Reviews
David N. Gibbs
First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia
Vanderbilt University Press, 2009

David N. Gibbs, in his excellent book about the destruction of Yugoslavia, First Do No Harm, offers a credible explanation [for US policy].

■ Charles Simic, New York Review of Books

Gibbs offers an important antidote to the self serving propaganda emanating from Washington and allied capitals… First Do No Harm is a tour de force… [an] invaluable book.

■ Washington Times

Gibbs marshals an impressive array of sources to counter the explanations used to justify Western involvement in Yugoslavia … His contention that a relentless American drive for hegemony was at the root of this disaster is open to debate… Yet Gibbs raises compelling questions about the role of the West in Yugoslavia’s demise and future studies will have to acknowledge the challenges he has posed.

■ Diplomatic History

[A] pioneering study… a powerful new interpretation of the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

■ Chalmers Johnson, author of the Blowback trilogy

An antidote to the humanitarian legend of the Kosovo war.

■ David Bromwich, Huffington Post

Gibbs shows that the NATO intervention against Yugoslavia was deliberately planned and was not the answer to the ‘humanitarian catastrophe’…The book certainly shows a very different picture than the simplified black and white, which has in the world and in Slovenia so far prevailed.

■ Mladina (Slovenia)


■ Jim Hoagland, Washington Post
[First Do No Harm] stands out as one of the most intriguing accounts of the Western intervention in the Balkans in the 1990s… an indispensible source on the Yugoslav crisis.

■ Perspectives:
*Central European Review of International Affairs*

Overthrows the fading shibboleths of the Yugoslavian conflict.

■ Z Magazine

Though other critical writers have dealt with the problems of Western intervention in Yugoslav civil wars, none has conducted so thorough and well documented an analysis as Gibbs… excellent and readable.

■ Peace Research:
*The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*

David N. Gibbs has written what is in many ways an admirable work… First Do No Harm teems with fascinating and important information. The author has clearly spent an enormous amount of time in research, unearthing a considerable array of data heretofore not widely known. His analysis is well thought out and revealing, painting a devastating picture of Western duplicity. This is an important work which anyone with an interest in how diplomacy is actually conducted should read.

■ Science and Society

Amid the burgeoning literature on humanitarian intervention, David Gibbs’ book stands out for its apt critique and the cogent questions he raises about the rationale for using military force to try and remedy the world’s many human crises. Professor Gibbs makes strong arguments and contentious and provocative claims, some of which I disagree with. Yet this is a carefully reasoned and well sourced account of how the liberal or Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination and non-intervention morphed into a license to intervene almost anywhere. Gibbs has read very widely and uses the best sources available. Given the hypocrisy of many arguments for humanitarian intervention, Gibbs’ central argument should be taken to heart. First do no harm.

■ Bruce Cumings
*Swift Distinguished Service Professor of History*
*University of Chicago*

Also featured on C-SPAN’s Book TV series.

David N. Gibbs is Professor of History at the University of Arizona, in Tucson. His previous writings include *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention*, University of Chicago Press, 1991. His articles have appeared in the London *Guardian, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor,* and *Le Monde Diplomatique,* as well as many academic journals. He is on the editorial advisory board of *Tikkun.*