



Back to Basics? International Engagement and Recurring Conflict in Southeastern Europe

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With the Ottoman and Habsburg empires caught up in a process of disintegration, the newly independent states of Southeastern Europe embarked on an uphill battle to solidify their territorial integrity, to forge robust political institutions and enhance the cohesiveness of society at large. In the late 19th century and especially the early 20th, problems associated with state building were aggravated by the fact that governments of independent Southeast European countries began perceiving their national projects as competitive to those of their neighbors. The powerful dynamic of relationships between majority and minority populations, within and across state borders, was another factor that prolonged the process of creating viable and sovereign states.

The legacy of international engagement on the Balkan peninsula over the past two hundred years is fraught with as much complexity as are intra-regional ties. Neighboring countries and especially Great Powers have at times exerted direct influence, or projected power from afar, over the political and social mosaic of Southeastern Europe. The motives and modalities of such meddling have varied considerably. But a long-standing interest of most foreign powers has been to thwart or contain conflicts that could otherwise unsettle the region, and affect the continent as a whole. From time to time Great Powers and other international actors have acted in concert to advance this latter aim.

This article will begin by briefly analyzing international engagement with the Balkan states over the past two centuries. By *international* engagement I mean that states, directly or indirectly referring to multilateral agreements or organizations, made commitments to local actors, employed significant resources, and developed policies with intrusive aspects. I argue that, in terms of motives and means behind conflict-related political intervention, three eras of international engagement stand out as distinctive. The same is true when turning to conceptions of post-conflict interference, in the form of administration of portions of Southeastern Europe. In the latter context, I will distinguish between practices linked to interim administration and those associated with the (hypothetical) end state of affairs.

The historical overview will then inform a discussion of contemporary international engagement on the Balkan peninsula. My overall concern is with the effectiveness and legitimacy of international engagement, both in terms of political intervention and in the form of administration of territories, peoples and resources. For all of these purposes, the article will draw on the contemporary literature on related issues in the academic field of international relations, as well as on a growing body of policy-relevant work discussing the problems of conflict-related political intervention and administration in Southeastern Europe at the turn of the 21st century.

The Record of International Engagement: Three Eras

Stephen Krasner's *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (1999) and the author's frequent use of examples from the Balkan peninsula in this influential study has sensitized many international relations scholars to the long history of Great Power entanglement in the region. It is quite clear that major Western powers of the 19th century, be it France, Austria-Hungary, Prussia, Russia or the British Empire, in a first era of international engagement brought their power to bear over important areas of policymaking in Southeastern Europe. Economic policy was crucial to such pressures. At the time, international borrowing was, in the absence of a modern financial system or global trade agreement, a matter handled between two sovereign states. As long as both countries

were roughly equal in size, power and resources, sovereign lending need not have been profoundly different from contemporary arrangements. But the lender was, as a rule, in a much stronger position than was the borrower. Krasner writes that the debtor country's autonomy through sovereign lending in fact could be compromised twice: first by signing a contract that provided the creditor government control over some domestic fiscal activities, such as collection of tax or levies. And second, if the debtor defaulted, the creditor government might be in a position to seize assets, direct control of custom houses or the like (Krasner 1999: 132).

Another common intrusive activity was related to the 'import' of predominantly German princes as monarchs and the establishment of constitutions in the turbulent wake of Habsburg or Ottoman rule (Krasner 1999: 155-175; Jelavich 1983: 235-299). Nowhere was political intervention more blatant than in the case of Greece. Following a series of meetings by local Greek revolutionaries in the 1820s, an intergovernmental convention signed by Britain, Russia and France set up a government and ensured it international recognition, and thereby effectively overruled all previous proceedings. The teenage son of Ludwig I of Bavaria, Otto of Wittelsbach, was picked as ruler. Bulgaria under Alexander of Battenberg, liberated from the Ottoman forces by Russia in 1878, suffered another setback. Having been acknowledged as the largest Balkan country—with outlets into the Aegean and Black Sea—at the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, the Congress of Berlin of the same year ruled to relegate Bulgaria to a landlocked principality under the suzerainty of the Sublime Porte. Romania and Serbia, although better poised to mobilize local political resources by virtue of their more influential elites, did gain formal independence at the Berlin Congress. Still, international recognition was made contingent on those states accepting provisions that secured ethnic and religious equality in their constitutions. In Albania, finally, Italy and Austria-Hungary sponsored competing political factions with divergent lawmaking agendas both before and after the granting of autonomy in 1912 (Gawthorne-Hardy 1950: 90-92).

International interference followed this pattern well into the first decade of the 20th century. It was for the most part hardnosed, unilateralist and largely driven by what the respective capitals regarded as their overriding national interests. The so-called 'Concert of Europe' no doubt helped constrain desires toward engaging in the use of large-scale coercion or outright warfare (Clark 1990). Due to such constraints, in the Balkans most European Great Powers preferred playing subtler games than in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The principal mode of influencing the newly independent states can be described as a form of economic and political patronage. Though Serbia was virtually a Russian protectorate from 1830 to 1856 and Greece remained under heavy Russian, French and British influence as long as until 1923, direct administration of territories and populations was in fact uncommon (Jelavich 1983: 229-234). Since anything resembling occupation would have prompted suspicions of territorial expansion on the part of competing powers, the rare examples of outright administration were entrusted to the 'incumbent' Ottoman and Habsburg imperial regimes.

