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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**ORIGINS OF THE BREAKUP OF YUGOSLAVIA
IN THE 1990s**

by

Slavco Strezoski

June 2019

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2019	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE ORIGINS OF THE BREAKUP OF YUGOSLAVIA IN THE 1990S			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Slavco Strezoski				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) broke apart violently in the early 1990s. This thesis explores evidence about the root causes of Yugoslavia's turbulent disintegration. It evaluates the cogency of the most prominent suggested causes of the SFRY's breakup, and draws conclusions regarding the most convincing explanations. The most frequently discussed potential causes of the breakup include nationalism, international politics, economic competition, contention among the Yugoslav political elites, and "ancient hatreds." From the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918 until the combat began in 1991, there was constant tension between the different ethnicities, and the fiercest disputes were between the Serbs and the Croats. The thesis concludes that none of the proposed causes alone can provide an explanation for the SFRY's dissolution, which involved the interaction of multiple factors. However, the self-interested republic-level Yugoslav political elites, backed by certain foreign countries, constituted the decisive factor in the Yugoslav federation's collapse.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Yugoslavia, ethnic war, nationalism, ancient hatreds, Yugoslav Civil War, the collapse of Yugoslavia, Milosevic, Tudjman, Yugoslav People Army, YPA, self-management system, SFRY			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 81	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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ORIGINS OF THE BREAKUP OF YUGOSLAVIA IN THE 1990s

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(EUROPE AND EURASIA)**

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ABSTRACT

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) broke apart violently in the early 1990s. This thesis explores evidence about the root causes of Yugoslavia's turbulent disintegration. It evaluates the cogency of the most prominent suggested causes of the SFRY's breakup, and draws conclusions regarding the most convincing explanations. The most frequently discussed potential causes of the breakup include nationalism, international politics, economic competition, contention among the Yugoslav political elites, and "ancient hatreds." From the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918 until the combat began in 1991, there was constant tension between the different ethnicities, and the fiercest disputes were between the Serbs and the Croats. The thesis concludes that none of the proposed causes alone can provide an explanation for the SFRY's dissolution, which involved the interaction of multiple factors. However, the self-interested republic-level Yugoslav political elites, backed by certain foreign countries, constituted the decisive factor in the Yugoslav federation's collapse.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Cominform	Communist Information Bureau
EC	European Commission
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
FNP	Federal Fund for the Development of the Underdeveloped Republics and Provinces
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAO	Serbian Autonomous Oblast
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
U.S.	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YPA/JNA	Yugoslav People's Army

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Kate Egerton of the Naval Postgraduate School's Graduate Writing Center for reviewing this thesis and providing valuable comments.

I also wish to thank my thesis advisors, Professor David Yost and Professor Mikhail Tsyarkin, for their invaluable thesis support and their detailed analysis.

Thank you to my girlfriend, Carmen Mordan, who encouraged me throughout the writing process.

Lastly, I would like to thank my late father, Petre Strezoski, who gave me inspiration for this thesis. He has been a guide in my life, and someone I have always looked up to. I miss him a lot.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The breakup of Yugoslavia happened simultaneously with the fall of the Soviet Union. The era of communist society was coming to an end in Europe. Western powers sought to democratize the world. Socialist Yugoslavia could not remain untouched by developments in the Soviet empire. The only way to preserve the country was through a smooth transition to democracy. There was no powerful leader, such as Josip Broz Tito (the ruler of Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1980), who could reach out to all parts of Yugoslavia and unite the country in this transformation. Why were the Yugoslav republics unable to find a peaceful solution for transformation from socialism to a democratic government? Over the course of the existence of Yugoslavia nationalism emerged regularly, and the republics were unable to find unity beyond Tito's charismatic leadership. After his death in 1980, unity was unattainable, and discord led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, followed by an extremely violent civil war with crimes against humanity.

The saga of the breakup of Yugoslavia has become an important case study in the evaluation of fragility in the unity of a nation. Thus, an examination of the contributing factors that led to the demise of Yugoslavia may help guide analysis of the strength of cohesion in a union. By investigating what led to the creation of the Yugoslavian state after World War I, the emergence of the communist party leader Josip Broz Tito, the victorious outcome of World War II, and post-World War II international relationships, and how these events have affected the rise and fall of Yugoslavia, this thesis sheds some light on the possible underlying causes of the breakup of Yugoslavia. The history of the Yugoslav republics will also be a factor to consider as a reason for the break up. This thesis analyses the weakness in Yugoslav unity looking through the lenses of nationalism and economics. Furthermore, it assesses the motives of the Yugoslav political elites and foreign powers as factors in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In examining the ways in which nationalism, economics, the Yugoslav political elites, and the international political environment influenced unity in Yugoslavia, this thesis attempts to contribute to the larger body of work that studies the foundations of national unity in federations.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis examines the causes of the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. This country, which once defied Soviet's governing system under Joseph Stalin, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and established its own communist path, broke apart in a messy and complex civil war. The Croats and the Slovenes developed their economy more quickly than the rest of Yugoslav republics, and they were the first to secede from Yugoslavia. The Serbs tried to maintain the country's unity. Once it was clear that there was no future for a united Yugoslavia, the Serbs supported the Serb factions in Croatia and Bosnia in an attempt to maintain control and expand Serbia's borders.

The primary question the thesis address is the following: What were the reasons for the country's violent breakup in 1990s? Additionally, this thesis investigates how Yugoslavia developed from its formation in 1918 to its breakup with the end of the Bosnian conflict in 1995.¹ To what extent were economic factors significant? To what extent were contending political identities decisive?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The United States projects its political influence worldwide in order to protect and advance its national interests. Historically, multiple events in the Balkans have been connected to major shifts in the international order. Hence, it is in the United States national interest to maintain its influence in the Balkans. In order to do so it is necessary to understand the values, principles, and attitudes of the fairly new independent countries that emerged from the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Over twenty years have passed since the Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the ethnic war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the former Yugoslav republics faced turmoil from the war that changed them forever. The newly developed condition in the region with respect to the consequences of the dissolution of Yugoslavia is worth investigating because it left deep wounds, which will not heal in the near term. The events

¹ Various other end dates for analysis are sometimes employed by scholars. One could, for example, regard the Kosovo War in 1998-1999 or the independence of Montenegro in 2006 as end dates.

during the Yugoslav civil war will continue to affect the prospects for cooperation between the nations in the region.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The collapse of Yugoslavia can be attributed to many factors. However, this thesis will focus on examining arguments based on nationalism, economic factors, the role of Yugoslav political elites, international politics, and “ancient hatreds.” With the exception of the last argument, all of these approaches are supported by strong evidence. However, the collapse was a complex process that cannot be credited to a single factor. Thus, an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments may help to clarify the causes of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

1. Ancient Hatreds Argument

During the Yugoslav civil war in the 1990s, the supposedly ancient hatreds among the ethnicities composing the Yugoslav population stood out in prominent journalistic accounts as a predominant argument for the cause of the civil war. Robert Kaplan, for example, claimed that the Balkan nations have always engaged in fratricidal wars: “Here men have been isolated by poverty and ethnic rivalry, dooming them to hate. Here politics has been reduced to a level of a near anarchy that from time to time in history has flowed up the Danube into Central Europe.” Kaplan goes on to say that “Nazism, for instance, can claim Balkan origins. Among the flophouses in Vienna, a breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously.”² According to Patrick Bishop, “Folk memories are long, and inability to forget the hatreds of the past has condemned successive generations to perpetuate them.”³

In an interview with *The Sunday Times* in 1999, Bill Clinton, who was then the United States President, stated that Yugoslavia under the communist regime, which

² Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: Picador, 2005), li.

³ Patrick Bishop, *Daily Telegraph*, January 20, 1999, quoted in Dejan Jovic, *Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2009), 40.

suppressed the long-standing ethnic tensions, had a “false stability.”⁴ Moreover, President Clinton adopted Kaplan’s thesis to justify non-intervention in Bosnia. In her book *On the Edge*, Elizabeth Drew, a political journalist and author, recounts how President Clinton after reading Kaplan’s book had a discussion with Les Aspin, then the Secretary of Defense, about the deep historical roots of conflict in Bosnia. The discussion prompted Aspin to call members of the National Security Council’s Principal Committee and warn them that Clinton would not support military actions in Bosnia.⁵ Additionally, the idea of ancient hatreds was supported by the British Prime Minister John Major.⁶

Misha Glenny has admitted that in his earlier works he had supported the ancient hatreds argument. However, after much criticism Glenny revised his view on Balkan history and published newer studies in which he opposed this argument.⁷ While there is not much scholarly literature to support the “ancient hatreds” theory, much of the worldwide popular view has been based on this argument owing to the media coverage of the war.

The major Yugoslav ethnicities are Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Bosniaks, Albanians, and Macedonians. The additional ethnicities present, such as Magyars, Turks, Vlach and others, accounted for a negligible proportion of the population and will be excluded from this analysis of the ancient hatreds theory. Furthermore, because civil war did not erupt in Macedonia and only lasted for ten days in Slovenia, these two countries will also not be taken into consideration for an assessment of the ancient hatreds argument. The ethnic Albanians in Kosovo likewise did not play a role in the early 1990s war, but took center stage in 1998–1999 Kosovo War. Therefore, the argument for ancient hatreds concentrates on the Serbs, the Croats and the Bosniaks. The argument for ancient hatreds between these three ethnicities is weak because history does not show a major

⁴ “Clinton Says NATO Could Not Let History Forget Kosovo Albanians,” *CNN*, April 18, 1999, <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/04/18/clinton.letter/>.

⁵ Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 157.

⁶ Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Viking, 2000), xxiv.

⁷ Glenny, xxv.

conflict between them. The territory of Yugoslavia, populated by the South Slavs in the 6th century, was mostly under occupation until the early 19th century by the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires. If there were an ancient hatred, it would have been directed to the occupiers, not the indigenous populations.

The culture of the three main ethnicities differs in regard to their religion. Serbs are Orthodox, Croats are Catholic, and Bosniaks are Muslim. Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a population comprised of all three ethnicities, prior to the civil war had abundant mixed marriages. The people in Bosnia lived together as neighbors without any significant inter-ethnic disputes. Furthermore, the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian languages are almost identical. The common language further adds to the similarities of the three ethnicities.⁸

The key event that supports the argument for the existence of ancient hatreds is World War II. The Nazis, after they occupied the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, formed a puppet state known as the Independent State of Croatia led by an extremist political movement called Ustaše. During World War II the Ustaše regime, led by Ante Pavelić, burnt villages and killed hundreds of thousands of Serbs with extreme brutality. Furthermore, the Ustaše set up multiple concentration camps that made additional hundreds of thousands of Serbs victims of the genocidal policy of the notorious regime.⁹ While the cruelty and the mass killings by the Ustaše could have provoked ethnic hatreds during World War II, there was no reciprocity on that magnitude by the Serb and Muslim extremist groups. The Serb extremist groups, called Četniks, killed around fifty thousand Muslims and Croats.¹⁰ The Četniks, in contrast with the Ustaše, were an anti-Axis movement and represented the exiled Yugoslav monarchy in London. The methods that the Ustaše used show that they followed Nazi directives in exterminating Jews and Slavs, but the Ustaše did not represent

⁸ Fedja Buric, "Confessions of a 'Mixed Marriage Child'. Diary in the Study of Yugoslavia's Breakup," *Südosteuropa* 64, no. 3 (January 1, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2016-0028>.

⁹ Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation the Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10904631>.

¹⁰ Vladimir Geiger, "Human Losses of The Croats In World War II and The Immediate Post-War Period Caused by The Chetniks (Yugoslav Army in The Fatherland) and The Partisans (People's Liberation Army and The Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia/ Yugoslav Army) and The Yugoslav Communist Authorities Numerical Indicators," no. 1 (March 12, 2012): 45.

the majority of the Croatian population. The lack of solid historical evidence makes the ancient ethnic hatreds argument weak. However, it is worth critically examining because propaganda highlighting ethnic hatreds was used by the local leaders of specific ethnicities to gain support from the masses.

2. Economic Argument

The economic argument is based on Yugoslavia's continuous economic struggle after World War II, notably in late 1970s and early 1980s. Susan Woodward, an advocate of the economic argument, holds that the cause of the Yugoslav civil war in the 1990s resided in issues of economic insecurity, and individual and family instability stemmed from adjustments to the global economy.¹¹ Patricia Taylor, Grendjean Burk, and Niko Tos maintain that the core of the Yugoslav economic system was the self-management of the enterprises.¹² According to Jasminka Udovički, the leading Yugoslav economists, Alexander Bajt and Branko Horvat, emphasized that Slovenia achieved its economic growth under that system.¹³ However, the Yugoslav system's performance was far behind that of the capitalist countries in Europe. Dinko Dubravčić argues that the inequality among the republics in economic contributions to Yugoslavia's federal budget added to the disputes.¹⁴ Slovenia and Croatia, the leading contributors to the Yugoslav federal budget, were pushing for economic autonomy from Yugoslavia. David Binder identifies the implications of the United States passing the Foreign Operations Appropriation law in 1990. The law limited the United States in issuing loans or credits only to a republic "which

¹¹ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1995), 228.

¹² Patricia Taylor, Grendjean Burke, and Niko Tos, "Work Satisfaction Under Yugoslav Self-Management: On Participation, Authority, and Ownership," *Social Forces* 65, no. 4 (June 1, 1987): 16.

¹³ Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway, eds., *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1997), 286.

¹⁴ Dinko Dubravčić, "Economic Causes and Political Context of the Dissolution of a Multinational Federal State: The Case of Yugoslavia," *Communist Economies and Economic Transformation* 5, no. 3 (January 1993): 259–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631379308427758>.

has held free and fair elections and which is not engaged in systematic abuse of human rights.”¹⁵ This law would further push the republics to seek independence from Belgrade.

