Prosperity without Security: The Precarity of Interpreters in Postsocialist, Postconflict Bosnia-Herzegovina

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The socioeconomic transformation of Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1992 presents an analytically awkward case inside and outside postsocialist studies. To consider Bosnia-Herzegovina within a framework of postsocialism requires taking into account the effects of four years of armed ethnopolitical conflict. On the other hand, considering Bosnia-Herzegovina through the lens of conflict and reconstruction requires taking into account the fact that Bosnians experienced not only the destruction of the country to which they belonged but also, with the collapse of Yugoslav socialism, the disappearance of an entire socioeconomic order. It is deeply rewarding to combine these lenses by examining one new occupational group that emerged as a result of the Bosnian conflict and foreign intervention and to ask in what ways the whole of postsocialist central and eastern Europe has become incorporated into a global economy of security and humanitarianism. To fully do so, social scientists' tools must include interpretivist approaches that are able to understand and convey the effects of globalization on the individual life course.

Since 1992, dozens of international political and judicial agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and foreign military forces have attempted to introduce new political institutions, economic models, and social norms to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Almost two decades of international intervention have comprised the war years themselves, when the United Nations (UN) struggled to uphold a mandate to protect civilians while minimizing confrontation with local militaries (1992–95); the process of implementing the Dayton Peace Agreements and confronting local wartime elites (1996–c. 2004); and an unsteady equilibrium based on preparing the Bosnian state to enter international institutions. Although certain aspects such as defense reform have been considered successful, implementing other areas of the settlement such as refugee return and transitional justice has proved at best problematic, at worst inappro-

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priate.[1] Indeed, certain authors criticize the very concepts of state building and democratization as external impositions that fail to resonate with local worldviews, lack fundamental legitimacy, and in one controversial assessment even threaten to mirror a "European Raj."[2] In response, interpretivist approaches including ethnographic fieldwork and life history interviewing have grown in significance because they assist us in understanding the impact of intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the bottom up.[3]

This article discusses one new occupational group that arose as a result of intervention, namely locally recruited "interpreters" who were hired by foreign military and civilian agencies to translate and interpret between the languages of "internationals" and the complex of language variants now known as Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. Their duties included field interpreting, media analysis, facilitating liaison meetings, and English-language office work. Most "interpreters" were not professional linguists with postgraduate interpreting/translation qualifications but drew on skills in English or other European languages acquired through other education and work. Language capabilities therefore coalesced with political and military events to create a new structure of employment in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thousands of men and women, many in their twenties and some even in their teens, found work and hard-currency salaries on foreign military bases operated by the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led successors IFOR (Implementation Force) and SFOR (Stabilization Force), and the European Union– led EUFOR. Thousands more were hired by humanitarian organizations, NGOs, and foreign intervention institutions

1. Xavier Bougarel, Ger Duijzings, and Elissa Helms, eds., *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society* (Aldershot, Eng., 2007); Jelena Subotič, *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans* (Ithaca, 2009).

2. For these concepts as external impositions, see Stef Jansen, "Of Wolves and Men: Postwar Reconciliation and the Gender of Inter-National Encounters," *Focaal* 57 (2010): 33–49. For their lack of fundamental legitimacy, see David Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton* (London, 1999). For the idea that they mirror a European Raj, see Gerhard Knaus and Felix Martin, "Travails of the European Raj," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 3 (July 2003): 70.

3. For ethnographies of intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Stef Jansen, "The Privatisation of Home and Hope: Return, Reforms and the Foreign Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Dialectical Anthropology* 30, nos. 3–4 (2006): 177–99; Elissa Helms, "Gendered Transformations of State Power: Masculinity, International Intervention, and the Bosnian Police," *Nationalities Papers* 34, no. 3 (July 2006): 343–61; Kimberley Coles, *Democratic Designs: International Intervention and Electoral Practices in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Ann Arbor, 2007); Paula M. Pickering, *Peacebuilding in the Balkans: The View from the Ground Floor* (Ithaca, 2007); Andrew Gilbert, "Foreign Authority and the Politics of Impartiality in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008); Azra Hromadžić, "Discourses of Integration and Practices of Reunification at the Mostar Gymnasium, Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Comparative Education Review* 52, no. 4 (November 2008): 541–63; Anders H. Stefansson, "Coffee after Cleansing? Co-Existence, Co-Operation, and Communication in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Focaal* 57 (2010): 62–76; Johanna Mannergren Selimovic, "Perpetrators and Victims: Local Responses to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia," *Focaal* 57 (2010): 50–61.

such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Office of the High Representative. Through this employment, they acquired social, economic, and cultural capital "to facilitate insertion into the new modernisation processes."[4] This pattern of work intersected with important local sociopolitical dynamics as well as with wider regional and global processes. This article discusses these intersections and explores the negotiations between prosperity and precarity that one type of civilian worker (interpreters) made while working for one type of foreign organization (militaries).

The economic impact of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was enmeshed with the collapse of the socialist socioeconomic structures that had provided Yugoslavs with relative certainty at work and home. In the 1990s Bosnians had to resituate their lives in a system of somewhat unfamiliar and sometimes unwelcome economic values, at a time of personal and collective devastation, fear, and grief. Stef Jansen indeed argues that most experienced "the 'reforms' from socialist self-management to neoliberal capitalism [. . .] as further blows, contributing to the precariousness they so wished to overcome."[5] Precarity, as defined by Louise Waite, is a concept denoting both insecure labor market experiences and the general conditions of life this insecurity produces in the early twenty-first century.[6] Even in western societies that have not experienced postsocialism or a recent war on their own soil, labor casualization has been seen to cause precarity, destabilize social identities, and threaten individuals' ability to make meaningful narrative sense from their lives.[7] For the employees of international institutions, the uncertainty of work with an international mission that might conclude at any time introduced an even sharper version of contemporary precarious working into postwar Bosnian society.

The remarks of the interpretive sociologist Michael Burawoy on the need for studies of globalization to attend to individual life courses provide the epistemological departure point for this article. Burawoy suggests that ethnographic methods that enter the lives of their research subjects can derive "a privileged insight into the lived experience of globalization."[8] Since my work did not include participant observation or extended stays in the field, it cannot be considered ethnographic. Nonetheless, I

4. Jansen, "Privatisation," 193.

5. Ibid., 190.

6. Louise Waite, "A Place and Space for a Critical Geography of Precarity?" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 1 (2001): 415.

7. Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter (London, 1992); Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Buckingham, Eng., 1998); Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York, 1998); Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London, 2011). Though Beck, Bauman, and Sennett employ the concepts of risk and instability rather than precarity, their observations on work have still framed the contemporary study of precarity: Waite, "Place and Space," 419–20.

8. Michael Burawoy, "Reaching for the Global," in Burawoy, ed., *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World* (Berkeley, 2000), 4. Ethnographers trained by Burawoy have studied groups such as U.S. shipyard workers facing casualization and Hungarian mothers affected by the postsocialist shift from universal welfare

share Burawoy's conviction that a bottom-up approach is essential if the goal is to understand the impact of globalization on human identities and lives. Using life history interviews helps reveal interpreters' everyday working experiences and the forms of insecurity they encountered, how precarity was manifested in practice, and how these experiences affected workers' decisions about continuing their employment.

