

International Affairs

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The culture of power in Serbia: nationalism and the destruction of alternatives. By Eric D. Gordy. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press. 1999. 230pp. Index. \$17.95. ISBN 0 271 01958 1.

In the wake of the Balkan myth: questions of identity and modernity. By David A. Norris. Basingstoke: Macmillan. 1999. 182pp. Index. £42.50. ISBN 0 333 75168 x.

Bosnia: faking democracy after Dayton. By David Chandler. London: Pluto. 1999. 224pp. Index. £45.00 ISBN 0 7453 1408 2. Pb.: £14.95. ISBN 0 7453 1403 1.

In *Bosnia: faking democracy after Dayton*, David Chandler has written a book that is likely to be highly unpopular in most European foreign ministries, and the US State Department in particular. But its polemical title and the fact that it is published by a small left-wing firm should not detract from its importance. It is the first well-researched and systematic study of the actual implementation of the Dayton Accords over the years since they were signed in 1995, and for any student of the region or participant in its affairs it makes sobering reading. Chandler has culled a wide range of sources for his material, both in Bosnia and in the reports of impartial outside organizations such as the International Crisis Group. Most of the field research seems to have been done in the summer of 1997, when the claim could still be made, prior to the Kosovo war, that Dayton had improved the general atmosphere in the region.

The full extent of media manipulation, slanted propaganda and sheer misrepresentation that surrounds the Accords has yet to be widely discussed. Chandler is very good on the degree of plain and simple coercion and bribery with aid money that determines how Bosnia is run, and on the rapacious corruption of the old elites whose power the Accords reinforced. The book is a goldmine of detailed information on what has happened in the country in the last four years, irrespective of whether one shares the author's outlook and political assumptions.

There is a simple and understandable reason for this distortion of reality, in that after the horrors of the Bosnian war, most opinion formers in the West have allowed a conspiracy of silence to develop, based on the reasonable argument that an imperfect peace is much preferable

to a war. But as Chandler shows, the whole Bosnian edifice is based on very insecure foundations involving Great Power interests that could change at any time. Genuine internal democracy in Bosnia is not a luxury that can be left until later but something that is needed urgently to enable the three entities involved to withstand change. Unfortunately, there is not much sign of this being recognized at the moment, particularly in the Clinton administration where a 'success' image for Dayton is still relevant to the Gore presidential election campaign.

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