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# Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict

V.P. Gagnon, Jr.

## The Case of Serbia

Does ethnicity affect the international system? What are the causes of violent conflict along ethnic lines? Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of war in the Balkans, these questions have seized the attention of international relations scholars and policy makers.<sup>1</sup> In the former Yugoslavia, war conducted in the name of ethnic solidarity has destroyed the Yugoslav state, leveled entire cities, and resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties and millions of refugees.<sup>2</sup> It has also brought NATO's first out-of-area actions, the largest United Nations peacekeeping operation in history, and the very real possibility of war spreading to other parts of the Balkans.

Is the Yugoslav case a look into the future of international relations? Are ethnically-mixed regions in the post-Cold War era inevitably the sites of violent conflict that will spill over into the international arena? If so, the only apparent solution would be the creation of ethnically pure states; yet the greatest threats to peace in this century have tended to come from those regions in which partitions along ethnic or religious lines have taken place.<sup>3</sup> This paradox is a

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1. See, for example, John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-56; Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), pp. 5-39; Jack Snyder, "The New Nationalism," in Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 179-200; Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

2. The best English-language sources on the Yugoslav wars include Lenard Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993); James Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military: The Yugoslav Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifshutz, eds., *Why Bosnia? Writings on the Balkan War* (Stony Creek, Conn.: Pamphleteers Press, 1993).

3. Examples include Greece-Turkey (1922), Ireland (1921), the Sudetenland (1938), India-Pakistan (1947), South African apartheid (1948), Palestine (1948), and Cyprus (1974). John Mearsheimer and Robert Pape, "The Answer: A Partition Plan for Bosnia," *The New Republic*, June 14, 1993, pp. 22-28, argue for partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as the best solution to the current conflict.

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major challenge to international peace and stability, especially given the growing number of violent conflicts described and justified in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion.

Despite the urgency of this issue, theories of international relations have until quite recently not addressed the question of ethnic nationalist conflict. The main challenge is conceptual: how to establish the causal link between ethnic nationalist sentiment and interstate violence.<sup>4</sup> Existing approaches tend to assume either that ethnic sentiment itself is the main cause of violent conflict, or that external security concerns lead national decision-makers to inflame such sentiment.<sup>5</sup> In this paper I argue that such violent conflict is caused not by ethnic sentiments, nor by external security concerns, but rather by the dynamics of within-group conflict.<sup>6</sup> The external conflict, although justified and described in terms of relations with other ethnic groups and taking place within that context, has its main goal within the state, among members of the same ethnicity.<sup>7</sup>

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4. One of the shortcomings of the literature on ethnic and nationalist conflict is the lack of a precise conceptual definition. The term "nationalism" (or "hypernationalism") is commonly used, either implicitly or explicitly, to mean simultaneously (and confusingly) ethnic national sentiments or beliefs; political rhetoric that appeals to ethnic nationalist sentiment; and violent conflict that is described and justified in terms of ethnicity. To avoid this confusion, and to clarify the dependent variable (violent conflict, rather than ethnic sentiment) "ethnic nationalism" in this article refers to the rhetoric by which political actors describe, justify, and explain policies with reference to the interest of the "nation" defined in ethnic terms. It does not refer to sentiment or belief. This definition also makes clear that the root causes of a conflict that is described as ethnic may have little to do with ethnicity *per se*, and thereby points to the questions that must be answered to understand ethnic nationalist conflict: when do political elites resort to conflictual definitions of ethnic national interest? When and how do such definitions come to dominate the policies of the state? What are the goals of this conflictual behavior?

5. Examples of international relations works which look to ethnic sentiment as the key to understanding the link between nationalism and foreign policy include Alexis Heraclides, *The Self Determination of Minorities in International Politics* (Portland, Ore.: Cass, 1991); William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For those that look to external security concerns, see Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future"; and Barry Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 80–124. The literature on ethnic conflict also tends to explain violent conflict as a response to external threats to or opportunities for the ethnic group *vis-à-vis* other groups. The most prominent such work is Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

6. One work that explores the domestic roots of conflictual nationalist policy is Snyder, "The New Nationalism." For a review of earlier works that look at domestic sources of international conflict, see Jack Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 259–288.

7. This type of conflict is one example of the more general phenomenon of violent conflict in the international arena which is described and justified by national leaders in terms of ideas such as religion, class, and culture, as well as ethnicity. Given the extent to which international conflicts have been justified not in purely security terms but rather in such ideational terms, identifying the causal link between such ideas and violent conflicts carried out in their names is clearly of importance.

I argue that violent conflict along ethnic cleavages is provoked by elites in order to create a domestic political context where ethnicity is the only politically relevant identity. It thereby constructs the individual interest of the broader population in terms of the threat to the community defined in ethnic terms. Such a strategy is a response by ruling elites to shifts in the structure of domestic political and economic power: by constructing individual interest in terms of the threat to the group, endangered elites can fend off domestic challengers who seek to mobilize the population against the status quo, and can better position themselves to deal with future challenges.

The dominant realist approach in international relations tells us very little about violent conflict along ethnic lines, and cannot explain the Yugoslav case. Focusing on external security concerns, this approach argues that conflictual behavior in the name of ethnic nationalism is a response to external threats to the state (or to the ethnic group).<sup>8</sup> The general literature on ethnic conflict likewise uses the "ethnic group" as actor and looks to factors outside the group to explain intergroup conflict.<sup>9</sup> But in fact, the Serbian leadership from 1987 onward actively created rather than responded to threats to Serbs by purposefully provoking and fostering the outbreak of conflict along ethnic lines, especially in regions of Yugoslavia with histories of good inter-ethnic relations.<sup>10</sup>

Although the Serbian leadership itself has justified its policies in terms of an external security threat to Serbia and Serbs, over the past thirty years a significant part of the Serbian elite has advocated a very different strategy based on democratic pluralism, peaceful negotiation of political conflict, and modernization of the Serbian economy.<sup>11</sup> This strategy would probably have been

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8. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future"; Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power." For a realist approach that takes ethnic groups rather than states as actors, see Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 27-47.

9. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; and "Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October 1993), pp. 18-38.

10. In both Croatia and Bosnia, forces allied with Belgrade went to great lengths to destroy the long-standing harmony between Serbs and non-Serbs. Although the Croatian regime had resorted to nationalist rhetoric and actions worrisome to local Serbs, both sides were willing to negotiate over key issues until Belgrade began terrorizing moderate Serbs. This strategy was repeated in Bosnia. In Serbian-controlled regions of Croatia and Bosnia, the extremists in power have silenced and even killed dissenting Serbs. See *NIN*, November 8, 1991, p. 15; *Vreme*, November 4, 1991, pp. 12-15; Milorad Pupovac, head of the Zagreb-based moderate Serbian Democratic Forum, in *Vreme*, October 21, 1991, pp. 12-14; Peter Maass, "In Bosnia, 'Disloyal Serbs' Share Plight of Opposition," *Washington Post*, August 24, 1992, p. 1.

11. For example, Latinka Perović and Marko Nikezić, heads of the Serbian party in the late 1960s and early 1970s [see Perović's *Zatvaranje kruga: Ishod političkog rascjepa u SKJ 1971/1972* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991); and Slavoljub Đukić, *Slom Srpskih Liberala* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 1990)]. On the war in Croatia, nationalist opposition party leader Vuk Drašković from the summer of 1991

much more successful and much less costly than conflict in ensuring the interests of Serbs and Serbia, even if the goal had been an independent, enlarged Serbia.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to argue that an objective security threat exists when even nationalistically-oriented elites in Serbia denounce the war and claim there was no need for it.

Another common explanation for violent conflicts along ethnic lines, particularly for the Yugoslav case, is that ancient ethnic hatreds have burst to the surface.<sup>13</sup> But this too is unsupported by the evidence: in fact, Yugoslavia never saw the kind of religious wars seen in Western and Central Europe, and Serbs and Croats never fought before this century;<sup>14</sup> intermarriage rates were quite

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denounced the war in Croatia (*Vreme*, November 4, 1992, pp. 9–11; *Danas*, February 18, 1992). Drašković has also denounced the Bosnian war as harmful to Serbs (see his speech to “Congress of Serbian Intellectuals,” May 1994); Milan Panić, first prime minister of the new Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia, also criticized the war (“Four Immediate Tasks,” *Review of International Affairs*, no. 1005–6 (June 1–July 1, 1992), pp. 4–6).

12. Indeed, the policies of the Serbian leadership and its allies have alienated the 33 percent of the Serbian republic’s population that is non-Serb, thus decreasing its internal security. The Croatian and Bosnian territories that have been gained in the process are among the poorest regions of the former Yugoslavia, with very low rates of education and income, and are for the most part strategically very difficult to defend, since they are connected with Serbian-contiguous lands only by a very thin corridor. The atrocities against and expulsions of most of the very large number of non-Serbs—who before the war made up about 55 percent of the population of the Croatian and Bosnian territories held by Serbian forces in mid-1994—have produced enormous antagonisms and created a situation in which a long-term strategy of low-level guerilla warfare is quite likely. Figures derived from the 1991 Population Census of Bosnia-Herzegovina, cited in Stjepko Golubić, Susan Campbell and Thomas Golubić, “How not to divide the indivisible,” in *Why Bosnia*, pp. 230–231; and the 1991 census in Croatia, *Popis Stanovništva 1991* (Zagreb: Republički zavod za statistiku, 1992).

13. See, for example, Robert Kaplan, “Ground Zero,” *New Republic*, August 2, 1993, pp. 15–16, “A Reader’s Guide to the Balkans,” *New York Times Book Review*, April 18, 1994; “History’s Cauldron,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1991, pp. 92–104; and Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993). See also Elizabeth Drew, “Letter from Washington,” *New Yorker*, July 6, 1992, p. 70.

14. On the history of relations between Serbs and Croats in Croatia before this century, see, for example, Wolfgang Kessler, *Politik, Kultur und Gesellschaft in Kroatien und Slawonien in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1981); Sergei A. Romanenko, “National Autonomy in Russia and Austro-Hungary,” in *Nationalism and Empire* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992); Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 410. On cooperation in the first Yugoslavia between Serb and Croat parties in Croatia against Belgrade, see Ljubo Boban, *Svetozar Pribičević u opoziciji (1928–1936)* (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatsku povijest, 1973); Drago Roksandić, *Srbi u Hrvatskoj od 15. stoljeća do naših dana* (Zagreb: Vjesnik, 1991). During World War II, the ruling Ustaša forces in the puppet Independent State of Croatia perpetrated massive atrocities against Serbs and others; they were a marginal party imposed by the Germans and Italians after the highly popular Croatian Peasant Party refused to collaborate. The Ustaša policy of genocide against Serbs, and its use of Muslims to carry out this policy in Bosnia, combined with its authoritarian repression of Croat and Muslim dissent, rapidly alienated most of the state’s population. Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Zagreb: Sveučilišna Naklada Liber, 1978). And while the Serbian nationalist Četnik

high in those ethnically-mixed regions that saw the worst violence;<sup>15</sup> and sociological polling as late as 1989–90 showed high levels of tolerance, especially in these mixed regions.<sup>16</sup> Although some tensions existed between nationalities and republics, and the forcible repression of overt national sentiment added to the perception on all sides that the existing economic and political system was unjust, the evidence indicates that, notwithstanding claims to the contrary by nationalist politicians and historians in Serbia and Croatia, “ethnic hatreds” are not the essential, primary cause of the Yugoslav conflict.

In the following sections I lay out an alternative theoretical framework and hypotheses about ethnic nationalist conflict that look to internal dynamics to explain external conflict. I then apply this to the specific case of Yugoslavia, concentrating on five episodes in which elites within the Serbian republic resorted to conflictual strategies described and justified in terms of the interest of the Serbian people.<sup>17</sup> In the conclusion I look at how this framework can illuminate other cases, and what it says about strategies for conflict resolution.

### *Domestic Power and International Conflict: A Theoretical Framework*

This section lays out a framework and proposes some hypotheses about the link between ethnicity (and other ideas such as religion, culture, class) and international conflict. It is based on the following four premises: first, the domestic arena is of central concern for state decision-makers and ruling elites because it is the location of the bases of their power. Ruling elites will thus

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forces perpetrated atrocities against Muslims in Bosnia, most Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia joined the multi-ethnic communist partisan forces rather than the purely nationalistic Četniks. Thus the image of “ethnic groups” in conflict even during World War II must be seen as part of an ideological construct in which “ethnic groups” are portrayed as actors by nationalist politicians and historians.