The new occupation of interpreting for foreign military forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina became available to Bosnians, and to other ex-Yugoslavs prepared to travel to Bosnia-Herzegovina, in 1992 when the first UNPROFOR units arrived. Today, NATO and EUFOR still operate some bases in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including a Sarajevo headquarters that has contained a professionalized language service since 2000. Many more bases have closed, however, as troop contributors including the United Kingdom and the United States have drawn down their forces. In addition, the professional and social field has itself altered since 1992. This article is based on interviews with more than twenty former Yugoslav interpreters who worked for foreign military forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gathered during a research project on language policies and practices in peace support operations, these interviews were therefore not systematically designed to include workers from civilian agencies.[9] For extra background on interpreters' employment conditions, interviews with an additional eight Britons and Danes who evaluated or managed interpreters are also included.[10]

Interviewees were selected through snowball sampling beginning with initial requests that I made through online reunion groups for interpreters and troops who took part in peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina; an active team of interpreters in Sarajevo; a mailing list for academic and nonacademic researchers with an interest in southeast Europe; an advertisement in a British military magazine; personal contacts. The dates of their first interpreting jobs ranged from 1993 to 2000, and they ceased working as interpreters from 1995 to the present. Thus the study contains experiences from almost the entire course of international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Former Yugoslav interviewees were asked to choose whether to speak in English or their own language; apart from one London-based participant, though, all chose English.[11]

Interviews were semistructured and all contained individualized follow-up questions, meaning that a list of questions applicable to each and every participant cannot be reproduced. All interpreters were, however, asked to focus on their experiences of learning and using foreign lan-

payments to means-tested benefits and have sought and explained "lacunae or anomalies" in existing theories of globalization. Burawoy, "Reaching," 27–28.

9. See Hilary Footitt and Michael Kelly, eds., *Languages at War: Policies and Practices of Language Contacts in Conflict* (Basingstoke, Eng., 2012).

10. These interviews are drawn from 52 oral history interviews with 51 people carried out for the University of Southampton's research into peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of the comparative study Languages at War: Policies and Practices of Language Contacts in Conflict.

11. Because this individual had worked only in Croatia, his interview is not considered in this article.

guages before they became interpreters; how they heard about and obtained their first interpreting post; first impressions of the job and working with foreign troops; everyday life on military bases; the impact of significant political and organizational events (for example, the Dayton Peace Agreement; the closure of an important base; the Kosovo war); how military policies and practices applied to them; changes of employer and/or workplace location; supervision and training received; contractual arrangements and welfare; experiences they considered significant for an understanding of the work and identity of interpreters; how they had ceased working as interpreters (if relevant). Foreign military personnel were asked to comment on their preparations for deploying to Bosnia-Herzegovina, their own experiences of cultural and linguistic contacts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and policies and practices for using and managing interpreters. Most interviews lasted 90 minutes or longer, with the longest running to 3.5 hours.

The interviews collected may be considered typical in terms of work profile. The snowball method meant that two particular clusters emerged, one associated with a highly professionalized team of interpreters at Camp Butmir in Sarajevo and another with a network of field interpreters who had worked on a more casual basis in and around British military bases in Banja Luka, Šipovo, and Mrkonjić Grad; other interviews took place in Bihać, Doboj, and Tuzla with interpreters who had worked in or near these towns. The contrast between the Sarajevo and Banja Luka clusters ensured that the study incorporated distinct types of working conditions (desk-based versus field/patrol-based; supervision by professional linguists versus supervision by logistics officers) and reflected experiences from both political units defined at Dayton (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska).The size of the Banja Luka cluster, however, means that, of the three divisions of the post-Dayton foreign force, the British-led division was overrepresented in comparison to the U.S.-led division headquartered in Tuzla and, in particular, the French-led division headquartered in Mostar. Further research in the Mostar area would be required to determine whether the employment practices of forces in this division were so different that the findings of this research would not apply. Interpreters employed by foreign militaries constitute only a subset of former Yugoslavs who worked for international organizations during and after the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. More extensive research with this wider population would be required before these findings could be fully generalized.

Lenses for Understanding Bosnia-Herzegovina: Postsocialism or the Development-Security Nexus?

Bosnian experiences of negotiating intense socioeconomic dislocation can be read in the context of a growing body of research that uses interviewing and ethnography to understand how workers have come to terms with new postsocialist phenomena such as employment insecurity, the decline of universal welfare benefits, and the revaluation of qualifications and work experience. Kristen Ghodsee uses life history data to challenge

the idea that men in Bulgaria benefited more than women from transition: after 1989, the cultural capital female tourist workers had acquired cheaply under socialism enabled them to meet the demanding prerequisites for work in Bulgarian resorts (by the 2000s, younger cohorts had to spend economic capital to enter this industry).[12] Elizabeth Dunn examines how a U.S. manufacturing corporation's introduction of capitalist management and marketing practices in the 1990s sought to reshape the socialist person into idealized, flexible late-capitalist workers in the course of remaking a Polish factory.[13] Elaine Weiner, like Dunn, compares managers with factory workers (though in the Czech Republic) and shows how both social groups used a metanarrative of capitalism vanquishing communism to make sense of their experiences.[14] Steven Sampson's study analyzes civil society programs in Albania and shows that "transition is a social space in which various resources [. . .] are manipulated and reconstituted" by foreigners and locals in a global organizational setting.[15]

Each of these studies raises possible comparisons with (post-)conflict interpreting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, most strikingly where language skills are concerned. All show that language skills acquired under socialism were transformed into prerequisites for opportunities that sometimes did not even exist before 1989. Bulgarian tourism receptionists require at least two foreign languages (though Russian is no longer compulsory) and have usually attended a languages gymnasium at secondary level; Czech women graduates with knowledge of English, German, and/or French were able to enter the new postsocialist occupation of "manager" from the professions or even from lower-level administrative jobs; "competence in English and in 'project-speak'" is a prerequisite for locals to work for Albanian NGOs.[16] Further commonalities are structural. Women in these studies have been shocked at the replacement of universal socialist welfare with short maternity leaves and means-tested benefits.[17] Transition has made the individual worker into the bearer of risk and sometimes, as in the Polish factory, replaced stable employment with insecure casualization. When viewing Bosnia-Herzegovina through the lens of these case studies, though, certain differences must be kept in mind. Unlike former Yugoslavia, none of these states experienced violent conflict after the collapse of socialism, and all except Czechoslovakia remained intact. This is significant for understanding the dynamics of postsocialist labor because

12. Kristen R. Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea* (Durham, 2005), 13–17.

13. Elizabeth C. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor* (Ithaca, 2004).

14. Elaine Weiner, *Market Dreams: Gender, Class, and Capitalism in the Czech Republic* (Ann Arbor, 2007).

15. Steven Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania," in Chris M. Hann and Elizabeth C. Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (London, 1996), 122.

16. Ghodsee, *Red Riviera,* 76; Weiner, *Market Dreams,* 97–99; Sampson, "Social Life," 123.

17. See also Lynne A. Haney, "Global Discourses of Need: Mythologizing and Pathologizing Welfare in Hungary," in Burawoy, ed., *Global Ethnography,* 53–55.

certain socioeconomic transformations are particularly associated with armed conflict. Without armed conflict of the Bosnian type, factors such as forced migration, extended conscription (followed by demobilization), and certain forms of extralegal trade do not occur. One might then be impelled to consider Bosnia-Herzegovina, not within the mainstream of postsocialist societies, but, instead, through a lens of conflict, development, and security.

