Thinking about Yugoslavia

The Yugoslav breakup and conflict have given rise to a considerable literature offering dramatically different interpretations of what happened. But just how do the various interpretations relate to each other? This ambitious new book by Sabrina Ramet, an eminent commentator on recent Balkan politics and history, reviews and analyses more than 130 books about the troubled region and compares their accounts, theories, and interpretations of events. Ramet surveys the major debates which divide the field, alternative accounts of the causes of Yugoslavia’s violent collapse, and the scholarly debates concerning humanitarian intervention. Rival accounts are presented side by side for easy comparison. Thinking about Yugoslavia examines books on Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo which were published in English, German, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, and Italian, thus offering the English-speaking reader a unique insight into the controversies.

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Thinking about Yugoslavia

Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo

Sabrina P. Ramet
To Danica Fink-Hafner
and
Mitja Hafner-Fink
Contents

Preface viii
List of books discussed xi
Glossary xvii

1 Debates about the war 1
2 The collapse of East European communism 35
3 The roots of the Yugoslav collapse 54
4 Who’s to blame, and for what? Rival accounts of the war 76
5 Memoirs and autobiographies 108
6 The scourge of nationalism and the quest for harmony 138
7 Milošević’s place in history 159
8 Dilemmas in post-Dayton Bosnia 185
9 Crisis in Kosovo/a (with Angelo Georgakis) 200
10 Debates about intervention 220
11 Lands and peoples: Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia 243
12 Southern republics: Macedonia and Montenegro in contemporary history 280
13 Conclusion: controversies, methodological disputes, and suggested reading 305

Index 319
I have been struck, over the years, by the persistence of certain debates – one could even say fault lines – within the scholarly community. These debates cover a wide range of subjects, riveting on the best methodology to study East-Central Europe, the nature of the collapse of the communist organizational monopoly (a collapse completely denied by one ‘imaginative’ scholar), the nature of the Bosnian War and the appropriate Western response, the nature of the war in Kosovo and the appropriate Western response, and the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. But, while these debates might appear, at first sight, to be unrelated, it turns out, on closer inspection, that there are some threads running through these debates, and that in many one can identify traces of the rivalry between idealism (the belief that moral beliefs matter, that shifts in moral consensus can have political consequences, and that one can speak sensibly about universal moral norms and universal rights, with the corollary too that there are some duties incumbent upon the international community under certain conditions) and realism (the belief that what matter in the first place are stability and security, that these can be assured by means which are not necessarily moral in any sense, and that decisions taken by office-holders should be and, in fact, generally are taken on the basis of considerations of national interest, to be understood in terms of security, stability, wealth, power, and influence), or again between historical determinism which looks back over centuries to account for present developments and theoretical approaches which find the most relevant factors to be located in the more proximate past. It is, rather obviously, possible to forge one or another synthesis across these cleavages, but in practice these theoretical divides tend to define rival patterns of thought, steering analysts and policy-makers alike in alternative directions.

Other factors enter into any particular equation, of course, and not all differences in the field are determined by these fault lines. But much is, and it is these threads which run through the essays included in this volume. The chapters included herein were written as review essays of
the literature, and this volume, thus, represents a series of reflections upon the literature relating to the Yugoslav breakup and subsequent conflicts. More than 130 books in four languages (English, German, Italian, and Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian) are discussed in some detail herein, and analysed in terms of their philosophical or methodological frameworks. Additional literature is discussed in passing. Taken in sum, these essays constitute a serious effort to come to terms with the growing literature on the subject and to take stock of the principal debates and controversies. It is my hope that this book will be useful not only to specialists but also to students interested in making sense of a potentially confusing avalanche of work.