Following the dispute with the Soviets in 1948, Yugoslavia faced isolation. The Yugoslav president, Josip Broz Tito, did not have alternative options and had to seek help from the West. He applied to the World Bank in 1949 and started to receive funding from the West. Furthermore, the economic system was weak and was unable to produce growth.

The central government had to implement a creative reform to produce economic growth within a socialist framework in order to preserve its ideology. The result was the introduction in June 1950 of the basic law of workers’ self-management, whereby in theory enterprises belonged to the workers. Yugoslav economists led by Edward Kardelj—a Slovenian politician, and second in command in the Yugoslavian leadership hierarchy—developed the self-managing system of the enterprises. It was a hybrid of capitalistic and socialist systems that limited the communist government in interfering with the management and gave more freedom to the managers in running the enterprises. It was considered to be the most effective use of the capitalist gains to increase productivity and create products for domestic and foreign markets. Yugoslav socialism combined capitalist and socialist ideals and policies, and it was open to the world economy. Woodward notes that the foundation of the Yugoslav governing system was constructed on the balancing act between East and West. Yugoslavia’s military independence from Moscow gave them a huge leverage when bargaining with the West. She states that Yugoslavia played “a critical role in defence of NATO’s southern flank against possible Soviet movement west.”¹⁶ For Yugoslavia’s neutrality the West provided economic assistance, membership in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank loans, and association with the European Commission (EC) the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the General

¹⁵ David Binder, “Evolution in Europe; Yugoslavia Seen Breaking up Soon,” *The New York Times*, November 28, 1990, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/28/world/evolution-in-europe-yugoslavia-seen-breaking-up-soon.html>.

¹⁶ Susan L Woodward, “The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia,” in *Fighting Identities: Race, Religion, and Nationalism*, ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, vol. 39, Socialist Register 2003 (London: Merlin Press, 2003), 75.

Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).¹⁷ However, after the Cold War, without the economic assistance from the West, Yugoslavia was not able to keep up with the world market trends, and this eventually led to recession, inflation, and the collapse of the whole economic system.¹⁸

Economic crises emerged in Yugoslavia after the 1974 constitution transferred considerable power to the republics. It allowed the republics to act freely in pursuit of their interests and empowered them to manage their internal economies. In the 1970s the West provided abundant low interest credit to Yugoslavia. As a result, foreign debt increased 300 percent by 1980, from six billion dollars in 1975 to nineteen billion dollars in 1980. Funds were mismanaged and misinvested to satisfy political rather than economic objectives. Thus, interest on foreign debt brought Yugoslavia three-digit inflation. The economic crises culminated in 1987 with strikes for higher pay and lower prices for basic products.¹⁹

After the Cold War, the foreign powers' priorities shifted to providing economic assistance to the Central European states. Yugoslavia lost the strategic importance it possessed during the Cold War, and the IMF's economic assistance was conditioned with a push for a democratic system of governance. The West viewed Yugoslavia as simply another local government, which, if it fell behind, provoked little interest from outside authorities capable of intervention.²⁰ The economic crises widened the gaps between the republics. Citizens in Slovenia judged that they would be better off economically if they split from Yugoslavia. Even the citizens of Kosovo, on the other side of the spectrum, believed the same since its GDP per capita was falling.²¹

¹⁷ Woodward, "The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia."

¹⁸ Dražen Marjanac, "Economic Aspects of Breakup of Yugoslavia," *Зборник Радова Економског Факултета у Источном Сарајеву* 1, no. 11 (May 4, 2016): 83, <https://doi.org/10.7251/ZREFIS1511083M>.

¹⁹ Udovički and Ridgeway, *Burn This House*, 81.

²⁰ Woodward, "The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia."

²¹ Dejan Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches," *European Journal of Social Theory* 4, no. 1 (2001): 101–120, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310122225037>.

During the economic crises Ante Marković, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, emerged as its most popular politician, with solid economic reforms. Marković advocated for a substantial degree of privatization and a fully market-oriented economy. Woodward implies that, his economic reforms were based on an assumption that the West would provide economic assistance for Yugoslavia “to pay the interest on the foreign debt.”²² However, the leaders of the most powerful Yugoslav republics—Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia—declined economic support from the European Community by not accepting a political compromise.²³ Therefore, despite the promising economic reforms and popularity of Ante Marković, the West did not loan funds to Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, and instead focused on providing assistance to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

The economic crises preceding the Yugoslav Civil War provide a plausible argument as a factor in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. However, the economy alone cannot provide an explanation of the dissolution of Yugoslavia because it does not take into consideration the human aspect. The end of the Cold War should have helped Yugoslavia to come out of its financial crises due to the reduced military expenditure. Moreover, Yugoslavia collapsed while the reforms of Ante Marković demonstrated an economic progression. Until the end of the Cold War in 1989–1991 Yugoslavia was economically the most advanced case of all the East European Communist societies, and had the greatest political autonomy in relation to Moscow with the possible exception of Albania from 1968 to 1991.

3. Nationalism Argument

Nationalism was present in Yugoslavia from the beginning of the kingdom in 1918. Aleksa Djilas, an historian and political commentator, observes that after the fall of Communism in 1991, nationalism was the main alternative political creed.²⁴ Democratic currents, economic crises, and a leadership vacuum threatened the conservative wing. The

²² Woodward, “The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia.”

²³ Jovic, “The Disintegration of Yugoslavia.”

²⁴ Aleksa Djilas, *Raspad i Nada: Eseji, Članci i Intervjui, 1991-1994*, Edicija Cogito (Beograd: Princip, 1995).

way out was nationalism. Dejan Jovic's study is exceptionally enlightening because he points out the lack of political institutions that represented the citizens of Yugoslavia. During Tito's regime, nationalism was banned, but it was strong in underground movements. The Yugoslavian regime failed to establish political institutions that would represent the Yugoslav people as one nationality.²⁵

Susan Woodward's explanation for nationalism is based on the federation's weak economy. The nationalistic rhetoric appealed to the people without government jobs. As the economy decayed, nationalism gained support.²⁶ Jasminka Udovički's analysis shows that Yugoslavia's leadership struggled to eliminate nationalism after the country's creation in 1918. The Yugoslav king divided the country into nine provinces in an effort to remove the traditional borders and break nationalism.²⁷ Tito abolished Serb and Croat nationalist movements by force. However, nationalism prevailed and was an effective instrument for blocking progressive social and political change in Yugoslavia.²⁸ Of the relevant studies, the article by Jovic is especially valuable because its analysis shows that the failures of the efforts to create a single Yugoslav nationality were reflected in the country's institutions.

While the ancient hatreds argument does not help to explain Yugoslavia's disintegration, nationalism is the most debated scholarly argument with a convincing basis. The former Yugoslav Republics had historical, economic and cultural differences that contributed to the strong nationalism that culminated in the 1990s. Each Yugoslav republic has a rich and extensive history dating back for centuries. The Croats and the Slovenes were under the rule of the Hapsburg Empire from the 12th century until the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. During the same period the Serbs, the Montenegrins, the Macedonians, and the Bosniaks were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Under foreign domination, the republics developed different histories that divided them.

²⁵ Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia."

²⁶ Woodward, "The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia."

²⁷ Udovički and Ridgeway, *Burn This House*, 55.

²⁸ Udovički and Ridgeway, 8.

Strong nationalism among the Serb population was evident from the beginning of the unification in 1918. First, Serbia was the only republic of the kingdom that was independent, governed with a fusion of monarchy and parliamentary democracy, prior to the unification. Therefore, the Yugoslav king was a Serb from the dynasty of Karađorđević. King Alexander dissolved the Parliament in 1929 and ruled Yugoslavia in a highly centralized and authoritarian regime. The Serb leaders reigned over this country as a Great Serbia, not as Yugoslavia. Second, the Serbs generally believed that they paid a disproportionately higher price for freedom than the rest of the Yugoslav nations and did not receive proper recognition for their sacrifices in the Balkan wars, World War I and World War II.²⁹ Serbs accounted for forty percent of the Yugoslav population, but Tito denied them a role in the government proportionate to their numbers.

On the other hand, the Croats continuously fought for greater autonomy throughout Yugoslavia's existence. Following the unification in 1918, the Croats wanted a new federal constitution linking the Serbs and the Croats. Croat leaders accepted the monarchy but insisted on federalization and democratization.³⁰ They struggled from 1919 on to form a party in the parliament. As documented in the Zagreb Manifesto of 1932, the Croats, the Slovenes, and the inhabitants of Vojvodina and Bosnia and Herzegovina sought greater autonomy. The authoritarian government led by King Alexander responded by imprisoning the leaders who signed this manifesto.

The Serbs dominated Yugoslavia until the Germans invaded the country in April 1941. The monarchy led by King Peter II, the successor of King Alexander, went into exile in London. This created a political vacuum which Tito's Communist Party was able to exploit. His principal opponent, the main challenger to his supremacy as the ultimate Yugoslav leader, was Dragoljub Mihailović, the leader of a Serbian faction called the Četniks, who represented the exiled monarchy. Tito was a Croat. He was nonetheless able to recruit supporters throughout Yugoslavia with a strong anti-nationalistic focus. He argued for brotherhood and unity among the Yugoslav ethnic groups to win Yugoslavia's

²⁹ Udovički and Ridgeway, 118.

³⁰ Duncan Wilson, *Tito's Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 11.

independence. In contrast, Mihailović was only able to obtain support from the Serbs. Tito was widely supported in Yugoslavia, with the exception of Serbia. Nationalism was a hurdle that the Yugoslav Communist Party had to overcome to unite Yugoslavia. Subsequently, after World War II King Peter was not allowed to return to Yugoslavia, and Mihailović was tried and executed for treason and war crimes. The Communist Party also faced a threat of nationalism from the Croatian Catholic Church, led by Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac, who was tried and sentenced to sixteen years in prison.³¹ Tito's charismatic leadership held the unity of Yugoslavia, but frequently he had to combat nationalists in Serbia and Croatia.

In the late 1960s, a cultural and political movement, the Croatian Spring, emerged from the Communist Party in Croatia. A younger generation of Croat politicians tried to overcome the Communist Party. Croats sought reforms for more rights for the Republic of Croatia within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1970, Croat ideologists formed the institution Matica Hrvatska, which was intended to expand access to the Croatian culture. At that time, the Serbo-Croatian language was the official language of the Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. There are no major differences between the Serbian and the Croatian languages, except that Serbs use the Cyrillic alphabet and the Croats use the Latin. In 1967, Croat scholars wrote a document, *Declaration of the Status and Name of the Croatian Language*, and published it in a Yugoslavian newspaper, seeking recognition of Croatian as an independent language. In 1971 Tito's patience diminished, and the movement was abolished by force. He influenced the decision of the major Croat political figures to resign, ousted most members of the Croat communist party, and legally prosecuted thousands of people. One of the arrested was Franjo Tuđman, a future president of Croatia, who led Croatia throughout the breakup of Yugoslavia. The 1971 movement in Croatia was crushed, but the new federal constitution that was ratified in 1974 satisfied some of the demands of the Croatian Spring movement. The Croats were not alone in seeking greater autonomy within Yugoslavia. As early as the 1970s the Slovenes were

³¹ Wilson, 42.

more interested in cultivating links with Austria and West Germany than in keeping their relationships with the Yugoslav republics.

The economic struggles and disagreements among the Yugoslav republics increased the rise of nationalism. Slovenes and Croats viewed the rest of the republics as more primitive. The economies of these two republics were significantly superior to the rest. Croatia and Slovenia, accounting for the greatest economic contributions in Yugoslavia, showed discontent in funding the less developed Yugoslav republics.³² Divisions in the Communist Party also emerged, creating conservative and liberal sides. Conservatives were citizens of the less developed republics who pushed for equality in the distribution of funds among the republics, wage equality on a national level, and consequently a greater central authority. The liberal communists who lived in the more developed republics supported Western principles such as self-management and limited government interference with the management of the enterprises.

Nationalism is an important factor among the arguments purporting to explain the disintegration of Yugoslavia. However, Jovic claims that “what the nationalist argument fails to explain is the growing sense of Yugoslavism among the population” from 1970 to 1990.³³ Furthermore, the Communist Party was aware of the nationalism but made no attempt to create an artificial unity. The Communists believed that the development of a unified Yugoslavia could be only achieved by creating a common interest. The people of Yugoslavia were encouraged to develop relationships with each other. Eventually, the younger population started to develop a Yugoslav culture.

4. The Role of the Yugoslav Political Elites Argument

Vladimir Goati argues that political elites were the reason for Yugoslavia’s collapse. In 1989–1991, after the collapse of communism, Yugoslavia encountered major challenges in implementing political and economic changes. Goati holds that the

³² Wilson, 42.

³³ Jovic, “The Disintegration of Yugoslavia.”

devastating conflicts within the Yugoslav elite were decisive and led to the breakup.³⁴ Warren Zimmermann, the last American ambassador to Yugoslavia, observes in his memoirs that the presidents of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia had distinct personalities and ideologies.³⁵ Despite their differences, all three of them had the same agenda—maximizing their power. Franjo Tuđman in his book *Horrors of War* further expounded his nationalistic ideology and assessed the nature and scope of the crimes committed by the Ustaše. Although he condemned the atrocities they committed during World War II, he argued that they had been exaggerated. Furthermore, he asserted, the war crimes were no greater than those of the Serbian counterparts, the Četniks.³⁶

Tito exercised power in Yugoslavia above the law. He did not represent any particular ethnic group, but he had his own vision for the future of Yugoslavia. The 1974 constitution gave the republics greater autonomy, and at the same time declared Tito as President without limitation of office.³⁷ His power was sufficient to successfully act as an arbitrator in any emerging ethnic conflicts. However, after Tito's death, the constitution weakened the power of the central government. Tito's ideological and political leadership of Yugoslavia was replaced by leaders who represented the republics, and formed a body called the Yugoslav State Council, also known as the Yugoslav Council of the Presidency. The Council was led by a president who served a one-year term, and the presidency rotated between the representatives of the six republics and the two provinces. With the Yugoslav State Council's powers diminished, its representatives conveyed the messages of the presidents of the republics. The presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia had a significant influence in the Yugoslav State Council, but were able to gain support only from their segments of society.