15. For example, throughout the 1980s, 29 percent of Serbs living in Croatia married Croat spouses. *Demografska statistika* (Belgrade: Savezni zavod za statistiku), 1979–1989 (annual), Table 5–3.

16. Randy Hodson, Garth Massey and Dusko Sekulic, “National Tolerance in the Former Yugoslavia,” *Global Forum Series Occasional Papers*, No. 93-01.5 (Durham, N.C.: Center for International Studies, Duke University, December 1993).

17. This article represents part of a broader work that looks at the dynamics of ethnic nationalist conflicts in other Yugoslav republics as well. The Serbian case, however, merits the most attention because the actions of its leadership from the mid-1980s onward have driven the current conflict and created nationalist backlashes in other Yugoslav republics, and because the *de facto* alliance between the Serbian leadership and the Yugoslav Army has given Serbia a massive military and thus political advantage. The Croatian leadership since 1990 has carried out similarly conflictual policies in the name of Croatian ethnic nationalism; but these policies can only be understood within the context of the Serbian strategy.

focus on preserving these domestic bases of power. Second, persuasion is the most effective and least costly means of influence in domestic politics. One particularly effective means of persuasion is to appeal to the interest of politically relevant actors as members of a group. Third, within the domestic arena, appeals for support must be directed to material and nonmaterial values of the relevant target audiences—those actors whose support is necessary to gain and maintain power. Ideas such as ethnicity, religion, culture, and class therefore play a key role as instruments of power and influence, in particular because of their centrality to legitimacy and authority.

Finally, conflict over ideas and how they are framed is an essential characteristic of domestic politics, since the result determines the way political arguments can be made, how interests are defined, and the values by which political action must be justified. The challenge for elites is therefore to define the interest of the collective in a way that coincides with their own power interests. In other words, they must express their interests in the “language” of the collective interest.

These premises lead to the following hypotheses about the conditions under which national leaders will resort to conflictual policies described and justified in terms of threats to the ethnic nation.

First, if ruling elites face challenger elites who seek to mobilize the majority of the politically relevant population in a way that threatens the rulers’ power or the political or economic structure on which their power is based, the ruling elites will be willing to respond by undertaking policies that are costly to society as a whole, even if the costs are imposed from outside. Behavior *vis-à-vis* the outside may thus have its main goal in the domestic arena. If the most effective way to achieve domestic goals involves provoking conflict with the outside, then, as long as the net benefit to the threatened elites is positive, they will be willing to undertake such a strategy.

Second, threatened elites will respond to domestic threats in a way that minimizes the danger to the bases of their domestic power. They must gain the support, or neutralize the opposition, of the majority. But if domestic legitimacy precludes the massive use of force against political opponents and depends on respecting certain political forms and “rules of the game,” elites are circumscribed in how they can respond to domestic threats. One effective strategy in this context is to shift the focus of political debate away from issues where ruling elites are most threatened—for example, proposed changes in the structure of domestic economic or political power—toward other issues, defined in

cultural or ethnic terms, that appeal to the interest of the majority in non-economic terms.<sup>18</sup> But ethnicity or culture in and of itself does not determine policies; the interest of the collective defined in ethnic terms can be defined in any number of ways.

Competing elites will thus focus on defining the collective interest by drawing selectively on traditions and mythologies and in effect constructing particular versions of that interest. The elite faction that succeeds in identifying itself with the interest of the collective, and in defining the collective interest in a way that maximizes its own ability to achieve its goals, wins an important victory. It has framed the terms of political discourse and debate, and thus the limits of legitimate policy, in a way that may delegitimize or make politically irrelevant the interests of challenger elites and prevent them from mobilizing the population on specific issues or along certain lines.

Third, in this competition over defining the group interest, images of and alleged threats from the outside world can play a key role in this domestic political strategy. A strategy relying on such threatening images can range from citing an alleged threat to provoking conflict in order to create the image of threat; conflict can range from political to military. Since political mobilization occurs most readily around grievances, in order to shift the political agenda, elites must find issues of grievance unrelated to those issues on which they are most threatened, and construct a political context in which those issues become the center of political debate. It is at this point that focus on the interest of the group *vis-à-vis* the outside world proves to be useful. If the grievance or threat is to the collective rather than to individuals, it creates an image of potentially very high costs imposed on the group regardless of the direct impact on individuals. It therefore defines the individual's interest in terms of a particular threat to the group. Moreover, if the threat or grievance is outside the direct experience of the majority of politically relevant actors, there is no way to verify whether the grievance is real, or indeed whether it is being addressed or not. Such a strategy also becomes in effect a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the reactions provoked by the conflictual policies are pointed to as proof of the original contention. Thus is created a grievance that, if violence is involved, is sure to continue for years.

The effect of creating an image of threat to the group is to place the interest of the group above the interest of individuals. This political strategy is crucial

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18. On agenda setting as a power strategy, see P. Bachrach and M.S. Baratz, "The Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (1962), pp. 947-952.

because, in the case of aggressive nationalism and images of threats to the ethnic nation, it creates a context where ethnicity is all that counts, and where other interests are no longer relevant. In addition, such an image of overwhelming threat to the group delegitimizes the dissent of those challengers who attempt to appeal to members of the relevant group as individuals or who appeal to identities other than the “legitimate” identity in a “legitimate” way, especially if dissenters can be portrayed as selfish and uninterested in the well-being of the group, and can therefore be branded as traitors.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, by using a strategy of agenda-setting to shift the focus of political attention toward the very pressing issue of threats to the group from the outside, and by actively provoking and creating such threats, threatened elites can maximize the domestic benefits while minimizing the costs imposed on their own supporters, and thus the danger to their own power bases.

Fourth, in this domestic political context, information and control over information play a vital role. Control or ownership of mass media, especially television, therefore bestows an enormous political advantage where the wider population is involved in politics, and is a key element in the success of such a strategy.

Fifth, elites will tend to define the relevant collective in ethnic terms when past political participation has been so defined; when such a definition is encouraged by international circumstances; and when these elites are seen as credible defenders of ethnic interests and concerns. Clearly, for grievances or threats to the group to be politically relevant, a majority of actors must be able to be identified as members of that group. That does not mean, however, that their main or primary identity must be to the group; in fact, people have multiple identities and such identities are highly contextual. The key is to make a particular identity, and a specific definition of that identity, the only relevant or legitimate one in political contexts. This identity will be closely related to the ideas of culture, ethnicity, and religion that the majority of the population values. Ideas such as ethnicity have an impact on the international arena precisely because they are so central to domestic power.

Since conflictual policies tend to take place along these previously politicized lines of identity, they also tend to create the impression of continuity between

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19. This strategy is thus especially effective in discrediting those who appeal to liberal democratic ideology, which defines the collective interest of the citizenry as best ensured by ensuring the rights and well-being of the individual.

past conflicts and current ones, and indeed are specifically portrayed in this way. But there is nothing natural about ethnic interest that requires it to be defined in a conflictual way.

Sixth, the larger and more immediate the threat to the ruling elite, the more willing it is to take measures which, while preserving its position in the short term, may bring high costs in the longer term; in effect it discounts future costs. The intensity and thus costliness of a conflictual strategy depends on the degree of the threat to the old elites. These factors include, first, the time frame of the threat to power. While the conflictual policies may over the long run result in an untenable position and ultimately undermine their bases of political influence, elites' political behavior in a situation of immediate threat is motivated by that threat and by the concern for keeping the power in the short run, which at least leaves open the possibility of their survival in the long run. This also gives them time to fashion alternative strategies for dealing with change, including shifting the bases of their power.

Also, the strength of the challenger elites also affects the immediacy of the threat. If the challenger elites are successfully mobilizing the majority of the politically relevant population against the status quo, ruling elites will feel quite threatened and be willing to incur high costs to preserve their position. Threatened elites will also attempt to recruit other elites, at the local and regional as well as national levels, to prevent such a mobilization.

A further factor is the costs to the threatened elites of losing power; that is, the resources and fallback positions they have if change does take place. If they have everything to lose and nothing to gain, they will be much more likely to undertake conflictual policies costly to society as a whole than if they have resources that would allow them to remain involved in power to some degree.

For the conflictual strategy to include the use of military force, especially against other states, the status-quo coalition must include a dominant faction within the military.

Seventh, threatened elites may use marginal neo-fascist parties as part of their conflictual strategy in conditions where the wider population is included in the political system. Every country has small extremist groups whose mainstay is ethnic hatred and violence; their motivations may be political, personal, or psychological. But the very existence of this option is clearly not enough for it to come to dominate state policy. An advantage of giving neo-fascists media coverage and weapons is that by bringing extremists into the political realm, the right becomes the "center"; a statement that ten years earlier may have been unacceptably racist may be perceived after this kind of strategy as rela-

tively moderate.<sup>20</sup> By making issues of ethnic nationalism the center of political discourse, this strategy also turns those who are archconservatives on economic issues into moderate centrists.

Eighth, internal costs of a conflictual strategy are closely monitored, since they must be outweighed by benefits. Of particular importance is the need to prevent popular mobilization against costs of the conflictual external strategy. While conflict remains in the realm of political rhetoric, it may have great support among the population, since it is basically costless. But if military conflict is involved, the costs to the general population rapidly start to mount.<sup>21</sup> Conflict will be undertaken with an eye toward minimizing the costs for those parts of the populations which are key for support, and will therefore tend to be provoked outside the borders of the elite's power base, with great efforts taken to prevent war from spilling over to the domestic territory. Thus, in the Soviet case anti-reform conservatives provoked violent ethnic conflict outside of Russia, in Moldova, Georgia, and the Baltics; in the Yugoslav case armed conflict has not taken place within Serbia itself, and the Croatian conservatives' conflictual strategy affected mainly central Bosnia, rather than Croatia.

Of course, if material conditions deteriorate enough and if the discrepancy between the interest of the collective group and the interest of the status quo power elite becomes great enough, challenger elites may successfully lead the wider population to revolt against the power structure. In this case members of the old elite may jump on the bandwagon of the new elites who lead such revolutionary revolts.

Finally, external costs are also key. Such a strategy is most likely when the potential international costs, in terms of how they would affect the status-quo elites' domestic power position, are minimal. But if the cost of external reaction were to threaten elements of the status-quo coalition, they might defect, since losses at the hands of domestic elites could be less than at the hands of external foes, especially if challenger elites were willing to offer a deal to the defectors. This strategy will thus be very sensitive to the kinds of costs it provokes from the outside.

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20. See Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse in Race and Sexuality: Britain 1968–1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

21. Despite the assumption that ethnic political mobilization inevitably pushes politics towards extremism (referred to as "ethnic outbidding" by Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 348), there is in fact little evidence of a natural inevitable progression from ethnic mobilization to violent ethnic conflict. See V.P. Gagnon, Jr., "Ethnic Conflict as a Political Demobilizer," forthcoming.

This type of conflictual policy thus comes to dominate some states or regions and not others, depending on the degree of threat to the existing power structure and the size of the coalition (at both national and regional levels) of those within the power elite threatened by change. If a challenge to the existing power structure takes place in such a way that most of the old elite perceives a way out, either by cooptation into the new system or by being permitted to retain some privileges and benefits, a coalition will probably not be strong enough to impose a costly conflictual strategy as state policy. It may nevertheless incite conflict and violence in the hopes of gaining wider support. Such conflict takes the form of violence along ethnic lines when the wider population is involved in political decision making, and when political participation in the past has been defined in ethnic terms.

### *The Case of Serbia*

The violent conflict along ethnic lines in the former Yugoslavia was a purposeful and rational strategy planned by those most threatened by changes to the structure of economic and political power, changes being advocated in particular by reformists within the ruling Serbian communist party. A wide coalition—conservatives in the Serbian party leadership, local and regional party elites who would be most threatened by such changes, orthodox Marxist intellectuals, nationalist writers, and parts of the Yugoslav army—joined together to provoke conflict along ethnic lines. This conflict created a political context where individual interest was defined not in terms of economic well-being, but as the survival of the Serbian people. The conservatives' original goal was to recentralize Yugoslavia in order to crush reformist trends throughout the country, but especially in Serbia itself. By 1990, in a changed international context and with backlashes against their centralization strategy in other republics, the conservative coalition moved to destroy the Yugoslav state and create a new, Serbian-majority state. By provoking conflict along ethnic lines, this coalition deflected demands for radical change and allowed the ruling elite to reposition itself and survive in a way that would have been unthinkable in the old Yugoslavia, where only 39 percent of the population was Serb.

