PART I

BACKGROUND AND THEORY

1

Western Intervention in the Balkans

The Strategic Use of Emotion in Ethnic Conflict

In this book, I try to achieve multiple but connected goals. First, I wish to provide a history of ethnic conflict in the Western Balkans since the breakup of Yugoslavia. This goal is the book's substantive agenda. This history will concentrate on the role of the West, in particular the West's intervention policies. There is considerable variation in the success and failure of these policies. Understanding this variation requires some innovation in method. My second goal is to supply this innovation. This goal is the book's methodological agenda. This book has a third, less direct, aim. I hope that by developing this methodology and applying and testing it on the universe of Western Balkan cases, I will also be able to provide some understanding of Western intervention policy more broadly.

1. THE SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA

At its broadest level, this book concentrates on explaining variation in the success or failure of Western intervention in the Balkans from the collapse of communism up to the summer of 2008. With the formation of a strongly pro-EU government in Serbia in the summer of 2008, significant opposition to incorporation into Western institutions and the Western economy disappeared from the region. Not to exaggerate, but in an important sense one type of history had ended in the Balkans. Across this poor and corrupt region, nearly all looked to embrace the democracy and capitalism of the European Union and the United States. No party or leader could offer a coherent alternative. This transformation was perhaps inevitable. The combined gross domestic product of the entire Western Balkans (usually defined as the former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia but plus Albania) was dwarfed by that of its Western neighbors. In an era of globalization, these poor states could not advance outside of Europe's orbit. To be sure, significant conflicts and disputes still color the Western Balkan terrain, especially in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Macedonia. This book will chronicle

the ways those conflicts are still being contested. Yet the era of massive violence and isolation appears to be over.

Although the progression of regional history was likely to reach this stage, there were a few bumps along the way. In what amounted to the bloodiest fighting in Europe since the Second World War, the Bosnian war resulted in the death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Fifteen years after the Dayton Accords, progress toward the reconstruction of a functioning central state has been uneven. In Kosovo, the Milosevic regime drove over 800,000 Albanians out of their homes. In response, NATO conducted its first armed action, dropping over 26,000 bombs during a period of seventy-eight days to drive Milosevic's forces out of Kosovo.[1] The war not only changed NATO's mission, but also challenged sovereignty norms as a basic principle of the international order. Albanian guerrilla groups escalated violence in Kosovo in 1998, southern Serbia in 2000, and Macedonia in 2001. As late as 2008, radical nationalists in Serbia drew huge vote shares while their followers and sympathizers set fire to the U.S. and other foreign embassies.

Within the course of this drama, the United States and Europe made decisions about whether to intervene and how. The nature of intervention has taken a myriad of forms – informal pressure, sanctions, bombings, etc. In the years following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the United Nations conducted eight peacekeeping missions in the region, NATO carried out four different operations, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) worked on several assignments across the Western Balkans. Interventions took their most manifest form in brokered agreements among parties in conflict. In almost every corner of the region, the West has been involved in making these deals. In Bosnia, the Clinton Administration negotiated the 1995 Dayton Accord with special annexes for the cities of Brcko and Mostar; in Macedonia, the West mediated the Ohrid Accord and has continued to serve as arbiter in its evolving implementation; in Eastern Slavonia, the West instituted the Basic Agreement; in southern Serbia, the United States brokered the Konculj agreement; in Montenegro, the West negotiated the Belgrade Agreement and was involved in the Tuzi or Ulcinj accord; in Kosovo, the United Nations' Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) instituted a policy of standards before status, then one of standards with status, and then transferred power to the European Union and yet another form of supervised governance in the form of the Ahtisaari Plan. The West also invested enormous resources in attempting to make these brokered agreements work. The United States spent 22 billion dollars from 1992 to 2003; the European Union spent 33 billion euros just between 2001 and 2005.[2]

[1] More than 38,400 sorties dropped 26,614 bombs. Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace at Any Price: How the World Failed Kosovo* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 2.

[2] Elizabeth Pond, *Endgame in the Balkans: Regime Change, European Style* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2006), p. 278.

The Western-brokered accords just mentioned are a primary empirical focus of this book. In each case, an accord illustrates Western goals and provides criteria for judging whether these goals were successfully reached.