³⁴ Vladimir Goati, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: The Role of Political Elites," *Nationalities Papers* 25, no. 3 (1997): 455–467, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905999708408518>.

³⁵ Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador: A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 2 (1995): 2, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20047039>.

³⁶ Franjo Tuđman, *Horrors of War: Historical Reality and Philosophy*, Rev. ed (New York: M. Evans, 1996), 243.

³⁷ Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia."

The last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, in his memoirs portrayed the personalities and ideologies of the presidents of three republics as distinctive, although all of them championed nationalist ideas. Serbian president Slobodan Milošević was an opportunist, not an ideologist. Milošević disturbed the balance created after Tito's death. He was driven by a thirst for power, not nationalism. He used nationalism only to gain support from the Serb population. Milošević rallied supporters by campaigning with a strong nationalistic message: "all Serbs have the right to live in a single state." He was interested in a united Yugoslavia controlled by Serbs. Milošević's vision of unity was not democratic. He strived for a superior political power within Yugoslavia over the other republics. According to Zimmermann, Milošević had an extremely cold personality and did not care about human suffering.³⁸

In contrast to Milošević, the Croat President, Franjo Tuđman, was obsessed with nationalism. He ran an extremely nationalistic campaign that caused Ambassador Zimmermann to avoid interactions with him until he won the election. Tuđman during his campaign made statements such as that he was "glad his wife was neither a Serb nor a Jew."³⁹ He used these statements to associate himself with the notorious Ustaše from World War II. According to Udovički, Tuđman published a book in 1989, *Wilderness*, in which he expressed strong nationalist ideas and claimed that reports of Ustaše war crimes in World War II had been exaggerated.⁴⁰ Zimmermann alleges that what made Tuđman different from Milošević "is that he really [wanted] to be a Western statesman."⁴¹

Slovenian President Milan Kučan simply wanted to cut ties with Yugoslavia. He declared independence without negotiating for a legal secession, an approach that exposed his profound selfishness by ignoring the other twenty-two million Yugoslavs.⁴² Slovenia owed its economic growth to the system of self-management established under Tito.

³⁸ Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador."

³⁹ Zimmermann.

⁴⁰ Udovički and Ridgeway, *Burn This House*, 118.

⁴¹ Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador."

⁴² Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers -- America's Last Ambassador Tells What Happened and Why*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Books, 1996).

Kučan's actions instigated the civil war in Yugoslavia. The Slovenes were fortunate in that they were the most homogeneous nation in the union.

The argument highlighting the influence of Yugoslav political elites has a solid case as a factor in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In the middle of the 1990s, public opinion polls showed that seventy percent of the population were in favor of Yugoslavian unity. The different personalities of the Yugoslav political elites made unity and democracy impossible in Yugoslavia. After Tito's death the structure of the Yugoslav political institutions did not allow for a strong central government. The republics developed greater autonomy, which widened the political gap between them. The political elites that emerged in the republics won elections based on nationalistic campaigns. Therefore, none of them was able to gain nationwide support. For Yugoslavia to have remained united, they would have had to transfer power in the republics to centralist leaders with strong support and popularity among the entire Yugoslav population. Prime Minister Ante Marković was one of those leaders who, despite the positive results of his reforms, could not get support from the leaders of the republics. Marković lost the battle for unity after he agreed to republican referenda followed by a federal referendum. Once the leaders of the republics gained power from the local referenda, they were not willing to give it up. Consequently, the federal referendum was never held. However, this argument fails to explain why the leaders of Slovenia and Serbia gained support from the European Community countries and other Western states. Secession without such international support would have been impossible.

5. International Politics Argument

Susan Woodward argued that, in addition to economic factors, Yugoslavia collapsed because of the disruption in the international order caused by the collapse of communism in Europe. Yugoslavia's stability had become dependent on the international economic environment. However, changes in the economic policies of the Western nations on which Yugoslavia depended caused its dissolution.⁴³ Veljko Kadijevic, the top general of the Yugoslav People's Army, added that the collapse of the USSR increased pressure

⁴³ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 3.

from the West on Slovenia and Croatia to secede from Yugoslavia.⁴⁴ James Gow examined how and why Britain, France, Germany, and the United States failed to manage the dissolution of Yugoslavia. He concluded that the fundamental reasons for this failure were “bad timing, poor judgment, a lack of cohesion, and absence of will to implement policies” on the part of the leading Western nations.⁴⁵

The international politics argument holds that the collapse of Yugoslavia occurring simultaneously with the end of the Cold War was not a coincidence. During the Cold War Yugoslavia played an important role in international politics. Defiant against the USSR, determined to preserve and pursue its own model of Communism, Yugoslavia drew support from the United States and other Western nations. Throughout the Cold War, the threat of a Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia caused concern for the Western allies. The strategic location of Yugoslavia along the Adriatic Sea was a factor of importance to the NATO allies. They supported Yugoslavia in order to prevent the establishment of Soviet military bases along the coast. The most important role that Yugoslavia had in the Cold War was the development of its own Socialist system and founding the Non-Alignment Movement, which irritated the Soviets.⁴⁶ Some of the communist countries tried to follow the Yugoslavian socialist system in order to develop autonomy from the USSR. In the cases in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Soviets were quick to respond with an invasion and the removal of the rebellious leadership. Unlike Yugoslavia, the other Eastern European communist countries did not have Western support, and the Soviets were able to retain control easily. The Yugoslavian Socialist system exposed a weakness in the Soviet regime—its coercive system of control of the communist nations. Western allies saw Yugoslavian communism as a competitor to the Soviets and continued to support it. With the end of the Cold War Yugoslavia lost the strategic importance it had enjoyed, and it was no longer able to benefit from the frictions between the East and the West. The United

⁴⁴ Veljko Kadijević, *Moje Videnje Raspada: Vojska Bez Države* (Beograd: Politika, 1993).

⁴⁵ James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 9.

⁴⁶ Yugoslavia was a founding member of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), an alternative to joining one of the two major power blocs during the Cold War.

States and other Western allies lost interest in the Balkan Peninsula. The diminished influence of external great powers resulted in increased tensions between the republics, which were no longer restrained by those powers. After the collapse of the USSR, the ethnic groups of Yugoslavia were put in an environment similar to that of the states in the anarchic international system. They had to maximize their security and compete for survival. With the absence of a threatening hegemon—the Soviet Union—the incentives for Yugoslav unity vanished. The security of the individual Yugoslav republics diminished, and they needed to defend themselves.

The international politics argument emphasizes the reasons for the stances that foreign countries took regarding the Yugoslav civil war. The United States supported Yugoslav unity, because without that unity war was inevitable. However, the United States at that time put priority on the conflicts in the Middle East. To the United States, Iraq invading Kuwait created greater immediate concerns for its national security than the situation in the Balkans. Therefore, Washington left the Balkan conflict in the hands of the European Community (EC). After the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Federation was unable to project its influence in the Balkans. Hence, the EC was the only institution able to intervene effectively until 1995 when the United States and NATO actively engaged in the conflict.⁴⁷

Some observers thought that a strong Yugoslavia was not in the interest of the EC. The Cold War restrained Austria, Germany, and Italy from encouraging Croatia and Slovenia to seek independence. After the Cold War, with the United States shifting its interest to the Middle East, the policy shifted. Countries of the EC met with the presidents of Slovenia and Croatia and provided support for their secession. A week after the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker, met with the leaders of Slovenia and Croatia, and clarified the U.S. position regarding unity in Yugoslavia, they declared independence. This action implies that Croatia and Slovenia had support from the EC and probably the impression that the United States would not interfere with their intention. Despite the fact that they were well aware that secession would cause a civil war, Austria, Denmark, Germany,

⁴⁷ The UN intervention, notably in the form of UNPROFOR, was unsuccessful.

Hungary, and Italy recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia immediately. Furthermore, they let it be known that they would recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina should this political entity decide to declare independence. The EC countries, after disagreeing about how to proceed, recognized the independence of the former Yugoslav republics but lacked the will necessary for a military intervention in the conflict, citing the ethnic hatreds among the factions as an excuse. However, the international politics argument fails to explain the emergence of the ethnic hatreds. These ethnic hatreds emerged before 1995, when external powers intervened with military force.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The biggest fallacy concerning the causes of the dissolution of Yugoslavia is based on the hindsight bias—that what happened, had to happen. Yugoslavia’s dissolution was widely regarded as an improbable outcome, but since it happened, the common tendency has been to think that it was inevitable.⁴⁸ The literature review considered five hypotheses concerning the causes of the dissolution of Yugoslavia: nationalism, economic factors, the role of Yugoslav political elites, international politics, and ancient hatreds among the Yugoslav ethnicities. This thesis investigates the hypothesis that some of the potential causes were probably more important than others, as indicated in the preliminary overview that follows bellow.

The first potential cause of the dissolution of Yugoslavia may have been strong nationalism within the former Yugoslav republics. Nationalism persisted throughout Yugoslavia’s existence from 1918 to 1991. The majority of the citizens of Yugoslavia identified themselves first as a Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Bosnians or Albanians, and second as Yugoslavs. This thesis examines why the citizens of Yugoslavia did not develop an identity based on a common nationality. Moreover, it raises a question: if nationalism was so strong among the ethnicities, why did it lead to a civil war in the 1990s and not earlier? Therefore, a potential hypothesis is that nationalism existed in Yugoslavia (perhaps to a stronger degree in some republics than in others), but it was

⁴⁸ Florian Bieber, Armina Galijaš, and Rory Archer, eds., *Debating the End of Yugoslavia*, Southeast European Studies (Farnham, Surrey, UK ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 4.

not strong enough to lead to a dissolution of Yugoslavia. It had to be supplemented by the effects of other causes.

The second potential cause of the dissolution is Yugoslavia's continuous economic struggles that culminated in the 1970s and 1980s. Yugoslavia was a socialist country, with an economic system less productive than that of the West. Throughout the post-World War II era, Yugoslav leaders struggled to integrate a free market economy with a socialist ideology. The system's overall performance was superior to that of the other communist countries in Europe, but far behind that of the capitalists. The strategic importance of Yugoslavia during the Cold War generated economic support from the West, which compensated for its flawed economic system. Yugoslavia lost its strategic importance after the Cold War, and fell behind the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in the priorities of the Western countries in providing economic assistance. The thesis assesses whether—and to what extent—there was economic rivalry among the former Yugoslav republics before and after the breakup of the Yugoslav federation.

The third potential cause is the quest for power maximization among the Yugoslav political elites. Tito established himself as the undisputed leader of Yugoslavia. His charismatic leadership sufficed to contain and manage the strong nationalistic currents. However, due to his age his power gradually declined. The federal reforms in the 1974 gave the republics greater governing autonomy. Political leaders from the various ethnicities within Yugoslavia sought power, fought for ideologies, supported nationalism, and were able to gain strength over the central government. Public opinion within Yugoslavia showed that seventy percent of the people were for unity. However, unity threatened the political elites who had established themselves in the republics. To gain support the political leaders engaged in extreme nationalist campaigns fueled with propaganda. The thesis strives to distinguish the roles played by local political elites in exploiting other factors, including ideology and economic competition.

The fourth potential cause is the influence of international politics on Yugoslavia's government. During the period from 1945 to 1991, Yugoslavia increased its military strength. The security dilemma—that is, a fear of a strong and united Yugoslavia—may have been one of the motives behind the European Community's decision to support the

secession of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia. Austria, Germany, and Italy were among the Western nations that succeeded in rearranging the balance of power in Europe and enhancing their influence in the Balkans. The thesis examines the relative importance of such international political factors.

The final cause suggested by some commentators is the ancient hatreds between the Yugoslav ethnicities. According to certain commentators, ethnic groups in the Balkans have engaged in numerous conflicts throughout history; and the recurrent conflicts involved brutalities which could not be forgotten. This causation narrative holds that ethnic hatreds, reignited by political leaders, escalated to unimaginable cruelties that reached a climax with the mass genocides during the Bosnian War. Paramilitary troops from Serbia and Croatia spread hatred by conducting genocides. The result was the total destruction of the country that Tito built.

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapter II evaluates the nationalist argument. Chapter III examines the economic factors. Chapter IV discussed the Yugoslav political elites and the interaction with foreign political powers. Chapter V offers conclusions.

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II. EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN YUGOSLAVIA

The integration and disintegration of Yugoslavia are closely tied to the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It was these three nations that originally formed Yugoslavia, and these three nations bear the responsibility for dismantling it. All three ethnicities are descendants of the South Slavs who populated the Balkan Peninsula in the sixth century. Yet, the first time they united under one flag was at the end of World War I. The reasons why they could not be united earlier are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, because the South Slavs were unable to unify until 1918, they developed different identities. Ivo Banac, a Croatian historian, suggests that the national identity of the South Slavs existed long time before modern nationalism. They preserved their identity primarily through consciousness of the national elites, and part was the popular imagination, despite not having a state independence.⁴⁹ This chapter investigates the roots of the nationalism among the South Slavs and discovers that the absence of an established Yugoslav identity was one of the key factors in Yugoslavia's disintegration. The democratization process in the early 1990s exposed the weakness of the Yugoslav state institutions and paved the road for a dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

A. NATIONALISM BEFORE WORLD WAR I

Throughout the centuries, from the days they migrated to the Balkans until World War I, Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had short periods of self-governance. Slovenes had a brief period of self-rule in the 8th century. According to Banac, "the term Slovenia emerged as a geographical and national designation only in the nineteenth century."⁵⁰ Croats were independent from 910 to 1102. In 1102, Croatia became part of the Hungarian kingdom, and after 1526, came under Hapsburg rule. Serbia was an independent state from 1169 to 1389. In 1389, the Serbs became part of the Ottoman Empire and until 1830 they did not

⁴⁹ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 23.

