" (p. 1).

In addition to offering overly teleological renderings, Schwartzwald takes up an uncritical use of "Western civilization" and an unstated assumption of its benefits. There are aspects of the book that the reader might interpret as Orientalist, too, in particular toward Russia and the Ottoman Empire. For the former, Schwartzwald argues that Ivan the Terrible's revised law code was "elevated, if not to a civilized level, at least to one of barbarism, which was a notable improvement" (p. 70). For the latter, Schwartzwald claims that Mameluke cavalry fought the exact same way against Napoleon they did several centuries earlier. In a judgment insulting to both, the book states that, after Peter the Great's reforms, while "the Russians no longer looked like Turks, they could still act like them from time to time" (p. 78). What that means is not explicitly stated, but context suggests anti-progress, misogynistic, boorish, and drunkard.

On the positive side, *The Rise of the Nation-State in Europe* is written in a delightful and ever-entertaining style that anyone can enjoy. It is chock-full of colorful, amusing, and interesting anecdotes, many of which add new angles to understanding significant historical events. The occasional bit of authorial snark certainly made me chuckle. Still, while it is aimed at "the student and the general reader," both can find better surveys that take advantage of the historiography of the past half century (p. 2).

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