At the same time, the Paris (1856, 1858) and Berlin (1878) international conferences helped forge certain elements of a joint approach toward Southeastern Europe. This joint approach transpired from international deliberations combining the key components of the 'Concert of Europe' system, namely Great Power consent to any significant territorial changes on the continent, and a desire to forge relative stability through the establishment of viable states (Clark 1990: 112-130). It is nevertheless apparent in the outcome of those major conferences devoted to Balkan affairs that balance of power considerations remained the chief concern.



In the interwar period, international engagement in Southeastern Europe was directly geared toward the protection of ethnic and religious minorities. This second era of international engagement was strongly influenced by the notion of self-determination, as conceptualized by Woodrow Wilson. In light of the two Balkan wars and the First World War, foreign powers felt that they had little to gain from pressing Balkan governments into adopting certain economic policies or constitutional provisions. Perhaps more importantly, the 1914 events in Sarajevo and their repercussions had underscored the dangers of an unstable Southeastern Europe and the common interest of Great Powers to secure peace and prosperity in the region (Cobban 1969: 57-84).

Indeed, there was a longer history of the Great Powers' preoccupation with minority issues. Already the 1815 Vienna Congress had afforded protection to an ethnic group, as opposed to a religious community, in its explicit reference to the situation of Poles.¹ Further, the 1858 Treaty of Paris awarded religious and civil liberties to Jewish communities in the Balkan countries, and the 1878 Berlin Treaty prohibited 'exclusion or incapacity in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil and political rights, admission to public employments, functions and honors' (Krasner 1999: 86-87). Interestingly, the phrasing of this latter anti-discriminatory clause has a distinctly modern flavor. Overall, however, these minority rights provisions were not translated into political and administrative practices that corresponded to the spirit of treaty formulations. For instance, the treatment of Jews in Romania, of Muslims in Serbia, and of Turks in Bulgaria, left much to be desired.

Because of the perception that early 20th century warfare in Southeastern Europe largely stemmed from animosities between ethnic and religious groups, minority rights agreements were incorporated into most peace treaties signed with all Central and Eastern European states in the aftermath of World War I (Cobban 1969: 85-90). Similar provisions were in fact made for the protection of minority rights in the Free City of Danzig, the Åland Islands, Upper Silesia and other regions. As opposed to the treaties of the 19th century, the interwar agreements were quite detailed and often explicitly guaranteed minority protection as regards distinctions of language, birth, race, nationality and religion (Krasner 1999: 90-91). In turn, these minority arrangements were typically incorporated into national law with the additional condition that the League of Nations would need to approve of them being suspended or revoked.

It would appear that the policy recommendations proffered by European governments largely resonated with the famous fourteen points put before the U.S. Congress by President Wilson in 1918, including the notions of collective security and self-determination of peoples (Cobban 1969: 57-58). If wartime intervention had been characterized by motives related to military strategy, interwar engagement on the part of European Great Powers was internationalist and sometimes even multilateral in its implementation.² For example, the Minorities Section of the Secretariat of the League of Nations was charged with monitoring and enforcing of the minority rights protection system established through the Treaty of Versailles and a string of bilateral accords (Claude 1959: 43-61).

In terms of administration of post-conflict situations, the so-called inter-Allied Regime set up in Thrace represents an interesting episode. The short-lived inter-Allied Regime is a successful, albeit unusual interwar experiment by Great Power governments to introduce

¹ Article 12 expressly provided for 'institutions that assured to the Poles the preservation of their nationality' (Fouques-Duparc, quoted in Krasner 1999: 83). The treaties of Paris (1856 and 1858) and Berlin (1878) and other international agreements were to have similar ethnic safeguards built into them.

² Regarding multilateralism, I follow John Ruggie (1998: 112), who wrote: 'What distinguishes the multilateral form from other forms is that it coordinates behavior among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct'.

order, reduce conflict potential and help build effective political institutions in one area of Southeastern Europe (Cobban 1969: 299-300; Mitrany 1936: 254-263). It was set up in what today is northeastern Greece on 28 October 1919 through a decree issued by the Governor General, the French General Franchet d'Esperey. The decree established an autonomous province with a provisional government that was acting on behalf of the Allied Powers. The provisional government carried out a comprehensive demilitarization of the province while working to facilitate, rather than assume, the normal duties of local administrations.

Yet despite individual achievements in terms of peace-building and concerted efforts to convince governments to develop a more tolerant and inclusive policy towards minorities (thwarting a general trend toward increasing tensions between ethnic and religious communities on the peninsula), the positive legacy of several interwar experiments faded within a couple of years. Evidently, international actors never provided resources matching the ambitions and pledges initially made. The actual policies adopted by several Balkan governments revealed that their own commitment to self-determination, beyond the interests of the majority population, was shallow at best (Cobban 1969: 87-88). Following the Greek-Turkish wars of 1919-1922 and the ensuing population exchanges, few paid even lip-service to minority rights. As 400,000 Turks and Muslims left the Balkan peninsula and entered the newly proclaimed Turkish nation-state, some 1,100,000 Greeks and Orthodox Christians were evicted from Anatolia (Clogg 1992: 101).