⁵⁰ Banac, 33.

have autonomy.⁵¹ The long periods of the foreign subjugations altered the South Slavs' identities.

The dissimilar South Slav identities can be partly attributed to the frictions in the 19th century between the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes. Oliver Zimmer, a professor studying European nationalism, observes that the concept of a nation, identified by a cultural authenticity, historical growth and political self-determination, gained popularity among the wider population in the last third of the 19th century. Moreover, during this period, nationalism became a key assembling force that politicians were able to use to gain control.⁵² Serbian politicians aimed to unite all Serbs living under Ottoman and Habsburg rule in one independent state. Charles Jelavich, a Balkan specialist, wrote that in 1844, Ilija Garašanin, Serbia's minister of the interior, in a secret document named *Načertanije* (The Draft), drafted a plan for a future Serbian state which would unite all Serbs and did not refer to South Slavs unity. Furthermore, the Serbian educational system in this era was geared to promote the national aim. Vuk Karadžić, a preeminent Serbian scholar whose main contribution was a standardization of the Serbian language, held that all Slavs speaking the Štokavian dialect are Serbs.⁵³ The Štokavian dialect is the Serbo-Croatian language. In 1914 there were 1,957,000 (or 30% of the Serbs) living under Hapsburg rule in Vojvodina, Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Jelavich claims that there is no evidence that the Serbian government before 1914 was interested in anything other than a union of the Serbian nation.⁵⁴

The Croatian goal was to unite the lands of the Triune Kingdom— Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia—in a single nation and to integrate the Serbs, who accounted for 25% of the population, with loyalty to Croatia. Croatian textbooks written during that time stressed the unity of Croatian provinces with the understanding that the lands where Serbs

⁵¹ Charles Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms-Textbooks and Yugoslav Union Before 1914* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 3–6.

⁵² Oliver Zimmer, *Nationalism in Europe, 1890-1940*, 2003 edition (Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave, 2003), 27.

⁵³ Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms-Textbooks and Yugoslav Union Before 1914*, 263.

⁵⁴ Jelavich, 264.

also lived belonged to Croatia.⁵⁵ The Slovenes' goal was to unite all their provinces in a single political entity under the Hapsburg empire. Slovenian textbooks made an explicit claim that the Slovene political leaders' loyalty was to the Hapsburg Monarchy.⁵⁶

Language usually unites nations, but in the case of Serbia and Croatia, the common language created conflicts. Both nations fought for what they regarded as in the best interest of their people, not for the South Slavs' unity. Serbs spoke the Štokavian dialect. The Croat population spoke three dialects: Kajkavian, Čakavian and Štokavian. Ljudevit Gaj, the leader of the Illyrian movement in Croatia, played a major role in influencing the Croatian intellectuals to adopt the Štokavian dialect. In 1847, the Croatian policymakers declared the official language of the nation to be the Štokavian dialect.⁵⁷ Banac observes that language is important for a national identity and that saving or shaping a national language is the first priority of nationalism.⁵⁸ Croats called the Štokavian dialect the Croatian language and the Serbs called it the Serbian language. They both claimed the developed Serbo-Croatian language literature in Dubrovnik as their own literature.⁵⁹ The Slovenes fortunately did not have this issue because their language is somewhat different from the Štokavian dialect.

The South Slavs, under two different empires, developed different traditions. Jelavich claims that the Croatian association with Hungary and the Austrian empire that lasted for over nine centuries was seen as positive by the Croats, whereas the Serbs viewed the Ottoman Empire with animosity.⁶⁰ The Croats adopted Western Civilization and the Catholic religion. The Serbs were closer to Constantinople and under the influence of the Byzantine Empire. Therefore, they adopted the Orthodox religion. The Croats, influenced by Western Civilization, thought of themselves as a superior ethnicity and looked down on

⁵⁵ Jelavich, 264.

⁵⁶ Jelavich, 264.

⁵⁷ Jelavich, 9.

⁵⁸ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, 23.

⁵⁹ Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms-Textbooks and Yugoslav Union Before 1914*, 265.

⁶⁰ Jelavich, 269.

the Serbs. The Serbs, who won their independence, considered the Croats tools of the Catholic Church and the Hapsburg Empire. In the years preceding World War I, relations between the Hapsburg Monarchy and Serbia were severely impaired. The Hapsburg Monarchy's expansion in the Balkans was contested by the Serbs.

In the years preceding World War I, it was clear that the South Slavs did not have a desire for unification. The 19th century was an era characterized by the emergence of nationalism. This nationalism was tied to the development of urbanization and the emergence of the middle class. During this era, the regions that the South Slavs inhabited were not urbanized, and there was no middle class. Eighty percent of the South Slav population consisted of peasants who were not interested in unification.⁶¹ Nationalism in the South Slavs was developed through the church and the educational system.⁶² However, the intention of the Croats, the Serbs, and the Slovenes was to shape their individual identities and build a nation with larger boundaries. There was little interest in a South Slav unification under one nation with a common identity.

B. NATIONALISM DURING WORLD WAR I AND THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Interest in unification among the Croats, Serbs and Slovenes increased during World War I. The tensions between the Hapsburg Monarchy and Serbia culminated after the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Subsequently, World War I commenced. Austro-Hungarian and German forces quickly defeated the Serbian Army and forced it to retreat to the Greek island of Corfu. During World War I, Slovenes and Croats served in the ranks in the Austro-Hungarian Army. The Yugoslav communist leader and later the president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, served in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I. This is not to imply that the Croats and the Slovenes deliberately fought against the Serbs, but it does convey the fact that they were on opposing sides as participants in the two major alliances.

⁶¹ Alex N. Dragnich, *Serbs and Croats: The Struggle in Yugoslavia* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 6.

⁶² Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms-Textbooks and Yugoslav Union Before 1914*, 58–60.

As the outcome of World War I became increasingly clear, the Serbs and the Croats started to plead their cases to the Entente Powers for an independent state. What complicated matters was that Italy, originally a member of the Triple Alliance, initially declared neutrality. After the secret London Treaty with the Triple Entente Powers in 1915, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary. Clearly, this treaty revealed the Italians' desire to enlarge their borders at the expense of the collapsing Hapsburg Empire. This factor put pressure on the Croats and Slovenes to seek unification with the Serbs to avoid falling under Italian rule. Serbs also considered the unification advantageous, because they were able to unite with all the Serbs who lived in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, they were able to negotiate the head of the state to be the Serb Monarch, Alexander Karađorđević. Thus in 1916, the South Slavs signed the Corfu Declaration, which proposed the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

The negotiations for unification were mainly between the Serbian Prime Minister, Nicola Pašić, and the Croat statesman Ante Trumbić, who led the Yugoslav committee. Alex Dragnich, the author of several works on the Balkans, summarizes the negotiation for unification throughout World War I as a process conducted with distrust and skepticism among the South Slavs.⁶³ However, the advocates of unification prevailed. Fortunately, the United States President, Woodrow Wilson, did not recognize the London Treaty so the South Slavs kept their territories despite Italian claims. Nevertheless, the unification from the Croat side appears to have been based on necessity rather than desire. That can be perceived from the countless quarrels after World War I.

During the period from 1918 to 1929, the South Slavs struggled to create a cohesive political system. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes adopted the Serbian governing system, which was a parliamentary monarchy. The king was a Serb from the dynasty of Karađorđe, and the majority of the parliament consisted of Serb nationals. The Croat representatives led by Stjepan Radić, the leader of the Croatian Peoples' Peasant Party, pushed for a greater autonomy for Croatia and distanced themselves from the monarchy by missing parliament sessions. Agreement on national goals became

⁶³ Dragnich, *Serbs and Croats*, 23–34.

challenging for the executive because the parliament consisted of multiple parties based on regional loyalties. The Croat representatives elected to the parliament were winning elections based on a nationalistic view. The tensions culminated in 1928 when a Montenegrin representative in the parliament shot dead three Croat representatives, among them their leader Radić. This event showed that nationalist views were deeply imbedded in the South Slavs' parliamentary representatives and that the current parliamentary system of government could not function well.

King Alexander dissolved the Parliament in 1929 and renamed the country to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Dragnich suggests that the king did not have an alternative if he was to preserve the existence of the unified South Slav country. King Alexander aimed to unify all the South Slavs under one identity—Yugoslavs. He restructured the local governments' borders in nine regions that did not reflect the ethnic boundaries.⁶⁴ The reforms he made, including changing the country's name to Yugoslavia, suggest that he intended to remove the nationalism in the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes. However, his reforms and his centralized and authoritarian system created strong opposition among the Yugoslav ethnicities. Croats formed terrorist organizations abroad supported by foreign governments. A Bulgarian terrorist associated with Croat groups assassinated King Alexander in Marseilles, France, in 1934. Elections were held in 1935 for a new parliament, but this did not provide any changes in the government. To stabilize the situation, Prince Paul—King Alexander's successor—invited Croat leaders to discuss compromises. Croat leaders accepted the monarchy but insisted on federalization and democratization.⁶⁵

The situation in Yugoslavia during the interwar period displays the struggle of the South Slavs to establish a functioning governing system. The Yugoslav political leaders' inclination was to create a democratic governing system. However, the Serbs represented the majority of the population, and therefore they had greater representation in the parliament and the government. The Croats were seeking equality, and the solution was to establish greater autonomy within Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav king's assessment was

⁶⁴ Dragnich, 56.

⁶⁵ Wilson, *Tito's Yugoslavia*, 11.

correct: the various ethnicities within Yugoslavia had to establish a common identity. In the 19th century unification processes in Germany and Italy, each had a dominant state. In Germany it was Prussia, and in Italy Piedmont. The dominant states were able to unify Germany and Italy on their terms. That raises a question: why were the Serbs unable to establish themselves as a dominant state?

The feud between the Serbs and the Croats in the parliament in the early years of Yugoslavia's existence can be summarized as a constant struggle for power. However, it is clear that the Croat political parties' objective was Croatian autonomy and the goal of the Serbs was the unification of Yugoslavia under the Serb monarchy. For as long as nationalism existed in Serbia and Croatia, the existence of Yugoslavia was doomed. The Serb monarchy failed to identify the root of the nationalism and eliminate it, whether by force or by diplomacy. Croat politicians were able to gain popularity by identifying themselves as part of the peasant class. For example, the leader of the Croatian Peoples' Peasant Party, Stjepan Radić, who spent most of his life in an urban environment, was able to win elections by identifying himself as a peasant whose political aim was to improve the peasants' life.⁶⁶

Clearly, Serbia in the first half of the 20th century was a superior state, politically, militarily, and economically within the Yugoslav Kingdom. Considerable numbers of ethnic Serbs populated the non-Serb territories—including Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia—in Yugoslavia. Additionally, the Croats needed the Serbs to protect them from Mussolini's aggression. The Serbs were unable to capitalize on their superiority during the first half of the 20th century to dominate Yugoslavia. The assassination of King Alexander brought instability in the monarchy. Prince Paul temporarily took the regency of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia until Alexander's son, King Peter II, was of age to step to the throne. Prince Paul did not have the authority necessary to reign as a true monarch and pursue King Alexander's visions. Aleksa Djilas observes that after World War I, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had weak liberal-democratic institutions. The interwar period was a short time to shape the country that consisted of

⁶⁶ Dragnich, *Serbs and Croats*, 41–42.

South Slavs who had never before been under one ruler and who had little loyalty to the idea of Yugoslavia as a single nation.⁶⁷

C. NATIONALISM DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II

World War II brought an end to the monarchy in Yugoslavia. In 1940, Germany occupied Yugoslavia, and King Peter II and his ministers were exiled in the United Kingdom. With the exception of the Serbs, the monarchy was not popular among the South Slavs. The South Slavs felt that they could not depend on the political decisions by the government. Therefore, the South Slavs were not committed to the country and were not ready to defend it. Some even welcomed foreign invasion.⁶⁸ Without the king's presence in Yugoslavia, the monarchy was destined to be abolished. His exile showed that he was not committed to the Yugoslav ideal. Furthermore, the king did not immediately establish local representatives of the royal government. Granted, he was only 17 years old, but the lack of leadership gave an opportunity to the popular communist movement to rise in power.

Nationalism in Yugoslavia culminated during World War II. The Germans formed a puppet state known as the Independent State of Croatia ruled by the Croatian fascist organization, Ustaše. During World War II, the Ustaše, led by Ante Pavelić, burnt villages and killed hundreds of thousands of Serbs with extreme brutality. Furthermore, the Ustaše set up multiple concentration camps that made additional hundreds of thousands of Serbs victim to the genocidal policy of the regime.⁶⁹ Serb nationalists were called Četniks, led by Dragoljub Mihailović. Unlike the Ustaše, they stood up against the Nazi oppression. Mihailović's popularity among the Serbs made King Peter II's monarchy recognize him as their representative in Yugoslavia.

The activities during World War II revealed where the Kingdom of Yugoslavia stood at that time. The Croats wanted an independent state with territories consisting of

⁶⁷ Djilas, *Raspad i nada*, 14.

⁶⁸ Djilas, 15–16.

⁶⁹ Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation the Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945*.

Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. However, a large Serb population lived in those territories. Serbs populated the territories in Croatia in the 16th century because they were given land by Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I so that they would serve as a buffer between Catholic Croatia and the mighty Ottoman Empire that threatened the West. Croatia's unification faced strong resistance from the Serbian population dwelling in those territories. Moreover, the Serbian government, which also sought territorial expansion, would not permit the Croats to reign over the Serbian population. Therefore, the solution for the Ustaše—a Croatian nationalistic movement—was “ethnic cleansing” of the Serbs in Croatia while the Ustaše had support from Germany.

