

# Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis

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## SUMMARY

The dissolution of multinational communist federations and the ensuing armed conflicts that have emerged with their transformation into independent nation-states have returned the “national question” (i.e., the relationship of a national or ethnic group to a state that includes multiple ethnic groups within its territory) to the forefront of debates over international politics, law, and theory. The violent breakup of Yugoslavia, in particular, demonstrates the inability of the international community to rely on any solid legal principles, guidelines, or established mechanisms to avoid such chaos and mass suffering when constituent parts of these types of multinational states decide to go their own way.

The former Yugoslavia was an attempt to address three fundamental aspects of the “national question”: (1) the right of a nation acting to create its own state through demands for national self-determination; (2) the right of a national homeland (whether sovereign state or republic within a federation) acting through its diaspora either to monitor the relative status of its conationals elsewhere, or to demand national unification and the redrawing of borders; and (3) the rights of members of national minorities to resist the majority’s formation of a new nation-state either by seeking

cultural or political autonomy or by seceding in order to unite with their own national homeland.

A multinational state, such as Yugoslavia, cannot attempt to resolve these questions in any one nation’s favor, lest it risk the collapse of the entire state. If a resolution of the national question in Yugoslavia appeared to tilt in favor of any one particular group, the federation’s internal balance would be upset. Thus, Yugoslavia was not only a mosaic of different ethnic nations, but also a *system* that was developed to accommodate these differences.

The creation and maintenance of Yugoslavia hinged on the interdependence of Serbs and Croats, the country’s two largest national groups. These peoples “imagined” the borders of their respective states as overlapping and clashing. None of the other national groups the former Yugoslavia comprised, with the exception of the Slovenes, lived within clearly defined ethnic borders inside the federation. Large numbers of Yugoslav peoples lived within one of the other’s “national” territory. Bosnia-Herzegovina posed the greatest challenge to the peaceful dissolution of Yugoslavia because both Serbs and Croats lived there in large numbers, and because both Serbia and Croatia had historical pretensions to the republic’s territory.

Almost every one of Yugoslavia’s peoples has been perceived as a threat to another national group and has felt threatened itself. This general atmosphere of *ressentiment*, real or imagined, could easily be used to produce the feeling that one’s national group was threatened with extinction as the object of another’s aggression.

Ever since the founding of Yugoslavia, two distinct nationalist policies have struggled for primacy in the debate over the country’s political future: Croatian separatism striving for an independent state and Serbian centralism striving to preserve the common Yugoslav state under its dominion. Croatian nationalism was separatist and oppositional, Serbian nationalism alternated between outright Serbian rule and a strict federalism governed through central government institutions. The Croatian policy supported the devolution of power from the center outward and found support among most other Yugoslav nations, which would eventually articulate their own national aspirations—Slovenian, Macedonian, Albanian, and (in the Bosnian experience) Muslim.

Both of these strident, ethnocentric, national ideologies preordained the failure of any attempt to constitute Yugoslavia as a modern unitary and liberal state. For Serbia, the Yugoslav state became nothing more than a vehicle for Serbian domination, which, in turn, stimulated Croatian national opposition. The first Yugoslav state (1918–41) was not only unable to pacify internal conflicts and dilute rigid national ideologies, but its collapse in World War II left no mechanisms in place to prevent extreme methods of resolving the national question.

The League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) played the role of “mediator” among the quarreling Yugoslav peoples. It promised an ideological resolution of the national question through a *social revolution* that subsumed class and national distinctions within a socialist framework. While the country’s major ethnic groups were constituted as nations within the new federation, the arrangement was best expressed by the classic Soviet formula, “national in form, socialist in content.”

The tenuous supranational ideology of Yugoslav communism would eventually provoke the federation’s crisis. The weakening and disappearance of socialism’s ideological sovereignty raised perforce fundamental and profound questions about Yugoslavia’s existence as a state, as happened in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

Despite the regime’s attempts to control national aspirations by institutionalizing them within the political and territorial boundaries of the titular republics, the more abstract aspects of nationhood could not be so confined. Conferring the *sense* of statehood upon Yugoslavia’s major ethnic groups had far greater consequences in strengthening their territorial integration.

The immediate source of Serbian dissatisfaction in general, and the most tangible reason for the republic’s nationalist reaction in particular, were the constitutional provisions that undermined Serbia’s territorial integrity. Although the institutional system established under the 1974 constitution prescribed the “nativization” of all Yugoslav peoples within their territorial, republican frameworks, Serbia was frustrated in this regard. According to the constitution, Serbia was not a “sovereign” negotiating party like the other republics because of the “sovereignty” of its two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Serbian hard-liners’ main interpretation of the “Serbian tragedy” in Kosovo was that ethnic Albanians had gained control through Yugoslavia’s 1974 constitution, and that the only way to stop the “ethnic cleansing” of Serbs in Kosovo was to reinstate Serbian domination there. In the ambiguity surrounding the “Kosovo problem,” hard-liners organized a putsch in Serbia’s Communist party in 1987, bringing the most conservative elements into the party’s leadership positions.

During 1988–89, Serbia’s intelligentsia and Slobodan Milosevic’s Serbian Communist party clique joined forces to encourage a national revolution to create a “unified Serbia” by tapping social and national discontent in the republic. The nationalist ideology of being threatened and hated fueled this Serbian mass movement.

This nationalist movement also mobilized Croatian Serbs by helping to organize meetings where they aired their demands for cultural and political autonomy. Such meetings only further supported the growth of Croatian nationalist movements, including the Croatian Democratic Union.

The advent of free elections in 1990 and the breakdown of the communist regime was the culmination of what had already been going on for more than a decade in Yugoslavia following Tito’s death. Along with the process of democratization in the republics and the denial of that same process in the federal government, central state authority was becoming weaker, approaching a situation of anarchy that bore an unsettling resemblance to the collapse of the empire that used to rule the Balkans. Yugoslavia’s breakup gave new meaning to the old notion of Balkanization.

As communism collapsed, the strategies of the political actors in each of the Yugoslav republics were determined by specific elements of the national question on the one hand, and the search for an exit from the communist system on the other. Yet, saving the communist regime remained the one method by which conservative elites in Serbia, including the Yugoslav National Army (YNA), could simultaneously preserve the Yugoslav state and achieve the goal of Serbian unification within one country.

The dual games (national and ideological) played by all the republics to a greater or lesser extent actually precluded both of two possible paths to a resolution of the federation’s crisis. The

republics' leaders were unable to either reimagine Yugoslavia as a democratic and minimal state or break away peacefully by creating new, separate democratic states.

Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union shared the same types of multinational federal institutions, ethno-demographic mix of populations, and large diaspora communities whose status would change significantly with the dismemberment of both federal states. Both cases involved the creation of new national states in which one ethnic group became predominant. If these and other multinational states share the same broad political and ethno-demographic elements, are there lessons from the Yugoslav crisis that the international community can generally apply to their dissolution and avoid the possibility of mass violence in their wake?

First of all, the international community should actively work with the relevant parties to arrange a temporary status quo compromise if the dismemberment of multinational states is not preceded by both an internal consensus on the terms for creating new states, including their borders and the status of minorities, and a clear conception of future security and cooperation arrangements.

The international community's recognition of the new states emerging from the Yugoslav federation's breakup was woefully insufficient to secure their peace and security. Not only must such recognition take into account the internal and external threats involved in each case, but it must be real in the sense that the new state must either be able to

defend itself or be defended by international military forces. Otherwise the result is highly unstable situations that lead to victim-states and victimized populations.

In the wider context of the political transformation of East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, a more fundamental debate has been rekindled: the right to national self-determination and how this vague principle might be reconsidered and clarified in order to make it a workable concept in international law. The abuse of this right in the Yugoslav case underscores the need for such an examination, as the right to self-determination came to be equated with the right of ethnically defined nations/republics to secede from the federation, regardless of the mass violence such an act would surely entail. The republics' unilateral acts of secession were in turn met with internal acts of secession by minority ethno-national communities invoking the same principle of self-determination.

One crucial precondition for the peaceful application of the right to self-determination should be the respect of both territorial integrity and minority rights. Borders cannot be changed by force or without consideration of the consequences that the redrawing of international borders would have for all members of the state. Above all, there should be some international mechanism that provides for the renegotiation of borders and that encourages all sides to recognize the consequences of newly drawn international borders for all relevant parties.

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## EXPLAINING NATIONALISM IN YUGOSLAVIA

The dissolution of multinational communist federations and the ensuing armed conflicts that have emerged with their transformation into independent nation-states have returned the “national question” to the forefront of debates over international politics, law, and theory. The forces fueling the breakdown of these multinational states have not been exhausted with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia. Most of the successor states of these federations are themselves breaking down. Whether there will be a third phase of breakdown that will require the resolution of new “national questions” remains to be seen.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I attempt to explain the disintegration of Yugoslavia and why its breakup was not a peaceful one. By way of this example, I also attempt to explain in general why and when the demise of multinational states creates ethnic polarization that seems “resolvable” only by force and even genocide. The violent breakup of Yugoslavia, in particular, demonstrates the inability of the international community to rely on any solid legal principles, guidelines, or established mechanisms to avoid such chaos and mass suffering when constituent parts of these types of multinational states decide to go their own way. In the concluding section of this study, I offer recommendations the

international community may find useful in avoiding these kinds of conflicts in the future.

For many years, Yugoslavia functioned as a nation-state by providing a peaceful compromise to the conflicting, multifaceted, and perennial “national questions” posed by its constitutive parts. Multinational states, such as Yugoslavia, cannot attempt to resolve these questions in any one nation’s favor, lest they risk the collapse of the entire state. If a resolution of the national question appeared to tilt in favor of any one particular group, Yugoslavia’s internal balance would have been upset. Thus, Yugoslavia was not only a mosaic of different ethnic nations, but also a *system* that was developed to accommodate these differences. Joseph Rothchild emphasizes the almost unbelievable diversity of ethnic groups that Yugoslavia brought under one state: “By virtually every relevant criterion—history, political traditions, socioeconomic standards, legal systems, religion and culture—Yugoslavia was the most complicated of the new states of interwar East-Central Europe, being composed of the largest and most varied number of pre-1918 units.”<sup>2</sup> Maintaining political balance and diffusing ethnic tensions was the only way Yugoslavia could survive. If the Yugoslav state could not maintain these essential functions, the “separation” of its intertwined national groups in a full-scale war would be the probable result.

By its very nature, Yugoslavia has never had a *staatsvolk* (“state-people”) that could “naturally” dominate by its numbers and serve as the foundation on which a modern nation-state could be built. (As members of the most populous national group, Serbs constituted only 40 percent of the total Yugoslav population.) The creation and maintenance of Yugoslavia hinged on the interdependence of Serbs and Croats, the country’s two largest national groups. These peoples not only shared a common daily existence, but also “imagined” the borders of their respective states as overlapping and clashing. Thus, a Serbo-Croatian compromise represented the foundation of Yugoslavia.

None of the other national groups that inhabited the former Yugoslavia, with the exception of the Slovenes, lived within clearly defined ethnic borders inside the federation. Large numbers of Yugoslav peoples or peoples of neighboring countries lived within one of the other’s “national” territory.<sup>3</sup> Bosnia-Herzegovina posed the greatest

challenge to the peaceful dissolution of Yugoslavia because both Serbs and Croats lived there in large numbers, and because the two states—Serbia and Croatia—both had historical pretensions to the republic’s territory.<sup>4</sup> Bosnia-Herzegovina was an “apple of discord” between Serbia and Croatia, as the recent war over its division confirms.<sup>5</sup>

The very existence of Yugoslavia seemed to defy the history of relations among its different nations, which had already waged one ethnic and religious war among themselves with the collapse of the first Yugoslavia (1918–41). The feeling of resentment among Yugoslavia’s nations, however, did not emerge from this experience alone. To be sure, Yugoslavia’s national groups all share a common history of struggling to save their distinct identities and renew their lost medieval states—a history of repressive domination that fostered disloyal and militant minorities and arrogant and repressive majorities. Almost every one of these peoples has been perceived as a threat to another national group and has felt threatened itself. This general atmosphere of *ressentiment*, real or imagined,

could easily be used to produce the feeling that one’s national group was threatened with extinction as the object of another’s aggression.<sup>6</sup> Almost without exception, every Balkan nation has had some territorial pretensions or expansionist intentions in one historical period or another. The region’s history has witnessed successive campaigns for “Greater Serbia,” “Greater Croatia,” “Greater Albania,” “Greater Bulgaria,” “Greater Macedonia,” and “Greater Greece.”<sup>7</sup> National *ressentiment* extended into the relatively recent period of communist rule, as the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (embodied in Tito as the bearer of absolute power) frequently resolved national conflicts through repressive methods that were not easily forgotten. In the process of maintaining a balance of power among national groups, every nation/republic had reason to believe that it had been unjustly treated in the Yugoslav state.

The sheer complexity of the former Yugoslavia’s current crisis has supported numerous interpretations of its origins. One explanation that has

acquired a certain currency is “nationalism as a power game,” which views the main cause of the Yugoslav crisis as an ideology (in the sense of “false consciousness”) of “aggressive nationalism,” perpetuated by members of the old *nomenklatura* who seek to preserve their threatened positions of power in the face of democratic change. Given that these government bureaucrats, party officials, and military officers were overwhelmingly concentrated in Serbia, this republic was the first to forge an effective conservative coalition under the banner of the old Serbian ideology to inhibit a “democratic revolution” that would drive them from power.<sup>8</sup>

In the “nationalism as a power game” argument, Communist elites in Yugoslavia’s other republics faced similar reformist pressures and attempted to duplicate the Serbian leaders’ strategy in their own republics. By promoting their own nationalisms, Yugoslavia’s other republican leaders acknowledged not only that Serbian threats—real or perceived—must be countered, but that nationalism was the most successful card to play in maintain-

ing their positions of power. Indeed, stirring up nationalist sentiment seemed to be the most convenient strategy for Yugoslavia’s republican political elites, particularly when they could easily manipulate public opinion through their control of their respective republic’s major sources of information.<sup>9</sup>

The problem with this approach is that it treats the “national question” as an epiphenomenon of the struggle to preserve power and privilege. In doing so, it forgets that political

battles in Yugoslavia have almost always developed around the “national question.” Such an understanding of nationalism as “false consciousness” discounts the power of national sentiment among the region’s ethnic groups.

The alternative explanation views nationalism in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the former Yugoslavia as a result of historical desires of separate peoples to resolve their “national question.” As such, nationalism is not viewed as a disingenuous ploy by political elites to hold onto power, but as a consequence of modernity in contemporary

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international society.<sup>10</sup> The very idea of a “multinational state” implies the dynamic of the “national question.” Multinational states significantly differ from multiethnic states, in that the former are composed of *separate nations* that want to establish their political autonomy in order “to ensure the full and free development of their cultures and the best interests of their people. At the extreme, nations may wish to secede, if they think their self-determination is impossible within the larger state.”<sup>11</sup> When we speak of the “communist federations” that are the subject of this work, we should keep in mind that these states “institutionalized multinationality.”<sup>12</sup>

Yugoslavia was an institutionalized multinational state that managed to contain, in the full sense of the word, disparate and seemingly intractable national questions. If we accept the view that there are essentially three fundamental aspects of the national question, then Yugoslavia contained all three: (1) a nation acting to create its own state through demands for national self-determination; (2) a national homeland (state or republic) acting through its diaspora either to monitor the relative status of its conationals in the new states emerging from the federation, or to demand unification and the redrawing of borders; and (3) members of an alienated national minority suffering from discrimination and acting to resist the majority’s formation of a new nation-state by either seeking cultural or political autonomy or seceding in order to unite with their own national homeland.<sup>13</sup>

In this respect, it should be kept in mind that all these aspects of the national question existed within one federal state, creating a specific internal dynamic that cannot be compared to a similar configuration of national questions in other independent states. These national questions have emerged in their most extreme forms (secession, irredentism, or the expulsion of minorities) in the process of Yugoslavia’s disintegration. Once they were so formulated, with the understanding that their proponents could not abandon their commitment to their particular solution, war was more or less inevitable.

