



Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)

By *Stuart J. Kaufman*

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Ethnic conflict has been the driving force of wars all over the world, yet it remains an enigma. What is it about ethnicity that breaks countries apart and drives people to acts of savage violence against their lifelong neighbors? Stuart Kaufman rejects the notion of permanent "ancient hatreds" as the answer. Dissatisfied as well with a purely rationalist explanation, he finds the roots of ethnic violence in myths and symbols, the stories ethnic groups tell about who they are.

Ethnic wars, Kaufman argues, result from the politics of these myths and symbols—appeals to flags and faded glories that aim to stir emotions rather than to address interests. Popular hostility based on these myths impels groups to follow extremist leaders invoking such emotion-laden ethnic symbols. If ethnic domination becomes their goal, ethnic war is the likely result. Kaufman examines contemporary ethnic wars in the Caucasus and southeastern Europe.

Drawing on information from a variety of sources, including visits to the regions and dozens of personal interviews, he demonstrates that diplomacy and economic incentives are not enough to prevent or end ethnic wars. The key to real conflict resolution is peacebuilding—the often-overlooked effort by nongovernmental organizations to change hostile attitudes at both the elite and the grassroots levels.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Convincing in arguing that ethnic violence is not the result of 'ancient hatreds,' and that contemporary politics and the struggle for power among individuals and elite groups largely determine who will engage in violence and who, ultimately, will get killed." *New York Review of Books*

"While providing excellent background of ethnic wars, *Modern Hatreds* is not simply a historical text. It offers a modern interpretation of the many recent individual conflicts, and helps knit together the broader themes that are relevant to them all." *National Journal*

"*Modern Hatreds* is an excellent and timely contribution to scholarship on ethnic war. . . . Kaufman manages to combine a thoroughly researched and detailed analysis of the case studies and the construction of a hypothesis that may explain, to some extent, the emergence of ethnic war." *Journal of International Studies*

"This detailed work on the history of hatred provides a thoughtful perspective of events and motivations that should fascinate any serious reader." *Political Science Quarterly*

"In *Modern Hatreds*, Stuart Kaufman provides a solid, cohesive argument in favor of paying more attention to the myths and symbols underlying ethnic conflict. The systematic treatment of ethnic conflict across comparable case studies distinguishes this study from most other recently published works on this topic. This is not only a sound piece of scholarship, but also an accessibly written book that should be read in and beyond academe." *Robert J. Kaiser, University of Wisconsin*

About the Author

Stuart J. Kaufman is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware. He is the author of *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (winner of the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order) and *Nationalist Passions*, both from Cornell, and coeditor of *The Balance of Power in World History*.

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