Taken as a whole, these accords also illustrate the Western philosophy toward intervention. I will argue that both Western intervention practice and the social science that evaluates it are driven by a narrow sense of human nature. More specifically, individuals are seen as responding to short-term, largely economic incentives and disincentives, or perhaps to physical threats. Correspondingly, policies are formed along the lines of narrowly conceived "sticks and carrots." In the words of an American military colonel serving in Iraq, "With a heavy dose of fear and violence, and a lot of money for projects, I think we can convince these people that we are here to help them."[3] In another similar vein, interveners apply the logic of rational choice game theory, especially in the form of the "prisoners' dilemma," to the conflicts they find themselves in. As with sticks and carrots, the goal is to raise the value of rewards, or to structure penalties in such a way that the relationships among the parties in the conflict can rapidly evolve toward a new "equilibrium" with higher mutual payoffs. In an important sense, this book is an evaluation of this philosophy and the practice that follows from it.

The Western Balkans is a critical case for the study of intervention. Most factors have theoretically lined up to support successful intervention – both carrots and sticks have been abundant. In Bosnia, fourteen years after the Dayton Accords, the international community had poured more money into Bosnia per capita than into any recipient of the Marshall Plan. Under the so-called Bonn powers, international administrators could easily remove uncooperative local political actors, even from positions to which they were democratically elected. The International Criminal Tribunal has tried dozens of war criminals at the Hague. Massive security forces have kept the peace. NGOs have worked to create a strong narrative that places the blame on manipulative elites. Critically, the European Union holds out the promise of membership in exchange for compliance to its wishes. Yet the hope of developing effective central governments made only halting progress. In 2009, Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton Accord, was warning about Bosnia's possible collapse.[4] In Kosovo, the program of "standards before status" failed to create a functioning multiethnic society or to prevent massive riots in March 2004, despite having poured enormous resources into a small state of two million people. The West was pouring money into Kosovo at a rate twenty-five times greater than into Afghanistan and had helped fund troop levels at a rate fifty times greater.[5] Some regions in

[3] Dexter Filkins quoting Colonel Sassaman in the *New York Times*, December 7, 2003, "Tough New Tactics by U.S. Tighten Grip on Iraq Towns."

[4] Richard Holbrooke and Paddy Ashdown, "A Bosnian Powder Keg," *London Guardian*, October 22, 2009. Ashdown was writing as a former UN High Representative to Bosnia.

[5] King and Mason, *Peace at Any Price*, p. 21.

Bosnia, and arguably Macedonia, have seen more success. What explains this variation? The set of accords mentioned form a substantial field of variation from which to examine potential answers to this question.

II. THE METHODOLOGICAL AGENDA: THE STRATEGIC USE OF EMOTION IN ETHNIC CONFLICT

In terms of the substantive agenda just described, this book is a straightforward social scientific work. I develop and examine hypotheses that explain observed variation in the success or failure of Western intervention policy in one universe of cases, the Western Balkans.

At the same time, the book deviates greatly from standard practice and the conventional wisdom in political science. This deviation stems from the discrepancy that I observed over the course of several years of fieldwork in the Balkans between what actors do and the theoretical model of their behavior that underlies Western models of intervention and reconstruction. The individuals I observed had lived through violence and some of them had committed it. Many fled their homes in fear. Some would seek revenge. These individuals often hold deep historically based prejudices; they often cannot value the lives of ethnically distinct others. Many became used to being on top of the political and social hierarchy and had a hard time accustoming themselves to new political realities. In other words, the people I have observed have been through some powerful experiences. These experiences have left a residue. For those who have lived in the conflict regions of the Balkans, the residue of their experience is often as real as the guns and money that form the basis of Western social science accounts. The question is how this powerful but amorphous residue can be incorporated into social science.

The most basic underlying proposition of this book can be simply stated: *broad human experiences leave residues that affect the path of conflict*. This statement will undoubtedly seem banal to many readers. In fact, it flies in the face of the conventional wisdom of U.S. political science as it stood in the early twenty-first century. The view that broad human experience shapes the outbreak and course of conflict has been under consistent assault for much of the post-Cold War era. The current thinking comes in many different forms, and consumers of the literature will recognize the slogans and catchwords of specific versions: greed over grievance, insurgency as technology, elite manipulation, and thugs. Violence is often viewed as a matter of very small numbers of actors, either elites or criminals, making rational decisions to initiate and sustain violence to achieve narrow ends. Despite diversity in details, each of these views holds in common the idea that the daily life of members of large communities is largely irrelevant to understanding conflict.

