

# Palgrave Critical Studies in Post-Conflict Recovery

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Daniel Serwer

From War to Peace  
in the Balkans,  
the Middle East  
and Ukraine

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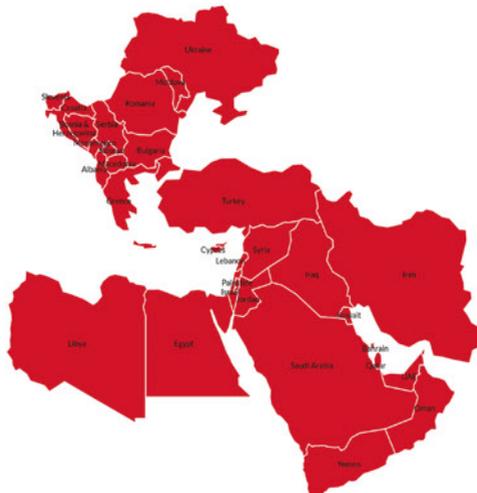
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Cover illustration: Pattern adapted from an Indian cotton print produced in the 19th century

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**Fig. 1** Kiepert, Heinrich. Generalkarte des Türkischen Kriegsschauplatzes: auf Grund der Carte Generale des Provinces Europeennes et Asiaticques de L'Empire Ottoman. (Berlin: Heinrich Kiepert, 1916) Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013593013/>



**Fig. 2** Twenty-first century Balkans, Middle East and Ukraine

*To the people of the Balkans, who have suffered and deserve better*

## PREFACE

This book aims to analyze the wars of Yugoslav succession after 1989 and subsequent peacebuilding of the 1990s and 2000s, up to the present. I know of no comparable effort. When a group of Fulbright scholars heading for the Balkans asked in the summer of 2014 for a book that gave an overview of the recent history, I was stumped. There is no single book to recommend about the conflicted parts of the region and their recovery from war, though there are good books focused on the dissolution of former Yugoslavia and the postwar trajectories of individual countries. This thin volume is a belated answer to the Fulbrighters' request for an accessible treatment that treats the whole region's recent wars and subsequent peace.

The book began with lectures on Bosnia (I follow the usual American practice of shortening "Bosnia and Herzegovina"), Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, and the Balkans region as a part of Europe. I've added an introduction on "Why the Balkans?" and a concluding chapter on the implications for the Middle East and Ukraine, as people often try to apply lessons from the Balkans to those areas, which lie close by and share some history in the Ottoman empire. I have spent most of the last 15 years working on Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt, and other majority Arab countries suffering from conflict and experiencing often unsuccessful transitions from autocracy. I understand those who see in the ongoing tragedies in Ukraine and Syria multiple reflections of the 1990s conflicts, especially in Bosnia and Kosovo. But valid conclusions require we understand what is specific to the context and what is more generally applicable.

My emphasis is on explanation and re-interpretation, an exegesis of events that in retrospect have clearer significance than when they happened. I have tried to rely on the best, though mainly secondary, sources. I have also had access to some declassified State Department cables, released under the Freedom of Information Act. The most relevant ones I've included in the footnotes. My personal experiences inform many of the events and my interpretation of them.

For almost 25 years the people of the Balkans have tried to keep me abreast of developments, explain their issues, make me understand their plight and hopes, and suggest remedies. Unlike many of them, I believe the region has made enormous progress, even if problems that could threaten regional peace and security remain, especially in Kosovo and Serbia as well as in Bosnia. As its people approach resolution of the last remaining major conflict issues in their region, they merit wholehearted support and encouragement to consolidate peace and democracy by completing the process of joining Euro-Atlantic institutions, with all the manifold requirements that entails. This book is intended as a contribution to their efforts.

Washington, USA

Daniel Serwer

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Credit is due to many. Purdue University Professor Charles Ingrao, whose Scholarly Initiative I encouraged, appears in this book in the footnotes referencing its *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies*. I am grateful to all its European and American contributors of varied origins and ethnicities for their courage and commitment in trying to sort things out in a way true to their diverse perspectives. Clemson University Professor Vladimir Matić, who had the decency to resign from the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry before the worst Milošević abuses were perpetrated, read an early draft and offered perspicacious comments as well as encouragement to complete this book.

Rrap Kryeziu, a Kosovar American and then a rising senior at my alma mater Haverford, worked with me in the summer of 2015 and again in 2018 to check the facts, challenge interpretations, and straighten out footnotes, formatting, and other annoying details. Marko Grujičić, a Serbian student at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), likewise helped in academic year 2015/16. Martin Naunov, a Macedonian American and rising senior at Middlebury College, joined the effort in the summer of 2016. SAIS Professor Siniša Vuković, a Montenegrin, read and commented on the penultimate draft, to excellent effect. Copyeditor Jonathan Lawrence whipped the final version into shape.

I owe the time and intellectual as well as administrative and library support needed to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and its Conflict Management program, personified by

Administrative Coordinator Isabelle Talpain-Long as well as my predecessors as its Director, Professors P. Terrence Hopmann and I. William Zartman. I feel deep gratitude to each of them.

PRAISE FOR *FROM WAR TO PEACE IN THE  
BALKANS, THE MIDDLE EAST AND UKRAINE*

“Dan Serwer was there at the start of international interventions in the Balkans. He is a clear-eyed observer of what has worked and what has not in a region still at peace but still troubled. Dan has earned his observations from decades in the field, and this book is well worth reading.”

—Madeleine K. Albright, *Former US Secretary of State, USA*

“Daniel Serwer, who has worked in and on the Balkans for decades, has produced a fine book on the collapse of the region after Tito. Focused heavily on Bosnia and Kosovo, he catalogues the successes and failures in US and European policy in the region. Hard-hitting, his heroes have their blemishes showing; his scoundrels are far from being caricatured. For aficionados and those seeking an excellent narrative with informed comment this is an important read.”

—Thomas R. Pickering, *Former US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and Ambassador to the UN and Russia, USA*

“This is a long overdue study and I can think of no-one better to write it than Dan Serwer. He was actively involved in the Balkan troubles of recent years as a policy maker and shaper of events, right from the start, gaining a widespread reputation for his judgement and wisdom. This is a cool, rational, and expert lesson of what we should learn from this period and how it is relevant to the challenges we face today.”

—Lord Paddy Ashdown, *Former High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002–2006), UK*

“After a quarter of a century of engagement by the international community in the Western Balkans, a region marred by crisis and acute conflict in the wake of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, much progress has been made, but more attention and engagement are still required. Daniel Serwer, a prominent scholar and a key actor in efforts to promote peace in the region, helps us to understand the historical background, complexities of the regional environment and impact of political initiatives. While each conflict has its own dynamics, many lessons that are painfully learned are too quickly forgotten. This book reminds us of the successes and failures of international engagement in the former Yugoslavia. We should keep these in mind when addressing outstanding issues in the region or attempting to resolve other complex conflicts with a direct or indirect impact on European security.”

—Lamberto Zannier, *Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Kosovo, 2008–2011, Secretary General of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (2011–2017), and OSCE High Commissioner for Minorities (2017–present), the Netherlands*

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