

of all films mentioned would have helped reading. These aspects, among several others, show that an ambitious publication was unfortunately prepared with less care than was necessary. The result is a book which portrays transition in Romanian film as an analysis of film plots. It presents the Romanian case as a singular one, failing to see the undeniable connections to media policy in the USSR (shown, for example, in K. Roth-Ey's *Moscow Prime Time*) and to the Southeast European context.

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Uwe HINRICHS / Thede KAHL / Petra HIMSTEDT-VAID (eds.), *Handbuch Balkan. Studienausgabe*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2014 (Slavistische Studienbücher N.F., 24). VII + 844 pp., ISBN 978-3-447-06814-7, € 39.80

Quite unexpectedly, writing textbooks on the Balkans is in vogue again. Most of them are limited in scope to the end of communism and the subsequent period of political and economic transition – for example R. Bideleux and I. Jeffries, *The Balkans: a Post-Communist History*, or S. Ramet (ed.), *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*. But several textbooks published on Southeastern Europe and Yugoslavia take a broad thematic sweep or have encyclopaedic ambitions – for example, K. Clewing and O. J. Schmitt (eds.), *Geschichte Südosteuropas. Vom frühen Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, and H. Sundhaussen, *Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten 1943–2011*. They all, however, face the same dilemma: unlike the classic diplomatic histories, like the one by Charles and Barbara Jelavich, a modern history textbook covers themes from linguistics to economics and more than a handful of nations, states and languages. Any such volume may end up

as a heterogeneous collection of articles instead of a comprehensive textbook, especially when written by a collective of authors. Yet, the scope of such a book is clearly beyond the capacities of a single author, with a few noteworthy exceptions. Who, for that matter, would dare to undertake a similar endeavour for Western Europe, including both Portugal and Iceland, covering architecture, popular culture and state building?

The present textbook, edited by the Slavists Hinrichs, Kahl and Himstedt-Vaid, excludes some (non-Slavic) countries, Greece and Romania, but includes Albania. Its focus is on post-1989 history. Most of the contributors and their themes are so well known that the book dispenses with an "About the Authors" section. The authors include Wolfgang Höpken on history and memory, Michael Schmidt-Neke on Albania, and Gabriella Schubert on gender issues. This heavyweight textbook of over 800 pages contains four sections: History; Europeanization (i.e. post-1989 history); Languages; and Culture. In terms of the quality of the individual chapters, the reader can be assured that each contribution is a condensed and highly competent analysis backed up by years of academic research, analytical observation, and local networking. Criticism by a reviewer would invariably end up as nitpicking over minor details, personal likings, or hobbyhorses.

Although the present textbook came out in August 2014 and takes into account events as recent as Croatia's EU accession, it may already be outdated in its political-strategic outlook. Typically, the second section, on post-1989 history and politics, is entitled "Europeanization". It includes a separate chapter on every state in "the Balkans", including Romania, but there is only a single chapter on Serbia and Montenegro together and none for Kosovo, Croatia or Slovenia. Extra chapters are

dedicated to "migration and integration" and economic perspectives. This selection appears to have been based on a number of implicit mental maps. The European Union is the common perspective, but each country's road towards Europe is an individual one. If similarities exist, they unite the laggards of Eastern enlargement and the "Western Balkans". Arguably, however, Slovenia and Greece have exerted a substantial influence, for better or worse, on the European integration of Southeastern Europe. Croatia, moreover, has been part of the same process most of the time. Its exclusion seems to follow the logic of the European Commission, that the signing of the accession agreement retroactively exonerates a state from being part of "the Balkans".

More importantly, the section title suggests that EU integration has been the hegemonic perspective and the only "game in town" for the past quarter of a century. The Yugoslav wars of succession are somewhat sidelined and relegated to the "dustbin of history". The report for each country in this section is ten to twenty pages long, but the structures of the chapters differ significantly. The Macedonian chapter is arranged by theme (education, politics, decentralization etc.), whereas the Serbia/Montenegro chapter is organized chronologically. Differences in length and structure are much less of a problem in the other sections and chapters. Yet, the fact that the chapter on popular culture is fifty pages long and the one on media less than twenty is indicative of the free reign the editors gave to their authors.

The evidence contradicting such a hegemonic perspective towards European integration has been increasing. Not only is Euroscepticism on the rise in this part of Europe, but other centres of gravity have reappeared on a map where geopolitics is no longer a non-issue. Radical Islam may

be one contender. The chapter on religion, however, has a strong focus on Christianity and Orthodoxy, and even includes civic religions such as fascism. Turkey has become a recognized, albeit controversial regional player. Its ambitions as a regional power, its disillusionment with EU integration perspectives, and the rise of Erdoganism have changed the geopolitical constellation. These contenders to the EU, however, are eclipsed by Russia's new ambitions to "roll back" Western dominance, which encompasses not only the former Soviet republics, but also the politically and economically vulnerable countries of Southeastern Europe. The recent advances made by Athens to Moscow are part of a larger pattern.

The pivotal question remains: Is there a market and, more importantly, is there a readership to warrant this *Handbuch Balkan*? The back cover optimistically states: "The textbook is an effective reference tool [...] for European Studies programmes and in particular for the Southeast European Studies programmes in the making at numerous universities." However, apart from Further Reading lists for each chapter, the *Handbuch Balkan*, lacks all the extras one would expect in an effective reference tool: there is no index of names and topics, no chronology, and no glossary. The editors or publisher correctly identify a trend towards interdisciplinary European Studies, combining courses in history, political science, area-studies, geography, and law. A similar trend towards an interdisciplinary and comprehensively European outlook (let alone a global one) does not seem to be on the agenda in Southeast European Studies, however.

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