

Overall, *The Greeks: A Global History* provides a very interesting and dynamic read that seeks to present the Greeks and their history as a sophisticated patchwork of identity phases, each of which has had a global influence in its unique way and all of which have contributed to what we today think of as *the Greek identity*. The book's depth and

style of argumentation allows the reader to go through the various historical stages without difficulty and gain valuable insight into how the Greeks were shaped as a people, depending on the specific circumstances they found themselves in.

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Repeating History 1941–1991? Two break-ups of Yugoslavia as Repeated History? Serbian Perspectives, edited by Predrag J. Marković, Bojan B. Dimitrijević.
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In 2021 the Institute for Contemporary history published a collection titled "Repeating History 1941–1991? Two break-ups of Yugoslavia as Repeated History? Serbian Perspectives" As the introductory essay by Predrag Marković makes clear, the articles contained in the volume are not exercises in comparative history. Rather, they investigate select episodes from 1941 and 1991 "side-by-side". Marković asks the reader to be wary of hasty comparisons and draw his own conclusions.

In "The April War of 1941" historians Marko B. Miletić and Miloš Žikić recount the main course of the German invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941. The reader is offered a vivid presentation of combat operations along the main thrusts of the German attack. While mostly covering familiar historiographical ground, the narration of combat operations is interspersed with numerous nuggets. The invasion, for example, did not start - as almost universally believed - with the bombing of Belgrade on April 6, but with a forced crossing of Danube by a German unit around Đerdap in the late hours of April 5. The Yugoslav army assumed it would hold the

attacker back for six weeks. Instead, the war was over in barely two weeks. Ever since the end of the Second World War, the sudden collapse of the Yugoslav war effort prompted the Serb and Croat historiography to trade accusations, the former blaming the defeat on the unwillingness of the Croats to take up the fight against the invader, and the later pointing out the general lack of military competency and meek response to mobilization. In Miletić and Žikić's account, the primary way the national tensions sabotaged the defense was through the adoption of a flawed military plan, which placed the bulk of the troops near to Yugoslav borders as Slovenes and Croats were unwilling to fight outside their home regions. Without a deep strategic reserve, the Yugoslav army stood no chance against a better armed and more experienced enemy. Finally, the Yugoslav high command shares no small part of the blame, as it failed to call up the reservists on time. To circle back to the questions posed by Marković's prefatory essay, we might say that the national problems greatly hampered the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) war effort in Croatia as well, as most non-Serbs either defected

or were unwilling to fight, but then again, the “second” Yugoslav army did not fight a foreign invader in 1991.

The second article in the collection, “The Bulgarian Occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941”, by Boris Tomanić, details the reasons for, and the nature of, the Bulgarian occupation of eastern parts of Yugoslavia in 1941. While the essay is rich in historical detail, based on unpublished material from Serbian and Bulgarian archives, we may say that the broader lesson for the comparison of 1941 and 1991 is that in the latter year no equivalent of Bulgarian occupation materialized, as all neighboring countries largely sat on the sidelines as the Yugoslav wars raged.

Radosav Tucović’s article “Occupational Police Formations in Serbia during 1941: Structural Organization, Police Practice and Problems” lays out the initial conception and evolution of the German policing forces in the occupied Serbia. The key obstacles faced by the Germans were lack of policemen and insufficient knowledge of local circumstances. While the recruitment of the Danube Swabians, *Volksdeutscher*, solved the first problem, it was by finding willing accomplices in the prewar Serbian police that the Germans solved the second problem.

The next two articles in the volume treat the anti-Axis resistance forces. “The Uprising and Creation of Free Territory in Serbia in the Period July-October 1941” by Nemanja Dević, narrates the story of the Serb uprising against the Germans in western Serbia in the latter half of 1941. The territory freed by the insurgents - the communist-led partisans and the royalist forces *chetniks* - commonly goes by the name *Republic of Užice*. This is misleading, as Dević suggests, not only

because the control over the territory was hotly contested by the Germans or because it comprised *chetniks* strongholds, but also because, ironically enough, the partisans themselves eschewed the name initially so as to hide revolutionary goals of their struggle from the Allies.

“Resistance in Belgrade 1941” by Rade Ristanović discusses various forms of resistance against the German regime in Belgrade in 1941. Earlier historiographical works that dealt with this topic focused on the communist-led struggle, so it is a welcome change that the author includes various forms of civil disobedience, and individual efforts to save the Belgrade Jews from destruction. Belgrade was even in prewar years a hotbed of anti-German sentiment. Nevertheless, Ristanović reminds us, the fact that in the last six months of 1941 over 68 armed attacks on occupying or collaborations forces occurred is a notable feat at the time most European capitals remained silent. However, it is a testimony to ruthless efficacy of the occupation regime that by the second half of 1942 even communists suspended their attacks on the Germans and their collaborators.

