

Fateful Misinterpretation

"America and Bosnia" by Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, in the *National Interest* (Fall 1993), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Does the United States have a stake in the Balkans? It does, insist Tucker, author of *The Nuclear Debate* (1985), and Hendrickson, a political scientist at Colorado College, but it is not based on the abstract principles most advocates of intervention have cited: repelling aggression, preserving recognized borders, and maintaining "world order." The "great interest" is "order and stability in post-Cold War Europe." But from the beginning, they argue, Washington—and most Americans—misperceived both the stakes and the situation in Bosnia.

The common view is that the war is a case of illegal aggression by one state, Serbia, against another, Bosnia. It rests, the authors say, mainly on the fact that the Yugoslav republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina gained recognition as an independent state from the European Community and the United States in early April 1992. Thus, the support given by the rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to the armed Serbs of Bosnia has been seen as illegal. In fact, the authors say, the circumstances of Bosnia's independence were themselves "highly questionable."

The February 29–March 1, 1992, referendum in which a majority of the Bosnians who cast ballots voted to secede from Yugoslavia (but which the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia boycotted) was a violation of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, Tucker and Hendrickson assert. That document required the mutual agreement of Yugoslavia's republics to any secession, which Bosnia did not obtain. As a result, the authors conclude, the international recognition of Bosnia's independence was itself a violation of international law.

"The true cause of the war," Tucker and Hendrickson maintain, "was the structure of reciprocal fears" within Bosnia. The Bosnian Muslims feared that they would suffer oppression in a Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia; the Bosnian Serbs (31 percent of the population) feared oppression in an independent Bosnia dominated by Muslims (44 percent).

The event that triggered the war, the authors write, was the repudiation by Bosnia's Muslim

president, Alija Izetbegovic, of a draft constitutional agreement, worked out in February 1992. Bosnia would have been divided into Muslim, Serb, and Croat areas. The United States, however, apparently advised Izetbegovic to reject the accord.

Partition is the only basis for a workable settlement, the authors believe. But the United States, laboring under the illusion that repelling "Serb aggression" and protecting the sanctity of Bosnia's borders were the imperatives, long opposed all such proposals. In August, the Clinton administration apparently shifted, urging Izetbegovic to endorse a plan for partition. Whether this betokens a new American understanding of the situation in Bosnia, however, is unclear.

Adieu to the West

"The Collapse of 'The West'" by Owen Harries, in *Foreign Affairs* (Sept.–Oct. 1993), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

The West is being summoned to guarantee the peace in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. But there is a fundamental problem, asserts Harries, editor of the *National Interest*, with the premise that "the West" still exists as a political and military entity.

The Western countries, to be sure, do share a common history and culture, as well as political values. But until the Cold War provided a great common danger, Harris says, that shared heritage was not enough to create a united West. Indeed, "fratricidal warfare might well be offered as one of the distinguishing characteristics of Western civilization of the past."

Americans traditionally have had "a moralistic distaste for European power politics," Harries observes, and with the demise of the Soviet Union, many now feel that it is time to turn to domestic matters. Many Europeans, meanwhile, have long viewed the United States as "unsophisticated" in international affairs, and once the Soviet threat was gone, many of them began dreaming of a United Europe "that would supplant the United States as the dominant economic—and ultimately political—force in the world." Europe's self-confidence has been hurt by its economic woes and its disunity in foreign affairs—but only temporarily, Harries believes.

With the disappearance of the common en-

emy, he concludes, the concept of the West as a unified entity is likely to disappear, too. But, he adds, it may return, "when things go seriously bad and individual countries or restricted alliances are unable to cope on their own. One must assume—unless one has come to accept the fatuous nonsense that war as an institution is dead—that such circumstances will again return to haunt us one day, perhaps sooner rather than later."

Casualties of War

"The Middle East Scholars and the Gulf War" by Norvell B. DeAtkine, in *Parameters* (Summer 1993), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5050.

As war in the Persian Gulf neared two years ago, many Middle Eastern specialists warned of disaster for the United States. Rashid Khalidi of the University of Chicago and Charles Doran of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins, among others, predicted massive upheavals in every Islamic country, Americans slaughtered in Arab cities, airliners blown out of the skies, Arab soldiers turning their weapons on their Western allies, and Saudi Arabs emerging from their villas to toss Molotov cocktails at U.S. tanks.

Have these experts since been reflecting on where they went wrong? Not at all, says DeAtkine, a retired Army colonel who is director of Middle East studies at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg. In articles and books such as *George Bush's War* (1992) by Jean Edward Smith, they have launched a new revisionist attack. They maintain that the war was unnecessary; or that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was strictly an Arab problem, calling for an exclusively Arab solution; or that the Iraqis had a jus-

tifiable claim on Kuwait; or that Kuwait was insignificant and Saudi Arabia was in no danger of invasion by Iraq.

All of this is absurd, says DeAtkine. There was no political unity among the Arabs, and there would have been no Arab solution. Nor did the historical origins of the boundary between Iraq and Kuwait justify Iraq's action. Until its attempt to take over Kuwait, "the boundaries imposed by colonial powers, while universally proclaimed [to be] an evil legacy of imperialism, were nevertheless generally accepted." Iraq may have had no intention of invading Saudi Arabia, but an intimidated Saudi royal family inevitably would have adopted a policy of appeasement toward the Iraqis. Nor would economic sanctions have been effective enough to dislodge Saddam Hussein, DeAtkine adds.

Why have Middle Eastern scholars and jour-

The Corrupt and the Clean

"The bipolar world dominated by the communist-capitalist dichotomy has been replaced with a politically unitary one, divided between the corrupt and the clean," writes Daniel Bell in the *New Republic* (Aug. 23 & 30, 1993).

It is hard to avoid the larger moral question that is tied up with the fate of democracy and capitalism—of capitalism as a system of economic reward, and democracy as a system of civic loyalty and trust. . . .

In Japan, Tasushi Mieno, the governor of the Bank of Japan, who pricked the bubble of the inflated Japanese boom, has been quoted as saying that the giddy expansion of the late 1980s "undermined the stability and soundness of Japanese society by weakening the ethos of labor, the notion of working by the sweat of your brow." The boom, he said, hastened "a decline in morals," and fostered "inequalities in the distribution of wealth."

If capitalism is still to confront the ethos of "greed," democracy has to confront the problem of trust. In almost every society, the distrust of the political order and of politicians is rising, often feeding reactionary forces that seek to channel the resentments of a population into religious fundamentalism or a rising nationalism. The money corruption becomes the symbol of the breakdown of trust in democracy. The rebuilding of trust can only begin with the rectitude of the politicians and the moral authority of a political class. That is the great task that confronts democratic societies in the years ahead. It is not one of technique, but of virtue.
