

Nationalism, globalization, and orthodoxy: the social origins of ethnic conflict in the Balkans. By Victor Roudometof. Westport, CT: Greenwood. 2001. 304pp. Index. ISBN 0 313 31949 9.

Recent work on the Balkans has moved away from discussion of the supposed ancient hatreds of ethnic groups and towards a growing appreciation of the role of the state in propagating nationalism, national identity and violent conflict. Rather than being seen as somehow natural or inevitable, or products of regional backwardness, there is now widespread recognition that national identities and atavistic politics are socially constructed. The violent conflicts that bedevilled the region in the 1990s and before were not caused by tribalism therefore, but by the 'nation-states' specific historical paths to modernity' (Roudometof, p. 229). These two volumes contribute to our understanding of the role of states and the processes of modernization in building national particularism in very different ways. Roudometof adopts a historical sociological perspective to show how state-building and the bureaucratization of Balkan society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries built nations and constructed national identities where there were none. Malović and Selnow show that even in the 1990s, with the universalization of the nation-state idea throughout the region, national identity remained something that had to be secured through control of the media. Together, these volumes show that contrary to the popular imagination in International Relations, nationalism was a latecomer to the Balkans and national identities were not self-evident, even in the 1990s.

Roudometof's starting point is to investigate why there has been recurrent conflict in the Balkans. He self-consciously adopts a materialist historiography that roots social change and fragmentation in changing patterns of administration and economic production. His account, which spans over 300 years and covers Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Bosnia, starts around 1600. He argues that the perceived decline of the Ottoman Empire was fostered by administrative reforms that attempted to make the empire more efficient and commensurate with the forms of governance being established in western Europe. These reforms, which involved the decentralization of power and—most importantly—land ownership, created a class of local Muslim lords who became powerful enough to threaten the very existence of the empire. It was therefore local Muslim leaders, not indigenous Balkan nationalists, who first challenged the empire. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that nationalist movements began to claim citizenship rights, with the Young Turks at the forefront. Nationalist movements were closely linked to three simultaneous social transformations. First, the 'death of god' prompted the secularization of elite society. Second, across the Balkans local elites began processes of state-building largely aimed at supporting their own economic interests rather than those of the 'nation' or the empire. Third, the abolition of the Ottoman *millet* system, which organized society according to religious affiliation, prompted the transformation of Ottoman religious identity into secular national identities (p. 101).

National identities were not easily fostered, however. Well beyond the turn of the twentieth century an overwhelming majority of people in the region were illiterate, peasants throughout

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the region showed little interest in nationalist crusades, and nations were so intermingled and overlapping that boundaries could not be drawn between them. Nationalism remained an elite pastime well into the twentieth century. Nation-building included forced population transfers managed by bureaucratic elites. Lest there be any doubt about either the link between the state and the nation or the link between both and the economic interests of the urban elite, Roudometof shows, for instance, that most Balkan nationalists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were directly employed by the state. The creation of professional national armies provides one of the most interesting examples of this nexus. Such armies offered good careers to young professionals while there were wars to fight. New nationalist ideologies provided plenty of reasons to fight wars to reclaim 'lost' territory, disseminating a culture of irredentism. Nevertheless, the continuing prominence of national intermixing and the reluctance of peasants to become nationalists fostered alternative approaches to modernization such as the idea of transnational citizenship that lay at the heart of Yugoslavism. However, the Yugoslav state failed to resolve the problem of what to do with competing nationalist claims to statehood and was also unable to build a prosperous economy, which led ultimately to its demise.

It is the demise of Yugoslavia and the birth of a universal system of nation-states in the Balkans—for the first time in the 1990s—that provides the historical context for Malović and Selnow's study. Malović and Selnow provide a detailed study of the media in post-independence Croatia, showing that nationalists there were not confident enough of the veracity of their claims to allow the public to make their own minds up. Franjo Tuđman's government removed most of the outward signs of media censorship but exerted as much control over the media as its communist predecessor. As evidence suggested that only 10 per cent of Croats got their news from newspapers, the government granted *de jure* freedom of the press. In fact, though, it sold the largest numbers of newspapers to members of the ruling party. Formerly well-respected publications such as *Vjesnik* and *Slobodna dalmacija* became nothing more than mouthpieces of the government. Although independent papers such as the notorious *Feral tribune* were not closed down, the government controlled its distribution through the monopoly distribution agency Tisak, which it refused to privatize. It also imposed extra taxes on the *Feral* because of its supposedly 'pornographic' content. In the mid-1990s, a single edition of *Feral* cost more than a packet of foreign cigarettes. Because 90 per cent of the population got its news from television, Tuđman controlled the broadcast media much more rigidly. Party propaganda was peddled as news and independent journalism was frowned upon. However, despite mobilizing the power of the state to control the media and articulate a particular vision of national identity, there was resistance. In the second half of the 1990s, independent journalists battled against the odds to establish independent newspapers. When the government tried to take Radio 101 off the air because of its opposition, 100,000 people took to the streets of Zagreb, forcing the government to back down.

Taken together, these studies reveal two remarkable points that ought to reframe the way we think about the Balkan crises of the 1990s. Firstly, Roudometof shows that the growth of nationalism was intimately tied to the development of local states with the latter producing the former. This places the birth of nations in the region much later than has commonly been thought. Indeed it was not until well into the twentieth century that mass movements resembling nations were created. It is well worth remembering, for instance, that in 1939 the *Ustaša* Croatian fascist movement numbered less than 2,000 and the largest political party in Croatia was a peasants' party that married ruralism, nationalism and confederal pan-Slavism. Secondly, Malović and Selnow show that the 'explosion' of nationalism in the 1990s was nothing of the sort. It was stage-managed and predicated, once again, on the mobilization of the power of the state. While these books have individual flaws—Roudometof's account begins to fall apart when he gets to the formation of the first Yugoslavia; Malović and Selnow do not say much that is new and provide only a cursory account of Yugoslavia's media liberalization in the late 1980s—taken together they are indicative of a returning sophistication to Balkans studies.

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