The material is not, however, simply reprinted here. On the contrary, I have moved sections of one essay into another essay, removed some
books discussed, and have added a large number of books to what I discuss. Chapter 1 is based on C, with the discussion of two books moved elsewhere and with a discussion of books by Norbert Both, Norman Cigar, and Michael Sells added. Chapter 2 is based on B. Chapter 3 is based on A, with a discussion of two books deleted and with the addition of discussion of books by John B. Allcock, Neven Andjelic, Branimir Anzulovic, Christopher Bennett, Lenard J. Cohen, Vjekoslav Perica, Andrew Baruch Wachtel, and Susan L. Woodward. Chapter 4 is essentially new, but incorporates the discussion of the book by Takis Michas originally published in H. Chapter 5 is based on E, but incorporates the discussion of books by Boutros Boutros-Ghali and John Major originally published in C, with the addition of discussions of the memoirs of Veljko Kadijevic, Stipe Mesic, and Javier Perez de Cuellar. Chapter 6 is based on D, with a discussion of Tim Judah’s Kosovo moved elsewhere and with the addition of a discussion of books by Ivan Colovic and Jasna Dragovic-Soso taken from H, and new discussions of books by Keith Doubt and Stjepan G. Meštrović; an earlier discussion of Rusmir Mahmutčehajic’s Bosnia the Good, originally published in D, is not included in chapter 6. Chapter 7 is based on J, but incorporates the discussion of Slavoljub Djukić’s book originally published in F, as well as new discussions of recent books by Dusan Pavlović, Vidosav Stevanovic, and Massimo Nava. Chapter 8 is essentially new, but incorporates the discussion of books by Sumantra Bose and Elizabeth Cousens/Charles Cater originally published in H. Chapter 9 is based on I, with the deletion of discussions of books by Branislav Anzulovic and Greg Campbell, and with the addition of a discussion of Tim Judah’s Kosovo, originally published in D, and with the addition of a discussion of Alex Bellamy’s Kosovo and International Society. Chapter 10 is an extended version of an article originally published in G. Chapter 11 is essentially new, but incorporates a discussion of Norman Cigar’s Vojislav Koštunica originally published in F. Chapter 12 and the conclusion were written expressly for this volume. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

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Books discussed

(Numeral in parentheses indicates the chapter in which the book is discussed; the conclusion makes only brief references to various books, and does not offer full reviews.)

Memoirs

Drnovšek, Janez, *Der Jugoslawien-Krieg: Meine Wahrheit* (5).
Halilović, Sefer, *Lukava strategija*, 3rd expanded edn (5).
Izetbegović, Alija, *Sjećanja: Autobiografski zapis* (5).
Mamula, Branko, *Slučaj Jugoslavija* (5).
Pérez De Cuéllar, Javier, *Pilgrimage for Peace: A Secretary-General’s Memoir* (5).
Špegelj, Martin, *Sjećanja vojnika* (5).
Tomac, Zdravko, *The Struggle for the Croatian State . . . Through Hell to Democracy* (5).
List of books discussed


**Academic books about and popular treatments of Yugoslavia**


Andjelic, Neven, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: The End of a Legacy* (3).

Anzulovic˘, Branimir, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (3).


Banac, Ivo, *With Stalin, against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Conclusion).


Bellamy, Alex J., *Kosovo and International Society* (9).


Bennett, Christopher, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences* (3).


Buckley, Mary and Sally N. Cummings (eds.), *Kosovo: Perceptions of War and Its Aftermath* (9).


Calic, Marie-Janine, *Krieg und Frieden in Bosnien-Herzegovina*, revised and expanded edn. (10, Conclusion).


Cigar, Norman, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of ‘Ethnic Cleansing’* (1, Conclusion).

Cigar, Norman, *Vojislav Koštunica and Serbia’s Future* (11).

List of books discussed

Conversi, Daniele, *German-Bashing and the Breakup of Yugoslavia* (4, Conclusion).
Dragović-Soso, Jasna, ‘Saviours of the Nation’: Serbia’s Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism (6, Conclusion).
Elsäßer, Jürgen (ed.), *Nie wieder Krieg ohne uns: Das Kosovo und die neue deutsche Geopolitik* (9).
Fink-Hafner, Danica and Terry Cox (eds.), *Into Europe? Perspectives from Britain and Slovenia* (11).
Harris, Erika, *Nationalism and Democratisation: Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia* (11).
List of books discussed


Hoare, Quintin and Noel Malcolm (eds.), *Books on Bosnia* (1).


Judah, Tim, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (9).


Kolbow, Walter and Heinrich Quaden (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden auf dem Balkan – Makedonien am Scheideweg?* (12).