I believe this view is wrong. The reason for the existence of this view may be that a fundamental goal of social science is to make complicated matters easier to comprehend. In the pursuit of parsimony, simplifying assumptions are necessary. Given the biases of Western society and academia, methods in the study

of conflict have been based, either explicitly or implicitly, on the assumption of narrowly rational actors.[6] Perhaps unsurprisingly, both the Western practitioners of intervention and the scholars who study political violence are driven by the same assumptions. Both sometimes fail in their respective endeavors, I argue, because their overly narrow view of human nature often blinds their practices and methods.

Although civil war is not the direct subject here, recent political science literature on that subject has produced slogans and catchwords that have influenced conflict studies at large. It is worthwhile to compare the approach and essence of some of these studies with the method developed here. Consider one of the most highly influential cross-national quantitative studies of civil war and development policy.[7] Paul Collier and his collaborators conclude that civil war is overwhelmingly linked to economic variables.[8] The related slogan is "greed over grievance." They find that political grievances and social divisions, inequality, and a host of other factors are not statistically significant; rather, a simple combination of accessible natural resources and a weak state produces civil war. These correlations are then interpreted in rational choice terms. The statistically significant variables are assumed to produce the constraints and incentives that affect the rational decisions of rebels in their pursuit of narrow interests, primarily economic goods. In this view, violence is a resource that is used to grab wealth. There are two versions of this "greed" theory. In one, the existence of natural resources provides a motive for conflict and war. In the other, the focus is on the lack of opportunities for legitimate economic activity in poorer, weaker states. Both suggest that looking for explanations in grievances and nonmaterial motivations is not a productive avenue. In a passage on recruitment into rebel armies, Collier et al. address the question of noneconomic motivation with the following speculation:

> The people who join rebel groups are overwhelmingly young uneducated males. For this group, objectively observed grievances might count for very little. Rather, they may be disproportionately drawn from those easily manipulated by propaganda and who find the power that comes from possession and use of a gun alluring. Social psychologists find that around 3 percent of the population has psychopathic tendencies and actually enjoys violence against others (Pinker) and this is more than is needed to equip a rebel group with recruits.[9]

[6] On this point, see Chaim Kaufmann, "Rational Choice and Progress in the Study of Ethnic Conflict: A Review Essay," *Security Studies* 14 (2005): 178–207.

[7] I also use quantitative studies of civil war as a primary example because they may represent the modal form of analysis among political scientists in the first years of the twenty-first century. According the APSA Task Force on Political Violence, over fifty quantitative studies of civil war appeared between 2001 and 2006 alone, more than in the previous thirty years combined. Most of these studies consider similar sets of variables.

[8] Paul Collier, V. L. Elliott, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington D.C. and Oxford: Copublication of the World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003).

[9] Ibid. p. 68. The Pinker citation is from S. Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking Press, 2002).

In Collier et al.'s approach, the actual everyday experiences of larger groups of people do not carry explanatory significance. Anger at violence, resentment of domination, and historically and culturally based prejudices and stigmas are not particularly relevant. Rather, violence is a matter of greedy elites operating according to structural constraints, who lead a small set of naïve or psychopathic recruits.

James Fearon and David Laitin's article on civil war and insurgency examines the onset of civil war.[10] Based on a wide reading of political science works, they develop a set of independent variables that include level of gross domestic product, income inequality, nature of terrain, population size, ethnic and religious diversity, and extent of civil liberties. They find that the variables associated with grievances and identities are statistically nonsignificant, whereas those associated with level of GDP, terrain, and population size are statistically significant. Fearon and Laitin's interpretation of these findings is that civil wars are largely a matter of insurgent technology (the related slogan is "insurgency as technology"). Rebels fight for a variety of reasons, but they do so only when they can rationally expect to avoid capture by the state. They can challenge the state if they can hide in mountains or within large populations and if the state's capabilities are weak (proxied by GDP figures).