By and large, the Second World War and the Cold War periods were characterized by one-sided power projection into the Balkans by individual Great Powers. In the latter period, needless to say, the United States and the Soviet Union dominated the scene entirely. What can be termed a third era of international engagement therefore only began with the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. In 1990 and 1991, Western states were standing by as hostilities erupted in Slovenia, Croatia and elsewhere. But over the next few years, the United States, the European Union and individual European countries became increasingly entangled with conflict management in the Balkan region.

The collapse of Yugoslavia presented a series of challenges to international actors in terms of intervention as well as post-conflict administration of territories, peoples and resources. There was an initial agreement to try and rely as much as possible on regional and multilateral institutions, such as the EU, the OSCE and the UN.³ While the EU sought to produce a political framework for a reconstructed federal Yugoslavia, the OSCE was given an operational role in monitoring elections, building confidence and preventing the outbreak of hostilities. Several ceasefire agreements were negotiated between warring factions, but the conflict escalated amid EC/EU efforts to forge a settlement on the orderly breakup of Yugoslavia.

In the next stage, diplomatic activities were reorganized along classic Great Power lines, in the so-called Contact Group, initially encompassing the United States, Russia, France, Britain and Germany (Cohen 1995: 310-320). Faced with ongoing Bosnian Serb aggression against the civilian population of Sarajevo and elsewhere, U.S. and NATO policy hardened and became more favorable toward the Bosnian Muslim and Croat viewpoints. In February 1994, following the Sarajevo 'market massacre', NATO issued an ultimatum to Serb forces to withdraw beyond shelling distance of that city. A few months later Washington gave its blessing to Croatian troops moving in to capture the Serb-held Krajina region. Whereas the defeat of Serb forces in that pivotal region between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina dealt a major blow to Belgrade's strategy for a Greater

³ The EU and OSCE, formerly the EC and the CSCE, were renamed in the mid-1990s.



Serbia, it inevitably prompted the biggest single exodus of war refugees during the post-Yugoslav wars, with hundreds of thousands of Serbs evicted from their longtime homelands.

NATO was also the tool of military intervention in the spring of 1999, as the Western alliance tried to put an end to the low-intensity warfare between Albanian insurgents and heavily armed Serb police forces in the province of Kosovo (Schnabel and Thakur 2000). NATO's campaign appears to have been badly prepared in many respects, but the grip was tightened after the first weeks of limited success. Slobodan Milosevic did much to strengthen the resolve of NATO, which was getting ready to celebrate its 50th anniversary, by escalating his policy of expelling Kosovar Albanians (Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000: 19). Cornered by NATO, the EU and Russia, Milosevic eventually accepted the broad terms of a peace agreement on 2 June 1999, with military details hammered out over the next few days. On 10 June, NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana, on part of the alliance, declared the end of the air campaign.

International intervention in the Republic of Macedonia, as conducted in the spring of 2001, was less heavily reliant on a military component. UN, NATO and OSCE missions had been stationed in the country for nearly a decade, aiming to reduce the level of tension between majority ethnic Macedonians and the sizable minority of ethnic Albanians. The situation turned into an acute crisis in the aftermath of the Kosovo campaign, as the number of incursions of armed Kosovar Albanians increased. In February and March 2001 the city of Tetovo became the scene of armed struggle between Albanian guerillas and Macedonian police forces. With civil war lurking as a real prospect, a number of Western governments and international institutions acted swiftly.

At this point, the United States and the EU devised a joint strategy with three components. One component was the offer of a small-scale military contingent that would monitor the conflict, oversee the dismantling of irregular (ethnic) Albanian forces on Macedonian territory, and guarantee the safety of minority communities in disputed areas of the country. A second component was the diplomatic input into the complex negotiations between the Macedonian cabinet, parliamentary representatives of the Albanian minority, and interlocutors of the armed insurgents. The core controversies related to the status of the Albanian community in the constitution, access to public office, and decentralization of government to the municipality level—paving the way for partial autonomy for Albanian-dominated areas. A third component consisted of a package of aid, credits and pledges to help the country move in the direction of EU accession.

Although the incentives provided by the EU were significant, the strict conditionality approach outlined by U.S. envoy James Pardew and EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, left little room to maneuver for the Macedonian cabinet or for their ethnic Albanian counterparts. The Ohrid agreement signed in the summer of 2001 led to the disbandment of ethnic Albanian guerilla forces in Macedonia and to a series of concessions by the government in terms of constitutional amendments and decentralization of power to municipalities.

So if Great Powers seem to dominate the political intervention phase in the third era of international engagement, the multilateral component remains crucial to post-conflict administration. A High Representative was charged with organizing international administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina as soon as the Dayton peace accord was finalized in November 1995, and a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to Kosovo was similarly appointed in 1999. Italy joined the Contact Group in shaping the main conditions of realizing the terms of the peace agreement. A so-called

Peace Implementation Council was formed for the participation of dozens of other governments involved in the reconstruction of the country. In Kosovo, meanwhile, a Joint Interim Administrative Structure (JIAS) was created under the UN SRSG and the auspices of UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo). In turn, UNMIK-JIAS entails four pillars whose day-to-day operation in turn relies on the EU, the OSCE, and a variety of UN agencies.

