

Book Reviews

David Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton* (London: Pluto Press, 1999, 239 pp., £14.99 pbk.).

While the Kosovo crisis has provoked a renewed interest in Yugoslavia, the demand for analysis of the Bosnian war has continued unabated. David Chandler's new work contributes to the ongoing debate about Western involvement in the Balkans, combining the merits of a concise analysis of the Dayton Peace Accord (DPA), with an up-to-date summary of the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This book is divided into eight chapters, the first being a detailed and concise literature review. The author has collected, read, and summarised a vast number of books and articles on democratic theory and the Bosnian war. Nevertheless, the author fails to advance any of his own arguments, nor does he compare and contrast viewpoints; this is an annotated bibliography, nothing more. While interesting, none of this theory is used to analyse the aftermath of the Dayton Peace Accord, engendering false expectations from its beginning.

The remaining seven chapters deal with various aspects of the DPA, most notably, how international involvement in Bosnia to promote democratic transition, power-sharing, and the construction of a civil society has actually isolated the population. In his first chapter on Dayton, Chandler introduces his central thesis, that the DPA has led to less rather than more democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The author argues that Bosnian self-rule has been restrained by strict provisions, while the international community have been given a free hand to expand and redefine its mandate at will. Included here are useful sections on the background to Dayton, the Lisbon Agreement and the Vance-Owen Plan, as well as a detailed summary of the DPA itself, complete with commentary on all 11 Annexes, summaries of the international decision making bodies, and notes on new state institutions.

In his chapter on 'Power-Sharing and Multi-Ethnic Administrations', Chandler details the problems of overemphasis on multi-ethnic cooperation, decentralisation of political power, and the granting of protection to minority groups. This focus has significantly reduced the power of democratically elected nationalist parties, which account for some 85 per cent of the popular vote. Chandler carefully reviews various elected bodies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, highlighting their lack of real power, and the need for change. Notable case studies on local elections in Mostar, Sarajevo, and Brcko prove the point. Election results were disregarded in favour of ethnic balance in the allocation of seats. An interesting pattern thus emerges—the international community suppresses nationalism and nationalist parties while upholding ethnic balancing and ethnic keys—a vague throwback to Titoist times.

The strategy of the international community is explored in Chandler's chapter on 'The Protection of Human Rights'. This protection is the central goal for outside parties who have tried to reverse 'the most flagrant violation of humans rights in recent European history', and its concomitant, 'the factor of fear' (p. 90). These principles, the author posits, have been at the root of the DPA. A review of 16

human rights conventions imposed on Bosnia, however, exposes a contradiction: many of the external powers imposing the DPA are not themselves signatories of these conventions, most notably the United States. Chandler also attacks the 'tip of the iceberg' theory, that there are far more human rights abuses than have been reported. This, he claims, is a dangerous assumption, considering that the largest human rights monitoring force in history has been assembled in Bosnia.

Chandler's discussion of 'Political Pluralism' highlights the suppression of the nationalist media. Again, he posits that the international community has failed; its 'Media Experts Commission' has created heavy-handed and cumbersome pronouncements for Bosnian journalists. Included in this chapter is an analysis of the 1997 elections, and the suppression of nationalism. At issue here is the international community's suppression of nationalism in favour of moderate multi-ethnic parties, which it has been vigorously supporting.

Chandler's chapter on civil society examines the role of the 'Democratisation Branch' of the OSCE in promoting indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), in the hope of constructing a coherent civil society with democratic norms. This he feels is an important precondition for democracy and compliments the large amount of external capital used to finance independent candidates and moderate opposition groups. The main problem highlighted here is the fact that the international community is in fact running the country, making it difficult for NGOs to have any real power. Another problem is that externally funded NGOs do not have a strong base of popular support. In this sense, the civil society being created is artificial.

Chandler's 'Assessments' are particularly useful. The problem, as he sees it, lies in 'more democratisation but less democracy' (p. 155), a strategy which has restricted Bosnian self government, while increasingly bogging down outside actors in 'long term strategies' and expanded mandates. This chapter summarises dissatisfaction from a variety of camps, offering 'official', 'liberal', and 'conservative' assessments of the problem, and a useful section on the contradictions embedded in policy towards Bosnia, which will only exacerbate tensions in the future.

While the first chapter is poorly structured—a collage of writings rather than any sort of analysis—the rest of the book is a welcome contribution to the debate over Western intervention in Bosnia. Chandler succinctly analyses the Bosnian political situation and the outcome of the DPA, highlighting problems and contradictions, while offering some useful prescriptions. The most glaring problem with this book is the choice of source material. While the Internet is a useful medium for research, most of the author's primary sources are gleaned from it, seemingly in a 'download, cut-and-paste' style. Nevertheless, for a detailed discussion of the Dayton Peace Accord, there is no better book on the market at present.

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