Kumar, Radha, *Divide and Fall? Bosnia in the Annals of Partition* (8).


Mahmutčehajić, Rusmir, *The Denial of Bosnia* (6).

Malcolm, Noel, *Bosnia: A Short History* (11, Conclusion).

Malcolm, Noel, *Kosovo: A Short History* (9, Conclusion).


Merkel, Reinhard (ed.), *Der Kosovo-Krieg und das Völkerrecht* (10).


Michas, Takis, *The Unholy Alliance: Greece and Milošević’s Serbia* (4).

Mojzes, Paul, *Yugoslav Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (Conclusion).
List of books discussed

Nava, Massimo, Milosˇević: La tragedia di un popolo (7).
Pavlović, Dušan, Akteri i modeli: Ogledi o politici u Srbiji pod Miloševićem (7).
Perica, Vjekoslav, Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States (3).
Pettifer, James, The New Macedonian Question (12).
Pleština, Dijana, Regional Development in Communist Yugoslavia: Success, Failure, and Consequences (3).
Popov, Nebojša (ed.), The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis (6, Conclusion).
Poulton, Hugh, Who Are the Macedonians? (12, Conclusion).
Ramet, Sabrina P, Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević, 4th edn (Conclusion).
Reuter, Jens and Konrad Clewing (eds.), Der Kosovo Konflikt: Ursachen, Verlauf, Perspektiven (9).
Roberts, Walter, Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies (Conclusion).
Rumiz, Paolo, Masken für ein Massaker. Der manipulierte Krieg: Spuren-suche auf dem Balkan, expanded German edn (10).
Schmid, Thomas (ed.), Krieg im Kosovo (9).
Sell, Louis, Slobodan Milošević and the Destruction of Yugoslavia (7, Conclusion).
Sells, Michael A., The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia (1).
Silber, Laura and Allan Little, The Death of Yugoslavia (1, Conclusion).
Simms, Brendan, Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia (4).
Snyder, Jack, From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict (7).
Steindorff, Ludwig, Kroatien: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart (11).
Stevanović, Vidosav, Milošević, jedan epitaf (7).
Tanner, Marcus, Croatia: A Nation Forged in War (11).
Tenbergen, Rasmus, Der Kosovo-Krieg: Eine gerechte Intervention? (10, Conclusion).
List of books discussed

Thomas, Robert, *Serbia under Milošević: Politics in the 1990s* (11, Conclusion).
Thompson, Mark, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, completely rev. and expanded edn (Conclusion).
Udovički, Jasminka and James Ridgeway (eds.), *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, rev. and expanded edn (1).
Volle, Angelika and Werner Weidenfeld (eds.), *Der Balkan: Zwischen Krise und Stabilität* (10).
Weymouth, Tony and Stanley Henig (eds.), *The Kosovo Crisis: The Last American War in Europe?* (9).

**Academic books about Eastern Europe**

Horvath, Agnes and Arpad Szakolczai, *The Dissolution of Communist Power: The Case of Hungary* (2).
Philipsen, Dirk, *We Were the People: Voices from East Germany’s Revolutionsary Autumn of 1989* (2).
Poznański, Kazimierz Z. (ed.), *The Evolutionary Transition to Capitalism* (2).
Glossary

ORIENTATIONS ABOUT MORALITY

Consequentialism: the belief that the morality of a given law or practice or action may be best assessed by determining what its consequences are.

Conventionalism: the belief that there is no external standard by which one may assess the morality or immorality of the laws or practices of a given government and that it is meaningless to speak of universally valid moral precepts, except arguably in a nominal sense as established by written international agreements.

Universalism: the belief that one can speak sensibly of a universally valid moral standard by which one may criticize the laws or practices of a given government for being wrong (immoral) and that one can establish some universally valid moral precepts by the exercise of unaided reason.

ORIENTATIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Idealism: the belief that sovereignty is relative to morality and that governments should be held to a universal moral standard.

Realism: the belief that human rights are relative to sovereignty and that governments should enjoy a wide latitude in their domestic policies on the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of another state.

Relativism: any orientation which relativizes morality or which treats the rights of one (group of) people as less important that the rights of some other (group of) people.