**From Sarajevo 1914 to Southeastern Europe 2014: Wars, Transitions and Controversies**

**By John R. Lampe, Professor Emeritus, Department of History. University of Maryland, College Park, and Senior Scholar,**

**Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars**

**When I drafted my first edition of *Balkans into Southeastern Europe, a Century of War and Transition* a decade ago as a Wilson Center Fellow, I was writing in the wake of the previous decade of warfare in the former Yugoslavia. The conflicts of 1991-2001 had followed the century’s initial decade of war surrounding the First World War and another decade for the Second World War if we add the Greek Civil War. These three wartime decades were more than enough to revive the Balkan pejorative separating Southeastern Europe from Europe. They have also provided most of the scholarly controversies that continue. So does the unscholarly temptation to read history back from the 1990s to find a recurring pattern of war guilt or victimization.**

**But the region’s peacetime transitions into Southeastern Europe dated from the 1920s and also deserve attention. I argue that the struggles of the separate nation-states, minus the old empires from 1918 forward, centered on a set of European transitions, on a pattern familiar from Eugen Weber’s *Peasants into Frenchmen*. Seeking to avoid the moral narratives common in too much national history, I was attracted to Charles Maier’s structural narrative of European modernization since the mid-19th century - modernization by centralization (Napoleonic ministries in the capital cities, supported by police and army for internal control and coopting the business and professional elite, based on heavy industry). Communist regimes are thus included.**

**Moral narratives for national identities nonetheless entered to justify states and their “politically bordered space” as nation-states. Ethnic majorities, Maier argues, came to stand for these identities, successfully in France but not Germany. The new or expanded states of Southeastern Europe have spent the peacetime decades of the past century seeking to combine these structural and moral narratives, seeking to become strong states while asserting or struggling with a single ethnic identity.**

**My first edition celebrated the chance for equal association in an integrated Europe that opened up to the region in 2001. The EU was finally affording membership, after Western efforts simply to stabilize a subordinate region had failed in the 1990s, as they failed before the First World War Here was a final transition that**

**promised to overcome the limitations and abuses of the earlier European-style transitions. A set of newly elected governments**

**needed only to meet the EU’s Copenhagen Criteria, defined as political institutions guaranteeing democracy through the rule of law and respect for individual and minority rights, while also providing a functioning market economy capable of European competition. And the economic boom of 2002-7 was already underway, recording impressive rates of economic growth and drawing in impressive amounts of Foreign Direct Investment that surpassed the shrinking international aid.**

**My expanded and revised Second Edition must address the trials of these economies since the European financial crisis of 2008. Their prospects and those of the European Union itself now seem less certain. I still find positive efforts or aspirations to the lofty standards of the Copenhagen Criteria, standards arguably first enunciated by Woodrow Wilson after the First World War. Alas, I must spend more pages on problems created not solved by state centralization and the budgetary reforms demanded for EU membership. Instead, limitations endure from the earlier European-style transitions, state weakness outside the capital city, problematic public administration, and political parties supported by patronage.**

**I am helped by new scholarship, some published and some from doctoral dissertations. Some comes from the region, and I now include references to publication in the local languages. Reflecting the recent turn to transnational cultural and intellectual history, this new work has addressed the Europeanization of the interwar capital cities, from popular culture to competing ideological currents, racist eugenics in particular. I expand on my own attention to the regions’s recent engagement with European banking to emphasize parallels and distinctions from the 1920s. We also have new attention to war memories and the role that war memorials have played, along the lines that Jay Winter and others have explored for the First World War in particular.**