The two preceding essays most readily bring to mind those features of 1941 that, from the Serb perspective, differed most starkly from 1991. The wars started in 1991 had almost no guerrilla aspects, as wars were fought between states or state-supported forces and the cities were either sieged, reduced to rubble or thoroughly “cleansed” of their inhabitants.

The next article of the collection touches on the issue usually ignored by more traditionally oriented histories. “Women in Occupied Serbia in 1941” by Ljubinka Škodrić describes how the war

changed the position of women from playing a subordinate role in households to taking over more traditional male roles as men were either engaged in combat or faced heavy scrutiny by the occupiers. The collaborators, above all the ultraconservative *Zbor*, used the war to double down on their patriarchal political program with women relegated to domestic roles only. While the Ravna Gora movement neither imposed nor held definitive political views with regard to women's role in society, the old-guard officer corps and largely rural background of its rank-and-file cemented the subordinated position of women, some notable exceptions notwithstanding (Milka Baković and Jelena Kalabić Đorić). The communists, on the other hand, attracted far more female fighters, but as their rank-and-file shared the same rural background as the traditionalist Ravna Gora movement, women were again gradually relegated to noncombat roles. Not even an openly emancipatory and modernizing outlook, that the communists, as it were, wore on their sleeves, could subdue the stubborn attachments to the "old ways".

Dragomir Bondžić investigated the actions, or rather, the fate of the Serbian elites in 1941. "Serbian Intellectual Elite in 1941" details the bearing and doings of members of the Serbian Royal Academy and the teachers of the University of Belgrade. Some resisted the occupiers, others collaborated, while most hunkered down and focused on survival. Whatever agency the Serbian elites possessed in the Royal Yugoslavia was quickly shattered by the German onslaught. The Serbian elites from these two venerable institutions, of course, played an almost exact opposite role in the run-up to the Yu-

goslav wars in what we may term was a profusion of agency.

The last paper in the first part of the collection, by Goran Miloradović, touches on the thorny issue of how to classify the Ustasha movement. In "Ustasha Ideology in the European Context in the 20th Century: An Attempt at a Typology of Modern Dictatorships" Miloradović tries to disentangle the foreign from the domestic factors that shaped the Ustasha ideology. As the bulky title already indicates, this is a taxing endeavor. It is not possible to economically reproduce Miloradović's take, but suffice it to say that any attempt to reduce the Ustasha ideology to either fascism or Croat nationalism would be inadequate.

The second part of the collection comprises four articles dealing with causes of the Yugoslav wars, war aims, the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), and the founding of the Republic of Serb Krajina.

Vladimir Petrović in "Becoming Inevitable: Yugoslav Descent to War Revisited" asks the reader to bracket the hindsight knowledge and the common wisdom according to which the Yugoslav wars were unavoidable. This allows him to trace the actions through which first the dissolution and then the wars indeed became inevitable. The dissolution point, according to Petrović, was reached in the spring of 1990 as the "decision" was made to hold elections in separate republics rather than on the federal level. Petrović suggests that the federal authorities, although greatly weakened by that time, could have pushed the country into staging the federal elections first. The second point of no return was reached as the JNA continued its bellicose actions and the Slovene and Croat leadership pressed on with

the independency drive in 1991. As Petrović himself hints at the “phantom-like” qualities of the federal institutions and the plebiscitary support behind the republics’ starkly conflicting goals, the article is perhaps best read as an invitation to imagine a different future rather than as questioning, well, the inevitable past.

Kosta Nikolić in “On the War Aims in the 1991–1992 Yugoslav Conflict” discusses the war aims of the main protagonists. The key point, according to Nikolić, is that all had double goals: the open goals were meant to appeal to domestic or foreign audience, while the hidden goals were nothing but naked nationalism. In the Serbian case, the open goal was to protect or preserve Yugoslavia, while the hidden goal was to unity all Serbs in one state and organize the society on strictly ethnic grounds. We can add that the war aims in 1941, excluding the communists’ aims, were strikingly similar, except back then no one felt the need to hide anything.