Serbian conservatives relied on the particular idea of ethnicity in their conflictual strategy because political participation and legitimation in this region historically was constructed in such terms. From the nineteenth century, the great powers used the standard of national (usually ethnically-defined) self-determination to decide whether a territory merited recognition as a sovereign state—a practice that continues today. Those elites who could make the

best case for representing the interests of an ethnic group could increase their power *vis-à-vis* the domestic arena by being internationally recognized as the representative of their ethnic or national group.<sup>22</sup> In Eastern and Central Europe this factor reinforced the Ottoman, Romanov, and Habsburg empires' definitions of political participation in terms of religion in the first two cases and language in the latter, and the subsequent construction of politicized identities in the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The Serbian national myth, molded in the struggle against the Ottoman Turks and in the expansion of the Serbian state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, played a central role in Yugoslav politics between 1918 and 1941, and remained important for the communist partisans, who relied on popular support during World War II.<sup>24</sup> The ethnic national bases of the Yugoslav republics was the result of this wartime need for popular political support, and was maintained as more than a façade after the 1948 break with the Soviet Union again forced the communists to rely on some level of popular support. This emphasis on ethnicity was reinforced by a system of ethnic "keys" within each republic which determined the distribution of certain positions by ethnic identity according to the proportion of each group in the republic's population.<sup>25</sup> This political reification of ethnicity, along with the suppression of expressions of ethnic sentiment, combined to reinforce the historical construction of political identity in terms of ethnic identity, and made ethnic issues politically relevant when the political system opened up to include the wider population.

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22. For example, arguments about carving up the Ottoman Empire's European territories were made in terms of "ethnic territories" despite the very ethnically intermixed nature of those territories.

23. On the Romanov Empire's construction of national identity, see John Slocum, "The Boundaries of National Identity: Religion, Language, and Nationality Politics in Late Imperial Russia," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1993; on the Ottomans, Kemal Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era," in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Vol. 1 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), pp. 141–169; on Hungary, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 101–109.

24. The relation to religious identity is a complex issue, and is related to the fact that in traditional Serbian national mythology, born in the fight against the Ottomans, the Muslim Turks are seen as the ultimate enemy. Although religion *per se* was minimally relevant to interpersonal relations in Yugoslavia before the most recent wars, as part of the Serbian national mythology it was drawn upon in a selective way to the political ends of demonizing Albanians and Slavic Muslims.

25. On the ways in which socialist regimes reinforced the relevance of ethnic identity, see Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 179–203. A similar process was seen in India, where colonial powers, drawing on real or sometimes mythic differences, politicized cultural difference and played groups off against each other. Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Sage: New Delhi, 1991).

In addition, the rhetoric of threats to the ethnic nation was available to Serbian conservatives in a way that it was not in other republics, in part because the Serbian party was one of the few that was ethnically homogeneous enough that such a strategy would not automatically alienate a significant portion of the party membership. The Serbian republic (even without its provinces) also had regional differences in economic development that were more extreme and significant than in any other republic. Thus because liberals were stronger, conservatives entrenched in some underdeveloped regions were also more threatened; however, they had a grassroots base upon which to rely for support. Serbia's conservatives were also well-placed to oppose change, given Serbia's importance in the Yugoslav federation and the frequent congruence of interests between Serbian conservatives and conservative elements in the Yugoslav army.

Five episodes are described below in which conservative forces, especially those in Serbia, were threatened with the radical restructuring of political and economic power. In order to test the hypotheses laid out above, each section looks at the threat to the conservatives and the status quo; their responses; and the effect of those responses.

#### 1960S: THREATS TO THE STATUS QUO

In the early 1960s, in response to an increasingly dysfunctional economic system, reformists in the Yugoslav party leadership, with Tito's support, began a radical restructuring of the Yugoslav political and economic system. At the local level the 1965 reform was a direct attack on party bureaucrats in enterprises as well as those in local administrative positions,<sup>26</sup> and also involved a loosening of party control of society, including tolerance of more open expressions of national sentiment.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Economic decisions were no longer to be made according to political criteria, and Tito himself openly dismissed "propaganda work," the mainstay of many party workers, stressing instead the need for technical knowledge and "detailed understanding" of economics and management. Tito, speech at fifth plenum of League of Communists of Yugoslavia Central Committee, *Borba*, October 6, 1966, p. 2. Economic reform was accompanied by political reform in the form of a radical restructuring of party relations at the local level, with the goal of undermining the position of conservative party bureaucrats by bringing rank-and-file party members into decision-making, and dismantling the institutional bases of bureaucratic power at the local level (including the local party cells and regional party organizations). Gagnon, "Ideology and Soviet-Yugoslav Relations, 1964-1969: Irrational foreign policy as a rational choice," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1992, pp. 579-583; April Carter, *Democratic Reform in Yugoslavia: The Changing Role of the Party* (London: Frances Pinter, 1982).

27. See Savka Dabčević-Kučar, series of interviews in *Nedeljna Dalmacija*, January 14, 21, and 28, 1990.

At the macro-political level the reform radically decentralized the federation, and almost all decision-making was given to the republics. This allowed the top leadership to bypass the conservatives who dominated the central bureaucracy and to rely instead on the republic-level leaders and central committees, which were dominated by young technocratically-oriented reformists. Indeed, this decentralization was enthusiastically supported by all the party leaderships, including Serbia's. By the summer of 1971 there was also discussion of decentralizing the party itself, a topic which was to be addressed at a party meeting in November 1971.<sup>28</sup> If undertaken, the effect would have been to institutionalize reformism in each republic, remove all power from the conservatives who dominated the center, and remove even the possibility of a conservative comeback.

The conservatives were clearly threatened by the popularity of the young republic-level reformist leaderships within the central committees, as well as among the wider population. Indeed, the goal of the reforms had been in part to broaden the legitimacy of the communist party by building a base in that wider population; this meant, however, that conservatives were faced with leaders who could mobilize the population in support of irreversible radical changes in the structure of power.

RESPONSE TO THE THREATS. The conservatives at first tried to sabotage implementation of the reform. The result, however, was that in 1966 Tito purged conservatives from the leadership of the party, and the reform became even more radically threatening to conservatives. Some conservatives in the Serbian party then began publicly to argue that the reforms were harmful to the Serbian nation, and linked the reforms to the "historical enemies" of Serbia. These conservatives were expelled from the party in 1968; however, by 1971, as the party faced the possibility of radical decentralization, other conservatives in the Serbian party and army pointed in particular to the open expression of nationalist sentiment in Croatia, which included some extremist views. Conservatives blamed the Croatian leadership for revival of Croatian nationalism.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Dušan Bilandžić, *Historija SFRJ* (Zagreb: Školska Knjiga, 1979), p. 427.

29. Although this period did see some extreme demands, including calls for a Croatian army, a seat for Croatia in the UN, and a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as some expression of chauvinistic Croatian nationalism, such demands were never made by the Croatian party leadership, which appealed instead in a positive sense to material well-being, freedom of expression, and cultural creativity. Pedro Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia: 1963-1983* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 104-143; Ante Čuvalo, *The Croatian National Movement, 1966-1972* (New York: East European Monographs, 1990). Indeed, despite the official explanation, the Croatian party leaders never felt either party rule or socialism to be in danger. The then-leader of the Serbian party also subsequently admitted that the purges of the Croatian leadership had been a mistake. See Dabčević-Kučar, interviews in *Nedeljna Dalmacija*, January, 1990; Miko Tripalo, *Hrvatsko proljeće* (Zagreb: Globus, 1990); Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga*.

These conservatives allied with some conservatives in the Croatian and Bosnian parties, party workers and war veterans who had been forced into early retirement, members of the central bureaucracy, elements in the Yugoslav army, and Serbian nationalist intellectuals to invoke the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Serbs by the Croatian Ustaša leadership during World War II and to blame the reforms for undermining socialism and endangering Croatia's Serbs. Conservatives in the security forces and in the army, in particular, convinced Tito to act against the Croatian reformists.<sup>30</sup> The Croatian reformists were purged and tanks were sent to the outskirts of Zagreb. The following year the Serbian reformists were also purged, despite very strong resistance from the republic's central committee; similar purges in the other republics and provinces followed. As a result, the local-level reforms were effectively reversed, and a renewed ideologization took place.<sup>31</sup>

**EFFECT OF THE RESPONSE.** By casting the threat posed by reform in terms of ethnic nationalism, the conservatives shifted the focus of political debate away from the cross-republic reformist project, and toward the alleged threats from Croatian nationalism; this allowed them to argue that radical reform had in fact brought the emergence of nationalism and thus of counterrevolution.<sup>32</sup> By using the threat of external and internal enemies of socialism defined in ethnic national terms, they managed to divide the country's popular reformists. This enabled the conservatives to prevent the decentralization of the party and to reverse the essence of the reforms (although decentralization of the federation itself remained and was enshrined in the 1974 constitution).<sup>33</sup> In addition, the Yugoslav army now became a key political player, with the official role of

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30. On the army's role in mobilizing war veterans against reformists in Croatia and in other republics, see A. Ross Johnson, *The Role of the Military in Communist Yugoslavia: An Historical Sketch*, No. P-6070 (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, January 1978), pp. 31–33; on the army's role in convincing Tito of the dangers of Croatian nationalism, see Robin Remington, "Armed Forces and Society in Yugoslavia," in Catherine McArdle Kelleher, ed., *Political-Military Systems: Comparative Perspectives* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974), p. 188; and Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military*, p. 58. On the role of the security forces in supplying Tito with detailed information, see Zdravko Vuković, *Od deformacija SDP do Maspoka i Liberalizma* (Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga, 1989), p. 586.

31. Stephen Burg, *Conflict and Cohesion in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 181–183, 229. While confederalization remained in place, the economic mechanisms which were meant to integrate the country were removed, resulting in eight statist and autarkic units.

32. The fact that they argued against the reforms, which were reversed, while the confederalization of the country remained even after the purge of liberals, indicates that the main threat was the reforms.

33. Conservatives in Serbia also set the groundwork for a longer-term strategy, for example by allowing Dobrica Ćosić, who had been purged for denouncing reform as anti-Serbian in 1968, to continue to publish his nationalistically-oriented works. Thus throughout the 1970s he constructed a very specific version of Serbian nationalism, whose theme was that Serbs were the greatest

ensuring the domestic order against external and internal enemies; this made the army the natural ally of conservatives in the party. By 1974, 12 percent of the federal central committee were army officers, up from 2 percent in 1969.<sup>34</sup>

1980–87: THREATS TO CONSERVATIVES

When Tito died in May 1980, the debate over reform, which had been muffled, broke out into the open. The economic crisis triggered by the global recession of the late 1970s, the oil shock, and Yugoslavia's huge foreign debt burden (\$20 billion by the early 1980s), as well as the negative results brought by ending reform in the early 1970s, all compelled radical systemic change. The reformists' proposals were indeed much more radical than in the early 1960s and their audience—managerial elites, democratically-oriented intellectuals, and party rank-and-file—were much more receptive. The proposals were therefore even more threatening to the conservatives than they had been in the 1960s, especially without Tito to moderate conflicts; the political conflict had become winner-take-all.

Serbian reformists were in the forefront of this struggle, and in the early 1980s the Serbian party was among the most liberal in the country. Members of the Serbian party leadership called for totally removing party influence at the local levels of the economy; for greater reliance on private enterprise and individual initiative; multiple candidates in state and party elections; free, secret elections in the party; and recognition and adoption of "all the positive achievements of bourgeois civilization," i.e., liberal democracy.<sup>35</sup> From within

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victims of Yugoslavia, portraying them as a "tragic people." See for example his popular four-part series of historical fiction, *Vreme Smrti*, published in Belgrade between 1972 and 1979, which chronicles the tragedies of Serbia during World War I (during which it lost 25 percent of its population and 40 percent of its army), and which portrays Serbia as the innocent victim of its neighbors, its supposed allies and other Yugoslav ethnic nations. In English, published as Dobrica Ćosić, *Into the Battle* (part 1) (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1983); *Time of Death* (part 2) (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977); *Reach to Eternity* (part 3) and *South to Destiny* (part 4) (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1983). See also the series of interviews in Slavoljub Dukić, *Čovek u svom vremenu: Razgovori sa Dobricom Ćosićem* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 1989).