Fearon and Laitin recognize the limits of large-*n* statistical studies, so they also look to case studies and qualitative treatments of civil war. However, when analyzing case studies, Fearon and Laitin seem to transfer the rationalist assumptions underlying the regression findings. In a review of a set of largely anthropological and case study works on violence, they address the puzzle of why individuals appear to participate in communal violence when it does not appear rational to do so. They solve the puzzle by concluding that "'ethnic violence' can be a cover for other motivations such as looting, land grabs, and personal revenge, and the activities of thugs sent loose by the politicians can 'tie the hands' of publics who are compelled to seek protection from the leaders who have endangered them."[11] The interpretation predictably seeks answers by positing a rational individual pursuing a constricted range of goods.

John Mueller argues that ethnic violence and war have nothing at all to do with grievances, prejudices, or history. The catchword for his explanation is "thugs." Mueller surveys the killing in recent cases and concludes, "The mechanism of violence in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, then, is remarkably banal. Rather than reflecting deep historic passions and hatreds, the violence seems to have been the result of a situation in which common, opportunistic, sadistic, and often distinctly nonideological marauders were recruited and permitted free rein by political authorities. Because such people are found in all societies, the events in Yugoslavia and Rwanda are not peculiar to those locales,

[10] James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97 (2003): 75–90.

[11] James Fearon and David Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Identity," *International Organization* 54 (Autumn 2000): 845–77. Passage is from p. 874.

but could happen almost anywhere under the appropriate conditions."[12] For Mueller, violence is the result of a small band of power-seeking elites deciding to unleash criminals. Each of the groups pursues its narrow agenda. The broader population lie in between with their preferences, their beliefs, and their backgrounds, meaningless to the events swirling around them. Support for one's own group is only a matter of survival: "Often the choice was essentially one of being dominated by vicious bigots of one's own ethnic group or by vicious bigots of another ethnic group. Given that range of alternatives, the choice was easy."[13]

Unlike Mueller, Russell Hardin sees the process of identification as essential and worthy of exploration. Why would an individual act in favor of or support collective violence? Hardin's starting point is rational choice. As he states, "In this study, I propose to go as far as possible with a rational choice account of the reputedly primordial, moral, and irrational phenomena of ethnic and nationalist identification and action."[14] This work, like others in political science, limits its approach from the beginning. Accordingly, Hardin's consideration of norms boils down to a strategic choice represented by a coordination game. Like Mueller, Hardin posits that individuals will choose to support their own ethnic groups mainly as a matter of avoiding sanction. Individuals wish to coordinate with other individuals on a salient identity dimension. As with Mueller, the content and history of that dimension is irrelevant. Hardin's discussion is much richer than Mueller's, as it also considers the ways in which individuals' information becomes limited, both by themselves (the epistemological comforts of home) and by elites, and also raises the cognitive phenomenon of the is-ought fallacy (because a group convention exists, it should be attributed moral power). Hardin's view of group conflict, though, has little to do with broader experiences such as group stigma, status hierarchy, memory of past violence, or emotions.

For many types of conflict, most recent political science treatments seek an explanation in the form of a specific actor at a specific time making an optimizing decision based on narrow considerations of greed or power. For example, political scientists find that mass killing and genocide during war is a strategic calculation unrelated to history, identity, or politics.[15] Furthermore, security dilemma theorists hold that ethnic conflict is often the result of one specific strategic situation. When both sides are able to strike each

[12] John Mueller, "The Banality of 'Ethnic War,'" *International Security* 25 (1) (Summer 2000): 42–70. Passage is from p. 43.

[13] Ibid., p. 56.

[14] Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 16. For a review related to the present work, see Roger Petersen, "Ethnic Conflict, Social Science, and William Butler Yeats: A Commentary on Russell Hardin's *One For All: The Logic of Group Conflict*," *European Journal of Sociology* 38 (1997): 311–23.

[15] Benjamin Valentino, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay, "'Draining the Sea': Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare," *International Organization* 58 (2004): 375–407. Also, see Alexander Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

other and offensive and defensive actions are blurred, then it is rational to strike first rather than risk being attacked. The argument generally focuses on balances of power and the relationship between offense and defense rather than on the political and social experiences of the antagonists.[16] Relatedly, over the past three decades, many political scientists have moved away from drawing insights from psychology and history to wholeheartedly embrace economic approaches. Consider a recent economic treatment of the phenomenon of hatred. Edward Glaeser writes that hatred is a choice subject to the laws of supply and demand. Politicians supply negative stories about groups and consumers decide whether to buy these stories depending on a cost-benefit analysis of the product.[17] Clearly, this approach downplays, if not completely ignores, considerations of historical creation and momentum of identities, as well as the voluminous work on the psychology of prejudice and cognitive distortions.