**Now the flood of 1914 books has raised a new controversy. One tempting moral narrative reads the real responsibilities of the Milosevic regime for the 1990s warfare in Bosnia back to Serbian responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Such “retrospective determinism”, as Henri Bergsen called it, also draws on recent Habsburg nostalgia that sees the Monarchy’s dissolution and the 1919 creation of Yugoslavia as original sins. The scholarly source of this scenario is of course Christopher Clark’s best-selling Sleepwalkers book. Its retrospective determinism may be seen in the Introduction’s reference to the Srebrenica massacre of 1995 as a reason to reexamine the pattern of Serbian history. Clark goes on to call Serbia a “rogue state” already “steeped in terrorism” before 1914. The Black Hand’s Colonel Apis organized the Sarajevo assassination and Prime Minister Pasic knew ful well but let it go ahead. These aspersions rest on selected memoirs and speculation. They fly in the face of evidence long available. From Vladimir Dedijer’s still seminal if Marxist work to the recent study of Habsburg Bosnia by Robin Okey, Gavrilo Princip and several other Bosnian Serb assassins (not Serbians, not 9/11 terrorists) initiated the plan themselves. They came from the loose, self-selected Mlada Bosna, Bosnian student youths united in anti-urban and pro-Yugoslav sentiments but unconnected to Serbian army officers until one of them provided the weapons that the plotters had tried to buy but could not afford. But never mind, Serbian state guilt as the assassination’s organizer also exonerates Germany and Austria-Hungary, “whose decision makers vanish from the narrative of decisive moments in 1914", according to the critical bibliographic review of Clark’s book in the new Cambridge History of the First World War.**

**Before the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, it was of course Ottoman Macedonia rather than independent Serbia that had seen more terrorism and violence. A Great Power Concert tried to supervise a stabilizing Macedonian settlement in 1903, but with no more thought of equal association than in the 1990s. The Muerzsteg Agreement divided up Ottoman Macedonia for oversight under a population census with the same disastrous results as with the Vance-Owen Plan**

**for Bosnia in 1993. The Concert did little better with creating an independent Albania in 1912. But in Kosovo, Serbia is no longer immune from Serbian criticism. Its own scholarship acknowledges that paramilitaries entered as ethnic cleansers in 1912 and the army itself in 1919, high level orders for restraint from the Serbia command not withstanding. But the resident ethnic populations caught between or close to the lines in the Balkan Wars and the First World War did not join the militias and army units in killing their neighbors. A recent dissertation by Stefan Papaioannou finds the abuses centered on the competing armies, including forced labor and concentration camps as the war went on, Bulgarian or German on one side of the Salonika Front, Greek or French on the other.**

**Hanging over the interwar period were not just the familiar problems of a new set of political borders, expanding Romania, expanding and contracting Greece, and creating a** **Yugoslav state while shrinking Bulgaria and confining Albania. Population transfers and war memories deserve their new attention as major consequences. All of the transfers served the expansion of ethnic majorities. Some were forced, most harshly in Kosovo. Advocates of the transfers have denied the resettlement trials of the sort that made even the agreed Greek and Bulgarian exchanges tragic (see Theodora Dragostinova’s *Between Two Motherlands).***

**War memories and memorials troubled the interwar transitions as well. They deepened the royal-republican schism in Greece. In Romania, they served the Romanian Orthodox Church and the army to represent single ethnic identity in a newly diverse population. Only Stamboliiski’s Bulgaria suppressed the remembrance of its lost war, as Claudia Weber has shown in a book in German, until army officers led a later revival. Most divisive was the Serbian appropriation of its army’s survival and victories for war memorials and royal occasions across the new Yugoslav Kingdom. Melissa Bokovoy’s journal article and book chapter spell out the rising resentment, especially in Croatia.**

**Otherwise, my two interwar chapters move from liberal promise to illiberal retreat. High-sounding constitutional frameworks were put in place early in the 1920s and by the end opposition parties won parliamentary elections in Romania and Bulgaria. The opposition Croatian Peasant Party kept winning by far the largest share of seats for Croatia, although elsewhere in the Yugoslav Kingdom the Albanian and German parties were forced out. Public administration made less progress, plagued by *patizanstvo* (clientelism).**

