

Igor Štiks

Nations and Citizens in Yugoslavia and the Post-Yugoslav States: One Hundred Years of Citizenship (London, UK & New York, USA: Bloomsbury, 2015) ISBN 978-1-4742-2152-8.

The first monograph by Igor Štiks, a Sarajevo-born Croatian scholar with a PhD from Sciences Po and Northwestern University, embodies a coming together of his two major research interests – citizenship and postsocialism. With the publication of this book, Štiks, currently a Leverhulme Fellow at the University of Edinburgh, accomplished a culmination of his research activities as part of the Europeanisation of Citizenship in the Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia (CITSEE) project.

This book represents an analysis of various citizenship concepts and practices employed in Yugoslavia and its successor states during the 1914–2014 period. If we bear in mind that Štiks is not just a scholar, but also an author of two critically acclaimed novels, we should not fail to notice that the book's subtitle is a clever and most fitting reference to García Márquez. As a novelist, Štiks deals with multiple identities, love and family relations torn by war, emigration, and betrayal. Thus, his two personas – the literary and the scholarly one – show the same passion for questions of belonging and construction and destruction of identities that are so carefully dealt with in this book. Štiks is also known in Croatia for his civic activism.

Following a contemporary approach to the concept, the author understands citizenship both as status (in terms of civic rights and obligations), as well as quality (in terms of possibilities for political participation). As Štiks rightly notes, citizenship always implies a certain privilege (over non-citizens and not-fully-citizens) and thus creates hierarchical power relations between different groups of inhabitants of a given state. Another key concept in his analysis is citizenship regime, the set of legal acts and accompanying policies that govern a state's approach to citizenship. Štiks highlights the importance of citizenship regimes as reference frameworks that can construct, deconstruct and reconstruct personal and collective identities. In addition, the author supplements his analysis of formal rules governing citizenship with an assessment of informal practices that include contestation of existing norms, as well as systemic unequal treatment of groups of citizens despite formal equal citizenship status.

Štiks points out that the first Yugoslav state was hard-pressed between federalist forces that advocated a multinational understanding of the political community and unitary forces that envisaged a single, ethnic Yugoslav identity.

The Yugoslav monarchy inherited a patchwork of different citizenship practices that it only managed to replace by a single citizenship law at the end of the 1920s, during the dictatorship of King Alexander I.

When discussing the emergence of the Second Yugoslavia and its federalist approach to citizenship through concurrent republican and federal citizenship, the author identifies the intellectual influences of Austro-Marxism as precursors for Yugoslav socialist federalism that constituted an attempt to solve the so-called national question (demands for self-government of different ethnic groups) and represented a turn away from integralist Yugoslavism. Štiks explains how the citizenship law became a tool to exclude ideological foes from the new Yugoslavia, foremost ethnic Germans and Italians. Furthermore, he also shows how the socialist citizenship regime in Yugoslavia developed and transformed parallel to numerous constitutional and institutional experiments and the gradual shift from a centralized federation (1940s to 1960s) to a decentralized federation, almost akin to a confederation (1970s to 1980s).

In his assessment of post-Yugoslav citizenship regimes as part of a wider practice of ethnic engineering and ethnonationalist state building, Štiks detected four distinct categories of citizens – the included, the invited, the excluded and the self-excluded. The included were the holders of republican citizenships that automatically became citizens of the newly established sovereign states. The invited consisted of members of the titular ethnic group residing abroad that were deliberately included in the new political communities through citizen regimes that emphasized ethnic origin as a decisive criterion for granting of citizenship. The excluded were holders of republican citizenships that resided in another republic at the time of the breakup of the Yugoslav state. These citizens had to undergo a naturalization process as if they were immigrants. Finally, the self-excluded were members of ethnic minorities that did not accept the legitimacy of the new sovereign states, but instead sought to either establish self-governing entities or secede and attach themselves to the state where their co-ethnics constituted a majority.

The author concludes his analysis on an optimistic note, with an appraisal of the supranational concept of EU citizenship. He suggests that EU citizenship offers a potential of reconnecting individual destinies fragmented by national post-Yugoslav citizenship regimes and enables an equitable approach to citizenship as both status and quality.

The writing style of the author is very agreeable, which makes the subject matter accessible even to undergraduate students. Yet, although Štiks's work represents an excellent piece of research, he occasionally treats complex topics relating to the history of Yugoslavia and its successor states in a somewhat

superficial way. Readers interested in both citizenship regimes and postsocialism, yet without extensive understanding of Yugoslav history, could have benefitted from the book even more if Štiks had expanded some of the chapters and included more references that would have provided additional context. By skimming over some of the more intricate debates about Yugoslavia, Štiks sometimes just provides a single view on a given issue, without mentioning alternative perspectives.

Nevertheless, this book is a highly recommendable read for students and scholars of citizenship studies. In addition, it should be on the reading list for everyone interested in the rise and fall of the Yugoslav state(s), as well as specific traits of democratic transition and consolidation in post-Yugoslav countries. Besides the plethora of existing research on the causes for the Yugoslav breakup, this book offers a fresh and engaging approach to the complexities of the centennial project of construction of Yugoslavia as a political community. Finally, readers interested in debates on the fundamental questions of politics, such as the questions of constitution of political communities and the subsequent processes of inclusion and exclusion, the role of the citizen in a political community and the interplay of individual and collective identities, shall find Štiks's analysis most compelling and satisfying.

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