Expanding Ambitions

To summarize the preceding section, three distinct eras of international engagement in Southeastern Europe can be identified. In the 19th century foreign powers interfered frequently into the affairs of Balkan states on the basis of Concert of Europe norms, though primarily using unilateral means. A second era of international engagement was characterized by efforts to bolster minority rights and by internationalist motives. International peace treaties and the League of Nations were considered the main building blocks of that arrangement, even if enforcement capacity was weak, success modest and in many instances unsustainable. A third, post-Cold War era focuses on human rights and relies on the political and military intervention of Great Powers acting in concert, while post-conflict administration is largely left to global and regional multilateral institutions.

In other words, the developmental pattern of the past two hundred years demonstrates significant complexity. For instance, it is unclear how the practice of international engagement in Southeastern Europe relates to Kalevi Holsti's (grand theory) observations of 'a slow decline in the appeal of bellicosity' since the Napoleonic Wars (Holsti 1991: 326).⁴ But the pattern is unilinear in at least one key respect, namely in respect of its expanding ambitions to organize post-conflict administration in Southeastern Europe. The example of the inter-Allied Regime in northern Greece was alluded to above, and the jurisprudence of the League of Nations and the International Court in The Hague likewise serve to underscore that point (Claude 1959: 28-61). In the post-Cold War environment, this process has evolved much further. While 19th century monarchs and early 20th century politicians appear to have focused on stemming violence and bringing a measure of peace and stability to the region, contemporary decisionmakers and international organizations officials actively contribute to raising expectations associated with post-conflict administration.

The higher degree of intrusiveness characteristic of present-day post-conflict administration is evident in the Dayton agreement and the personal powers it accords to the High Representative. At a December 1997 Peace Implementation Council meeting in Bonn, these powers were further expanded to include the sacking of government officials, the right to declare elections invalid, etc. While perhaps above all Carl Bildt's reign was characterized by respect for the political integrity of officials from all sides, his successor Carlos Westendorp was vested with the so-called 'Bonn powers', enabling him to dismiss Serb Republic president Nikola Poplasen. Subsequent representatives have engaged in much more intrusive activities in order to further the goals of international actors. Wolfgang Petritsch more than once applied his wider mandate to undo the election results in the various entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to introduce sweeping constitutional changes. Paddy Ashdown followed this approach in, among other things, amending the constitution of the Serb Republic (ICG 2003; Ourdan 2002).

⁴ Overall, the Balkans were never regarded a major prize by the Great Powers in the 19th century. One might argue that the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits remained a significant prize until the mid-19th century (as the Crimean War would appear to confirm). The building of railroads across many parts of the region in the late 19th century clearly offset the role of the Straits, yet thereby tended to somewhat bolster the strategic relevance of other areas of the region.



These measures are all legal in that the High Representative's original mandate had, from the outset, been very broad in scope, before it was then extended even further through the 'Bonn powers.' An act of a legally more dubious kind was the 'information intervention' that took place in 1997. After continuous tension between the UN, NATO and the Bosnian Serb media, SFOR General Wesley Clark simply besieged and closed down the Pale TV station for 'persistent and blatant contravention' of the Dayton accord (Thompson and Price 2003: 183-202). Needless to say, such overt use of military force resembles the practices of occupying forces rather than of post-conflict administration sanctioned by the international community.

The paradoxes and inconsistencies that flow from the Dayton accord are today recognized among practitioners and outside observers alike (Knaus and Martin 2003; ICG 2003). Susan Woodward refers to Dayton as 'not a peace agreement but a 'deal'—a form of nonnegotiated elite pact drawn up by outside negotiators—between the heads of the three warring parties' (Woodward 1999: 284). The basic paradox Woodward sees is inherent in the relationship of Dayton to the international legal norm of sovereignty. In her view, the international community is 'defying the autonomy principle in order to create an autonomous state' (Woodward 1999: 253). The question she poses is whether the major exceptions to sovereignty and non-intervention implied in the Dayton agreement can contribute to genuine domestic sovereignty and autonomy being established in the next stage (Woodward 1999: 256).

Another troubling inconsistency is the role of national and ethnic communities in the Dayton universe of constitutional rules. While the U.S. administration long opposed the Vance-Owen and Owen-Stoltenberg plans for a reconstructed Bosnia and Herzegovina on the grounds that it tended to reward Bosnian Serb aggression and reinforce ethnopoliticization of the Balkans, the Dayton accord was no less flawed in this respect (Woodward 1999: 283). Aside from the political leaders who signed the accord, Dayton may even have had fewer prospects to be accepted by most inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By reinserting ethnic quotas and balances in the constitution, many observers believe that the ethnopolitical nature of decision-making and representation was further entrenched in the aftermath of the war.

But sovereignty is nonetheless a principle inherent to the Dayton agreement, posing certain limitations to post-conflict administration. The UN mission to Kosovo, UNMIK, has a much more far-reaching mandate based on Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999. The Independent International Commission on Kosovo found that resolution 1244 had created 'a unique institutional hybrid, a UN protectorate with unlimited powers' (The Kosovo Report 2000: 9). In consequence, there is hardly any realm of government left untouched by the activities of international actors within the UNMIK-JIAS arrangement. More recently, regional and municipal authorities in Kosovo have been awarded certain competences and duties (Schwarz 2002). Their mandatory tasks include the basic operation of infrastructure, the economy, and the health system. In addition, the more active and innovative of regional and municipal officials may choose to attend to matters beyond the fundamental ones. Local administrators are in other words cautiously encouraged to try and cater for culture and arts, sports, tourism and youth matters (Schwarz 2002: 124-125).