The question arises, then, why practically each nation took the most extreme position, which, in essence, made Yugoslavia’s political relations a zero-sum game. Was the main cause of this situation the *ancien régime*’s elites who launched

“nationalism” as an ideology in order to protect their threatened positions of power? Or was it the prospect of finally resolving the ever-present “national question,” which would be freed from the constraints of the old authoritarian political order with the arrival of democracy? The related question, in terms of the federation’s survival, was whether Yugoslavia could either transform itself into a genuine democratic, federal state, or break up peacefully in light of: (1) conflicting national ideologies; (2) the existing collective decision-making structure, representing Yugoslavia’s nations (through its republics’ representatives) and the working class (through its vanguard, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia); and (3) the enormous apparatus of power that was created by the “authentic” socialist revolution—the authoritarian regime and the legacy of Tito’s absolute rule?

If nationalism takes the form of a quest for national identity through the creation of a nation-state, the most important task is to show why and when the nation assumed such worth, thereby making nationalist demands such a successful political card to play.<sup>14</sup> A more comprehensive analysis of nationalism, based on specific historical, institutional, and political factors, helps to avoid treating nationalism as an irrational, “false” phenomenon that can be wished away, or as a mere psychological template in the postcommunist search for identity. Following the more comprehensive analyses, this study will attempt to show that nationalism is a weapon for a new division of power in the process of deconstructing the political space of Yugoslavia and a dysfunctional prerequisite in the struggle for security among the new states emerging from the former multinational federation.

This analysis of nationalism’s role in Yugoslavia’s crisis will focus on three main factors: (1) the contradictory institutional structures of the Yugoslav state; (2) Serbian *ressentiment*; and (3) the collapse of authoritarian rule.

The first part examines the contradictory institutional structures of Yugoslavia as a state. While Yugoslavia was a practical compromise solution to the conflicting national questions contained within its borders, the Yugoslav state lacked the integrative potential necessary to create institutional frameworks and workable procedures of democratic rule that could accommodate the conflictual relations among its different national groups. It

was particularly unsuccessful in establishing the latter, as it was constantly trying to “resolve” national questions—mainly through its repressive state apparatus—that were anathema to the establishment of a democratic state. The next section explores this matter in detail, comparing the first Yugoslavia, the centralized, liberal state created after World War I, and the second Yugoslavia, the ethno-national federation created under communist rule. This section attempts to show how difficulties encountered in both of these state structures became a basis for future ethnic conflicts and the eventual disintegration of Yugoslavia. In short, both of these Yugoslavias proved unable to overcome the inherent antagonisms of the country’s fundamental national question.

The second and perhaps the most salient factor of the Yugoslav crisis is Serbian *ressentiment*, which ultimately rejected both the second Yugoslavia and a possible “third Yugoslavia” as a confederation of independent states. From the mid-1980s, prominent segments of the Serbian intelligentsia, in conjunction with the republic’s political and military elites, pushed Yugoslavia toward rapid disintegration with an offensive strategy of “finally settling accounts with ‘Tito’s monster.’” An aggressive Serbian nationalism broke the thin thread holding together Yugoslavia’s nations in a compromise arrangement, pushing toward an extreme solution of its national question through threats and warmongering: Either Yugoslavia’s various nations would accept Serbia’s vision of a “normal,” unified state that served Serbian interests, or Serbs from all the republics would “join together” and achieve their national unity by force. The political elites in all the former republics took advan-

tage of these extreme solutions as an opportunity to save their positions of power and privilege.

The third factor in this analysis is the collapse of authoritarian rule, which began right after Tito’s death in 1980, and accelerated rapidly during the breakdown of other communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe in 1989. This collapse involved two simultaneous processes of disintegration. The first was the breakdown of the value system of socialist internationalism, which tipped the delicate balance between socialist universalism and ethnic particularism in favor of the latter. The second was the dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which brought the very existence of the Yugoslav state into question—particularly if we keep in mind that socialist ideology, as defined by the LCY, provided the main integrative force holding the Yugoslav state together. With the disintegration of the state and its apparatus of repression, nothing could restrain the rise of nationalism—particularly Serbian nationalism—or return it to the framework of compromise. Far from laying the foundation for representative and responsive institutions that could accommodate the demands of Yugoslavia’s nations, the introduction of political pluralism and free elections at this juncture created a “state of nature,” bringing unmediated national conflicts to the stage of open warfare.

Thus, the situation in Yugoslavia during 1990–91 can best be described as a “decisive battle” for maximal solutions to the question of national boundaries and legitimate states.<sup>15</sup> In order to provide a complete understanding of the events that led up to this battle and what they mean for the future of the former Yugoslavia, I examine these three factors in fuller detail.

## 2 INTEGRATIVE PROBLEMS

### Interwar Yugoslavia and the Major National Ideologies

One prevalent explanation for the eventual demise of the Yugoslav state is that it never succeeded in constituting itself as a political community, as a nation-state whose identity conceptually and structurally transcended the various nations that it comprised. While the special function and purpose of the Yugoslav state ideally would have accommodated a large, diverse collectivity of many different ethnic groups, national minorities, and religions, as well as cultural, economic, and linguistic differences, the reality was that each of Yugoslavia's nations sought to use Yugoslavia to protect its own particular national identity and develop its own idea about statehood. The more obvious reality was that these different conceptions of the Yugoslav state were decidedly asymmetrical: Yugoslav statehood had to compete with its individual nations' desires for statehood. Yet the Yugoslav state itself would eventually be usurped by the largest nation—Serbs—to serve its own national interest. To be sure, the creation of a Yugoslav nation-state reflected Serbian interests, while Croatian interests (and, later, those of the other republics) fostered the ideal of a Yugoslav confederation of independent states.

The first Yugoslavia (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes) enshrined the idea of

“national unity” in a liberal, parliamentary monarchy. The idea of “national unity” presumed that there lived in Yugoslavia one people with three names—Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The wartime allies promoted unification of these “tribes” in a common state as an expression of the right to self-determination on the basis of nationality, following the example of the creation of the Italian and German nations in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Of course, such “Yugoslav ethnic unity” was spurious.<sup>17</sup> Its foundation of putative ethnic unity was, in essence, a joint project among the various South Slav nations to ward off any territorial aspirations of neighboring countries and to protect their national identities through a “unified” Yugoslavia. The state was dominated by Serbian institutions (above all, the Serbian House of Karadjordjevic), including the military, the political leadership, and the civil service. These institutions were mechanically transferred to the new parts of Yugoslavia, even though these old Serbian institutions lacked the integrative potential for a new state that was five times larger than Serbia and that now brought under its dominion fragments of old empires that were arguably more developed than Serbia from a legal, cultural, and economic standpoint. After the creation of Yugoslavia as a unified nation and centralized state under Serbian domination, the Croatian political parties entered the opposition, obstructing the work of parliament and state organs. Practically from the very founding of Yugoslavia, the Croatian national question was opened up.

Even before its formation as a state, there were debates over how the first Yugoslavia should be organized, even though Serbia entered the debates with a considerable advantage. Serbia had a stronger position in the negotiations over Yugoslavia, largely owing to its reputation as one of the victors in the Balkan Wars (1912–13), then as a state on the side of the Entente during World War I (in which Serbs suffered enormous casualties), and finally as an organized military force capable of blocking the pretensions of neighboring countries to Yugoslav lands (primarily Italy's claims on Dalmatia). For these reasons, Serbia believed that it had the right to speak in the name of all Yugoslav peoples and to influence decisively the form of the state in conformity with Serbian national interests.

Given the historical circumstances and balance of power, the Serbian position prevailed.<sup>18</sup>

Serbian politicians rejected outright the Croatian proposals for a federation. Such a scheme was foreign to Serbian history. Moreover, anything less than a centralized state would deprive Serbia of its dominant role in ruling the new country. If Serbian politicians were to accept the federal model, they would have to link together all of the “Serbian lands” so that Serbia could be assured of a dominant role in such a federation. The “Serbian lands in Austria-Hungary” that would be linked with Serbia were understood to include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina with Srem, and a part of Dalmatia. Montenegro, which had already united with Serbia, also fell within these “lands.” Moreover, Serbia had already obtained Vardar Macedonia and Kosovo in the Balkan Wars. As a result, the Serbian federal unit would be substantially larger than its Croatian and Slovenian counterparts. The idea of a federation created on the basis of historical provinces was not up for consideration, since it would “break up the Serbian nation” and the leading role of Serbia.<sup>19</sup> Serbian politicians were not prepared to “drown Serbia in the Yugoslav community” and rejected the example of the Piedmont region, which renounced its own past for the unification of Italy. This is the reason why Serbia did not agree to call the new state “Yugoslavia,” which came only in 1929 under the dictatorship of King Alexander.

Debates over how Yugoslavia should be organized—as either a unitary or a federal state—constantly plagued the first Yugoslavia, and the debates continued on into the second, communist, Yugoslavia until its disintegration. But debates over the country’s political structure involved much more than arguments about the nature and extent of federal relations in the two Yugoslavias. At the heart of these debates was the ongoing battle to resolve Yugoslavia’s national question. The opposing sides in these debates almost always divided along the lines of the two historically dominant ideologies that inevitably destroyed both Yugoslavias: Croatian and Serbian.

Well before unification, a strong political current in Croatia advocated an independent Croatia within its “historical boundaries,” which included Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of contemporary Serbia (a so-called Greater Croatia). Because

Croatia long enjoyed an autonomous status under Hungarian rule, it joined Yugoslavia as a nation with a well-developed consciousness about the “right of statehood,” that is, the right to an independent state.<sup>20</sup> Given the circumstances at the time, Croatia was not in a position to exercise this right or to advance the cause for a federal Yugoslavia. Pressed by an internal Yugoslav movement (which was especially strong in Dalmatia and among Croatian Serbs who were pushing for unification with Serbia), Croatia joined Yugoslavia, but with a strong feeling of its unequal position in the partnership.<sup>21</sup> Given its ambivalent relationship toward the unified state, and the fact that such an arrangement was ill suited for advancing its own interests, Croatia maintained a strategic position of separatism regarding its conception of the Yugoslav state. This position alternated between a pro-Yugoslav ideal of an autonomous state within a confederation of other South Slavs and outright secession from the Yugoslav federation and the establishment of a truly independent state. Regarding the latter position, Serbs posed the only obstacle to its achievement, according to the more extreme strains of Croatian nationalist sentiment. Croatian nationalist ideology and a historical longing for the national state it lost a thousand years before gave ample support for such a position.

Serbia’s basic objective remained the unification of all Serbs in one state. Following this nationalist ideology, Serbia entered World War I with the aim of bringing together all Serbs and Serbian lands, including those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Vojvodina (all under Austro-Hungarian rule). However, Serbia officially defined its war goal as the broader unification of all South Slavs within one state. The idea of Serbian unification was based on two principles. One reflected narrow Serbian interests: It envisioned a large Serbian state that would be a center of power in the Balkans after Serbian military victories and strategic alliances with the other Balkan nations forced the dying Hapsburg and Ottoman empires out of the region. Serbia achieved this goal, ending Ottoman rule and annexing Macedonia and Kosovo. The Serbian diaspora had a dual role in fulfilling Serbian unification: providing the resources needed to occupy a dominant position in the Balkans and focusing on the national question. While the borders of this “Greater Serbia” were not

clearly drawn, Serbia's more ardent nationalists invoked the image of a rebirth of the medieval Serbian kingdom lost to the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389.

The second principle was broader: namely, Yugoslavism conceived in a number of ways. Yugoslavia as a multinational enterprise, and not an expanded Serbia, was more popular among prominent segments of the Serbian intelligentsia and youth than in official political and military circles.<sup>22</sup> The pervasiveness of Serbian ethnic boundaries coincided with both the Yugoslav ideal and the cooperation established in the mid-nineteenth century with other nations that included large Serbian communities, principally Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. However, Serbian politicians did not renounce the Piedmont-like position of Serbia and its leading role in the creation of Yugoslavia. Toward the end of World War I, the Serbs realized their unification plan with the establishment of Yugoslavia under the slogan "national and state unity." From that time on, they considered Yugoslavia the permanent solution to their national question. Accordingly, they made great sacrifices during World War I, assigning themselves the role of the Yugoslav "state people" and "liberators" of the other peoples.<sup>23</sup> This dual identity remained a permanent part of the Serbian national character up to the emergence of the Serbian national movement in the 1980s, when this tie was broken with the rejection of Yugoslavism and Yugoslavia as the Serbian homeland.

Under the pressure of national, social, and economic problems, Yugoslavia did not survive for long as a parliamentary democracy. King Alexander's imposition of dictatorship in 1929 decisively defeated the idea of Yugoslavia as a liberal state based on "national unity." Through repression and persecutions, the King imposed his own version of national unity, including extensive regional

reorganization aimed at severing ties among ethnic communities and lessening their potential for resistance. This policy was not only unsuccessful, it intensified dissatisfaction among the national groups it sought to include in the monarchy's ideal of Yugoslavism, including Serbia. Such a policy found support only among diaspora Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

With the weakening of the dictatorship in 1934, pressure to resolve the Croatian question was so strong that on the eve of World War II the regime established the Croatian region (*banovina*). In addition to the traditional Croatian lands, considerable parts of Herzegovina and northern Bosnia were included in the new region. The establishment of the Croatian administrative region, in turn, reopened the question of where and how far the Serbian lands extended.

During Yugoslavia's partition in World War II, the conflict over the national question culminated in ethno-religious war and genocide in the fascist Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which included Bosnia-Herzegovina and part of present-day Serbia, near Belgrade. Ethnic atrocities committed by the Nazi-sponsored Croatian Ustashe regime in the NDH left an indelible mark on Serbian national consciousness, as well as on the consciousness of peoples who suffered Serbian revenge. The mass liquidations that were carried out by the new communist government against so-called collaborators and "class enemies" further traumatized the Yugoslav nations.

The scale of the massacres in the NDH and other mass executions would not allow their examination

in the atmosphere of "national reconciliation" that followed the war. Such a possibility was further denied by communist ideology, which rejected attempts to define the problems of ethnic war in "national" terms. As such, genocide and massacres were not carried out by members of national

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groups, but by “fascists,” “Ustashe,” and “Chetniks.” Monuments were raised to the victims, but a veil of silence covered over the climate of fear and mutual distrust.<sup>24</sup>

Ever since the founding of Yugoslavia, two distinct nationalist policies have struggled for primacy in the debate over the country’s political future: Croatian separatism striving for an independent state and Serbian centralism striving to preserve the common Yugoslav state under its dominion. Croatian nationalism was separatist and oppositional, Serbian nationalism alternated between outright Serbian rule and a strict federalism governed through central government institutions. While the former would be nurtured by economic growth through a reorientation of the Croatian economy, the latter would have to rely on the army and the police. The Croatian policy supported the devolution of power from the center outward and found support among most other

Yugoslav nations, which would eventually articulate their own national aspirations—Slovenian, Macedonian, Albanian, and (in the Bosnian experience) Muslim.

Both of these strident, ethnocentric, national ideologies preordained the failure of any attempt to constitute Yugoslavia as a modern unitary and liberal state. To be sure, such attempts lacked a genuine appreciation for the term “liberal state.” For Serbia, the Yugoslav state became nothing more than a vehicle for Serbian domination, which, in turn, stimulated Croatian national opposition and, in a somewhat subsidiary fashion, Slovenian nationalism. The position of the other Yugoslav nations was simply not a matter for discussion. The first Yugoslav state was not only unable to pacify internal conflicts and dilute rigid national ideologies, but its collapse in World War II left no mechanisms in place to prevent extreme methods of resolving the national question.

## 3 ETHNO-NATIONAL FEDERALISM UNDER COMMUNIST RULE

The disintegration of the second Yugoslavia and the activity of the main actors up through the outbreak of violent conflict can be understood in a specific context, that of a multinational federal state operating within a socialist framework. Both of these elements, which served as the bases of Yugoslavia's renewal after World War II, produced new problems of integration at the level of both the federation and the new federal units, or "national states." New contradictions emerged with the radical rejection of the civic principle of citizenship as a means of integrating the Yugoslav state and its constituent parts.

### "National in form, socialist in content"

The renewal of the country from the start of the war was taken up by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which played the role of "mediator" among the quarreling Yugoslav peoples. It promised a resolution of the national question, which from its ideological standpoint, could be settled only as an inseparable part of a *social revolution*. The party's linkage of social and national revolutions offered a specific way to "resolve" the national question and constitute Yugoslavia as a unified state. The linkage between nation and revolution was presented as a *comprehensive*

*arrangement*, best expressed by the classic Soviet formula, "national in form, socialist in content." What exactly did this formula mean for the formation of Yugoslavia as a state, and how exactly was the national question "resolved" according to this formula?

