

REVIEWS AND NOTES

**Bogdan Teodor, Jordan Baev, Matthew Crosston, Mihaela Teodor (eds.),
*Old and New Insights on the History of Intelligence
and Diplomacy in the Balkans,*
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Old and New Insights on the History of Intelligence and Diplomacy in the Balkans provides a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the complex interplay of intelligence and diplomacy in the Balkans. The book, curated by Bogdan Teodor¹, Jordan Baev², Matthew Crosston³ and Mihaela Teodor⁴, showcases a variety of perspectives that enhance our understanding of this complex region from an intelligence history perspective. The authors probe into the historical, political, and cultural dynamics of the region, illuminating not only its past but also the often-underexplored facets of intelligence gathering and diplomatic operations within this context.

The authors hail from various academic institutions across nine European countries, and their ranks range from young researchers and

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doctoral students to well-established scholars. This diversity of voices and career stages lends the book a unique and comprehensive perspective on its subject matter. The book's structure is logical and well-organized divided into two comprehensive parts. The first part encompasses six semi-biographical chapters that delve into a relatively unexplored area: the influence of culture on intelligence gathering and perceptions, while the second part, offers six additional chapters, primarily centered on the evolution of bilateral relations among Balkan states and their interactions and partnerships with other European nations.

The chapters are arranged in a way that allows the reader to follow the evolution of these fields over time, providing a comprehensive overview of the subject. The authors' meticulous research and balanced analysis are evident in each section, making the book a valuable resource for scholars, students, and anyone interested in the Intelligence history in the Balkans. The authors employ a case study approach in their respective chapters, delving into specific instances, events, or periods to shed light on the broader themes of intelligence and diplomacy in the Balkans. This approach allows for a detailed exploration of each topic, providing readers with a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play. The authors make extensive use of primary sources, including archival documents, personal accounts, and official records, to substantiate their arguments. This rigorous approach to research ensures that the analysis provided in each chapter is grounded in solid evidence.

For instance, in the chapter written by Maja Perić, she discusses the early modern diplomatic history of frontier societies in the border zone of coexistence and conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Catholic Republic of Venetia from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Perić reveals more thoroughly some not very well-known cross-cultural

regional diplomatic sources in the state archives of Zadar, Croatia, viewing the specific function of Dragomans not just in their formal role of translators but also as special messengers, negotiators, and de facto intelligence actors where they “were regularly involved in espionage practices and there are situations where some translators were not afraid to express loyalty to both camps” (Perić, p. 25).

Another noteworthy section of the book is the case study of Otto von Essen, a Russian officer who served as a spy in the Balkans during the 19th century (p.47). The author uses von Essen’s experiences to explore the human side of intelligence gathering, highlighting the challenges and issues related to intercultural learning and adaptation in a foreign environment. Stahlberg’s use of direct quotations from von Essen’s accounts adds a layer of authenticity and immediacy to the narrative, offering unique insights into the cultural, social, and political dynamics of the Balkans during this period (Stahlberg, p. 45, 50-51).

In the chapter “Agents of the Hotel Lambert in the Balkans in the 1830s and 1840s” by Tomasz Jacek LIS, the author presents a detailed examination of the activities of the Hotel Lambert spy organization in the Balkan Peninsula during the 1830s and 1840s. LIS’s work is based on extensive literature and archival documents, providing a comprehensive understanding of the operations of this organization, which was created by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, ex-minister of foreign affairs in Russia. The chapter offers a unique perspective on the diplomatic operations aimed at building an independent Polish Kingdom, with a particular focus on the spy ring in Constantinople from which spies were sent to the Balkans (LIS, p. 87-109).

One interesting chapter of the book is the detailed analysis of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Albania during the Second World War and aftermath (p. 201). The authors provide a comprehensive account of the operations, the challenges faced, and the impact of these

operations on the region. They also delve into the controversies and conspiracy theories that have surrounded the SOE's operations in Albania, providing a balanced and nuanced perspective.

Old and New Insights on the History of Intelligence and Diplomacy in the Balkans is a significant contribution to the genre of Intelligence history in the Balkan studies. The book unravels the intricate relationship between intelligence and diplomatic activities in the complex history of the Balkans, also constituting a study of the human side of intelligence gathering, the role of cultural intermediaries in intelligence gathering and diplomacy. It is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the intricate dynamics of intelligence and diplomacy in the Balkans.