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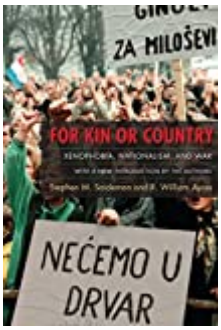

Stephen M. Saideman, R. William Ayres. *For Kin or Country: Xenophobia, Nationalism, and War.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. xi + 288 pp. $35.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-231-14479-7.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air War College)

Irredentism Revisited

After the end of the Yugoslav wars in 1995, it appeared that violent irredentist efforts, during which groups wanted to reclaim lost ethnic kin, has become less frequent and less important, at least in Europe. However, Russiaâs annexation of the Crimea in 2014 and its support of separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine has brought the importance of this topic back into the forefront of political discussions. Indeed, the above incidents highlighted that irredentism is far from extinct and a determined leader can use a minority as a pretext to destabilize Europe on its eastern border.

Stephen M. Saideman and R. William Ayresâs book, *For Kin or Country: Xenophobia, Nationalism, and War,* provides a clear and concise account of why some countries use aggressive policies towards their neighbors to protect their minorities, while others do not. The book was originally published in 2008 and at that time the cases that âdid not barkâ included Russia, Hungary, and Romania. At the same time, Croatia, Serbia, and Armenia have engaged in violent irredentist policies in the past. In other words, these constituted the cases which âdid bark.â This edition of the book includes a well-written new introduction that highlights the changes that took place over time and the authors provide a convincing explanation as to why the Russian case has become violent, even though it was dormant for many years.

Irredentist efforts can escalate into wars and such conflicts can be some of the most intractable and long-lasting struggles in world politics. In fact, both world wars started as irredentist wars. Serb intentions to create a Greater Serbia led to the outbreak of World War I, and Hitlerâs plan to reunite lost German folk in Sudetenland contributed to the start of World War II. Other hot spots of irredentism include Kosovo, the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, problems over the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions, as well as Iraq, especially as partition as a solution to end the war once again is on the table.

Irredentism can partially be explained by the power of nationalism and the ability of rulers to capitalize on ancient primordial hatreds that are kept alive by the com-

munity over the years. However, the authorsâ theoretical explanation is more complex than that, as it is articulated in the âIrredentism and its Absenceâ chapter. If reuniting ethnic kin is costly and the actors will most likely upset host states, then why do it? It appears that the explanation has more to do with domestic factors than international ones. While international norms are important and the advantages that come with joining international organizations (such as the EU, NATO, etc.) can be quite promising, in the end, it is the domestic elite that determines the outcome. And if going to war over the ethnic kin is advantageous for politicians and it will keep them in office, than they will most likely choose that outcome, even though this might not necessarily be what is best for the country. Hence the fitting title of the book: âFor Kin or Country.â

While the authors do an excellent job defining the significance of the topic and the book is clearly written and well organized, I would have liked to see a little more discussion on the methodology applied and perhaps even some narratives from the field. Specifically, interviews, evaluations by scholars, and surveys were used to test the hypotheses. How were those carried out; what are the details? The descriptions regarding measurement and operationalizing the variables, such as identification with kin and tolerance versus xenophobia, are somewhat vague as well.

I think that the strongest parts of this book are the individual case studies of Croatia and Serbia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Hungary, Romania, and the Russian minority. I especially liked the âDueling Irredentismâ chapter on Greater Croatia and Greater Serbia, and the âBreaking Up is Hard to Doâ section analyzing the Russians abroad. Much of the literature related to the Yugoslav wars is difficult to read because of the complexity of the conflict and the long-standing animosities between multiple actors. Saideman and Ayres are able to illuminate and make clear the clash of two major efforts by Serbia and Croatia to unite ethnic kin in order to create their own ethnic empires, resulting in displacement and severe violence, and to the detriment of various ethnic groups. Both Slobodan Milosevic, president of Serbia, and Franjo Tudjman, leader of Croatia, were able to stay in power longer than other Eastern European leaders of the time because they were harnessing the rhetoric of nationalism. Ultimately Bosnia was caught in the middle of two competing irredentist struggles and paid a hefty price as a result.

In 1991, at the collapse of communism, the world leadership was anxiously watching as one by one former republics of the Soviet Union began to break away. Rogers Brubaker, among other scholars, has seen parallels to the Weimar Republic, and a violent breakup was anticipated. Yet, Russian irredentism was not forthcoming, which constitutes an important puzzle in the book. Saideman and Ayres argue that some explanation for the lack of violence at that time has to do with the lack of interest of the Russian minority to join Russia, with the exception of the Crimea, as well as domestic conditions within Russia, such as weak nationalist politics and a lack of cohesion regarding Russian identity.

The cases of Hungary and Romania fall into the category of restraint and nonviolence with respect to irredentism. This is interesting in a couple of ways. As the authors state, in 1990 over five million Hungarians lived outside of the country, whereas the population within Hungary was ten million. In addition, the Hungarian minority in Romania, Slovakia, and Serbia has experienced much discrimination at the hands of the respective governments. Yet, involvement continuously remained âshort of irredentismâ (p. 111). In addition, the border between Romania and Moldova has been âthe least legitimate,â and the awaited reunification between the two countries did not occur (pp. 141). However, Romaniaâs foreign policy has not been aggressive.

Overall, I highly recommend this book to those interested in ethnic politics, irredentism, conflict, and nationalism. The book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of world politics through the lens of conflict, or the lack thereof, with respect to national minorities or lost ethnic kin in their respective host states. I believe that both academics and practitioners will find it a clear and excellent book to read on this complex topic.

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