The Serbs could not get international support during World War II. Mihailović was the representative of the exiled government in the United Kingdom. However, Tito won support from the United States and the United Kingdom in the form of military weapons. The United States' policy in the Balkans was strongly influenced by the UK. The lack of military support for the Četniks suggests that the United Kingdom was not interested in promoting a powerful Serbian state in the Balkans. Tito, even though he was a Communist, was seen as a partner to the West superior to Mihailović.

Tito's greatest support came from the Yugoslav peasants. His model for brotherhood and unity of all South Slavs was widely accepted. He was able to recruit partisans from every ethnicity in the country. Most of the recruits were from the Serb population in Croatia that took refuge in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷⁰ Until then the peasants had been indifferent to the idea of Yugoslav unity. However, World War II brought them together against the common enemy, and Tito capitalized on his message of brotherhood and unity.

The communist regime did not change the nationalistic ideology of the South Slavs. After World War II in Western Europe, nationalism weakened because of the development of the liberal-democratic political culture, but in Communist Yugoslavia (despite Marxism-Leninism) nationalism remained in its traditional form.⁷¹ Yugoslav Communism did not

⁷⁰ Dragnich, *Serbs and Croats*, 114.

⁷¹ Djilas, *Raspad i nada*, 23.

encourage mixing between the different nationalities. Common Yugoslav universities with students from all nationalities did not exist, and it was rare for a student to study in a university that was not of his or her nationality. Thus, an intellectual class of citizens identifying themselves as Yugoslavs never developed. Furthermore, common economic and cultural projects were rare. There was not a common Yugoslav newspaper or TV station.

After World War II, nationalism sporadically resurfaced, mostly in Croatia. In the late 1960s, a cultural and political movement, the Croatian Spring, emerged from the Communist Party in Croatia. Croat reformers were seeking more rights for the Republic of Croatia within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1967, Croat scholars wrote a document entitled *Declaration of the Status and Name of the Croatian Language*, and published it in a newspaper, seeking recognition of Croatian as an independent language. In 1971, during the Croatian Spring, Croat ideologists, members of the Croatian national institution Matica Hrvatska, had an important role in organizing student demonstrations that opposed a unified and centralized system of government, and called for more rights for Croatia within Yugoslavia. In 1971, Tito's patience diminished, and he abolished the movement by force. Tito's authoritarian regime was able to fight nationalism swiftly. The nationalistic movement leaders were quickly removed from power, and order was restored. Tito's regime nonetheless failed to prevent ethnic nationalism from resurfacing. The vast majority of the Yugoslav population were not identifying themselves as Yugoslavs.

Yugoslavia was widely considered to be a multiethnic country. However, Djilas holds that Yugoslavia was homogenous in terms of ethnicity, but it was heterogeneous in terms of nationalistic perceptions among the Yugoslav population. The three Yugoslav languages—Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian, and Slovenian—are similar to each other. Furthermore, the similarities among the South Slavs in Yugoslavia are larger than those among any of its neighbors. Many of nationalities in the world united by the language, culture, and historical traditions are far less similar than the South Slavs in Yugoslavia.

However, the South Slavs' nationalistic ideologies that were formed and widely adopted before World War I never dissolved.⁷²

The last decades of Yugoslavia's existence were characterized by an increase in the numbers of citizens declaring themselves Yugoslavs. Dejan Jovic observed that, from 1974 to 1990, the emergence of Yugoslav culture was mainly seen through the popularity of Yugoslav rock music. The musicians, regardless of their nationalities, were popular throughout Yugoslavia. From 1971 to 1981, the number of citizens declaring themselves Yugoslavs increased from 273,000 to 1.2 million. That was an increase from 1.3% to 5.4% within a decade. Additionally, from 1981 to 1991, those declaring themselves Yugoslavs further increased to one fifth of the total Yugoslav population.⁷³

In 1967, the Yugoslav government recognized separate cultural systems for its nationalities. This made it more difficult for the South Slavs to form a shared identity. Jovic states that in Yugoslavia nationalism predominated because a single culture did not exist, nor were there "Yugoslav political institutions that would represent the citizens of Yugoslavia."⁷⁴ However, he rejects the thesis that nationalism has always been present among the South Slavs, but was frozen during Communism.⁷⁵

D. CONCLUSION

In summary, the question of nationalism was the most significant in relations between the Serbs and the Croats. Nationalism is deeply embedded in them, and it was historically easy to exploit, such as the Ustaše atrocities in World War II and the massive genocides during the Civil War in Yugoslavia in 1990s, conducted predominantly by the Serbs. Serbian politicians argue that the Serbs made the largest contributions in establishing Yugoslavia in 1918 and made greater sacrifices than other ethnicities in Yugoslavia in World War I and World War II. Furthermore, the Serbs represented the largest proportion

⁷² Djilas, 13.

⁷³ Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia," 107.

⁷⁴ Jovic, 106.

⁷⁵ Jovic, 106–7.

of the Yugoslav population in Serbia and also inhabited large areas in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the Serbs' goal was to combine the territories where all the Serbs lived in one country.

Croat politicians were afraid that their power in Yugoslavia would weaken with democratization. They feared that with free elections, the majority of the votes would go to the Serbs due to the larger Serb populations. Therefore, the Croats supported the Slovenes' option to democratize within the republic, while the Serbs favored democratization at the federal level. Jovic believes that democratization in Yugoslavia as a whole would have created a politically united nation.⁷⁶ The popularity of a Yugoslav identity was on the rise in the last two decades of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's existence. Consequently, the biggest losers from the establishment of Yugoslav democracy would have been the Croatian and Slovenian political elites. Therefore, nationalism resurfaced at the height of the possibility for a democratic Yugoslavia, as the only means to preserve the power of the regional governments.

Prior to World War I, the South Slavs were never one nation nor did they express loyalty to the idea of one South Slav nation. Building a unified South Slav nation proved to be more challenging than anticipated. To local peasants, it mattered little under whose rule they would be, but it did matter who could provide protection. The monarchy, early in the founding of Yugoslavia, failed to provide reliable security and establish institutions that would encourage shared South Slav identity. The one party authoritarian Communist regime was able to balance the power of the different nationalities within the government and keep the political elites satisfied, if not happy. The democratization efforts threatened the balance of power among the nationalities. In the face of the nationalistic propaganda from political leaders in the 1990s, the Croats and the Serbs had to choose sides. Without a well-established Yugoslav identity, it was natural for the Serbs and the Croats to turn to their nationalistic roots.

⁷⁶ Dejan Jovic, *Yugoslavia: A State That Withered Away*, 1st edition (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 107.

III. THE FAILURE OF THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNING SYSTEM TO BUILD A STABLE ECONOMY

The history of Yugoslavia's economy consisted of a series of ineffective economic policies that occasionally needed the implementation of necessary reforms in order to correct them. The objective was to remove elements of Yugoslavia's socioeconomic system that impeded dynamic economic growth. Furthermore, the policies aimed to narrow the economic disparities between the Yugoslav regions and funded the less-developed regions with resources from the better developed regions. Yet, the policies did not bring economic convergence in Yugoslavia. Numerous post-World War II economic reforms, intended to balance the economic disparities, failed. The reforms would regularly prove to be ineffective. They were fabricated to serve the interest of particular ethnicities in order to preserve a political power. This chapter explains Yugoslavia's economic framework, presents its most important institutional and developmental characteristics, and finally examines to what extent Yugoslavia's failed economy led to its dissolution.

A. OVERVIEW OF YUGOSLAVIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

From 1920, until the outbreak of World War II, Yugoslavia did not make noticeable economic progress. Economic growth was partly a consequence of demographic growth; and it is clearly visible, from Yugoslavia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) data, that the economy during this period was mostly stagnant.⁷⁷ In 1939–1945, World War II caused severe difficulties for economic development in Yugoslavia. During World War II, more than 1.7 million people died, at an average age of 22, which was twice more than the civilian and military casualties of the United Kingdom and the United States combined.⁷⁸

However, during the post-World War II period, Yugoslavia sustained exponential economic growth. In the period from 1950 to 1979, GDP per capita increased over four

⁷⁷ Angus Maddison, *The World Economy*, Development Centre Studies (Paris, France: OECD, 2006), 474–479.

⁷⁸ Tim Cullen, *Yugoslavia and the World Bank* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, Information and Public Affairs Department, 1979), 3.

times.⁷⁹ Indeed, Yugoslavia achieved greater economic progress after World War II. However, this trend was not unique to Yugoslavia. During this period, rebuilding after World War II caused substantial economic development around the globe.

After World War II, Yugoslavia aligned its economic development with the West. Susan Woodward believes that the Yugoslav economic system depended, throughout the post-World War II period, on the balancing act between the East and the West:

The core of the balancing act was a strategic bargain struck with the West: it would maintain a strong military capacity independent of Moscow, including a critical role in defense of NATO's southern flank against possible Soviet movement west, in exchange for Western economic assistance and membership in global economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with its access to World Bank loans, association with European trading blocs (the EFTA and the EC), and by 1965, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).⁸⁰

This bargain was a foundation on which the economic development within the Yugoslav socialist system was based.

In the period from 1979 to 1989, there was no increase in per capita income in Yugoslavia. Stagnation in economic development occurred in the neighboring states Bulgaria and Hungary, but not in Greece or Austria.⁸¹ It is apparent that this stagnation was not the result of broader European economic difficulties nor was it a global movement. Therefore, studying the Yugoslav economic trends during this period is certainly an important factor to understand the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

B. BARRIERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YUGOSLAV ECONOMY

From the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918 until the Civil War in the 1990s, the economic development had been either slow or unsustainable. According to economist Vladimir Gligorov, after World War II, "non-democratic solutions and the non-liberal economic policy temporarily contributed to stabilization, but in the long run they signified

⁷⁹ Maddison, *The World Economy*, 478–79.

⁸⁰ Woodward, "The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia," 75.

⁸¹ Maddison, *The World Economy*, 275–77, 478–79.

the abandonment of a more durable political community.”⁸² In the long term, disagreements between nationalist interests, in terms of economic development, caused the Yugoslav economy to lag behind the capitalist developed countries.

Yugoslavia was geographically located in proximity to the developed world. Thus, economic backwardness could not be explained by a geographical cutoff from access to the world markets. Moreover, at the time of the stagnation in the 1980s, when the democratic political changes were inevitable, circumstances were favorable for Yugoslavia to join the developed world. Therefore, the lack of economic development in the post-World War II period can be seen as a result of the adoption of policies made by the Yugoslav statesman.

Throughout the history of Yugoslavia, uneven tax distribution among the regions were subject of the most intense political disputes. Furthermore, the spending of public funds—investing more in undeveloped areas and less into developed ones—increased tensions among the Yugoslav regions. Dinko Dubravčić, a Croatian economist, believes that the redistribution of income is crucially important for the state to function well. Redistribution should be implemented among citizens with different amounts of wealth, economic sectors, or regions of a state. The democratic states’ motive for redistribution of income is to strengthen their political and economic power in relation to foreign competitors.⁸³ Therefore, it is not surprising that Yugoslavia invested more public funds in underdeveloped areas, since regional differences should also be expected to decrease after state unions, which is a key economic justification for the creation of a common state.

Gligorov notes that, in the post-World War II period, it should have been expected that less developed regions would have superior growth rates than developed ones.⁸⁴ However, that was not the case in Yugoslavia. According to the World Bank data, in 1973, household income in Slovenia was the highest in Yugoslavia. In relation to Slovenians’

⁸² Vladimir Gligorov, “Yugoslavia and Development: Benefits and Costs,” accessed May 20, 2019, http://www.yuhistorija.com/economy_txt01.html.

⁸³ Dubravčić, “Economic Causes and Political Context of the Dissolution of a Multinational Federal State,” 259–60.

⁸⁴ Gligorov, “Yugoslavia and Development: Benefits and Costs.”

the household income in Croatia was five-sixth, Serbia and Vojvodina two-thirds, and the other republics around one-half. Kosovo was lagging far behind with one-third. Slovenia with a GNP per capita of \$3,802 compared with several western European countries while Kosovo with \$627 per capita was comparable with the developing countries. The income disparities between Slovenia and Kosovo, during Yugoslavia's existence, were as high as a 6 to 1 ratio.⁸⁵

C. UNSUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC REFORMS IN POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD

Yugoslavia's policymakers failed to create equal economic progress among the various regions of the country. After systemic economic changes in the mid-1960s, the economic regional development remained relatively unaffected. With the exception of Kosovo, regional differences ranged between ratios from 1 to 3.⁸⁶ However, the fact that the economic regional differences did not decrease nor did they change significantly shows that the national funds appropriated to support the less developed regions did not generate economic equality. Gligorov implies that Yugoslavia's economic failure may have been the economic system that was constructed to favor the underdeveloped areas over the developed. Conversely, the economic policies over the decades failed to increase the level of economic development of less developed regions to the high-performance levels of Slovenia and Croatia.⁸⁷

One of the main hurdles to Yugoslav economic growth was the complex economic system. Patricia Taylor, Grendjean Burke, and Niko Tos acknowledge that the evolution of the Yugoslav economic system was a result of the dispute between Tito and Stalin in 1948. Yugoslavia was expelled from membership in the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), and its economic cooperation with the communist bloc countries was lost. Consequently, Yugoslavia turned for help to the World Bank. This led to the origins of the complex Yugoslav economic system that was designed to link the communist ideology

⁸⁵ Cullen, *Yugoslavia and the World Bank*, 6.

⁸⁶ Cullen, 6.

