

READING

BETWEEN THE LINES

Dave Chandler looks at some lessons learned in the Bosnian conflict

THE END OF SOVEREIGNTY?

THE WARRIOR'S HONOR: ETHNIC WAR AND THE MODERN CONSCIENCE

Michael Ignatieff
Chatto & Windus
£10.99 pbk

DIVIDE AND FALL?: BOSNIA IN THE ANNALS OF PARTITION

Radha Kumar
Verso, £14 hbk

THE FRAGMENTATION OF YUGOSLAVIA: NATIONALISM IN A MULTINATIONAL STATE

Aleksandar Pavković
Macmillan
£42 hbk

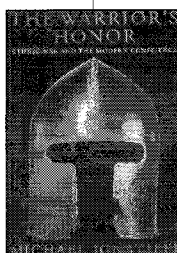
IN 1991 THERE WERE NO FOREIGN TROOPS IN the Balkans; today NATO and United Nations troops are encamped in southern Hungary, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania, and have an indefinite mandate to remain in Bosnia. The UN high administrator for Bosnia has assumed legislative, executive and judicial powers over the new state, and can dismiss elected representatives and impose legislation against the will of elected governments at state, entity and municipal levels. Now there are growing calls for wider international mandates to be extended to Serbia's troubled province of Kosovo without restrictive UN Security Council resolutions. The books reviewed here all attempt to address this transformation of traditional norms of international relations and to analyse the ever-expanding role of the international community in the Balkans.

Michael Ignatieff's collection of essays, *The Warrior's Honor*, highlights the misanthropy inherent in what he calls today's 'moral internationalism' which is built on the fear of human evil. By contrast, says Ignatieff, the universalistic ideology of international relations in the

past at least paid lip service to humanity's capacity for good. The redefinition of conflict as a series of crimes against humanity carried out in a struggle between abusers and their victims has created a narrow moral framework for understanding the world.

In the book's central essay Ignatieff examines how the old-fashioned universality of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stands in direct contrast to the 'moral internationalism' of groups like Human Rights Watch and Médecins sans Frontières. Since the founding of the ICRC in 1863, the organisation has upheld the doctrine of neutrality and a universal approach to war with every combatant and prisoner treated equally.

In the 1990s this approach has been out of line with the new moralistic view of international relations; in the Bosnian conflict, for example, many argued that intervention could not be impartial between Serbs and Muslims. This contrast, for Ignatieff, was epitomised by the ITN news pictures of Trnopolje which, in the eyes of the world, turned a transit camp into a death camp, while 'the Red Cross delegates on the scene watched ⇨



IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD THE ITN NEWS PICTURES OF TRNOPOLJE TURNED A TRANSIT CAMP INTO A DEATH CAMP, WHILE, SAYS IGNATIEFF, 'THE RED CROSS DELEGATES ON THE SCENE WATCHED THE ENSUING MEDIA CIRCUS WITH DISBELIEF'

the ensuing media circus with disbelief' (pp136-7). Alone among international humanitarian organisations, the ICRC refused to compromise its neutrality by giving evidence to the International War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague. It was also the only such organisation providing assistance to the 200 000 Krajina Serbs who were driven from Croatia in 1995, in the war's biggest single act of 'ethnic cleansing'.

Radha Kumar's *Divide and Fall?* puts the new interventionist capacity of major powers in the broader historical context of overcoming the negative legacy of imperialism. The international institutional arrangements established at the end of the Second World War, and preserved unchanged during the Cold War, were shaped by the postcolonial experience, privileging state sovereignty and limiting the rights of great powers to intervene. For Kumar, Bosnia has been an experimental ground for rewriting the rule book and for testing the new post-Cold War possibilities that have opened up for international peacekeeping interventions. She notes that this involvement has proved so attractive that it has been difficult 'to walk away from', so that 'each half-hearted intervention, however delusory, led to an expansion rather than curtailment of involvement' (p37).

Through a comparative study of the politics of partition, Kumar illustrates the international policy shift that has taken place in Bosnia. She divides international policymaking on Bosnia into three periods: 'divide and rule' from the recognition of Bosnia in 1992, where the international community is alleged to have followed a traditional peacekeeping approach of neutrality while the Bosnian factions sought to divide the state; 'divide and quit' from mid-1994 onwards, where Bosnia was divided on the international community's terms, and where there was a 'move away from letting domestic actors set the terms of negotiation and a move towards enlarging the role of European institutions' (p72); and 'divide and fall?' after the Dayton peace agreement, when what looked like a temporary international administration over a divided state turned into an indefinite external administration over a marginally more united one. This third stage in Kumar's view demonstrates the overcoming of the colonial legacy, so that partition is no longer seen as 'the lesser evil' to external administrations. This, Kumar thinks, has facilitated a new positive role for the international community, going beyond securing the peace to overcoming ethnic divisions through long-term regulation.

KUMAR'S HISTORY DOES NOT ONLY REWRITE the experience of international involvement in the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, but also revises the colonial experience itself. In her reading the emphasis is on how premature and enforced colonial withdrawal allowed ethnic divisions to re-emerge, rather than

on how domination by foreign powers created or institutionalised ethnic segmentation.

Aleksandar Pavković's *Fragmentation of Yugoslavia* rightly questions the view that international peacekeeping in the Balkans has curbed ethnic rivalry or nationalist competition. He does not shirk from emphasising the importance of ethnic nationalist ideologies in the region, and begins by charting the rise of the national myths of Balkan groups such as the Croats, Serbs and Albanians and the conflicting nature of their territorial claims. He also explains the limitations of Tito's promotion of Yugoslavism in the 1950s, and how these national myths were used by the different elites in the Yugoslav republics in the 1970s and 1980s, as they fought over dwindling state resources. However, Pavković makes it clear that ethnic segmentation and conflicting nationalist ideologies were not enough to explain why the attempt to resolve the divisions between the Yugoslav republics ended in war. The military solution only became attractive, or even possible, once the international community entered the equation.

US AND EUROPEAN PRESSURE WHICH INSISTED that the Yugoslav state could not resort to force to defend its territorial integrity first put to question Yugoslav sovereignty, and encouraged fragmentation. In 1991 the European Union took over from the Yugoslav government as conflict mediator, proposed dividing Yugoslavia along existing republic borders, and offered little possibility of arbitration over disputed regions. It was this internationally imposed solution that undermined the possibility of a negotiated compromise or even the peaceful alteration of republic borders, which were originally drawn on the basis of preventing separation rather than to facilitate it.

Kumar welcomes the current indefinite extensions to the international community mandates in Bosnia as a commitment to challenge ethnic nationalism. There is little evidence that this is the case. Enforcing international policy through imposing legislation over the heads of elected representatives has done little to dampen tensions and insecurities in the region. With Bosnian institutions having no real authority, fear that externally decided policies will question entity borders or existing rights to land, homes and employment has led to high levels of support for nationalist parties and the marginalisation of political alternatives.

As Pavković suggests, international regulation has enforced rather than mitigated the importance of nationalism. The same point is made by Ignatieff who forcefully argues that the causative order of Balkan conflict has been, firstly, the collapse or weakening of states in the region, which then made interethnic accommodation more difficult and in turn fuelled nationalist fears and ethnic tensions. ●