**As for liberal economics, the central banks followed the new guidelines from the Bank of England and operated independently from the central government and its budgetary demands. But the banks’ support of a stable yet overvalued exchange rate did not attract the foreign capital, especially state loans, that would have justified this defense against depreciation. Criticism here from the region, particularly from new Bulgarian scholarship, has been telling; “capitalism without capital”, in the words of Roumen Avramov. All the central governments responded with protective tariffs, further reducing the revival of pre-1914 trade. Reduced agricultural exports added further to the hardships of peasants. Their new smallholdings from the agricultural reforms were sufficiently challenged by the former owners to deny them mortgage credit (Bulgaria did better under Stamboliiski’s cooperatives and the Agrarian Bank, although Roumen Avramov would not agree). Broader financial comparisons to the present, post-2008 position of the region are tempting, although challenged by EU funding for accession and the absence of large tariff barriers.**

**Neglected connections to the European mainstream into the 1930s were the growing cultural credentials and intellectual standards of the professional elites in the major cities. From the universities, these links unfortunately led into the same eugenic elevation of the ethnic majority that Mark Mazower has described as Europe-wide in his *Dark Continent*. For our area, Romania has received the most attention, starting with Maria Bucur. The essays in *Blood and Homeland* edited by Turda and Windling range across the region. Interwar ideological debates favored European influence from the right over the left, as detailed in the new comparison of interpreting “National Character” in Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria by Balasz Trenczenyi.**

**New research presents a less troublesome connection with European popular culture beyond Bucharest’s well known French connection. In Sofia, according to Mary Neuberger’s *Balkan Smoke*, the new nightlife, with men and women drinking and smoking together in public, provoked a backlash not just from Stamboliiski’s Agrarians but also from the region’s one temperance movement, launched by the American Protestant clergy. In Belgrade, high culture from wartime French and Russian emigre influences joined popular entertainment fed by British media and American films. Together they built up connections, relevant into the present, with the wider Western world, but not as much with Croatia or Slovenia as my first edition suggested. Alienation from Yugoslavia in Croatia was left to grow unimpeded, particularly in Zagreb University.**

**The authoritarian regimes of the 1930s made two well known contributions to the political centralization that moved further ahead under the Communist regimes after 1945. Their suspension of genuine multi-party politics was a precedent for one-party rule. And their strengthening of the anti-opposition powers and capacities of their Interior Ministries paved the way for political police on the Soviet model: Siguranta into Securitate and so on. New Serbian scholarship points out that clientelism, faulty coordination and poor training failed to create the tight, centralized apparatus for repression long associated with King Aleksandar’s 1929-34 dictatorship. But it could build on a *gendarmerie* whose powers as a paramilitary force above the law had already served the Yugoslav regime in Kosovo and Macedonia. A majority of its forces were stationed there in the 1920s. Even then, their abuses seem more the result of corrupt local officers and appointees, uncontrolled from Belgrade and indifferent to the lack of support for Serb colonists. (Half of them had left by 1930). One precedent for meeting present EU standards came from several reforming municipal governments that addressed the social problems of growing capital cities and prompted debate over European-style modernization.**

**We should also acknowledge some neglected economic precedents. European commercial codes were widely adopted in the 1930s, some used as the basis for new ones after 1989. Foreign direct investment for joint stock enterprises rose during the 1930s despite the Depression, with only a little from Germany. The renowned bilateral clearing agreements with Nazi Germany did provide a precedent for postwar trade with the Soviet Union, but without the attendant political subjugation that was assumed at the time.**

**Only the Second World War afforded that German leverage. In the event, Nazi invasion, occupation or alliance destroyed or discredited the interwar regimes, opening the way for the small Communist parties to take power everywhere but Greece. This much has long been clear. So now are eugenically inspired Romanian efforts to cleanse Bessarabia (see Vladimir Solinari, *Purifying the Nation*) and the anti-Semitic animus of General Antonescu (Dennis Deletant, *Hitler’s Forgotten Ally*). Bulgarian scholarship has addressed the mixed record of minority protection, Jews only within its own borders, and not even there for Pomaks and Roma. Controversy among Greek scholars over the two sides in the rounds of civil war that lasted until 1949 has served to generate damning evidence against both sides.**