⁸⁷ Gligorov, "Yugoslavia and Development: Benefits and Costs."

with the free market economy. The core of the new system was the self-management of the enterprises introduced in 1950. It was a hybrid of capitalistic and socialist systems that limited the communist government's interference with management and gave more freedom to the managers in running the enterprises.⁸⁸

According to Woodward, the Yugoslav socialism was combination of “socialist ideals and policies with openness to the world economy.”⁸⁹ One of the main systemic differences between capitalism and socialism is the process of making investment decisions. With nationalization of the funds, the state monopolized the investment decisions. With introduction of the self-management system, the Yugoslav policymakers gave decision-making authority to enterprises. Woodward wrote that the self-management handed Yugoslav workers influence in decision-making within the enterprises on issues such as whether the profits would go to wages or to new investments, allotting the cost of labor and deciding whether it is appropriate to cut wage levels temporarily or to dismiss employees. Enterprises were managed by directors who were elected by workers' councils. Members of the workers' councils were elected representatives from the enterprises' workforce.⁹⁰

The reform of the 1960s brought substantial changes in the Yugoslav economy. The central state investment fund was abolished. According to Dinko Dubravčić, until 1966, “the main channels of transfers from the developed to the less developed regions were the federal budget and central investment funds.” In 1966, the federal fund for the development of the underdeveloped republics and provinces (FNP) was established to satisfy the Croatian and Slovenian demands to set up a threshold and limit investment to the less developed regions.⁹¹ Moreover, investment decisions were transferred to the enterprises. Changes in the banking system and the public finance system were also significant.

⁸⁸ Taylor, Burke, and Tos, “Work Satisfaction Under Yugoslav Self-Management: On Participation, Authority, and Ownership,” 1021–23.

⁸⁹ Woodward, “The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia,” 74.

⁹⁰ Woodward, 75–76.

⁹¹ Dubravčić, “Economic Causes and Political Context of the Dissolution of a Multinational Federal State,” 263.

Gligorov says that the reform designated the Yugoslav commercial banks as facilitators of financial relations between the Yugoslav enterprises and the world.⁹²

The intention of the economic reform in the mid-1960s was to encourage association with foreign markets and increase the efficiency of the Yugoslav enterprises' investments. The Yugoslav commercial banks were able to take deposits in foreign currency and progressively became capable of borrowing abroad and issuing loans to the domestic enterprises. Yet, direct foreign and private domestic investments were both unattainable, which were drawbacks that subsequently had to be eliminated.⁹³ The economic system was capable of generating foreign funds and providing financial subsidies for the Yugoslav economy. Nevertheless, the economic reform that intended to establish a system for increasing the efficiency of the economy served as apparatus to maintain the old system by creating a false sense of stability.

Yugoslavia's economic policy reforms in the 1960s were getting closer to privatization and democratization. Some constitutional solutions from the 1960s seem to have started in that direction. Furthermore, Yugoslavia had opened its borders for increased international cooperation. All of these systemic solutions had the character of a state that was inclined to change to privatization and democratization. However, the political changes went in a completely different direction. Nationalistic movements intensified and threatened to break up the state. Privatization was stopped, and Yugoslavia further distanced itself from democratization. The outcome was that most of the economic changes mainly strengthened the Yugoslav republics and provinces on account of the federation. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia became a much more open economy following the economic reform in the 1960s.

The 1970s were considered the golden age in Yugoslavia. According to Gligorov, the dinar was strong, foreign import goods were available, and the infrastructure was somewhat reconstructed or built. In the 1970s, the Yugoslav economy was operating at a negative real interest rate. With the previous reforms, the federal government lost its ability

⁹² Gligorov, "Yugoslavia and Development: Benefits and Costs."

⁹³ Gligorov.

to regulate the fiscal policy, and the monetary policy became a primary instrument for instituting economic policy. The federal government lowered the interest rates below the rate of inflation. This resulted in an increase in investment and consumption, which were financed by borrowing abroad, and the growth of imports. As the money was cheap in the 1970s, Yugoslavia national debt continued to increase.⁹⁴ The World Bank report showed that by 1979, Yugoslavia had sixty loans that totaled over 2 billion U.S. dollars. That put Yugoslavia among the five largest borrowers in the world.⁹⁵

D. YUGOSLAV ECONOMY IN THE 1980S: DESTINED TO COLLAPSE

After the Tito-Stalin fallout, Yugoslav's economic dependence on Western capital and Western markets continued to grow. Even if there was a feeling of well-being, it was not built on stable economic foundations. The economy was sustainable as long as foreign creditors were willing to lend. From 1965 to 1987, the national debt increased from \$1.3 billion to \$22.2 billion U.S. dollars. That amounted to an increase per year of about 18%.⁹⁶ Branko Horvat and Helen Kramer point out that in the 1980s the credit-worthiness of Yugoslavia fell to the lowest ranking in its existence. International creditors were reluctant to lend to Yugoslavia. Inflation reached 50%, and economists expected it to remain the same. However, Slovenia maintained its full employment, fueled by its exports to Western markets. In contrast, Kosovo experienced the highest levels of unemployment and migration to the West.⁹⁷ In 1984 Yugoslavia's unemployment reached levels above 20% except in Slovenia and Croatia. In 1985, 59.6 % of those unemployed in Yugoslavia as a whole were 25 and under.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Gligorov.

⁹⁵ Cullen, *Yugoslavia and the World Bank*, iii.

⁹⁶ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Library, *OECD Economic Surveys: Yugoslavia*, (Paris: OECD 1990), https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/eco_surveys-yucs-1990-en.pdf?expires=1558656977&id=id&accname=oid022203&checksum=5CF57E470AC402AA03FD43D3A2813412.

⁹⁷ Branko Horvat and Helen M. Kramer, "The Economic System and Stabilization," *Eastern European Economics* 23, no. 1 (1984): 69–70.

⁹⁸ Woodward, "The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia," 81.

By the 1980s, Yugoslavia was no longer able to repay foreign debts. Moreover, the IMF requirements for lending funds to Yugoslavia became more radical.⁹⁹ At the same time, Yugoslavia had a large trade deficit, but this time, due to the increased requirements, borrowing was not an option. Gligorov illustrated that Yugoslavia could not find proper solutions to the economic troubles in a timely manner. It became necessary to adjust the balance of imports and exports. In addition, it was necessary to refinance the existing debts at significantly higher and unsustainable interest rates.¹⁰⁰

The first hurdle was the dispute over the possible solutions. According to Gligorov, the devaluation of the dinar would have redistributed the costs among the republics. The devaluation would have benefited tourism and exports sectors. However, the products manufactured for the domestic market would have to go up in price. There was no compensation mechanism, because the federal government could no longer provide a financial support for those who needed assistance with income generated by taxing those who benefited from the reform. The central bank used the exchange rate and selective lending to compensate for this, but its actions only increased disputes because the conditions were unequal.¹⁰¹

These obstacles to the relatively quick resolution of foreign debt problems led to the difficulty in re-launching economic production. The economy stagnated for a decade with a steady growth of inflation and unemployment. Over the course of the 1980s, the advocates for economic solutions could not gain public support. The developing republics consistently emphasized the inequity of the fiscal system, which allegedly directed funds to less-developed areas. It was not until late 1989 that the government of Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković started to change these system characteristics, which resulted in favorable economic trends beginning in 1990.

⁹⁹ Woodward, 81.

¹⁰⁰ Gligorov, "Yugoslavia and Development: Benefits and Costs."

¹⁰¹ Gligorov.

E. CONCLUSION

How was it possible for a country with solid economic growth in three decades after World War II to collapse in the 1980s? Vesna Bojicic, a senior research fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science, finds that the Yugoslav economic system failed to remove the barriers for economic growth caused by the socialist economic system.¹⁰² Furthermore, Yugoslavia's economic system was not built on a stable foundation. Horvat explains that the people who constructed Yugoslavia's economic system did not understand how the system should function. If the self-management system was criticized then, automatically, the critics would be labeled as anti-socialist, and with that possibly face consequences.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, the increase in unemployment was attributed to the institutional factors, including self-management. With the elimination of shareholders in the enterprises, there was no incentive for the companies to grow.

In an enterprise, employees' incentive is to increase their wages and not to increase the size of the company. Where the workers' interest is higher wages, the shareholders' interest is growth in the value of their investments. In Yugoslavia's socialism, the shareholder was the state. The state incentives for companies to grow are not as high as those of shareholders. Therefore, the workers' objective of higher wages prevented investment for research and development, and ultimately increased unemployment. Woodward believes that the self-management system made the Yugoslav citizens define their identities, economic interest, social status, and political loyalty based on their employment status.¹⁰⁴

Second, since the very creation of the Yugoslav state, the distribution of benefits and cost amongst its constituents repeatedly generated intense debates and disagreements. The FNP was the only remaining fiscal means of redistribution of the national fund. Yet, the economic framework was not accepted by the individual national communities. It was

¹⁰² Vesna Bojicic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Causes and Consequences of Dynamic Inefficiency in Semi-Command Economies," in *Yugoslavia and after: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth*, ed. David A. Dyker (London: Longman, 1999), 45.

¹⁰³ Horvat and Kramer, "The Economic System and Stabilization," 75.

¹⁰⁴ Woodward, "The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia," 76.

widely considered among all Yugoslav republics that the fiscal system was unfair. In the end, the country collapsed because of a dispute over who contributed more and who benefited more from the national fund for underdeveloped regions. This dispute should have been expected, since the reduction in fiscal jurisdiction of the federal government was a key requirement in the period from 1968 until its breakup.

The different views concerning the future of the Yugoslav economy divided the regions between centralist and de-centralist approaches. Centralists pushed for tax collection by the federal tax authorities. De-centralists believed that the federal budget should be reduced, with less money appropriated for the Yugoslav Army.¹⁰⁵ Serbs and the rest of the undeveloped regions were on the centralist side of the argument and Croatia and Slovenia on the de-centralist. Serbs argued that per capita income differences between developed and less developed regions had increased and that a redistribution of income was needed. Developed regions countered that the funds were used in extremely inefficient ways. They could only agree on general principles: free trade, exchange of goods and services, and capital and labor movement between the regions. Furthermore, Woodward observes that in order to meet the condition of the IMF in 1970s, the Yugoslav central government gave greater economic autonomy to the republics with respect to economic decision making.¹⁰⁶

Finally, Yugoslavia lost its strategic importance after the fall of the Soviet Union. The World Bank, the IMF, and other financial institutions increased the qualification requirements for lending to Yugoslavia. In the late 1980s, Marković's push for reforms in the Yugoslav economy were not supported by the IMF and the World Bank. His economic reforms favored increasing democratic policies from the precedents in the 1960s and the 1970s. However, Yugoslavia lost its geopolitical importance and Western nations shifted their focus to the ex-communist countries in Central Europe.

¹⁰⁵ Dubravčić, "Economic Causes and Political Context of the Dissolution of a Multinational Federal State," 267–68.

¹⁰⁶ Woodward, "The Political Economy of Ethno-Nationalism in Yugoslavia," 79.

IV. THE YUGOSLAV POLITICAL ELITES AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Communist system in Yugoslavia was destined to collapse. New political elites emerged to lead Yugoslavia's democratization. Paradoxically these elites had deep roots in the Communist regime. An examination of the contributing factors that led to the election of the Yugoslav leaders may help to explain the emergence of mass nationalism among the different ethnicities in Yugoslavia. By examining the ways in which Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and Croatian President Franjo Tuđman affected the Yugoslav people's lives, this thesis sheds some light on one of the possible underlying causes for the tragic Yugoslav Civil War in the early 1990s. Understanding the Yugoslav political elites' positions on the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the actions that followed, will also be a factor to take into account in this attempt to interpret the tragic events.

This thesis concludes that the Yugoslav political elites in the late 1980s and early 1990s were responsible for the Yugoslav crisis in the 1990s. Furthermore, foreign powers, particularly the United States, had a huge impact on the outcome of the conflict in Yugoslavia by their late intervention. Richard Holbrooke, the chief negotiator representing the United States during the Yugoslav crisis, wrote that the Yugoslavian crisis was the result of "the greatest collective security failure of the West since the 1930s."¹⁰⁷ This chapter examines international politics as a factor in the Yugoslav dissolution. Furthermore, this thesis analyzes the immoral domestic and the inadequate international policies in Yugoslavia that created a hostile environment and escalated into a civil war. By specifically examining the ways in which Yugoslav political elites and international politics influenced the outcome of the Yugoslav Civil War, this chapter contributes to the larger body of work that assesses European policies in the Balkans.

¹⁰⁷ Richard C. Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1998), 23–24.

A. THE RISE OF SERBIAN PRESIDENT MILOŠEVIĆ: “BUTCHER OF THE BALKANS”

Serbian President Slobodan Milošević was a key political figure in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. According to Holbrooke, Milošević “bore the heaviest responsibility” for all the wars in Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁸ He rose in power by being the right-hand man to the Serbian President, Ivan Stambolić, who Milošević later betrayed and forced to resign. It is interesting how Milošević managed to gain popularity and succeed in overthrowing Stambolić. Warren Zimmermann, the U.S. Ambassador in Yugoslavia, described Milošević as “an opportunist, not an ideologue, a man driven by power rather than nationalism. He has made a Faustian pact with nationalism as a way to gain and hold power.”¹⁰⁹ An example of that behavior was his trip in Kosovo in 1987. Stambolić sent him to Kosovo to reduce the tension between the government of Kosovo, consisting mainly of ethnic Albanians, and the nationalist Serbs faction, which posed challenges to the Kosovo government. From this visit, Milošević quickly recognized that he could use Serb nationalism to gain power. His narrative was that Kosovo was not just part of Serbia; it was the heart of Serbia. Ethnic Albanians forced out Serbs from Kosovo. Therefore, Serbs must protect the remaining Serbs in Kosovo. Zimmermann compared the significance of Kosovo to the Serbs with that of Jerusalem to the Jews.¹¹⁰ Milošević’s popularity increased and surpassed that of Stambolić, with his strong stance against the ethnic Albanian government and firm support for the nationalist Serbs in Kosovo.

B. FRANJO TUĐMAN: THE FATHER OF THE COUNTRY–CROATIA

Franjo Tuđman, the Croatian President in 1990–1999, had deep Croatian nationalist roots. Biographer Darko Hudelist suggests that Tuđman’s father had a vast influence on Tuđman’s political orientation. In the interwar period, Tuđman’s father was a member of the Croatian Peoples’ Peasant Party.¹¹¹ The political party had a strong separatist view and

¹⁰⁸ Holbrooke, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Zimmermann, “The Last Ambassador,” 5.