The contradictory nature of Yugoslavia as a state was apparent from its very inception. On the one hand, the Communist party was able to come to power only as a *Yugoslav movement*; on the other hand, it could not hope to attract the "oppressed nations" to the revolutionary cause with the promise of a *Yugoslav solution* to the national question. The social revolution, following the tradition of the Soviet experience, subsumed class and national divisions within the categories of the oppressed and the oppressor. Simply put, some of Yugoslavia's nations were "working class," and others ranked among the bourgeoisie. According to the LCY, the "Serbian bourgeoisie" was both a class and national oppressor. Thus, the party did not offer a Yugoslavia that its "exploited nations" would continue to view as a Serbian creation; rather, it attempted to move the new Yugoslavian project as far away from Serbian influence as it could. This was achieved by emphasizing the revolutionary right of each nation to self-determination and by offering the promise of a federal organization of Yugoslavia. The resulting framework of social revolution (which, according to party ideologists, was coterminous with the country's national war of liberation) could only be a new, socialist Yugoslavia. In its formulation of the new socialist project, "the party had come to acquire a sensitivity to the point of view of the individual Yugoslav nationalities while at the same time being fully committed to finding a Yugoslav solution to the national question."<sup>25</sup> How would such a Yugoslavia be constituted? On what institutional assumptions would it be based?

According to official communist doctrine, Yugoslavia could not be established as a nation-state, even in a federal arrangement. "Nations" were products of capitalism, not socialism; so any attempt to establish administrative units based on historical categories, such as nations, was out of the question. Unity in the new, socialist Yugoslavia was to be realized by *merging* the basic differences (including national ones) among its various peoples in an all-encompassing proletariat.<sup>26</sup> This presumed

unity was not political (i.e., national) but apolitical (i.e., class-based) in nature. Until the time when this new unity could be fully established, nations would be recognized and constituted as sovereign states, but only until that “form” could be transcended by an authentic community of working people. Of course, recognition of the nations as sovereign states was, from the start, more established on paper than in fact, particularly with regard to their own national policies. The major decisions were taken in the central party organs, and all state institutions, including republican governments, were merely “transmitters” of these decisions.

The formula “national in form, socialist in content” established Yugoslavia as a state based on one ideological project, or more precisely, the absolute and centralized power of the Communist party and its apparatus of state power.<sup>27</sup> The subjective dimension of Yugoslavia as a state is expressed by “socialist patriotism,” which reduces its identity to that of a communist *supranational ideology*. This tenuous conception of Yugoslavia would later provoke its crisis. The weakening and disappearance of socialism’s ideological sovereignty raised perforce fundamental and profound questions about Yugoslavia’s existence as a state, as happened in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

As long as communist Yugoslavia could not be defined as a nation-state (“nation” defined as a shared political community), nor its citizens as constituting a unified nation, its communist leaders could safely

allow its composite parts to be constituted in national terms.<sup>28</sup> Yugoslavia institutionalized the relations among these nations through an unusual federal arrangement based on a hierarchy of two kinds of ethno-nationality. Enjoying the higher status were the “constitutive nations” that originally “joined together in the common state” and theoretically enjoyed the right to be recognized as *sovereign states*. Thus, Yugoslav federalism was

based on an ethno-national sovereignty that would bear the seeds of future ethnocracies once its socialist framework fell apart.<sup>29</sup> Five constitutive nations were so recognized—Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, and Slovenes—each of which was territorially and politically organized as a republic in the Yugoslav federation. One republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, was not recognized under the national principle until 1971. After the recognition of Muslims as a separate ethno-nation, Bosnia-Herzegovina became a republic consisting of three constitutive peoples: Serbs, Croats, and Muslims.

The constitutive nations enjoyed the status of states (republics), while all of the other national groups held the status of national minorities with recognized cultural rights. Later on, this status was elevated to the level of “nationalities” (*narodnost*), granting them proportional representation at the local level, and at the provincial/republican and federal levels for larger minority groups (e.g., Hungarians in Vojvodina). Within the Serbian republic, two autonomous provinces were formed: Kosovo, populated primarily by ethnic Albanians, and Vojvodina, populated by significant numbers of ethnic Hungarians and other minorities.<sup>30</sup> Under the 1974 constitution, both of these regions took on a state-like status similar to that enjoyed by the republics.

Despite the regime’s attempts to control national aspirations by institutionalizing them within the political and territorial boundaries of the titular republics, the more abstract aspects of nationhood

could not be so confined. Conferring the *sense* of statehood upon Yugoslavia’s major ethnic groups had far greater consequences in strengthening the territorial and ethnic integration of these nations. That is, their rights to be “constitutive” were recognized not only within their respective states, but also among their conationals inhabiting the territory of other Yugoslav republics. In some cases, these ethnic diaspora communities viewed the

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constitutive nature of Yugoslav nationhood as giving them the right to extend the sovereignty of their national “homeland” to the territories they inhabited. Such was the case with Serbs in Croatia, constituting 12 percent of the republic’s population in 1991. Later, this status would produce enormous problems, giving Croatian Serbs the “right” to secede from Croatia, and giving Croatia the right to deny them this status by designating them as a “minority” in its new constitution. An even clearer example was in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where, according to the same principle, three nations held sovereignty: Serbs, Croats, and Muslims.<sup>31</sup> This principle held for Yugoslavia’s other nations as well, but it did not have the same consequences due to the significantly smaller share of other nations in their populations.

Yugoslavia’s institutionalization of these two opposing principles of integration—territorial-political and ethnic—posed an apparent contradiction that had two major consequences.<sup>32</sup> First, none of Yugoslavia’s constitutive nations acquired its own national state (with the exception of Slovenia, which was more or less ethnically homogeneous), since members of other “constitutive” nations lived within their borders. The second consequence bears on the issue of the right to self-determination. Specifically, who is the bearer of that right in the Yugoslav experience? Does self-determination apply to the republics or to “peoples” as members of national groups? (Serbian nationalists insisted on the latter, referring to the federal constitution, which states that “nations” and not republics “joined together” to form the common state.)

There was a third consequence whose significance would become increasingly apparent in later conflicts: When “constitutive peoples” were in the minority of a particular republic, they were denied the exercise of their cultural rights, since they already enjoyed such rights in their own titular republics. Thus, for example, Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Croats in the latter, could not carry out their own cultural policies as ethnic groups, nor could they maintain cultural links with their home republics.<sup>33</sup> Such policies not only precluded the possibility of peacefully integrating national minorities into the majority ethnic group’s titular republic, but they prevented these minorities from maintaining vital cultural linkages to their national homelands *within the territorial and political framework* of that republic.

This absolutized the political (i.e., state) criteria for guarding and protecting the “nation” in the ethno-cultural sense. Moreover, this arrangement later gave Serbia’s policy of unifying all Serbs unlimited possibilities for playing upon Serbian discontent in order to escalate conflicts in Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This system was the logical consequence of rejecting the *civil* state as a framework for integration under the socialist regime. Such a “supranational” arrangement could be maintained only with the unlimited power of the Communist party, which kept an eye on any and all attempts to raise national consciousness to the level of nationalism among Yugoslavia’s myriad ethno-national groups.

Could the new Yugoslavia have succeeded in attenuating the country’s two major national ideologies—Serbian domination and Croatian separatism—that threatened the very survival of the Yugoslav experiment? The obvious answer is that it could not, but less obvious is why it could not. Was the Yugoslav experiment doomed to fail from its inception? The key to answering this deeper question once again lies in the different perceptions of Yugoslavia’s two main ethno-national groups about the purpose of the new federation.

The revolutionary bases—national and social—underlying the legitimacy of socialist Yugoslavia can be understood as a compromise between the two major national ideologies. Yugoslavia’s new federal arrangement within a socialist context not only provided all of the region’s major national groups their own territorial sovereignty, but ensured a *de jure* equality among the federation’s new states. At least this was the perception among most of the Yugoslav nations, including Croatia. Serbia perceived the new federation differently: Yugoslavia’s renewal under a strong, centralized communist order would once again fulfill Serbia’s historical quest to unify all Serbs in one state.<sup>34</sup> Serbs accepted the new federation and the borders that defined its republics and provinces only because Yugoslavia, not the republic of Serbia, would now be the guarantor of their national interest. In spite of its new configuration, Yugoslavia’s basic asymmetry survived under the guise of arbitrary “national balancing acts” that would later serve as the basis for new nationalist grievances. The most obvious of such “national balancing acts” was the overrepresentation of Serbs in the federal organs of power—military, police, and administration.

Disproportionate numbers of Serbs outside of Serbia joined Partisan forces in World War II and were active in the revolution. For their efforts as a loyal cadre, these Serbs were awarded state and party positions in these republics in disproportionate numbers. This circumstance especially caused discontent among Croats, even though the numbers of Serbs did not undermine the dominant position of the Croatian cadre in its own titular republic. On the other hand, this circumstance “balanced off” the reduction of Serbia as a republic (with its two autonomous provinces).<sup>35</sup>

### Centralism and decentralism

Beginning in the early 1960s, the debate over centralism versus decentralism in the federation highlighted the differences between the two fundamental views of Yugoslavia’s national purpose. Serbia’s official policy strategically sided with the center of power and “Yugoslavism,” resisting until the end of the decade the push for decentralization and economic reforms that would lead to a redistribution of power in favor of the republics and provinces.<sup>36</sup> Croatia and Slovenia extended their original support of economic decentralization to the central Yugoslav party and state apparatuses, resisting periodic attempts by the party to renew the idea of “Yugoslavism” outside the context of “socialist patriotism.”<sup>37</sup> This position found support among the other non-Serbian republics and provinces, not because of similar economic interests, but for political reasons—namely, to weaken the central government as a Serbian stronghold. Thus Croatia (along with Slovenia and the other non-Serbian republics) adopted the strategy of loosening and weakening the central role of the federation, preferring that it merely represent the positions the republics and provinces had already agreed on.

If one event foreshadowed the specter of nationalism in postwar Yugoslavia, it occurred in 1964 at the Eighth LCY Congress, which rejected the idea of “Yugoslav culture” as assimilationist. Croatia and its supporters denounced “integral Yugoslavism” as a chauvinist policy advanced by Serbian hegemonists. Similarly, the congress rejected the “bourgeois prejudice about the withering away of nations” and the specious notion that “national differences will disappear quickly after

the revolution.” These viewpoints were judged as being not only incorrect but also bureaucratic, “unitarist,” and hegemonic.<sup>38</sup> In line with such criticism, the congress witnessed a complete turnaround in efforts to establish Yugoslavia as a nation-state. From that point on, nations/republics were to become the real bearers of sovereignty, as all nations have the right to do. At its next congress in 1969, the LCY followed the same pattern, transferring party power to the republican organs. Thus, Yugoslavia’s Communist party practically disappeared as a unified organization, although it continued to function primarily because of Tito’s sacred and absolute power.

The devolution of power initiated at the Eighth LCY Congress eventually produced a series of comprehensive constitutional changes that culminated in the 1974 constitution. Tito’s personal power was strengthened under Yugoslavia’s new basic law (which only served to codify the tremendous growth of his personality cult during the 1970s), as was the *political role* of the Yugoslav National Army, which became the ninth member of the collective presidency of the LCY, along with the eight representatives of the republics and provinces.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, the new constitution also transferred power to the republics. In the federal organs, decisions had to be made according to consensus (with each republic and province holding veto power). All of the republics were represented equally in government bodies; the provinces had a smaller number of representatives, but this did not affect their position. Representatives in federal organs consisted of “delegations” from the republics and provinces, and they were accountable to these bodies for their decisions. Republics and provinces could develop their own independent foreign relations, and the organization of territorial defense was left up to the republics as well.

The formal bearers of sovereignty in Yugoslavia were its nations. Without the agreement and approval of the country’s eight national states (six republics and the two provinces), the federation could not function, as it did not have its own autonomous source of authority.<sup>40</sup> The need for agreement among disparate national states operating within a framework of overlapping federal and confederal jurisdictions (the proscribed powers of the federation were fairly broad) meant that every

question was necessarily “nationalized,” inevitably leading to national confrontations on a regular basis.<sup>41</sup> Under the 1974 constitution, so-called international relations were established *within* Yugoslavia.<sup>42</sup> Every question affecting the entire federation first had to be cleared in one’s own state and returned to the federal level for final agreement. Since there were no federal bodies with their own source of legitimacy that transcended that of the republics, Yugoslavia under the new constitution could neither frame issues in terms of their impact on the federation as a whole, nor arrive at federal solutions that attempted to effect compromise outcomes.

Finally, the 1974 constitution established a symmetry that precluded linking Yugoslavia’s identity with any particular republic. As such, Yugoslavia essentially had no citizens; rather, it was inhabited by citizens of its respective republics. In reality, though, the country’s political life belonged to Tito and the Yugoslav National Army. The country’s

political elites would begin their competition for real political power only after Tito’s death in 1980.

The institutionalization of Yugoslavia as an ethno-national federation constituted the first step in dismembering Yugoslavia along ethnic lines. This analysis suggests that Yugoslavia, as a multinational state, was formed in such a way that it emerged and survived only under the aegis of authoritarian rule, and that the battle for ethno-national statehood results in either the construction of a common “nation-state” that seeks to pacify separate national identities, disintegration into independent states, or the formation of a confederation (which is not a “state” in the real sense of the term). However, neither possibility obtained in postwar Yugoslavia, since asymmetrical national interests and the very institutional structure of multinationality precluded these alternatives. Rather, Yugoslavia’s states resorted to yet another alternative—to change Yugoslavia’s internal borders through prolonged, bloody conflict.

# 4

## THE ROLE OF SERBIAN RESSENTMENT

Thus far, this study has attempted to explain the fragility of the Yugoslav state in terms of both the dominant national ideologies that shook its foundations from its very creation and the institutional frameworks within which national conflicts evolved.

Tito's principal strategy in maintaining national peace sought to curb the power of the largest republic (Serbia) and prevent the separation of the others from the federation. After his death, such a peace had little chance of surviving absent a supreme arbiter. No legitimate political institutions existed in Yugoslavia to both regulate conflicts among different national groups and support the ideal of a unified nation-state, a common situation for all multinational states in the communist bloc. This circumstance was particularly convenient for the rise of ethno-nationalism in these countries.<sup>43</sup>

### Sources of crisis in Serbia: The nationalist response

The crisis in the former Yugoslavia, characterized first by the political disintegration of the country and then by its descent into full-scale war to alter republican borders, cannot be understood without an analysis of the crisis that broke out in Serbia in

the mid-1980s. This crisis had its origins in the powerful nationalist movement under the leadership of Serbia's Communist party. Initially, it sought the restoration of the Yugoslav federation based on the authority of the Communist party, but it soon grew into a movement for the creation of a "Greater Serbia." With each passing day, this movement intensified national conflicts and pushed the crisis toward the denouement of war that eventually engulfed all of Yugoslavia. The country could have embraced a democratic response to the collapse of the communist system only under the condition that all participants pursue a *moderate* policy.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, Yugoslavia was robbed of such a conditional alternative with the triumph of conservative factions in the League of Communists of Serbia and the ascension of Slobodan Milosevic as its leader in 1987.

The Serbian crisis had multiple origins, three of which can be identified as the most profound.

***Serbia's problematic position under the 1974 constitution.*** As noted previously, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was not immune to the forces that rendered federation-wide institutions ineffective in guaranteeing Yugoslavia's existence. The LCY's waning authority as the basis of Yugoslav integration was viewed by the Serbs as jeopardizing the Serbian national interest for all Serbs to live in one state. "Every Serb who had participated in the national liberation movement became convinced that the new Yugoslavia was becoming an inter-nationally founded federation in which . . . the ideological principle had precedence over the national." This conviction, "as shown by the identification with Yugoslavia as a formula of internationalism, was the core of most Serbs' national consciousness up until 1974. . . ."<sup>45</sup>

This fundamental legitimacy crisis was bolstered by the existing constitutional arrangement that defined Yugoslavia as a state by "mutual agreement" of the republics and provinces. Yugoslav sovereignty had been essentially seized and divided up among the federation's national groups. The symmetry established between the republics and provinces vis-à-vis an empty central authority made it senseless for Serbia to maintain its "internationalist" position against the "nativist" positions of other republics.<sup>46</sup> Yugoslavia's future was

heading toward either confederation or disintegration as the communist system weakened. The Serbian cultural and political elite did not accept such a future, fearing that the forces propelling Yugoslavia toward dissolution would also destroy the fundamental Serbian national goal—that all Serbs live in one state. Viewed as such, Serbian nationalism was a reaction to the fading of what Serbs considered a symbiosis between “Serbianism” and “Yugoslavism” that was mediated by the communist system. With the disappearance of this symbiosis, the problem of the Serbian diaspora clamored to be resolved once again.