In “Yugoslav People’s Army in Troublesome 1991.” Bojan Dimitrijević describes the makeup and exploits of the JNA in 1991. In painstaking detail, Dimitrijević narrates the fighting in Slovenia and Croatia, showing that what military successes it had, the JNA owed them almost entirely to armor and superior fire power. We note that the parallels to 1941 are again striking. Much as in 1941, the military leadership was indecisive and slow to adapt, and much like the Yugoslav royal army, which trained for positional warfare but faced the German blitzkrieg, so the JNA trained to fight NATO or the Soviets through operational warfare, but ended up fighting lightly armed irregulars.

In the concluding contribution of the volume, “The Birth of the Republic of Serb Krajina”, Milan Gulić spells out the goals and political transformations of the Republic of Serb Krajina. The received wisdom sees the Croatian Serbs’ actions as both fueling the Croat’s desire for independency and later on starting the war itself. Gulić, however, uses archival sources to show that the Croatian Serbs leadership saw themselves as reacting to Croatia’s moves. Their dissociation from Croatia followed in lockstep Croatia’s own dissociation from Yugoslavia. The year 1941 bore, of course, heavily on 1991, as the Serbs interpreted the events of 1991 as a repeat of 1941.

The collection presents a successful effort to deepen our knowledge of the fateful 1941 and 1991. In particular, the kaleidoscopic juxtaposition of the two years allows the reader to judge for himself how similar or dissimilar the two historical periods were.

Why do historians and informed citizens alike instinctively invoke historical parallels? The habit is so natural that we almost never question its usefulness. And yet a moment’s reflection confirms that comparing any two historical periods separated by enormous changes in technology, outlook, sentiment and worldviews can be a deeply problematic endeavor. For example, studying the military aspects of the Yugoslav wars in order to get a grip on how a potential war might look like in the Balkans would be a futile exercise now that drones dominate the battlefield. When the former US President Trump challenged the election results in 2020, the American pundits were quick to invoke the Weimer Germany. The present failings of the Russian military in

Ukraine are explained by some western military analysts as being due to a tradition of poor logistics going back all the way to the Tsardom of Russia!

What all these examples have in common is that they represent reasoning by analogy. We study an event and establish a causal connection where from A follows B. We then study a different event where we identify A and conclude that B must follow. We go off the rails if we (1) misidentify A or if (2) the connection between A and B is not as strong as we thought. For example, Trump, whatever his numerous vices, is not Hitler; but even if he were, the US is not Weimer Germany and so will not turn into a Nazi Germany if he were to obtain power again.

But it is not the case that we are simply fooled by faulty analogies. Rather, as Predrag Marković indicated at in his prefatory essay, conflating two otherwise distinct events, an “essentialist simplification”, can often be a strategy of self-justification. We know, in other words, that our analogy is flimsy, but we do not care, because it serves our political goals or validates are prejudices in a self-pleasing manner.

And yet there are cases where comparative history is indispensable. Say you study the economic development of Serbia in the 19th century. Some researchers claim that the exceedingly small landholdings of the Serbian peasantry due to the regulations instituted by Knez Miloš, hampered the economic development, because the Serbian agriculture could not achieve the necessary economies of scale to produce and market grain commodities efficiently. Romania in the 19th century, however, possessed exceedingly large landholdings. Was Romania a more effi-

cient agricultural producer at the time? South Korean land reforms after the Second World War parceled the Korean land into small lots. Was the South Korean agriculture as inefficient as the Serbian one?

Finally, rather than compare two historical episodes we might simply claim a clear causal connection. The Versailles treaty in a sense caused the Second World War. Or we might say that the atrocities visited upon the Serbs in the Second World War as well as the territorial arrangements adopted by the communists, caused the Yugoslav wars. The job of the historian is to make out this putative causal chain as transparent as possible.

To circle back to the theme of the collection, we should guard against self-serving analogies while being mindful of possible causal connections between the years 1941 and 1991. In terms of our present political concerns, the most pressing questions seem to us to be the following. Is it true that the Serb nationalism of the 90s was a repetition of the chetnik violence? Can we draw a clear line between Garašanin’s *Načertanije*, Moljević’s *Homogenous Serbia*, and the Serbian Academy of Science’s *Memorandum*? Was the Tuđman’s Croatia an NDH reincarnated? Is there a deep continuity between Ante Starčević’s racial harangues, the NDH regime, and Tuđman’s *Besupća Povijesne Zbiljnosti*? Did the Bosniak SDA strive for an Islamic Bosnia? What connection can we make out between the Resolution of Sarajevo Muslims in 1942 and Izetbegović’s *Islamska deklaracija*? While the way we posed these questions may seem suggestive of an answer, we are not convinced any easy answer is possible.

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