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Roudometof, Victor. *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002. 265 pp.

The emergence of an independent Macedonia in 1991 as a result of the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation created a situation of tension in the South Balkan region with two of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's (FYROM) neighbors, Bulgaria and Greece. Representative of the Balkan region, this conflict was created from perceived threats of national security due to minority groups within each nation. Unique, however, has been the lack of violence in the relationship of these three states. Since 1991, there has not been a lack of literature dealing with the Macedonian question. The literature that has been published, however, has primarily consisted of politically laden material to promote one particular side of the conflict.

Victor Roudometof, a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, Gerontology, and Anthropology at Miami University, Ohio, attempts to analyze the Macedonian question from a sociological approach in *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*. Roudometof's methodology rests on using the national histories, or narratives, of FYROM, Bulgaria, and Greece to describe Greek-Macedonian and Bulgarian-Macedonian relations. These national narratives are presented as mutually exclusive, thus potentially damaging to the legitimacy of conflicting narratives.

Due to the use of national histories as a means of justifying the existence of a state, conflicting histories are a useful way of analyzing potential conflict between states. Roudometof attempts to shed light on the inconsistencies, half-truths, and political nature of each of the national narratives. To compensate for the deconstruction of the national narratives to describe the origins of the Macedonian state, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict* presents an alternative analysis to the Macedonian Question in the hope of leading to new scholarship on the issue. Furthermore, Roudometof analyzes the impact of the minority issue in the South Balkans on the overall Macedonian question, paying specific attention to Albanian minorities in Greece, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

In an attempt to offer a more critical approach to define the origins of the Macedonian nation, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict* posits the hypothesis that the Macedonian national identity is a product of the regions historic transformation over the last two hundred years as opposed to a natural ethnic identity. The most important presupposition to this argument is that ethnicity and national categorization should be viewed within the larger social transformation that occurred in the region during the process of modernization and nation building (p. 84). Roudometof traces the major historical events and developments surrounding Macedonia from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary period. Central to Roudometof's argument is the impact of the persecution of Slavic speaking inhabitants as an outcome of the cultural homogenization policies of the Serbs and Greeks during the inter-war period (p. 108). Using such argumentation, it might be stated that Macedonian nationalism is in reality nothing more than a negative reaction to other national groups. Roudometof, however, correctly asserts that in the case of Macedonia, nationalism is not just based on the denial of an "other" but there were traces of cultural distinctiveness in the nineteenth century (p. 109)

The core question attached to Balkan politics in the 1990s is "Why should *I* be a minority in your state if *you* can be a minority in my state (p. 126)?" Although there have been no explicit claims to territorial revisionism by FYROM concerning Greece or Bulgaria, Macedonia has made claims for the protection of the Macedonian national minority in Greece and Bulgaria. In the context of the Balkans, however, the proclamation of a group as a "national minority" is interpreted as an immediate threat to state sovereignty (p. 125). Through the use of quantitative statistics and examining minority relations throughout the entire Balkan region, Roudometof offers insight into the validity of Macedonian claims of national minorities present in Bulgaria and Greece. Due to the desire of local authorities to undermine the appearance of ethnic fragmentation and the complex relationship between ethnicity and religion, Roudometof concedes that it is difficult to find reliable census studies on

national minorities (p. 128). The vast number of statistics presented in *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, however, do offer insight into the complex ethnic makeup of the region and potential zones of conflict. Although Roudometof does not find significant evidence to define national minorities of Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria, this does not negate the discrimination of individuals by Greek and Bulgarian authorities (p. 145).

The relativistic nature of *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict* is perhaps its greatest downfall. Roudometof concedes that the work is relativistic in nature due to potentially supporting one national narrative over another. One area, however, where this study is most vulnerable is in the discussion of the Albanian minority question. Much is discussed about Albanian-Greek relations and Albanian-Macedonian relations, however, the reader is left to draw his/her own conclusions about the impact of the Albanian question on Greek-Macedonian relations. The Albanian minority is an important aspect of the overall Macedonian question, but by the book's title, the work deals with Macedonia, Greece, and Bulgaria. Whereas the Greek-Macedonian conflict is largely symbolic in nature, Albanian-Macedonian relations have led to armed conflict. Only through careful reading of the text will it become evident that due to Greek and Albanian economic interdependence, Macedonian-Greek relations might suffer due to the Albanian minority question in Macedonia.

Overall, this well-researched work is an important new piece of scholarship dealing with the modern Macedonian Question, which has repeatedly emerged in contemporary politics from the nineteenth century to the present. Unfortunately, due to the political nature of the subject, meaningful academic scholarship has fallen victim to partisanship. Roudometof's sociological approach to the Macedonian Question and his new analysis of the development of Macedonian national identity will be a useful point of departure for future studies on Macedonia.

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