If not situated within the postsocialist mainstream, former Yugoslavia including Bosnia-Herzegovina might instead be understood as a region within the "development-security nexus" evident in world affairs after the Cold War. This "nexus" has been observed by Mark Duffield, who argues that two processes have combined to merge development and security: from the global south, "an explosion of transborder and shadow economic activity that has forged [. . .] alternative and non-liberal forms of protection, legitimacy, and social regulation," and from the global north, a thickening of international public policy networks that begin to take functions over from the nation-state.[18] These have led to a policy shift in global governance toward "liberal peace," that is, "a political project [. . .] to transform the dysfunctional and war-affected societies [. . .] into cooperative, representative and, especially, stable entities."[19]

What the early stages of this project mean in practice is illustrated by the war ethnography of Carolyn Nordstrom, who discerns networks of extralegal economic activity running through and out of war zones. Even after wars officially end, leaders with wartime power bases often remain in control of resources and extralegal trade routes, and the international agencies supposed to be bringing about change are often themselves implicated in making institutional and personal profits.[20] This strand of scholarship rests on Mary Kaldor's theory of "new wars," a prevalent form of conflict in the post–Cold War world characterized by identity politics, a strategy of capturing territory through political control of populations, and by a globalized war economy. Bosnia-Herzegovina is in fact Kaldor's central case study, a paradigm for the "new wars" even though its postsocialist background distinguishes it from many other such sites.[21]

18. Mark R. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London, 2001), 9.

19. Ibid., 11.

20. Carolyn R. Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley, 2004), 201.

21. Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford, 1999), 6–9, 31–68. Nordstrom's and Duffield's demonstrations of the globalization of war are focused on the present, with Duffield in particular seeing it as a consequence of post–Cold War changes in international relations. The historian Tarak Barkawi, however, reminds us that the development-security nexus is only the latest form of globalizing war, which has depended on interconnection and transfers of resources for much longer than a presentist outlook on globalization would suggest. Tarak Barkawi, *Globalization and War* (Lanham, Md., 2006), 15. Understanding the global dimension of war requires an understanding of culture, which Barkawi incorporates into his history of war by showing how "cultural frameworks derived from wartime experience" accelerate globalization by forcing people toward an awareness of unfamiliar places (*Globalization,* 80–81). Language—the compe-

Synthesizing these lenses produces exciting opportunities for analysis. One might be to interrogate the concept of "new wars" by asking what factors, observed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, were in fact attributable to postsocialist specificities rather than to global transformations in types of conflict. Another is to consider whether existing findings on postsocialist working trajectories are applicable in the particular conditions of conflict zones and postconflict societies. In this vein, it is possible to examine workers' motivations to take up interpreting posts and to continue working in them or leave them. These decisions were informed by their experiences of high potential and actual earnings versus the types of insecurity and risk associated with the posts in the particular socioeconomic context of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Conflict and Postconflict Economy of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Although Bosnia-Herzegovina's physical economy was destroyed by war, the collapse of Yugoslav socialism had already undermined its philosophical underpinnings. Socialist Yugoslavia had devised a unique system of "self-management" through workers' councils that structured political and economic life and had far surpassed other socialist economies in the production of consumer goods.[22] The visa-free travel privileges enjoyed by a leading nonaligned state enabled ordinary Yugoslavs to go abroad for education and pleasure, and guest worker arrangements with several western European countries, intended to relieve the pressure of mounting unemployment in Yugoslavia, gave thousands of blue-collar workers the experience of working in foreign-language environments. The victorious Partisans who designed Yugoslavia's postwar economy and feared attack from either the Soviet east or the capitalist west had intended Bosnia—the republic at the Federation's defensible, mountainous heart—as the cradle of national engineering and manufacturing. The coal mines of Tuzla, the steel mills of Zenica, and Sarajevo's massive energy company, Energoin-

tence interpreters supply—is less central in his history, despite a section on language in the British empire's Indian army (*Globalization,* 92). One way to write language into the globalization of war is offered by Vicente Rafael, who has shown how the United States has instrumentalized foreign languages and trained Americans in languages of the Other in order to project its own power abroad: during the war and insurgency in Iraq, Rafael argues, the locally recruited interpreter becomes an object of suspicion by virtue of the very fact that translation can never represent the transfer of all possible meanings from one language to another: Vicente L. Rafael, "Translation, American English, and the National Insecurities of Empire," *Social Text,* no. 101 (Winter 2009): 1–23. For an analysis of why the states that intervened in Bosnia-Herzegovina lacked mass local-language capacity among their own citizens and therefore had to rely on locally employed interpreters, see Michael Kelly, "Issues in Institutional Language Policy: Lessons Learned from Peace-Keeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *European Journal of Language Policy* 3, no. 1 (2011): 61–80.

22. See John B. Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York, 2000); John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country,* 2d ed. (Cambridge, Eng., 2000); Patrick Hyder Patterson, *Bought and Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Ithaca, 2011).

vest, all constituted as social enterprises, provided Bosnian tradespersons and graduates with jobs for life.[23]

The fall of socialism alone would have exposed Yugoslavs to the same threats that affected other (post)socialist countries after 1989: the end of secure employment and housing; the loss of savings to inflation as the country adjusted to the free market; the distortion of social inequality as entrepreneurs with connections to the new political elites enriched themselves.[24] In Yugoslavia, these pressures intersected with escalating armed conflict fought on ethnopolitical terms as leaders competed for the resources of the fallen state and mobilized populations by propagating existential fear.[25] By 1992, Bosnians from all three major ethnic groups—or from more than one, or none, or who simply declared their ethnic origin on census forms as "Yugoslav"—watched as civil unrest became military confrontation in Croatia and (for ten days in June and July 1991) Slovenia. Serb and Croat militia groups had already formed "autonomous regions" over territories their forces claimed for Croatia or the rump Yugoslavia, yet few people in the major Bosnian cities expected war—except the politicians, soldiers, and criminals who planned to fight. In March 1992, the government in Sarajevo declared independence after a referendum boycotted by most Serbs. Ethnonationalist parties' so-called crisis staffs seized power in towns across Bosnia-Herzegovina and ethnic cleansing campaigns began in Herzegovina, Posavina, and Bijeljina.[26] Bosnians who traveled abroad in spring 1992, often students, were expecting to stay away only for weeks or months.

With towns besieged, factories occupied or destroyed, military-age men conscripted, and land transport past hostile checkpoints impossible, normal economic activity in Bosnia-Herzegovina ceased. A shortage and survival economy reigned in the siege cities—often exacerbated by UN and humanitarian supplies—and Bosnia-Herzegovina operated on two wartime currencies: the Deutschmark and the cigarette carton.[27] In many towns, the foreign military and the local authorities remained the only employers for some time after the war. Employment on a foreign military base paid hard currency and provided distance from local political networks of dependence and coercion, even as it could expose workers to jealousy, harassment, and extralegal intimidation. Foreign forces hired

23. Under socialist Yugoslavia's ideology of "workers' self-management," social enterprises, run by workers' councils, were the equivalent of state-owned enterprises in the Soviet bloc.

24. See Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, 1996); C. M. Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London, 2001); Alena V. Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business* (Ithaca, 2006).