The formal mandate notwithstanding, the expressed ambitions of international administrators in Kosovo also outstrip those of their peers in Sarajevo. The expansion of ambitions characterizing the third era of international engagement is vividly illustrated in the following statement by Andy Bearpark, Deputy UN SRSG to Kosovo. According to him, international donors

require us to provide a stable and secure environment in which all the people of Kosovo can pursue normal lives, a democratic and accountable system of government, a sound market-oriented economic and financial framework within which Kosovo's people can prosper freely, a strategy to promote growth, and the conditions in which civil society can flourish (UNMIK 2000: 5)

In this understanding, the joint UNMIK-JIAS framework is supposed to fulfill each of the lofty ambitions listed. While UN police keep the peace and uphold law and order, a variety of other UN agencies are supposed to build a civil administration system. The OSCE is charged with election monitoring and democratization programs, the first concrete outcomes being the municipal and parliamentary elections held in 2001 and 2002. The EU, finally, is responsible for rebuilding the economy and the infrastructure, via the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development as well as an array of smaller projects and initiatives.

From a critical standpoint, Florian Bieber has distinguished three levels of ambition among international organizations active in post-conflict administration efforts in the Balkan peninsula today. The three levels of ambition can be expressed in terms of how international actors experience their own roles. Such actors perceive that they have a mandate from the international community to either (Bieber 2003: 5-6):

- monitor agreements entered by the parties,
- technically implement such agreements
- or act politically through the shaping and staffing of government agencies and/or nominating people for public office.

In fact, it would appear that the entire spectrum of post-conflict administration is present in parts of former Yugoslavia. The role of the international community in the Republic of Macedonia is largely that of monitoring agreements entered into by the parties.⁵ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, by contrast, the international mission takes a much more active stance in technically implementing Dayton, as well as vetoing developments that are regarded as detrimental to the purposes of the peace agreement by applying the 'Bonn powers'. Kosovo, finally, is an example of a province that is being administered and politically molded at the same time. Belgrade has practically no say over what goes on in Kosovo, and so far the influence of local residents is also very limited.

Of course, the long-term perspective is that power will be handed back to local actors, to decision-makers and civil servants (Ducasse-Rogier 2001: 29). But what about the questions posed by Susan Woodward? Is it possible to create autonomy through procedures and actions that violate autonomy? Can democratic institutions emerge in a context where election results could be declared invalid as a result of citizens voting for a nationalist party? Is accountable government a realistic prospect when the top international officials are in a position to sack government officials and thus bypass regular chains of command and legal procedure?

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, David Chandler has famously launched a major assault on what he calls 'the strategy of externally imposed democratization' (Chandler 1999: 193). Chandler may well have a point in that resistance against international efforts often stems from a wish to regain self-respect and dignity, as powerfully described by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon 1966). On the whole, however, Chandler's charge that foreign meddling in the Balkans reinvigorates the image of colonialism and 'the White Man's burden' seems grossly overblown. First, Southeast

⁵ In 2003, the EU Commission pledged to assist each of the Macedonian ministries to implement reforms that were agreed under the Ohrid agreement (Ernst 2003).



European societies have never been subjected to slavery and colonialism in the sense these terms deserve to be defined. Second, international organization officials serving in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo—and to a lesser extent in the Republic of Macedonia—have undoubtedly made *some* progress toward institutionalizing democracy and civil society (Manning and Antic 2003). And third, none of the Western powers or international organizations plan to stay long in Southeastern Europe or would deliberately miss an opportunity to find an appropriate 'exit strategy.' Ultimately, they wish to transfer power to local actors who will govern their communities responsibly, not least taking the views and interests of minorities into account.

More adequate than Chandler's blunt challenge is Sumantra Bose's pointed criticism of the mandate of the High Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, accountable to 55 governments and organizations associated with the Peace Implementation Council, but not to the citizens of that country (Bose 2002: 275). But even Bose's comprehensive analysis seems to neglect the contradictions involved in the approach of the international community in the Balkans. Adding to Woodward's preoccupation with sovereignty and autonomy, Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin have recently investigated the interaction between the High Representative and local decisionmaking bodies, and concluded that there are few serious legal or political constraints to the authority wielded by the head of international activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Knaus and Martin 2003: 63-67).

Even fewer outside observers have tried to elicit general lessons regarding region-wide international engagement. One exception is Florian Bieber (2003), who has questioned the relationship between post-conflict administration and support from local political actors and the public at large. At the center of his concern is the role awarded to civil servants, political parties, and the citizenry in the interim phase (while not neglecting how this affects the hypothesized end state of affairs). In fact, Bieber perceives the key paradox in the fact that the deeper the involvement of international actors in Southeastern Europe, the more problematic the question of legitimacy is likely become. Incidentally, this paradox was succinctly summed up by High Representative Ashdown himself in a 'no-nonsense' message to the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2002:

The more you reform, the less I will have to do. The less you reform, the more I will have to do (quoted in Knaus and Martin 2003: 61).

