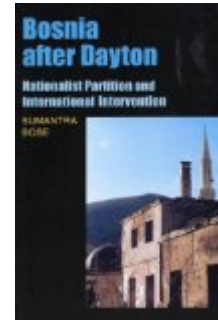


Sumantra Bose. *Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention.* London: Hurst and Company, 2002. viii + 296 pp. \$28.17, paper, ISBN 978-1-85065-585-5.



Reviewed by Stefan Wolff

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The Merits and Flaws of "International State-building" in Bosnia

Seven years after the conclusion of the Dayton accords, which brought the war in Bosnia to an end, Sumantra Bose has delivered this fine account analysing not just the process of implementing the accords but also examining the wider lessons that can be learned from the Bosnian experience for international intervention and the dynamics of externally driven state and nation-building. Broadly supportive of the intentions and outcome of the international community's role in Bosnia and fairly optimistic of the long-term success of the Bosnian experiment, this volume is bound to be received with praise by some and criticism by others. This is especially true at a time when the international community is engaged in another Bosnia-type exercise in Afghanistan and some are pushing it towards action against Iraq where, on the "day after", similar challenges of rebuilding a state will await external actors.

To be sure, Bose's book is not about whether any such intervention is desirable, it is primarily

an assessment about whether it is politically feasible, that is, whether international intervention can create a meaningful and workable institutional framework for the reconstruction of an ethnically plural society torn apart by civil war and the gross human rights violations that accompanied it. Focusing on the political dimensions of the reconstruction project keeps the author's task manageable. While some might argue that it leaves out important elements of any post-war reconstruction endeavor, (such as rebuilding civil society and economic recovery) that are vital for long-term success, I agree with the general premise of Bose's work that without negotiating, implementing and operating the "right" institutional framework, everything else becomes meaningless.

Thus, one can read this book also as a quest for an adequate framework, or, more precisely, whether the external imposition of a consociational institutional structure and its stabilisation (or the effective containment of opposition to it) by a massive international military and administrative presence is the right approach to rebuilding a war-torn society. After contextualising

present-day Bosnia in its historical and contemporary time and place, Bose examines in great detail how the Dayton state of Bosnia came about and how it is structured. This is informative reading, supplying the basic facts to those who are not familiar with recent Balkan and international diplomatic history. What follows is a meso-level analysis of the international intervention process since Dayton, taking the town of Mostar as an example. While this is an interesting and informative analysis, I do not quite agree with Bose's contention that "Mostar refracts in a concentrated microcosm practically all the problems Bosnia & Herzegovina faces in the aftermath of the apocalypse of 1992-5" (p. 146). With hardly any Serbs left in a town that once held approximately 20,000, the Mostar situation may be much more indicative of the problems in the Croat-Muslim federation, and their likely or unlikely solution. Admittedly, the future of Bosnia as a single state hinges, to a significant degree, on the stability of the federation, yet the "Serbian factor" can hardly be underestimated. Thus, while Mostar is an interesting case study of the institution-building and "unification" dilemmas faced by international actors in post-Dayton Bosnia, it is only part of the wider Bosnian picture.

This wider picture is what Bose turns to in the following two chapters. First he places the Bosnia debate in the context of the dispute between partitionists and integrationists that has been raging between both scholars and practitioners for the past decade in relation to (post-) Yugoslavia. Engaging with advocates of partition like Pape, Mearsheimer, Kaufman and van Evera, he argues against partition (which, unfortunately, is never clearly defined), primarily on the basis on its human, economic and cultural costs. This argument is clear, balanced and straightforward, and benefits from a solid comparison with the situation in Kashmir.

In chapter 5, Bose examines the dynamics of democracy in the divided society of post-Dayton

Bosnia and its "range of institutional technologies for managing divided societies democratically, in particular an array of devices associated with federalism and consociation" (p. 205). I found his analysis of the Bosnian party system and the different techniques of electoral engineering particularly enlightening as they are relevant to many other divided societies and serve as a warning to those who believe that creative electioneering can solve all the problems of such societies. Following a subsequent analysis of Bosnia's federal/confederal institutions, Bose concludes that despite its limits and problems, consociationalism still is the "most viable institutional option" for Bosnia "short of formal partition, redrawing of boundaries and exchange of populations" (p. 247).

The final chapter, in which Bose draws "lessons from (and for) international intervention", I found the most problematic. First, Bose reverts to Rogers Brubaker's triadic nexus for the explanation of post-war Bosnia (p. 260ff.). This is a significant step back from the analysis up to this point: Brubaker considers host-state, kin-state and minority as the three essential players and has very little to say about international actors. While Bose (quoting Mihailo Crnobrnja) acknowledges that the international community is the "fourth constituent part" of Bosnia (p. 267), he nevertheless remains trapped within Brubaker's framework when claiming "that Bosnia, including the controversies over the legitimacy and the institutional form of its statehood, is best understood through two levels of analysis: the local level within Bosnia, and the supra-state, regional level which includes but also transcends Bosnia" (p. 277f., emphasis in original). Clearly the earlier analysis should have suggested adding a third level: the international community in which another set of distinct players is active, again with particular interest and opportunity structures that influence, and are influenced by, what happens at the local and regional level. Not acknowledging this risks not drawing all the lessons from the Bosnian experience: it was no accident that a consociation-

al model was adopted in Bosnia as this reflected best the interests and convictions of the main players in the international community.

Other minor flaws in an otherwise valuable book are factual errors or imprecisions: for example, *uti possidetis juris* has its origins in Latin American decolonisation in the nineteenth century, rather than in Africa in the twentieth century (p. 49). There is also what I would consider inappropriate language: referring to Mearsheimer and Pape, Bose describes their proposal for the partition of Bosnia as "sheer, senseless absurdity" and continues that "[i]t makes one think that Saadat Hasan Manto was rather correct in equating partitionism with dementia" (p. 173f.). Even though I personally disagree with the partitionists as well, I do not think that it is necessary to condemn their point of view in such strong (if not insulting) terms, as it takes away from the merit of the anti-partitionist argument replacing it with rhetoric. By the same token, labelling the International Crisis Group a "hyper-interventionist think-tank" (p. 218), at the very least, does not add anything to the substantive argument on electoral engineering in the context of which this reference is made. Finally, I was left somewhat puzzled when Bose announces that "three key lessons can be gleaned from the cumulative experience of almost six years of intensive international engagement" (p. 274) but then only tells the reader two of them (institutions are more important than individuals; and, the transparency and accountability of international officials and institutions is important [pp. 274-6]).

In the wider scheme of things, however, none of this really matters, but the author and publisher might want to take account of some of these points in a revised and updated edition in a couple of years. My criticisms are certainly also not meant to take away from the significant accomplishment that Sumantra Bose has made with this book and on which he needs to be congratulated. In the breadth and depth of its analysis it will con-

tinue to be an important contribution to the debate on both the limits and opportunities of international intervention and the different ways in which external actors can assist the processes of state and nation-building in war-torn societies.

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