25. See V. P. Gagnon Jr., *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca, 2004).

26. See Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (London, 1999).

27. Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca, 2008).

not only interpreters but also clerical assistants, catering staff, cleaners, and laundry workers, while some bases also took on garment workers, hairdressers, mechanics, and carpenters. Interpreting was the most highly skilled occupation, though neither employers nor employees generally realized how highly skilled a profession it was supposed to be.[28]

The previous occupations of interviewees who became interpreters from 1996 to 1998 included: employee of a Sarajevo radio station; glazier; conscript; seventeen-year-old student at a *gimnazija,* the most academic secondary school.[29] The most striking stories of economic pull came from interpreters who moved or even commuted from Belgrade, the capital of a Serbia under continued international sanctions, to work for hard currency in Republika Srpska. One woman from Belgrade (Jovana) had been studying mathematics and computing until a childhood friend working as an interpreter in Banja Luka heard about her family's financial difficulties and recommended her for the recruitment test; others included Serbs originally from Croatia and one female secondary school student. Although international borders now separated their departure points from their destination, their homes and workplaces had been part of the same country only a few years before.

Most interviewees' stories of becoming an interpreter acknowledged economic rationales (the rest just said they had applied, often when a friend or cousin had pointed out a vacancy). Some, mainly in the Federation, spoke of being able to contribute to collective efforts at peacebuilding and reconciliation as their work progressed. Yet to work as an interpreter, as interview data shows, meant reconciling an economic advantage for as long as the job lasted with several sources of risk and precarity that were characteristic of the work.

Insecurity

In contrast to the socialist era's stable working identities, employment insecurity was common to all postsocialist societies in transition and was certainly manifested in interpreters' experiences. Even interviewees who were still interpreters (with militaries or other international organizations), as well as those who had voluntarily left, spoke of the constant uncertainty inside missions of uncertain duration. Interpreters usually had rolling contracts (only HQ SFOR after 2000 introduced more stability) and could be dismissed at any time if the force closed a base or pulled out of a town. Some interpreters nevertheless viewed working for the forces

28. Employers did not demand a languages degree, let alone a professional interpreting qualification, from their interpreters but usually asked them to pass some sort of test before their employment could be confirmed. Sometimes, interpreters' prospective supervisors at bases desperate for language support would bypass their own force's policy and hire the interpreter on an informal basis, with payment in supplies or no pay at all, until the formalities were complete.

29. A year or two after this last interviewee had started working, the divisional headquarters began enforcing a minimum working age of eighteen and reportedly terminated several young interpreters' contracts.

as preferable to more insecure employment with local firms or the many short-term NGO projects that required language work. Women over 40 spent longest narrating how they had reconciled themselves to insecurity. One strategy was to situate their decision in their identity and obligations as mothers: "Some of us [. . .] started to work for [. . .] projects for one year, two years, three years and that was it [. . .] being a mother and having a child and somebody who depends on you, I was always thinking it's better [to have] less money but to have it continuously, for a certain period, than to have a bigger amount of money just for one year and then what? To look for another job."[30] Another strategy—in interaction with an interviewer from a capitalist country—was to juxtapose Yugoslav socialism and western capitalism in order to explain the rupture between Bosnia-Herzegovina's socialist past and its capitalist present: "When I (*laughs*) finished one month there was no security—I know there is no promises, there is no security in your world, in any western world, for a job, but—which was not what we used to be. The situation that we used to have, before the war."[31]

Employment practices during and after the conflict, however, exhibited some factors specific to conflict zones, particularly the capacity for local authorities to interfere with employment contracts. This interference was greatest from 1992 to 1995. To a powerful mayor, military commander, or black marketeer (these roles were sometimes wrapped up in the same person), foreign military bases represented competing sources of income for local residents that could harm the power-holder's own ability to exert patronage and influence; one interpreter based in Republika Srpska suggested that politicians also coveted high-paying interpreting jobs for their own relatives who had spent the war abroad. In Srebrenica, the town council (*opština*) was known to have conscripted local male Médecins sans Frontières employees and to have controlled most employment with the Dutch UNPROFOR battalion. Interpreters and hairdressers were exempt, but the opština forced other base employees to pay it an arrangement fee, shortlisted candidates, and imposed six-month limits on selected employees.[32] Military-age male interpreters could be threatened with conscription or imprisoned, the fate of two interpreters at the British base in Goražde in 1995. Other bases faced more minor antagonism, such as demands to split interpreters' salaries 50:50 with the mayor (reported by a British captain who served at Bugojno in 1994).[33]

The peace process gradually reduced local authorities' ability to dictate employment conditions and incorporated more people into the "interpretariat" when extra towns were earmarked for foreign bases after Dayton. The winding-down of UNPROFOR (late 1995), however, intro-

30. Dubravka, interview, Banja Luka, 9 May 2010.

31. Zorica, interview, Pale/Sarajevo, 27 October 2009.

32. T. Frankfort, "Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Action," and C. L. Schoonoord, "Dutchbat III and the Population: Medical Issues," both in *Srebrenica, a Safe Area: Reconstruction, Background, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a Safe Area* (Amsterdam, 2002), 2.8.6 and 1.4.

33. British captain, interview, Bugojno, 26 February 2009.

duced uncertainty into existing interpreters' lives. Some units simply painted their white UN vehicles green and operated immediately as IFOR, retaining local staff. UNPROFOR headquarters, however, was only partially absorbed into the civilian UN, and other elements such as the Military Observers closed down altogether. Interpreters facing redundancy could apply for jobs with the new IFOR offices or with civilian organizations (many ended up with the civilian International Police Task Force). One interpreter team at UNPROFOR headquarters apparently switched to IFOR en masse in protest at soldiers treating them as mouthpieces or "yellow cards" (a dehumanizing nickname based on the color of local employees' identification cards). For others, the official coming of peace was a catalyst to give up interpreting work and determine a new trajectory in Bosnia-Herzegovina or abroad.

With the gradual reduction of forces after 1997, most interpreters experienced the ongoing risk of their posts being eliminated at short notice. Interviewed in 2009–10 (5–12 years after their contracts had ended), interpreters who had experienced the force drawdown as gradual presented the job changes brought on by downsizing as an active search for new challenges.[34] They talked more readily about job loss as involuntary when narrating the end of others' employment (whether as a result of the drawdown or an individual's inability to cope with the stresses of the job, behave professionally, respect military discipline, or pass new skills tests). It became ever harder to perceive agency in one's own life as the force was reduced across Bosnia-Herzegovina, bases were closed, and mass redundancies occurred. The closure of the British base at Banja Luka in 2007 appeared as a turning point in most interviews collected there: interpreters in their twenties and thirties who had achieved social roles as providers saw their roles transformed again when they were left unqualified for non-interpreting work. Some interpreters in mass redundancy areas switched to different national contingents in the Liaison Observation Team houses (operated by forces such as the Swiss and Romanian armies) that characterized the EU-led military presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina after 2004. This usually entailed a longer commute and, for former British employees, the lack of daily interaction with native English speakers—which they frequently mentioned in interviews as an intangible yet heartfelt loss.

An even more urgent risk than job loss was personal injury (not so significant in non-postconflict postsocialism). Interpreters perceived this as a risk even though movement with foreign troops meant traveling in a convoy of armored vehicles, under the protection of armed soldiers, with (in wartime) clearances to facilitate passage through local checkpoints—privileges most Bosnian civilians did not have. Wartime interpreters, however, feared that employers would abandon them at hostile checkpoints and narrated stories of abandoned colleagues. One might expect perceptions of personal injury risk to have lessened after Dayton. Yet many interviewees who had worked after 1995 perceived that working for the

34. As, in very different circumstances, did downsized U.S. professionals interviewed by Richard Sennett in the 1990s. Sennett, *Corrosion of Character*, 28–29.

military still exposed them to dangers average Bosnian civilians would not face, particularly the risk of accidents in military vehicles if soldiers were driving negligently or had not noticed a landmine. One exchange in English gave a double meaning to "job security":

> Q: How much sort of job security was there in your job?
> A: Pff . . . Job security, in terms of being what, possibility that I'm going to be sacked, or losing a leg? Two (*laughs*), two different levels.[35]

Interpreters' lack of health insurance made injury by negligent driving a particular fear. Although foreign troops had extensive protection and privileges, their employees did not always enjoy the same benefits.

