Robert M. Hayden’s *From Yugoslavia to the Western Balkans*  
A comment  

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Robert Hayden is among the most prolific American scholars of the former Yugoslavia, and this new volume showcases the breadth of topics he has written about over the past two decades. It is also illustrative of why Hayden is one of the most provocative observers of Yugoslavia’s dissolution, as he meticulously and uncompromisingly tackles numerous controversial topics such as genocide debates, victimization narratives, the role of the international community, the perennial crises of post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, and integration into the European Union. The fact that this volume is not based upon new research, but rather is a collection of previously published journal articles and chapters, is both the book’s strength and its major weakness. Hayden was active in many of the scholarly debates in the 1990s as the Yugoslav tragedy unfolded, and his articles often read like policy papers rather than academic reflections written long after the events they are describing unfolded. In this sense, we get a revealing look into the often fiery and passionate polemics that had divided the American academic community working on Yugoslavia as the country was falling apart.

About half of the chapters in this book were published in the 1990s and appear to have been left in their original version. While this does provide the reader with some insight into how one author’s understanding of the Yugoslav wars developed over time, more recent scholarship and the revelations of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) have clarified many events and processes that were impossible to grasp as the war was still raging, such as the extent of Serbia’s involvement in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (pp. 222, 229). Thus, parts of the book feel woefully outdated considering the book was published in 2013. Moreover, the lack of any editing has resulted in the repetition of entire paragraphs and sections, such as the discussion on mixed marriages (pp. 10–11, 92–93). Nevertheless, because this volume
is a collection of articles and not a monograph to be read from cover to cover, this is a minor nuisance considering the wealth of material it contains. The only new text is the final chapter, "From Euphoria to eu-goslavia," which serves as a kind of warning that the same institutional weaknesses that undermined Yugoslavia potentially threaten the long-term stability of the EU. Comparing the EU institutional structure to some aspects of Yugoslavia's 1974 Constitution, especially in light of the ongoing global economic crisis, Hayden wryly concludes: "It would appear that Edvard Kardelj is alive and living in Brussels" (p. 386).

Hayden, a professor of both Law and Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, applies both of his fields of expertise in analyzing the complexities of Yugoslavia's demise and the ongoing state- and nation-building processes in the successor states. His research on multinational relations in South Asia and his extensive fieldwork in the former Yugoslavia since the early 1980s lend a comparative yet in-depth perspective on many of the issues raised in this collection. As a constitutionalist, Hayden frequently sparred with those scholars who supported the independence of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and he continues to criticize harshly the international community's selective use of 'humanrightism' (p. 236) to justify some interventions and cases of ethnic cleansing while ignoring others. The first Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, the ICTY (where Hayden testified as an expert witness several times), the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and overly moralistic Western scholars are frequent targets of his acerbic observations of the post-war situation in the region. One may not always agree with him or his style, but credit has to be given to Hayden for raising issues that his fellow scholars hesitate to discuss, such as sexual violence, the discourses of genocide and genocide denial, and the international community’s ‘one size fits all’ moral vision of anti-nationalism. He admits that some of the questions he posits, such as the critical deconstruction of the rhetoric of genocide in the case of Srebrenica, “will be distasteful to many readers,” but argues that “avoiding an issue because it is uncomfortable is itself of dubious morality” (p. 141).

The volume is organized into four thematic (rather than chronological) sections: “Unstaking Vampires: Destroying the Yugoslav Nation and State,” “The Power of Labeling: Discourses on Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing and Population Transfers,” “Humanitarian Hypocrisy,” and “Un-imaging Communities.” As stated in the short introduction, Hayden has written in great depth on several specific topics, rather than attempting an all-encompassing synthesis of Yugoslavia's dissolution by adopting the ‘ethnography of the present’ approach (p. xii). There are also several concepts – for example, identity politics, the symbolic and legalistic construction of the Other, victimization narratives, and