34. Robert Dean, "Civil-Military Relations in Yugoslavia, 1971–1975," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (November 1976), p. 46.

35. These liberal positions especially linked the need for radical economic reform and a market system with an equally radical reform of the political system. See article by Serbian party leadership member Najdan Pašić, in *Danas*, October 12, 1982. Another Serbian leader, Mijalko Todorović, argued that the only solution to the economic crisis was "democratization of all political institutions." Similar views were expressed also by Pašić and Drača Marković, head of the Serbian party, indicating that this was the official position of the party. (Cited in *RFE Situation Report* No. 256, November 7, 1983). See also Pašić letter to the central committee on the political situation, November 1982, cited in *RFE Situation Report* No. 125, June 1, 1983; and his calls to purge the party of conservatives who blocked reform, *Politika*, September 10, 1984.

the party were also heard calls for private enterprise to become the “pillar of the economy,” and even calls for a multi-party system. Reformists were also very critical of the Army’s privileged political and budgetary position, and called very early on for cutting that influence.<sup>36</sup> Once again reformists were seeking to mobilize broader popular sentiment against conservative positions among party rank-and-file as well as the wider population, at a time when the economic crisis had discredited the conservatives’ ideological stance.<sup>37</sup>

Due to the consensus nature of federal decision-making, the conservatives were at first able to hinder an outright reformist victory, but the terms of the debate nevertheless shifted in the favor of the reformists. By the mid-1980s secret multi-candidate elections were being held for party officers, and even some state posts were chosen in multi-candidate popular votes.<sup>38</sup>

RESPONSE TO THE THREATS. Conservatives in Serbia responded with a three-pronged strategy. The first was to re-emphasize orthodox Marxist themes, in an attempt to delegitimize liberal trends at the lower levels of the party. Although the conservatives were not very successful in the political debates over reform at the leadership level, at the local level in Serbia they imposed an orthodox ideological line, while at the same time raising the issue of Serbian nationalism. Most notable was the Belgrade party organization which, beginning in 1984, was headed by Slobodan Milošević. Soon after coming to power, Milošević began a campaign stressing ideological orthodoxy,<sup>39</sup> and sent out warnings to all Belgrade party units urging vigilance against “the dangerous

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36. For example, in December 1982 the army budget was openly criticized in the Federal Assembly for having been increased by over 24 percent without the Assembly’s approval. *Politika*, December 15, 1982. In 1984 the Young Slovene Communist Party organization even called for the abolition of the Yugoslav army (A. Tjanić, *Intervju*, March 30, 1984). Army officers enjoyed pay levels much higher than average Yugoslavs as well as housing privileges in a country where housing was in acute shortage. The budget was also quite high (around 4 percent of gross domestic product in the early 1980s at a time of sharp economic decline).

37. The degree of threat that the reforms posed varied, in part by region of the country. In the early 1980s, those party officials and managers from more economically developed regions—Slovenia and Vojvodina—tended to be reformist, while those from underdeveloped Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bosnia tended to oppose them. The Serbian economy was split between the underdeveloped regions in the south and the more developed regions in the north, around Belgrade, and around the other major cities in central Serbia. The Serbian party leadership was very liberal, although there was a constituency of conservatives who were threatened by reform. Croatia, although more developed, was dominated by conservatives mainly because of the 1971 purges. For characterizations of the republic leaderships, see Pedro Ramet, “The Limits to Political Change in a Communist Country: The Yugoslav Debate, 1980–1986,” *Crossroads*, No. 23, pp. 67–79.

38. For example, Croatia and Slovenia had multi-candidate party elections by 1986; Bosnia-Herzegovina held multi-candidate popular elections for state presidency representative.

39. Slavoljub Dukić, “Trka za recenentom,” *Borba*, August 12, 1991, p. 11.

increase in anti-Yugoslav propaganda" from internal and external enemies, a warning that also dominated Yugoslav army leadership pronouncements.<sup>40</sup>

The second part of the conservatives' strategy was to shift attention toward ethnic issues. Thus, Milošević's tenure as party chief in Belgrade also saw the start of a nationalist campaign among Belgrade party members and "leftist" intellectuals, including Milošević's sociologist wife Mirjana Marković, which sought to defend "the national dignity of Serbia" and to protect its interest in Yugoslavia.<sup>41</sup> Belgrade also saw growing numbers of protests by Serbs from the province of Kosovo, claiming to be the victims of ethnic Albanian "genocide."<sup>42</sup> The fact that the demonstrations took place without police interference was a sign that they were at least tolerated by the Belgrade party.

In January 1986, despite very strong opposition from within the party leadership, Milošević was elected head of the Serbian party's central committee.<sup>43</sup> This period saw increased attention to the issue of Kosovo by a Belgrade-centered coalition of conservative party members, orthodox Marxist intellectuals, and nationalist-oriented intellectuals who repeated the charges of "genocide" against Serbs in Kosovo.<sup>44</sup> Journalists who were allied with Milošević, especially at the daily newspaper *Politika*, undertook a media campaign to

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40. Dukić, "Strogo pov. optuznica," *Borba*, August 13, 1991, p. 11. See also the speech of General Jovičić, head of the army's communist party organization, in *Politika*, December 15, 1984.

41. Mira Marković, *Odgovor* (Belgrade, 1994), and *Duga*, December 1993, cited in *Vreme*, February 7, 1994.

42. Kosovo had been the heart of the medieval Serbian kingdom. But by 1981 it was 75 percent ethnic Albanian, and had received a high degree of autonomy in 1974. In the late 1970s Serbian conservatives had used the issue of Kosovo's autonomy as a way of attacking reformist positions. In this they were supported by conservative Serbs from Kosovo, who were being replaced by ethnic Albanians in party and government posts. In 1981, massive demonstrations by ethnic Albanians erupted throughout the province, which the Serbian conservatives cited as evidence of pervasive "Albanian nationalism." For background on Kosovo, see Branka Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia* (London: Verso, 1993); Banac, *National Question in Yugoslavia*; Elez Biberaj, "The Conflict in Kosovo," *Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Autumn 1984); Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, pp. 156–171; essays in Arshi Pipa and Sami Repishti, eds., *Studies on Kosovo* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1984); for a Kosovan Albanian view, see *The Truth of Kosovo* (Tirana: Encyclopedia Publishing House, 1993); for a Serbian view, see Miloš Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku, Kosovo 1945–1985* (Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga, 1987).

43. For how Milošević and his allies overcame strong opposition, see Slavoljub Dukić, "Kroz iglene uši," *Borba*, August 15, 1991, p. 11; "Pod okriljem Stambolića," *Borba*, August 16, 1991, p. 11.

44. Their main charge was that Serbs were the victims of genocide by the majority Albanian population, which they accused of attempting to create an ethnically pure state through rapes of women, children and nuns, destruction of Serbian cultural monuments, and other types of harassment which had resulted, they claimed, in a massive exodus of Serbs and Montenegrins from the province. For details of the charges as well as a rebuttal of them by an independent commission, see Srdja Popović, Dejan Janča, and Tanja Petovar, *Kosovski čvor: držeći ili seći?* (Belgrade: Chronos, 1990). See also Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 61–73.

demonize ethnic Albanians and to “confirm” the allegations of genocide.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the issue of Kosovo now became the conservatives’ main weapon against reformist forces within Serbia and in the wider federation, as Serbian conservatives insisted that the issue be the priority not only of the local Serbian party but also at the federal level as well.<sup>46</sup>

However, it soon became clear that this coalition’s goals were not limited to Kosovo and Serbia. The third part of the conservatives’ strategy was to portray Serbia as the victim of Yugoslavia, setting the stage for attacks on the other republics’ autonomy. An ideological manifesto written by some members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1985, although claiming to call for democracy, actually advocated the restoration of the repressive, centralized socialist system that existed before the 1965 reforms. It sharply attacked the 1965 reforms as the root of all evil in Yugoslavia and as being aimed against Serbs; declared Serbs in Kosovo and Croatia to be endangered; and denounced the “anti-Serbian coalition” within Yugoslavia.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, given the nature of decision-making in Yugoslavia, to prevent radical reform in Serbia the conservatives would have to ensure that it did not take hold in the other republics and at the federal level.

**EFFECT OF THE RESPONSE.** The result of the Serbian strategy was that questions of radical reform were shunted aside in order to deal with the pressing issue of “genocide” in Kosovo. Through a combination of press manipulation, mass rallies, and political manipulation, and a stress on Stalinist notions of “democratic centralism,” by September 1987 Milošević managed to consolidate conservative control over the Serbian republic’s party organization.<sup>48</sup> Those parts of the Serbian media that had been relatively independent were taken over by conservative editors allied with Milošević.

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45. For example, see Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, p. 109.

46. For example, in January 1986, 200 Serbian intellectuals, including some who had previously been identified as socialist humanists, signed a petition accusing the (reformist) Serbian and federal party leaderships of complicity in what they described as “the destructive genocide” against Serbs in Kosovo. See text in Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 48–52.

47. For text, see “Memorandum SANU,” *Naše Teme*, Vol. 33, No. 1–2 (1989), pp. 128–163. On Milošević’s quiet support for the Memorandum, see Slavoljub Dukić, “Čudno Miloševićevo ponašanje,” *Borba*, August 21, 1991, p. 13.

48. Reformists were purged from being “soft” on Albanians (because they wanted to negotiate a solution with the Albanians rather than impose one); for being openly critical of the media’s inflaming of the Kosovo issue; for warning against the demonization of all ethnic Albanians; and for criticizing the chauvinistic version of Serbian nationalism being used by conservatives. Dragiša Pavlović, “Potcenjuje se srpski nacionalizam,” *Borba*, September 25, 1987, p. 3; *Borba*, September 11, 1987. See also Slavoljub Dukić, *Borba*, August 26, 1991, p. 11; *Borba*, August 27, p. 11; *Borba*, August 28, p. 13; *Borba*, August 29, p. 11.

1988–90: THREATS TO THE STATUS QUO

The conservative coalition, although it had consolidated control over the Serbian party organization, still faced threats from reformist forces in other Yugoslav republic and provincial organizations (Serbia was only one of eight), as well as in the federal government, especially as the economic situation continued to deteriorate. Slovenia, with strong liberal and democratic currents, was in the vanguard of increasingly vocal calls for an end to the one-party system and for Yugoslavia to move closer to the west, as well as very sharp criticisms of the Yugoslav army.<sup>49</sup> Also threatening were the successes of Federal Prime Minister Ante Marković, a strong reformer who, despite Serbian opposition, managed to get Federal Assembly approval for radical transformation of the Yugoslav economy.<sup>50</sup>

RESPONSES TO THE THREATS. Over the course of 1988 and 1989, Milošević and his allies attempted to subvert the party leadership in other Yugoslav republics and to weaken the federal government through a strategy of appealing to an aggressive version of Serbian nationalism. This strategy was viable despite the Serbs' minority status in Yugoslavia, because Serbs were over-represented among politically relevant actors including communist party officials and members in other republics, and within the federal bureaucracies.<sup>51</sup> As long as this remained the case, Serbian conservatives could "legiti-

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49. Tomaž Mastnak, "Civil Society in Slovenia," in Jim Seroka and Vukašin Pavlović, eds., *The Tragedy of Yugoslavia: The Failure of Democratic Transformation* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), pp. 49–66; Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military*, pp. 78–88.

50. Marković, who became federal prime minister in March 1989, pushed the Federal Assembly to pass constitutional amendments setting the foundation for a market economy and for private enterprise to play a large role in the economy. He circumvented unanimity requirements (and thus the Serbian veto) by declaring further reforms as "urgent measures," which required only two-thirds support in the Assembly, and called for an end to subsidies for unprofitable enterprises. By the end of 1989, Marković had the strong support of the federal communist party apparatus, much of the Federal Assembly, the Croatian party and government, and foreign governments and financial institutions. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 66–71.