The immediate source of Serbian dissatisfaction in general, and the most tangible reason for its nationalist reaction in particular, were the constitutional provisions that undermined Serbia’s territorial integrity. Although the institutional system established under the 1974 constitution prescribed the “nativization” of all Yugoslav peoples within their territorial, republican frameworks, Serbia was frustrated in this regard. According to the constitution, Serbia was not a “sovereign” negotiating party like the other republics because of the “sovereignty” of its two provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina.

According to the 1974 constitution, the republics and provinces were almost completely on equal footing regarding rights and duties. At the federal level, provinces had veto power, equal representation in the collective Yugoslav presidency, and the right to represent their own interests without consulting the republic—most often in opposition to it. Serbia’s representation at the federal level covered only the territory of “Serbia proper” (i.e., Serbia without its autonomous provinces), even though such a jurisdiction was not defined in the constitution. In ethno-demographic terms, this meant that Serbia’s representatives in the federation could speak for only 42 percent of the Serbs living in Serbia.<sup>47</sup>

Following the period of constitutional reform in the late 1960s, Serbia’s provinces seized all the attributes of statehood—legislative, judicial, and executive powers—even those not constitutionally granted to them. The provinces changed their own constitutions independently, maintained relations with foreign countries (e.g., Kosovo with Albania), and created their own territorial defense. Laws were passed by consensus of all three units; if the

provincial parliaments did not accept Serbian proposals, they applied only to Serbia proper.

Soon after adoption of the 1974 constitution, the Serbian leadership called for a change in the Serbian republic’s status. Why it wasn’t changed immediately is obvious: The constitution could not be changed because the federation’s members could not reach an agreement regarding this matter.<sup>48</sup> In 1976, the Serbian leadership submitted a request to change the constitutional provisions specifying the republic’s composition, seeking to encompass Serbia’s provinces formally. The document justifying this request to change Serbia’s status was called the “Blue Book” (made public only in 1990). Denounced as a nationalist tract, the document was received with “knives” by political leaders in the other republics and particularly in the provinces.<sup>49</sup>

The situation continued into the early 1980s, when the focus of attention shifted to Kosovo, the Serbian province that was the scene of growing ethnic tension. The Serbian leadership at the time, headed by Ivan Stambolic, made concerted efforts to change the status of Serbia vis-à-vis its provinces with the agreement of the other federation members. However, opening up discussions on this matter was becoming an increasingly painstaking process. In order to change the constitution, an effective pro-Serbian coalition was required. When none was forthcoming, Serbia interpreted the maintenance of the constitutional status quo as the work of an anti-Serbian coalition. After the outbreak of nationalist demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981, in which ethnic Albanians demanded republican status for Kosovo—which would bolster claims to the right to self-determination—the question of Serbia’s constitutional jurisdiction took on even greater importance; its resolution spelled either political survival or failure. Indeed, Kosovo’s threat to Serbia’s territorial integrity had been gaining momentum since 1968, when the Kosovar leadership gave its support to an Albanian national movement in the province whose principal goal was to gain republican status for Kosovo.<sup>50</sup>

*Kosovo and the “ethnic threat.”* Demonstrations among Kosovo’s overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian population were the second reason for the crisis. Setting Kosovo apart as a de facto republic created the conditions for a Serbian nationalist reaction.

Kosovo was considered the cradle of Serbian medieval culture and the symbol of national history and mythology.<sup>51</sup> During the first years after the 1981 Albanian demonstrations and the imposition of martial law in Kosovo, the LCY provided the official, socialist interpretation of the disturbances, branding them as instances of “counterrevolution” by Albanian separatists. Viewed in such a way, the Yugoslav leadership avoided identifying ethnic factors as the cause of unrest.

A starkly different interpretation of these events emerged from the Serbian party leadership, which capitalized on the symbolic meaning of Kosovo and latent Serbian nationalism in order to strengthen its arguments for changing Serbia’s constitutional status. The Serbian Communist party redefined Kosovo as an *ethnic threat*, tapping national myths surrounding Kosovo and the history of the great Serbian medieval state. The federal government tolerated Serbia’s ethnic reaction, which centered on the possible loss of Kosovo as a “holy land.”<sup>52</sup> The “Albanian enemy’s” goal, according to the Serbian party leadership, was being realized by the forced expulsion of Serbs from Kosovo,<sup>53</sup> while ethnic Albanians escaped prosecution from a sympathetic provincial government for crimes such as rape, murder, theft, desecration of Serbian graves, and various other types of intimidation.<sup>54</sup> Serbian emigration from Kosovo came to be viewed by Serbia as nothing short of an exodus under the pressure of Albanian nationalism, although clearly there were other factors at work.<sup>55</sup> Anyone who dared to mention these other reasons (economic, educational, etc.), particularly if the person was from another Yugoslav republic, was ruthlessly attacked and denounced as an enemy of the Serbs.<sup>56</sup> Serbian grievances were not thoroughly investigated, since the very act of checking suggested doubts about the Serbs’ claims of victimization.<sup>57</sup> Not even repression of the “rebellious” Albanians, the military occupation of Kosovo, or the imprisonment of hundreds of Albanians changed Serbs’ opinion

that their brethren in Kosovo suffered increasing persecution, evidenced by continued Serbian emigration from the province.<sup>58</sup>

The main role in defining the situation in Kosovo was taken over by an organized movement of Serbs from Kosovo that had the support of the Orthodox Church and the Serbian intelligentsia. These Serbs’ demands were almost always aimed at constitutional changes that would establish a united Serbia, but they endeavored even more to change the ethnic domination in Kosovo. Their

main interpretation of the “Serbian tragedy” in Kosovo was that the ethnic Albanians had gained control through the 1974 constitution, and that the only way to stop the “ethnic cleansing” of Serbs in Kosovo was to reinstate Serbian domination there.<sup>59</sup>

Both interpretations of the problem, the constitutional position of Serbia as an unequal party in the federation and the matter of ethnic Albanian domination in Kosovo, distanced Serbs

from a diagnosis of the republic’s real problem: determining the basis of Serbia’s political community and its political identity. To be sure, the same problem applied to Yugoslavia as a whole, but it is not an exaggeration to say that the locus of Yugoslavia’s demise was in Kosovo. The federation was politically unequipped to protect its citizens—Serbs and ethnic Albanians in this case—because it had no nonviolent instrument (above all, the rule of law) at its disposal to neutralize and pacify these types of ethnic conflicts.

The ethnic politicization of Kosovo increased the number of interpretations of the conflict, depending on who was speaking: “genocide” (the Serbian interpretation), “normal migration” and “vehicles of Serbian nationalism” (Slovenian), “dispossession of ethnic Albanians and political terror” (Albanian). These interpretations strained relations among the republics. On the one hand, Slovenia and Croatia backed the Albanian nationalist movement. On the other hand, Serbian

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responses increasingly acquired overtones of nationalism, repression, propaganda, and outright lies.<sup>60</sup> Kosovo demonstrated that ethnic conflicts could be invented and exacerbated through media propaganda. This effective tool became the principal mechanism for intensifying ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia. In essence, the media dramatically staged reality for millions of Serbs and turned whatever potential existed in Serbia for ethnic hatred into a self-fulfilling prophesy.

**The antidemocratic coalition.** The third factor in the Yugoslav crisis involved the concentration of the old regime's conservative forces in Serbia. The privileged layer of central and local Communist party bureaucrats and members of the state's power apparatus (military and police) viewed with concern the nascent democratic changes taking place in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. Democratization of the "first country of socialism" threatened Yugoslavia's status quo and the privileges and positions these elites enjoyed. They were threatened by domestic liberal opposition as well, which was strongest in Belgrade at the time. In the ambiguity surrounding the "Kosovo problem," these conservative political elites organized a putsch in the Serbian Communist party in 1987, bringing to the forefront the party's most conservative elements, led by Slobodan Milosevic.

The party conservatives' support of the military apparatus was not hidden. General Ljubicic, one of the most influential officers in the Yugoslav National Army, greeted Milosevic's candidacy as president of the Serbian Communist party with this encomium: "Slobodan has committed himself to the battle against nationalism, against liberalism, and against all forms of counterrevolution in Belgrade."<sup>61</sup> Criticism of the moderate wing in the League of Communists of Serbia as being unfaithful to Tito's politics was accurately read as an accusation of having betrayed national interests. On both tracks—defending Tito's cult of personality and resolving the Kosovo problem—a power struggle took place through party purges, consolidating the party's victorious faction, establishing control over the most influential media outlets, and attacking the liberal opposition.<sup>62</sup>

Serbia's conservative power apparatus tapped new sources of energy and support in the well-spring of Serbian national frustration. The Yugoslav National Army excelled in this technique,

with its "evaluations of the situation" that characterized the "soft communist" reformers as agents of the "new world order," whose goal was to deny "socialism [the ability] to rectify its mistakes and show its strength."<sup>63</sup> The Western countries (especially Germany) were routinely denounced as enemies of Yugoslavia for both undermining socialism and destroying the Soviet Union as a state and military power. In fact, the army was an instrument not of the state, but of the party; as such, it was the main political force (together with the Serbian party faction that maintained its power) posing the most formidable obstacle to change. When communism began to split along all its seams, the army rushed in first to help defend the system. Its actions should come as no surprise, since it was defending its own privileges. Officers in the YNA joined Yugoslavia's conservative *apparatchiks* in dragging Serbia into an "antimodern" revolution, which became the social and political background for defending the Serbian national question.<sup>64</sup>

By the end of the 1980s, a powerful and effective antidemocratic coalition was firmly in control of Serbia's political scene. One side consisted of extreme nationalist elements in the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian intelligentsia, whose role was to produce propaganda and formulate nationalist ideology. The other side consisted of the conservative party apparatus, the army, and the police, who used this nationalist ideology to hold onto their positions of power. Although their motives were different, the members of this "nationalist-communist" coalition<sup>65</sup> complemented each other and jointly pursued an aggressive policy of tearing down Yugoslavia and recasting it in their own mold: Either Yugoslavia would become a country according to Serbian (i.e., Serbian Communist party) standards, or else Serbia would embark on the path toward creating a "Greater Serbia" by force. In the end, the new country would encompass all of Yugoslavia's Serbs and keep the members of the *ancien regime* in their privileged positions.

### Escalation of the conflict: The Serbian offensive strategy

The principal mechanism for escalating interethnic conflicts in a multinational state begins when political elites in tenuous positions of power successfully portray their ethno-nation as being

threatened by another.<sup>66</sup> The political players will then manipulate this “ethnic threat” to advance their interests in holding onto political power and/or vanquishing competing elites. Members of Serbia’s broad coalition of conservative political, military, and cultural elites pushed each other toward an extremist definition of the “national threat,” creating a constant escalation of the conflict among all the other Yugoslav nations. The more this coalition emphasized the perception that the Serbian nation was threatened, the more the other ethnic nations perceived threats to their own security. This defensive reaction was, in turn, used to confirm the threat to Serbia, giving it the right to increase the level of its “defense.”<sup>67</sup>

This vicious circle of defending against ethnonational threats began in the 1980s with the “ethnic threat” in Kosovo and the uncertainty over the survival of Yugoslavia’s state and society. The conflict developed in the context of a preemptive vision of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, which incited the struggle for power and security among all of its nations’ political leaders. Reality was becoming more and more a daily fabrication based on mutual name-calling and consciously crafted lies. Ethnic clashes were becoming more frequent and more intense in a political scene whose script was becoming increasingly predictable.<sup>68</sup>

For its part, Serbia used three offensive strategies for grabbing power while working to ensure Yugoslavia’s disintegration and, at the same time, beginning the process of nation- and state-building. The Serbian leadership’s new vision of state-building now relied on mass nationalist movements that coalesced around the idea of redividing the Yugoslav space and creating a powerful, all-encompassing Serbian state.<sup>69</sup> This new vision informed the Serbian intelligentsia’s redefinition of Serbia’s national identity, as reflected in regularly repeated media images and historical myths.<sup>70</sup>

**Serbian resentment.** The very expression of Serbian nationalism and the new vision of the Serbian state invoked by Serbian nationalist intellectuals aggravated ethnic tensions.<sup>71</sup> The task of redefining the Serbian nation was undertaken by both the conservative faction of the Serbian intelligentsia and the Serbian Orthodox Church in collaboration with the political leadership, which had control over the mass media. The reawakening of Serbian national consciousness followed classic methods

of “nation-building,” including descriptions of “national treasures” and cultural uniqueness.<sup>72</sup> They encouraged the Serbian national community to imagine itself as an “endangered species” that urgently needed its own state in order to protect itself from other “species.” The basic emotion upon which Serbian national identity was built was the *enmity of other Yugoslav peoples*.<sup>73</sup> This is best illustrated in the words of the writer and “father of the Serbian nation,” Dobrica Cosic: “The enemies of the Serbs made Serbs Serbs.”<sup>74</sup> Another well-known Serbian writer expressed the same thought: “The Serbian issue was started and opened by others. They straightened us out by blows, made us sober by offenses, woke us up by injustices, brought light and united us by coalitions. They hate us because of Yugoslavia, and now it seems they do not leave her, but us.”<sup>75</sup>

*Ressentiment*—the dominant sentiment of being threatened and hated throughout Yugoslavia—informed Serbian nationalism, which consisted of two basic components. One was entirely for domestic purposes, providing the conservative Serbian leadership with a convenient taxonomy of real and fabricated Serbian grievances against Yugoslavia’s other nations. By constantly returning to this repertoire of current and historical wrongs, the Serbian leadership was able to keep nationalist passions running high.

The second, external, component contained a revision of Serbian relations with other nations and with Yugoslavia as a whole. This new set of relations appeared for the first time in 1986 with the unofficial publication of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts’ draft “Memorandum,” which was an attempt to present systematically the situation of the Serbs *as a whole nation*. Based on that document and many positions taken by well-known Serbian writers and members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts appearing daily in the Serbian media, seven key themes of Serbian *ressentiment* are identified here.<sup>76</sup>

1. *Yugoslavia is a Serbian delusion.* According to this theme, Serbs were naively duped into accepting Yugoslavism and the fraternal bonds of its other nations, while those “brothers” were continually building their ethno-national states on the bones of dead Serbs who fought in wars of liberation. Only the Serbs love Yugoslavia, they were the only ones to fight for her, they were the only ones to abdicate their Serbian nationality in the name of

Yugoslavian unity. They lost considerable “historical time” in coming to the realization that Yugoslavia was a Serbian delusion. They had everything to lose in accepting the Yugoslav project, and other nations had everything to gain. The Serbs were the victims of their own futile Yugoslavism: “The contemporary Serbian national consciousness is soiled by ideological fraud . . . with its strongest spiritual footing in its national defeats, the illusory Yugoslavian. . . . The contents and forms of national consciousness of other Yugoslav nations are *a priori* anti-Yugoslav.”<sup>77</sup> But now, “there is a growing consciousness that Yugoslavia is a mass grave of the Serbian people. . . .”<sup>78</sup>

2. *The conspiracy against the Serbs.* During their entire Yugoslav history, Serbs were exposed to the conspiracy of the Comintern, the LCY, and Tito (the Croat) and Kardelj (the Slovene), who played the leading roles in Yugoslav decision making and who implemented Yugoslavia’s anti-Serbian policy. As part of its social revolution and the struggle against Serbian hegemonism, the LCY acted to reduce Serbia to the Turkish pasha’s outpost in Belgrade and promoted the disintegration and assimilation of the Serbian people: “Austro-Hungarian and Comintern ideology united in Titoism. In setting up republican-political territories, developing republican etatism . . . and instituting the 1974 constitution, Titoism was doing everything to disintegrate the Serbian nation, and it succeeded in doing so.”<sup>79</sup>

3. *Serbia is exploited.* Serbia was economically exploited by Croatia and Slovenia, which explains its economic backwardness. The largest part of the Serbian Academy’s “Memorandum” was devoted to this theme, formulated in the following way: “During the entire postwar period, the economy of Serbia was exposed to nonequivalent exchange. . . . There is not the slightest degree of suspicion that the relative retardation of Serbia primarily resulted because of smaller investments per capita, and not because of the effectiveness of investments. . . .