Interpreters believed that their welfare depended on the goodwill of their employers rather than on any policy designed to protect them.[36] In contrast to the welfare provisions they enjoyed in socialist Yugoslavia, workers had to buy their own health insurance (except eventually at HQ SFOR) and maternity leave was short and unpaid. Only one narrative of welfare-by-fiat was positive: an interpreter who had worked at a British military hospital in Šipovo (where one British officer interviewed had launched a project to employ local blue-collar workers) spoke in a frame of fellowship between internationals and locals that had sprung up as a result of foreign military initiatives to improve the local economy. While employed under these conditions, interpreters tended not to quibble over their contracts, relieved to be working at all. When speaking with hindsight in 2009–10, though, several spoke disparagingly of the arrangements, and Banja Luka interviewees often referred to a woman injured by a negligent discharge during a weapons inspection.

Foreign soldiers who worked with interpreters suffered a—much smaller—emotional impact (interpersonal discomfort rather than existential insecurity) from implementing the drawdown. Some soldiers, especially from a close-knit British team at Vitez, remained in touch with their interpreters and heard about their mixed fortunes: one officer used UNPROFOR contacts to get one interpreter a well-paid administrative job in Croatia but regretted he could not help another woman, who was unable to leave her hometown for personal reasons. One air force officer set local employees' employment prospects in the wider context of the contemporary casualized economy: "But they're short-lived jobs. And the local community are aware of that."

> Q: So what sort of job security actually was there?
> A: As long as SFOR are there, or it handed over to EUFOR et cetera,

35. Jovana, Interview, London, 18 November 2009. In Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, *bezbjednost/sigurnost/bezbednost* can mean both "security" and "safety."

36. E.g., one interpreter remembered that an UNPROFOR colleague injured by shrapnel had been funded to have surgery in western Europe. Yet whether liaison officers would stand up for their interpreters at checkpoints depended entirely on the whim of the officer concerned.

> they had job security. Ah . . . You know, it was like any job today, is there job security? And they know that.[37]

Bosnia-Herzegovina's inextricable connection to wider global processes is shown by the fact that the structure of the military force—therefore the chance of an interpreter having their contract renewed—ultimately depended on foreign political and diplomatic decisions that were made with reference to global, rather than just Bosnian or southeast European, affairs. IFOR's very existence beyond its initial one-year mandate was uncertain for much of 1996 because troop-contributing governments had not agreed how long forces would be kept in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even with a longer-term agreement for the multinational force in general, individual bases' prospects depended on national military calculations: for instance, the United Kingdom's withdrawal when SFOR changed to a European Union force in 2004 and British reinforcements were urgently needed in Iraq caused the closure of the Banja Luka base, the closure of support facilities serving the divisional headquarters, and hundreds of local redundancies. Even in the most supportive working teams such as the post-2000 professionalized language service at HQ SFOR, downsizing crystallized inequalities between locals and internationals and among teams of local employees. Young students or graduates in large cities who were prepared to relocate and who could see themselves taking responsibility for their own working lives fared better than individuals whose responsibilities to children, parents, or siblings tied them to small-town locations even after SFOR left.

If Bosnia-Herzegovina's young, educated population were working for international organizations, what jobs were they not doing? A British Army linguist who had managed a team of Bosnian interpreters in 1993 and served further tours in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia/Kosovo still worried about the impact of the employment surge on local society, considering that it had interrupted young workers' lives and impeded them finding jobs in the local economy and civil society that foreign interveners believed Bosnia-Herzegovina needed to build.[38] At least one of his local colleagues had indeed been a career teacher who subsequently spent years as an interpreter. The Bosnian media, an essential aspect of Bosnia-Herzegovina's public sphere, also lost part of its potential workforce (out of ten interpreters interviewed in Sarajevo, two had given up local media jobs to work as better-paid interpreters and provide improved support for their families). Mandy Turner and Michael Pugh have observed that postconflict reconstruction has identified the need to reintegrate veterans into postwar economies but has not recognized the parallel need to reintegrate civilian war workers: this certainly holds true for Bosnia-Herzegovina.[39] A few interpreters expressed difficulty or unwillingness adapting to a local commercial world that ran on

37. Gordon (air force officer), interview, London, 26 June 2009.

38. Fred (British army linguist), interview, Germany, 24 July 2009.

39. Mandy Turner and Michael C. Pugh, "Towards a New Agenda for Transforming War Economies," *Conflict, Security and Development* 6, no. 3 (2009): 475.

informal practices of *veze* (connections) and outright corruption. Public-sector jobs they might have been eligible for were awarded through the corrupt practices of the ethnopolitical elites who had retained power.[40] Many interpreters resolved this problem by acquiring the money, expertise, and contacts to move abroad, creating the irony that, as Stef Jansen remarks, "those individuals that the Foreign Intervention Agencies invested in as the key to Bosnia-Herzegovina's development seemed to be amongst the most likely to succeed in their visa applications."[41]

The same economic issues affected employees of all international organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in many roles. The distinctiveness of working as an interpreter and for foreign militaries, which could obstruct comparisons with a wider range of workers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, lay in the extent to which these interpreters were embedded in spatial practices of power, which had different meanings in different places and times and which could produce even deeper insecurities. This was most visible in late 1990s Republika Srpska, which Ioannis Armakolas characterizes as undergoing a "clash of hegemonies" between the discourses of the international community and exclusivist Serb nationalism.[42] Interpreters for the military based in Republika Srpska, who generally lived for 1–2 weeks at a time on a foreign military base and worked 12-hour shifts, had direct experience of this clash: at work they often spoke the words of one discourse's user to a user of the other discourse, and even their off-duty time was split between living on the base and living at home, meaning that both discourses' spatial practices of power were operating on them.[43] While ethnonationalist local authorities constructed the public space of towns in nationalist terms, SFOR bases were pervaded with the foreign imagination of an ethnicity-blind Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The implications of this ideological competition went beyond a concept of work as exchange and brought into question the very idea that the working and nonworking self could be integrated. Former interpreters in late 1990s Banja Luka often related stories of suspicion and hostility from neighbors. Dubravka, for instance, felt that she led "a double life": she needed to perform a working self that responded to her employer's discourses and preoccupations in a way she felt comfortable with, yet also had to perform a neighborly self among neighbors who viewed that employer's power differently.[44] This discomfort cannot be quantified but could still be said to have damaged her sense of ontological security and should therefore be taken seriously. Even compared to other local work-

40. Boris Divjak and Michael C. Pugh, "The Political Economy of Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 3 (August 2008): 373–86.

41. Jansen, "Privatisation," 190.

42. Ioannis Armakolas, "Sarajevo No More? Identity and the Experience of Place among Bosnian Serb Sarajevans in Republika Srpska," in Bougarel, Duijzings, and Helms, eds., *New Bosnian Mosaic,* 86.

43. As SFOR shifted its role from security to liaison, many SFOR bases closed and fewer night patrols were used. By 2010, this had converted many EUFOR field interpreter posts to office-hours positions.