**My chapter on this second decade of war again pays considerable attention to the controversies among Western as well as local historians over the respective Serbian and Croatian roles. Here the retrospective determinism runs only from the 1990s back to the 1940s. Let some but not all of the essays in two recent books edited by Sabrina Ramet stand for the continuing moral narrative from Croatia. German control or oversight was largely responsible for the war crimes committed under the NDH, but the considerable independence of the Nedic regime in Serbia is held responsible for war crimes there and for close coordination with Mihailovic’s Chetniks in its later Nazi collaboration in Bosnia. The Serbian side has remained silent on the side of responsible scholarship and glorified both Nedic and Mihailovic on the less responsible side.**

**We remain better served by previous scholarship, ranging from Jozo Tomasivch’s *War and Occupation* to the volumes by Holm Sundhausen and Walter Manoschek in German, by Fikreta Jelic-Butic in Croato-Serbian, and by Branko Petranovic in Serbo-Croatian. Among recent work, I cite and recommend *Hitler’s New Disorder* by Stevan Pavlowitch, a Serbian historian long in the UK. He stands back from choosing a side and emphasizes instead the divisions and disputes within allthe major forces, Partisans and Germans included. His long list of interviews with survivors and major figures is invaluable, given the lack of written records on the Serbian side in particular. For Croatia, Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation* details the division in the *Ustasha* regimebetween the returning emigre cleansers who conducted the initial Revolution of Blood and the fascist true-believers from Zagreb University whose Revolution of the Soul in 1942-43 sought to reshape Croats themselves, men and women. Reinforcing my own previous treatment of occupied Serbia, Ben Shepard’s *Terror in the Balkans* spells out the decisive and deadly role of the largely Austrian Nazi leadership that was sent in to put down unrest and attacks in August 1941, assuming command and control over the new Nedic regime . (A Serbian translation has already appeared).**

**More important for the 1990s than any of this, I submit, was the internecine violence in Bosnia and Croatia between Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims. These were the decisive war memories of local killings left in the back of collective minds that created potential for hardened divisions after 1990 , a decisive role for violence itself just as Ipek Yosmoaglu has argued for pre-1914 Macedonia.**

**I found less new work on the period 1945-1989 than for the preceding years. No one has succeeded in reworking the economic indicators to provide a single time series from at least the interwar period or, as far as I am concerned forward past 1989. Scholarship from the region has emphasized the decisive role of the domestic Communist parties in forcing their way into political power afer 1945, along the lines already identified for Romania by Vladimir Tismaneanu. Witness the study of restrained Soviet influence in Bulgaria from Veselin Dimitrov and the region’s several “elections without options” as detailed by Verisiliu Tsarau.**

**My two chapters on the pre-1989 decades nonetheless continue to stress the problems that accompanied “modernization by centralization”. For non-Communist Greece, multi-party politics allowed a loosening of the hard internal controls during first postwar decade. The large Cold War army, one of two in the region, took power in 1967 but its failure to survive marked the end of military influence and the long royal-republican schism in Greek politics. Then Papandreou’s Pasok regime of the 1980s inflated the size of the public payroll and created the state enterprises that have now brought the Greek economy down. Elsewhere, the Communist regimes struggled with reforms in the 1980s that failed to overcome the problems of one-party centralization, in Yugoslavia at the republic level.**

**There, the recent study of Dejan Jovic, *Yugoslavia, The State that Withered Away* points the finger convincingly at Kardelj’s earlier influence in preventing the political loosening that might have permitted market reforms in market socialism. Only imports and inflation could assuage the rising European expectations of Yugoslav consumers, expectations pushed ahead by the Western-style advertizing agencies as profiled in Patrick Ryder Patterson’s *Bought and Sold, Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia.* Meanwhile, Western diplomats continued to believe that the Yugoslav regime would survive the death of Tito in 1980. Helping to encourage American optimism until the late 1980s were the able, well traveled officials of Yugoslavia’s Foreign Ministry. As shown in by Rinna Kullaa, in *Non-Alignment and the Cold War in Europe*, the Ministry had uniquely cut its reporting and officers off by the 1950s from the security service controls common in the Soviet Bloc. A competitive process for selection and the attraction to serving in the many Yugoslav embassies, particularly in Washington, created the aforementioned senior cadre.**