One gets a picture of an oppressed and neglected economy in the Yugoslav space. . . . The situation of Serbia should be observed within the pattern of the political and economic domination of Slovenia and Croatia, who were the initiators of changes in all of the previous systems.”<sup>80</sup>

4. *Serbs are the losers,* because they are the only ones who do not have a state proper. They win at war, but lose in peace. All their war victories were canceled out in peace settlements (i.e., two Balkan wars and two world wars). Serbs, along with the Montenegrins, sacrificed their earlier states for the foundation of Yugoslavia. “The nation which after a long and bloody struggle came

once again to have its state [that is, after the long Ottoman occupation], which alone fought for and acquired democracy, and which in two world wars lost 2.5 million compatriots, lived to see that a party commission created by the party apparatus found that after four decades in the new Yugoslavia it was the only nation that did not have its own state. A worse historical fiasco in peacetime could not be imagined.”<sup>81</sup>

5. *Serbs are exposed to the hatred* that all Yu-

goslav people have toward them. Hatred toward Serbs is a dominant theme in the writings of Serbian intellectuals, expressed in many different ways. Each Yugoslav nation has its own distinct hatred toward Serbs. For instance: “Macedonian Communists have simply ‘Macedonized’ Serbs (i.e., they have committed ethnocide against Serbs in their republic).” And so it goes for each nation. This theme in Serbian *ressentiment* contends that the republic had to endure “the unequal and humiliating position of the Serbian people in the present-day Yugoslavia under the rule of an anti-Serb coalition, especially of ‘Serbophobia,’ which in the last decades has grabbed wide layers of Slovenian, Croatian, Albanian peoples, and some parts of the Macedonian intelligentsia and Moslems. . . . The Albanian national minority for longer than two decades from its motherland hounds the most

**The principal mechanism for escalating interethnic conflicts in a multinational state begins when political elites in tenuous positions of power successfully portray their ethno-nation as being threatened by another.**

populous Yugoslav people.”<sup>82</sup> The Serbian nation is “surrounded by hatred, which made its peace more tormenting than the war.”<sup>83</sup>

6. *Serbs are exposed to genocide*, again perpetuated by their enemies’ enduring and immutable anti-Serb policies.<sup>84</sup> The motive of Serbia’s leaders in provoking fear and ethnic clashes was to remind Serbs of genocide’s ever-present proximity and to prevent a new genocidal campaign against Serbs. This theme was renewed in a variety of ways, but mainly through the display of photographs and accounts of Ustashe atrocities against Serbs in all of the republic’s major newspapers and on television programs.<sup>85</sup> An exhibit devoted to Serbian genocide traveled around Serbia for months.

Orthodox priests demanded that they be allowed to take Serbian victims murdered in World War II out of mass graves and to rebury them with dignity.<sup>86</sup> Exhuming mass graves and the reburial of remains has a symbolic role of defining the borders of the Serbian state: Where there are Serbian graves, there are also Serbian borders. The number of past genocide victims increased every day during this particular Serbian nationalist campaign, which led to disputes with Croatia over the exact number of Serbs murdered. The number of victims was, in fact, overstated in order to force the Croats to publicly deny the inflated numbers. In such a fashion, the Serbs could conclude that Croats wanted to hide their genocidal crimes against Serbs in order to deflect attention from preparations for another future campaign: “It seems to me that that which disrupts relations between Serbs and Croats now is connected to the genocide which was perpetrated against the Serbian people by [the Croatian Ustashe regime]. . . . We can conclude that this hiding of genocide represents an appeal to history for a repeat. . . .”<sup>87</sup> Thus, “Serbs are the people who are constantly exposed to genocide.”<sup>88</sup>

7. *A national state of all Serbs*. An identity created from others’ hatred meant that inevitably Serbs would want to “clean their house” of all those who hated them: “After genocide, . . . after the 1974 constitution, . . . it is difficult to understand why Serbs today do not reasonably and obstinately aspire to a state without national problems, national hatreds, and Serbophobia.”<sup>89</sup> “We Serbs have to learn to think that we can live alone.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, the issue of a Serbian national state is seen as an “issue of freedom

and the right to exist for the Serbian ethnos as the whole of its spiritual, cultural, and historical identity, irrespective of the present-day republican boundaries and the Yugoslav Constitution. If this freedom and the right are not respected, then the historical goal of the Serbian people—unification of all Serbs in one state—is not realized.”<sup>91</sup>

These nationalist themes, which were perpetuated by the Serbian intelligentsia through the republic’s major media outlets, would not have been entirely successful if they had not been taken up by Serbia’s political and military elites as part of their daily activity, although they did not publicly express such views. Serbia’s conservative intellectuals and, later on, the republic’s nationalist opposition parties, were the voice of official nationalist policy. At the beginning of 1991, it was officially disclosed that Slobodan Milosevic accepted the right of all peoples to self-determination, but he did not accept the existing republican borders. In March 1991, at a closed meeting with the leaders of all Serbian municipalities, Milosevic stated the possibility that Serbs could “live alone”:

Borders, as you know, are always dictated by the strong, they are never dictated by the weak. Therefore it is basic for us to be strong. We simply believe that the legitimate right and interest of the Serbian people is to live in one state. That is the beginning and the end. That legitimate interest of the Serbian people does not threaten the interest of any other nation. Anyway, why would they need those Serbs who bother them so much in Knin, Petrinja, Glina, Lika, Banija, Kordun, Baranja, if this problem is of such magnitude? And, if we have to fight, God help us, we will. I hope they will not be so crazy to fight with us. Because, if we cannot work and produce well, at least we know how to fight.<sup>92</sup>

**Political mobilization: The “antibureaucratic revolution” and the unification of Serbia.** The only way out of this “national catastrophe,” according to Serbia’s intelligentsia, was by encouraging a Serbian uprising. The hope was for a national revolution in which the Serbs would again be able to create their own national state. This so-called antibureaucratic revolution, which was organized from above by Milosevic’s party clique with the help of Serbs from Kosovo and the secret police, drew upon the nationalist ideology of “being threatened and hated.” During 1988–89, the revolutionary forces

took shape as a mass movement to create a “unified Serbia,” successfully tapping social and national discontent in the republic, especially over the situation in Kosovo. Political mobilization developed through mass “meetings of solidarity” with Serbs from Kosovo. These meetings were used as an extra-institutional way of tearing down the leaderships in Serbia’s provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) and in Montenegro. More than sixty such meetings were held across Serbia, in which 3.5 million people participated. There were few places in the republic where these “meetings of truth” were not held. Although the slogans varied from place to place, they were all distinctly nationalist and even racist in content. For the first time, people appeared at these meetings dressed in Chetnik regalia.<sup>93</sup> At the November 1988 meeting of “Brotherhood and Unity,” held in Belgrade and attended by more than one million people, calls for hounding Slovenia out of Yugoslavia were publicly heard for the first time. At the same gathering, Milosevic spoke in ominous tones about the use of force:

This is not the time for sorrow; it is time for struggle. This awareness captured Serbia last summer and this awareness has turned into a material force that will stop the terror in Kosovo and unite Serbia. . . . People will even consent to live in poverty but they will not consent to live without freedom. . . . Both the Turkish and the German invaders know that these people win their battles for freedom. . . . We shall win despite the fact that Serbia’s enemies outside the country are plotting against her. . . . We tell them that we enter every battle with the aim of winning it.<sup>94</sup>

Just a few short months after Milosevic’s speech, Serbia seemed to be preparing for such a battle. The republic enacted a series of sweeping repressive measures in Kosovo in March 1989. A coup d’état brought a Serbian puppet regime to power in Montenegro. At the same time, the populist and authoritarian Serbian national movement invested its national leader with absolute power, thereby making democratization and a clear break with the ancien regime impossible.<sup>95</sup>

In the already weakened Yugoslav presidency, Serbia could no longer count on a majority of votes in the collective body. The attempt of the Serbian Communists to dominate the LCY failed at its extraordinary (and last) congress in January 1990, when the Slovenian and Croatian representatives

walked out, thus signaling the end of Yugoslavia’s Communist party.

***Mobilization of the Serbian diaspora: The Croatian nationalist response.*** Serbia’s third strategic move involved the mobilization of the Serbian diaspora in Croatia by directly linking its loyalty to Serbia’s survival. Ethnic skirmishes using diaspora Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were planned with the idea of tearing the republics apart along ethnic lines. In the climate of nationalist hysteria surrounding a “unified Serbia,” the Serbian nationalist coalition had little trouble spreading rumors of possible genocidal campaigns directed at the Serbian diaspora communities in these republics. Such rumors were largely intended to mobilize the diaspora Serbs, and they would not have been successful had there been no recognizable strain of Ustashe nationalism in Croatia’s official policy. If Croatia had not fallen victim to its own national chauvinism, Serbia’s entire strategy would have failed.

Slovenia was the first to clash with Milosevic, attacking him for destroying the leaderships in Vojvodina and Montenegro. These attacks were welcomed with open arms, since they rallied Serbs around anti-Slovenian sentiment. At the same time, Slovenia was using Milosevic to justify its plans to secede from Yugoslavia. In fact, secession was already under way in 1989, when the Slovenes proclaimed that federal laws were valid in Slovenia only if they conformed with Slovenian law. The Croatian Communist party kept silent because of the republic’s Serbian minority, ever aware that an attack on Milosevic would cause a major rift with Croatian Serbs. Yet, the silence could not last forever.

Serbia’s mobilization of Croatian Serbs started with an unsuccessful attempt to organize a meeting of solidarity in Knin with Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo. Belgrade inundated the Knin gathering with constant messages, and the Serbian Orthodox Church assisted by publishing a text that claimed the situation of Serbs in Croatia was worse than that of Serbs in Kosovo and that such terror would force Serbs to migrate toward the east.<sup>96</sup> The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts also contributed by organizing a conference on the Croatian war memorial at Jasenovac, once more heating up the unavoidable theme of the Croatian genocide of the Serbs; an accompanying tract

accused Croatia of assimilating Serbs living in the republic. The Serbian Writers Association also organized a meeting in 1989 with the theme of “Serbophobia,” where Croatian genocide was once again featured prominently. Finally, all kinds of Serbian emissaries were sent to Knin to incite Croatian Serbs, and the response this time seemed promising. The meeting was set for February 28, 1989. Well-trained “advance people” came from Serbia, shouting out Slobodan Milosevic’s name and carrying posters with his visage looking out over the crowd, waving the Serbian national flag, and singing nationalist hymns.<sup>97</sup>

Soon after this event, the Croatian Democratic Union appeared on Croatia’s political scene. During the creation of the nationalist party, its leader, Franjo Tudjman, accused the Croats of being silent, and attacked the system in which the “sovereignty of the Croatian people” had been made an impossible goal. In the republic’s parliament just a couple of days later, it was suggested that the Croatian Constitution be changed so that it would no longer stipulate that Croatia was also a state of the Serbian people. Thus, the process of Croatia’s ethnic homogenization began.

Finally, at the February 24, 1990 inauguration of the Croatian Democratic Union, in the presence

of Ustashe émigrés and Croats waving their national flag, Tudjman delivered his well-known remark that the “Independent State of Croatia [under the Ustashe regime] was not only a chauvinist state, but also the result of specific historic facts and the will of the Croatian people to create their own state.”<sup>98</sup>

During this short period, Croatian Serbs became tightly organized. They formed their own party and began to express their territorial pretensions. First, they expressed these ideas as the need for cultural and then political autonomy; finally, they threatened secession if Croatia were to become an independent state. Meetings were held throughout the republic at which young men appeared in Chetnik regalia, shouting “This is Serbia!”

Tudjman won the elections in Croatia. This was the greatest gift that Milosevic and the rest of Serbia’s nationalist coalition could have received. After Tudjman’s victory, unremitting media propaganda from both sides further exacerbated the conflict. Now Serbs were really threatened, and war was no longer a remote possibility. The labels that each side had attached to the other had in fact become their identities: Both Chetniks and Ustashe had reappeared in Yugoslavia.

# 5

## THE BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNISM

### Collapse and War

By the late 1980s, the emerging democratic movements across Eastern Europe were gathering momentum. In Yugoslavia, by contrast, national movements were gearing up to establish their own states. The breakdown of the communist regime and the advent of free elections was the culmination of what had already been going on for almost a decade in Yugoslavia. Along with the process of democratization in the republics and the denial of that same process in the federal government, central state authority was becoming weaker, approaching a situation of anarchy that bore an unsettling resemblance to the collapse of the empire that used to rule the Balkans. Yugoslavia's breakup gave new meaning to the old notion of Balkanization.<sup>99</sup>

At first glance, it could be concluded that Balkanization was the predictable outcome of the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War balance of power. This allegedly "natural" state of affairs in the region, which had long suffered from unresolved national questions and old conflicts among the three founding nations of Yugoslavia (Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), generally has been regarded as the explanation for the country's ongoing violence. Nationalist antagonisms in post-communist Yugoslavia appeared to confirm Nietzsche's "eternal return": Once again, Slovenes and Croats were fighting for their independent

states, and Serbs were struggling for their own unification within one state. How could history repeat itself in such a stereotypical fashion? What hidden mechanism accounted for this repetition? Had five decades of communist rule had no effect on the "national question"? As stated at the beginning of this study, the Communist party combined two elements to create the Yugoslav state: 1) resolution of the national question, and 2) social revolution. In order to understand the most recent Balkanization of the region, both elements must be taken into account. As communism collapsed, the strategies of the political actors in each of the Yugoslav republics were determined by specific elements of the national question on the one hand, and the search for an exit from the communist system on the other.

After five decades during which Yugoslavia's Communist leaders preoccupied themselves with "external" and "internal" enemies of the regime that could threaten their privileged positions, the enemy suddenly had become real. That this enemy came from the "first socialist country," where Gorbachev granted "permission" to all the communist countries to choose their own way, was the clearest sign that communism was losing its ideological ability to maintain these leaders in power.

Various strategies for dealing with the impending downfall of communist regimes typically framed the responses to nationalist conflicts throughout the region during the 1980s, but Yugoslavia's republican elites could not agree on a joint policy for managing the mounting threats to their multinational system. At its last congress in January 1990, the Serbian Communist party, led by Milosevic and supported by the Yugoslav National Army, sought to reinforce the communist regime's role of holding Yugoslavia together; but other republican leaders, particularly in Slovenia and Croatia, did not want to continue down that path. They clearly perceived that a departure from the communist system could serve as their path away from Yugoslavia and toward the establishment of their own independent states. Thus, each of the republics was pursuing a separate policy, combining the national cause with ideological choice.

Saving the communist regime remained the one method by which conservative elites in Serbia, including the YNA, could simultaneously preserve the Yugoslav state and achieve the goal of Serbian

unification within one country. After the conservatives took power in 1987, they saw little advantage in democratic change. This is unfortunate. In fact, the only way that Serbia could have successfully resolved its national question of all Serbs living within one state would have been for it to take the leading role in democratization, offering a multiparty system, a liberal federation, and a free-market economy. Such was the path taken by other republics, first by Slovenia and Croatia, and then to some extent by the other republics. The conservative Serbian elite believed it was left with few options: It defended the old regime and opposed political pluralism and economic reform.<sup>100</sup>

The dual games (national and ideological) played by all the republics to a greater or lesser extent actually precluded both of two possible paths to a resolution of the federation's crisis. The republics' leaders were unable to either reimagine Yugoslavia as a democratic and minimal state or to break away peacefully by creating new, separate, democratic states. These games led to the final stage of Yugoslavia's disintegration, which went through four phases: (1) introducing varying degrees of political pluralism, which fostered and in some cases even maximized the interests of the different republics; (2) giving precedence to national goals over economic interests and political reform; (3) establishing national states as ethnocracies, that is, differentiating citizens' rights and obligations along ethnic lines; and (4) negotiating the age-old question of Yugoslavia's political form. Taken together, these four phases amounted to a prelude to war.