44. Dubravka, interview, Banja Luka, 9 May 2010.

ers (cleaners and caterers) on military bases, interpreters in Republika Srpska were particularly susceptible to this discomfort because they were personally implicated in producing the discursive clash through their acts of interpreting. In contrast, retired professionals interviewed by Larisa Jasarević at Arizona Market who had also adjusted to an alternative work trajectory (home production and market trading) did not earn as much and endangered their professional identities, but were able to sustain a prewar idea of work as limited and social.[45] The "insecurity" of interpreting for the military could thus extend from economic to existential when the ideologies of interpreters' social worlds markedly diverged.

Prosperity?

Workers in Bosnia-Herzegovina suffered from employment insecurity in common with those in other postsocialist countries, even though some sources of insecurity were specific to (post-)conflict situations. Where they most differed from counterparts in nonconflict-affected states was in the nature of opportunities for material benefits, which came about through Bosnia-Herzegovina's situation within the development-security nexus: prosperity rather than precarity is therefore where Bosnia-Herzegovina's greatest divergences from classic postsocialism can be seen. Although accurate salaries are hard to reconstruct without archival access to pay scales and the wages remembered in interviews ten to fifteen years later may be unreliable, we do know that the material benefits of working as an interpreter were high.[46] Wages paid by "national contingents" were significantly lower than those at the force headquarters and also varied between contingents; moreover, as parts of the Bosnian economy recovered, differentials became less pronounced and interpreters' purchasing power declined unless they received a raise.[47] The relative impact of interpreters' pay is nonetheless clear. In 2000, the UN Development Programme found that 46 percent of Federation residents and 75 percent of Republika Srpska residents lived below its poverty line of 441 KM (Federation) or

45. Larisa Jašarević, "Everyday Work: Subsistence Economy, Social Belonging, and Moralities of Exchange at a Bosnian (Black) Market," in Bougarel, Duijzings, and Helms, eds., *New Bosnian Mosaic,* 279.

46. Many interviewees could still remember pay rates, e.g., a British battalion commander who served in 1993 thought his unit's interpreters had been on 400–500 DM a month; interpreters employed by British forces in the Republika Srpska around 2000 remembered salaries of 1,000–1,800 DM; UNPROFOR in Sarajevo paid $300–$400 in 1993 and two interpreters in Pale recalled receiving $600 and $800, respectively; the civil affairs team at IFOR/SFOR headquarters paid its interpreters $900 in 1996 and $1,100 in 1998; at Zetra, one woman began as a secretary at $600 a month and was later promoted to a language assistant at $750; by 2009, after a professionalization process at SFOR headquarters had started in 2000, a headquarters interpreter hired at the lowest NATO grade (LCH 4) could expect a starting salary around 1,500 KM with biennial increments during their first twelve years of employment.

47. Most interpreters in Bosnia-Herzegovina were employed by "national contingents" (foreign units deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina and funded by their national defense ministries) rather than directly through the force headquarters in Sarajevo.

399 KM (Republika Srpska); interpreters' full-time salaries were at least two to three times this amount.[48] All interviewed interpreters and foreign military officials who spoke about pay recognized a vast differential between interpreters' pay and local professional salaries; one extremely well-qualified interpreter even compared his 2009 salary to members of the national presidency.

During the shortages of 1992–95, the work's overwhelming benefit was being able to support one's family. It justified the long hours, the time away from home, the dangers of crossing checkpoints and siege lines, and the jealousy from neighbors who might accuse a household's young daughter of hoarding, profiteering, or even obtaining an advantage through sex with foreign soldiers. Care for one's family mattered as much as—sometimes much more than—feelings of contributing to peace-making. No such solace was possible, however, for those who had been permanently displaced because their home had been destroyed and their family separated during the war. Displacement even continued after the war, into the Dayton "implementation" phase: most Serbs who had lived in certain areas of Sarajevo controlled by the Republika Srpska army (such as the peripheral suburbs of Ilidža and Vogošća) due for transfer to the Federation left for the Republika Srpska or Serbia before the deadline in February 1996 for these districts to be transferred. Serb interpreters who worked for UNPROFOR's liaison office in Pale had to negotiate the decision of whether to remain in the affected districts after they came under Federation control or to move to an area still controlled by Serb authorities. Alternatively, an interpreter had to decide whether or not to remain living in or near Sarajevo after relatives or neighbors had left an affected district for this reason.

Mobility, when freely exercised, was another dimension of prosperity. The distinction between interpreters and most other local civilians was most noticeable during 1992–95, when interpreters enjoyed privileged mobility outside their immediate areas and privileged access to sources of desirable supplies.[49] This allowed them to benefit from the wartime extralegal economy. No interviewed interpreters put themselves on record as profiteering from the war, reflecting an important limitation of first-hand interviewing: people frequently do not admit to behavior they regard as criminal. Emir Suljagić, in his memoir of the siege of Srebrenica, where he worked as a UN interpreter until the army of the Republika Srpska attacked in August 1995, similarly distances himself from the black-market resale of foreign soldiers' cigarettes: "No matter how many cigarettes there were in the enclave, there were never enough. They became one of the two or three solid currencies. You could pay and get paid in cig-

48. International Crisis Group, *Bosnia's Precarious Economy: Still Not Open for Business,* ICG Balkan Report 115 (Sarajevo, 2001), 6. See also Michael Pugh, "Postwar Political Economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Spoils of Peace," *Global Governance* 8, no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 467–82.

49. These included foreign military bases, duty-free shops for international workers, towns outside siege lines, and shops in Croatia where some UN units had their rear headquarters.

arettes, buy and sell for cigarettes. [. . .] unlike some of my colleagues I did not want to take part in it."[50] Peter Andreas's study of the siege of Sarajevo shows that UN-marked supplies entered Sarajevo's black market through the mediation of troops or their local staff and that UN staff could also exercise mobility to smuggle cash: according to Andreas, at least two interpreters also used official visits outside Bosnia-Herzegovina to smuggle more than 100,000 DM into Sarajevo.[51] Suljagić himself admits to extralegal trading on one occasion when his cousin needed a carton of cigarettes to pay a debt.[52] Interviewees who had lived in besieged cities during the war were more forthcoming about their positions on the black market as purchasers. Their regular hard-currency wages had enabled them to buy black-market goods and bring in supplies across siege lines, which they narrated as altruistic support for networks of family and neighbors.

Within central and eastern Europe, extralegal transborder trading is of course not unique to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The difference is scale, with Bosnia-Herzegovina simultaneously the destination of militarized smuggling routes for arms and equipment and a transit node for sanctions-busting smuggling into Serbia. The post-Yugoslav conflict indeed generated extralegal trade opportunities elsewhere in eastern Europe, particularly in neighboring states. Even the formal face of the development-security nexus could extend to incorporate these states: in 1998–99, for instance, the U.S. military cooperated with Bulgaria to refit a hospital in Trun for use during the Kosovo intervention. The Trun exercise brought some material benefit in the shape of refurbished infrastructure and also raised local hopes of contact with "Americans," though this image of the west was dashed by the U.S. Army's strict force protection policies, which restricted troops from interacting with locals.[53] The development-security nexus is immediately apparent in Bosnia-Herzegovina but takes longer to discern elsewhere in eastern Europe, where economies might appear more insulated from the disruption caused by the post-Yugoslav conflict. Its lower visibility in these other states does not diminish its significance.