**Then as the other one-party Communist regimes disappeared in from 1989 forward, the tenuous unity of the Yugoslav republics and then the army went with them. My revised and expanded final chapter begins with the ensuing warfare and the struggles through the 1990s of the successor states, since dubbed the Western Balkans by adding Albania and subtracting Slovenia. Here there are no innocent parties, but the Milosevic regime still bears the greater responsibility. The bulk of the chapter moves on to address the EU commitment to association with the region’s states old and new that finally began after the Western initiatives of the 1990s had pursued only stabilization. Only after the World Bank/European Commission Stability initiative in 1999 had failed to generate the promised assistance did the EU step in with Stability and Association Agreements. Over the past 10 years, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and now Croatia have joined and the other non-members are pursuing candidacy. Only Greece, a member since 1981, and Slovenia joined the Eurozone.**

**On finally to address three major issues in appraising the progress toward political stability and economic association. How have the new members done? What about the Greek economic crisis? And what prospects are there for the Western Balkans, now minus Croatia? All the region of course took advantage of the credit boom led by European banks to record a most promising set of economic indicators for 2004-8. Growth rates rose and unemployment declined. Multi-party elections proceeded under established frameworks and some media diversity. More pluralism and participation than in the political parties came from the mushrooming thousands of domestic NGOs that have appeared as the Western activists of the 1990s stepped back. Small/medium sized enterprises led the way in creating jobs and also a new middle class. Meanwhile, Foreign Direct Investment poured in to balance payment accounts still facing large export deficits, and EU support made up for the decline in international aid after the 1990s. Exchange rates overvalued directly from the Euro or tied to it did not seem to matter. Then came the international financial crisis of 2008 and the slow recovery, especially in FDI, that has followed.**

**For the new members, EU attention on weak state problems of corruption and judicial oversight focused on Bulgaria. A new Cooperation and Verification Mechanism withheld some promised EU funding but found little progress. Academic attention has focused on Romania and its campaign to join without rigorous compliance to a number of Acquis chapters. Tom Gallagher’s book led the way, *Romania and the European Union, How the Weak Vanquished the Strong.* Subsequent problems of political turmoil in both Bulgaria and Romania have added to the northern European view that they had joined prematurely, also inviting comparisons to Italy and Spain in southern Europe. Now Slovenia faces the same turmoil. Its overdue bill has come due for keeping its Yugoslav-era socially owned enterprises afloat with Ljubljanska Banka loans to prevent Austrian or Italian takeovers.**

**For Greece, its state-enforced austerity since 2008 has turned the corner for major economic indicators, unemployment aside, but created the possibility of a Syriza-led backlash against further repayment of the huge EU support that has kept Greece in the Eurozone. Assessments from Jens Bastien in Athens and the World Bank still see a way ahead if structural reforms of the labor market, income tax collection. and the state bureaucracy can go ahead. Enforced state loans and false official statistics rather than reckless credits from a competitive Greek banking sector were after all the major cause of the collapse in 2008.**

**For the Western Balkans, I balanced reports from the IFYs and especially the regional central banks with interviews in the various capitals to reach some moderately encouraging conclusions in the economic sections of Cohen and Lampe, *Embracing Democracy in the Western Balkans* Yes, the export deficits are no longer covered by the FDI that discouraged insider privatization and oligarchic monopolies. Austerity has caused political backlashes against the established parties comparable to Italy as well as Greece. Declining populations were already a problem . Now emigration by recent university graduates is rising once more, along with unemployment and public disillusion. An opposition party has finally won in an Albanian election, but the ruling parties in Macedonia and Montenegro use their majorities to support political supporters in major enterprises. Serbia’s new government promises to restructure these still semi-state enterprises themselves. Croatia did more in this direction and in judicial reform than Bulgaria and Romania had done, under threat of not being admitted. And all of them began from 2004 forward to put in place the fiscal reforms that Greece only undertook under EU pressure after 2008. Reforming public administration and cutting it loose from the clientelism of long Balkan tradition remains ahead. So do EU decisions that will enable the region and all southern Europe to be equal members of the European Union, the great European transition of the past century.**

**The increased cooperation among these small Southeastern states that US policy has long encouraged would set an example from which the EU itself would benefit.**