### Political pluralism

The republics witnessed the formation of a variety of new political parties during 1989–90. Since most of these parties to varying degrees advanced nationalist programs, political pluralism in Yugoslavia was strongly colored by nationalism from the very start. In April 1990, Slovenia and Croatia held their first free elections; the Communists lost in both cases. Meanwhile, Serbia's official policy remained at the level of reform rhetoric; Serbian leaders continued to advocate political pluralism without actually introducing a multiparty system. However, once all of the other governments in the region had squarely embarked on the path of

political reform, Serbia had no choice but to accept multiparty elections. The League of Communists of Serbia rechristened itself the Socialist Party in July 1990. Although all of the communist parties in the various republics entered their respective multiparty elections under new names, only in Serbia and Montenegro did these renamed communist parties win, and only then with the support of the YNA. At that time, the YNA openly supported the Serbian side—or, more precisely, Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia. The three main tenets of this coalition were: 1) both partners were against liberal and democratic changes; 2) both viewed the new Yugoslavia as a vehicle for advancing Serbian and military interests; and 3) both had majority participation of Serbs. The other republics' new parties were able to push the Communists into the opposition, and in doing so the republics could assert that they had become "democracies" by virtue of having overthrown their communist predecessors. In Serbia, on the other hand, a combination of communism and nationalism won out.

The most important fact about these first free elections was that they confirmed the power of the offensive strategy of defending national interests. Bosnia-Herzegovina's first and only elections were particularly instructive when viewed from this standpoint. The Bosnians had a chance to vote for the liberal and reformist party of the then Yugoslav prime minister, Ante Markovic. Indeed, his party seemed to be the most popular in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But it turned out that the people from each of the three national communities were afraid to take the chance to vote for the civic parties, fearing that the others might vote for nationalist ones—a typical "prisoner's dilemma." Thus, the results of the elections mirrored the national census; almost all citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina voted according to their national affiliation. Nationalist parties won in all of the republics, except Macedonia.<sup>101</sup>

Maximal nationalist programs became enshrined as state policy in the main rival republics, Serbia and Croatia. In both republics, opposition parties decided to expand nationalist agendas rather than devise alternative programs that would strike some balance between nationalist and democratic goals, between extremist and moderate national policies. Some of the ultranationalist opposition parties, in cooperation with their

respective state governments, set up their own armies and paramilitary formations, which eventually would be responsible for horrible crimes.

The centrality of ethnicity in Yugoslavia's political life grew as the victorious nationalist parties spread beyond their borders, serving the interests of their conationals, or "constituent peoples," who lived in other republics. Thus, Franjo Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union opened branches for Croats living in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina. Similarly, Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia formed local branches of the Serbian Democratic Party with guidance from Belgrade.<sup>102</sup> The Muslim Party of Democratic Action, led by Alija Izetbegovic, originated in Bosnia-Herzegovina but soon expanded to Serbia and Montenegro to support the Muslims living in Sandzhak. Moreover, larger national minorities, such as the Albanians and Hungarians, established their own ethnic-based political parties, first in Kosovo and Macedonia and then in Vojvodina, respectively. Thus, the whole space of Yugoslavia and the republics themselves were divided up by ethnic parties with their various public and hidden agendas.

### The priority of national over economic interests

At the beginning of 1990, the new Yugoslav prime minister (who would also be its last), Ante Markovic, introduced a dynamic program of economic reform, succeeding in reducing the galloping rate of inflation from an annual 2,600 percent to zero in about six months. He offered a vision of a new economic system governed by market principles and privatization, making room for a political union of a new, democratic Yugoslavia. Markovic attained considerable popularity throughout the country, even superseding in this respect the "fathers" of its dominant nations, Milosevic and Tudjman. Indeed, for a time it seemed as though a united Yugoslavia

might succeed in acquiring a new lease on life. With his liberal political outlook and substantial economic success, Markovic represented a real chance for the various nations to avoid the path of war and destruction and, instead, turn toward a future based on modernization and eventual European integration. During 1990, the standard of living rose as hard-currency reserves swelled to \$7.1

billion, twice their 1989 level. The country's foreign debt decreased and repayments took place on schedule.

Markovic's economic and political program ran counter to the nationalist politics pursued by the various republics. Markovic eschewed the endless discussions about Yugoslavia's future political form, insisting that the term used for such a form (i.e., federation or confederation) was not important. What mattered most to Markovic was maintaining a consensus on the usefulness of an integrated, well-functioning state that would facilitate economic reform. To consolidate political support for his ideas, Markovic founded his own political party, the Alliance of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia, in July 1990. Unfortunately, this came after the formation of the nationalist parties and the elections in Slovenia and Croatia, too late to influence developments in these two breakaway republics. Markovic founded his party in Bosnia as a symbol of Yugoslavia's ethnic diversity and as a concrete embodiment of the multiethnic idea of "living together."

Curiously, Markovic's program was both successful and popular in all the republics, including Serbia, but he was unable to convert this popularity into electoral support for his party. He failed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro, and had relatively little success in Macedonia. There was little doubt that the decisive factor in Markovic's defeat was insecurity about voting for someone who did not represent one's own ethnic community; too many people believed that voting

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only for their own national leaders would guarantee their safety.

Although practically none of the republican leaders (except those in Macedonia) supported him, Markovic faced an especially ruthless attack from Serbia. Slobodan Milosevic clearly intended to destroy this unpredictable obstacle to his own political plan for restructuring Yugoslavia's political space.<sup>103</sup> When Markovic proposed constitutional changes to embrace further economic reform and to make room for federal elections, Slovenia and Croatia joined Serbia in blocking his proposals. The republics thus decisively precluded the possibility of an economic and democratic reconstruction of the federal state and a democratic dialogue about Yugoslavia's future. After the political leaders squandered this opportunity, national conflicts gained momentum. The country was swiftly moving from one crisis to yet another.

### Ethnocracies and war from inside the republics

The new republican governments produced their own internal instabilities by discriminating against national minorities (or groups sharing the ethnicity of peoples from other constituent republics). This discrimination created a vicious circle: In order to realize their desire for national sovereignty, the newly elected governments developed powerful and militant nationalist movements backed by propaganda, discriminatory policies, and violations of human and civil rights. Backed by the republican political leaders, these movements produced disaffected and separatist minority groups that, in turn, posed a real "disturbance" to the republics' national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In reaction to the militant separatist behavior of these minority groups, the republics quickly acquired the highly centralized, authoritarian machinery of states that were ill suited to the heterogeneous composition of their population. The governments of Serbia and Croatia were typical of this situation, the former in relation to the Albanian minority in Kosovo and the latter in relation to its Serbian minority.

Armed conflicts first broke out in Kosovo after Serbia abolished its autonomy. Subsequent repressive measures in Kosovo then provoked fresh

revolts, mass demonstrations, and the eventual, complete alienation of the Albanian minority. In January 1990, approximately forty thousand students staged demonstrations in Kosovo, demanding both an end to the extraordinary political measures and the release of Azem Vlasi, a Kosovar political leader who was on trial. By the beginning of February, Kosovo was on the brink of civil war. The Yugoslav National Army intervened against the demonstrators, killing twenty-seven ethnic Albanians and wounding many more.<sup>104</sup> In July 1990, ethnic Albanian delegates to Kosovo's provincial assembly submitted a declaration proclaiming Kosovo a republic. A few days later, the Serbian legislature dismissed Kosovo's provincial assembly. The ethnic Albanians of Kosovo then boycotted the elections in Serbia to show that they did not recognize Serbia as their country. Finally, they created their own shadow government and held a "secret" referendum on the question of an independent Kosovo.

Croatia's failure to provide adequate minority rights guarantees fueled the fires of rebellion among Croatian Serbs, who had already been strongly supported from Belgrade and had raided local police stations to supplement their arms caches.<sup>105</sup> The new Croatian government confronted armed resistance when it set out to take over and change the ethnic composition of the police stations in predominantly Serbian areas of the republic. The violence started in Knin in August 1990, when Croatian government officials began gathering arms from the police stations and prevented Serbs from taking them. In the largely Serb-populated Krajina region of Croatia, Serbs were preparing to hold a referendum on their political autonomy, a prospect that inflamed tempers throughout the rest of Croatia. The government in Belgrade encouraged the discontented Croatian Serbs, spreading propaganda about the inevitable repetition of the Ustashe genocide against the Serbs in World War II. With the rejuvenation of these memories, Serbia's leaders promoted the fear of a complete return to the past among Croatia's Serbs, pushing them even closer to the precipice of war.<sup>106</sup> In mid-1991, conflicts escalated in those areas of Croatia populated by large numbers of Serbs, who were openly supported in their efforts by the Yugoslav National Army.<sup>107</sup>

## Negotiations, collapse, war

After seventy years of existence, the circle was closed: Yugoslavia found itself repeating the same historical debate about what form the Yugoslav state should take. Just as had occurred seventy years before, a number of different proposals were on the table again. Slovenia and Croatia proposed confederation, an arrangement that was to be construed as resembling the structure of the European Union. The proposed confederation would consist of sovereign and internationally recognized states that would regulate matters of joint interest, such as a common market, defense and security, human rights, and European integration.<sup>108</sup> Serbia and Montenegro proposed a “democratic federation,” which in practice would have meant the termination of the confederal elements introduced by the 1974 Yugoslav constitution.<sup>109</sup> The proposal adumbrated a set of classical federal principles, including the sovereignty of citizens at both the federation and republican levels.<sup>110</sup> The third and most conciliatory solution was advanced jointly by Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which envisioned Yugoslavia retaining its identity as a state and its republics as sovereign entities.<sup>111</sup> All three proposals failed, since the protagonists—Slovenia and Croatia on the one hand, and Serbia on the other—were in no mood to compromise. The compromise solution aimed at saving Yugoslavia proposed by Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was rejected just weeks before the war started.

Direct negotiations between the national leaders began in the spring of 1991. The talks produced no results in part because the leading republics had already decided unilaterally and in secret coalitions to follow their own particular interests. Slovenian and Serbian leaders came to an agreement that Slovenia could secede and that Serbs had a right to live in one state. Another secret agreement between Tudjman and Milosevic, created as far back as March 1991 in Karadjordjevo (Serbia), formed an alliance against Markovic and divided up Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia.<sup>112</sup> These so-called reserve alternatives

were under way long before direct negotiations started. Slovenia and Croatia were preparing to gain their independence—by force, if necessary.<sup>113</sup> The Serbian side was preparing for a war to establish a Serbian national state, but not within the existing “communist” borders.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, federal agencies started to collapse with the withdrawal from the Federal Assembly of first the Slovenian and Croatian members and then the representatives from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. By September 1991, the Yugoslav presidency was reduced to a “rump” composed of only Serbian and Montenegrin representatives. This process paralleled the individual republics’ referenda on independence (beginning with Slovenia and ending with Bosnia-Herzegovina) and their subsequent declarations of independence. Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence in June 1991. The Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Serbian Republic of Krajina declared their independence in December 1991.

War erupted in Slovenia in June 1991 when Slovenes removed federal signs along the Slovenian border and occupied the border outposts and customs offices. The Yugoslav federal government sent a unit of the YNA to replace Yugoslav border signs and return the federal customs officers to their posts. The YNA decided to fulfill this task by moving into Slovenia with tanks and carrying out their orders with force. Slovenian Territorial Defense units responded by attacking the YNA detachments, which were defeated in a few short days. The YNA then quickly withdrew from Slovenia.

Immediately thereafter, war broke out in Croatia between the rebellious Serb population and the Croatian police guard. The YNA sided with the Croatian Serbs under the pretext of protecting the Serb population from genocide and ensuring its right to self-determination. The YNA practically waged a war against Croatia, as it would do later in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the Croatian forces also joined in the latter conflict. So began the long and tragic division of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Serbs and Croats.<sup>115</sup>

# 6

## CONCLUSIONS

I have confined my analysis of the Yugoslav crisis to the internal factors that led to both the collapse of the state and the onset of war. The international community has had an important influence on the crisis and a decisive impact on the dynamics of the conflict. A proper treatment of the conflict itself, important though it may be, would go beyond the framework of this study. Nevertheless, based upon my analysis of the internal factors of Yugoslavia's breakdown, I offer some recommendations in the form of conclusions that may be useful for international decision making on ways to avert such conflicts in the future. I offer these broad recommendations despite the fact that the Yugoslav case is unique, just as the factors contributing to the breakdown of all multinational federations are unique. Still, we can draw some important lessons from Yugoslavia's demise, especially with regard to the critical ethnic problems that still plague the former Soviet Union and East-Central Europe.

Yugoslavia and the USSR shared the same type of multinational federal institutions, ethno-demographic mix of populations, and large diaspora communities whose status would change significantly with the dismemberment of both federal states. Both cases involved the creation of new national states in which one ethnic group became predominant. The politics of ethnic unification invites

conflicts over borders (for example, Nagorno-Karabakh in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, and the Krajina region in Croatia). Secession that does not entail a change of either borders or minority-majority status (as was the case with Slovenia, a uniquely homogeneous republic in the Yugoslav federation) might still lead to an imbalance in the ethno-national composition of the rest of the multinational federation, encouraging other ethnically mixed regions or republics to claim the right to self-determination in order to avoid the potential domination of one of the remaining federal units.

Therefore, the first conclusion we can draw from the case of Yugoslavia is that the international community should treat the dismemberment of multinational states with great caution, attempting to moderate the tempo of state dissolution and thus avoid an all-or-nothing result. Otherwise, it is virtually impossible to establish procedures for peaceful decision making. Here, too, it is important for the international community to avoid spurious assumptions in deciding how it should respond to the crisis (for example, the convenient assumption that nationalism is a benign ally in the struggle against communist regimes).

Although Yugoslavia never succeeded in creating a wholly legitimate and democratic state, neither did it comprise an "empire" in which all its constituent nations had the same desire for independence from the center. As I have argued in this study, Yugoslavia was a patchwork of ethnically mixed regions, and it contained just as many "national questions" as there were approaches to resolving them. Not all of these approaches involved the kind of ethnic symmetry necessary for a successful political outcome. Some of Yugoslavia's republics, like Slovenia and Croatia, were more inclined to push for the complete devolution of the federal state. Serbia, on the other hand, played the role of the state's guardian, trying to maintain the power of the center for its own interests. The interests of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were somewhere in between these two dominant positions. Creating independent, ethno-national states from the disintegrating federation was highly problematic from the very beginning, since the maximal solutions proposed for most of Yugoslavia's various national questions were in fundamental conflict with one another. The all-or-nothing nature of these solutions, leavened with the nationalist

fervor with which Yugoslavia's republican political leaders pursued them, made war and gross violations of human rights natural accompaniments. This scenario applies throughout the region. When a maximal solution is proposed for one national question, then all other competing national claims emerge in the same extreme form. In these predictable and potentially lethal conditions, such conflicts require early preventive actions that aim at inhibiting the rise of extreme solutions and the escalation of nationalist responses.

A major problem with the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, as executed by extreme nationalist political elites, was the apparent absence of alternative solutions that would have prevented (or stopped altogether) the war and reestablished peace and security in the region. Thus, I offer as another recommendation that the international community actively work with the relevant parties to arrange a temporary status quo compromise if the dismemberment of multinational states is not preceded by both an internal consensus on the terms for creating new states, including their borders and the status of minorities, and a clear conception of future security and cooperation arrangements.

This last item gives rise to the question of whether reaching agreement on procedures that enable the conflicting parties to arrive at any sort of consensus is even feasible in such profound crises. What happens if the parties can find no common ground to work out the decision-making rules and institutions—or, short of these, compromise solutions—that will govern the dismemberment of the country? Absent such common ground, solutions typically appear as a *fait accompli*; and once they are under way, workable political solutions and peaceful attempts to prevent or stop violent conflicts are almost impossible to find. Thus, the Vance-Owen proposal for ending the hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina came too late; that is, after the Bosnian Serbs already held more than 70 percent of Bosnian territory. At the same time, the international community did not really press for acceptance of the plan, since its members could not reach a firm consensus among themselves. The United States, for example, did not

express much enthusiasm for the plan, apparently because it would have required an uncertain—and undesirable—degree of U.S. military participation to bring the plan to fruition.

Because there was no internal consensus in the Yugoslav case, two messages should have been sent by the international community to Yugoslavia's republican leaders: (1) that no unilateral decisions about secession would be accepted, and (2) that the use of military force would be met with a military response. Asking the antagonists to respect human rights, democratic institutions, and international law was tantamount to doing nothing

to prevent conflict. If the various leaders of Yugoslavia's warring factions observed these rights and principles in the first place, they would not have found themselves suddenly trying to vanquish one another.

