

## BOOK REVIEWS

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***Beyond Mosque, Church and State: Alternative Narratives of the Nation in the Balkans.*** Ed. Theodora Dragostinova and Yana Hashamova. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016. xi, 321 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Tables. \$60.00, hard bound.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.19

This volume is based on a 2011 conference held at Ohio State University. Nearly all the chapters address issues that pertain to the former Yugoslavia or its successor states (Bosnia, FYR Macedonia) and/or Bulgaria. Overall, the volume is a good representation of western liberal mainstream scholarship about these countries. The volume is divided into two parts: the first part consists of six chapters that discuss several issues of historical scholarship, while the second part consists of five chapters that focus on contemporary issues. Some chapters are better than others, and for edited volumes that is a judgment often dictated by the reader's topic of interest. Still, the thematic coverage is, for the most part, limited to just a portion of the countries typically subsumed under the rubric of the Balkans or southeastern Europe. Given the volume's focus on South Slavic nations, the editors' failure to cover the rest of the region's countries in sufficient depth might not be a serious concern for this journal's audience.

Irrespectively, the majority of the chapters are well-written and the authors are knowledgeable about their topics. As the introductory chapter makes clear, the range of topics is restricted to what the authors and editors deem as outsider or marginal perspectives. These topics include: an analysis of demographic trends concerning the consolidation of Muslim communities in the Ottoman era, the different ways the Ottoman legacy influenced nation-making, images of the nation in official classifications or the popular press, the role of cultural artifacts and intellectuals in the communist and post-communist eras, the relationship between gender and authority structures, and a really interesting chapter on the recent rise of extreme-right Bulgarian nationalists (or populists). Given space restrictions, it is not possible to review in length the specifics of each chapter. Instead, my remarks focus on the volume as a whole.

Most chapters rely mainly upon US-based Area Studies experts and that in turn leads to a nearly uncritical duplication of the field's widely known "knowledge base." Area Studies is well-known, however, for its US foreign policy-oriented biases. This orientation is acutely reflected throughout the volume. For example, in his chapter, Ipek K. Yosmanoglu notes that L.S. Stavrianos' classic study *The Balkans Since 1453*, originally published in 1958, reappeared unrevised in a new edition in 2000 (57–58). The point is well-taken but only highlights the limits of the shared conceptual universe that manifests itself throughout the volume's pages. The list of historians who have made significant contributions includes Charles and Barbara Jelavich, Mark Mazower, Georges Castellan, Traian Stoianovich, and Richard Clogg. In addition, there are also social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and others) too numerous to even attempt a partial enumeration here.

Given the volume's title, my initial impression was that this collection of essays would feature the historians' engagement with alternative conceptions of the nation in the region. I offered a birds' eye view of such conceptions in my book *Nationalism, Globalization and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans* (2001). I was hopeful that historical research could offer additional archival material or fresh interpretations, but my expectations were misplaced. Instead of exploring the *actual* historical alternatives to the modern nations in the region, most of

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the chapters simply present rather well-known evidence that shows the discrepancy between nationalist rhetoric and the real historical record. Of course, the goal of publicizing this discrepancy is praiseworthy; as in several nation-states, the official versions of national history fail to conform to the actual historical record. Having said that, though, it is necessary to observe that in several chapters authors largely reiterate existing knowledge or add very little that is fresh or advancing regional scholarship. In other words, it is debatable whether the volume as a whole ultimately succeeds in truly advancing historical knowledge. While individual chapters sketch alternatives *against* the dominant national narratives, there is no theoretical strategy that goes *beyond* church, mosque, and state. In this regard, the title appears to exaggerate the actual objectives realized in the book's pages.

If one looks upon the volume in terms of its positive contribution to knowledge (as opposed to merely destabilizing dominant versions of various local national narratives), then it is fair to say that the volume's chapters demonstrate the processes through which several agents of the Balkan nation-states have engulfed a multitude of local identities in order to obtain the much-cherished objective of national conformity or homogeneity. But that is not different from what has been done everywhere else in the world. Lamenting nation making is pointless: after all, the entire globe is organized on such a basis. The theoretical relationship between the region's route to modernity and ethnic conflict—an issue I have sought to explain in my 2001 book—remains outside the authors' scope. In all fairness, this failure reflects the broader marginality of Balkan studies and an inability to break with the methodological nationalism that informs the shared worldview of so many scholars in the region. One of the pervasive features of the post-1989 era is the failure of the entire field of Area Studies *as such* to come to terms with the post-Cold War realignment and the critical challenge of globalization for the field. Over the last few years, this issue has been a topic raised in ASEEES presidential addresses; and this journal's readers should be sufficiently familiar with the overall problematic. Therefore, this is not an issue that concerns solely or exclusively this volume, but of course, that by no means suggests that one should turn a blind eye toward these matters.

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***Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion.*** By Gareth Stedman Jones. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016. xii, 750 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. Maps. \$35.00, hard bound.  
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Why would a specialist in Russian and east European history feel the need to read a biography about Karl Marx? First and foremost, presumably, because of the immense influence of Marx's ideas on Russian history. If this is our motivation, Gareth Stedman Jones tells us we are deeply mistaken: Marx had barely any influence at all on the Social Democratic movement prior to World War I, either in Germany, Russia, or anywhere else. The widespread impression to the contrary is the result of efforts by German Social Democrats at the end of the nineteenth century to give themselves a respectable pedigree by constructing a cult of Marx. In reality, their "Marxism" consisted mostly of the scientism of Friedrich Engels' *Anti-Dühring* and a desire to imitate Charles Darwin. The canon of Marx's texts created after the Russian revolution of 1917—including the *Communist Manifesto*—is an ahistorical fake: "It was only in the twentieth century, as a result of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the foundation of the Comintern,