

the main burden of the author's critique is directed at U.S. involvement in such operations at all. His strictures are not leveled at peacekeeping per se, which in its traditional, blue helmet role, he considers to be commendable. Rather, what was reprehensible was the distraction from national interests (as imagined by Fleitz) and the business of military competence that was apparently caused by U.S. involvement in peace support operations. There are of course many ways in which policy elites can construct the meaning of national interests and in which these interests can be pursued. Fleitz's prescription is for the United States to focus on its combat power, using the UN when it serves a particular purpose such as counterterrorism.

The book does not, therefore, dismiss the UN as satanic, but its early years are represented as a hotbed of intrigue against the United States. The subversion of UN Secretary General Trygve Lie and the UN's use as an instrument of U.S. policy in the cold war and afterward hardly fit with this argument. For scholars interrogating the crises of the international system the book's argument can be interpreted as reinforcing a variety of fundamentalism that constructs a Manichean world of fateful struggle. The United States is here depicted as a progressive, democratic, and freedom-loving state, though seemingly from Fleitz's evidence to be constantly fearful of the "evils" outside in spite of its massive military power. Evidence that would challenge the construction is conspicuously but unsurprisingly absent from such narratives as U.S. support for Israeli policy toward Palestinians; U.S. support for human rights-abusing dictatorships and guerrilla movements such as the Marcos, Somoza, and Pinochet regimes; Savimbi's UNITA; and the Taliban and Hussein's Iraq. The author was an analyst for the CIA and worked closely with the Reagan, Bush Sr., and Clinton administrations.

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Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia by Louis Sell.
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Understanding how Slobodan Milosevic came to power, what he did with that power, and how the international community responded to the challenges Milosevic posed sheds light not only on what went so wrong in Yugoslavia but also on what can be done to prevent similar disasters. Louis Sell, a former foreign service officer with eight years of service in Yugoslavia, has the kind of background that permits him to craft a compelling account of the Milosevic legacy. More than a biography, *Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* offers a readable account of both the domestic Yugoslav side of the country's collapse and the history and consequences of international interventions in the wars in Slovenia and Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Central to Sell's account is the thesis that Yugoslavia in the mid-1980s was a "functioning multiethnic society" (p. 33) and "not inevitably doomed to

disappear" (p. 33). It took power-hungry, self-serving politicians like Milosevic to violently tear the country apart. While Milosevic takes top billing as the villain in Sell's narrative, he shares the stage with his wife, Mira Markovic, and other Serbian chauvinists, in particular the Serbian intellectuals in the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU) whose 1986 Memorandum "constituted the intellectual underpinnings for the destruction of Yugoslavia" (p. 46). The international community, Sells finds, is also blameworthy for ignoring the portending debacle in Yugoslavia and then "rediscovering Yugoslavia—but too late" (p. 144).

The book is at its best when Sell incorporates firsthand accounts drawn from his years in Yugoslavia: Serbs and Croats singing nationalists songs to each other in 1974 and being stopped by police; Serbian women in Kosovo keening hysterically over the death of a Serb army recruit shot dead by an Albanian conscript. The book could have benefited from more detailed firsthand accounts. However, Sell's unwillingness to tread too far into the first-person is not a major drawback. He skillfully draws upon extensive interviews as well as on previously published work, including that of Milosevic's Serbian biographer, Slavoljub Djukic.

Milosevic appears in Sell's account as a narcissist who is at the same time an affable drinking buddy and a ruthless power-hungry tyrant. "Take away Slobodan Milosevic's interest in power and the man is pretty much a cipher," Sell declares (p. 171). A mediocre student from a dysfunctional family, Milosevic through sheer hard work and single-minded pursuit of power clawed his way to the top of a decaying Yugoslav political system. "One element of Milosevic's genius for retaining power," Sell remarks, "was his ability under pressure to make tactical concessions that over the long-run act to defeat his enemies" (p. 260). A political chameleon with no moral compass, Milosevic has the ability to masterfully charm and manipulate international diplomats while ruthlessly pursuing his own personal goals. Sell adroitly observes that one of the few constants in Milosevic's personality is mendacity, noting that "few political leaders share Milosevic's capacity not only for lying but also for actually appearing to be believing their own lies" (p. 173).

One of the very best lines of this well-written book concerns the irony in the international community negotiating with Milosevic over a peace plan for Bosnia. "The arsonist was enlisted to extinguish the fires he himself created," Sell writes (p. 168). Adding to the absurdity of the situation, after Milosevic became the guarantor of peace in Bosnia, NATO troops bombed him into submission over Kosovo, and then international prosecutors hauled him to the Hague for war crimes trials concerning both Bosnia and Kosovo. How did this happen? This close study of Slobodan Milosevic succeeds in helping us answer this question.

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