To be sure, the international community's recognition of these new states was woefully insufficient to secure their peace and

security. Not only must such recognition take into account the internal and external threats involved in each case, but it must be real in the sense that the new state must either be able to defend itself or be defended by international military forces. Otherwise, the international community produces highly unstable situations that lead to victim-states and victimized populations. The experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina has discredited the concept of collective security, and has severely undermined the credibility of the UN and NATO. Similarly, the conflict has weakened the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and has clouded the otherwise bright prospects for future European integration and its institutional machinery overall.

In the wider context of the political transformation of East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, a more fundamental debate has been rekindled: the right to national self-determination and how this vague principle might be reconsidered and clarified in order to make it a workable concept in international law. The abuse of this right in the Yugoslav case points up the need for such an examination, as the right to self-determination

**The experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina has discredited the concept of collective security.**

came to be equated with the right of ethnically defined nations/republics to secede from the federation, regardless of the mass violence such an act would surely entail. The republics' unilateral acts of secession were in turn met with internal acts of secession by minority ethno-national communities, invoking the same principle of self-determination. The international community, meanwhile, did very little to clarify the situation. In fact, its actions during the early stages of Yugoslavia's dissolution probably contributed more than any other factor to dashing the prospects of the multinational federation's giving birth to sovereign, independent states in a peaceful fashion, as its recognition of the new states was based more on strategic calculations and risk-aversion than on an established international legal principle. The failure to develop guidelines for the application of this principle only served to exacerbate conflicts and provide the justification for nationalist pathologies, such as so-called ethnic cleansing, and the violent eruption of emerging mini-states.

This is not the place to develop either a new concept of self-determination or the criteria for the recognition of this right by the international community. Rather, a more practicable endeavor would be simply to suggest that the international community discourage claims to collective rights that infringe upon the enjoyment of individual ones, especially in East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, whose citizens are still making democracy's requisite psychological transition from collective to individual rights and the observance of civil liberties. Future discussions about the notion of self-determination should start from an investigation of the specific characteristics of new cases emerging in the post-communist era. Drawing on the arguments elaborated in this study, I would suggest that a minimal precondition for the international community's support of a nation's claims to the right of

self-determination be a viable political community in which the full rights of citizenship do not depend upon membership in the dominant ethno-national group and whose democratically expressed will for independence transcends the ethnic base of the state.

As preconditions for the peaceful application of the right to self-determination, one other factor

should be present when invoking this right: the respect of both territorial integrity and minority rights. This does not mean that the boundaries between states are immutable. It does mean, however, that they cannot be changed by force or without consideration of the consequences that the redrawing of international borders would have for other members of the state. Above all, there should be some international mechanism that provides for the renegotiation of borders and that encourages all sides to recognize the consequences of newly drawn international borders for all relevant parties.

The right to self-determination ought not be exercised at the expense of the rights of others, particularly those who will become minorities in the new states. This means that plebiscites, referenda, and ethno-national coalitions—which, by their very nature, exclude the voices of newly created minorities—are not adequate foundations for the formation and recognition of new states. Indeed, in the case of Yugoslavia, they became a treacherous road to war. Various new forms of

national self-expression, autonomy, and political representation must be developed to fit the new situations arising in complex, multiethnic states today. But none of these variations should be so encumbered by collective national ideologies as to override the liberal ideal of individual liberties and civil rights.

I have described here a typical case of ethno-nationalism, which is characterized by a rigid ideology and the aggressive politicization of national

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identities. Another important conclusion that can be derived from this case is that the interpretation of both national membership (i.e., citizenship) and the nation itself plays a key role in shaping policies conducive to the establishment of a democratic nation-state. Human collectivities that define themselves in organic terms, as “superfamilies” in which myths about blood ties provide the predominant image of communal identity, find it difficult to establish universal, democratic rules of governance. Their goal of creating a state for “their people” will always be out of reach, as other people “get in the way” and must be removed—by force, if necessary. It is impossible in this part of the world to create a stable state on the basis of the sovereignty of one particular ethnically defined group.

This outcome was particularly likely in multinational Yugoslavia, which suffered from

undemocratic regimes, economic backwardness, and overlapping national goals. The old regime’s more conservative element grabbed the chance to achieve Serbian unification and preserve itself in power at the same time. In Croatia, new elements of the authoritarian regime were added to the old in the service of defending a “young democracy” and creating a new nation-state. In order to establish a permanent peace and to reconstruct the region in economic, political, and cultural terms, the current elites will have to be replaced by new democratic leaders capable of introducing innovative ideas and visions that will foster the development of each of these countries and of the region as a whole. Such a perspective is necessary as the only way to eliminate the conditions that produce unitary national identities and their destructive political manipulation.

## NOTES

1. Charles Tilly also poses the question of whether we will be faced with a process in which every ethnic group seeks its own national state. See his "Prisoners of the State," *International Social Science Journal* 44, no. 3 (August 1992): 329–42.
2. *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 201.
3. According to the last Yugoslav census, conducted in 1991, the ethnic makeup by republics consisted of the following. Serbia: Serbs, 65.9%; Albanians, 17.1%; Hungarians, 3.5%; and Muslims, 2.5%. Montenegro: Montenegrins, 61.85%; Muslims, 14.6%; Serbs, 9.3%; and Albanians, 6.6%. Bosnia and Herzegovina: Muslims, 43.7%; Serbs, 31.3%; Croats, 17.3%; and "Yugoslavs," 5.5%. Macedonia: Macedonians, 66.5%; Albanians, 22.9%; and others, 12%. Croatia: Croats, 77.9%; Serbs, 12.2%; and others, 10%. Slovenia: Slovenes, 90%; and others, 10%.
4. Bosnia-Herzegovina's ethnic diversity goes beyond the number of different ethnic groups living there and their relative size. Before the onset of the conflict, one-third of its population lived in towns whose residents—to a significant degree—were the products of mixed marriages. The ethnic distribution of the rural population was markedly different, with two-thirds inhabiting different ethnically homogeneous villages in close proximity to one another. As such, the republic had very few ethnically homogeneous regions. See Srdjan Bogosavljevic, "Bosna i Hercegovina u ogledalu statistike," in *Bosna i Hercegovina između rata i mira*, ed. Dusan Janjic and Paul Shoup (Beograd: Dom omladine/Forum za etnicke odnose, 1992), 40–41.
5. It is no longer a secret that Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman agreed to divide up Bosnia-Herzegovina in the spring of 1991. In a hearing on Yugoslavia's breakup before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Secretary of State James Baker stated: "We know that the leadership of Serbia and Croatia held long conversations about how to divide up Bosnia." *NIN*, January 20, 1995.
6. "Ressentiment refers to a psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred (existential envy) and the impossibility to act them out. . . ." Liah Greenfield and Daniel Chirot, "Nationalism and Aggression," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (February 1994): 84. The authors argue that in the case of "collectivistic and ethnic nationalism," which is characteristic of all the peoples of the former Yugoslavia, *ressentiment* plays a key formative role.
7. Vesna Pestic and Julie Mostov, "A New Challenge for Conflict Resolution: The Case of Yugoslavia," in *Yugoslav War*, ed. T. Kuzmanovic and A. Truger (Schlaining, Austria: Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 1992), 38.
8. V.P. Gagnon, Jr., "Serbia's Road to War," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 2 (April 1994): 118.
9. One of the most thorough studies of the manipulation of public opinion through control of the mass media in all of the Yugoslav republics involved in the war is Mark Thompson's study for Article 19 of the International Centre Against Censorship. See his *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Avon: The Bath Press, 1994).
10. Charles Tilly thinks that the modern era legitimated the principle "that states should correspond to homogeneous peoples, that members of homogeneous peoples owe strong loyalties to the states that embody their heritage, and that the world should therefore consist of nation-states having strongly patriotic citizens." Charles Tilly, "States and Nationalism in Europe, 1492–1992," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (February 1994): 133.
11. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16.
12. According to Rogers Brubaker, the "Soviet Union was a multinational state not only in ethnodemographic terms—not only in terms of the extraordinary ethnic heterogeneity of its population—but, more fundamentally, in *institutional terms*." Rogers Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (February 1994): 49.
13. *Ibid.*, 64.
14. For a definition of nationalism as a desire for congruity of nation and state, see Ernest Gellner, *Nation*

- tions and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1, 7, and 43. See also Liah Greenfeld, "Transcending the Nation's Worth," *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 47–62.
15. Claus Offe, "Ethnic Politics in Eastern European Transitions" (paper presented at the conference on "Nationalisms in Europe Revisited" at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, 27–29 March 1995), 34. In this analysis of nationalism in Eastern Europe, Offe discusses the role of the "decisive battle": "It is well understood by the ethnic groups in Eastern Europe that this is the decisive time at which a new game is being started and the 'original endowment' of territorial and legal resources is being distributed, which will determine the relative position of the actors involved for the indefinite future. Both of these assessments, the absence of a stable equilibrium and the urgency of the issues involved, are apt to inflame ethnic and chauvinistic sentiments and to provoke unilateral preemptive strikes."
  16. Basically, this was only one current—the so-called integral Yugoslavs—which was not popular among the masses in Serbia, Croatia, or Slovenia. It was not accepted by any of their official representatives who were involved in negotiations over the new state. See Vasa Cubrilovic, *Istorija politicke misli u Srbiji XIX veka* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1954), 450.
  17. Branko Petranovic, "Modernizacija u uslovima nacionalno nestabilnog drustva," in *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima XX veka*, ed. Latinka Perovic (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 1994), 18.
  18. See Djordje Stankovic, *Nikola Pasic, Saveznici i stvaranje prve Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1984).
  19. See Cubrilovic, *Istorija politicke*, 461–65.
  20. Latinka Perovic, *Od centralizma do federalizma* (Zagreb: Globus, 1984), 125–42.
  21. Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 115–40.
  22. Cubrilovic, *Istorija politicke*, 463.
  23. According to some sources, about one million Serbs were killed in the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and in World War I. See Jozo Tomashevich, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1955), 225.
  24. Croatia's communist-imposed silence on genocide aided Belgrade's propaganda in eventually pushing Croatian Serbs into war, and Zagreb's propaganda helped to confirm Serbia's suspicions. See Bette Denich, "Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide," *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 2 (May 1994): 367–90.
  25. Paul Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 55.
  26. Gregory Gleason, *Federalism and Nationalism: The Struggle for Republican Rights in the USSR* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), 35.
  27. See Slobodan Samardzic, *Jugoslavija pred iskusenjem Federalizma* (Belgrade: Strucna Knjiga, 1990). See also Robert Hayden, "Constitutional Nationalism in the Former Yugoslav Republics," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 654–73.
  28. Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question," 52.
  29. On ethnocracy, see Julie Mostov, "Endangered Citizenship," in *Russia and East Europe in Transition*, ed. Michael Kraus and Ronald Liebowitz (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, forthcoming).
  30. Using census data, it is possible to chart the changes in the ethnic structure of Kosovo. In 1921, 65.8% of Kosovo's population was Albanian and 26% was Serbian. The first postwar census in 1948 shows that the percentage of Albanians grew and that of the Serbs decreased. In 1948, Serbs were 23.6% of the population, while in 1981 they stood at only 13.2%. Because ethnic Albanians boycotted the last census in 1991, there are only estimates of the population's ethnic breakdown for that year: Albanians, 81.6%; Serbs, 9.9%. *Nacionalni sastav stanovnistva SFRJ* (Belgrade: Savremena administracija, 1991) and Bilten No. 1934 (Belgrade: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1992).  
The majority of the population of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was Serbian. They made up 57.3% of the population; Hungarians, 16.9%; Croats, 3.7%; Slovaks, 3.2%; Montenegrins, 2.2%; Romanians, 1.9%; and others, 14.8%.
  31. After the formation of the Muslim nation, there was a discussion about whether to recognize its status regionally—that is, within Bosnia and Herzegovina only—or for all Muslims wherever they live—that is, in Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, etc. It was decided to recognize the Muslims' status as a

- “constitutive” people over the whole territory of Yugoslavia. For an interesting discussion of this question, as well as the unwillingness to recognize the “ethnic Muslims” by individual republics, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962–1991*, 2d ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana, 1991), 177–86.
32. Rogers Brubaker contends that “In regions with highly intermixed ethnocultural communities, . . . where political borders cannot be drawn to coincide with ethnocultural frontiers, the territorial-political and ethnocultural models of nationhood are not so easily reconciled. Widely dispersed ethnocultural nations, as well as those that overlap with other ethnocultural nations in inextricably intermixed frontier ‘shatter zones,’ cannot be neatly ‘territorialized,’ cannot easily acquire their own territorial states. And territorial polities that include substantial and self-conscious national minorities cannot, in the age of nationalism, be easily ‘nationalized,’ i.e., ‘nationally homogenized.’” Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question,” 56.
  33. Thus, for example, the old cultural institutions of Serbs in Croatia were abolished soon after the war, with the explanation that a constitutive people is not a minority and thus is not entitled to minority cultural rights. This fact later enabled Serbian nationalists to assert that Serbs in Croatia had fewer rights than under Austro-Hungarian rule and were “subject to assimilation.” See Predrag Tasic, *Kako je ubijena druga Jugoslavija* (Skopje: Stamparia Katje, 1994), 181.
  34. Serbs outside of Serbia accepted Yugoslavia as their national state. “If you awake an average Serb from Croatia in the middle of the night and ask him what is his national state, he will say ‘Yugoslavia.’ If you wake a Croat and ask him the same, he will say ‘Croatia.’” Dusan Biladzic, “Skriven nacionalni program u SKJ,” *Filozofija i društvo* IV (Belgrade: Univerzitet u Beogradu i Institut za drustvenu teoriju, 1993), 119.
  35. See Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 334–36.
  36. Serbian “liberals,” who led the Serbian Communist party at the end of the 1960s, provided an official outlet for Serbia’s political and economic elites who were critical of Yugoslavia’s centralism and authoritarianism (including Tito’s). Based on their ideas about Serbia’s modernization and economic development, the “liberal” platform briefly changed Serbia’s traditional centralist policy. Tito’s extensive purges of “liberals” in both Serbia and Croatia in 1972 aided conservatives’ efforts to reverse the process of decentralization and reform with “more nationalism and more authoritarianism.” On the struggles among the republics over economic decentralization and economic reform as a major source of conflict over different national interests, see Dennison Rusinow, *Yugoslav Experiment, 1948–1974* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
  37. The idea of “Yugoslavism” was not clear and was subject to different interpretations from the standpoint of different national interests. At the beginning of the 1950s, the accent was on national unity and “Yugoslavism,” as was evident in the constitutional changes in 1953 and in later discussions about “Yugoslav culture” based on the closeness of the Yugoslav peoples. A 1954 declaration establishing Yugoslav cultural and scientific institutions asserted that the Serbian, Croatian, and Montenegrin languages were one. On this occasion, efforts were undertaken to compile a Serbo-Croatian dictionary. But by the beginning of the 1960s, there was a backlash from Croatia and Slovenia, rejecting the idea of “Yugoslavism” as an attempt at “cultural assimilation.” See Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*, 194–212.
  38. Veljko Vlahovic, *Referat na Osmom Kongresu SKJ* (“Report to the Eighth Congress of the LCY”) (Belgrade: Komunist, 1964), 141–142; cited in Vesna Pesic, *Kratki kurs o jednakosti* (Belgrade: Sociolosko drustvo Srbije, 1988), 73.
  39. See James Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military: The Yugoslav Crisis* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 59.
  40. See Julie Mostov, “Democracy and Decisionmaking,” in *Yugoslavia: A Fractured Federalism*, ed. Dennison Rusinow (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1988), 105–119.
  41. Bare “national interests” tend toward a political “zero-sum” game. Slobodan Samardzic calls this kind of federalism “combative.” See Samardzic, *Jugoslavija pred iskusenjem Federalizma*, 34.
  42. Ramet correctly asserts that the Yugoslav system can be studied in the context of a “balance of power” approach (i.e., within the context of international systemic theories). *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962–1991*, xvii.