According to Bieber (2003), there are at least two simple reasons why the performance of institutions run by international officials will tend not to be successful. One is that the running of day-to-day government affairs requires the continuous support, and not only tolerance, of local political elites. In essence, there is only so much one can do if key representatives of the citizenry, people who have acquired a certain standing in the community, refuse to lend a helping hand. The other reason is that a smoothly operating government requires the acceptance of the public at large. Again, laws and regulations will not be upheld, or key objectives attained, without some level of consent on the part of the citizenry. Alas, Ashdown's candid message is not necessarily the best way to wield support from either 'constituency.'

Piecemeal Success

So what has gone wrong in terms of international engagement in the Balkans over the past decade? Some problems of post-conflict administration are structural, even endemic, and will not be successfully overcome through any temporary initiative by outsiders. A basic problem in administering a province like Kosovo—one of the poorest regions with one of the weakest governance structures in all of Europe—is where to begin in the first place (UNMIK 2000: 9). To introduce even a thin veneer of order and security

for all inhabitants, requires substantial resources. The 40,000 troops that KFOR initially was made up of were evidently not enough to prevent further human rights violations after the withdrawal of Serb police and military.⁶

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we know that several tactical errors were committed. Some decisions were influenced by over-optimism on the part of international actors, who believed that the electorate after several years of conflict would suffer from 'nationalist fatigue.' A crucial decision was to hold general elections as the starting-point for a process of democratization, soon after the cessation of violence. Instead of providing a stepping-stone toward democratic rule, the electorate voted for nationalist parties and thus entrenched the ethnopolitical dimension of political life (Manning and Antic 2003; Ducasse-Rogier 2001: 26).

Conversely, other decisions taken early in the process may have been overly pragmatic. Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to field what in fact are three armies organized along ethnic lines. The rationale behind the initial reluctance to disarm the troops lay in a fear of enhanced instability immediately after the Dayton accord was signed (Woodward 1999: 287). The small numbers of troops that SFOR consisted of at this delicate juncture made this fear a plausible one. Yet the short-sightedness (or naïveté) of allowing three separate armies to be sustained, in light of the objective of de-emphasizing ethnicity in future Bosnian politics, is nothing short of astonishing.

These tactical errors no doubt contributed to the 'Dayton syndrome' of reaffirming nationalist claims and reinforcing a trend toward virtual ethnic fiefdoms (Bieber 2003: 10). But more worrisome is that many of the later problems in effect were pre-programmed and, according to some analysts, wholly predictable. In many ways, the absurd complexity of Dayton Bosnia constitutes a mere extension of the peace accord. In this regard, the outrage of HR Paddy Ashdown expressed in May 2002, as he blasted the lawmakers of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the existence of 13 prime ministers, 180 cabinet members, and 760 parliamentarians, was entirely misdirected. More appropriate was Ashdown's sharp criticism of rampant corruption and nepotism facilitated by that constitutional complexity and lack of administrative and political accountability (Ourdan 2002).

Second, the mere fact that a government structure is transitory inevitably limits its effectiveness (Bieber 2003: 6). An obvious example is Kosovo, whose permanent status was deliberately left undetermined in order for a peace agreement to be signed at the end of NATO's military campaign in 1999. Resolution 1244 consequently strikes a compromise that neither side considers tenable in the long term, namely the institutionalization of Kosovo as a region with 'substantial autonomy' within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In fact, even the latter state has since the Kosovo war been reconfigured as a 'Union of Serbia and Montenegro.' While the details of the peace agreement may have been expedient for hostilities to end and a temporary arrangement to be established, UNMIK later acknowledged that the constitutional limbo established through the peace accord has undermined efforts to forge viable government structures (UNMIK 2000/45: 1:1). The 'standards before status' formula devised by the Contact Group countries, instead of mitigating the problems, threatens to augment them, as extremists on either side experience an opportunity and consequently ratchet up their rhetoric (Steiger 2003). Moreover, as any transitory arrangement involving several international organizations and/or foreign governments, the UNMIK-JIAS arrangement suffers severely from the need of constant 'inter-pillar' coordination.

⁶ Few of the 200,000 Serbs driven away after the end of NATO's air campaign have returned since mid-1999 (Woker 2003).



Third and crucially, there is the question of legitimacy and support from local elites and citizenry, raised by Bieber and others. In the international law sense, post-conflict administration arrangements that were established as part of a peace deal are legitimate as long as the local political leadership has signed up. But to the extent that a peace accord simultaneously creates a long-term constitutional arrangement that is binding on all citizens, this is clearly unsatisfactory. Unless the agreement is formally ratified by an elected legislature or by the electorate at large through a referendum, a serious legitimacy deficit will eventually ensue.

