## BOOK REVIEWS BY GROUP CAPTAIN PETER W GRAY, DIRECTOR OF DEFENCE STUDIES RAF

MISHA GLENNY, THE BALKANS 1804 - 1999, NATIONALISM, WAR AND THE GREAT POWERS, GRANTA, LONDON, 1999. ISBN 1862070504

TIM RIPLEY, OPERATION DELIBERATE FORCE: THE UN AND NATO IN BOSNIA 1995, CENTRE FOR DEFENCE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES, BAILRIGG STUDY 3, 1999. ISBN 0 9536650 0 3

Events in the Balkans over the last decade have generated a veritable rain forest of books, articles and theses from the full spectrum of society. When this reviewer first started work as an analyst attempting to specialise on this fractious part of the world, background material was very thin on the ground. Fred Singleton's A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985) provided a much needed historical backdrop and James Gow's Legitimacy and the Military: the Yugoslav Crisis (Pinter, London, 1992) gave a useful overview of the military aspects. Care then had to be taken with the flood of material that inevitably followed as much of it had been written with the highly audible sound of axes being sharpened in the background. This was typified by the horror experienced when a young diplomat recommended, as an excellent foundation reader, an extremely partisan academic paper that had been prepared by a formal adviser to the Bosnian Serb leadership! Fortunately, neither of the two books that are the subject of this review fall into this category. Both provide valuable additions to the literature, albeit from opposite ends of the spectrum.

One of the first reliable studies to hit the streets, that was worthy of positive recommendation, was Misha Glenny's Fall of Yugoslavia (Penguin, first published in 1992) which was updated several times as events unfolded in the Balkans. Glenny has now gone on to produce a masterly history of the region from 1804 to present day. Although his earlier work retained some element of the journalistic tone, this latest offering very much falls into the category of genuine narrative history. Glenny's theme throughout his book centres on the balance between nationalism and great power intervention – with the inevitable outbursts of violence. It is essential reading for anyone wishing to get beyond the banal generalisations of 'religious divides' and 'ethnic conflict'. Visitors who have conducted formal talks in the region will be aware of the propensity for all discussions to be preceded by selective renderings of history accompanied by dubious

maps of the region. A liberal dose of Glenny is recommended as an antidote. For the casual reader looking for a brief introduction to the current conflict, the Epilogue – the Balkan Vortex – makes excellent reading.

The second subject of this review article is a detailed study of Operation DELIBERATE FORCE written by Tim Ripley. This work is published as a Lancaster University Bailrigg Study where Ripley is a research associate; he is also a journalist who has covered events in the region for Jane's Intelligence Review and Flight International. The book is written very much in a journalistic, rather than academic, style with some less than choice phrases such as 'The grim reality was far from rosy for General Ratko Mladic and his army'. Similarly, the outstanding range of interviews that Mr Ripley conducted do not appear to have warranted detailed footnotes outlining times and places: a full list of interlocutors has, however, been included. These are minor criticisms and do not detract from the overall utility of the book. It will prove to be an invaluable source of reference for subsequent writers who will benefit considerably from the first hand interviews. That these have been woven into the narrative adds to the value. (Some of Ripley's interlocutors may squirm slightly at the extent to which they have been quoted directly). The rather dense nature of the narrative tends somewhat to mask some of the more valuable aspects of this Balkan saga that are well worthy of deeper analysis. An example of this is highlighted by Nik Gowing (Diplomatic Editor of Channel Four News) who notes in his foreword that the US had been waging a covert war in support of the Bosnian Muslims involving weapons drops, training and so forth. Ripley brings out further evidence of this (page 61), along with some analysis of the degree to which US negotiator Richard Holbrooke co-ordinated NATO bombing. Croatian Army advances and diplomatic efforts. Holbrooke's own book. To End a War (Modern Library, New York, 1999) makes an excellent companion volume for students of Balkan conspiracy theories!

Both of the books reviewed make welcome additions to the rapidly growing literature on the conflict in the Balkans. Both authors have extensive experience of the region and add significantly to the debate. For students of air power, Tim Ripley's volume fills a major gap on the shelves. For any reader interested in taking his or her knowledge beyond general awareness, Misha Glenny's work cannot be recommended too highly.

133

ook reviews

## This article has been republished online with Open Access.

(Room 119), Shrivenham, Swindon, Wiltshire SN6 8LA.

Ministry of Defence © Crown Copyright 2023. The full printed text of this article is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-space

Government Licence V3.0. To View this licence, visit https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/. Where we have identified any third-party copyright information or otherwise reserved rights, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned. For all other imagery and graphics in this article, or for any other enquires regarding this publication, please contact: Director of Defence Studies (RAF), Cormorant Building

Centre for Air and **Space Power Studies** OGL.

OROYAL AIR FORCE