¹¹⁰ Zimmermann, 3.

¹¹¹ Darko Hudelist, *Tuđman-Biografija* (Zagreb: Profil, 2004), 15–17.

argued for Croatian autonomy.¹¹² In 1960, Tuđman became the youngest general in the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA). Joe Tripician's analysis shows that it was unusual for a Croat to rise to the rank of general in the YPA. Nevertheless, he resigned from serving in the YPA in 1961, and decided to go into politics. He was arrested twice for contributing to Croatian nationalistic movements.¹¹³ His first arrest was in 1972 and his second in 1982.¹¹⁴

Tuđman's biographers imply that his heart was never in Yugoslavia. However, his rise to the rank of general at the age of 38 could suggest that he had a robust network of sponsors. After he was released from prison, in the 1980s he traveled in the West looking for support from Croat immigrants. One of his biggest supporters was a Croat-Canadian businessman, Gojko Šušak, who bankrolled his elections. According to the New York Times, Šušak had a strong sentiment for the Ustaše movement during World War II.¹¹⁵ It is apparent that during the 1980s Tuđman was trying to advance his political ambition based on Croatian nationalism. He won the 1990 Croatian presidential election based on a strong nationalist campaign. The U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, considered Tuđman's campaign extreme in nature and filled with immoral statements such as "that he was glad his wife was neither a Serb nor a Jew," and decided not to meet Tuđman until he won the Croatian presidency. Zimmermann in their first meeting confronted Tuđman's radical campaign statements, but Tuđman evaded the question in favor of focusing on Croatian history. Zimmermann concluded that Tuđman's concept of governance was not based on democratic values.¹¹⁶

¹¹² The Croatian Peoples' Peasant Party intent and organization is discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.

¹¹³ Joe Tripician, *Balkanized at Sunrise* (lulu.com, 2016), 34.

¹¹⁴ Michael Schuman, *Croatia, Nations in Transition* (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 41.

¹¹⁵ David Binder, "Gojko Susak, Defense Minister of Croatia, Is Dead at 53," *The New York Times*, May 5, 1998, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/05/world/gojko-susak-defense-minister-of-croatia-is-dead-at-53.html>.

¹¹⁶ Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador," 7.

C. SLOVENE CONCERN WITH SERB AGGRESSION IN KOSOVO

The Slovenian President from 1991 to 2002, Milan Kučan, undoubtedly had stronger democratic values than the rest of the Yugoslav political elites. Zimmermann points out that Kučan's administration followed democratic principles such as free elections, freedom of the press, and a free market economy that leaned to the West. However, Slovenes were frightened by Milošević's rise to power. His gangster-like attitude and imperialistic arrogance made Slovenes doubt if they could manage to live within a united Yugoslavia. In a discussion with Zimmermann, Kučan described the Serb aggression in Kosovo as "the worst human rights problem in Europe."¹¹⁷ The population in Slovenia was ethnically homogenous and there were no territorial disputes with the other Yugoslav republics. The question arises: why were Slovenes worried about Kosovo?

Within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Kosovo and Vojvodina were autonomous provinces of Serbia. Tito gave the two provinces autonomy out of fear that Serbia, with its larger territory and population within Yugoslavia, could overpower the other republics. Therefore, both provinces had a representative in the Yugoslav Council of Presidency to limit the Serbs' influence in the government. Milošević's control over Vojvodina and Kosovo gave him two extra votes in the Council of Presidency. With Montenegro historically siding with the Serbs, that meant a total of four votes out of eight.¹¹⁸ Decisions in the Yugoslav Council of Presidency had to have a majority vote to pass. In the late 1980s, Serbia controlled four votes, but it needed one more to control the decision making by the Yugoslav Council of Presidency. The four votes led to a stalemate in the early 1990s.

D. HEADLESS STATE

In May 1991, it was Croatia's turn to take the Presidency of Yugoslavia. Stipe Mesić, chosen by the Croatian Parliament, was to be the President of Yugoslavia from May 1991 to May 1992. According to Mesić, for the previous twelve presidents, the Yugoslav

¹¹⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, 30–35.

¹¹⁸ The eight votes were cast by the representatives to the Yugoslav Council of Presidency from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and Vojvodina.

Council confirming Yugoslav presidents was a formality, not a contested vote. His appointment to serve as President of the Yugoslav Council by the Croatian Parliament should have been confirmed without contest. The Serbs, controlling four votes, opposed his appointment, and, with a stalemate, Yugoslavia did not have a president.¹¹⁹

Serb domination in the Yugoslav Council raised concerns in all the other Yugoslav republics. One of the key authorities of the Yugoslav Council was to give orders to the Army. Originally, the Croatian Parliament had selected Stipe Šušteršič to be the Croat representative to the Yugoslav Council. In 1990, after Tuđman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party won the elections in Croatia, Šušteršič was replaced by Mesić. By appointing Mesić, Tuđman showed that he had different ideas for Yugoslavia. The Serbs had a reasonable concern about Mesić's appointment due to the HDZ's strong nationalist campaign and its evident objective of an independent Croatia. However, the Serbs in denying Mesić the presidency violated the Yugoslav Constitution. On the other hand, if Mesić had been elected the President of SFRY, the Croats would have controlled the YPA, and the Serbs would have lost their control of the Yugoslav Council.

Serbia's strategy in the stalemate was to create a state of emergency and give power to the YPA to act independently. Most of the YPA's generals were Serbs, including the Minister of Defense, General Veljko Kadijević. Nevertheless, the YPA leadership's pressure on the Yugoslav Council to declare a national emergency failed. General Kadijević made it clear that he would not do anything without the council vote. He intended to remove the leadership in Slovenia and Croatia and prevent secession. Undoubtedly, this kind of behavior from the republics under Tito's regime would have been quashed by Belgrade. However, Kadijević, without backup from prominent foreign powers, could not operate independently. His actions would have probably been seen as a coup and might have led to NATO action against the YPA. The Serbs had a military advantage and could have attacked Zagreb, but they did not have allies. The Croats had support from Austria, Germany, and Hungary.

¹¹⁹ Stipe Mesić, *The Demise of Yugoslavia: A Political Memoir* (Budapest ; New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 20–28.

E. THE YUGOSLAV CRISIS IN THE EARLY 1990S

The Yugoslav crisis started in Krajina, a region in Croatia settled with a majority Serb population. Since the YPA could not act overtly in the crisis, the Serbs' strategy changed. In June 1991, after Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia, the Serb media planted fear in the Serbs from Krajina. Noel Malcolm, an English political journalist, described watching Radio Television Belgrade "as if all television in the USA had been taken over by the Ku Klux Klan." He asserted that propaganda of this type and magnitude would have started a war even in the USA.¹²⁰ Backed by the YPA, the Serbs established the autonomous region of Krajina (SAO Krajina).¹²¹ The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, in the summary of the judgement concerning the Serbian leader in Krajina, Milan Martić, concluded as follows:

The evidence presented to this Trial Chamber has shown that the President of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, openly supported the preservation of Yugoslavia as a federation of which the SAO Krajina would form part. However, the evidence has established that Slobodan Milošević covertly intended the creation of a Serb state. This state was to be created through the establishment of paramilitary forces and the provocation of incidents in order to create a situation where the JNA [YPA] could intervene. Initially, the JNA [YPA] would intervene to separate the parties but subsequently the JNA [YPA] would intervene to secure the territories envisaged to be part of a future Serb state.¹²²

F. EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND UNITED STATES POLICIES IN YUGOSLAVIA

In the early 1990s, Western nations had different views on how to resolve the crisis in Yugoslavia. Austria and Germany pushed for recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia. On the other hand, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States supported the unity of the republics in Yugoslavia. On 21 June 1991, the United States made its position clear when the United States Secretary of State, James Baker, visited

¹²⁰ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 252.

¹²¹ The acronym SAO stands for Serbian Autonomous Oblast.

¹²² "Summary of Judgement for Milan Martić," United Nations International Residual Mechanism, accessed May 5, 2019, http://www.icty.org/x/cases/martic/tjug/en/070612_summary_en.pdf.

Belgrade. According to Zimmermann, “Baker told Croatian President Franjo Tuđman and Slovene President Milan Kučan that the United States would not encourage or support unilateral secession; he hoped they would not secede, but if they had to leave, he urged them to leave by negotiated agreement.”¹²³

The United States chief negotiator, Richard Holbrooke, claimed that one of the key factors for the Yugoslav tragedy in the early 1990s was the U.S. reliance on the European Community (EC) to handle the crisis. With the United States preoccupied with the war in Kuwait and Iraq in 1990, for United States policy makers the Yugoslavian issues became insignificant. Additionally, U.S. politicians did not want to get involved in the crisis prior to the United States presidential election in 1992. Therefore, Holbrooke suggests, the future of Yugoslavia was left in the hands of the EC. In the post-World War II era, the Yugoslav crisis was the first major security issue in Europe in which the EC was negotiating without prominent United States involvement.¹²⁴ Four days after U.S. Secretary of State James Baker departed Belgrade, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, and the war in Slovenia commenced. This suggests that the Slovenes and the Croats correctly understood the U.S. position of not wanting involvement in combat in Yugoslavia.

After the war in Slovenia erupted, the EC sent representatives to negotiate peace, but the United States did not. The outcome of the negotiation was a cease-fire and the establishment of the Slovenes’ autonomy. However, EC negotiators failed to determine Milošević’s intent. The YPA, considerably more powerful, was nonetheless defeated quickly by the Slovenian Army. Milošević understood that with Slovenia’s secession he would dominate Yugoslavia. After war erupted in Croatia, the British politician, Lord Carrington, was appointed to lead the diplomatic peace talks between the EC and the Yugoslav political elites. However, his efforts were negated by Germany’s firm stance on recognizing the independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

Lord Carrington heavily criticized Germany’s intention to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia. First, he believed that the recognition could be

¹²³ Zimmermann, “The Last Ambassador,” 11.

¹²⁴ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 22–32.

powerful leverage for negotiating a peace agreement. Second, he understood that if the EC recognized Croatia and Slovenia without negotiating a peace agreement a war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was inevitable. BiH might follow Slovenia and Croatia in secession from Yugoslavia. The population in BiH, which consisted of a mix of Muslims, Croats, and Serbs, had complex views about secession from Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, Germany's strong position on the matter prevailed, and the EC decided to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

Germany's strong push for the independence of Slovenia and Croatia was baffling. Holbrooke states that, despite opposition from Lord Carrington, the United States, and many EC members, Germany's stance was so strong that it threatened European unity. After the Cold War, the United States welcomed the idea of Germany emerging as an even more influential actor in shaping European policy. Therefore, the United States ultimately sided with Germany's position concerning Yugoslavia.¹²⁵ The Nazi connection with the Ustaše government in Croatia during World War II was well known. However, the connection between the democratic German leadership of the 1990s and the nationalistic Tuđman regime was unusual. Germany's strong position concerning the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, despite the high risk of a greater Yugoslav Civil War, was alarming.

This raises a question: what was Germany's motive for recognizing the independence of Slovenia and Croatia? German unification in the 19th century was achieved by bloodshed. Otto von Bismarck famously stated that "it is not by speeches and majority resolutions that the great questions of the time are decided – that was the big mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood."¹²⁶ Yugoslavia was a sovereign state in which Slovenia and Croatia were component republics. This thesis is not suggesting that Slovenia and Croatia should not have been allowed to secede. However, the Yugoslavs should have been given more time for negotiation and the EC should have discouraged secession unless it proved absolutely necessary. Slovenia and Croatia would not have

¹²⁵ Holbrooke, 31.

¹²⁶ Bismarck quoted in "GHDI - Document," accessed May 5, 2019, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=250&language=english.

declared independence in June 1991 without German support, just as General Kadijević would not act independently against the Slovene and Croat governments without the Soviet Union's support. Moscow refused to provide such support.

German leaders must have been aware of Tuđman's nationalistic attitude. Once Croatia declared independence, the HDZ instituted the checkerboard as the Croatian coat of arms. The checkerboard flag was used by the Ustaše during World War II. Furthermore, the Croatian state police, including the ethnic Serbs in Krajina, were required to wear the checkerboard on their uniforms. To require ethnic Serbs to wear checkerboard insignia on their uniforms would be similar to requiring Jews to wear the swastika. If Tuđman's vision was to create an independent Croatia with 25% of population consisting of Serbs, he would not have implemented a checkerboard for a coat of arms. This action suggests that he aimed to provoke the Serb populations in Croatia, and (when the time was right) to eradicate them. At the end of the Yugoslav crisis, Tuđman succeeded in achieving an ethnically "clean" Croatia. According to World Atlas data, currently the overwhelming majority of the population in Croatia consists of ethnic Croats. After 1991, the proportion of the Croat population increased from 78% to 91%, while the Serb population declined to less than 4%.¹²⁷

The Germans' motive in the crisis is unclear. However, their actions during the Yugoslav crisis suggest that their aim was the disintegration of Yugoslavia. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Germany became a more influential power in Europe. Croatia and Slovenia were soon to be on track to become members of the EC. Germany possibly saw a unified Yugoslavia, with a majority Serb population, as a barrier to its objective. With independent states in Slovenia and Croatia, Germany could establish its presence in the region more easily than with a united Yugoslavia.

G. UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN THE BOSNIA CONFLICT

Four years of failed EC-led peace negotiations resulted in intense ethnic war involving the Bosniaks, the Bosnian Serbs, and the Bosnian Croats in BiH. This required

¹²⁷ "Largest Ethnic Groups in Croatia," World Atlas, accessed May 15, 2019, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/largest-ethnic-groups-in-croatia.html>.