The prospect that post-conflict administration in Southeastern Europe may drag on for many years to come serves to exacerbate the problematic. The threat of alienation from the post-conflict administration conducted in their name on the part of Balkan politicians, civil servants and the public is already looming large in some places. The ethnic violence erupting in several locations throughout Kosovo in March 2004 has reminded all parties of the high stakes involved, but there are also less dramatic signs of a growing legitimacy gap. For instance, in May 2003, the Kosovo legislature had passed a bill challenging the international community by declaring the 'war of independence' conducted by the KLA in 1998-1999 a justified one (DPA/AP 2003). Meanwhile, in Macedonia, key signatories to the 2001 Ohrid agreement were becoming increasingly reluctant to stand by their commitments, a process only halted by the tragic death of President Boris Trajkovski in an airplane crash in February 2004 (Ernst 2003; Ernst 2004). Evidently, many people in Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina feel they have limited influence over their own futures as a result of how international engagement is organized.⁷

Back to Basics?

David Mitrany, a founding father of the study of international organization and of functionalist theorizing in political science, spent part of his academic career conducting research on his native region, the Balkans. One of Mitrany's first full-blown studies was devoted to international engagement in Southeastern Europe (Mitrany 1936). In his conclusion, this British political scientist of Romanian-Jewish origin noted the stereotypes inherent to much thinking about conflicts and their origins in Southeastern Europe:

[t]oo often it has been said, and all too easily believed, that the antagonism between the Balkan nationalities is so deep that they must be segregated; and on the other hand, that the poverty of their countries is the consequence of foreign exploitation (Mitrany 1936: 262-263).

But the term 'exploitation' is, according to Mitrany, badly suited to describe certain multilateral experiments of the interwar period (as it is inapplicable to most instances of recent international engagement) in the Balkans. In fact, the experience of the inter-Allied administration of 'Western Thrace' between October 1919 and May 1920 in Mitrany's view demonstrated that the mixed populations of that region are altogether capable of a life of mutual tolerance and co-operation, as long as they are insulated against the nationalist incitements of political conflicts.⁸ Mitrany also felt that the experiment proved that 'even in a poor province people can be given the advantage of a civilized material life, if their labor and resources be not absorbed in an extravagant political and military superstructure of the state' (Mitrany 1936: 263).

⁷ According to Ivan Krastev (2002), this 'crisis of representation' exists in a milder form throughout the peninsula, and is linked to the conditionality principle applied by most international organizations, especially the EU and the International Monetary Fund.

⁸ Greece subsequently took over the administration of Western Thrace. After the 1922-23 war with Turkey, a surge of Greek nationalism swept away the legacy of multiethnic coexistence, launching a period of what Anastasia Karakasidou (1997: 141-161) calls 'group formation and social closure' in present-day northern Greece.

The 'Western Thrace' experiment, as evaluated by Mitrany, consisted of a hotly disputed area between the Rhodopi mountain range in the north and the Aegean Sea in the south, otherwise delimited by the Nestos (Mesta) and Maritsa rivers. The population was made up of some 73,000 Turks, 69,000 Bulgarians, 51,000 Greeks, and smaller numbers of Pomaks (Slav-speaking Muslims), Jewish, Armenian and Roma minorities (Mitrany 1936: 255). For this brief period, a Superior Administrative Council for Thrace was created, under Governor General d'Esperey and his deputy, General Charpy, to advise the regime. The composition of the Superior Council, in turn, reflected the various ethnic and religious backgrounds of the population.

The achievements of the inter-Allied regime in terms of reinvigorating institutions of public administration, education, health care and infrastructure were perhaps not altogether surprising, as the preceding wars had wreaked havoc in the region for several years and the mere discontinuation of hostilities helped restore basic services. More unexpected was the extraordinarily robust economic revival which resulted from the short-lived, military-led administration, apparently at least in part due to its vigorous support of an active economic policy. The main item on the expenditure side of the budget was represented by public works, providing jobs and a much-needed jolt to a variety of local businesses (Mitrany 1936: 259-261).

Apart from its positive economic results, the unexpected political success of the brief reign of the inter-Allied administration may seem puzzling to a contemporary observer, accustomed to the long-term projects of resourceful international organizations and their pervasive presence in regions of conflict. It appears that popular support was never presumed on the part of General d'Esperey's administration but gradually acquired through actual delivery on everyday matters that concerned the inhabitants of 'Western Thrace.' According to Mitrany himself, a heavy focus on rapid, hands-on results combined with a manifest respect for the customs and politics of the area—in contrast to most regimes briefly ruling the area in the early 20th century—paved the way for an excellent relationship between the interim government and the local population.

Today, more than eighty years have passed since the inter-Allied Regime was dismantled. The character of political conflicts—and prospects for their resolution—has changed profoundly, and so have the particular circumstances in Southeastern Europe. The mixed legacy of Yugoslavia, affecting all parts of the peninsula under scrutiny here, directly or indirectly shapes post-conflict administration in much of the region. And the structure of relationships between different actors on the world stage, between governments, international institutions and non-governmental organizations, constitute elements of such transformation.