43. See Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism in the Vacuum," in *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities*, ed. Alexander Motyl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 243–54.
44. Here I use Renée de Nevres's definition of "moderation" in the context of democratization: "Moderation means avoidance of extremism and hostility in developing positions vis-à-vis other ethnic groups." Renée de Nevres, "Democratization and Ethnic Conflict," in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 70.
45. Dobrica Cosic, "The Serbian People's Great Illusion," *Politika*, January 10, 1991.
46. Underlying the Serbs' "internationalism" was a decidedly nationalist position, which explains why they did not have an organized nationalist movement—as long as the LCY maintained Yugoslavia under centralized rule. Other nations, holding onto their "nativist" positions, went through their own nationalist experience: the extensive Croatian movement at the beginning of the 1970s, the Slovenian highway affair at the end of the 1960s, and the Albanians' numerous demonstrations in Kosovo.
47. Connor believes that the intention of Yugoslavia's Communist party was "to gerrymander the Serbian community" that was constitutionally recognized "within the new Serbian Republic as well." In order to achieve a balance between Croatia and Serbia, provinces were created in Serbia alone. Connor stresses that the Serbian community in Serbia was reduced by one-fifth (i.e., 1.1 million people). See Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, 336.
48. Ramet contends that the provinces were put on equal footing with the republics with the helpful assistance of Slovenia and the Croatian nationalists in power at the time the amendments were made. For more details on the constitutional struggle between Serbia and its provinces, see Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962–1991*, 76–78.
49. The appearance of the "Blue Book" spelled the end to the confederal compact in which republican lists of cadres for candidates to the presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia were automatically accepted. Dragoslav Markovic, who was in charge of the "Blue Book" on behalf of the Serbian leadership, was not elected to the LCY presidency owing to the opposition of representatives from other republics and provinces. For a more detailed discussion of the "Blue Book," see Veljko Vujacic, "Communism and Nationalism in Russia and Serbia" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1994), 176–78.
50. Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds—The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993), 51.
51. The Battle of Kosovo, which pitted Serbs against Ottoman Turks on June 15, 1389, symbolizes the loss of the medieval Serbian empire and still remains the central event in all of Serbian history. The Battle of Kosovo also shapes a large part of Serbian national consciousness and culture, serving as an inspiration for Serbian epic poetry that has been passed down throughout the centuries.
52. The Serbian Orthodox Church was the most attentive and immediately accepted the chance to cast off its marginalized role. The revitalization of the church was essentially linked to the "dangers" that were hanging over the nation. Kosovo became the cornerstone of its strategy to take over the representation of the Serbian people as a whole. The church's support in this affair was rewarded by the government in 1984, when approval was given to build St. Sava church in Vracar and a complex of buildings for the School of Theology. Radmila Radic, "Crkva i 'srpsko nacionalno pitanje,' 1980–1995," *Republika*, no. 121–22 (August 1995): iv–v.
53. The population of Serbs and Montenegrins was permanently on the decline, which I indicated earlier. (See note 30.) The number of Serbs who left Kosovo from 1981 to 1985 reached 17,600. See Tasic, *Kako je ubijena druga Jugoslavija*, 64.
54. My research on rapes in Kosovo indicates that as of 1987, there was not a single "interethnic" rape (i.e., a Serbian woman raped by an Albanian), although such cases were constantly mentioned in the press. Under enormous public pressure regarding the rape of "Serbian women," new criminal proceedings were introduced if the rape involved individuals of "different nationalities." In addition, the rate of such sexual assaults in Kosovo was the lowest compared to other Yugoslav republics, and the greatest number of rapes in Kosovo occurred within the same ethnic groups. See Vesna Pesic, "O krivicnom delu silovanja: Upporedna analiza sa SFRJ, uzu Srbiju, Kosovo i Vojvodinu," in *Kosovski cvor: dresiti ili seci?* (Belgrade: Chronos, 1990), 47.

55. Ruza Petrovic and Marina Blagojevic, *Seobe Srba i Crnogorca sa Kosova i iz Metohije* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1989).
56. Tasic, *Kako je ubijena druga Jugoslavija*, 71.
57. The Slovenes in particular were criticized for not understanding the Serbian problem in Kosovo. "The Serbs understood the Slovenes when the Germans ousted them from their homes during the Second World War, and thus gave them shelter in Serbia." They did not ask for "proof" that the Germans had truly ousted them. Tasic, *Kako je ubijena druga Jugoslavija*, 89.
58. Ivan Jankovic, "Krivicno pravna represija politicki nenasilnih ponasanja na Kosovu: 1979–1988," in *Kosovski cvor: dresiti ili seci?*, 63.
59. This interpretation of the conflict was publicly expressed for the first time at the funeral of Aleksander Rankovic, the former Yugoslav minister of internal affairs. After his downfall in 1966, the situation in Kosovo changed drastically when ethnic Albanians assumed power. His funeral in 1983 was "transformed into a nationalistic event," which was attended by more than 100,000 people. Beneath the din of thousands of Serbs shouting out his name, the subtext of the gathering was clear: "When Rankovic was on the job, the Albanians were peaceful." Slavoljub Djukic, *Izmedju slave i anateme—Politicka biografija Slobodana Milosevica* (Belgrade: Filip Visnjic, 1994), 36.
60. The "Keljmendi Case," regarding the Albanian soldier who killed four sleeping soldiers from different ethnic groups and wounded several others, was headlined in the Serbian press as "Shooting at Yugoslavia" and stirred up extreme anti-Albanian sentiment. Commentaries in *Politika* implied that the Albanians hated not only the Serbs, but all Yugoslav ethnic groups. Daily accounts of the case pointed up so many contradictions that one could not help but get the impression that the barracks massacre had been orchestrated. See Tasic, *Kako je ubijena druga Jugoslavija*, 99–100.
61. Djukic, *Izmedju slave i anateme*, 36.
62. The most influential and prestigious daily newspaper, *Politika*, was put into the service of nationalist policy in order to create a cult of the new "national leader." The newspaper played a key role in the creation of national intolerance through its aggressive column "Odjeci i Reagovanja" ("Repercussions and Reactions"). It spoke with the voice of "the people," attacking individuals—and even the entire nation—if the slightest doubt was expressed over Milosevic's policies. Such doubt was likened to hatred of the Serbian people.
63. General Kadjevic, Yugoslavia's secretary of defense and the head of the republic's military high command from 1989 to 1992, maintains in his book that the reformers in power in socialist countries were part of the U.S. strategy to defeat communism. These "reformers" had been prepared long in advance "so that it seemed as though the process of destroying the system by way of reforms was being led by internal Party forces." *Moje vidjenje raspada—Vojska bez drzave* (Belgrade: Politicka izdavacka delatnost, 1993), 13.
64. In "The Crisis of Modernity" (*Republika*, No. 8: "The Slavs and the West," January 1994), Srdja Popovic accurately emphasizes that the conservative coalition in Serbia "found its social base in primitive rural regions which have always been threatened by the effort and discipline that modernism requires. . . . Its main opponent is the middle class and the urban population, the mainstay of cosmopolitanism, commercialism, science, and rationality."
65. For the similarities and coalitions between the communists and nationalists in Serbia and Russia, see Vujacic, "Communism and Nationalism in Russia and Serbia."
66. William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 74.
67. Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, 194.
68. Miodrag Stanislavljevic, *Zveckanje Oklopnika* (Zrenjanin: Republika, 1994), 25.
69. Dobrica Cosic emphasizes the subordinate role of national ideology to state-building with the following: "Slobodan Milosevic became a politician having the characteristics of a charismatic leader not with nationalism as an ideology, but with statehoodness as a national goal." *Promene* (Novi Sad: Dnevnik, 1992), 141.
70. On the relationship between "nation" and "state," see Katharine Verdery, "From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Societies* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 225–55.

71. The issue here is the ethnic interpretation of a nation, which is closest to the definition offered by Anthony Smith: "Ethnic concepts of the nation focus on the genealogy of its members, however fictive; on the popular mobilization of 'the folk'; on native history and customs; and on the vernacular culture." When politically mobilized, ethnic nationalism tends to conceive of the nation based on 1) its natural qualities, renewing "pre-existing ethnic ties"; 2) the politicization of culture, which renews the ethno-historical tradition; and 3) ethnic purification, which leads to "segregation, expulsion, deportation, and even extermination of aliens." Anthony Smith, "The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism," in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, 36 and 38.
72. Yael Tamir, "The Right to National Self-Determination," *Social Research* 58, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 577.
73. Jack Snyder points out that "nationalist criteria for political identity and alignment are, to some extent, inherently conflictual. Any intensification of nationalist sentiment is likely to contribute to an intensification of the conflict with other national groups." See his "Nationalism and the Crisis of the Post-Soviet State," in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, 93.
74. *Politika*, July 27, 1991.
75. Matija Beckovic, *Politika*, August 2, 1991.
76. The other face of *ressentiment* is chauvinism and aggressiveness. The poisoning of the Serbs by others' hatred resulted in their hatred toward the other nations. Thus Serbian nationalism acquired the classic traits of ethnic "reductionism"—ethnic purification and chauvinism. Alexander Motyl points out that chauvinistic nationalism presupposes the situation in which "nations must be brought into contact and competition, in which some lose and others win." See Alexander Motyl, "The Modernity of Nationalism: Nations, States, and Nation-States in the Contemporary World," *Journal of International Affairs* 45, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 313.
77. Dobrica Cosic, *Knjizevne novine*, December 1, 1988.
78. Dobrica Cosic, *Promene* (Novi Sad: Dnevnik, 1992), 62, 72, and 75.
79. Cosic, *Politika*, July 27, 1991.
80. "Memorandum," quoted in *Osmica*, February 12, 1989.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Cosic, *Knjizevne novine*, December 1, 1988.
83. Cosic, *Promene*, 259.
84. Croatian genocide against the Serbs is regarded as an enduring historical phenomenon: "It is certain that for the genesis of the genocidal acts upon Serbs in Croatia one has to look to the times when the so-called Orthodox Vlasi (i.e., Serbs under the pressure of Turkish rule in the 16th and 17th centuries) started to populate Croatian lands. . . . The idea of genocide of Serbs was completely finished in the framework of Austria-Hungary, before World War I started. . . . The long-lasting fermentation of the idea of genocide in Croatian society . . . took root in the conscience of many generations." Vasilje Krestic, *Knjizevne novine*, September 15, 1986.
85. For instance, over the course of four months in 1985, different daily newspapers were full of stories about crimes that Andrija Artukovic, "the Himmler of the Balkans," and the Ustashe perpetrated on the Serbs. For months, Serbia's major newspapers ran serials with titles like: "From the History of the Ustashe State," "I Fled from Artukovic's Torture Chamber at Jasenovac," "Andrija Artukovic—The Greatest Living War Criminal," "Pavelic's Secret Chambers," and so on. The "Voice of the Church" also published a great number of serials about genocide against the Serbs, accompanied by photographs of decapitated and mutilated corpses.
86. Throughout 1990, reports regularly arrived from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia about religious chanting and services for the victims of genocide, including the exhumation of the victims' remains and their reburial. The reports were usually followed by detailed descriptions of the way the victims were killed. At the same time the ministry of the Serbian Orthodox Church sent a warning from Bosnia-Herzegovina that there was a broadening of the "vampire Ustashe" atmosphere even there. Before the war of 1991, there was a commemoration of the fifty years of suffering of the Serbian Orthodox Church and genocide and the ongoing work of priests and others to unearth the remains of the innocent victims. This is still being done throughout Bosnia. See Radic, "Crkva i 'srpsko nacionalno pitanje,' 1980–1995," xiv.

87. Jovan Raskovic, *Politika*, March 25, 1990.
88. Radovan Samadzic, *Politika*, August 7, 1992.
89. Dobrica Cosic, *Knjizevne novine*, July 15, 1989. Just before the war, the idea of a Serbian state was propagated much more openly. Cosic is most clear about this matter: "The Serbian people have today all the historical, national, and democratic reasons and rights to live in one state. . . . If other peoples do not want such a Yugoslavia, then the Serbian nation will be forced to live freely in its state and after two centuries of struggle will solve for good its existential question." *Politika*, January 21, 1991.
90. Antonije Isakovic, *Politika*, May 25, 1990.
91. Cosic, *Politika*, January 21, 1991.
92. Quoted in Djukic, *Izmedju slave i anateme*, 187.
93. Tasic, *Kako je ubijena druga Jugoslavija*, 124.
94. Quoted in Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962–1991*, 229–230.
95. Nebojsa Popov, "Srpski populizam," *Vreme*, no. 133 (May 24, 1993).
96. Tasic, *Kako je ubijena druga Jugoslavija*, 152.
97. *Ibid.*, 157.
98. *Ibid.*, 187.
99. Balkanization is "a process and possibly a cycle of empire disruption, small countries creation, local instability, and a new (or old) empire moving in. . . . The balkanization process was characterized particularly by the attempts of the Balkan nations at autonomous state creation and by wars erupting between them." Vladimir Gligorov, *Why Do Countries Break Up?* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis, 1994), 18.
100. This unfortunate choice was obvious when the old apparatus created its own political organization, which played an important role in fomenting the armed conflicts. It was known as the "Generals' Party"; its formal name was The League of Communists–Movement for Yugoslavia.
101. Although the nationalist party in Macedonia received the most votes of any single party, it did not get a majority of all votes cast. The nationalist party got 31.67%; the "reformed" communists, 25.83%; the Albanian minority party (PDPM), 14.17%; and the Alliance of Reformist Forces of Macedonia (Ante Markovic's party), a mere 9.17%.
102. In these republics, Serbs did not take the name of Milosevic's party in order to avoid being associated with "communists." They thus adapted to the situation in these republics.
103. Prime Minister Markovic had to face a number of vitriolic attacks, including those from politically active members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Mihailo Markovic declared: "Ante Markovic is making a deal with our enemies about how to destroy Yugoslavia and Serbia," *Politika*, October 11, 1991. "We are a country of cleavages and hatred—national, religious, and social," said Dobrica Cosic, "[and] it is difficult to understand why Premier Markovic is ignoring the political reality of Yugoslavia, and it is even less understandable how he thinks that that reality can be overcome through elections." *Politika*, August 4, 1990.
104. Slobodanka Kovacevic, "Hronologija jugoslovenske krize: 1990–1992," *Medjunarodna politika*, nos. 1–2 (1992): 110.
105. *Ibid.*, 111. Jovan Raskovic, the leader of the Serbian Democratic Party in Croatia, anticipated armed rebellion on June 25, 1990, when the Assembly of Serbs in Croatia passed a declaration proclaiming the sovereignty and autonomy of the republic's Serbs and established a Serbian National Council to serve as a state-like body to represent their autonomy. Raskovic characterized these acts as "Serbs' rebellion without arms."
106. On the discrimination against Serbs and the acts of the Croatian government that rekindled Serbian memories of the Ustashe-run Independent State of Croatia, see Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 12–14. Also see Denich, "Dismembering Yugoslavia."
107. For more details, see Kadijevic, *Moje vidjenje raspada*, 122–144.
108. *Borba*, October 6–7, 1990.
109. "Democratic federation" as a concept was inimical to the precepts of Serbian nationalism. The fictitious character of that proposal was unacceptable even to those republics whose interests were coterminous with the federal organization of Yugoslavia (i.e., Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina).
110. *Borba*, October 8, 1990.
111. *Borba*, June 4, 1991.
112. See Djukic, *Izmedju slave i anateme*, 187 and 190.

113. According to the 1974 constitution, each republic had its “Territorial Defense” (TD), which was independent from the federal Yugoslav National Army. Martin Spegelj, Croatia’s defense minister and former YNA general, understood TD as serving the “security of the republics against the domination of the majority people” (Serbs). Under his organization, Croatia’s TD could mobilize 180,000 armed troops in 1982. When the Warsaw Pact broke up, the YNA took control over the TD system. In 1991, the YNA partially disarmed the Croatian TD. But, after the elections in Croatia and Slovenia, these republics

started to buy arms secretly from foreign sources. See Darko Hudelist’s interview with Spegelj in *Erasmus* 9 (1994): 42 and 45.

114. Latinka Perovic defines Serbia’s war objectives in the following way: “Revision of internal boundaries, exchange of populations, and restructuring of the Balkan political space.” Latinka Perovic, “Yugoslavia Was Defeated from Inside,” in *Yugoslavia, Collapse, War Crimes*, ed. Sonja Biserko (Belgrade: Center for Antiwar Action and Belgrade Circle, 1993), 63.

## A BOUT THE AUTHOR



115. On June 14, 1991, Belgrade's daily paper *Borba* disclosed that President Tudjman had informed the British officials that the Serbian and Croatian governments had agreed to divide up Bosnia-Herzegovina between themselves. The article also mentioned that in the "circles of European politics such a possibility was already considered as one of the options."

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