51. This condition was clearly present within the "inner" Serbia (85 percent Serb), Vojvodina (56 percent Serb), and Montenegro (70 percent Montenegrin and Serb). By the early 1980s Serbs made up 60–70 percent of the army's officer corps and 47 percent of all communist party members in the country; they dominated key parts of the federal bureaucracy, and made up disproportionately large parts of the party membership in Croatia (around 35 percent) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (47 percent). Although at the upper levels of the federal bureaucracy an official policy of quotas existed, these were determined not by nationality but by republic. Thus Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia held positions based on their republic status rather than on their nationality. Within the bureaucracy itself Serbs also tended to dominate; for example, 50 percent of the foreign ministry and diplomatic service came from "inner" Serbia alone (without Kosovo or Vojvodina), which held only 25 percent of the country's population: *Vreme* (Belgrade), September 30, 1991, p. 33. See also Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*.

mately" gain power in all of Yugoslavia (and thereby legally recentralize the country) if they could dominate the federal party and state collective leaderships by controlling at least five of the eight votes.

To this end Serbian conservatives continued to focus on the image of threatened Serbs in Kosovo. They staged mass rallies of tens of thousands in every major town in Serbia as well as in other republics and in front of party headquarters and during party meetings; these rallies, decrying the "atrocities" in Kosovo, called for party leaders to step down.<sup>52</sup> The result was that the party leaderships in Vojvodina and Montenegro were ousted in October 1988 and January 1989.<sup>53</sup> The Kosovo party leadership, which had been hand-picked by the conservatives in Belgrade, was also pressured to acquiesce in the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy and the recentralization of Serbia. Although these moves provoked massive demonstrations and strikes among the province's Albanian population to protest the threat to its autonomy, in March 1989 the Kosovo assembly, subjected to fraud and manipulation by Belgrade, voted to end the province's autonomy.<sup>54</sup>

Similar pressure was also put on the Croatian government. Massive rallies organized from Belgrade were held in the rural Serb-majority region around Knin, with the intention of eventually moving on to Zagreb to overthrow the Croatian party leadership.<sup>55</sup> Likewise the ruling party in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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52. These rallies drew on social dissatisfaction caused by the increasingly poor economic situation as well as images of persecution of Kosovo Serbs. They denounced the existing party leaderships at the federal level and in other republics of betraying the interest of Serbs. They were portrayed by the Serbian regime as an "anti-bureaucratic revolution," although, as one commentator points out, they never criticized the Serbian bureaucracy. Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 206–207. One notable feature of these massive rallies was the presence of many posters and slogans praising Milošević personally (*RFE Situation Report* No. 8/88, September 23, 1988). See also the interview with former Serbian party leader, Dragoslav Marković, "Naš mir je, ipak, bio bolje," *Borba*, August 17–18, 1991, pp. 10–11. The direct link between this anti-reformist movement and extremist Serbian nationalists is seen in the fact that Mirko Jović, an organizer of the 1988 rallies, is also the founder of the Serbian guerrilla group "Beli orlovi," accused by Helsinki Watch of numerous atrocities against civilians in Croatia and Bosnia. Helsinki Watch has requested that Jović himself be investigated for war crimes. Helsinki Watch, *War Crimes in Bosnia Hercegovina* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992), p. 6; *Globus* (Zagreb), August 28, 1992, pp. 11–12, citing *Duga* (Belgrade).

53. For details, see Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 170–172, 208; and *RFE Situation Reports*, Yugoslavia, Nos. 8 and 9, September 23 and October 11, 1988. One Montenegrin party official in October 1988 noted that "the protests about the terrorizing of the Serbian and Montenegrin minorities in Kosovo by the Albanian majority" was the work of Serbian "extremists." Reuters, October 13, 1988.

54. *Yugoslavia: Crisis in Kosovo* (New York: Helsinki Watch, 1990); Michael W. Galligan, et al., "The Kosovo Crisis and Human Rights in Yugoslavia," *Record of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (April 1991), pp. 227–231; Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 179–190.

55. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 130; the Serb-majority region's population was 65 percent Serb, and it included about 25 percent of Croatia's Serbian population; the rest lived in ethnically-mixed regions where they were not a majority.

discovered that Serbia's secret police were active in the republic.<sup>56</sup> In Slovenia the plan was cruder—hundreds of intellectuals and dissidents were to be arrested and the army was to be used to put down protests.<sup>57</sup>

The conservatives' strategy of consolidating control over the other republics through the use of aggressive Serbian nationalism was accompanied by increasingly vehement media demonization not only of Albanians, but also of Croats,<sup>58</sup> as well as an active campaign to portray Tito's Yugoslavia as specifically anti-Serbian.<sup>59</sup> It claimed that an authoritarian, Serb-dominated and centralized Yugoslavia was the only way to ensure the security and interests of all Serbs: such a Yugoslavia also, not coincidentally, would ensure the power interests of the conservative Serbian elites. In the face of the deteriorating economy, Milošević blamed Marković's reforms, and put forward his own program that rejected even the most modest of the reformists' proposals for economic and political change.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile the army, under Defense Minister Branko Mamula, openly sided with conservative positions and harshly attacked the political opposition. In the military itself, conservative Marxist-Leninist indoctrination was stepped up.<sup>61</sup> The army also endorsed Milošević's neo-socialist economic and political program, stressing in particular continued monopoly of the communist party and recentralization of the state.<sup>62</sup> In cooperation with Serbian conservatives,

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56. Milan Andrejevich, "Serbia Accused of Interfering in Bosnian Affairs," *RFE*, October 23, 1989, cited in Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military*, p. 128.

57. *Mladina* (Ljubljana), May 20, 1988.

58. Images were stressed which evoked the specter of the wartime Croatian fascists, including prime-time television broadcasts of previously unshown graphic films from the Ustaša concentration camps. The implication—and at times explicit conclusions—of these and other such images was that Croats as a people were "genocidal." On the television images, see Biljana Bakić, "The Role of the Media in the Yugoslav Wars," draft master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, Spring 1992; see also Ivo Banac, "The Fearful Asymmetry of War: The Causes and Consequences of Yugoslavia's Demise," *Daedalus*, Spring 1992, pp. 141–174.

59. For example, see Robert M. Hayden, "Recounting the Dead: The Discovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Yugoslavia," in Rubie S. Watson, ed., *Memory and Opposition under State Socialism* (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1993), citing Ljubomir Tadić, "Kominterni i Nacionalno Pitanje Jugoslavije," *Književne novine*, September 15, 1988.

60. Milošević called for more efficient use of existing resources rather than any structural changes, emphasized "social ownership" rather than private property, stressed the priority of reforming (that is, strengthening) the federal organs, and rejected even the possibility of nonsocialist political parties, Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 55–58. On the multiparty system, see Milošević, in *NIN*, July 3, 1988, p. 14–15; Slobodan Vučetić, "Travna država slobodnih ljudi," in *NIN*, July 30, 1989, pp. 10–15, cited in Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 58.

61. Anton Bebler, "Political Pluralism and the Yugoslav Professional Military," in Seroka, *Tragedy*, pp. 126–127, 129.

62. Indeed, this platform, laid out in July 1989 by Defense Secretary Kadrijević at the Conference of the Yugoslav Army's party organization, was "the most conservative of all the explicitly articulated platforms in Yugoslavia and the most dogmatic as far as political pluralism was concerned." Bebler, "Political Pluralism," pp. 129–131.

the military openly attacked reformists' calls to democratize the country, to reduce the military's political role, and to reform the military-industrial complex. Moreover, statements by top army officers "made it clear that they viewed the Army's internal mission in orthodox ideological terms."<sup>63</sup>

EFFECT OF THE RESPONSE. Although this strategy gained Serbia control over four of the eight federal republics and provinces, and placed the purported threats to Serbdom at the center of political discourse, it also provoked backlashes in the other republics. In Slovenia, publication of the army's plans to crush dissent radicalized the party and wider population in Slovenia, where by mid-1988 an unofficial referendum on independence was held and the party began advocating introduction of a multi-party system. In Croatia, a bastion of conservatism since 1971, the Serbian moves provoked the reformist minority, so that by October 1988 the Croatian party proposed dismantling the communist party's leading role and encouraging private property.<sup>64</sup> Even conservative Serbs within the Croatian leadership criticized Milošević's strategy.<sup>65</sup> Likewise in Bosnia, which had previously been supportive of Milošević, the aggressive nationalist strategy and the threat to the Bosnian party leadership led it to distance itself from Serbia's positions.<sup>66</sup>

By the end of 1989, reformist forces had taken over the Croatian party, and both the Slovene and Croatian parties had scheduled multi-party elections for the spring of 1990 (despite attempts by conservative Serb allies of Milošević to prevent this in Croatia).<sup>67</sup> An attempt by Milošević to recentralize the federal party at an extraordinary League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) Congress in January 1990 failed as the Slovene party walked out when its proposal for *de jure* party independence was rejected, and the Croatian, Bosnian and Macedonian parties refused to continue the meeting.

#### 1990: THREATS TO THE STATUS QUO

In 1990, the greatest threat yet to the conservative Serbian coalition and its allies arose—the emergence of a political system in which the general population

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63. *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.

64. Stipe Šušar (one of the most orthodox of the Croatian leadership), October 17–19, 1988, in RFE Situation Report, Yugoslavia, No. 10/88, November 11, 1988.

65. For example, Dušan Dragosavac, a Serb and conservative leader in the Croatian party, denounced Milošević for creating national hatreds. *Danas*, December 13, 1988, cited in Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, p. 216.

66. Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military*, p. 128.

67. See Josip Jović, "Centar bez srpskog krila," *Nedeljna Dalmacija*, February 11, 1990, pp. 10–11.

would choose political leaderships. The strategy of recentralizing Yugoslavia by use of mob rallies and aggressive Serbian nationalism to pressure communist party leaderships was clearly no longer feasible; likewise, there was little chance of winning an election in a country where only 39 percent of the population was Serb, especially since Milošević's strategy had alienated most non-Serbs.

The specific threats were now coming from three directions. The first was the fact that in the spring 1990 elections in Slovenia and Croatia, openly anti-socialist parties committed to a loosening rather than tightening of political ties had taken power, due in large part to a backlash against Milošević.<sup>68</sup> Federal decision-making bodies thus now included representatives from these two republics, marking the introduction of an irreconcilable ideological difference in terms of economic and political viewpoints. Indeed, the Slovenian and Croatian governments soon put forward formal proposals for confederalizing the country, utterly rejecting Serbia's calls for recentralization. Given the pressure for multi-party elections in the other Yugoslav republics, and the fall of communist parties throughout the rest of Eastern Europe, it seemed likely that other republics would join these calls.<sup>69</sup>

The second set of threats came from the policies of federal Prime Minister Marković. By early 1990 these policies were quite successful in lowering inflation and improving the country's economic situation, and he was very popular, especially within Serbia.<sup>70</sup> Taking advantage of these successes, and looking ahead to multi-party elections, he pushed bills through the Federal Assembly legalizing a multi-party system in the entire country, and in July 1990 formed a political party to support his reforms.

The biggest challenge, however, came from within Serbia itself. Encouraged by the fall of communist regimes in the rest of Eastern Europe and the victory of noncommunists in Croatia and Slovenia, opposition forces in Serbia began

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68. On the Slovenian election, see Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 89–94; Milan Andrejevich, "On the Eve of the Slovenian Election," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 16 (April 20, 1990), pp. 32–38; on Croatia, see Milan Andrejevich, "Croatia Goes to the Polls," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 18 (May 4, 1990), pp. 33–37; and Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 94–102. On Milošević's role in the victory of the nationalist CDU in Croatia, see interview with former Croatian party head Stipe Šušvar, in "Jugoslavija nije razbijena i neće biti," *Nedeljna Borba*, May 5–6, 1990, p. 12.

69. Even the Bosnian communist party, formerly quite conservative, denounced Serbian presidency member Jović's statement that democratization was endangering the constitutional order of Yugoslavia. Enver Demirović, "I vanredni kongres obnove," *Borba*, May 18, 1990, p. 3.