As opposed to these political scientists, field researchers often do find history and collective grievances to be critical. A recent collection of studies of protracted conflict surveyed the struggle among insurgent groups and the state in eleven cases. The concluding chapter evaluated Collier's greed argument in light of the case studies evidence and produced the following statement: "None of our cases significantly support the 'supply-side explanations' of insurgent or rebel violence popularized by Professor Paul Collier of the World Bank and his colleagues, . . . ETA, GAM, Hamas, the IRA, the JKLF, the LTTE, and the PKK were formed by people influenced by nationalist and leftist doctrines, and they understood themselves to be acting in response to the repression, conquest, partition, or maltreatment of their nations."[18] Thus we see that one set of scholars finds that repression and maltreatment are central, whereas another sees them as insignificant. Why don't the findings of the case analysts show up in the treatments of political scientists? The discrepancy calls for a rethinking of how broad experiences and grievances translate into motivations and actions that precipitate and sustain conflict.

III. EMOTIONS AS THE RESIDUE OF EXPERIENCE

The approach in this book is to treat the essence of these experiences as emotions. As I will outline in detail in the following chapter, emotions can be conceived of as a package of cognitions and action tendencies, with influences on information-collection and belief-formation. Borrowing from psychology,

[16] Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35 (1993): 27–47. Posen does recognize the influence of past violence on present calculations.

[17] Edward Glaeser, "The Political Economy of Hatred," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120 (2005): 45–86.

[18] Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary, and John Tirman eds., *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 400.

I will develop a conception of emotions that can be incorporated into hypotheses concerning strategic choices during conflict.

In this introduction, however, I will only discuss some common sense notions about experiences and emotions during conflict and intervention. Although many broad experiences might affect how conflict unfolds, three seem most powerful and common: the experience of violence itself, the experience of stigma and prejudice, and the experience of status reversal.

First, consider the experience of violence. People strongly react when members of their groups are killed. This statement should be uncontroversial, but its full meaning is seldom captured by analyses that employ static measures of death and hostility. These measures cannot capture the fact that the qualitative nature of violence shapes the way humans experience violence. Some types of violence create anger and a desire to strike back; other types of violence create fear and a desire to flee. If the violence targets cultural sites and specific individuals, the reaction will tend toward anger. If the killing seems indiscriminate, the reaction is likely to be fear. The emotions of anger and fear are primary resources in ongoing conflicts.

Consider a description of an actual onset of war in the city of Mostar, Bosnia:

> The Muslim-Croat war for Mostar erupted one night in the early summer of 1993, climaxing months of rapidly escalating tensions. According to a Bosniac soldier, the atmosphere in the city resembled a tinderbox in those last days of 'peace', and gunmen from both sides had already taken up positions on either side of the Boulevard in anticipation of an imminent outbreak of fighting. His position on the side of the Boulevard closer to the Neretva faced Croat positions on the other side of the wide street. That night, according to his account, Croat militiamen holed up in the gymnasium building just across the Boulevard from his position brought a 17 year-old Bosniac schoolgirl abducted from west Mostar to the school. They then apparently gang-raped her before throwing her out of a top-floor window. Several years later the former Bosniac fighter recalled to me his most vivid memory of that night: the absolute stillness and silence for a few minutes after the girl's screaming ended. Then heavy firing broke out from both sides of the Boulevard.[19]

This passage illustrates the unsettling and uncomfortable realities of political violence. The passage also indicates the difficulties of treating political violence as a straightforward matter of rational calculation. The event described involved the violation of norms, the creation of memories, and, most relevant here, the triggering of emotions. It was more than some leader's calculated decision to initiate "onset." It likely left a powerful residue. Years after Dayton, and fifteen years after this event, Mostar remained an ethnically segregated city despite massive funding and Western pressure.

Next, consider the phenomenon of stigma and prejudice. As an enormous body of literature has established, members of one group often see members

[19] Sumantra Bose, *Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 103–4.