United States and NATO intervention to solve the Yugoslav crisis. All three ethnicities fought each other in order to grab bigger pieces of territory. Neither the Serbs nor the Croats wanted their military forces to be seen as aggressors in BiH. However, the CIA's National Intelligence Estimates show that paramilitary groups directed from Belgrade and Zagreb led "ethnic cleansing" activities in BiH.¹²⁸

According to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Milošević and Tuđman were leaders of joint criminal enterprises. Milošević was "charged with leading a joint criminal enterprise to permanently remove the majority of non-Serbs from large swaths of territory in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo by violent means."¹²⁹ Likewise, "the Appeals Chamber upheld the Trial Chamber's findings that key members of Croatia's then-leadership, including President Franjo Tuđman, Defense Minister Gojko Šušak, and Janko Bobetko, a senior General in the Croatian Army, shared the criminal purpose to ethnically cleanse Bosnian Muslims and contributed to realizing that goal."¹³⁰

The United States government was not involved in the Yugoslav crisis in the early 1990s, resulting in an arduous and complex situation in BiH. The Bosniaks, sometimes called the Muslims, suffered the most casualties resulting from "ethnic cleansing" operations conducted by the Serbs and the Croats. While the Serbs' atrocities were far worse than those of the Croats, Bosnian Croats also conducted "ethnic cleansing" operations. The ICTY concluded that the Croats formed a "joint criminal enterprise aimed at creating a Croatian entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina that would facilitate the reunification of the Croatian people, through ethnic cleansing of the Muslim

¹²⁸ "National Intelligence Estimate: Combatant Forces in the Former Yugoslavia," CIA, 1993, 53, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1993-07-01b.pdf>.

¹²⁹ "Prosecution Case," United Nations International Residual Mechanism, Accessed May 5, 2019, <http://www.icty.org/en/content/prosecution-case>.

¹³⁰ *Statement of the Office of the Prosecutor in Relation to the Judgement in the Case Prosecutor vs. Jadranko Prlić et Al.* (2017), <http://www.icty.org/en/press/statement-of-the-office-of-the-prosecutor-in-relation-to-the-judgement-in-the-case-prosecutor>.

population.”¹³¹ Furthermore, the Croat leader Stipe Mesić in a BBC interview admitted the existence of concentration camps run by Bosnian Croats. The camps would not have been possible without Tuđman’s approval.¹³² The United States approach in resolving the conflict included creating an alliance between the Bosniaks and the Bosnian Croats. This was an astute approach because an alliance between the Bosniaks and the Bosnian Serbs was impossible, and alliance between the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Serbs would have meant that BiH would not exist anymore.

By 1995, Serbs controlled about a quarter of Croat territory in Krajina and parts of Slavonia. The United States knew that Tuđman wanted those territories back and used that leverage to convince him to give up his interest in BiH. Zimmermann disclosed a theory that, in 1991, Milošević and Tuđman had a secret meeting on how to divide BiH.¹³³ This could explain occasional Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat joint attacks on Bosniaks in BiH.¹³⁴ Tuđman decided to move against the Serbs in Croatia. In a BBC interview, Peter Galbraith, U.S. Ambassador to Croatia in 1993–1998, said the United States knew that the operation would take place. Tuđman laughed and said that the United States has a good intelligence service, and proceeded with his operation as planned.¹³⁵ According to the Los Angeles Times, “Tudjman... asked Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith whether the United States had any objections to Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia via Croatia. Two days later, Galbraith and Charles Redman, Clinton’s special envoy to the region, told Tudjman they had ‘no instructions’ from Washington, meaning that the Clinton

¹³¹ “The ICTY’s Final Appeal Judgement to Be Rendered on 29 November 2017,” United Nations International Residual Mechanism, 2017, <http://www.icty.org/en/press/the-icty%E2%80%99s-final-appeal-judgement-to-be-rendered-on-29-november-2017>.

¹³² Angus MacQueen, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, Documentary, 1995, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URZA6r5LLtk>.

¹³³ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, 122.

¹³⁴ Chuck Sudetic, “Serbs and Croats Mount Joint Attack on Muslim Town,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 1993, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/28/world/serbs-and-croats-mount-joint-attack-on-muslim-town.html>.

¹³⁵ MacQueen, *The Death of Yugoslavia*.

administration did not object to the deal.”¹³⁶ Thus, it is reasonable to believe that the United States government gave Tuđman tacit approval to move in Krajina.

The operation in Krajina was quick and decisive. Croatia at this time was “ethnically clean.” Furthermore, NATO commenced a campaign in BiH and forced the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate a peace settlement. At this point, Milošević appears to have lost control of the Bosnian Serbs. The New York Times reported that in May 1993 he failed to influence the Bosnian Serbs to sign a peace agreement. At this time, Serbs controlled a significant portion of BiH and a quarter of the territory of Croatia. Bosnian Serbs defied Milošević and risked confrontation with the United States.¹³⁷ After NATO attacks against the Bosnian Serbs, they turned to Milošević for help. He provided it under the condition that he would have authority to negotiate on behalf of the Bosnian Serbs. That paved the road to Dayton, Ohio, for a peace negotiation involving Milošević, Tuđman, and BiH President Alija Izetbegovic, among others.

The Bosnia conflict concluded with the Dayton Peace Agreement. The signatories of the agreement confirmed who was responsible for the Yugoslav conflict. The agreement declared a peace for a war in Bosnia that both Tuđman and Milošević denied being involved in. Nevertheless, the conflict stopped with their signatures and those of other parties to the Dayton accords.

H. CONCLUSION

The Yugoslav political leaders elected in the late 1980s and early 1990s faced exceptional circumstances. The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution shifted power from the central government to the presidents of the Yugoslav republics. The reforms in the constitution were not tested until Tito’s death in 1980. The highest-ranking body of the central government was the Yugoslav Council, which consisted of the members appointed by the parliaments of the six Yugoslav republics and the two autonomous provinces. Thus, the

¹³⁶ John Pomfret and David Ottaway, “U.S. Allies’ Arms Aid to Bosnia Detailed,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1996, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-05-12-mn-3437-story.html>.

¹³⁷ “Conflict in the Balkans; Serbs Reject Bosnia Pact, Defying Friends and Foes, and Insist on Referendum,” *The New York Times*, May 6, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/05/06/world/conflict-balkans-serbs-reject-bosnia-pact-defying-friends-foes-insist-referendum.html>.

members' true commitment was to the persons that appointed them, and in most cases, it was the presidents of the republics or the provinces. The presidency of Yugoslavia was rotating annually among the members of the Yugoslav Council with the intent that none of the republics would establish dominance in the central government. Therefore, after Tito's death, Yugoslavia was governed without an actual executive power. The political vacuum in the 1980s created a situation favorable to the emergence of nationalist leaders such as Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević.

ICTY findings charged both men with leading criminal enterprises that were responsible for the atrocities in the Yugoslav Civil War. Holbrooke wrote that the Yugoslav tragedy "was a product of bad, even criminal, political leaders who encouraged ethnic confrontation for personal, political, and fanatical gain."¹³⁸ The suffering of the Yugoslav people in the 1990s could not be easily repaired. Friction between Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks persists and will continue in the foreseeable future, especially in BiH, where the territory is divided between Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. As with the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in its last phases, the chair of the BiH presidency rotates among them.

¹³⁸ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 23.

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V. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in this thesis concentrated on examining the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian positions. The positions of the other former Yugoslav ethnicities were excluded for various reasons. The intentions of the Montenegrins in the Yugoslav crisis were closely associated with those of the Serbs. It would be hard to regard their position on the federation's breakup as distinct from that of the Serbs. The involvement of Macedonia and BiH in the events that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s and led to Yugoslavia's dissolution and the civil war was arguably negligible. U.S. Ambassador Warren Zimmermann wrote that Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov and BiH President Alija Izetbegovic expressed genuine support for Yugoslav unity.¹³⁹ However, with the secession of Slovenia and Croatia and the frightful acts of the Serbs, it was expected that Macedonia and BiH would seek independence. Bosnian citizens arguably suffered more than citizens of other SFRY republics in the years immediately after the breakup in 1991. Knowing that with secession a civil war was inevitable, the Bosnians supported unity.¹⁴⁰ The population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was comprised of almost equal numbers of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats.¹⁴¹ Despite the fact that the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo add considerable variety in the region, they did not make a major contribution to the crises in the early 1990s, mostly because they were subjugated by the Serbs. The major havoc in Kosovo (notably in 1998–1999) took place after the Yugoslav breakup in the early 1990s. This thesis, as noted above, focused on analyzing the causes of the initial breakup in the early 1990s.

This thesis sought to identify evidence about the root causes of Yugoslavia's violent breakup. It evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the most prominent suggested causes of the breakup of the SFRY, and drew conclusions regarding the most convincing explanations. As noted previously, the frequently discussed potential causes for the

¹³⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, 136.

¹⁴⁰ The term Bosnians refers to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹⁴¹ The term Bosniaks refers to the Muslim population in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

breakup include nationalism, ancient hatreds, economics, the Yugoslav political elites, and international politics.

The nationalism argument presented a profound factor among the causes of the dissolution. This thesis analyzed the magnitude of Serb, Croat and Slovene nationalism by undertaking an historical examination of the events that took place during the existence of Yugoslavia from 1918 to 1991. Specifically, this research examined the manifestation of nationalism after the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, during World War II, and afterwards. Additionally, this thesis analyzed the communist regime policies that created obstacles to establishing a strong national identity embraced by all the Yugoslav population. After examining the severity of the nationalism in specific republics and the weaknesses in the communist regime's policies, the thesis acknowledged the logic and strong evidence of the case for nationalism as a major reason for the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The potent nationalism among the Yugoslav ethnicities (and the failure under Tito to establish a Yugoslav national identity) resulted in a compelling case for this argument.

The ancient hatreds argument was important to consider because its prominence in the media conveyed a misleading message to the world concerning the causes of the Yugoslav civil war. This message was exploited by local politicians to win elections and justify their actions. Ethnic hatred was obvious during the conflicts in Krajina—a contested region in Croatia—and during the Bosnian War in the early 1990s. The currency of the ancient hatred argument among the ethnicities in Yugoslavia proved that this rationale was exploited by certain political elites, who misled people domestically to believe that security could be found only by supporting nationalistic leaders. Additionally, this argument was credited for creating confusion among the citizens of Western nations as to whether the use of force to intervene in Yugoslav wars was justifiable.

The economic argument was based on examining the self-management system and the disparity of the economic outputs among the Yugoslav republics. The self-management system was the core mechanism in the Yugoslav economic system, and it led to substantial economic growth. However, the republics developed economic outputs that differed significantly in their proportional effects, with certain republics more prosperous than

others. Additionally, this thesis examined the Yugoslav dependence on economic assistance from Western nations. Taking into account the strength of the Yugoslav economic system, the level of dependence on Western funds, and the economic competition among the former Yugoslav republics, the economic factors suggested that Croatia and Slovenia had vast motivations and material incentives to secede from Yugoslavia. Although it can be argued that Slovenia enjoyed substantial economic growth after gaining independence, it took the country a decade to reach the level of prosperity that it enjoyed in the late 1980s.¹⁴² The rest of the former Yugoslav republics undoubtedly did not see equivalent economic benefits. Therefore, while the economic argument could not have independently caused the dissolution of Yugoslavia, it probably contributed to the breakup to a noteworthy extent.

The local political elites' argument was closely tied with the theme of nationalism, since the most influential leaders won elections on successful nationalistic campaigns. The Yugoslav political elites' argument analyzed the objectives of the presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Their political power rose beyond that of the central government. Nevertheless, their motives and political aims differed. Opinion polls showed that in the middle of the 1990s seventy percent of the population favored Yugoslavian unity. However, nationalistic candidates won republic-level elections in the early 1990s. The presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia rose in political power, and gained popularity among the various ethnicities. The governing system that Yugoslavia was built on could not function effectively after Tito's death. Its weakness was exposed, and it was unable to show resilience in dealing with the numerous factors that threatened Yugoslav unity.

The international politics argument brings a potentially persuasive explanation as one of the causes of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but some elements lack hard facts. The European Community nations, after debating the legitimacy of the secessions of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia, decided to support the independence of these two Yugoslav republics in 1991 prior to conducting any negotiations with the various other Yugoslav

¹⁴² Udovički and Ridgeway, *Burn This House*, 281.

republics. There is no proof that all European Community nations wanted Yugoslavia to dissolve. However, the different positions of the EC countries in relation to supporting the independence of the Yugoslav republics, and the lack of will to act with military forces to stop the genocide, created a void that certain Yugoslav political elites were able to exploit.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia cannot be attributed to one single factor. However, the most persuasive arguments to explain the dissolution of Yugoslavia involve the Yugoslav political elites. The failed economic policies, nationalism, ancient hatreds, and international politics were only tools that certain Yugoslav political elites exploited to achieve their objectives. Mihailo Crnobrnja, a former Yugoslav Ambassador to the EC, wrote that “Tito’s funeral brought together the biggest assembly of world statesmen and dignitaries ever known for such an occasion.” World leaders from the Soviet Union (Leonid Brezhnev), China (Hua Guofeng), the United States (Walter Mondale), Palestine (Yasser Arafat), and many more traveled to Belgrade to pay their respects to the Yugoslav giant. Furthermore, within four years of his death half of the population in Yugoslavia visited his grave.¹⁴³ The international recognition that Tito received is a testament for the greatness of Yugoslavia under his leadership.

The Yugoslav political elites that brought about the dissolution of Yugoslavia, with the exception of Milan Kučan, are all dead now. None of them reached the level of Tito’s domestic and international recognition. According to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, most of them led joint criminal enterprises. Instead of building on what Tito achieved in 35 years (1945-1980), they managed to destroy Yugoslavia in their pursuit of personal gains.

¹⁴³ Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, 2. ed (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Univ. Press, 1996), 81.

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