Nevertheless, many of the lessons Mitrany extracted from the inter-Allied experiment of 1919-1920 seem compatible with contemporary observations. Not least Bieber's double focus on performance and legitimacy, flowing from his analysis of peace building efforts in ex-Yugoslavia, demonstrates considerable overlap. Bieber stresses that, while institutions promoted by international organizations or foreign governments must operate effectively and produce tangible results, they also need to be 'more domestic in both their origins and their identification' (Bieber 2003: 14). Similarly, Woodward regards the near total lack of indigenous support for the Dayton arrangement in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the source of many of its present deficiencies. The denial of sovereignty is extreme in Dayton, she asserts, as a result of the imposition of

a design of international construction without any participation of the Bosnian people in its construction or amendment. Because the structure of guarantees for national rights built into the Dayton constitution leaves no



space for democratic politics in its implementation and possible reform, moreover, there is no clear way to generate a popular source for Bosnia's international legal sovereignty (Woodward 1999: 289)

Recalling Mitrany's wider theorizing about politics and international relations, one is tempted to call this a functionalist lesson. High performance in the fields for which a post-conflict administration authority expressly assumes responsibility would be a fundamental, if not necessary precondition for success. A second prerequisite would be that the legitimacy derived from an international mandate is limited in scope as well as in time, since otherwise the integral role of—as well as support from—decisionmakers, bureaucrats, businesses, NGO's and the like, is likely to erode.

Beyond performance and legitimacy in this narrow focus, there may be broader reasons for reverting back to basic values in post-conflict administration. One is the general trend perceived by sociologists toward the increased centrality of questions related to legitimacy and democracy in world culture. The successful diffusion of the human rights agenda throughout the post-World War II period is widely supposed to be one expression of this trend. Another sign of the rising salience of legitimacy might be the heightened awareness of dependency relations between creditors and debtors, for instance in the stark asymmetry prevailing between developing countries and international financial institutions. There are good reasons to assume that Balkan societies are just as sensitized to such asymmetries as people in developing countries, which is why intervention and post-conflict administration would need to be precisely and narrowly defined (Krastev 2002: 49-53).

Conclusion

A co-inspirer of postwar international organization and European integration—by virtue of his theorizing of cross-border political processes—David Mitrany was predictably heartened by postwar developments in this respect. The entrenchment of international institutions in world politics, the evolution of global arrangements in matters of trade and finance, and the ever-widening scope of international organization, all seemed to be steps in the right direction. He was particularly struck by the extraordinary degree of collaboration that was taking place in Europe, albeit at the time still restricted to the western part of the continent (Mitrany 1975: 240-266). Presumably, had he still lived, Mitrany would have delighted in the post-1989 coming together of eastern and western Europe, politically and institutionally.

The same applies to his native Southeastern Europe. The Balkan peninsula 'lacks a natural center of its own', Mitrany wrote nearly seventy years ago (Mitrany 1936: 6). Although this is still fundamentally true, Southeastern Europe is no longer left to itself. Through the emergence of a resourceful and an increasingly committed EU, supplemented by organizations like the OSCE, NATO, the OECD and the Council of Europe, the European continent has been provided with a huge magnetic force. This magnetic force is proving itself capable, after some false starts in the early 1990s, of pulling the Balkan peninsula into its orbit. Slovenia entered the EU as full member in the spring of 2004, with Bulgaria and Romania hoping to join as early as 2007. In terms of economic policy, non-members are also parties to the wider processes. If international engagement in the interwar period helped establish efficient regulations concerning Danube shipping, the infrastructure projects presently promoted under the auspices of the EU-sponsored Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe should provide a major impetus

to economic growth.⁹ In turn, these developments are destined to enhance intra-regional ties.

Notwithstanding these promising trends, Mitrany might not have been impressed by the continued absence—at the dawn of the 21st century—of agreed practices in the international community for handling conflict-related political intervention and administration. Much of what is going on in this field, not least in the Balkans, is characterized by *ad hoc* solutions to problems partly inherent to the present system of international relations. To a considerable degree, the solutions advanced appear more closely linked to the interests of influential governments, or those of individual international organizations, than to actual needs. In terms of post-conflict administration, moreover, the persisting ‘trial-and-error’ methodology does not appear to generate better solutions, but increasingly cumbersome modes of action.

Arguably, a Mitranian recipe to the contemporary problems of international engagement prescribes that we reflect seriously on the fundamental goals and means to be applied in regions of conflict. One key aspect is actual performance, which in a Mitranian understanding ought to mean that one pays special attention to the economic aspects of peace building, as well as to the functional differentiation between spheres of activity. A second major aspect, as Bieber and Woodward point out, is linked to legitimacy, in a formal as well as in a symbolic sense. In advancing the example of the inter-Allied Regime in Western Thrace, Mitrany indicated that post-conflict administration is helped by a clear delimitation of roles between international actors and local administration and possibly a fixed timeline, in order to avoid creating an artificial set of incentives for local actors. Considering the importance he attached to respect for the sensitivities of the local polity, finally, Mitrany is likely to have advocated that international actors are particularly careful not to undercut existing political and administrative authority and capacity, but rather that they act to bolster them. In a sobering comment expressed at the end of his long career as theorist of international organization, he cautioned that

the long democratic effort for mutual tolerance and understanding citizenship has fallen into the raw percentages of opinion polls and the intemperate clamour on the highways as in the universities, our centres of enlightenment. And the long liberal effort to stop small peoples and nations being dominated by the stronger has so far merely split the misuse of power into more numerous hands. We have sown liberty and are merely reaping license, within our communities and in the world at large (Mitrany 1975: 266)

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⁹ On the history of creating an international arrangement for Danube shipping, see Sherman 1923. On infrastructure projects, see the website of the Balkan Stability Pact at <http://www.stabilitypact.org/infrastructure/default.asp>.



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