70. In May 1990 Marković's popularity in Serbia surpassed that of Milošević; while the Serbian leader received a 50 percent approval rating, the federal prime minister's positive rating in Serbia was 61 percent. *Borba*, May 21, 1990.

organizing and pressuring the regime for multi-party elections, holding massive protest rallies in May. Although Milošević argued that elections could not be held until the Kosovo issue was resolved, by June the Serbian regime recognized that elections were unavoidable.<sup>71</sup>

RESPONSE TO THE THREATS. Within Serbia, the regime again resorted to the issue of Kosovo, working assiduously to provoke violent resistance from the Albanian population.<sup>72</sup> Despite these actions and the fact that the new Serbian constitution, adopted in September, effectively stripped Kosovo of its autonomy, the Albanian response was peaceful resistance.

While turning up the heat on Kosovo, the Serbian party also had to deal with opposition parties at home, including nationalist ones from the right (most notably the Serbian Renewal Movement, SRM, headed by writer Vuk Drašković), as well as from civically-oriented democratic parties. In the face of anti-communist nationalist party opposition, and in order to win the necessary two-thirds of the Serbian vote (since the party had alienated the non-Serbian 33 percent of the republic's population), the Serbian conservatives first undertook a strategy of averting a split of the communist party into a large pro-reform social democratic party that would more credibly appeal to the population's economic interest, and a small hard-line party (as happened in the rest of Eastern Europe). The Serbian party was renamed the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). The regime continued its control over the mass media, and greatly limited access of opposition parties to television. Economic problems were blamed on the "anti-Serbian" policies of Yugoslav federal Prime Minister Marković. The government also printed \$2 billion (U.S.) in dinars for overdue worker salaries just before the December elections, with funds taken illegally from the federal treasury.

On issues of nationalism, the party had already very much distanced itself from the policies of Tito, especially those which forbade public expression of national sentiment. This fact, plus the fact that Yugoslav agriculture had remained in private hands, ensured the SPS most of the vote of peasants and those one generation off the land (a majority of the voters), and thus dampened anticommunist sentiment against it.<sup>73</sup> The SPS, linking the nationalist SRM to

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71. Dušan Radulović and Nebojša Spaić, *U Potrazi za Demokratijom* (Belgrade: Dosije, 1991).

72. In July, Serbia dissolved the Kosovo Assembly and took over all institutions of the province; all Albanian language media were closed down; all Albanians were fired from positions of responsibility and replaced with Serbs, many fanatically anti-Albanian; Albanian workers were fired without cause; and there was a general harassment of the Albanian population. Galligan, "The Kosovo Crisis," pp. 231–234 and 239–258; Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 262–263.

73. "Sto dana višestranačke Srbije," *NIN*, March 29, 1991, pp. 77–79.

Serbian extremists during World War II, portrayed the SRM as wanting to drag Serbia into war, and painted itself as a moderating and progressive force.<sup>74</sup> The SPS managed to win an overwhelming majority of parliamentary seats with the support of 47 percent of the electorate (72 percent of Serbia's Serbs).<sup>75</sup>

But the challenge to the conservatives continued from outside of Serbia, in the context of the Yugoslav federation. The Serbian conservatives' response was to continue to demonize other ethnic nationalities, and also to begin provoking confrontations and violent conflicts along ethnic lines and to discredit the very idea of a federal Yugoslavia, calling it the creation of a Vatican-Comintern conspiracy.<sup>76</sup>

Even before the 1990 elections the Belgrade media had stepped up its campaign against Croatia, and after the elections it accused the new Croatian ruling party, the Croatian Democratic Union (CDU) of planning to massacre Croatia's Serbian residents.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, in the May 1990 elections only a small minority of Croatia's Serbs had supported the Serbian nationalist party, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDP).<sup>78</sup> Following the elections, throughout the summer of 1990 the Serbian media also ran stories detailing the anti-Serb massacres of the World War II Croatian Ustaša regime, furthering the implicit link with the CDU,<sup>79</sup> and Belgrade and its allies began to provoke violent conflict in the Serbian-populated areas of Croatia. Between July 1990 and March 1991, Belgrade's allies took over the SDP, replacing moderate leaders with hard-liners. It portrayed the CDU as genocidal Ustaša; rejected all compromises with Zagreb; held mass rallies and erected barricades; threatened moderate Serbs and non-SDP members who refused to go along with the confrontational strategy; provoked armed incidents with the Croatian police, and stormed villages adjacent to the regions already controlled by Serbian forces and an-

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74. Forty-nine percent of SPS voters stressed the importance of good inter-ethnic relations. *Vreme*, January 6, 1992.

75. For a detailed description of how the SPS managed to subvert the elections and cripple the opposition, see Radulović and Spaić, *U Potrazi za Demokratijom*.

76. Magaš, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 263–264.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

78. In the 1990 elections, most of Croatia's Serbs, especially those who lived in ethnically-mixed and more economically-developed parts of the republic, had rejected the overt nationalism of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDP), and had voted instead for multi-ethnic parties. While 23 percent of Croatia's Serbs preferred the SDP, 46 percent preferred the reform communists and 16 percent the Coalition of National Reconciliation, both of which advocated harmonious inter-ethnic relations and improved material well-being, and rejected Milošević's strategy of recentralizing the country. Ivan Šiber, "The Impact of Nationalism, Values, and Ideological Orientations on Multi-Party Elections in Croatia," in Seroka, *Tragedy of Yugoslavia*, p. 143.

79. Hayden, "Recounting the Dead," p. 13.

nexed them to their territory.<sup>80</sup> Throughout this period, conciliatory moves by the Croatian regime were rejected, and moderate Serbs who disagreed with Belgrade's conflictual strategy were branded as traitors.<sup>81</sup> Although the campaign rhetoric and the actions of hard-liners in the CDU did give Croatia's Serbs cause for concern, rather than fostering negotiation and compromise with Zagreb, Belgrade exacerbated the Croatian Serbs' concerns.

Following Milošević's December 1990 victory in the Serbian elections, the situation in Croatia became even more confrontational as a hard-line group within SDP, working closely with Belgrade and armed by the Yugoslav Army, began to provoke armed conflicts with Croatian police in areas where Serbs were not in the majority.<sup>82</sup> Croatian Serbs were increasingly pressured to toe the SDP line, and Croats in the Serb-held "Krajina" region were besieged by Serbian armed forces and pressured to leave.<sup>83</sup> These purposely provoked conflicts were publicly characterized by Belgrade as "ethnic conflicts," the result of ancient hatreds, and the Yugoslav army was called in to separate the groups. At the end of February, Krajina proclaimed its autonomy from Croatia.

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80. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 131 and 134; Miloš Vasić, "Labudova pesma dr Milana Babića," *Vreme*, February 10, 1992, pp. 13–15.

81. For example, in June 1990 the CDU offered SDP leader Jovan Rašković a position as vice-president of the parliament; Belgrade's pressure on Rašković and other SDP members led him to reject the offer and walk out of the assembly, and to end negotiations with Zagreb on the Serbs' status in Croatia; Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 86. During the referendum on sovereignty in August, though Zagreb condemned the voting, it made no move to stop it, or to remove the barricades that Serbian forces had thrown up around the territory. *Ibid.*, p. 134. Indeed, outside observers note that despite Serbian accusations of a genocidal regime, Zagreb continued to moderate its rhetoric and act with "restraint." Helsinki Watch, "Human Rights in a Dissolving Yugoslavia," January 9, 1991, p. 7. In October, moderate SDP representatives from areas outside of Krajina (Slavonia, Baranja, Kordun, Istria), in negotiations with Zagreb, received official recognition of the SDP as the legitimate representative of Croatia's Serbian population and the promise (later confirmed) that the draft Croatian constitution would not include the description of the republic as the "national state of the Croatian people," one of the Serbs' main grievances. The CDU delegation also promised to resolve all other disputed questions quickly. SDP hard liners from Knin, however, denounced the moderate Serbs as traitors. Vasić, "Labudova pesma."

82. Jovan Rašković, one of the founders of the SDP, notes that at a February 26 meeting of the SDP leadership, 38 out of 42 members supported his call for moderation against extremist Milan Babić, who advocated a hard-line confrontational and military approach and who was in direct contact with Belgrade. The next day Babić proceeded to found his own party, the SDS Krajina; Rašković stated that at this time "for the first time I warned that this radical group which wanted to take over the SDP is a danger for us and that war will definitely result if they exacerbate things." See interview with Rašković, *Globus*, February 14, 1992, pp. 14–15. Shortly after this, armed clashes with Croatian police broke out in Pakrac, in western Slavonia, and at the Plitvice Lakes national park on the edge of Krajina.

83. The Croat-majority village of Kijevu outside Knin was besieged for eight months. Srdan Španović, "Čudo u Kirjevu," *Danas*, March 12, 1991, pp. 18–20.

These Serbian moves provoked Croat hard-liners to take repressive actions against Serbs in areas where the ruling party controlled the local government: these actions were pointed to by Belgrade's allies as proof of the threat to Serbs.<sup>84</sup> Despite calls by Croatian hard-liners to use military force, Zagreb lacked significant stocks of weapons (although it was seeking sources), and Croatian president Franjo Tuđman clearly feared providing the Yugoslav army with an excuse to crush the Croatian government. He was thus forced to accept the army's gradually expanding occupation of the areas where the SDP's authoritarian rule prevailed. This period saw the groundwork for a similar strategy being laid in Bosnia by Belgrade's ally there, Radovan Karadžić, head of that republic's SDS.<sup>85</sup>

As conflict heated up in Croatia, in negotiations over the future of Yugoslavia, Milošević and his allies refused to budge from his call for a more tightly centralized federation. He declared that if his demand was rejected, then the borders of Serbia would be redrawn so that all Serbs would live in one state.<sup>86</sup>

EFFECT OF THE RESPONSE. The result of this strategy of conflict was to further the destruction of Yugoslavia. The provocations and repression of even moderate Serbs in Croatia increased the territory under the Yugoslav army's control, and provoked reactions on the part of extremist Croats.

#### 1991: THREATS TO THE STATUS QUO

This apparently successful strategy was suddenly interrupted when Serbia's political opposition held massive protest rallies in Belgrade on March 9 and 10.<sup>87</sup> Appealing to the wider population, the opposition, led by SRM chief Vuk Drašković, threatened to oust the regime by force of street rallies. Initially called to denounce the regime's tight control and manipulation of the media, the rallies also condemned Milošević's disastrous economic policies and his policy

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84. For example, in western Slavonia, some hard-line CDU members from Hercegovina, "formerly petty criminals," were put into the police force and began harassing Serbs, and even local Croats were frightened. The result was that the SDP, which had little support in the region before, began to attract many Serbs. Zoran Daskalović, "Skupljenje povjerenja," *Danas*, March 12, 1991, pp. 13–14; Milan Bečević, "Forsiranje straha," *Danas*, March 12, 1991, pp. 16–17.

85. Karadžić openly declared the goal of drawing ethnic borders, citing the Krajina experience, but ignoring the Muslims as a factor. Yet Bosnia's population was so ethnically intermixed that there really were no ethnic borders. See Golubović, Campbell and Golubović, "How not to Divide," in *Why Bosnia*. Karadžić also declared that "we have given Milošević a mandate to represent Serbs in Bosnia-Hercegovina if Yugoslavia disintegrates." *Borba*, February 26, 1991, p.7.

86. *Vreme*, March 4, 1991.

87. See Helsinki Watch, "Yugoslavia: The March 1991 Demonstrations in Belgrade," May 1, 1991; Zoran Miljatić, "9. mart, zvanična verzija," *NIN*, March 29, 1991, pp. 11–13.

of provoking conflict with other republics.<sup>88</sup> They called for the SPS to step down from power as other East European communists had done. Although Milošević's immediate reaction was to call the army to put down the demonstrations (since the republic's police forces were all in Kosovo), the military refused to use massive force.<sup>89</sup> This marked the start of the democratic opposition's rapid rise in popularity, and the beginning of an open split within the ruling SPS by democratic, pro-reform forces. Shortly thereafter massive strikes (including one of 700,000 workers) aimed specifically against Milošević's regime shook Serbia.