Following the implementation of the Dayton accords and particularly Bosnia-Herzegovina's first parliamentary elections in September 1996, fears of an immediate return to violence diminished, leaving more space to think about leisure, education, or the future. Young interpreters had a privileged ability to prepare and save for all of these, although a greater ability to complete or advance one's higher education did not mean that it was always practically possible to do so. Some did resume higher education, and some even switched their course of study to politics or human resources management, adapting to a world of service industries and international organizations rather than the prewar economic base of heavy

50. Emir Suljagić, *Postcards from the Grave,* trans. Lelja Haverić (London, 2005), 37–38.

51. Andreas, *Blue Helmets,* 81–85.

52. Suljagić, *Postcards,* 38.

53. Galia I. Valtchinova, "Between a Balkan 'Home' and the 'West': Popular Conceptions of the West in Bulgaria after 1945," in Andrew Hammond, ed., *The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other, 1945–2003* (Aldershot, Eng., 2004), 147–49.

industry and socialist administration. Long working hours interfered with studying, however. Some interview participants in 2009–10, then in their mid-thirties, had only completed their undergraduate degrees in 2007–09 (in Sarajevo, they could often pay extra for evening or weekend classes), and one had never had time to finish her degree at all. The most reliable way to find time to study was to move abroad.

International mobility, as noted above, was itself a good to which workers employed by foreign organizations had privileged access in comparison to workers in the local public or private sector. Among the potential destinations, one choice tied Bosnian workers even further into the development-security nexus: work for private military contractors on foreign bases in Iraq and Afghanistan, where employees with proven English-language skills and a track record of working alongside militaries were highly sought after.[54] In May 2010, while I was conducting many of my interviews, private military contractors were recruiting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In May 2011, DynCorp was again recruiting through the main Bosnian jobs portal for electricians, carpenters, drivers, butchers, bakers, cooks, and administrative assistants, stipulating that "all qualified applicants must speak fluent English."[55] The former interpreters who became catering supervisors or logistics managers on bases in post-9/11 conflict zones made yet another unexpected transfer of their cultural capital, as the lens of global crisis turned away from Bosnia-Herzegovina even as the country remained embedded in the globalized economy of war.

Interpreters rarely discussed how their jobs affected their own family dynamics beyond saying they had been supporting what was often an extended family unit. Many posts on foreign bases were in jobs normatively gendered feminine, especially at the lowest pay grades (for work such as catering, cleaning and laundering). As has been seen, however, the stability and hard-currency wages paid by foreign military bases exceeded what was available on the local job market. Whether working at the lowest pay grades or in the more highly paid interpreting jobs, women were therefore more likely than men to have what would be considered high-paid employment in local terms. This could upset the masculine head-of-household role and could also present pregnant women with an unpalatable choice: quit work (especially before maternity-leave provisions existed) or spend half one's time away from one's young child, often in another town. Normative household models were disrupted along age lines, since young people were the most likely to have the necessary

54. Keith Brown, who has studied private military contractors recruiting Macedonians to work in Iraq, notes that, in this work, the category "foreign civilian" is further broken down into a hierarchy associating certain jobs with certain nationalities. He suggests that Macedonians "are placed or place themselves in a different occupational category from Serbs, Croats and Bulgarians, as well as western Europeans." Brown, "From the Balkans to Baghdad (via Baltimore): Labor Migration and the Routes of Empire," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 834. The experiences of Bosnian workers in Iraq and Afghanistan deserve research but were beyond the scope of this project.

55. At that time, a major Bosnian jobs portal was www.posao.ba/job.php?jobID=54919 (accessed 9 May 2011; no longer available).

educational and practical experience in English (through private English lessons or living abroad with parents) and people in their twenties could find themselves providing for parents. This disruption to the family order could be produced by any hard-currency international-community employment. An extra, more complex, gender order affected interpreting for the military, since the feminine gendering of language skills conflicted with the masculine gendering of the military and of certain tasks (for example, sleeping outdoors on night patrols). Foreign supervisors sought a mix of genders for local interpreter teams just as they sought a mix of ethnic backgrounds, populating the team with a "toolkit" of selectable identities. Field interpreter teams often had a roughly equal male-female split, whereas English-speaking local employees at headquarters were more likely to be female. Thus, even though interpreting might be coded feminine, a significant minority of interpreters (interviewees often estimated 40 percent) were men.[56]

As privileged as interpreters were in their communities, they remained at an economic disadvantage relative to the better-paid foreign workers and soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina with whom they competed for certain resources such as housing. An interpreter working in Pale in 1996 said she had had difficulties renting a flat "because I was local. They were waiting for rich foreigners from ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] to claim their flats for 1,000 KMs at that time."[57] Qualified interpreters and translators, meanwhile, noticed worrying effects on their own professional rates. One professional translator, with a postgraduate degree from a university in the country of her second language, had observed less qualified people undercutting what had been standard rates and preventing accredited translators from finding work at what they considered "a normal price."[58] Inequalities between local workers and privileged temporary foreign residents could of course arise in non-postconflict economies. These particular forms of inequality, however, were specific to societies in which international agencies had brought thousands of foreign workers as agents of direct intervention.

While further research on similar populations would be necessary to form firmer conclusions, this study of interpreters employed by foreign military forces suggests that using interviewing to obtain bottom-up perspectives on work trajectories reveals both commonalities (insecurity) and dissimilarities (specific consequences of international intervention) between Bosnia-Herzegovina and other postsocialist states. Ethnographic literature on postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina approaches work in two ways: changes in the structure and meaning of work (a postsocialist lens) and the workplace as a site for everyday interethnic experience (a lens relating to the impact of ethnopolitical conflict). Ethnographies on the

56. While much more deserves to be said about gender and interpreting, a full analysis of how this work was gendered is beyond the scope of this paper.

57. Interpreter, interview, Pale, 27 October 2009.

58. Boba, interview, Sarajevo, 28 October 2009.

revaluation of work reveal that recycling cultural capital into high-earning yet precarious work as an interpreter (at the top of foreign pay scales for locally employed civilians) was only one of the new trajectories made available by the development-security nexus. Another, using a blend of legal and extralegal practices to earn a living as a market trader (as in Jasarević's research) was available both to those who lacked the cultural capital for international-organization work and to those who might have had the necessary cultural capital but who made a different choice.[59] Paula Pickering discusses the significance of the workplace in interethnic relations, concluding that, given the ethnic homogenization of living space that occurred in the 1990s, the workplace is where contemporary Bosnians are most likely to acquire the "bridging social capital" that leads to interethnic cooperation.[60] She also recognizes that these workplaces provide "temporary havens [. . .] that insulate those inclined towards individualism from the more chauvinistic Bosnian society" while remaining a structurally "precarious" and impermanent form of employment.[61] The calculations about contract length and travel time made by Pickering's informants who had to decide whether to continue working for such organizations strongly resemble those articulated by the interpreters I interviewed.

Does job security exist anywhere today? A former teacher accustomed to Yugoslav socialism and a British officer embedded in the contemporary capitalist world posed strikingly similar questions. The casualization of work, which involves transforming formerly secure posts into short-term contracts and outsourcing former public sector jobs, has shifted more and more risk to the employee and produced anxious dislocations even in the capitalist west: Alison Stenning thus writes that the west as well as her own research site (postsocialist Poland) is experiencing "a loss of linearity and clarity of (occupational and social) progression and a loss of security."[62] To those used to the relative certainties of Yugoslav socialist life, the dislocation was even more extreme, compounded by and inseparable from the consequences of their country disintegrating and armed conflict overtaking their hometowns. Individuals' ability to benefit from the employment opportunities of post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, or rather to attempt to recover previous living standards and aspirations, depended on whether or not their circumstances allowed them to accept the high level of internal mobility that often became necessary to keep using one's skills in the drawdown years. Just as in postsocialist central and eastern Europe or even in the western academic job market, opportunity in Bosnia-Herzegovina favored the young, single, and mobile whose educational backgrounds

59. Jašarević, "Everyday Work," 279.

60. Paula M. Pickering, "Generating Social Capital for Bridging Ethnic Divisions in the Balkans: Case Studies of Two Bosniak Cities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 1 (January 2006): 83.

