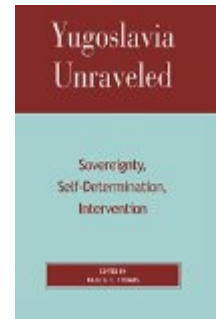




Raju G. C. Thomas, ed.. *Yugoslavia Unraveled: Sovereignty, Self-Determination, Intervention.* Lanham and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003. xx + 380 pp. \$98.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7391-0517-7.



Reviewed by Joe Mocnik

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Raju G. C. Thomas, the Allis Chalmers Distinguished Professor of International Affairs at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, compiled thirteen thematically and contextually diverse interpretations of the Balkan tragedies of the 1990s. This volume is a refreshing supplement to the debate that he co-edited with H. Richard Friman, *The South Slav Conflict: History, Religion, Nationalism, and War*, published by Garland in 1996. Like its predecessor, *Yugoslavia Unraveled* re-examines underlying issues regarding the sources of religious nationalism and inter-ethnic conflict, but it also focuses on the issue of territorial integrity and sovereignty of states, the principle of self-determination, the right of secession from an existing state, and the nature of media propaganda in times of war. Gordon N. Bardos, Milica Z. Bookman, Maya Chadda, Kelly M. Greenhill, Robert M. Hayden, Edward S. Herman, Alan J. Kuperman, P. H. Liotta, Michael Mandel, Michael Mandelbaum, Satish Nambiar, and Raju G. C. Thomas provide a fresh and, for the most part, an alternative interpretation of the Yugoslav wars.

Of the three articles that Raju G. C. Thomas contributed to the volume, the most remarkable supplement to the scholarship appears to be "Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Secession: Principles and Practice." He questions the principle of equating the right to national self-determination to the right to secede from a state and argues that "some logical explanation must be provided as to why the principle of the right to secede was applied selectively to Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia but not to other ethnic groups demanding secession elsewhere in the world" (pp. 32-33). Thomas correctly suggests that domestic political disputes, minority ethnic grievances, and armed secessionist struggles have been far more intense and prolonged elsewhere than in the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, the essential "problem was not what the Serbs did but what the Western powers did: namely, the violation of Yugoslavia's territorial sovereignty, the rush to advance the principle of self-determination, and the reckless use of massive force in violation of the UN Charter on humanitarian grounds" (p. 34). The application of the self-determination principle has been highly selective: "Slovenes, Croats, Muslims, and Albani-

ans have all been conceded the right of self-determination but the Serbs of Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo have been denied this right" (p. 34). Though recognition, or the promise of recognition, might have led to the unraveling of Yugoslavia, it is highly debatable whether no violence would have occurred without it as Thomas is suggesting.

Michael Mandelbaum's excellent brief essay on the future of nationalism persuasively contends that the key question about self-government is not who should govern or how are the people to govern but "who are the people" (p. 41). The problem arises because of the apparent incompatibility between the principle of national self-determination and the principle that existing sovereign borders are sacrosanct and should not be altered. Since neither had been fully embraced or definitively dismissed, Mandelbaum suggests that the most effective solution of national conflicts in the future will be "the obsolescence of sovereignty itself" (p. 52). Nonetheless, the problem is that though its powers may be declining, the nation-state is not withering away and the national question is not vanishing.

P. H. Liotta, Professor at the U.S. Naval War College, in the article "Religion and War: Fault Lines in the Balkan Enigma," discusses the role of Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Islam within the former Yugoslavia. This is a rebuttal of Samuel P. Huntington's "clash of civilization" paradigm and Liotta challenges Huntington's civilizational model as it hinges on an alignment based solely on cultural identities. The debate revolves around the question of whether or not in the post-Cold War era the fundamental source of conflict will be cultural and civilizational. Concerning the example of Yugoslav disintegration, Liotta suggests that "religion provided an occasion, but was not the cause, for the death of Yugoslavia" and he argues that "economic potential, politics, history, social identity, and religion [are] inextricably linked" (p. 91). Furthermore, he correctly suggests

that "it was the 'West's' (read American) reluctance to commit early to preventing the outbreak of conflict that allowed the inevitable collision" (p. 108). The tensions and symbolism that existed in former Yugoslavia, isolating communities along religious lines, are still present today. Instead of advocates of unity and tolerance, like the nineteenth-century Roman Catholic Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, more controversial figures who symbolize Balkan cultural fault lines, such as Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, have taken center stage, perpetuating stereotypes and exacerbating tensions. Though Islamic communities remained far more silent than either the Serbian Orthodox Church or the Roman Catholic Church, Bosnian Muslims, who were arguably the strongest supporters of multiculturalism, "became ardent Islamic 'hard-liners' in the face of cultural conflict" (p. 100). Though the Serbian Orthodox Church represents a spiritual and cultural force that cannot be detached from the notion of a Serbian national identity, it allowed itself to be manipulated by both the Tito and Milosevic regimes. Hence, the three major religions became entrenched as the foundations of nationality and have "come to be viewed as responsible for actions [they] could not control" (p. 104). Therefore, Huntington's civilizational paradigm as it applies to the influence of religion in the Balkans "proves useful for explaining why conflict occurs and far less worthwhile for formulating strategies to prevent future tensions from erupting in conflict."^[1]

Satish Nambiar, an Indian military officer who was the first commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) deployed in the former Yugoslavia, provides a peacekeeper's perspective on the Yugoslav wars. After briefly summarizing the recent history that precipitated the disintegration, he correctly states that the "incomprehension about the Yugoslav situation in much international, including transatlantic, debate at the time was staggering" and "the European Community and the United States share much of blame for the carnage that took place in

the former Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s" (p. 348). Regarding the role of the United Nations General Nambiar argues that its operations failed because they were launched too hurriedly, without the necessary preparation, and adequate commitment: "As UNPROFOR operations progressed, it soon became evident that shared responsibility between the United Nations and the European Community ... was an unsatisfactory arrangement, to put it very mildly" (p. 353). Yet, he remains cautiously optimistic about the future of the region providing the West gives a consistent economic impetus to the independent states.

This is a solid and comprehensive volume that assembles new and previously published insightful works by a range scholars and politicians, and delivers a compelling analysis of the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. As some other works on the former Yugoslavia written by non-native experts, the book regrettably contains a number of inconsistent and misspelled words, places, and personal names, and would greatly benefit from careful editing; among the examples are the name of Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer misspelled as Juri Josaj Strossmayer (p. 92), or General Ante Gotovina misspelled as Ante Govina (p. 201).

The legality and morality of military intervention by external powers and the subsequent nation-building remain a controversial topic in the post-Cold War era that ushered in a world without countervailing power. Perhaps the book's major contribution is the attempt to demonstrate how the Western powers downplayed Yugoslavia's problems early on and in so doing helped cause the ensuing bloodshed. Therefore, contributions to this volume provide compelling interpretations of the historical events that unfolded in the former Yugoslavia.

Note

[1]. Regrettably Liotta did not even mention the major recent work on the church and state relations in former Yugoslavia: Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yu-*

goslav States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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