RESPONSE TO THE THREATS. Given the refusal of the army to use force, Milošević was forced to negotiate with his opponents. He accepted limited economic reform, printed more money to pay workers, and discussed the formation of a multi-party Serbian national council. At the end of March he secretly met with Croatian President Tudjman to agree on a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, thus removing the possibility of Tudjman taking advantage of Milošević's then weak position. In April Milošević finally accepted the principle of confederation, and in early June, during talks over the future of Yugoslavia, he agreed to the principles on which such a confederation would be based.<sup>90</sup> Belgrade also pressured its Serbian allies in Croatia to negotiate with Zagreb, although the Serbs refused to reach an agreement.<sup>91</sup>

Yet at the same time, the strategy of provoking conflict along ethnic lines was also stepped up. Milošević himself labeled the protesters "enemies of Serbia" who were working with Albanians, Croats, and Slovenes to try to destroy Serbia, and ominously stressed the "great foreign pressures and threats" being exerted on Serbia and which gave "support to the forces of disintegration of Yugoslavia."<sup>92</sup> The media stepped up its portrayals of Croatia as a fascist Ustaša state, and in April graphically reported on the opening of caves in Bosnia-Herzegovina filled with the bones of thousands of Serb victims of the Ustaša; in August it broadcast the mass interment of the remains.<sup>93</sup>

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88. For a list of initial demands, see Milan Bečević, "Rafali u demokraciju," *Danas*, March 12, 1991, pp. 29–31; see also "Objava mira umesto rata," *Politika*, May 8, 1991, p. 8.

89. On use of force, see Helsinki Watch, "Yugoslavia," May 1991.

90. See "Kompromis i ustupci korak ka rešenju," *Borba*, June 7, 1991, pp. 1 and 3; and interview with Bosnian president Izetbegović, co-author (along with Macedonian president Gligorov) of the compromise plan, "Država na ljudskim pravima," *Vreme*, June 17, 1991, pp. 12–14.

91. Tanjug, April 15 and 16, 1991. This occasion was used, however, to further purge the SDP of moderates with the accusation of being "traitors" for having talked with Tudjman. This period saw further marginalization of other moderates, including Rašković, who was sent to Belgrade. Vasić, "Labudova Pesma," p. 14.

92. Milošević speech to Serbian parliament, *Politika*, May 31, 1991, pp. 1–2.

93. The funeral, presided over by the Serbian Orthodox patriarch, included a procession of coffins that stretched for one and one-half kilometers. Hayden, "Recounting the Dead," p. 13.

This period was also one of close cooperation between the Yugoslav army, the Belgrade regime, and the Bosnian SDP, as the three sides implemented "Project RAM," a plan to use military force to expand Serbia's borders westward and create a new Serbian Yugoslavia.<sup>94</sup> Thus in Bosnia in the spring of 1991, the SDP set up "Serbian Autonomous Regions" which were declared no longer under the authority of the republic government, a repetition of the Krajina strategy.<sup>95</sup>

The SPS at this time also began an open alliance with the neo-fascist Serbian Radical Party led by Vojislav Šešelj, ensuring Šešelj's election to the Serbian parliament in a by-election.<sup>96</sup> Šešelj's guerrilla groups were active in the ensuing escalation of conflict in Croatia. In this period, Belgrade also exerted growing pressure on moderate Serb leaders in Croatia's ethnically-mixed Slavonia region (where Serbs were not in the majority) to accept its confrontational strategy; in May, Krajina held a referendum to join with Serbia, and Belgrade-supported guerrillas, including Šešelj's "Četniks," flowed into Croatia, terrorizing both Serb and non-Serb populations in the more developed regions of Eastern and Western Slavonia (neither of which had Serb majorities).<sup>97</sup> These forces attacked Croatian police, in at least one case massacring and mutilating them, and began a policy of forcible ethnic expulsions in areas coming under their control. Moderate SDP leaders denounced Belgrade for provoking and orchestrating this confrontational strategy.<sup>98</sup>

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94. On SDP cooperation with the Yugoslav army, see "Skica pakla," *Vreme*, March 9, 1992, p. 25. On project RAM, see *Vreme*, September 30, 1991; and the stenographic notes of the federal cabinet meeting at which this plan was discussed, in *Vreme*, September 23, 1991, pp. 5–12. Related to RAM, just after the street protests, Yugoslav Defense Minister Kadijević held secret talks in Moscow with Soviet Defense Minister Yazov (who would several months later lead the coup attempt against Gorbachev), and without the knowledge of civilian officials arranged for a large quantity of weapons, including planes, rocket systems, and helicopters, to be delivered to the Yugoslav army (*ibid.*, p. 7).

95. Momčilo Petrović, "Odlučivaće sila?" *NIN*, April 19, 1991, p. 11.

96. Miloš Vasić, "Falsifikat originala," *Vreme*, June 17, 1991, pp. 8–9. Šešelj appealed to a virulent Serbian nationalism that demonized other nationalities, especially Albanians and Croats, called for building a Greater Serbia including all of Croatia "except what can be seen from the top of Zagreb's cathedral," and advocated expulsion of non-Serbs from Serbia. See the program of his "Chetnik movement" in *Velika Srbija*, July 1990, pp. 2–3.

97. Other Belgrade-supported paramilitary groups include those of Arkan ("Tigers"), and of Mirko Jović ("White Eagles"). On Belgrade's support of these groups and the local Serbian forces, see "Helsinki Watch Letter to Slobodan Milošević and General Blagoje Adžić," January 21, 1992, in *War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New York: Human Rights Watch, August 1992), p. 275. On the referendum, see *Politika*, May 13, 1991, pp. 1 and 5.

98. Vojislav Vukčević, head of the SDP organization in the Baranja region of Croatia, bordering on Serbia, in *NIN*, April 19, 1991, p. 14. Former SDP leader Rašković also denounced the hard-liners who had taken over the party, as well as Belgrade's strategy of conflict. *NIN*, May 3, 1991, p. 15.

In the face of this pressure, and in preparation for the new confederal agreement, in late June the Croatian government declared the start of a process of disassociation from Yugoslavia, specifically stating that it was not an act of unilateral secession and that Zagreb continued to recognize the authority of federal organs, including the army.<sup>99</sup> When the Serb-controlled army attacked Slovenia following its own declaration of sovereignty, Croatia refrained from helping the Slovenes, in order to avoid giving the army an excuse to attack Croatia.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, the Yugoslav army, despite its public promises not to attack Croatia,<sup>101</sup> escalated the conflict in Croatia, and Serbian forces continued their strategy of provoking conflicts in Slavonia and on the borders of Krajina, terrorizing civilian populations, destroying Croatian villages and Croat parts of towns, bombing cities to drive out the population, and forcing Serbs on threat of death to join them and point out Croat-owned houses.<sup>102</sup> Serbs who openly disagreed with these policies were terrorized and silenced.<sup>103</sup> The human rights group Helsinki Watch noted that in the period through August 1991 (when the Croats finally went on the offensive and Croat extremists themselves undertook atrocities against civilians), by far the most egregious human rights abuses were committed by the Serbian guerrillas and the Yugoslav army, including indiscriminate use of violence to achieve their goals of terrorizing the Serb population into submission and driving out the non-Serb population.<sup>104</sup> This policy, by provoking extremists in Croatia into action, in effect

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99. See the report by Chuck Sudetic, "2 Yugoslav States Vote Independence to Press Demands," *New York Times*, June 26, 1991, pp. A1 and A6.

100. These Yugoslav army attacks seemed in part to be in response to U.S. Secretary of State Baker's declaration in Belgrade that the most important U.S. priority continued to be a united Yugoslavia, which was apparently crucial in assuring the army that the international costs of military action would not be unbearable. For Baker's statement, see Thomas Friedman, "Baker Urges End to Yugoslav Rift," *New York Times*, June 22, 1991, pp. 1 and 4. Indeed, the usually reliable independent Belgrade weekly *Vreme* reported that just before Baker's visit the United States had sent special emissaries to offer the Yugoslavs the help of the 82nd Airborne Division if necessary; and a few days before the visit, Assistant Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger mentioned the possibility of NATO or CSCE aid to Yugoslavia. Roksanda Ninčić, "Kraj druge Jugoslavije," *Vreme*, July 1, 1991, p. 6.

101. Cited in *Danas*, July 23, 1991, p. 7.

102. See "Helsinki Watch Report on Human Rights Abuses in the Croatian Conflict," September 1991, in *War Crimes*, pp. 230–272; and "Helsinki Watch Letter to Milošević and Adžić," pp. 276–302.

103. See *NIN*, November 8, 1991, p. 15; *Vreme*, November 4, 1991, pp. 12–15; and interview with moderate Zagreb-based Serbian Democratic Forum leader Milorad Pupovac in *Vreme*, October 21, 1991, pp. 12–14.

104. Helsinki Watch noted that "the majority" of human rights abuses by Croats "involved discrimination against Serbs," where individual managers demanded that Serb workers sign loyalty oaths to Croatia or be fired, as well as some police beatings; whereas abuses by the Serbian forces involved "physical maltreatment" and "egregious abuses against civilians and medical

became a self-fulfilling prophecy as the Serbian regime pointed to those atrocities as proof of its original charges.<sup>105</sup>

This war policy also destroyed the chances for Marković's reforms to succeed. Slovenia and Croatia, along with Serbia, had already been trying to block implementation of many aspects of his reform, but the Yugoslav army and Serbian guerrilla attacks killed any support in Slovenia and Croatia for a continued Yugoslavia, even among those who had advocated it; meanwhile, Milošević's moves to take over the federal presidency and marginalize the federal government by September 1991 led Marković to the conclusion that he had no choice but to resign. By summer, the army was also draining the federal hard currency reserves and taking up a vast proportion of the federal budget, which had been carefully managed by Marković.

The war also helped Milošević in his domestic crisis. In April 1991 the democratic opposition had been at a high point, predicting the imminent fall of the SPS. But the SPS used charges of genocide and the subsequent war in Croatia to suppress internal party dissent and to marginalize the democratic opposition by drowning out concerns about economic and political reform, and by accusing those who questioned the war of treason. The regime also used the war to try to destroy the opposition physically: it first sent to the front reservists from counties that had voted for opposition parties. Opposition leaders and outspoken anti-war activists were also sent to the front. Any criticism was met with physical threats and violence from neo-fascist gangs.<sup>106</sup> The regime also targeted the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina (an absolute majority in seven counties); although they were only three percent of Serbia's population, they represented seven to eight percent of reservists at the front and twenty percent of casualties.<sup>107</sup>

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personnel," including the use of civilians as "human shields" in battle. It also accused the Yugoslav army of committing "serious human rights violations by attacking civilian targets with Serbian forces," including the mortar bombing of such cities as Vukovar and Osijek. Helsinki Watch ("Yugoslavia: Human Rights Abuses in the Croatian Conflict," September 1991). See also Blaine Harden, "Observers Accuse Yugoslav Army," on EC observers' similar charges, *Washington Post*, January 17, 1992, p. A23. The head of the main democratic nationalist party in Serbia, Vuk Drašković, has publicly stated that "there was no particular need for war in Slavonia." *Danas*, February 18, 1992. See also his denunciation of the war in *Vreme*, November 4, 1991, pp. 9–11.

105. For details of atrocities and abuses by Croatian forces, see Helsinki Watch, "Yugoslavia: Human Rights Abuses in the Croatian Conflict, September 1991"; and "Helsinki Watch Letter to Franjo Tudjman," February 13, 1992, in *War Crimes*, pp. 310–359.

106. Milan Milošević, "Srbi protiv Srba," *Vreme*, October 21, 1991, pp. 8–11; Helsinki Watch, Letter to Milošević and Adžić, *War Crimes*, pp. 302 and 304; Milan Milošević, "Panonska pobuna," *Vreme*, November 18, 1991, pp. 12–15.

107. In addition, 25,000 Hungarians fled Serbia. The leader of Serbia's Hungarian community described this policy as "violent changing of the ethnic structure" of Vojvodina. "Bekstvo od rata," *Vreme*, January 20, 1992, p. 31.

By September 1991 the army was attacking Dubrovnik, and thousands of Serbian and Montenegrin reservists were ranging around Bosnia-Herzegovina, terrorizing the Slavic Muslim population.<sup>108</sup> But at the same time there was growing discontent in Serbia about the war.<sup>109</sup> Thousands of young men hid or left the country to avoid being drafted, and whole units of reservists deserted from the front.<sup>110</sup> It was also clear that the SPS's hard-line allies in Moscow had failed in their attempts to seize power.<sup>111</sup> By November 1991, when the European Community threatened economic sanctions against Serbia, and Croat forces began taking back territory, Serbia accepted the principle of UN peacekeeping forces in the areas it controlled in Croatia.