61. Ibid., 94.

62. Alison Stenning, "Re-Placing Work: Economic Transformations and the Shape of a Community in Post-Socialist Poland," *Work, Employment and Society* 19, no. 2 (June 2005): 237.

had equipped them with the necessary skills.[63] For many the ultimate goal was migration to more prosperous societies abroad and/or reunion with family members in the diaspora: interpreting was thus a means to an end, not a permanent new working identity.

The distinction between wartime/postconflict Bosnia-Herzegovina and other sites of research on insecure employment in postsocialism explains many peculiar features of the interviewed interpreters' experiences. Bulgarian tourism and Polish and Czech factories were already recognized sources of employment before the collapse of socialism, whereas the occupation of conflict interpreter simply did not exist in a socialist Yugoslavia. The long off-seasons for Bulgarian tourism workers supported continuing education and training, and the ideology of continuous learning reshaped workers' sense of identity in Poland. By contrast the weekly or fortnightly residential shifts many interpreters worked in 1990s Bosnia-Herzegovina disrupted further education and left workers in their late thirties without university degrees. Mobility prospects, too, were inverted: while Bulgarians, Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians formally had more opportunities to travel after 1989 than before, ex-Yugoslav citizens faced with visas, war, and the impact of economic sanctions against Serbia had fewer. Most fundamentally, the collapse of communism in states that remained peaceful was a rupture that promised hope, at least for a short time. No such promise was made in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the crisis of 1991–92 propelled Bosnians straight from socialist security to utter loss. The origins and effects of that contraction projected Bosnia-Herzegovina into another socioeconomic context altogether: the emerging nexus between development and security.

The role of interpreter, available to workers with a set of characteristics implicitly understood by both employers and employees to include spoken language skills, flexibility, personal resilience, and tolerance for risk, offered a direct interface with the development-security nexus that shapes the economies of contemporary conflict zones during and after wars. The observation that these economic transformations would have been unthinkable without the early 1990s crisis recalls Naomi Klein's theory of "disaster capitalism," in which contemporary wars and natural disasters invite "orchestrated raids on the public sphere," frustrating survivors' desires "to salvage whatever they can and begin repairing what was not destroyed."[64] Lynn Haney's analysis of welfare reform in postsocialist Hungary understands the inrush of a pathologized poverty discourse similarly: "Unprotected by the historic shield of the party/state, [countries like Hungary] were wide open for this discourse of need to flood in through the newly opened sphere of civil society. Itself in transition, the Hungarian state was unable to serve as a filter or a buffer for these

63. On precarity in the western academic labor market, see Jacquelyn Allen Collinson, "Working at a Marginal 'Career': The Case of UK Social Science Contract Researchers," *Sociological Review* 51, no. 3 (August 2003): 405–22.

64. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London, 2007), 6, 8.

global forces."[65] Klein's "disaster capitalism" invites both a weak and a strong hypothesis: that disaster capitalism exists and that models of employment and discipline have been tested in foreign crisis zones before becoming reimported to the core economies of the global North in the wake of shocks such as Hurricane Katrina in the United States or terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom. The weak hypothesis appears borne out by several ethnographies of postsocialist employment inside and outside former Yugoslavia. The strong hypothesis is harder to support, since it would expect the Bosnia-Herzegovina employment model of prosperity-with-insecurity to have been transferred back into North America and western Europe. The western financial crisis that began in 2008 has, indeed, raised threats to taken-for-granted welfare systems, shaken expectations that educational achievement will necessarily lead to a secure working life, and produced predictions of precarious working as a likely future for many who had until 2008 considered themselves members of the middle class. The concept of British college graduates as a so-called jilted generation without access to the life chances of their parents' generation after the demise of easy credit or the redefinition of the former western middle class as an unstable "precariat" echoes the shock to individuals' consciousness of society in central and eastern Europe in 1989–91: "post-financialism" rather than postsocialism.[66] Precarious working in the post-financialist period, however, offers few opportunities equivalent to the high-purchasing power combined with short-notice period that was open to interpreters in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Where they exist they are located outside the home country, becoming much more explicitly global than their equivalents in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The ex-Yugoslavs who became interpreters in Bosnia-Herzegovina harnessed their pre-1992 cultural capital to new ends, yet the outcome was substantially less secure than for similar groups in postsocialist central Europe. Despite adopting strategies similar to the Czech managers in Weiner's research (who stepped from professional work trajectories into management and narrated this as a rational exercise of choice), ex-Yugoslav interpreters experienced precarity similar to that of Czech factory workers. The example of Bosnian work trajectories provided in this paper suggests that Bosnia-Herzegovina's status as a site of international politico-military intervention made it distinct from the mainstream of postsocialist experience characterized by the Ghodsee/Dunn/Weiner model of adaptation to precarity. To strengthen this conclusion, further research would of course be needed on interpreters working for civilian agencies, on other types of civilian workers, and on other sites of international intervention in the Western Balkans. Should this produce similar results, it might imply that Bosnia-Herzegovina represents too great an outlier to be included meaningfully in comparisons among postsocialist societies. Indeed, when Valerie Bunce ranked central and eastern

65. Haney, "Global Discourses," 70.

66. Ed Howker and Shiv Malik, *Jilted Generation: How Britain Has Bankrupted Its Youth* (London, 2010); Standing, *Precariat*, 1.

European states in terms of their economic performance in 1999, she excluded "those cases, such as Georgia and Bosnia, that are war-ravaged economies" because they could not usefully be compared with others.[67]

Bosnia-Herzegovina need not be solely an outlier, however: forces that should be examined throughout central and eastern Europe are particularly easy to observe here. The dynamics of security, humanitarianism, and intervention help to explain many differences between Bosnian and "mainstream postsocialist" experiences. Yet the interaction of these factors is not confined to former Yugoslavia. It is clear that non-conflict-affected states have also been drawn into the intervention economy, as Galia Valtchinova's example of U.S. military exercises in Bulgaria shows; that political intervention has a wider reach than military intervention, as Sampson's example of civil society programs in Albania illustrates; and that, through NATO enlargement, the countries of central and eastern Europe have become junior agents in intervention elsewhere, with their own citizens taking on the position of foreign officials.[68] Social scientists of central and eastern Europe must theorize how the region as a whole has been incorporated into this global economy of development and security, which has increasingly structured international politics since 9/11. Neither a postsocialist lens nor a postconflict lens is sufficient in itself for an understanding of these connections.

67. Valerie Bunce, "The Political Economy of Postsocialism," *Slavic Review* 58, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 770.

68. Valtchinova, "Between a Balkan 'Home' and the 'West,'"; Sampson, "Social Life." See, e.g., James W. Peterson, "An Expanded NATO Confronts Terrorism and Instability," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 4 (2007): 475–97, and Nik Hynek and Jan Eichler, "The Czech Provinicial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan: Context, Experience and Politics," *Defense Studies* 10, no. 3 (September 2010): 405–30.