By this time, the opposition in Serbia was again gaining momentum, drawing on the anti-war sentiment and discontent over continued economic decline. Condemning the SPS's economic policy, its war in Croatia, and even its conflictual policy in Kosovo, the opposition by February 1992 was gathering hundreds of thousands of signatures calling for Milošević's resignation and the convening of a constitutional assembly.<sup>112</sup> Once again, the regime pulled back, and it finally allowed UN troops to move into Krajina, put pressure on hardliners in Krajina, allowed moderate Serbs to negotiate with Zagreb,<sup>113</sup> set up meetings with the remaining four Yugoslav republics to negotiate a future Yugoslavia, and called for talks with Croatia.<sup>114</sup>

But at the same time, Serbia also stepped up the pressure on Bosnia, instituting an economic blockade of the areas not controlled by its SDP allies.<sup>115</sup> It now portrayed as the ethnic enemy the allegedly fundamentalist-Muslim

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108. On reservists, see Mladen Klemenčić, "Srpska kama u trbuhu Bosne," *Globus*, September 27, 1991, p. 9.

109. For polling data, see Milan Milošević, *Vreme*, September 23, 1991, pp. 29–33.

110. See Dragan Todorović, "To nije njihova kolubarska bitka," *Vreme*, October 7, 1991, pp. 24–26; Milan Milošević, "Marš preko Drine," *Vreme*, October 7, 1991, pp. 20–22; Torov, *Danas*, October 1, 1991, p. 32.

111. In fact, the SPS was the only ruling party in Europe to have openly supported the attempted coup, declaring the beneficial effects of its success for the Serbian regime. See Strojani Cerović, "Staljinizam bez Kremļa," *Vreme*, August 26, 1991, pp. 16–17. For specific comments by SPS officials supporting the coup, see Hari Štajner, "Jeltsin preuzeo Gorbačova," *Vreme*, August 26, 1991, pp. 4–6; in *Vreme*, September 2, 1991; and in "Točak istorije ne može nazad," *Borba*, August 21, 1991, p. 4.

112. Milan Milošević, "Dogadjanje potpisa," *Vreme*, February 17, 1992, pp. 9–14; Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić, "Enough! Student Protest '92: The Youth of Belgrade in Quest of 'Another Serbia'," *The Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 11, Nos. 1–2 (Spring-Fall 1993), pp. 127–137.

113. See interview with chairman of CDU executive council Stipe Mesić, in *Globus*, February 7, 1992, pp. 6–7.

114. "Četiri republike za zajedničku državu," *Politika*, January 22, 1992, p. 1.

115. Helsinki Watch, *War Crimes*, p. 26.

population of Bosnia, who were said to be seeking to impose an Islamic state and to perpetrate genocide against the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, the same scenario was beginning in Bosnia. In December the SDP declared that it would form a republic, and in January 1992 the independent "Serbian Republic" was declared in the 66 percent of Bosnian territory that the SDP controlled, the "Serbian Autonomous Regions" that had been formed in 1991. SDP leader Radovan Karadžić declared at this time that Bosnia would never again be undivided.<sup>117</sup> Objecting to a referendum to be held in those parts of the republic not under SDP control, Serbian guerrilla forces began armed attacks on Croat and Muslim civilians in early March.<sup>118</sup> Despite this, the referendum, seeking approval for Bosnia-Herzegovina's independence, was approved by 63 percent of the republic's population (99 percent of those voting), including a large proportion of those Serbs who lived outside of SDP-controlled territory.<sup>119</sup> (Indeed, the Bosnian presidency continues to include Serbian members, as does the Bosnian army, whose deputy commander is a Serb; all have been branded traitors by the SDP.)

Within the next two months Serbian guerrilla groups had committed widespread atrocities, expelling and murdering non-Serbs, mostly in areas already controlled by the SDP.<sup>120</sup> By September 1992, Belgrade's Bosnian Serb allies had increased their territorial holdings by less than ten percent, to about seventy

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116. One example of this propaganda came in March 1992, at the end of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, when the SDP's press agency cited a made-up Koran verse in which, they claimed, Muslims were called on to kill Christians at the end of Ramadan. Ejub Šitković, "Kur'an po 'SRNI'," *Vreme*, April 27, 1992, p. 33. The Slavic Muslims of Bosnia are generally very secular. See Ivo Banac, "Bosnian Muslims: From Religious Community to Socialist Nationhood and Postcommunist Statehood, 1918-1992," in Mark Pinson, ed., *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 129-153.

117. The "Republic of the Serbian People of Bosnia-Herzegovina" was declared to include areas where Serbs were in a majority as well as in "those areas where the Serbian people is in a minority because of the genocide against it during the Second World War." Zehrudin Isaković, "Spor oko 'ako'," *Vreme*, January 13, 1992, pp. 17-18.

118. See Helsinki Watch, *War Crimes*, pp. 27-29; "Drugi Sarajevski atentat," *Globus*, March 6, 1992, pp. 3-6.

119. The SDP prevented the referendum from being carried out in the areas under its control, which included large numbers of non-Serbs. Although the SDP called for a total boycott by Serbs, 2 million people (63.4 percent of eligible voters) participated in the referendum. See *Referendum on Independence in Bosnia-Herzegovina: February 29-March 1, 1992*, cited in *War Crimes*.

120. For details of the atrocities and war, see *War Crimes; War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Vol. 2 (New York: Helsinki Watch, April 1993); Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide: The 1993 Pulitzer-Prize Winning Dispatches on the "Ethnic Cleansing" of Bosnia* (New York: Macmillan, 1993). Alexandra Stiglmeier, ed., *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Zehrudin Isaković, "Pocrveneli ljljani," *Vreme*, April 6, 1992, pp. 6-7.

percent. As in Krajina, almost the entire non-Serbian population were killed or driven out, and Serbian dissenters were silenced and repressed.<sup>121</sup>

EFFECT OF THE RESPONSE. The Serbian conservatives' strategy had a short-term goal of insuring their survival in power and preserving the structure of economic and political power in Serbia. In the long term, their strategy initially had the goal of creating a centralized, authoritarian Yugoslavia where the conservatives would crush all attempts at radical change and enforce their own orthodoxy. But when in 1990 the bases of political power shifted to the wider population, the conservatives were forced to change this strategy. Having discredited themselves in the eyes of the 61 percent of Yugoslavia's population that was non-Serb, the conservative coalition resorted to destroying the old multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, and creating on its ruins a new enlarged Serbian state with a large majority of Serbs in which they could use appeals to Serbian nationalism as a means of defining political interests, and thereby preserve the existing power structure. The violence itself and the retaliatory violence against innocent Serb civilians in Bosnia and Croatia have created a situation in which grievances defined in ethnic terms are sure to continue to play an important role in Serbian politics. Meanwhile, the regime has restructured and taken firmer control of the economy, and has blamed the accompanying economic hardships on the international sanctions.

### *Conclusion: Ethnic Conflict as a Political Strategy*

Violent conflict described and justified in terms of ethnic solidarity is not an automatic outgrowth of ethnic identity, or even of ethnic mobilization. Violence on a scale large enough to affect international security is the result of purposeful and strategic policies rather than irrational acts of the masses. Indeed, in the case of the former Yugoslavia there is much evidence that the "masses," especially in ethnically-mixed regions, did not want war and that violence was imposed by forces from outside. The current major conflicts taking place along ethnic lines throughout the world have as their main causes not ancient hatreds, but rather the purposeful actions of political actors who actively create violent conflict, selectively drawing on history in order to portray it as historically inevitable.<sup>122</sup>

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121. See, for example, Blaine Harden, "In Bosnia 'Disloyal Serbs' Share Plight of Opposition," *Washington Post*, August 24, 1992, pp. 1 and 14.

122. On Azerbaijan, see Dmitrii Furman, "Vozvrashchenie v tretii mir," *Svobodnaia mysl'*, No. 11 (1993), pp. 16–28; on various cases in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Georgii Derluguan, "Ethnic violence in the post-communist periphery," *Studies in Political Economy*, No. 41 (Summer 1993),

If such conflict is driven by domestic concerns, outside actors can try to prevent or moderate it by making the external costs of such conflict so high that the conflict itself would endanger the domestic power structure. The most obvious way is the use of military force. But to prevent such conflicts, the threat of force must be made early, and it must be credible. In the Yugoslav case the international community has not fulfilled either condition.

Such conflict might also be prevented or moderated by international attempts to influence the situation from within, striking at the root cause of conflictual behavior. While assuring minorities of their rights may be important, that alone does not address the roots of the conflict in cases such as this one. Rather, the target must be the real causes of conflictual policy: the provocation of violence by threatened elites, and the reasons for their conflictual behavior. Such a preventative policy must come early, but it is much less costly than a military solution. The international community can undertake policies such as ensuring multiple sources of mass information and active and early support for democratic forces. But in cases where domestic structural changes are being fostered by international actors, those actors must also be very attentive to the domestic political context into which they are intervening, and in particular should take into account the concerns of those who are most negatively affected by domestic changes. An example is to ensure those elites most affected by change of fall-back positions.

If violence along ethnic lines is caused by internal conflict, then negotiations over interests outside the domestic arena will be without effect, since the goal of the conflict is not in the international environment, *vis-à-vis* another state, but rather at home. To be truly effective, these internal factors must also be brought into negotiations.

What are the implications of this approach for understanding the link between nationalism and violent conflict in other parts of the world? If domestic conflict drives external conflict, and if the potential costs in the outside world are a key part of the domestic calculus, then we would expect such types of external conflict to be less likely in a truly threatening international environment. If the risk is too high, threatened elites will have more motivation to seek

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pp. 45–81; on Africa, Binaifer Nowrojee, *Divide and Rule: State Sponsored Ethnic Violence in Kenya* (New York: Africa Watch, 1993); *Somalia: A Government at War with its Own People* (New York: Africa Watch, 1990); Amnesty International, *Rwanda: Mass Murder by Government Supporters and Troops* (New York: Amnesty International, 1994); Catherine Watson, et al., *Transition in Burundi* (Washington, D.C.: American Council for Nationalities, 1993); on India, Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, "Modern Hate," *The New Republic*, March 22, 1993, pp. 24–29; on Lebanon, Barry Preisler, "Lebanon: The Rationality of National Suicide," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1988.

a compromise solution with challengers at home. On the other hand, in conditions where the external threat to security is minimal, threatened elites may be more tempted to use conflict in the external arena as one part of their domestic political strategy. The end of the Cold War may therefore have its primary effects on the international arena not directly, through its influence on the structure of the international system, but rather indirectly, in domestic spheres around the world.

What explains absence of ethnic conflict under conditions of change? In the Russian case, Gorbachev's evolutionary style of incremental reform, where he brought conservatives step-by-step toward radical change, was one factor preventing a feeling of sudden threat among conservatives. Since then economic change has taken place gradually in Russia, and often the new owners of privatized enterprises are the former managers and party bureaucrats. Although this gives them a stake in the new system, if these firms are unprofitable or poorly run, a rash of bankruptcies may have a drastic effect. In addition, in the Soviet Union and then in Russia, because reformists are in control of the central government, they also control the media, making it very difficult for hard-liners to create images via television.

Extreme Russian nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who made a surprisingly strong showing in Russia's 1994 elections and whose expansionist rhetoric alarms many in Russia's "near abroad," is an example of a threatened elite resorting to conflictual policies. Zhirinovsky's rhetoric serves the domestic political aims of threatened elites in the security forces, forcibly pensioned party workers, and others. It is thus no coincidence that, like Milošević, Zhirinovsky and other extreme nationalist Russians speak in terms of threats to Russians outside of Russia; any conflict will thus most likely be outside of Russian Federation's borders.

Methodologically, the case of Serbia shows the importance of recognizing that political rhetoric is itself political behavior, and that conflict described in ethnic terms and taking place along ethnic lines, while it may be about ethnic issues, may be caused by issues not related to ethnicity. The ability of violence to create specific political contexts means that those provoking violent conflict may have as their goal something quite outside the direct objects of conflict. It is thus important to realize that the rhetoric of ethnic nationalist purists is exactly that: rhetoric. Within every group the definition of group interest is contested, and in fact that definition is the key to power.